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The imperative of success: United Nations Peacekeeping in Cambodia (1991-1993)

Stam, W.

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The Imperative of Success

United Nations Peacekeeping in Cambodia (1991–1993)

Proefschrift

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Promotor: Prof. dr. B. Schoenmaker

Copromotor: Dr. T. W. Brocades Zaalberg

Promotiecommissie: Prof. dr. A. ten Cate (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)

Prof. dr. I.G.B.M. Duijvesteijn

Prof. dr. A.W.M. Gerrits

Dr. P. Grosser (Sciences Po Paris)

Dr. A.M. O'Malley

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“l’ignorance du passé ne se borne pas à nuire à la connaissance du présent ; elle compromet, dans le présent, l’action même.”

Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l’histoire ou Métier d’historien*, 1949

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(Demining of a rice field by French peacekeepers from the *17e régiment du génie parachutiste* as Cambodian civilians pass by, September 1992.)

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Cambodian governments, factions and armies

CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea was the resistance government in exile formed in 1982 presided by Prince Sihanouk.
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea was the Vietnamese-installed government in 1979 with limited international recognition.
DK	Democratic Kampuchea was the official name of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime led by Pol Pot, and continued to be the official name of the faction during UNTAC.
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea was the political party of the Khmer Rouge after their ousting from power in January 1979.
NADK	National Army of Democratic Kampuchea was the army of the PDK.
SOC	State of Cambodia was the name of the government in Phnom Penh since 1989 led by Prime Minister Hun Sen.
CPAF	Cambodia People's Armed Forces were the armed forces of the Hun Sen government.
CPP	Cambodian People's Party is the political party of the Hun Sen government.
FUNCINPEC	<i>Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique Et Coopératif</i> (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia) was the royalist party founded by Prince Sihanouk and later led by Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.
ANKI	<i>Armée Nationale pour Khmer Indépendant</i> (National Army of Independent Kampuchea) was the armed wing of FUNCINPEC.
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front was a right-wing anti-communist party led by Son Sann.
KPNLAF	Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces was the armed wing of the KPNLF.
BLDP	Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party was the political party of the right-wing KPNLF.

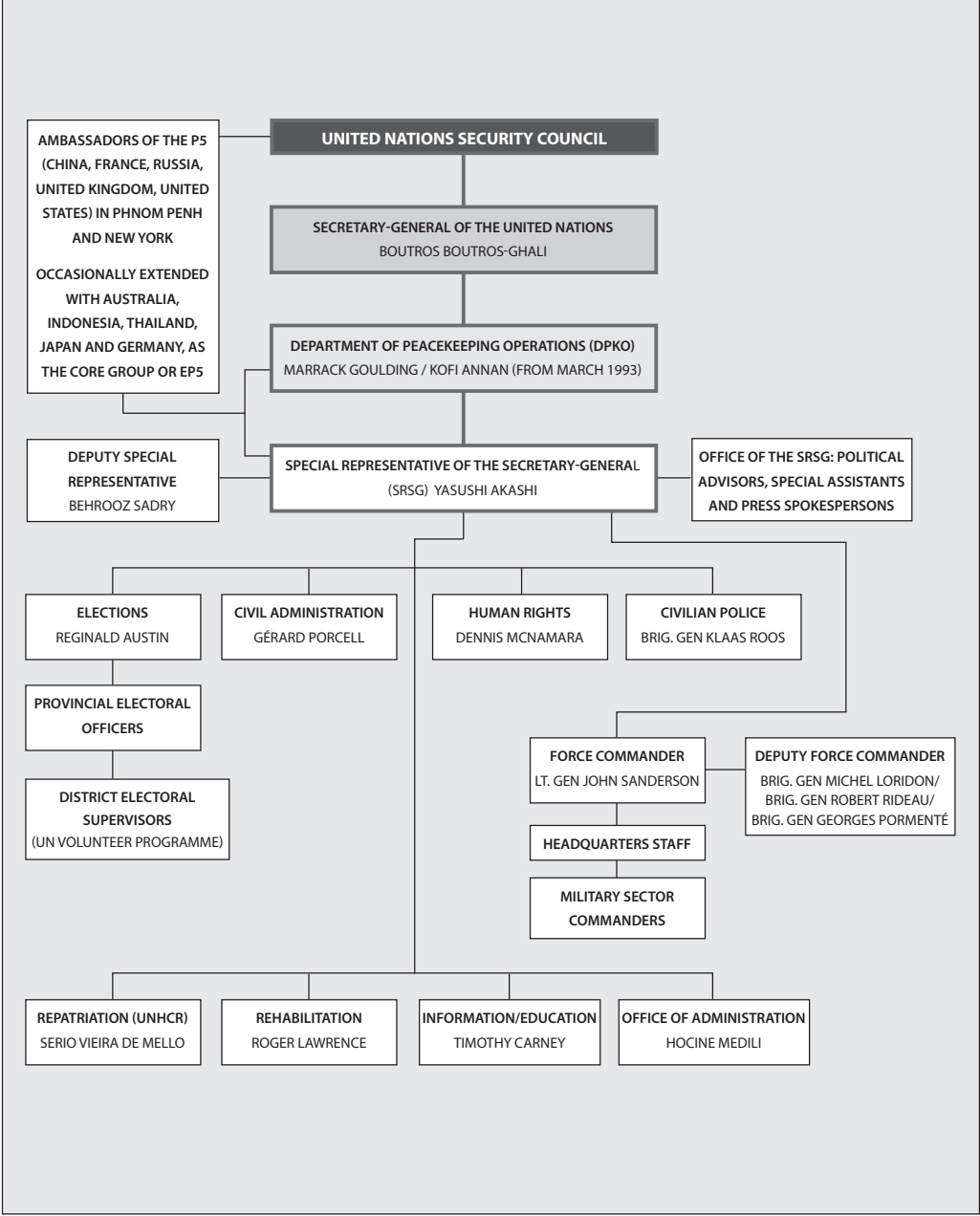
Other abbreviations

ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
ADN	<i>Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes</i>
AMBZ	<i>Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken</i>
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
APRONUC	<i>Autorité Provisoire des Nations Unies au Cambodge</i>
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAF	Cambodian Armed Forces
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
CIVPOL	Civilian police
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DES	District Electoral Supervisor
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRFOIA	United States Department of State Records, Freedom of Information Act
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
ECPAD	<i>Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense</i>
EP5	Extended permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council, also known as the “core group”
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
ICK	International Conference on Kampuchea
IPSO	International Polling Station Officers
MIPRENUC	<i>Mission Préparatoire des Nations Unies au Cambodge</i>
MMWG	Mixes Military Working Group
MLO	Military Liaison Officer
NUF	National United Front
NIMH	<i>Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie</i>
ONUC	<i>Opération des Nations Unies au Congo</i>
ONUCA	United Nations Observer Group in Central America
ONUMOZ	<i>Opération des Nations Unies au Mozambique</i>
ONUSAL	<i>Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador</i>
P5	Permanent Five members of the United Nations Security Council
SDF	Japanese Self Defence Force
SHD	<i>Service Historique de la Défense</i>
SNC	Supreme National Council
SRSg	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SIB	<i>Semi Statisch Informatiebeheer Ministerie van Defensie</i>
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces

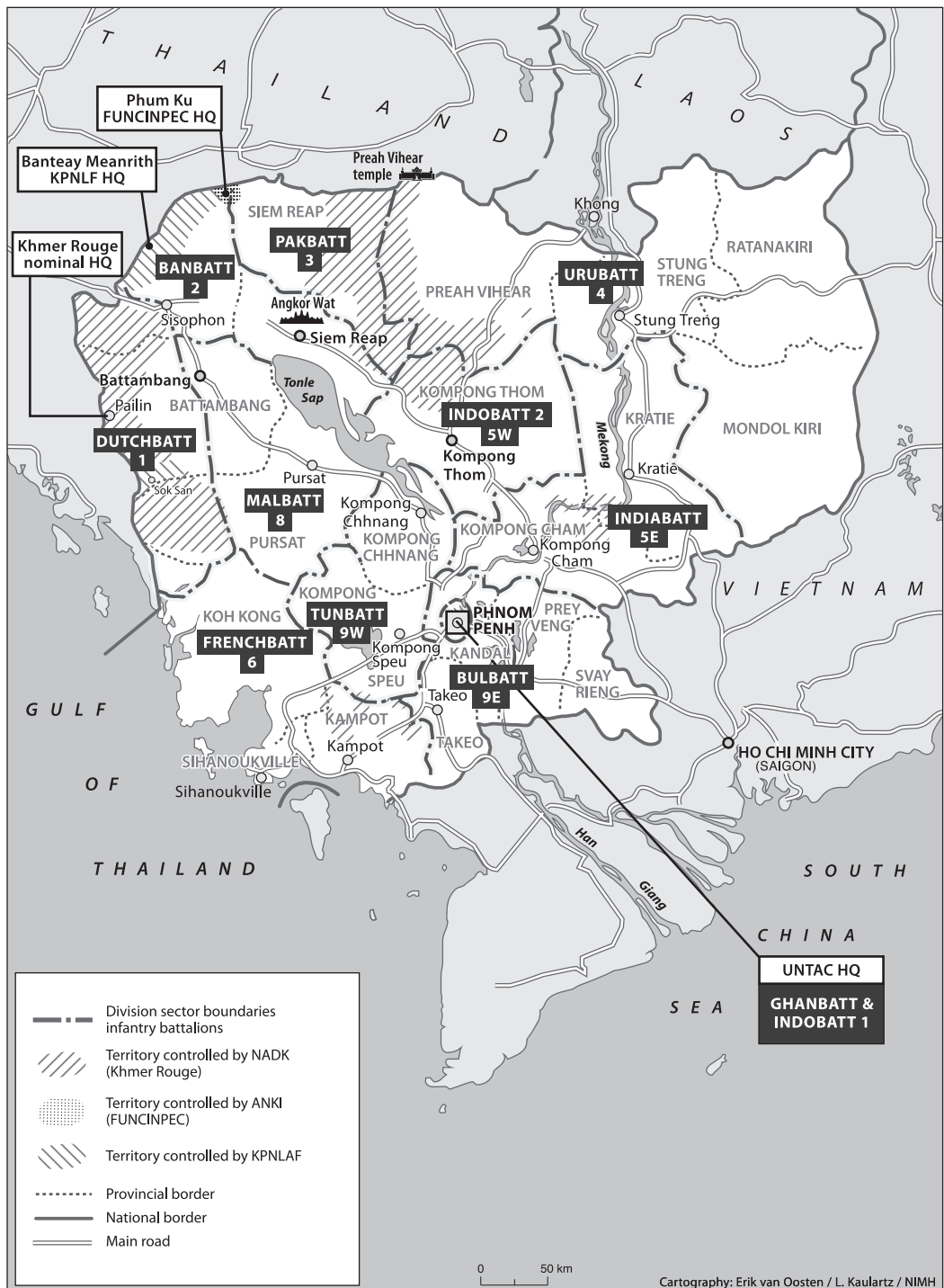
RPG	Rocket-propelled Grenade
UNA	United Nations Archives
UNAMIC	United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNMO	United Nations Military Observer
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
VAB	<i>Véhicule de l'Avant Blindé</i>

Charts and maps

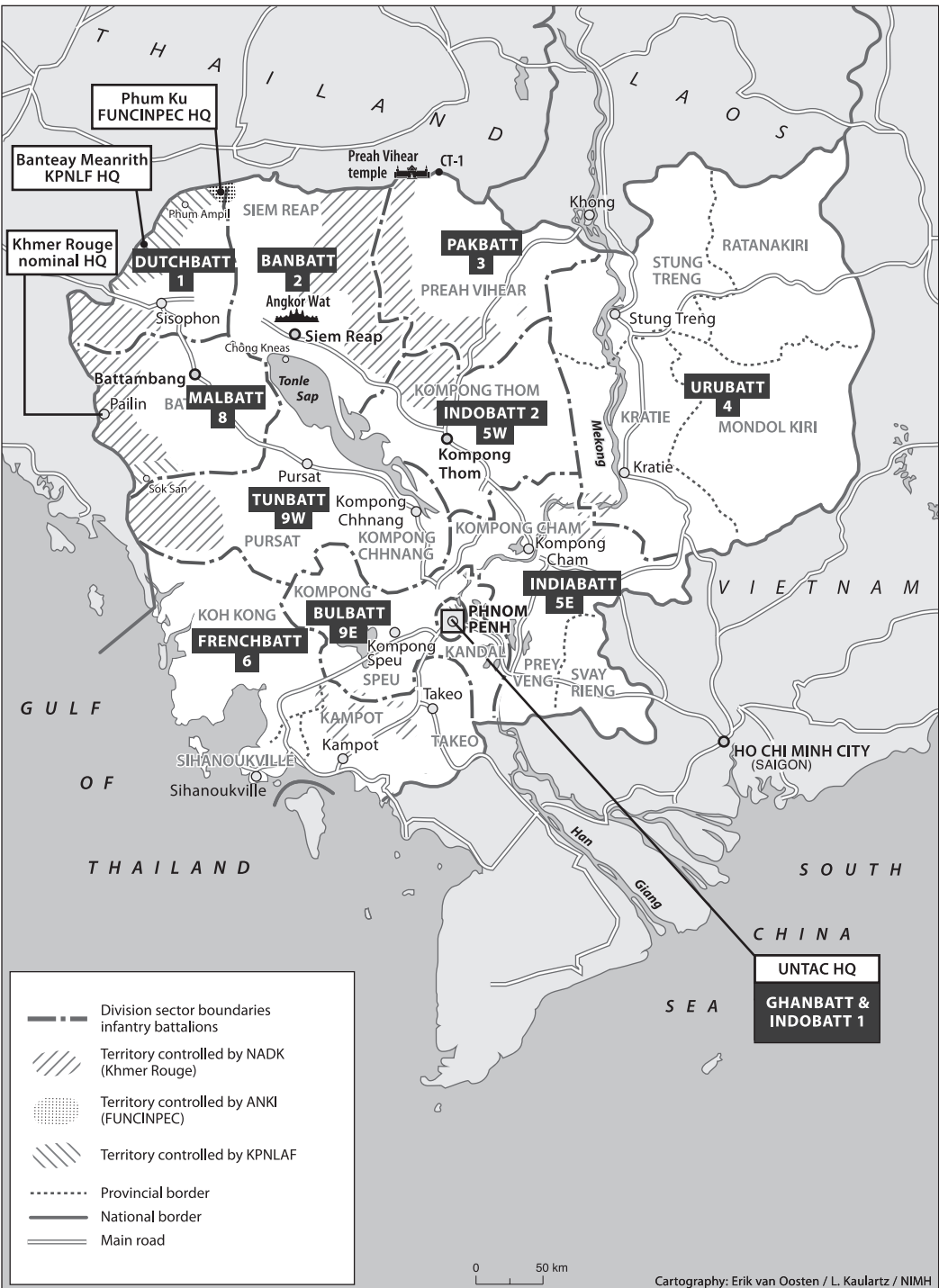
United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in Cambodia - Organisational Chart



UNTAC in Cambodia 1992



UNTAC in Cambodia 1993



Introduction

“Tonight, a new page in the history of Cambodia is written. It is now up to the United Nations to organise an operation of a scale unprecedented in its annals,”¹ said French president François Mitterrand at the opening ceremony of the Peace Conference on Cambodia held in Paris on 23 October 1991. After more than four years of intense international peace-making efforts, representatives of the four Cambodian factions and eighteen other nations gathered in Paris to sign a peace agreement that aimed to end the civil war that had ravaged the small Southeast Asian country for more than two decades, and facilitate a transition towards peace, stability and democracy. The signatories to the “Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict,” commonly referred to as the Paris Peace Agreements, agreed to entrust the responsibility for implementing the transition from conflict to peace to a United Nations peacekeeping operation: the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

President Mitterrand was right to emphasise the unprecedented scale of the operation. UNTAC had a complex multidimensional mandate with a much wider range of tasks than any previous UN peacekeeping operation. With a total of 22,000 international personnel, there was one UN employee to every 400 Cambodians. This made it the largest peacekeeping mission since the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in the early 1960s. With its budget of \$ 1.9 billion, UNTAC was, at the time, also the most expensive UN operation ever. Its military component would count, at its peak, 16,000 troops and observers. Their task was to supervise the cease-fire, verify the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia, monitor the cessation of outside military assistance, and canton, disarm and demobilise the military forces of the four Cambodian factions. The second objective was to establish a liberal democracy in Cambodia. For the first time in its history, the UN was in charge of the entire organisation and supervision of elections that would lead to a new legitimate government. UNTAC was also mandated to exercise direct control over the existing administrative structures of all four Cambodian factions, which was specifically meant to neutralise the influence of the government in Phnom Penh during this transitional process. The civilian component, existing of 1,149 UN personnel and 465 UN volunteers, had a wide range of tasks: an information component sought to educate the Cambodians about democracy and the voting process, a human rights component had the responsibility to foster an environment in which these “free and fair” elections could take place, and 3,500 UN Civilian police officers (CIVPOL) were to work with the local Cambodian police forces to ensure the protection of these human rights. Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was tasked to facilitate the repatriation of more than 370,000 Cambodian refugees who stayed in Thai refugee camps. The combination of all these tasks made UNTAC the most ambitious operation ever conducted by the United Nations.

UNTAC’s ambitious multidimensional mandate was the product of the zeitgeist in the post-Cold War period, during which a strong believe in liberal internationalism was dominant in

1 Allocation d’ouverture de M. le président de la République, Conférence de Paris sur le Cambodge, le 23 octobre 1991, Archives Diplomatiques Nantes (ADN), 10 POI/1 1308.

the Western world. US president George H. W. Bush famously described the emergence of a “new world order,” which reflected the great confidence of the United States as the victor of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War. Using liberal internationalist rhetoric that resembled President Woodrow Wilson’s after the end of the First World War, Bush called for a new partnership of nations, whose goals were to increase democracy, prosperity and peace. But Bush’s new world order was in reality not so “new”, as political scientist Stanley Hoffmann pointed out, arguing that it actually was the same order underlying the UN Charter of 1945: an order resting on the principle of collective security against aggression and on the cooperation of the major powers.² Nonetheless, with the deadlock in the UN Security Council caused by Cold-War tensions now resolved to a large extent, the realisation of a system for collective security, provided for in the UN Charter, was given a second chance. Great hopes were raised about the potential of a revitalised United Nations to manage conflicts and assist countries on the path to peace and liberal democracy. The liberal peace theory, the idea that the active promotion of liberal democracy abroad provides the best ingredient for lasting peace, constituted an important - albeit mostly unspoken - underpinning of UN peace operations after 1989, particularly from a Western perspective.³ The apparent achievements of several small UN missions between 1988 and 1991, notably in Angola, El Salvador and Namibia, as well as the unanimous reaction of the UN Security Council with regard to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, generated a strong sense of optimism about the UN’s capacities as the guarantor of peace in the post-Cold War world.⁴ On 31 January 1992, three months after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia, the United Kingdom and France took the initiative to organise, for the first time ever, a UN Security Council summit at the level of Heads of State or Government to reaffirm the central role of the Security Council in maintaining world peace. “It is an exciting opportunity for our United Nations. We must not allow it to slip away,” President Bush stated in his speech at the summit.⁵ UNTAC, as the first large, comprehensive, multidimensional peacekeeping operation deployed after the end of the Cold War, was more than any other UN operation a testcase for the ambition to build stable peace in a war-torn country by transforming it into a liberal democracy, strengthening the rule of law and establishing a market-based economy.⁶ So, in Cambodia, the ambitions were great and the stakes were high. Shortly before the operation started, the new UN Secretary-General, the Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali, emphasised that UNTAC would give the United Nations “a historic opportunity to restore peace to Cambodia and to contribute to the advent of a new era in Southeast Asia and in international relations.”⁷

It seemed as if the UN succeeded in its mission in Cambodia. By the end of September

2 Stanley Hoffmann, “The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 98 (Spring 1995): 167.

3 Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism,” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997): 56.

4 Mats Berdal, “The Security Council and Peacekeeping,” in *The United Nations Security Council and war: the evolution of thought and practice since 1945*, eds. Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh, and Dominik Zaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 201; Chen Kertcher, “From Cold War to a System of Peacekeeping Operations: The Discussions on Peacekeeping Operations in the UN During the 1980s up to 1992,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 611.

5 Provisional verbatim record of the three thousand and forty-sixth meeting, held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 31 January 1992 (S/PV.3046, 1992), 50.

6 Sorpong Peou, “Re-examining liberal peacebuilding in light of realism and pragmatism: The Cambodian experience,” in *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding*, eds. Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2009), 316; Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 23; Paris, “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism,” 66.

7 S/PV.3046, 1992, 7.

1993, after a new constitution had been formally approved, a new government was formed, and UN troops were withdrawing from the country, the UN Security Council officially declared UNTAC a “success” and euphorically declared the operation to be “a major achievement for the United Nations”.⁸ The verdict in the media was also generally positive. William Shawcross, a British journalist and well-known author of the bestseller *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, exclaimed that the United Nations had put an end to Cambodia’s nightmare: “Let there be no doubt about it. Success is the right word”.⁹ UNTAC’s force commander, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, from Australia, also stated in public lectures that “it is important to make the point early in any discussion about UNTAC that it was unequivocally a success.”¹⁰ The UN and its member states were eager to present Cambodia as the “Jewel in the Crown” of peacekeeping in contrast to the widely-publicised peacekeeping disasters in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia.¹¹ Cambodia is often mentioned in a row with the much smaller UN operations in El Salvador (ONUSAL, 1991–1995), in Namibia (UNTAG, 1989–1990) and Mozambique (ONUMOZ, 1992–1994) which are also widely regarded as successful operations.¹² But in size and scope UNTAC resembled more the operations in Somalia (UNOSOM I and II, 1992–1995) and the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR, 1992–1995). In the collective memory of UN peacekeeping in the early 1990s, UNTAC stands out as the exception that is often used to make the argument that peacekeeping in this period is not only a story of total disasters. Both UN officials and member states that contributed to UNTAC have shown a certain complacency in presenting Cambodia as a success, probably to counterbalance their bad experiences with peacekeeping in other parts of the world. Marrack Goulding, the former head of UN peacekeeping operations between 1986 and 1993, admitted in his remarkably frank memoirs that UNTAC was not a total success, but nonetheless “a success for the international community.”¹³ In his 2003 Europaeum lecture, Goulding discussed the question whether UN peacekeeping in the 1990s was either a success, a failure or neither. Despite the disasters that happened partly under his watch, Goulding used the examples of Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Cambodia to make the point that there were also successes, enabling him to conclude “neither.”¹⁴ It seems that the heavyweight operation in Cambodia keeps the balance on the scorecard just right.

Most academic studies about UNTAC, by majority written in the immediate years after the operation and based on fieldwork in Cambodia, have subdued the official UN euphoria somewhat, but still largely endorsed the idea that UNTAC was a successful operation because

8 UN Security Council Resolution 880, UN document, 4 November 1993. (S/RES/880 1993); Statement of the President of the Security Council Concerning the Successful Completion of the Mandate of UNTAC, 5 October 1993 (S/26531, 1993).

9 William Shawcross, “The Nightmare is Over,” *The New York Times*, 12 October 1993; See: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1987).

10 Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, “UNTAC: The Military Component View,” in *The United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia (UNTAC): debriefing and lessons*, ed. Nassrine Azimi (London: Kluwer Law International, 1995), 126.

11 William Maley, “Introduction: Peace Operations and Their Evaluation,” *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 16 (2012), 205.

12 Séverinne Autesserre, “The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can’t End Wars,” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 1 (January/February 2019), 103; Fen Osler Hampson, “The Pursuit of Human Rights: The United Nations in El Salvador,” in *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ed. William J. Durch. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997);

Pamela L. Reed, “The Politics of Reconciliation: The United Nations Operation in Mozambique,” in Durch, *UN Peacekeeping*.

13 Marrack Goulding, *Peacemonger* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 265.

14 Marrack Goulding, *The United Nations and Peace since the Cold War: success, failure or neither?*, Europaeum Lecture delivered at the Graduate Institute of International Studies Geneva on 8 April 2003, 8–13.

it achieved its final objective within time and within budget.¹⁵ Whereas organising elections was UNTAC's greatest achievement, it failed, however, to fulfil its other major task of disarming the four Cambodian factions' armies and demilitarising the country. This would have "serious consequences for Cambodia's national reconciliation and for its role as a coherent state in the world community," political scientist Jianwei Wang concluded in a report for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).¹⁶

The outcome of peacekeeping operations has been a topic of interest to scholars, especially political scientists, who have mostly analysed these outcomes in terms of success and failure and tried to find universally applicable explanations, not rarely to inform policy. The pursuit of "success" instead of "victory" is a particularity of modern military interventions, as military sociologist Christopher Dandeker has perceptively pointed out.¹⁷ Although victory can already be hard to define, success is a condition that is even more prone to varying interpretations and narratives. There are no single universally accepted criteria for measuring the success of peacekeeping operations, mostly because defining "success" is highly dependent on the specific context and the vantage point from which it is assessed. As political scientists Paul Diehl and Daniel Druckman have noted, one must ask the question "success for whom?," because there are always many different actors and "stakeholders" involved in peacekeeping operations. The belligerents, the local population, the United Nations, and the troop contributing countries all have their own goals, interests and definitions of success.¹⁸ This is confusing, and political scientists have therefore turned to measuring how many tasks of a mission's mandate have been fulfilled by the time of its departure. Diehl and Druckman developed an evaluation framework that includes criteria such as conflict containment, democratisation, humanitarian assistance, human rights protection, disarmament and demobilisation, local security, reconciliation and transformation, to name just a few.¹⁹ Political scientist Jeni Whalan applied Diehl and Druckman's evaluative framework to the UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia and concluded that it was a "partial success," because it succeeded in some areas, such as containing the conflict, reducing the number of human rights violations and repatriating refugees, but failed in other parts, like violence abatement and disarmament and demobilisation.²⁰ Other peacekeeping scholars, using similar evaluation methods, came to the same conclusion, describing UNTAC in terms of being

15 Trevor Findlay, *Cambodia: The legacy and lessons from UNTAC*, SIPRI Research Report No. 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Janet E. Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition: The United Nations in Cambodia* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1994); James A. Schear, "Riding the Tiger: the United Nations and Cambodia's Struggle for Peace," in *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ed. William J. Durch (London: Macmillan, 1997).

16 Jianwei Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Cambodia* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1996), 82.

17 Christopher Dandeker, "From Victory to Success: The Changing Mission of Western Armed Forces," in *Modern War and the Utility of Force: Challenges, Methods, and Strategy*, eds. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (New York: Routledge, 2010), 17.

18 Paul F. Diehl and Daniel Druckman, *Evaluating Peace Operations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2010), 12.

19 Paul F. Diehl and Daniel Druckman, "Evaluating Peace Operations," in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, eds. Joachim A. Koops et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 93–108.

20 Jeni Whalan, "Evaluating Peace Operations: The Case of Cambodia," in *Peace Operation Success A Comparative Analysis*, eds. Daniel Druckman and Paul F. Diehl (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013), 32; Daniel Druckman and Paul F. Diehl, "Revisiting the Framework: Extensions and Refinements," in *Peace Operation Success A Comparative Analysis*, 150.

a “mixed success,” “qualified success,” or “moderate success.”²¹ But all the adjectives and nuances have not prevented UNTAC from generally being put into the category of “success” rather than “failure.”²² In academic and policy making circles, UNTAC is currently still remembered as a positive experience, with leading peacekeeping scholars referring to Cambodia as a success story.²³

Thus, UNTAC could perhaps best be described as a “strange success,” to echo French historian Marc Bloch.²⁴ What makes UNTAC’s outcome particularly astonishing is that the peacekeeping operation was confronted with a major problem: one of the signatories to the peace agreements, the notorious Khmer Rouge, responsible for the murder of between 1.5 and 2 million Cambodians – a quarter of the country’s population – between 1975 and 1979, disrespected its obligations under the Paris Peace Agreements and became a “spoiler party,” a term coined by political scientist Stephen Stedman, and now a commonly accepted terminology in the peacekeeping literature. Stedman characterised the Khmer Rouge as a “total spoiler,” by which he meant that they pursued “total power” and were irreconcilably opposed to any compromise.²⁵ This means that in Cambodia, the consent of all the parties involved, a traditionally essential ingredient for the success of UN peacekeeping, was severely compromised. This raises the question how it was possible that UNTAC was able to achieve an outcome that is generally considered as successful, even though it did not enjoy the full consent and cooperation of all the parties. In other words, how was “success” in Cambodia possible with one major spoiler party? Why did consent disintegrate, how did UNTAC handle this situation, and to what extent did it manage to win back any form of cooperation? How was it possible that, while UNTAC’s first main objective of disarming and demobilising the Cambodian factions’ soldiers, and reintegrating them back into society (DDR), turned into a complete failure, the final objective of organising free and fair elections was successfully accomplished?

The consent of all the parties had been one of the three preconditions for successful UN peacekeeping since 1956, when lightly armed blue helmeted soldiers were sent to the Sinai

21 Benny Widyono, “United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC),” in *The Oxford handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, eds. Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, Thierry Tardy and Paul D. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 405; Michael W. Doyle, “UNTAC – Sources of Success and Failure,” in *International Peacekeeping: Building on the Cambodian Experience*, ed. Hugh Smith (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994); Sorpong Peou, “Implementing Cambodia’s Peace Agreement,” in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 501; Duane Bratt, “Defining Peacekeeping Success: The Experience of UNTAC,” *Peacekeeping & International Relations* 25, no. 4 (1996): 3–5; Thijs W. Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power: Supporting and Substituting Civil Authorities in Modern Peace Operations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 156.

22 See for example: Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 221; Stanley Hoffmann, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 185.

23 See: Bellamy and Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 243; Lise Morjé Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 7–8; Barabara F. Walter, Lise Morjé Howard and Virginia Page Fortna, “The Astonishing Success of Peacekeeping: The UN Program Deserves More Support—and Less Scorn—From America,” *Foreign Affairs*, 29 (November 2021).

24 See: Marc Bloch, *Strange defeat: a statement of evidence written in 1940* (New York: Norton, 1999), original French version: Marc Bloch, *L’étrange défaite: témoignage écrit en 1940* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1957).

25 Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 11. In some accounts of UNTAC, including Stedman’s work, the State of Cambodia (SOC), meaning the government in Phnom Penh of Prime Minister Hun Sen, is also labelled as a spoiler party, though not a complete spoiler. But it must be noted that the non-cooperation of the SOC was not of the same nature as the that of the Khmer Rouge. It will be demonstrated in this study that the SOC only became less cooperative after the Khmer Rouge refused to disarm and allow the UN access to its zones.

Peninsula to monitor a cease-fire agreement and act as an interposition force after the Suez crisis.²⁶ In order to lay down some basic rules for this new phenomenon, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld determined that a UN force needed the *consent* of the parties involved, was to remain *impartial* and could *use force only in self-defence*. These three guidelines, sometimes referred to as “the holy trinity,” became the defining principles for UN peacekeeping.²⁷ UN field operations nonetheless remained a rather confusing hybrid diplomatic-military activity. Several scholars have characterised the sending of blue helmeted soldiers under the UN flag to conflict areas in those terms. Jocelyn Coulon described peacekeepers as “soldiers of diplomacy” and Marie-Claude Smouts portrayed their activities as “*la diplomatie en kaki*.”²⁸ The famous adage that “peacekeeping is not a soldier’s job, but only a soldier can do it” also deserves to be mentioned because it illustrates the paradoxical diplomatic-military identity of the peacekeeper.²⁹ Tensions quickly emerged between the theory of peacekeeping and operational practices on the ground, especially during the UN operation in the Congo (ONUC), deployed between 1960 and 1964, which was unable to maintain its impartiality and conducted offensive military operations, that included the use of fighter planes, artillery and tanks, to protect Congolese territorial integrity against the secession of the province of Katanga. 127 blue helmets were killed in action and Secretary-General Hammarskjöld himself died in a mysterious plane crash. This rather traumatic experience for the UN led to a sharp decline in peacekeeping operations and a reconfirmation of the holy trinity.³⁰ The peacekeeping rules were nonetheless somewhat loosened in 1973, when a new mission was established on the Sinai Peninsula after the war between Israel and Egypt (UNEF II). The then UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim proposed that “self-defence” would henceforth include “resistance to attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council.” The new formulation of “the use of force in defence of the mission” would henceforth be included in all mandates of UN peacekeeping operations.³¹ However, in practice, force was rarely used to defend the mandate because the will and resources to do so were lacking.

In the period of optimism in the early 1990s, the thinking about the peacekeeping principles seemed to evolve further. When Boutros-Ghali presented his report *An Agenda for Peace*

26 Although this inventive improvisation, named the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), was not the first UN operation in the field – observer missions had been deployed in the Middle East (UNTSO) and in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) – it was the first in which peacekeepers were armed.

27 Although UN operations were generally deployed under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, Hammarskjöld pointed out that the activity actually fell somewhere between Chapter VI (The Pacific Settlement of Disputes) and Chapter VII (Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of Peace and Acts of Aggression). Despite the hypothetical “chapter six and a half” character of UN peacekeeping, the operations involving blue helmeted soldiers observing cease-fires were clearly distinguished from “green helmeted” enforcement actions.

28 See: Jocelyn Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Marie-Claude Smouts, ed., *L'ONU et la guerre: la diplomatie en kaki* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1994).

29 A quote that is often attributed to the second Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld.

30 Trevor Findlay, *The Blue Helmets' First War?: Use of Force by the UN in the Congo 1960-64* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999), 142; Emily Paddon Rhoads, *Taking Sides in Peacekeeping: Impartiality and the Future of the United Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016), 53-55.

31 Trevor Findlay, *The Use of Force in Peace Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press-SIPRI, 2002), 100; Ray Murphy, “UN Peacekeeping in Lebanon and the Use of Force,” *International Peacekeeping* 6, no. 2 (Frank Cass London, Summer 1999): 40; Ronald Hatto, “From peacekeeping to peacebuilding: the evolution of the role of the United Nations in peace operations,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 95 (2013): 505.

to the UN Security Council on 17 June 1992, he added to the already existing confusion about UN peacekeeping. In an effort to provide a new definition for the UN activity he attempted the revitalise, the Secretary-General described UN peacekeeping as “the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well.”³² The word “hitherto” was highly significant because it seemed to imply that consent of all the parties was no longer an absolute precondition for an operation’s success, and that the other principles of impartiality and minimum use of force except in self-defence might also become less important and give way to UN forces taking more initiative in the use of force.³³ After all, the “holy trinity” implied that the erosion of consent would automatically make it problematic for peacekeepers to uphold the other peacekeeping principles of impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Secondly, the Secretary-General suggested that the UN had the authority to take military action to restore violated cease-fires when all peaceful means had failed. This option, he argued, was “essential to the credibility of the United Nations as a guarantor of international security.” He further proposed the creation of specialised “peace enforcement units” that could be deployed quickly to enforce violated cease-fires. This was all clearly a call for a new, more assertive UN military role.

Did this development in conceptual thinking about UN peacekeeping mean that the peacekeeping principles were also interpreted and applied more liberally in Cambodia? The traditional narrative suggests that the opposite is true. This is largely the result of the fact that UNTAC’s outcome has been interpreted in normative comparison with other large UN operations in the early 1990s. UN peacekeepers hit a rocky road in the 1990s, and the initial optimism about the UN’s potential was soon replaced by the recognition that UN peacekeeping was in a severe state of crisis.³⁴ In late 1993, political scientist John Ruggie observed that the cause for this crisis was that UN peacekeepers found themselves wandering in a grey area, “a vaguely defined no-man’s-land lying somewhere between traditional peacekeeping and enforcement.” Ruggie argued that the UN deployed peacekeepers in contexts for which the traditional peacekeeping mechanism was not intended.³⁵ In other words, despite the broadening of functions and ambitions of peacekeeping, the operations in the field continued to be guided by the same old three principles defined by Hammarskjöld in the 1950s.³⁶ Although Ruggie published his article shortly after UNTAC had withdrawn from Cambodia, he based his analysis essentially on the UN operations in the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) and Somalia (UNOSOM II). Apparently, Ruggie did not believe that peacekeepers had moved into this grey area in Cambodia.

After a series of traumatic UN experiences between 1993 and 1995, Ruggie’s analysis was

32 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992), 11.

33 Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, “The United Nations and the Use of Force: Between Promise and Peril,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 5 (2014): 665.

34 Adam Roberts, “The crisis in UN Peacekeeping,” *Survival* 36, no. 3 (1994).

35 John Gerard Ruggie, “Wandering in the Void: Charting the U.N.’s New Strategic Role,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 5 (November/December 1993): 26.

36 Donald C. F. Daniel, “Wandering Out of the Void? Conceptualizing Practicable Peace Enforcement,” in *Peacekeeping with muscle: the use of force in international conflict resolution*, eds by Alex Morrison, Douglas A. Fraser and James D. Kiras (Clementsport: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1997), 5; Alan James, “Is there a second generation of peacekeeping?,” *International Peacekeeping* 1, no. 4 (September–November 1994): 112.

soon endorsed by other observers, including the UN Secretary-General himself. In Rwanda, at least 500,000 Tutsis were murdered by the Hutu population under the eyes of the small UN peacekeeping operation UNAMIR. In the former Yugoslavia, peacekeepers of UNPROFOR were deployed in an ongoing conflict in which they were unable to effectively protect civilians from atrocities and often ended up in violent clashes with the warring factions. UNOSOM II, the UN operation in Somalia, derailed when peacekeepers clashed with forces loyal to warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. Boutros-Ghali was forced to admit that the post-Cold War ambitions of constructing a new framework for the management of international peace and security had failed, and that the United Nations' reputation was seriously damaged.³⁷ In January 1995, even before the massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in the "safe area" of Srebrenica had occurred, the Secretary-General published his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, a position paper in which he reflected on the state of peacekeeping and reconsidered the optimism and ambition he had displayed in his *Agenda for Peace* in June 1992. The Secretary-General now expressed scepticism about developing peacekeeping into more robust directions and combine peacekeeping with elements of enforcement.³⁸ He argued that the previous three years had confirmed that respect for the basic principles of peacekeeping were essential for achieving success: "Analysis of recent successes and failures shows, that in all the successes those principles were respected and in most of the less successful operations one or other of them was not."³⁹ Boutros-Ghali, in essence, called for a return to these "basic principles" of UN peacekeeping. Lt. Gen. Sanderson, UNTAC's force commander, endorsed the conclusion of the Secretary-General and argued that, indeed, in the Cambodian operation "strict adherence to the peacekeeping ethos was an essential ingredient of success."⁴⁰ This also became the dominant analysis among scholars in the second half of the 1990s, when most studies about UN peacekeeping were written. Academics Donald Daniel and Bradd Hayes, for instance, concluded that UNTAC succeeded partly because it was not lured into enforcement while UNOSOM II, in Somalia, went off track after it was given an enforcement mandate.⁴¹ In his influential 1995 report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) about the Cambodian peacekeeping operation, political scientist Trevor Findlay made the point that UNTAC's successful outcome was in large measure the result of a strict adherence by the political and military leadership to the traditional UN peacekeeping doctrine, preventing it from straying into the grey area between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Findlay argued that unlike the operations in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, the mission in Cambodia maintained its impartiality, did not attempt to use military force to impose its mandate and even claims that consent was never entirely lost because the Khmer Rouge never renounced the Paris Peace Accords.⁴² Most scholars subscribed to Findlay's conclusion and equally pointed out that

37 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: a U.S.-U.N. Saga* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 337.

38 Berdal and Ucko, "The United Nations and the Use of Force," 666.

39 "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations," UN document A/50/60 S/1995/1, 25 January 1995, 8.

40 John M. Sanderson, "The UNTAC Military Component," in *Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain: The United Nations at Fifty*, ed. Ramesh Thakur (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 133.

41 Donald C. F. Daniel and Bradd C. Hayes, "Problems and Progress: The Future of UN Peacekeeping," in *Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping*, eds. Donald C. F. Daniel and Bradd C. Hayes (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); James A. Schear, "Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping: The Case of Cambodia," in *Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping*, 260; Gary Anderson, "UNOSOM II: Not Failure, Not Success," in *Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping*.

42 Findlay, *Cambodia*, 157–58.

UNTAC's leadership was correct in adhering to the traditional peacekeeping approach, and not creeping into enforcement activities.⁴³ Political scientist Duane Bratt, for example, maintained that UNTAC, despite provocations from the Khmer Rouge, "steadfastly remained neutral," and avoided prolapsing into disastrous situations as in Somalia where the UN's impartiality was violated.⁴⁴

This study will demonstrate that this narrative is untenable and that scholars have all too readily interpreted the reasons for UNTAC's outcome in the light of the experiences in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. These experiences dominate both the literature of UN peacekeeping in the 1990s as well as popular memory, and have, consequently, also coloured the historical interpretation of the peacekeeping operation in Cambodia. But the clarity of hindsight can be misleading. It obscures the factors at play in Cambodia that informed the decision-making processes in a time that the traumatic experiences in Bosnia and Somalia did not yet constitute the dominant frame of reference for policymakers and scholars alike. UNTAC was deployed at a pivotal moment for UN peacekeeping, still full of optimism and hope. When Boutros-Ghali accepted the challenge of redefining peacekeeping, the UN had already embarked on the most complex and expensive mission it had ever undertaken. Though not including Cambodia in his analysis, John Ruggie nonetheless indicated a feeling that during UNTAC "doctrinal differences were muted" and added that this might have led to a false sense of confidence.⁴⁵ This study is an attempt to illuminate these differences and clarify whether Cambodia was really such a different experience from the other UN peacekeeping operations in the first half of the 1990s. It demonstrates that it was not, and that the UN military and civilian leadership in Cambodia did move far into the "grey area" in order to enforce the mission's success.

Scholars such as Trevor Findlay, James Shear, Janet Heining, Steven Ratner, Michael Doyle and Sandrine Barbier have written comprehensive overviews of UNTAC, highlighting the mission's strengths and weaknesses, its successes and its failures, what worked and what did not. These studies provide a rich source of information because most of the authors base their findings on field research in Cambodia, where they were able to conduct interviews with UNTAC officials, ambassadors, and other actors. These scholars, whose work was published in the immediate years after UNTAC, have laid the foundation on which every student of UNTAC stands. However, as they did not yet have access to archival evidence, their analyses rely almost completely on interviews, which has sometimes resulted in a tendency to adopt certain narratives

43 MacAlister Brown and Joseph J. Zasloff, *Cambodia Confronts the Peacemakers, 1979–1998* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 104; Jeni Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work: power, legitimacy, and effectiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 102, 105; Mats Berdal and Michael Leifer, "Cambodia," in *The new interventionism, 1991–1994: United Nations experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, and Somalia*, ed. James Mayall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25; Heining, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 136; Karl Ferris, "UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia: On Balance, A Success," *Parameters*, 24, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 38–50; Lise Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9; Lise Morjé Howard, "Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement and UN Reform," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2015): 6–7.

44 Duane Bratt, "Explaining peacekeeping performance: The UN in internal conflicts," *International Peacekeeping* 4, no. 3 (1997): 65.

45 John Gerard Ruggie, "The UN and the collective Use of Force: Whither or Whether?," in *The UN, peace and force*, ed. Michael Pugh (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 6.

and perspectives.⁴⁶ The overall verdict of the above-mentioned “peacekeeping scholars” on the UN’s mission in Cambodia is relatively positive. This stands in stark contrast to experts on Cambodian history who have generally been much more critical of UNTAC. Historians Ben Kiernan and Michael Vickery and political scientist Raoul Jennar have questioned the morality and the sagacity of including the Khmer Rouge in the peace process, as well as the extent to which UNTAC actually succeeded in bringing peace and democracy to Cambodia.⁴⁷ Despite the fact that UNTAC helped to bring Cambodia back on its feet, the ideal of creating a well-functioning liberal democracy turned out to be an illusion, mainly because such a system did not correspond to the reality of Cambodia’s political culture.⁴⁸ British scholar David Roberts studied UNTAC as part of Cambodia’s process of democratisation, and argued that the UN operation might have brought the temporary illusion of a democratic system, but was unable to bring a long-term peace to Cambodia.⁴⁹ Roberts’ conclusions are in line with those of the Canadian political scientist Roland Paris, who pointed at the superficiality of democracy in Cambodia to support his critique on the effectiveness of liberal peacebuilding.⁵⁰ Political scientist and Cambodia specialist Sorpong Peou acknowledged that UNTAC only succeeded in reducing the scale of the Cambodian conflict rather than fully resolving it. But the Cambodian-Canadian scholar has also challenged Stedman’s

46 In this respect it must be also noted that some scholars were connected in some way or another to the policy making level during UNTAC, which may have influenced their analyses. Trevor Findlay, for instance, spent thirteen years in the Australian diplomatic service before joining the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The legal scholar Steven R. Ratner served as the legal advisor to the US delegation to the Paris Conference on Cambodia. James A. Schear worked as Akashi’s advisor at the United Nations Office in Washington, DC.

47 Ben Kiernan, “The Cambodian crisis, 1990–1992: The UN plan, the Khmer Rouge, and the State of Cambodia,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 24, no. 3 (June 1992); Ben Kiernan, “The Failure of the Paris Agreement on Cambodia,” in *The Challenge of Indochina: An Examination of the US Role*, ed., Dick Clark. Congressional Staff Conference April 30–May 2 1993 Conference Report, The Aspen Institute vol. 8, no. 4 (1993); Ben Kiernan, “The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the Cambodian Peace Process: Causes and Consequences,” in *Genocide and democracy in Cambodia: the Khmer Rouge, the United Nations and the International Community*, ed. Ben Kiernan (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1993); Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey, Regime Change and Regime Maintenance in Asia and the Pacific, Discussion Paper No. 14*, (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1994); Raoul M. Jennar, “Cambodge, l’entreprise inachevée,” in *L’ONU et la guerre. La diplomatie en kaki*, ed. Marie-Claude Smouts (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1994); Raoul M. Jennar, “UNTAC: ‘International Triumph’ in Cambodia?,” *Security Dialogue* 25, no. 2 (June 1994); Raoul M. Jennar, “L’ONU au Cambodge: Les leçons de l’APRONUC,” *Études internationales*, 26, no. 2 (1995); Raoul M. Jennar, “Quand les compromis diplomatiques ignorent les réalités du terrain,” discours à l’occasion du 25e anniversaire des Accords de Paris sur le Cambodge, Phnom Penh, 20 October 2016. For other critical studies see: Peter Hazdra, *Die UNO-Friedensoperation in Kambodscha Vorgeschichte, Konzept, Verlauf und kritische Evaluierung des internationalen Engagements* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1997), 408; Andrzej Sitkowski, *UN Peacekeeping: Myth and Reality* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1996), 87. Robert M. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss British and American Doctrine and Practice after the Cold War* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2004), 125; Stéphanie Oltra, *L’intervention des Nations Unies au Cambodge mars 1992–septembre 1993*, unpublished MA-thesis (DEA de Relations Internationales, Paris-I Sorbonne), June 1995, 46.

48 See: Pierre Lizée, “Peacekeeping, Peace-building and the Challenge of Conflict Resolution in Cambodia,” in: David A. Charters, *Peacekeeping and the Challenge of Conflict Resolution* (Centre for Conflict Studies University of New Brunswick, 1994), 143; Pierre Lizée, *Peace, power and resistance in Cambodia: global governance and the failure of international conflict resolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); David W. Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia, 1991–99: Power, Elitism and Democracy* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001); Sorpong Peou, *Conflict Neutralization in the Cambodia War From Battlefield to Ballot-box* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1997); Sorpong Peou, “Implementing Cambodia’s Peace Agreement,” in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth M. Cousins (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confronts the Peacemakers*; Roland Paris has argued that the elections might have been successful, but the process of democratisation was not. See: Roland Paris, *At war’s end: building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009), 79.

49 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*.

50 Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism,” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997); Paris, *At war’s end*, 79, 90.

description of the Khmer Rouge as a “total spoiler,” and argued that UNTAC’s limited success was due to its failure to act as Cambodia’s legitimate authority resulting from its inability to address the Khmer Rouge’s security concerns.⁵¹ However, the evidence presented in this study suggests that Peou’s model based on “security” provides an insufficient explanation for UNTAC’s outcome.

Political scientist Michael Doyle has argued that UNTAC’s overall success was in large part the result of the multidimensionality of its mandate. The complex multidimensional peacekeeping operation consisted of so many different components, which practically functioning as separate missions, which allowed it to “distribute eggs across baskets,” avoiding that the initial failure of the military component endangered the overall success of the operation. Doyle also emphasised the importance of UNTAC’s active role in organising the elections, with the military component’s redefined role of supporting and protecting the electoral process and the guarantee of a secret ballot.⁵² Historian Thijs Brocades Zaalberg has taken this argument further in his detailed analysis about civil-military relations in peace operations in the 1990s, in which UNTAC functioned as an elaborately analysed case study based on Dutch and Australian military archives. Brocades Zaalberg demonstrated how UNTAC’s military component took informal control of key civilian aspects of the operation, which, he argues, was key in saving the elections.⁵³ He makes the point that UNTAC has improvised very cleverly at the operational level in enhancing the military-civilian interaction. This study acknowledges that this factor certainly played a role in making the elections possible, but other factors were more central to safeguarding this outcome, especially UNTAC’s decision to drop its impartiality and collaborate with one of the parties.

The body of scholarship about UNTAC has only grown very modestly since the late 1990s. In the more recent literature on UN peace operations, UNTAC only rarely appears as a case study in a wider analysis on peacekeeping operations. Cambodia is part of Beatrice Pouligny’s sociological study that explores the perspectives of local populations in the UN interventions of the 1990s. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, Pouligny sketches a multi-coloured portrait, from the bottom up, of the many different local experiences during the Cambodian peacekeeping operation. She is critical of the notion that a new framework can be imposed from the outside on a post-conflict society, and questions the notion that organising elections equals success, in which Cambodia was a case in point.⁵⁴ Adopting Pouligny’s local lens of analysis, political scientist Jeni Whalan also uses UNTAC as one of her case studies to point at the importance of “local legitimacy” in UN peacekeeping. Focussing on the concepts of power and legitimacy to demonstrate that peacekeeping operations are more likely to obtain cooperation when they are perceived locally to be legitimate, she argues that UNTAC’s outcome can be explained by both its ability and inability to win the trust and cooperation of local military elites and of the local population.⁵⁵

The book *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* by political scientist Lise Morjé Howard is of particular interest for this study, because it is concerned with understanding how peacekeepers

51 Peou, “Implementing Cambodia’s Peace Agreement,” 499–530; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 192–272.

52 Michael W. Doyle, *UN peacekeeping in Cambodia: UNTAC’s Civil Mandate* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 54, 66, 70; Michael W. Doyle, “UNTAC – Sources of Success and Failure,” in *International Peacekeeping: Building on the Cambodian Experience*, ed. Hugh Smith (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994), 90.

53 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 130, 419.

54 Béatrice Pouligny, *Ils nous avaient promis la paix: Opérations de l’ONU et populations locales* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2004), 297.

55 Jeni Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work: power, legitimacy, and effectiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

produced the varying outcomes of UN peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, with a particular focus on those missions that have been labelled as successful. Cambodia constitutes – together with Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Eastern Slavonia – one of the “successful” case studies, while Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, and Bosnia are analysed as failed missions. Howard argues that UNTAC (and UNAMIC) began in a state of “organisational dysfunction” but eventually managed, half-way the operation, to move into a “first-level learning mode,” by which she means that the mission learned how to operate as a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, which eventually allowed it to succeed in fulfilling an important part of its mandate.⁵⁶ Howard positions herself as a believer in the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, and she is joined by political scientist and fellow peacekeeping enthusiast Virginia Page Fortna. Howard and Fortna share the conviction that peacekeeping “works”, but both scholars have come to different conclusions about UNTAC in their analyses.⁵⁷ On the basis of a comprehensive statistical analysis of conflicts in the 1990s, Fortna finds that peace lasts longer when peacekeepers are present than when belligerents are left to their own devices, as well as that multidimensional peacekeeping operations are the most effective. Although Fortna observes that, in the post-Cold War period, all forms of peacekeeping reduced the risk of renewed conflict significantly, the case of UNTAC seems to stand out as a notable exception to her theory. Since Fortna focusses on the duration of peace after civil-war, it appears that UNTAC had a limited impact on the duration of peace because Cambodia remained unstable until 1998.⁵⁸ UNTAC was a pioneer operation in multidimensional peacekeeping and is generally labelled as a success, but Fortna refrains from explaining why it does not fit her theory. UN scholar Richard Gowan has commented that historical study is necessary to see whether theories, such as Fortna’s, actually hold.⁵⁹

As time has passed and doors to the archives have opened further, possibilities for historical research have widened. Some historians have gained access to diplomatic and military archives of individual member states and have thus studied UNTAC mainly from the perspective of national contributions.⁶⁰ John Connor’s analysis of UNTAC in the official history of the Australian contribution to UN peacekeeping is a case in point, which, through the exploration of mainly Australian government archives, paints a rather positive picture of the Australian role, maintaining that the Australians were key to the success in Cambodia.⁶¹ Dutch historian Ben Schoenmaker observed that historical research on peace operations is often conducted through a national lens, focusing almost exclusively on the role played by one’s own country in a peacekeeping mission. Schoenmaker argues that such an approach is artificial, given the eminently international nature

56 Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 131, 144, 151.

57 Barbara F. Walter, Lise Morjé Howard and Virginia Page Fortna, “The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace,” *British Journal of Political Science* 51 (2021): 1705–22.

58 Virginia Page Fortna, “Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of peace After Civil War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no 2 (2004): 269–92; Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work?: Shaping Belligerents’ Choices after Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 116; Virginia Page Fortna, “Peacekeeping and democratization,” in *From War to Democracy Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, eds. Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 52, 69–70.

59 Richard Gowan, “Review,” *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009): 352–54.

60 For The Netherlands, see: D. C. L. Schoonoord, *De Koninklijke Marine in actie voor de Verenigde Naties: mariniers in Cambodja 1992–1993* (Leeuwarden: Eisma, 1993); Arthur ten Cate, Sven Maaskant, Jaus Müller, Quirijn van der Vegt eds., *Qua patet orbis: the Netherlands Marine Corps in an age of conflict* (The Hague: Boom, 2017), 91–121.

61 David Horner and John Connor, *The Good International Citizen Australian Peacekeeping in Asia, Africa and Europe, 1991–1993* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2014), 221–23.

of peace operations, and has therefore advocated a broader multi-national view.⁶²

Drawing on a wide and diverse range of primacy sources, this study broadens the scope by looking mainly through the lens of the strategic level. The focus is not on the “performance” of UNTAC’s different components. Instead, it moves beyond a compartmentalised analysis which has characterised most studies about UNTAC. However, the consequence of this prism is that not all UNTAC branches are given equal treatment. The increased accessibility of archival material provides opportunities for new insights, especially about decision-making processes at the political, strategic and operational levels. The bulk of the evidence presented in this study comes from previously classified documents in the archives of the United Nations in New York, where vast amounts of new material have recently become available, although long declassification procedures still apply to access the most relevant documents. This material includes code cable traffic between Phnom Penh and New York, correspondences, meeting minutes, situation reports, policy documents, etc. Whereas most of the evidence comes from the records of the UN archives, it also incorporates recently declassified material from national diplomatic and military archives. French archives on UNTAC, which have remained completely unexploited so far, provide a rich source. Despite France’s centrality in the Cambodian peace process, there has been surprisingly little interest among French scholars in UNTAC.⁶³ This can in part be explained by the fact that, in France, the central focus with regard to peacekeeping operations in the 1990s has been on the French involvement in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda. But the foremost reason for the complete absence of historical studies about the French role in Cambodia is the very restricted access to the French military archives in Vincennes. Nonetheless, recently expired embargoes on documents from the French diplomatic archives in Nantes partially make up for the inability to access military files and provide information, not only about French views, but also about the general course of the operation and decision-making process within the circle of the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council (P5). Whereas records about the Dutch military contribution to UNTAC have been used before, the diplomatic archives of the Netherlands involvement in Cambodia have also become accessible and provide an important complementary source in this study. Lastly, this research has also benefited from the availability of some documents of the US State Department that have been released through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Sources that have not been consulted for this research, but which would probably have been of value, are the government archives from major international players in the Cambodian peace process such as China, Indonesia and Japan. Obvious language barriers, declassification challenges and practical limitations such as time and budget have hindered a more global approach. Nonetheless, at the archives of the United Nations, information about all member states involved in the Cambodian operation comes together. Therefore, the material from these archives forms the core of this study. Because Australia delivered the key position of force commander, the diplomatic archives of Australia and the papers of Lieutenant General John Sanderson at the Australian Defence Force Academy Library in Canberra would also have been useful. These records, however, have already been explored by other historians, and it appears that

62 Ben Schoenmaker, *Vredesoperaties en de terugkeer van de oorlog*, inaugural lecture, Leiden University, 29 October 2012.

63 The only French studies about UNTAC are by Raoul Jennar (see previous notes) and Sandrine Barbier, *Cambodge (1991–1993) MIPRENUC, APRONUC* (Paris: Éditions Montchrétien, 1999).

there is a partial overlap with the papers held in the archives of the United Nations in New York, which have remained practically unexplored so far because of earlier access restrictions.

In addition to archival material, oral history is used as a complementary source of information. Besides interviews by the author, the study benefits from interviews with major actors in the Cambodian peace process that have been conducted in the framework of the United Nations oral history project of Yale University in the late 1990s, which constitutes a rich body of source material that has remained largely unexploited by scholars. Further, the study also uses articles by journalists, in particular of the world's main international press agencies and newspapers, often providing well-informed first rough drafts of the history of the Cambodian peace operation.

The study is divided into five chapters that chronologically analyse the course of the twenty-three months-long peacekeeping operation. It mainly focusses on the strategic level, the highest levels of policy making such as the UN Secretariat in New York, the main body responsible for the management of peacekeeping operations, and the UN Security Council, providing the political guidance. In Phnom Penh, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and the force commander were the most important decision makers. Developments in the national capitals of relevant member states will also be taken into account.

Most scholars studying UNTAC have focussed more on the last months of the operation, when UNTAC was receiving more public attention and most scholars came to Cambodia to conduct their field research. The first part of the operation, the period between November 1991 and December 1992, has received much less examination, but is nonetheless of vital importance to get a better understanding of UNTAC's outcome. As new primary sources allow for it, the focus in this research is slightly more to the first phase of the operation. Drawing on a diverse body of literature, Chapter 1 reviews how Cambodia turned into one of the Cold War's bloodiest battlefields, and traces how the peace accords were shaped by the great powers and enforced on the Cambodian factions. The signing of the Paris Agreements marked more the end of the Third Indochina War than the end of the hostility between the Cambodian factions.

Chapter 2 analyses the understudied United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC), the first of the two operations that constituted the UN's peacekeeping effort in Cambodia, deployed between the signing of the Paris Accords in October 1991 and UNTAC's arrival in March 1992. Although largely neglected by scholars, this first phase of the Cambodian peace operation is of vital importance to understand the challenges with which UNTAC was later confronted. It reviews how the UN was faced with Khmer Rouge non-cooperation at a much earlier stage than has previously been assumed, and that the Khmer Rouge followed a deliberate strategy of using the peace agreement as a weapon, leaving the small "Good Offices Mission" without support from New York and military means completely powerless.

Chapter 3 explores how UNTAC missed its opportunity immediately upon its arrival to assert its authority and freedom of movement. With the UN leadership refusing to see through the Khmer Rouge's promises and focusing almost exclusively on keeping the time schedule and the final objective of elections, the disarmament and demobilisation was heading towards disaster.

Chapter 4 explores what concrete options were considered by the UN leadership in order to persuade the Khmer Rouge back into the peace process, revealing that a proposal by ASEAN countries to break the deadlock by using Asian forces to disarm the Khmer Rouge was eventually

not implemented. It also shows a growing distance between the UN Secretary-General and his special representative Yasushi Akashi who, instead of following a policy of patient diplomacy prescribed by New York, aimed to pressure the Khmer Rouge into cooperation. Such a policy course was designed by the French but blocked by the Australians who instead pushed for abandoning disarmament, containing the Khmer Rouge and get on with the elections.

Chapter 5 shows how UNTAC tried to keep up the appearance of an impartial peacekeeping force, while cooperating with the State of Cambodia to defend the elections against their now common adversary. With the imperative of success of the democratisation experiment, mandate constraints were no longer used as an excuse to refrain from taking more risk. The chapter further analyses how, in the aftermath of the elections, UNTAC lost its last bit of impartiality by supporting the provisional government in facing the Khmer Rouge insurgency.

Fuelling war and enforcing peace

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The Paris Peace Agreements of 23 October 1991 provided for the establishment of UNTAC and constituted the basis of its mandate. In order to get a better understanding of UNTAC's mission, this chapter explores how the peace accords were shaped, why the Cambodian parties agreed to sign it, why the Khmer Rouge were part of it, and how solid this peace was. No pen can describe the tragic and tumultuous history of Cambodia in the second half of the twentieth century, this chapter nonetheless attempts to provide an understanding of how the small Southeast Asian country turned into one of the Cold War's bloodiest battlefields, and then traces the long peace-making process that culminated in the Paris Peace Agreements. It will be demonstrated that the peace settlement was not the result of successful negotiations among Cambodians, but rather a compromise among the great powers who, after having fuelled the conflict, enforced a peace settlement on the Cambodian factions. The signing of the Paris Agreements did not end the hostility between Cambodians but marked the end of a wider conflict that had troubled great-power relations for over a decade.

The creation of a Cold War killing field

Cambodia had been the victim of the power politics of foreign powers for centuries, struggling to survive in between its two larger neighbours, the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand) and the Kingdom of Annam (Vietnam). In 1863, King Norodom I willingly concluded a treaty with the French to save his kingdom from being partitioned by its hostile neighbours. The French progressively consolidated their power over the kingdom-protectorate and most of the colonial era was characterised by political stability.¹ On 23 April 1941, the French Vichy-authorities chose the eighteen-year-old Prince Norodom Sihanouk as the new king. After the end of the Second World War, Sihanouk succeeded to keep Cambodia out of the worst fighting between French forces and the Vietminh, and managed in November 1953 to persuade the French government to grant Cambodia complete independence, shortly before France lost the battle at Dien Bien Phu and blew the retreat from Indochina. In Cambodia, the French colonial era ended as it had begun: in a predominantly non-violent way.²

Sihanouk became a popular king but suddenly abdicated in March 1955 to start a political movement, succeeding in his objective to crush the existing parties and win all seats in the national assembly. He became prime minister and transferred all policy-making powers from the crown to the government. During the 1960s, the hardworking and clever prince had himself named Cambodia's head of state and gained a monopoly on power.³ Cambodia lived through a period

1 David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008), 168.

2 Jean-Marie Cambacérès, *Norodom Sihanouk: le roi insubmersible* (Paris: le cherche midi, 2013), 92.

3 Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 238.

of social and economic progress which would later be referred to as Cambodia's "Golden Age." Phnom Penh was a capital of peace and prosperity with a rich cultural life. Sihanouk, who came to personify Cambodian politics, maintained a Nonaligned foreign policy and introduced his country on the international stage. Besides his many travels abroad, he received world leaders such as Charles de Gaulle in 1966 and celebrities as Jacqueline Kennedy in 1967 on iconic visits.⁴

But all the splendour had its limits. The Cambodian economy was in shambles and the prince made himself unpopular by retreating from his responsibilities, dedicating himself to his favourite hobby of filmmaking, with government funds. He also violently suppressed his political opponents on the left, which resulted in the rising popularity of an underground communist resistance movement under the leadership of a group of Paris-educated intellectuals, with their chairman Saloth Sar, better known by his nom de guerre Pol Pot. The "Khmer Rouge," as Prince Sihanouk called them, operated from the jungles in eastern Cambodia and were supplied and trained by the North Vietnamese communist forces. In 1968, the Khmer Rouge began an uprising against the decaying regime in Phnom Penh.⁵ Sihanouk ordered the conservative and anti-communist general Lon Nol, commander of the armed forces, to put down the rebellion. But Lon Nol's violent counterinsurgency campaigns resulted in many casualties among the Cambodian peasants and a rising popularity of the Khmer Rouge.

Sihanouk repeatedly proclaimed Cambodia's neutrality, but he was unable to avoid the war in neighbouring Vietnam spilling over into Cambodia. In an effort to appease Hanoi, he broke off diplomatic relations with Washington and turned a blind eye to North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces using Cambodian territory for sanctuary and a base of operations into South Vietnam. In 1967, American and South Vietnamese units also began infiltrating Cambodian territory in pursuit of their communist enemy, to which Sihanouk acquiesced. Two years later, US president Richard Nixon launched a massive bombing campaign against North Vietnamese forces operating from Cambodia. The carpet bombing of Cambodia's countryside by American B-52s which killed thousands of innocent Cambodians was, according to historian Ben Kiernan, the most important single factor in Pol Pot's rise.⁶ Sihanouk's position was further weakened at the expense of General Lon Nol, who became prime minister. In March 1970, while the prince had left Cambodia for his house in Mougins at the French Côte d'Azur, Lon Nol staged a coup d'état and removed Sihanouk from power. The newly established right-wing Khmer Republic was supported by the United States and joined the war against the North Vietnamese communists. The premier of China, Zhou Enlai, with whom Sihanouk maintained a personal friendship since the Bandung Conference of 1955, arranged financial support and a comfortable residence for Sihanouk in Beijing.⁷ In order to avenge himself, Sihanouk switched sides and publicly announced the creation of a coalition with the Khmer Rouge against the Lon Nol government.⁸

⁴ Cambacérès, *Norodom Sihanouk*, 128; Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 232.

