

SINO-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS : A CASE-STUDY OF CHINA'S
FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA
(1970-1975)

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P R E F A C E

PREFACE

The Communist victory on the Chinese Mainland in 1949 and the almost coincident withdrawal of the European Powers from their colonial possessions in Southeast Asia, created apprehensions in the minds of American policy-makers. They felt that Southeast Asia, because it consisted of militarily weak, economically impoverished and politically instable and unintegrated states constituted a power vacuum likely to be filled by Communist China.

However, the ensuing years proved this to be a total misperception. While Communist China, embroiled in her own domestic problems, showed a lack of interest in expansionist designs, the states of Southeast Asia demonstrated their adeptness at retaining their sovereignty by constantly reappraising the components of their foreign policies to assure their appropriateness to the prevailing circumstances. Thus foreign policy "postures" such as neutralism or self-reliance were flexible national interest formulations born of responses to the existing power relations among the major powers in Asia.

This dissertation is a modest attempt to analyse China's foreign policy objectives in Southeast Asia. The author chose Sino-Cambodian relations for this purpose because she felt that this case-study would demonstrate most vividly, not only the flexibility of China's foreign policy, which

was basically defensive and geared to the preservation of national security, in the main; but also the flexibility of the foreign policy postures of the Southeast Asian states.

The author would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Gargi Dutt, Chairman, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for her guidance and valuable suggestions. The author would also like to thank the library staff of the Indian Council of World Affairs, the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, and the Jawaharlal Nehru University, without whose co-operation this study would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

SINO-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS : 1956-1969

A commonly held notion about South East Asia has been that because it consists of militarily weak, economically impoverished and politically unstable and unintegrated states, it is a "power vacuum" that is vulnerable to external penetration, especially by Communist China.¹ However, if the Sino-Cambodian relations were to be taken as case in point it would become increasingly evident that not only have South East Asian Governments been adept at exploiting their disadvantages in size, military resources and position in the midst of great power rivalry, but also that China has sought to achieve her objectives in this region by following an essentially defensive, non-aggressive policy involving minimum risks.

In analysing all foreign policies, two factors must be kept in mind; first, that foreign policy is not necessarily pre-planned, or pre-meditated but can also be in reaction to certain events.² Consequently, it is arguable that the so-

1 Michael Brecher, The New States of Asia : A Political Analysis (New York, Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 98, 104 and 110. Also see Bernard K. Gordon, Towards Disengagement in Asia : A Strategy for American Foreign Policy (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1969), p. 76.

2 Michael B. Yahuda, "Chinese Foreign Policy : A Process of Interaction", in Ian Wilson, ed., China and the World Community (Angus and Robertson, Publishers in Association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1973), p. 42.

called moderate and radical phase in Chinese foreign policy since 1949, were determined by policies pursued by other states towards China, that for example, the anti-Americanism of the late 1940s was a reaction to American hostile policies towards Communism in China, and in Asia generally,³ and that the moderate policies of 1954-56 were determined mainly by the international developments of the ending of the Korean war,^{and} perception of the emergence of anti-imperialist neutralist "bourgeois-nationalist" leaders as an important force on the world stage. Furthermore, the ending of that moderate phase was likewise determined more by international developments, than by domestic politics. Thus it was in the mid-1950s that the US really erected the containment cordon around China in a series of military build-ups and multilateral pacts,⁴ and refused meaningful negotiations on Taiwan, short of a PRC announcement in effect denying its full sovereignty over Taiwan - this the Chinese leaders refused to do.⁵

A correlated second factor to be kept in mind is that a foreign policy though generally calculative and

3 For a detailed presentation of this view see John Gittings, "The Origins of China's Foreign Policy", in David Horowitz, ed., Containment and Revolution (London, Antony Blond, 1967), pp. 182-217.

4 David Mozingo, "The Maoist Imprint on China's Foreign Policy", China Briefing (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 23-57.

5 Kenneth T. Young, Negotiating with the Chinese Communists (New York, McGraw Hill, 1968), pp. 17-18.

decisive can also be ambiguous and uncertain.⁶ Consider, for example, Premier Chou En-lai's statement at a Phnom Penh Press Conference, when questioned about the support pledged by the People's Republic of China to the Cambodian Government. "As to the kind of support, undoubtedly moral and political support, as there has always been. As to support in other aspects, we will take into consideration the needs of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the possibilities at our disposal, and the conditions prevailing at the time."⁷ Consequently, in spite of acting upon certain fundamental policy aims and tactics, China's foreign policy vis-a-vis South East Asia remained considerably flexible.

This was true of Cambodia as well, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Head of State of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was constantly reappraising the components of his neutralism to assure their appropriateness to the prevailing circumstances. Thus foreign policy "postures" such as neutralism or self-reliance were flexible national interest formulations born of responses to the existing power relations among the major actors in Asia.

Mao tse-Tung once stated that the governments of sovereign states should base their foreign policy on the

6 Melvin Gurtov, China and South East Asia: The Politics of Survival (New York, Heath Lexington Books, 1971), p. 2.

7 NCNA (Phnom Penh), 11 May 1960, in Survey of China Mainland Press (Hong Kong), no. 2260, 18 May 1960, p. 41.

"realities" which we see around us; therefore to understand the Chinese view of foreign relations one must try to see these realities from the Chinese point of view.

For any Chinese Government, Communist or non-Communist, the abiding facts of geography are the first of these realities. China is a large state and three-quarters of her borders are land-bound with one long side exposed to the sea. For many centuries the sea frontier did not count no enemies came that way. The land frontier especially the northern border was the one that mattered for across it came the destructive raids and occasional invasions of the nomadic peoples who were the principle enemies of the Chinese state.⁸

However, by the middle of the 19th century, China realized that the Southern frontiers were just as unsafe. Today, when China looks at South East Asia from the stand point of its own security, it thinks first and foremost of the security of South-West China. The British and the French in their colonial days regarded continental South East Asia as important, mainly because it seemed to offer the best access to South-West China and it was primarily for this reason that they occupied Burma and Indo-China respectively.⁹

8 For details see C.P. Fitzgerald, "The Chinese View of Foreign Relations", The World Today (London), vol. 19, no. 1, January 1963, p. 917.

9 Harold Hinton, China in World Politics (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 395.

In the post World War II period, the interest of the United States in South East Asia was stimulated in part by two major developments; the rise to power of the Communist regime in China and the almost coincident withdrawal of European Powers from their colonial possessions in South East Asia. The actions of China in Korea and her support of the Viet Minh in the Indochina war convinced American policy makers that unless the US filled the so-called vacuum left by the departed colonial powers, all of South East Asia would soon succumb to Communism. This resulted in the formation of the South East ^{Asian} Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and establishment of American military bases in certain South East Asian countries.

The Soviet Union at this time was embarking on her policy of peaceful economic competition with capitalist nations. In many of the underdeveloped countries she found a receptive audience. Of great practical value to the Asians was the fact that the Soviet Union was prepared to grant more favourable terms - low interest rates, long repayment periods, barter deals - than were obtained from the West. Such terms and the absence of political conditions, which the United States was so frequently prone to attach to its offers, were of course attractive to many Asians.

While the United States and the Soviet Union were trying to establish a foothold in South East Asia, China

launched a more active programme to win the friendship of the governments in this area. This action of the Chinese was probably as much in response to Soviet efforts to extend its influence into what China considered her sensitive periphery, as to American endeavours. Besides, China realized that what she required "to solve all her problems" was "a peaceful environment and continued relaxation of the world situation". She needed "peaceful co-existence with all her neighbours, with all countries in the world, particularly with the South East Asian countries with which she shares common borders".¹⁰

Therefore, at the Afro-Asian Conference held at Bandung, Java, in April 1955, Premier Chou En-lai, tried to overcome historically rooted fears of Southeast Asians of the giant in the north by espousing the principles of peaceful co-existence and by undertaking to discuss resolution of specific issues of concern to several South East Asian countries. The most outstanding of these issues being that of the overseas Chinese community, hitherto looked upon with apprehension by South East Asian Governments. In subsequent months China undertook a foreign aid programme of her own with the stated objective of supporting the establishment of basic industries in the underdeveloped countries in South East Asia. China's conciliatory attitude and remarkable performance

¹⁰ Speech by Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, at a farewell banquet for the Burmese Minister of Culture U Chit Thaung in Peking. Peking Review (Peking), vol. 2, no. 43, 27 October 1959, p. 26.

at Bandung resulted in the normalization of her relations with a number of countries - Cambodia being one of them.

✓ Cambodia had her own reasons for wanting to establish relations with the Chinese People's Republic (CPR). The main objective of Cambodia's foreign policy may be stated as the maintenance of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sharing a 549 mile border with South Vietnam, a 240 mile border with Laos and a 380 mile border with Thailand - Cambodian Governments were ever conscious of security threats from all sides, for, in Sihanouk's view, basic threats to Cambodia originated in the traditional annexationist ambitions of Hanoi, Saigon and Bangkok.¹¹

A major issue with Thailand was the dispute over the Temple of Preah Vihear, which the International Court of Justice decided in 1962 that it belonged to Cambodia. However, armed incidents continued to be reported in the temple area, despite Thailand's acceptance of the Court's verdict. As to the border itself, the Sihanouk Government felt certain that Thailand was still interested in recovering Cambodian territory - Siem Reap and Battambang - granted to Thailand by the Japanese in 1941, but restored to Cambodia in 1946,¹²

11 Sihanouk's statement in Cambodian News, January 1963, cited in Michael Leifer, "Cambodia and China: Neutralism, Neutrality and National Security", in A.M. Halpern, ed., Policies Towards China: Views from Six Continents (New York, McGraw Hill for Council on Foreign Relations, 1965), p. 346.

12 See Michael Leifer, "Cambodia and Her Neighbours", Pacific Affairs (Virginia), vol. 34, Winter 1961-62, pp. 361-74.

Finally, Cambodia maintained that the Thai Government with American backing had long sheltered the 'Khmer Serei' (a group led by Son Ngo Thanh) which started agitating for removal of French rule after World War II. Persecuted by the French authorities, this group removed itself to the Thai border, and continued to undermine the Prince's position by representing itself to the people as the only true opposition to French rule. Even after Cambodia became independent, this group with support from the Thai Government continued to oppose Sihanouk.¹³ Sihanouk was convinced that it was Son Ngo Thanh and the Khmer Serei which were responsible for the armed incidents over the years in Battambang province.

Differences with North Vietnam ranged over questions of Communist subversion, Vietnamese territorial interests in Cambodia etc. From the early 1950s the Cambodian Government was apprehensive about the subversive activities of the Khmer Rouge who Sihanouk felt were supported by Hanoi and the Viet Cong.

The Government of South Vietnam also refused to recognize the legality of the existing border and claimed several small islands in the Gulf of Siam. Apart from this Saigon periodically closed the Mekong River to ships destined for Cambodia, thus creating difficulties for Cambodia, which

¹³ Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indo-China (Stanford, 1954), p. 254.

prior to the construction of the port of Sihanoukville had no outlet to the sea.

Consequently, Sihanouk's foreign policy sought to establish friendly relations with the United States and China in the hope that they would prevail upon their respective allies (US allies were Thailand and South Vietnam, while China's ally was North Vietnam) to recognize and respect Cambodia's borders and leave her in peace.

Soon after gaining independence in 1953 Cambodia had adopted a pro-Western stance. The policy of neutrality evolved only after Cambodia's request to be accepted into the SEATO was rejected by the United States, on the grounds that it would be undermining the Geneva Agreements.¹⁴

Failing to obtain any specific commitment from the strongest member of SEATO, Cambodia had decided by November 1954 to follow a neutral foreign policy. Speaking at Phnom Penh, on his return from a state visit to Burma, Sihanouk said:

...in order to safeguard ourselves, the small and large nations of South East Asia should deploy all their goodwill in order to create a center of Pacific resistance to all facts or alliances susceptible to provoking world conflicts. That is to say a large group of nations should observe neutrality strictly. 15

14 Roger Smith, Cambodia's Foreign Policy (New York, Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 70-71.

15 Ibid., p. 73. See also Norodom Sihanouk, "Cambodia Neutral ; The Dictate of Necessity", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol. 36, no. 4, July 1958, pp. 582-3.

At Bandung in April 1955, Premier Chou En-lai and Pham Vang Dong of North Vietnam, at a private meeting with Prince Sihanouk, pledged their countries' respect for Cambodia's independence and territorial integrity;¹⁶ in return for his (Prince Sihanouk's) assurance that he had not asked for SEATO's protection.

