THIS ARTICLE looks at New Zealand’s policy of recognition towards Cambodia (or Kampuchea) between 1978 and 1990. New Zealand policy makers had to make the difficult decision as to which political entity to recognize, if any at all, after the Vietnamese invaded and installed a puppet government in Kampuchea in 1978. The Vietnamese army’s removal of the genocidal Khmer Rouge, or Democratic Kampuchea (DK), led by Pol Pot, provoked mixed reactions from the international community. There was universal relief at Pol Pot’s removal, but the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), China and the United States expressed the concern that a Soviet-sponsored Vietnam was attempting to achieve sub-regional hegemony. These nations all supported the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces. Controversially, New Zealand also opted to give diplomatic recognition to the ousted Khmer Rouge regime-in-exile as the legitimate representatives of the Cambodian people.

What emerges about New Zealand foreign-policy decision-making over this issue is that it contained a great deal of ambivalence. On one hand, New Zealand officially supported the ASEAN policy of recognizing the Khmer Rouge as the legitimate representatives of Kampuchea until 1982, when the Khmer Rouge became part of a wider anti-Vietnamese coalition. On the other hand, the documents show that New Zealand’s political leaders were unhappy affording support to the Khmer Rouge and were adamant that the Khmer Rouge should not be returned to power in Kampuchea. This apparent contradiction occurred because New Zealand decided that, in order to show solidarity in the face of perceived Vietnamese aggression, it would form a united front with ASEAN in spite of its misgivings. What also emerges from the official documents is that Thailand and China were the most active lobbyists in encouraging New Zealand to continue to recognize the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces. Any misgivings within the New Zealand government about the policy of recognition were conveyed ‘behind the scenes’ to ASEAN, China and the United States. The entire policy could be
summarized as the New Zealand government deciding that it must choose between the lesser of two evils.

Thailand and Vietnam have long engaged in rivalry over Cambodia and Laos. In the seventeenth century, when both Thailand and Vietnam consolidated as kingdoms, there was fierce rivalry over control of Cambodia. Cambodia was subject to military incursions and brief occupations which resulted in Vietnam expanding its territory into Cochin China by the late eighteenth century, while Thailand was able to absorb territories in the west of Cambodia. Cambodians grew to dislike both their neighbours, but Vietnam most of all, by virtue of its greater threat. In 1845 Thailand and Vietnam placed Cambodia under ‘joint protection’, and the arrival of France and its protection of the beleaguered kingdom may have preserved its existence. This historical rivalry demonstrates the continuing struggle for influence over Cambodia.

Historical and ethnic tensions became enmeshed in the ideological contest for Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Thailand’s various post-war military governments were mainly both anti-communist and anti-North Vietnamese, and offered their support to the US. Continuing instability and civil war in Cambodia and South Vietnam followed the United States’ phased withdrawal from Vietnam in the early 1970s. These troubles coincided with the reorientation of Thai foreign policy as its Indochinese neighbours were experiencing massive upheaval, which would ultimately see the establishment of communist regimes in the region. Following the Khmer Rouge’s seizure of power in Cambodia in 1975, Thailand determined that it was in its interest to preserve the status quo in the region, even though this meant maintaining diplomatic links with a Khmer Rouge regime that supported the Communist Party of Thailand and routinely violated Thailand’s borders. Thailand had been instrumental in persuading the ASEAN states to recognize the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK) in 1975, a Khmer Rouge front organization headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, after the entrance of Khmer Rouge forces into Phnom Penh.3

In December 1978, when the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) invaded Kampuchea, they underestimated the ability of the Khmer Rouge to withstand the brunt of the invasion. The New Zealand Defence Attaché in Bangkok, A.E. Thomson, reported to Wellington that while Kampuchea was the original provocateur — referring to cross-border raids by the Khmer Rouge on Vietnamese villages — it was difficult to assess why Vietnam had attacked, but he surmised that: ‘Fear of an ultimately strong Chinese influence in Kampuchea may have augured for an early attempt to overthrow Pol Pot, and a simple misjudgement of the fragility of that regime may have led Hanoi to think that an advantageous change could be inexpensively achieved.’4

4 Memo, Defence Attaché (DA), Bangkok to Secretary of Defence (SD), 30/8/1, ‘Thailand’s Security in a New Environment’, 12 December 1978, 315/5/1 Vol.2.
Vietnam’s invasion of Kampuchea in 1978 to remove the Khmer Rouge caused the Thai government grave concern because it feared that the Vietnamese would achieve subregional dominance. For more than a decade, Thailand’s policy was to obtain outside support for its policies on Kampuchea. The ASEAN grouping, with which New Zealand had close ties, took on Thailand’s foreign-policy goal, which was that Kampuchea should be kept out of Hanoi’s influence. Thailand, wanting to counter Vietnam’s perceived aggression, urged its friends and allies to oppose the invasion and give recognition to the previous rulers of Phnom Penh, namely the Khmer Rouge. New Zealand found itself in a difficult position because it wished to oppose Vietnam’s control of Kampuchea; however supporting ASEAN’s stance meant giving recognition to the genocidal forces of Pol Pot. New Zealand’s policy vis-à-vis Kampuchea was largely constructed in consultation with Thai officials.

The context of New Zealand’s broader foreign-policy outlook is worth a brief synopsis. After World War II New Zealand forged close relations with the US and Australia, due to the realities of Britain’s inability to defend the Pacific during the war and subsequently the emerging Cold War conflict. Australia, New Zealand and the United States signed the ANZUS treaty in 1951. Wellington’s foreign-policy makers shared the concerns about the spread of communism that their counterparts held in Canberra and Washington. New Zealand was also party to the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) of 1954 that not only included familiar allies such as Australia, Britain and the United States, but, for the first time, allies in Asia. New Zealand’s defence strategy was one of ‘forward defence’, whereby any threat to New Zealand would inevitably pass through Southeast Asia and would be best met there. This caused New Zealand to offer support to its two larger allies, Britain and the US, in military operations in the region. New Zealand supported Britain in the Malayan and Borneo conflicts, briefly sent troops to Thailand during the 1960s and made a commitment to the United States’ Vietnam War effort between 1962 and 1972. Ultimately New Zealand’s foreign policy was to assist its larger allies in the region. However, events forced a change in strategy. The withdrawal of British troops from Malaysia in 1971 and US troops from Vietnam by 1973 changed the balance of power configuration. There was also significant disenchantment in New Zealand with the United States’ foreign policy because of the Vietnam War. The Norman Kirk Labour government of 1972 concurred with these sentiments about great power relationships and withdrew New Zealand forces from the Vietnam War, showed little interest in SEATO (which was practically moribund by this time), declared an anti-nuclear policy which caused tension within ANZUS, recognized the People’s Republic of China and paid more attention to aid and assistance to the developing world. With regard to Southeast Asia, New Zealand’s foreign-policy makers identified ASEAN, created in 1967, as an indigenous organization of regional resilience. ASEAN was broadly pro-Western in outlook, but by no means uncritically so. While the Keith Holyoake government had expressed its support for ASEAN on its inception, it was not until the early 1970s that it
became the focus of attention. This focus coincided with US and Australian foreign-policy reorientations towards viewing ASEAN, as opposed to SEATO, as the premier regional organization in Southeast Asia. These circumstances created a situation of continuity for New Zealand of close relations with ASEAN, and the policy of support for ASEAN carried on through the period under investigation.

