Cambodia and Afghanistan: A Comparative Study of United States Regional Conflict Management Strategies In Asia

By

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1. Introduction: The Principles of U.S. Policy in Asia

Postwar (World War II) American foreign policy in Asia has been guided by the geographical division of the continent into three major regions: (1) Northeast Asia comprising China, the Korean Peninsula (North and South Korea) and Japan, (2) Southeast Asia comprising the six Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Brunei), the three Indochina states of Vietnam (pre-1975: North and South Vietnam), Laos, and Cambodia, together with the tenth state of Burma (Myanmar), and (3) South Asia comprising India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. This geographical perspective necessarily imposes certain fundamental constraints on U.S. approaches to the region even if it enables the formulation of a more coherent sub-regional policy to deal with crises and contingencies. The diverse political, economic, social, demographic, and cul-

tural characteristics of the Asian continent present serious problems of understanding for the scholar and statesman alike. The formulation of principles, policies, and strategies is compounded by the multiplicity of cultures, perspectives, problems, as well as approaches to problem solving. The principles which constitute the very foundation of American foreign policy may be stated as follows: (1) sovereign independence, anti-colonialism, and rejection of European-style 19th century power politics, (2) freedom of international trade and navigation, (3) self-determination of peoples, (4) egalitarianism and free enterprise, (5) support for democratic regimes and human rights, and (6) non-intervention.[1]

While principles provide a guide to conduct, the principles themselves become increasingly articulated in terms of conduct that can be sustained by reality.[2] In this context, the application of American principles, power, and policies to theAsian continent has been marked by both success and failure. This paper attempts only to examine the security dimensions of American policy in Asia with specfic focus on two regional conflict scenarios: Cambodia and Afghanistan. It aims to identify the lingkages that might well exist in U.S strategic approaches to the conflicts in Cambodia (since 1978), and Afghanistan (since 1979). It also attempts to identify and analyse: (a) the nature of U.S. security perceptions of the Asia-Pacific region before and after these two major developments, (b) the pattern of response in accordance with the basic premises of the Nixon Doctrine of 1969, (c) the continuties and discontinuities in American policy in Asia since the fall of Saigon in 1975,(d) the impact of Cambodia and Afghanistan on the character of Soviet-American interaction in Asia in the 1980s until the end of the Cold War, and finally, (e) the impact of these two crisis situations on specific U.S. policy outflows toward ASEAN in particular, and towards a broader framework of regionalism such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) in general. The essay concludes with some observations on the similarities and differences in America's strategic approach to regional conflict management in Asia.

1. K.S. Nathan, "Current U.S. Policy in Asia: Principles, Problems, and Performance", *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, Fourth Quarter 1990, p. 321.

2. Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy", in Robert A. Goldwin (ed). *Readings in American Foreign Policy*, 2nd Edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 643.

2. *U.S. Strategic Perceptions of Asia*

Postwar American policy towards Asia has been singularly marked by the formulation of strategies in regional conflict management. Conflict management as a strategy of U.S. foreign policy was itself a product of ideology. As Richard J. Barnet notes, "America has always tried to explain its relations to the rest of the world in terms of ideological principles which transcend parochial economic or military interests"[3]. Survival strategies and the protection of American global and regional interests reflected the nature of the ongoing Cold War between two ideological world centres: the world of capitalism and democracy led by the U.S., and the world of communism and dictatorship led initially by the Soviet Union, and later competitively by China as well. The ideological foundation of national and regional security defined the framework for the formulation of specific strategies of national, regional, and global survival. Indeed, America's strategic approach to specific conflict situations rested on a broader framework of assumptions befitting its global status: (1) the United States has global responsibilities and obligations, (2) it stands as a guardian of freedom and morality on the international stage, (3) the future of the world depends on its willingness and readiness to act abroad for the good of the world, and (4) the United States is to be the world's leader, a position which it readily accepts. This character of globalism seems to be deeply ingrained as a cornerstone of American foreign policy.[4]

The salience of the ideological dimension of U.S national security policy is evidenced by the nature of the American response to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a year later, in 1979. The Societ factor in both these developments left no alternative but a definitive and discernible response from the only other superpower, the United States. U.S. regional conflict management strategy involved the adoption of direct and indirect measures to contain the global influence of the Soviet Union at the regional level. Regional containment strategies against the adversary were

3. Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution: America's Confrontation with Insurgent Movements Around the World,* New York, The World Publishing Company, 1968, p. 78.

4. Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process, New York*, St Martin's Press, 1987, pp. 40-42.

tantamount to cumulative global containment of international communism. In Indochina, the post-1978 Cambodian conflict presented a direct security threat to America's role as a regional power in the Asia-Pacific region, as the conflict provided strategic opportunities that were hitherto non-existent for the expansion of Soviet power and influence in Southeast Asia. The U.S viewed the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance of November 1978 as a calculated communist strategy to reduce the traditional influence and military presence of the United States in Southeast Asia. For the United States, the outbreak of the Cambodian conflict reinforced traditional security perceptions that peace and stability in the region could only be maintained through American security initiatives taken directly or in cooperation with its Asian allies. The Reagan Administration tended to view American commitments in Southest Asia primarily in terms of global strategic moves against a Soviet Union that was perceived by Washington to be prone to taking new military risks.[5]

In South Asia, U.S. security perceptions of the Afghan conflict reflected similar concerns. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent stationing of forces in that country could alter the regional balance of power in favour of Moscow and New Delhi, and to the detriment of Washington and Islamabad. In sum, the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts were viewed by Washington as potential springboards for hostile powers to further undermine the Pax Americana in Asia following the Vietnam debacle between 1965 and 1975.

3. The Nixon Doctrine as Basis of U.S. Response

Crisis management as a foreign policy strategy is invariably strongly informed by available resources—military strength, economic and financial power, as well as political support and diplomatic skill. America's Vietnam experience had drained the nation of available national resources for future high profile unilateral involvement in regional conflict situations. The doctrine of self-reliance and burden sharing underscores the new American approach to conflict management. The primary responsibility for defence has to be borne by local or regional actors with growing national strength and defence capabilities, while

5. Leszek Buszynski, "The Soviet Union in Southeast Asia: Motives,Limits,and Opportunities", *Contemporary Southeast Asia,* Vol. 4, No. 3, December 1982, p. 289.

the American security contribution would take the form of an overarching guarantee of regional security for friends and allies. Fundamental changes in international relations such as movements toward detente at the global and regional level constitute an integral component of the new low-profile security doctrine.

The test-cases of post-Nixon Doctrine foreign policy in Asia are indeed the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts. In the case of Cambodia, the U.S. increasingly shifted the burden of confronting the Soviet-Vietnamese coalition to ASEAN and China in Pacific-Asia, while in South Asia, the direct involvement of Pakistan (a U.S.ally) was clearly evident. Support for presumably pro-American contending factions in civil conflicts is the keystone of the Nixonian management strategy. In Cambodia, the U.S funded, albeit in a relatively small way, the Non-Communist Resistance comprising the Sihanoukist and Son Sann forces, while the Soviet-Vietnamese coalition armed the Heng Samrin regime. Diplomatically, the U.S. virtually abandoned all initiatives to the ASEAN grouping whose profile as a regional actor rose in inverse proportion to that of the U.S in the Cambodian conflict. Likewise, in Afghanistan, the aim of U.S. strategy was to wear down Soviet-Afghan forces by arming the Mujahideen rebels and providing them with the necessary wherewithal to prolong the fighting and increase the cost to the enemy. The cost to the Soviet Union of keeping over 180,00 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia was about US$3 million a day,[6] while Moscow's Afghan adventure with a military presence of 105,000 troops cost the Soviet treasury a phenomenal US$15-20m million a day.[7]

Regional conflict managemant also means avoidance at all costs of direct confrontation with the other superpower. Nikita Khrushchev's Doctrine of Peaceful Coexistence (1956) was as meaningful and relevant to Soviet strategy as it was to American military doctrine. Short of nuclear war, all other options were open to superpower competition within the broader framework of the Brezhnev Doctrine, premised as it was on the strategy of offensive coexist-

6. Kishore Mahbubani, "The Kampuchean Problem: A Southeast Asian Perception", *Foreign Affairs*, No. 62208, Winter 1983/84, p. 419.