⁵ Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Cold War's Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018), 305–9.

⁶ Bien Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Third Edition, 2008), 16.

⁷ Julio A. Jeldres, *Norodom Sihanouk & Zhou Enlai: an extraordinary friendship on the fringes of the Cold War* (Phnom Penh: Sleuk Rith Institute, 2021).

⁸ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Book, 1984), 605; Chamberlin, *The Cold War's Killing Fields*, 325.

Khmer Rouge offensives and the withdrawal of American support for the Lon Nol regime eventually led to the collapse of the Khmer Republic. Khmer Rouge forces moved into Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. Pol Pot and his followers shut off Cambodia from the outside world, renamed the country “Democratic Kampuchea” and transformed it into a totalitarian agrarian slave state ruled by Angkar (the organisation).⁹ Sihanouk, though allied with the Khmer Rouge, was put aside by Pol Pot and kept under house arrest at the royal palace. For four years, a reign of terror killed nearly a quarter of the nation’s population of 8 million people. The downfall of the genocidal regime came after the Khmer Rouge rekindled the traditional Khmer animosity towards Vietnam and launched a series of attacks in 1977 across the Vietnamese border in a delusory attempt to reconquer the Mekong Delta that used to belong to the historic Khmer Empire. Beijing supported Pol Pot in order to counter the threat of a Soviet-supported Vietnamese domination of Indochina.¹⁰ Determined to oppose the expansion of Chinese influence in Indochina and cement its alliance with the Soviet Union, Hanoi made the bold but calculated move to launch an invasion into Cambodia on Christmas Day 1978.¹¹ The battle-hardened Vietnamese troops outclassed the Khmer Rouge and took Phnom Penh within ten days. Pol Pot’s forces fled into the jungle hills at the Thai-Cambodian border and Sihanouk took the last flight to Beijing where he was offered asylum. Beijing, whose traditional strategic policy was to divide and weaken Indochina, was unwilling to accept a Vietnamese domination of Cambodia and the danger of an enhanced presence of Hanoi’s ally, the Soviet Union, on the Chinese southern periphery.¹² China therefore sent its army across the border into Vietnam to teach Hanoi a “lesson” for their invasion of Cambodia. After a month of fierce fighting and thousands of casualties on both sides, there was no clear winner, but both Hanoi and Beijing declared victory in March 1979. Hanoi installed a puppet-regime in Phnom Penh under the name of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and maintained an occupation force of approximately 150,000 troops in the country. Although the arrival of the Vietnamese army ended the four-year-long Khmer Rouge nightmare, and most Cambodians indeed welcomed the Vietnamese as liberators, Hanoi’s invasion was perceived in most parts of the world, especially in the West, as an aggressive violation of Cambodia’s sovereignty followed by an illegal occupation.¹³

Although Pol Pot’s army had been reduced to a small and weakened resistance movement, generous Chinese economic and military support allowed the Khmer Rouge to rebuild their army, which quickly increased its force to around 30,000 troops.¹⁴ A second resistance movement was created by an experienced politician named Son Sann, a Paris-educated economist who had refused

9 Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 159–250.

10 Christopher E. Goscha, “La Géopolitique Vietnamienne vue de l’Eurasie: quelles leçons de la troisième guerre d’Indochine pour aujourd’hui ?,” *Hérodote* 2, no. 157 (2015): 31.

11 Kosal Path, *Vietnam’s strategic thinking during the Third Indochina War* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 52.

12 Robert S. Ross, “China and the Cambodian Peace Process: The Value of Coercive Diplomacy,” *Asian Survey* 31, no. 12 (December 1991): 1170. Also see: François Joyaux, *Nouvelle histoire de l’Indochine française* (Paris: Perrin, 2022), 23, 379, 406. The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu was a triumph for Beijing, as it signified the end of the French Empire, which had challenged Chinese strategic influence in Indochina for nearly a century.

13 Nyan Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 370.

14 Sophie Quinn-Judge, “Victory on the battlefield; isolation in Asia: Vietnam’s Cambodia decade, 1979–1989,” in *The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972–79*, eds. Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge (London: Routledge, 2006), 218.

to associate himself with Lon Nol or the Khmer Rouge. After the Vietnamese invasion, Son Sann had come back from his exile in France to found the anti-communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF). Sihanouk's supporters encouraged the prince to create a royalist resistance movement which he would call the *Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif* (FUNCINPEC). The three resistance groups competed with each other for soldiers, whom they recruited among the 300,000 Cambodian refugees who had fled their country across the border into Thailand, where they were settled in refugee camps, each under the control of one of the Cambodian resistance factions.¹⁵ Sihanouk and Son Sann requested military aid from the United States, but Washington redirected them to Beijing. The Chinese, however, insisted that they forge a formal alliance with the Khmer Rouge in return for weapons and supplies. Son Sann refused cooperation with Pol Pot, and Prince Sihanouk set as precondition for the formation of this Faustian bargain that the Khmer Rouge would have to agree, in the case of a Vietnamese withdrawal, to the disarmament of all the Cambodian factions by a United Nations peacekeeping force that would also guarantee the non-return of Vietnamese forces. It was the first time that this idea was put explicitly on the table, ten years before the actual deployment of UNTAC. The Khmer Rouge, however, understood that Sihanouk and Son Sann did not have much choice and outrightly refused to accept Sihanouk's demands. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹⁶ also pushed for a broad anti-Vietnamese coalition which they considered to be a necessary condition for reaching a negotiated settlement.¹⁷ In June 1982, the three resistance movements came together in Kuala Lumpur to form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), with Sihanouk as president, Son Sann as prime minister and Khieu Samphan, who had been the titular leader of the Khmer Rouge since 1980. Khieu Samphan was an economist with a PhD from the Sorbonne who had served in Sihanouk's government as Under Secretary for Trade before becoming the Chairman of the State Presidium of the Khmer Rouge regime. After the fall of Democratic Kampuchea in 1979, Khieu Samphan was pushed forward by Pol Pot as a supposedly moderate figure in an attempt to seek support from the West and rally Prince Sihanouk to his cause. From 1985 onwards, Samphan was flanked by Son Sen, also an intellectual who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Khmer Rouge army.¹⁸ According to historian Michael Vickery, the CGDK was a "strange creature, a shotgun marriage of three partners whose mutual hatred was only exceeded by their antipathy for the PRK and Vietnamese."¹⁹ The coalition-in-name gave greater political legitimacy to the resistance and was a success for Beijing and Washington who used it as a cheap instrument to weaken Vietnam. The Chinese were essential in keeping the pact together, threatening to cut off all aid if one of the factions would withdraw from the coalition. The non-communist coalition partners could not bring more than 5,000 men each into the field, so most of the fighting was done by the well-

15 Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), 448.

16 The ASEAN member states between 1984 and 1995 included Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei.

17 Becker, *When the war was over*, 457; Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 381–94.

18 Christophe Peschoux, *Les « nouveaux » Khmers rouges: enquête (1979–1990): reconstruction du mouvement et reconquête des villages* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992), 65–67; Stephen Heder, *Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan*, Working Paper 70, published by the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia (1991).

19 Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 1.

supplied Khmer Rouge.²⁰ Although the resistance never posed a real threat to Vietnamese military control over Cambodia, their guerrilla war in the north-eastern parts of the country continued to consume Vietnamese manpower and resources. Moreover, since China maintained an army of up to 300,000 troops along the Sino-Vietnamese border, where small clashes continued to occur, Vietnam's military was compelled to stay on constant alert.²¹ The Third Indochina War, as the conflict between Cambodia, Vietnam and China is referred to by historians, perpetuated throughout the 1980s, though at a lower intensity, until a peace settlement was finally reached in 1991.

Ending the Third Indochina War: competition among the peacemakers

The Third Indochina War was a complex conflict, an entanglement of a civil war in Cambodia, a struggle for hegemony between China and Vietnam, and a regional battleground of superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and thus part of what historian Odd Arne Westad described as the Global Cold War.²² The complicated multi-layered nature of the conflict meant that a willingness to find a political settlement at the regional level could be impeded by the great powers, and a solution at the global level would not necessarily mean a peace among the Cambodians. In search for a solution to the conflict, different peacemakers competed with each other to reach a settlement that protected their interests.

In the first half of the 1980s, some diplomatic steps were taken, but no real negotiations were held. When UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim visited Hanoi in April 1979, the Vietnamese government made it clear that it was willing to withdraw its troops from Cambodia if China promised to cease its support to the Khmer Rouge, but Beijing was not ready to end this cheap and effective way of weakening Vietnam.²³ Within ASEAN there was a consensus that China's anti-Vietnamese strategy did not serve a stable Southeast Asia, free from great-power interventions. But ASEAN struggled to maintain its unity: Whereas Thailand remained wary of Vietnamese hegemonic ambitions in Indochina and played a key logistic role in providing the resistance with Chinese weapons and supplies, Indonesia and Malaysia saw China as the more important long-term threat to stability in the region and took a more conciliatory approach towards Hanoi. On 13 July 1981, the United Nations convened the International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) in New York. The conference was a failure because Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Moscow boycotted the diplomatic event.²⁴ An ASEAN proposal for the complete withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, followed by the full disarmament of the Cambodian factions, the establishment of an interim government, and the organisation of free elections also ran into heavy Chinese and Khmer Rouge opposition. ASEAN countries were also particularly shocked that they could

20 Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 394.

21 Ross, "China and the Cambodian Peace Process," 1175.

22 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) and Odd Arne Westad, "Introduction: From war to peace to war in Indochina," in: *The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972–79*, eds. Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quin-Judge (London: Routledge, 2006).

23 Michael Haas, *Cambodia, Pol Pot, and the United States: The Faustian Pact* (New York: Praeger 1991), 61

24 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Hédi Annabi, 1995, New York, Yale-UN Oral History project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, New York.

not count on support from Washington, which instead pressured them to accept the Chinese position.²⁵ Paris, that neither recognised the PRK nor the CGDK, manifested itself as neutral mediator with a special responsibility vis-à-vis Cambodia. France, with the socialist government of President François Mitterrand in office, was one of the few non-Soviet countries to provide economic aid to Hanoi, while maintaining close relations with Prince Sihanouk. Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson visited Vietnam in March 1983 where he declared that he did not wish to see Vietnamese troops leave Cambodia as to prevent Pol Pot from returning to power. A month later, however, President Mitterrand received Prince Sihanouk in Paris and made an official visit to Beijing where he condemned the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.²⁶

The Cambodian conflict remained in full stalemate, but from 1985 onwards, Hanoi and Phnom Penh expressed an increasing willingness to talk about a peace settlement with the non-communist coalition partners of the CGDK. They negotiated from a position of strength on the battlefield since a powerful offensive of the Vietnamese army had led to the destruction of all Khmer Rouge and non-communist military bases in Cambodia, driving the resistance forces into sanctuary across the Thai border. The Vietnamese desire to find a peace settlement was especially motivated by economic factors, as has been argued by historian Balázs Szalontai.²⁷ Hanoi's occupation of Cambodia was a heavy burden, costing \$1 billion a year and the lives of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers (eventually, a total of 55,000 Vietnamese were killed in Cambodia).²⁸ A younger generation of leaders, rising to power within the Vietnamese Communist Party, launched an economic reform programme called *Doi Moi* (Renovation). Suffering from international trade embargoes and eager to establish new economic relations with its ASEAN neighbours, the West and China, Hanoi announced its intention to withdraw all its troops from Cambodia before 1990. The Vietnamese gradually reduced their forces and built up a regular Cambodian army with Soviet support. In January 1985, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar visited Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries to talk about the Cambodian problem. The Vietnamese had just put in place a new prime minister of the PRK: the 32-year-old political talent Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge officer who had defected to the Vietnamese in 1977 to escape Pol Pot's purges. Hun Sen, belonging to the progressive wing in Phnom Penh believing in economic liberalisation, realised that the country would collapse if it did not climb out of international isolation and actively sought a dialogue with countries in the region. Australia's foreign minister, Bill Hayden, who maintained constructive contacts with Hanoi, was the first in a row of regional leaders to meet with Hun Sen to talk about possible solutions for the Cambodian conflict. During their encounter in Ho Chi Minh City, in March 1985, Hun Sen indicated that he was ready to make concessions to Sihanouk and Son Sann if they would distance themselves from the Khmer Rouge. Hayden proposed to organise a peace conference in Canberra and establish a tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge leadership for their crimes against humanity. But these initiatives created

25 Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 389–92.

26 Eric Teo, "The New French Socialist Foreign Policy and Indochina," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 6, no. 3 (December 1984): 224; Ng Shui Meng, "Vietnam in 1983: Keeping a Delicate Balance," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1984): 265.

27 Balázs Szalontai, "From battlefield into marketplace: The end of the Cold War in Indochina, 1985–1989," in *The End of the Cold War and the Third World: New perspectives on regional conflict*, eds. Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko (New York: Routledge, 2011), 163, 168.

28 Nick B. Williams Jr., "Hanoi Puts Its Cambodia Toll at 55,000 Dead," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 1988.

tensions with Washington and ASEAN which both rebuffed the Australian proposal.²⁹

Two of the foremost Cambodia experts, historians Ben Kiernan and Michael Vickery, have made the point that a peace agreement that excluded the Khmer Rouge could have been brokered within the Southeast Asian sphere by 1985, but regional diplomatic efforts were outflanked by China and the United States that wanted a peace settlement on their terms, which were based on weakening Vietnam and undermining its “puppet regime” in Phnom Penh.³⁰ Although the Reagan administration publicly declared that it would never accept a Khmer Rouge return to power, it continued to recognise the CGDK and actively support it. The horrors of the Pol Pot regime were by now well known to the world (Roland Joffé’s 1984 movie *The Killing Fields* had strongly contributed to this), but Washington, embittered by its defeat in the Vietnam War, and preoccupied with maintaining good relations with China and containing the Soviet Union, refused to use the term “genocide.” To do so would be to admit that the Vietnamese invasion had indeed been a legitimate intervention and not an illegal act of expansionism.³¹

Just how strongly the Third Indochina War was part of the Global Cold War is revealed by the fact that the real breakthrough towards a solution only came after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union in March 1985. Gorbachev understood that the Soviet Union had overextended itself and that its solidarity with Hanoi was not only costly in resources but was also undermining its relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. On 28 July 1986, the new General Secretary made a momentous speech in Vladivostok in which he announced the Soviet Union’s pivot to Asia, hoping that better relations with the Far East could help revitalise the Soviet economy and give Moscow a leading role in this part of the world.³² A normalisation of the USSR’s relations with Beijing was central in Gorbachev’s Asian strategy, but Chinese leaders indicated that several obstacles had to be removed first, of which the most important was the Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Moscow agreed to solve the Cambodian question with urgency, and in a demonstration of goodwill acquiesced to the Khmer Rouge’s inclusion – “except Pol Pot and his high-ranking accomplices” – in the negotiations for a political settlement.³³

Sihanouk, who considered himself the father of modern Cambodia, was determined to return to his country as its saviour, and temporarily resigned as president of the CGDK to give himself a more neutral status. Hun Sen was eager to meet with the prince, and a first meeting between the two Cambodian leaders was organised by the French diplomat Claude Martin, the director of the Asia department at the *Quai d’Orsay* (the French foreign ministry). Martin, who maintained good contacts with Sihanouk, saw an opportunity to give France a leading role in the Cambodian peace process, using its special relationship with the prince and good rapports with Beijing, Hanoi and Moscow. Putting the profoundly Francophile prince at the centre of a political

29 Indonesia and Malaysia, individually, replied positively to Hayden’s proposals. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 62–64; Kiernan, “The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge,” 195.

30 Kiernan, “The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge,” 91; Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 3–7. Also see: Charles McGregor, “China, Vietnam, and the Cambodian Conflict: Beijing’s End Game Strategy,” *Asian Survey* 30, no. 3 (March 1990): 269.

31 Quinn-Judge, “Victory on the battlefield,” 220.

32 Pierre Grosser, *L’histoire du monde se fait en Asie: une autre vision du XXe siècle* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2017) 519, 536; Elizabeth Becker, “The Progress of Peace in Cambodia,” *Current History* 88, no. 537 (April 1989): 169; Quinn-Judge, “Victory on the battlefield,” 225.

33 Szalontai, “From battlefield into marketplace,” 161.

solution would also protect France's interests in Southeast Asia. On 2 December 1987, Sihanouk and Hun Sen met for the first time in a château in Fère-en-Tardenois, a village between Paris and Reims. The meeting was a success. Hun Sen and the prince got along very well, and after three days of constructive discussions they signed a joint communiqué in which they pledged to work towards a political settlement of the conflict. Three weeks later, they met for a second time in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.³⁴

Meanwhile, ASEAN countries also continued their peace-making efforts and were somewhat piqued by France's interference in a matter they considered to be their *chasse gardée*. In July 1988, Ali Alatas, the foreign minister of Indonesia, succeeded, in close coordination with Vietnam, in bringing together for the first time the three resistance factions and Hun Sen for an informal meeting – called a “cocktail party” – in the palace of Bogor, near Jakarta. Khieu Samphan represented the Khmer Rouge, with Pol Pot remaining in charge in the background. The Cambodians were joined by Vietnam, Laos and ASEAN countries to discuss the international dimensions of a peace settlement.³⁵ Surprised they had not received an invitation for this important conference, the French persuaded Sihanouk not to attend the meeting, making the point that it was France that held the key to Sihanouk, to the chagrin of the Indonesians. To end the competition between the peace brokers, French foreign minister Roland Dumas, proposed Indonesia to become co-president of an international conference on Cambodia that would be held in Paris, which Alatas accepted.³⁶

Though Hun Sen's army maintained the upper hand on the battlefield and Vietnamese troops continued to leave Cambodia, Beijing insisted on including the Khmer Rouge in a peace settlement in exchange for cutting their supply line. The Soviets, who were impatient to find a solution for Cambodia, pressured the Vietnamese to be flexible and agree to the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in a peace settlement. Hanoi knew that with Sino-Soviet relations improving, it stood weaker vis-à-vis China. The decreasing Soviet commitment to Vietnamese military security became apparent in March 1988 when Moscow did not intervene in the Sino-Vietnamese naval clashes over the Spratly Islands, in which the Vietnamese lost three ships and more than sixty men.³⁷ In April 1989, Hanoi announced that it would withdraw its last remaining forces from Cambodia by September of the same year. Beijing immediately reduced its military pressure along the Sino-Vietnamese border and opened negotiations with Hanoi. A month later, Gorbachev made a trip to China as an important symbolic step in the normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations.³⁸ These developments created momentum for a political settlement of the Cambodian problem.

Negotiations between the Cambodian factions also seemed to be going towards a positive conclusion, but into a different direction. In May 1989, Sihanouk and Hun Sen reached agreement on key issues, such as the formation of a four-party National Reconciliation Council, headed by Sihanouk, that would organise the disarmament of all Cambodian factions as well as elections, under supervision of a small international control mechanism. Sihanouk also dropped his previous

34 Claude Martin, *La diplomatie n'est pas un dîner de gala* (Paris: Éditions de l'aube, 2018), 514; Becker, *When the war was over*, 472–75.

35 William S. Turley, “The Khmer war: Cambodia after Paris,” *Survival* 32, no. 5 (September/October 1990): 439.

36 Martin, *La diplomatie*, 525, 561.

37 McGregor, “China, Vietnam, and the Cambodian Conflict,” 282; Ross, “China and the Cambodian Peace Process,” 1175.

38 Quinn-Judge, “Victory on the battlefield,” 225–26.

demand to dismantle Hun Sen's government before the elections.³⁹ Hun Sen, in return, responded to Sihanouk's request to rebrand the PRK as the "State of Cambodia" (SOC), restore Buddhism as the national religion and adopt a new flag that resembled the one of the former Kingdom of Cambodia. Though the single-party state remained in place, the name of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) was changed into the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Communism was sworn off, private property rights reintroduced and the door opened to foreign investments. The SOC's new constitution stated that Cambodia was a neutral and Non-Aligned country. Hun Sen was willing to take these measures as they served his effort to rid himself of his image as a puppet of Hanoi and make his regime internationally more acceptable.⁴⁰ The time looked ripe for a peace agreement.

On 30 July 1989, France and Indonesia convened the peace conference on Cambodia in the Hôtel Majestic at the avenue Kléber in Paris, the same conference centre where in 1973 the peace accords had been negotiated and signed that aimed to end the Second Indochina War. Foreign ministers of nineteen countries attended: the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union), Vietnam, Laos, the six ASEAN member states (Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei), Canada and India as the neutral monitors of the 1954 Geneva Accords that had settled the First Indochina War, Zimbabwe as president of the Non-Aligned movement, Japan because of its ambition to become a leading nation in Asian affairs, and Australia because of its good relation with Indonesia and earlier initiatives by Bill Hayden. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, also attended. In the days preceding the conference, France and Indonesia successfully persuaded the leaders of the four Cambodian factions to accept a symbolic but important compromise: Son Sann, Sihanouk, Hun Sen and Khieu Samphan agreed to sit together in the conference room behind a five-metre-long nameplate labelled "*C a m b o d g e*." But despite the reconciliatory picture of the Cambodians sitting shoulder to shoulder, they quickly entrenched themselves deeper into their positions. Khmer Rouge representative Khieu Samphan was uncompromising, making an aggressive and hypocritical opening speech in which he compared the Vietnamese occupation with crimes committed by the Nazis in the Second World War. Sihanouk also took an unexpected recalcitrant stance, accusing Hun Sen and the Vietnamese while defending the Khmer Rouge. It revealed that the prince still stood under strong pressure from Beijing, where he resided in great comfort at the expense of the Chinese government; from the Khmer Rouge, who formed the only credible military force in the resistance against Phnom Penh and Hanoi; as well as from some members within his own party who disapproved of his deals with Hun Sen and forced him to adopt hard-line positions.⁴¹

After the first days of plenary sessions during which the great powers promised disengagement from their Cambodian clients once an agreement was reached, the ministers left Paris while the experts of the delegations broke up in different committees for three weeks to work out the details of a comprehensive political settlement. The discussions were based on papers produced by two of Pérez de Cuéllar's staff members of the UN Secretariat, the Tunisian Hédi Annabi and

39 Michael Haas, "The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 23, no. 2 (1991), 43; Turley, "The Khmer war: Cambodia after Paris," 440.

40 Sebastian Strangio, *Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Hun Sen and Beyond* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 40.

41 Haas, "The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989," 45; Martin, *La diplomatie*, 590; Becker, *When the War was Over*, 490.

the Pakistani Rafeeuddin Ahmed, who had been working on a plan for a United Nations role in implementing a comprehensive political settlement for Cambodia.⁴² The working groups focusing on the external aspects of the Cambodian conflict made significant progress, but the Cambodian factions remained in total deadlock. The main problem was that the factions could not come to an agreement about a power-sharing arrangement pending elections. Khieu Samphan demanded the complete dismantlement of the Phnom Penh government, which was unacceptable for Hun Sen, who refused any Khmer Rouge participation in a quadripartite interim administration. The factions also couldn't agree on the tasks and composition of an international control mechanism that would oversee the transition to a newly elected government. The resistance wanted a United Nations mission to disarm the factions and organise elections. Hun Sen and Hanoi, however, did not want a heavy UN involvement and instead proposed an ad hoc International Control Mechanism similar to the Geneva conference of 1954, in which a small number of acceptable countries would supervise elections to be organised by the State of Cambodia itself.⁴³ But Pérez de Cuéllar had cleverly put his foot in the door by proposing to send a UN fact-finding mission to Cambodia. When all conference participants accepted this, a survey mission was immediately dispatched and published a report. This made it more difficult to deny the UN a central role in the peace process.⁴⁴

Although the delegates of the conference worked day and night for thirty days, a comprehensive settlement could not be reached, and the foreign ministers did not come back to Paris for a final signing act, as was planned. It was not only the irreconcilable positions of the Cambodians that led to the conference's failure, but also the unwillingness of the great powers to put enough pressure on their Cambodian clients to compromise. With the Vietnamese troop withdrawal scheduled for the next month, China and the United States had basically already obtained what they needed. The Paris conference was held only two months after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 4 June 1989, and the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, made his first appearance on the international stage since these events had shocked the world. The Beijing massacre had significant consequences for the dynamics of the Cambodian peace process. China had lost much of its bargaining power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union because it found itself politically and economically isolated, while the relationship between the Moscow and the West was improving. The only remaining source of leverage Beijing maintained on the international stage was its influence over the Khmer Rouge, so it was determined to use it in maintaining its strategic influence in Indochina and achieve the dissolution of the pro-Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh.⁴⁵ Although Qichen made a conciliatory opening speech, the Chinese continued to protect their Khmer Rouge clients behind the scenes. The United States did not mind either to postpone a peace settlement until a later moment when the non-communist resistance factions might be in a stronger position on the battlefield vis-à-vis Phnom Penh.⁴⁶ American political scientist and Cambodia expert Michael Haas observed that while Vietnam and Hun Sen made important concessions, Beijing and Washington, supported by Bangkok and Singapore, aimed

42 Interview by James Sutterlin with Hédi Annabi.

43 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 56; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 144.

44 Interview by James Sutterlin with Hédi Annabi.

45 Ross, "China and the Cambodian Peace Process," 1177.

46 Turley, "The Khmer war: Cambodia after Paris," 441.

to impose “a treaty of surrender” on Phnom Penh and Hanoi.⁴⁷ The French tried to save the conference by making a last-minute proposal for a compromise solution, which received sufficient international support, but could not lead to an agreement because of the complete lack of mutual trust among the Cambodians. At the end of the conference, Hun Sen declared that he had been “fooled by Sihanouk.”⁴⁸ To avoid the impression of complete failure, the co-presidents decided to “suspend” the conference. There was a strong feeling of disappointment, that it had all been a waste of time and money, especially with the French who paid the entire bill of 2.5 million dollars for their grand conference. The Security Council’s five permanent members (P5) decided that, since the Cambodian factions seemed unable to find agreement among themselves, the great powers would have to work out the basis for a peace agreement to which the Cambodian factions would simply have to comply.

In the month after the Paris conference, all Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia, and resistance forces immediately launched attacks in Western Cambodia. The non-communist forces regained some terrain, but the Khmer Rouge successfully seized the gem-mining district of Pailin and threatened to take the provincial capitals of Sisophon and Battambang. For a moment, the balance on the battlefield seemed to have changed in favour of the resistance, but Hun Sen’s forces launched a successful counterattack in which they retook almost all lost positions, except for Pailin. Phnom Penh maintained in control of 90 per cent of Cambodia.⁴⁹ As the war in Cambodia continued, so did the competition among the peacemakers. Nobody knew exactly how to proceed after the failed Paris conference, until Australia gave new air to the discussions by promoting the idea of establishing a UN interim authority in Cambodia. This concept was not new. It had already been pushed for years by Stephen Solarz, a US Congressman from New York and chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, who maintained close contacts with Prince Sihanouk, and had tried to bring the situation in Cambodia to the attention in Washington.⁵⁰ After the inconclusive Paris conference, Solarz actively continued his lobby and promised Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans that he would nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize if he was willing to pick up the idea and successfully sell it in other capitals.⁵¹ Evans, who was trying to shape Australia’s future as an active regional power in Asia, sensed an opportunity to claim a central role in the Cambodian peace process.⁵² Without prior consultation with the United Nations or the P5, Evans turned Solarz’s idea for an enhanced UN role in Cambodia into an “Australian initiative for

47 Haas, “The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989,” 43, 52.

48 Becker, *When the War was Over*, 492.

49 Turley, “The Khmer war: Cambodia after Paris,” 442.

50 See: Stephen J. Solarz, “Cambodia and the international community,” *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1990), 99–115; Stephen J. Solarz, “Support the UN Plan for Cambodia,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 9 October 1990.

51 Gareth Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist: A Political Memoir* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2017), 155; Gareth Evans, “The Comprehensive political Settlement to the Cambodia Conflict: An Exercise in Cooperating for Peace,” in *International Peacekeeping: Building on the Cambodian Experience*, ed. Hugh Smith (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994), 1–13; Becker, *When the war was over*, 496.

52 Gareth Evans, “Australia’s Asian future: Address by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to launch the Institute for Contemporary Asian Studies, Monash University (19 July 1990),” 3; Ken Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue: Australia’s initiative for peace* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin in association with the Dept. of International Relations, Australian National University, 1997); Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, 152. Australia’s 1987 Defence White Paper described South-East Asia as Australia’s “region of primary strategic interest”, see: Kim C. Beazley, *The Defence of Australia 1987* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), 8.

peace.”⁵³

As the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, Washington felt the moment was right to speed up negotiations about Cambodia and took the initiative to call together representatives of the P5 in Paris on 16 January 1990. Richard Solomon, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs persuaded his French and Soviet colleagues – and fellow Sinologists – Claude Martin and Igor Rogachev that the power-sharing problem could best be resolved by giving the United Nations an enhanced role in the peace process. The fact that the three diplomats spoke in fluent Mandarin with China’s vice-foreign minister Xu Dunxin obviously helped in working towards a compromise with Beijing. The P5 diplomats met five more times alternatively every other month in Paris and New York, together with Rafeuddin Ahmed and Hédi Annabi, to work out the main elements of a peace agreement. The main issues on the table were to resolve the issue of power-sharing among the factions and to reconcile a role for the United Nations with Cambodia’s sovereignty. The solution was found in the creation of a Supreme National Council (SNC), representing the four factions, which would enshrine the sovereignty of Cambodia during the transition to a new government and grand a collective consent to a UN peacekeeping operation. The precise composition of such a council of national reconciliation remained open for debate.⁵⁴

On invitation of his Indonesian colleague Ali Alatas, Australian foreign minister Evans participated in a meeting with the Cambodian factions in Jakarta in late February 1990, where he tabled a collection of working papers which he called the “Red Book,” because of its red cover, containing concrete proposals for an operationalisation of a UN role.⁵⁵ The Australian assertiveness irritated Claude Martin, who believed that the Australians had no legitimate role to play in the Cambodian peace process. Evans felt exactly the same about France, whose stature as a former colonial power in Indochina was not considered as a positive factor in Australia.⁵⁶ Australian narratives generally attribute central importance to Evans’ initiative in pushing the peace process forward, but the proposals in the Red Book largely merged with the ideas that were already under discussion by the P5, who subsequently paid lip service to the Australians.⁵⁷ The Red Book nonetheless helped to get the idea for a UN role accepted by the Cambodian factions, who trusted Evans, and stimulated the discussion on a concrete operationalisation of the concept.⁵⁸

The blueprint for a UN operation in Cambodia was largely based on a multidimensional UN operation that had been deployed to Namibia in April 1989, after a long delay of more than

53 Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage for Peace: A Secretary-General’s Memoir* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 507; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 90; Richard H. Solomon, *Exiting Indochina: U.S. Leadership of the Cambodia Settlement & Normalization with Vietnam* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2000), 54.

54 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 144; Becker, *When the war was over*, 498.

55 Cambodia: An Australian Peace Proposal, Working Papers prepared for the Informal Meeting on Cambodia, Jakarta, 26–28 February 1990, United Nations Archives, New York (UNA), S-1854-0016-0003.

56 Largely because of the nuclear test in the South Pacific in the 1980s: Interview by Jean Krasno with Gareth Evans, 10 December 1997, New York, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York; Becker, *When the war was over*, 500; Martin, *La diplomatie*, 536.

57 See: Gareth Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, 156; Berry, *Cambodia*, 76, 315; Horner and Connor, *The good international citizen*, 111; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 17. The U.N. Secretary-General’s representative Rafeuddin Ahmed has stated that “everybody certainly gave lip service” to the Australian initiative, but in the end, the Australians were “not so important” that their Red Book “had no importance” in the negotiations, and that the Australian draft single negotiating text “did nothing.” See: Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Rafeuddin Ahmed, New York, date unknown, Yale-UN Oral History Project, call number at the Yale University Archives: MS 1703 box 1, folder 2.

58 Becker, *When the war was over*, 498; Solomon, *Exiting Indochina*, 56, 74.

ten years. UNTAG was to ensure the peaceful transfer of power in Namibia from South Africa to a new Namibian government. It was the first multidimensional UN operation that gave UN peacekeepers a multitude of new tasks. A UN military force of nearly 4,500 personnel supervised not only a fragile cease-fire, but also the withdrawal of South African forces and the disarmament of Namibian forces. An election division supervised an electoral process and educated voters about democracy. In November 1989, elections for a constituent assembly in Namibia were conducted very smoothly, with a 97 per cent turnout and no violent incidents. UNTAG's successful completion of its entire mandate contributed to the sense that this sort of the new peacekeeping could work in Cambodia as well.⁵⁹

Bangkok and Tokyo also attempted to get more directly involved in the Cambodian peace process with the aim to broker a regional deal, independent of the P5's consultations working towards a comprehensive settlement. As Vietnamese troops were gradually withdrawing from Cambodia, Thai entrepreneurs pressured their government to open up to Hanoi and exploit trading opportunities. The new prime minister of Thailand, Chatichai Choonhavan, who had been democratically elected in July 1988, agreed with their arguments and famously stated that he wanted to turn Indochina from "a battleground into a market place." The pragmatic Chatichai established close contacts with Hun Sen and radically changed Bangkok's stance on Cambodia by proposing a step-by-step peace settlement that included ASEAN, Vietnam, and the Cambodian factions.⁶⁰ Tokyo also jumped in and organised a peace conference on 5 June 1990 with two delegations, one headed by Sihanouk, representing the resistance, and a second delegation led by Hun Sen. The Khmer Rouge boycotted the conference because it was not invited as an independent party but only as a member of the Sihanouk delegation. This allowed Sihanouk and Son Sann to disregard the Khmer Rouge and move closer to Hun Sen, with whom they found agreement around the establishment of a Supreme National Council, from which the Khmer Rouge were excluded. The Tokyo Conference saw a move towards a more realistic settlement that acknowledged the undeniable fact that Hun Sen's government controlled 90 per cent of Cambodia.⁶¹ But Washington expressed great displeasure about both Bangkok's and Tokyo's initiatives that shifted the balance in favour of the State of Cambodia, and brought its allies back in line by threatening with economic consequences.⁶²

Several major developments led to an acceleration in the negotiations between the great powers about Cambodia. First, Chinese and Vietnamese political leaders held a series of secret meetings aimed at resolving their differences and restore normal relations.⁶³ Second, in July 1990, the US foreign secretary James Baker III stunned the world when he announced in Paris, standing next to his Soviet colleague Eduard Shevardnadze, that the United States would withdraw diplomatic recognition of the CGDK and open direct talks with Hanoi and Phnom Penh about the settlement of the Cambodian conflict. Washington's sudden about-face with regard to its Cambodia policy was the result of the increasing pressure exercised by the US Congress on the

59 Bellamy and Williams, *Understanding peacekeeping*, 237; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 118–23.

60 Szalontai, "From battlefield into marketplace," 163.

61 Yasuhiro Takeda, "Japan's Role in the Cambodian Peace Process: Diplomacy, Manpower, and Finance," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 6 (June 1998): 555.

62 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 19; Kiernan, "The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge," 204–5.

63 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 145.

Bush administration to stop the indirect American support for the Khmer Rouge, which American public opinion began to consider as too immoral to sustain.⁶⁴ Beijing realised that it would soon be isolated as the sole supporter of the Khmer Rouge and dropped its long-standing demand to fully dismantle the Hun Sen government. As a consequence, the P5 quickly reached consensus on a draft “framework document” they had been discussing with the UN Secretariat that reflected a plan for achieving two objectives that protected the P5’s common interests: removing the Phnom Penh government and preventing a Khmer Rouge return to power. The plan did not foresee the complete dismantlement of Hun Sen’s government, but its key ministries (foreign affairs, defence, finance, public security and information) were to be put under direct control of a United Nations Transitional Authority in order to neutralise its advantage during “free and fair” elections for a constituent assembly. The UN peacekeeping force would be tasked with the organisation of these elections as well as with the full disarmament and demobilisation of the Cambodian factions’ armies. It was decided to make the Khmer Rouge full members of the Supreme National Council with the calculation that, in the end, they would be beaten in the political arena, presuming that Cambodian voters would despise them. The power of democracy would do its work, was the idea.⁶⁵

As the P5 had written out their plan for peace in November 1990, they set out to try to sell it to the Cambodian factions, to ASEAN and Vietnam.⁶⁶ But this posed a challenge because the P5 framework included the Khmer Rouge, whereas in the negotiations among the Cambodian factions, agreement was only possible between Sihanouk, Son Sann and Hun Sen, excluding the Khmer Rouge. Notwithstanding this reality, the P5 proceeded to push the Cambodians to accept their peace plan through a policy of “coercive diplomacy,” as characterised by political scientist Sorpong Peou.⁶⁷ The P5’s decision to impose a solution must also be understood in the context of other events and crises, such as Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and the following Gulf War, which demanded much of their attention. In December 1990, when Roland Dumas called the Cambodian factions to Paris, he warned them that the international community could not indefinitely focus its attention on the fate of Cambodia if the Cambodians themselves did not show the political will to reach a settlement. He presented the P5’s framework document as a “take-it-or-leave-it” deal. The resistance factions were ready to accept it, as it was clearly to their advantage, but Hun Sen continued to object to a UN role in controlling important parts of his government, which he viewed as a violation of Cambodia’s national sovereignty, as well as to the disarmament of his entire army before the elections, which would make his government vulnerable vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge. The army of the Phnom Penh government, the Cambodian People’s Armed Forces (CPAF), was located at fixed military bases throughout the country, whereas nobody knew exactly where the isolated Khmer Rouge’s jungle camps were, making it much easier for them to cheat by hiding weapons and soldiers from UN inspectors. Hun Sen also pressed for measures to exclude the Khmer Rouge in case they would subvert the peace agreement.⁶⁸ The stalemate continued, although the factions agreed to pursue their negotiations.

64 Becker, *When the war was over*, 501.

65 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 150–51.

66 Interview by James Sutterlin with Hédi Annabi.

67 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 171.

68 Kiernan, “The Cambodian crisis,” 17; Haas, “The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989,” 45.

In January 1991, a delegation from France, Indonesia and the United Nations travelled to Hanoi to sell the P5 framework for a peace agreement, but the Vietnamese refused to accept to weaken the authority of the Phnom Penh government.⁶⁹ They argued that Cambodia was a sovereign state and that the Cambodian conflict was a civil war that should primarily be resolved among Cambodians, not by a P5-imposed settlement. Hanoi was also sceptical about such an intrusive role of the United Nations and protested against giving political legitimacy to the Khmer Rouge, who continued to receive arms from Beijing, including a recent shipment of twenty-four tanks.⁷⁰ But Vietnam was in a weak negotiating position. Communist states in Europe were collapsing and Hanoi's former patron, the Soviet Union, was disintegrating.⁷¹ The Soviet-Vietnamese alliance had practically ceased to exist, and Moscow now tried to persuade Hanoi to just accept the P5 plan. Ultimately, it was Chinese and American pressure that made Hanoi more flexible. Beijing calculated that the prospect of a prolonged civil war would eventually compel Hanoi to make compromises. It threatened to continue its military support to the Khmer Rouge and put the unconditional acceptance of the P5 peace plan as the first precondition for a normalisation of Sino-Vietnamese relations.⁷² Washington played the same card. Since Hanoi had fulfilled the precondition to withdraw its troops from Cambodia in September 1989, it had been eagerly waiting for the United States to restore diplomatic relations and lift its trade embargos. But Washington had so far refused to do so and instead presented a "roadmap" for the normalisation of relations, in which the primary condition was Hanoi's acceptance of the P5 plan for a comprehensive peace settlement and demanded Hanoi to put pressure on Phnom Penh to accept it as well.⁷³

As long as there was no definitive peace agreement, the great powers continued to protect their interests in Indochina and supply their clients with military aid, thus fuelling the conflict. In February 1991, Tokyo made a new attempt to break the deadlock by presenting a new peace plan that aimed to address Hun Sen's objections to the P5's peace plan and reach a settlement among the Cambodian factions themselves, not by imposition from the P5. The Japanese plan introduced two concrete proposals. The first was to include a provision in the peace agreement that stated that any faction that violated the agreements would be deprived of its right to participate in the elections. Secondly, Tokyo called for the establishment of a special committee to investigate the crimes of the Pol Pot regime. Hun Sen endorsed the Japanese peace plan as a more balanced alternative for the P5's proposals. Son Sann and Sihanouk had no objections to the plan, but the Khmer Rouge outrightly rejected it. Washington also expressed its strong disapproval of the Japanese initiative, saying that it might "confuse the international effort."⁷⁴ In the next few months, Hun Sen and Sihanouk moved away further from the P5 plan and the Khmer Rouge. They decided to declare an indefinite cease-fire and found agreement around a limited role for the United Nations, with a modest peacekeeping force of about 700 lightly armed soldiers. In June 1991, France and Indonesia demonstrated a willingness to accept modifications of the P5 peace

69 Interview by James Sutterlin with Hédi Annabi.

70 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 160–63.

71 Frederick Z. Brown, "Cambodia in 1991: An Uncertain Peace," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 1 (January 1992) 89; Gary Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1993): 89.

72 Ross, "China and the Cambodian Peace Process," 1179.

73 Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 24; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 169–71.

74 Takeda, "Japan's Role in the Cambodian Peace Process," 556.

plan.⁷⁵

A final breakthrough came, again, as the result of a change in leadership, this time in Hanoi. Several anti-Chinese hardliners within the Vietnamese government resigned in the summer of 1991. The replacement of Nguyen Co Thach by Nguyen Manh Cam as foreign minister immediately improved the Sino-Vietnamese contacts. Bilateral consultations allegedly led to a consensus between Beijing and Hanoi around the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge and a minimum involvement of the United Nations, with a force of only a few hundred observers. Beijing seemed willing to make a compromise with Hanoi, but Washington continued to refuse to accept any solution reached between China and Vietnam that went contrary to the original P5 plan.⁷⁶ Eventually, it was the American obstinacy that made Hanoi bow. In June 1991, when the Cambodian factions met first in Thailand and then in China, the Vietnamese instructed Hun Sen to make important concessions. The SOC prime minister dropped his demands to make him vice-president of the Supreme National Council. Chinese premier Li Peng, who was satisfied that China had achieved most of its objectives in Cambodia and confident that Hun Sen would henceforth recognise China's regional authority, received the SOC prime minister in Beijing for an informal meeting. This was a milestone.⁷⁷

Hun Sen nonetheless made a final demonstration of resistance in the last week of August 1991, when key participants of the Paris Conference convened for a four-day meeting in the Thai coastal town of Pattaya. The SOC prime minister accepted most aspects of the P5 plan but continued to argue that the full demobilisation of his army prior to elections would make his government and the entire country too reliant on the UN peacekeeping force for security in case of a Khmer Rouge offensive. He therefore proposed to disarm only 40 per cent of the faction's armed forces, with the rest placed under supervision for the peacekeeping force. The Khmer Rouge, however, tabled a counterproposal to reduce all faction's armies to a maximum strength of 10,000 troops. Eventually, a compromise was found around a French proposal to disarm and demobilise 70 per cent of the factions' forces and regroup the remaining 30 per cent under UN supervision. This would allow Phnom Penh continued numerical superiority against the Khmer Rouge. In return, Hun Sen dropped his demand to explicitly refer in the peace agreements to the crimes of the Pol Pot regime as "genocide." Washington protested against the compromise, and insisted to adopt the P5 plan unchanged, which prompted Sihanouk to complain that even the Khmer Rouge were being more flexible than the United States.⁷⁸ As other countries of the Paris Conference agreed to keep the armies at least partly intact as a safeguard against the Khmer Rouge, Washington eventually backed down. In Pattaya, the Cambodian factions agreed to a new cease-fire and the cessation of foreign arms supplies. Sihanouk was elected president of the SNC, providing him officially with a neutral position above the parties, as well as decision-making powers. This "Pattaya consensus" provided the blueprint for the final peace agreement.⁷⁹

To avoid any more delays, copresidents France and Indonesia reconvened the Paris Conference on 23 October 1991 to get the deal done as quickly as possible. The delegations of

75 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 44.

76 Ibid., 165.

77 Ross, "China and the Cambodian Peace Process," 1183.

78 Kiernan, "The Cambodian crisis," 15.

79 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 83; Brown, "Cambodia in 1991," 93.

nineteen countries returned to the Kléber conference centre two years, two months and five days after the failed conference of 1989. This time, it was a one-day conference with the sole aim to sign the peace accords.⁸⁰ After a long and rocky road, a settlement had been finally reached that aimed to end the endless conflict in Indochina. But the peace agreements were ratified in a sombre atmosphere. There was no joint celebration and no sign of rapprochement among the Cambodian factions. Igor Rogachev, the Soviet Union's director of Asian affairs, commented after the signing ceremony that the main objective was already accomplished before the first blue helmet set foot in Cambodia: ending the foreign support for the war.⁸¹ The Paris Peace Agreements might have ended the Third Indochina War, but the Cambodian factions considered it as a continuation of their war by other means.⁸² Major breakthroughs in the peace process had not been generated by a spirit of reconciliation, but by the great shifts in the geopolitical landscape in the final phase of the Cold War, which had enabled an unprecedented cooperation between the P5, who were all determined to sweep the embarrassing dossier off the table and "exit Indochina."⁸³ This is not to say, as Trevor Findlay has suggested, that there would have been no peace agreement if it had been left to the Cambodians themselves.⁸⁴ Rather, it must be argued that a peace agreement could have been achieved much earlier if the great powers had not insisted on a comprehensive political settlement that included the Khmer Rouge. A peace agreement between Hun Sen, Sihanouk and Son Sann, excluding the Khmer Rouge, supported by ASEAN and Vietnam was certainly conceivable. By insisting on a comprehensive political settlement, China, and particularly the United States, prevented a purely regional settlement, fearing that such a deal would be too beneficial to Vietnam and too detrimental to their own interests.

The great powers that had fuelled the war in Indochina to protect their strategic interests now enforced a peace agreement so they could redefine their relations in the post-Cold War world. For Beijing, the Paris Agreements ended the threat of Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina and allowed it to withdraw its support from the universally condemned Khmer Rouge in a face-saving way. But besides settling the long conflict between Hanoi and Beijing, the Cambodian peace settlement also marked a first step towards the normalisation of the complicated relation between the Washington and Hanoi. One could therefore argue that the Paris Conference on Cambodia was the second act of the Paris Conference of 1973 that ended the American involvement in Vietnam but failed to end the Second Indochina War. The Paris Accords of 1973 resulted in what historian Pierre Asselin has described as "a bitter peace." Bitter for Washington because it was defeated and failed to obtain a peace with honour, but also bitter for Hanoi as it was forced to accept the terms of the agreement under pressure of a relentless American bombing campaign as well as the recalibration of great power relations (Soviet-American détente and the Sino-American

80 Symbolic for the dominance of the United States in the decision-making process was the fact the French planned to convene the conference on 31 October 1991 because this was Sihanouk's birthday. But Washington insisted on 23 October, because of the availability of Secretary of State James Baker. Sihanouk initially refused the 23rd because the oracles advised against it, but eventually, the Americans got their way. Roland Dumas, *Le fil et la pelote: mémoires* (Paris: Plon, 1996), 444.

81 Becker, *When the war was over*, 507.

82 Strangio, *Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Hun Sen*, 45; Becker, *When the war was over*, 506; Martin, *La diplomatie*, 647.

83 Solomon, *Exiting Indochina*, 76.

84 Findlay, *Cambodia*, 17.

rapprochement) which resulted in “betrayal” by Beijing and Moscow.⁸⁵ In 1991, the cards were different. The United States, emerging from the Cold War as the dominant power, was in a much stronger position than Hanoi. This time, it was not the destructive stick of aerial bombardments that pressured Hanoi to accept the terms of the peace agreement, it was the attractive carrot of access to global trade markets and the World Bank. Asselin argued that the 1973 Paris Accords were bound to unravel for the reason that, during the negotiations, finalising a peace agreement was considered more important than achieving peace itself.⁸⁶ This was also the case in 1991. Achieving a comprehensive political settlement was vital for the redefinition of great power relations, while shaping the conditions for a sustainable peace among Cambodians was clearly of secondary importance. The hot potato of making peace among the Cambodian factions was handed over to the United Nations. Steven Ratner, the legal advisor to the US delegation to the Paris Conference later observed: “after the signature of the Paris Accords, most states viewed Cambodia as ‘the UN’s problem’, which essentially meant the Secretary-General’s problem.”⁸⁷ Many UN member states, especially in the West, recalibrated their focus on the crises in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, which would have harmful consequences for the course of the operation in Cambodia.

A fragile peace

As the Paris Peace Agreement was more a settlement among foreign powers than among Cambodians, it constituted a fragile basis for peace. Michael Haas has argued that the model of a “comprehensive political settlement” did not correspond to the “Asian way” of diplomacy, which proceeds step-by-step, instead of seeking a blueprint.⁸⁸ Other Cambodia experts observed at the time that the Paris Agreements favoured the Khmer Rouge for several reasons. First, it gave breathing space to its army which had been forced into the defensive on the battlefield. Second, it allowed them access to the national political arena without abandoning their military options. Third, the peace agreement explicitly prohibited that individual members of the Khmer Rouge could be tried before a tribunal for genocide.⁸⁹ It was hoped by the P5 that the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the peace settlement would lure them out of the jungle and into the political arena which would ultimately lead to their marginalisation. But Cambodia watchers warned that the Khmer Rouge hadn’t changed and were determined to reconquer the country, combining political and militarily means.⁹⁰

Prince Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh on 14 November 1991, after a period of fourteen years in exile. Prime Minister Hun Sen escorted the prince from the airport to the

85 Pierre Asselin, *A Bitter Peace: Washington, Hanoi, and the making of the Paris Agreement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 165; Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi’s War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 311.

86 Asselin, *A Bitter Peace*, xi.

87 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 161.

88 Michael Haas, *Cambodia, Pol Pot, and the United States: The Faustian Pact* (New York: Praeger 1991), 124–25.

89 Klintworth, “Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading,” 113–29; Raoul M. Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes 1990–1994* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995) 117, 199; Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 10; Kiernan, “The Cambodian crisis,” 114; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 38; Abdulgaffar Peang-Meth, “The United Nations Peace Plan, the Cambodian Conflict, and the Future of Cambodia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 14, no.1 (June 1992): 44.

90 Christophe Peschoux, “Masque et réalité du mouvement Khmer Rouge,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1991; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 115–212; Nayan Chanda, “Pol Pot’s Plan for Survival,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 September 1991; Kiernan, “The Cambodian crisis,” 6.

royal palace in a white 1963 Chevrolet Impala convertible, a symbol that reminded of the era in which Cambodia had been at peace for the last time. Both men triumphantly waved to the cheering crowd holding flags of the Supreme National Council, UN-blue with a white silhouette of Cambodia.⁹¹ The scene was magnificent and symbolised the hope for peace in Cambodia. But Sihanouk was well aware that the conflict in his country was far from settled. In his first speech on Cambodian soil, the prince explicitly pointed out that the Cambodians were forced by foreign powers to accept the return of the Khmer Rouge.⁹²

By insisting on a comprehensive political agreement, the great powers determined that the UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia would be an all-embracing enterprise. Scholars have generally argued that UNTAC was the most ambitious peacekeeping effort ever attempted by the United Nations because of the complicated and multifaceted nature of its mandate. This might be true, but the biggest challenge was undoubtedly the fact that this ambitious plan had been imposed by the great powers on the Cambodian factions who had only a superficial interest in reconciliation. As is the case with many negotiated settlements, the Paris Peace Agreements were both detailed and ambiguous. The Paris Peace Agreement did not spell out the consequences for disrespecting it, there was no build-in sanctioning mechanism in case one of the parties would not live up to its obligations under the agreement, as Japan had proposed. It did not offer a credible threat of punishment, a good balance of carrots and sticks, which according to international relations scholar Monica Toft is an essential ingredient for a negotiated settlement that aims to end a civil war and build enduring peace.⁹³ The American diplomat and Indochina-expert Frederick Brown observed at the time that the agreement could only bring peace to Cambodia if UNTAC would be ready to take “firm actions” and if the special representative would make “extraordinarily wise interpretations” of his mandate.⁹⁴ But Yasushi Akashi was only appointed as special representative two months after the peace agreement was signed, and officially started his function as head of UNTAC five months later. In the meantime, a small UN advance mission (UNAMIC) was sent to Cambodia to fill this large gap and keep the fragile peace.

91 Cambacérès, *Norodom Sihanouk*, 319.

92 Kiernan, “The Cambodian crisis,” 23.

93 Monica Duffy Toft, “Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?,” *International Security* 34, no. 4 (Spring 2010): 8.

94 Brown, “Cambodia in 1991: An Uncertain Peace,” 91.



From left to right: Kieu Samphan (Democratic Kampuchea or Khmer Rouge), Son Sann (KPNLF), Prince Norodom Sihanouk (FUNCINPEC), French foreign minister Roland Dumas, and Hun Sen (State of Cambodia), before starting talks on 25 July 1989 in La Celle Saint Cloud in preparation of the Paris Peace Conference from 30 July to 30 August 1989. Photo credit: Agence France Presse / Voice of America.

UNAMIC: The limits of good offices

2

After the Paris Peace Agreements were signed on 23 October 1991, UNTAC was nowhere near ready to deploy to Cambodia. Whether the United Nations would play a role in Cambodia had remained undecided until June 1991, which explains in part why the UN had hardly done any advance planning for what turned out to be the most ambitious UN peacekeeping operation in the history of the organisation. As there were concerns about the fragility of the cease-fire and about the gap between the signing of the peace agreement and the arrival of UNTAC, the idea took shape to send a small interim mission to Cambodia, allowing the United Nations to mobilise the necessary funds and forces for UNTAC. Plans for such a mission were hastily approved, and only a week before the signing of the Paris Accords, the UN Secretary-General authorised the establishment of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC), which deployed to Cambodia in the second week of November.¹ UNAMIC consisted essentially of fifty Military Liaison Officers (MLOs) from twenty-three different countries, who like UN military observers (UNMOs) were unarmed and operated in small groups. But instead of merely observing the cease-fire and reporting violations, their mission in Cambodia was to actively assist the Cambodian factions in maintaining the cease-fire through facilitating liaison between them and resolving problems, a diplomatic activity commonly referred to as “good offices.”² Without the presence of any armed peacekeeping units, the fifty unarmed MLOs relied purely on diplomatic means to keep the peace in Cambodia. This chapter explores to what extent these diplomats in uniform succeeded in maintaining the cease-fire between the Cambodian factions.

Existing studies about the UN operation in Cambodia have mostly neglected UNAMIC and exclusively focussed on UNTAC. But the five-month period separating the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement and the arrival of UNTAC deserves more profound analysis because it constituted the first phase of the United Nations’ presence in Cambodia. Instead of rigidly separating UNAMIC and UNTAC as two missions, as is often done, the two acronyms should be considered as two parts of the same operation. Political scientist Lise Morjé Howard described UNAMIC as a “survey mission.”³ Although this was not the case, in practice Howard’s characterisation was correct because UNAMIC constituted an essential first UN presence that enabled the UN to measure the temperature, collect information and do reconnaissance work, which was all essential to make sure that UNTAC could make an efficient start. This chapter will show that the UN Secretariat, distracted by the crises in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, failed to give serious attention to the situation in Cambodia, support the small UN presence adequately,

1 S/23097 Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Cambodia, 30 September 1991; United Nations Security Council Resolution 717 (1991), 16 October 1991, UNA, S-0994-0002-0002.

2 UNAMIC was not mandated to investigate alleged violations of the cease-fire. “UNAMIC, Notes for the guidance of military liaison officers on assignment, Office for Special Political Affairs/Field Operations Division, United Nations, New York, October 1991,” UNA, S-0994-0002-0002.

3 Lise Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 145.

or take advantage of UNAMIC's survey capacities.

Already a year before the signing of the Paris Agreements, officer-scholar John Mackinlay argued in a piece for the *RUSI* journal that supervising a Cambodian peace settlement would be "an unusually hazardous task" for the United Nations, and made some sharp predictions about the challenges a UN force in Cambodia would be facing. First, he warned that there would never be enough time between the conclusion of the negotiations and the start of the peace process to organise and prepare an effective international force with an agreed *modus operandi*. Second, he foresaw that keeping the cease-fire would be particularly complex and failing to do so would have disastrous consequences for almost every other aspect of the settlement. Third, Mackinlay insisted that the effectiveness of the infantry battalions, particularly in the initial stages of the cease-fire and the dispersal of opposing forces, would be crucial.⁴ The United Nations fell short on all three points, and scholars have put much of the blame for the loss of Khmer Rouge cooperation on UNAMIC, arguing that it lacked the mandate, the means and the strength to maintain the cease-fire and uphold the Cambodian factions' confidence in the peace process.⁵ The dominant view is that the legitimacy and authority of the UN had begun to wane even before UNTAC deployed to Cambodia in March 1992 because the UN's performance was insufficient to satisfy the Khmer Rouge, prompting them to change their position and withdraw their consent and support.⁶ According to Lise Howard, it was UNAMIC's "organisational dysfunction" that strongly contributed to the loss of consent and cooperation from the Khmer Rouge, even before the main operation had begun.⁷ Historian John Connor has questioned the quality of UNAMIC's personnel and argued that they neglected to give the planning for UNTAC the priority it required, whereas Cambodia specialist Raoul Jennar has lauded their professionalism and achievements.⁸

This chapter demonstrates that the mentality and skill of UNAMIC's personnel was certainly not the problem, though the lack of staff and materiel certainly hindered the effectiveness of their work. Rather, the main reason for UNAMIC's inability to effectively keep the peace and prepare for the arrival of UNTAC was that it missed the two main requirements that had been defined by Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar for the mission to successfully perform its tasks: "the cooperation, at all times, of all the Cambodian parties" and "freedom of movement."⁹ The argument here is that, from the beginning, UNAMIC encountered serious problems with the Khmer Rouge who followed a deliberate strategy of using the peace agreement as a "weapon" to stonewall the UN's efforts. This means that Pol Pot's faction became a spoiler much earlier in the peace process than has been assumed by scholars, who generally situate the "withdrawal"

4 John Mackinlay, "A Role for the Peacekeeper in Cambodia," *RUSI Journal* (Autumn 1990): 26–30.

5 Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 60; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 154; Peou: *Conflict Neutralization*, 184, 201, 272; Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 167; Jarat Chopra, John Mackinlay and Lary Minear, *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process, Research Report no. 165* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, February 1993), 18; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 211; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 119; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 136–37; Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, 15.

6 Michael Mersiadès, "Peacekeeping and legitimacy: lessons from Cambodia and Somalia," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005): 210.

7 Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 145–46.

8 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 299, 348, 349; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 137. Also see: Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 212.

9 S/23097 Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Cambodia, 30 September 1991, UNA, S-0994-0002-0002.

of the Khmer Rouge's cooperation and consent in June 1992.¹⁰ As will be argued, at the time, the disintegrating situation in Cambodia was insufficiently understood at UN headquarters in New York where minimum attention was given to this small interim mission. While the UN Security Council was holding its summit meeting on 31 January to discuss its more active role in maintaining world peace, and the UN Secretariat went through a thorough reorganisation to prepare itself to realise these ambitions, the UN's prestige project in Cambodia was already unravelling at a quick pace.

An improvised operation carried by Franco-Australian strategic competition

UNAMIC was a last-minute improvised operation. A diplomat involved in the development of the Paris Agreements told the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that UNAMIC "was only an afterthought when the peace accord was drawn up."¹¹ Since the United Nations was in a dire financial situation and already desperately looking for funds to finance UNTAC, it had reserved no budget to run UNAMIC. Two member states, France and Australia, jumped in and made the advance mission possible by making each a voluntary financial contribution of \$8 million to pay for the start-up costs.¹² Both Paris and Canberra also fully funded their own contingents, which formed the backbone of UNAMIC, receiving no reimbursement from the United Nations.¹³ Australia contributed thirty-seven army signallers who assured independent communications throughout Cambodia, which was essential to allow for the effective liaison among the Cambodian factions as well as with UNAMIC. France provided an air unit of four SA 330 Puma helicopters and one C-160 Transall transport plane with 111 personnel, which was indispensable to travel in a country where the roads were in a terrible shape.¹⁴ These early investments by Paris and Canberra reflected the commitment of both governments to the Cambodian peace process, but also demonstrated their ambition to take a leading role in UNTAC. Their donations to the UN were in that sense not for free. Aiming to gain the key position of UNTAC force commander as well as control over communications of the peacekeeping mission, the Australian Department of Defence aptly codenamed its generous contribution to UNAMIC "Operation Goodwill."¹⁵

Larger interests were at stake for Canberra and Paris where an important policy aim was to gain a strategic foothold in this isolated country that started to open up to the wider world. These French and Australian ambitions led to competition and caused tensions. Australia had a long-held and well-known ambition to lead the military component of UNTAC. In early 1989, when a peace agreement was still uncertain and far away, Australia already started planning for a contribution to a future UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, and lobbied in New York for the top military

10 Notable exceptions are Cambodia experts Ben Kiernan, Michael Vickery and Raoul Jennar who, at the time, accurately warned for the Khmer Rouge's intentions to subvert the Paris peace agreement. This chapter reinforces their argument.

11 Nate Thayer, "Unsettled land, UN's delayed arrival starts to undermine peace settlement," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 February 1992, 23.

12 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 243.

13 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 107.

14 New-Zealand contributed 20 demining experts and Germany 6 military doctors. Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 207; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 113; Compte-rendu de la réunion du 22 octobre 1991 relative à la mission préparatoire des Nations Unies au Cambodge (MIPRENUC), Paris, 29 October, ADN, 521PO/2/27.

15 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 113.

position.¹⁶ In January 1991, ten months before the peace agreements were signed, Canberra officially earmarked the then major general John Sanderson as its candidate for the position of UNTAC's force commander.¹⁷ But as the signing of the Paris Accords drew closer, Canberra's ambitions were suddenly impeded by Paris that lobbied to make the Cambodian peacekeeping operation as francophone as possible, arguing that most of the Cambodian interlocutors spoke better French than English – which was true – and nominated Brigadier General Michel Loridon for the position of UNAMIC force commander (not yet for UNTAC).¹⁸ When Marrack Goulding unexpectedly – and contrary to UN usage – announced that the working language of UNAMIC would be French, he encountered much resistance from Australian officials who accused him of “colluding with the French.”¹⁹ Washington, carrying veto-power over the decision, supported Sanderson's candidacy and objected to the appointment of Loridon for two reasons. First, Australia had supported the American candidate for the directorship of the World Food Programme, and the US support for Sanderson was a favour in return.²⁰ Second, and much more fundamental, was the fact that John Bolton, the then US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, said he disapproved of permanent members of the Security Council commanding UN peacekeeping operations as this was contrary to the traditions of the United Nations.²¹ The issue was eventually resolved when Washington and Paris agreed to make Loridon force commander of UNAMIC and Sanderson of UNTAC, with Loridon becoming Sanderson's deputy when UNAMIC would transition into UNTAC.²² Awaiting his official appointment as UNTAC force commander, Sanderson was temporarily named “Military Advisor to the Secretary-General on Cambodia,” allowing him to become involved in the planning process for UNTAC.²³

On the diplomatic level, Paris and Canberra also competed for the largely symbolic first accreditation of their ambassadors to the Supreme National Council in Phnom Penh. Prince

16 Ibid., 81, 86, 102.

17 Frank Frost, *Engaging the neighbours: Australia and ASEAN since 1974* (Acton: ANU Press, 2016) 77; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 224; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 101.

18 Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 7 November 1991, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Washington to Paris, 30 October 1991, “Cambodge MIPRENUC et ARPONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

19 Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 252; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 208.

20 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 116; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 224.

21 Bolton was also against P5 members contributing infantry battalions to UN peacekeeping operations. He took the position that if there were to be a consensus about the participation of P5 member states in UN peacekeeping operations, they should all contribute evenly, but only with logistical support units, not infantry battalions. In theory, this would mean that if France would contribute an infantry battalion to UNTAC – as they were planning –, the United States would be compelled to do the same. But the prospect of deploying a battalion of American troops in Indochina was an unimaginable scenario. See: Defence attaché of the French embassy in Washington, DC to First Political Counsellor of the French permanent mission to the United Nations in New York, 21 November 1991, ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 7 November 1991, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

22 Paris agreed to this as soon as it was given assurances that Sanderson mastered the French language at an acceptable level and was working to improve it even further. Canberra also pointed out to the French that Sanderson's deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Damien Healy had been specifically chosen because he had followed courses at the French *École de Guerre* in Paris. Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, “relations entre la France et l'Australie à propos du Cambodge,” 20 December 1991, ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 30 October 1991, “Cambodge MIPRENUC et ARPONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 7 November 1991, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 117; “Rivalités entre Français et Anglo-Saxons: La petite guerre pour la paix au Cambodge,” *Le Monde*, 8 November 1991.

23 The quarrel between Washington, Canberra and Paris did not lead to a more fundamental debate about the question whether permanent members of the UN Security Council should be allowed to hold key positions in UN peacekeeping operations.

Sihanouk decided that French ambassador Philippe Coste would be the first to present his letters of credence, thus becoming the doyen of the diplomatic corps.²⁴ The designated Australian ambassador, Richard Butler, an activist against French nuclear tests in the South Pacific, was furious and refused to come to Phnom Penh. Another ambassador, John Holloway, was eventually sent to Cambodia to take his place.²⁵ The diplomatic honours may have been given to the French, but the position of UNTAC force commander was far more important in directing the peace operation in Cambodia, as would become clear a few months later.