The Labour government (1972–1975) wished to pursue political, economic and social ties through ASEAN and saw it as a break from the old alliance network of New Zealand’s traditional partners. For example, this government attempted to direct aid money through ASEAN for development assistance, because it saw ASEAN as a new kind of regionalism. However the emergence of communist regimes in Indochina in 1975 saw ASEAN focus more squarely on regional resilience and foreign-policy initiatives. The incoming National government of Robert Muldoon in the same year was much more inclined to view the expansion of Soviet communism as a threat. The 1978 Soviet-Vietnam Friendship Treaty gave the USSR military bases in Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, while the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan was cited as further evidence of Soviet belligerence. New Zealand’s growing angst over Soviet actions was mirrored by concern in some quarters of ASEAN. By the time of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in late 1978, New Zealand decision-makers had opted for the course of attempting to achieve an intimate relationship with the ASEAN countries. For a small state like New Zealand, with little tangibly to offer the countries of Southeast Asia, officials in Wellington concluded that it was best to engage in collective responsibility with ASEAN decisions (i.e. to go along with the decisions of the majority). Not only was ASEAN seen as the key to regional stability but also as a means of gaining political goodwill within Southeast Asia. New Zealand’s acquiescence in ASEAN’s stand on Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor in 1975 further demonstrates this point. Following the invasion itself, New Zealand gave ‘de facto’ recognition to the seizure of territory and for more than two decades declared that the integration with Indonesia was ‘irreversible’. In a similar fashion to the case of recognition of the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces in Cambodia, any reservations about East Timor were expressed privately, while in public, including votes in the United Nations, where New Zealand found itself out of step with a number of other Western nations, East Timor has been viewed as part of Indonesia for all intents and purposes. The fact that New Zealand faced the recognition issue over two separate invasions within four years, and chose to decry one as a breach of international law, but not the other, shows a clear preference for ASEAN policy and for geostrategic Cold War considerations.

Following Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia, Thailand (bilaterally and through ASEAN), China and the United States all requested that New Zealand support the recognition of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) credentials at the UN. New Zealand decided to support the ‘ASEAN line’ given the organization’s importance, and thereafter New Zealand became an active participant in efforts to condemn Vietnam’s actions. New Zealand supported the initial vote to recognize the credentials of the DK at the United Nations
General Assembly in September 1979.\footnote{Known as Resolution 34/22 it passed with voting margins of 71 for, 35 against and 34 abstainers.} When Radio New Zealand asked Foreign Affairs Minister, Brian Talboys, why New Zealand had supported Pol Pot at the UN, Talboys replied that New Zealand was supporting ASEAN.\footnote{Background Paper, Embassy, Bangkok, ‘Visit of Mr Talboys to Thailand: Transcript of meeting with press representatives in Bangkok on 1 November [1979]’, 59/315/10.} He added that the approval of the DK’s credentials was mainly an expression of disapproval by ASEAN, New Zealand and the others involved, of Vietnam’s actions. New Zealand officials publicly stressed that, while they were not supporting Pol Pot, the New Zealand government had decided to support ASEAN over the accreditation of diplomatic credentials. This was a fine point of diplomacy that was doubtless lost on those appalled by the genocidal nature of the Khmer Rouge while in power.

Clearly New Zealand was not wholly satisfied with giving recognition to the DK, and furthermore the Muldoon government was keenly aware of the negative public perception this would create. New Zealand may have had cause to regret its eagerness to back ASEAN, but once the decision was taken New Zealand officials considered that changing policy would have served to undermine the ASEAN cause by being seen to be defecting from the ‘anti-invasion’ camp. New Zealand was not the only country to risk embarrassment. Khieu Samphan, the perennial public face of the Khmer Rouge at the UN, publicly thanked the United States for their support in the recognition issue. This caused the Carter administration some consternation, as in 1978 President Carter had called the DK the greatest violator of human rights on earth. Nevertheless, the US, with a great deal of ambivalence, backed China and the ASEAN states at the UN.

As part of Thailand’s strategy to keep a buffer between itself and Vietnam, the Thai government began tacit support for those forces in opposition to the Vietnamese-backed regime. After heavy losses, the main military forces, the Khmer Rouge, arrived on the Thai border together with refugees. In October 1979 they numbered around 40,000.\footnote{Marie Alexandrine Martin, \textit{Cambodia; a Shattered Society.} London, 1994, pp. 240–1.} The Khmer Rouge was then able to operate freely over the border, often travelling to the DK headquarters in Phnom Malay. The non-communist forces of ex-prime minister Son Sann and the forces of Prince Sihanouk also operated around the border areas but were far weaker militarily. The New Zealand Defence Attaché (DA), Captain McGibbon, reported in March 1980 that, while the Vietnamese were accusing the Thai government of giving the Khmer Rouge sanctuary and weapons, Thai officials denied this strenuously in public.\footnote{Memo. DA, Bangkok to SD, ‘Defence Attaché Bangkok: Periodic Report for Quarter Ending 31 March 1980’, 315/5/1 Part 4. It was later confirmed to Wellington that Thai authorities were in fact aiding and abetting the Khmer Rouge (as was always the suspicion) when the Chief of Defence Staff and the Secretary of Defence visited Thailand in June 1981; General Saiyud of the Royal Thai Army implied (‘quite openly’) to the New Zealanders that the DK were receiving their arms from inside the Thai border. Saiyud said that Thailand acknowledged the DK as the legitimate government of Kampuchea. Cable. Bangkok to Wellington, No. 857 (DA to DDI), ‘Visit by CDS/SEC DEF’, 9 June 1981, 315/5/1 Part 5.} However McGibbon commented...
that 'there is no doubt that the Khmer Rouge retreat into Thailand at will, and it is highly probable that they also obtain arms and ammunition from Thailand'. The DA also maintained that the 'Khmer Seri' were considered by the Thai authorities to be little more than 'bandits'. These right-wing rebels had attacked Thai villages and spent a lot of time fighting for control of the black market.

