"Among Asians, Khmer desires for peace and respect have been recognized and reciprocated."

Consolidating the Cambodian Revolution

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Cambodian politics and society. Five years of civil and foreign-inspired war ended abruptly in April as liberation forces, nominally led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, entered the Khmer capital of Phnom Penh. They met no resistance. To the contrary, the city's population ran into the streets to greet and to cheer the guerrillas. Even soldiers wearing the uniform of the defeated army joined reunions in the streets. Whether or not they understood or supported the socialist cause, nearly all these Cambodians knew that the socialist victory meant peace for the country and the opportunity to reclaim battlefields for the production of food.

Within hours of entering the city on April 17, the revolutionaries ordered a general evacuation. Every man, woman and child, including hospital patients and thousands of half-starved refugees (a population numbering between 2 million and 3 million people), walked to food distribution centers in the countryside. The haste with which this was done and the suffering it created in the short term appeared unavoidable to the People's Armed Forces for National Liberation of Kampuchea (PAFNLK).1 At the time, there were rumors that the Americans intended to bomb the city. Later, Ieng Sary, a Vice Premier in the revolutionary government, explained that the evacuation was necessary because the liberation army did not have the means to import tons of food to the city as the Americans had done. If food could not be brought to the people, then the population had to go to the countryside to obtain it and to produce it.2

These spontaneous celebrations were short-lived.

1 "Kampuchea" is the Khmer language name for the country of the Khmer people. The French "Cambodge" and the English "Cambodia" are colonial derivations. The revolutionaries use only the national name.

² Interview of Vice Premier Ieng Sary in Newswork, September 8, 1975.

⁸ See this writer's "Cambodia: Model of the Nixon Doctrine," Current History, December, 1973.

Le Monde, 5 février, 1975.

⁸ There were never any serious efforts to negotiate a settlement to the Cambodian war. The United States persistently denied the revolutionaries' prior condition that their government, Prince Sihanouk's, be dealt with as a government, not as an opposition party or a provisional revolutionary government within Lon Nol's regime. Juridically speaking, the position of the revolutionaries rested on the illegality of the parliamentary vote deposing Sihanouk in 1970. Under these circumstances, occasional United States pressure on the Lon Nol group to seek negotiation was only a clever way to prevent negotiations while appearing conciliatory.

A critical opportunity for a negotiated settlement was missed in January, 1973, when President Richard Nixon and United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger deliberately avoided direct discussions with Prince Sihanouk. They chose instead to begin the daily saturation bombings in support of Lon Nol. For details, see the testimonies and prepared statements of D. Gareth Porter and Laura Summers in hearings on S. 1443 before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 4, 1973. During the coatly and frustrating battle of Phnom Penh, Prince Sihanouk called Dr. Kissinger "intelligent but intellectually dishonest." The Guardian (Manchester), March 5, 1975.

As for the rumors of American attacks, Ieng Sary further explained that the revolutionaries had an American intelligence document outlining specific sabotage operations once the city was occupied. The Khmers could not be sure whether the document contained authentic plans or speculative, contingency proposals. What was certain was the tenacious and frequently violent insistence of American governments on controlling the course of developments in Khmer politics. Cambodian territory, Khmer society and the revolutionary movement were the principal victims of the ill-conceived and ill-fated Nixon Doctrine.3 Subsequently, the administration of United States President Gerald Ford attempted to prolong the lost war. White House emergency funds paid for an airlift of food and military supplies into Cambodian Premier Lon Nol's last major positions. The supplies included oxygen-absorbing cluster bomb units (CBU-55) that are indiscriminate in their destruction.4 The Ford administration also requested additional military aid for Lon Nol under the pretence of searching for a negotiated settlement.5

In the end, the legacy of United States policies—600,000 killed, prolonged suffering and incidental charity—is painful for Americans and for Khmers. When American diplomats hastily evacuated Phnom Penh on April 12, they feared their own Khmer embassy guards. For Khmers who survived, the awesome task was to transform the accumulated bitterness and suffering into an impetus for socioeconomic reconstruction of the country, while at the same time normalizing the country's foreign relations to prevent any further harmful intervention. Despite great difficulties, the revolutionary government is making progress in both domains.

POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION

Evacuees from Phnom Penh and most of Kampuchea's rural population have been organized into production teams called solidarity groups. These are supervised by PAFNLK cadres who make a point of doing their share of the group's work. The groups vary in size according to project. Some village-level teams organized during the war remain small and intimate, including 10 to 25 people; but most new groups are larger, with 100 or more people. Many new teams are also mobile, because they are responsible for the reconstruction of the country's roads and bridges, and the Poipet-Phnom Penh railway. River ports, water routes, dams and canals are also being cleared, dredged, rebuilt or extended. In areas where American bombing destroyed whole villages or numerous dwellings, production teams are building houses. Medical teams, including at least one team practicing acupuncture in Kampong Chhnang province, are manufacturing drugs and vitamin supplements from local herbs. Most solidarity groups are engaged in agricultural work, however, for in the absence of foreign imports or even a currency of exchange, the immediate and long-term economic wellbeing of Kampuchea's population of 7 million depends on caloric energy generation and allocation. To this end, the problems confronting Khmer society go far beyond the destruction and dislocation of the recent fighting.

Before the war, Cambodia's per hectare rice yield was considerably lower than that of her Southeast Asian neighbors. Centuries of intensive cultivation of the land, combined with lack of modernization, left Khmer farmers at the mercy of nature, and restricted rice production to one crop per monsoon year in most regions. Very few provinces attained average yields of one ton per hectare. Developmental neglect in conjunction with population increases and

expanding consumer demand for expensive imported goods led Cambodia on the road to food deficiency before the war began in 1970. Instability and lag in the agrarian sector were fundamental causes of economic instability in the Sihanouk era, but government attempts at reforms were foiled by the structure of land ownership and rural credit.

During the war, the revolutionaries organized village committees in an effort to increase individual productivity as well as total production. Improved rice strains came from China, and small amounts of fertilizer, possibly captured stocks, were applied to selected areas. Engineers directed the construction of new irrigation works. Reports of double-cropping and larger yields were broadcast by the resistance radio station as early as 1972. New seeds, better water control, fertilizer and more efficient local organization became as valuable as firearms in the politics of the war. As Phnom Penh was militarily isolated and then cut off from land and water supply routes, the liberation forces invited the city's population to slip through the "defense" perimeter to obtain food and security. In 1973, Khmers loyal to the resistance believed the major purpose of Nixon's sixmonth bombing campaign was to destroy the emerging productive potential and the social security of the liberated zone, but this could not be discussed by any party to the war at the time. For Prince Sihanouk's Royal Government of National Union (RGNU) to have made the charge would have begged the question of the effectiveness of the bombing. The American government could never admit to bombing civilian targets or deliberately trying to create starvation; the Lon Nol regime always insisted that the PAFNLK and civilians in the liberated zone had less food than the residents of Phnom Penh. This alarming suggestion combined with heavy bombing and artillery fire in rural areas deterred many people from voting with their feet until the day of liberation. Nevertheless, the proof of some agrarian accomplishment in the liberated zone came in the summer of 1974, when the RGNU exported 50,000 tons of rice to South Vietnam in payment for arms required for a major offensive on Phnom Penh.

Because of the high cost of the war and in spite of increased rural productivity, the prospect of nourishing an additional 3 million people in the months immediately following victory must have been daunting. Indeed, refugee reports confirm that food allowances in the solidarity groups are small; but there is little evidence of the famine conditions so frequently mentioned in the American press.⁶ These American reports, even those claiming to be based on intelligence analyses, ignore the changes in agricultural technology made during the war as well as current efforts to diversify food production through the cultivation of rice substitutes. Emphasis on the increased culti-

Some of these speculations about famine based on anonymous "intelligence sources" appear in the "Periscope" section of Newsweek, July 21, 1975, and September 15, 1975. See also the news report in Newsweek's September 22, 1975, issue.

vation of tapioca, sweet potatoes, corn, beans and bananas, for example, is consistent with altered consumption patterns in the late 1960's, when high rice prices on the black market in Vietnam encouraged Khmer farmers to limit their personal consumption of their most valuable product. The end of war also means greater security for fishing and livestock industries. National prospects for the December-January rice harvest remain good, even though drought conditions threaten the yield in small areas of the country. It is important to remember, however, that even a mediocre rice harvest would not necessarily lead to famine. Gross agricultural production and efficiency in food distribution are more important factors than they have been in the past.