The carefully planned Australian preparation for obtaining military command in Cambodia contrasted sharply with the improvisation of the French government that rather randomly and at the last-minute selected Loridon as its candidate. Loridon hardly had any time to prepare for his mission in Cambodia. He attended the Paris Peace Conference as an observer and received a short briefing in New York from the Ghanaese Major General Timothy Dibuama, who had been the Secretary-General's military advisor since 1977.²⁶ But the two generals would have a difficult working relationship, mostly because of the French-English language barrier, which remained an issue.²⁷ When Loridon disembarked at Phnom Penh Airport on 11 November he told a large crowd of journalists that he saw his mission as "a difficult gamble."²⁸

Ataul Karim, a seasoned diplomat from Bangladesh, was appointed as the civilian head of UNAMIC and in that capacity given the responsibility to maintain contact with the Cambodian factions' leaders, who seated in the Supreme National Council under the presidency of Prince Sihanouk. General Loridon was given the command over 170 military personnel. Of the fifty Military Liaison Officers, seventeen were stationed at UNAMIC headquarters in Phnom Penh and thirty-three deployed to six different locations around the country. Every team was generally composed of approximately six officers, and three Australian radio operators. Besides monitoring the cease-fire and assisting the factions to maintain it, the MLOs were also tasked to collect exact figures of the factions' troops, weapons and munitions, and chart their mine fields. In order to do this effectively, the liaison officers needed to build confidence with the factions and required full freedom of movement around the country. However, it quickly became clear that not all factions were committed to the peace process and that full freedom of movement and cooperation remained a delusion.

The delusion of Khmer Rouge cooperation

Immediately after UNAMIC's arrival, it became clear that the mutual distrust among the Cambodian factions remained immense. Although there was no more war in Cambodia, the

24 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 15 November 1991, "présentation de mes lettres de creance," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Author's interview with Philippe Coste, 1 February 2019, Paris, France.

25 Author's interview with Philippe Coste; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 20 December 1991, "relations entre la France et l'Australie à propos du Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 20 November 1991, "attitude de la presse de langue anglaise," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Cable French Ambassador Canberra, to Paris, 14 November 1991, "le commandant de la force des Nations Unies au Cambodge vu de Canberra," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 119.

26 Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 13.

27 Author's interview with Michel Loridon 22–23 July 2018, France.

28 Michel Loridon, "Une bataille pour la paix," *Armées d'Aujourd'hui* 167 (November 1991): 18.

factions continued to jockey for position. Sihanouk and Hun Sen soon started to move towards each other again, as they had done in the preceding year. On 23 November, Sihanouk announced the formation of an alliance between the political party of the State of Cambodia (the Cambodian People's Party) and FUNCINPEC (the political party under the leadership of his son Prince Ranariddh). The two parties vowed to share power after the elections even if one of them would win an absolute majority. It was a shrewd political move that politically isolated the Khmer Rouge and Son Sann's KPNLF.²⁹

As one could expect, the return of the Khmer Rouge to Phnom Penh, for the first time since 1979, did not occur without emotion and upheaval. The Khmer Rouge delegation to the SNC resided in a highly secured compound next to the royal palace. Son Sen, commander-in-chief of the Khmer Rouge's armed forces, the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK), arrived on 17 November without incident. On 27 November, however, Khieu Samphan's return provoked a demonstration that got out of control when the crowd attacked and ransacked the Khmer Rouge's residence and assaulted Khieu Samphan, who only narrowly escaped from being lynched by the mob if it wasn't for his bodyguards and the SOC police who only intervened at the very last moment. Khieu Samphan declared with icy dignity that Hun Sen had not kept his word to guarantee his safety, and immediately escaped to the airport to catch a flight back to Bangkok. During the ransacking of the Khmer Rouge office, evidence was discovered of regular reports by Son Sen to Pol Pot, proving that the secretive figure was still in control behind the scenes.³⁰ The riot was clearly orchestrated by the Phnom Penh government but probably got out of hand as a result of genuine popular fury. Recovering from his unpleasant return to the Cambodian capital, Khieu Samphan released a statement from Bangkok in which he called for the immediate deployment of a battalion of 1,000 UN peacekeepers to provide security in Phnom Penh.³¹ Political scientist Sorpong Peou has argued that this moment was the beginning of the creation of the Khmer Rouge's feeling of "vulnerability and insecurity," which is considered by Peou as the main cause for their non-cooperation.³² But the argument that the Khmer Rouge felt threatened becomes much less convincing when taking into account that the other Cambodian factions were willing to reassure the Khmer Rouge, and repaired the escalated situation themselves by quickly taking confidence building measures. Hun Sen apologised, spoke reconciliatory words and took responsibility for the incident.³³ On 3 December, the four factions met together with the representatives of the P5 and the UN in the Thai city of Pattaya, where agreement was found on a series of extra security measures for the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh. Two days later, still in Pattaya, Prince Sihanouk further eased tensions by calling off the alliance between FUNCINPEC and his political party, and guaranteed that they would not form a government before the UNTAC-organised elections.³⁴

For a brief moment, the situation remained hopeful as the Khmer Rouge made a statement

29 Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia*, 99–100; Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 257–58.

30 Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 214.

31 Cable Karim to Akashi, Goulding and Ahmed, 14 January 1992, UNA, S-0795-0040-0002; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 November 1991, "les Khmers Rouges obligés de quitter Phnom-Penh," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308; Statement by Khieu Samphan, President of the Democratic Kampuchea party on who have tried to sabotage the SNC and the Paris Agreement, 25 December 1991, UNA, S-0993-0005-0001.

32 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 183.

33 Brown, "Cambodia in 1991: An Uncertain Peace," 95; Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 115.

34 Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 214; Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance*, 99–100.

of goodwill and expressed their willingness to cooperate with UNAMIC. By 22 December, all factions had received a team of UNAMIC liaison officers at their headquarters, including the fake headquarters of the Khmer Rouge in Pailin, a small Khmer Rouge-controlled town in a gem-mining area situated near the Thai border.³⁵ The real headquarters, a compound called "Office 87," was located a few kilometres inside Thailand near the city of Trat, to which access was controlled by Thai army units.³⁶ After Karim and Loridon had travelled to Pailin to inspect the installation of the UNAMIC MLO team in a building opposite the Khmer Rouge "headquarters," Karim cabled to New York that the local Khmer Rouge commander was "very cooperative" and that the discussions over lunch were held "in a very cordial atmosphere." Given the fact that agreement was reached on all points of discussion, Karim optimistically reported his belief that the Khmer Rouge was "trying to demonstrate their sincerity with regard to the implementation of the agreement."³⁷ But Karim's optimism was purely based on the Khmer Rouge's promises, which soon proved to have been premature.

There was a strong discrepancy between what the Khmer Rouge were promising and what they were actually delivering. Khmer Rouge officers might declare their commitment to the peace agreements, but it soon became clear that they failed to provide UNAMIC with a central precondition: full freedom of movement. Loridon planned to visit Pailin again on 24 December, to discuss with his liaison team there and urge the Khmer Rouge to send a military representative to Phnom Penh to participate in the meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group (MMWG). The Khmer Rouge were the only faction that had failed to send an officer with the rank of brigadier general to this consultative body in which military representatives of all factions were meant to discuss the observance of a cease-fire and exchange information about their troops' numbers and locations.³⁸ While Loridon made an official request four days in advance to land with a helicopter in Pailin and meet with a Khmer Rouge representative, the Khmer Rouge disrespected UNAMIC's right to freedom of movement by refusing the permission. A week later, Loridon avoided another refusal of his travel clearance by informing the Khmer Rouge about his arrival only one hour in advance. After landing in Pailin, a Khmer Rouge general made it clear that the UNAMIC commander was not welcome. It was also established that the MLOs in Pailin were severely restricted in their freedom of movement, notwithstanding the Khmer Rouge's earlier declarations of cooperation.³⁹ "We have no freedom. The desire for cooperation is not there at the moment," the liaison officer in charge, Lieutenant Colonel Rakesh Malik from India, told a journalist.⁴⁰ His Irish colleague, Commandant Sean O'Meara, recalled that they were not allowed

35 The six MLOs in Pailin were led by Lieutenant Colonel Malik from India. In the KPNLF headquarters in Banteay Meanrith were five MLOs commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Esteves from Argentina. The ANKI headquarters in Phum Ku had six MLOs commanded by Major Filler from the United Kingdom. The MLO team in Battambang was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Khamran from Pakistan, and the one in Siem Reap by Major Delius from the United Kingdom, the one in Phnom Penh by Lieutenant Colonel Bczyk from Poland.

36 David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A political Biography of Pol Pot* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 181–82; William Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil: Warlords & Peacekeepers in a World of Endless Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 39.

37 Cable Karim to Ahmed and Goulding, 19 December 1991, "UNAMIC," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

38 "UNAMIC, Notes for the guidance of military liaison officers on assignment," Office for Special Political Affairs/Field Operations Division, United Nations, New York, October 1991." UNNAY, S-0994-0002-0002.

39 Memorandum by Loridon, "bilan des actions de rétention de la part du NADK," UNA, S-0994-0001-0001; Author's interview with Michel Loridon.

40 Lindsay Murdoch, "A Khmer Rouge Renegade Puts Cambodia Peace Plan At Risk," *The Age*, 6 March 1992.

any more than 300 metres from their building, and any ideas about ventures around the area were quickly dispelled.⁴¹ They were to be escorted in all areas they wished to visit, and talking to the local population was forbidden. Although the UN officers protested against this situation, they were told that these rules were for their own “security” since there were “strange men in the forest.” But the UN officers’ subsequent observations for any strange men proved fruitless.⁴² Loridon, who had spent the night in the building with his MLO team, wanted to experience the Khmer Rouge obstruction for himself and invited Major Eric Debontridder, a Belgian MLO in Pailin, to go for a morning run together. This time, the Khmer Rouge soldiers did not stop the two officers, but only followed them. This was an important experience for Loridon because it convinced him that the Khmer Rouge were bluffing and that the UN should be determined in exercising its right to freedom of movement.⁴³ Despite several attempts to communicate with the Khmer Rouge, no dialogue could be established throughout Loridon’s two-day stay in Pailin.⁴⁴ The consequence was that the first meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group on 28 December 1991 was held without a Khmer Rouge military representative. They did send a diplomat, Ambassador Mak Ben, who confirmed his commitment to respect the cease-fire and promised UNAMIC absolute freedom of movement.⁴⁵ On the ground however, nothing changed, whereupon Loridon informed New York that “the civil authorities of the Khmer Rouge try to make us believe that their faction plays the game, whereas the military doesn’t want to.”⁴⁶

The complete lack of Khmer Rouge cooperation was confirmed when Loridon met with Son Sen on 10 January. The Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief refused to give any guarantees for freedom of movement for the reason that he could not vouch for the UN officers’ safety in the Khmer Rouge-controlled territories. Moreover, he argued, the MLOs did not require full freedom of movement as their mission consisted only of being in touch with the Khmer Rouge headquarters in Pailin and nothing more.⁴⁷ The problem was that UNAMIC was not mentioned in the Paris Peace Agreement, and the Khmer Rouge used this to their advantage. Son Sen told Loridon that the cease-fire was purely symbolic until UNTAC arrived to supervise it.⁴⁸ While the NADK commander had made his position clear to Loridon, to the outside world he kept up the appearance of cooperation. After the meeting, he declared to journalists that he had “pledged full cooperation with UNAMIC.”⁴⁹ This was simply not true, and Loridon reported to New York that it was clear to him that the Khmer Rouge were dragging their feet.⁵⁰ Karim also informed Goulding about the “changing posture” of the Khmer Rouge and that a “somewhat gloomy scenario” was emerging.⁵¹

41 Sean O’Meara, “Keeping the peace a Cambodian diary Dec. 1991–June 1993,” *An Cosantóir – The Defence Forces Magazine* 52, no. 10 (October 1992): 34.

42 O’Meara, “Keeping the peace a Cambodian diary,” 34.

43 Author’s interview with Michel Loridon; Author’s interview with F. Motmans and E. Debontridder.

44 Memorandum by Loridon, “bilan des actions de rétention de la part du NADK,” UNA, S-0994-0001-0001; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

45 Press release UNAMIC “First Meeting of the Mixed Military Working group,” 28 December 1991, UNA, S-0993-0004-0001.

46 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 8 January 1992, “Violations du cessez le feu,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

47 Cable Karim to Akashi and Ahmed, 14 January 1992, UNA, S-0795-0040-0002.

48 Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 210. No further indication of used source is given by the author.

49 “U.N. military chief meets Khmer Rouge leader,” *Reuters*, 12 January 1992.

50 Memorandum by Loridon, “bilan des actions de rétention de la part du NADK,” UNA, S-0994-0001-0001.

51 Cable Karim to Akashi, Ahmed and Goulding, 14 January 1992, UNA, S-0795-0040-0002.

Support from New York does not match the needs on the ground

UNAMIC was clearly not on the priority list at UN headquarters in New York, which meant that it was unable to provide the mission with crucial support and exploit momentum. Although the other three Cambodian factions started to lose their patience with the evasive Khmer Rouge attitude, they were nonetheless prepared to continue to build confidence by giving unanimous support to a Khmer Rouge proposal to send military representatives of the four factions to all the UNAMIC positions in the country, and to deploy, in addition to the already existing UNAMIC outposts in the country, eight additional UNAMIC liaison teams to a selection of new locations in the country.⁵² The Khmer Rouge wanted UNAMIC to concentrate on the eastern border with Vietnam, in order to improve the control and verification of foreign forces in Cambodia.⁵³ Despite the fact that it was clear that this proposal served the Khmer Rouge's interests, because all the proposed additional locations were in SOC-controlled areas and none was in their own zones, all the other factions agreed. Although UN officials at the time didn't know, this was the only moment throughout the entire peace operation that the factions unanimously agreed about an issue. This demonstrates that even the Phnom Penh government was willing to adopt a constructive attitude vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge and build confidence. Loridon cabled Marrack Goulding that the deployment of these additional liaison teams was indeed "very desirable," and added a detailed estimation of what extra resources were needed in case New York approved of such an expansion.⁵⁴

Australian officials and scholars have viewed Loridon's immediate approval of the Khmer Rouge proposals as part of a French plot to retain the military command in Cambodia by expanding UNAMIC to such an extent that the deployment of UNTAC would become unnecessary.⁵⁵ It seems more convincing though that Loridon wanted to exploit an early consensus among the Cambodian factions and demonstrate the UN's neutrality and goodwill to the Khmer Rouge. The expansion of the small advance mission with additional MLO teams would allow UNAMIC to rapidly expand the UN presence in the Cambodian provinces, extend its mobility and increase its ability to effectively maintain the cease-fire. The positive impact of the military liaison teams had

52 Cable Loridon to Goulding, "Compte rendu de la 2eme réunion du GTMM," 2 January 1992, UNA, S-0993-0004-0001; Letter Son Sen to Karim, 28 December 1991, UNA, S-0993-0005-0001. These locations were Kompong Som, Kampot, Takeo, Kompong Thom, Preah Vihear, Kompong Cham, Kratie and Stung Treng.

53 Statement by Khieu Samphan, President of the Democratic Kampuchea party on who have tried to sabotage the SNC and the Paris Agreement, 25 December 1991, UNA, S-0993-0005-0001; Letter Son Sen to Karim, 28 December 1991, UNA, S-0993-0005-00001.

54 Loridon asked for three extra staff officers, forty additional liaison officers, twenty-four communication personnel, twenty vehicles, two extra helicopters and one additional transport plane. Cable Loridon to Goulding, "Compte rendu de la 2eme réunion du GTMM," 2 January 1992, UNA, S-0993-0004-0001.

55 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 129–30, 149. This Australian suspicion towards the French general's intentions was reinforced by the belief that, according to their information, Loridon had very recently been promoted to "major general," which was also interpreted as a strategic promotion in order to improve France's position to obtain the UNTAC military command. In reality, Loridon was never promoted to "major general" before or while serving in Cambodia, which would have been difficult since this rank does not exist in the French army. As UNAMIC-commander and throughout UNTAC, Loridon was *général de brigade*, a rank he held since 1988, and which in France does not have one but two stars. There is not a one-star general rank in the French army. The rank of *général de brigade* is preceded by *colonel* and succeeded by *général de division*, which bears three stars and is the French equivalent to the NATO-rank of major general. Loridon would receive his third star, as planned, after he left Cambodia and started his new function in Germany as deputy of the French forces in Germany. In the French military, *major général* is not a rank but an appointment, carried out by a four-star general *général de corps d'armée*, the equivalent of a NATO lieutenant general, who is at the head of an army corps and thus assisting the Chief of the armed forces. John Connor makes the same mistake by indicating that Loridon's successor also held the rank of "major general." See: "Biographie du Général Loridon," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Author's interview with Michel Loridon.

been demonstrated by the fact that in the provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang the number of cease-fire violations had declined rapidly after MLO teams had been deployed to these areas, whereas the majority of the cease-fire violation took place in the regions where MLO teams were not yet stationed.⁵⁶

New York, however, was slow to respond to this development and unable to deliver. It took two weeks for the UN Secretariat to reply that it had decided against the expansion of UNAMIC out of fear that too much would be expected from the small advance mission.⁵⁷ The problem was that the Security Council had decided on 8 January to enlarge UNAMIC with a unit of 1,000 engineers and demining specialists. Goulding feared that the Security Council would not accept another expansion of UNAMIC's mandate so soon after.⁵⁸ Loridon strongly regretted New York's decision, which led to incomprehension among the Cambodian factions. Khieu Samphan said he did not understand why the Security Council had no difficulty in sending engineers to Cambodia but appeared unable to send extra liaison officers or gradually expand the presence of UN infantry units in Cambodia. He warned Karim that the situation was getting "more complicated" and that it might become worse if UNTAC forces would not be deployed soon.⁵⁹ But the UN Secretariat was not on top of the situation in Cambodia. The twelve-hour time difference between New York and Phnom Penh and the communication problems between Dibuma and Loridon made the decision-making processes even more difficult.⁶⁰ UNAMIC suffered from a lack of autonomy as practically all important decisions had to be submitted by fax to New York for approval. While the reports from Cambodia were increasingly disconcerting, they were not alarming enough for Goulding to feel any urgency to take any radical decisions.

The feeling that New York did not fully appreciate the fragility of the situation in Cambodia was shared by US Congressman Stephen Solarz – one of the conceptual architects of the UN peace operation in Cambodia – who after a visit to Cambodia in the first week of January shared his concerns about the degrading situation in a letter to the newly appointed UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Solarz described the situation he had witnessed in Cambodia as "extremely delicate."⁶¹ He applauded "the valiant efforts" of UNAMIC that helped to restore calm in Cambodia, but also expressed his strong concern that the next explosion might destroy all hope for implementing the peace agreement.⁶² The question is to what extent Solarz' alarming message got through at the UN Secretariat in New York, which was simply overwhelmed. "[W]e are drowning," Goulding wrote in his diary in mid-1991, "The member states are piling on the

56 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 8 January 1992, "Violations du cessez le feu," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

57 Cable Goulding to Karim/Loridon, 15 January 1992, "Notes on the second meeting of MMWG," UNA, S-0993-0004-0001.

58 Ibid.

59 Cable Karim to Akashi and Ahmed, 14 January 1992, UNA, S-0795-0040-0002; Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 24 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

60 Cable Paris to New York, 13 May 1992, "L'adaptation des structures onusiennes actuelles face à une opération de maintien de la paix de grande envergure rend problématique la tenue des échéances prévues pour l'application du processus de paix," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

61 Letter Congressman (NY) Stephen Solarz to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 3 January 1992, UNA, S-1085-0022-0001.

62 Ibid.; Sue Downie, "Solarz calls for UN action in Cambodia, future UNs role as peacemaker at stake," *The Nation*, 2 January 1992.

Secretariat tasks which we do not have the capability to carry out; and there is no leadership.”⁶³ Moreover, immediately after taking office, the new Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali ordered a thorough reorganisation of the UN Secretariat, and especially of the desks that were responsible for peacekeeping. Between 1984 and 1992, UN peacekeeping had fallen directly under the executive office of Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. In late 1991, a special report on peacekeeping operations observed an alarming lack of clarity about who at the Secretariat was responsible for what with regard to peacekeeping. Having received an unprecedented mandate during the presidential level Security Council meeting in January 1992 to make the UN ready to manage the post-Cold War challenges, Boutros-Ghali decided to undertake a drastic reorganisation. He was influenced by the recommendations made by former Under-Secretary General for Special Political Affairs Sir Brian Urquhart, who had urged that the UN bureaucracy needed to be adapted to the new circumstances. In March 1992, Boutros-Ghali began a sweeping reform that eliminated entire departments and senior posts. He abolished Goulding’s Office for Special Political Affairs (OSPA) and created two new departments, one dedicated to the military aspects of peacekeeping, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the other to the political aspects, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), a separation which Goulding believed to be a mistake because of the inherent political nature of UN peacekeeping. The reorganisation further increased the bureaucratic confusion and lack of coordination.⁶⁴ International relations scholar Herman Salton has argued, on the basis of exclusive access to Marrack Goulding’s private papers, that the creation of DPA and DPKO further increased the already existing bureaucratic confusion and lack of coordination in the UN Secretariat with regard to UN peacekeeping operations.⁶⁵

UNAMIC also struggled with a complete lack of administrative and logistic support. There was a shortage of vehicles, helicopters and maps.⁶⁶ Cambodia was competing for attention as the crisis in Yugoslavia dominated the world’s headlines in early 1992 and demanded much of the UN’s resources.⁶⁷ To this was added the problem that the United Nations was on the brink of insolvency because member states were lagging behind with their contributions. A consequence was that a budget for UNTAC had not yet been approved.⁶⁸ Many within the UN Secretariat felt that with Cambodia’s rainy season starting in May, the deployment of UNTAC should probably be postponed until November 1992, or even 1993.⁶⁹ The UN desperately needed money for the operation in Cambodia, and Boutros-Ghali believed that the best place to get it was Tokyo. On 9 January, he appointed the Japanese UN career diplomat, Yasushi Akashi, as his special representative for Cambodia. Akashi had been a UN civil servant since 1957. Before being asked for the job in Cambodia, Akashi had been Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

63 Herman T. Salton, *Dangerous Diplomacy: Bureaucracy, Power Politics, and the Role of the UN Secretariat in Rwanda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 185.

64 Salton, *Dangerous Diplomacy*, 133; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 15–16; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 31, 247.

65 Salton, *Dangerous Diplomacy*, 130–34.

66 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 January 1992, “Activités militaires des Nations-Unies au Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

67 At the press conference on 20 February 1992, Akashi admitted that UNTAC was in competition with UNPROFOR because many of the same states were being asked to provide forces to both missions. Press Conference Akashi, 20 February 1992. Also see: Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 19. Also cited in: Findlay, *Cambodia*, 26.

68 “Khmers clamour for early arrival of UN peace units,” *Bangkok Post*, 4 January 1992.

69 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session II, 28 November 1997, New York, United States, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York.

since 1987. Despite his familiarity with disarmament, he had not been involved in the Cambodian peace process, nor did he have any specific experience with UN peacekeeping. The choice was clearly also motivated by the expectation that the appointment of a Japanese national might help to persuade Tokyo to make a considerable financial contribution to the UN operation. As Akashi was essentially picked for the cash he could bring with him, he was not immediately sent to Cambodia, but spent his first months as special representative looking for the funds needed to get UNTAC running as quickly as possible.⁷⁰

Glimmers of hope

Two months after its arrival, UNAMIC was already running behind schedule for the collection of the necessary data to make preparations for the deployment of UNTAC. This was mainly caused by the fact that the Mixed Military Working Group continued to be ineffective because of the absence of a Khmer Rouge military representative.⁷¹ On 16 January, the Khmer Rouge finally sent Major General Mao Savy to Phnom Penh to attend the meeting, who took a cooperative stance by pledging to respect the cease-fire.⁷² But a few days after the meeting, on 21 January, armed clashes erupted between Khmer Rouge forces (NADK) and Hun Sen's army (CPAF) in Kompong Thom province, some 125 kilometres north of Phnom Penh. The town, situated at an intersection of the main roads between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, was of great strategic importance for communications and provisioning because it connected the northern and southern parts of the country. For the Khmer Rouge, the province was also of symbolic value because it was the birthplace of Pol Pot. The fighting in Kompong Thom resulted in the worst cease-fire violations since the signing of the peace agreements. At least twenty people were killed in the fighting and an estimated 10,000 people were forced to flee their homes.⁷³ Prince Sihanouk requested to deploy a UNAMIC liaison team to Kompong Thom in an effort to promote a local cease-fire. Without consulting New York, the decision was quickly made by UNAMIC's leadership to form a new team which was deployed to Kompong Thom within a few days.⁷⁴ This action immediately prompted Khmer Rouge-leader Son Sen to renew his proposal to send additional MLO teams to more locations in the eastern part of the country.⁷⁵ But New York again replied that it was inopportune for the Secretariat to request the Security Council to authorise additional personnel

70 Ratner, *The new UN peacekeeping*, 163; Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Rafeeuddin Ahmed; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 January 1992, "Entretien avec le représentant spécial du secrétaire général des Nations-Unies," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

71 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 8 January 1992, "Violations du cessez le feu," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; "Military working group cancelled due to Khmer Rouge absence," *Agence France Presse (AFP)*, 8 January 1992.

72 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 17 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

73 Nate Thayer, "Unsettled land, UN's delayed arrival starts to undermine peace settlement," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 February 1992, 26; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 215.

74 Initially there were only two liaison officers. A third MLO, however, needed to be deployed. Thus, due to urgency it was decided that Major Malcom McGouch from the Australian contingent be appointed as the third MLO and deployed to Kompong Thom. See: Interoffice message CCLO to CMLO, 9 March 1992, "Deployment of Maj Malcom McGouch to Kompong Thom," UNA, S-0994-0001-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 February 1992, "Situation militaire au Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 24 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

75 The eight newly proposed positions were Phnom Den (in Takeo province); Prek Chrey (in Kandal province); Ka-am Samnar (in Kandal province); Bavet (in Svay Rieng province); Krek (in Kompong Cham province); Snoul (in Kratie province); Dak Dam (in Mondol Kiri province); Bar Keo (in Rattanakiri province). Son Sen to Karim, 28 January 1992, UNA, S-0993-0004-0001.

and equipment for UNAMIC.⁷⁶

Despite these serious cease-fire violations, Mao Savy adopted a surprisingly constructive posture in the Mixed Military Working Group where the atmosphere remained cordial, with the Khmer Rouge general stating that he regretted the fighting and that he would instruct his forces to respect the cease-fire.⁷⁷ He also agreed to put the positions of the Khmer Rouge units on a map on the wall, as the generals from the other factions had already done. As this was the first concrete positive gesture by the Khmer Rouge for which everybody had been waiting, all the Cambodian and UN officers in the meeting room immediately stood up and spontaneously applauded.⁷⁸ Mao Savy further made the promise to go to Pailin and give orders to undo all the restrictions that had blocked UN officers so far and allow UNAMIC to conduct a reconnaissance in the Khmer Rouge-controlled zone to make preparations for UNTAC's arrival.⁷⁹ Another major development was that he agreed to welcome liaison officers from the other factions to Pailin.⁸⁰ Mao Savy's cooperative stance created a quasi-convivial atmosphere in the meetings which seemed to establish a certain measure of trust between the parties.⁸¹ Loridon, who grew carefully optimistic about the situation, shared with Goulding his expectation that UNAMIC should receive full freedom of movement soon.⁸² When Goulding suggested that a report could be sent to the Security Council in order to put some extra pressure on the Khmer Rouge, Loridon replied that he felt that patience was now required because he sensed that the Khmer Rouge were finally becoming more flexible.⁸³

In order to keep the constructive spirit among the Cambodian factions alive, UNAMIC officers took the initiative to organise a "Mixed Military Working Group Dinner" at the luxurious *Cambodiana* hotel in Phnom Penh. It was hoped that such an informal occasion, gathering the senior officers from all Cambodian factions and UN personnel, would help to facilitate dialogue and maintain the goodwill between the parties and the UN.⁸⁴ Some bureaucratic obstacles nonetheless needed to be surmounted because UN regulations did not allow for the reimbursement

76 Cable Goulding to Karim/Loridon: "Deployment of MLO teams to Kompong Thom," 28 January 1992

77 When Akashi shortly joined the meeting during his visit to Phnom Penh between 21 and 27 January, Loridon upliftingly said to the special representative that there was "great support and cooperation" and even "friendship" among the generals. Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 24 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

78 Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 24 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Author's interview with Michel Loridon.

79 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, "MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC," 3 February 1992, "Deployment of military component UNTAC," UNA, S-0994-0002-0006; Cable Loridon to Goulding, 17 February 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

80 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, "MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC," 3 February 1992, "Deployment of military component UNTAC," UNA, S-0994-0002-0006.

81 Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 31 January 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Mao Savy also stated to the press that the meeting had brought "big progress." Mark Dodd, "Rival factions agree to deploy in all zones," *Reuters*, 31 January 1992; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 February 1992, "Situation militaire au Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1 1310.

82 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 6 February 1992, "Deployment of military component UNTAC," UNA, S-0994-0002-0006.

83 "Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon," 7 February 1992 10:30, UNA, S-0994-0002-0001.

84 Internal message Loridon to Samuel Chao (Senior Administrative Officer), 14 February 1992, "Mixed Military Working Group Dinner," 14 February 1992, UNA, S-0995-0001-0008; Author's correspondence with Michel Loridon 1 July 2019; Lieutenant Colonel Z. Biernat, "Team Leaders' coordinating conference Friday 14 Feb 1992," UNA, S-0995-0001-0007; Interoffice message Loridon to Samuel Chao Senior (Administrative Officer), 14 February 1992, "Mixed Military Working Group Dinner," 14 February 1992, UNA, S-0995-0001-0008.

of such “hospitality expenses.”⁸⁵ But eventually, UNAMIC’s tight budget was spared the costs of the dinner, as a deterioration of the situation led to its cancellation.

Pol Pot’s strategy: using the Paris Peace Agreements as a weapon

The glimmers of hope that seemed to glow in the second half of January 1992 extinguished completely by the start of February. Mao Savy’s cooperative declarations might have led to a certain optimism within the ranks of UNAMIC, but ultimately, Pol Pot was not planning to cooperate in good faith with the United Nations, but rather use the peace agreements as a weapon. It quickly became clear that the Khmer Rouge were not delivering on their promises. Travel permissions for UNAMIC through Khmer Rouge-controlled parts of the country were suddenly withdrawn and reconnaissance teams were denied access.⁸⁶ To this was added that the Khmer Rouge were slow to deliver the liaison officers they had promised to the UNAMIC locations, nor had they arranged facilities for the reception of the other factions’ liaison officers in Pailin, as they had also promised. The night before the scheduled deployment of all the factions’ officers to the UNAMIC liaison teams, the Khmer Rouge suddenly announced that they were not yet ready to receive them, without indicating when they would be. Most worrying of all, however, was that General Mao Savy suddenly disappeared and would never be seen again.⁸⁷ As a consequence, there was no Khmer Rouge permanent military representation anymore in Phnom Penh, which resulted in a complete interruption of UNAMIC’s reconnaissance missions.

There is no doubt that the sudden change in the Khmer Rouge’s behaviour was the direct consequence of a decision made at the highest levels of the Khmer Rouge hierarchy. On 6 February 1992, the Khmer Rouge leadership held a meeting during which Pol Pot gave a long speech in which he laid out in detail the Khmer Rouge’s strategy for the transitional period.⁸⁸ From the minutes of this speech, which were only discovered and translated by UNTAC almost a year later, it becomes clear that Pol Pot was not interested in peace or national reconciliation. He rather made it clear that their struggle with the “Yuan” – a pejorative word for “Vietnamese” – and their puppet regime in Phnom Penh continued, though the fight was moving into a new dynamic

85 Interoffice message Samuel Chao to Loridon, 14 February 1992, “Mixed Military Working Group Dinner,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0008. Also see: “Rapport de fin de séminaire” UNA, S-0995-0001-0008.

86 On 12 February, a UNAMIC team was denied access to the Khmer Rouge cantonment site of Phum Ta Ngan, despite the fact that this had been agreed to in advance. Another MLO team did succeed to visit another cantonment site just south of Phum Beng, but the local Khmer Rouge commander who was supposed to be there did not show up with the necessary information.

87 Letter Loridon to Mao Savy, 14 February 1992, “Co-operation in Progression of the Peace Process,” UNA, S-0993-0005-0001; Cable Loridon to Goulding, 17 February 1992, “Situation au Cambodge,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0002.

88 The minutes were captured by UNTAC’s Information division via SOC-related sources. UNTAC’s Khmer speaking experts under the leadership of the American diplomat Timothy M. Carney were of the view that the speech represented the “authentic thinking of Pol Pot.” Journalist and historian Nayan Chanda, historian Michael Vickery, and Cambodian scholar Raoul Jennar presumed it was Pol Pot, whereas historian Ben Kiernan has referred to the documents as drafted by Ieng Sary, the former deputy prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea. It could, indeed, have been either one of them since the speaker stated: “according to my own experience negotiating with Le Duan in 1975.” In June 1975, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary visited Hanoi, and in August of the same year, Le Duan visited Phnom Penh. For the sake of clarity, it is here assumed that the speaker was indeed Pol Pot. See: Nayan Chanda, “Strained ties, Poor UN relations with Bangkok mar peace process,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 December 1992, 26; Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 11; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 216; Kiernan, “The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge,” 233; Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 14.

with more players involved and becoming less “military” and more “political and diplomatic.”⁸⁹ In these new circumstances, Pol Pot proposed to adopt the tried-and-tested strategy which the North Vietnamese had applied during their negotiations with the Americans in the early 1970s: “talking while fighting.” Pol Pot even referred to former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s memoirs to illustrate how successful Hanoi had been by following this strategy. Now they needed to demonstrate the same toughness with both Hun Sen, UNAMIC and UNTAC.⁹⁰

The Khmer Rouge leader emphasised that the Paris Peace Agreements were “the fruit of a struggle waged for 13 years” which they should now use as their “weapon” to defeat the enemy and liberate Cambodia.⁹¹ When accused by the United Nations of non-cooperation, they should just refer to the Paris Agreements. Very clear instructions were given in this regard by Pol Pot: “We must use the Agreements as a weapon which we cite. [. . .] If these guys say something that differs from the Agreements, then we say, sir, you are saying something that is outside of the Agreements, are we implementing the Agreements or not? [. . .] like when our comrades [meet] Lorida, and all we do is bring up the documents, he’s at a disadvantage vis-à-vis us.”⁹² Pol Pot clearly considered Lorida as a serious threat to his objectives, but one that would soon disappear given the apparent lack of support he enjoyed within the United Nations: “even their own people see that Lorida’s a scoundrel. So this guy’s not got us beat,” Pol Pot said.⁹³ The Khmer Rouge thus finetuned the Vietnamese strategy of “talking while fighting” by promising cooperation while not delivering on it.

Drawing on Pol Pot’s speech and interviews with Khmer Rouge leadership figures, such as Ieng Sary – known as “Brother Number Three” – after their defection in 1997, political scientist David Roberts has argued that the Khmer Rouge leadership had every intention of cooperating with UNTAC and to comply with the terms of the Paris Agreements, but that the delay of UNTAC’s arrival gave them reason to change their minds.⁹⁴ Roberts’ analysis is in line with Sorpong Peou’s thesis that the Khmer Rouge’s insecurity perception constituted the main reason to withdraw their cooperation.⁹⁵ Pol Pot indeed complained that it took too long for UNTAC to arrive in Cambodia and even suggested that delaying UNTAC might be a deliberate strategy by the United States and Vietnam to give their armies the time to prepare for a joint attack on the Khmer Rouge.⁹⁶ This paranoid and highly unrealistic theory seems to support Peou’s thesis that Pol Pot was very concerned about his security and perceived UNAMIC as unreliable. But this argument becomes less convincing when taking into account that Pol Pot clearly explained that his strategy was predicated on using the Paris Agreements to strengthen the Khmer Rouge’s own position and evade their obligations that were disadvantageous to them.

Pol Pot made it clear that he wanted UNTAC to come to Cambodia because UNAMIC

89 “Clarification of Certain Principles Views to Act as de Basis of Our Views and Stance, 6 February 1992,” see: cable Akashi to Goulding, 16 December 1992, “Minutes of DK meeting held in February 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0049-0001. (Pol Pot speech, 6 February 1992).

90 Pol Pot speech, 6 February 1992.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 This analysis is also made by Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 10.

94 Roberts, *Political Transition*, 93–96.

95 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 183, 196, 201.

96 Pol Pot speech, 6 February 1992.

did not immediately give him the advantages he expected to get from the Paris Agreements, which was the weakening of the State of Cambodia. Resuming attacks and denying UNAMIC freedom of movement were presented as deliberate measures to put extra pressure on the UN to speed up UNTAC's deployment: "if for example we take measures to prevent these guys from coming to Pailin whenever they like, even though Loridon is not pleased, this makes Akashi hasten to come."⁹⁷ But the Khmer Rouge's cease-fire violations should not merely be interpreted as simply a ploy to force UNTAC's arrival. Pol Pot also clearly pointed out that their objective was to reconquer and control two-thirds of the Cambodian villages before UNTAC deployed. The "military solution" was considered as the right one, especially because it was clear that UNAMIC didn't have "any muscle power" to counter it.⁹⁸ In sum, the Khmer Rouge's strategy was to use the Paris Agreements as a tool to weaken their opponent and reconquer, or "liberate," Cambodia. UNTAC's presence was required to set this strategy in motion, and because UNAMIC did not serve this goal, Pol Pot decided to stop all cooperation. The effects of this decision were immediately noticeable, particularly by the sudden disappearance of the relatively cooperative general Mao Savy, who in Pol Pot's view, was clearly getting too "cosy" with UNAMIC.⁹⁹

Red flags

UNAMIC officers immediately witnessed the sudden change in behaviour of the Khmer Rouge, but their alarm signals sent to New York were not given serious attention. On the morning of 14 February, Loridon received a message from the Khmer Rouge headquarters that Mao Savy was sick and could therefore not attend the Mixed Military Working Group which was scheduled on the same day. This was a very disturbing signal, especially because the day before, the Khmer Rouge had also failed to send a representative to what was to be the first meeting of the Local Mixed Military Working Group in the volatile province of Kompong Thom. Loridon summoned the Cambodian generals to meet in Phnom Penh within six hours, hoping this would force the Khmer Rouge to send a replacement. But no reply came, and the meeting took place without a Khmer Rouge general, leaving the urgent topic of the continuing cease-fire violations undiscussed.¹⁰⁰ Loridon sent a cable to Goulding summarising in detail all the demonstrations of uncooperative behaviour by Khmer Rouge. He concluded that UNAMIC had entered "a difficult phase," but nonetheless expressed the hope that the meetings of the Mixed Military Working Group and of the Supreme National Council could brighten things up in case the Khmer Rouge would attend. Loridon considered these meetings as a last chance to keep the peace process on track and indicated to Goulding that the time might have come to threaten the Khmer Rouge with more forceful measures if they maintained their uncooperative attitude:

"If [Khmer Rouge cooperation] will not come around, I wish that the Security Council and the Secretary-General take measures, one of these could be to threaten the Khmer Rouge with an armed intervention by

97 Ibid.

98 Pol Pot speech, 6 February 1992.

99 Ibid.

100 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 17 February 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Record of the 6th meeting of the MMWG, 14 February 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

the international community for the non-respect and violation of the Paris Accords signed by this faction. The current situation cannot continue.”¹⁰¹

On the same day that Loridon sent his alarming red-flag message to Goulding, the UN Secretary-General received a personal letter from Khieu Samphan that aimed to legitimise the Khmer Rouge’s non-cooperation by creating the impression that they were the victims of UNTAC’s absence. Written in sophisticated and exquisitely polite French – to which Boutros-Ghali was susceptible – the Khmer Rouge president expressed his concern that the Paris Agreements were being transformed into an instrument to legalise the “Vietnamese occupation” of Cambodia. The fact that UNTAC had still not arrived in Cambodia, three months after the signing of the Paris Agreements had given Hun Sen the opportunity to launch military operations against the Khmer Rouge, Samphan argued, and urged the Secretary-General to accelerate the arrival of UNTAC so it could take care of what he stated as the Khmer Rouge’s two main concerns: the control and verification of the withdrawal of all categories of foreign forces and the disarmament of the factions’ armies. As long as these two points were not settled by the UN, “other problems could not be resolved.” To what extent the Secretary-General was informed about the fact that the Khmer Rouge were the ones who were responsible for the violation of the cease-fire and were actively thwarting UNAMIC’s efforts to make the necessary preparations for UNTAC’s arrival is not certain, but he might have been reassured by Samphan’s concluding statement reaffirming his “determination to firmly respect the Paris Accords of 23 October 1991.”¹⁰²

While the Khieu Samphan tried to give Boutros-Ghali the impression of being a reasonable party with reasonable concerns while maintaining a firm commitment to the peace process, in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge continued to block every effort of the UN. Contrary to the best hopes of the UNAMIC leadership, the meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group on 20 February only confirmed that the Khmer Rouge had decided to adopt an obstructive stance. General Mao Savy was replaced as the new military representative by General Nuon Bunno, who was privy to Khieu Samphan and Pol Pot.¹⁰³ Whereas Mao Savy had at least pretended to cooperate, Nuon Bunno dropped any pretence of goodwill and made it clear that UN personnel would only receive full freedom of movement once UNTAC arrived.¹⁰⁴ “If UNTAC is here,” Nuon Bunno told Loridon, “you can travel anywhere you wish.”¹⁰⁵ He also refused to mark the Khmer Rouge minefields and to cooperate with the deployment of liaison officers from the other factions to the Khmer Rouge headquarters in Pailin, while repeating the request to deploy sixteen additional MLO teams to the eastern part of Cambodia that were under control of the State of Cambodia.¹⁰⁶ Loridon resisted: “General, if you really want reconciliation you must put your

101 Cable Loridon to Goulding, “Situation au Cambodge.”

102 Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 17 February 1992, UNA, S-0797-0013-0006.

103 He explained that his colleague was indisposed because of a severe fever, but this was clearly an excuse. Record of Mixed Military Working Group 7th meeting, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

104 The disappearance of Mao Savy and the replacement by the very uncooperative Nuon Bunno was clearly a direct consequence of the Khmer Rouge’s leadership meeting on 6 February, which circumstantially confirms the authenticity of the document that was captured and translated in December 1992.

105 Record of Mixed Military Working Group 7th meeting, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

106 Letter Nuon Bunno to Loridon, 17 February 1992, UNA, S-0797-0013-0006; Record of Mixed Military Working Group 7th meeting, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

officers in place as soon as possible and cooperate with the UN. Make some gestures and I promise that the other factions will not attack. I give you my word. [. . .] Have confidence in me and in the other factions [. . .] we are determined to make peace among you.”¹⁰⁷ But the incessant attempts by UNAMIC officers to persuade the Khmer Rouge general were to no avail. The meetings of the Mixed Military Working Group turned into a dialogue of the deaf in which the Khmer Rouge refused to cooperate with any UNAMIC initiative and defended their position by making continuous references to the Paris Agreements and calling for UNTAC’s immediate arrival, exactly as Pol Pot had instructed. This was also the case when Loridon requested the factions’ agreement to allow reconnaissance flights over their territory to allow the Mekong Committee of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to make maps of Cambodia:

Loridon [UNAMIC]:	“I would like to speak on the subject of the flights for the Mekong Committee project. Can you give permission for overflight where the Mekong Committee must do its work[?]”
Kruoch Yoeum [ANKI]:	“Yes.”
Phoeung Siphon [CPAF]:	“Yes.”
Hay Run Song [KPNLAF]:	“Yes.”
Nuon Bunno [NADK]:	“No, because it is contrary to the Paris Agreement. In the Paris Agreement there is no mention of the Mekong Committee. You may understand that there is some fighting and some shells might hit the planes or the helicopters. We do not have any objection if UNTAC is here to supervise the withdrawal of foreign forces from Cambodia and to create the atmosphere of neutrality in Cambodia.” ¹⁰⁸

With the exception of Pailin, the Khmer Rouge-controlled territory remained terra incognita for UN officers. Though declaring that they wanted UNTAC to arrive quickly, the Khmer Rouge obstructed UN officers in surveying future locations for the UNTAC infantry battalions as well as for the cantonment camps of demobilised Cambodian soldiers. Australian Lieutenant Colonel Russel Stuart, who was in charge of the reconnaissance parties, stressed to Nuon Bunno that “we no longer have time for delay. We require full cooperation. Time for talking about it is over and time for action is now.”¹⁰⁹ But the Khmer Rouge said they were “not ready to give full protection” to the UNAMIC reconnaissance parties.¹¹⁰ Loridon started to lose his patience with the Khmer Rouge and shared his frustration with journalists: “It is no problem for the other three [factions] but the [Khmer Rouge] are not fully cooperative . . . I was very strong with them . . . but they were delaying, saying, ‘yes possibly, not now, maybe next week.’”¹¹¹

Despite Loridon’s reports and public statements about the fact that the Khmer Rouge were

107 Record of Mixed Military Working Group 7th meeting, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 March “Fonctionnement du groupe militaire mixte de travail,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

108 Record of Mixed Military Working Group 7th meeting, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 “UN General Says Khmer Rouge Not Cooperating,” *Bangkok Post*, 21 February 1992.

endangering the peace process, New York remained unalerted. The problems with the Khmer Rouge, if at all recognised, were considered to be only temporarily given their promises to start cooperating after UNTAC's arrival. On 20 February, while Akashi presented the implementation plan for UNTAC at UN headquarters in New York, the special representative admitted to the press that there were still "certain problems regarding the freedom of movement," but added that he had seen "nothing to indicate that the Khmer Rouge did not want UNTAC to succeed."¹¹² The next day, Loridon sent a new distressing message to Goulding in which he made the correct observation that "manifestly, the [Khmer Rouge] military has received orders to win time and stonewall our actions."¹¹³ The French general added that he felt the time had come for the Security Council to put some pressure on the Khmer Rouge, as Goulding had suggested earlier.¹¹⁴ But the Under-Secretary-General did not agree that this was the right time for such action. Referring to Loridon's cables, Goulding indicated to Akashi: "we seem to have a problem here."¹¹⁵ For Goulding, the "problem" was not the non-cooperative attitude of the Khmer Rouge. It was Loridon, who, to his mind, was demonstrating "a certain impetuosity."¹¹⁶ His suggestion that the UN should perhaps consider to threaten the Khmer Rouge with an armed intervention had not landed well in his office where the UNAMIC commander seemed to have lost his credibility. Goulding felt that the French general's suggestions stemmed from his "lack of previous UN experience" and "his difficulty in coming to terms with our financial and logistic constraints."¹¹⁷ But given the fact that it was difficult to "straighten things out" at such a long distance, Goulding indicated to Akashi that the "problem" would be resolved automatically when General Sanderson would arrive in Phnom Penh. Goulding believed that the Secretary-General would appoint a general from "the Third World" as UNTAC's deputy force commander and that Loridon would soon be sent back to France.¹¹⁸ Pol Pot had thus correctly sensed that the French general enjoyed little support within the UN and that he would soon be replaced. However, neither Pol Pot nor Goulding had reckoned with the deal that had been struck behind the scenes between the United States and France about Loridon becoming deputy force commander, which meant they both would have to wait a little longer before their "problem" would be solved.

Waiting for UNTAC

The Khmer Rouge continued to make the promise that they would start cooperating once UNTAC arrived. When, during an official visit of Prince Sihanouk to Pailin, journalists had an opportunity to ask Son Sen why his party was not cooperating, the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief simply replied: "Let's wait until UNTAC comes. Then they can go everywhere they want.

112 Press briefing by Special Representative on Cambodia, 20 February 1992, UNA, S-0797-0013-0006.

113 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 21 February 1992, "situation après la 7ème réunion GTMM du 20 février," UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

114 Ibid.

115 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 February 1992, "Planning for UNTAC," UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid. Goulding later described Loridon as a "difficult number." See: Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding, 30 June 1998, Oxford, United Kingdom, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York.

118 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 February 1992, "Planning for UNTAC," UNA, S-0794-0012-0001.

We have nothing to conceal.”¹¹⁹ With the deployment of the first UNTAC troops only two weeks away, the UN Secretariat and the Security Council did not take any further action, probably believing that the Khmer Rouge would keep their word.¹²⁰

It took the wounding of a UNAMIC officer by Khmer Rouge bullets before New York began to realise that the situation in Cambodia was deteriorating. On 26 February 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Russell Stuart, Australia’s highest ranking officer in Cambodia, was hit several times while sitting next to the open door of a Puma helicopter flying at 100 metres altitude over the jungle in Kompong Thom province. Suddenly the helicopter was hit by a salvo of small arms fire, wounding Stuart. A team of *Médecins Sans Frontières* provided first aid to the Australian officer who was subsequently transported to Bangkok where he was operated and, eventually, fully recovered from his injuries.¹²¹ All the factions denied responsibility for the shooting and an investigation was launched by UNAMIC.¹²² The investigators concluded that soldiers belonging to the Khmer Rouge’s 616th division under command of the notorious one-legged general Ta Mok – also known as “the Butcher” – were responsible for the shooting of the UN helicopter while they were moving south to prepare an attack on Kompong Thom provincial town.¹²³ Though Khmer Rouge leaders in Phnom Penh continued to deny responsibility, Khmer Rouge soldiers on the ground in Kompong Thom actually admitted to UN officers that they had fired on the helicopter, using the rather implausible excuse that they thought the black-painted letters of “UN” stood for “Viet Nam.”¹²⁴ The helicopter shooting could have been avoided if the Khmer Rouge would have had a liaison officer in Kompong Thom, but the deployment of a Khmer Rouge officer had been obstructed for weeks by Nuon Bunno who insisted on his unrealistic demand to simultaneously deploy liaison officers to the SOC military headquarters in Battambang and Siem Reap, which simply went beyond UNAMIC’s logistic capacities. Although all other factions agreed with the deployment of the liaison teams in two shifts, Nuon Bunno refused to accept UNAMIC’s

119 Sutin Wannabovorn, “Khmer Rouge say Cambodia still at war,” *Reuters*, 27 February 1992; “Les Khmers rouges refusent toujours le libre accès de l’ONU dans leurs zones,” *Le Monde*, 29 February 1992.

120 Cable Goulding to Karim/Loridon, 4 March 1992, “Khmer Rouge,” UNA, S-0993-0005-00001.

121 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 2 March 1992, “Résultats de l’enquête du général Loridon, SMLO MIPRENUC au sujet de l’incident du 26 février 1992,” UNA, S-0797-0013-0006; “Bloody duels continue despite peace accord,” *Bangkok Post*, 27 February 1992; Author’s interview with F. Motmans and E. Debontridder. During the session of the MMWG on 20 February, Nuon Bunno had warned UNAMIC not to go to Anlong Veng. After the meeting, the Khmer Rouge representative had confidentially asked UNAMIC officers not to effectuate any reconnaissance missions in a triangle between Siem Reap and Anlong Veng, twenty kilometres north of Kraya, “for security reasons.” Being aware of the mounting tensions in the region and wondering about the actual control the Khmer Rouge military leadership had on its forces in this area, Loridon took this request seriously and drew a red line on the map which the helicopters were not allowed to cross as to avoid any incidents. During the reconnaissance flight to Kraya on the 26th, the helicopter crew had respected these flight restrictions.

122 “Australian commander wounded in Cambodia,” *Bangkok Post*, 27 February 1992; Mark Dodd, “UN general to grill Khmer Rouge chiefs,” *The Nation*, 28 February 1992; “Cambodia still at war: Khmer Rouge,” *The Canberra Times*, 29 February 1992; Record of Mixed Military Working Group Eight Meeting, Friday, 28 February 1992, UNA, S-0797-0013-0006.

123 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 2 March 1992, “Résultats de l’enquête,” UNA, S-0797-0013-0006.

124 Author’s interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

helicopter shortage as a valid excuse.¹²⁵ With their forces preparing an offensive in Kompong Thom province, the Khmer Rouge had no interest in contributing to cease-fire talks in that area, let alone UN helicopters flying over the area that would spot their forces. The wounding of a senior UN officer in Cambodia was a wake-up call for New York. On 4 March, Goulding shared, for the first time, his concerns with the ambassadors of the P5 about a “growing pattern of Khmer Rouge non-cooperation with UNAMIC,” and asked for their advice.¹²⁶ All P5 members, with the exception of China, agreed that as soon as Akashi arrived in Cambodia the special representative should immediately put pressure on the Khmer Rouge.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge continued to fight Hun Sen’s army and successfully gained ground. On 10 March, a force of 2,000 Khmer Rouge soldiers launched a coordinated attack in Kompong Thom province, conquering some territory, blowing up key bridges, and forcing another 2,500 people to flee their homes.¹²⁸ In Phnom Penh, Nuon Bunno declared that his forces were merely acting out of self-defence.¹²⁹ A last attempt was made by UNAMIC to organise cease-fire talks on the spot, but the Khmer Rouge did not send a representative and refused to order a stop to the fighting.¹³⁰ On the eve of the transition from UNAMIC into UNTAC, there was no cease-fire and not a grain of trust left among the Cambodian factions.¹³¹

Scholars have not fully grasped how serious the erosion of Khmer Rouge cooperation already was before UNTAC had even arrived in Cambodia. Lise Morjé Howard, for example, has stated that even after the attack on Khieu Samphan in late November 1991, the Khmer Rouge remained “full participants” in the peace process, and most other students of UNTAC maintain the same perception.¹³² It is true that Khmer Rouge leaders continued to proclaim their strict adherence to the Paris Agreements, but evidence shows that this was part of their strategy of creating the impression of cooperation, while in reality they continued to conquer territory and obstruct the UN’s efforts. This calls into question John Connor’s observation that UNAMIC failed to effectively pave the way for UNTAC because its mediocre personnel neglected to give the

125 UNAMIC did simply not have enough helicopters at its disposal to facilitate a simultaneous deployment. Prince Sihanouk and his entourage used 50 per cent of the UNAMIC’s helicopter capacity for flying around the country for visits. Loridon and Karim felt this was justified because they considered the prince to be of central importance to the peace process and national reconciliation. Loridon repeatedly requested New York and Paris to send several light helicopters of the French Gazelle type to Cambodia, which would limit the use of the much heavier Puma helicopters and make the management of the air assets easier. Paris subsequently offered the UN Secretariat a maximum of six Gazelle helicopters. But the UN Secretariat responded only in April that UNTAC did not need these helicopters, declined the offer and instead asked France to contribute another six Pumas. See: Record of Mixed Military Working Group Eight Meeting, Friday, 28 February 1992, UNA, S-0797-0013-0006; Cable Karim to Akashi, 25 March 1992, “Political situation in Cambodia,” UNA, S-0795-0043-0003; “Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon,” 7 February 1992 10:30, UNA, S-0994-0002-0001; Cable Loridon to Goulding, 17 February 1992, “Situation au Cambodge,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; “Verslag van Maj. Schuering van UNTAC contingent commanders conference van 6 t/m 8 april 1992 bij de VN te New York,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 25.

126 Cable Goulding to Karim/Loridon, 4 March 1992, “Khmer Rouge,” UNA, S-0993-0005-0001.

127 Ibid.

128 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 12 March 1992, “Situation at Kompong Thom,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

129 Record of Mixed Military Working Group Emergency Meeting, 13 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

130 Ben Kiernan “The Cambodian crisis,” 22; Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, “Situation au Cambodge,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0002; Cable Loridon to Goulding, 12 March 1992, “Situation at Kompong Thom,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Record of Mixed Military Working Group Emergency Meeting, 13 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; “The Khmer Rouge refuses to order end to fighting,” *Bangkok Post*, 15 March 1992.

131 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, “Situation au Cambodge,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0002.

132 Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 146.

planning for UNTAC the priority it required.¹³³ First, “planning for UNTAC” was not a task that had been clearly spelled out in UNAMIC’s mandate, nor in Goulding’s official instructions.¹³⁴ The UN Secretariat in New York was responsible for formulating UNTAC’s implementation plan, of which a draft was only sent to UNAMIC on 3 February, providing Phnom Penh with the necessary information to begin making concrete preparations for UNTAC’s arrival.¹³⁵ But these efforts were severely obstructed by the sudden withdrawal of Khmer Rouge cooperation in the same week. To this must be added that because of miscommunication, the UN Secretariat promised but did not provide UNAMIC with additional staff officers to man a dedicated planning cell, further handicapping the UN’s ability to conduct planning activities.¹³⁶ Second, it would have been difficult for UNAMIC to have started much earlier with preparations because the Khmer Rouge were only properly represented in the Mixed Military Working Group from 16 January 1992 onwards.

UNAMIC’s Military Liaisons Officers seem to have done everything in their power with limited means and practically no support from New York. In his last cable to Goulding, Loridon emphasised “the quality, competence and devotion of the quasi-totality of the officers, NCO’s and soldiers” serving in UNAMIC.¹³⁷ Cambodia watcher Raoul Jennar also lauded “the pragmatism and ingenuity of Loridon and his men,” who, though unable to prevent cease-fire violations, nonetheless succeeded with very limited means to keep the situation from escalating into full conflict.¹³⁸ Jennar observed that under Loridon’s command, UNAMIC demonstrated a strong determination to achieve its objectives.¹³⁹ Loridon indeed believed that in the effort of persuading the Cambodian parties to cooperate and respect their commitments, willpower and determination were of vital importance. His last message to all UNAMIC personnel illustrates this: “together, we will put our experience and all our willpower to the service of general Sanderson, and we will

133 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 137.

134 Directive à l’intention de l’officier de liaison principal militaire de la MIPRENUC, UNA, S-0994-0002-0002. In the report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council, it was stated that the Chief Liaison Officer, Ataul Karim, “would have responsibility for liaison with the Supreme National Council on the preparations for the deployment of UNTAC and on other matters related to the role of the United Nations in the implementation of the Comprehensive Political Settlement Agreement.” S/23097 Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Cambodia, 30 September 1991, UNA, S-0994-0002-0002; Security Council resolutions 717 and 718 (1991), UN Digital Library. In the fringe of the Paris Peace Conference, during a UNAMIC-preparatory meeting, there was no mention of how UNAMIC should prepare for UNTAC. This would have been difficult to establish because no calendar for UNTAC had been determined yet or the reason that certain members of the Security Council were reluctant to accept that UNTAC would become too big of an operation, and that consultations about UNTAC’s calendar were planned to begin only in January 1992. See: *Compte-rendu de la réunion du 22 octobre 1991 relative à la mission préparatoire des Nations Unies au Cambodge (MIPRENUC)*, Paris, 29 October, ADN, 521PO/2/27. It was the draft report of the survey mission, which was released by Dibuma on 24 December 1991, that stated that “some of the military staff officers deployed in UNAMIC headquarters will carry out detailed planning in the field regarding the deployment of UNTAC.” See: “Report of the United Nations Military Survey Mission to Cambodia 17 November–16 December 1991, United Nations New York, 24 December 1991,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 13.

135 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, “MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC,” 3 February 1992, “Deployment of military component UNTAC,” UNA, S-0994-0002-0006; Record of first coordinating UNTAC planning conference Monday 2 March 1992 1100–1210 hours Operations Room UNAMIC HQ, UNA, S-0994-0002-0009.

136 Note to the file by Hisako Shimura, 31 December 1992, UNA, S-1085-0022-0001; “Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon,” 7 February 1992, 10:30, UNA, S-0994-0002-0001.

137 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, “Situation au Cambodge,” UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

138 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 271.

139 Ibid., 299, 348, 349.

help him with all our heart to pursue the actions that have been started so well by UNAMIC.”¹⁴⁰

Despite all efforts of UNAMIC personnel, their good offices proved insufficient to keep the cease-fire. The military officers were essentially diplomats in uniform, and it was the absence of a credible military UN force that failed to impress the Khmer Rouge, deter them from violating the cease-fire and convince them of the UN's capacity to act. UNAMIC was misled by the Khmer Rouge's promises of forthcoming cooperation, while concrete demonstrations of their good intentions failed to materialise. In February, it became clear to Loridon and his officers that the Khmer Rouge were deliberately stalling the UN's effort and taking advantage of UNAMIC's inability to deter them from ceasing territory. But New York was unwilling to accept the idea that its prestige project in Cambodia was already unravelling before the main force had arrived. Everybody clung to the hope that with the arrival of UNTAC, the Khmer Rouge would change their attitude and that the significant delays that had been incurred could be made up for.

140 Ordre du jour Loridon to UNAMIC staff, 14 March 1992, UNA, S-0993-0005-0001; Also see: Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004.

UNTAC deploys and displays success

3

On the eve of UNTAC's arrival in Cambodia on 15 March 1992, the Khmer Rouge adopted a contradictory position: On the one hand they called for UNTAC's quick deployment and promised to cooperate with the mission once it had arrived, but they had constantly and deliberately obstructed UNAMIC's efforts in making preparations and violated the cease-fire. UNTAC was divided into two phases. Phase one, which started after the signing of the Paris Agreement, was to see a complete cease-fire and the total withdrawal of foreign military forces along with their equipment, with ongoing verification of their non-return. Phase Two would set in motion the disarmament and demobilisation of 70 per cent of the Cambodian factions' armies, with the residual 30 per cent remaining in cantonments under UN control to be either demobilised later, or incorporated into a new national army. UNTAC would also have to foster a neutral political environment and organise and hold elections. During the negotiations of the Paris Agreements, much focus had been on disarmament, and a large part of the peace accords was devoted this part of the mission. It was considered to be the key to every other aspect of the operation and an absolutely vital precondition for the organisation of elections.¹ Eventually, three months later, as Phase Two started, the Khmer Rouge boycotted the disarmament and demobilisation process, plunging the entire operation into a crisis. This chapter explores the reasons why UNTAC failed to achieve its first objective.

Most scholars have pointed at the slow arrival of UNTAC's military units and civilian teams in Cambodia as well as inadequate preparation as the main causes for UNTAC's inability to succeed in disarming the Cambodian factions.² It has been argued that the late deployment of UNTAC proved "extremely damaging" for the operation. Michael Mersiades has pointed out that it effected Khmer Rouge perceptions of UNTAC's legitimacy.³ According to Lise Howard, the delays forced the operation into "a state of organisational dysfunction."⁴ Sorpong Peou and David Roberts have argued that the Khmer Rouge demonstrated a degree of cooperation and seemed prepared to participate in the disarmament, and demobilisation process, but refused to comply because UNTAC failed to address their concerns about security.⁵ This chapter will show that scholars have made the same misinterpretation as the UN leadership at the time by taking the Khmer Rouge leadership's statements about their commitment to the peace process at face value, although their statements continued to be in complete contradiction to their actions. It will be demonstrated, first, that rather than ignoring the Khmer Rouge's security concerns, the UN leadership ignored the Khmer Rouge's strategy of stonewalling UNTAC's efforts while

1 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

2 Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, 21, 43, 85; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 14, 192; Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian peace process*, 18; Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 83; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 113, 35; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 154, 175; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 64.

3 Mersiades, "Peacekeeping and legitimacy," 210.

4 Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 147.

5 Peou, "Implementing Cambodia's Peace Agreement," 512, 523; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 102.

continuously raising their price for cooperation. Second, we will see that though the slow arrival of peacekeepers was certainly harmful for UNTAC's authority, it was above all the great reluctance with which they were deployed in March 1992 that deprived UNTAC of early momentum and authority. Third, a major reason for Phase Two to flounder was the fact that the civilian UN leadership was more focussed on the ultimate objective of organising elections, sticking to the predetermined time schedule, than on the disarmament and demobilisation.

A contested implementation plan

With regard to the disarmament and demobilisation of the Cambodian factions, the Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that the factions' soldiers were first expected to report to specifically designated regroupment zones; every faction had its own set in the parts of the country they controlled, where peacekeepers would be waiting for them. From there they would be escorted to nearby cantonment sites, large camps of battalion size (some 800 men) operated by UNTAC's military. The faction's soldiers would then hand in their weapons and ammunition to be stored in the custody of UNTAC. Once the cantonment would be completed, UNTAC infantry battalions would patrol the countryside and verify if all soldiers and their weapons had been committed to the cantonments. All in all, it was an ambitious and complicated process which relied on the full cooperation of all the factions. But these general outlines of the Paris Agreement had yet to be translated into a more specific implementation plan.⁶

Awaiting his official appointment as UNTAC force commander, Sanderson was temporarily named "Military Advisor to the Secretary-General on Cambodia."⁷ Between 17 November and 7 December 1991, General Sanderson and General Dibuama together led a UN military survey mission to Cambodia, which was mandated to prepare the military part of the implementation plan.⁸ As a result of this survey mission, which mostly operated from Bangkok and spent only nine days in Cambodia, a first draft of the implementation plan was produced by the UN Secretariat. Sanderson, who had not been given an official position in New York and continued to operate from Australia, had his doubts about the plan.⁹ It foresaw to deploy a force of twelve battalions with a total of 15,900 troops.¹⁰ This was much more than the 6,000 personnel a UN fact-finding mission in 1989, under the leadership of the Norwegian lieutenant general Martin Vadset, had concluded would be necessary, and Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar had in mind.¹¹ UNTAC's future force commander was especially concerned that the fragile infrastructure in Cambodia could not handle such a large force and that it would be too expensive. He therefore hoped that the Cambodian

6 Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Paris, 23 October 1991, Annex II, Article III.

7 Resolution 718 (1991) Decisions, Dag Hammarskjöld Digital Library, United Nations, New York; Interview by Hugh Smith with John M. Sanderson, 10 July 1998, Canberra Australia, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Digital Library, United Nations, New York.

8 UN Security Council Resolution 718 (1991).

9 Letter Sanderson to Dibuama, 6 December 1991, Sanderson papers, Australian Defence Force Academy Library (ADFA), box 2, file 7.

10 "Report of the United Nations Military Survey Mission to Cambodia 17 November–16 December 1991, United Nations New York, 24 December 1991," NIMH-099, file 13; Letter Sanderson to Dibuama, 6 December 1991.