On 13 February 1956, Prince Sihanouk travelled to China. While the Prince claimed that "there are very few Khmers who do not have some Chinese blood in their veins" on account of the ancient and historical ties between the two countries",¹⁷ the Chinese reiterated this and hailed Sihanouk's trip as another application of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Jen-Min Jih-pao, editorially stated:

The Chinese Government and people persistently pursue a peaceful foreign policy. They particularly hope to maintain genuine and sincere friendly relations with their neighbours. The Chinese people believe that all countries irrespective of their size should treat each other on an equal basis. They hold that the right of the people of all countries to choose their political and economic systems and their ways of life should be respected. They oppose the policy of interfering in other country's internal affairs and of organizing military blocs. 18

16 George Mc G. Kahin, The Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955 (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 15, 21.

17 Prince Sihanouk's statement in Canton. NCNA, 13 February 1956, Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1230, 17 February 1956, p. 37.

18 Jen-Min Jih-pao, NCNA, Peking, 13 February 1956, Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1230, 17 February 1956, pp. 38-39.

The article went on to say that friendly and co-operative relations between the two countries were not only possible but necessary.

As a result of the trip Cambodia became a beneficiary of \$ 22.4 million aid grant, the first such grant made by China to a non-Communist country. This aid from China, as the Sino-Cambodian joint communique of 22 June 1956 clearly stated "is not subject to any conditions" and the Cambodian Government "may use as it sees fit all equipment, construction material and merchandise given to Cambodia by China. The Chinese Government will not intervene or exercise any control over this use".¹⁹

On Sihanouk's return to Cambodia, Thailand and South Vietnam closed their frontiers with Cambodia. The Cambodian Government charged that the United States had entered into collusion with South Vietnam and Thailand, in order to force Cambodia into joining SEATO and to show their disapproval of Cambodia's relations with China. To clarify his position Sihanouk declared: "I went to Communist China with the aim of applying Panchsheel. This does not mean that Cambodia has become Communist...that is impossible for a Buddhist country like Cambodia."²⁰

¹⁹ NCNA, Peking, 22 June 1956, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1318, 27 June 1956, p. 45. Also see Peking Review, 26 August 1958, vol. 1, no. 26, pp. 8-9.

²⁰ Smith, n. 14, p. 97.

In an address to the National Assembly on 29 February Sihanouk denounced the US as helping only those countries "which accept its supervision", whereas the Chinese offered aid "without any conditions", and yet he stated "we cannot do without American aid without falling into the orbit of the Communist powers, an event which would signal the end of our neutrality, and probably independence....I hope therefore that the Khmer neutrality will be maintained...by the balance of powers west and east."²¹ whatever, Sihanouk might have said, it was evident that he was vigorously wooing China.

In November 1956, Premier Chou En-lai visited Cambodia on a mission of goodwill. In a joint statement signed by Premier Chou En-lai and Premier San Yon, both parties "expressed their determination to carry out the five principles thoroughly in letter and in spirit, so as to set an example in such relations for international co-operation and understanding among the peoples of nations and to contribute to peace in Asia and the world".²²

On his departure on 27 November Chou En-lai declared that the Chinese Government "will in accordance with its consistent policy...encourage the Chinese residents in Cambodia to integrate themselves with the Cambodian people...

21 Ibid., p. 98.

22 NCNA, Phnom Penh, 27 November 1956 in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1421, 30 November 1956, pp. 22-23.

to abide by the law, respect the customs and habits of the country and contribute to the full to its prosperous development".²³ Henceforward Sino-Cambodian relations were to develop rapidly. What with Cambodia's de iure recognition of China in July 1958,²⁴ the establishment of diplomatic relations and exchange of ambassadors. Consequently, in a welcome speech to Prince Sihanouk, during his second visit to China in August 1958, Premier Chou En-lai stated that "a new page is opened in the annals of traditional friendly relations between China and Cambodia".²⁵

Sihanouk's arrival in Peking on 15 August was front-paged by the Peking Press. Renmin kibao hailed Cambodia's neutral stand stating "Cambodia has maintained a policy of peace and neutrality in international relations, non-participation in military blocs, refusal to allow foreign countries to establish military bases on her territory and development of friendly relations with all countries". These policies of the Cambodian Government, it went on to state "have the sympathy and support of the Chinese people...."²⁶

The statement signed by Premier Chou En-lai and Prince Sihanouk on 24 August called for the working out of

23 Ibid., pp. 22-29.

24 Sino-Cambodian communique, NCNA, Peking, 24 August 1958, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1821, 27 August 1958, p. 37.

25 Peking Review, vol. 1, no. 25, 19 August 1958, p. 21.

26 Ibid., p. 19

further measures to develop trade between the two countries. Elaborating the Chinese view on the question of aid, Premier Chou En-lai said that this country had always traded with the nationalist countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, supplementing each other's works and had offered them technical assistance with no political strings attached, to help them stand on their feet. "We are firmly opposed", the Premier stressed "to the imperialists' old policy of economic aggression represented by the American idea of an industrial U.S. an agricultural Latin America; and the idea of the Kishi Government in Japan of Japanese technique, American capital and Southeast Asian resources".²⁷ A month later Sihanouk attended the Thirteenth U.N. General Assembly to propose the admission of Communist China to the organization.

During his second visit to Cambodia in May 1960 Premier Chou En-lai cautiously stated China's support for Cambodia. At a Press Conference in Phnom Penh he said: "If the Kingdom of Cambodia is aggressed upon from whichever direction, the Chinese people...and the Chinese Government... will stand on the side of the Royal Government of Cambodia." He added: "As to the kind of support, undoubtedly moral and political support as there has always been. As to support in other aspects we will take into consideration the possibilities at our disposal and the conditions prevailing at the

27 Peking Review, vol. 1, no. 26, 26 August 1958, p. 9.

time."²⁸ This declaration was typical-cautious--designed to obtain Cambodia's friendship while pursuing a policy of minimum risks. All following statements of support for the Cambodian Government were to be just as non-committal.

In December 1960, during his third visit to Peking, Prince Sihanouk signed a treaty of friendship and non-aggression with China, by which both parties were to respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the other besides undertaking not to commit aggression against each other and not to take part in any military alliance directed against the other.²⁹

These rapid developments in Sino-Cambodian relations were motivated by a number of conclusions on Sihanouk's part, most important of which was that the US was unwilling to restrain her allies, South Vietnam and Thailand and that the Viet Cong would eventually win. After Diem's overthrow in South Vietnam in 1963, Sihanouk was more than ever convinced that the US had no future in South East Asia. According to Leifer, in November 1963, Sihanouk had concluded that the implication of Diem's overthrow was for Cambodia to come to

28 NCNA, Phnom Penh, 11 May 1960, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 2260, 18 May 1960, p. 41.

29 For text of the treaty see NCNA, Peking, 3 May 1961, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 2491, 8 August 1961, pp. 35-36.

terms with the Vietnamese and Chinese Communists before their victory in South Vietnam and Thailand.³⁰

Cambodia's gratitude for China's unconditional assistance, political support and non-interference in Cambodia's affairs was expressed in a number of ways. Diplomatic relations were broken off with Thailand in October 1961 with South Vietnam in August 1963 and with the U.S. in 1965, though U.S. aid was terminated in 1963. (Soon after this a new Sino-Cambodian aid agreement was signed in early 1964, by which mortars, rocket launchers, trucks and automatic and other weapons with ammunition were delivered by Peking).³¹ The Albanian Government was recognized by Phnom Penh in September 1962, and in October 1963, the two countries co-sponsored a resolution to seat Mainland China in the General Assembly.³²

Then there was Cambodia's stand on the Sino-Indian border dispute of 1962. At the December 1962 Conference called by Nehru, Prime Minister of India (at Colombo), to help resolve the issue, Cambodia joined with Burma in urging

30 Michael Leifer, Cambodia: The Search for Security (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1967), p. 149.

31 JPRS Translations on South and East Asia (Virginia), no. 8, 7 April 1964, p. 4.

32 Editorial in the 17 September issue of the Cambodian Weekly, Nationalist, translated in Peking Review, vol. 6, no. 43, 25 October 1963, p. 18.

that negotiations between New Delhi and Peking be resumed and in rejecting Egypt's suggestion that the demilitarized zone be established in Ladakh, something China was not prepared to accept. In the end Nehru accepted the conference's proposals regarding a cease-fire line.³³

In March 1964, when at Colombo the Sino-Soviet differences split the delegations between those in favour of a second non-aligned "bloc" conference at Belgrade and those in favour of a second Bandung Conference composed of Asian and African nations, Cambodia sided with the Bandung group which supported by Communist China proposed to meet at that site (later changed to Algiers) to give support to Sukarno's new theme of the new emerging forces.³⁴

When the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1963, Cambodia adopted China's position. Sihanouk wrote that the treaty was "a big fraud designed to pool the people of the world, it is opposed to the aspirations of the people of all countries". He further stated that it was "a deal of trickery and a demagogic act" which "essentially strengthened the position of the nuclear powers to perpetuate nuclear blackmail...."³⁵

33 G.H. Jansen, Non-Alignment and the Afro-Asian States (New York, Praeger, 1966), pp. 334-42.

34 Ibid., chapter 17.

35 Norodom Sihanouk, "The Moscow Treaty and U.S." in Cambodian weekly Nationalist, quoted in Jen-min-Jih-pao (editorial), NCNA, Peking, 19 October 1963, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 3086, 24 October 1963, p. 33.

However, all this is not to say that Cambodia had become a satellite of China. Sihanouk took an independent stand on certain matters in the international field. Friendly relations were maintained with Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In 1963, Cambodia accepted a Yugoslav credit of \$ 6 million for the construction of three hydro-electric power plants - the first of several credits Belgrade was to grant Phnom Penh.³⁶

Soviet economic assistance to Cambodia between 1955-60 totalled \$ 28.8 million, in April 1963, i.e. before the Sino-Cambodian military aid agreement was concluded. Phnom Penh signed Cambodia's first military aid pact with a member of ^{the} socialist camp - Soviet economic and military aid in 1960-64 amounted to \$ 20.5 million compared with \$ 25.7 million in the same period for Chinese assistance.³⁷

Perhaps what China hoped to gain from her Cambodia policy was to alleviate the fears and apprehensions of South East Asian Governments, and to prove that she was capable of consistently co-existing with neutral governments of whatever size; that she was non-aggressive, sympathetic towards underdeveloped countries, least interested in interfering in their domestic politics, and disinterested in binding them down to certain "do's and don't's" by offering them

36 Smith, n. 14, p. 113.

37 Ibid., p. 63.

economic assistance. Therefore Cambodia's independent stand on certain political and foreign policy issues did not detract from the value of Cambodia to China's external interests. The Prince's friendly relations with the West or the Soviet Union were to China not nearly so important as his rejection of American aid, bases and forces. Apart from symbolizing for China the possibility of a relationship based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence, Cambodia's value also included her support of Chinese positions, particularly those that reflected opposition to imperialism.

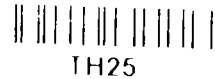
This was also a period when Peking was advocating a "broad united front" against imperialism. Apart from that Peking was contesting the Soviet Union's "softness" on revolutionary war. At this particular time when China found herself estranged from the Soviet Union and at logger-heads with the United States, she was prepared to overlook the character of individual governments and instead emphasized their anti-imperialist sentiments. Sihanouk's Cambodia was therefore an important addition to Peking's united front. And yet, perhaps China realized that as Sihanouk drifted away from the United States and towards China his friendship might impose unwanted obligations on Peking regarding Cambodia's defence. Consequently apart from making non-committal statements on this point, China spoke time and again about Cambodia's self-reliance and self-defence.

Sihanouk's hopes regarding Communist China's willingness to act as a restraining influence on North Vietnam, or

for that matter to deter pro-American regimes in South Vietnam and Thailand, had little substance to support them. Except that at the Geneva-Conference of 1954, Peking's delegates led by Premier Chou En-lai had prevailed upon the Viet Minh to drop most of their demands concerning the Communist Khmer, the only other evidence that China had some influence over Hanoi was North Vietnam's dropping of claims to the off-shore islands just before Liu-Shao-chi arrived in Phnom Penh from Hanoi in May 1963.³⁸ In subsequent years, however, it was to become increasingly clear to Sihanouk that the CPR was not prepared to make any statement, or take any action that would in any way compromise the position of the Vietnamese Communists.