7. Noor A. Hussain, "Alternative Futures for Afghanistan", in Ralph H. Magnus (ed.), *Afghan Alternatives: Issues, Options, and Policies*", New Brunswick (USA), Transaction Books, 1985, p. 190.

ence. The pattern of U.S. response sharply underscored the relative increase in local capabilities for regional defence after nearly thirty years of American military, economic, and political pre-eminence in the non-communist world. The Nixon Doctrine clearly signalled the relative decline of American politico-economic power vis-a -vis its allies. The inevitable increase in local content stemmed partly from the unique character of American politics whereby domestic support for protracted unilateral adventures in distant lands had considerably eroded following the Vietnam fiasco. Additionally, U.S. conflict management doctrine in post-Vietnam Southeast Asia was informed by the level of actual conflict taking place on the ground. The Cambodian conflict fell within the definition of a "low-intensity conflict" which did not threaten vital national interests. As defined by Jordan and Taylor, "low-intensity conflict is the military recourse of nations and organizations to limited force or the threat of force to achieve political objectives without the full-scale commitment of resources and will that charcterizes nation-state wars of survival or conquest".[5]

4. *Continuities/Discontinuities in U.S Asian Policy since 1975*

The revival of the Cold War after Cambodia and Afghanistan, that is, the emergence of Cold War II since 1980 (until 1990) did not basically alter the premises of the Nixon Doctrine as applied to Asia. Both the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts were never able to seriously threaten U.S. interests in Asia. The U.S. was able to modify its postwar Containment policy to suit local or regional contingencies as long as the Cold War prevailed. It is arguable that the Cold War international system with its central ideological bifurcation facilitated the application of U.S. strategic doctrine to regional conflict situations. Operating from a much larger and more varied internal and external resource base, the U.S. could easily outmatch Soviet capacity for similar enterprises. The impact of Cambodia and Aghanistan on U.S. strategic doctrine was to reverse the process of decline in military capability in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Under the Reagan Administration, U.S. strategy "focused on a vigorous buildup of its Pacific fleet as part of a markedly offensive naval warfighting strategy

5. Amos A. Jordan and William J.Taylor (eds.), *American National Security: Policy and Process*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 270.

aimed at ensuring the containment of Soviet naval power at its source in the north Pacific".[9] The Reagan policy aimed at confronting Soviet power in the Asia-Pacific region through a powerful deployment and disposition of U.S.-Japanese strategic power, providing thus the broader framework for conflict management of specific regional issues.

The unidimensionality of Soviet power facilitated America's doctrinal basis of containment at the regional and global levels. Soviet cultural propaganda served little to enhance Moscow's military strategy in regional conflicts, whereas as the propagation of American culture hardly required official intervention or support. This apparent voluntary reception of American culture on a global scale underscored the multidimensionality of American power—a factor that has conduced significantly towards a more effective application of U.S. power and purpose to the arena of regional conflict management.