11 Military officers from Australia, Britain, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, and Poland participated in this mission. See: Haas, "The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989," 45; Television interview with Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, 17 November 1991, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDdFbMcMkS0>.

factions might be willing to agree to “a less precise and rigid approach to the disengagement and demobilization,” which would also considerably lower the costs of the operation.¹² Realising that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was overstretched and lacked the experience to plan such a large and complicated mission as UNTAC, Sanderson decided to travel to New York uninvited.¹³ But when he arrived at UN headquarters on 15 January, nobody could receive him because he had no official invitation. Sanderson was shocked to discover that at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations there was no special operation room for Cambodia and a limited understanding of translating the Paris Agreement into operational military terms. This was illustrated by Dibumama’s intention to deploy UNTAC between June and September 1992, which was in the middle of the wet season, when Cambodia’s badly-maintained roads would become impassable because of the mud, making a deployment a logistical nightmare.¹⁴ Sanderson had to wait until 5 February 1992 to become officially involved in the planning process, which was two days after the Secretariat had finished a definitive version of the implementation plan.¹⁵

Loridon, who was wasn’t involved in the planning process for UNTAC either, also disagreed with the ideas that dominated in New York about the strategy for disarmament and demobilisation. The French general did not believe it was necessary to have as many as 15,900 peacekeepers deployed in Cambodia, and felt that the mission of disarming and demobilising the Cambodian factions could be achieved in a much more efficient, cheaper and flexible way. On 24 January, he sent his official recommendations to the UN Secretariat in which he proposed to start immediately with the progressive deployment of a total force of 5,000 peacekeepers. Loridon’s idea was to have all these units deployed before 15 May and organise them in fifty mobile groups of 100 blue helmets.¹⁶ These mobile groups would drive around the countryside and disarm the Cambodian factions’ units on the spot, completing the disarmament by 15 July. Once the demobilisation completed, the mobile groups would patrol vigorously and set up camp in the villages, live among the Cambodians to win their confidence and gather intelligence about remaining arms caches. In the case of a cease-fire violation report, one or two mobile groups would rush to the location to calm the situation and investigate.¹⁷ Loridon’s plan for deploying small mobile groups of blue helmets among the Cambodian population was partly inspired on classic counterinsurgency doctrine.¹⁸ It resembled the strategy that had been applied by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny during the First Indochina War in the 1950s, but it deviated completely from the traditional United Nations operating procedure in which sectors were being allotted to

12 Letter Sanderson to Dibumama, 6 December 1991, Sanderson papers, ADFA Library, S-2-7. Australian government officials also expected that the UN Secretariat would eventually scale down the proposal to cut costs as much as possible. See: Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 215.

13 John Sanderson, *Command at the operational level*, unpublished paper given at the Australian Command and Staff College Queenscliff, 26 June 2000.

14 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 144; Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 18.

15 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, “MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC,” 3 February 1992, “Deployment of military component UNTAC,” UNA, S-0994-0002-0006; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 144. It was only on 19 February that the Secretary-General submitted the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council.

16 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh, 27 January 1992, “Activités militaires des Nations Unies au Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

17 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh, May 1992, ECPAD Ivry-sur-Seine, 92.9.014 - K7-23.

18 Karsten Friis, “Peacekeeping and Counter-insurgency – Two of a Kind?,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (2010): 52.

different national infantry battalions.¹⁹ But Loridon was largely unfamiliar with the UN's modus operandi and proposed a plan that he believed was best adapted to the situation on the ground in Cambodia. The other problem was that the Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that the Cambodian faction's soldiers were to disarm and demobilise by reporting to regroupment areas before being interned into cantonments of battalion size or larger. But Loridon did not believe that forcing the Cambodian soldiers to live in barbed-wire camps and separate them from their families for an extended period would be a workable method to achieve the disarmament of the factions.²⁰ He argued that his alternative plan also fitted perfectly within the of Paris Agreements.²¹ But Dibuama and Goulding did not adopt Loridon's proposals.²²

Despite the input from both Sanderson and Loridon, the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC did not include their recommendations.²³ On 19 February, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali presented UNTAC's implementation plan that respected Dibuama's original draft. UNTAC would consist of an infantry element of 10,200 soldiers, subdivided in twelve enlarged infantry battalions of 850 blue helmets each.²⁴ In consultation with the Cambodian factions, the number of cantonments had been scaled down from 317 to fifty-two camps, which meant that the number of cantoned soldiers per camp would now range between 1,600 and 7,000 men.²⁵ The number of camps had been reduced to the absolute minimum in order to reduce costs.²⁶ Whereas the Cambodian factions had agreed in Paris to a demobilisation of 70 per cent of their forces, the Secretary-General urged the factions again to agree to a demobilisation of all their forces, as this would enable UNTAC to close the cantonment areas and reduce the number of peacekeepers as quickly as possible, which would further reduce costs.²⁷ But this ambition seemed unrealistic as Hun Sen's State of Cambodia was unwilling to demobilise its entire army as long as

19 Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012), 266.

20 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh; Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon," 7 February.

21 The Paris agreements could also be read in such a way that they did not. Paris Agreements, Annex II, Article VII Cessation of outside military assistance to all Cambodian Parties: "Immediately after the second phase of the cease-fire begins, UNTAC will take the following practical measures: c) Maintain mobile teams at strategic locations within Cambodia to patrol and investigate allegations of supply of arms to any of the Parties." And Paris Agreements, Annex II, VIII, Caches of weapons and military supplies, 2: "On the basis of information received, the military component shall, after the date referred to in paragraph 1, deploy verification teams to investigate each report and destroy each cache found." However, the Paris Agreements also determined that UNTAC would "supervise the regrouping and relocating of all forces to specifically designated cantonment areas [. . .] and initiate the process of arms control and reduction." See: Section C "military functions" of the UNTAC mandate, 20. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

22 When Loridon wanted to elaborate on his recommendations, Goulding and Dibuama said that his cable had never been received in New York. See: "Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon," 7 February.

23 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, "MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC," 3 February 1992, "Deployment of military component UNTAC," UNA, S-0994-0002-0006. It was only on 19 February that the Secretary-General submitted the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council.

24 UNTAC's military component would have a total strength of 15,900 men and women and would also include 485 military observers, 2,230 military engineers, an air support group of 326, a signals unit of 582, a medical unit of 541, a logistic battalion of 872, and a naval element of 376 to operate six sea patrols boats and nine river patrol boats. S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

25 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 24 March 1992, "Russian non-paper on expenditure cuts of the UN operation in Cambodia," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

26 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

27 S/23613; UN Security Council Resolution 745, 28 February 1992; Paris Peace Agreement, Annex 2, Article V-1. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

the Khmer Rouge were able to hide soldiers and arms out of UNTAC's sight.²⁸ Logically, Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief, Son Sen, favoured a demobilisation of 100 per cent because it would strongly weaken the power of Hun Sen's regime.²⁹

When the Secretary-General presented his implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council on 28 February, he started with a disclaimer. He admitted to the Council that the plan "may appear ambitious, and its cost rather worrying," but argued that it merely translated into operational terms the ambitious and unprecedented mandate conceived by the authors of the Paris Agreements. Nothing was definitive, he asserted, except for the timetable of the operation, in which the final objective was the organisation of elections in late April or early May 1993. This date was "a major political imperative," and Boutros-Ghali assured the Security Council that everything would be done to hold that timetable. Somewhat paradoxically, the Secretary-General also underlined that it would be "necessary to show some measure of flexibility in the conduct of this operation."³⁰ Frankly recognising that the information in his implementation plan was not necessarily complete and precise enough – given the continuing development of the situation in Cambodia – Boutros-Ghali made it clear in his report that it contained recommendations that may "need to be re-examined in the light of experience, once UNTAC is in place."³¹ He promised to the Council that he would propose necessary adjustments, as well as to visit Cambodia in April in order to examine personally how the whole operation was progressing in the field.³² Shining in absence was a budget for UNTAC. The Secretary-General did not spell out in detail how much the entire UNTAC operation would cost and only provided the rough projection of \$1.9 billion to cover the entire mission's eighteen months. This money, however, had not been reserved, and the General Assembly had only approved \$200 million as an advance appropriation.³³

The Security Council members were not entirely satisfied with the Secretariat's implementation plan. The scale and estimated costs for the operation were a true shock. The Americans, who knew they would have to pay the largest share of the bill, made it clear that UNTAC risked becoming far too expensive.³⁴ The other P5 members were equally sceptical, but not only for financial reasons. As peacekeeping operations were multiplying, member states were facing difficulties in providing peacekeepers on time. Realising that a rejection of the plan was virtually impossible as it would only lead to further delays, it was unanimously adopted by the Security Council. The P5 and other Council members instead emphasised the importance of making UNTAC cost-effective and gladly endorsed Boutros-Ghali's remarks about the need for constant re-evaluation and revision of the UNTAC plan in light of the real situation in Cambodia. The United States permanent representative, Thomas Pickering, stated: "We wholeheartedly welcome the Secretary-General's intention continually to review and refine UNTAC's operation in the light of actual experience and new information, with a view to maximum effectiveness and

28 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 April 1992, "Your UNTAC-493," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

29 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Brief for the Secretary-General on the military situation in Cambodia, 16 April 1992, UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

30 Provisional verbatim record of the 3057th meeting, held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 February 1992 (S/PV.3057.), 7.

31 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

32 S/PV.3057., 7.

33 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 164.

34 Joel Brinkley, *Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 70.

the most efficient use of resources.”³⁵ In order to make UNTAC cost-efficient, Security Council members underlined that the timetable of the operation, and the target date for the elections, should be scrupulously respected.³⁶ Everyone realised that speed was of the essence and that UNTAC would have to be fully deployed before the wet season arrived in May. Any delay in the implementation plan was likely to lead to difficulties and increasing costs. But the call for respect of the timetable was somewhat at odds with the call for maximum flexibility.

In his implementation plan, the Secretary-General also laid down four essential conditions that would have to be met to enable UNTAC to discharge its responsibilities effectively and impartially. First, UNTAC would need the full support of the Security Council; second, it needed to be assured of full cooperation, at all times, of all Cambodian factions; third, the military component would need to enjoy full freedom of movement; fourth, the necessary financial resources needed to be provided by member states in full and in a timely manner.³⁷ With the Khmer Rouge dragging their feet and the uncertainty about the finances of the operation, the Secretary-General omitted to mention that only one of these conditions seemed to have been met at the time of publishing his report, which was the unanimous support of the Security Council.

UNTAC's hesitant deployment

The situation in Cambodia was disconcerting. UNAMIC had not succeeded in maintaining the cease-fire: fighting was still ongoing in Kompong Thom where the NADK continued to attempt to push to the south and cut off the CPAF's access to the northern provinces. The Khmer Rouge troops were at least ten kilometres (six miles) from Kompong Thom, surrounding all but the southern side of the town as they were unable to cut the road to Phnom Penh.³⁸ The civilian population suffered badly from the fighting in Kompong Thom: 15,000 Cambodians, mostly poor rice farmers, were forced to leave their fields and villages.³⁹ The Khmer Rouge's cooperation with the UN had eroded significantly in the six weeks preceding UNTAC's deployment. On 7 March, Prince Sihanouk publicly accused the Khmer Rouge of deliberately stalling the peace process. "All the problems are created by them. If there were no Khmer Rouge there would be no problems. You won't even need UNTAC," he stated.⁴⁰ Richard Solomon, the US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, witnessed a widespread concern about the lack of cooperation by the Khmer Rouge when he visited Cambodia between 9 and 11 March, only a few days before UNTAC's arrival. "Across the board, they just keep making excuses not to cooperate," Solomon stated to journalists.⁴¹ In New York, however, one seemed to remain unaware of the erosion of the Khmer Rouge's cooperation.

When UNAMIC transitioned into UNTAC, the UN operation in Cambodia was now officially placed under the leadership of the special representative Yasushi Akashi, who succeeded

35 S/PV.3057, 44.

36 S/PV.3057, 18.

37 S/23613.

38 Jean-Claude Chapon, "Khmer Rouge refuses to end fighting, head of U.N. mission due," *AFP*, 14 March 1992.

39 Mark Dodd, "U.N. peace team due in embattled Cambodia region," *Reuters*, 2 April 1992.

40 Kiernan, "The Cambodian crisis," 21.

41 Mark Dodd, "Cash, Khmer Rouge trouble U.N. effort, US says," *Reuters*, 11 March 1992; Nate Thayer, "Solomon Says Khmer Rouge Obstruct Peace Process," *The Associated Press*, 10 March 1992.

Ataul Karim as the highest UN official in Cambodia. Lt. Gen. John Sanderson took over the military command from Brig. Gen. Michel Loridon, who became UNTAC's deputy force commander. From the moment that Loridon passed over the UN military command in Cambodia to Sanderson it became clear that the two generals held very different ideas about how the peacekeeping operation ought to be conducted. As a consequence, the working relation between the force commander and his deputy was tense from the start.⁴² It was a clear clash of personalities. In character and experience, the two generals were each other's opposites. Sanderson was a calm, reflective and soft-spoken political general, a methodical planner with diplomatic skills. Trained as an army engineer, he had been deployed to East Malaysia during the Malayan Emergency in 1966 and to South Vietnam in 1971 where he was engaged in mine-clearance, the reconstruction of infrastructure and civic action operations.⁴³ Later in his career, Sanderson became director of plans of the Australian Army and worked as a coordinator between the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs for the development of Australia's military strategic policy. It was in this last capacity that Sanderson became involved in the planning for Australia's contribution to a future peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.⁴⁴ This provided Sanderson with a clear understanding of the context in which he operated and how his actions on the operational level could have great implications on the political level. The head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, remembered Sanderson as "rather conventional," "very cautious," but also "a safe pair of hands."⁴⁵ Loridon, on the other hand, acquired a reputation for being vigorous, dynamic, practical and forceful.⁴⁶ The French general also explicitly distanced himself from politics. To the Cambodian generals he said: "we are officers and we will have accomplished our mission if the cease-fire is respected. Let the politicians discuss."⁴⁷ He was a veteran of the Algerian War and later served in the French Foreign Legion. He had been the commander of French forces in the Central African Republic and of the French army's elite 11th Parachute Brigade. These experiences made him familiar with quick deployments and improvising in rapidly changing circumstances.⁴⁸

On 11 March 1992, the first units of UNTAC's military component, an Indonesian battalion of the 503rd Para Raider Infantry, arrived in Phnom Penh. Loridon was eager to deploy the Indonesian paratroopers immediately to Kompong Thom, interpose them between the belligerents to ease the situation, reassure the population and make a clear demonstration of UNTAC's authority.⁴⁹ He told journalists that UNTAC was able to deploy very quickly and that

42 Author's interview with Michel Loridon; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 145.

43 CV Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AMBZ, BZ-00391; Interview by Hugh Smith with Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, 10 July 1998, Canberra, Australia, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York.

44 John M. Sanderson, *Command at the operational level*.

45 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

46 Richard Solomon was impressed by the "dynamic" and "vigorous" way by which Loridon had led the UNAMIC mission. See: Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC, 24 February 1992, "Consultations Franco-Américaines sur l'Asie: Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 115.

47 Record of Mixed Military Working Group Emergency Meeting, 13 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

48 CV General Michel Loridon, Archives Diplomatiques Nantes, NY 10 POI/1 1310; Author's interview with Michel Loridon. For a good analysis of Loridon's 11th French parachute brigade operating in a peacekeeping environment, see: Chiara Ruffa, *Military cultures in peace and stability operations Afghanistan and Lebanon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 60.

49 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh.

he had instructed the Indonesian troops in Phnom Penh to be on standby to move to Kompong Thom, adding that this decision was, of course, one to be made by his superior, Sanderson.⁵⁰ The Khmer Rouge appeared to follow-up on their promise that as soon as UNTAC had arrived, UN forces would be allowed to deploy into their zones. On the day of UNTAC's arrival, the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief, Son Sen, announced that he was willing to talk about a cease-fire in Kompong Thom if UNTAC would immediately deploy a battalion to the disputed province.⁵¹ Sensing a movement in the Khmer Rouge position he had not witnessed during his UNAMIC command, Loridon immediately drafted a plan for the deployment of two Indonesian companies to Kompong Thom, which he presented to Sanderson the moment the force commander landed in Phnom Penh on 15 March.⁵² But Sanderson did not follow Loridon's advice and preferred to make his own evaluation of the situation and his own plan. "I need more information before I make that decision," he stated to journalists at the airport.⁵³

Interviews conducted by Steven Heder with Khmer Rouge defectors and by David Roberts with the Khmer Rouge leadership both suggest that Khmer Rouge military had received orders from their superiors to be cooperative with UNTAC in March and April. Heder refers to "a brief honeymoon of hospitality" in which Khmer Rouge troops were instructed to welcome the peacekeepers in their zones.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Khmer Rouge leadership demonstrated very cooperative behaviour the moment UNTAC arrived in Cambodia. On 16 March, during a meeting of the Supreme National Council, the commander-in-chief of the Khmer Rouge army, Son Sen, made a solemn declaration in which he warmly welcomed Akashi and Sanderson to Cambodia and said that he strongly hoped that all UNTAC military and civilian personnel would soon be fully deployed around the country. "In this spirit, we salute with a profound satisfaction the arrival of the Indonesian and Malaysian battalion," he stated.⁵⁵ Although the Khmer Rouge had obstructed UNAMIC's efforts to prepare for UNTAC's arrival, Son Sen hypocritically paid "a vibrant tribute" to Karim and Loridon who, he alleged, had succeeded in their mandate despite the modest resources at their disposal.⁵⁶ A day later, when Sanderson and Akashi met privately with Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge army leader again urged them to deploy UNTAC troops immediately to Kompong Thom, and promised complete Khmer Rouge cooperation in this effort.⁵⁷ On the same day, the ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh also strongly advised Akashi and Sanderson to establish a UN military presence in Kompong Thom as well as in the southern province of

50 Nate Thayer, "Khmer Rouge Rebels Refuse to Halt Fighting On Eve Of U.N. Mission," *The Associated Press*, 14 March 1992; "Khmer Rouge shuns cease-fire demands," *Canberra Times*, 15 March 1992.

51 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; "Khmer Rouge call for end to fighting at Kompong Thom," *AFP*, 15 March 1992.

52 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh.

53 "Khmer Rouge call for end to fighting at Kompong Thom," *AFP*, 15 March 1992.

54 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 94, 100, 96; Stephen Heder, "The Resumption of Armed Struggle by the Party of Democratic Kampuchea: Evidence from National Army of Democratic Kampuchea 'Self-Demobilizers'," in *Propaganda, Politics, and Violence in Cambodia: Democratic Transition under United Nations Peace-keeping*, eds. Stephen Heder and Judy Ledgerwood (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 104; Jianwei Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Cambodia* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1996), 59.

55 Déclaration de S.E. M. Son Sen Membre du Conseil National Suprême à la Réunion du CNS à Phnom Penh, le 16 Mars 1992, UNA, S-1085-0021-0007.

56 Ibid.

57 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, "UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March," UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

Kampot, in order to prevent further cease-fire violations in these areas and make it clear from the outset that UNTAC would not tolerate any “no-go areas.”⁵⁸ But Sanderson refused, explaining that he wanted to avoid “entrapment” and emphasising the necessity to organise reliable supply lines first.⁵⁹ Sanderson felt that he didn’t have sufficient logistical and medical support, nor were there enough officers available who could concentrate on making detailed plans.⁶⁰ Only two out of eleven infantry battalions had arrived in Cambodia, and these were still dependent on support units from UNAMIC. The medical contingent from Germany counted only fifteen personnel, and the French aviation assets were reaching the limits of their capacities. UNTAC did not yet have logistic support units, which meant that the battalions were dependent on their own sixty days of supplies.⁶¹ With such a fragile force, Sanderson preferred not to send his troops into the area before the fighting had stopped, cease-fire lines were drawn, and a detailed plan for their supervision was agreed upon. His starting point was that the Cambodian factions needed to agree to a local cease-fire first, before he deployed his troops to the province. “I don’t want U.N. troops stumbling blind around the countryside [. . .] If I had put U.N. troops in there this week, they would have been put right in the middle of a counter-offensive,” the force commander told reporters.⁶² He ordered the Indonesian battalion to remain on standby in Phnom Penh until the fighting in Kompong Thom had stopped.⁶³

Emphasising the importance of making detailed plans, Sanderson preferred to convene the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh first in order to work out a plan together with the factions and then deploy peacekeepers “in a properly constructed way.”⁶⁴ “You are all military officers and you know that you should make a plan before you commit your troops to an operation,” Sanderson said to the Cambodian generals during the meeting on 27 March in Phnom Penh. “Before I put UN soldiers in villages in the Kompong Thom area I must know what arrangements we have agreed there; who we are going to meet, what roads we are going to use, who is going to guarantee the opening of those roads.”⁶⁵ But agreement around a concrete plan could not be found because Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno refused to reveal the exact locations of his troops and minefields. He nonetheless agreed to the principle of a cease-fire and assured Sanderson that any UNTAC forces that moved into Kompong Thom province would not have to worry about their safety.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Son Sen repeated his public calls for UNTAC to separate the fighting factions immediately: “If the referee stays only in Phnom Penh, we cannot stop the fighting,” Son Sen stated to the press, adding that “we will only be able to stop the fighting once UNTAC is on

58 “Expanded Perm Five statement welcoming UN Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, 15 March 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

59 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 March 1992, “Situation report,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

60 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, “UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March,” UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

61 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 21 April 1992, “UNTAC Deployment – Military and Police Component,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0003.

62 Sheri Prasso, “Generals refuse to halt fighting in central Cambodia,” *AFP*, 27 March 1992.

63 Message Sanderson to Lt Col Erwin Sudjono, 22 March 1992, “Directive on the employment of the Indonesian UNTAC battalion,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

64 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, “UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March,” UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

65 Minutes of the 11th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

66 Minutes of the 11th meeting of the MMWG, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Fax Bartu to Sanderson, 23 March 1992, “Record of Level II Meeting of MMWG on 21 March and Record of meeting between NADK and the Mixed Military Working Group – 22 March 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

the spot.”⁶⁷ Son Sen’s appeal for UNTAC’s interposition surely reflected an opportunistic move to use the blue helmets to protect their conquered territory against counterattacks by the CPAE, but UNTAC missed an opportunity to respond to this Khmer Rouge request for an immediate demonstration of its strength.

Notwithstanding logistical problems, Sanderson’s cautious reflexes during the first two weeks of his command seem, above all, to have been informed by political considerations. On 1 April, the Australian parliament was scheduled to vote about the government’s resolution to contribute a contingent of 500 army communication specialists to UNTAC. But the ambitious policy of the Australian Labor Party with regard to the Cambodian peace process was not uncontroversial. Already from early 1989, when the Labor government began discussing options for a contribution to a possible peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, a political debate erupted around the nature of such a mission and the dangers to which Australian personnel would be exposed.⁶⁸ In August 1989, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans publicly promised that in the case that Australian troops were to be deployed to Cambodia, it would be to observe a negotiated peace, not to settle a war.⁶⁹ Evans also reminded the “less-than-happy” and “destructive” role Australia had played two decades earlier in Indochina through its participation in the Vietnam War. “This time round,” he stated, “we want any contribution we might make to be wholly peaceful and constructive,” and emphasised that Australia would not send troops into a “shooting war.”⁷⁰ Evans criticised the foreign policy of Australia’s conservative governments in the past which, from a left-Labor viewpoint, had been too much focussed on maintaining the “imperial link” with Britain and close ties with the United States, leading to Australia’s active and much deplored involvement in the Vietnam War.⁷¹ Evans was determined to start a new chapter in Australia’s relations with Asia and implement the Labor Party’s foreign policy doctrine which was predicated on working out Australia’s regional identity by playing an “active partnership role” in Asia.⁷² Taking the lead in a future peacekeeping operation in Cambodia thus had a strategic and symbolic significance for the Labor government. However, it was clear from the start that it had to be avoided at all costs that Australia would be held responsible for an escalation of violence in Indochina. Such a scenario would be a nightmare for the Labor government, as it would not only go against the party’s traditional foreign policy principles and make itself vulnerable to the opposition, but it would also endanger the objective of establishing close partnerships with key Asian countries such as China and Japan and developing Australia’s new Asian identity.

In Australian political tradition, the government was expected to seek bipartisan support in the policy areas of foreign affairs and defence. It would be unthinkable that the largest deployment of Australian troops overseas since the Vietnam War, and especially to Indochina, would occur without bipartisan support. However, the shadow foreign minister, Senator Robert Hill of the

67 Nate Thayer, “U.N. Fails to Obtain Cambodian Cease-fire,” *Associated Press*, 27 March 1992.

68 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 82.

69 “No shooting war for us in Cambodia, Evans says,” *The Canberra Times*, 25 August 1989.

70 Ibid.

71 Andrea Benvenuti and David Martin Jones, “Myth and Misrepresentation in Australian Foreign Policy: Menzies and Engagement with Asia,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 4 (2011): 58.

72 Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, 152; Evans, *Australia’s Asian Future*; Meg Gurry, “Identifying Australia’s ‘Region’: From Evatt to Evans,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (May 1995): 28. Also see: James Cotton and John Ravenhill, eds., *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs 1991–1995* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Liberal Party, was very critical of Australia's involvement in Cambodia, which had resulted in some fierce confrontations between him and Evans in the Senate on this issue.⁷³ Under heavy pressure from the opposition, Evans promised that the peacekeeping mission in Cambodia would be a low-threat operation. In late October 1991, with the ink on the paper of the Paris Agreements hardly dry, Evans succeeded to persuade Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Phnom Penh government to visit Australia first before returning to Cambodia.⁷⁴ At a joint press conference with Evans in Canberra, Hun Sen reassured the Australian public that its peacekeepers "would not get bogged down in any military quagmire." Evans quickly endorsed Hun Sen's statements, and added that the most acute dangers that Australian troops would experience would come from the tropical environment and the many landmines in the Cambodian countryside. The Australian foreign minister also countered the idea that the Khmer Rouge was still strong enough to endanger the peace plan.⁷⁵

The debate about the safety of Australian troops nonetheless continued, and it was far from certain that the Australian contribution to UNTAC would receive bipartisan support in parliament.⁷⁶ As reports about the continuous fighting in Kompong Thom were echoed in the Australian press, Senator Hill expressed his concerns that UN soldiers would get involved in separating the Cambodian factions, which in his view, would exceed their peacekeeping role.⁷⁷ He threatened to withhold the opposition's support for the Australian contribution to the operation if the government would not "come clean" about the dangers posed to Australian peacekeepers in Cambodia and provide guarantees that they would only receive tasks involving minimum risks.⁷⁸ In reaction, Evans guaranteed that UN troops would not get involved in a "separation exercise" and assured that they were "not going to be thrown into a hot-war, shooting-war situation," as this was "not their role."⁷⁹

Before the Australian contribution was put to the vote in parliament on 1 April, Prime Minister Paul Keating had made a statement that aimed to reassure the critical opposition and obtain bipartisan support for the Australian contribution to UNTAC. He especially underlined the peacekeeping character of the operation by stating: "UNTAC most definitely will not have a role enforcing or imposing the peace if hostilities break out," because that would be "a task that would go beyond the UN mandate."⁸⁰ Keating declared that the government had carefully assessed all the risks and vowed to take "every prudent precaution to protect our troops."⁸¹ Finally, he made it clear that this meant that Australia could not sustain its presence in case the situation

73 See for example the debate in the Australian Senate on 6 December 1990 during which Senator Evans was the first Australian parliamentarian to use the f-word during a debate when Senator Hill expressed his concerns about a report in *Jane's Defence Weekly* about the alleged delivery of Chinese tanks to the Khmer Rouge. See: Senate Official Hansard No. 142, 1990, Thursday, 6 December 1990.

74 Michael Byrnes, "Hun Sen heads for Australia after peace accord," *Financial Review*, 28 October 1991.

75 Greg Austin, "Australian troops for Cambodia told they won't have to fight," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1991.

76 "Opposition fears Cambodia 'too dangerous' for Aussie troops," *AFP*, 27 March 1992.

77 David Lague, "UN peacekeeping efforts at a standstill in Cambodia," *The Australian Financial Review*, 31 March 1992.

78 Tony Parkinson, "Killing fields give no peace of mind," *The Australian*, 1 April 1992; Mark Metherell, "Libs Threaten To Oppose Peace Force," *The Age*, 28 March 1992; Jack Taylor, "Australia questions the sending of troops to Cambodia," *AFP*, 31 March 1992; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 133.

79 Mark Metherell, "Cambodia Force Will Keep Out Of Fire, Says Evans," *The Age*, 31 March 1992.

80 Emphasis in original document. "Statement by the Prime Minister, the Hon P.J. Keating MP Cambodia Peacekeeping 1 April 1992." See: Cable Netherlands Embassy in Canberra to The Hague, 8 April 1992, AMBZ, DPV 00168.

81 Ibid.

escalated: "if we conclude that there is no longer a peace to keep in Cambodia, the Australian and other UN forces will have to be withdrawn."⁸² Keating's speech seemed to have the desired effect, as the Liberal-National opposition eventually voted in favour of the Australian contribution to UNTAC, but expressed ongoing concerns about recent violations of the cease-fire and the dangers these posed for Australian defence personnel, the precise role of the UN force, and especially the character of the proposed demobilisation.⁸³ Keating's promise that the Australian contingent would be withdrawn if there would be no more peace to keep in Cambodia quickly reached Phnom Penh where Hun Sen commented to Australian journalists: "If we already had peace we would have invited you to come here as tourists, not a peace-keeping force."⁸⁴

It was clear that any casualty, caused by either a landmine or an accident, would certainly put the Australian government in a very difficult position. This domestic political context cannot be ignored in understanding Sanderson's prudence. "We are in Cambodia as peacekeepers, not peace enforcers," he told reporters on 29 March, adding that he would "not put U.N. forces in the middle of a confused environment and no cease-fire where the roads are mined."⁸⁵ Sanderson's decision to delay the deployment to Kompong Thom until a local cease-fire agreement had been reached was publicly supported by Gareth Evans, who stated to the press that UN troops were in Cambodia to monitor a settlement, not to separate the warring factions.⁸⁶ Interposing themselves between belligerents was nonetheless universally considered to be a classic peacekeeping task, which blue helmets had been executing since UNEF in 1956.

At this point, Akashi also believed that the risks to UN personnel should be kept as low as possible. The day after his arrival in Cambodia, the special representative argued in favour of employing demobilised Cambodian soldiers to demine the country instead of using UN personnel to do this dangerous work. Besides the argument that it would be cheaper, Akashi confided to Goulding that "loss of life and limb among volunteers from troop-contributing countries will have a very chilling effect on their willingness to participate in peacekeeping operations, and risks to them must be kept to an absolute minimum."⁸⁷ Akashi was keenly aware that Tokyo was just as sensitive to casualties as was Canberra. Besides paying a large part of UNTAC's bill, the Japanese government was eager to contribute peacekeepers to UNTAC, which would be the first overseas deployment of the Japanese army since the Second World War. In the emerging post-Cold War world, Tokyo was actively seeking a more prominent role on the international stage. A permanent seat in the UN Security Council was no secret ambition, and sending peacekeepers to Cambodia provided an excellent opportunity to make a first visible contribution to international peace and

82 Ibid.

83 Frost, *The Peace Process in Cambodia*, 44.

84 "Hun Sen hits Aussie peacekeeping fears," *Herald Sun*, 4 April 1992, 17; Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 217.

85 Nate Thayer, "Phnom Penh Launches Offensive as Cease-fire Efforts Stall," *The Associated Press*, 29 March 1992.

86 David Lague, "UN peacekeeping efforts at a standstill in Cambodia," *The Australian Financial Review*, 31 March 1992.

87 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 March 1992, "Situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004. Also cited in: Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 39.

security that would enhance its stature as an international power worthy a seat at the table.⁸⁸ The only obstacle in the way of realising these ambitions was the Japanese constitution that did not allow for sending the Japanese Self Defence Force (SDF) overseas. In order to modify the constitution, the Japanese government tried to get a bill adopted, the so-called Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) bill, that would allow Tokyo to contribute troops to UN peacekeeping operations, and in the first place to UNTAC. But when the Japanese government was officially asked for a contribution by the United Nations, six months of fierce political debate in the Japanese parliament about this sensitive issue had been inconclusive. As long as the PKO bill in Japan had not been adopted, news from Cambodia about casualties would certainly create an unfavourable climate for making it through parliament, which would be a major defeat for the government.

Things finally started to move with regard to the situation in Kompong Thom in the last days of March. A plan was made in the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh to hold cease-fire talks in the provincial capital itself. On 30 March, an UNTAC helicopter carrying Loridon picked-up two generals of the Khmer Rouge's 616th division from the jungle and brought them to the provincial capital for a meeting with military representatives from the other factions.⁸⁹ The meeting marked the first time Khmer Rouge generals were present in the SOC-controlled city of Kompong Thom since their removal from power in 1979. Initially, progress was hard to accomplish. A breakthrough only came after the Belgian major Motmans, leader of the UN liaison officers in Kompong Thom, took the initiative to travel to the frontline and succeeded in persuading local officers from both the NADK and the CPAF to accept a cease-fire. This forced the generals from both factions to agree to stop fighting for one week, carry off their wounded soldiers and demine the roads.⁹⁰ To celebrate this momentous occasion, Loridon offered the Cambodian generals a beer and together they toasted to the peace in Cambodia.⁹¹ Although the local cease-fire agreement was only temporary, it was a small but important step forward in the peace process because a framework for discussion in the volatile province was now finally in place. It also created the preconditions Sanderson had set for the deployment of his peacekeepers.⁹² In New York, Goulding, who was clearly preoccupied with the appearance of UNTAC's success, expressed satisfaction that the event had led to more positive reports about UNTAC in the international media.⁹³

88 Canberra strongly supported the Japanese permanent membership of the Security Council and encouraged Tokyo to demonstrate its political leadership in the Asia-Pacific region by contributing peacekeepers to UNTAC. Australia thus had an interest not to see Japan turn away from its contribution in Cambodia. See: Katsumi Ishizuka, "Japan's policy towards UN peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 1 (2005): 68–71; Robert Delfs, "Looking for a role," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 June 1992, 41; Cable Netherlands Ambassador Tokyo to The Hague, 3 December 1991, AMBZ, 00168; Tom Ormonde, "Let Japan Join UN Force, Says Evans," *The Age*, 10 April 1992.

89 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Kampong Thom ceasefire negotiations," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Sheri Prasso, "Khmer Rouge battle as generals negotiate peace," *AFP*, 31 March 1992; Mark Dodd, "Cambodia field commanders talk truce at front," *Reuters*, 31 March 1992.

90 Colette Braeckman, "La drôle de paix de Kompong Thom," *Le Soir*, 14 April 1992; Letter by Lieutenant General Phung Siphon (SOC) to Sanderson and Loridon, 31 March 1992, "Proposal for the ceasefire on the spot in some areas of Kampong Thom Province," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Author's interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

91 "Le retour à la paix Cambodge: timide progrès sur le terrain," *Le Figaro*, 1 April 1992; Author's interview with Michel Loridon; Author's interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

92 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Kampong Thom ceasefire negotiations," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Report on the meeting of SNC on 1 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

93 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 6 April 1992, "Third Situation Report," UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.



Brigadier General Michel Loridon (right) toasts to the local cease-fire in Kompong Thom with NADK General Nuon Bunno (left) and CPAF General Phoeung Siphan (middle) on 30 March 1992. Photo credit: "Le retour à la paix Cambodge: timide progrès sur le terrain," Le Figaro, 1 April 1992/ Reuters.

Again Loridon did not hesitate to publicly pressure his superior to proceed with the rapid deployment of UN troops to the area: "I will tell General Sanderson we must show the U.N. flag to give confidence to the population," he told journalists.⁹⁴ The next day, Sanderson ordered one company of Indonesian peacekeepers to deploy to Kompong Thom. A convoy of seventeen trucks with 193 Indonesian soldiers was enthusiastically welcomed by the local population who turned out in thousands to greet them.⁹⁵ But instead of immediately interposing themselves between the factions in the countryside, the peacekeepers remained inside the provincial town. Sanderson explained that the Indonesian troops would only be deployed to the villages once agreement on the separation of forces had been reached and confirmation was given that all roads were demined. Béatrice Pouligny's field research in Cambodia gives an idea of how such actions were perceived by the local population. Pouligny recorded a testimony of a Cambodian district chief from Battambang, who witnessed a similar situation: "The UNTAC people never went further than here [the district capital]; they did not go into the district itself. [...] There was a company here, but they stayed in the centre of the district, they did not move. UNTAC was afraid of the Khmer Rouge. They were afraid of those who had weapons. [...] When they agreed to move, it was long after everything had calmed down. [...] I used to say to the village chiefs and peasant delegations who came to see me: You must not expect anything from these people; they won't

⁹⁴ Mark Dodd, "U.N. peace team due in embattled Cambodia region," *Reuters*, 2 April 1992.

⁹⁵ Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 April 1992, "Your UNTAC-493," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Angus MacSwan, Khmer Rouge thwart U.N. in Northern Cambodia," *Reuters*, 26 April 1992.

do anything to protect you.”⁹⁶ The Cambodian factions, including the Khmer Rouge, were also surprised and continued to assert that a cease-fire could only come into effect once peacekeepers were deployed between their armies.⁹⁷

Concessions in reaction to violations

After two weeks of UNTAC's presence in Cambodia, the awe of the UN operation was rapidly vanishing. This was most clearly reflected in the increasingly uncooperative behaviour of the Khmer Rouge. The reason for the decreasing cooperation from this party was not that UNTAC was unable to fulfil the Khmer Rouge's demand to verify the alleged presence of Vietnamese forces, as has been suggested by some scholars.⁹⁸ On the contrary, Akashi and Sanderson went very far in trying to satisfy the Khmer Rouge by making demonstrations of UNTAC's neutrality and goodwill. The problem was that the Khmer Rouge were clearly unimpressed by UNTAC's authority and used the very fragile cease-fire in Kompong Thom to set conditions and demand more concessions. Before allowing blue helmets entry to their zones, the Khmer Rouge now demanded that UNTAC first verified the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. They persisted in their claim that the Vietnamese army was continuously making incursions into Cambodia, but they were never able to provide any proof or exact locations. The Khmer Rouge cleverly used the Paris Agreements that did not give a precise definition of “foreign forces” to make the preposterous claim that the term also applied to what they referred to as “Vietnamese forces in disguise.” This virtually meant any ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia, including the large number of Vietnamese immigrants who had recently come to Cambodia for economic opportunities in the wake of UNTAC's arrival, reinforcing the Khmer Rouge argument that their country was being occupied by Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge probably knew that this would strike a responsive chord with the non-communist resistance factions and ordinary Cambodians. KPNLF-leader Son Sann repeatedly claimed in May 1992 that over one million Vietnamese had entered Cambodia illegally in an attempt to colonise Cambodia and prop up the Hun Sen government in the elections.⁹⁹

The primary Khmer Rouge demand was that UNTAC establish twelve checkpoints at the Vietnamese-Cambodian border and three at the frontier with Laos to verify that no shipment of arms or Vietnamese forces were being brought into Cambodia.¹⁰⁰ The Paris Agreements required UNTAC to deploy these border checkpoints with military observers only after Phase Two of the cease-fire had begun.¹⁰¹ Sanderson nonetheless decided to establish the checkpoints ahead of schedule, hoping that this gesture of goodwill would make the Khmer Rouge more cooperative. The force commander also attempted to build a personal relationship with Son Sen, which he

96 Pouligny, *Ils nous avaient promis la paix*, 149.

97 Sheri Prasso, “U.N. deploys peacekeeping troops despite fighting,” *AFP*, 3 April 1992; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes 1990–1994*, 299; Braeckman, “La drôle de paix de Kompong Thom”; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 April 1992, “Fourth Situation Report,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

98 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 200.

99 Klintworth, “Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading,” 124.

100 Letter Son Sen to Akashi, 17 March 1992, “vérification du retrait de toutes les catégories des forces étrangères et de leur non-retour,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Minutes of the 11th meeting of the MMWG, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

101 Paris Agreements, Annex II, Article VII Cessation of outside military assistance to all Cambodian Parties.

did by sending him letters and through several face-to-face meetings with the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief.¹⁰² But despite these efforts and concessions, the Khmer Rouge maintained their evasive stance. On 9 April, Akashi warned the Khmer Rouge that he would be forced to make an official report to the UN Security Council about their insufficient cooperation, but he decided to wait until after the visit of the UN Secretary-General to Cambodia.¹⁰³

As he had promised the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali visited Cambodia between 18 and 20 April and stayed in the Khmerin Palace as Prince Sihanouk's special guest. It was the first opportunity for Boutros-Ghali to acquaint himself with the situation in Cambodia, which struck him as relatively peaceful. He was given a warm welcome by thousands of children standing alongside the road waving small UN flags and noted to this surprise that Phnom Penh showed few signs of war time devastation.¹⁰⁴ The Secretary-General was also reassured by his talks with Khieu Samphan and Son Sen who, in their presentation, resembled in nothing to what one might expect from leaders of a guerrilla army. Instead of Maoist attire they wore Western suits with ties and spoke exquisitely polite and sophisticated French. Khieu Samphan, like Boutros-Ghali, had spent his student years in Paris and held a PhD from the Sorbonne. The Khmer Rouge leaders expressed their full adherence to the Paris Agreements and promised that, in a few days, UNTAC peacekeepers would be allowed to enter the zones under their control. At the end of his visit, Boutros-Ghali said that he was now more optimistic than before his arrival and reiterated that the United Nations would stick firmly to the target of holding elections in May 1993.¹⁰⁵ Four days after the Secretary-General's visit, Khieu Samphan made an encouraging but not spectacular gesture by announcing that UN teams would be allowed to inspect five locations located in the Khmer Rouge zone. On 27 April, a first UNTAC team made a reconnaissance trip to the isolated area of Anlong Veng, where General Ta Mok held headquarters. Several other survey missions were planned.¹⁰⁶ But the reconnaissance parties were quickly disappointed as they were only allowed to participate in guided visits to specific locations under very strict controls. This was not the unhindered and unconditional freedom of movement UNTAC required. It seemed to be yet another sop, and Sanderson and Akashi made it clear that they were not totally satisfied.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the fragile cease-fire in Kompong Thom province was unravelling. The local Mixed Military Working Group had been ineffective because plans to demine the roads in a joint effort were constantly called off at the very last moment by the Khmer Rouge representatives who took an unconstructive attitude and regularly refused to show up at the meetings.¹⁰⁸ From 19 April

102 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 165; Minutes of the 14th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 18 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

103 Tan Lian Choo, "UN mission chief warns Khmer Rouge about access," *The Straits Times*, 10 April 1992.

104 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 32.

105 Sheri Prasso, "Boutros-Ghali inspects northwest Cambodia's refugee centers," *AFP*, 19 April 1992.

106 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 30 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 165–66; "UN team completes first visit to Khmer Rouge site," *The Strait Times*, 27 April 1992.

107 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Sheri Prasso, "U.N. inspects Khmer Rouge zones," *AFP*, 26 April 1992; Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge to allow U.N. peacekeepers into zones," *Reuters*, 21 April 1992; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 April 1992, "problèmes militaires au Cambodge," ADN, RP NY ONU 10 POI/1 1312.

108 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 1 May 1992, "UNTAC checkpoints and the declaration of the Phase Two Cease-fire," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 258; "Report on reconnaissance of Route 12 held on 14.06.92.," NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 45.

onwards, the Khmer Rouge continued to launch sporadic attacks against districts held by the CPAF and lay new mine fields to defend their own positions. The company of Indonesian peacekeepers was still in the provincial capital, and only deployed to the countryside on 24 April.¹⁰⁹ Sanderson announced his intention to create a permanent presence of UN soldiers in the villages, but stressed at the same time that he would withdraw the Indonesians if armed clashes would break out again.¹¹⁰ In the following days, the Khmer Rouge withdrew their liaison officers from Kompong Thom and regrouped their forces around the town. Sanderson wrote a letter to Son Sen urging him to send the liaison officers back, give UNTAC full freedom of movement, and to finally start marking their minefields.¹¹¹ But promises of forthcoming cooperation remained vague and were increasingly conditional.¹¹² On 4 May, the Khmer Rouge launched a battalion-strength offensive in the north-eastern part of Kompong Thom province to take control of two vital supply routes. The small Indonesian company could not deter the Khmer Rouge from conquering several villages and establishing a strategic communication link with the southern province of Kompong Cham.¹¹³ It was clear that the operation had been carefully planned and coordinated, supported by artillery. The Khmer Rouge simultaneously gained ground from their former allies Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces (KPNLAF) and *Armée Nationale pour Khmer Indépendant* (ANKI) in the north-western part of the country. The Khmer Rouge radio also started to broadcast messages accusing UNTAC of not respecting the Paris Agreements.¹¹⁴ On 6 May, French ambassador Coste commented in his cable to Paris: "After six weeks of mutual observation, UNTAC is beginning to have the same experience with the Khmer Rouge as did UNAMIC."¹¹⁵ UNTAC had failed to make a strong impression in the first weeks of its deployment which tempted the Khmer Rouge to test their manoeuvre space.

Tensions among the sponsors of peace

Diplomatic competition between Australia, France and Indonesia was tangible in the early phases of the Cambodian peace process. The prospect of peace in Cambodia and the opening of Southeast Asia resulted in a sort of a scramble for Cambodia, in which these three middle-sized powers defended their strategic interests. The resulting political tensions between these three major contributors to the peace process severely compromised UNTAC's effectiveness and its dealing with the Khmer Rouge, especially in the early phase of the operation.

When in mid-April Sanderson decided to deploy a second Indonesian company to Kompong Thom, he was confronted with a problem: the senior Indonesian officer, Colonel Ferry

109 Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge thwart U.N. in Northern Cambodia," *Reuters*, 26 April 1992; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 299.

110 Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge to allow U.N. Peacekeepers into zones," *Reuters*, 21 April 1992.

111 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 1 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

112 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

113 Interview by Jerold E. Brown with Major George Steuber, 25 September 1992, Combat Studies Institute Report no. 15, US Army Command and General Staff College, Kansas; Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Murray Hiebert, "Draining the swamp: Peace process grinds slowly forward," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 June 1992, 24; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 218, 299.

114 Peter Goodman, "UN deterrent or ploy in hands of rival militias?," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 May 1992.

115 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 6 May 1992, "la situation militaire et les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

Tinggogoy, refused to move the remainder of the Para Raiders out of Phnom Penh. Tinggogoy proclaimed that he had lost faith in Sanderson's command and suggested that the Indonesian battalion might have to be withdrawn completely from Cambodia. The Indonesian officer had never been on speaking terms with Loridon during UNAMIC and now refused to obey any orders from Sanderson, following instead the instructions from the Indonesian ambassador in Phnom Penh by the letter. Sanderson cabled to Goulding that Tinggogoy was acting "more in the way of defence attaché than a United Nations officer" and that this behaviour of the Indonesian colonel put him in an "untenable position."¹¹⁶ It was only after Akashi's mediation that the Indonesian authorities agreed to send the three remaining Indonesian companies to Kompong Thom, provided that a second battalion, which Indonesia promised to dispatch to Cambodia, would be retained in Phnom Penh.¹¹⁷

The Indonesian protestations seem to have been caused by tensions between the two co-chairmen of the Paris Peace Conference: Jakarta and Paris. Sanderson had originally planned to keep the Indonesian battalion in the Phnom Penh area and allot the sector of Kompong Thom province to the battalion from Tunisia, but these troops had not arrived yet.¹¹⁸ Now the Indonesians were ordered to deploy from the safe capital to the province where most of the fighting took place. This contrasted with the French, who had successfully blocked Sanderson's plan to deploy their battalion to the north-eastern provinces of Cambodia. In Sanderson's analysis, the French paratroopers were the only soldiers sufficiently trained and equipped to deploy to this large sector with challenging terrain. But Paris feared that its contingent would be sent away to a remote and unpopulated part of the country where it would be invisible to the Cambodian population. Instead, France preferred to set up headquarters in a more populous area such as Phnom Penh, Battambang or Sihanoukville.¹¹⁹ This preference, which was interpreted by some observers as a search for political prestige and the protection of business interests in their former colony, was explained by the French themselves as an opportunity to better exploit what they considered to be their trump card in the Cambodian peace operation: the use of the French language. France also argued that for "for historical reasons" it could not deploy its contingent at the border with Vietnam, which could potentially jeopardise its improving relations with this country.¹²⁰ Because of the size of the French contribution and its prominent position in the peace process, Goulding

116 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 23 April 1992, "Difficulties with Indonesian component," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 28 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002. In an effort to assure a strong link with any future government in Cambodia, Indonesia wished to maintain good relations with all Cambodian factions, including the Khmer Rouge, see: Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 61.

117 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 23 April 1992, "Indonesian Contingent," UNA, S-0997-0006-0003; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 28 April 1992, "UNTAC/FC/027," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 2 May 1992, "Preparations for the phase two cease-fire," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi Session II; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002.

118 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

119 Cable Paris to French mission New York, 14 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable Paris to Phnom Penh and New York, 9 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable French PR UN New York to Paris, 13 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 10 April 1992, "French contingent," UNA, S-1854-0016-0008.

120 Cable Paris to Phnom Penh and New York, 9 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

was under a lot of pressure to satisfy the French demands.¹²¹ Sanderson wanted to avoid any more difficulties with France and eventually agreed to allow the French battalion to deploy to “Sector 6” in the southern provinces and set up headquarters in Sihanoukville. “Sector 4” in the north east was allotted to a battalion from Uruguay.¹²² Goulding believed that the fact that France had gotten the sector of its choice was the cause for the Indonesian resistance to deploy its battalion to Kompong Thom. On 23 April he wrote to Sanderson: “we took [the] decision to change [the] planned deployment of [the] French battalion for non-UNTAC reasons and in full knowledge that this was contrary to an important principle and [that it] might have damaging repercussions. Our fears have been justified.”¹²³

France’s refusal to deploy to the sector of Sanderson’s choice further aggravated the suspicion among Anglo-Saxon officers that France followed its own agenda in Cambodia aimed at regaining a foothold in their former colony.¹²⁴ One of the objectives of the French presence in Cambodia was indeed to revive the cultural and economic ties with countries in Indochina by promoting French-language programmes and stimulate French business-opportunities.¹²⁵ On 22 November 1991, the French foreign minister Roland Dumas was the first Western minister to travel to Cambodia since the signing of the Paris agreements. He was accompanied by a group of forty representatives of French companies and banks. A priority for France was to set up a renewed bilateral cooperation in rubber cultivation by reviving the *Institut de Recherches sur le Caoutchouc au Cambodge*.¹²⁶ France also invested millions of francs in the construction of electricity and water supplies in Cambodia.¹²⁷ This caused some friction with the Australians who had their own geostrategic and economic agenda in Southeast Asia. Australian historian John Connor explains that the main reason for the Australian government to contribute a contingent of communication specialists to UNTAC was to assist the government-owned Overseas Communication Corporation to take this “unique market opportunity” to obtain the exclusive rights of international telecommunications with Cambodia.¹²⁸ Moreover, Canberra had systematically prepared its contribution to UNTAC and succeeded in placing its officers at key staff positions. With forty-seven officers at UNTAC headquarters, Australia was much better represented than France with only fourteen officers, despite the fact that France’s overall contribution to the operation was much larger than Australia’s: 1,400 military personnel against 500.¹²⁹ Somewhat frustrated by the

121 Cable Goulding to Akashi/Sanderson, 9 April 1992, “UNTAC-519 French contingent,” UNA, S-1854-0016-0008.

122 Sanderson to Goulding, 10 April 1992, “French contingent,” UNA, S-1854-0016-0008. France nonetheless accepted to send half of its battalion to Sector 4: “L’Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires (novembre 1991–décembre 1993), commandement de la doctrine et de l’entraînement, édition du 18/03/1997, Ministère de la Défense, 20.

123 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 23 April 1992, “Indonesian Contingent,” UNA, S-0997-0006-0003.

124 Author’s interview with Willem A. Huijssoon, 3 December 2013, The Netherlands.

125 Projet d’instructions de M. Philippe Coste Ambassadeur de France au Cambodge, 7 November 1991, ADN, 521 POI/293; Nate Thayer, “The Grand Illusion; Efforts to revive French language appear doomed,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 February 1993, 12; Teo, “The New French Socialist Foreign Policy and Indochina,” 221–30; James Burnet, “The French Connection,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 February 1993.

126 Projet d’instructions de M. Philippe Coste, ADN, 521 POI/293.

127 “La visite de M. Roland Dumas a Phnom-Penh: le premier pas vers la rentrée de la France sur la scène Indochinoise,” *Le Monde*, 24 November 1991.

128 OTCI succeeded in obtaining a contract worth of 35 million Australian dollars. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 85, A-11; Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 157; Author’s interview with Robert Rideau, 10 May 2019, France.

129 Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 157; Letter General Rideau to Admiral Lanxade, 15 July 1993, ADN, 521PO/2-31; L’Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires, 46.

dominant Australian position at UNTAC HQ, France put much effort in protecting the French language within the UN operation which – at least in theory – enjoyed an equal status with English.¹³⁰ This further reinforced tensions with Anglo-Saxon colleagues, who regularly excluded French officers from staff meetings.¹³¹ Even Deputy Force Commander Loridon was not allowed to attend the daily staff meetings, which would have been logical for a second-in-command.¹³² In early April 1992, when a conference for the contingent commanders was organised in New York, Sanderson delegated Lieutenant Colonel Stuart, the second most senior Australian officer in Cambodia, as his representative.¹³³ Loridon, frustrated to be forced to play second fiddle, felt that he was deliberately ostracised, but Sanderson found that Loridon and other senior French officers excluded themselves with a non-collaborative attitude and sulking about not being in control.¹³⁴

The overall atmosphere of competition between France and Australia in Cambodia added to the tense working relation between Sanderson and Loridon, but neither Paris nor Canberra wanted that these frictions would stand in the way of improving their bilateral relation, after two decades of tensions around nuclear tests in the South Pacific.¹³⁵ “It would be a pity,” Jean-David Levitte, the head of the Asia department at the *Quai d’Orsay*, wrote in a cable, “if misunderstandings between the two most senior officials of UNTAC’s military component contradict the acts and intentions of our two governments.”¹³⁶ Levitte felt that it was up to Akashi to solve the problems between the two generals.¹³⁷ The French chief of the defence staff, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, instructed Loridon to improve his relation with Sanderson because France had no interest in a renewed animosity with Australia.¹³⁸

“The main problem is not here in Cambodia, it’s in New York”

The slow process of approving the budget for what was then the most expensive operation in the history of the United Nations was a major concern for the understaffed UN Secretariat in New York, which was simply overwhelmed by the mushrooming of UN operations in 1992. UNTAC found itself in competition for resources with other peacekeeping missions, especially UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia.¹³⁹ Therefore, the first priority of the UN civilian leadership

130 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 April 1992, “La France et l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

131 Author’s interview with Willem A. Huijssoon; Author’s interview with Philippe Coste; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon; Author’s interview with Robert Rideau. General Robert Rideau, who succeeded Loridon as deputy force commander at the end of July 1992, was also regularly excluded from senior staff meetings. Internal memorandum Rideau to Sanderson, 16 December 1992, “Relations hiérarchiques au sein de l’état-major de la composante militaire de l’APRONUC,” Private Archives Robert Rideau; Cable French Embassy Phnom Penh to Paris, 28 June 1993, “Reunion des cinq plus,” ADN, 521 POI/2/155.

132 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 April 1992, “La France et l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

133 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 6 April 1992, “Composante militaire de l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

134 Author’s correspondence with John Sanderson, 26 February 2020.

135 Ivan Barko, “L’Australie face à la politique française dans le Pacifique de 1981 à 1988,” in *François Mitterrand et les territoires français du Pacifique (1981–1988)*, ed. Jean-Marc Regnault (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2003), 507–17.

136 Cable French Embassy Canberra to Paris, 7 April 1992, “Cambodge – Coopération Franco-Australienne,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

137 Ibid.

138 Author’s interview with Michel Loridon; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 72.

139 Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 152. Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 147; Heinger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 69.

was to secure the money for UNTAC. The second preoccupation was to avoid additional costs and keep the operation on its tight time schedule to keep a certain grip on the finances. The actual situation on the ground in Cambodia, and the factions' commitment to the peace process, or lack thereof, was not considered to be a cause for major concern. After all, the Khmer Rouge had solemnly declared their attachment to the Paris Peace Agreement and promised to cooperate. "The main problem is not here in Cambodia," the Secretary-General told the press at the end of his visit to Phnom Penh in early April, "It's in New York: how to find the money. I need a lot."¹⁴⁰

In the first months after his arrival in Cambodia, Akashi did not seem focussed on the situation in Cambodia. He was distracted by politics in New York and national capitals where he spent a large part of his time securing UNTAC's budget. Before arriving in Phnom Penh on 15 March, Akashi flew from New York to Tokyo for a five-day visit to Japan's cabinet offices and parliamentary committee rooms where he urged Japanese politicians to stay committed to pay one-third of the costs for what he sold as "the biggest test case of the UN's ability to deal with regional conflicts in the post-Cold War era."¹⁴¹ In early May, Akashi travelled to Washington, DC for talks with members of the US Congress to rally their support for paying another one-third of UNTAC's budget.¹⁴² The Bush administration had already paid a \$60 million share of the \$200 million needed for the start-up costs of UNTAC, but the Americans owed the UN a total contribution of more than ten times that figure.¹⁴³ Now Akashi essentially urged Washington to put its money where its mouth was.¹⁴⁴

After Washington, Akashi continued to New York to prepare the UN Secretariat's official budget proposal of \$764 million to enable him to run UNTAC for the next six months.¹⁴⁵ In New York, he underlined the importance to speed up the deployment of UN troops in Cambodia in order to meet the deadline of holding elections in April or early May 1993.¹⁴⁶ When asked by journalists at UN headquarters about the renewed fighting in Kompong Thom province, Akashi downplayed these events and replied reassuringly that "the peace has been restored in that area of Cambodia." It was nothing more than "occasional fighting," he said, which would stop automatically once the rain season had arrived and UNTAC would start disarming and demobilising the factions' armies.¹⁴⁷ Like the Secretary-General had done before, Akashi stated that UNTAC's "main problems are not in Cambodia but here in New York over money and equipment."¹⁴⁸ In order to secure both cash and supplies, Akashi remained outwardly optimistic. Any suggestion that the operation in Cambodia was already derailing in its starting phase could make member states think twice about investing tax payers' money in an uncertain adventure. Before returning to Phnom Penh, Akashi continued directly to Tokyo to pressure the Japanese

140 Nick Cumming-Bruce, "Boutros seeks financial aid for Cambodia's fragile peace," *The Guardian*, 21 April 1992; "Khmer Rouge Among Cambodian Factions Signing Human Rights Conventions," *The Associated Press*, 20 April 1992.

141 "UNTAC chief sees timely Khmer elections," *Bangkok Post*, 14 March 1992; James Walsh, "Great Blue Hope: The U.N. begins its most ambitious task. Unfortunately, it may also be an impossible one," *Time*, 23 March 1992, 26.

142 Report on the visit of Mr. Yasushi Akashi to Washington, DC, 6 May 1992, UNA, S-1085-0021-0007.

143 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

144 Author's interview with James A. Schear, 5 December 2018, Washington, DC, United States.

145 Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 164.

146 "U.N. peacekeeper deployment must be sped up to fulfil Cambodia goals: Akashi," *AFP*, 5 May 1992.

147 World Chronicle 473: Yasushi Akashi, UNTAC, 8 May 1992, URL: <https://www.unmultimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/2113/2113010/>.

148 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

government again for paying its share to UNTAC as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁹

Stick to the plan

Getting all the UN military and civilian personnel and their equipment to Cambodia on time was a complicated logistic operation. It took until July before all UNTAC's infantry battalions had deployed, and the reason for this slow arrival was related to the fact that member states only received an official request to contribute troops to UNTAC two weeks before the starting date of the operation. Some member states had anticipated a participation in the Cambodian peacekeeping operation, but others had to organise this at the last moment. As one could expect with so many different troop contributors, there were unforeseeable circumstances which caused further delays. Venezuela cancelled its infantry battalion because of a coup d'état in Caracas, Uruguay was requested to take its place, but its troops needed another five weeks to arrive in Cambodia.¹⁵⁰ UNTAC was in a race against time to get all the UN forces in Cambodia deployed by June in order to start with Phase Two of the operation before the seasonal rains began. To keep this schedule, UNTAC's forces needed to be deployed by the end of May at the latest.¹⁵¹ It quickly turned out that this time schedule was overly optimistic. The force commander estimated that he needed at least nine battalions in order to proceed with Phase Two, but he knew that he could only count on six of the ten infantry battalions by that time. While the Indonesian battalion reluctantly deployed to Kompong Thom, the battalion from Malaysia was occupied with assisting the repatriation of Cambodian refugees from Thailand.¹⁵²

Sorpong Peou has argued that the P5, responsible for 55 per cent of UNTAC's budget, failed to provide adequate financial support to allow UNTAC to deploy quickly and play a more active role. For Peou, the P5 were the ones responsible for UNTAC's failure to establish its authority.¹⁵³ Though the lack of financial means indeed hampered a quick deployment into Cambodia, it must be argued that the P5 actually had serious doubts about the Secretariat's implementation plan and the costs it entailed. The ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh and New York frequently met about Cambodia, often joined by the ambassadors of five other countries that had a special interest in the Cambodian peace process. This group of the P5 plus Indonesia, Japan, Australia, Thailand and Germany was called the "core group" or "the expanded permanent five" (EP5). The French, who spoke of the "5 + 5," invited Germany to join, which was considered somewhat misplaced by other capitals given Berlin's limited involvement in Cambodia. It would have been more logical if the Vietnamese ambassador had joined the meetings, but this was apparently still too sensitive for Beijing and Washington. In Phnom Penh, the ambassadors of the core group frequently met with Akashi for an informal exchange of views. In New York, the EP5 formed a working group of experts with the aim to support the UN Secretariat in running UNTAC and enhance its effectiveness. After a thorough review of UNTAC's operational plan, the group grew concerned about the

149 "Japan asked again to fund one-third of U.N.'s Cambodia cost," *AFP*, 11 May 1992.

150 *L'Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires*, 22.

151 Press conference of Yasushi Akashi, 19 March 1992, UNA, S-0795-0046-0004.

152 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, "UNTAC deployment – military and police component," UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; The military situation in Cambodia brief for the Secretary-General, 16 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

153 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 236, 246.

feasibility to deploy the full military component of twelve infantry battalions by 1 June. Key problems that were identified were Cambodia's war-torn infrastructure, the inevitable onset of the rainy season, and the fact that the necessary logistical support was not yet in place to facilitate the deployment of military units and civilian elements around Cambodia. Two weeks after UNTAC's arrival in Cambodia, the French permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, wrote a letter to Akashi and Goulding, in the name of the core group, to urge the two UN officials in charge of UNTAC to maintain maximum flexibility with regard to UNTAC's scale and time schedule. Mérimée emphasised that the operational plan required continuous review and adjustment in the light of on-the-ground realities. The EP5 expert group proposed to deploy fewer military forces to Cambodia, which would enhance UNTAC's ability to respect its timetable and reduce cost. Two concrete suggestions were made to help attain this objective: reducing the period of cantonment of demobilised soldiers and pressing the Cambodian parties to agree to a demobilisation of 100 per cent of their troops.¹⁵⁴ The core group nonetheless emphasised that it could best be determined in the field what adjustments were necessary. They therefore encouraged Akashi and Sanderson to come with specific proposals for necessary revisions of the implementation plan and urged Goulding to endorse these in New York. The core group also promised that their governments would do their part in helping to make the Cambodian factions understand that adjustments to the original plan were necessary in the light of the realities on the ground.¹⁵⁵

Despite the core group's call for flexibility, Goulding and Akashi clung to the original plan frenetically, and focussed more on finding the budget to carry it out than on rethinking the plan according to the prevailing circumstances on the ground in Cambodia. Akashi saw limited possibilities to divert from the plan as it stood. First, he argued that trying to persuade the SOC to agree to full demobilisation would be a non-starter, as it would leave the Khmer Rouge militarily unopposed. Second, he deemed it undesirable to reduce the cantonment period for the reason that it would make it more difficult to conduct the disarmament and demobilisation process in a thorough and systematic manner.¹⁵⁶ In this light, Akashi did not favour a reduction in the number of UN troops because he felt that UNTAC would simply have to deliver on its commitment to have its forces in place on time and begin with the disarmament and demobilisation as planned. A failure to do so, he felt, could result in a serious loss of UNTAC's credibility and of confidence in the peace process as a whole. He therefore pressured New York to speed up the deployment of the military component and emphasised that in order to conduct the election in April 1993, UNTAC would have to start with Phase Two on 1 June. This timetable could not be tampered with, or the operation would face the serious consequences of the wet season: "The importance of achieving complete UNTAC deployment by 01 June cannot be overemphasised," Akashi cabled to Goulding.¹⁵⁷ If disarmament could not be completed according to schedule, elections would have to be postponed until November 1993, after the rainy season of that year, which implied

154 The second measure was probably pushed by the United States.

155 Letter Jean-Bernard Mérimée, French permanent representative to the UN New York to Goulding, 31 March 1992, UNA, S-0795-0008-0001.