In 1963 therefore when Cambodia terminated American aid (the causes being serious armed incidents along the Vietnamese and Thai borders late in 1963, the alleged beaming of broadcasts by the Khmer Serai; and Diem's overthrow) Peking though heartened by this made a cautious statement on 21 November pledging "resolute support" of Cambodia against alleged American-engineered provocations and violation of the Geneva Accords. "The Chinese Government solemnly declares if the Kingdom of Cambodia which firmly supports policies of peace and neutrality should actually come under armed incursions planned by the United States and its lackeys,

³⁸ Kahin, n. 16, p. 121.



the Chinese Government and Chinese people will steadfastly stand on the side of Cambodia and moreover, will give her full support. U.S. imperialism must accept all the consequences of this...."³⁹

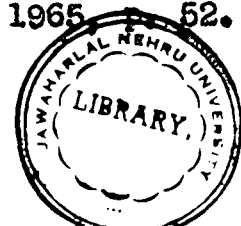
Typically, the Chinese statement thereafter voiced confidence that Cambodia under Sihanouk would be able to deal with the United States on her own. Rather than committing China to a specific commitment China was more interested in convening another Geneva Conference that would neutralize Cambodia and make it more difficult for the US or Cambodia's neighbours to violate her frontiers. An article by "commentator" in July stated that the Conference was "the only way" to restore peace throughout Indo-China,⁴⁰ especially in view of the fact that the US was bringing military and diplomatic pressure to bear on Laos and Cambodia.

Sihanouk's attempt to obtain a written guarantee, from South Vietnam as well as North Vietnam, concerning the border, met with failure with the NLF orally stating their recognition and respect, but not in writing.⁴¹ Disappointed

39 Jen-Min Jih-pao (editorial), 22 November 1963, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 3109, 29 November 1963, p. 32. Also see Peking Review, no. 46, 15 November 1963, p. 4; Peking Review, vol. 6, no. 48, 29 November 1963, pp. 8-9.

40 Jen-Min Jih-pao (commentator), NCNA, Peking, 5 July 1964, in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 3254, 9 July 1964, pp. 26-27.

41 Jean Pierre Simon, "Cambodia : The Pursuit of Crisis", Asian Survey, vol. 5, no. 1, January 1965, p. 52.



with China's negligible backing on the issue, perhaps Sihanouk realized that not only had neutralization become of secondary interest to the Vietnamese Communists and the Chinese, but also that Peking was not going to intervene on his behalf so long as the Vietnam war had not been settled on terms of favourable to the Communists.

This view must have been further endorsed by the Indo-Chinese People's Conference, convened in Phnom Penh in February 1965. Though absent from the conference Chou En-lai sent a message⁴² prior to its first plenary session scheduled for 25 February in which he stated that any international agreement to settle Indochina's problems, together or separately would have to await the complete withdrawal of American forces and bases from South Vietnam.

Consequently in the final documents of the Indo-Chinese People's Conference Sihanouk's neutralization plan was subordinated to Chinese and Vietnamese Communist interests. Though in accordance with Sihanouk's proposal that a Geneva Conference on Cambodia be held was resolved upon, Peking's demand for NLF representation ensured a moratorium on any consideration of such a plan by the major powers.

42 Text of message in Jen-min Jih-pao, 25 February 1965, quoted in Melvin Gurtov, "China's Policies in South-east Asia: Three Studies", Studies in Comparative Communism (California), vol. 3, nos. 3-4, July-October 1970, p. 33.

In the midst of all this Cambodia broke off diplomatic relations with the US in 1965. Promptly Chou En-lai hailed Cambodia's action stating that "the Chinese People would absolutely not stand idly by".⁴³ In spite of the fact that Cambodia had become all the more important to China after her (Cambodia's) severance of ties with the US, the CPR refused to elaborate on its commitment to Cambodia.

In the wake of Cambodia's unremitting support for China's foreign policy stances came the inevitable severance of ties with the Soviet Union as well. Sihanouk's trip to Moscow scheduled for November was abruptly cancelled. The Chinese used the rupture in Cambodian-Soviet relations to step up their military aid programme, perhaps to establish themselves as the main source of arms. In June a military aid agreement had already been signed to bring Chinese military technicians into Cambodia. According to Sihanouk, Chou En-lai also stated that China would provide all the military aid Cambodia needed to defend herself against both large and small scale attacks. In November China reportedly had promised enough arms to outfit 20,000 men; these together with previous Chinese deliveries would provide weapons for 49,000 men or 19,000 more than the total manpower of the

43 Premier Chou-En-lai's 20 May telegram to Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Peking Review, vol. 8, no. 22, 28 May 1965, p. 4.

Cambodian army at that time.⁴⁴

An interesting interpretation with regard to China's substantial aid to Cambodia has been put forward by one writer.⁴⁵ According to him, China's aid to Cambodia was in keeping with her consistent message to Sihanouk that Cambodia ought to be self-reliant in the field of defence and that China by granting this aid sought to reduce the likelihood that she would become directly involved in Cambodia's security problems.

By 1966-67 Sihanouk had started having second thoughts about Cambodia's China policy. This was probably due to certain internal and external factors. To begin with American-backed incursions into Cambodian territory were becoming more and more numerous, this Saigon stated was because the Viet Cong were making extensive use of Cambodian territory. China was adopting a non-committal stand - not once had she declared anything like an attack on Cambodia will be regarded as an attack on China - which is probably what Sihanouk had wanted. To add to this, domestically the radical leftist politicians were agitating over the selection of a right of centre cabinet. The Cambodian Government was probably feeling terribly insecure. This is not to say

44 Gurtov, n. 6, p. 71.

45 Ibid., p. 72.

that Sihanouk had withdrawn support of China's international stand. In fact, Sihanouk joined with China in demanding an American withdrawal and in denouncing the proposal for an all-Asian Peace Conference on Vietnam. In return the CPR military and economic aid programme was stepped up in 1966.⁴⁶

Fissures in the Sino-Cambodian relations first appeared in 1967 and were probably produced ^{by} the issue of Cambodia's borders and China's unwillingness to assist Cambodia in dealing with the worsening Viet Cong threat. In order to draw out a definite Chinese, Hanoi and NLF statement of respect and recognition of Cambodia's borders Phnom Penh announced officially on 19 May that all countries were being asked to make clear their attitude on the frontiers. This announcement was not acknowledged by the CPR till 1 June. The Soviet Union was the first Communist state to extend recognition. The CPR promptly followed suit. On 8 June, both Hanoi and NLF announced their positions. In return Sihanouk recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) de jure on 15 June; China's aid programme continued.

What put the lid on Sihanouk's misgivings about his China policy and rapidly brought the already deteriorating Sino-Cambodian relations to near breaking point was the Great Cultural Revolution unfolding on Mainland China the activities

46 JPRS Translations on South and East Asia, no. 146, 21 February 1967, pp. 9-40.

of the Khmer-China Friendship Association (set up in the 60s)⁴⁷ and the CPR Embassy in Phnom Penh.⁴⁸ A rupture in Sino-Cambodian relations was finally averted by Premier Chou En-lai's appeals to Prince Sihanouk not to recall the Cambodian Embassy officials from Mainland China and to push the whole affair to a break in relations. However, Sihanouk was probably convinced by now that the only option left open to him was the re-establishment of relations with the US.

Internally, this was a period of strain and unrest for Cambodia. Sihanouk was alarmed at the extent of dissidence in Battambang and other provinces. The prince refused to implicate Hanoi or Peking but charged that elements in Cambodia loyal to Chinese and Vietnamese Communists were behind the turmoil.⁴⁹ Externally, the US large scale involvement in Vietnam seems to have become a critical element in Sihanouk's calculations about the future. Perhaps he felt that a sudden American withdrawal would yield up the country to the Communists and leave Cambodia wide open to Communist intrigues.

Sihanouk's apparent feeling that the US was buying time for Cambodia in Vietnam was reflected in his diminished

47 NCNA, Peking, 12 December 1960 in Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 2403, 22 December 1960, p. 27.

48 Gurtov, n. 6, pp. 119-20, and 170.

49 J.L.S. Girling, "The Resistance in Cambodia", Asian Survey (Berkeley), vol. 12, no. 7, July 1972, pp. 556-7.

confidence in Communist China. Peking's hesitancy in 1967 to take the lead in recognizing Cambodia's existing borders perhaps, meant to him that China's leaders were unwilling to stand beside Cambodia against the North Vietnamese. Consequently, on 12 January 1968 a communique was signed at the conclusion of Ambassador Chester Bowles visit to China. Bowles agreed that America would seek to avoid incidents that would violate Cambodian sovereignty. Though diplomatic relations were maintained with the CPR, this communique signalled the end of the Sino-Cambodian honeymoon.

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CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

SINO-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS, 1970-75 : THE COUP D'ETAT OF 1970 AND CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR THE KHMER ROUGE

The coup d'etat of 1970, which ousted Head of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, could briefly be described as "the logical consequence of accumulated grievances and unresolved developmental dilemmas generated over the course of Cambodia's political and economic evolution since 1954, although it might not have occurred when it did except for specific foreign interest in its execution".¹

Various groups in the country had been advocating different routes to national development. While one group (the Leftists) believed total self-sufficiency, i.e. reduction in foreign expenditures to check foreign penetration of the Cambodian market, price controls, production incentives and ideological mobilization was the only panacea for Cambodia's poorly integrated national economy and her only hope for national independence, the so-called elite (essentially Rightists) stressed the need for foreign aid in order to maintain and expand existing programmes and structures and to forego difficult administrative reforms. This programme aimed not at the maintenance of national independence but

1 Laura Summers, "Cambodia : Model of the Nixon Doctrine", Current History (New York), vol. 65, no. 388, December 1973, p. 252.

maintenance of status quo. What it sought was the return of an "era of plenty", the days of American aid.²

Sihanouk's policy could be placed somewhere between these two programmes. While accepting multilateral loans and permitting free trade along the Cambodian, South Vietnamese border, he sought to institute certain reforms on the administrative and organizational level thereby antagonising the elite. His policy, therefore, pleased neither one group or another.

The Head of State's economic policy was ^{one major} ~~another~~ factor causing discontentment. Lack of attention and investment in agriculture and for that matter in industry too resulted in the inevitable economic crisis. Agricultural products costs rose throughout the 1960s in proportion to soil deterioration population increases and inflationary pressures on the primary sector. By the end of the decade state imposed price controls in the absence of capital investment and development affected the distribution of basic foodstuffs and produced some food shortages, mainly because the middleman on account of the price control found it more profitable to sell foodstuffs across the border to the Vietnamese Communists who paid more. Besides, fixed prices discouraged peasants from growing rice for more than minimal needs.³

2 Ibid., p. 253.

3 Donald Kirk, "Cambodia's Economic Crisis", Asian Survey, vol. 11, no. 3, March 1971, p. 240.

Exports began to decline, as well with the nationalization of foreign commerce and banking under SONEXIM (Societe Nationale d'exportation et d'Importation) the Khmer Bank of Commerce and Indana Joti, the state credit bank. These organizations were reported to be riddled with corruption with the men in charge (often stated to be Sihanouk's relatives) doing exactly as they pleased.⁴

T.D. Allman writing of the coup described it as "a bourgeois effort by the upper and educated classes to regain their traditional privileges from a royal leader who bypassed them to rule with the direct consent of the masses. "The movement against the crown", he wrote, "appears largely limited to Phnom Penh and those of the elite who found Sihanouk's rule stifling".⁵

In other words, lack of political institutionalization was another causative factor of the coup. Sihanouk had long conducted the government of Cambodia on the basis of political omnipotence. His success derived from his ability to exploit an extraordinary personal status and standing. Through an initially democratic electoral system he had acquired a personal constituency from which he could control any factors and the political elite who found themselves

4 Ibid., p. 240.

5 T.D. Allman, "Last Days of the Crown", Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), vol. 67, no. 16, 16 April 1970, p. 6.

obliged to seek patronage through the medium of Sihanouk's mass movement, Sangkum. Their domestic, political positions rested on Sihanouk's demonstrated popular support, his dispensation of patronage and skill in neutralizing political challenge by playing off against each other those who aspired to high office.⁶

To add to all these factors there was the peasant discontentment and rebellions (1967-68) in Battambang and Kattanakiri provinces. Battambang had had a long tradition of unrest stemming from the depopulation and devastation caused by the 18th and 19th centuries wars with the Thai monarchs. Resettled to some extent during the French period, it again served as a base for Vietminh and Issarak guerrillas during the Indo-China war. Afterwards it continued to be the scene of plots and intrigues by the Khmer Serei operating from Thailand and so retained its reputation for instability.⁷ Discontentment amongst the peasants in Battambang set in with the enforcement of fixed prices for compulsory state purchase, more so because Battambang was the largest rice exporting province.

