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For the U.S.,  
Continued  
Commitment to  
Asia

*By J. Danforth Quayle*



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# For the U.S., Continued Commitment to Asia

by J. Danforth Quayle

I am delighted to be here today to discuss U.S. policy toward Asia. Asia and the Pacific are very much in the news. With the tragic events unfolding in China, our attention is cast toward events in the east.

The Pacific region includes half of the world's people and two-thirds of the world's GNP, and it continues to be the fastest growing region in the world. Japan is now the world's second largest economic power, surpassing the declining Soviet Union.

President Bush understands the importance of Asia and its economic, political, and security relationship to the rest of the world. Indeed, the Bush Administration is the first Administration in history to have both the President and Vice President visit the region in the first 100 days of an Administration.

I would like to focus my remarks on the question of regional security in Asia and its relation to democratic and political development. In particular, I want to address one of the key issues I discussed with Asian leaders during my visit: the current situation in Cambodia. I am afraid that there is a great deal of misinformation floating about regarding our assistance to the Non-Communist Resistance and the Bush Administration's policy toward Cambodia. I want to set the record straight. But first let me briefly lay out some of the key principles underlying our Asia policy in general.

**Vital Cooperation.** Since World War II, the United States has been deeply engaged in Asia, helping to defend our allies while promoting peace and stability throughout the region. Formal bilateral security relationships with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia, along with informal cooperation with other free world nations, have made an immense contribution to the stability of the region, and have been a vital factor in our global deterrence posture.

One of the key themes I stressed in both my public and private remarks in Asia was the need for the United States and our Asian allies to maintain our commitment to collective security. As the Soviet Union takes its first faltering steps toward democracy, as it begins to be interested in contributing constructively to settling international disputes, there may be a tendency to neglect our common defense, and to ignore the need to nurture our alliance relationships.

I am firmly convinced that we must resist the temptation to dispense with our defense capabilities. Rather, we must prudently watch to see if Gorbachev's peace rhetoric in the Pacific is matched by deeds that lessen the Soviet threat. We must adopt a long-range perspective on the Soviets that is hopeful, yet cautious. Although there are encouraging signs of change in Soviet policies, these changes have not been uniform and, with the exception of the Sino-Soviet border, there has been no substantial reduction in the overall Soviet threat, especially in military capabilities in the Northwest Pacific. The Soviet Pacific

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Ocean fleet still numbers 871 ships and craft. As long as this remains, so does the need for preparedness.

**Appreciating the Soviet Threat.** This message was well received and was supported by my Asian hosts. My basic impression was that the leaders of the Pacific Rim – men like Bob Hawke of Australia, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and President Suharto of Indonesia – have a very shrewd and realistic appreciation of the Soviet threat. They are not about to be swept away by euphoria. They recognize that the Soviet Union is interested in sharing in Asia's economic boom and in increasing its access to the region, and has moderated its behavior accordingly. But they also recognize that the Soviets continue to modernize their force projection capabilities in Asia and the Pacific, where the largest of the Soviet fleets remains stationed. And they understand that the jury remains out on the question of the durability of the Gorbachev reform program and the extent of fundamental change in Soviet intentions.

For these reasons, the United States must continue to maintain an active role and presence in the Pacific. The U.S. must remain a Pacific power, the fundamental guarantor of regional stability.

We must continue to work closely with our Asian friends and allies to support the structure of collective security that has developed in the post-war years. The linchpin of this collective security system is Japan. The health of the U.S.-Japanese relationship will remain vital for ensuring security and stability in the region. The U.S. will also continue to cultivate its security relationships with traditional friends such as Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines. And we will work hard to develop mutually beneficial relations in the security area with other friendly nations in the region.

**Central U.S. Objective.** We must never forget that security cannot be divorced from politics. Security relationships can only flourish where there are shared political values and institutions. Therefore, the fostering of long-term democratic development in Asia and the Pacific must be seen as a central objective of our approach to collective security.

In East Asia and the Pacific, we have witnessed a continuing evolution toward greater democracy and political openness. In the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, and elsewhere, democracy continue to advance. Fiji is on the way to restoring constitutional democracy. In Burma, too, a desire for political renewal is evident, even though the forces of authoritarianism continue to rule. In short, there has been an encouraging expansion throughout Asia of values that we Americans share, values that serve to strengthen our partnership, and cement our friendship, with the nations of the region.

Of course, the great exception to this heartening regional and global trend is China. It is our duty to denounce the brutal suppression of popular and peaceful demonstrations in China. It is our obligation to condemn the Orwellian inversion of truth that is now being spread about the events around Tiananmen Square.

**Chinese Patriots.** The simple truth is that, by and large, the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square and throughout China were Chinese patriots. They advocated basic human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. These are rights that we support around the world. As President Bush as stated: "Throughout the world, we stand with those who seek greater freedom and democracy. This is the strongly felt view of my Administration, of our Congress, and, most important, of the American people."

For this reason, the American people are shocked and outraged by the recent executions in China. We urge the government in China, in the strongest possible terms, to end these executions now. We further urge on the Chinese government to end the wave of violence and reprisals against those who have called for democracy.