156 Letter Akashi to Jean-Bernard Mérimée, 13 April 1992.

157 Cable Akashi and Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, "UNTAC deployment – Military and Police component," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Akashi to Goulding, "Advanced Requirement for Additional Battalions," 23 March 1992, UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

that UNTAC would have to stay in Cambodia until 1994. One could only imagine the explosion of costs this would entail. As scholars Macalister Brown and Joseph Zasloff put it: "The election dates drove UNTAC's efforts."¹⁵⁸

The Paris Peace Agreement stipulated that it was the responsibility of UNTAC's force commander to determine the exact time and date on which Phase Two of the operation would begin, and that this date would be set at least four weeks in advance.¹⁵⁹ The two main conditions for proceeding with Phase Two were the full – or at least sufficient – deployment of UNTAC's military component in all the faction's zones and the preparedness of the Cambodian parties to fully cooperate with this process.¹⁶⁰ The Cambodian soldiers could only be demobilised once UNTAC was confident that all the listed forces and weapons had been cantoned. Accurate information about the factions' units and their locations, weapons and equipment was therefore essential. Since UNAMIC, all factions had been delivering most of the necessary information to the UN, but the Khmer Rouge was failing to respect this commitment. However, even if the Khmer Rouge decided to cooperate, military planners at UNTAC HQ were not confident that the disarmament and demobilisation could actually be undertaken according to the time schedule. UNTAC's forces would first need to deploy into the Khmer Rouge zones, set up their own camps and construct cantonment sites to receive the Khmer Rouge forces. Moreover, it was felt that UNTAC lacked the resources and manpower so set up a thorough programme for the reintegration of the factions' soldiers into Cambodian society. There were even fears that the release of the demobilised Cambodian soldiers was likely to result into further disintegration of the security situation in Cambodia, especially because half of UNTAC's military forces were scheduled to withdraw by the end of 1992.¹⁶¹

For all these reasons, Sanderson did not yet feel confident to announce the starting date for Phase Two, which he was normally expected to do on 1 May if disarmament was to begin on 1 June. On 27 April, the force commander warned the ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh that he could not rule out a postponement of the cantonment and disarmament until October, after the rainy season, understanding very well that such a decision would mean that the factions remained fully armed for at least another three months and probably delay the elections. But as long as insufficient UN forces were deployed around Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge refused to give them access to their zones, postponing the disarmament and demobilisation process might be the only logical thing to do.¹⁶² Sanderson's reluctance to announce a definitive starting date for Phase Two was met with strong resistance from New York. The Secretary-General was committed to announce Phase Two on time and excluded the possibility of postponing the disarmament and demobilisation until after the rainy season. Akashi, who was visiting New York, co-drafted a cable with Goulding in which they made it clear to the force commander that it was "politically

158 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 93.

159 See: Paris Peace Agreement, Annex 2, Article I-1. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

160 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 April 1992, "Sixth Situation Report," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

161 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 93.

162 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 April 1992, "problèmes militaires au Cambodge," ADN, NY 10 POI/1 1312; Hiebert, "Draining the swamp Peace process grinds slowly forward," 24; "U.N. vows to start disarming Cambodian factions in June," *AFP*, 8 May 1992.

imperative” that the starting date was kept as close to 1 June as possible.¹⁶³ The reality on the ground, however, remained that the preparations for Phase Two were far from adequate. Under strict controls and conditions, the Khmer Rouge had allowed UNTAC to visit ten locations for cantonment sites situated in their zones, but there were still six more that needed to be inspected.¹⁶⁴ During the Mixed Military Working Group of 2 May, Sanderson reemphasised that he needed guarantees for freedom of movement and accurate figures on the faction’s troops and weapons.¹⁶⁵ The force commander made it clear that if the Khmer Rouge would be unable to deliver these figures before 6 May, he would publicly announce that they were not ready for Phase Two.¹⁶⁶ After the meeting, Sanderson shared his concerns in a conversation with a journalist in Phnom Penh: “If they’re not ready to do all these things, they’re not ready,” he told to the reporter and added that UNTAC’s lack of sufficient resources was the other part of the problem: “now I have only 4,000 people in the country . . . (and) we need close to 16,000 men to do Phase II of the ceasefire.” Although Sanderson did not make these remarks in an official interview, the Bangkok-based newspaper *The Nation* headlined the next day that UNTAC was forced to delay its time schedule.¹⁶⁷ The civilian UN leadership was not amused. As Akashi was in New York, his deputy, Behrooz Sadry, brought Sanderson back in line. After a long conversation with the force commander, Sadry reported to Goulding: “It is now clear to him that Phase II must be announced on, or close to schedule.” The deputy special representative also immediately implemented stricter rules with regard to UNTAC personnel’s freedom to talk to journalists, with the aim to prevent further “off-the-cuff comments regarding sensitive and important issues.”¹⁶⁸ The Khmer Rouge failed to provide the required information on 6 May, forcing Sanderson to push the deadline to 20 May and announce in the SNC that if the Khmer Rouge’s cooperation would not be forthcoming, it would be impossible to conduct Phase Two correctly, which would jeopardise the entire peace process.¹⁶⁹ This statement caused some concern among ambassadors of the P5 who questioned Akashi whether it was not too early to move on into the Phase Two. But Akashi made it clear that UNTAC needed to respect its time schedule and that a postponement of the cantonment and disarmament until after the rainy season was not an option.¹⁷⁰

Whereas the Paris Agreements determined that an effective cease-fire and freedom of movement were preconditions for moving into Phase Two, the Khmer Rouge publicly stated that announcing Phase Two was the best way to solve the fighting in Kompong Thom and all other problems.¹⁷¹ The Mixed Military Working Group on 9 May was the moment of truth.

163 Cable Goulding/Akashi (New York) to Sanderson (Phnom Penh), 30 April 1992, “Start of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 30 April 1992, “entretien des cinq avec M. Akashi,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

164 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

165 Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 2 May 1992, “Preparations for the phase two cease-fire,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

166 Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Minutes of the 14th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 18 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Cable Goulding and Akashi to Sanderson, 30 April 1992, “Start of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.

167 Sheri Prasso, “UNTAC forced to delay its work schedule,” *The Nation*, 2 May 1992.

168 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0001.

169 “Address to the SNC – 7 May by Lt. Gen. J. M. Sanderson,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, “UNTAC/FC/CYP003,” 18 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

170 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 9 May 1992, “Eighth situation Report,” UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

171 Andrew Sherry, “U.N. gearing up to disarm Cambodian factions,” *AFP*, 7 May 1992.

As Sanderson was under great pressure from his civilian superiors to announce the starting date of 13 June of Phase Two, he asked the factions to endorse a prepared statement which he would read to the press after the meeting, to avoid endless discussion. It announced that the factions had given the force commander the assurances that they would prevent further cease-fire violations, mark their minefields, and provide UNTAC immediately with full freedom of movement, including unconditional access to all faction areas and with detailed information about their military personnel, equipment and weapons. All factions endorsed the statement, but Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno only indicated that he had “no comment to add” and left the talking to Tep Khunnal, a shrewd political officer who made vague promises to agree to Sanderson’s demands as soon as UNTAC had finished the establishment of all its checkpoints at the border with Vietnam.¹⁷² Seven out of the ten checkpoints had been deployed and UNTAC was working hard to establish the three remaining ones as resources and logistics allowed for it.¹⁷³ After a difficult three-hour meeting in which the Khmer Rouge did not make any explicit assurances, Sanderson nonetheless decided to proceed with the announcement of Phase Two to the reporters who were waiting outside the meeting room.¹⁷⁴ Despite his personal doubts about the Khmer Rouge’s sincerity and readiness to disarm and demobilise, the force commander made the single most important decision of his command under strong pressure from the UN civilian leadership.¹⁷⁵

Difficult Dutch deployment: the reality behind apparent Khmer Rouge cooperation

The Khmer Rouge’s stance in the first months of UNTAC has been characterised by James Schear as “cautious cooperation.”¹⁷⁶ But a more accurate description would be “apparent cooperation,” as the Khmer Rouge continued to apply their strategy of gaining time by promising and not delivering while setting the bar for their actual cooperation higher and higher. On 22 May, the

172 Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 9 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

173 One of the problems was that not all of the 485 UNMOs’ military observers – who were to occupy the checkpoints – had arrived in Cambodia. Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, “Military Observers – UNTAC,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Interoffice message, Sanderson to Sadry, 26 March, “Issues of immediate concern to the military component of UNTAC,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 9 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

174 Sanderson later claimed in an article that the Khmer Rouge did give him what he needed: “Finally, I decided to go with about seven and a half of the twelve battalions and, on 9 May, at a very tense meeting of the MMWG, I declared as D-Day for the commencement of the Phase Two ceasefire, the containment [sic], disarmament and demobilization process. The reason why the MMWG was so tense was because I sought assurance from the factions on the steps they would take before and on the due date. I had to have those assurances before I announced the date to the press who were waiting outside the conference room with pencils and tape recorders poised. The Khmer Rouge were reluctant to give those assurances without things happening that they were not in the Paris Agreement – but in the end they did give them.” See: Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, “Peacekeeping operations in Cambodia,” *The RUSI Journal*, (December 1994): 25; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 14 May 1992, “Commencement of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.

175 See the difference between Goulding’s draft version of the Secretary-General’s report to the UN Security Council stating: “My Special Representative has recommended that Phase II of the cease-fire must proceed as scheduled on 13 June. I have accepted this recommendation,” and the final version of the report, written by the Secretary-General himself, which included the phrasing: “After careful consideration, I have concluded that Phase II of the cease-fire must proceed as scheduled on 13 June.” See: Cable Goulding to De Soto, 11 June 1992, “SecGen’s report on Cambodia,” UNA, New York, S-1829-0314-0004; Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, 12 June 1992, S/24090, UN digital library. When Sanderson was asked later whose decision it was to move into Phase II, Sanderson indicated that “it certainly was a very high-level decision.” See: Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

176 Schear, “Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping: The Case of Cambodia,” 253.

Khmer Rouge again failed to comply with the deadline to deliver the required information, and UNTAC still didn't have full freedom of movement.¹⁷⁷ They continued to raise their stakes by demanding that all the border checkpoints with Vietnam should be manned by platoons of armed UNTAC peacekeepers as well as representatives of the four Cambodian factions.¹⁷⁸ They promised that all problems would be resolved once UNTAC met these demands.¹⁷⁹ "If you satisfy our request," Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno told Sanderson, "then I will do my best to cooperate with you in every way."¹⁸⁰ But many concessions and demonstration of goodwill had already been made by UNTAC. Besides establishing border checkpoints as the Khmer Rouge had requested, Sanderson had deployed no less than 100 teams of military observers in eastern Cambodia who were constantly on the lookout for Vietnamese forces, that were simply not there since Vietnam had completed the withdrawal of all its troops in 1989. He also created special helicopter-borne investigation teams that could respond immediately to indications of Vietnamese troops or any other complaints regarding violations of the peace agreements.¹⁸¹ The force commander repeatedly requested the Khmer Rouge to provide specific information about Vietnamese troops in order to conduct a joint investigation, but the Khmer Rouge leaders were never able to substantiate their claims.¹⁸²

The starting date of 13 June for Phase Two meant that by then all UN battalions had to be deployed with the regroupment areas and cantonment sites completed and ready to receive the disarmed factions' soldiers. The dominant idea was that once all UNTAC units had arrived in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would lift their restrictions and cooperate. "Our ability to make the Khmer Rouge and the other factions cooperate with our plan depends on getting a strong, credible force in there of some 15,000 soldiers," Akashi stated to reporters in New York.¹⁸³ The question how the blue helmets were to gain access to the Khmer Rouge zones remained unanswered, and it was left entirely to the individual battalions to find their way in.

UNTAC's military units arrived unprepared for a forceful deployment in Cambodia, not so much materially, but especially mentally, as UNTAC headquarters had not given any specific instructions about what to do in case of non-cooperation by the Khmer Rouge. The force

177 Note to the file Meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 20 May 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0006; "Areas of concern with NADK 20 May 1992," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 May 1992, "Readiness of parties for Phase II," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006. The SOC was also late in providing all the required information, but Sanderson was satisfied with their efforts.

178 Note to the file Meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 20 May 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

179 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. By 26 May, nine out of the ten border checkpoints along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border had been set up. Because the last checkpoint's location was difficult to mount for logistical reasons, Sanderson accepted to place another UNTAC checkpoint at the juncture of RN 4 and RN 18, as a compensation. Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

180 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

181 Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group Level One in Kompong Thom, 17 June 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; UNTAC Press Release 29 May 1992, "Mr. Akashi visits border checkpoints, factions headquarters, UNTAC establishes mobile investigation teams," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006-0002; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 29 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001.

182 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; François Luizet, "Cambodge: la paix en panne les Khmers rouges bloquent l'ONU," *Le Figaro*, 11 June 1992.

183 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

commander had selected the battalion of the well-equipped and well-trained Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (*Korps Mariniers*) to deploy into the extreme western part of the country, labelled as Sector 1, and set up headquarters in the Khmer Rouge-controlled town of Pailin.¹⁸⁴ It was clearly the most risky deployment of all UNTAC units as it was uncertain whether the marines would actually be “welcome” in their sector. A Dutch advance party based in Phnom Penh had not been allowed to freely survey all locations for their battalion and they noticed that Khmer Rouge troops were actively building additional checkpoints around the area they controlled.¹⁸⁵ At UNTAC headquarters, the prevalent idea was to deploy the battalions as quickly and as impressively as possible into the sectors.¹⁸⁶ The French battalion deployed in one single move into its sector and staged an impressive military parade in the town of Sihanoukville. The local Cambodian population had streamed in massively to witness the spectacular entry of the French peacekeepers, which included speeches, music performances and a spectacular jump demonstration by a paratrooper with a tricolour parachute.¹⁸⁷ Contrary to the Dutch marines, the French paratroopers had an easy sector which allowed them to arrive via Cambodia’s harbour town of Sihanoukville, where they could immediately set up their headquarters and spread out over a territory which was largely controlled by the State of Cambodia. The sober Dutch marines felt that such a “Charge of the Light Brigade”-style deployment was unsuited for their sector, which was logistically much more challenging.¹⁸⁸ The Dutch battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Herman Dukers, opted for a careful approach, as detailed information about his sector, such as the position of minefields, was not available.¹⁸⁹ He wrote to UNTAC headquarters that he did not intend to send his men “into the unknown” and dispatched reconnaissance parties first, which could prepare the camps before deploying the main body of the battalion.¹⁹⁰

The Dutch battalion decided to deploy into Cambodia via Thailand, because the infrastructure from the Cambodian side was insufficient, which made the marines dependent on the cooperation of the Thai military authorities.¹⁹¹ Although Sanderson had visited Bangkok a few days before the Dutch deployment to discuss Thai assistance to UNTAC, the Thai government had not made any arrangements and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with UNTAC did not exist.¹⁹² One of the consequences was that the Dutch advance party was not allowed to set up camp near the Cambodian border and was therefore forced to stay in a hotel in the beach-town Pattaya.¹⁹³ The timing of the arrival in Thailand was very unfortunate because it was between 17

184 Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 13 May 1992, “Kambodja/UNTAC,” AMBZ, 990.

185 Cable Captain Van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

186 Cable Major Wilmsen to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 27 April 1992, “Sitrep 004,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

187 “Les paras sautent sur Sihanoukville,” *L’Humanité*, 3 June 1992; “Cambodge: Parade tricolore avant le marathon de la paix,” *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 3 June 1992; Frédéric Pons, *Les Casques bleus français: 50 ans au service de la paix dans le monde* (Rennes: E-ditions Italiques, 1995) 27; “APRONUC défilé du Bataillon Français,” Video 92.9.14_15 ECPAD.

188 Cable Major Wilmsen to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 27 April 1992, “Sitrep 004,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

189 Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), “Sitrep 007,” 10 May 1992; Author’s interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

190 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ, 23 May 1992, “Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1,” Semi Statistisch Informatiebeheer Ministerie van Defensie (SIB), MARNSTAF-UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7; Bais, *Het mijneveld van een vredesmacht*, 34.

191 Herman Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodja: Nederlandse mariniers in UNTAC,” *Mars in Cathedra* 94 (July 1993): 2848; Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007.”

192 “UNTAC mission to Thailand 11–13 May 1992,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

193 Cable Dukers to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 26 May 1992, “Achtergrondinformatie participatie Nederland aan UNTAC,” SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7.

and 20 May that the government of General Suchinda Kraprayoon quelled the biggest and most violent protests the country had seen in decades, an event that resulted in the deaths of at least forty people and would later become known as “Black May.”¹⁹⁴

The Dutch battalion had not received clear guidance from UNTAC headquarters. No document listing UNTAC’s rules of engagement had been communicated, nor was there any information about the condition of the roads in their sector and whether they were cleared of mines.¹⁹⁵ After his arrival in Bangkok, battalion commander Dukers immediately continued to Phnom Penh to meet with Sanderson. But the force commander was unavailable, and without any specific orders other than to deploy as quickly as possible, Dukers returned to his men in Thailand.¹⁹⁶ When the Dutch reconnaissance party arrived at the Thai-Cambodian border they succeeded, after long negotiations with the Khmer Rouge border guards, to proceed with a small part of their convoy to Pailin in order to inspect the site of the future battalion headquarters. However, when they returned the next day, the marines were stopped by the Khmer Rouge who told them that passing into their zone was from now on completely forbidden.¹⁹⁷ The Thai military were not eager to help the Dutch since the deployment of UNTAC into the Khmer Rouge zone would interfere with their lucrative business in hardwood logging and gem mining with which the Khmer Rouge earned an estimated eight million dollars per month.¹⁹⁸ When Dutch officers discovered that their Thai liaison officer maintained close relations with the Khmer Rouge border guards and exploited a gem mine in Cambodia himself, they reported to The Hague that it was clear they had ended up in a “snake pit.”¹⁹⁹

In Phnom Penh, the force commander confronted Nuon Bunno with his soldiers’ refusal to provide the Dutch battalion access to their zone, but the Khmer Rouge general evasively replied that they did not know that the Dutch wanted to deploy into their zone and that there was some sort of mistake.²⁰⁰ But the fact of the matter was that the Khmer Rouge knew exactly when and where to expect the Dutch battalion because all Cambodian factions had been briefed in detail about the deployment schedule of all UNTAC battalions.²⁰¹ Every day, the marines continued to drive back and forth between Pattaya and the border and made continued attempts to negotiate their way into Cambodia, without any success.²⁰² The only remaining option seemed to deploy by using force, but the Dutch battalion commander decided not to do so because these were not his orders from Phnom Penh. His mission was to deploy into Cambodia with the cooperation of the Cambodian factions, and he had received no instructions what to do in case the Khmer Rouge

194 Philip Shenon, “Military Crackdown in Thailand Blunts Protest Against Army Rule,” *The New York Times*, 20 May 1992; William Branigin, “Thailand Releases 3,000 Protesters; Death Toll Uncertain, as Many Are Missing and Presumed Dead,” *The Washington Post*, 22 May 1992.

195 Cable Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Hague to New York, 19 May 1992, “dpv-769/92,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 80.

196 Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja 1992–1993*, 92.

197 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 23 May 1992, “Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1,” SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7; Author’s Interview with Herman Dukers; “Rode Khmer werkt tegen bij stationering mariniers: Commandant krijgt geen toegang tot gebied,” *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 27 May 1992.

198 Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 30 April 1992, “Sitrep 005,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67; Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 13 May 1992, “Kambodja/UNTAC,” AMBZ, 990.

199 Cable Dukers, 26 May 1992, “Achtergrondinformatie participatie Nederland aan UNTAC.”

200 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

201 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

202 Karolien Bais, “VN-vredesmacht legt het af tegen de regels van de jungle,” *Leidsch Dagblad*, 1 June 1992.



*Dutch marines at the Thai-Cambodian border, trying to establish communications with UNTAC HQ in Phnom Penh.
Photo credit: H. F. Dukers / NIMH*

would not let them pass.²⁰³ The Dutch felt there were too many risks involved in forcing their way into Cambodia as they did not know what to expect deeper into the jungle.²⁰⁴ While continuing their attempts to persuade the Khmer Rouge border guards, they decided that their own safety came first and that it was the responsibility of the UNTAC leadership in Phnom Penh to find a solution to the stalemate.²⁰⁵ Dutch officers stationed at UNTAC headquarters felt a strong lack of understanding for the difficult conditions in which their battalion was expected to deploy.²⁰⁶ Sanderson was nonetheless aware of the problems the Dutch peacekeepers experienced, and wrote another letter to NADK-commander Son Sen with the request to make an unequivocal statement to guarantee the access of UNTAC to Khmer Rouge areas.²⁰⁷

The fact that the Dutch battalion was unable to deploy into their sector while the Khmer Rouge leadership demanded more concessions, perfectly illustrates the Khmer Rouge's strategy of delaying the peace process by claiming a different reading of the Paris Agreement. The problems the Dutch were encountering with the Khmer Rouge also made Sanderson lose confidence in

203 Dukers, "Peace-keeping in Cambodia," 2849; Author's interview with Herman Dukers; Scholars have commented that the Dutch battalion had only anticipated "a best-case scenario" with the Khmer Rouge. See: Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 20–21.

204 Author's interview with Herman Dukers.

205 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 23 May 1992, "Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1," SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodia, box 1226, folder 7.

206 Cable Captain Wallage to The Hague (DBZ/OPS), 2 June 1992, "Sitrep nr 001," NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

207 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, "UNTAC/FC/CYP003," 18 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

the Khmer Rouge's readiness to participate in the disarmament and demobilisation process. In a memorandum to Akashi he concluded that it was clear that the Khmer Rouge had been "too busy taking advantage of the cease-fire and establishing themselves in the countryside to prepare for the regroupment and cantonment. They are not ready and may be having difficulty delivering their troops to the process."²⁰⁸ On 26 May, Akashi presented twelve points that would have to be met by the Khmer Rouge within a week, of which the most important were: the full and unrestricted freedom of movement to UNTAC, to refrain from further cease-fire violations, and to cooperate fully with UNTAC in the reconnaissance of the remaining cantonment sites. Akashi threatened that if his demands would not be met satisfactorily before 5 June, he would inform the UN Security Council.²⁰⁹ But the special representative's warning did not impress the Khmer Rouge who refused to make any gestures and continued to present their own interpretation of the Paris Agreements.²¹⁰ The ambassadors of the P5 agreed that this situation could not continue and therefore believed that the Security Council should be brought into play by the Secretary-General.²¹¹ However, Boutros-Ghali, who was focussed on the historic UN "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, did not believe this to be necessary and requested Akashi to continue to seek the compliance of the Khmer Rouge through "quiet diplomacy."²¹²

The Bamboo pole incident: a symbolic moment

As had been the case with the wounding of the Australian officer during UNAMIC, an incident serious enough to be picked up by the international media was necessary to create some realisation in New York about the difficulties UNTAC was encountering with the Khmer Rouge. On 30 May, Sanderson and Akashi travelled to north-west Cambodia for a tour along the headquarters of the three resistance factions. At the camps of the two smaller factions, in Phum Ku (FUNCINPEC) and in Banteay Meanrith (KPNLF), Sanderson and Akashi were warmly welcomed and released doves of peace in solemn ceremonies of disarmament. They subsequently travelled to Pailin by helicopter with the aim to inspect the situation and the future cantonment sites earmarked for the Khmer Rouge.²¹³ Although their visit had been announced in advance, there were no Khmer Rouge officials in Pailin to meet them. After Akashi was briefed by the local UNMO team in Pailin about the fact that the Dutch were still stuck at the border and that the Khmer Rouge had strengthened their checkpoints, the special representative decided to attempt to drive to the Thai border to meet with the Dutch battalion. The convoy of UN vehicles did not come far. Less than a kilometre outside the town of Pailin, they were halted by a checkpoint manned by two

208 Message Sanderson to Akashi, 25 May 1992, "preparation of NADK for Phase 2 of the cease-fire," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

209 Statement by Akashi at the SNC meeting of 26 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0020-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 May 1992, "Meeting of the Supreme National Council," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

210 Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

211 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 29 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 27 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 May 1992, "vers l'épreuve de vérité avec les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10POI/1 1308.

212 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 28 May 1992, "UNTAC Phase II, readiness of parties and meeting of SNC," UNA, S-1829-0314-0004; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 1 June 1992, "UNTAC-1110 Khmer Rouge," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

213 UNTAC Press Release 29 May 1992, "Mr. Akashi visits border checkpoints, factions headquarters, UNTAC establishes mobile investigation teams," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006-0002.

Khmer Rouge guards who blocked the road with a bamboo pole. For thirty minutes, Akashi tried to persuade the young Khmer Rouge soldiers to lift the bamboo pole and let them through, but without any success.²¹⁴ Eventually, the highest ranking civilian and military UN officials in the country decided to obey the Khmer Rouge and turn around, while Thai trucks filled with logs, gems and other goods passed the checkpoint without any problems in both directions. A group of twenty-four journalists present in the UN convoy witnessed this painful moment which was soon referred to as “the bamboo pole incident.”²¹⁵ The event was symbolic for the risk-aversiveness of the UN leadership and clearly set the wrong example for the entire peacekeeping force.

Sanderson did not believe it to be a good idea to defy the Khmer Rouge at the bamboo pole. “To attempt to push through the barrier with our unarmed party might have made a good story for the press but it would have achieved nothing except to place you and the rest of the party at risk,” he wrote to Akashi several months after the incident in a memorandum which was clearly meant for the record. Moreover, the force commander did not believe that such a bold action would have drawn the Khmer Rouge any closer to the peace process. “On the contrary,” he argued, “it may have wrecked the Paris Agreements completely, denying us any further opportunities for maintaining a dialogue with the PDK.”²¹⁶ One year after the incident, the force commander explained in an interview with American scholar Steven Ratner that he believed that ignoring the roadblock would have caused the Khmer Rouge to stop them further down the road with heavier weapons and mines, leading to bloodshed which would have sabotaged diplomatic efforts to gain Khmer Rouge compliance.²¹⁷ Concerns about an escalation of events and the larger political consequences, particularly in Canberra, were clearly on top of Sanderson’s mind. He later remembered: “Many of our troop-contributing countries were sending their soldiers on their first-ever UN missions [. . .] Some hadn’t even arrived yet. How many of them would have signed on if the mission had been advertised as ‘Come to Cambodia to make war with the Khmer Rouge!’”²¹⁸

Sanderson recalled Akashi’s intentions in Pailin as to “test the freedom of movement” and believed that the Khmer Rouge’s demonstration of denying them this “fulfilled the objective of the visit.”²¹⁹ Akashi later claimed that he wanted to demonstrate to the journalists “the utter arrogance of the Khmer Rouge and their non-cooperation” and that the course of events unfolded exactly as he intended to.²²⁰ But it seems unlikely that Akashi decided to voluntarily humiliate himself, and the United Nations, in front of the cameras. Back in Phnom Penh, Akashi protested to Khieu Samphan that the incident in Pailin was “unacceptable, deeply disquieting, and totally unsatisfactory.” But the Khmer Rouge president stoically stated that he could only comply with

214 The special representative of the Secretary-General was told that he was only allowed to circulate inside Pailin, but not to move out of the town.

215 Fax Lt Col. Malik to UNTAC HQ, 30 May 1992, “Visit of Mr Akashi and Lt Gen Sanderson,” UNA, S-1854-0060-0004; Sue Downie, “U.N. chief turned back by Khmer Rouge,” *United Press International*, 30 May 1992; “Faisant obstacle à la mission de l’ONU Les Khmers rouges multiplient les violations de l’accord de paix,” *Le Monde*, 2 June 1992; O’Meara, “Keeping the peace a Cambodian diary,” 36; Internal message Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993, “The Bamboo Pole incident,” UNA, S-0796-0056-0002; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 42; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 1 June 1992, “Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges,” AND, 10 POI/1 1309.

216 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993, “The Bamboo Pole incident,” UNA, S-0796-0056-0002.

217 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 170.

218 Samantha Power, *Chasing the flame: One Man’s Fight to Save the World* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 108.

219 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993.

220 Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 167.

Phase Two as soon as UNTAC had, first, ensured that all Vietnamese forces had left the country, and second, endowed the Supreme National Council with governmental functions so that it could replace the State of Cambodia. But Akashi made it clear that there were no sine qua non conditions and no priorities set forth in the Paris Agreements.²²¹ The special representative reported to the Security Council and informed the ambassadors of the P5 about what had happened in Pailin.²²² Among the ambassadors, there was a general feeling of consternation about Akashi's actions.²²³ The US ambassador and the French ambassador believed that Akashi and Sanderson had made the wrong judgement call by not forcing their way in.²²⁴ UN headquarters in New York was also displeased, but instead of pushing through, Goulding felt that Akashi should have avoided the guaranteed humiliation in Pailin by simply not going there.²²⁵ "There was no way in which the Khmer Rouge was going to be intimidated by the television cameras to lift the bamboo pole," Goulding later said in an interview with Professor James Sutterlin.²²⁶

Pushing through the bamboo pole would probably have changed the entire dynamic of the operation in one way or the other. It was a question of judgement how much risks were involved in calling the Khmer Rouge's bluff. Prince Sihanouk believed that it was unlikely that the Khmer Rouge would fire at UN troops as that would equal "a declaration of war to the United Nations" the prince told the Portuguese ambassador Castello-Branco in Phnom Penh who presented his letters of credence the day after the bamboo pole incident. If the Khmer Rouge would be bold enough to fire on the peacekeepers entering their zone, the Prince said, the only way for the UN "to defend its honour and authority" would be to launch an operation similar to Operation Desert Storm. If UN member states contributing troops to UNTAC were not willing to get involved in such an enforcement operation, the only solution according to the prince, was to ask Hanoi to send the Vietnamese army back to Cambodia to "fight under the UN banner" against the Khmer Rouge.²²⁷ Sihanouk sharply analysed the dilemma for UNTAC and more generally for UN peacekeeping operations operating in semi-permissive environments. Perhaps the Khmer Rouge would indeed not dare to shoot at UN peacekeepers entering their zone, but if they would, the situation could escalate very quickly, and the United Nations would find itself in a totally new situation for which the existing peacekeeping force was ill-prepared.

Despite the fact that the bamboo pole incident made it blatantly clear that the Khmer Rouge's promises of forthcoming cooperation were an illusion, a tendency remained among the UN civilian leadership to ignore this reality and what it meant for UNTAC's ability to fulfil its mission. The Dutch battalion commander regretted that Sanderson and Akashi had not been able to reach him and were sent back to Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge as two "schoolboys," but it suited him well that the whole world could now see that he and his men were not to blame for

221 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

222 Jean-Claude Chapon, "UNTAC chief stopped from entering Khmer Rouge zone," *AFP*, 30 May 1992.

223 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, "Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges," 1 June 1992, ADN, 10 POI/1 1309; Author's interview with Philippe Coste.

224 Interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy with Ambassador Charles H. Twining, 26 May 2004, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training; Author's interview with Philippe Coste.

225 Interview by James Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

226 Ibid.

227 Report by the Portuguese Ambassador Castello-Branco of his conversation with Prince Sihanouk on 31 May 1992. See: Cable Netherlands Embassy Bangkok to The Hague, 2 June 1992, "Kambodja/UNTAC: Vredesoperatie voor wezenlijk deel in Thaise handen," AMBZ, 990.

their inability to deploy into the Khmer Rouge zone.²²⁸

Whereas Sanderson later explained his decision not to escalate the situation at the bamboo pole by pointing out that the troop-contributing countries might be deterred to send their troops to Cambodia, the fact that the Khmer Rouge had dared to refuse UNTAC's highest officials access to their zone had exactly the effect the force commander feared. The Dutch government was alerted by UNTAC's humiliation in Pailin and decided to suspend the departure of the next shift of 200 marines to Thailand. The prospect of having an entire battalion sit idle in a hotel in Pattaya – a place known for its sex tourism – was considered far from ideal.²²⁹ It was decided to put the remaining marines on a 48-hours' notice to move until safe access to the area of operation in Cambodia was guaranteed.²³⁰

Instead of publicly denouncing the Khmer Rouge for their non-cooperation with UNTAC and violation of the Paris Agreements, the UN leadership turned the Dutch into the scapegoat to blame for disrupting the deployment schedule and causing further delays. Goulding angrily accused the Dutch of giving the Khmer Rouge a "free ride" and made it clear that the UN would keep this incident in mind when asking The Netherlands to contribute troops to future UN operations.²³¹ Akashi agreed with Goulding's firm stand vis-à-vis the Dutch unilateral decision. "We certainly cannot afford to lose any positive momentum of deployment of infantry battalions," he cabled to New York.²³² The Secretary-General sent a letter to the Dutch minister of foreign affairs, Hans van den Broek, in which he pointed out that he was determined to press ahead and make it clear to the Khmer Rouge "that it is they who will suffer if they try to frustrate the process." The decision by the Dutch government, he wrote, would convey the opposite impression and could be interpreted as a signal of weakness. The Secretary-General firmly added that the build-up of UN troops in and around Cambodia should signal to the Khmer Rouge "how much they will pay if they defy the international community's will."²³³ The Dutch government felt that the reaction from New York was exaggerated and that it was not up to their battalion to solve the issue with the Khmer Rouge, but to the UNTAC leadership in Phnom Penh.²³⁴ The Hague came up with a compromise solution: for every hundred marines that succeeded to enter Cambodia, another hundred would immediately be dispatched to Thailand.²³⁵ It was also decided to deploy the Dutch peacekeepers to locations outside Khmer Rouge-controlled territory and have them set up headquarters in the town of Sisophon, capital of Banteay Meanchey Province, instead of

228 Dukers, "Peace-keeping in Cambodja," 2849; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 34.

229 Note by the director of policy to Relus ter Beek, 26 May, "vertrek mariniersbataljon voor Untac," SIB, TCBU-Secretaris-Generaal Cambodja Vredesmissies, box 12.

230 Letter by Lieutenant General Van Breemen to Ter Beek, 5 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12; Cable The Hague to New York, 1 June 1992, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167; Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja 1992–1993*, 97.

231 Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 2 June 1992, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 1 June 1992, "Deployment of Netherlands battalion," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

232 Akashi to Goulding, 6 June 1992, "Deployment of Dutch battalion," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

233 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Van den Broek, 3 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12; Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 4 June, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167.

234 Cable Van den Broek to Netherlands PR UN in New York, 3 June 1992, AMBZ, 990; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 66.

235 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 5 June 1992, "Deployment of Dutch battalion," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Author's interview with Herman Dukers; Letter by Lieutenant General Van Breemen to Ter Beek Minister of Defence, 5 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12.

Pailin.²³⁶ When the Khmer Rouge was looking the other way, a Dutch company even succeeded to deploy to Sok San, a KPNLRF-enclave located in the middle of Khmer Rouge territory south of Pailin.²³⁷

The very resolute tone of the Secretary-General in the correspondence to the Dutch foreign minister contrasted sharply with the very polite letter he sent, on the same day, to Khieu Samphan in which he said to be “somewhat surprised” by the Khmer Rouge’s refusal to allow UNTAC troops into their zones and their unpreparedness for the disarmament phase, and gently asked for his cooperation.²³⁸ But Khieu Samphan used his personal correspondence with the Secretary-General to create a smoke screen and isolate an increasingly uncompromising Akashi. In his reply to the Secretary-General, again written in exquisitely polite French, Khieu Samphan solemnly declared his profound attachment to the Paris Agreements and promised to continue to cooperate with UNTAC and Akashi if his two “key conditions” were met.²³⁹ But Akashi’s attempts to reason with Khieu Samphan were going nowhere, and the special representative started to lose his patience.

Soldier or diplomat and the issue of risk

The French sociologist and philosopher of history Raymond Aron considered the soldier and the diplomat as the two most important and mutually complementary actors in the realm of international relations.²⁴⁰ A UN peacekeeper, however, is expected to combine both functions in one job. The decision to lay emphasis on either diplomatic or military measures in fulfilling peacekeeping missions revolves around many considerations. The issue of risk, which has been identified by historian Ben Schoenmaker as the central dilemma in post-Cold War peace operations, was certainly a key element at play in Cambodia.²⁴¹ Soldiers accept risk as part of their profession, and diplomats generally try to avoid it in achieving their goals. UNTAC’s force commander Sanderson clearly defined his role more as a diplomat than as a soldier. His political antenna and diplomatic skills gave him a strong sense of what the political consequences might be in case of an escalation of the situation. Loridon, however, believed that a military dynamic was required to keep the peace, emphasising the symbolic importance of a demonstration of authority and determination to succeed in the mission’s objectives, but not taking into account that some countries might not be willing to pay the price for escalation.

Nonetheless, the force commander and his deputy did share at least one perception: they were both sceptical about the feasibility of the disarmament and demobilisation of the Cambodian

236 Cable Captain Wallage to The Hague (DBZ/OPS), 2 June 1992, “Sitrep nr 001,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

237 “Samenvatting gebeurtenissen Sok San locatie,” SIB, MARNSTAF-UNTAC, box 1236, file 43; Cable Goulding to Akashi for Sanderson, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1854-0016-0007; Author’s correspondence with Herman Dukers, 5 December 2019.

238 “Je me permets donc de faire appel à votre compréhension et à votre coopération, dans l’espoir que toutes les parties s’engageront, lors de la prochaine réunion du CNS, à prendre les mesures nécessaires pour permettre l’APRONUC de mettre en œuvre, à compter du 13 juin, la deuxième phase du cessez-le-feu et l’ensemble des autres fonctions à caractère militaire qui lui ont été confiées.” Quoted from letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Khieu Samphan, 3 June 1992 (see: Cable Goulding to Akashi, 3 June 1992, “Khmer Rouge”) UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

239 “The effective verification of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the transformation of the SNC into the unique source of authority in Cambodia.” Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

240 Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962, 1984 edition) 17–18, 770.

241 Schoenmaker, *Vredesoperaties en de terugkeer van de oorlog*, 5.

factions. Sanderson had carefully expressed his doubts about the feasibility of pursuing Phase Two while the cooperation from the Khmer Rouge was not forthcoming, but Loridon was less hesitant to openly express his increasing scepticism about the UN's ability to succeed in its mission in Cambodia. On 27 May, he told a journalist: "I haven't been very optimistic for the last fortnight since the Khmer Rouge are creating serious problems by refusing our requests."²⁴² Privately, the deputy force commander expressed his concerns more explicitly. When the first officers of the French battalion arrived in Cambodia, Loridon told them in a briefing about the situation in Cambodia that he was of the opinion that the operation was heading towards "great difficulties" because he did not see how the Cambodian factions' armies could be disarmed as long as UNTAC was denied access to the Khmer Rouge zones. He added that he had never believed in the feasibility of the plan for disarmament and demobilisation, which in his view was too inflexible and necessitated far too many UN forces. He recognised that chances were slim that the Khmer Rouge soldiers would open their zones on 13 June and report voluntarily to the UN regroupment zones to be disarmed and demobilised, which would have the foreseeable consequence that the other factions would refuse to be disarmed as well.

Loridon had taken an early interest in the Khmer Rouge's strategy and understood their objective to thwart UNTAC's efforts as much as possible, while accusing the mission of not respecting the peace accords and trying to obtain as many concessions as possible to serve their objective of regaining power. His analysis was based on his own experience in dealing with the Khmer Rouge during his command of UNAMIC, but also strongly influenced by reading the manuscript of an extensive research by the then 33-year-old French Cambodia scholar Christophe Peschoux, who analysed the strategic thinking of the Khmer Rouge leadership. Peschoux concluded that the "new" Khmer Rouge were actually "old wine in new bottles" and that Pol Pot's objective was to reconquer 35 per cent of the Cambodian villages, in order to dominate a large part of the countryside before the elections were held in May 1993.²⁴³ Pol Pot's plan reflected the classic model of Maoist insurgency which prescribed the slow expansion throughout the countryside, the creation of liberated areas, link them up into liberated zones and increase the popular support for the insurgency.²⁴⁴ Since the Khmer Rouge only controlled 20 per cent of the Cambodian villages, Loridon believed that the Khmer Rouge would continue to obstruct the peace process. He therefore argued that the only way for UNTAC to counter the Khmer Rouge's strategy was to call the Khmer Rouge's bluff, exert the UN's right to freedom of movement, demonstrate authority, and deploy UN forces into the Khmer Rouge zone, preferably in the presence of the UNTAC leadership, and see if the Khmer Rouge soldiers would dare to shoot at them. He strongly believed that they would not.²⁴⁵

It was a matter of time before Loridon, who was certainly not of the stereotypical *grande muette*-type, went public with his views. The bamboo pole incident seemed to have been the trigger. On 30 May, the French general sat down with a group of French journalists in Sihanoukville

242 Jean-Claude Chapon, "Khmer Rouge undermining Cambodian peace plan: U.N. general," *AFP*, 27 May 1992.

243 The book was eventually published a little later, in August 1992: Christophe Peschoux, *Les « nouveaux » Khmers rouges enquête (1979–1990): reconstruction du mouvement et reconquête des villages* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992), 11, 201.

244 Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "The study of insurgency and counterinsurgency," in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, eds. Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5–6.

245 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh; "Cambodge: Pol Pot menace la paix," *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 1 June 1992; Author's interview with Michel Loridon.

and openly spoke his mind about why UNTAC was about to derail. “The fact that I speak out today,” he told the reporters, “is not for self-promotion. It’s not for my career that I am here. My career ends in two years [. . .] I want peace in Cambodia, but I do not agree with the plan of the United Nations, so I say it.”²⁴⁶ Loridon did not mince his words in explaining his conviction that the plan for Phase Two was too rigid, insufficiently adapted to the local circumstances, and too vulnerable to the slightest contingency. The Khmer Rouge, Loridon argued, were taking full advantage of this. He added that he regretted that New York had refused to take into consideration his alternative “more flexible” plan.²⁴⁷ The journalists wrote with sympathy about the French general whom they believed was sincerely passionate about his mission, but frustrated that an opportunity to make peace in Cambodia was missed and that his opinion had not been heard. The articles appearing in French newspapers about Loridon’s *cri de cœur* were a cause of concern for the French government.²⁴⁸ Speaking frankly to the press was already a taboo for a French general, but by openly questioning the UN strategy in Cambodia and indirectly criticising his superiors, Loridon had clearly exceeded his authority in the eyes of the French defence minister Pierre Joxe, who immediately decided to call the outspoken general back to France.²⁴⁹ Loridon’s dismissal did not cause much surprise or debate in France where, traditionally, politicians have a low tolerance for senior military officers who publicly comment on political-strategic issues.

Loridon was nonetheless proven right when Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno officially announced, on 9 June, in a letter to Sanderson that he was not in the position to allow UNTAC forces to deploy in the areas under its control to disarm and demobilise the Khmer Rouge forces. It was now officially clear that the start of Phase Two on 13 June would be “a non-event,” as Prince Sihanouk put it.²⁵⁰ Akashi condemned the Khmer Rouge declaration as “completely unacceptable” and “a clear breach of the Paris Agreements.”²⁵¹ But in actuality, the Khmer Rouge statement was merely a confirmation of the policy Pol Pot’s men had been following for months.

It has generally been assumed that the Khmer Rouge ceased to cooperate in June 1992 out of protest against UNTAC’s inability to satisfy their demand of controlling the SOC’s administrative power.²⁵² It is true that UNTAC’s civil administration component had not yet initiated supervision and control over the five major departments of the SOC government in early June, as they were originally scheduled to do. The recruitment of qualified civil administrators had started late and was progressing slowly as the UN did not have a reservoir of specialised personnel.

246 Dominique Artus, “Colère française au Cambodge,” *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 31 May 1992.

247 Frederic Pons, “Le syndrome du buffle,” *Valeurs Actuelles*, 22 June 1992; Francois Luizet, “Cambodge: la paix en panne, les Khmers rouges bloquent l’ONU,” *Le Figaro*, 11 June 1992.

248 Also see: Patrice de Beer, “Le scepticisme tempéré du général Loridon,” *Le Monde*, 2 June 1992; “Inquiétude au Cambodge,” *L’Humanité*, 1 June 1992.

249 Cable French PR New York to Paris, 2 July 1992, “APRONUC Remplacement du général Loridon,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

250 Luizet, “Cambodge: la paix en panne.”

251 “Statement by Mr. Akashi, Readiness of the parties for Phase II,” Supreme National Council, 10 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

252 David Roberts, “More honoured in the breach: Consent and impartiality in the Cambodian peacekeeping operation,” *International Peacekeeping* 4, no. 1 (1997): 5; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 36; Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 94; Michael Mersiades, “Peacekeeping and legitimacy: lessons from Cambodia and Somalia,” *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005): 210.

This meant that the civil administration could only begin exercising control a month later.²⁵³ Some scholars have suggested that early UNTAC control over the SOC might have persuaded the Khmer Rouge to give UNTAC peacekeepers entry to their zones.²⁵⁴ But the Khmer Rouge did not explicitly put forward the absence of UNTAC's control over the Phnom Penh government as a reason for their refusal to cooperate. The precondition for their compliance with Phase Two was the implementation of what the Khmer Rouge interpreted and presented as the two "key provisions" of the Paris Agreements. The first point was to ensure that all Vietnamese forces had left Cambodia.²⁵⁵ In the first three months, the Khmer Rouge focussed their complaints entirely on the alleged presence of Vietnamese forces and UNTAC's inability to find these troops. In line with these "concerns," they conditioned their cooperation with Phase Two on the establishment of checkpoints along the border with Vietnam.²⁵⁶ As we have seen, UNTAC made strenuous efforts to complete the positioning of these checkpoints, but the Khmer Rouge continued to adjust the prerequisites for their cooperation, up to the point of dictating the composition and operation of these checkpoints.²⁵⁷

The second precondition was to strengthen the power of the Supreme National Council and endow it with governmental functions. Khieu Samphan maintained that the existence of Hun Sen's government was in violation with the Paris Agreements, and basically demanded to replace the State of Cambodia with the Supreme National Council.²⁵⁸ But this claim had no basis because the SNC had never been intended to act as a *de facto* transitional government but rather as a symbolic authority that conveyed power for supervising and controlling Cambodia's public administration to UNTAC. The Paris Agreements stipulated that UNTAC's administrative control should be exercised through the existing administrative structures of each of the four Cambodian parties, and not abolish them altogether.²⁵⁹ Khieu Samphan was clearly applying the strategy outlined by Pol Pot of using the Paris Agreements as a weapon to justify their own obstructionism and demand more concessions.

Loridon believed that the point of no return had been reached after the Khmer Rouge officially refused to disarm and demobilise. The UN's house of cards in Cambodia had collapsed. A week before his departure from Cambodia, the deputy force commander stated in an interview with historian and veteran Indochina-journalist Nyan Chanda of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that he was leaving Cambodia frustrated because of UNTAC's inability to implement its mandate. The French general openly accused his superiors of being "too busy being diplomatic while ignoring the Khmer Rouge strategy of buying time," and urged that UNTAC should push

253 On 1 July the civil administration component started to exercise control over the SOC ministries in Phnom Penh. UNTAC's twenty-one civil administration offices in the provinces were opened on 15 July. It would take until 27 September before the full staff of 600 internationals and 600 Cambodians got into action to oversee the SOC administration. Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 196; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 155.

254 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 200; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 173; Doyle, *UNTAC's civil mandate*, 35.

255 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005; Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

256 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 12 May 1992, "Commencement of Phase II," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

257 Message Sanderson to Akashi, 25 May 1992, "Preparation of NADK for Phase 2 of the Cease-Fire", UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

258 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005; Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

259 Second Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, S/24286, 14 July 1992, NIMH, UNTAC 099, box 82; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 158.

the local Khmer Rouge commanders for compliance instead of “just sitting and waiting for the Khmer Rouge leaders to agree to disarm their troops.”²⁶⁰ During his command of UNAMIC, he argued, he had obtained results not by pandering to the Khmer Rouge but by being firm with them, adding that the UNTAC battalions were not being used to their potential. “I have done a lot more with 300 troops than is now being done with 14,000,” he stated. The French general went on to make the point that no peacekeeping operation could be risk-free, and that “courage and a willingness” were needed to push the Khmer Rouge into respecting the terms of the peace accords they had signed. In order to further illustrate this, he made a bold statement for which the interview would become best remembered: “It is possible at some point they will try to block the UN move by force. If it comes to that one may lose 200 men – and that could include myself – but the Khmer Rouge problem would be solved for good.”²⁶¹ This single quote was immediately copied in many news reports and caused much consternation, but Loridon later wrote in a letter to Nyan Chanda that he regretted some of his “provocative” remarks.²⁶² Nonetheless, the statement has led scholars to picture Loridon as a loose cannon who proposed to start a punishing counterinsurgency campaign, or at least a peace enforcement operation, against the Khmer Rouge. Sorpong Peou, for example, has argued that Loridon suggested “that 200 UN troops could be sacrificed in a swift war against the Khmer Rouge.”²⁶³ However, in the same interview, Loridon explained that he was absolutely convinced that the Khmer Rouge would not dare to shoot at UN troops. He was probably right in this assessment as interviews with Khmer Rouge defectors by Cambodia scholar Stephen Heder suggest that they had received orders not to shoot at UNTAC for fear of international condemnation.²⁶⁴

Contrary to conventional analysis, Loridon was not fired because of his remarks in the interview with Chanda, which was published on 23 July 1992, three weeks after it was publicly confirmed by the French government that Loridon would leave Cambodia by the end of the month to be succeeded by another French general, Robert Rideau.²⁶⁵ Loridon’s remarks nonetheless shocked the UN leadership. Akashi publicly said he was “startled.”²⁶⁶ Sergio Vieira de Mello, the chief of UNHCR in Cambodia, cautioned for the rest of his career against “crossing the Loridon-

260 Nyan Chanda, “UN divisions Signs of growing Franco-Australian rivalry within peacekeeping force,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 July 1992.

261 Chanda, “UN divisions,” 9.

262 Message from Phnom Penh by AFP, 29 July 1992, accessed via Dow Jones Factiva database; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

263 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 229; also see: Berdal and Leifer, “Cambodia,” 42; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 119; Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confronts the Peacemakers*, 284.

264 Heder, “The Resumption of Armed Struggle,” 94.

265 Steven Ratner has argued that Loridon was fired by Akashi. See: Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 203. It has been argued by John Connor that Loridon’s comments published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on 23 July were “the final straw” and resulted in the French defence minister to call Loridon back to France. This is incorrect. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 149; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 2 July 1992, “APRONUC Remplacement du général Loridon,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Cable Goulding to Akashi/Sanderson, 8 July 1992, “DFC,” UNA, S-0795-0056-0002; “Le général français Robert Rideau au Cambodge,” *Le Monde*, 10 July 1992.

266 Philip Shenon, “Conversations Yasushi Akashi; A Japanese Envoy’s Impossible Job: Keeping the Peace in Cambodia,” *The New York Times*, 4 October 1992. In an interview in 1997, Akashi claimed to remember a meeting with Loridon during which he asked him how many casualties UNTAC would suffer if they decided to march into one of the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas. According to Akashi, Loridon replied by saying that UNTAC could lose three to four hundred men. “That would have been the end of UNTAC” Akashi told James Sutterlin. There is however no evidence to support Akashi’s claim, and according to Loridon, such a meeting had never taken place. See: interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I.

line.”²⁶⁷ But others believed that Loridon was right and regretted to see him leave. Ironically, the Americans, who had been opposed to Loridon taking command in Cambodia, were impressed by the French general’s vigour and dynamism, and generally supportive of his views.²⁶⁸ Charles Twining, the US ambassador in Phnom Penh, maintained a good relation with Loridon and wrote in a last letter to him: “I have every expectation that, when the history books are written on the Cambodian peace process in the future, your name will be prominent among those who made a lasting contribution to the process.”²⁶⁹ Despite his decision to replace the outspoken general, Defence Minister Joxe nonetheless seemed to have agreed with Loridon’s point of view. According to Loridon, the minister told him during an official debriefing in Paris that the general had said everything what had to be said, but that it was impossible for the French government to agree with these statements in public.²⁷⁰

Loridon’s provocative public statement has been falsely interpreted as a concrete proposal for starting a counter insurgency operation against the Khmer Rouge. He rather aimed to make the fundamental point that risks would have to be accepted if one wanted to achieve the objective of the operation. In making this argument, Loridon reflected the general French philosophy about the conduct of peacekeeping operations. According to Professor of International Security Shaun Gregory, the French political vision on the conduct of peacekeeping operations demands “clarity about the purpose of the mission, acceptance of the potential for escalation, and flexibility for the political position to evolve in relation to events on the ground.”²⁷¹ This was well illustrated when Boutros-Ghali met with the French Chief of Defence, Admiral Lanxade, a week before Loridon’s departure from Cambodia. Surprisingly enough, neither Loridon’s dismissal nor the overall situation in Cambodia was discussed during the meeting that exclusively focussed on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, revealing that the priority for both the Secretary-General and the French military was with the Balkans and not in Indochina. Boutros-Ghali began the meeting by expressing his condolences to Lanxade for the death of two French officers who had been killed by a Serbian bomb in Croatia earlier that week. He underlined that the protection of UN forces was of great concern to him and that he considered it “inadmissible that soldiers of peace were getting killed.” After thanking the Secretary-General for his condolences, Admiral Lanxade made it immediately clear that “the President of the French Republic has chosen to accept the risks of the operation and to have them accepted by public opinion as well.”²⁷² Lanxade’s reply reveals how different the mentalities with regard to casualties and the dangers involved in a peacekeeping operation were at UN headquarters in New York and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, in this case France. In the 1990s, French society and public opinion generally supported

267 This statement was a variation from the term “crossing the Mogadishu line,” referring to the escalation of a peacekeeping operation into an enforcement operation. Power, *Chasing the flame*, 108–9. For Akashi’s reaction see: Shenon, “Yasushi Akashi; A Japanese Envoy’s Impossible Job.”

268 Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 24 February 1992, “Consultations Franco-Américaines sur l’Asie: Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 6 April 1992, ADN, 10 POI/1 1315.

269 Letter by Ambassador Charles H. Twining to General Michel Loridon, 13 July 1992, Private Archives Michel Loridon (PAML).

270 Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

271 Shaun Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” *The RUSI Journal* 145, no. 4 (August 2000): 63.

272 Note de l’entretien du Secrétaire général avec le Chef d’état-major des armées de la République française, 22 July 1992. UNA, S-1082-0020-0008.



Brigadier General Michel Loridon talks to a group of French journalists at a beach café near Sihanoukville on 30 May 1992. Photo credit: © Michel Riehl /ECPAD/Défense.

France's participation in peacekeeping operations and concern about the safety of its military personnel was rarely an issue.²⁷³ According to political scientist Brigitte Stern, in France the possibility of casualties in peace operations is considered as "the price France is prepared to pay to retain its rank as a permanent member of the Security Council and a defender of the fundamental values of international society, respect for human rights, humanitarian law, democracy, and peace."²⁷⁴ This means that the parameter of domestic political support and the fear for casualties were not of primary concern to Loridon in his considerations.

Sanderson, on the other hand, operated in a context in which pressure to avoid escalation was high. Although the troops Canberra contributed to UNTAC were not the infantry units that would be in the first line to enter the Khmer Rouge zones, casualties among blue helmets of any nationality would have increased the political pressure by the opposition on the Australian government considerably. In May 1992, Shadow Foreign Minister Hill, unsatisfied with the information provided to him by the government, decided to travel to Cambodia to see for himself "what exactly is going on" and determine the dangers of the cease-fire breaches for Australian

273 Pia Christina Wood, "France," in *The Politics of Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold War Era*, eds. David S. Sorenson and Pia Christina Wood (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 75. Wood cites Defence Minister Joxe who has explained, "[I]n France, one can attest that public opinion tolerates and accepts the use of armed forces in causes that are just and can dignify sacrifices of human life."

274 Brigitte Stern, "Conclusion," in *United Nations peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, eds. Brigitte Stern, Yves Daudet, Philippe Morillon and Marie-Claude Smouts (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 124–25. Also see: Shaun Gregory who argues that the French political vision on the conduct of peacekeeping operations demands "clarity about the purpose of the mission, acceptance of the potential for escalation, and flexibility for the political position to evolve in relation to events on the ground." Gregory, "France and *missions de paix*," 63.

troops.²⁷⁵ Two months later, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans publicly resisted suggestions that military action against the Khmer Rouge would be justified, and declared that UN troops would have to leave Cambodia if the Khmer Rouge made it impossible to carry out the terms of the peace settlement. Any use of military action, Evans stated, would require “a fundamental re-writing” of the Paris Peace Agreements. “It is not the sort of thing that can creep up on us within the terms of the present settlement,” he said.²⁷⁶ Political commentators in Australia believed that in the face of the March 1993 elections in Australia, the Keating government was unlikely to support any action that might expose Australian troops in Cambodia to danger.²⁷⁷

In Tokyo, the Japanese contribution to UNTAC and the risks of escalation in Cambodia also remained a sensitive topic. On 15 June 1992, after nine months of fierce parliamentary debates, the PKO bill was finally forced through parliament in a vote that was dramatically boycotted by deputies of the opposition, after they had unsuccessfully tried to dissolve the assembly by collectively submitting their resignation. The government was forced to accept many restrictive amendments prohibiting the Japanese peacekeepers to participate in activities that were considered too dangerous such as enforcing cease-fires, disarming combatants and removing mines.²⁷⁸ If the mounting tensions in Cambodia would lead to a serious escalation, Tokyo’s highly symbolic contribution would have to be cancelled because of constitutional constraints.²⁷⁹ However, the political situation in Tokyo did not seem to have been of direct influence on Akashi, who was a career UN official and not employed by the Japanese government. But Tokyo’s prominent position as the principal financier of UNTAC gave Sanderson and Akashi an additional reason to avoid risks.

The issue of risk forms a recurrent theme in the articles published by both Sanderson and Loridon in which they have reflected on their command in Cambodia and UN peacekeeping in general. Although the generals’ writings serve, to a large extent, as ex post facto justifications for their decisions in Cambodia, they also provide an amplification of their visions on the conduct of peacekeeping operations. It becomes clear that their principal point of difference was on whether the risk of escalation should be accepted or not. Sanderson warned in his articles of “the incalculable dynamic of force,” arguing that peacekeeping operations run the risk of “dabbling into war” if control is lost.²⁸⁰ Loridon, on the other hand, argued that the unwillingness to take risks paralyses a UN peacekeeping operation. Although acknowledging that military leaders always have the responsibility to protect the lives of their soldiers, the French general identified the concern with a “zero mortality rate” as the central factor that prevents peacekeepers from achieving their

275 “Aust troops in Cambodia facing danger: Hill,” *The Canberra Times*, 9 May 1992.

276 Susan Aitkin, “UN troops may have to abandon Cambodia: Evans,” *The Canberra Times*, 30 July 1992.

277 Malcolm Booker, “Cambodia a sticky wicket for Australia,” *The Canberra Times*, 28 July 1992.

278 Robert Delfs, “Do or die tactics Socialists resign in bid to block peacekeeping bill,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 June 1992, 17; John Gerard Ruggie, “Japan Had to Join in U.N. Peacekeeping Effort,” *The New York Times*, 18 June 1992.

279 Cable Goulding to Sadry, 17 June 1992, “Japan’s contribution to UNTAC,” UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

280 John M. Sanderson, “The Incalculable Dynamic of Force,” in *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia Peacekeeper’s Views on the Limits and Possibilities of the United Nations in a Civil War-like Conflict*, eds. Wolfgang Biermann and Martin Vadset (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998); John M. Sanderson, “Dabbling into War: The Dilemma of the Use of Force in United Nations Intervention,” in *Peacemaking and peacekeeping for the new century*, eds. Olara A. Atunnu and Michael W. Doyle (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 150.

objectives.²⁸¹ “If blue helmets do not inspire confidence, if they are hesitant, if their behaviour is questionable,” he argued, “the mission is doomed to fail.”²⁸² Loridon applauded the courage of his colleague, General Philippe Morillon, force commander of UNPROFOR between 1992 and 1993, who decided to travel to the besieged town of Srebrenica in March 1993 and declare it a safe area under the protection of the United Nations. He observed that Morillon had demonstrated a “willingness to act, to take responsibility, not to favour one party over the other, but to help a suffering population while risking his own life and those of his men.”²⁸³ Both French generals considered risk-taking an important military virtue, and have argued that peacekeepers should adopt a posture based on the idea “shoot at us, if you dare!”²⁸⁴ Loridon believed that “the stakes for the Cambodian people and for peace demanded such risk-taking.”²⁸⁵ But Sanderson made the point that such views are incompatible with peacekeeping and could potentially unleash an uncontrollable dynamic of violence.²⁸⁶ He described peacekeepers as “instruments of diplomacy,” who should always behave in a way that is consistent with their diplomatic objectives.²⁸⁷ Actions that included the use of force by peacekeepers in a Chapter VI peacekeeping mandate would have “a corrosive effect” on the UN’s moral authority.²⁸⁸ Loridon, on the other hand, argued that UNTAC lost its authority when it refrained from exercising its freedom of movement.²⁸⁹

The arguments of the two generals also reflect different interpretations of the guiding principles of peacekeeping. Sanderson emphasised the importance of absolute impartiality for peacekeepers in order to protect their credibility as honest brokers in a peace process, and avoid the risk of becoming another party to the conflict.²⁹⁰ Loridon, on the other hand, explicitly challenged the notion of impartiality, arguing that it should be replaced by the term “active neutrality,” meaning a neutral posture but with the possibility to be firm with the parties that do not respect their obligations.²⁹¹ With regard to the use of force, Sanderson pointed out that UNTAC had

281 Michel Loridon, *The U.N. intervention in Cambodia 1991/1993*, unpublished paper given at the RUSI-Swedish War College seminar 23 and 24 April 1996.

282 Michel Loridon, “La fermeté: un droit et un devoir pour l’ONU,” in *Les interventions extérieures de l’armée française*, ed. Pierre Pascallon (Bruylant: Brussels, 1997), 246.

283 Michel Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” *Le Casoar* 130 (July 1993): 87; Accompanied by a few blue helmets, General Morrillon travelled to besieged town of Srebrenica and told its citizens they were under the protection of the United Nations. New York was not amused with Morillon’s action but, with the media on the French general’s side, they were forced to create a safe haven for six areas of Bosnia, including Srebrenica. Morrillon was eventually called back to Paris out of fear that he would not be acceptable to the Bosnian Serbs anymore since his impartiality was now in jeopardy. See: Tony Barber, “Profile: General Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you: Tony Barber reports from Zvornik on the French general who is bringing hope to a besieged town,” *The Independent*, 21 March 1993.

284 Philippe Morillon, “The military aspects of field operations,” in *United Nations peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, eds. Brigitte Stern, Yves Daudet, Philippe Morillon and Marie-Claude Smouts (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 98. Also see: Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” 59. Both generals did not hide their Catholicism as a drive to succeed in their “peace missions.” Loridon argued that peacekeepers have the duty not to hesitate to risk their lives for peace in another country and protect its population. He described this as a “Christian and human principle” and the *grandeur* of the soldier of peace. See: Philippe Morillon, *Croire et oser. Chronique de Sarajevo* (Paris: Grasset, 1993); Loridon, “La fermeté,” 248; Loridon, “The U.N. intervention in Cambodia”; Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” 87.

285 Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” 87; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

286 John M. Sanderson, “The UNTAC Military Component,” in *Past Imperfect, Future UNCertain: The United Nations at Fifty*, ed. Ramesh Thakur (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 122.

287 Sanderson, “UNTAC: The Military Component View,” 130; John M. Sanderson, “Intervening for Peace.”

288 Sanderson, “Dabbling into War,” 149.

289 Loridon, “La fermeté,” 245.

290 Sanderson, “The Incalculable Dynamic of Force,” 206.

291 Loridon, “The U.N. intervention in Cambodia.” In 1995, French Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Lanxade equally referred to “active impartiality.” See: Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” 62.

no legitimate authority to use force against any party in Cambodia because this was contrary to the pacific nature of Chapter VI of the UN Charter.²⁹² But for Loridon, the use of force did not necessarily mean the use of *armed* force, but could also amount to a show of strength and forceful persuasion.²⁹³

The doctrines for peacekeeping operations that were later developed by Australia and France, both in 1994, can be seen as conceptualisations of the visions that were expressed by Sanderson and Loridon during and in the aftermath of the mission in Cambodia. The Australian doctrine defined peacekeeping as “a non-coercive instrument of diplomacy,”²⁹⁴ whereas the French developed the term *restauration de la paix* (peace restoration) to underpin the idea that there is a continuum between peacekeeping and peace enforcement.²⁹⁵ It seems likely that the origins of these national peacekeeping doctrines can be found in the Cambodian experience, although experiences of both countries in Somalia, and for France in the former Yugoslavia have left marks that were just as important, if not more important.²⁹⁶

A central point Sanderson made in his articles is that there is a strict dividing line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Although this was possibly his strong conviction, it also provided an elegant excuse that conceals other factors that were at play and that informed his policy decisions. Scholars of UNTAC have nonetheless portrayed Loridon as the man who wanted to sacrifice 200 blue helmets in a peace enforcement operation and argued that Sanderson

292 John M. Sanderson, “Peacekeeping or Peace Enforcement? Global Flux and the Dilemmas of UN Intervention,” in *The United Nations at Fifty: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Ramesh Thakur (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1996), 183.