In contrast to the uncertainties in agriculture. Cambodia's reconstruction efforts in the industrial sector can already be called successful. By August and September, more than 70 factories were back in production, including a textile factory, a power station, waterworks, a motor-vehicle tire works, a soap factory and a papermill in Phnom Penh. Outside the capital, the power station, water tower and harbor at Sihanoukville and the textile mill and hemp sack factory in Battambang are operating. Two dry cell battery factories near Phnom Penh, rapidly repaired in May, were able to reopen only because raw materials were found in stock. Many plants were pillaged or sabotaged in the final days of the war and are short of certain materials. Several plants, including the dry cell battery factories, gradually increased production over the summer as materials or substitutes were located. Most of the work force in the heavy industries are peasant-soldiers receiving onthe-job-training. Now, most of the materials being processed are locally produced. These include cotton and silk fibers as well as rubber latex. Hydroelectric power is the main source of energy in large plants. Oil, gasoline and kerosene fuels are scarce, but some supplies are being purchased regularly in markets on the Thai border.

As factories reopen and as sowing ends in the countryside, Phnom Penh is being slowly repopulated. An estimated 100,000 people, approximately one-sixth of the capital's normal prewar population, lived there in September. Continuing population movements in the interim between rice transplanting and harvesting are to be expected, but the efficiency with which people are being shifted from reconstruction projects or permanently resettled cannot yet be determined. Life is without doubt confusing and arduous in many regions of the country, but current hardships are probably less than those endured during the war. It. is a mistake to interpret postwar social disorganization or confusion as nascent opposition to the revolution. Thus far, few Khmers have left the country, and many of those who have left are former officers

from Lon Nol's army or former civil servants who fear prosecution for wartime activities. No war crimes trials have, in fact, come to light, probably because of an RGNU decision to avoid deepening internal sociopolitical conflicts and bitterness in a time of reconstruction.

CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

On the first day of the resumption of Radio Phnom Penh transmissions. Vice Premier and Minister of Defense Khieu Samphan announced that internal security and reconstruction were the government's first priorities. Next highest priority was attached to an international policy of nonalignment. The announcement was not surprising. The National United Front of Kampuchea, the political arm of the RGNU, had committed itself to such a foreign policy in its political program of May, 1970. Reiteration was nonetheless necessary because of international speculation about the extent of cooperation between Prince Sihanouk and the revolutionaries led by Khieu Samphan. By confirming that the revolutionaries intend to play an active role in the community of nonaligned third world states, Khieu Samphan was saying that the basis for continuing cooperation between the Prince and the revolutionaries remains firm. The alliance rests upon mutual appreciation of the necessity for a self-sustaining foreign policy of nonalignment.

Nonalignment is the key to Prince Sihanouk's successful political career. The concept reflects the radical nationalism of the Khmers, who believe that their sovereignty is jeopardized by alliances with major powers. In the mid-1950's, when Sihanouk first adopted the concept under the name "neutrality," nonalignment also reflected a positive response to political and geographical realities in Southeast Asia. Cambodia lay on the frontier between the socialist and "free world" spheres. Because Cambodia was a relatively small and weak power, only Sihanouk's skilled diplomacy prevented either camp from intervening directly in Khmer politics.

During the cold war years, Prince Sihanouk increasingly relied on foreign alliances and contacts to discipline or to assuage national political groups. Thus, he prevailed alternately on conservatives, liberals or socialists to subordinate their personal grievances and demands to the exigencies of Cambodia's larger security problem. This delicate counterbalancing of foreign and national interests came to an end in 1970 because the country's uneven economic growth and fragile political integration required almost constant attention and mediation from the Prince. The sequel was American intervention on an unprecedented scale. Sihanouk quickly realized that genuine internal development was necessary to avoid dependence on or domination by other

powers. Genuine political independence, in this view, is synonymous with self-sufficiency and nonalignment. The revolutionaries, whom Sihanouk once viewed as a threat to independence and nonalignment, were primarily interested in domestic development and had always supported Sihanouk's views on national autonomy. Thus, common interests and complementary skills produced a unique alliance between the Prince and social revolutionaries and prevented their falling out over secondary personality and ideological differences.