Evidence that New Zealand was not completely happy with the recognition policy emerged in early 1980. In March 1980 both Indonesia and Malaysia, neither of whom felt that Vietnam was a significant regional threat, established the 'Kuantan Principle', whereby it was recommended that Vietnam establish a more independent foreign policy as a precursor to a peace deal. New Zealand clearly supported this type of approach and in a letter to the American Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, Talboys advanced New Zealand's views on the way to solve the Kampuchean crisis. He urged the Secretary of State to consider the normalization of United States-Vietnamese relations, because the Minister of Foreign Affairs felt that a peace settlement without this was not going to be as effective. Vance was in the process of putting forward a proposal that would have seen the withdrawal of Thai support (and possibly Chinese support) for Pol Pot, in return for the phased withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea. The Minister of Foreign Affairs warned that unless the US took the step of constructive engagement with Vietnam, then it was New Zealand's view that the 'war is bound to go on'. Talboys also expressed concern about the composition of any post-Heng Samrin government (Heng Samrin being the puppet leader installed by the Vietnamese after their invasion), given that those formulating this agreement had opposed the installation of a government by external means. (The idea of returning Prince Sihanouk had been floated.) In any event, a settlement was not reached at this point, nor was New Zealand's view on the normalization of relations given any credence. New Zealand continued to believe, throughout the crisis, that a political settlement could occur only if the United States offered Vietnam the political and economic inducement to do so. New Zealand officials even encouraged the United States to renew ties with Vietnam at ANZUS meetings. With the trauma of the Vietnam war still fresh in the minds of the US public and government, Talboys' suggestion, while perhaps well balanced, was never going to be acceptable.

10 More commonly written as Khmer Serei, this was a right-wing group that existed at the time of French rule. In this sense McGibbon was probably referring to the non-communist resistance in a collective sense by using an old label.
11 Cable, Wellington to Washington, No.975 (Talboys to Vance, via Washington Embassy), 'Indochina', 13 March 1980, 316/1/1 Part 1B.
12 ibid. The letter further reads: 'We have undertaken to consult with them [the ASEAN countries] before making any significant changes in our own stand on major issues relating to Indochina. In giving this commitment, we had very much in mind that no Indochina settlement is likely to last unless it is accepted and supported by the ASEAN countries.'
This proposal represented a serious attempt by New Zealand to find reconciliation. However, New Zealand was not prepared to make this suggestion known to the wider international community. In public Talboys maintained the line that New Zealand would support the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces. New Zealand's consistent policy was to urge dialogue ‘behind the scenes’, while maintaining the appearance of support for Thailand and ASEAN over the whole issue. Thailand's Prime Minister, Prem, continued to maintain that the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops was the one prerequisite to negotiations.

Unbeknown to the public and much of the diplomatic community, Thailand and Vietnam conducted secret negotiations over Kampuchea. New Zealand diplomats in Bangkok did eventually find out about this activity between Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Hanoi. After hearing the rumours, the Chinese began a series of visits to try to prevent any secret settlement between Thailand and Vietnam. The fragility of agreement between those who backed recognition of the Khmer Rouge was evident in concerted attempts to try to keep the loose coalition together. In April 1980 the Chinese became worried that Pol Pot's forces would be sacrificed as a ‘peace counter’ between Thailand and Vietnam in some kind of compromise. In fact, on the eve of the visit of Vice Premier Li Xiannian (then ranked third in the Beijing government) to New Zealand, the New Zealand ambassador to China was told by Liang Feng, of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, that Vietnam’s policy was to divide the ASEAN coalition, and that Liang Feng hoped that New Zealand, and ASEAN for that matter, would be consistent and honour their commitment at the UN. It was the official Chinese view that the Vietnamese had invaded and then trumped up accounts of Khmer Rouge massacres, because the DK would not listen to Hanoi’s directives. When Li Xiannian visited New Zealand, the media failed to realize that the major bilateral issue of his tour was to persuade New Zealand to retain its recognition of the Khmer Rouge.

The ministry’s opinion was that the prolonging of the conflict would give the Soviet Union an even greater presence in the region; this was of great concern to New Zealand, and indeed to the other ASEAN countries. It was seen as desirable that Vietnam forge peaceful co-operation with ASEAN, but it was also realized that neither China nor the Soviet Union would allow such an arrangement. In spite of Chinese fears, the chances of Thai-Vietnamese rapprochement were slim. The Thai Foreign Minister, Air Vice Marshall Siddhi Sivatsila, told the New Zealand ambassador in Bangkok that Hanoi could not be trusted. Perhaps as a further reason as to why there was now little need for Thailand to co-operate, he noted that DK troop numbers had swollen

14 Cable, Bangkok to Wellington, No. 650, ‘Indochina’, 24 April 1980, 316/1/1 Part 1B.
15 Background Paper, ‘Record of Ambassador’s Call on Mr Liang Feng, Deputy Director Asian Affairs Department’, Foreign Ministry, 5 May 1980, 316/1/1 Part 2.
16 For example, the Auckland Star (AS), 13 May 1980, concentrated on Li’s visit to a woollen garment display at Christchurch, while the New Zealand Herald (NZH), 15 May 1980, focused on China’s intercontinental ballistic missile testing, although there was brief mention of Afghanistan, the Korean peninsula and Cambodia.
to 50,000 over the last few months.\textsuperscript{17} These troops were well supplied with food, clothing and arms, as well as being well organized into a military structure. Given this situation there was little to be gained for the Thai government from negotiation when Vietnam could not defeat this strengthening buffer.

Any wavering in ASEAN, and the ASEAN-plus grouping, was soon cut short by a Vietnamese political blunder. On 23 June 1980, Vietnamese troops moved a few kilometres into Thailand, along the border by the towns of Mak Moon, Samet and Nong Plue. There was a large base of right-wing Kampuchean forces at Samet and the Vietnamese wanted to prevent their repatriation. When the Thai armed forces counter-attacked they initially estimated that a PAVN force of around 1500 troops had entered Thailand. The timing of the attack produced unwanted results for Vietnam as it managed to force ASEAN, including the wavering Indonesia and Malaysia, back together as a cohesive bloc. It became difficult for Vietnam to claim that it had no desire to interfere with Thai sovereignty. The ASEAN countries were due to hold their annual Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur and the border incident had the effect of strengthening their resolve. The Vietnamese denied all knowledge of the attack, and the ill-considered political nature suggested that it was indeed possible that a regional commander had acted autonomously. On 25 June, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a joint statement: ‘The ASEAN Foreign Ministers express their serious concern over the act of aggression by Vietnam along the Thai-Kampuchean border and the intrusion of their troops into Thai territory. This irresponsible and dangerous act will have far-reaching and serious consequences and constitutes a grave and direct threat to the security of Thailand and the South East Asian region.’\textsuperscript{18} ASEAN was now firmly behind Thailand on the Kampuchean issue, and the ASEAN dialogue partners were encouraged to back the same policy. In September 1980, when Muldoon visited Prem Tinsulanond, the Thai Prime Minister, and Siddhi, the Foreign Minister, he discovered that Thai officials were totally preoccupied with the Kampuchean issue. Muldoon observed that ‘Siddhi was emphatic that China would be a constructive force in the region because of its (defensive) obsession about the Soviet Union and its preoccupation with economic modernisation.’\textsuperscript{19} The Thai leaders may have been aware of New Zealand’s traditional fear of possible Chinese expansion from relations through SEATO in the past, but New Zealand officials were not unsympathetic to the Thai position by this stage as the expansion of Soviet influence in the Pacific was viewed as a far greater problem by the Muldoon administration.

