

CHAPTER II

CAMBODIA AS CHINA'S PROXY IN ASEAN

There are major things can define Cambodia as a proxy state of China. Cambodia and China have proximities historically and geographically. While emphasizing in terms of politics, both have similar policies in several issues like South China Sea dispute, One China Policy, Repatriation of asylum seekers, and Tibet as a part of China. Individually, Hun Sen as Cambodia's prominent leader is now a pro Chinese leader who was previously a pro Vietnamese leader.

Between Phnom Penh and Beijing, there have been intimate relations since long time ago. The indication was quite clear that Cambodia has become China's proxy state since the turbulence of Indochina Wars. However, ASEAN and China are equally important for Cambodia. Other ASEAN countries such as Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia automatically deplored the path of Cambodia to refuse the South China Sea discussion agenda at AMM. It would possibly impact on their relations and would turn harmony into disharmony. Recently, those ASEAN countries are still conflicting with China regarding territorial claims in South China Sea.

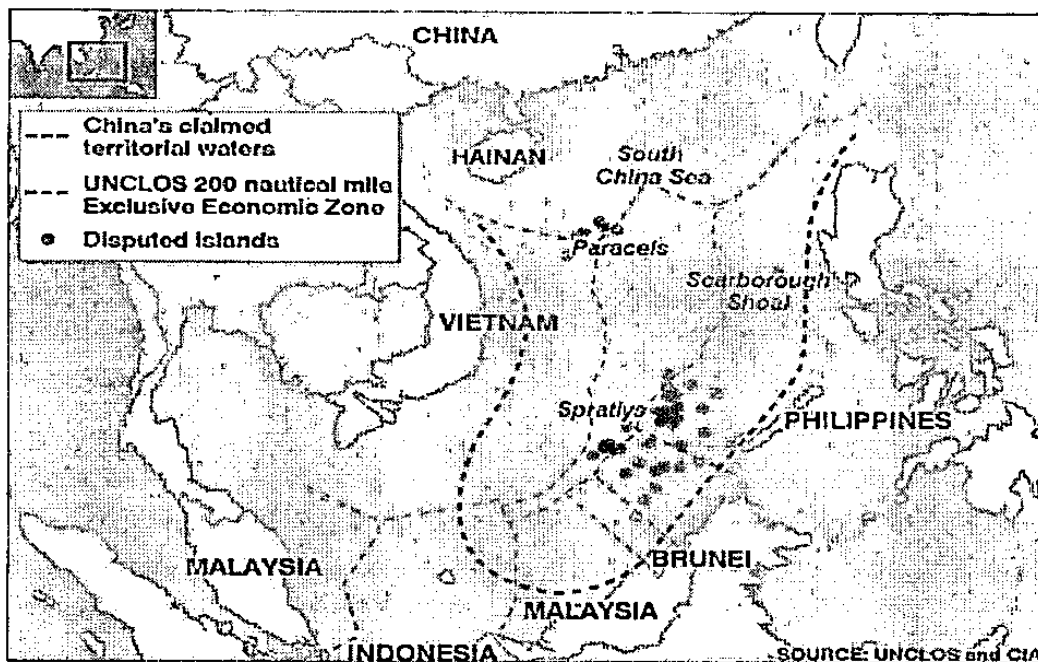
A. The South China Sea Dispute

The South China Sea consists of territorial land and territorial waters claimed by several countries surrounding the area. The dispute is clearly complicated since it has become a long term competition on geopolitical framework between China and several of South East Asian countries. The Spratly

and Paracel are unoccupied islands located within South China Sea. The natural resources such as crude oil and natural gas are overwhelming in various areas of South China Sea especially beneath the Spratly islands.

The claimants of the Spratly islands are China, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, and Taiwan. While Paracel islands are claimed by China, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Thus China takes over most of the area in South China Sea. Each of these claimants said to recognize historically the area it claims in the Spratly and Paracel islands. There are also Scarborough Shoal, Pratas Islands, and Macclesfield Bank consist of reefs and atoll which claimed by China, Taiwan, and Philippines.

Map 1: South China Sea dispute map



Each of the countries involved in the dispute provides historical and legal evidence that will determine the ownership of the islands. The claims of sovereignty over the individual land features are based on the countries' historical presence or occupation and administration of the islands, as well as maps.¹¹ The claimants have been very confident defending the territory in South China Sea. In fact all the claimants seemed not to be worried since they have legal evidence as well as maps. This situation made the neutral parties difficult to achieve any consensus among conflicting countries.

The summer of 2012 dispute over the Scarborough Shoal between China and the Philippines served as one of the most severely tense crises of this summer. China attempts to corroborate its claims to this area with reports of trips made by Chinese explorers over 2,000 years ago and map published in 1947, which was "recognized by no other state".¹²

A.1. The Stance of ASEAN as well as ASEAN Members in the Case of South China Sea Dispute in AMM.