In the course of the revolution, Prince Sihanouk assumed full responsibility for international diplomacy. And the RGNU had several vexing diplomatic problems. China's early support of Prince Sihanouk provoked the Soviets into retaining diplomatic relations with the Phnom Penh regime. This affected the RGNU's relations with several East European states. Within the third world, Sihanouk's prestige and acumen earned enough support for the RGNU to come close to regaining its seat in the United Nations General Assembly in 1973 and again in 1974. Beyond the socialist and third worlds, the RGNU made many frustrated efforts to improve its relations with France. France refused to dignify either Cambodian government with formal diplomatic recognition, but accepted diplomatic missions from both, while retaining her embassy in Phnom Penh.

The conclusion of the war brought renewed consideration of the problems of normalizing relations with the industrial West, the pro-Soviet East and neighbors in the Southeast Asian region. (Tense relations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, for example, were greatly aggravated by Vietnamese seizure of the Wai Islands during a week of heavy fighting in June.) Still, Prince Sihanouk's first approach was to the United States. In an open letter to The New York Times in March, 1975, he expressed the desire of his government to normalize relations with the United States as soon as possible. Reconciliation with the United States and West Europe is central to a successful nonalignment policy and would give the RGNU more flexibility in dealing with socialist powers, notably, the Soviet Union. Sihanouk's initiative and Khieu Samphan's April declaration suggest that the Prince might have returned to Cambodia much earlier than September but for two incidents, the French embassy and the Mayagüez affairs. These rapidly complicated Cambodia's already complex foreign relations.

In the ninth hour of the war, the French government announced its intentions to extend diplomatic recognition to the RGNU, a gesture acknowledged with gratitude by the Prince.7 France then proceeded to keep her Phnom Penh embassy open during the liberation. Hundreds of Frenchmen who had earlier refused to leave the country, journalists of several nationalities, Cambodian officials of the defeated military regime, and diplomats from other foreign missions (including the Soviet embassy) sought and received diplomatic shelter from the French. The abuse of protocol was flagrant even though the wartime emergency was real. The French presumed that an announced intention to establish diplomatic relations gave France the right to act as if these relations were already established. The Paris mission of Sihanouk's government hastened to point out that normal diplomatic conventions required the closing of the embassy and the recalling of all personnel who had dealt with the discredited regime. Formal recognition and the exchange of diplomatic credentials and privileges would follow. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs chose to ignore its own diplomatic and political arrogance. It insisted that food shortages and inadequate sanitation facilities threatened the lives of the more than 600 people crowded into the embassy compound. Requests for permission to fly in emergency supplies were promptly denied by PAFNLK and RGNU officials, who feared French spying or even acts of subversion on top of this new presumption of France's right to take things into her own hands in Cambodia. Ultimately, the French were obliged to surrender Cambodian nationals in their compound; food was provided by the RGNU; and the entire community was evacuated overland by the PAFNLK in a 25-truck convoy in early May.*

Once safely in Thailand, many of the Europeans said they had been well treated, but few acknowledged the strain their situation created for their Cambodian hosts. In a country facing food shortages, most Frenchmen came out with heavy baggage and pets. Though they had endured hardships during their weeks of confinement in the embassy, these hardships were on a different scale from those endured by Khmers during and after the war. The French government acted as if the Cambodians owed them apologies for the incident, but this was the huff of defeat. France had none too subtly contrived to exact deference and concessions from the revolutionary regime at a moment when it might have been most vulnerable to pressure.9 Unhappy over the prospect of losing her remaining neocolonial privileges, France hoped to maintain her large cultural mission in Cambodia and sought compensation for nationalized rubber plantations. The RGNU refused to be intimidated into accepting relations on France's

⁷ Le Monde, 16 avril, 1975.

⁸ See the reports in *Le Monde* from April 25 to May 12 for an idea of the agitation the embassy affair precipitated in France. Afterward, it emerged that the French vice-counsel in Phnom Penh had exaggerated his reports of privation in the compound.

Prince Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan made one attempt to expose the ruse. See Le Monde, 10 mai, 1975.

terms. Colonial versus anticolonial sentiments, plus resistance on both sides, ended all discussion of diplomatic recognition.