6 Michael Leifer, "Failure of Political Institutionalization in Cambodia", Modern Asian Studies (London), vol. 2, no. 2, 1968, pp. 125-40; also see Michael Leifer, "Political Upheaval in Cambodia", World Today, vol. 26, no. 5, May 1970, pp. 181-2.

7 J.L.S. Girling, "The Resistance in Cambodia", Asian Survey, vol. 12, no. 7, July 1972, p. 556.

For different reasons Rattanakiri was another province known for its instability. A collection of empty districts of forests and plateaus and mountains populated by some 60,000 Khmer Loeu, a smaller number of Kola tribesmen of Burmese origin and a few villages of ethnic tribesmen, Rattanakiri was invaded by the Vietminh from north and east, in order to divert French forces from the main theatre of war.⁸ After the signing of the Geneva Agreements of 1954, Cambodian authorities made efforts to secure the province, still containing no ethnic Cambodians. Ethnic Cambodians were encouraged to settle in this province in the 60s. This posed a threat to the Khmer Loeu land and the survival of their culture.

All these factors were exploited by the disgruntled elite to oust Sihanouk. By early 1968 "widespread rebel activity" was reported in practically every province and was reportedly linked with "radical leftist opposition" or rather the Khmer Rouge who according to the Lon Nol Government (Lon Nol was appointed permanent Prime Minister by Sihanouk on 12 August 1969), were being armed, trained and directed by the Vietnamese.⁹

⁸ T.D. Allman, "And Nowhere Else to Go", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 67, no. 6, 5 February 1970, p. 24.

⁹ Michael Leifer, "Rebellion or Subversion in Cambodia", Current History, vol. 56, no. 330, February 1969, p. 93; Girling, n. 7, p. 557.

In spite of the persistent emphasis on the "hereditary enemy" theme there are reasons to believe that the Vietnamese were careful not to antagonize Sihanouk by direct support of the Cambodian rebels. Burchett writes that "in the past, the NLF of South Vietnam did not supply arms to the Khmer Rouge resistance fighters, although they had abundant stocks in the frontier areas. They did not want to do anything which might endanger Sihanouk's neutrality...."¹⁰

At the end of January 1970 Sihanouk left Cambodia for France for medical treatment. His absence gave Lon Nol and Sirik Matak (Deputy Prime Minister; appointed by Sihanouk at Lon Nol's insistence) the chance they had been waiting for to exploit anti-Vietnamese feeling in Cambodia in an attempt to discredit the Prince's policy of seeking an accommodation rather than a war with Cambodia's powerful neighbour. T.D. Allman writes;

On 8 March, the army organized anti-Vietnamese demonstrations in the Svay hieng province. Three days later Phnom Penh students, soldiers and some 200 Buddhist monks were ordered to gather at the Independence Movement. In a peaceful amicable mood they followed government organizers to the Provincial Revolutionary Government embassy less than a mile away. While the marchers were encouraged to shout anti-Vietnamese slogans, a team of 45 trained soldiers in civilian dress entered the embassy and sacked it.

10 Wilfred Burchett, The Second Indo-China War: Cambodia, and Laos (New York, International Publishers, 1970), pp. 68-69.

The demonstrators numbering 10,000 were hardly hostile to the sacking in a country where anti-Vietnamese feeling runs deep. But the demonstration was hardly spontaneous. Few of the students and civil servants would have shown up had they not been ordered and they undoubtedly had the idea that the ultimate result of their demonstration would be ousting Sihanouk. The scene was repeated a little later at the North Vietnamese embassy and the demonstrators dispersed peacefully. Significantly no Vietnamese -- more than 10,000 live in Phnom Penh was molested that day, although the government radio was claiming that the demonstrations amounted to an upheaval of popular anger at Sihanouk's policy of having good relations with the Communists. 11

Writing from Phnom Penh, T.D. Allman stated:

....Observers here increasingly believe that the wave of Government organized anti-Vietnamese demonstrations was merely a device to rally the nation to the regime while they were taking the unpopular step of attacking the personality who had been preeminent in Cambodia for 29 years. 12

However, those who sought to challenge Sihanouk's preeminence were in a position to know full well that Cambodia unassisted was incapable, militarily, of expelling the intruders. Interestingly, in January 1970, the former Minister of Information of Cambodia, wrote to the British Press on the subject. Concluding his letter he said:

11 T.D. Allman, "Anatomy of a Coup", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 67, no. 15, 9 April 1970, p. 19.

12 Ibid.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to the fact that Cambodia is not in a position to prevent these infiltrators with its restricted and poorly equipped forces, when the American and South Vietnamese forces exceedingly more numerous and well-equipped have never been able to combat these infiltrators themselves. 13

It can be argued on the basis of the above consideration that the issue of Vietnamese Communist infiltration was but a facade to cover up the more primary cause of his^{Sihanouk's} removal - the desire of the ruling group within the government of Cambodia to exercise power untrammelled by what they regarded as the suffocating omnipotence of the Head of the State.

The Lon Nol-Sirik Matak clique had asked for trouble - which had now begun to brew. Not only was the attitude of the Vietnamese Communists bound to change, but the Cambodians themselves, who unable to associate the sacking of the Vietnamese embassies with the overthrow of Sihanouk, still did not consider it an unpatriotic thing to demonstrate on behalf of Sihanouk.

Consequently, immediately following the coup on 18 March 1970, a number of revolts and demonstrations took place in both rural and urban areas of Cambodia. The foreign Press characterized them as pro-Sihanouk, while Phnom Penh

13 The Times, 19 January 1970, in Michael Leifer, "Political Upheaval in Cambodia", The World Today, vol. 26, no. 5, May 1970, p. 14.

officials explained that Sihanouk had a few partisans who had been temporarily duped by Vietnamese agitators.¹⁴ The authorities announced the arrest of the Vietnamese nationals who controlled the demonstrations and said that they were in possession of all the proofs of the participation of Vietcong agents in the organization of the riots.¹⁵ And yet government soldiers firing on the demonstrators shot and killed between 80 and 100 Cambodians (none of them carrying firearms - no Vietnamese were killed).¹⁶

Despite the fact that the Cambodian Government refused to acknowledge a civil war in Cambodia, the fact remains that Cambodian unity was fast being shattered by one. The disorientation of the peasantry, the consequent pro-Sihanouk demonstrations and the governments high-handed manner of dealing with them plus the invitation by the new Government to US and South Vietnamese troops to clear out Vietcong sanctuaries, all added to drag Cambodia into the morass of the Indo-China war.

T.D. Allman reporting from Phnom Penh wrote:

14 Laura Summers, "The Cambodian Civil War", Current History vol. 63, no. 376, December 1972, p. 261.

15 Ibid.

16 T.D. Allman, "Where Khmers Kill Khmers", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 67, no. 15, 9 April 1970, p. 5.

Although reports last week of Vietcong columns advancing on Phnom Penh were false, for the first time since independence in 1953, Cambodians were killing Cambodians...on the government side are the army, most of the business class, the aristocracy, intellectuals and government functionaries. Fanged against the government are some 40,000 Vietnamese troops - who so far have taken a small role in anti-Government movements - the tiny Khmer rouge guerrilla movement and most importantly, a sizeable but unknown proportion of Cambodia's 6 million peasants who still see Sihanouk as a god-king and the nation's only leader. 17

As far as the denial on the part of the new Cambodian Government of a civil war, this was absolutely essential. Any shift in Phnom Penh's public posture would have undermined Nixon's rationale for aid to Cambodia, for "American aid to Cambodia was justified as an assurance on the (false) assumption that Vietnamese Communist forces were moving into the Mekong Delta to threaten Saigon."¹⁸

The widening of the war, i.e. the invasion of Cambodia by the South Vietnamese (ARVN) and US troops and the US air strikes against the Vietcong sanctuaries was bound to bring about a change in the attitude of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, who hitherto had been careful not to impinge on the sovereignty of a country that had sought accommodation

17 Ibid., p. 5.

18 Summers, n. 14, p. 260.

with them. Now, however, they entered the battle in Cambodia without any inhibitions.

T.D. Allman once again, writing from the main theatre of war, stated:

Under Sihanouk areas of Vietcong control were measured in kilometers - even meters from the border. Now they are measured in districts or whole provinces. Under Sihanouk Cambodians were being killed at the rate of 1 or 2 a day, mostly by misplaced American air strikes. Now they are being killed at the rate of 10-20 a day as the government tries unsuccessfully to hold its ground against Vietcong attacks. 19

It was just a matter of time before the anti-Government faction especially the peasantry joined hands with the Viet Cong. The coup alone might not have precipitated a civil war, but the violent invasion and subsequent 17-month occupation of heavily populated areas of eastern Cambodia made it difficult to avoid. "In the process of intervening in Cambodia to win in South Vietnam, the American sponsored intervention set in motion the forces of national reaction and resistance. The Cambodian liberation forces seem to have been created by the military logic of foreign intervention."²⁰ What the Nixon Doctrine of Vietnamization of the Indo-China war had

19 T.D. Allman, "Honeymoon with Disaster", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 68, no. 17, 23 April 1970, p. 32.

20 Summers, n. 1, p. 256.

overlooked was one little detail - Cambodian nationalism.

China's reaction to the coup of 1970 in Cambodia and subsequent events should be studied against the backdrop of changes taking place not only in China's foreign policy posture, but also in the international arena during this period. Commenting on these changes in the 1970s Alastair Buchan wrote that on a global scale international politics have become more balanced because -

all the major participants in it are politically introverted. More concerned with organization, order and prosperity of their own large societies and social systems, less disposed to impose their standard on others, with less energy available for attacking a point of their adversaries, than was the case in the 1950s and 1960s. 21

As far as the Chinese People's Republic was concerned the end of the Cultural Revolution had just taken place in April 1969, with the end of the 9th Congress of the CCP. This Congress had opened a period of relaxation on the domestic scene, allowing for recuperation and reorganization of the country and rebuilding of the CCP.²² But if relaxation on the domestic scene had made an active foreign policy again possible, external events had made initiative and dynamism necessary, if not indispensable.

21 Alastair Buchan, Power and Equilibrium in the 1970s (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1973), p. 42.

22 Alain Gerard Marsot, "The Chinese Perspective", in Sudershan Chawla, Melvin Gurtov, Alain Gerard Marsot, eds., Southeast Asia Under the New Balance of Power (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 73.

Mao had discovered that isolation spelled danger. Once more Sino-Soviet relations proved to be the critical element. With almost no one except Albania at her side, China witnessed Czechoslovakia, the enunciation of Brezhnev Doctrine (that no state was free to leave socialism - as defined by the USSR). As it were clashes between the Chinese and Soviet Union troops were already taking place along the Ussuri river. All previous matters dividing Russia and China now merged into one overwhelming concern - that of security.

The key to safety was the US-rapprochement with the US would provide the means for entering the United Nations, altering relations with Japan with maximum advantage, and secure recognition from other American allies who had delayed such an act primarily out of a desire to avoid antagonizing Washington.²³

Rhetorically, though the US was described as a "declining power", but one which should not however be taken to be a paper tiger overnight even though it is in "the throes of its death bed struggle";²⁴ yet practically China was interested in the US because she assumed that the US would continue to be both strong and present in the Pacific-Asian area. Peking would have found little benefit in

23 Robert Scalapino, "China and the Balance of Power", Foreign Affairs, vol. 52, no. 2, January 1974, p. 356.

24 Peking Review, vol. 14, no. 2, 8 January 1971, p. 13.

dealing with a weak isolationist America. In its essence the new Chinese policy relied upon a balance of power in which American strength was a central assumption.²⁵ What China sought to do then was to apply the traditional principle of "suing one barbarian to control another".²⁶ Consequently from 1970 onwards China started moving towards detente with the US which finally resulted in the Sino-American communique of 1972.

The essentially flexible nature of China's foreign policy is summed up by one writer, in terms of Maoist dialects used on the domestic scene: two steps forward, one backward.²⁷ This flexibility was once again illustrated from 1970 onwards when China, while providing the Cambodian liberation forces with "spiritual atom bombs", continued to follow a basically low-risk, low-cost foreign policy and normalized relations with the hitherto "vicious U.S. imperialists".