In 2002, the DOC was signed between ASEAN and China as ASEAN initiative to ease the South China Sea dispute. The ASEAN members and China as the claimants agreed to formulate a more binding Code of Conduct (COC) by developing the DOC. DOC includes two aspects of peaceful settlement. One is the confirmation of peace resolution of territorial dispute and self-restraint of hostile attitudes. Another aspect is the improvement of confidence building through mutual exchange of military personnel and cooperation in environmental research.

¹¹M. P. "China's Stance on the South China Sea Dispute." *W. W. East Asia*, June 24, 2012. [www.Origin](#)

The beginning to achieve Code of Conduct on this issue somehow created a conflict of opinion among ASEAN members as well as between ASEAN and China.¹³

ASEAN has proposed the DOC as an initiative to unite the understandings among ASEAN members and between ASEAN and China over the dispute. Most of the DOC contents talked about recognition on international law including 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the sea. Although the DOC has already been signed by all parties but the top event was in AMM to reach joint communiqué. China considered this would weaken China's position. The best way for ASEAN bridging the dispute is by consensus. However, this can be a matter because not all parties agreed with ASEAN proposal. ASEAN is seemingly put its members which involve in the dispute on track because almost all members agreed.

Philippines and Vietnam are the most assertive claimants among ASEAN members in the South China Sea dispute. They claimed both Paracel islands and Spratly islands. They have become very assertive in confronting this issue. Other ASEAN members who claim the territory are not as assertive as Philippines and Vietnam. For example Malaysia, this country did not show where it stands with. Philippines has shown its friendly relations with United States dealing with this issue. They built military cooperation recently.

¹³ Sanae Suzuki. "Conflict among ASEAN members over the South China Sea issue". *Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization*, 2012, p.1-2.

The tension heated up and changed into active discord. This is no more about conflict on the table but all involved parties have figured out about the consequences and took further steps. China as a powerful country is fearless until the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting slightly inhibited China. Other claimants such as Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, etc. insisted China to help or support them in multilateral meeting. ASEAN meetings brought the fresh air at the moment to the claimants which were also the ASEAN members. China seemed to have been preparing for all that would happen. So was Cambodia which brought refreshing air to China itself.

The claims of the Philippines are more recent, including a lighthouse and flag established on the island in the 1960s and proximity. China has attempted to modernize its claims by sending fishing expeditions and patrol boats throughout the disputed waters (a strategy which it has employed throughout the South China Sea). This resulted in a 2-month standoff starting in April 2012, when the Filipino navy attempted to stop several Chinese fishermen, an act which China viewed as aggressive. The Spratly Islands, meanwhile, have been home to several clashes between the Chinese, Filipino, and Vietnamese governments since the 1970's. Back then, Vietnam was arguably the key aggressor, unilaterally claiming an Exclusive Economic Zone that clearly overlapped with the EEZs of other South eastern countries and deploying fishing vessels in these areas.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ang Cheng Guan, "The South China Sea Dispute Re-Visited Singapore" *Institute of Defense*

In the second meeting of AMM, Philippines and Vietnam persisted to incorporate the dispute settlement procedures internationally based on United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) into the code of conduct. On the contrary, through cooperative environmental research and the joint resource development, China emphasized on trust building. China believed if this issue brought to international level then this country will lose everything severely. In the process to a decision, China could not use its power to threaten. Cambodia and Thailand become the proponents of China even though they do not have direct interests in this issue.

Several member countries including Indonesia agreed that in the joint communiqué of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, ASEAN members should decided the region at stake, such as Scarborough Reef. It has also been agreed that every member should respect the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) imposed in UNCLOS and it should also be mentioned in the communiqué. Most ASEAN members agreed with the proposals of Philippines and Vietnam, but Cambodia, which chaired the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, opposed them and supported China. Because of the objection by Cambodia, no agreement was reached on the sentences on the South China Sea issue to be incorporated into the joint communiqué.¹⁵ As a result, ASEAN decision-making method as well as consensus is slightly ineffective. If there were disagreement among member parties, achieving the final decision can be a tough part. Common organizations mostly conduct every decision-making by vote or combine either decision-making

¹⁵ Sanae Suzuki. "Conflict among ASEAN members over the South China Sea issue". *Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization*, 2012, p.1-2.

by vote or by consensus. ASEAN itself reminded as an organization full of rights respect to the members.

ASEAN members have been discussing principles include utilizing the dispute settlement procedures of UNCLOS set as international framework, constructing a monitoring system, and emphasizing respect for the EEZ in consideration as Philippines and Vietnam have proposed. The principle is to be incorporated into the code of conduct in Senior Officials' Meetings since the end of 2011. Use of the dispute settlement procedures of UNCLOS is corresponding with the articles of the ASEAN Charter, which specify the utilization of an international approach to settling disputes among ASEAN members. In line with the above policy, the ASEAN members attempted to hold discussions with China and formulate a code of conduct before the end of 2012.¹⁶

A.2. The Interests and the Position of China and Cambodia in the Case of South China Sea Dispute in AMM.