The Mayagüez confrontation with the United States began the day after the last French citizens arrived in Thailand. For several days prior to its capture of the United States merchant ship on May 12, 1975, the Cambodian navy had stopped ocean-going vessels passing within six kilometers of Cambodia's coast and offshore islands, to inspect them for espionage materials. The United States State Department issued no warnings to American shipping firms of this activity until after the Mayagüez was towed in. Other than this neglect of normally routine advice, there is scant evidence of deliberate American provocation of the confrontation. The United States Seventh Fleet and other American military resources in the region were not in position for the rescue operation that was subsequently ordered. The lack of State Department response to Cambodia's earlier action in stopping ships might be put down to a denial of political integrity to a government too long dismissed as a "faceless," Vietnamese, Chinese or Soviet front. The United States could not appreciate the realities of Khmer politics because it had not accepted its defeat in Cambodia. It responded to the Mayagüez capture as if the erroneous reasoning that dictated its long intervention in Cambodia was still operational.

President Ford ordered military forces to the area immediately. Kissinger announced that these would be held in check to allow time to search for a diplomatic solution, but a reconstruction of the timing and the sequence of events shows that there was no delay.10 Even without negotiations, the Mayagüez and its crew were released before United States marines invaded Cambodia's Koh Tang island. Air support for the uninformed ground rescue attempt actually endangered the released crew, who were not held on the island and were at that moment sailing

In the heat of the affair, the United States announced trade embargoes against Cambodia and South Vietnam, and rode roughshod over Thai government protests that United States use of sovereign Thai air bases as staging areas for the Cambodian invasion violated Thailand's sovereignty and jeopardized her national interests.

In Phnom Penh, RGNU officials learned of the capture of an American ship from United States radio broadcasts. Local PAFNLK commanders had towed the ship in without prior authorization upon discovering suspicious equipment on board. The naval commander at Sihanoukville was summoned to the capital for an explanation and consultations. After three hours of talks, it was decided that the ship as well as its crew should be released. The decision was immediately broadcast on Radio Phnom Penh by a Cabinet minister, but Washington claims it was uncertain about whether the crew was being released along with the ship. Washington further claims there was no time for a follow-up inquiry. Khmer casualties during the bombing of Ream harbor were very high. At least 30 Americans were killed; some 50 were wounded. These were probably unnecessary casualties."11

The affairs of the French embassy and Mayagüez confused Kampuchea's peaceful foreign policy intentions with its militant concern for internal security. It has proved impossible for the Khmers to respond effectively to the agitated international press speculation about atrocities, executions, Khmer xenophobia and aggressiveness.12 These reports reveal more about official United States and French hostility to the Khmer revolution than they do about postwar reconstruction and domestic development in Cambodia. Under these circumstances, the RGNU maintained a low profile in the West for most of the year.

Within the Southeast Asian region, however, the Thai government welcomed RGNU assurances that Cambodia has no territorial ambitions. Normalization of Thai-Cambodian diplomatic relations appears certain now that Bangkok has invited Prince Sihanouk and Vice Premier Ieng Sary to pay official visits.

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from the mainland port of Sihanoukville to reclaim the Mayagüez, which was anchored just off Koh Tang. United States air raids on Ream and Sihanoukville, having no apparent military function, occurred well after the President knew of the safety of the detained seamen

¹⁰ Good reconstructions of the confrontation are "Mayaguez: The Unnecessary Victory," The Sunday Times (London), May 16, 1975, and "Glory of Mayagüez incident fades as blunders revealed," The Guerdien (Manchester), May 20,

¹¹ The Khmer version of the Mayagüez incident was reported in the International Herald Tribune, September 9. 1975, and in several other major international newspapers at about the same time. The United States State Department declined comment on the report.

¹⁸ The themes are ubiquitous, but some of the more explicit headlines are: "Kissinger affirms that widespread atrocities are committed," Le Monde, 14 mai, 1975; "Bloodbath in Cambodia," Newsweek, May 12, 1975. Khmer aggression and xenophobia are implied in "Kissinger says ship rescue shows US cannot be pushed," The Guardien (Manchester), May 17, 1975; "Cambodian refugees tell of deaths and famine," The Sunday Times, June 22, 1975; "Open the Cambodian Cage," The Guerdien (Manchester), August 21,

Thai problems, internal and external. Nor have the events of October, 1973, led to legal or constitutional changes of any significance. A real change of emphasis from that of crude military police domination to the preservation of tradition and class advantage through legislation is, however, an observable fact.