\textsuperscript{17} Siddhi claimed that they had also been joined by the Montagnard. The term Montagnard is a French term meaning ‘highlander’ and was applied to a diverse collection of indigenous transborder minority groups across Indochina. Cable, Bangkok to Wellington, No.650, ‘Indochina’, 24 April 1980, 316/1/1 Part 1B.


\textsuperscript{19} Cable, New Delhi to Wellington (PM to MFA), No.741, ‘Thailand’, 3 September 1980, 315/5/1 Part 4.
However, Muldoon did express some dissatisfaction with the tacit support that ASEAN and the ASEAN-plus countries had afforded the DK. Muldoon complained to Prem and Siddhi that he could not reconcile the Chinese insistence that Vietnam should be ‘bled dry’, a common Chinese expression for its strategy, with the notion of trying to achieve regional peace and stability. Siddhi replied that this strategy was working as it was costing the USSR $US3 million a day for the Kampuchean campaign and within three to five years Vietnam would have no choice but to admit it could not achieve victory. Muldoon also promised that New Zealand would give ASEAN ‘every support’ but warned that this was becoming increasingly difficult. He explained that the New Zealand public could not distinguish between support for DK credentials and ‘acquiescence about Pol Pot’s atrocities’.20

Both Prem and Siddhi assured Muldoon that the DK had learned their ‘lessons’ and that they had changed. Muldoon was also informed that, with Pol Pot unwell, the Khmer Rouge was becoming more moderate. This assessment by Thai officials was a highly generous one, and New Zealand officials showed reluctance on more than one occasion to accept the official Thai version of the situation in Kampuchea, even though they went along with Thailand’s expressed wishes concerning recognition. At the end of the discussion, despite Muldoon’s openly voiced reservations at the meeting, he gave the Thai officials reassurance that New Zealand would support their aims in Kampuchea.21

This incident mirrors subsequent events in which New Zealand officials opted to acquiesce to the wishes of Thailand, which determined ASEAN’s agenda over Kampuchea. New Zealand gave its full support to ASEAN, despite its constant reservations, as New Zealand’s decision-makers felt that this was the best way to reach long-term stability. Clearly New Zealand would have preferred different policies but it was not prepared to attempt to put these into action without the support of its larger friends. New Zealand, as a small state, decided that it would try to influence the ASEAN states in the direction of constructive dialogue, but the New Zealand government felt bound to follow the collective responsibility of the group decision. Once ASEAN had decided, New Zealand would endorse that outcome.

Siddhi had commented to Muldoon that ‘were the Vietnamese to withdraw the Heng Samrin Government would collapse and Democratic Kampuchean forces would take control of Government once again’.22 This was not what New Zealand wanted. It was known that the Thai government, the Chinese and the US were co-ordinating their approaches but there were some obvious differences. US officials accepted the ASEAN position but, like New Zealand, they made it quite clear to their allies that they were strongly against the possible return to power of Pol Pot and his cohorts.23 The non-communist

20 ibid.
21 ibid. Muldoon commented: ‘The meeting left me with the impression that the Thais are rather nervous.’
22 ibid.
forces at the time were thought to number a modest 5000–10,000 troops and were not serious contenders for power.

On 25 August 1980, Talboys met at the United Nations with Vietnamese officials, led by Eu Song, to discuss Kampuchea. Talboys told the Vietnamese that while they kept insisting that the situation was ‘irreversible’ and refused to negotiate the issue, their policies in Kampuchea were self-defeating. The New Zealand opinion was: ‘If (as the Malaysians say) Thai policy is now heavily influenced by the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok, that is largely due to the pressure the Vietnamese themselves have been putting on Thailand during the last few months.’ Still, there was a degree of ambivalence as the ministry could see that there was a lack of will on both sides of the divide to negotiate a settlement that would bring about a more peaceful order in Kampuchea: ‘Given the current attitudes of the Vietnamese and the Thais, it is hard to see any constructive suggestion you could make that would have much chance of acceptance.’ The Thai government proposed ‘peace zones’ inside Kampuchea, whilst the Vietnamese argued that there should be a de-militarized zone inside the Thai border. Predictably, this created an impasse.

New Zealand always made the point that it was distinguishing between accepting the credentials of the DK at the UN, while not recognizing the Pol Pot forces. New Zealand could not accept a government imposed, and enforced, by outside forces, as it held the position that the Khmer people should be able to determine their own fate. The DK had already had its credentials recognized by the United Nations General Assembly with an overwhelming majority. However there were often serious doubts in the minds of those countries supporting Khmer Rouge credentials. In December 1979, the British decided to de-recognize the DK without recognizing Heng Samrin. Muldoon felt compelled to reaffirm New Zealand’s position: ‘We have assured the Asean governments that we will consult closely with them on this issue. We are, therefore, not in a position to take the same action as Britain has done.’ Britain’s announcement followed India’s recognition of the Heng Samrin regime after abstaining in the UN vote. On 15 October 1980, the Malcolm Fraser Liberal-led government, while stating that Australia still backed ASEAN, decided to de-recognize the Khmer Rouge. The Australian policy announcement was used, as New Zealand had often suspected such a move would be, as propaganda by the Vietnamese authorities to give their

25 ibid.
26 ibid.
27 Officials often stated to the media that New Zealand did not recognize Pol Pot, which was short-hand for the Khmer Rouge administration, while they supported Democratic Kampuchea. To observers, such a distinction was something of a mystery. The distinction, while maintained in public, was usually dropped in diplomatic correspondence.
28 ‘NZ to Keep Pol Pot Recognition’, NZH, 8 December 1979.
29 Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, Australia’s Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s, Melbourne, 1991, p.208.
presence in Kampuchea more legitimacy. This created ripples through those
circles that supported ASEAN’s policy, some of whom moved to issue
statements of clarification. ASEAN’s lobbying of its friends and allies became
intense, as it became increasingly difficult for them to rein in the doubts and
reconsiderations of those who had initially given their support.