It was the first time in the 45-year history of ASEAN summits (AMM) that the meetings failed to issue a joint communique. In the first meeting of AMM, the cause was particularly coming from Cambodia's decision in the ASEAN meetings that there would be no discussion about South China Sea dispute. This coincided with the position of Cambodia as the Chair of ASEAN in 2012. ASEAN tried to propose COC (Code of Conduct) over South China Sea dispute. But Cambodia refused to incorporate the positions of Philippines and Vietnam regarding their conflict with China in South China Sea. There were also AIDA and ASEAN High Conference meetings held as a continuation of the

previous meetings. These meetings resulted in the same thing without achieving any consensus especially regarding the South China Sea dispute discussion.

According to Cambodia, AMM is not a court that could rule against or in favour of anybody, in relation to bilateral disputes. Whether the South China Sea dispute is really a purely bilateral dispute can be questioned, and Cambodia's stance is inconsistent with ASEAN's own policy of talking to China multilaterally over this issue.¹⁷ United States dug deeper hole by stating its support on multilateral approach and triggered China's response quickly. Cambodia's way of thinking in the second meeting of AMM was in line with China that ASEAN should prioritize the settlement in South China Sea dispute bilaterally. China has always asserted these disputes should be resolved on a bilateral basis because through this framework China can hold the power to intimidate. Moreover, Hun Sen's attempts to slip through a resolution backing China's position that the territorial dispute should not be "internationalized" outraged several member states, especially the Philippines and Vietnam, both of which have in recent months been confronted by aggressive Chinese surveillance vessels in their waters.¹⁸

At this Foreign Ministers' Meeting, however, China opposed ASEAN's policy and insisted on restarting discussions from the very beginning. China argued that territorial disputes should be settled bilaterally by the countries

¹⁷ Ang Cheng Guan. "The South China Sea Dispute Re-Visited Singapore", *Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies*, 1999, p. 1-2.

¹⁸ Vancouver Sun (2012), "Southeast Asian unity stumbles over China's island claims", <http://www.vancouversun.com/opinion/Southeast+Asian+unity+stumbles+over+China+island+cla>

concerned, and it does not want them to be settled through multinational frameworks or in corresponding with the procedures of UNCLOS. Because Cambodia and Thailand supported China's position, the ASEAN foreign ministers decided not to announce ASEAN's policy or failed to determine the decision or in another word joint communiqué.

In July 2012, at a ministerial meeting, the ASEAN delegates were for the first time unable to issue a communique because Hun Sen, fresh from a bountiful meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao before the ASEAN meeting in which more gifts and low-interest loans were given to Cambodia, refused to allow a reference to the South China dispute to be included.¹⁹ This was one of the symptoms that Cambodia is more than just a partner in bilateral relations. China has put special attention to Cambodia. It was rarely happened that a country was willing to follow other state's policy because no matter what each one has it usually respects its own sovereignty and independence.

Cambodia is a relatively small and poor country in Southeast Asia. This country still needs economic supports such as aid and investment from more powerful countries especially China. China becomes Cambodia's top list partner for its economy, while other potential countries like United States and Japan are needed by Cambodia economically but they are not as close as Cambodia and China. It was seen as reciprocal relationship between China and Cambodia where China can serve its assistance in huge amount while Cambodia should agree to let China play its political influence inside as compensation.

China's government met the Cambodia's government diplomatically. China's government has invoked Cambodia diplomatically to follow its policies before the issue arose. Chinese officials displayed an effective diplomacy tied along with economic incentives in Cambodia. It was related to China's efforts to manage disputes with Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea and Cambodia's appointment as the chair of ASEAN in ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. After Chinese and Cambodian officials met, there was reassurance that Cambodia would follow China's preference and keep the South China Sea issue off the official agenda of an ASEAN Summit convening in Phnom Penh.²⁰

It was quite often Chinese government tended to persuade a country like Cambodia with an effective diplomacy. This has created an interpretation that China has brought Cambodia to become proxy state. Of course the purpose is clear which is to achieve its political interests. There is no concrete rejection of Cambodia. By doing this, Cambodia can get many benefits and few of consequences. For Cambodia, it was better to get something in hands than nothing. The concrete habit of Chinese government is to visit Cambodia and bring particular offer for the government before the issue arose.

The same cases happened before Cambodia decided to support and follow China's policies on the issues of "One China" policy and the repatriation of Uighur asylum seekers. China's official met the government in charge in Cambodia to have diplomatic discussion over these issues. China offered

²⁰ Robert Sutter and Chin-hao Huang. "China-Southeast Asia Relations: Hu Visits Cambodia as Chair of ASEAN." *China's Foreign Relations*, 2012, no page.

economic incentives as Cambodia became much cooperative on its policies. The 'take and give' principle seemed to be implemented on their relations.