293 Michel Loridon, “Cambodge, les raisons d’un échec,” in *Opérations des Nations unies, leçons de terrain: Cambodge, Somalie, Rwanda, ex-Yougoslavie*, eds. Jean Pierre Cor and Franck Debié (Paris: la fondation diffusion documentation française, 1995), 108; This distinction was also made by Sir Brian Urquhart, the man who led peacekeeping operations during the larger part of the Cold War. See: Erwin A. Schmidl, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick: The Use of Force in Peace Operations, Past and Present,” in *Peacekeeping with muscle: the use of force in international conflict resolution*, eds. Alex Morrison, Douglas A. Fraser and James D. Kiras (Clementsport: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1997), 85. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of UNTAC made such a distinction: “there are two types of force: unarmed force and armed force.” The document stated: “Unarmed Force: Unarmed force involves the use of all means, short of weapons, to discharge the duties entrusted to UNTAC. Examples are the use of vehicles and personnel to prevent passage of armed persons and vehicles, or the removal of unauthorized persons from an UNTAC installation. UNTAC personnel are authorized to use unarmed force. Armed Force: Armed force is the use of any weapons, military or non-military, including clubs, batons, rifle butts, bayonets and opening fire. Examples are the use of clubs and teargas to deny entry to a UN post by a violent assembly, or the use of aimed shots to resist an attack on a convoy. UNTAC personnel are authorized to use armed force against armed persons.” UNTAC Standard Operating Procedures, Section 4 Use of Force, NIMH, UNTAC 099, folder 22.

294 Trevor Findlay, *The Use of Force in Peace Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press-SIPRI, 2002), 406. This doctrine also echoed the visions by Gareth Evans in his book *Cooperating for Peace*. Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for peace: the global agenda for the 1990s and beyond* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993). Sanderson also fully endorsed the Secretary-General’s *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*, in which Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated that peacekeeping required the consent of the parties and could not be combined with the use of force: *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: A/50/60*, 3 January 1995, paragraph 35 and 36; see: Sanderson, “Intervening for Peace” (1995).

295 The French developed the term *restauration de la paix* (peace restoration) to describe operations that were conducted in an ongoing conflict, and where force may be necessary to restore peace, using a mixture of persuasion and coercion, but not against a defined aggressor. The French argued that this category differs from *opérations d’imposition de la paix* (peace enforcement operations) which are always conducted under Chapter VII and against an identified aggressor. See: Thierry Tardy, “France,” in *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions*, eds. Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 120; Brigitte Stern, “Introduction,” in *United Nations Peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, ed. Brigitte Stern (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 4–5; Thierry Tardy, “The reluctant peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 5 (2014), 776.

296 For France see: Thierry Tardy, *La France et la gestion des conflits Yougoslaves (1991–1995): enjeux et leçons d’une opération de maintien de la paix de l’ONU* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1999), 330, 355–71.

was correct in knowing the limits of his peacekeeping mandate. By misrepresenting Loridon's views, the alternative courses of action he defended have been misunderstood. The theoretical and legalistic distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement therefore does not offer a suitable lens for a correct understanding of the different mindsets of the two generals and why they defended certain policies.

The UN's gamble of moving ahead

After the announcement by the Khmer Rouge that they would not disarm, UNTAC was officially in a crisis. As long as the Khmer Rouge would not cooperate, the State of Cambodia refused to disarm and demobilise 70 per cent of its troops. Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed to proceed with Phase Two, but without commencing the actual cantonment and disarmament process. Goulding and Akashi also agreed that UNTAC should proceed.²⁹⁷ A postponement, Akashi argued, would allow the Khmer Rouge to sabotage the entire peace process, while UNTAC had finally reached momentum. By the end of May, Cambodia witnessed a sudden surge of white vehicles and blue helmets. Practically all military units had arrived or were arriving and deploying throughout the country. Sanderson had deployed his units all around the Khmer Rouge areas in anticipation of a possible future Khmer Rouge decision to cooperate. "Since our contingents are arriving, our deployment plans all made and the process in full swing, apart from the absence of [the Khmer Rouge], there is really nothing else that we can practically do," Akashi cabled to Goulding.²⁹⁸ But as long as the Khmer Rouge showed no sign of cooperation, the mission to disarm the factions' forces was on hold. This meant that some 11,000 peacekeepers deployed around Cambodia were unable to do the job they had come to do.

The P5 wanted to resolve this situation as soon as possible. On 22 June, their foreign ministers were scheduled to travel to Tokyo for a conference on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia. The gathering, aimed to pledge funds for the rebuilding of Cambodia, was hosted by Japan, co-presided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and attended by all nineteen countries that had signed the Paris Peace Agreement plus fifteen other countries. France considered Tokyo a good occasion to organise a "mini Paris Peace Conference" in order to discuss how the clearly diverging interpretation the Khmer Rouge maintained of the peace agreements could be resolved. Although Khieu Samphan had announced that he was not planning to attend the Tokyo conference, it was hoped that he would agree to come after all for a fundamental discussion.²⁹⁹

Article 29 of the Paris Peace Agreements was the only whip that could be activated in the event of a violation of the accords. It was a vague procedure that authorised France and Indonesia to consult with the Cambodian factions "with a view to taking appropriate steps." But the co-chairmen were only allowed to do this upon request by the UN Secretary-General.³⁰⁰ Boutros-

297 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Phase-II," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

298 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 6 June 1992, "5 June Meeting of the Supreme National Council," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

299 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 June 1992, "Paris Conference on Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002.

300 This provision had resulted from the UN Secretariat's hesitation about giving the co-chairmen carte blanche to reconvene the Paris Conference after the agreements had been signed and responsibility for their implementation had been entrusted to the Security Council and through it to UNTAC.

Ghali, however, though contradictorily believing in a dialogue with Khieu Samphan, was not enthusiastic about the idea of reconvening the Paris Conference. In his view, the Paris Agreement, as it stood, was the only solid foundation for UNTAC, and any suggestion to modify or amend it should be vigorously resisted. He therefore asked Akashi to discourage the co-chairmen to pursue the idea.³⁰¹ Goulding later recalled that the option of putting the operation on hold and reconvene the Paris Conference was not given serious consideration in New York mainly for the reason that such a decision would inevitably cause further delays, higher costs, and was likely to lead to more negative publicity. The prevailing idea at UN Headquarters was that it was better to have a partly implemented agreement than no implementation at all. Goulding retrospectively admitted that things might have turned out differently if the UN had agreed to the reconvening of the Paris Conference: "it is interesting to think of what would have happened if we had gone down that road."³⁰² But rather than pausing the operation and face the challenge of a fundamental debate about the Paris Peace Agreement and a possible revision of the operational plan, the UN civilian leadership decided to move ahead in the hope that Khieu Samphan would keep his promises of cooperation and decide to join the disarmament process at some point. The Secretary-General already felt the pressure from the United States and other major countries to ensure that the UN operation would end as soon as the objective of the elections had been achieved.³⁰³ Boutros-Ghali therefore saw no time for a pause, a revision or a discussion. UNTAC needed to keep up with its time schedule.

Although the Paris Conference was not officially reconvened in Tokyo, the fact that all the signatories were present provided an occasion to discuss solutions for the way ahead. In Tokyo, the foreign ministers of the core group agreed to see what adaptations to the peace process could be made to persuade the Khmer Rouge to come back in. Eventually, Khieu Samphan did show up in Tokyo after all, and in the margins of the pledging conference, an extraordinary meeting of the SNC was convened. An informal "proposal for discussion" was circulated that sought to address the Khmer Rouge's concerns, especially by promoting a more active role of the SNC in the implementation of the peace process. Although the other three Cambodian factions accepted the paper's proposals and thus made another concession to the Khmer Rouge, Khieu Samphan asked "for more time" to study what came to be known as the "Tokyo non-paper."³⁰⁴

Meanwhile, access to the Khmer Rouge's territory was now explicitly forbidden. Signs appeared alongside the roads around the Khmer Rouge-controlled zone in western Cambodia with the text: "Unless [the] 23rd October 1991 Paris Peace Agreement is implemented correctly, unless the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia is verified, unless the SNC is functioning as sole authority in Cambodia, there will be no deployment in the western area."³⁰⁵ The road sign was symbolic for the fact that the stalemate had become definitive. UNTAC had failed to get a foot in the door when it had the opportunity, early on, before the Khmer Rouge abandoned

301 Cable Goulding to Sadry, 17 June 1992, "Paris Conference on Cambodia," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003; also see: letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

302 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

303 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 33.

304 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 July 1992, "Notes on my meetings," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002; S/24286. The pledging conference in Tokyo was considered a great success. The participants pledged 880 million US dollars in aid, which exceeded by far the Secretary-General's target of 595 million.

305 Jacqueline Park, "On the borderline," *The Nation*, 27 November 1992.

their wait-and-see attitude and fell back into the pattern that had characterised the UNAMIC experience: applying the strategy of stonewalling UNTAC's efforts and continually raising demands. The civilian leadership, especially in the UN Secretariat, largely ignored this problem as they were entirely focussed on mounting this gigantic operation and safeguarding its budget, despite calls from the core group to handle the imperfect implementation plan flexibly and adapt it to on-the-ground realities. They boxed themselves in with declarations that the timetable of the operation should be respected and the elections could not be held any later than early May 1993. An uncooperative party did not fit into that plan. The goal of the UN leadership to respect the operational calendar had been accomplished, but in doing so, it essentially skipped the first crucial step in the mission. The choice to ignore the Khmer Rouge's violations of the Paris Agreement would have grave consequences for the peace process. Goulding would admit in his memoirs, albeit not explicitly for the Cambodian case, that a central lesson he drew from his time as head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was to never turn a blind eye to the parties that do not respect the agreements they signed: "every condoned violation creates a precedent; ground lost at the beginning cannot be recovered; start tough and continue tough. But I have to confess that there were occasions when I too paled at the prospect of an early confrontation with one of the parties and agreed that a violation should not be challenged until later."³⁰⁶

The disarmament and demobilisation process turned into a superficial exercise. By 16 June, not a single Khmer Rouge soldier had reported to the UN forces, whereas 4,324 CPAF, 450 KPNLAF and 100 ANKI troops were disarmed and transferred to the cantonment sites.³⁰⁷ The Paris Agreement determined that the regroupment and cantonment process should be completed four weeks after its commencement. But on 13 July, only 13,512 soldiers from the four Cambodian factions had been cantoned, barely 5 per cent of the 200,000 soldiers that were projected. Amongst the cantoned troops, 9,003 belonged to the CPAF, 3,187 to ANKI, 1,322 to KPNLAF and none to the NADK.³⁰⁸ Soldiers of the two smaller resistance factions loyally reported to UNTAC and disarmed enthusiastically. Their armies practically ceased to exist. Although most of the troops in the cantonments were from the CPAF, they were generally of poor quality and the weapons they handed were old, rusty and unserviceable: "more dangerous for the shooter than for the enemy," Prince Sihanouk said.³⁰⁹ The CPAF made sure it was not weakened, and actually increased its efficiency because of reorganising and ridding itself of poor-performing conscript soldiers it wasn't able to pay anyway.³¹⁰ On 17 June, Hun Sen's army launched its biggest offensive in months against the Khmer Rouge in the provinces of Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear to regain the ground lost. UNTAC did not intervene as it considered the attacks to fall within the State of Cambodia's right to self-defence. The "military balance on the battlefield" needed to be maintained, declared Akashi.³¹¹ Part of this effort was that UNTAC made a deal with the other factions that its soldiers could go on "agricultural leave" once they had registered and handed in their weapons. This allowed the soldiers to work their fields and re-join their families,

306 Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 336.

307 Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 116.

308 S/24286.

309 "... ceux qui sont plus dangereuse pour le tireur que pour les ennemis." See: Note de l'entretien du Secrétaire général avec Son Altesse Royale Samdech Norodom Sihanouk à Jakarta, le 31 août 1992 à 17:00 heures, UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

310 Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 71.

311 "Cambodge: offensive des troupes de Phnom Penh contre les Khmers rouges," *Le Monde*, 17 June 1992.

while remaining on a two weeks' notice to report back to the cantonment site in case the Khmer Rouge decided to cooperate and come into the cantonments as well. But the partial disarmament clearly benefitted the Khmer Rouge whose troops were steadily gaining ground and expanding their influence into the vacuum left in the field as a result of the cantonment of the three other factions.³¹² The Khmer Rouge's refusal to provide UNTAC access to its zones endangered the creation of a neutral political environment, which was necessary for free and fair elections that were to be held in May 1993.³¹³ UNTAC's challenge continued to be to determine a strategy that could break the stalemate and induce the Khmer Rouge to cooperate.

312 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, "implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

313 Mark Dodd, "Cambodian factions locked in crisis talks," *Reuters*, 5 June 1992; Mark Dodd, "U.N. says it will fight if attacked by Khmer Rouge," *Reuters*, 10 June 1992.

Determining strategy: Pressure or exclude

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With their explicit refusal to participate in the disarmament and demobilisation process, the Khmer Rouge removed their mask of feigned cooperation and entrenched themselves in a position with unreasonable demands. This stalemate could not go on for too long as it endangered the cease-fire settlement and the objectives of the entire operation. Without disarmament of the parties, a neutral political environment, which was an absolute prerequisite for the conduct of elections, would be impossible to obtain. The objective to organise the elections in April or May 1993, which could not be delayed into the summer because of the seasonal rains, weighed heavily on UNTAC. Moreover, the question was how long the other parties, especially the State of Cambodia, were prepared to wait for the Khmer Rouge and continue to faithfully disarm their troops, reducing their own strength. It was therefore urgent to determine a strategy before the entire peace process would fall apart. This chapter is concerned with the courses of action that were considered and implemented by UNTAC to get the Khmer Rouge to cooperate and put the operation back on track.

As political scientist Lise Howard has theorised, UN peacekeeping operations generally have three ways to exercise power and change the behaviour of the parties to a conflict; through persuasion, inducement and coercion.¹ Conventional wisdom has it that UNTAC maintained a cautious approach of patient diplomacy towards the Khmer Rouge, and counted on the diplomatic persuasion by external powers, especially Beijing and Bangkok, to negotiate the rebellious faction towards cooperation.² Cambodia scholars Ben Kiernan and Raoul Jennar have criticised this policy as “appeasement.”³ UNTAC’s alleged non-confrontational strategy has been predominantly identified with Akashi, who has generally been characterised as a cautious and risk-averse UN bureaucrat marked by a Japanese-style search for consensus avoiding any form of confrontation.⁴ This interpretation, however, needs to be nuanced as new evidence reveals that Akashi actually distanced himself from New York’s policy of patient diplomacy and instead aimed to pressure the Khmer Rouge into cooperation with a more assertive use of UN peacekeepers. Howard argues that inducement, which entails, among other measures, weapons embargos, and economic

1 Morjé Howard, *Power in UN Peacekeeping*, 29.

2 Doyle, *UNTAC’s Civil Mandate*, 67; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 237; Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 174; Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 123; Roberts, “A dangerous game,” 46; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 169, 198; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 71; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 129; Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 97; Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 153; John Hillen, *Blue Helmets: the strategy of UN military operations* (London: Brassey’s, 2001), 171; Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 53–54; Boraden Nhem, *A continuation of politics by other means: the “politics” of a peacekeeping mission in Cambodia (1992–93)* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2011), 46.

3 Kiernan, “The Failures of the Paris Agreement on Cambodia,” 13; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 407.

4 Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” 29; Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 198; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 110; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 129; Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: the History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 384; Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2011), 325; Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 123; Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 200–206; Sitkowski, *UN Peacekeeping: Myth and Reality*, 94; Oltra, *L’intervention des Nations Unies au Cambodge*, 37; Hazdra, *Die UNO-Friedensoperation in Kamboscha*, 408; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 110; Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 152.

sanctions, is an effective but often neglected strategy that peacekeepers can employ to influence belligerents' behaviour.⁵ This chapter shows that in Cambodia, although Akashi and a Security Council resolution supported such an inducement policy, it was eventually not implemented by the force commander out of fear of provoking the Khmer Rouge. This calls into question the argument, first made by political scientist Stephen John Stedman, that Akashi successfully dealt with the Khmer Rouge by following a strategy of the "departing train," a metaphor implying that the peace process would go irrevocably forward with or without the Khmer Rouge, leaving them behind if they would not jump on board on time.⁶ Although from the outside it looked as if, in the autumn of 1992, UNTAC was merely "muddling through" or "struggling to stay afloat," as scholars have suggested,⁷ in the period between June and December 1992, more options were considered and discussed than previously assumed. It appears that in determining strategy, the option of pressuring the Khmer Rouge was thwarted by the Australian government and the force commander, who instead pushed for the exclusion of the Khmer Rouge.

The P5: united in division

The dominant idea in the existing literature is that the UN mission in Cambodia enjoyed a remarkable consensus among the P5 in the Security Council on an issue that had traditionally divided them, and that this was a key factor that allowed the Cambodian operation to move forward.⁸ Duane Bratt, for instance, argued that "UNTAC was able to deal effectively with the Khmer Rouge because it had the full and united support of the P-5."⁹ The resolutions of the UN Security Council may have given the impression of unity, but behind the scenes there was no consensus among the P5 on how to deal with the Khmer Rouge, which seriously hampered UNTAC's effectiveness. The P5 did put much effort in maintaining their unity, but this meant that, in the face of the Khmer Rouge's non-cooperation, the Security Council was unable to respond forcefully, in particular because of Beijing's opposition. As a consequence, there was more room for initiative in the field to determine policy. The role of the P5 ambassadors in Phnom Penh, as well as their EP5 colleagues, was absolutely crucial for the decision-making processes in Cambodia. Although their role in the daily conduct of the operation remained a strictly advisory one, Akashi was nonetheless very attentive to the opinions of the P5 ambassadors and used them as his sounding board.¹⁰ The strong cohesion and the high level of agreement

5 Morjé Howard, *Power in UN Peacekeeping*, 80.

6 Stephen John Stedman, "UN Intervention in Civil Wars: Imperatives of Choice and Strategy," in *Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping*, eds. Donald C. F. Daniel and Bradd C. Hayes (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 43; Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," 14.

7 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 103; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 156.

8 Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, 83; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 204; Doyle, "UNTAC's Civil Mandate," 64; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 175.

9 Bratt, "Explaining peacekeeping performance," 54.

10 Yasushi Akashi, "An assessment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)," in *Cambodia, progress and challenges since 1991*, eds. Pou Sothirak, Geoff Wade and Mark Hong (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 157; Author's interview with Philippe Coste; Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session II; Interview James S. Sutterlin with Sir Marrack Goulding; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June 1992, "Les Khmers Rouges et le processus de paix," ADN, 10POI/1 1314.

among the P5 ambassadors struck the special representative upon his arrival in Phnom Penh.¹¹ This sense of unity was in no small part due to the fact that they all discovered an exotic country that had known very few contacts with the rest of the world for more than a decade. Since most of the embassy buildings had been demolished after the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, the iconic luxury hotel *Cambodiana* functioned as a temporary diplomatic pension in the first months of the operation. The ambassadors and their staff set up office in the hotel and continuously worked in close contact with each other.¹² US Ambassador Charles Twining later recalled: “you would see each other at breakfast. It was almost incestuous, but it was a good way to operate.”¹³ The permanent representatives of the P5 in New York held their consultations in preparation of Security Council resolutions on the basis of the synergetic discussions among their colleagues in Phnom Penh.

The P5 agreed that it was important to maintain their cohesion, especially in the face of the waning cooperation from the Khmer Rouge.¹⁴ In order to demonstrate a broad and united front to the Khmer Rouge, the ambassadors of the P5, joined by ambassadors from the core group, made a common demarche to the Khmer Rouge. During their meeting with Khieu Samphan on 5 June they strongly urged the Khmer Rouge to cooperate. Although the Khmer Rouge president conceded absolutely nothing and stoically read his standard declaration, he nonetheless appeared to be impressed by the unanimity of the P5, including the Chinese.¹⁵ Despite the pursuit of unity, there were different views amongst the P5 about how to respond to the Khmer Rouge’s non-cooperation. Paris and Moscow were in favour of applying economic sanctions, but Washington and London wondered whether these would have any effect and feared that they could backfire and strengthen the rebellious attitude of the Khmer Rouge.¹⁶ The Chinese ambassador in Phnom Penh stood alone in advising patience and dialogue, and cautioned his P5 colleagues that in Asia the use of public pressure should be avoided.¹⁷ Beijing probably preferred to avoid criticising the Khmer Rouge publicly because this could imply that they had lost control over them, which would be painful to admit since their influence on the Khmer Rouge was their only card of influence in the Cambodian peace process. Beijing therefore hoped that a tough Security Council resolution could

11 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 March 1992, “Situation report,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004. This unity also struck British journalist William Shawcross. See: Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 38.

12 Author’s interview with Philippe Coste.

13 Interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy with Ambassador Charles H. Twining.

14 Cable US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Washington, DC, 27 May 1992, “Contact with the Khmer Rouge,” Department of State Records Freedom of Information Act (DSRFOIA), 6268; Cable James Baker to Ambassador US Ambassador Phnom Penh, 5 June 1992, “Perm Five meeting with Khmer Rouge,” DSRFOIA, 626c; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 8 June 1992, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309.

15 Cable US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Washington, DC, 6 June 1992, “Core Group Meeting with Khieu Samphan,” DSRFOIA, 626a; Cable US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Washington, DC, 5 June 1992, “No progress made in Cambodian meetings,” DSRFOIA, 6269; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 5 June 1992, “nouvelle réunion avec M. Khieu Samphan,” ADN, 10 Poi 1314; Cable US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Washington, DC, 6 June 1992, “Core Group Meeting with Khieu Samphan,” DSRFOIA, 626a.

16 Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 17 June 1992, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June, “Les Khmers Rouges et le processus de paix 2/2,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador London to Paris, 11 June 1992, “Cambodge – position Britannique,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; French Ambassador UN New York to Paris, 5 June 1992, “Conseil de Sécurité – Cambodge,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314.

17 Cable US Permrep UN New York to Department of State Washington, DC, 3 June 1992, “Cambodia – perm five meeting on Khmer Rouge,” DSRFOIA, 626d; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to MFA Paris, 9 June 1992, “Concertation avec M. Akashi,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

be avoided as long as possible.¹⁸ Getting a resolution adopted with a unanimous vote was a delicate matter. While the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia and France wanted to put pressure on the Khmer Rouge by condemning their behaviour in a resolution, China did not want to point the finger directly at its former clients.¹⁹ The language of the resolution was inevitably watered-down to “strongly deploring” the behaviour of “one of the parties.”²⁰ On 21 July, Resolution 766 was unanimously adopted, which determined that only the parties that cooperated with UNTAC could benefit from the rehabilitation aid that had been pledged at Tokyo.²¹ As the Khmer Rouge had never applied for any aid, everyone realised that the effects of such sanctions would be limited and above all very symbolic.²² The P5’s attempts to maintain their unity while actually being divided limited the options for a Security Council response to the unravelling situation in Cambodia.

More carrots than sticks

After the humiliation at the bamboo pole in Pailin, Akashi was driven to the idea that it was time to act and take a firmer stand vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge. Contrary to the generally accepted idea that Akashi continued to believe in quiet diplomacy, the special representative actually saw the limits of the extent to which external players, such as Beijing and Bangkok, could persuade the Khmer Rouge into cooperation. Instead, he believed that UNTAC itself had the ability and responsibility to try to get some movement in the stalemate and was strongly encouraged, from different sides, to apply more carrots than sticks. First of all, there was Sihanouk, who told Akashi that it was clearly the Khmer Rouge’s intention to sabotage the peace process and strongly urged him to not allow this to happen.²³ Convinced that the Khmer Rouge were bluffing, the prince believed that UNTAC was “too soft” and too much inclined to negotiate with them.²⁴ He made it clear to the special representative that the Khmer Rouge would always remain a threat to the stability of the country if nothing was done to pressure them. If UNTAC would not take decisive action soon, the entire peace process would fall to pieces. “The world will say that Sihanouk and

18 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 1 June 1992, “Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador UN New York to MFA Paris, 9 June 1992, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June, “Les Khmers Rouges et le processus de paix 2/2,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador Beijing, 10 June 1992, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309.

19 Cable French PR New York to Paris, 10 July 1992, “Cambodge: attitude à adopter à l’égard des Khmers Rouges,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 July 1992, “Échange de vues à la réunion des Perm-5 plus,” UNA, S-1829-0313-0004.

20 Cable French PR New York to Paris, 13 July 1992, “Cambodge: attitude à adopter à l’égard des Khmers Rouges,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 16 July 1992, “Security Council Resolution,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

21 Cable Jean-David Levitte to French Embassies, 10 July 1992, “Cambodge – attitude à adopter à l’égard des Khmers Rouges,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 13 July 1992, ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Security Council resolution 766, 21 July 1992; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 18 June 1992, “Moyens de persuader les Khmers Rouges à coopérer,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309.

22 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, “Implementation of the Paris Agreements,” UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

23 Meeting Akashi with Prince Sihanouk, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0001; Meeting Akashi with Prince Sihanouk, 3 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

24 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June, “Les Khmers Rouges et le processus de paix 2/2,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Report by the Portuguese ambassador Castelo-Branco of his conversation with Prince Sihanouk on 31 May 1992.

Akashi and UNTAC failed in their duties and in their mission,” the prince warned.²⁵

Akashi was also pressured by members of his staff, such as Dennis McNamara, the director of UNTAC’s Human Rights component, who said: “I don’t see the point of having thousands of soldiers and police if one bamboo pole can stop us.”²⁶ Akashi, however, was not inclined to discuss strategic issues collectively with the directors of the UNTAC components. He preferred to reserve these to his own office which was filled with young and bright personal advisors, some of whom had accompanied him to Pailin and witnessed the painful episode.²⁷ They tried to convince their boss that stronger action was necessary by arguing that UNTAC was in a “war of nerves” with the Khmer Rouge, and if they would not act quickly and boldly, they would lose all credibility, putting the entire mission in doubt. Contrary to the statements by the Secretary-General, Akashi’s personal advisors emphasised that the key to success was “not in New York, but here in Cambodia, with UNTAC.”²⁸ One of their concrete suggestions was to send a company consisting of both French and Indonesian blue-helmeted paratroopers – representing the co-chairmen of the Paris Conference – to Pailin with the mission to help with the deployment of the Dutch marines into the area. This would allow UNTAC to regain the initiative and find out whether the Khmer Rouge really meant to resist the UN by force. Behrooz Sadry, Akashi’s deputy, was also in agreement with such an approach.²⁹

As the Security Council had limited options to officially decide on more forceful action because of China’s position, France, the United States and Russia informally encouraged Akashi to act more assertively. “What worries us,” US Ambassador Twining wrote to Akashi on 3 June, “is the perception that UNTAC is ‘doing little’, otherwise translated as ‘is weak’.” He argued that it was imperative that UNTAC began “showing that it is active and will not settle for the status quo, whatever one or another faction may be doing to block UNTAC activity.”³⁰ The American ambassador recommended to immediately deploy peacekeepers into populated Khmer Rouge zones and have them accompanied by members from the civilian components with the aim to make contact with the local population and win their hearts and minds for the UNTAC mission. In order to “show the UN flag” blue helmets would clearly have to force entry somewhat in those areas, but according to Twining, this was a risk that had to be taken. The French ambassador Coste and his Russian colleague Myakotnyk also tried to convince Akashi of the view that as long as the Khmer Rouge’s strategy of winning time and obtaining as many concessions as possible did not encounter any resistance from a lingering UNTAC, they would only continue to raise their

25 Akashi: Meeting with HRH Prince Norodom Sihanouk, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0001.

26 Power, *Chasing the flame*, 108. Also see: interview by James S. Sutterlin with Dennis McNamara, 16 February 1998, New York, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York.

27 Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 257.

28 Memo by member of Akashi’s staff (probably by Peter Swarbrick and Jean-Noël Poirier) to Akashi, 2 June 1992, “Preparations for Phase II: possible courses of action for UNTAC,” UNA, S-0794-0020-00002.

29 Peter Eng, “Cambodia: A Repeat of the Past or a New Course?,” *The Associated Press*, 23 August 1992.

30 Letter US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Akashi, 3 June 1992, UNA, S-0997-0006-0003.

stakes.³¹

Akashi was clearly convinced by these arguments, as he cabled on 3 June to Goulding: "Although the Security Council, the Permanent Five, the Secretary-General, the co-Chairmen of the Paris Conference and influential Powers such as China and Thailand have their own roles to play, I believe much can and should be done by UNTAC, given its powers in Cambodia and its rapidly growing military forces and civilian expertise."³² Akashi felt that he could not simply rely on the alleged diplomatic pressure exercised by Beijing and Bangkok as he doubted the extent to which they would have an effect. Beijing, he believed, seemed to have done what it could and Bangkok's ability and willingness to do more seemed not encouraging either.³³ Akashi's harder line was a cause for friction between him and his superiors at UN headquarters in New York. During Goulding's first field trip to Cambodia between 20 and 25 June, the DPKO-chief requested Akashi to remain strictly impartial and refrain from criticising the Khmer Rouge publicly.³⁴ Akashi challenged these directions and asked how he could remain impartial when three of the factions were cooperating with UNTAC and the fourth was not.³⁵ Goulding later remembered that Akashi became "very combative and aggressive towards the Khmer Rouge," and started to ignore his instructions.³⁶

Akashi saw that negotiations with the Khmer Rouge were going nowhere as Khieu Samphan refused to accept the Tokyo non-paper and continued to state his own demands. Two working sessions with the members of the Supreme National Council were held in Phnom Penh in early July, but instead of responding to the proposals formulated in Tokyo, Khieu Samphan made his own counterproposal to create "SNC Consultative Commissions" in all the administrative structures of the State of Cambodia. This basically meant the dismantlement of the SOC administration and its replacement with quadripartite commissions.³⁷ This proposal was clearly unacceptable, both for the SOC and for UNTAC. In addition to the meetings of the SNC, Akashi met three times with Khieu Samphan to persuade him to accept the Tokyo proposal and to take the necessary steps to comply with the Paris Agreement. But these attempts were also to no avail.³⁸ To this was added that, on 6 July, the Khmer Rouge announced to boycott the meetings of the Mixed Military Working Group, and a week later, launched new attacks in northern Cambodia.³⁹ These developments confirmed to Akashi that the Khmer Rouge were blocking the implementation of

31 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 1 June 1992, "Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 5 June 1992, "Nouvelle réunion avec M. Khieu Samphan," ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June, "Les Khmers Rouges et le processus de paix ½," ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 July 1992, "Échange de vues à la réunion des « Perm-5 plus », " UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; For a description of the Russian position see: Internal memorandum Jean-Noël Poirier to Yasushi Akashi, 12 May 1992, "Le Kampuchea Démocratique: 6 mois après l'arrivée de l'Organisation des Nations Unies au Cambodge," ADN, 521 PO/2 27.

32 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 June 1992, "Meeting with Prince Sihanouk and Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

33 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, "Implementation of the Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001; Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 9 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

34 Situation in Cambodia, observations by Marrack Goulding, 20–25 June 1992, UNA, S-0795-0043-0005.

35 Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 259.

36 Interview by James Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

37 Proposition de la Partie Kampuchea Démocratique concernant la coopération entre l'APRONUC et le CNS, 27 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

38 Notes of meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 6 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0012-0002; S/24286.

39 Sheri Prasso, "Khmer Rouge continue attacks in northern Cambodia," *AFP*, 15 July 1992.

the peace agreement and did not intend to participate in Phase Two.⁴⁰

The Secretary-General, however, was not persuaded by that view and continued to believe that the Khmer Rouge could be persuaded to be reasonable.⁴¹ On 27 June, Boutros-Ghali received a letter from Khieu Samphan in which the Khmer Rouge leader explained why he could not accept the proposals in the Tokyo non-paper, and the Secretary-General believed that some of Khieu Samphan's points did have "a certain legitimacy."⁴² Despite the fact that the Khmer Rouge had done nothing to fulfil their obligations under the Paris Agreements, the Secretary-General believed that they had the right to criticise UNTAC for not deploying its civil administration component on time which was tasked to supervise the Phnom Penh government.⁴³ He instructed Akashi to engage in "a private and patient dialogue" with Khieu Samphan, make additional efforts to meet the Khmer Rouge concerns and to demonstrate that UNTAC was rectifying its "shortcomings."⁴⁴ Boutros-Ghali promised to support Akashi in "working out an acceptable compromise" by writing a letter back to Khieu Samphan.⁴⁵

Akashi resisted Boutros-Ghali's instructions which, in his view, completely miscomprehended the reality of the situation on the ground in Cambodia.⁴⁶ He indicated to the Secretary-General that he had become convinced that the Khmer Rouge's concerns were not really genuine and only constituted a pretext to slow down the peace process. From his experience in dealing with Khieu Samphan in the preceding months, it had become clear to him that further concessions were unlikely to induce the Khmer Rouge to honour their obligations under the Paris Agreement. On the contrary, every concession UNTAC had made only led the Khmer Rouge to demand more.⁴⁷ Akashi had also come to the conclusion that Khieu Samphan, who continuously dictated the same fixed lines of argument, was nothing more than a "glorified mouthpiece" of Pol Pot who carefully followed the doctrine of talking while fighting, meaning that there were limits to Khieu Samphan's flexibility in negotiations.⁴⁸ Getting the Khmer Rouge to comply, Akashi argued, would therefore not only require dialogue, but also "a certain firmness and resolve, as well as a willingness to press them very hard when we can."⁴⁹ Akashi also started to publicly blame the Khmer Rouge for the increasing cease-fire violations in Cambodia and accuse them of following "a deliberate policy of

40 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 July 1992, "Notes on my meetings," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 10 July 1992, "Situation report for week beginning 5 July," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

41 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

42 Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 27 June 1992. See: Cable Goulding to Akashi, 29 June 1992, "Letter from Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

43 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 30 June 1992, "Khmer Rouge / UNTAC Radio station," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001; Letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

44 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003; Cable Goulding to Sadry, 17 June 1992, "UNTAC-1434 – meeting with P/5," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

45 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 30 June 1992, "Khmer Rouge / UNTAC Radio station," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

46 See: Akashi's notes expressing confusion and astonishment on cables from New York: Cable Goulding to Akashi, 30 June 1992, "Khmer Rouge / UNTAC Radio station," UNA, S-0794-0043-000; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, "Implementation of the Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

47 Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 9 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

48 Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 27 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 9 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi Session I and Session II.

49 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 10 July 1992, "reply Mr. Khieu Samphan to the Secretary-General," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

terror against ordinary Cambodians.”⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the pressure on Akashi to take stronger action continued to mount. On 30 July, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* published an interview with Sihanouk in which the prince publicly criticised UNTAC’s leadership. “The Khmer Rouge sees that the gentlemen of UNTAC are very kind,” Sihanouk told the *Review*, critically observing that UNTAC did not intervene in areas where the fighting occurred. “The Cambodian people believed the UN blue berets were like Jupiter threatening to unleash lightning against the Khmer Rouge. What do people see? When the Khmer Rouge advance, UNTAC pulls back. Akashi went to Pailin. They hung up a bamboo and UNTAC withdrew. Akashi just negotiates and negotiates.”⁵¹ These statements by the prince were embarrassing for Akashi, who by now clearly recognised the necessity to act. The day after the interview was published, he again insisted with Boutros-Ghali that the policy of quiet diplomacy and patient persuasion was not working.⁵² “While we continue talking with Khieu Samphan,” he wrote to the Secretary-General, “[the Khmer Rouge] seems determined to expand its influence in as many parts of Cambodia as possible.”⁵³ He pointed out that UNTAC had been using more carrots than sticks in dealing with the Khmer Rouge, and emphasised the need to shift the balance to the use of more sticks in their efforts to break the deadlock. The special representative reassured New York that he did not wish to invoke Chapter VII of the UN Charter, but in his view this did not mean that UNTAC could not adopt “a more active policy.”⁵⁴ He believed that much more could be done within UNTAC’s peacekeeping mandate.⁵⁵

In Akashi’s view, the UN Secretariat in New York did not have a clear appreciation of the challenges UNTAC faced in the field and therefore preferred to make his policy decisions more independently.⁵⁶ This was not necessarily surprising. UN peacekeeping operations had traditionally been commanded from the field, with UN headquarters in New York merely coordinating the political, logistical and financial aspects of the mission. The special representative is the general manager of the operation and operates under the double authority of the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General. As the exact hierarchy remains unclear, the relation between the Secretary-General and his special representative is generally a complicated one.⁵⁷ Moreover, Herman Salton has demonstrated in his study about the UN operation in Rwanda that, as a result of Boutros-Ghali’s reorganisation, there was a lot of confusion at the UN Secretariat about who was in charge of peacekeeping in the early 1990s. The result was that UN officials in the field enjoyed considerable margin of manoeuvre, which sometimes translated into disobeying orders from New York, selective reporting, and shaping policy in the way they saw fit.⁵⁸ Akashi, who knew the UN system from inside out, also took advantage of this confusion to follow a more

50 Kiernan, “The inclusion of the Khmer Rouge,” 238.

51 Nayan Chanda, “Interview Sihanouk: Sihanouk chides UNTAC for feeble response,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 July 1992, 19.

52 Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 9 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

53 Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 27 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

54 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, “Implementation of Paris Agreements,” UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

55 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 12 August 1992, “Military options,” UNA, S-0794-0043-0003.

56 Akashi, “An assessment of the UNTAC,” 163; Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

57 Donald Puchala, “The Secretary-General and His Special Representatives,” in: *The Challenging Role of the UN Secretary-General: Making “the Most Impossible Job in the World” Possible*, eds. Benjamin Rivlin and Leon Gordenker (Westport: Praeger 1993), 94.

58 Salton, *Dangerous Diplomacy*, 171, 197.

independent course from New York. The close relations the special representative maintained with the P5 ambassadors in Phnom Penh provided him with a direct line to the Security Council, circumventing the Secretary-General. The context of UNTAC confirms the general observation made by political scientist John Karlsrud that special representatives enjoy relative safety in acting contrary to the guidance from UN headquarters because of their personal authority, stature and network. Karlsrud even makes the argument that the SRSG can act as a “norm changer” in this regard.⁵⁹

Although Goulding was Boutros-Ghali’s most trusted adviser, their views on UN peacekeeping differed. The DPKO-chief was particularly wary of mission creep and overstretch, and urged the Secretary-General to make a distinction between “peacekeeping” and “peace-enforcement”. Boutros-Ghali, however, advocated a less conservative and more muscular interpretation of peacekeeping in his first year of office, and demonstrated with *An Agenda for Peace* his willingness to reinvent the concept. The Secretary-General lamented Goulding’s strong “doing it by the book” approach: “You are always telling me, Goulding, that we can’t do this and we can’t do that because that’s not the way we do peacekeeping in the United Nations,” he complained in early 1993.⁶⁰ Boutros-Ghali believed that giving political guidance to UN peacekeeping operations was his responsibility, leaving DPKO to take care of managing the operational aspects of missions on a day-to-day basis.⁶¹ At the same time, however, he did not believe that Akashi could be managed from New York.⁶² Goulding, who himself could only spend a fraction of his time on Cambodia believed this to be a mistake and later said that he had “great trouble” in persuading the Secretary-General of his view that “Akashi wasn’t actually doing a terribly good job.” They hardly spoke on the phone and Goulding felt that Akashi kept him in the dark by not sending a report as frequently as he should.⁶³ The time difference between Phnom Penh and New York was certainly a complicating factor in the coordination, but so were the travel restrictions Boutros-Ghali imposed on all his under-secretaries-general. As a consequence of this general travel ban, Goulding was unable to make regular visits to Cambodia and get a full picture of the situation on the ground, as he later explained to Professor James Sutterlin of Yale University:

“We all tried [. . .] to persuade [the Secretary-General] that you can’t run these large, complicated operations halfway across the world by fax and telephone. You’ve got to see what’s going on, what it’s like on the ground, how people are interacting with each other. And I only got to Cambodia twice, I think. Which is absurd, the largest peacekeeping operation since the Congo. And when air travel is so easy. But he said “No you can’t, you’re supposed to be here, you run your department, you stay here.” One of his greatest weaknesses, in my opinion. [. . .] If Boutros had allowed me to go every two months to Cambodia, as I went every two months to Namibia, it would have been different. Not that Goulding is a great man, but simply there would have been more exchange, better understanding.”⁶⁴

59 John Karlsrud, *Norm Change in International Relations: Linked ecologies in UN peacekeeping operations* (London: Routledge, 2016), 66.

60 Salton, *Dangerous Diplomacy*, 176-202.

61 Ibid, 203.

62 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

Despite Boutros-Ghali's limited interference in the conduct of the operation in Cambodia, he nonetheless continued to maintain a personal correspondence with Khieu Samphan, much to the chagrin of Akashi.⁶⁵ Goulding witnessed that the Secretary-General believed in "the force of intellectual arguments," and that he could hardly resist the temptation "to visit Pol Pot in the jungle."⁶⁶ In his letters to Boutros-Ghali, Khieu Samphan steadily repeated that the Paris Agreement "was a source of delight" for Democratic Kampuchea and that they had no reason whatsoever to prevent UNTAC from achieving "its noble objectives."⁶⁷ These polite formulations seemed to maintain Boutros-Ghali's belief that Khieu Samphan was a reasonable man and that a compromise could be found with him. Since Akashi had made it clear that he had lost his faith in further attempts of quiet diplomacy with Khieu Samphan, the Secretary-General requested Rafeeuddin Ahmed to open up a backchannel with the Khmer Rouge for secret negotiations. Ahmed, who had been dispatched to Bangkok as head of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) after he had declined the offer to lead UNTAC, met Khieu Samphan a couple of times in secret. Without Akashi knowing about it, they discussed possible compromise solutions, such as the immediate formation of a government of national reconciliation, which could be adjusted later according to the election results. Boutros-Ghali believed that these departures from the Paris Agreements could be justified if they brought the Khmer Rouge back into the process. But ultimately, the behind-the-scenes talks led to nothing.⁶⁸ The only effect this side-lining of Akashi undoubtedly had was that it further undermined his authority, and that of UNTAC in general, vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge.

Hopes for a diplomatic solution were particularly vested in the negotiations conducted by China, Japan and Thailand in August.⁶⁹ The Chinese diplomat, Xu Dunxin, allegedly met with Pol Pot in Bangkok on 7 August, but China's influence on the Khmer Rouge leadership turned out to be less than expected, as the talks did not lead to any positive result.⁷⁰ On 22 August, a Japanese delegation travelled to Bangkok to hold a tripartite meeting with officials from the Thai government and the Khmer Rouge. The Thai and Japanese diplomats proposed to set up an "Administrative Consultative Body," which was meant as a coordination committee within the SNC that provided the factions with the possibility to exchange views on a more technical level in the case of disagreement. It was hoped that such a mechanism would ensure that the actions of the Phnom Penh government were neutral, as well as to stimulate the Khmer Rouge to deal more rationally with issues. But again, instead of commenting on the ideas that were tabled, Khieu Samphan released his own counterproposal suggesting the creation of "Consultative Commissions"

65 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 11 September 1992, "SecGen's proposed letter to Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-0794-0043-0003.

66 Cable Netherlands PR UN New York to The Hague, 19 November 1992, AMBZ, 990. Boutros-Ghali also mentioned this to Roland Dumas: Cable French Ambassador Geneva to Paris, 30 December 1992, "Entretien du Ministre d'État avec le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies: Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

67 Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 29 September 1992, UNA, S-1085-0030-0008.

68 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 35; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 260.

69 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, "implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

70 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 11 August 1992, "DK change of policy," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002; Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 20 August 1992, "Thailand/asean," AMBZ, DOA 01729; Sutin Wannabovorn, "China hopes Khmer Rouge will comply with peace," *Reuters*, 3 August 1992.

of the SNC within the administrative structures and police forces of all the Cambodian parties.⁷¹ Although there seemed to be some similarities with the Thai-Japanese proposal, a compromise could not be found.⁷² Tokyo was eager to find a solution as it had not only invested a lot of its credit, but also its credibility as an active UN member state in the operation.⁷³ Akashi, however, was more annoyed than pleased by the initiatives of the Japanese government, in which he was not consulted. He felt that these diplomatic gesticulations interfered with his own actions and therefore hoped that they would run aground soon.⁷⁴ In general, Asian countries were very active in trying to find a solution for the stalemate, and countries from Southeast Asia in particular pleaded for a more Asian approach.

The ASEAN way: an Asian solution for an Asian problem

The “Asian Way” refers to the conduct of diplomacy based on the principle that there must be “Asian solutions to Asian problems” in opposition to the intervention of foreign powers. In the years after the Second World War, this philosophy arose in several Asian countries out of the realisation that the Western principles of international relations could not be applied satisfactorily in an Asian context. At its core stood the principle that decisions should result from a process of informal discussions and consensus building, in contrast to Western *realpolitik*. These principles motivated the foreign ministers of five Southeast Asian countries to form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967.⁷⁵ Embodying a non-confrontational and informal way of diplomacy along Southeast Asia’s cultural norms, the “ASEAN way” became the preferred model for the regional organisation to deal with conflict situations.⁷⁶

Key ASEAN member states, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia all played prominent roles in the Cambodian peace process, but they had been disappointed by the extent to which they were involved in the conduct of UNTAC. In late June 1992, ambassadors from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia approached the UN, both in New York and in Phnom Penh to demand a closer coordination between UNTAC and the ASEAN countries.⁷⁷ In Phnom Penh, several ambassadors from ASEAN countries complained to Akashi that their nationals were underrepresented at UNTAC’s military headquarters and stressed the need to handle the Khmer Rouge in a more “Asian way.”⁷⁸ The ASEAN countries acted swiftly after a desperate Akashi replied that he would support any action by ASEAN that could help UNTAC to get cooperation from the Khmer Rouge. On 10 July, the Malaysian Minister of Defence, Najib Razak, made a trip

71 This idea of giving the SNC more power represented a concept that had been abandoned before the signing of the Paris Agreement, but was much less radical than the previous Khmer Rouge’s demand for the full dismantlement of the SOC administration. See: Proposition de la partie Kampuchea Démocratique concernant le rôle du CNS et la mise en œuvre de la Phase II, le 22 août 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0004.

72 Proposal of the Democratic Kampuchea Party on the role of the Supreme National Council and the implementation of Phase II, 27 August 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0002.

73 Japan was planning to deploy an engineering battalion to Cambodia in October or November.

74 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 6 August 1992, “Conversation avec M. Akashi,” ADN, 10POI/1 131; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, “implementation of Paris Agreements,” UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

75 Michael Haas, *The Asian Way to Peace: A Story of Regional Cooperation* (Westport: Praeger, 1989), 3–10.

76 Gillian Goh, “The ‘ASEAN Way’ Non-Intervention and ASEAN’s Role in Conflict Management,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 115.

77 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 18 June 1992, “Malaysia’s concerns regarding UNTAC,” UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

78 Akashi’s meeting with some ASEAN ambassadors on 1 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

to Cambodia during which he proposed to Akashi and Sanderson to deploy a mixed force of Malaysian and Indonesian troops into the western Khmer Rouge zone around Pailin. It appeared that the proposal originally came from Thailand's Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin, who had presented it to the Malaysian government. The Thais seemed to have discussed the idea with Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief Son Sen, who allegedly had reacted positively to the proposal.⁷⁹ Minister Razak emphasised to Akashi and Sanderson that he was very serious about this proposition which, he argued, could potentially force a breakthrough in the stalemate. Sanderson, however, was not charmed by the idea. He believed that it was a matter of principle that the Khmer Rouge could not dictate how he deployed his troops. Moreover, he considered it dangerous for the cohesion of his peacekeeping force if he was to give a preference to contingents from certain countries.⁸⁰ Clearly disappointed by UNTAC's lukewarm reaction to his proposal, Razak publicly announced, upon his return to Kuala Lumpur, that he had met with Khieu Samphan in Phnom Penh and proposed to him, in name of Malaysia and Indonesia, to send ASEAN "peace forces" into the Khmer Rouge zones. Razak did not specify whether these forces would fall under UNTAC's responsibility or not, neither how Khieu Samphan had responded to his proposal. But his intention was clearly to pressure UNTAC's leadership to reconsider.⁸¹

Whereas Sanderson outrightly rejected the ASEAN plan, Akashi discussed the proposal for this regional approach with the UN Secretariat and consulted the P5 ambassadors in Phnom Penh on the matter. The P5 were divided. France and Russia firmly objected and agreed with the force commander's arguments. The United States and the United Kingdom, however, pointed out that the proposal could represent a way forward and should therefore be taken into serious consideration. With the peace process in a complete stalemate, they felt that it might be an important opportunity to seize. They teasingly countered France's firm opposition by pointing out that it would not be the first time that a troop-contributor pressured the UNTAC leadership to deploy its contingent to a specific part of the country. Most importantly, China was also in favour. Ambassador Fu argued that this proposal should not be seen as a concession to the Khmer Rouge because the proposal came from "friendly countries who want to help UNTAC."⁸²

The UN Secretariat in New York was in favour of trying it the ASEAN way. Goulding believed that UNTAC could make much more use of the countries from the region and proposed that UNTAC took advantage of the fact that the Khmer Rouge regarded Asian countries "as being more understanding towards their position than some others." He considered it unlikely that the Khmer Rouge would start cooperating unless UNTAC made a visible concession. Deploying peacekeepers from ASEAN countries into Pailin would represent a change in UNTAC's policy and might persuade the Khmer Rouge to make a gesture in return.⁸³ The ASEAN initiative also fitted into Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace*, in which the Secretary-General argued that regional

79 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 July 1992, "Meeting with the EP-5," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 16 July 1992, "Proposition du ministre malaisien de la défense," ADN, 10POI/1 1311.

80 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 July 1992, "record of Mr. Akashi's meeting with Dato Seri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak, minister of Defence 10 July 1992," UNA, S-1829-0313-0004.

81 Cable French Ambassador Kuala Lumpur to Paris, 14 July 1992, "Cambodge: proposition du ministre Malaisien de la défense," ADN, 10POI/1 1311.

82 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 July 1992, "Meeting with the EP-5," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

83 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, "Implementation of the Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

arrangements and organisations should play an important role in UN peacekeeping.⁸⁴

Akashi saw both the advantages and disadvantages of the ASEAN proposal and hesitated. In his conversations with Khieu Samphan, it struck Akashi that the Khmer Rouge president sometimes referred to UNTAC as "*l'Occident*." Sending Southeast Asian troops into the Khmer Rouge zone, would certainly help to counter the Khmer Rouge narrative that UNTAC represented the West.⁸⁵ But the special representative did not like the idea to make a new concession to the Khmer Rouge and strongly felt that it was time for them to make a move, not for UNTAC. He also agreed with Sanderson that UNTAC reserved the right to deploy its contingents where it saw fit. Without any guarantees for cooperation by Khieu Samphan in return, deploying Malaysian and Indonesian troops into the Pailin area, instead of the Dutch marines, it did not seem to make sense. If, however, such a move by UNTAC would be part of "a bigger package" in which the Khmer Rouge promised in return to give UNTAC full and unrestricted access to their zone, then Akashi would be willing to consider the ASEAN proposal. But even in that scenario, he insisted that UNTAC should send in a mixed contingent, consisting of a majority of Dutch forces and a minority of Malaysian or Indonesian troops.⁸⁶

Sanderson nonetheless maintained that the proposal should be strongly resisted. Besides his concern of dancing to the Khmer Rouge's tune, the force commander also feared that problems could arise in the longer run if the Khmer Rouge was given special treatment over the other factions. He believed that the ASEAN proposal fitted into a deliberate Khmer Rouge strategy to draw divisions between UNTAC contingents from Asia and other parts of the world. The force commander observed that this was already happening in Kompong Thom province where the Indonesian battalion maintained good relations with the Khmer Rouge and ignored the intimidation of the four unarmed UN military observers located in the sector of their responsibility. In early August, the local Khmer Rouge commander in Kraya, General Chou Chin, told the UNMOs that they would be killed if they did not move out of the area immediately, which they subsequently did. Sanderson felt that the Indonesians had been weak in defending the UNMOs against these threats. Neither were the difficulties with Indonesian Colonel Tinggogoy in April forgotten, and the force commander feared that Indonesian troops would continue to pursue their own agenda if deployed into the Pailin area.⁸⁷ But Sanderson's mistrust vis-à-vis his Indonesian battalion was not the strongest of arguments against the ASEAN proposal which was essentially coming from Malaysia, whose Royal Ranger battalion performed splendidly in Battambang province, which was close to Pailin.

More disconcerting were the indications Sanderson had received from the Dutch battalion commander that the Khmer Rouge's preference for Asian peacekeepers was based on their premise that they were easier to manipulate than the Dutch.⁸⁸ After his battalion had been deployed

84 Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, 37.

85 Meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 3 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

86 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 July 1992, "Meeting with the EP-5," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 16 July 1992, "Proposition du ministre malaisien de la défense," ADN, 10POI/1 1311.

87 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 77.

88 Cable Netherlands Embassy Canberra to The Hague, 17 July 1992, "Cambodja," AMBZ, DOA 01729; Damien Healy "Contrepoint," in *Opérations des Nations unies, leçons de terrain: Cambodge, Somalie, Rwanda, ex-Yougoslavie*, eds. Jean Pierre Cot and Franck Debié (Paris: la fondation diffusion documentation française, 1995), 70.

around the Khmer Rouge-controlled zone, Lieutenant Colonel Dukers and his staff were invited to a secret rendezvous with unknown individuals in a local bar. During the meeting, the Dutch officers were basically requested to adopt a more liberal approach with regard to the disarmament and demobilisation of the Khmer Rouge in their sector. When gemstones were put on the table, it became crystal clear what kind of game was being played. When Dukers refused to be bribed, his interlocutors replied that they would make sure to arrange that the Dutch forces would soon be replaced by a contingent from another country.⁸⁹ Dukers reported the incident to Sanderson, which convinced the force commander that the argument that only peacekeepers from Southeast Asia were able to persuade the Khmer Rouge to cooperate had a hollow ring. He pointed out to Goulding that UNTAC's military component should remain united.⁹⁰ Looking back on UNTAC, Sanderson strongly emphasised the importance of keeping the unity of his peacekeeping force: "A *United Nations* force cannot afford to be a collection of national contingents each pursuing their own agenda [. . .] the United Nations Force Commander cannot be seen to be discriminating between the members of his force. To have done so in UNTAC would have almost certainly led to further demands aimed at dividing the force and weakening the Agreements."⁹¹

In the meantime, Akashi had inquired directly with Khieu Samphan about the Khmer Rouge's position with regard to the ASEAN proposal. Samphan had replied that it did not matter from which country the UNTAC troops came because it would not change their demands.⁹² This was enough for Akashi to put the option aside. In his report to the Secretary-General, Akashi wrote that he was satisfied that "replacing the Dutch battalion with an ASEAN battalion in the [Khmer Rouge] zones will not change their non-cooperation with us," and added that he therefore did not see any solution in "an unspecified 'Asian approach'."⁹³ But Goulding believed that this was not necessarily the Khmer Rouge's last word and requested Akashi to continue to explore what Khieu Samphan would be prepared to offer in return for "specific moves" by UNTAC.⁹⁴

Whereas in Phnom Penh and New York the ASEAN-plan was generally considered as a concession to the Khmer Rouge, either pointless or necessary, Malaysia presented it as an opportunity to claim freedom of movement in the Khmer Rouge zones and fulfil UNTAC's mission with a reduced risk of escalation and casualties. Malaysian Defence Minister Razak argued that the Khmer Rouge were unlikely to open fire at ASEAN troops, should the decision be made to move them into Pailin.⁹⁵ On 31 July, Razak repeated to Akashi's deputy Sadry that Malaysia was ready to send a second Malaysian battalion to Cambodia. He even proposed to travel to Pailin personally "as a sincere gesture towards breaking the deadlock." Sadry respectfully declined Razak's offer and told him that UNTAC did not need an extra battalion.⁹⁶ The Malaysian

89 Author's interview with Herman Dukers; Correspondence with Herman Dukers, 5 December 2019.

90 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002.

91 Sanderson, "UNTAC: The Military Component View," 132.

92 Cable Akashi to Goulding 31 July 1992, "Implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 July 1992, "Situation report for week beginning 19 July," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

93 Cable Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 27 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

94 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, "Implementation of the Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

95 Courtesy Call on Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, 31 July 1992, UNA, S-1854-0016-0007.

96 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 July 1992, "record of Mr. Akashi's meeting with Dato Seri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak, minister of Defence 10 July 1992," UNA, S-1829-0313-0004; Courtesy Call on Acting Sec-General Dato' Abdul Halim Ali, 30 July 1992, UNA, S-1854-0016-0007.

government expressed disappointment that its readiness to be in the frontline of breaking the stalemate in the peace process was met with an unfavourable response on the part of UNTAC.⁹⁷ Whereas Goulding continued to argue that the ASEAN option should be kept “in reserve,”⁹⁸ the scenario was off the table as far as Sanderson and Akashi were concerned. Malaysia nonetheless continued to reiterate its offer to make a second battalion available to UNTAC until December.⁹⁹ The Thai government also continued to raise the proposal with the UNTAC leadership, but to no avail. When Sanderson visited Bangkok on 3 August, Foreign Minister Sarasin told the force commander: “Apparently, Khieu Samphan has a negative reaction to the Dutch,” and added that Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief Son Sen had indicated that “ASEANs would help.” But Sanderson was not willing to discuss the subject again and only indicated that the Khmer Rouge did not need to be “frightened of the Dutch”.¹⁰⁰

It is often assumed that Akashi and Sanderson decided to refrain from sending blue helmets into the Khmer Rouge zone because they appreciated that the countries contributing troops to the operation would never accept to see their soldiers involved in dangerous situations.¹⁰¹ Jeni Whalan, for example, has argued that Sanderson and Akashi were keenly aware that troop contributing countries had committed their forces to a non-enforcement peacekeeping operation and that the international political consensus opposed the use of force. According to Whalan, the presence of the EP5 on the ground in Phnom Penh was highly influential in shaping this perception, posing a significant structural constraint on the power of UNTAC.¹⁰² Yet there is little evidence to support this claim except for the fact – as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter – that the governments in Canberra and Tokyo discouraged actions that involved risk-taking, though both countries contributed supporting units and not infantry battalions that could be tasked to move into the Khmer Rouge areas. The argument that there was a complete unwillingness among UNTAC’s troop-contributing countries to take the risk of deploying into the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas seems unsound when taking into account the strong urging of ASEAN countries – which did contribute three infantry battalions and offered a fourth – to make better use of their troops and their greater acceptability as Asians.

French firmness

As co-president of the Paris Conference and permanent member of the UN Security Council, France had an influential voice in the conduct of the operation. As soon as it became clear that the Khmer Rouge boycotted the disarmament and demobilisation process, France advocated to pressure the Khmer Rouge into cooperation with economic sanctions. Paris essentially proposed

97 Malaysia nonetheless continued to reiterate its offer to deliver an extra battalion to UNTAC until December 1992. See: Letter Dato Seri Abdul Rahman bin Hj. Abdul Hamid to Akashi, 26 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0009-0002.

98 Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 31 July 1992, “Eventueel relocatie van Nederland bataljon in Kambodja,” AMBZ, BZ-DOA-463.

99 Letter General Dato Seri Abdul Rahman bin Hj. Abdul Hamid to Akashi, 16 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0009-0002.

100 Meeting between Lt. Gen. Sanderson and foreign minister of Thailand, Mr Arsa Sarasin at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok on 3 August 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

101 Doyle, *UNTAC’s Civil Mandate*, 68; Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 170.

102 Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 96–97.



An area near the Khmer Rouge-controlled town of Pailin, where intensive logging and gemstone mining activities resulted in severe deforestation. Photo credit: H.F. Dukers / NIMH.

to put a brake on the lucrative trade in logs and gemstones between the Khmer Rouge and Thai businesses.¹⁰³ The Khmer Rouge earned large sums of money with the exploitation of these natural resources, which they used not only to sustain themselves, but also to operate their own development aid system which included buying rice from Cambodian farmers for a higher price than the market value. Such actions made the Khmer Rouge successful in winning the hearts and minds, and thus support, of the Cambodian population.¹⁰⁴ With the logging and gem mining activities they also became less dependent on their former patron and supplier Beijing, which eliminated important Chinese leverage vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge on which the Security Council had counted to guarantee their cooperation.¹⁰⁵ Taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Vietnamese army and the peace negotiations in the summer of 1989, the Khmer Rouge had conquered Pailin and the surrounding areas, which contained one of the world's richest ruby and sapphire fields.¹⁰⁶ Lucrative contracts were granted to Thai mining and logging companies of which the lion's share dated from after the signing of the Paris Agreement in November 1991 and had a total estimated value of one billion US dollars. The Khmer Rouge earned millions of dollars

103 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 10 June 1992, "10 June Meeting of the Supreme National Council and subsequent meeting of EP5," UNA, S-0795-0045-0003; Situation in Cambodia, observations by Marrack Goulding, 20–25 June 1992, UNA, S-0795-0043-0005; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 June 1992, "Les khmers rouges et le processus de paix 2/2," ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Cable Paris to New York/Phnom Penh, 2 June 1992, "Concertation a cinq sur le Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1315.

104 APRONUC exposé Capitaine Justine, video 92.9.014 - K7-13, ECPAD.

105 Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 65, 87.

106 In 1989, logging had been officially prohibited in Thailand because of the alarming rate of deforestation in that country.

per month with the illicit trade, but the Thai businesses and army officers also paid in vehicles, communication equipment, generators, quinine and other vital supplies.¹⁰⁷

France considered that interfering in this important lifeline had the potential to cut the Khmer Rouge's income so significantly that it would make them more flexible quickly enough. The advantage of this method also was that pressure could be applied through denial rather than direct confrontation. To achieve an effective blockade, the French proposed that UNTAC would take control of all large border crossing points located in the Khmer Rouge zones. Although it would be a complex operation, the French felt it was technically possible.¹⁰⁸ They moreover argued that it would also be fully in line with the Paris Agreement which stipulated that UNTAC's military was to establish checkpoints along the Cambodian side of the border with the aim to monitor the cessation of outside assistance to all Cambodian parties after the start of Phase Two. Sanderson had given priority to the prompt establishment of border checkpoints along the Vietnamese-Cambodian border in order to satisfy the Khmer Rouge's concerns, but at the Thai-Cambodian border, only six of the twelve planned checkpoints had been realised, as the other six were situated in the Khmer Rouge-controlled zones.¹⁰⁹ At the Tokyo Conference on 22 June, the French vice-minister of foreign affairs, Georges Kiejman, tabled the option of cutting the Khmer Rouge's income short through a complete blockade of their territory, and the Thai minister of foreign affairs, Arsa Sarasin, promised Kiejman that Thailand would fully cooperate with the deployment of UNTAC border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge-controlled region around Pailin.¹¹⁰ Thai companies saw the storm clouds gathering. Anticipating that good times would end soon, they worked round the clock to get as many logs and gem-bearing earth out of Cambodia before UNTAC would seal off the border.¹¹¹

Although initially somewhat sceptical about whether interdicting the illicit commerce between the Thai and the Khmer Rouge would be within UNTAC's mandate,¹¹² Akashi was eventually convinced that it could work, especially when the interdiction of specific goods could be decided by the Supreme National Council, the body the Khmer Rouge recognised as the sole authority in Cambodia. Akashi had the power to enforce a decision in the SNC to declare logs and gemstones illegal export products and justify the ban as a measure to preserve Cambodia's natural resources. Although the deforestation had indeed detrimental effects on the landscape of Cambodia's western border areas, the main purpose of such a moratorium would be to pressure

107 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 20 July 1992 Meeting with Thai officials, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Ken Stier, "Log rolling: Thai forestry contracts help to fund Khmer Rouge," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 January 1993, 15–16.

108 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 17 June 1992, "Analyses et suggestions sur le Cambodge (II – l'hypothèse des sanctions)," ADN, 10 POI/1 1309.

109 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 12 June 1992, "Poste de contrôle aux frontières du Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1314.

110 Cable Levitte to French Ambassadors New York/Phnom Penh, 10 July 1992, "Cambodge – attitude à adopter à l'égard des Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10 POI/1 1314. Ismail Kassim, "France for sanctions against Khmer Rouge," *The Straits Times*, 25 June 1992; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes 1990–1994*, 319. A year before, as a deputy minister of Justice, Georges Kiejman, had worked out a proposal to amend the UN Charter so as to give the Security Council the right to sanction countries that threatened the security of their own citizens. It was an idea that did find the approval of President Mitterrand but not of Foreign Minister Dumas.

111 Nayan Chanda and Rodney Tasker, "The gem stampede: Round-the-clock mining by Thai companies," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 July 1992, 20.

112 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 10 June 1992, "10 June Meeting of the Supreme National Council and subsequent meeting of EP5," UNA, S-0795-0045-0003.

the Khmer Rouge into compliance. The deliveries of fuel to the Khmer Rouge areas could also be put to a halt by UNTAC if the SNC declared petroleum to be a military supply.¹¹³ Through this construction, UNTAC would be enabled to pressure the Khmer Rouge economically without the intervention of the UN Security Council.¹¹⁴ Akashi also saw the more symbolic advantage in the checkpoints that their establishment would demonstrate that UNTAC was taking the initiative and did not accept the Khmer Rouge's blocking of UN peacekeepers.¹¹⁵ The special representative proposed to include in the next Security Council resolution the official request to neighbouring countries to assist in the establishment of border checkpoints, and hereby clearly demonstrated his interest in the idea to take control of the Thai-Cambodian border.¹¹⁶ But such a paragraph was ultimately not included in the resolution as China objected to it.¹¹⁷

The UN Secretariat in New York was not eager to pressure the Khmer Rouge economically for the reason that such a measure was considered incompatible with a policy of quiet persuasion. Goulding also doubted whether UNTAC had the military capacity to mount such an operation, and to what extent it could count on the active cooperation from Thailand. He also feared that UNTAC's credibility would suffer a major blow if such an operation would fail. Instead of taking the risk of a confrontation, Goulding suggested to Akashi to continue a private dialogue with Khieu Samphan.¹¹⁸ Though Akashi continued to meet with the Khmer Rouge president, he also tried to convince the Secretary-General of his belief that by cutting off the Khmer Rouge's income, they might "well change their tune in two months or so and agree to our entry into their zones and start cantoning their troops."¹¹⁹

Akashi's intention was to bash the Khmer Rouge on the nose and get them to be reasonable. In June, the special representative requested Sanderson to make a plan for the mounting and manning of UNTAC border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge zone. Sanderson, however, was not enthusiastic about such an audacious operation and tried to convince Akashi in a subtle way to drop the idea. His planning staff produced a paper that listed every conceivable argument to demonstrate that it would be an impossible mission. First, it was argued, that UNTAC did not have enough troops to mount the checkpoints. Second, the semi-mountainous terrain in the border area meant that the UNTAC soldiers would have to deploy "in a tactically imprudent manner." Third, there was of course the risk of an armed confrontation. Going beyond immediate considerations for the military objective, the planners pointed out that armed clashes with the Khmer Rouge were likely to cause an escalation of tensions and, as a consequence, could have a negative impact on the entire peace process. The last and probably the most convincing point,

113 A paragraph in the Tokyo non-paper could also be referred to for an extra justification of this measure. "All foreign trade and investment agreements by all Cambodian parties shall be reported to the SNC secretariat and subject to UNTAC oversight in consultation with the SNC." Tokyo non-paper (proposal for discussion), UNA, S-0794-0047-0002.