Nevertheless, the discontinuities in American policy in Asia have become more apparent with the demise of the Cold War. Firstly, the progressive reduction and retenchment of U.S. military forces in Asia since the Nixon Doctrine has been accelerated by developments in the Soviet Union, Indochina, and the Philippines. As the Moscow-Hanoi-Phnom Penh axis over Cambodia began to disintegrate under the impact of the Gorbachev Revolution since 1985, the United States gradually began taking a greater diplomatic and political interest in the Cambodian conflict. The impending Soviet political and economic collapse by the late 1980s was parallelled by declining Soviet support for Hanoi's military occupation of Cambodia and the continued Soviet presence in, and support for Najibullah in Afghanistan. This dramatic shift in Moscow's patronage of client regimes in Asia invariably influeced U.S. strategy towards the two conflicts. The U.S. began to increasingly multilateralise conflict management in Cambodia through the Perm-5 Approach, thus lending further diplomatic support to intermediaries such as France, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia. On the other hand, American policy towards ASEAN vis-a-vis the Cambodian conflict was itself affected by fundamental shifts in Soviet foreign policy, the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe which was part of the Soviet empire, the thaw in Sino-Soviet relations, rapprochement between China and

9. Amitav Acharya, "The United States Versus the USSR in the Pacific: Trends in the Military Balance", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 9, No. 4, March 1988, p. 298.

Vietnam, and the completion of troop withdrawals by the Soviet Union from Afghanistan by 15 February 1989, and by Vietnam from Cambodia by 30 September of the same year. With the departure of foreigh troops from Cambodia and Afghanistan, U.S. security policy underwent significant strategic adjustments in terms of shifting the focus of regional policy away from ASEAN in Southeast Asia, and away from Paksitan in South Asia. U.S. support for the ASEAN-inspired CGDK(Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (since 1982) could no longer be sustained by the changes that have occurred. Similarly, with the winding down of the Afghan conflict to a level where, like Cambodia, the primary actors were now the internal contending factions, the premises of containment required a fundamental reorientation.

The Cold War American perspective of Indochina in Southeast Asia, and India in South Asia based on hostility and suspicion had now to be supplanted by deideologised approaches to the regional scenarios. The demise of the Soviet threat and factor in regional and world politics facilitated positive perceptions of these two geopolitical actors whose proximity to the conflict area, and whose patron-client linkage to Moscow compelled both interest and involvement on the part of Washington in those regional conflicts. Nevertheless, the continuity in postwar American policy could be seen in the balance of power strategy adopted by Washington in the two conflicts. In Cambodia, the U.S. pitted ASEAN against Vietnam; in Afghanistan, the U.S. sided Pakistan against the Soviet Union. The Soviet factor was central to both conflicts, hence it would be relevant to examine the extent to which these two regional conflicts impacted upon the nature of Soviet-American interaction in the 1980s until the end of the Cold War.

5. *Impact of Cambodia and Afghanistan on U.S.-Soviet Relations*

The direct impact of Soviet participation in these two regional conflicts was the onset of the Second Cold War (1980-1990). Washington's concern over Soviet ideological, political and military gains in the third world triggered a reaction in favour of activist containment of Soviet expansionism, as well as concerted efforts to reverse these gains by support for right wing revolutionaries. The full impact of the Reagan Doctrine was manifested in Nicaragua and Central America where pro-Soviet forces ostensibly posed a direct threat to the status

quo by threatening American hegemony in Latin America. In Asia the Reagan Doctrine was applied through strong though indirect military and economic support for anti-communist forces battling to overthrow the pro-Soviet regimes in Cambodia and Afghanistan. Thus Soviet-American relations prior to Gorbachev suffered severe strains from the conflicting strategies of the superpowers over their competition for influence in the third world. The Strategic Arms Limitation Agreements of 1979 (SALT II) were never ratified by the U.S. Congress, thus forcing the Reagan Administration to launch a fresh approach towards nuclear arms control in the form of START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks). It is noteworthy that the revived Cold War atmosphere was influenced by and influenced the space-based missile development program known as SDI(Strategic Defense Initiative). Reagan's readiness to confront Soviet proxies through the use of American proxies increased the economic and military pressure on the already exhausted and overstretched Soviet military and economy.