China began to establish closer ties with the regime of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen since 1997. Hun Sen is a pro-Vietnam government and a defector from the Khmer Rouge during the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Although initially supporting Hun Sen's political rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh and his FUNCINPEC party (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia), China was disappointed with Ranariddh efforts to build closer ties with Taiwan in 'One China' policy issue.²¹ By this disappointment, China was able to approach Hun Sen and bring him closer to China. In fact, it was not easy to persuade a leader who was not so friendly and devoted to Chinese government. With an excellent diplomacy and persuasion, Chinese government was successful changed Cambodian government perspective.

Faced with international isolation after the 1997 coup that brought him to power, Hun Sen's close relationship with China opposed attempts by Western countries to impose economic sanctions against Cambodia. Close relations with Cambodia and China along with its influence demonstrated to defeat the Vietnamese influence in the region. Cambodia has severed all relations with Taiwan and has been very supportive of reunification of Taiwan with China.²² (*Ibid*: 143).

²¹ Akbar Husain and Wim Swann. *21st Century Cambodia: View and Vision*. New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2009, p. 143.

²² *Ibid*.

B. Proximity between China and Cambodia

B.1. Proximity of Political History: Indochina Wars

Historically, Indochina Wars happened three times. The wars were motivated by ideological conflict in which the spread of Communist ideology at the time was very fast, especially in the Indochina region. First Indochina War was a war between Vietnam and France that occurred from 1946 to 1954. The war was marked by the struggle of the Viet Minh movement to free Vietnam from French colonialism. This war also got Japan involved as an ally of France which also occupied Vietnam. France was assisted by South Vietnam which was not a Communist faction. France also attacked other countries such as Laos and Cambodia. One of the leaders of Cambodia named Sihanouk had an important role in the struggle to achieve the independence of Cambodia. Sihanouk was known to choose a more leftist leaning to China. From here began the attachment between Cambodia and China. Finally this war was ended with the fall of the French and the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, succeeded in driving the French out of Vietnam.

The Second Indochina War occurred from 1957 to 1975. This war involved two camps, one representing Communist ideology and the other liberal one, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Vietnam was a Communist country assisted by the USSR and China, while South Vietnam was supported by the United States and its allies. This war ended with the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Vietnam that marked the strong support of the USSR and China to

Third Indochina War, as a continuation of the previous wars, was more important here because it showed the intense relationship between China and Cambodia. This war took place around the year 1972-1979 involving three players, namely China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. It was fueled by the fear of Vietnam of Chinese domination and control in the Indochina region. This war began when Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia. Khmer Rouge or the Communist Party of Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot, successfully replaced Prince Sihanouk and General Lon Nol. In his regime, the genocide happened beyond normality, killing more or less 2 million people of Cambodia. This program aimed to select those people who were purely in line with the communist government at that time. Eventually, China launched a retaliatory invasion against the Socialist Vietnam in response of the occupation of Cambodia by Vietnam. Even so, China did not want to take any risk further because Vietnam was fully supported by the USSR. The main cause of Chinese invasion at that time was the overthrow of the Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime by Vietnam.²³

In 1978, the war tension aroused with the Vietnamese invasion to Cambodia. Vietnam regarded the Khmer Rouge overthrow as an appropriate action. The Khmer Rouge was under Pol Pot's rule, the most violent leader in Cambodia at that time. He strongly held the Communist ideas said to be inspired by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist approach. China quickly responded to Vietnamese attack in repressive way. The failure of China to prevent Laos from falling under the influence of Vietnam encouraged this country to look after Cambodia. China

²³ Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge, *The Third Indochina War*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

had played an important role in this conflict. China's supports on the legitimacy of Cambodia's independence in Geneva bring a long-standing pattern of close Cambodian-Chinese ties.²⁴

Several agreements had been made by China and Vietnam to end the conflict but always found a dead end. This war ended because each side, Vietnam or Cambodia, claimed its victory over this war and its success in expelling United States away. In the course of time along the First and Second Indochina Wars, a good relationship has established between China and Cambodia. The Third Indochina War marked the beginning of strong China-Cambodia ties. A close China-Cambodia relationship appeared awkward on the surface because China was the devoted and dedicated patron of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge from its inception in the 1960s through insurgency, conquest, genocide, defeat, and peace.²⁵

B.2. Geographical Proximity

Geographical proximity between one country and another has been significantly beneficial in their relations. It has been shown in China-Cambodia relations. China is geographically situated in East Asia while Cambodia in Southeast Asia. It would be much efficient for them to do several joint activities, especially trade. This can reduce the costs incurred in trade. In the context of spreading political influence, China has the advantage of geographical proximity

²⁴ Bernard K. Gordon. "The Third Indochina Conflict". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 1986, p. 66-85.