We, of course, have major strategic interests at stake in China. We would not want to see a reversion to the situation of total hostility to the West of the 1950s, or to the 1960s, when China promoted “national liberation wars” and posed a threat to its neighbors. China’s opening to the West has contributed to stability in the Pacific region and the world – and, indeed, to reform in China itself. We and the Chinese continue to share fundamental strategic interests, and we each can only lose if this relationship continues to deteriorate.

**Responding Appropriately.** The recent events in China have caused deep concern among the American people and have disrupted our relationship based on this common strategic interest. The Chinese leadership must judge where its strategic and economic interests lie. We urge the Chinese leadership to consider the effects of what they have done and are doing. We would respond appropriately to such positive developments, and our common interest in global peace and stability will be served.

Now I would like to talk about Cambodia, and about the Administration’s policy in support of peace and democratic development in Southeast Asia. As you know, Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia in late 1978. At the time, it seemed doubtful that the victorious Vietnamese could ever be induced to go home. Now, however, Vietnam has indicated that it will withdraw its forces from Cambodia by September 30. We continue to hope that progress can be made in negotiations among the Cambodian factions toward agreement on an interim coalition government under Prince Sihanouk which will lead to free elections and genuine stability in Cambodia, and prevent the return to the Khmer Rouge “killing fields.”

**Cambodia Coalition Government.** In the past, the U.S. has worked closely with the ASEAN nations as well as with China to bring home to Vietnam the diplomatic and economic consequences of its domination of Cambodia. The ASEAN leaders agree with our position that the Vietnamese-installed Hun Sen regime cannot be allowed to monopolize power after Vietnamese forces have withdrawn. A one-sided settlement would make continued civil war almost inevitable. At the same time, the communist Khmer Rouge, who are responsible of the deaths of 20 percent of Cambodia’s 1975 population – some million and a half persons – must not return to dominance. The only realistic and satisfactory alternative is a transitional coalition government headed by Prince Sihanouk, in which the Non-Communist Resistance – the groups headed by Sihanouk and Son Sann – would play a key role. This coalition would establish the framework of a new, non-communist state and organize elections that would offer the Cambodian people an opportunity to decide their own future.

To deal with the twin dilemmas of the Khmer Rouge and the Hun Sen regime, virtually every government supports an international presence under U.N. auspices to verify the Vietnamese withdrawal, police a ceasefire, and supervise elections in Cambodia. The only exceptions are Vietnam and its Cambodian client. Even Moscow at times has appeared willing to accept an international presence, with the caveat that it must be acceptable to Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

The U.S., ASEAN, China, and our allies in Europe and Japan welcome steps that will hasten a true, complete, and internationally verified withdrawal as a real contribution to a

comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia. U.S. policy towards Cambodia has consistently called for such a withdrawal, along with effective measures to prevent the return to power of the Khmer Rouge. And the U.S. looks forward to eventual normalization of relations with Vietnam in the context of a genuine withdrawal and an acceptable settlement in Cambodia. The pace and scope of the normalization process, of course, will be affected by Vietnam's cooperation with us on humanitarian issues, including the POW/MIA issue.

**Helping the Non-Communist Resistance.** The best opportunity for preventing a return to power by the Khmer Rouge is a comprehensive settlement that includes a Sihanouk-led interim coalition government and an international presence to monitor and supervise elections and keep the peace. No single element can do the job alone. Our policy is designed to create the full range of stabilizing and restraining elements needed for a comprehensive settlement. However, the most important single element is strengthening the Non-Communist Resistance in as many ways as possible. For this reason, the Administration has asked Congress to authorize additional aid to the Non-Communist Resistance. The purpose of such assistance is to increase the political strength of the Non-Communist Resistance in the peace process while simultaneously giving it the strength to hold its own in the event of a Khmer Rouge attempt to seize power.

Yet instead of endorsing greater assistance to the Non-Communist Resistance, some in Congress have opposed it. They have challenged the Administration to make the case for more assistance in a public forum. Well, this is a public forum, and I would like to lay out the case for strengthening the Non-Communist Resistance in Cambodia.

The basic rationale for such a policy is straightforward. At this moment, the forces of the murderous Khmer Rouge are heavily armed, thanks to China's assistance. The forces of the Hun Sen regime are even more heavily armed, thanks to Soviet and Vietnamese assistance. Under these circumstances, surely the non-communist forces deserve the assistance of the West. Surely we should act to prevent the Khmer Rouge from returning to power. Surely, as Americans, we have a compelling moral responsibility to do what we can, short of direct intervention, to provide the wherewithal for the Cambodian people to have a genuine choice in determining their future.