The cumulative political, psychological, military, and economic pressures orchestrated directly and indirectly by the United States upon the Soviet Union provided the necessary external context and incentive for Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost in the later part of the 1980s. In other words, the Reagan Doctrine singularly exposed the unidimensionality of Soviet power and compelled Moscow to come to terms with the multidimensionality of American power. Translated into policy terms, this required the adoption of Soviet measures to move the arms control agenda forward, and to review its direct and indirect involvement in third world regional conflicts on behalf of Marxist regimes. The external dimension of Gorbachev's foreign policy vis-a-vis the two conflicts was manifested by increased Soviet persuasion and pressure to settle the conflict through non-military means, i.e. a desire for a negotiated solution that will provide the necessary face-saving formula for Moscow to extricate itself from these regional conflicts. The Soviet leader was keenly aware that Moscow's prestige in the Islamic world had plummeted as a result of Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan.[10] In the meantime, Soviet embroilment in the two conflicts created opportunities for American diplomacy to readjust its relationship with ASEAN in the light of changing circumstances, and to broaden

10. Donald Zagoria, "The USSR and Asia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1, January 1986, pp. 26-27.

Asia-Pacific regional networks to address the rising economic dynamism of the region.

6. *Impact on U.S. Policy towards ASEAN and Pacific-Asia*

Conflict resolution, and more specifically conflict management is better achieved by regional parties to a conflict than through the intervention or intercession of outside powers, although this could be helpful at least in terms of moving the peace process forward. However, when external big powers are directly involved in a regional conflict with combat forces of their own in the battle-field, the process of conflict resolution is rendered that much more complex. This was the case with the earlier American involvement in the Vietnam War which did not lend itself to a negotiated solution that was acceptable to all parties. In the case of the Cambodian conflict, U.S. conflict management strategy was clearly assisted by the higher profile taken by ASEAN in the political and diplomatic aspects of the conflict. Accordingly, the period of the Cambodian conflict witnessed a strengthening of U.S.–ASEAN economic and military relations within the classical model of the Nixon Doctrine. The U.S. was an actor but not the primary actor in the Cambodian conflict. China, ASEAN, and Vietnam were the principal actors whose motivations, level of commitment, and constraints were determined by the broader framework of U.S.–Soviet relations. The dynamics of superpower involvement in regional conflicts and its impact upon regional actors was evidenced by the emergence at the height of the Second Cold War of the concept of "two Southeast Asias"—a pro-western ASEAN, and a pro–Soviet Indochina. The emphasis on economic relations in the U.S–ASEAN relationship in the 1980s despite the Cambodian conflict symbolised the nature of domestic political contraints against major involvement in Asian land wars. Secondly, the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and the Sino-Vietnamese rift stemming from the PRC's support of the ousted Khmer Rouge can be viewed as fortuitous developments that minimised resource deployment by Washington to achieve desired outcomes in Southeast Asia. With the Communists containing other Communists, i.e. with the ongoing East-East conflict involving four Communist actors—the USSR vs. China, China vs. Vietnam, and Vietnam vs. Cambodia—Washington's low priority approach towards post–Vietnam Southeast Asia, and by extension ASEAN's

survival, became eminently sustainable.[11] The U.S.-ASEAN Dialogues initiated in 1977, together with the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference(PMC) mechanism served as the principal political-diplomatic-economic forums for the processing of mutual interests during the Second Cold War in Southeast Asia.