²⁵ Stephen J. Morris. *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*. California: Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 100.

to Cambodia. If there was something happening in the region, China will be able to read the situation more easily and act more quickly and efficiently because they do not need to travel long distance coming to the site.

C. The Indicators of Cambodia as A Proxy State of China

A proxy state is strongly connected to a more powerful state. The proxy state is known as periphery state because it is considered less developed (a third world country) while on the top is the center state or developed one. There are several reasons a state is willing to commit as a proxy state. It is bound with the more powerful state in important aspects of life such as politics, economy, culture, and military. But this bond is common without any historical connection and ideological factor. Historical value significantly affects the relations between periphery state and the more powerful state in recent time. Countries which share the same ideology establish bilateral relations more easily.

For center state, it is very helpful "using" proxy state to obtain its interests through foreign policy at regional level. The purposes vary consisting of sovereignty, territory, and domination. Every center state has concern in dominating particular region. Therefore, proxy state is very important for center state to compensate other state's power in a region.

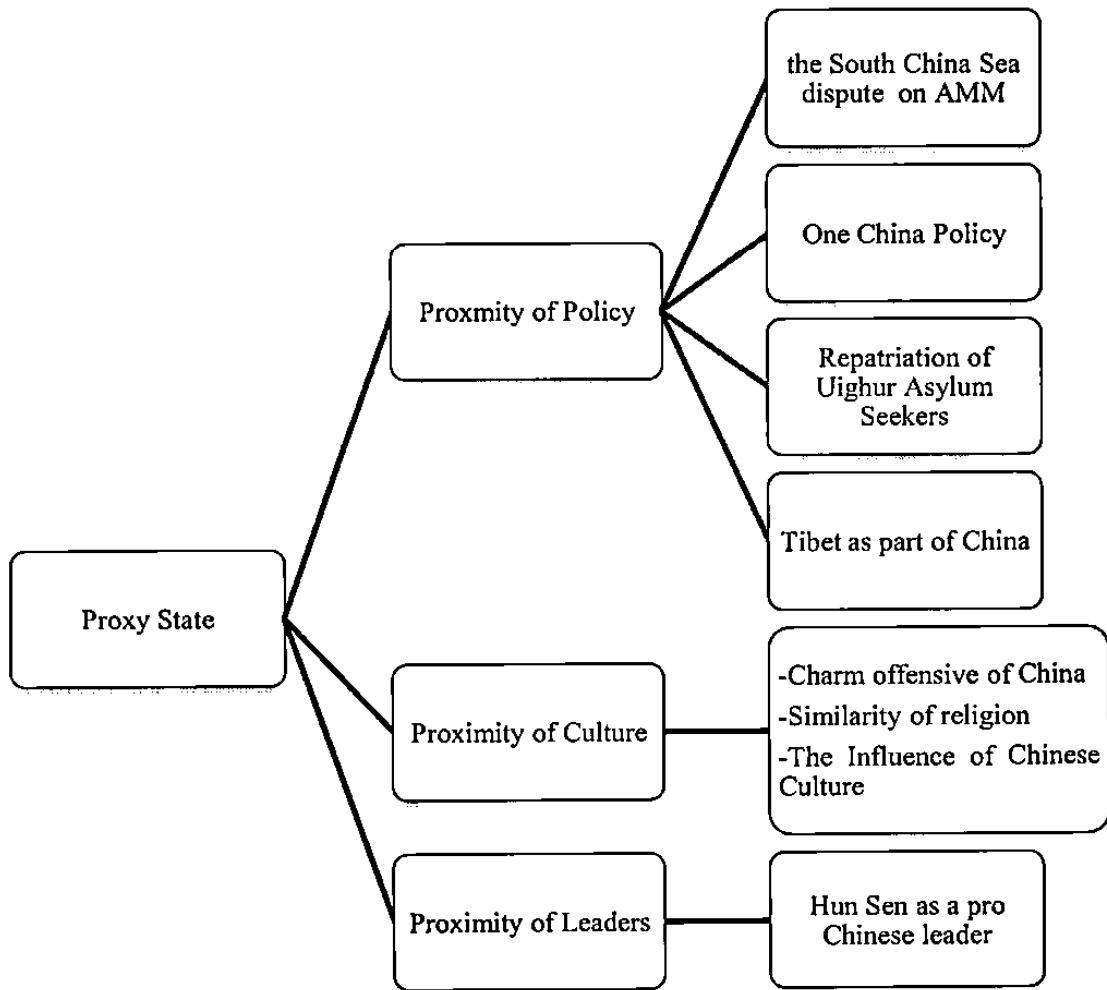
During the Cold War era, superpowers activated Proxy states and organizations to serve and represent their interests and to engage in conflict with one another. This form of Proxy avoided direct superpower confrontation and mitigated the threat of nuclear war.²⁶ (Lebow and Stein, 1987: 5-72).