Sihanouk was deposed when he was on the point of leaving Moscow for Peking. On his arrival at the Chinese capital, he was greeted as though nothing had happened; an

25 Scalapino, n. 23, p. 357.

26 John Bryan Starr, Ideology and Culture : An Introduction to the Dialectic of Contemporary Chinese Politics (New York, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 241.

27 Marsot, n. 22, p. 67.

array of luminaries led by Premier Chou En-lai were present at the airport to meet him. Immediately, broadcasting facilities were put at his disposal to defend his policies.

On 20 March, Prince Sihanouk, made the first of many statements for transmission to Cambodia and the world in which he called the coup unconstitutional, defended his foreign and domestic policies, rejected various charges of corruption and warned of the dangers to Cambodia in a re-alignment with the West.²⁸ He vowed to fight to overthrow the coup group, but said he would never again hold the reins of the government.²⁹ As for the means of his return Sihanouk in a 23 March message said that he would set up a "new government of national unity" and a "national liberation army organized with broad popular participation under a National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK).

While dutifully publishing the Prince's statements, the Chinese did not associate themselves with them. In the first week after the deposition the Chinese media issued only two reports; one stating concern for the homes and property of overseas Chinese and Vietnamese. The other issued on 23 March by NCNA mentioned the Lon Nol Government for the first

28 Text in Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 13, 27 March 1970, pp. 15-17.

29 Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 13, 27 March 1970, p. 19.

time - calling the overthrow (of Sihanouk) planned and its leader pro-American. The article concluded that the Cambodian situation is "still developing" and that "people are closely watching the development and changes of the Cambodian situation".³⁰

China was following an extremely cautious line. According to one writer, Peking's hesitancy in supporting Sihanouk's "struggle" was probably due to the considerations that "the extension of the Vietnam fighting into Cambodia might overextend the Communists capabilities, might lead to American intervention, and even if successful would only benefit Vietnamese Communist interests".³¹

However, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Chinese Communists to remain aloof. On 25 March, Lon Nol's Government closed Sihanouk ville to Communist ships, thereby cutting important sources of supplies for Communist forces in the lower half of South Vietnam. On the same day a trade agreement concluded with the NLF in September 1969, regarding rice supplies was also cancelled. Reports started pouring forth of instances of Cambodian-South Vietnamese and American co-operation in assaults on Communist sanctuaries

30 Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 13, 27 March 1970, pp. 5-6.

31 Melvin Gurtov, China and South East Asia: The Politics of Survival (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 141.

along the border. Beginning late in March, South Vietnamese units launched attacks into Cambodia.³² On 27 March the first step was taken toward a government appeal for foreign, including American military assistance.

The Chinese leadership responded to these developments by taking a rougher stand with regard to the possible consequence of such measures. NCNA on 26 March accused the US of having instigated the overthrow and predicted the victory for "the Cambodian people" in their struggle against US intervention.³³

Subsequently, articles reported demonstrations against Lon Nol outside Phnom Penh his "collusion with the US, Thai and South Vietnamese authorities to obtain military aid to fight Vietnamese communist forces, and his steadily declining authority. Resistance to the government was also reported to be spreading rapidly."³⁴

China's shift in posture and identification with the fighting in Cambodia was publicized when Chou En-lai in a speech in Pyongyang, lent support to Sihanouk's appeals and voiced confidence that the Cambodians "fighting shoulder to

32 Ibid., pp. 140-1.

33 See Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 14, 3 April 1970, pp. 29-30.

34 Ibid., pp. 28-30 and 32.

shoulder", with the Vietnamese and Laotians would be victorious.³⁵ Fighting in Cambodia continued to intensify and with this China's support for the anti-government forces. South Vietnamese involvement in the sanctuary areas resulted in deeper Communist penetration westward threatening Phnom Penh. Chinese news reports and radio commentaries now began to emphasize the military successes of "patriotic armed forces" in Cambodia. The concept of "people's war" and protracted struggle under NLFK was now stressed.³⁶

The fact that China had by now adopted a stand more or less the same as North Vietnam's (Hanoi called resistance to Lon Nol as part of the "Indochinese people's fight" against US imperialism. On 25 March the DRV officially announced its support of Prince Sihanouk, his programme and "the just struggle of the Khmer people to take final victory)³⁷ was demonstrated by the Indochinese people's summit conference, called by Sihanouk and held on 24-25 April in Southern China. The conference was attended by Vietcong, Hanoi and Laotian Communist leaders (and towards the close by Chou En-lai). In effect this conference "Indochinized" the Vietnam war; it symbolized the

35 Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 15, 10 April 1970, p. 14.

36 Jen-min Jih-pao (editorial), 17 April 1970, in Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 17, 24 April 1970, pp. 26-27.

37 Gurtov, n. 31, p. 140.

fact that the three anti-American struggles in Indo-China were now correlated.

As far as China was concerned, it established China (and not the Soviet Union) as the major patron of Indochina war as a whole, and an important patron of individual participants in the Conference. For Cambodia as represented by Sihanouk the conference gave guarantees plus assurances of Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia after the common goals were achieved. It also recognized the Khmer Rouge as the real activists within Cambodia.³⁸

Hitherto China had not promised material support for the Communist movement in Cambodia to overthrow the Lon Nol Government. President Nixon's decision of 30 April to send American troops into the sanctuaries however forced China's hand. The fact that the CPR waited until after the event to announce the founding of Sihanouk's regime and China's backing of its aims may show just how reluctant it was to embrace a Vietnamese Communist strategy for Cambodia.

The US President's decision left China with little choice. At the banquet celebrating the success of the Summit Conference of Indochinese peoples. Premier Chou En-lai made a speech in which he asserted that the Chinese territory was

38 Motherland (Delhi), 10 August 1973.

the "reliable rear area of the people of the three Indo-Chinese countries. The brotherly people of the three Indo-Chinese states can believe that in the common struggle against the US imperialism, the Chinese people will forever be with them."³⁹ On 5 May a Chinese Government statement formally recognized the Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia.⁴⁰

It was Mao's 20 May⁴¹ statement, however that enunciated the stand that would be taken by the CPR in the subsequent years. The statement might be described as an amalgam of caution and support. According to one writer this statement was "the highest possible endorsement of the new direction to China's post-Cultural Revolution foreign policy".⁴²

While referring in highly approving terms to Sihanouk's efforts to oust the present government in Phnom Penh and expressing warm support for the united front established under Prince Sihanouk and the Communist leaders of North and South Vietnam and Laos at the Indochinese summit

39 Peking Review, vol. 13, special issue, 8 May 1970, pp. 34-35.

40 Text of Premier Chou En-lai's letter in Peking Review, vol. 13, no. 20, 15 May 1970, p. 14.

41 Peking Review, vol. 13, special issue, 23 May 1970, pp. 8-9.

42 Leo F. Goodstadt, "China : Mister Moderation", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 68, no. 22, 29 May 1970, p. 8.

conference, Mao once more emphasized China's belief that through persevering in a protracted "people's war", the three Indo-Chinese peoples would certainly overcome all difficulties and win complete victory.

Then again, while writing off the US as looking like a "huge monster" while in fact being no more than "a paper tiger now in the throes of its death-bed struggle", He went on to make it plain that China's backing for anti-US movements would remain essentially moral and political. He stressed that small countries can triumph if they only dare to rise in struggle, take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destinies of their countries. Therefore, Mao put forth clearly China's stand against any direct intervention by China in the "people's wars" of other nations. Mao seems to have been anxious to reassure the world, possibly the US of China's determination to steer clear of any military involvement in Indochina.

This, then was to be China's plan of action in the following years. While supporting Cambodia with its characteristic rhetorical bombast, the CPH continued to normalize relations with the US through the years 1971-72. By 1973 Sihanouk was reported to have stated that China had halted all material aid to popular forces in Cambodia. He said in an interview:

Every cloud has a silver lining, even if we are abandoned, we are taking over destiny in our own hands....I do not criticize China.... I understand perfectly the motivations.... Now peace is more or less the fashion, so we are somewhat outmoded. 43

Victories of the Cambodian Liberation Army in 1975 were hailed warmly by the CPR, but no longer was the US denounced in scathing terms as had been the trend prior to the 1970s.⁴⁴ Lord Palmerston once stated: "In international relations there can be no eternal friends, nor can there be eternal enemies. The only thing eternal is the national interest." The accuracy of this cynical remark was borne out by the illustrated flexibility of the Chinese foreign policy in the 1970s.*

43 Patriot (New Delhi), 22 September 1973.

44 Peking Review, vol. 18, no. 14, 4 April 1975; Peking Review, vol. 18, no. 11, 14 March 1975, pp. 9-10.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

CHINA'S THEORY OF PEOPLE'S WAR

China's encouragement of the wars of national liberation and propagation of the theory of people's war, has often been looked upon with suspicion and misconstrued as her desire to subvert governments in the underdeveloped countries and to ensure the establishment of a Communist regime.

However, China's theory of people's war is just one of the dimensions of her foreign policy which is geared essentially to the preservation of national interest and national security. This becomes evident if one studies China's stand towards the national liberation movements over the years and her fluctuation from warm enthusiastic support to cool acknowledgement of these wars. Needless to say that these fluctuations tally with her threat perceptions at various times.

That China took extraordinary interest in the Indo-China peninsula is not surprising considering the "lip and teeth" relationship often emphasized. The US "stake" in holding on to South Vietnam was also China's "domino" fear of the result of North Vietnamese and Vietcong defeat. Consequently China felt that if the US aggressors instead of being driven out are allowed to hang on in South Vietnam then US imperialism will

still more unscrupulously be pushed forward to subjugate its victims one by one, and more furiously suppress the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹

Peking's policy of supporting wars of national liberation becomes even more comprehensive when one considers that from the sixties onwards, China found herself more and more isolated. The Sino-Soviet dispute had erupted into the open, with the Soviet Union moving closer to the US propagation of people's war during this period, was designed to draw the Third World 'have-nots' to China in order to create a third camp and thereby counteract the hegemonistic designs of the two super powers who were steadily dividing the world between them as their satellites.²

Hitherto only US imperialism had come under attack of Chinese propaganda. The sixties witnessed Soviet revisionism also come steadily under the fire of Chinese criticism.³ This became all the more strident during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-69. The beginning of the seventies saw China moving

1 J.L.S. Girling, People's War (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 39.

2 The Leaders of the CPSU Are the Greatest Splitters of our Times (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1964), pp. 20-21.

3 For China's attitude towards US imperialism and Soviet revisionism see Peking Review, vol. 6, no. 25, 21 June 1963, p. 9; vol. 6, nos. 10 and 11, 15 March 1963, p. 24; and vol. 9, no. 33, 12 August 1966, pp. 19, 23.

closer to the US. Though Peking continued to propagate people's war, support for revolutions steadily became lukewarm.

That the states of Indochina should have adopted Mao's strategy for revolutionary war should not be surprising. This was a region of revolt. Revolts had erupted and failed over the centuries.⁴ The advent of the colonial rule created a feeling of frustration in the people of these states. Underdeveloped, as they were, it gradually began to dawn on them that just revolutionary fervour was not sufficient to help them fight against the superior weapons of their western masters. What was required was a suitable strategy which would enable them to fight against the Europeans with whatever little they had. Mao's strategy provided the answer; it was a strategy that had been applied and was successful.

Therefore, as Milton Osborne states, it was not Communism which attracted the revolutionaries but the strategy and organizational techniques. Had any other philosophy provided them with these tools the revolutionaries would not have hesitated to adopt it. One point often overlooked is that these revolutionaries were more nationalistic than communistic. What they ultimately sought was self-preservation. Arguing on this hypothesis, it would be self-evident that these states were most unlikely to become

⁴ Milton Osborne, Region of Revolt (Australia, Permagon Press, 1970), pp. 7-21.

satellites of China as the US feared. This has been increasingly demonstrated by the Vietnamese stand.⁵

Mao's theory of people's war provided the Indo-Chinese states with the methodology of dealing with an imperialist power. Mao specifically states that each revolutionary country cannot simply accept Chinese Communist ideology (as they could be the theories of Lenin and Stalin) for it is the unique product of the particular circumstances of the Chinese Revolution. However, the "correct" combination of theory and practice in societies of similar stages of development must result in "correct" ideology.⁶ What the revolutionaries can learn from the Chinese experience is the methodological model for the creation of a practical ideology.