Nevertheless, as the Cold War became increasingly irrelevant to policy makers in Washington and ASEAN, the strains that were easily subdued by ideological convergence now began to determine the future pattern of U.S.-ASEAN interaction. With the dissipation of the ideological cement following the collapse of world communism, new bonding devices had to be contemplated to maintain America's strategic interests in Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War era. The closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines signalled the end of a 100-year American military presence in that ASEAN country. Other ASEAN states such as Singapore and Malaysia, were concerned that the termination of external participation in the Cambodian conflict could accelerate the process of U.S. total withdrawal from the region, have offered access and facilities to ensure a continued American presence in the region. In South Asia, the end of external participation in the Afghan war and the death of the Soviet Union are already producing visible consequences for U.S. relations with both India and Pakistan. The new strategic scenario in South Asia, as in Southeast Asia, could well be one where the U.S. could be inaugurating new strategic partnerships with erstwhile adversaries of the Cold War—with Vietnam in Southeast Asia, and with India in South Asia. Economic liberalisation through market reforms in India evident since 1992 would focus Washington's attention increasingly on strategies geared towards maintaining an economic balance of power in South Asia that is favaourable to U.S. interests after the Cold War. The post-Cold war era is marked by new strategic necessities and opportunities. The U.S. commitment to maintaining a balance of power of power at the global and regional level at all times will be underscored by a decoupling of close ties to ASEAN and Pakistan so as to increase America's leverage upon all regional actors, and to expand the range of options available for conflict management in any given scenario.

11. K.S. Nathan, "Malaysia and the Soviet Union: A Relationship with a Distance", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXVII, No. 10, October 1987, p. 1069.

One such option is the creation of broad-based patterns of regional cooperation that enable America to exercise strong economic and political influence in the-Pacific region. The U.S. views APEC(Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)embracing now some 18 political-economic entities(Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the ASEAN Six, the United States, Canada, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, and Chile) as the most effective approach to post-Cold war political and economic problems in the Asia-Pacific region. One of the principal trends in the Asia-Pacific region since the 1980s is the economic vitality of basically pro-American regimes—governments that initially could not have survived without American military protection and support, but which were able to pick up the pieces rapidly and demonstrated impressive political and economic resilience using the capitalist-democratic framework as instruments in their development. By the decade of the 1980s, the "Four Tigers"(South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore) had already begun to impact upon the scene thus portending the economic future of the region. Washington views their economic success as at least partially if not principally, flowing from America's active political, economic and strategic involvement in the region during the Cold War when the threat of Communist expansion was real. The U.S. therefore intends to participate actively in the post-Cold War economic dynamism through the multilateral APEC process. Any more narrowly conceived schemes of regional economic cooperation that threaten America's interests would be rejected if they are not APEC-compatible. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker affirmed that in view of recent developments in Eastern Europe and the European Community, the U.S. remained firmly committed to the APEC process as a new multilateral forum for promoting economic growth and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.[12]

U.S. objections to the East Asian Economic Grouping/Caucus (EAEG/EAEC) proposed by Malaysia in 1991 (which excludes U.S. participation) must be read in the context of a genuine American fear that resulting Japanese domination of the region could eventually produce tension and conflict. The United States views itself as an "Asian power" in the political, economic, and strategic sense i.e. Washington's role has been, and would continue to be instrumental in shaping the strategic scenario of the Asia-Pacific.[13] Both the

12. *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 31 July 1990, p. 19

13. K.S. Nathan, "Vision 2020: Implications for Malaysian Foreign Policy—Part II: The New World Order", *Asian Defence Journal 2/92*, February 1992, pp. 16-20.

Cambodian and Afghan conflicts provide sufficient proof of U.S. interventionary influence, be it direct or indirect, in determining the final outcome. Support form the United States as well as other interested parties through arms and money has undoubtedly enabled the rebels in Cambodia and Afghanistan to prolong the war and increase their own prospects for eventually regaining power.[14] Thus, the enduring if somewhat beleagured Pax Americana can be expected to provide the overall strategic framework of nation-state interaction in the near future, as it did during the heyday of the conflicts in Cambodia and Afghanistan.