²⁶ B. N. Lebow & J. C. Stein, "Beyond Deterrence", *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 43(4), 1987, p.

The proxy states became popular during the Cold War era. The ultimate purpose of any superpower states activating the proxy states is to represent their interests. At the beginning of proxy states euphoria in the Cold War, superpower state aimed to balance other power and avoid any direct confrontation. Furthermore, proxy states were eligible to stop the conflict getting wider.

Cambodia has been very supportive toward China's policies in several occasions. The influence of China has significantly affected the government of Cambodia to sacrifice other states' interests for China's. The number of incentives and gifts are provided as an offer for Cambodia to confirm the position of China among many parties related to the issues that this country has been dealing with. The regular visits of Chinese officials to Cambodia for cultural purposes also signify these close ties. It will make Cambodia difficult to switch sides from China because culture is something that is flourishing in the community and it is difficult to be eliminated. These habits clarify that Cambodia acts as a China's

Figure 1: The Indicators of Cambodia as a Proxy State of China



C.1. Proximity of Policy

A proxy state always shows proximity of policy to the more powerful country. Being a proxy state means having proximity of policy. Proximity of policy means having a close connection in term of policy. Proxy state followed the policies made by the more powerful state that beneficial for its own. There were many evidences showing Cambodia became China's proxy state and proxy

relationship between China and several other countries in the region is fairly obvious. First, Cambodia acts as a China's proxy state in ASEAN summits in the context of South China Sea dispute. Second, Cambodia supports "One China" policy that will make Taiwan's position difficult. Third, Cambodia was involved in repatriation of 20 Uighur asylum seekers to China (the Uighurs are ethnic minorities from the restive province of Xinjiang) despite international protests. Fourth, Cambodia supports the position of Tibet as a part of China.

C.1.1. Cambodia as a Supporter of "One China" Policy

As quoted by Steve Tsang, Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia point out that Cambodia state clearly its support to "One China" policy. Cambodia has regarded Taiwan as a territory of the PRC and it is an inseparable part of China. Cambodia fully disagrees with the former prime minister of Taiwan move, Chen Shui-bian to freeze the function of the National Unification Council and stop the application of the national unification guidelines. Prime Minister Hun Sen has become one of ASEAN's adherents of "One China" policy.²⁷

In August 1997, China granted US\$6 million in assistance to Cambodia to build hundreds of wells. The interior minister Sar Kheng visited China to discuss cooperation "on security issues", even though the result of those discussions was never stated in public. And a couple days later after the meeting, Hun Sen

²⁷ Steve Tsang, "Cambodia's Foreign Policy: A Study in Pragmatism", *Journal of International Studies*, 2000, 32(1), pp. 1-15.

announced that the Taiwanese representative office in Phnom Penh was being shut down, despite Taiwan being one of Cambodia's major investors.²⁸

The Cambodian government ordered to close down Taiwan's de facto embassy and Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in 1997 and prohibited Cambodian government officials from making official or government visits to Taiwan or attending any functional meetings. In 2002, Cambodia refused to grant Visa to Dalai Lama and suppressed the Falun Gong activities in the country. It can prove that Cambodia is surely an adherent of China's policy.²⁹ (Vannarith, 2009: 9).

In August 2010, Hun Sen warned provincial governors not to permit the establishment of Taiwanese government bureaus or offices in their provinces. If Taiwan disobeys the warning it will face an immediate dismissal. It was quite irrational if Cambodia was willing to become a proxy state only for grant that was offered by China. It was because the influence and the power of China capable of destabilizing the Cambodian government's focus.

According to the government of Cambodia's data, around 1994 until 2011, Taiwan ranks in the sixth position of the top investors in Cambodia. Even it is far away from China's position rank number one top investor, but Taiwan is considered much important. Cambodia will not only emphasize on single investor

²⁸ Julio A. Jeldres. *The Royal House of Cambodia*. Michigan: Monument Books, 2003.

²⁹ Chhann Vannarith. "Cambodia Between China and Japan". Cambodian Institute for

but the rest of it equally important. But it is all about who has stronger power and influence in which China fills the criteria.

C.1.2. The Repatriation of Uighur Asylum Seekers

In December 2009, Cambodia decided to return 20 Uighur asylum seekers to China, ethnic minorities from the restive province of Xinjiang despite protests internationally. It was built upon Beijing's request. Beijing granted Cambodia 1.2 billion USD of aid a few days earlier brought about more than the cumulative total in 17 years earlier.³⁰

Wong's opinion indicates that China is a tough protector of sovereignty and territory. China will chase any group assured engage in separatist movement. Even the smallest thing cannot escape from China's control. 20 asylum seekers should not have entered into a count. In fact, 20 asylum seekers in Cambodia are valuable for China and should not be wasted.