New Zealand officials felt the force of public controversy over the issue of
recognition, particularly in the wake of the Australian decision. Editorials and
‘letters to the editor’ of the major dailies give an indication of the opposition
in the New Zealand community to their country’s policy on Kampuchea. In
November 1980, Thailand proposed a visit from Siddhi, the Foreign Minister.
He visited Australia first, in early February, and spent much of his time there
trying to counter criticisms from academics and the press corps over ASEAN’s
view of the Kampuchean situation.30 He then visited New Zealand from 8–11
February 1981. The Bangkok embassy informed the New Zealand government
that the meeting would be solely about the Kampuchean situation and the
refugee burden, as the Thai government regarded New Zealand ‘as a solid
supporter’ and somewhat more reliable than Australia.31

New Zealand officials were cautious about the negative effects of Siddhi’s
visit, which threatened to raise the profile of the debate once again. Siddhi,
on arrival, called a meeting with journalists in New Zealand for the sole
purpose of justifying Thailand’s position (and, ipso facto, New Zealand’s
position at the time) on the Kampuchean situation. First, Siddhi noted the
background to the conflict and explained that Thailand could not abide the
invasion of a sovereign nation: ‘When Vietnamese forces launched a full scale
invasion of Kampuchea in December of 1978, the world was faced with a true
crisis situation in a classic mold: the invasion of one independent country by
another . . . [in] clear violation of the UN Charter and other international
agreements.’32 Secondly, Siddhi explained that while Thailand had had no
sympathy for the Khmer Rouge government when it was in power, it was for
the Kampucheans to decide their administration, as the DK was the legal
government, and it was not Vietnam’s right to intrude: ‘Its [Khmer Rouge]
methods of government and the policy of near genocide carried out against its
own people during the three years it was in power disgusted and horrified us
in Thailand as much as it did the rest of the world. Nonetheless — and here is
the crux of the Thai position at that time and since — it was the only legal
government of Cambodia in existence. Its acts against its own people and
against its neighbours were frequently abominable. But it was for the people
of Cambodia to deal with, not Thailand and not Vietnam.’33 He cited the fact
that the DK had been recognized by the majority of countries at the UN as
legitimate representatives of the Kampuchean people. Finally, Siddhi stated

30 Cable, Canberra to Wellington, No.347, ‘Visit of Foreign Minister’, 5 February 1981,
59/315/3 Vol.3.
31 Cable, Bangkok to Wellington, No.222, ‘Visit of Foreign Minister Siddhi’, 5 February 1981,
59/315/3 Vol.3.
32 Notes used by Siddhi at lunch with NZ newsmen on 9 February 1981, 59/315/3 Vol.3.
33 ibid.
that Thailand had no wish to see the return to Phnom Penh of the ‘universally detested’ Pol Pot regime. Siddhi also defended China’s policy and acknowledged the support that China had given to ASEAN.34

Talks between Talboys and Siddhi focused on Kampuchea and the so-called ‘third force’, or the non-communist resistance forces opposing the Vietnamese.35 The Thai government had been concerned for some time that the Khmer Rouge was the only militarily credible force capable of resisting the Vietnamese forces. Siddhi claimed that the Thai government was actively trying to convince the Chinese to consider other options for the leadership of the resistance. This would have also involved the removal of Pol Pot to an outside country. Siddhi told Talboys that the Chinese were not prepared to remove Pol Pot, but were financially supporting the non-communist resistance forces under Son Sann,36 in an effort to dilute the Khmer Rouge’s military power, probably at Thailand’s encouragement.37 Talboys indicated that New Zealand would support the idea of a united front which would remove the need for recognizing the DK, especially if led by Pol Pot, and ease the situation for the New Zealand government internally. New Zealand, Talboys told Siddhi, wanted the removal of Pol Pot and a restructuring of the DK, and this would also assist the recognition problem for Australia.38 New Zealand officials felt that Thai officials did want Pol Pot removed, and that Siddhi could now use the comments made in Wellington to bolster the cause for change in the face of the determined Chinese officials.

After the talks, Talboys and Siddhi issued a joint statement to the press that their talks had focused on the Kampuchean situation and that a political settlement could only be based on self-determination, meaning a withdrawal of Vietnamese authority from Phnom Penh.39 Both reaffirmed the desire that Vietnam and ASEAN should form a constructive dialogue, while Talboys reiterated that New Zealand would continue to support ASEAN, and that the New Zealand government continued to be sympathetic to Thailand’s external threat.

The Prime Minister of Thailand, Prem, visited New Zealand from 28–31 August 1981 to discuss trade relations between the two countries and to broach once more the subject of Kampuchea in the aftermath of the Australian announcement.40 In the Prime Minister’s brief from Foreign Affairs, Muldoon was urged to express New Zealand’s unwillingness to accept a united Khmer

34 The notable difference between the Thais and the Chinese was that Siddhi did not share China’s favourable view of Pol Pot. See Cable, Wellington to Bangkok, No.193, ‘Talks with Foreign Minister Siddhi’, 11 October 1981, 59/315/3 Vol.3.
35 ibid.
36 Son Sann was a former prime minister of Cambodia, and leader of the non-communist Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (Front National de Libération du Peuple Khmer (FNLPK)). FNLPK were rivals to both the Khmer Rouge and the Sihanoukist forces.
38 ibid.
resistance that was dominated by Pol Pot. He was briefed to find out if there was any way that Thailand could unify the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces as a more favourable solution to the recognition issue. Prem told Muldoon that there had been considerable progress in uniting the three resistance fronts and that all three would travel to Singapore on 2 September to establish a coalition government-in-exile, which in the event did not happen until the following year. The three anti-Vietnamese resistance groups were: the Khmer Rouge, which continued to form the mainstay of the subsequent coalition; FUNCINPEC, headed by Prince Sihanouk, former head of state; and FNLPK, headed by Son Sann, a former prime minister. The latter two were non-communist groupings and Western countries tried to bolster them; however, the Khmer Rouge was to remain by far the largest anti-Vietnamese group. Prem also took the opportunity to thank the New Zealand government for its continued support at the UN over the recognition of DK credentials. Muldoon then asked Prem about the Khmer Rouge and whether it had changed. The record states: 'Mr Muldoon then said that the one question at the heart of the political response to developments in Kampuchea was whether the Khmer Rouge was moving away from the extremism which characterised the pre-Vietnamese period and which was totally intolerable.' Muldoon stated that the New Zealand government had some 'political difficulties' with the DK and that it publicly supported the DK credentials at the UN only because it was ASEAN’s wish, not because the government supported the 'barbaric policies associated with the DK under Pol Pot'. Astonishingly, Prem assured the New Zealand Prime Minister that the Khmer Rouge had changed and were now 'good men'. Muldoon, out of disbelief, again pressed the issue, and Prem replied that Thailand was committed to peace in Kampuchea and New Zealand could assist this with its support. Muldoon, despite his clearly stated doubts, acquiesced and said that New Zealand would stand alongside Thailand on this issue. In return Prem offered the compensation of promising to try to assemble a coalition government to be presented to the next UN General Assembly for accreditation. Muldoon wanted significant development in the formation of a coalition so that he was able to tell the New Zealand public that there was a 'new leadership coming up in a few months' and that the New Zealand government would be able to stop supporting the DK at the United Nations. Again the New Zealand government, despite privately articulated doubts, refused to de-recognize the DK after Thailand urged New Zealand to continue

42 Background Paper, 'Meeting with Prime Minister of Thailand and Accompanying Party: Auckland (South Pacific Hotel): Friday 28 August 1981', 59/315/5. Prem was confident that Prince Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan (the diplomatic representative of the Khmer Rouge) would reach agreement but Son Sann was the most doubtful starter.
43 ibid.
44 ibid.
45 Prem also told Muldoon that Vietnam was being backed into a corner and would probably seek settlement by 1982, as Vietnam itself had a disastrous economy and a demoralized population.
46 ibid.
its policy. New Zealand decision-makers still felt that the decision should be taken by ASEAN and that New Zealand would support the consensus after having made its case.