7. *Conclusions*

The Cambodian and Afghan conflicts reinforce the objective reality of contemporary international politics: conflicts are better managed than they are solved. The internal dynamics of the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts defy externally inspired solutions. In this regard, U.S., U.N., and other externally attempts at conflict resolution would be severely constrained by the intransigence of domestic factions whose refusal to compromise is based on perceptions of the stakes involved. In Cambodia, the U.N.-managed ceasefire is at best tenuous as the Khmer Rouge—the strongest military faction among the 4 warring factions—remain unintegrated and peripheral to the peace formula. The Khmer Rouge's apparent zero-sum approach endangers a final settlement although its capacity to uproot the peace accords might well be limited by the possibility of strong international condemnation. Similarly, in Afghanistan, a failure to come to terms with the Pashtun guerilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar could prolong the Afghan conflict given the potential for renewed tribal war and a protracted power struggle in that country.[15] The U.S. capacity to manage the post-April 1992 internal situation following the overthrow of Najibullah is more circumscribed than that obtaining during the Cold War. The absence of clearly defined external adversaries and patrons would tend to reduce American ability to manage the internal conflicts in both Cambodia and Afghanistan.[16] U.S.

14 See for instance the article by Tahir Amin, "Afghan Resistance: Past, Present and Future", *Asian Survey*, Vol XXIV, No. 4 April 1984, pp. 373-399.

15. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER), Vol. 155, No. 17, 30 April 1992, p. 12.

16. *FEER*, Vol. 155, No 19, 14 May 1992, p. 12.

reliance on, and utilisation of the U.N. machinery could temporarily stabilise the political-military situation, but long-term peace is a goal that must be fiercely fought for by insiders rather than outsiders.

Secondly, from the perspective of conflict management by an external power of a regional conflict involving principally internal warring factions, that task is facilitated by a congruence of interests between the external power and internal factions commanding a fairly broad-based popular support. In the case of Cambodia, the U.S. capitalised on the fact that the Phnom Penh regime was installed by Hanoi, while in Afghanistan, the evidence was even more overwhelming that the Babrak Karmal and later Najibullah regimes survived purely on Soviet credentials. Popular support favoured the Mujahideen rebels that received patronage and funding from both Pakistan and the United States. In Cambodia, a more formidable combination of forces and support in the form of a defacto U.S-ASEAN-China-Japan-EC alliance deprived the PhnomPenh regime of any international legitimacy. It was only after the U.S. abandoned the 8-year ASEAN-sponsored CGDK formula in July 1990, favouring instead the Perm-5 Approach establishing a Supreme National Council(SNC) incorporating the Hun Sen regime as well, that definitive moves toward conflict resolution became possible. Nevertheless, just as domestic/regional conflicts furnish opportunities for Great Power intervention and influence, these crises were also sources of embarrasment to the aid-giving patrons as both the U.S. and the USSR "had to grapple with the hard fact that their universalist message would not be accepted by other societies and cultures".[17]

Thirdly, America's strategic involvement in the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts was designed to serve different yet similar objectives of U.S. foreign policy. Soviet participation in both conflicts strenghened the ideological justification for application of the Containment Strategy against international communism. Invocation of this ideological rationale broadened the support base for U.S. strategy through the political-diplomatic support provided by America's allies and friends.

17. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict Form 1500-2000*, London, Fontana Press, 1989, p. 509.

U.S. intervention, indirectly through proxies (ASEAN in Cambodia, and Pakistan in Afghanistan)effectivelly prevented the Communist-installed regimes from consolidating their internal power base—an objective of conflict management that proved singularly successful, and which forced the incumbent regimes to seek compromise and terminate the conflict not at the battlefield but at the negotiating table. Furthermore, U.S. indirect intervention in both regional conflicts compelled a much larger expenditure of men, money and material on the part of external patrons (Vietnam/USSR in Cambodia, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan). In other words, U.S. regional conflict management strategy succeeded in converting the conflicts in Cambodia and Afghanistan into "a Vietnam" for both Hanoi and Moscow.