This was one of the symptoms Cambodia acted as China's proxy state. Every policy made by China, Cambodia tended to be the first follower and supporter. This made Cambodia China's regular proxy state. Thus a country can be considered as a proxy state when it shows that they have proximity of policy. This was the third tangible phenomenon that showed a proxy state behaviours.

C.1.3. Tibet as Part of China

There are increasing supports from many countries in international community including from Cambodia. The Cambodian government believed

³⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/15/world/asia/15china.html>

Tibet is inseparable part of China. More countries have extended their support to the Chinese government in its handling of the recent unrest in Lhasa, capital of China's Tibet Autonomous Region. A senior Cambodian official in charge of foreign affairs and international cooperation spoke to Chinese diplomats in Cambodia that the Lhasa riots were a premeditated and organized act of violence by a handful of separatists. The government of Cambodia and its people firmly support the steps taken by the Chinese government to maintain stability and restore order to the region.³¹ (*Xinhuanet*, 2012). It is still fresh in the memory when the government of China visiting Cambodia. Chinese officials ensured Cambodian government to support China's policies regarding Taiwan and Tibet issues. Both China and Cambodia agreed to maintain bilateral ties and cooperation. This cooperation is a strategic importance for Cambodia.

C.2. Proximity of Culture

Chinese officials visit Cambodia regularly (*charm offensive*) for some purposes (*sphere of influence*). Beijing supports its diplomacy through constant visits by senior Chinese officials to Southeast Asia. Since 2004, Chinese senior officials held at least twice as many visits to Phnom Penh. Promotion of Chinese culture and Chinese language studies are major parts of this public diplomacy. For example, funding from Confucius Institutes flows from Beijing as marked by the recent first year implementation. The leading local universities have Chinese language and culture schools. Beijing has also tried to encourage instruction of Mandarin and Chinese culture in primary schools abroad, such as by helping

³¹ Xinhuanet (2008). "Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh support China's actions to stabilize Tibet", [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-02/21/content_7822281.htm](#) (February 2012)

students in poor countries like Cambodia to attend local private Chinese language school.³²

Even though these cultural visits applied not only in Cambodia but other countries, the development of Chinese culture in Cambodia move faster than in other countries. The language and tradition have been very popular in Cambodian people. Moreover, the existence of religions both in China and Cambodia are Buddhist. The closeness' and the similarities of these countries are too many thus make the relations different with the relations between China and other countries.

C.3. Proximity of Leaders

Several Cambodian leaders have personal relations with Chinese leaders. Since Norodom Sihanouk, Pol Pot, until Hun Sen recently. China has to confirm that the leaders of Cambodia should become pro Chinese leaders. Hun Sen was formerly a pro-Vietnamese leader and move to pro-Chinese leader recently. It is caused by the control of Chinese government toward Cambodian government individually.

C.3.1. Hun Sen as a Pro Chinese Leader

Cambodia has transformed its previous position as pro-Vietnam country into China's proxy. Hun Sen was formerly pro-Vietnam leader. The reason is China supported Hun Sen's political rival, Norodom Ranaridh with his FUNCINPEC party. The disappointment of China to Ranaridh's action building closer ties with Taiwan has changed his view to turn over Hun Sen. Meanwhile Hun Sen received economic sanction from the western countries after the 1997

³² Joshua Kurlantzi, "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia", *Current History*, 2006, p.

coup that brought him to power. It was the right time for China showing the attention. China resisted the following decision made by western countries. China's ingenuity in taking any chances has built Hun Sen's trust. In addition, Hun Sen has been very supportive to unify PRC and Taiwan during his closeness with PRC.³³

It was a great turning from Hun Sen making him shift as a rather pro-China leader. While looking back the old memory in the past, the tension between Hun Sen and Chinese government was quite severe. Their relations in the past became less harmonious because of Chinese supports to Khmer Rouge regime led by Pol Pot. As noted, Hun Sen was the leader who has been successfully overthrow and replaced Pol Pot. It raised China's concern not to let Cambodia staying under the influence of Vietnam. Chinese purpose is to get rid of Vietnam in spreading its influence especially in Southeast Asia region. It proved that China and Cambodia are still inseparable. For Beijing, it does not matter who is ruling Cambodia as long as he is a communist and likely to be persuaded. Chinese patronage has got the trust back from Hun Sen and paves its way to play more politics game in Cambodia.

D. The Importance of ASEAN for Cambodia

ASEAN had a role in seeking a negotiated solution to the decade long Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia that ousted the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. Without ASEAN involvement, there might be no sovereign Cambodia today. Cambodia may still be languishing under foreign occupation and invasion

³³ 111. H. J. ...

