

## Wisdom on Cambodia

The Administration's decision to stay out of Cambodian politics serves the best interests of Cambodia, Vietnam and, not least, the United States.

The leading members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have found "reassuring" the description of American policy given to them privately by Secretary of State Rogers after a long conference with President Nixon. "Our profile [in Cambodia] is just about as low as you can get," Senator Mansfield said. This is the course of wisdom.

Some Allied military men and practitioners of power politics among Mr. Nixon's advisers evidently wanted to exploit the supposed opportunity opened by the ouster of Prince Sihanouk. A military move that succeeded in closing off the Communist sanctuary in Cambodia undoubtedly would hamper Hanoi's operations in South Vietnam.

Realistically, the chances of completely closing down Vietnamese Communist military operations in Cambodia are slim; American involvement in another quagmire would be far more likely. And the kind of cross-border harassment mounted recently by the South Vietnamese Army involves greater risks than benefits, even if desired by the new Cambodian regime. The indications are otherwise.

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Cambodia's new rulers have pulled back from encouraging such raids on Vietnamese Communist forces along the frontier; they have also criticized intimations from Washington that American troops now are authorized to cross into Cambodia in self-defense. Pnompenh obviously cannot invite Allied troops in at a time when it is appealing to the Geneva powers and the United Nations to help get the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong out.

The real issue in Cambodia is whether the new regime can consolidate power, and this, primarily, is an internal political issue. Reports that Vietnamese Communist units were marching on Pnompenh to restore Sihanouk to power have not materialized. Moscow and Hanoi both have avoided an open break with the new regime.

For all sides, a widening of the Vietnam war into Cambodia represents the least attractive of alternatives. Washington's decision to stay out now makes it likely that a war no one wants can be avoided.