It can be predicted that the Kukrit government has the wisdom to control a brittle and deteriorating economic situation—shared by all the nations of the world—while at the same time strengthening ASEAN. It will also have the wisdom to enlist public opinion, among Marxists and non-Marxists, to make sure that the July 1, 1975, promises of Chou En-lai and Teng Chiao-ping will be difficult for the Chinese to ignore.

CONSOLIDATING THE CAMBODIAN REVOLUTION

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In addition, August negotiations with the South Vietnamese government secured the return of the Wai Islands to Cambodia. These are important steps in consolidating the revolution. Among Asians, Khmer desires for peace and respect have been recognized and reciprocated. Prince Sihanouk's role in the Revolution is greatly affected by continuing foreign policy crisis management by the Khmer army and the Cabinet. Since his visit to Phnom Penh, mass media speculation about Sihanouk's inactivity places too much emphasis on his ideological differences with the Khmer Marxists. To some extent, his fate as well as the direction of the Revolution itself depends upon United States and French abandonment of cold war orthodoxy and the extension of détente to a country which has had enough of war.

INDONESIA

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aligned. It is not only non-Communist; it is also anti-Communist in its orientation. This might be expected. Two of its members, Thailand and the Philippines, are members of SEATO, an organization explicitly estab-

28 See INaV, May 3, 1975.

For the joint Malaysian-Indonesian maneuvers (code named Malindo), see INaV, September 10, 1974.
 See INaV, August, 1973. The lack of commonality

lished to serve as a barrier against communism.27 The current status of SEATO is not important; the bilateral treaties these two nations have with the United States preclude nonalignment in the strict sense. The national psyches of two other partners still bear the scars of recent experiences with communism. In one case, Indonesia, that experience took some 12 years; in the other, Malaysia, the toll in human lives was excessive. Singapore, the fifth and last of the nations that make up ASEAN (in the past occasionally identified as "the Third China"), has from the moment she became independent (less than two months before the Communist coup erupted in her southern neighbor) nursed a mortal fear of communism. In this context, one would hardly expect Adam Malik to contend that the new forces in Indochina that might be ideologically different from ASEAN could cooperate and even join ASEAN.28

ASEAN may yet develop defensive overtones. The prolonged death struggle of SEATO and the advance of communism may make a defensive regional alliance more attractive. Extraordinary efforts are being made (indeed, the Indonesian government on occasions bends over backward) to deny such a possibility. But joint maneuvers in the area occur with increased frequency. It is true that these are held under the auspices of individual member states, and not within the context of ASEAN.29 When, in a recent interview, Foreign Minister Adam Malik was asked to describe the nature and aims of ASEAN, he replied that the Bangkok Declarations elaborated "the common interests of its members," and then added somewhat awkwardly: "Since the beginning, ASEAN members realized that it was not easy to formulate these common interests because they varied for each country."30 This general description is not very satisfactory. But the main point is that the five ASEAN nations, apprehensive about the implications of the Nixon Doctrine and alerted by the recent Communist advance, may well find it in their "common interest" to undertake military cooperation.

This contingency may be slow in coming. Counterforces are also at work. Shortly after the fall of the Khmer Republic and the Republic of South Vietnam, a conference was held at Kuala Lumpur to establish a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. A precondition of such an arrangement would be that nations would have to remove foreign military establishments from their soil. Another factor that could cause some delay is the "second cold war," as the simmering rift between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China has been labeled. Tension between China and the Soviet Union may well become an incisive force in world politics, particularly in the politics of the developing world. It surfaced in August, 1975, when the Soviet Union requested the

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²⁷ An American clause to the effect that the treaty provisions become operative only in case of a Communist attack makes this clear.

may be ASEAN's greatest handicap. See also Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN States: No Common Outlook," International Affairs (London), October, 1973.

³¹ Most observers agree that the Kuala Lumpur Conference did not achieve very much, and that the idea of a "zone of peace, freedom and neutrality" is bound to remain a mirage.