(under Vietnam's occupation) or as an international pariah under Khmer Rouge rule.³⁴ During the Third Indochina War in 1978, ASEAN attempted on diplomatic initiatives opposing the Vietnamese action toward Cambodia. Vietnam's actions were considered against ASEAN principle. It was beneficial to ASEAN's internal unity and international profile experience to resist Vietnam.³⁵

ASEAN has become an important organization for Cambodia long time before it could join as a full member of it in 1999. ASEAN willingly served its help regarding Vietnam's occupation in Cambodia. Cambodia has been engaged with ASEAN in the terms of politics, economy, security, and trade since the first time joined ASEAN until recently. This cohesiveness has reflected a positive development for Cambodia that it can play active roles internationally. Cambodia sees ASEAN as a window of opportunities and possibilities.

Hun Sen has clearly stated the main reasons for his government to join ASEAN in 1999. There are several interests that need to be achieved by Cambodia such as regional security and stability, the ASEAN norm of consensus and the principle of non-interference, the economic growth experienced by ASEAN states over the previous 30 years, and the possibility of ASEAN serving as a gateway for trading relations with the outside world.³⁶ Any country in the world, including Cambodia, would never waste such opportunity. Otherwise, Cambodia would have never become a country considered internationally because

³⁴ Amitav Acharya. "The end of ASEAN centrality?", *Asia Times*, 2012, no page.

³⁵ Shaun Narine. "ASEAN and the Management of Regional Security", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, 1998, p. 7.

³⁶ *East, East and East Australasia 2002*, 24th edition, London: Routledge, 2002, 242.

an isolated country never gets counted. Cambodia may still become a less developed country but it has shown a good development inside.

D.1. The importance of ASEAN for Cambodia in Political Context

Acting more effectively in regional and international politics, Cambodia was actively participating in ASEAN summits and ministerial meetings such as AMM. From several agendas held, this country gave a certain influence on ASEAN although not too significant. ASEAN has put Cambodia in strategic position. ASEAN is an organization based on multilateral framework which let every country, including Cambodia, mingle with other great nations.

D.2. The Importance of ASEAN for Cambodia in Terms of Security

In terms of security, Cambodia will get benefit because it has been engaged as a member of the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum). With the increasing number of conflicts today, Cambodia can play a role to maintain peace and stability within or outside the region. The other positive thing is that Cambodia can build its good image and bright future by associating with ASEAN because ASEAN aims to promote the national interests of every member state. In terms of border conflict, ASEAN had contributed in resolving territorial conflict between Cambodia and Thailand because it was related to the promotion of regional security. ASEAN had attempted to reconcile and unite the two conflicting parties and offered several options to achieve the agreement between them. Without the services of ASEAN, perhaps the war is still going on today.

D.3. The Importance of ASEAN for Cambodia in Terms of Economy

After the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997, ASEAN economic integration was expedited. The main purpose of the integration was to create a single market

and production base, a competitive economic region, equitable economic development, and to achieve integration of the region into the global economy in order to make ASEAN a growing pole in the world economic system. As part of ASEAN efforts, the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Cambodia has been established. SEZ aims to provide and improve the investment climate conducive to the enhancement of productivity, competitiveness, national economic growth, export promotion, employment generation. If the approved SEZ are developed as planned, the location near Thai and Vietnamese border becomes very important for Cambodia as part of production base in the regional division of labor, especially after the ASEAN economic integration in 2015.³⁷

ASEAN is facing global challenges by implementing several important agendas focusing on economic sector development. Cambodia has the possibility to be involved in the agendas. There are ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and Korea), AFTA, set in the framework of cooperation. Besides, there is a big agenda is being well built by ASEAN which is ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). ASEAN is hoping for regional integration to advance the economy of its members through trade and investment. Alassane Sow, the World Bank country manager for Cambodia, pointed out that it would be wise for Cambodia to optimize its roles in AEC. Cambodia also has to utilize benefits from the implementation of AEC in order to absorb investment from services firms to serve the region and the world (Kunmakara and Renzenbrink, 2012: *no page*).

³⁷ N. P. P. (2012). "ASEAN Economic Integration and Cambodia's Industrial Policies".

E. Cambodia's Dilemma

Actually, Cambodia faces a fairly complicated dilemma to balance one of two equally important options. China and ASEAN are equally important for Cambodia because China may help Cambodia in terms of money, but ASEAN has a role as a platform for countries in Southeast Asia. By joining the ASEAN, Cambodia can play an active role in the international arena. Cambodia is able to join the cooperation among countries in Asia and outside Asia. For example, Cambodia is participating in achieving the integrated ASEAN Community by 2015. Many things will be achieved by Cambodia and it is likely to progress very well in the years to come. As the host of the latest ASEAN meeting in 2012, while in fact Cambodia is not a claimant of an area in South China Sea, it must prevent a joint communiqué. This is due to the very strong Chinese influence on it that China requested the Cambodian to secure its position in the South China Sea issue. It was not an easy thing for Cambodia's decision. On the other side, Cambodia wanted to maintain close relationship with ASEAN countries which are claimants of certain areas in South China Sea. China and ASEAN have the same contribution to Cambodia. But in the end China is a major actor for Cambodia. The country has already had the closest relationship with China based on