The first step is to find out the contradictions within a given real situation and on the basis of such an analysis make a "principled" choice of action. Mao conceives of a world in a process of constant change, propelled by contradictions that are inherent in all things.⁷ In his essay "On Contradiction", he writes: "there are many

5 Ibid., pp. 135-47.

6 Franz Schurum, Ideology and Organization in Communist China (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966), pp. 36-38.

7 For a brief discussion of the role of contradictions in Maoist Philosophy, see John Lewis, Leadership in Communist China (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 47-52.

contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of other contradictions." He goes on to explain -

when imperialism launches a war of aggression against a semi-colonial country, all its various classes except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all other contradictions among the various classes within the country (including the principal contradiction between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position..once the principal contradiction is grasped all other problems can be readily solved. 8

Having singled out the major enemy, a united front should be formed. This united front attempts to isolate that enemy from any possible support or alliance by exploiting disputes or "contradictions" which may exist between the enemy and his allies or potential allies. Our experience teaches us that the main flow of the revolution should be directed at the chief enemy, to isolate him, while as for the middle forces a policy of both uniting with them and struggling against them should be adopted so that they are at least

8 Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works (Bombay, People's Publishing House Ltd., 1954), vol. 2, pp. 35, 37.

neutralized and, as circumstances permit should be made to shift them from their position of neutrality to one of alliance with us, for the purpose of facilitating the development of the revolution.⁹

An important factor to be kept in mind at this stage is to "despise the enemy strategically, take full account of him tactically" (this incidentally is the heart of the Chinese strategic view of revolution). The concept of "paper tiger" could perhaps be stated as the most graphic example of Mao's theory of despising the enemy strategically but taking full account of him tactically.

In an interview with Anna Louise Strong in 1946 Mao stated:

The atom bomb is a 'paper tiger' which the U.S. reactionaries use to scare people. It looks terrible but in fact it isn't. Of course the atom bomb is a weapon of mass slaughter but the outcome of war is decided by the people not by one or two new types of weapons....All reactionaries are paper tigers, in appearance the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful....Take the case of China, we have only millet plus rifles to rely on, but victory will finally prove that our millet plus rifles is more powerful than Chiang Kai-shek's aeroplanes plus tanks.... 10

9 The Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1959), p. 15.

10 Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1961), pp. 100-1.

Peking also held that imperialism may be "parasitic, decaying and moribund capitalism" as Lenin argued, but until it is completely defeated by the armed struggle of the masses, it is not only capable of, but fully prepared to suppress violently those who rise against it. Consequently Mao stated a good revolutionary should derive confidence in ultimate victory from the knowledge that the enemy is strategically weak, but he must also be prepared to fight persistently and tenaciously against an enemy who is still very strong.¹¹

Peter Von Ness writes:

The fundamental concept of strategically despising the enemy while tactically taking him seriously is clearly an ideological formulation constructed in an effort to overcome the psychological barriers to making revolution and to help instill the kind of fighting spirit required to successfully oppose an objectively strong enemy.¹²

Therefore an article in the Peking Review, dated 4 January 1963 stated:

We hold that the question of whether one treats imperialism and all reactionaries strategically as the 'paper tigers' they really are, is of great importance for the question of how the forces of revolution and the forces of reaction are to be appraised; is of great importance for the question of

11 Ibid., pp. 100-1.

12 Peter Von Ness, Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support for Wars of Nationalist Liberation (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970), p. 48.

whether the revolutionary people will dare to wage struggle, dare to make revolution, dare to seize victory.... Every oppressed people should above all have the revolutionary courage and the revolutionary spirit to defeat imperialism and the reactionaries otherwise there will be no hope for any revolution. 13

Another fundamental conception of wars of national liberation is an attempt to portray the struggle as defensive; one being waged against an aggressive enemy. The utility of such a concept becomes clear. The first aspect of this view is that the enemy - imperialism and local reactionaries - is ever aggressive and can in no way be convinced to change his vicious nature.¹⁴ The only thing left for the people to do is to join together, arm themselves and make war against them, that is the only way to eliminate "this monster of mutual slaughter among men".¹⁵ The ultimate objective of this concept, is to create a mass psychology; to instill the people with a revolutionary fervour by projecting the enemy as aggressive and the cause of political and economic ills.

One other major emphasis in Mao's thought has been that a sufficiently motivated and mobilized mass can surmount

13 "The Differences between Comrade Togliatti and Us", Peking Review, vol. 6, no. 1, 4 January 1963, pp. 13-14.

14 Mao Tse-tung, n. 10, p. 428.

15 Mao Tse-tung, Military Writings (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1963), p. 78.

any obstacle. Therefore he stresses that in a war people are more important than weapons.

The theory...that 'weapons decide everything' ...constitutes a mechanical and one-sided view, our view is opposed to this...weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people not things that are decisive. The contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale. 16

Peking argues further that machines and more specifically weapons, must obviously be operated by men. If, however, the vast majority of the population refuses to co-operate, refuses to become policemen and soldiers, and man the weapons turned against the revolution, then the ruling classes cannot long maintain themselves in power and in spite of their vast superiority in weapons, they will ultimately go down to defeat at the hands of the revolutionaries. Hence in the final analysis "the spiritual atom bomb" will actually prove to be the most influential one.

However highly developed modern weapons and technical equipment may be and however complicated the methods of modern warfare... the outcome of the war will be decided by the sustained fighting of the ground forces, by the fighting at close quarters on the

battlefields, by the political consciousness of men, by their courage and spirit of sacrifice possessed by the revolutionary people. The spiritual atom bomb which the revolutionary people possess is a far more powerful and useful weapon than the physical atom bomb. 17

The most lucid example of the Chinese revolutionary model was put forward by Lin Piao in his article on "Long Live the Victory of People's War" published on 3 September 1965. Written to commemorate the twenty-third anniversary of the victory of the war against Japan, the essay analysed the strategy (People's War) that enabled the Chinese to defeat the Japanese and commented on its contemporary relevance.

Today the U.S. imperialists are repeating on a world-wide scale the past actions of the Japanese imperialists in China and other parts of Asia. It has become an urgent necessity for the people in many countries to master and use people's war as a weapon against US imperialism and its lackeys. In every conceivable way US imperialism and its lackeys are trying to extinguish the revolutionary flames of people's war. The Khrushchev revisionists, fearing people's war like the plague, are colluding to prevent and sabotage people's war. In these circumstances it is of vital importance to review the historical experience of the great victory of the people's war in China and to recapitulate comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory of people's war. 18

17 Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War", Peking Review, vol. 8, no. 36, 3 September 1965, pp. 26-27.

18 Ibid., p. 10

After stating Mao's contribution to the under-developed world,¹⁹ Lin Piao states Mao's strategy of people's war as comprising of six elements.

(1) Leadership by a revolutionary Communist Party which will properly apply Marxism-Leninism in analysing the class character of a colonial or semi-colonial country and which can formulate correct policy to wage a protracted war against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.²⁰

(2) Correct utilization of the united front policy to build the "broadest possible" national united front to "ensure the fullest mobilization of the basic masses as well as the unity of all the forces that can be united", in an effort to take over the leadership of the national revolution and establish the revolution on an alliance of first, the workers and peasants, and second, an alliance of the working peoples with the bourgeoisie and other non-working people.²¹

(3) Reliance on the peasantry and the establishment of rural bases, because in agrarian and "semi-feudal" societies the peasants are the great majority of the population, "subjected to three-fold oppression and exploitation by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, they will provide most of the human and material sources for the

19 Ibid., p. 24.

20 Ibid., pp. 10-12.

21 Ibid., pp. 12-14.

revolution. In essence the revolution is a peasant revolution led by the Communist Party "to rely on the peasants, build rural base areas and use the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities - such was the way to victory in the Chinese revolution".²²

(4) Creation of a Communist Party-led army of a new type, for a universal 'truth of Marxism-Leninism' is that "without a people's army the people are nothing". A new type of Communist Party led army in which politics is the commander must be formed, one which focuses on instilling in the minds of the population a "proletarian revolutionary consciousness and courage" and which actively seeks the "support and backing of the masses".²³

(5) Use of strategy and tactics of people's war as interpreted by Mao Tse-tung in a protracted armed struggle to annihilate the enemy to take over state power based on the support of a mobilized mass and the use of guerrilla warfare and ultimately mobile and even positional warfare as the revolution progresses.²⁴

(6) Adherence to a policy of self-reliance, because "revolution or people's war in any country is the business of the

22 Ibid., pp. 14-16.

23 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

24 Ibid., pp. 17-19.

masses in that country and should be carried out primarily by their own efforts, there is no other way".²⁵

China's whole theory of "people's war" then was formulated to serve as a "spiritual atom bomb", not only for its own masses but also as far as other countries were concerned, especially as Peking was unable to give the required amount of material aid to the underdeveloped countries and even more reluctant to directly confront US imperialism (hence the stress on self-reliance). The only way Peking could achieve her objective of maintaining national security (especially with regard to the Indochinese states) was to provide moral support and sympathy to the revolutionary countries.

Lin Piao's article provides a good example of the Maoist line, "of course every revolution in a country stems from the demands of its own people. Only when the people in a country are awakened, mobilized, organized and armed can they overthrow the reactionary rule of imperialism and its lackeys; through struggle, their role cannot be taken over by any people from outside. In this sense revolution cannot be imported. But this does not exclude mutual sympathy and support on the part of the revolutionary people in their struggle against the imperialists and their lackeys. Our support and aid to other revolutionary peoples serves

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 19-22.

precisely to help their self-reliant struggles".²⁶

Chalmers Johnson, in his article on "Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict" also states that ultimately the success or failure of a revolution hinges on the movement's success in winning popular support,²⁷ and China (or any other foreign power) is relatively limited in its capacity to help a revolution win popular support - in fact too great an involvement in the local effort, by Peking or even local Chinese tend to diminish the nationalist appeal of the revolutionary movement and ultimately weaken rather than strengthen it.²⁸

The primary concern of Chinese foreign policy then was not with helping bring foreign Communist parties to power or seeing the Chinese revolutionary model replicated in the developing world, but ^{her own} preservation as a nation (as far as South East Asia was concerned) with minimum risks involved, and on a world-wide scale a desire to win adherents to the Chinese programme of radical change in the international system.

In this regard the most important factor determining Chinese policy towards any individual country was not the objective class character of the society in question, or the

26 Ibid., p. 28.

27 Chalmers Johnson, "Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict", World Politics, vol. 14, no. 4, July 1962, pp. 646-61.

28 Peter Van Ness, n. 12, p. 167.

proclaimed ideology of the party in power, but the foreign policy being pursued by the country's government. "Those who supported radical change and establishment of new relationships among states, beneficial to China were Peking's friends, those who opposed these changes, even if they were Communists were China's enemies."²⁹

II

Cambodia like the rest of South East Asia had long been a region of instability. Strange though this might have sounded in the sixties when Sihanouk had masterfully papered over the fissiparous factors of discontent in Cambodia, and proudly proclaimed it to be a "haven of peace" in the midst of the tumultuous Indochina war, the fact remains that resistance to governmental authority was not new to Cambodia. Revolts of various hues had broken out time and again.³⁰ This kind of resistance continued to exist and was apparent in one form or another right from the inception of Sihanouk's rule in 1941 till the establishment of the Communist regime in 1975.

The major part of Sihanouk's rule which began in 1941 was under French colonial rule. Whatever authority he

²⁹ Ibid., p. 192; Michael Uskenberg, "China Forcing the Revolution to a New Stage", Asian Survey, vol. 7, no. 1, January 1967, pp. 2-3.

³⁰ Osborne, n. 4, pp. 10-11.

possessed could only be exercised within the constraints imposed by the French masters.³¹ More or less a figurehead, Prince Sihanouk represented a subject relationship for his kingdom for a number of years.

The cosmological aspect of kingship was important in Cambodia.³² In such a state which had sustained the impact of Indianization, so that its courts and administrations drew upon the Indian models for guidance, the king became a semi-divine being. But it was always the office, rather than the man who held it, which was of utmost importance. Hence, during his reign it was this concept of semi-divinity which was responsible for Sihanouk's popularity with the masses.