Fourthly, U.S. strategy vis-a-vis the conflict in Afghanistan aimed specifically to demolish the "Afghan Syndrome" promoted by the Soviet Union. Moscow's strategy was to inform the world that competitive coexistence incorporated the notion of the USSR as a global superpower so that the strategic interests of both superpowers in third world regions are equally respected. The Afghan adventure was Moscow's demand for global parity, not merely strategic parity—a demand if met would invariably undermine traditional western influence in most of the third world.[18] America's regional strategy was aimed at containment of Soviet power, not acquiescence in its further expansion in a vitally important reigon having strategic linkages to resources, sea lanes, and Islam in South-West Asia. American policy makers believed that U.S. resignation or muted response to the Soviet foothold in Afghanistan was likely to encourage further Soviet expansionism, and might well "lead to large-scale conflict between the super-powers through a Soviet miscalculation that the United States will not risk a military confrontation anywhere down the line".[19] Washington's respone was also influenced by deep-seated fears that the Soviet invasion would aggravate pre-existing instabilities in the Persian Gulf and exacerbate the volatility of the region to the detriment of western interests whose protection and advancement require order and stability.[20]

18. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The Afghan Syndrome: How to live with Soviet Power*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1982, pp. 28-29.

19. Zalmay Khalilzad, "Afghanistan and the Crisis in American Foreign Policy", *Survival*, Vol. 22, No. 4, July-August 1980, p. 159.

20. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The Afghan Syndrome*, p. 232.

Fifthly, the Cambodian and Afghan conflicts clearly demonstrate that the fates of small powes in a region will primarily be determined by larger powers, none of which is geographically Southeast Asian, or South Asian.[21] This factor of international politics was nowhere more evident than in the recent Gulf War (1990-91) where regional preferences and concerns were, and are being determined by the major powers particularly the United States—the singular superpower after the Cold War. Thus, conflict management, be it in the Persian Gulf, South Asia or Southeast Asia has hitherto been moulded primarily by American strategic doctrine and global interests. In the process, the fate of non-alignment as policy, strategy, ideology, and movement—usually backed by Soviet power during the Cold War—remained dismal.[22]

Finally, the U.S. approach to regional conflict management in Cambodia and Afghanistan reflects a strong predisposition towards the status quo. Any development that attempts to reverse the basically pro-western status quo prevailing in the postwar era is interpreted as directly, eventually, or ultimately posing a threat to the American heartland. Thus, "the impulse to keep war as far as possible from our shores has grown ever stronger as technology has increasingly undermined the foundations of national security. Presidents and generals have popularized the idea that if battles can be fought in Asian or African villages, they will not have to be fought over American cities."[23] Regional conflict management, therefore, is preventive medicine to avert the political cancer that can ultimately dismember the yet prevailing Pax Americana. Although the focus of international relations may have shifted to emphasis on economics and pragmatism rather than ideology and militarism characteristic of the Cold War era, U.S. strategies would be firmly anchored in policies based on regional and global stability. As Professor Nye aptly notes: "in a world of

21. This point is made by Coral Bell in her discussion of the concept of "security" in post-Vietnam Southeast Asia. See her article "Security Preoccupations and Power Balances After Vietnam", in Mark W. Zacher and R. Stephen Milne (eds.), *Conflict and Stability in Southeast Asia*, New York, Anchor Books, 1974, p. 469.

22. For a realistic assessment of the challenges facing the non- aligned movement in the post-Cold War era, see Sally Morphet, "The Non-Aligned in The New World Order: The Jakarta Summit, September 1992", *International Relations*, Vol. XI, No. 4, April 1993, pp. 359-380.

23. Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution*, p. 77.

transnational interdependence, international disorder can hurt, influence or disturb the majority of people living in the United States."[24] Washington's geo-political interests in international stability necessarily urges upon American policy makers the adoption of realistic management strategies that would incorporate a greater involvement of regional and international forces, and less the unilateral engagement of American power to promote U.S. national interests. Regional conflict management strategies born of the Cold War need to be fundamentally reformulated to accommodate a diminishing Pax Americana underscoring the limits of American globalism in as Asia elsewhere in the post-Cold War era, as the international system prepares to face the changes and challenges of the 21st century.

24. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "What New World Order?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Spring 1992, p. 94.