**Political Settlement vs. Civil War.** Bear in mind the political context in which this assistance would be undertaken. In about a month, important negotiations will take place that will shape the political future of Cambodia. We are committed to doing everything in our power to ensure that these negotiations do not result in a situation in which the Khmer Rouge will again be in a position to dominate Cambodia, whether politically or militarily. By strengthening the Non-Communist Resistance, we would be increasing the prospects for a successful political, negotiated, outcome; by doing nothing, we would increase the likelihood of continued civil war and the potential for a return to power by the murderous Khmer Rouge. Unless Sihanouk is strong enough militarily and politically, he will not be able to hold the center of the Cambodian political stage long enough to ensure a free and fair election.

In recent months we have seen many reports portraying Hanoi's invasion-installed PRK regime as beneficent, reforming, and popular. If Hun Sen — a former Khmer Rouge commander — is as popular as his press reviews claim, he has nothing to fear from going to the polls and substituting ballots for bullets in an internationally supervised, properly prepared election. If the PRK is as strong as it claims, an election victory will give it the legitimacy it so visibly lacks and badly needs.



Let there be no mistake about this crucial point: it is the absence of a negotiated agreement, not our assistance to the Non-Communist Resistance, that increases the prospects of civil war. By aiding Prince Sihanouk and the Non-Communist Resistance, we will be encouraging a political process that will bring Cambodia's civil war to an end. By withholding aid, we will only make continued civil war more likely.

**Congressional Critics.** But our congressional critics accuse the Administration of seeking to promote "instability" in Cambodia. They forget that the best guarantee of stability is a negotiated settlement, and that aid to the Non-Communist Resistance will help bring about such a settlement. They claim that by aiding Prince Sihanouk and the Non-Communist Resistance forces, we become indirect accomplices of his Khmer Rouge partners. They forget that our assistance to Prince Sihanouk is designed to make it possible for him to be independent of the Khmer Rouge without becoming a prisoner of the Vietnamese-sponsored puppet government. Prince Sihanouk's children were murdered by the Khmer Rouge. Does anyone seriously think that he needs instruction on how dangerous and odious these people are?

Critics claim that anything given to the Non-Communist Resistance will fall into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. In a single instance in the past, when the Non-Communist Resistance was dreadfully weak, a larger Khmer Rouge unit surrounded and disarmed a woefully outnumbered Non-Communist unit. However, this no longer happens — not because the Khmer Rouge have suddenly become genteel but because the Non-Communist units are now large enough and well armed enough to defend themselves in most cases while operating inside Cambodia.

Critics warn that by strengthening the Non-Communist Resistance we are headed down a "slippery slope." They forget that we have in fact been providing substantial amounts of assistance to the Non-Communist Resistance for years. This assistance has not led us back into direct involvement in Indochina. It has contributed to a policy of seeking a comprehensive, political settlement for Cambodia. Further assistance is a means to bringing about such a political settlement.

**Open Debate.** Finally, critics claim that the Administration is trying to avoid congressional scrutiny. How much more openly debated can the policy become? When members of the House of Representatives vote on H.R. 1655, The International Cooperation Act of 1989, they will be voting on a section entitled "Assistance for the Cambodian People," which specifically authorizes a variety of forms of assistance to the Non-Communist Resistance forces. Virtually identical language has passed both houses of Congress since 1985, but given the debate in the newspapers and elsewhere, the vote this year will provide an opportunity for individual members to stand up and be counted before the bar of history. Will members of either party in either house vote down the concept of meaningful assistance to the non-communists and thereby risk a return to power of Pol Pot's genocidal regime?

But, in fact, what underlies all these criticisms of our policy and the Non-Communist Resistance is a deeper fear — the fear of "another Vietnam." The unacknowledged but all too tangible presence in the debate over Cambodia is the ghost of Vietnam. But, my friends, it is now time to lay this ghost to rest. President Bush noted in his Inaugural Address: "No great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory." Similarly, no great nation can long afford to be paralyzed by a memory. We must not permit the Non-Communist Resistance in Cambodia to become the last casualty of the Vietnam War.

The situation in Southeast Asia today is very different from that of the late 1960s or the early 1970s. We have learned many things since 1975, the year Saigon fell to the armies of the North Vietnamese communists. We have learned that the coming of “peace” to Southeast Asia did not bring an end to suffering and injustice for the people of that region. Few of the critics of American involvement in the Vietnam War later found the time to pay much attention to the horrors inflicted on the peoples of Indochina by the communist regimes in Hanoi and Phnom Penh. Few had the courage to admit they may have been wrong in their assessment of the moral calculus of the situation in Southeast Asia.

At the same time, we have learned that there are limits to America’s ability to assist others achieve and defend free government. We have learned that America cannot fight others’ battles for them.

**Remaining Committed.** But we have learned that we have every reason to be confident in the ultimate triumph of freedom. The Vietnam experience damaged our confidence in American values and institutions. But over the last eight years, our confidence has been restored. And indeed, as we look at Asia and the world today, it is clearer than ever before that the future does not lie with Soviet communism or its Asian variants. To a degree that would have seemed astonishing even a decade ago, democratic ideals are on the march in Asia.

Let me conclude these remarks by reaffirming this Administration’s determination to remain engaged in Asia – engaged for peace, for freedom, and for democracy. Our role in Asia’s attainment of these goals remains vital. And that is why it must continue.