The Cambodian political elite, however, many of whom had been educated in France were not only personally ambitious and factions, but also sufficiently secularized not to be in awe of the myth of semi-divinity, which served to legitimate the form of royal authority in the countryside. The traditional reverence for Cambodian monarchy, which the French had sought to sustain for their own political purpose,

31 Roger Smith, Cambodia's Foreign Policy (New York, Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 29-30.

32 Milton Osborne, "History of ^{and} Kingship in Contemporary Cambodia", Journal of South East Asian History (Singapore), vol. 7, no. 1, March 1966.

had limited relevance for the small educated class who saw the king as a tool in the hands of the French colonial rulers; an obstacle to constitutional advance and personal gains.³³

The first wave of resistance to Sihanouk's rule, then, was presented by the Khmer Issarak (Serai) consisting of young intellectuals high school students, Buddhists monks and government officials. The leader Son Ngoc Thanh, a French-educated intellectual, who was fervently anti-French from the 1930s had been a protege of the Japanese during the war, and for a few months after August 1945 became the Prime Minister until the return of the French when he was arrested.³⁴ After the resumption of French control at the end of 1945, a number of Thanh's followers fled to the north west and kept up a resistance, others joined the Democratic Party which attracted strong support especially among junior officials, school teachers, the semi-educated and a section of the monks.³⁵

The Thai Government sought to use the Issarak who had fled to the north-west, to regain control or influence over the western provinces of Cambodia. (The western provinces

33 Michael Leifer, "The Failure of Political Institutionalization in Cambodia", Modern Asian Studies, vol. 2, no. 2, 1968, p. 126.

34 Michael Leifer, Cambodia: The Search for Security (London, Pall Mall Press, 1967), pp. 26-27.

35 Ibid., p. 32.

of Battambang, Angkor, Mongkol-Borei and Sisophon were annexed by the Thai monarchy from the late eighteenth century till 1907 when they were ceded to French protected Cambodia. Most of this area was regained by Thailand during World War II and reacquired by Cambodia on French insistence in 1946).³⁶

By 1948, however, as a result of the change of regime in Bangkok, the Issaraks became "authentically Khmer".³⁷ In the same year the Vietminh extended operations against the French into Cambodia. Under the slogan of nationalism and anti-colonialism, the Vietminh helped and encouraged organization of Buddhist monks, ethnic minorities as well as a number of Issaraks under a Vietminh political commissar Nguyen Thanh Son.³⁸ A three-pronged plan was developed; militarily it aimed at cutting lines of communication and destroying French economic and financial resources in Cambodia; organizationally at setting up 'liberated areas' in western and southern Cambodia, politically, to establish close links with the Issaraks which would lead to the formation of a "government of national resistance". Therefore, during the first Indochina war while the Vietminh was the main military

36 Roger Smith, n. 31, pp. 140-52.

37 Malcolm Caldwell and Lek Tan, Cambodia in the South East Asian War (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 41.

38 Ibid.

threat to Prince Sihanouk and the French army, it was the Issarak who posed the gravest political danger to the prince.

In April 1950 the Issarak front organized a "Conference of People's Representatives" attended by 200 delegates, half of whom were said to be monks.³⁹ This conference set up a "central committee for liberation" which subsequently became the Issarak "Government of National Resistance". The conference also created a "National United Front" under the leadership of Son Ngoc Minh.⁴⁰

In March 1951 another conference was held of representatives of the Khmer National United Front, the Vietminh and the Pathet Lao. It was decided to set up a joint National United Front for Indochina. One of the resolutions passed was that the basic task of the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian revolutionaries was to drive out the French aggressors and the American interventionists so as to achieve the genuine independence of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.⁴¹

In 1952 Son Ngoc Thanh made a triumphant return from exile in France and received a tumultuous welcome when he went on speaking tours in the provinces. Apart from this he got

39 Wilfred Burchett, Mekong Upstream (Berlin, Seven Seas, 1959), p. 89.

40 Caldwell, n. 37, p. 44.

41 Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (California, Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 262.

the backing of the ministers of the day and the support of the Democrats.⁴² It was to pre-empt the nationalist appeal of the Democratic Party and Son Ngoc Thanh on the one hand and of the revolutionary Issaraks allied to the Vietminh on the other hand that prince Sihanouk staged his dramatic "crusade for independence".

Sihanouk pointed out to the French, that the Issaraks and the Vietminh had an increasing prospect of attracting popular support as long as they could claim to fight for liberation and independence. Only by providing Cambodia with real independence could the problems of security be tackled. The people felt they were being asked to support the continuation of French control, it was no wonder they found the Issaraks and Vietminh an attractive alternative.⁴³

After Cambodia gained independence in 1953, the Issaraks, apart from Son Ngoc Thanh, who fled to Thailand, submitted to Sihanouk, who now came to dominate the political scene. In 1955 he (Sihanouk) abdicated to form the Sangkum keaster Niyum - "a mass organization cutting across party lines and founded on coincident loyalty to the nation and to the ex-King."⁴⁴ This organization under the leadership

42 Caldwell and Tan, n. 37, pp. 47-48.

43 Leifer, n. 34, p. 44.

44 Leifer, n. 33, p. 127.

of Sihanouk, enjoyed overwhelming success in the national elections held in September 1955. The personal magnetism of the former king and his ability to employ the resources of the state proved more than sufficient to counter the attraction of the more conventional political parties.

Now Left-wing opposition took concrete form in the Pracheachon (People's) party formed by the revolutionary Issarak, and the Vietminh active in Cambodia.⁴⁵ It sought without success (the reason according to J.L.S. Girling being official obstruction),⁴⁶ to contest the 1955 elections. Burchett points out that the Pracheachon "was in fact the Cambodian Communist Party, formed after the Indochinese Communist Party was dissolved in 1951. But the problem it faced was to reconcile support for Sihanouk's policy of independence and neutrality with the historic task of defending the interests of the Cambodian workers". Their dilemma became all the more acute as Sihanouk waged a stubborn struggle against imperialism "since support for this was regarded as the most important task".⁴⁷ After the formation of Sihanouk's Sangkum, the Pracheachon virtually went underground.

45 Ibid., p. 133.

46 J.L.S. Girling, "The Resistance in Cambodia", Asian Survey, vol. 12, no. 7, July 1972, p. 554.

47 Wilfred Burchett, The Second Indochina War: Cambodia and Laos (New York, International Publishers, 1970), pp. 51-53.

By 1966 Sihanouk found himself caught between two cross-currents in the Sangkum. The left who criticized him for his failure to pursue, except verbally a radical, social and economic programme and the Right who were frustrated by Sihanouk's renunciation of US military and economic aid in 1963 and his refusal to open the country to Western investments.⁴⁸ To add to all this peasant rebellions broke out in Battambang and Rattanakiri provinces in 1967-68, partly as a result of the Government's economic policy and partly on account of the high-handed manner in which the Cambodian officials had been dealing with these peasants.

It was against this backdrop that Sihanouk was ousted in March 1970 while away at France, by the disaffected and disgruntled Lon Nol-Sirik Matak clique who then went on to invite US air raids and South Vietnamese troops to clear out Vietnamese sanctuaries. Prevented from returning to his own country, Sihanouk remained in Peking and joined hands with the North Vietnamese and the Khmer Communists, who having remained underground all these years now became resurgent.

On 27 March 1970 the former Head of State, Prince Sihanouk declared the formation of the Royal Government of National Union, the National United Front of Kampuchea and the National Liberation Army, stating that these belong to the

48 Leifer, n. 33, p. 135.

progressive and anti-imperialist Cambodian people who constitute the majority of the Khmer nation. These establishments he went on to state were the basis for organizing national resistance in any country to US imperialism and to the oppression of the Khmer people and the life of the Khmer nation by the pro-imperialist fascist reactionaries.⁴⁹

It was just a question of time before the Cambodian peasants began to fill the ranks of these establishments, what with the bombing of villages by US air strikes and the ruthless treatment meted out to them by the invading South Vietnamese troops.

Speaking as early as 1950s, Yem Sambaur (who ironically enough, later joined Lon Nol) might well have been speaking of the Cambodian situation in the 1970s:

The best way to convert a villager to communism is to burn his house down and kill one or more members of his family. In this way you abolished a man's inducement to lead a quiet, respectable existence. When you cut the bonds that held a man to the existing order, he naturally became a bandit, and if you could persuade him that the Communists would fight his enemies more ruthlessly than the others, well he would be a Communist too....But then, of course, the transition to Communism is less difficult for an Asiatic, even for members of upper classes. Perhaps we have less to lose. In any case the prospect does not alarm us. 50

49 Caldwell and Tan, n. 37, pp. 286-7.

50 W. Lewis, A Dragon Apparent (London, 1961), p. 208.

In conclusion, one could state that the emergence of communism in Cambodia and its resounding victory against the superior arms of the US was essentially an internal problem. Writing in the broader perspective of South East Asia, Milton Osborne stated: "Leadership on the right, basically concerned with the preservation of privilege has never been hard to find in South East Asia....Leadership genuinely concerned with the needs of the people is a scarcer commodity."⁵¹ It is for this reason he says that -

leadership of the sort which Communists provide has a very real chance of effecting fundamental change....Adherence to Communism has not only led to the development of organizational skills, it has brought the emergence of men whose dedication to the success of their political programmes has been of a remarkable sort. 52

He goes on to say:

Challenge does not come merely because of the existence of social inequities or political discrimination. Challenge to existing systems emerges when through leadership and the provision of an alternative ideology a substantial proportion of the population comes to perceive the inequities of their position and the disadvantages under which they live their lives. 53

Further,

external prescriptions may take account of an infinite number of variables in their attempt

51 Milton Osborne, n. 4, pp. 145-7.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

to prevent or suppress revolts, yet no external force can replace the dedication which must be found internally if these prescriptions are to be carried through to fruition. The converse is equally important. The fantasy of revolts and revolutions conjured up from afar by hostile external forces has just as little reality. Whether revolts succeed or fail will not be determined by Peking or Washington or Moscow. The material support which may come from these centres will be important as will the ideologies which are espoused in them. But the ultimate determinants will be found in the countries of South East Asia; in the policies which are formulated by South East Asians and the extent to which South East Asian leaders are able to show that their concern is for change which is genuinely related to the aspirations and interests of the mass of the population.... 54

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

According to one writer, the politics (both internal and external) of modern China may be described as ^{that} one of "Cultural despair".¹ This could perhaps be more clearly understood if one viewed the traditional background of Communist China.

The Chinese traditional world order saw China as the natural centre of the East Asian world - Tien Hsia "all under heaven" presided over by Tien Tzu, the "son of heaven". Chinese influence over these East Asian States has been described as lying in concentric circles.²

Zone 1: Contained the eighteen provinces; the traditional territories under China's complete control throughout its history, and was the "core" of China, covering about 40 per cent of modern China.

zone 2: Covered the remaining 60 per cent of modern China, including Tibet, Sinkiang, outer Mongolia, the offshore islands and many tributary states such as Korea and Annam.

1 I.L. Ojha, Chinese Foreign Policy in an Age of Transition: The Diplomacy of Cultural Despair (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 3-9.

2 Norton Ginsburg, "On the Chinese Perception of a World Order", in Tang Tsou, ed., China in Crisis (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 76.

The Chinese regarded Zone 1 and Zone 2 as their vital interest areas.

Zone 3: Covered most tributary states along the Chinese border, such as Ryukyu Islands, Burma, Cambodia and Laos, the Himalayan states, Malaya, part of Borneo and for brief periods Japan. While all these states were regarded as within China's sphere of interest they were not as vitally important as the first two, and China seldom intervened in their domestic affairs.

Zone 4: This was "the great beyond" - a largely undifferentiated area in Chinese eyes.³

Until the mid nineteenth century China's leaders practiced selective isolationism based on the premise that the Chinese empire had little to gain from the outside world. International contacts were aimed mainly at the export of culture. Territorial conquest was generally limited to frontier wars or to defence measures. Non-Chinese peoples of the various zones were expected to pay tribute to Confucian virtues and to the civilization which upheld them. Completely lacking was any notion of equality among nations.

And so China lived up to the mid-nineteenth century in smug self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency and

3 Ibid., pp. 73-91.

splendid isolation. True there were invasions from the north (for many centuries the sea frontier did not count, no enemy came that way). Tribes from the north made a partial conquest of the northern provinces of China in the 4th century A.D. and again in the 12th century A.D. Twice they conquered all China, the Mongol conquest in the 13th century and the Manchu conquest in the 17th century. Many times there were destructive invasions only repelled after long wars.⁴

While the Chinese system of "syncretism" (the inclusion of alien ideas and institutions without the loss of identity) helped to absorb invaders like the Manchus, this process failed to work with regard to the Anglo-Saxon challenge of the mid-nineteenth century, for these people came to China with superior technological knowledge and a firm belief in the superiority of their own civilization.