The ASEAN countries were anxious to present the anti-Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea in a more favourable light than the Khmer Rouge enjoyed. Protestations by New Zealand, USA, Canada, Australia and others had taken their toll on China and ASEAN and there arose a need for a more acceptable grouping. Efforts were made to bring the three resistance forces together. A coalition of the three groupings, it was reasoned, would make it easier to support the resistance group in the UN. New Zealand’s Defence Attaché reported to Wellington that the Thai government realized that the DK’s previous record would never allow it to be acceptable to the world community and therefore a change in presentation was necessary.\(^\text{47}\) The problem for the ASEAN leaders was that the three resistance groups disliked the Vietnamese forces only marginally more than they disliked each other, and unity proved exceedingly difficult. An attempt at unity in New York, in July 1981, failed when the factions could not agree on the form of a coalition.

A second attempt was made in September 1981 when the DK, the FNLPK and Moulinaka,\(^\text{48}\) at a tripartite meeting hosted by Singapore, made a strong show of unity. The three groups produced a statement that announced that they had a ‘desire to form a coalition . . . with the goal of continuing the struggle for the liberation of Cambodia from the Vietnamese aggressors by all means’.\(^\text{49}\) However, the prevailing wisdom amongst Thai officials was that the coalition was unlikely to remain stable because of the differing ideologies and personalities in the resistance groups. In the dialogue sessions of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore, 17–18 June 1982, New Zealand officials were told that the FNLPK and Moulinaka ‘hate and distrust’ the DK as they had killed many Kampucheans, especially their colleagues and supporters.\(^\text{50}\) A further complication was that China was interested in the coalition only insofar as it would make the DK look better, otherwise they retained support for the Khmer Rouge. However, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (Gouvernement de Coalition du Kampuchea Démocratique (GCKD)) was formed on 22 June, in Kuala Lumpur, which concluded a power-sharing arrangement between the three factions.\(^\text{51}\) The forging of a three-party coalition made recognition of the anti-Vietnamese forces slightly more palatable to those who backed ASEAN’s policy. UN General Assembly recognition, and New Zealand recognition also,


\(^\text{48}\) The latter two being, respectively, the forces of Son Sann and the forces of Prince Sihanouk, also known as FUNCINPEC.

\(^\text{49}\) cit. Martin, p.244.


\(^\text{51}\) None of the factions really wanted the deal, except that the Khmer Rouge thought that they would lose support if they did not accept a coalition. The Khmer Rouge retained the seat on the UN, while the ministries-in-exile were each composed of three separate structures to accommodate all the alliance partners.
immediately went to the GCKD. ASEAN had come to realize that if it wanted to retain intra-ASEAN unity, not to mention ongoing Western support for the continued opposition to Heng Samrin, then the Khmer Rouge would have to be submerged into a grouping that included all anti-Vietnamese opposition forces in Cambodia.

In July 1981 Talboys delivered a speech to the United Nations Conference on Kampuchea in which he summarized New Zealand’s policy on Kampuchea as follows: first, that the Vietnamese forces would have to leave Kampuchea before any settlement could be reached; and second, that a truly representative government of the Kampuchean people should be restored, meaning that the Khmer Rouge should be kept out of any future government in Phnom Penh. Talboys also commended the policies of the ASEAN grouping, which had showed itself to be ‘a constructive force and positive force for regional peace and stability’. At the same time New Zealand continued to promote dialogue with Hanoi both behind the scenes and in public; as Talboys told the 1981 UN Conference, the New Zealand government would welcome consultations between ASEAN and Vietnam in an effort to forge a peace settlement.

New Zealand’s recognition policy remained constant and its new Foreign Minister, Warren Cooper, gave a speech to the press gallery in October 1982 in which he explained that New Zealand’s support for the resistance coalition in Kampuchea ‘was to oppose communism’. Furthermore, it was explained, the vote for GCKD credentials at the United Nations General Assembly, was to support Prince Norodom Sihanouk as titular head of the coalition. The Australians continued to abstain from the vote on this issue in the UN, but New Zealand felt much more comfortable with the tripartite resistance coalition — the GCKD — than the previous recognition of the DK. The ministry was able to claim more forcefully that they did not actually recognize the Khmer Rouge as sole representatives. The fact that the resistance coalition contained the Khmer Rouge, however, and that it constituted the most significant military component of the GCKD, continued to cause alarm.

On 16 May 1983, the leader of the FNLPK, Son Sann, met with Cooper in Wellington. While New Zealand recognized the GCKD as the legitimate voice of Kampuchea at the UN, it did not recognize the government-in-exile as being a legitimate government of the Kampuchean people due to its ineffectiveness and its inclusion of the Khmer Rouge. Son Sann came to New Zealand (and Australia) as a private and unofficial visitor for six days and was clearly part of the coalition’s acceptable face, making the visit to thank New Zealand for its continued support of the resistance government. He also requested assistance from the New Zealand government. The former Kampuchean Prime Minister pointed out that Vietnam was in fact a threat to Thailand, New Zealand’s ally, and stated that ‘I have come here to ask the New

53 ‘Kampuchea Vote was to Oppose Communism’, NZH, 28 November 1982.
54 NZFAR, 33, 2 (1983), p.39. This was announced at the ASEAN dialogue. A further $15,000 was gifted in 1984.
Zealand Government not to break the momentum of applying pressure to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{55} New Zealand, in consultation with the Thai authorities, later gave $30,000 during 1983 for humanitarian assistance to Son Sann’s FNLPK.\textsuperscript{56}

This assistance further demonstrates New Zealand’s overall goals. The FNLPK was certainly a more acceptable recipient of New Zealand assistance than the Khmer Rouge. The grant was designed to demonstrate to the Thai government that the non-communist FNLPK and Sihanouk forces were supported by the New Zealand government over and above the Khmer Rouge.