114 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, "Implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

115 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 September 1992, "The first six months 15 March – 15 September 1992," UNA, S-1854-0022-0008.

116 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 16 July 1992, "Cambodge – attitude à adopter à l'égard des Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

117 Cable Netherlands PR New York to Hague, 17 July 1992, "UNTAC/Rapport SGVN/Veilighedsraad resolutie," AMBZ, 00167.

118 Situation in Cambodia, observations by Marrack Goulding, 20–25 June 1992, UNA, S-0795-0043-0005; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 1 June 1992, "Khmer Rouge," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 24 July 1992, "Implementation of the Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0795-0043-0005.

119 Letter Akashi to Boutros-Ghali, 27 July 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

was the dependence of UNTAC on the cooperation by the Thai political and military authorities, which was seen as problematic given their close connections with the Khmer Rouge. The element of surprise would be lost, and an alerted Khmer Rouge could jeopardise the success of the operation.¹²⁰

Despite Sanderson's resistance, continuous promises of cooperation by Bangkok provided Akashi with confidence that the plan could work. In July, Thai Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin guaranteed Akashi that UNTAC peacekeepers would be allowed to go "anywhere they wished" on the Thai side of the border in the course of their operations.¹²¹ Bangkok actually saw an advantage in the mounting of UNTAC checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge area as this could help with reducing banditry in the border area, which was an issue of concern to the Thai government.¹²² On 3 August, during a meeting with Sanderson in Bangkok, Sarasin confirmed his promise to allow UNTAC to move via Thailand to mount the checkpoints in Khmer Rouge territory: "anything that would ensure NADK's compliance, we go along with," he told UNTAC's force commander.¹²³ Akashi believed that they should take full advantage of the Thai promises of cooperation.¹²⁴ The special representative was further encouraged when he visited Beijing in mid-August and met with Claude Martin, one of the main architects of the Paris Agreement, and now the French ambassador to China. When Akashi asked him for advice, Martin said that there was only one solution: to be firm with the Khmer Rouge and use the military to assert UNTAC's authority.¹²⁵ After the Thai Foreign minister repeated to Akashi his promise of full cooperation on 27 August, the special representative gave the order to start aerial reconnaissance to identify possible locations for the checkpoints, and requested the force commander to work out a detailed plan, regardless of his earlier reluctance.¹²⁶

Apart from pressuring the Khmer Rouge economically into cooperation, the second part of the French strategy for a way out of the stalemate and uncertainty was to give Prince Sihanouk more power. Paris believed that Sihanouk, whose authority was accepted by all parties, was the only person who could force the Khmer Rouge to fall back in line and get the peace process back on track.¹²⁷ In order to give Sihanouk a more powerful position, Paris proposed to organise a presidential election which would practically come down to a plebiscite to elect Sihanouk as president of Cambodia.¹²⁸ A presidential election was not foreseen in the Paris Agreements, but the French believed that, as president, Sihanouk could foster a rapprochement between the four factions, persuade the Khmer Rouge to disarm and create a new unified Cambodian army of which

120 "UNTAC border control mechanism," 26 June 1992, UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

121 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 20 July 1992, "Meeting with Thai officials," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

122 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 September 1992, "The first six months 15 March – 15 September 1992," UNA, S-1854-0022-0008; Mr. Akashi's statement to the SNC on "Future action by UNTAC: Some ideas for follow-up," 5 August 1992, ADN, 521PO/2 33.

123 Meeting between Lt. Gen. Sanderson and foreign minister of Thailand, Mr Arsa Sarasin at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok on 3 August 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

124 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Military options," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

125 Martin, *La diplomatie*, 705.

126 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Military options," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 27 August 1992, "Meeting with Thai Foreign Minister," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002.

127 Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 5 January 1993, "Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 23 September 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-0794-0048-0001.

128 Author's interview with Philippe Coste.

he himself would become commander-in-chief.¹²⁹ This proposal was predicated on the premise that peace in Cambodia would not follow from the instauration of a pluralist democracy alone, but should rest on the more traditional Cambodian mode of governance based on authority.¹³⁰ The idea for a presidential election had already been discussed during the drafting process of the Paris Agreement, and Sihanouk, who was well aware of his indispensable role in the peace process, had never stopped hinting that he was ready to hold such a position.¹³¹ With the prince increasingly critical towards UNTAC, the French hoped to guarantee his unwavering support for the UN mission by giving him a more central role on the stage.¹³² The last but certainly not least important reason for the French to advocate for an election of Sihanouk as president was that France's own interests in Cambodia would be best protected with Sihanouk, a long-time friend of France, as a head of state with real powers.

Reactions to the French proposal were mixed. Among the P5 members it received the full support from Moscow and Beijing. China's objective in Cambodia had always been to see the formation of a new government under the leadership of Norodom Sihanouk, a long-time friend of Beijing and the best guarantee for the country's independence.¹³³ Washington, London and Canberra, however, had strong reservations about "making" Sihanouk president before generals elections were held, a constituent assembly was elected and a new constitution was adopted. They also wondered whether it would be legally and technically possible to organise another election on such a short notice.¹³⁴ Washington's objections, Cambodia specialist Pierre Lizée has argued, derived from the idea that a plebiscite in favour of Prince Sihanouk prior to the general elections would be in contradiction to the principles of liberal democracy which UNTAC was meant to establish in Cambodia. Organising presidential elections would have the consequence that the elections for a general assembly, of which the informal objective was to beat the Khmer Rouge through the ballot-box instead of on the battlefield, would lose its central importance.¹³⁵ Clearly, the desired political outcome for the Americans was to replace the SOC regime with a new government that included the royalist FUNCINPEC and the anti-communist Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), or at least have them share power with Hun Sen. In New York, the UN Secretariat was reluctant. The Secretary-General, who was nonetheless close to Sihanouk, was not enthusiastic as he feared that a separate presidential election would be expensive to organise.¹³⁶ Goulding was not in favour either, and with several members of the core group sceptical, he advised Akashi to leave it to them to shoot it down.¹³⁷

129 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 23 October 1992, "The Presidential election Issue," UNA, S-0794-0043-0003.

130 Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia*, 112, 122.

131 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 23 September 1992, "Meeting with Vice Foreign Minister of China," UNA, S- S-1829-0313-0001.

132 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 23 October 1992, "The Presidential election Issue," UNA, S-0794-0043-0003; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 November 1992, "Today's Core Group meeting," UNA, S-0794-0048-0003.

133 Ross, "China and the Cambodian Peace Process," 1173.

134 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 October 1992, "Presidential elections," UNA, S-0794-0048-0003; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 November 1992, "Today's Core Group meeting," UNA, S-0794-0048-0003.

135 Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia*, 113.

136 Cable French PR UN New York to Paris, 20 January 1993, "Cambodge, Entretien des cinq avec le secrétaire-général," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

137 Cable Goulding to Akashi 23 October 1992, "The Presidential election Issue," UNA, S-0794-0043-0003; Cable Goulding to Akashi 29 October 1992, "The presidential Election Issue," UNA, S-0794-0043-0003.

Australia sets out the next steps: contain and carry on

Although Australia was not a member of the UN Security Council, it took an active role in thinking about ways forward and was able to successfully influence the course of the operation. Its main point of influence was holding the key position of force commander. How close the coordination between Canberra and Sanderson was requires further study, but it is clear that Evans and Sanderson were consistently on the same page and the force commander's cautious approach was fully in line with the policy of the Australian government. While resisting suggestions to send peacekeepers into the Khmer Rouge zones, Sanderson remained outwardly optimistic about UNTAC's ability to bring the Khmer Rouge back to the peace process.¹³⁸ Because of his incurable outwardly optimism, UN officials and journalists in Phnom Penh soon nicknamed Sanderson "Mr No Problem." French Ambassador Coste also observed with amazement how Sanderson continued to radiate confidence, optimism and "a marble serenity," despite the Khmer Rouge's continuous refusal to cooperate and their ongoing military activity throughout the Cambodian countryside. But the force commander played down the cease-fire violations by the Khmer Rouge as sporadic, weakly coordinated and merely intended to create an illusion of their strength in support of their political struggle.¹³⁹

It was Sanderson, not Akashi, who vested his hopes on the departing train effect, expecting that the Khmer Rouge would decide to jump on board at the very last moment. Visiting Bangkok on 20 August 1992, Sanderson shared his thoughts with Chatichai Choonhavan, Thailand's former prime minister who had played an active role in the negotiation of a Cambodian peace settlement in the 1980s. The force commander told Chatichai that peace was visibly developing in Cambodia because of a growing stability in the country. Sanderson based his optimistic assessment on the increasing number of Khmer Rouge soldiers and unit commanders who showed UNTAC their willingness to come into the cantonments and demobilise. These "self-demobilisers" demonstrated a weariness of war and a desire to live a normal life in peace with their families.¹⁴⁰ Sanderson believed that the lower Khmer Rouge commanders just needed some direction from their higher headquarters and he expected that UNTAC peacekeepers would shortly be able penetrate into the Khmer Rouge zones without risking their lives.¹⁴¹ It was all a matter of the right timing, the force commander argued, because if the Khmer Rouge would oppose such a move with force, Sanderson believed that the entire peace process would fracture.¹⁴² The Khmer Rouge's announcement that their representative would soon return to the Mixed Military Working Group, after four months of absence, was also considered as a hopeful sign.¹⁴³ Not believing that pressuring the Khmer Rouge would help in any way to obtain their cooperation, Sanderson preferred to be patient.

This was also the policy of the Australian government. On 10 September, Foreign Minister

138 Ben Kiernan, "U.N.'s Appeasement Policy Falls into Hands of Khmer Rouge Strategists," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 20 November 1992.

139 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 19 August 1992, "l'optimisme du général Sanderson," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

140 Fax HQ UNTAC Military Information to all Sector headquarters, 16 August 1992, "Weekly military information summary 10-92" and Daily press briefing UNTAC 17 July 1992, NIMH, UNTAC-099, box 83.

141 Notes of meeting between Force Commander & Former Prime Minister of Thailand General Chatichai Choonhavan, 20 August 1992, UNA, S-0794-010-0001; Sanderson shared the same expectation with the P5 ambassadors in Phnom Penh: Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 19 August 1992, "l'optimisme du général Sanderson," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

142 Notes of meeting between Force Commander & Former Prime Minister of Thailand.

143 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 27 August 1992, "Khmer Rouge," UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

Gareth Evans distributed a confidential paper, entitled “Cambodia: Next Steps,” to the other members of the EP5 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Indonesia, Japan and Thailand). The seven-page document essentially proposed to exclude the Khmer Rouge from the peace process, to isolate and contain them to their zones – which consisted of about 15 per cent of Cambodian territory – and proceed with the organisation of general elections in the parts of the country to which UNTAC did have access. Evans suggested to set a deadline for 1 December after which the Khmer Rouge would be formally excluded from participation in the elections, suspended from the Mixed Military Working Group and the SNC. The Australians proposed to head for UNTAC’s final objective, with or without the Khmer Rouge, assuming it unlikely that they would be willing and able to militarily disturb the elections.¹⁴⁴ In the summer of 1992, Prince Sihanouk had also suggested in public to isolate the Khmer Rouge and go ahead with the implementation of the peace process without them, but these public remarks encountered much resistance, especially from the Chinese, who successfully pressured Sihanouk to restate his position.¹⁴⁵ Sihanouk’s statements also worried Boutros-Ghali, who believed that trying to implement the peace agreement without the Khmer Rouge would be “a recipe for continued instability and conflict in Cambodia.”¹⁴⁶ The reactions to the Australian plan from the P5 were generally not enthusiastic either, feeling that it was not wise to actively stimulate the exclusion of the Khmer Rouge, as it would basically mean the failure of the Paris Agreement, the de facto division of the country and the acknowledgement that there was a zone the Khmer Rouge was entitled to control.¹⁴⁷ Jean-David Levitte, head of the Asia department of the *Quai d’Orsay*, believed that after the United Nations would leave Cambodia, peace would be much better preserved if the Khmer Rouge had taken part in the entire process and ended up with limited electoral power.¹⁴⁸ This was in line with the position of his Australian counterpart, David Irvine, head of the Asia department of the foreign ministry in Canberra, who expressed the view that the option to isolate the Khmer Rouge and carry on without them was not very attractive because it entailed a great risk of a return to civil war.¹⁴⁹

Why then, did Evans push so actively for the exclusion of the Khmer Rouge? The officially stated aim of the Australian proposals was to give new air to the discussion on possible ways forward. The unofficial aim of the paper was to steer away from the risk of a confrontation between UNTAC and the Khmer Rouge. According to Ken Berry, a staffer in Evans’ cabinet responsible for Indochina, the Australian Next Steps paper was meant to “avoid the option of trying to send UNTAC forces into Khmer Rouge zones.”¹⁵⁰ Berry claims that the paper originated

144 Cambodia: Next Steps, Canberra/Bangkok 10 September 1992. See: Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 22 September 1992, “Kambodja,” AMBZ, DOA 01729; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 262; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 186.

Malcolm Booker, “Cambodia real test of UN resolve,” *The Canberra Times*, 6 October 1992.

145 Nayan Chanda, “Interview Sihanouk: Sihanouk chides UNTAC for feeble response,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 July 1992, 19; Kiernan, “U.N.’s Appeasement Policy Falls into Hands of Khmer Rouge Strategists.”

146 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, “UNTAC 1708,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

147 Meeting with the EP5 10 September 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0001; Cable Levitte to French Ambassador Phnom Penh, 16 September 1992, “processus de paix au Cambodge ½,” ADN, 10POI/1 1314; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 23 September 1992, “meeting with vice foreign minister of China,” UNA, S-1829-0313-0001; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 263.

148 Cable Levitte to French Ambassadors Phnom Penh/New York, 16 September 1992.

149 Cable Netherlands Ambassador Canberra to The Hague, 14 August 1992, AMBZ, DOA 0/729.

150 Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 262.

from a conversation between Sihanouk and Evans at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Jakarta during the first week of September, where the prince allegedly expressed his concern that Akashi might send UNTAC forces into the Khmer Rouge zones and that it would be better for UNTAC to simply ignore the Khmer Rouge.¹⁵¹ It seems more likely, however, that the tabling of the Next Steps paper was purely motivated by Australian concerns, and not Sihanouk's, about the way in which Akashi was steering the operation. Boutros-Ghali and Prince Sihanouk also met each other at the Jakarta-summit, but during their conversation, the prince did not share any concerns about Akashi's intentions to enter the Khmer Rouge zone.¹⁵² He did reemphasise, though, that UNTAC should not show any weakness and suggested that more bluff vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge was needed.¹⁵³ Any concerns on Sihanouk's part about Akashi wanting to move UNTAC troops into the Khmer Rouge zone thus seem contradictory. It also seems highly unlikely that Akashi shared his secret plan with Sihanouk while he had told none of the P5 ambassadors that he was seriously considering setting up border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge zone. The only ambassador in Phnom Penh who appeared to be informed about Akashi's intentions was the Australian ambassador.¹⁵⁴ This makes it very plausible that Sanderson shared his concerns about Akashi's intentions with the Australian government, which reacted by taking action at the political level to push for a counterstrategy that did not involve moving UN forces into the Khmer Rouge zones. On 25 September, Sanderson stated in public that it was necessary to offer clarity towards the troop contributing countries about UNTAC's strategy. "They have got to know the way ahead . . . how we are going to respond to the various scenarios that might develop" Sanderson stated.¹⁵⁵ Establishing clarity and excluding risky options was clearly the purpose of Evans' Next Steps initiative. The paper was not a promotion of Akashi's strategy, as has been suggested by Stephen John Stedman; it was meant to counter the strategy that was advocated by him.¹⁵⁶

Sanderson ordered his staff to make plans for the scenario in which the elections would be organised without the Khmer Rouge. The force commander had placed two trusted senior Australian officers in the Plans Branch who were the driving forces in the force commander's policy making. Lieutenant Colonel Russel Stuart, a UNAMIC veteran who had been wounded by Khmer Rouge bullets in February 1992, was the deputy of Colonel Huijssoon, the Dutch chief of plans. Lieutenant Colonel Damien Healy, another Australian officer who had been selected by Sanderson himself, was made the head of the Mixed Military Working Group Secretariat, which was part of the Plans Branch and practically functioned as Sanderson's main policy making office.¹⁵⁷ Sanderson later recalled that he "benefited mightily" from having a command support unit with a "distinctly Australian hue."¹⁵⁸

151 Ibid.

152 Sihanouk did confirm to the Secretary-General his recommendation to proceed with the organisation of the elections.

153 "*Il faut un peu de bluff*" in Note de l'entretien du Secrétaire général avec Son Altesse Royale Samdech Norodom Sihanouk à Jakarta, le 31 août 1992 à 17:00 heures, UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

154 Internal message Karim to Akashi, 1 December 1992, "Meeting of the Core Group on 1 December 1992," UNA, S-0795-0045-0003.

155 Lindsay Murdoch, "Khmer Rouge holds Cambodia peace process to ransom," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 1992.

156 Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," 30.

157 W.A. Huijssoon, "United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia," 33; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 129, 136.

158 Sanderson, "Command at the Operational Level."

Some signs in September could suggest that the Khmer Rouge might eventually decide to cooperate. A Khmer Rouge general in the north-western province of Stung Treng announced that 500 of his soldiers would soon lay down their arms. On 26 September, UN observers were authorised by the Khmer Rouge to return to Kraya where they had been forced to leave a couple of weeks earlier. The announcement by the Khmer Rouge that general Nuon Bunno would soon return to the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh was also considered as an encouraging sign.¹⁵⁹ But there was little time left. UNTAC planners concluded that the ultimate deadline for the Khmer Rouge to canton, disarm and demobilise would have to be January 1993 to allow for the organisation of elections in May. The implication was that UNTAC's military component would have to remain in full strength in Cambodia until the elections.¹⁶⁰

Some believed that the Khmer Rouge might also be more inclined to cooperate now that UNTAC's civil administration component was fully deployed by the end of September, and was establishing control and supervision in the ministries of the Phnom Penh government, as well as in the twenty-one SOC-controlled provinces. The control and supervision seemed immediately effective because Hun Sen, although broadly cooperating, started protesting against what he considered to be far too intrusive interventions by UNTAC in certain areas of government. The prime minister of the State of Cambodia started to lose his patience with UNTAC as he was under increasing pressure from hardliners within his party who accused him of weakening the SOC while UNTAC was still waiting for the Khmer Rouge's permission to move into their zones.

Akashi was not completely against the scenario of moving on without the Khmer Rouge, but knew that it was not desirable. He realised that if the Khmer Rouge wished to violently disrupt the elections, they could easily do so.¹⁶¹ This was considered as the worst case scenario for which Sanderson's planners did not yet have a clear solution. In their view, elections "would be possible only if the NADK adopts a passive posture and does not impede the process in any way." If the Khmer Rouge would decide to launch attacks, UNTAC would be forced to take defensive positions and re-arm the other factions. In such a scenario, it was believed that elections would probably have to be postponed until October or November 1993. The Khmer Rouge could thus only be successfully excluded and contained if they would maintain a passive posture, which implied that UNTAC would do better to avoid any operation that risked provoking them. It was fully acknowledged by UNTAC planners that the decision to continue towards the elections without the Khmer Rouge, would imply that the newly elected government of Cambodia had to face an insurgent army and all the security problems this entailed. But that problem, planners concluded, would have to be solved by the new government and not by UNTAC.¹⁶²

159 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 30 September 1992, "situation militaire au Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1311.

160 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 September 1992, "Report on UNTAC's activities in its first 6 months," UNA, S-0794-0047-0004.

161 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, "implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 September 1992: "The first six months 15 March – 15 September 1992," UNA, S-1854-0022-0008.

162 Analysis of UNTAC options, 25 September 1992, UNA, S-1854-0022-0008.

Operation Dovetail

Akashi continued to feel that the case was strong to go ahead with the plan to enforce a ban on logs and gems through the establishment of border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge zone and pursued his preparations.¹⁶³ On 22 September, he overruled Khieu Samphan's objections in the Supreme National Council and pushed through the adoption of a moratorium on the export of logs of tropical wood. Akashi acknowledged that it was uncertain whether putting a dent in the Khmer Rouge's income would have any direct effect on the faction's willingness to cooperate. But even if not directly effective, UNTAC would at least assert its right to freedom of movement, which Akashi believed, with Thai support and cooperation, would have a powerful psychological effect on the Khmer Rouge and enhance the credibility of the United Nations.¹⁶⁴

But Akashi failed to convince the force commander who did not share his priorities. Sanderson found a polite way for defusing Akashi's strategy by presenting him with a plan that was destined to fail. By the end of September, Sanderson's planning staff had worked out a plan for an operation codenamed "Dovetail."¹⁶⁵ Militarily, it made no sense, as the objective of the plan was not the establishment of border checkpoints, but a small invasion of a combined civilian-military UNTAC force into the Khmer Rouge zone.¹⁶⁶ Because of its positions around the Khmer Rouge zone near the Thai border, the Dutch battalion was earmarked to prepare and execute the military part of the operation. The marines were to make a move into the Khmer Rouge zone via Thailand and establish two border checkpoints northwest of Pailin; at Ban Bung Chanang and Khao Kato. Two platoons would cross the border and establish the checkpoints, by force if necessary. Their action would be supported by Wolf anti-mine armoured vehicles and four Mi-17 helicopters for medical evacuation, as well as 60 mm and 81 mm mortars for fire support.¹⁶⁷ The border checkpoints in this plan would function as a bridgehead to progressively move deeper into the Khmer Rouge zone. In the wake of the military, members of the civilian components would follow and try to establish contact with the local population and inform them about UNTAC's mission.¹⁶⁸

Akashi's objective to enforce the SNC ban on the export of logs was not mentioned in the plan that was purposefully incoherent and drafted with the intention to be never executed.¹⁶⁹ Again, UNTAC planners highlighted that the operation would be full of risks and had the potential to cause "unacceptable casualties to UNTAC." It was argued that Dovetail was likely to provoke a hostile reaction from the Khmer Rouge which would make UNTAC vulnerable for retaliation, especially its civilian personnel. The bottom line was that if the plan would be pursued, UNTAC should "be prepared for the consequences of the worst case scenario" and that

163 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 September 1992; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 18 September 1992, "Processus de paix au Cambodge – concertation à cinq plus," ADN, 10 POI/1 1311.

164 Ibid.

165 In an earlier draft, the mission was named "Operation Neck Tie." See: "Draft op order op Neck Tie," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

166 "Operation Order 3/92 Operation Dovetail," NIMH, UNTAC-099, box 56; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 12 August 1992, "Military options," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

167 Interview Jeff Mac Mootry, 28 September 2017, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; "Operation Order 3/92 Operation Dovetail."

168 "Draft op order op Neck Tie."

169 Message Swarbrick (Special Assistant to the Special Representative) to Akashi, 23 September 1992, "Preparations for "Operation Dovetail," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

there was simply “little to gain from the success of the operation and a lot to loose [sic] from the failure.”¹⁷⁰ Sanderson and his chief planner, Colonel Huijssoon, explained to Akashi that UNTAC was neither equipped nor mentally prepared to execute this operation that would go beyond the peacekeeping tasks for which they had come to Cambodia.¹⁷¹ The central point Sanderson tried to make was that UNTAC, as a peacekeeping force, did not possess escalation dominance in case the Khmer Rouge would call UNTAC’s bluff and decide to open fire at the blue helmets. If this would happen, it was feared that the situation would escalate beyond control and jeopardise the final objective of the operation.¹⁷²

The plans for Operation Dovetail certainly created a lot of confusion. Both members of UNTAC’s Information and Education division as well as officers of the Dutch battalion were puzzled by the utility of the two border checkpoints in combination with the unclear purpose of the civilian elements.¹⁷³ A deployment via Thailand also seemed an unnecessary burden if the aim was to establish contacts with the local population in the Khmer Rouge zones.¹⁷⁴ Dutch battalion commander Dukers felt that the entire operation was a desperate attempt to make a show of force. He decided to keep The Hague in the dark, fearing that it would merely cause unnecessary panic, and hoped that the operation would not be pursued.¹⁷⁵

Dovetail was not focussed on mounting the six remaining border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge zone which, as a matter of fact, UNTAC was actually required to establish by the Paris Agreement. An operation trying to obtain that objective would certainly involve some risks, but would be much more realistic than what the plan for Operation Dovetail proposed. Officers of the Dutch battalion tasked with the preparations for the operation estimated that a prolonged advance into the Khmer Rouge zone would indeed make them vulnerable, but they were confident that they could establish and hold the border checkpoints without much difficulty. After all, The marines had succeeded to set up camp in the remote KP NFLAF enclave of Sok San in the heartland of the Khmer Rouge. On several occasions, the Dutch company located there was threatened by the local Khmer Rouge commander to leave the area or accept the consequences.

170 Cable Akashi and Sanderson to UN HQ New York, 28 September 1992, “Draft document deployment of Checkpoint in Western Cambodia,” UNA, S-0794-0048-0002.

171 Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 54.

172 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 88.

173 “Operation Order 3/92 Operation Dovetail”; Captain L.B Wallage, “Dove Tail vergelijking memo Civil Admin en Draft-order FC,” 29 September 1992, NIMH, UNTAC-099, box 55; Comments on draft fax on Operation Dovetail, 26 September 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0002.

174 The civilian component produced a complete redraft of the operational plan proposing a secondary role for the military and the abandonment of the checkpoints. The alternative plan proposed to deploy, by helicopter, a unit of about twenty-five civilian UNTAC personnel into the Khmer Rouge zone from the direction of Cambodia’s Battambang province. The UN civilians would only be accompanied by a handful of military personnel in order to give them “a sense of security.” The group should proceed into the villages to establish “friendly contact” and explain about UNTAC’s activities. They were to be equipped with flyers, loudspeakers, video equipment, T-shirts and other campaigning material. Instead of resembling a hostile invasion, the operation should give the impression of a “friendly visit with a kind of traveling circus festivity.” Success would completely depend on the reaction from the villagers. In the event of a hostile Khmer Rouge reaction, the mission would immediately have to withdraw without offering any resistance. Comments on draft fax on Operation Dovetail, 26 September 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-02; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 70.

175 Author’s interview with Herman Dukers; correspondence with Herman Dukers; Ten Cate et al., *Qua patet orbis*, 103; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 53; Akashi did not discuss the topic with the Dutch minister of defence, Relus ter Beek, when the latter visited Phnom Penh on 12 September 1992. See: Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 14 September 1992, “bezoek mindef en r aan kambodja: gesprek met untac hoofd y. akashi,” AMBZ, BZ-00391.

He also claimed full responsibility for shooting at UNTAC resupply helicopters.¹⁷⁶ The marines reacted by demonstrating their fighting capabilities by changing the colour of their camouflage nets from white into green and start ostentatious target practicing, using all their support weapons. They also made it clear to the Khmer Rouge that their snipers would neutralise any Khmer Rouge soldier showing the slightest hostile intent.¹⁷⁷ They also believed that their equipment was adequate for robust action: next to mortars, the marines were equipped with .50 calibre heavy machine guns, 84 mm Carl Gustaf anti-tank weapons and sniper rifles. Moreover, the company at Sok San disposed of some 2,000 weapons that had been eagerly handed in by the anti-communist KPNLAF faction. Some of these guns were brand-new and of excellent quality, such as M-16 assault rifles with M-203 grenade launchers.¹⁷⁸ These weapons were sometimes used on patrol to provide for more firepower. The marines thoroughly prepared for Operation Dovetail and actively rehearsed with live ammunition.¹⁷⁹ Several reconnaissance flights in the area of operation were undertaken with the Alouette III helicopters that belonged to the Dutch battalion.¹⁸⁰

Dovetail was a mock plan deliberately designed to make the argument that any ventures of UNTAC into the Khmer Rouge zone would be a foolhardy operation resulting in certain escalation. Sanderson felt that the conduct of UNTAC should not be entirely left over to a bureaucrat with a limited understanding of military affairs. Colonel Huijssoon recalled that there was a visible stand-off between the force commander and the special representative, but that in the end, Akashi was “no match for Sanderson,” and that the force commander had far more influence.¹⁸¹ In a Yale-UN interview, Sanderson suggested that he was better positioned to lead the operation than Akashi: “He had a great deal of experience within the United Nations itself, but little or no experience of running large organizations with definitive objectives in an operational setting, and so essentially that was my role, to provide that part of the organization,” the Australian general stated.¹⁸² Whereas in May 1992, Sanderson had been overruled by the civilian leadership with regard to his decision to announce Phase Two, in September he decided to hold his ground more firmly with regard to operational decisions involving the military component. As Akashi’s policy did not enjoy the support from New York either, it was relatively easy for the force commander to challenge it.

It is hard to believe that it was a coincidence that Akashi’s decision to drop the plan for border checkpoints was made on the exact same day that Paul Keating, the Australian prime minister, paid a visit to Cambodia on 26 September. In Phnom Penh, Keating suggested, both in his private meeting with Akashi and during a press conference, that the best way forward was to forge through towards the elections and organise polling in as wide an area as possible, with or

176 Cable Dutchbatt to The Hague, 7 February 1993, “Sitrep BDZ,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 89; Interoffice message Major Ahmed to Sanderson, 16 February 1993, “Situation in Sok San,” UNA, S-1854-0008-0006.

177 Cable Dutchbatt to The Hague, 22 February 1993, “Sitrep BDZ,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 89; Author’s interview with Jeff Mac Mootry.

178 Clifford C. Cremer, “Onze jongens in Cambodja,” *ARMEX*, January 1992, 15.

179 Author’s interview with Jeff Mac Mootry.

180 Ten Cate et al. *Qua patet orbis*, 103.

181 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 130.

182 Interview by Hugh Smith with John M. Sanderson.



Force Commander John Sanderson, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating and Special Representative Yasushi Akashi at UNTAC headquarters on 26 September 1992. Photo credit: UNA, S-0794-0044-0001.

without the Khmer Rouge.¹⁸³ Akashi resigned himself to the reality that this was the only strategy to which the force commander would agree. To save his own credibility and authority, Akashi had no other choice than to hide behind the argumentation that accompanied the mock plan for Operation Dovetail, which provided him with an honourable explanation for changing his mind. After Keating's visit, Akashi cabled Goulding that "a draft plan drawn up by the military component for the establishment of a reinforced checkpoint in the [Khmer Rouge zone] reveals serious problems and implications that go far beyond the need for additional requirements." Although still believing that border checkpoints were a necessary precondition for a serious effort to enforce the SNC-decided ban on logs, Akashi put forward the argument that a scenario in which UNTAC would be compelled to use force to withstand Khmer Rouge attacks, with the risk of casualties, "would take us out of the Paris Agreement and the current UNTAC mandate completely."¹⁸⁴ Behind the scenes, Australia thus appears to have had a strong influence on the course of the operation. Although Akashi, the captain of the UNTAC ship, was inclined to follow the course suggested by the French, Sanderson was in real control of the helm, and sailed into the direction of the Australian winds. This illustrates the general given that military officers involved in UN peacekeeping operations never entirely lose contact with their own governments and remain loyal to their countries' interests. This is not surprising because his or her career continues to depend on a hierarchy from which he or she is only temporarily separated.

183 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 September 1992, "Meeting with Australian Prime Minister," UNA, S-0794-0048-0002; Sheila McNulty, "Sihanouk Says U.N. Security Council Must Solve Khmer Rouge Impasse," *Associated Press*, 26 September 1992; Michelle Grattan, "PM Backs Plan To Press On With Election," *The Age*, 27 September 1992; Also see: Frost, *The Peace Process in Cambodia*, 45.

184 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 September, "Report on UNTAC's activities," UNA, S-0794-0048-0002.

Symbolic sanctions to avoid provocation

Though Akashi's plan for pressuring the Khmer Rouge economically seemed a road not taken, many observers considered it as the logical and necessary action to influence the Khmer Rouge's behaviour. A group of scholars from Columbia University specialising in Asia and international security, presided by political scientist Richard Betts, made a field trip to Cambodia in August 1992 to study the progress of the UN peacekeeping operation. In their report *Time Is Running Out in Cambodia*, which was published two months later, they observed that the UN peace plan was "seriously threatened" and emphasised that the period until December would be absolutely crucial for finding a solution. In its conclusion, the study group encouraged the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions on the Khmer Rouge, albeit acknowledging that it would take time for such measures to have a real effect.¹⁸⁵

The French also continued to push for stronger measures and used their penholder position as president of the Security Council to work towards a resolution in support of economic sanctions.¹⁸⁶ Asia-director Jean-David Levitte took the initiative for a series of consultations in New York on 7 and 8 October that involved Goulding, Akashi and the core group. A consensus was built around the view that the Khmer Rouge should not be excluded and that the door should be left open for them to re-join the process as long as possible. Levitte designed a strategy of increasing the pressure on the Khmer Rouge after giving them a window for a diplomatic solution. He requested Thailand and Japan, who had been negotiating with the Khmer Rouge for three months, to continue their efforts for another three weeks. Realising that it was unlikely that these talks would bring any results, Levitte hoped that it would make China more willing to support a stronger Security Council resolution deciding on sanctions in November.¹⁸⁷ On 13 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 783 in which the intention to proceed with the operation towards the elections was officially announced. The resolution was meant as another signal to the Khmer Rouge that time was running out for them, but that they were not excluded. It was decided that France and Indonesia would make a last attempt to persuade the Khmer Rouge to comply. If they would not succeed by 15 November, the Council would consider "what further steps are necessary and appropriate" to carry out the agreement.¹⁸⁸ Despite this vague diplomatic language, it was clear to analysts and journalists that economic sanctions were in the air.¹⁸⁹ The Khmer Rouge, however, remained undeterred. Immediately after resolution 783 was adopted, they launched a coordinated attack on several villages in Kompong Cham and Kompong Thom provinces. Six people were killed and two key bridges in central Cambodia were blown up, cutting off the northern provinces from Phnom Penh. These events led to some speculation about whether

185 Richard K. Betts, John Bresnan, Frederick Z. Brown, James W. Morley, Donald S. Zagoria, *Time Is Running Out in Cambodia* (New York: Institute Reports East Asian Institute, Columbia University, October 1992), 11.

186 Note Annabi to Goulding, 25 September 1992, "Cambodia: Outcome of the Dumas/Alatas meeting," UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

187 Cable Goulding to Sadry, 8 October 1992, "New York Consultations: Note to the Secretary-General Cambodia Consultations," UNA, S-1829-0314-0002; Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I; Akashi, "An assessment of the UNTAC," 159.

188 S/RES/783 (1992), 13 October 1992.

189 Betts et al., *Time Is Running Out in Cambodia*, 11; "UN sanctions only way to influence Khmer Rouge," *The Nation*, 23 July 1992; Philip Shenon, "Cambodians Ask U.N. to Abandon Its Peace Plan," *The New York Times*, 4 November 1992; Lincoln Kaye and Gavin Greenwood, "Test of will: Sanctions against Khmer Rouge likely as talks fail," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 November 1992, 13.

the Khmer Rouge were flexing their muscles as a warning for what was to come if the Security Council dared to impose sanctions on them.¹⁹⁰

As Levitte had foreseen, the last round of diplomacy by Thailand and Japan did not bring about a change in the Khmer Rouge's position.¹⁹¹ France and Indonesia took over and organised a meeting with the Cambodian factions on 7 November at Sihanouk's residence in Beijing.¹⁹² The atmosphere was tense. The Khmer Rouge delegation arrived too late and took an aggressive stance. Khieu Samphan declared unambiguously that his party did not intend to participate in the electoral process and that the peacekeeping operation was moving towards "an explosion."¹⁹³ He attempted to deter the Security Council from imposing sanctions by publicly declaring that any decision to do so would be "tantamount to a return to war."¹⁹⁴ The Khmer Rouge threats were supported by violent actions. On the eve of the Beijing talks, a UN checkpoint at the Thai-Cambodian border, outside but close to the Khmer Rouge zone, came under artillery and small arms fire from the NADK. The attack seemed to be a warning that peacekeepers could become a target if they dared to establish checkpoints in the areas under their control.¹⁹⁵

The negotiations in Beijing were in a complete stalemate. SOC prime minister Hun Sen made it clear that he was losing his patience with the Khmer Rouge, that he was tired of making concessions and demanded to impose sanctions on Pol Pot's faction. He warned that if the UN would not act soon, he would consider to withdraw from the peace process and use the dry season to resume attacks on the Khmer Rouge's positions.¹⁹⁶ Roland Dumas tried to come to a definitive decision about organising presidential elections, but the Khmer Rouge refused to discuss any type of elections and did not join the forming consensus on this matter. Although not officially invited, Gareth Evans suddenly showed up in Beijing. Allowed to participate in some meetings, the Australian foreign minister again strongly made the case that it was perfectly possible to continue with the elections without the Khmer Rouge.¹⁹⁷ Evans was aware of the fact that, just before the Beijing meeting, Sanderson's planning staff had handed over a contingency plan to Akashi for the protection of the elections by UNTAC's military component in the case of attacks. Eventually, agreement was found around Evans' proposal to set a deadline for the Khmer Rouge by the end of January 1993 to join the peace process or be excluded from the elections.¹⁹⁸ The French, who were still leading the drafting process of the next Security Council resolution, continued into a different direction and aimed to have the Security Council endorse the SNC

190 Sheri Prasso, "KR show they're a force to be reckoned with: Bridge blast cuts off provinces," *The Nation*, 17 October 1992; "Significance of recent NADK military activity" and "Military update." See: Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 October 1992, "Bridge incidents," 22 October 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0003.

191 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 November 1992, "Today's Core Group meeting," UNA, S-0794-0048-0003.

192 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 October 1992, "Presidential elections," UNA, S-0794-0048-0003.

193 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 12 November 1992, "Co-chairmen's Report to Sec-Gen," UNA, S-1829-0313-0001;

Francis Deron, "Cambodge: impasse dans le processus de paix: L'intransigence des Khmers rouges a fait échouer la réunion de Pékin," *Le Monde*, 10 November 1992.

194 Nate Thayer, "Not so secret agenda," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 November 1992, 12.

195 Andrew Sherry, "U.N. likely to avoid confrontation with Khmer Rouge," *AFP*, 9 November 1992.

196 "Hun Sen urges UN to exert pressure on KR," *Bangkok Post*, 10 November 1992; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 266.

197 Yvonne Preston, "Let's carry on without Khmer Rouge – Evans," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November 1992; Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I.

198 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 9 November 1992, "Beijing talks," UNA, S-1829-0312-0005; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 266; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 265.

ban on logs and call on UNTAC “to take all necessary measures to complete the establishment of checkpoints” to enforce the moratorium.¹⁹⁹

Security Council resolution 792, adopted on 30 November, determined that the elections for a constituent assembly would be held no later than May 1993 and in all areas of Cambodia to which UNTAC would have full and free access by 31 January 1993, which set a last deadline for the Khmer Rouge to re-join the peace process, as proposed by Evans.²⁰⁰ The resolution also imposed two indirect sanctions on the Khmer Rouge: a suspension of all petroleum deliveries to the parts of Cambodia that were controlled by the Khmer Rouge and a moratorium on the export of logs for the whole of Cambodia, thus supporting the SNC’s decision of 22 September, which had been enforced by Akashi.²⁰¹ The Council also invited the SNC to consider a similar ban on the export of minerals and gemstones in the near future.²⁰² The idea was that such a decision could then also be supported by the Security Council. Resolution 792 was explicitly designed to avoid the impression that the Council was directly imposing sanctions on the Khmer Rouge, in order to maintain Chinese support and facilitate Thailand’s assistance in its implementation. But this strategy, designed by the French, failed because China decided to abstain after all.²⁰³ Beijing seemed determined to try to maintain its leverage over its former clients by protecting them, and argued that neither economic sanctions nor an election without the Khmer Rouge were compatible with the Paris Agreements.²⁰⁴ Diplomatic lobbying behind the scenes had failed to generate the support from the Chinese, and the diligently preserved unity amongst the P5 in Cambodia now officially started to crumble. The effort of sending a powerful signal to the Khmer Rouge was further weakened by Boutros-Ghali who, one week before the adoption of resolution 792, publicly stated that he recommended the Council to refrain from imposing sanctions and instead use patient diplomacy to persuade the Khmer Rouge.²⁰⁵ The Khmer Rouge did not hesitate to exploit this utterance and released a statement describing Boutros-Ghali as “a very outstanding diplomat having great wisdom.”²⁰⁶

Ultimately, the sanctions voted by the Security Council were completely ineffective in pressuring the Khmer Rouge. Scholars have generally explained this by pointing at China’s abstention and the unwillingness of the Thai military to cooperate with the implementation of

199 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 12 November 1992, “Co-chairmen’s Report to Sec-Gen,” UNA, S-1829-0313-0001; The Secretary-General accepted most of these suggestions and recommended in his report to the Security Council to consider the adoption of “a series of measures aimed at securing greater cooperation and compliance” and mentioned the possibility of instituting “tighter border control measures around the DK zone.” See: Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 783 (1992) 15 November 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0003; Rene Slama, “France drafts U.N. resolution to modify Cambodia plan,” *AFP*, 13 November 1992.

200 Security Council Resolution 792 (1992), 30 November 1992, (S/RES/792 (1992)).

201 S/RES/792 (1992); “French Resolution Urges Economic Sanctions on Khmer Rouge,” *Asian Political News Kyodo News International*, 23 November 1992.

202 S/RES/792 (1992).

203 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I (31 October 1997) and Session II (28 November 1997); Cable Levitte to French Ambassador Phnom Penh, 14 January 1993, “Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

204 Security Council Provisional Verbatim 3143, 30 November 1992.

205 Peter James Spielmann, “UN Chief Recommends Against Sanctioning Khmer Rouge,” *Associated Press*, 20 November, 1992; “Boutros-Ghali opposes sanctions on Khmer Rouge,” *AFP*, 21 November 1992.

206 “Statement of the Democratic Kampuchea Party on H.E. Boutros Boutros Ghali, UN Secretary-General urging the Security Council not to impose sanction against the Democratic Kampuchea Party for that would not be the best way to solve the problem, which should rather be dealt with diplomacy and patience,” 30 November 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0003; “Khmer Rouge hails U.N. Secretary-General’s position on sanctions,” *AFP*, 29 November 1992.

the resolution.²⁰⁷ But these interpretations miss the essential point that the resolution provided Akashi with additional political and legal support to execute his initial plan to pressure the Khmer Rouge by cutting off their income. But faced with resistance by the force commander, the special representative remained unable to pursue this strategy. It must therefore be argued that the resolution failed to have an effect because UNTAC refused to take responsibility for its implementation. The suggestion by political scientist Jeni Whalan, that Akashi and Sanderson remained passive with regard to the implementation of the resolution because they recognised that the sanctions would be ineffective anyway, is not incorrect but requires further amplification.²⁰⁸ The force commander considered that the utility of checkpoints did not weigh up to the risks their establishment entailed, and that it would be better to isolate the Khmer Rouge than to confront them. Implementing the Security Council's decisions risked interfering with the force commander's policy of keeping the Khmer Rouge quiet and unprovoked.

The effectiveness of the moratoria on logs and petroleum depended on controlling the Thai-Cambodian border in the Khmer Rouge area, but Sanderson continued to resist the idea that UNTAC's military had any role to play in this. In mid-November, when resolution 792 was in the making, he commented on a first draft version that the text should explicitly request Bangkok to establish border checkpoints on the Thai side of the border. The force commander proposed an alternative phrasing that clearly specified that the border checkpoints would be "based in neighbouring nations."²⁰⁹ The suggestion was not adopted. Bangkok was not eager to take responsibility for implementing the trade embargo. The newly elected and fragile government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai was under pressure from the Thai business lobby and feared its own army whose officers were involved in the illegal trade practices.²¹⁰

Unable to increase the pressure on the Khmer Rouge himself, Akashi had hoped to come to an agreement with Prasong Soonsiri, the new foreign minister of Thailand, who had publicly declared, two months earlier, that the trade of Thai businesses with the Khmer Rouge should be stopped in order to support the peace process in Cambodia.²¹¹ However, when Prasong met Akashi, he had just come back from an inspection tour along the Thai-Cambodian border where he had talked with Thai traders, and now made it clear that Thailand had no role to play in the implementation of the resolution.²¹² Prasong refused Akashi's request to allow UNTAC liaison officers to deploy checkpoints on the Thai side of the border, saying that it would violate Thailand's sovereignty.²¹³ A game of passing the buck ensued with Prasong stating to the media that Thailand could not take over UNTAC's responsibilities, and Akashi declaring that Thailand would have to

207 Roberts, "A dangerous game," 45; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 239–41; Heining, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 77.

208 Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 103.

209 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 13 November 1992, "Possible elements for Security Council resolution – mid November 1992," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

210 Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Thailand still wishy-washy over KR," *The Nation*, 13 November 1992; Apisak Dhanasettakorn, "Govt urged to defy push to isolate KR: Closing border will hurt logging, timber interests, House panel told," *The Nation*, 25 October 1992; Jacqueline Park, "On the borderline," *The Nation*, 27 November 1992.

211 "Prasong – End trade with Khmer Rouge; review policy on Burma," *Bangkok Post*, 9 August 1992.

212 Park, "On the borderline."

213 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, "Implementation of resolution 792," UNA, S-0794-0011-0001; Internal message Karim to Akashi, 1 December 1992, "Meeting of the Core Group on 1 December 1992," UNA, S-0795-0045-0003; Cable Karim to Akashi, 30 November 1992, "Meeting between Mr. Akashi and Mr. Prasong Soonsiri, Foreign Minister of Thailand in Bangkok on November 27 1992, UNA, S-0794-0049-0001.

comply with its obligations as a member of the United Nations and implement the resolution.²¹⁴

The question nonetheless remained whether Bangkok actually had the power to seal-off the border with Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk predicted that the Thai military would never obey its government because there was simply too much money to earn in their business with the Khmer Rouge. More than 100,000 Thais had crossed the border into Cambodia to seek their fortunes in the Khmer Rouge-controlled forests and gem mines. With large investments in machinery and contracts signed, the Thai government realised that, on the short term, economic sanctions would hurt Thailand more than the Khmer Rouge.²¹⁵ A thorn in Akashi's side was that some of the Thai military and businessmen also assisted the Khmer Rouge with the transport of troops and the maintenance of their equipment.²¹⁶ Moreover, the border area also was an important black market for stolen items and weapons.²¹⁷ Shipments of arms and ammunition were mainly delivered to the Khmer Rouge from the Thai province of Sisaket via a long valley in Northern Cambodia between Anlong Veng and Cheom Ksan into Cambodia, which was informally known as the "Pol Pot trail."²¹⁸ But apart from its unwillingness to provoke the local military, Bangkok also preferred to maintain the status quo for reasons of national security. Thai policy makers counted with the scenario that the Khmer Rouge could regain power in the near future, either through political or military means. With this prospect, Bangkok had no interest in deteriorating its relations with the Khmer Rouge as this could have repercussions for the security of the border provinces. Past Khmer Rouge forays across the border, with Thai victims, had not been forgotten.²¹⁹

Despite the strong Thai resistance, Akashi decided to increase the pressure on Bangkok by publicly declaring that the Thai government bore the primary responsibility for ensuring that Security Council resolution 792 was carried out.²²⁰ In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Akashi stated in full transparency that he was unable to "to go into NADK areas for a confrontational opening of checkpoints," but that "Thailand can do something."²²¹ Thai officials, however, had good arguments to support their claim that the responsibility for the border checkpoints lay clearly with UNTAC. Resolution 792 explicitly requested UNTAC "to establish

214 "Prasong tells UN – Don't drag us into Khmer conflict," *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1992.

215 Mary Kay Magistad, "Thais Defend Investing With Cambodian Rebels: Trade Sustains Defiance of U.N. Peace Plan," *The Washington Post*, 30 November 1992; Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Thailand still wishy-washy over KR," *The Nation*, 13 November 1992; Ted Morello and Nate Thayer, "The Pol Pot trail: UN efforts to end Khmer Rouge trade likely to fail," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 November 1992, 12.

216 Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Army General Wimol Wongwanich, Bangkok 15 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

217 Morello and Thayer, "The Pol Pot trail," 12.

218 "Cambodia and UNTAC – The Thai position," UNA, S-0794-0012-0003; Letter Sanderson to US Ambassador Phnom Penh, 1 June 1993, UNA, S-1854-0016-0001; Talks with Thai Authorities 28–30 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Army General Wimol Wongwanich, Bangkok 15 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

219 Chongkittavorn, "Thailand still wishy-washy over KR"; "Cambodia and UNTAC – The Thai position," UNA, S-0794-0012-0003.

220 "Review of recent developments, Statement by Mr. Akashi in the Supreme National Council, 8 December 1992," UNA, S-1834-0047-0006; Akashi argued that paragraph 13 could be read in such a way that "neighbouring states" were, in the end, responsible for the border checkpoints. See: Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, "Implementation of resolution 792," UNA, S-0794-0011-0001. "While making it clear to the Thais that they bear primary responsibility for complying, in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter, with those provisions specifically directed towards 'neighbouring States', that is, paragraphs 12 and 13. The reference in paragraph 10 to 'those concerned' also clearly includes Thailand, which is mentioned by name in Annex 2, Article VII of the Paris Agreements."

221 Nayan Chanda and Rodney Tasker, "Sides of a triangle," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 December 1992, 28–29, 28.

all necessary border checkpoints,” whereas “neighbouring States” were only urged “to cooperate fully” in this effort.²²² Moreover, the Paris Agreement determined that all border checkpoints were to be established on the Cambodian side of the border. Akashi could not deny this, and his argument that the Khmer Rouge “would not be happy” if UNTAC mounted the checkpoints in their zone, did not impress Prasong.²²³ Akashi was clearly embarrassed by Bangkok’s rejection and denied to the press that he had ever asked the Thais for help.²²⁴ When journalists asked Akashi how UNTAC could enforce sanctions on the Khmer Rouge while being denied access to the Khmer Rouge zones, he replied cryptically: “There is something we can do. You’ll hear (about) it later, we have certain actions in mind,” without further elaborating.²²⁵ But Akashi knew that he did not have many options. The plan of having blue helmets mount border checkpoints had been defused by Sanderson for some time. Moreover, launching such an operation became riskier by the day as the element of surprise was now completely lost. Thai military officers were likely to warn their Khmer Rouge friends in advance about where to expect UNTAC and in what strength.²²⁶

The consequence was that Akashi and Sanderson saw themselves left with the rather humiliating and contradictory option to ask the Khmer Rouge for their cooperation in mounting the border checkpoints.²²⁷ On 1 December, Sanderson wrote a letter to the Khmer Rouge commander Son Sen asking his permission to establish UNTAC border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge zone as a “confidence-building measure.” The request remained unanswered, but must have caused some amusement with the Khmer Rouge leadership.²²⁸ Sanderson also spent four days in Bangkok talking to various high-ranking Thai officials whom he asked for support in persuading the Khmer Rouge to allow UNTAC to take control of the border.²²⁹ The force commander explained to his Thai interlocutors that he wished to have the Khmer Rouge’s prior approval before moving into their zone: “My advice to Mr. Akashi so far has been,” he said to Foreign Minister Prasong, “why should we endanger the whole Agreement for checkpoints[?]”²³⁰ “I do not want to fight DK, because this changes the whole game,” he told the Chief of the

222 Security Council Resolution 792 (1992) 30 November 1992.

223 Cable Karim to Akashi, 30 November 1992, “Meeting between Mr. Akashi and Mr. Prasong Soonsiri, Foreign Minister of Thailand in Bangkok on November 27, 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0049-0001.

224 Technically speaking this was true since Akashi had only requested the Thais to allow UNTAC teams to be added to Thai checkpoints. Chanda and Tasker, “Sides of a triangle,” 28.

225 “Don’t drag us into Khmer conflict,” *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1992.

226 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, “Implementation of resolution 792,” UNA, S-0794-0011-0001. On 1 December, the Thai Airforce cancelled all pre-arranged UNTAC flights into Thai airspace and demanded that all flights from Cambodia request permission three days in advance. It was interpreted as a precautionary measure against any initiatives UNTAC might undertake in the border area, and a demonstration of the Thai armed forces’ displeasure about resolution 792. Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 30 November 1992, “Thai restriction of UNTAC air traffic,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Cable French Ambassador Bangkok to Paris, 2 December 1992, “Réactions Thailandaises à la Résolution 792,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

227 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, “Implementation of resolution 792,” UNA, S-0794-0011-0001.

228 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 1 December 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Sanderson hadn’t been able to talk to Son Sen face-to-face since April. Neither was he even sure whether it was really Son Sen who answered his letters, because none of the correspondences he received were signed by the NADK commander. Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Foreign Minister Prasong prior to dinner at Foreign Ministry, Bangkok, 14 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

229 Programme for Force Commander’s visit to Bangkok Saturday 12 – Wednesday 16 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Army General Wimol Wongwanich, Bangkok 15 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Foreign Minister Prasong prior to dinner at Foreign Ministry, Bangkok, 14 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

230 Meeting Lieutenant General with Foreign Minister Prasong prior to dinner at Foreign Ministry, Bangkok, 14 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

Thai Army, General Wimol Wongwanich.²³¹ The Thai officials promised to talk to the Khmer Rouge leaders, but they weren't too optimistic about their ability to persuade them.²³² Sanderson applied the same strategy as Akashi of putting public pressure on Bangkok. Although the Thai officials had promised nothing concrete to Sanderson during their meetings, the force commander declared to the press afterwards that Thailand would set up eight more checkpoints along the border facing Khmer Rouge-controlled areas in Cambodia.²³³ The Thai government countered Sanderson's allegation by announcing it had only agreed to an around-the-clock liaison with UNTAC checkpoints at the Cambodian side of the border.²³⁴ It was a clear demonstration of how UNTAC tried to transfer the responsibility for the checkpoints to Bangkok, and how the Thai kept fending this off. The Thai government nonetheless kept up the appearance of cooperation with the Security Council resolution by declaring it had instructed logging companies to refrain from starting new projects in Cambodia.²³⁵

Instead of pressuring the Khmer Rouge, UNTAC continuously increased the pressure on Bangkok. Akashi took the initiative to develop a 30-minute documentary film showing evidence of the illegal logging and gem-mining activities and the detrimental deforestation it caused in the North-Western part of Cambodia. The footage, filmed from a low-flying UNTAC helicopter, clearly showed trucks with Thai licence plates involved in the extraction activities. Akashi sent a copy of the videotape to New York with the recommendation to display it in the Security Council. The UN Secretariat, however, rejected to humiliate the Thai publicly and only gave Akashi permission to organise a screening of the film in Phnom Penh.²³⁶ A disappointed Akashi subsequently leaked the videotape to journalist William Shawcross, who used the footage in his reporting.²³⁷

France deplored that UNTAC was not taking matters into its own hands. During their meeting on 30 December 1992 in Geneva, Roland Dumas urged Boutros-Ghali to make an end to Bangkok's "little game" by sending UNTAC troops to the Thai-Cambodian border, have

231 Meeting Sanderson with Wimol Wongwanich.

232 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 16 December 1992, "Discussions with Thai authorities by Lt. General J.M. Sanderson 14–15 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Meeting Sanderson with Prasong prior to dinner; "Military to urge KR to rejoin peace plan," *Bangkok Post*, 17 December 1992; "Thais agree to help UN on checkpoints," *The Straits Times*, 18 December 1992. The Khmer Rouge's answer was predictable. On 15 January 1993, Kieu Samphan reaffirmed to Prasong that he could only accept a maximum of three unarmed UNTAC monitors per checkpoint in the Khmer Rouge, and only zone after his well-known demands had been met. Talks with Thai Authorities 28–30 December 1992, see: cable Sanderson to Goulding, 4 January 1993, "Follow up staff work with Thai government on border controls & guidelines," UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; "K. Rouge won't allow UNTAC checkpoints," *Bangkok Post*, 16 January 1993.

233 "Thailand to Set up Own Checkpoints on Cambodian Border," *Asian Political News Kyodo News International*, 21 December 1992.

234 "Thai Army Chief to Talk With Khmer Rouge," *Asian Political News Kyodo News International, Inc.*, 21 December 1992.

235 Prasong asked Akashi for a "grace period" to allow for the transport of the felled logs into Thailand. But Akashi refused to extend the deadline of 31 December for the reason that the logging ban had been adopted on 22 September, which had given the loggers ample time to end their activities. Cable French Ambassador Bangkok to Paris, 11 December 1992, "Cambodge: entrevue avec le ministre des affaires étrangères," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Chanda and Tasker, "Sides of a triangle," 28.

236 Note for the Secretary-General, UNA, S-1085-0030-0008; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 22 December 1992, "Entretien avec M. Akashi," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

237 Author's interview with James A. Schear; Interview Akashi, Session II; William Shawcross, "Cambodia: The U.N.'s Biggest Gamble," *Time*, 28 December 1992, 18; Nayan Chanda, "Strained ties: Poor UN relations with Bangkok mar peace process," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 December 1992.

them mount the necessary border checkpoints and see that the Security Council's decisions were respected. But the Secretary-General wasn't inclined to push for the implementation of sanctions about which he had personally expressed his reservations. He felt that the risks were too great and UNTAC's capacities too small. "I would like to exert pressure," he told Dumas, "but without the means I can lose all credibility." Boutros-Ghali also indicated that he was concerned about the reservations Japan might have with regard to such actions.²³⁸ Gareth Evans, visiting Cambodia in January, continued to pull into the opposite direction of the French. He cautioned Akashi not to press too hard for blocking the export of gems and minerals to the Khmer Rouge areas, arguing that the international demand for applying sanctions on the Khmer Rouge was waiving and that it was unlikely that such pressures could enhance cooperation.²³⁹

As a good UN member state, Bangkok officially suspended petroleum shipments to the Khmer Rouge areas, imposed a ban on the import of logs and symbolically deployed some extra checkpoints across the border opposite the existing UNTAC posts, but not along the Khmer Rouge zone.²⁴⁰ The registered volume of exported timber from Cambodia dropped from some 40,000 cubic metres in January to less than 5,000 in February. But these official numbers were misleading as they only included the exports coming from the areas controlled by the three cooperating Cambodian factions, who were, ironically enough, hit harder by the sanctions than the Khmer Rouge.²⁴¹ The consequence was that senior officers from the CPAF, ANKI and KPNLAF began striking deals with their Khmer Rouge counterparts and passed their timber through the Khmer Rouge zones into Thailand.²⁴² The embargo was also rather easily circumvented because it only applied to logs and not to processed wood. As a consequence, lumber mills were brought in from Thailand and popped-up in the border villages to saw the large tree trunks into timber.²⁴³ The sawmills also functioned as a way for the Khmer Rouge to get around the petroleum ban. Many wood-cutters delivered fuel to the Khmer Rouge, while telling UNTAC that the petroleum was for their machines.²⁴⁴

Instead of being pressured by resolution 792, the Khmer Rouge were further emboldened, because of China's abstention, but also because they had successfully deterred UNTAC from

238 Cable French Ambassador Geneva to Paris, 30 December 1992, "Entretien du Ministre d'État avec le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies: Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

239 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 January 1992, "Note on meeting with Foreign Minister Evans," UNA, S-1829-0311-0006.

240 Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 792 (1992), 13 February 1993. S/25289; Rodney Tasker, "Dangerous neighbours: recent Cambodian fighting tests Thai nerves," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 February 1993; "PM – We're complying with KR sanctions," *Bangkok Post*, 6 January 1993; Cable French Ambassador Bangkok to Paris, 19 January 1993, "le Cambodge et la Thaïlande," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; "NSC suggests plan for Govt to beat log ban," *Bangkok Post*, 11 December 1992.

241 Note to the file Meeting with Thai Foreign Minister, 5 March 1993, UNA, S-0794-0012-0003.

242 Weekly sitrep nr. 007 Dutchbat II 09–16 January 1993, NIMH, UNTAC-099, folder 68; Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Army General Wimol Wongwanich, Bangkok 15 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 22 March 1993, "Embargo sur les exportations Cambodgiennes de pierres précieuses et de bois," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

243 Weekly sitrep nr. 005 Dutchbat II 26 December 1992–2 January 1993, NIMH, UNTAC-099, folder 68; Weekly sitrep nr. 010 Dutchbat II 30 January–6 February, NIMH, UNTAC-099, folder 68; Hans Vriens, "Waterputten voor de Rode Khmer," *Elsevier*, 27 February 1993. This was not illegal and also practiced by the Japanese companies in other parts of Cambodia; S/25289; Cable French Ambassador Bangkok to Paris, 19 January 1993; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 5 January 1993, "Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

244 Interoffice memorandum Peschoux to Carney, 27 January 1993, "Report on a visit to Kampot," ADN, 521 POI/2 31.

implementing the sanctions, making the resolution a dead letter. When UNTAC made it openly clear to the Khmer Rouge that they would not mount any border checkpoints without their approval and left the enforcement of the resolution to Thailand, the Khmer Rouge knew they were safe. As planned, the SNC adopted another moratorium on the export of minerals and gems on 10 February 1993. The decision was also subsequently endorsed by the Security Council. This time, China did not abstain in the vote.²⁴⁵ Beijing probably realised that the measure would not be enforced by UNTAC anyway, and preferred to give priority to not damaging its international standing and avoided being depicted as the Khmer Rouge's sole defender. The Chinese were proven right in their wisdom because three days later the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that the mounting of border checkpoints in the Khmer Rouge area, as asked for by the Security Council, had "proved unavailing."²⁴⁶

Ultimately, Akashi seemed to accept the view that pressuring the Khmer Rouge with sanctions, especially if these were to be enforced by UNTAC peacekeepers, risked provoking the Khmer Rouge. "Such a move," Akashi cabled to Goulding of 4 December, "even if not directly met with force from the NADK, would invite attacks on UNTAC personnel in the checkpoints and elsewhere." Whether it was Akashi's personal conviction or a copy of Sanderson's line of argument is uncertain, but ultimately, Akashi told Goulding that the idea, which he had been pushing for months, might "jeopardize the electoral process and risk changing the character of the mission."²⁴⁷ Whereas Akashi had previously believed in the possibilities for exercising pressures short of enforcement, his discourse changed once he needed to explain in public "his" decision for not taking more assertive action. Pointing at the limitations of UNTAC's peacekeeping mandate provided a convenient argument in this situation. At a press conference in January 1993, Akashi emphasised that UNTAC was not "an enforcement action," but "a classical type of peace-keeping operation which was essentially based on the agreement and consent of the parties involved."²⁴⁸ He characterised UNTAC as a "diplomatic peacekeeping force" with the obligation to resort to persuasion and negotiation and stressed that UNTAC was clearly different from the UN operation in Somalia UNOSOM, where peacekeepers had been given "rather exceptional authority to use force," whereas UNTAC could only use force "in the clear and dire case of self-defence."²⁴⁹ Some months later, the argument of the limited possibilities under a peacekeeping mandate was again used by Akashi to shrug off responsibility for the failed disarmament process: "To imply [. . .] that the failure to disarm was in some way UNTAC's responsibility seems to me to miss the whole point about peacekeeping as opposed to peace enforcement."²⁵⁰ Such public statements, in which Akashi connected the limits of his coercive options to the theoretical distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, have led scholars to conclude, erroneously, that Akashi maintained a narrow interpretation of his peacekeeping mandate, often set in contrast to his

245 S/RES/810 (1993) 8 March 1993.

246 Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 792 (1992), 13 February 1993 (S/25289)

247 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, "Implementation of resolution 792," UNA, S-0794-0011-0001.

248 Press Conference by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, 11 January 1993, UNA, S-0795-0046-0004.

249 Ibid.

250 Letter from Yasushi Akashi to Tetsuo Miyabara, United States Accounting Office, I-32, 5 August 1993, 1–2. Cited in: Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 72.

counterpart in Somalia, Jonathan Howe, who favoured strong action against Mogadishu's defiant warlord, Mohammed Aidede.²⁵¹ But as has been demonstrated, these public declarations did not reflect the real considerations behind the decisions that were made, but rather functioned as a retrospective rationalisation and justification for the chosen path.²⁵²

UNTAC's credibility challenged

The possibility of forcible opposition by the Khmer Rouge to the elections was not ruled out by the group of scholars from Columbia University who observed that elections could only succeed if the Khmer Rouge remained non-combative or, if combative, were weakened and isolated.²⁵³ Sanderson's strategy of keeping the Khmer Rouge calm, contain them and carry on towards the elections turned out to be challenging as UNTAC encountered an increasingly aggressive attitude by the Khmer Rouge, who seemed to prepare for armed struggle. After the adoption of Security Council resolution 792, UNTAC's contacts with the Khmer Rouge deteriorated further and the tone of their propaganda became much more hostile. In the night of 8 December, two bridges were blown up in the northern part of Kompong Thom by Khmer Rouge forces. On the same day, Khieu Samphan was absent from the SNC meeting in Phnom Penh and the atmosphere in the Mixed Military Working Group was particularly hostile.²⁵⁴ During the meeting, Sanderson attempted to find a solution for the heightened level of hostilities in the countryside, but General Nuon Bunno did not respond to the force commander's calls to cease the attacks. Instead he aggressively criticised UNTAC and stated that the true meaning of resolution 792 was "to offer graciously Cambodia on a plate to Vietnam."²⁵⁵ Sanderson and Akashi denied that the Security Council had imposed sanctions on any party because Chapter VII of the UN Charter had not been invoked.²⁵⁶ Although this was theoretically true, it did not fool the Khmer Rouge, nor the press.²⁵⁷

Contacts with the Khmer Rouge in the field grew noticeably more tense as Khmer Rouge units started capturing and detaining UN military observers and regular forces. On 1 December, six UN military observers were captured and detained by Khmer Rouge soldiers in Kompong Thom province. The group was patrolling the Steung Saen River in a small boat until they arrived

251 Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 199.