When two "Middle Kingdoms" clash it is the defeated one which has to bow. Not only did China bow but was sliced up like a melon into various spheres of influence by the Western powers that now bore down on her. Threatened by the rifles and gunboats of Western countries, China was forced to sign many "unequal treaties".⁵ According to these treaties

4 C.P. Fitzgerald, "The Chinese View of Foreign Relations", The World Today, vol. 26, no. 5, January 1963, p. 9.

5 William L. Tung, China and the Foreign Powers: The Impact of and Reaction to Unequal Treaties (New York, Oceana Publications, 1970), pp. 19-29.

China agreed to indemnify such countries as Great Britain, France and Japan for a large amount of money and to open almost all important Chinese ports to these countries.

Furthermore, the spheres of interest of these countries were expanded to include other areas in China, example France took control of Kwangchow Bay, Britain of Weihaiwei and the Yantze river area. Russia took control of Port Arthur and Japan of Taiwan and Penghu (Pescadores).⁶ Within their spheres of interest these countries had complete jurisdiction. They were free to build railways and military bases and to exploit natural resources. During this period China also lost most of its tributary states. Britain took control of Burma, France of Indochina and Japan took control of Manchuria and Korea.⁷

The Chinese response to this onslaught met with one failure after another. A rash of movements erupted which aimed at modernizing China in certain aspects while retaining the traditional base.⁸ For example, the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1860s whose major aim was military equality

6 Ibid.

7 Leo Yueh-Yun Liu, China as a Nuclear Power in World Politics (Great Britain, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972), p. 14.

8 For the traditionalists "to yield to the end of confucianism was no alternative to extinction but extinction itself". Mary C. Wright, The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism, quoted in *Ojha*, n. 1, p. 9.

with the industrialized states. Social and political reforms which generate the kind of power needed to confront Western nations were neglected. At this stage the Chinese did not understand that they could not superimpose modern power upon traditional societies. Confucianism, a bulwark of the old society became an obstacle to change.

By the end of the nineteenth century it began to dawn on the Chinese that a drastic change was needed. Not only did they continue to suffer losses at the hands of the West but they swallowed their biggest humiliation when defeated by Japan in 1895. During a short period of 27 years Japan had not only accepted the Western state system but had also modernized her entire economic and military power base. No Chinese could possibly continue to uphold the superiority of Confucianism after such a humiliating defeat at the hands of one of the ex-members of the Chinese world order.

The transition from culturism to nationalism then, was symbolized by the May 4th Movement of 1919. The Chinese intellectuals realized that to answer the West it was necessary to borrow from the West. Survival of the Chinese nation was the most important task of the day. The end of Confucianism no longer meant extinction. "Science and Democracy" (to be borrowed from the West) became the slogan of the day.

Despite this change in the attitude of the Chinese, the fact remains that recognition of China's weakness and

cultural irrelevance was agonizing. For a country that had wallowed in smug self-satisfaction over its cultural superiority for centuries, to realize that it was "poor" and "blank" in the face of the Western onslaught was a traumatic experience. It is this trauma that is referred to by Ojha as "cultural despair" which according to him left a profound mark on China's foreign policy and may take centuries to heal.⁹

The Communist regime which came to power in 1949 realized that if China was to "stand up" again, what was required was the total tearing down of the Confucian cultural fabric and the creation of a new society, a new Chinese man. It was at this critical stage (1950s) when the Communists were grappling with the problem of unifying the country that China became involved in the Korean war, out of fear that the US troops in South Korea would cross the Yalu and threaten Manchuria, an important area for the Chinese on account of its heavy industrialization.¹⁰

At about the same time the US gave its clarion call for the "containment of communism".¹¹ Fearing the French pull-out from Indochina would create a "power vacuum" that

9 Ibid., pp. 3-9.

10 Harold Hinton, Communist China in World Politics (London, Macmillan Press, 1966), pp. 109, 295.

11 Townsend Hoopes, "Legacy of the Cold War in Indochina", Foreign Affairs, vol. 48, no. 4, July 1970, p. 604.

would automatically be filled up by China on account of her ideological desire to spread communism; that the South East Asian states were militarily too weak and politically too unstable and unintegrated to resist, and that not only would South East Asian states fall one after another like dominoes, but that China would then aim to expand her influence across the Pacific to the America's, the US called for a collective security pact, against China. This ultimately resulted in the formation of SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization). The US did not stop here. It went further by establishing air bases in Thailand and Japan (Okinawa) and giving all out support to the nationalists, driven out by the Communists from Mainland China to Taiwan.

For a country which had hardly got over the experience of being carved like fish and meat by the European carving knife, this US build-up not only created a feeling of claustrophobia in Chinese minds, but presented a very real threat to the security of the Mainland. The Chinese concluded that the gunboat diplomacy still lived on. They became nervous of the possibility that, as so often during the heyday of imperialism, a strong foreign power might entrench itself on China's border and proceed to project a preponderant influence into the nearest region of China proper.¹²

12 Hinton, n. 10, p. 395.

It should be remembered that China's frontier regions, apart from Manchuria are in general sparsely populated by restless minorities; backward and poorly connected with the rest of the country. China had not forgotten how Britain and France had occupied Burma and Indochina respectively, essentially because it seemed to offer better access to South West China. Consequently it was with all these considerations in mind that Mao Tse-tung had declared that China would "lean to one side" - towards the Soviet Union.

To turn to China's objectives in South East Asia, various writers have interpreted China's foreign policy objectives as stemming from various sources; (1) Ideology, (2) National security, (3) Desire to re-establish the traditional Middle Kingdom position, (4) Search for Great Power status.

However, whatever China's objectives might be elsewhere (Africa, Latin America etc.) in South East Asia it was essentially maintenance of national security or rather preservation of China as a nation.¹³

Geared to achieve this objective, China's policy in South East Asia is informed by ideology to a certain

13 Ross Terrill, "China's Aims in South East Asia", in Ian Wilson, ed., China and the World Community (Australia, Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1973), pp. 214-15.

extent.¹⁴ Examine for instance Mao's proclamation of the concepts of contradictions, united front, protracted warfare, paper tiger and self-reliance.

(1) Conflict in societies and between nations derives in Mao's view from inherent contradictions involving contending political, economic and social forces within societies. Such conflicts 'broaden and sharpen to the point where external intervention by imperialism invariably occurs at the behest of "reactionary" rulers - thus transforming a revolutionary civil war into a local war.¹⁵ Unremitting struggle is of central importance in such a situation. Since in this case a relationship of "oppressed" to "oppressor" exists, there is a demand for a sympathetic and supporting attitude by China and other genuinely socialist nations towards a revolutionary ally; the people.

(2) Mao's concept of protracted warfare holds out to the revolutionaries the assurance that a long drawn out, armed struggle fought by the people can gradually wear down even the most powerful enemy.

(3) The concept of united front calls for a tripartite united front including the Communist Party in the vanguard,

14 Melvin Gurtov, China and South East Asia : The Politics of Survival (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 159-63.

15 "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism - Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU" (4), Peking Review, vol. 6, no. 43, 25 October 1963, p. 7.

a Red Army to win military objectives and a temporary alliance of "all those classes that are capable of being united."¹⁶

On the international level, this concept was adopted by China (in the sixties) in the sense that she was prepared to form a united front against imperialism with a regime of any complexion.

(4) The paper tiger theory was loudly proclaimed to provide revolutionaries with moral atom bombs by stating that US imperialism was nothing but a 'paper tiger' which would soon be in the throes of a death-bed struggle.

(5) Self-reliance was also stressed upon. Mao categorically stated that "revolution was not for export"; that outside forces could not be a decisive force in a revolution. In other words, China while urging revolutionaries to struggle against US imperialism in South East Asia, made it quite clear that she was not prepared to fight anyone else's wars not after the Korean experience.

While adopting a policy of minimum risks therefore, China sought to achieve her objectives in a number of ways. A low level relationship with the dissidents in South East

16 For a detailed exposition of the United Front see Lyman P. Vanslyke, Enemies and Friends: The United Front in China's Communist History (California, Stanford University Press, 1967); A.M. Halpern, "The Influence of the Revolutionary Experience on Communist China's Foreign Outlook", in Werner Klatt, ed., The Chinese Model: A Political, Economic and Social Survey (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1965), pp. 144-5.

Asian states was retained. So long as a government avoided a provocative relationship with China's enemies, China pledged no subversive co-ordination with anti-regime elements, including overseas Chinese.¹⁷ Contacts with the dissidents were maintained not so much to ferment revolution but to use as a lever against unfriendly governments and to keep them in a state of tension.¹⁸ As far as friendly, anti-imperialist governments were concerned, support was given, regardless of the ideological complexion of the government.¹⁹

Aid and trade as well as friendship and border treaties, were also instruments of state policy towards co-operative governments in the first two cases to reward compliant behaviour and in the second to perpetuate it.²⁰

China's foreign policy thrust in South East Asia was initially aimed at US imperialism. However, with the increasing intensity of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the 1960s

17 Stephen Fitzgerald, "^{China}India and the Overseas Chinese: Perceptions and Policies", China Quarterly, vol. 11, no. 44, October-December 1970, pp. 1-37.

18 Ross Terrill, n. 13, p. 215; Melvin Gurtov, n. 14, pp. 22, 116.

19 Gurtov, n. 14, p. 168.

20 Ibid., p. 165.

resulting in armed clashes along the Ussuri river and amassing of Soviet troops along China's northern borders in 1969, not only did China move towards detente with the US in the early 1970s, but now turned her vitriolic attacks more and more towards the Soviet Union. In fact China now came to regard US presence in South East Asia a blessing in disguise, as it served to balance the growing Soviet and Japanese influence in South East Asia.²¹

By and large, then, China's objectives in South East Asia could be stated as promotion of "friendly", "non-hostile" states. China's concern seems to be highest when, especially on the South East Asian mainland, hostile armed power or political influence establish footholds that enable them to threaten China's security and disturb the balance of forces in nearby countries.

Further, China seems to want countries to recognize her legitimacy and support or at least not oppose her policy positions of international consequence. Peking has not insisted on total conformity, to judge from the Cambodian study, deviant behaviour is tolerated so long as it does not become dominant or continuous.

21 One major Soviet interest in South East Asia lay in limiting China's growing influence in this region. Robert C. Horn, "The Soviet Perspective", in S. Chawla, M. Gurtov, Alain Gerard Marsot, eds., South East Asia Under the New Balance of Power (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 30-47.

In seeking to encourage the nations of South East Asia to adopt policies that are not hostile to her, Communist China apparently has the objective that they reject provocative, antagonistic associations with other countries or organizations that China opposes, especially, although these nations might accept aid from and maintain other political and economic relations with the US and Soviet Union, they should not permit the establishment of "foreign" (i.e. US or Soviet Union) bases on their soil, not join (or be active in) military alliances that are or may be directed against China, not afford China's enemies privileged diplomatic or economic positions.

Taking these objectives into consideration one feels that it is not helpful to see China's policies in South East Asia simply as a part of her Third World policies generally; the national security factor does not arise in Africa and Latin America and ideological motives may therefore have freer reign.

The shifts in China's ideological positions show how the exigencies of defending China against American encirclement, rivalry with the Soviet Union and the "ideological fall out" from the Chinese domestic experience, all find a certain joint focus. Thus the increased stress on national liberation struggles and the resistance to imperialism by the people;

the de-emphasis of the monolithic nature of the socialist camp (so often stated by China during the "lean to one side" period) are not only ideological changes but means by which China increases her relative power and prestige vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and copes with the need to defend herself against the US in the absence of a Russian will to help her to do so."²²

As far as the concept of South East Asia being a "power vacuum" was concerned, this seems to have been disproved by the adeptness of these governments at following a policy of accommodation to whichever major power these states thought would be most useful in helping them achieve their objectives. Further, what really threatened the national security of these states was internal dissidence, resulting from insufficiency of administrative contact between the government centre and outlying areas, an attitude of superiority on the part of the government officials towards rural peoples, local cultures and parochial loyalties of tribal and ethnic minorities, and of the economic grievances.

In conclusion, one might state that even though China has not exercised any expansionist thrust, her

²² Terrill, n. 13, p. 215.

psychological and political influence and her capacity to assist indigenous rebellions will always remain an influential factor in the formulation of the foreign policies of South East Asian states.

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