In June 1983, Cooper met with the Thai Foreign Minister, Siddhi, after the ASEAN post-ministerial conference and, as was the case with previous bilateral meetings, discussion focused on Cambodia.\textsuperscript{57} The strain of supporting the Khmer Rouge was still evident and Siddhi tried to reassure New Zealand officials that the Khmer Rouge were now somehow different. A note to the Cooper–Siddhi dialogue highlights this point:

Strong support for the non-communist resistance groups was coming from Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. They would like to give the two [other resistance] groups more support because the Khmer Rouge were still strong. ACM Siddhi mentioned that the King had told Shultz, Genscher and Abe when they had met that Pol Pot forces had turned the Khmer Rouge into a killing machine, they were not human, they had no feelings, they had even bayoneted babies. But things had changed. Now the children of the Khmer Rouge had learned from the Thais how to smile. They seemed to have changed. They were more human and the Thais hoped they could now have a better relationship with the Khmer people.\textsuperscript{58}

The Thai leaders also made it clear to Cooper that they believed the resistance could never hope to expel the Vietnamese from Kampuchea, but the intention was to pressure Vietnam into considering a new settlement. This reassurance to Cooper that the Vietnamese would not be expelled highlights Thai attempts to reassure New Zealand officials that the Khmer Rouge would not return to power. The sheen that Siddhi put on the Khmer Rouge was not accepted as realistic by New Zealand foreign-policy makers.\textsuperscript{59}

With the change of New Zealand government in 1984, the fourth Labour government reiterated the previous government’s policy concerning New Zealand’s Kampuchean recognition policy. Prime Minister David Lange renewed the New Zealand precondition that Vietnamese troops withdraw completely from Kampuchea. He also expressed a desire to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement that would give the Kampucheans self-determination.\textsuperscript{60} The Lange government continued to support the GCKD, but stated clearly that it was of the opinion that Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk

\textsuperscript{55} ‘Exiled PM tells of security threat’, NZH, 15 May 1983.

\textsuperscript{56} ‘$45,000 for Kampuchea’, AS, 29 June 1983.


\textsuperscript{59} ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} NZFAR, 34, 4 (1984), p.25.
represented the aspirations of the Kampuchean people, and not the Khmer Rouge. Lange also opened the way for Sihanouk’s subsequent visit by saying that he was welcome to visit New Zealand in the future. This revealed continuity with the Muldoon government’s position, although the Lange government was to prove far more open about its lack of enthusiasm for the Khmer Rouge.

In March 1985, Prince Sihanouk visited New Zealand and he told the National Press Club Luncheon that a neutral Kampuchea was the best alternative, as a re-emergence of the Khmer Rouge in power would see the likely return of the Vietnamese, assuming they had already withdrawn. He stressed that he had no personal interest in the Khmer Rouge as he had lost five children and 14 grandchildren during the reign of Pol Pot. The Prince stated that he was allied with the Khmer Rouge because the Vietnamese had given him no choice. Sihanouk also floated the idea of an international conference on the Vietnamese occupation, but the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence, Frank O’Flynn, told him that New Zealand would only consider the proposal. This was consistent with the government’s commitment to work through ASEAN; New Zealand would continue to encourage such a conference but it would participate only if accepted by the ASEAN group. Aside from these meetings Prince Sihanouk also met with a group of New Zealand Foreign Affairs officials led by Merwyn Norrish, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Following the visit, Foreign Affairs announced a further contribution of $130,000 for humanitarian relief along the Thai-Kampuchean border, which was equivalent to nearly 9% of the total New Zealand budget for refugee aid in the 1984-5 financial year ($1.482 million).

The Lange government, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Lange himself, took great pains to preserve some distance from the Khmer Rouge while at the same time continuing support for the anti-Vietnamese resistance during the United Nations credentials vote. A New Zealand Herald editorial at the time of Sihanouk’s visit pointed to the fact that the ‘bestial’ Khmer Rouge were still ‘numerically and militarily, the coalition’s largest component’. Indeed, because of Sihanouk’s relative weakness as a figurehead, the Khmer Rouge were still the power brokers in the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces.

The situation changed in September 1989 when a general withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea occurred, precipitated by the end of the Cold War. Hun Sen, the Vietnamese-supported successor to Heng Samrin, was left to face an on-going civil war with his GCKD rivals, which now had little reason to remain a coalition. The prospect of renewed conflict between the Phnom Penh forces and the Khmer Rouge led to fears that renewed fighting in Cambodia could bring about a victory for the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk immediately began to conduct a dialogue with the Hun Sen regime, but attempts to create a settlement continued to fail. In light of the Vietnamese

64 Department of Statistics, New Zealand Official Yearbook 1986–87, p.86.
withdrawal, the British recognized the Hun Sen regime in November. On 10 November 1989, New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russell Marshall, stated that New Zealand would continue to support the Cambodian resistance coalition, but at the same time expressed outrage that the Khmer Rouge might ever become part of any future Kampuchean government. Marshall also acknowledged that the New Zealand government found itself in a ‘dilemma’ over supporting a resistance front that included the Khmer Rouge: ‘We are caught in a way, the same as everyone else is. If you are against the Vietnamese running Cambodia [through its installed regime], you have to be for the other people.’ Marshall’s statement encapsulated the problem of New Zealand policy, effectively characterizing it as the choice of the lesser of two evils. New Zealand continued to support the Thai government in its belief that the Phnom Penh regime could not be supported as long as it was a ‘proxy’ of the Vietnamese.

However, Marshall hinted that Vietnam’s military withdrawal from Kampuchea had reopened the case about support for a coalition that contained the Khmer Rouge. As well as directing New Zealand’s permanent representative to the UN, Dame Ann Hercus, to read a lengthy statement condemning the Khmer Rouge, Marshall publicly stated to the national media that New Zealand supported the two non-communist factions in the coalition but not the Khmer Rouge. In an editorial, the New Zealand Herald pointed out that to criticize the Khmer Rouge and then vote to continue recognition revealed that New Zealand had failed to achieve an independent foreign policy on this matter. However, this was the first time that a distinction as to which side New Zealand supported in the GCKD was made public, and this foreshadowed future events. New Zealand officials were confident that, with the absence of Vietnamese forces, Hun Sen and Sihanouk would engineer a power-sharing arrangement which would remove the need to support the Khmer Rouge. New Zealand never supported the return to power of the Pol Pot forces and the beginning of the reassessment of recognition was something that was always going to occur once Vietnamese forces were withdrawn.

The UN Sponsored Paris Accords of 15–16 January 1989 set down guiding principles for working towards free elections and the New Zealand government welcomed this event. Marshall expressed relief at this turn of events: ‘During my term as Foreign Minister I have been very concerned to support international efforts to bring peace and a durable settlement to the tragic conflict in Cambodia.’

New Zealand’s Cambodian policy was finally changed on 19 July 1990, when the Minister of External Relations and Trade, Mike Moore, announced that New Zealand would no longer support the resistance coalition at the credentials vote at the United Nations. New Zealand changed its vote

67 ibid.
69 New Zealand External Affairs and Trade Review, 40, 2 (1990), p.27.
70 ‘Policy change on Cambodia likely’, Dominion, 20 July 1990.
following the United States’ decision to do the same thing. What came as a surprise to most observers was that New Zealand had done so without following ASEAN’s lead, which was a clear departure from past policy. The New Zealand Herald reported that the ASEAN nations were at first surprised by the change, but were resigned to it. This was because the Cambodian situation was no longer viewed by ASEAN with the same seriousness that it once had. Moore announced his support for an Australian plan to conclude a power-sharing arrangement that would exclude the Khmer Rouge. This coincided with the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, saying that he wanted to hold talks with the Phnom Penh authorities to eliminate the chances of Pol Pot regaining power.

In October 1991 the Cambodian factions accepted a United Nations-brokered ceasefire and allowed UN forces to engage in a peacebuilding exercise whereby the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) sought to establish institutions and pave the way for elections in May 1993. New Zealand supported the UN effort through diplomatic statements and provided a contribution to the multinational force. Twenty thousand military, police and civilian personnel were drawn from over 40 countries. New Zealand contributed around 100 service personnel for the tasks of mine clearance, communications and patrol of inland and coastal waters to protect fishing interests. During the reconstruction of the Cambodian political system, New Zealand gave $750,000 in humanitarian aid. The resulting elections were largely a success, despite disruption by the Khmer Rouge, and UN reluctance to disarm the competing factions; a democratically elected government resulted in a power-sharing arrangement between FUNCINPEC (Sihanouk’s supporters) and SOC (State of Cambodia, Hun Sen’s political grouping). The leaders, Prince Rannariddh (son of Sihanouk) and Hun Sen, became first and second Prime Minister respectively (in recognition of FUNCINPEC’s status as the majority and SOC’s effective stranglehold over much of the armed forces and a number of government institutions). When, in July 1997, Hun Sen launched a coup that ousted Prince Rannariddh (replaced by the Foreign Minister, Ung Huot), seizing complete control of government, those countries that had supported the Cambodian elections expressed disappointment. Hun Sen explained that Prince Rannariddh had grown too close to elements of the Khmer Rouge, but this was largely a means to subdue FUNCINPEC, as the subsequent brutal repression of Rannariddh loyalists showed. ASEAN refused to admit Cambodia to its ranks, as previously planned, and New Zealand expressed its disappointment that the constitution had been violated. New Zealand’s Foreign Minister, Don McKinnon, stated that 'there must be a peaceful solution with full respect for the Paris Peace Accords and Cambodia’s own laws and constitution'. He went on to add that

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development aid would still be offered and that it would be better to encourage Cambodia into greater pluralism than to engage in open criticism of events.

For New Zealand the seizure of government through force was unacceptable and in 1998 New Zealand joined ASEAN, the US, China, Australia and others in an informal grouping, the Friends of Cambodia, which successfully negotiated the return of Prince Ranariddh, resulting in elections and the return to relative normality. New Zealand will presumably continue to work with ASEAN to reach a solution and ‘encourage’ Cambodia to move away from the old habits of using force to maintain political power.

From 1978 to 1990, while giving diplomatic recognition to the Khmer Rouge first, and secondly to the GCKD, New Zealand never felt comfortable with its position. The records show that New Zealand’s political leaders struggled to come to terms with supporting any political entity that contained elements of the DK. Behind the scenes New Zealand officials urged ASEAN to make policy changes but New Zealand was never in a position to be able to achieve a peaceful solution to the Kampuchean crisis. Leading New Zealand political figures, Muldoon, Talboys, Cooper, Lange, Marshall and O’Flynn, made obvious their dislike for the Khmer Rouge. Sometimes they announced this in public, and they always laboured this point to Thai and Chinese officials.

The question then remains, why, despite the uneasiness apparent in official documents, did New Zealand officials continue to recognize the anti-Vietnamese resistance forces as Kampuchea’s legitimate representatives? New Zealand followed the diplomatic path urged by its international friends because of New Zealand’s already good relationship with ASEAN, and Thailand in particular, and because Vietnam had violated what is considered a fundamental element of global conduct: the international norm of non-interference in another state’s affairs. However, this factor cannot be taken in isolation from the Cold War, as Vietnam, as well as imposing its power on Kampuchea, was also viewed as being party to wider communist aggression. This further reinforced the New Zealand government’s resolve to oppose the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea. Furthermore this whole issue can be juxtaposed with New Zealand’s recognition of Indonesia’s ‘de facto’ authority over East Timor following the 1975 invasion, which was not condemned publicly by New Zealand officials as a breach of international law. New Zealand government policy over East Timor further demonstrated Cold War considerations, as well as a commitment to support Indonesia, and, *ipso facto*, ASEAN, on this issue.74

New Zealand foreign policy on the issue of recognition of the anti-Vietnamese resistance also illustrates that the government preferred to make its protests known to ASEAN privately. New Zealand officials tried to influence the process but judged that once ASEAN had reached a consensus then New Zealand was bound to support that decision. Australia had a different perception and decided to de-recognize the Khmer Rouge. The New

74 All members of ASEAN gave diplomatic recognition to Indonesia’s acquisition of East Timor.
Zealand government refused to follow the Australian lead as it feared the Vietnamese would see this disagreement in the non-communist grouping as a weakening of opposition to their occupation. Given that the Vietnamese turned Australia’s policy shift into a propaganda tool, New Zealand was reluctant to afford them the same opportunity. Once New Zealand had committed itself to supporting the credentials of the Khmer Rouge it became undesirable to reverse this decision, even though New Zealand might have been tempted to follow Australia’s lead.

One constant factor in New Zealand’s recognition policy with regard to Cambodia was to ensure that the Khmer Rouge remained out of power in Cambodia. It was New Zealand’s wish, and ASEAN’s as well, that a ‘third force’ or non-communist resistance be fostered to play a role in Cambodia’s future. While recognition went to the resistance coalition there was never any doubt that the Khmer Rouge should not be allowed to return to power. New Zealand officials discounted favourable reports of the Khmer Rouge offered by both Thailand and China and continued to urge support for other elements of the resistance and ultimately greater pluralism in Cambodia.

This shows that New Zealand foreign-policy makers did make independent assessments of the situation throughout, and were not completely dependent on the advice of the Thai, Chinese and US officials. While New Zealand did coalesce with ASEAN’s policy on recognition, the official documents show on a number of separate occasions that New Zealand officials did not always accept ASEAN (or Thai) explanations of events. The New Zealand government clearly made its own assessments, which often differed, and possessed an independence of thought. On weighing up the options, however, it was decided that ASEAN should be supported.

Although New Zealand decision-makers followed the ASEAN foreign-policy objectives until 1990, compliance was undertaken with a full expression of misgiving. What emerges is a picture of New Zealand publicly supporting the ASEAN stance but privately expressing the gravest reservations about recognition of any political grouping containing the Khmer Rouge. Clearly policy-makers faced a difficult dilemma and continued to pursue a path that was hoped would assist in the Vietnamese withdrawal but also not see the return of the Khmer Rouge to power. The 1990 repudiation of the previous policy and de-recognition of the resistance coalition demonstrated that the original policy was never viewed as entirely satisfactory.

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