252 The definition *rationalisation rétrospective* has been coined by Raymond Aron who has argued that *post eventum*, there is always a reasonable explanation for a victory. Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1938, nouvelle édition revue et annotée par Sylvie Mesure 1986), 173.

253 Betts et al., *Time Is Running Out in Cambodia*.

254 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 9 December 1992, "The military situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0049-0001.

255 Statement of Major General Nuon Bunno at the Mixed Military Working Group, 27th meeting, 9 December 1992, UNTAC HQ, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

256 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 27th meeting, 9 December 1992, UNTAC HQ, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003; Response to NADK Statement at MMWG, 9 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003; Chanda and Tasker, "Sides of a triangle," 28; "Review of recent developments, Statement by Mr. Akashi in the Supreme National Council, 8 December 1992," UNA, S-1834-0047-0006.

257 Michael Littlejohns, "Sanctions imposed on Khmer Rouge," *Financial Times*, 1 December 1992; Stanley Meisler, "U.N. Imposes Embargo on Cambodia's Khmer Rouge: Peacekeeping: Cutoff of oil is included after rebels refuse to disarm and take part in upcoming elections," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 December 1992; "Cambodge: Les Nations unies décident d'appliquer des sanctions aux Khmer Rouges," *Le Monde*, 2 December 1992.

at a Khmer Rouge river-checkpoint where they were forced at gunpoint to come ashore.²⁵⁸ The UNTAC helicopter sent to the area was fired at by the Khmer Rouge when approaching the scene, wounding a French lieutenant colonel, the seventh peacekeeper to be injured by gunfire in Cambodia.²⁵⁹ After mediation by Deputy Force Commander Rideau and members of the Indonesian battalion, the military observers were eventually released. The question was whether the detention had been a coordinated reaction to the Security Council's support for sanctions. The press certainly drew this conclusion.²⁶⁰ Within UNTAC, there were differing interpretations. Some believed that the Khmer Rouge indeed aimed to demonstrate that they could not be excluded from the elections without consequences.²⁶¹ Others, including Akashi and Sanderson, considered that it was an isolated incident caused by the poor communication among the Khmer Rouge units that predominantly relied on old Chinese-made radios of mediocre quality.²⁶²

This last interpretation was called into question when more similar incidents occurred soon afterwards. On 15 December, two UNMOs were detained after they had been invited to meet with a local Khmer Rouge commander in Phum O Sala, near Kompong Thom provincial town. When a group of fifteen blue helmets from the Indonesian battalion and two other UNMOs arrived to negotiate their release, they were also disarmed and detained by the Khmer Rouge.²⁶³ Another forty-six Indonesian soldiers were sent to the scene, but somehow the Khmer Rouge also succeeded to force them to lay down their weapons.²⁶⁴ It was only after the intervention by Prince Sihanouk, who wrote to Khieu Samphan, that all the peacekeepers were released, which seemed to imply that there was no problem with their communication systems.²⁶⁵ But the series of detentions was not over yet. On 19 December, a UN helicopter transporting eight members of the Uruguayan battalion went missing in the province of Kratie. The Khmer Rouge declared that they had "violated Khmer Rouge territory" and were considered as spies for the SOC and Vietnam.²⁶⁶ After two days of mediation, the peacekeepers were released. All detentions were, it seemed, the result of a combination of a lack of discipline on the part of individual peacekeepers and some sort

258 Statement of the NADK Spokesman on the arrest of UNTAC personnel along the Stung Sen River (Kampong Thom Province), 3 December 1992, UNA, S-0994-0049-0001.

259 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 2 December 1992, "Detention of NNU/UNMOs," UNA, S-0794-0023-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 December 1992, "Situation de la composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Tan Lian Choo, "Detention of UN troops sparks fears of clashes," *The Strait Times*, 5 December 1992.

260 William Branigin, "Khmer Rouge Guerillas Seize 6 U.N. Observers in Cambodia 7 Others Wounded After Security Council Imposes Sanctions," *The Washington Post*, 3 December 1992.

261 Cable French PR New York to Paris, 2 December 1992, "Cambodge: entretien avec M. Sadry," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

262 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 December 1992, "detained UNNO/UNMOs," UNA, S0794-0023-0001; Cable French ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 December 1992, "Libération des otages détenus par les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Tan Lian Choo, "Detention of UN troops sparks fears of clashes," *The Strait Times*, 5 December 1992.

263 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 16 December 1992, "Detention of UNMOs and INDOBATT members; Mine explosion," UNA, S-0794-0020-0003.

264 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 19 December 1992, "UNTAC update," UNA, S-0794-0048-0004; Incidents involving detention of UNTAC military personnel in Kompong Thom, 15–27 December 1992, ADN, 521 PO/2 29.

265 Letter Sihanouk to Khieu Samphan and Son Sen, 19 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0004; Telegram Khieu Samphan to Sihanouk, 19 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0004.

266 Déclaration de la Partie Kampuchea Démocratique et de l'Armée Nationale du Kampuchea Démocratique sur les violations répétées par l'APRONUC des zones de la Partie Kampuchea Démocratique, 20 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0048-0004; Statement of the NADK Spokesman on the arrest of UNTAC personels along the Stung Sen River (Kampong Thom Province), 3 December 1992, UNA, S-0994-0049-0001.

of coordinated Khmer Rouge action.²⁶⁷ The vigilance of UNTAC's military was clearly slacking off after months of limited and tedious activity. Mistakes had been made in the preparation and execution of the patrols, and Sanderson called for better discipline.²⁶⁸

Although no peacekeepers had been injured or physically abused, the resulting picture was that of the Khmer Rouge disarming UNTAC, while it was supposed to be the other way around. This passive response was very harmful for UNTAC's credibility, as it revealed its limited deterrence and questioned its ability to protect the elections against attacks. Khmer Rouge leader Ieng Sary later told David Roberts that some of their units had come to the conclusion that they could harass and arrest UN soldiers with impunity knowing they would not put up a fight.²⁶⁹ This was a worrying development as an internal UNTAC report indicated that the Khmer Rouge was "definitely turning its back on the peace process and laying the groundwork for armed struggle."²⁷⁰ The nature of UNTAC's contact with the Khmer Rouge nonetheless varied throughout Cambodia. Sanderson described the relation with the Khmer Rouge in the North-West as "relatively constructive," but in the rest of the country, their posture was generally "very hard."²⁷¹ UNTAC received indications that the hard-line general Ta Mok had reorganised his forces and received large shipments of weapons, ammunition and fuel via the Pol Pot trail, which put him in a position to launch a serious military operation in central Cambodia.²⁷² A fully armed and increasingly aggressive Khmer Rouge did not auger well for UNTAC's capability to protect the electoral process.

Peace through stability or democracy: the presidential election issue

Carrying on with the elections and counting on the Khmer Rouge's passivity was an enormous gamble. UNTAC's failure of disarming the Khmer Rouge and the partial disarmament of the other factions was impairing the creation of a peaceful and neutral political environment which was conducive to the holding of a free and fair elections. So much was clear, also to Akashi.²⁷³ The challenge for UNTAC was to maintain some resemblance of a secure atmosphere in Cambodia in the months leading to the elections, during the elections and in the months thereafter. The main threat would come from armed attacks by the Khmer Rouge, but there were other potential problems. Hun Sen's State of Cambodia controlled most of the country and the great majority of

267 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 December 1992, "Situation de la composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

268 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 19 December 1992, "UNTAC update," UNA, S-0794-0048-0004; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 December 1992, "Situation de la composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

269 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 69.

270 "Information/Education Division full digest of broadcasts News Media 4–19 November 1992 by the Partie of Democratic Kampuchea," ADN, 521 PO/2 27.

271 Meeting Lieutenant General Sanderson with Foreign Minister Prasong prior to dinner at Foreign Ministry, Bangkok, 14 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

272 Meeting Sanderson with General Wimol Wongwanich, 15 December 1992; Meeting Sanderson with Prasong, 14 December 1992; UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; "Cambodia and UNTAC – The Thai position," UNA, S-0794-0012-0003; Letter Sanderson to US Ambassador Phnom Penh, 1 June 1993, UNA, S-1854-0016-0001; Talks with Thai Authorities 28–30 December 1992, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

273 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 September 1992, "The first six months 15 March–15 September 1992," UNA, S-1854-0022-0008.

military and police forces. If Prince Ranariddh's royalist FUNCINPEC would win the elections, the SOC could easily contest this result with the power of its military. The period separating the elections for the constituent assembly and the adoption of a new constitution was therefore full of uncertainties. And even if the elections would be held relatively free and fair, and lead to the creation of a new legitimate government, the problem of the Khmer Rouge would pose a continuous threat to the new government, which would mean a continuation of the war.

It was for these reasons that the French continued to argue tirelessly that getting Sihanouk elected as president was the best solution available to stabilise the situation, stimulate national reconciliation, save the peace process and save the UN from disaster.²⁷⁴ The French thought historically about the Cambodian problem. Prince Sihanouk was the universally respected father of the nation, and he was willing to lead again. Hun Sen also strongly supported presidential elections, presumably hoping that he could make a power-sharing deal with Sihanouk that excluded the Khmer Rouge. During the Beijing conference in early November, the SOC leader made it clear that he could only support the general elections if presidential elections were held at least two weeks beforehand, thus supporting the French proposal. He resisted simultaneous elections and suggested that if UNTAC would be unable or unwilling to hold early presidential elections, the SOC could take care of the organisation itself.²⁷⁵ By this time, the UN Secretary-General had also been persuaded by the French to agree to the principle of holding presidential elections before the general elections.²⁷⁶

The logic of electing Sihanouk as president to create stability also received support in the academic community. Asia scholar Gary Klintworth observed that a democracy based on a system of proportional representation was probably not the right solution for Cambodia anyway, as it would create a weak government of competing factions, each trying to out-manoeuvre and wreck one another. He made the argument that Cambodia probably didn't need a democracy but rather "a strong, charismatic leader with a vision for Cambodia" who could protect the country against the Khmer Rouge.²⁷⁷ Cambodia scholar Raoul Jennar also warned that a system of proportional representation would be difficult to implement in Cambodia, and accused Washington and Canberra of "democratic fundamentalism."²⁷⁸ Scholars Mats Berdal, then a young peacekeeping specialist, and Gerald Segal, a veteran expert in Asian strategic and security issues, commented that if Sihanouk was elected president, it might not even matter if UNTAC failed. It would bring a certain degree of stability and allow the UN to "go home before anything particularly nasty happened."²⁷⁹

But Washington, Canberra, and to a lesser degree London, remained sceptical. Never very fond of Sihanouk and reluctant to give him power, they felt that the main focus should be on legislative elections which would give Cambodia a legitimate government, and eliminate the

274 Cable French Ambassador to Paris, 11 January 1992, Cable French Ambassador to Paris, 27 November 1992, "Grignotage des Khmers Rouge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh, 25 January 1993, "Bilan de l'application des accords de paix," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

275 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 9 November 1992, "Beijing talks," UNA, S-1829-0312-0005.

276 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 29 October 1992, "The Presidential Election Issue," UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

277 Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 128.

278 Raoul M. Jennar, "Democratization in Cambodia: Hopes and Limits," in *Democracy in Asia*, ed. Michèle Schmiegelow (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1997), 518.

279 Gerald Segal and Mats Berdal, "The Cambodian Dilemma," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (March 1993): 131–32.

Khmer Rouge democratically. From their perspective, the risk of giving Sihanouk power before the general elections was that the prince would proclaim a government of national reconciliation, make a deal with Hun Sen and claim that further legislative elections were unnecessary, possibly excluding the pro-democracy non-communist parties from power.²⁸⁰ So whereas the Anglo-Saxon countries adhered to the liberal internationalist doctrine of building peace through democracy, the other P5 members, France, Russia and China, opted for a more pragmatic approach towards determining who would best rule Cambodia in order to achieve peace and stability.

Policy makers in Washington and Canberra did realise that as a father of the nation, he was an essential player in the peace process whose support for UNTAC was absolutely crucial. Since 2 November 1992, Sihanouk had been residing in Beijing, officially to undergo medical treatment, but many believed that he was above all distancing himself deliberately from UNTAC to emphasise his own indispensability and waited to be called on to come back to Cambodia to save the peace process. David Burns, the British ambassador in Phnom Penh, estimated that the reasons for the prince's absence from Cambodia were "60 per cent political, 40 per cent medical."²⁸¹ On 4 January 1993, Sihanouk suddenly announced his decision to stop his cooperation with UNTAC, in particular out of protest against the politically motivated violence by elements of the SOC against members of FUNCINPEC. He publicly criticised the UN's decision to continue with the elections despite the failure to disarm the factions and said he had come to the conclusion that "the UNTAC medicine" was worse than the disease it was supposed to cure, and that only "old doctor Sihanouk" was able to prevent a tragic derailment of the peace process and to reconcile the country.²⁸² Sihanouk's decision was a great shock for UNTAC. Akashi immediately travelled to Beijing where he eventually succeeded in winning back the prince's confidence. Sihanouk reconfirmed his candidacy for the presidential elections and announced to come back to Phnom Penh in the first week of February to receive the French president, François Mitterrand, who was scheduled to visit Cambodia during his *Tour d'Indochine*.²⁸³ After these developments, Washington and Canberra withdrew their objections, out of concern to keep the prince committed to the peace process. A broad consensus was now formed to hold presidential elections two weeks before the general elections. The French seemed to have their way.²⁸⁴

But by the end of January 1993, Sihanouk characteristically changed his mind. He suddenly declared that he would only participate in presidential elections if these were held simultaneously with the general elections, and postponed the official announcement of his candidacy.²⁸⁵ Sihanouk

280 Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 283; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 5 January 1993, "Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

281 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 January 1993, "meeting with the core group," UNA, S-1829-0312-0001.

282 Nayan Chanda and Nate Thayer, "I want to retake power," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 February 1993, 22; "Tribune Spéciale pour les Sihanoukistes indépendantes et neutres. Ce que seront très vraisemblablement les élections législatives « Untacistes » en Avril ou Mai 1993, par San Khémanourak," see: cable Akashi to Goulding, 23 December 1992, "Article by Prince Sihanouk under Pseudonym," UNA, S-0794-0048-0004.

283 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 January 1993, "Meeting with Prince Sihanouk," UNA, S-1829-0312-0001; Cable French Ambassador Peking to Paris, 13 January 1993, "Entretien avec le Prince Sihanouk," 10 POI/1 1312.

284 Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 283; "China supports early election to break impasse," *Bangkok Post*, 21 January 1993; Statement by ASEAN Foreign Ministers on the holding of a presidential election in Cambodia, 15 January 1993, UNA, S-1834-0048-0002; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 261.

285 Déclaration de Norodom Sihanouk, Pékin, le 28 Janvier 1993, UNA, S-0794-0049-0003; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 26 January 1993, "Cambodge: élections présidentielles ultimes développements avant le CNS," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312.

probably realised that he needed the support of all the factions as president, but the Khmer Rouge publicly stated that they would not support any election organised by UNTAC.²⁸⁶ With Sihanouk himself faltering, the Americans and Australians started a diplomatic campaign against presidential elections, while President Mitterrand did not attempt to push the prince on the issue during his visit to Cambodia on 11 and 12 February.²⁸⁷ Traumatized by the US-supported Lon Nol coup that had ousted him from power in March 1970, and sensing that other key countries such as Australia and Indonesia were not really supportive of presidential elections either, Sihanouk eventually backed away and withdrew his candidacy.²⁸⁸ The prince explained that his change of mind was partly due to a letter he had received from Gareth Evans.²⁸⁹ The denouement of the presidential elections issue meant that the Australian-American argument for peace through democratic elections had eventually prevailed over the French argument for peace through stability. The elections for a constituent assembly thus remained the central focal point of UNTAC's operation, but the Khmer Rouge had excluded themselves from the democratic process. Eventually, the peace process progressed in the way that was desired by Canberra.

286 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 January 1993, "SNC meeting in Beijing," ADN, 521PO/233; Press briefing of the DKP on elections, Phnom Penh, 13 February 1993, UNA, S-0794-0049-0003.

287 Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 283; Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia*, 113; Cable Akashi to Annan, 13 February 1993, "Meetings of president Mitterrand," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 13 February 1993, "visite officielle du Président de la République au Cambodge (11–12 février 1993)," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312. The Indonesian Foreign minister Ali Alatas had promised his Australian counterpart Evans that he would try to convince the French counterpart not to press the issue during the visit of the French president.

288 See the analysis of Jean-Noël Poirier: Internal message Poirier to Sadry, 4 February 1993, "Attitude du prince Sihanouk face à l'APRONUC," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003; Cable Levitte to Phnom Penh, 17 February 1993, "Cambodge: reunion des cinq plus," ADN, 10 POI/1 1312; Déclaration de Norodom Sihanouk du Cambodge, Phnom Penh le 14 Février 1993, UNA, S-0794-0049-0003.

289 Meeting Akashi with Prince Sihanouk, 27 January 1993, UNA, S-0794-0049-0003; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 263.

In defence of the mission

When UNTAC entered the year 1993, the prospects for the mission to succeed were gloomy. The conditions that were considered as an absolute prerequisite by the Paris Agreements for the organisation of free and fair elections were not in place. With the Khmer Rouge becoming increasingly aggressive and the other parties less cooperative, it is striking that, eventually UNTAC did succeed in organising the elections, allowing the UN to declare the mission a success when leaving Cambodia by the end of September. In exploring how UNTAC succeeded in achieving this final outcome, this chapter challenges the conventional wisdom that the success was in large measure the result of complete adherence to the peacekeeping principles. Peacekeepers are supposed to be soldiers without enemies, but as the Khmer Rouge became unmistakably UNTAC's adversary, the operation changed into a robust force that relied heavily on the State of Cambodia to defend the mission and safeguard its success as well as the reputation of the United Nations. UNTAC might have attempted to keep up the appearance of an impartial peacekeeping force, but the imperative of success for the UN led to a more liberal interpretation of the mandate and the understanding that there could be no success without adopting a stronger military posture and taking more risks.

Increased military readiness

Media coverage about the UN operation in Cambodia became increasingly critical in early 1993, and public confidence in UNTAC was at an all-time low.¹ The most expensive operation in the history of the UN, reporters wrote, was on the verge of collapse and had achieved hardly anything of its mandate, except for the successful repatriations of refugees under the imaginative leadership of Sérgio Vieira de Mello. This was an impressive achievement, but also strongly facilitated by the fact that the Cambodian refugees were more than willing to return to their homeland and the Khmer Rouge had an interest in receiving them in their territories. Stories in the media about peacekeepers spending more time in bars and brothels than fulfilling their mission of disarming the Cambodian factions further undermined UNTAC's credibility. As is the case with practically any peacekeeping operation, the quality of the national contingents differed strongly. A large number of the infantry battalions was well-trained and disciplined. There were Malaysian Royal Rangers, Indonesian Para-Raiders, the French Foreign Legion, and the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. But other contingents were much less trained and equipped. Some of the units, in

1 See for example: Gary Klintworth, "United Nations: A Poor Job in Cambodia," *International Herald Tribune*, 2 February 1993; Nate Thayer and Nayan Chanda, "Shattered peace," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 February 1993, 11; Al Santoli, "Cambodia Needs a More Potent U.N. Presence," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1993; Victor Mallet, "UN soldiers fast losing popularity in the killing fields," *The Straits Times*, 19 February 1993; "UN soldiers fail to pacify the killing fields," *Financial Times*, 11 February 1993; René Backmann, "Cambodge: si les sauveteurs font naufrage," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 19 March 1993, 42–44; Henry Kamm, "Cambodia Election Snared as Peace Pact Unravels," *The New York Times*, 18 March 1993; Henry Kamm, "The UN and Cambodia: Fading Hopes," *International Herald Tribune*, 19 March 1993.

Sanderson's words, "came with their backsides hanging out of their trousers."² With the faltering disarmament process, many blue helmets had simply too much time on their hands and too much money to spend, which led to some serious disciplinary problems. Complaints mostly included drunkenness, disrespect vis-à-vis the Cambodian population, sexual harassment of Cambodian women and reckless driving in UN vehicles, regularly causing lethal accidents in a country where the previously abandoned roads were suddenly invaded by brand-new white SUVs. The battalion from Bulgaria, deployed to the provinces of Kandal and Kompong Speu, was notorious and caused most incidents, including street races with UN cars.³ There was also a strong rise in prostitution and HIV in the country.⁴ UNTAC acknowledged the problem and promised to set up a special office to handle complaints of sexual harassment, but Akashi was criticised for making things worse by untactfully defending the right for some entertainment and relaxation of "hotblooded eighteen-year-old soldiers who have come out of a difficult three-week mission in the jungle."⁵ This statement further contributed to a negative portrayal of Akashi in the press, where he was often depicted as indecisive and soft.⁶

In January 1993, the comprehensive political settlement of the Paris Agreement was practically dead, and UNTAC's new mission became limited to holding elections and put a legitimate government in place. Prince Sihanouk criticised the UN for proceeding with the elections despite its failure to disarm the factions' armies, saying nonetheless that he would continue to support the UN mission, "because that is the best means of getting rid of UNTAC."⁷ Some UNTAC staffers talking to journalists off the record also expressed their discomfort with what they observed as a strategy of "bluff[ing] our way through to elections, claim victory for the UN, and get out."⁸ With

2 Power, *Chasing the Flame*, 92.

3 Sofia had certainly not sent its best soldiers, but had instead recruited volunteers, some of them even being ex-convicts who had received no more than two months of basic military training. Moreover, a few weeks after their deployment, many Bulgarian soldiers threatened to leave the country complaining that they had not received their full salaries from their government nor adequate food. The UN Secretariat considered to completely cancel the Bulgarian contribution to the mission, but Bulgarian promises to send professional soldiers were eventually accepted out of fear for negative publicity. By December 1992, fifty-six members of the Bulgarian battalion, including eight officers, were sent home for disciplinary reasons. Sheri Prasso, "Poorly paid Bulgarian peacekeepers threaten to leave Cambodia," *AFP*, 12 July 1992; Lolke van der Heide, "Sofia stuurde criminelen als blauwhelmen naar Cambodja," *NRC Handelsblad*, 19 March 1993; Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 76; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 139; "An Open Letter to Yasushi Akashi," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 11 October 1992.

4 Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism, and UN peacekeeping: a gendered analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004) 62; At the hospital of Preah Vihear, in the sector of the Pakistani battalion, the majority of patients were young boys who were the victim of sexual abuse by UN soldiers. Cited in: Raoul M. Jennar, "l'ONU au Cambodge: les leçons de l'APRONUC," *Revue Études internationales*, 26, no. 2 (June 1995): 312. This is confirmed by other accounts. See: Guillaume Ancel, *Un casque bleu chez les Khmers rouges: Journal d'un soldat de paix, Cambodge 1992* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2021), 209. Similar abuses were observed by the Dutch battalion commander Patrick Cammaert in the adjacent sector where he took over the camp from the Bangladeshi battalion. See: Esther Bootsma, *Kijk niet weg: De missie van generaal Patrick Cammaert* (Amersfoort: Atlas Contact, 2019), 83.

5 "Speech by UNTAC Head of Mission Yasushi Akashi at UNTAC headquarters (1992)," accessed on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikgSjYa-0N4>; William Branigin, "Key Phases of U.N. Peace Operation In Cambodia Seen Breaking Down," *The Washington Post*, 4 October 1992; Akashi justified his remarks by saying: "I had to defend our soldiers. The behaviour of a very small minority should not colour people's perception of UNTAC as a whole." See: James Pringle, "Sex and inflation end the UN honeymoon in Cambodia," *The Times*, 26 November 1992; Sara Colm, "U.N. Agrees to Address Sexual Harassment Issue," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 11 October 1992.

6 Victor Mallet, "UN soldiers fail to pacify the killing fields," *Financial Times*, 11 February 1993; "UN soldiers fast losing popularity in the killing fields," *The Strait Times*, 19 February 1993.

7 Nayan Chanda, "Sharp words," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 February 1993, 23.

8 Nate Thayer, "Moaners beware: Harassed UN reacts to negative press assessments," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 November 1992, 27.

media reporting increasingly critical, UNTAC's relationship with the press deteriorated. Akashi was annoyed by what he viewed as the mediocre quality of sensation-seeking journalists and issued a directive that forbade UN staff to talk to the press without prior permission. UNTAC even tried to reassign journalists because of their negative reporting on Cambodia.⁹ But critical assessments of the situation were broadly shared among reporters – including those working for the world's major news agencies and newspapers – as well as by other observers. A delegation of French senators visiting Cambodia in late February concluded in their extensive report that UNTAC was failing in its mission and that the danger for renewed civil war was real. The senators observed that the UN bureaucracy in New York was clearly unsuited to lead such a large operation and that the UNTAC leadership also fell short. They predicted that the general elections in May would probably not bring peace to Cambodia but was likely to result in a division of the country in two zones, one held by the new government, the other by the Khmer Rouge, which would amount to the continuation of civil war.¹⁰ Cambodia academics Ben Kiernan, Raoul Jennar and Serge Thion made similar analyses and argued that the objective to restore peace was slipping farther out of sight.¹¹ Mats Berdal and Gerald Segal also considered that UNTAC was on the verge of failure and that a renewed civil war and “a wider war in Indochina” could not be excluded.¹²

The consequence of the Security Council's decision to push through with the elections was that the military component retained its full strength, instead of being reduced from 15,000 to 5,000, as had been planned after the successful completion of the disarmament and demobilisation process. As the role of the military component changed into supporting UNTAC's ultimate political objective, Sanderson's capacities as a military planner became an important asset. He quickly recognised that the organisation of elections in such a complicated environment required a level of detailed planning for which the civilian components of the mission were insufficiently prepared. Historian Brocades Zaalberg has demonstrated how Sanderson increased his control over the plan-making in the overall operation, in what the chief military planner jokingly described as a “military coup.” In early December 1992, the force commander proposed to make his military planning staff responsible for the planning of the entire operation in order to enhance the coordination between the military component, the electoral and the information and education branch. Akashi and the civilian components reluctantly agreed to making the military component the de-facto integrator and driving force behind UNTAC as a whole. In practice, however, the arrangement only partially functioned as the civilian components were not eager to have the military take over.¹³

The objective of disarmament and cantonment of the factions was practically abandoned, and all efforts of the military component focussed on the creation of a secure environment conducive to the preparations for and conduct of an election in Cambodia. On 9 December,

9 Phnom Penh correspondents' association, statement by Mr Akashi, September 1993, UNA, S-0794-0036-0004.

10 André Bettencourt, Claude Estier, Paul Caron, Paul d'Ornano, *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées à la suite d'une mission effectuée au Cambodge et au Vietnam du 26 février au 9 mars 1993*, Rapport du Sénat français, no. 268 (21 April 1993) 33–35.

11 Kiernan, “The Failure of the Paris Agreement,” 7–19; Serge Thion, “Failure in Cambodia,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 January 1993, 28; “Cambodia expert says war inevitable,” *The Times*, 6 February 1993.

12 Gerald Segal and Mats Berdal, “A Cambodia Failure Would Hurt the UN Everywhere,” *International Herald Tribune*, 12 January 1993.

13 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 129–30.

Sanderson signed the order to redeploy his battalions from the zones designed to accommodate cantonment to new zones that corresponded as much as possible to the administrative provinces of the country. This facilitated the use of the military component to assist the electoral process. “We made the decision that regardless of what the factions did to themselves, we and the Cambodian people would get on with the conduct of the elections,” Sanderson told a reporter in January 1993.¹⁴ This decision was described by William Shawcross in a *Time* magazine article as “the UN’s biggest gamble.”¹⁵ It was a gamble the UN was also taking at the time in Angola, where UNAVEM II decided to proceed with the organisation of elections despite the fact that it had been unable to disarm and demobilise the warring armies that continued to violate the cease-fire. Although the national elections in November 1992 proceeded reasonably smoothly and were considered to be generally free and fair, the gamble eventually backfired. Days after the election, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) refused to accept the election results, and the country plunged back into civil war, whereafter the UN withdrew most of its personnel.¹⁶

Sanderson realised that for Cambodia it was a risky strategy as well, because he knew that if the Khmer Rouge would decide to militarily oppose the elections from occurring, UNTAC did not have “the means nor the mandate” to confront such a threat.¹⁷ He therefore considered that the best approach was to leave the Khmer Rouge isolated in their zones and avoid provoking them. But the force commander also understood that if UNTAC would not enter contentious areas – meaning areas falling outside the zones that were fully controlled by any faction – its ability to conduct the elections in these parts of the country would be endangered, which risked to further crumble the already rapidly decreasing confidence of the Cambodian people in UNTAC. The force commander therefore instructed his sector commanders to push as far as they could into these contested areas to protect the civilian election teams doing their work there, accepting the risk that this might create incidents with the Khmer Rouge.¹⁸ Whereas Sanderson had previously been unwilling to take the risk to send his forces into zones of potential danger and territories of combat, he now believed that the clear political purpose of achieving the elections justified the risk of moving into the areas where the Khmer Rouge was active. He later recalled: “UNTAC continued to push into the countryside. It was risky, but it had to be done.”¹⁹

How risky it was to operate in these contested areas became clear when UNTAC suffered its first fatalities on 12 January. A group of forty unidentified armed men committed a coordinated attack on the houses of civilian UNTAC personnel in the village of Angkrom in Siem Reap province, killing two Cambodian women working for the electoral component, as well as a seven-year-old child. Two UNTAC police officers, from India and Ghana, were badly injured.²⁰ The incident especially made the Japanese government very nervous since five unarmed Japanese civilian police officers were also stationed at the UNTAC post, but coincidentally had been off-base when the

14 Harish Mehta, “Caught in the Cambodian crossfire - Lt-Gen Sanderson interview,” *Business Times Singapore*, 15 January 1993.

15 William Shawcross, “Cambodia: The U.N.’s Biggest Gamble,” *Time*, 28 December 1992, 14–20.

16 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 132.

17 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 7 January 1993, “PDK policy towards electoral process,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

18 Ibid.

19 Lieutenant General J.M. Sanderson, “UNTAC: Successes and Failures,” in *International peacekeeping: building on the Cambodian experience*, ed. Hugh Smith (1994), 21.

20 “Attack on UNTAC electoral workers, statement by Mr. Akashi,” 13 January 1992, UNA, S-1829-0312-0001.

attack occurred.²¹ After these first casualties, UNTAC headquarters emphasised to all units that they had the authority to respond with force if they were harassed or even hindered in executing their mission. Peacekeepers operating near the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas were instructed to adopt “a committed military posture” when escorting members of UNTAC’s civilian components, which included fully armed convoys equipped with heavy machine guns.²² Sanderson recognised that it was necessary to increase UNTAC’s military readiness, but the detention of large numbers of UNTAC personnel in December had dealt a blow to the credibility of UNTAC as a whole, and especially of the military component’s ability to protect the elections. The deterrent capacities of UNTAC battalions varied considerably. The Dutch and the French were clearly the best equipped contingents possessing a large number of vehicles, night-vision equipment, and their own helicopters. They were therefore able to act robustly.²³ This was demonstrated on 4 January 1993, when thirty Khmer Rouge fighters opened fire on a French compound. Local villagers who had rushed to the French camp for protection witnessed how the foreign legionnaires returned fire effectively, forcing the Khmer Rouge to flee.²⁴ Cambodia academic Christophe Peschoux was present during the incident and witnessed how the French riposte strengthened local villagers’ confidence in UNTAC.²⁵ Some commanders of other battalions, however, voiced concern about their new mission to protect the electoral process, lacking even the ammunition for target practicing.²⁶ Sanderson therefore requested New York to pressure troop contributing countries to organise special resupply flights to Cambodia to level-up ammunition, weapons, spare parts, medical supplies, and night vision equipment of their contingents.²⁷ UNTAC began to prepare for more violent scenarios.

Building a local peace: improvisation and pacification

Apart from the limited disarmament of the forces of the three cooperating factions, UNTAC’s eleven infantry battalions were unable to execute their main mission. However, by improvisation and design, peacekeepers became involved in other activities than their original mission prescribed. First, the military component became actively involved in providing security for UNTAC’s electoral workers. Since the arrival of its first personnel in the spring of 1992, the electoral component had worked quietly on the background to lay the groundwork for the elections. On 5 October, the voter registration process started, first in Phnom Penh, and then in the rest of the country, where 450 highly qualified and motivated but poorly paid United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) recruited

21 “Siem Reap attack worries Japan,” *The Nation*, 15 January 1993.

22 Message UNTAC HQ to all battalions, 18 January 1993, “Use of force,” UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

23 Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 50; Author’s interview with Jeff Mac Mootry; “La ‘croisade’ du Colonel Irastorza,” *Armée & Défense* (July 1992).

24 Journal de Marche et Opérations du Bataillon Français au Cambodge du 29 Novembre 1992 au 17 Juin 1993 APRONUC – Secteur 6, Service Historique de la Défense Vincennes (SHD), GR 2000 Z 114 5.

25 Interoffice memorandum Peschoux to Carney, 27 January 1993, “Report on a visit to Kampot,” ADN, 521 POI/231.

26 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 November 1992, “Planning for redeployment of UNTAC to support the electoral process,” UNA, S-1829-0312-0005.

27 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 26 November 1992, “Brief to contributing countries UNTAC,” UNA, S-0795-0043-0004; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 November 1992, “Planning for redeployment of UNTAC to support the electoral process,” UNA, S-1829-0312-0005; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 26 November 1992, “Brief to contributing countries UNTAC,” UNA, S-0795-0043-0004.

some 4,000 Cambodians and trained them in registration techniques. In small teams of five they travelled around Cambodia, with the aim to register the eligible Cambodian population for the elections. Living in precarious conditions, the UNVs demonstrated great courage by visiting the most remote villages. Sanderson instructed the military component to provide these teams with protection and logistic support especially in the contentious zones that were difficult to access and close to the Khmer Rouge.²⁸ With help from the Indonesian battalion, UNTAC election teams even succeeded in registering a large part of the population in the unstable province of Kompong Thom. By the end of January 1993, UNTAC's electoral component had managed to register over 4.7 million Cambodian voters, which constituted 96 per cent of the eligible population in the parts of the country to which UNTAC had access. It was encouraging that many Cambodians were visibly proud of their personal voting cards issued to them.²⁹

A week after it had finished its work of voter registration, UNTAC's electoral component, assisted by the Information and Education branch, initiated its civic education campaign through which it prepared the Cambodian population for the elections, to be held in the last week of May, through education programmes. UN volunteers travelled from village to village to give the Cambodian population explanation about the workings of democratic elections, using materials such as comics on posters and leaflets, but also videos and moving theatres. The most important message to convey was that their vote would be secret and that they should not be intimidated by threats from either the Khmer Rouge not to vote or from the State of Cambodia to vote for them.

Apart from providing security for electoral workers in contested areas, peacekeepers also actively assisted their efforts, for instance with the distribution of flyers and pinning up of posters in the villages with information about the elections.³⁰ The French battalion created a special platoon with Khmer-speakers that travelled around the countryside to reassure the local population and inform them about the elections. The platoon generally stayed one week in a village during which it set up a health clinic and a school where Cambodian children were given the opportunity to follow French language classes.³¹ Some observers saw the French peacekeepers applying some elements of the colonial counterinsurgency methods that had been used to pacify the countryside in French Indochina, which was based on a creeping occupation, using the analogy of an oil stain (*tâche d'huile*) spreading out progressively over a wider area using military, political and economic means.³² "Peace is not created from top-down, but from bottom-up," French battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Elrick Irastorza, said when sharing with a journalist his belief that if tensions in the countryside could be eased, it would help to solve the political stalemate in

28 Dukers, "Peace-keeping in Cambodia," 2854; Brocades Zaalberg *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 127; Jennar, "Cambodge: l'entreprise inachevée," 58.

29 "Mariniers in Cambodja: zorgen voor veilige verkiezingen," *Defensiekrant*, 10 December 1992.

30 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 98.

31 Barbara Smith, "French battalion aids locals in sector 6," *The Cambodia Times*, 5–11 October 1992; Rémi Favret, "Cambodge: la « petite paix » des villages," *Le Figaro*, 19 August 1992; APRONUC distribution de tracts, 92.9.014 - K7-13, ECPAD.

32 *Le Monde*-journalist Patrice de Beer observed that the French applied a method similar to the one developed by French Marshal Hubert Lyautey, who together with Marshal Joseph Gallieni, had "pacified" French Indochina (and other parts of the French colonial empire) in the late nineteenth century. Patrice de Beer, "Cambodge: la visite de M. Pierre Joxe aux « casques bleus » français, l'armée humanitaire," *Le Monde*, 2 October 1992. For a detailed analysis of the Gallieni-Lyautey method, see: Michael P. M. Finch, *A Progressive Occupation?: The Gallieni-Lyautey Method and Colonial Pacification in Tonkin and Madagascar, 1885–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Phnom Penh. In contrast to the “political peace” that was prolapsing, Irastorza ordered his men to build what he called *une petite paix locale*, a local peace in the Cambodian villages and rice paddies.³³

In order to build a local peace, it was necessary for UNTAC military forces to control their zones and protect the local population, tasks that were hardly considered to belong to the realm of peacekeepers in the early 1990s.³⁴ Although methods and motivation differed between the battalions, by actively patrolling their sector, sometimes even jointly with various factions’ members, the security around the Cambodian countryside was significantly improved.³⁵ As Brocades Zaalberg has demonstrated, the Dutch battalion became heavily involved in public security duties in their sector.³⁶ The main security problem in most parts of Cambodia was created by armed groups who used their weapons as an easy way to make money, often by forcing the local traffic to pay “road taxes.” Although their mandate did officially not provide for it, Dutch marines ignored protestations from UNTAC headquarters, and decided to disarm local bandits on the spot. They took the initiative to make it obligatory for all armed soldiers of the factions to carry ID-cards and a proper uniform in order to distinguish them from the bandits.³⁷ The French battalion adopted similar policies and succeeded in completely eradicating the racketeering on the mains roads in their sector. This improvement of the security environment allowed Cambodian farmers to work on their fields and go to the local marketplaces.³⁸

Bottom-up improvised initiatives by individual UNTAC units that went against official instructions were also central in efforts to provide medical aid to the local population in a country where medical facilities were very scarce. The UN Secretariat in New York opposed giving medical care to Cambodians as to preserve medical supplies which were normally exclusively reserved for UNTAC personnel.³⁹ But well-equipped Western contingents ignored these official UN instructions and used 85 per cent of their medical services to the benefit of the Cambodian population.⁴⁰ Doctors of the French battalion rehabilitated an old hospital in Sihanoukville, equipped it with an x-ray facility, a laboratory and an operating room. Nearly as much as a hundred operations per month were carried out, whereas this was only three per month before UNTAC arrived in the country.⁴¹ German military doctors in Phnom Penh also insisted on treating any Cambodians who presented themselves. The German and Japanese governments sent additional medical supplies and funds that allowed the German hospital to treat up to 17,000 Cambodian patients. It soon became known among the Cambodian population as “the House of the Helping Gods.” Indian army doctors also treated dozens of Cambodians for tuberculosis at their field

33 Favret, “la « petite paix » des villages”; Smith, “French battalion aids locals”; “La croisade.”

34 Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, “Counterinsurgency and peace operations,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, eds. Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (New York: Routledge, 2014), 85.

35 Michael Doyle observed that some battalions were ineffective but that most were “very good.” Doyle, *UNTAC’s Civil Mandate*, 63.

36 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 103–14.

37 Author’s interview with H. Dukers; Weekly sitrep nr 003 12–19 December 1992, NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 68.

38 Smith, “French battalion aids locals”; Favret, “la « petite paix » des villages”; Message Major Van Ede to Dutch HQ Sisophon, 4 September 1992, “optreden tegen banditisme Cambodja,” SIB, MARSTAF, box 1236, file 43.

39 Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodja,” 2853; Author’s Interview with Herman Dukers.

40 Commandement de la doctrine, *l’intervention française au Cambodge*, 61; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 97.

41 Commandement de la doctrine, *l’intervention française au Cambodge*, 70; Smith, “French battalion aids locals.”

hospital in Siem Reap.⁴² It was partly because of the initial prohibition by UN headquarters to receive the local population that UNTACs doctors and medics could treat only 27 per cent of all Cambodians seeking medical attention.⁴³

Besides UNTAC's engineer contingents from Thailand, Japan, China and France that worked hard to repair roads and bridges, most UNTAC infantry battalions also initiated small bottom-up initiatives to improve the infrastructure and the lives of the Cambodian population in their sector. The Dutch marines received half a million dollars from their government to set up development projects, which they used to build fifteen new schools, several nurseries and orphanages, a police station and a prison. Some fifty deep water wells were drilled, a malaria prevention programme was set up and crutches for Cambodian mine victims purchased.⁴⁴ The Dutch immediately observed that these "civic action" projects, as they were called, created goodwill and confidence among the Cambodian population.⁴⁵ The same was true for the French battalion, where each company was ordered to carry out at least one civic action project every month.⁴⁶ "I felt more like a construction worker than a soldier," an Irish foreign legionnaire remembered about his time in Cambodia.⁴⁷

Battalions with less financial and logistical means also found ways to set up civic action projects. The Malaysian battalion located in Battambang province, for example, had a civic action budget of only \$6,650 which was essentially used for road fixing activities, English language training, public health information campaigns and the construction of sanitary infrastructure.⁴⁸ The Bangladeshi battalion undertook low cost initiatives such as teaching the local population efficient farming techniques and starting up a revenue-generating programme for Cambodian land-mine victims.⁴⁹ The members of the second – more professional – Bulgarian battalion partly repaired the bad reputation of their predecessors by constructing schools and providing medical aid to the Cambodians.⁵⁰ The leadership of both UNHCR and UNDP in Phnom Penh were impressed by the work of the military component.⁵¹

Besides improving the living conditions of the Cambodian population, bottom-up civic action activities were also important for improving the morale of the peacekeepers as it gave them a sense of purpose in a country ridden with poverty in which they were unable to satisfactorily fulfil their mission. Brocades Zaalberg has pointed out that there was nonetheless some confusion over

42 Ralf Vollmuth, "UNTAC 1992/93 Der deutsche Sanitätsdienst in Kambodscha," *Zeitschrift für historische Bildung*, 2 (2018), 18–21; Mallet, "UN soldiers fast losing popularity in the killing fields."

43 Robin Davies, "Civic action in Cambodia: the role of UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia)," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 23 (January–April 1997).

44 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 101; Mieke Kooistra, "Ministers vinden Untac zinvol voor ontwikkeling Cambodja," 14 September 1992; Relus ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren: herinneringen aan Plein 4* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1996), 117; Verslag van het werkbezoek van de Inspecteur-Generaal der Krijgsmacht aan Cambodja van 26 december 1992 tot 11 januari 1993, SIB, MARSTAF, UNTAC, box 1232, file 24; Cable Netherlands Embassy Bangkok to The Hague, 16 March 1993, "Defensie ontwikkelingsprojecten Kambodja," AMBZ, BZ-00169; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 95.

45 Verslag van het werkbezoek van de Inspecteur-Generaal der Krijgsmacht aan Cambodja van 26 december 1992 tot 11 januari 1993, SIB, MARSTAF, UNTAC, box 1232, file 24.

46 Michael Hayes, "With a Little Help From the Troops," *Phnom Penh Post*, 23 April 1993.

47 Padraig O'Keeffe and Ralph Riegel, *Hidden soldier: An Irish Legionnaire's Wars from Bosnia to Iraq* (New York: The O'Brien Press, 2013), 45.

48 Heininger, *Peacekeeping in transition*, 122.

49 Davies, "Civic action in Cambodia"; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 96.

50 Van der Heide, "Sofia stuurde criminelen als blauwhelmen naar Cambodja."

51 Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 93.

the purpose of civic action because it was not always clear whether these activities of relief and reconstruction were a purpose of its own or whether “doing good” was a means of winning the hearts and minds of the population and thus facilitate UNTAC’s military operations.⁵² It seems, however, that this confusion disappeared as soon UNTAC’s mission became fully focussed on the protection of the elections, when civic action activities became a central instrument to enhance UNTAC’s credibility with the Cambodian population and compete with the Khmer Rouge for their hearts and minds.

Sanderson wholeheartedly supported the bottom-up civic action initiatives of some of his battalions. He himself had gained experience with civic action while serving in Malaya in the 1960s, and was an admirer of Sir Gerald Templer, the commander of the British forces during the Malayan Emergency of 1948–60, who had famously argued that the answer to the insurgency was not to pour more troops into the jungle, but to “win the hearts and minds of the people.”⁵³ Templer’s hearts and minds approach, which included psychological warfare and the construction of schools and medical clinics, is generally presented as an effective counterinsurgency method which successfully extinguished the insurrection. Some scholars, however, have nuanced this picture by pointing at the fact that the British also used high levels of coercion and force in Malaya.⁵⁴ Sanderson had enhanced his knowledge in this domain in the 1970s when he taught courses in counter-revolutionary warfare and peacekeeping operations at the British Staff College Camberley.⁵⁵ Before he took on command in Cambodia, Sanderson had asked the UN Secretariat to provide the military component with a special budget for civic action. But much to his regret, New York did not believe that civic action belonged to the realm of the military, and should be left to UNTAC’s rehabilitation component which fell under the responsibility of the UN agencies UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF.⁵⁶ Sanderson strongly deplored that New York did not understand that many parts of the Cambodian countryside were only accessible by the military.⁵⁷ During the first eleven months of the operation, UNTAC’s civic action activities relied on improvised initiatives by individual battalions. But with the elections approaching and the Khmer Rouge’s insurgency growing, UNTAC began to employ the hearts and minds approach more systematically to combat the Khmer Rouge’s influence over the Cambodian population. On 17 March 1993, two months before the elections, Sanderson created a special civic action cell at UNTAC headquarters to stimulate all contingents to engage in hearts and minds activities in order to forge ties with the local community before having to focus all attention on the security of the elections.⁵⁸ All battalions were instructed to set up medical aid programmes and appoint a staff

52 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 101–2.

53 Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

54 Simon Smith, “General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence, and Propaganda,” *Intelligence and National Security* 16, no. 3 (2001): 60–78; Paul Dixon, “Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 353; Karl Hack, “The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 383–414.

55 CV Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, AMBZ, BZ-00391; Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

56 Internal message Sanderson to Akashi, 10 August 1993, “GAO Draft Report Lessons Learned from the Cambodian Operation,” ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 3, file 14.

57 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 100; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 142–43. Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

58 Hayes, “With a Little Help From the Troops”; *The Peacekeeper: the military force newsletter*, March/April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

officer to coordinate civic action. It was the first time this was ever done in a UN peacekeeping mission.⁵⁹ The projects were coordinated as much as possible with NGOs that were active in Cambodia, in order to guarantee the sustainment of the projects in the long run.⁶⁰ Sanderson later described this effort as “forging an alliance with the Cambodian people” to enhance their commitment to the elections.⁶¹ Though keeping it implicit at the time, UNTAC was applying counterinsurgency methods to win over the Cambodians and nip the Khmer Rouge’s efforts to control the population in the bud. The force commander himself recalled that when UNTAC started to penetrate more deeply into the contested zones and implement civic action projects, “the Khmer Rouge began to notice that they had a competitor for the hearts and minds of the Cambodian people.”⁶²

An effective way to reach the Cambodians was through an independent UNTAC radio station. Timothy Carney, the head of UNTAC’s Information and Education component, an American diplomat with long experience in Cambodia, had long pleaded for broadcasting radio programmes in Khmer to effectively disseminate UNTAC’s message to the Cambodian people.⁶³ The Secretary-General, however, was initially sceptical about the intrusiveness of a radio station and blocked the idea. But in November 1992, he changed his mind and gave the green light after all. As no preparations had been made, Radio UNTAC first used the old Soviet-made radio transmitters of the SOC in Phnom Penh and the Voice of America radio in Thailand to cover the entire country. It was only in April 1993, by the time the election campaign officially began, that UNTAC received its own radio transmitter. Radio UNTAC broadcasted programmes fifteen hours a day, including political debates between the parties with equal speaking time and the “right of response” for every candidate. The Japanese government and NGOs donated a total of 347,804 radios which were distributed among the Cambodian population. Listening to this free and neutral source of information quickly became a favourite pastime for many Cambodians around the country.⁶⁴ Sanderson later stated: “I do not believe that anyone could now deny the criticality of Radio UNTAC to the whole process. In my view, this was obvious from the start and only the United Nations bureaucracy delayed it.”⁶⁵ The fact that UNTAC’s radio transmitter was under heavy guard by blue helmets, twenty-four hours a day, reveals both the importance of this asset to UNTAC’s efforts in winning over the Cambodian population to participate in the elections as well as the potential threat of Khmer Rouge sabotage actions. UNTAC also jammed the Khmer Rouge radio station from time to time, when its broadcasts were considered “non-neutral.”⁶⁶ In this competition for influence over the hearts and minds of the Cambodians, UNTAC and the Khmer Rouge found themselves in something that strongly resembled an information war.

Going beyond a competition for influence over the hearts and minds of the Cambodians,

59 Findlay, Cambodia, 142–43; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 100.

60 Hayes, “With a Little Help From the Troops.”

61 Sanderson, “The UNTAC Military Component,” 126; Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

62 Sanderson, “UNTAC: Successes and Failures,” 21.

63 Jennar, “Cambodge: l’entreprise inachevée,” 59; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 86, 152; Doyle, “UNTAC: Sources of Success and Failure,” 92; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 207.

64 Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 169; Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 127–28; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 76.

65 Sanderson, “UNTAC: The Military Component View,” 133.

66 Michael Haas, *Modern Cambodia’s Emergence from the Killing Fields: What happened in the critical years?* (Los Angeles: Publishing House for Scholars, 2012), 63.

some UNTAC battalions also employed civic action in an effort to pacify the Khmer Rouge more directly. Army doctors of the French battalion offered free medical treatment to Khmer Rouge officers, soldiers and their family members with the aim to lure them out of their mountain hideouts and persuade them to disarm and demobilise. It seemed to work, as a small number of war wary Khmer Rouge actually did present themselves to the French blue berets to hand in their weapons voluntarily.⁶⁷ The second Dutch battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Cammaert, described civic action as his “best weapon” in dealing with the Khmer Rouge.⁶⁸ It allowed him to create a good rapport with a local Khmer Rouge general, Neak Vong, who had indicated to him that the village of which he was the mayor suffered from a great shortage of rice supply. After Cammaert had promised Vong to see what he could do, he delivered five ox-carts filled with rice bags to the general’s village. The gesture resulted in a better exchange of information and permission for the Dutch marines to patrol in some Khmer Rouge-controlled areas which had previously been off-limits to UNTAC.⁶⁹ Civic action thus became a somewhat more structurally applied tool to pacify the Khmer Rouge in preparation of the elections. Strictly speaking, UNTAC was not involved in counterinsurgency as the objective was not to defeat the Khmer Rouge, but the fact that peacekeepers applied soft counterinsurgency methods to deal with an identified insurgent that thwarted the mission’s ultimate objective, reveals that the principle of impartiality was only maintained in theory.

Keeping up impartiality

To obtain its objective of organising free and fair elections, UNTAC needed all parties to stay committed to the peace process, which forced it into a balancing act of trying to keep up the appearance of an impartial peacekeeping force. UNTAC was not only confronted with the increasing aggressiveness of the Khmer Rouge, but also with the State of Cambodia, whose willingness to faithfully implement the peace agreement was rapidly evaporating. The Khmer Rouge had not demobilised any of their forces, while controlling more territory and people than they had before the peace agreements. Meanwhile, UNTAC’s presence was not only weakening the SOC, but also undermining the Phnom Penh government’s popularity with the Cambodian people. The arrival of large numbers of foreign troops had resulted in a huge inflow of foreign cash, which led to inflation, increased corruption, and a widening gap between poor peasants in the countryside and an increasingly rich urban minority. These developments were grist to Pol Pot’s mill, as they further discredited Hun Sen.⁷⁰ Hun Sen made it clear that if the military situation would continue to deteriorate further, he would resort to military means to counter the

67 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 28 August 1992, “visite dans la zone du bataillon français,” ADN, 10POI/1 1311; Patrice de Beer, “Cambodge: la visite de M. Pierre Joxe aux « casques bleus » français: l’armée humanitaire,” *Le Monde*, 2 October 1992.

68 Author’s interview with Patrick Cammaert, 18 December 2018, New York, United States; Memorandum Netherlands Embassy Bangkok to The Hague, 16 March 1993, “Defensie ontwikkelingsprojecten Kambodja,” AMBZ, BZ-00169.

69 Author’s interview with Patrick Cammaert; Klazien van Brandwijk-Wiltjer, “Iedere missie was uniek,” *Checkpoint*, January–February 2013, 44; Bootsma, *Kijk niet weg*, 96; Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja*, 168; Bais, *Het mijneveld van een vredesmacht*, 97–98; Vriens, “Waterputten voor de Rode Khmer,” 27.

70 Klintworth, “Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading,” 123.

Khmer Rouge encroachment.⁷¹ On 5 January, the SOC prime minister officially requested the UN Secretary-General to change UNTAC's mandate into a Chapter VII operation to allow UN forces to forcibly enter Khmer Rouge zones.⁷² He also publicly stated that the time had come to kick the Khmer Rouge out of the peace process, declare them outlaws and fight them in a joint CPAF-UNTAC effort.⁷³ The Khmer Rouge replied by accusing UNTAC of collaborating with Hun Sen's forces in order "to kill the Cambodian nation and the Cambodian people."⁷⁴ Sanderson believed that these "over the top" statements reflected a growing desperation resulting from the situation on the battlefield which was not developing in their favour.⁷⁵ The CPAF had launched a successful new offensive and was moving in on the Khmer Rouge-controlled town of Pailin. Hun Sen told Akashi that he could take Pailin within a week if he wanted to, but that he would not resume his attacks if UNTAC troops interposed themselves in a buffer zone between his forces and the Khmer Rouge.⁷⁶ Akashi was interested in the proposal, but Sanderson argued that his peacekeepers would be put at too much risk if they would attempt to monitor a buffer zone without the Khmer Rouge's agreement.⁷⁷ However, Hun Sen's proposal was made from a position of weakness as his forces were insufficient in number and strength to sustain their offensive in the Pailin area. The much better trained and disciplined Khmer Rouge succeeded in mounting a counterattack and take some CPAF soldiers prisoner.⁷⁸

Hun Sen continued to pressure UNTAC by publicly criticising the peacekeepers' passiveness by commenting that, in the face of danger, UNTAC soldiers "run more quickly than Cambodians because they have helicopters and Landcruisers."⁷⁹ His minister of foreign affairs, Hor Namhong, bluntly stated to the press that UNTAC was an utter failure. "They are incapable of doing anything," he said. "They take no risk whatsoever. They are here to pile up dollars and have no idea what their humanitarian missions should be" [sic].⁸⁰ Hun Sen complained that the supervision and control of his bureaucracy was "harsh and intrusive," while UNTAC was not exercising any control over the Khmer Rouge, and FUNCINPEC and the KPNLF hardly had an administration to control.⁸¹ The SOC, however, was evading UNTAC control as much as possible. The nature of the communist state apparatus, in which government was strongly entangled with the political party structures, made this relatively easy. When UNTAC administrators tried to establish control over the SOC ministries in Phnom Penh, they soon discovered that they were empty shells, and that the real decision-making processes were taking place in the channels of the

71 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 9 November 1992, "Beijing talks," UNA, S-1829-0312-0005.

72 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Hun Sen, 29 January 1993, UNA, S-1829-0311-0005.

73 "Phnom Penh: kick Khmer Rouge out of peace plan," *AFP*, 5 January 1993.

74 Declaration of NADK spokesman on the co-operation by some UNTAC people with the Vietnamese and its puppet in Battambang in launching an offensive against UNTAC, 10 January 1993, UNA, S-1829-0312-0001; "Khmer Rouge Say U.N. Is Backing Vietnam," *The New York Times*, 3 January 1993.

75 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 11 January 1993, "Situation in Battambang province," UNA, S-1829-0312-0001.

76 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 24 January 1993, "Situation in Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003.

77 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 February 1993, "Meeting met Hun Sen," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003; Philip Shenon, "Cambodia Halts Drive on Rebels," *The International Herald Tribune*, 3 February 1993.

78 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 11 January 1993, "Attaque de la zone de Pailin par les forces de l'état du Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

79 Interoffice memorandum Peschoux to Carney, 27 January 1993, "Report on a visit to Kampot," ADN, 521 PO/231.

80 Kamm, "Cambodia Election Snared as Peace Pact Unravels."

81 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 9 November 1992, "Beijing talks," UNA, S-1829-0312-0005.

SOC's political wing: the Cambodian People's Party (CPP).⁸² Moreover, much of the state power resided with officials in the provinces, where authority was exercised through informal channels. The French director of UNTAC's civil administration component, Gérard Porcell, did not give priority to establishing effective control at the provincial level. He was irritated by UNTAC's lack of firmness vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge and demonstrated a certain level of comprehension for the SOC's position. He felt that UNTAC could only negotiate with rather than control the SOC as long as it negotiated with rather than controlled the Khmer Rouge.⁸³ Instead of exercising control, UNTAC administrators were more successful in providing technical assistance, combatting corruption, and improving the efficiency of the Phnom Penh ministries. They created codes of conducts for SOC civil servants and trained them in accounting and more effective tax collection, which immediately led to an increase in revenue for the SOC.⁸⁴ So, ultimately, UNTAC was more reforming than controlling the bureaucracy of the Phnom Penh government.

Although it had officially sworn off communism, the CPP had difficulties in accepting the principles of pluralistic democracy and decided to attack and intimidate its political opponents rather than trying to convince the Cambodian electorate for their vote. Elements of the CPP caused a wave of politically motivated violence, especially aimed at the royalist FUNCINPEC party, which they considered as their greatest competitor in the upcoming elections. Indeed, the party of Prince Ranariddh was immensely popular, which was in no small measure the result of its association with Prince Sihanouk, tactfully exploited by Ranariddh, who made public statements during rallies such as: "give me the power so I may give it to my father."⁸⁵ In December 1992, fourteen FUNCINPEC party cadres were murdered and thirty party offices were attacked, ransacked or burned.⁸⁶ Other forms of violent intimidation, such as harassment and abductions, were no exceptions, especially in the provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap, and Kompong Thom. SOC police officers said they could not allow members of FUNINPEC, whom they viewed as the "enemy from within," to fly their flag freely on the territory they controlled.⁸⁷ Protesting against the political violence, Ranariddh followed his father's example and announced on 4 January that he would cease all working relations with UNTAC as long as no "energetic and effective measures" were taken to end the climate of violence. He also left Phnom Penh saying he feared for his safety.⁸⁸ Ranariddh was under pressure from within his own party, and his Khmer Rouge contacts, to pick up the weapons against the SOC and withdraw from the electoral process. Knowing that this would mean the end of the elections and thus the failure of UNTAC, Akashi

82 The ex-Soviet participants in the drafting of the peace accords later admitted that they accepted control of the SOC precisely because they knew how easy it would be for the SOC to resist it. See: Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 173; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 159; Benny Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows: Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, and the United Nations in Cambodia* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 67.

83 On 26 February 1993, Porcell resigned out of sheer frustration with what was, in his view, UNTAC's lack of firmness vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge. However, he was eventually persuaded to stay on until the elections. See: "Cambodge: déçu par l'impuissance de l'ONU le responsable civil de l'APRONUC le Français Gérard Porcell, va abandonner ses fonctions," *Le Monde*, 28 February 1993; "U.N. official in Cambodia decides to stay on," *Reuters*, 5 March 1993; Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 43; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 19; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 202.

84 Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 176.

85 Jennar, "Democratization in Cambodia," 520.

86 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 223.

87 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 117.

88 Mark Dodd, "Sihanouk's son stops cooperation with U.N.," *Reuters*, 5 January 1993.

was anxious to keep Ranariddh engaged in the peace process.⁸⁹ Akashi now felt that he had to do something to save the electoral process from total collapse and ordered peacekeepers to protect FUNCINPEC party offices and provide security at multi-party rallies. When the SOC authorities denied Ranariddh to use his private aircraft to fly to campaign rallies, UNTAC helicopters gave the prince a lift.⁹⁰

On 6 January, Akashi took a bold and revolutionary step by creating a special prosecutors' office with the aim to prosecute persons responsible for human rights violations. Mark Plunkett, an Australian lawyer, was appointed as UNTAC's special prosecutor with the authority to arrest and try suspects within Cambodian courts. In this unprecedented directive, Akashi made maximum use of his powers and stretched the boundaries of his peacekeeping mandate.⁹¹ Two suspects were quickly arrested by UNTAC's civil police, but as the UN did not have its own tribunal in Cambodia, it was dependent on the judiciary system of the SOC. After the hearing of the first case in which a SOC policeman was charged with the murder of a FUNCINPEC official, the SOC minister of Justice intervened by threatening the chief judge of the court if he would proceed with the case. As a result, the court refused to hear any new cases brought forward by the special prosecutor.⁹² The consequence was that suspects were sometimes held in custody by UNTAC police for months. As it was unsuccessfully executed, the experiment failed to have a deterrent effect on political violence. However, the mere creation of the Special Prosecutor's office had a strong symbolic value and fulfilled Akashi's objective to keep FUNCINPEC committed to UNTAC-organised elections. The fear of losing UNTAC's credibility had driven Akashi to take this drastic measure.⁹³

Equally controversial, but more successful, was Akashi's decision of 19 January to deploy special UNTAC control teams to the provinces to investigate abuses of state power and human rights violations. Without prior warning, these "hush hush teams," as they were informally called, secretly landed with helicopters near a preselected SOC provincial office. Here they blocked all exits before storming inside and started to go through documents, notebooks and correspondences as they pleased. These surprise visits were successful. UNTAC found evidence for the subversion of UNTAC control by SOC officials and their implication in the intimidation of political parties of the opposition.⁹⁴ Hun Sen was irritated and complained to Akashi about the intrusive methods of the special control teams, treating all SOC officials as suspects. He warned that this activity was "a dangerous adventure" that could lead to the destruction of the entire peace process, and threatened to publicly denounce UNTAC if these actions were to continue.⁹⁵ Akashi realised that he had to be careful not to provoke the complete non-cooperation of Hun Sen, who actually made demonstrations of goodwill by publicly denouncing the practices of intimidation against

89 Meeting Akashi with Prince Ranariddh, 14 January 1993, UNA, S-1829-0311-0006; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 75.

90 Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 169.

91 Directive No. 93/1 from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General establishing procedures for the Prosecution of persons responsible for Human Rights Violations, 6 January 1993, UNA, S-1829-0312-0001; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 182; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 131.

92 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 3 February 1993, "Special Prosecutor's office," UNA, S-1829-0311-0005.

93 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 132, 154.

94 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadow*, 67–68; Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 44; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 177; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 160.

95 Meeting Akashi with Hun Sen, 22 March 1992, UNA, S-0794-0050-0002.

political opponents as unacceptable, and calling on his local authorities to cooperate fully and unconditionally with UNTAC.⁹⁶ In March, Akashi saw a decreasing trend in the political violence and thus decided to stop parachuting his control teams. Again, the special representative had taken a far-reaching measure to save UNTAC's credibility as the guarantor of a neutral political environment.

Akashi pushed his efforts to demonstrate his impartiality even further by demonstrating that UNTAC made serious work of verifying the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces. He had already made considerable concessions to respond to the Khmer Rouge's "concerns" with regard to this issue, such as establishing mobile investigation teams and broadening the definition of "foreign forces."⁹⁷ The Khmer Rouge, however, continued to accuse UNTAC of not doing enough, and FUNCINPEC and KPNLF sometimes joined them in claiming that UNTAC was turning a blind eye to the Vietnamese "soldiers in disguise" who had stayed behind after Hanoi's withdrawal in 1989.⁹⁸ This meant that there was always pressure on Akashi from the resistance factions to "deliver" on finding Vietnamese forces. This pressure increased further in February 1993 when the highest-ranking generals in Thailand publicly accused Akashi and Sanderson of being "biased" against the Khmer Rouge because they had never tried to verify the presence of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia. The Thai top brass threatened that they were considering to withdraw the two Thai engineer battalions from Cambodia – that were repairing roads near the Thai border – because they had lost all confidence in UNTAC's leadership.⁹⁹ Sanderson demanded an official apology from the Thai government for this "slander," but Foreign Minister Prasong appeased the matter by suggesting that the *Bangkok Post* had misquoted the Thai generals.¹⁰⁰

Influenced by the verbal attack on him by the Thai generals or not, Akashi decided to push the investigations for "foreign forces" to the extreme by announcing on 1 March that UNTAC had found three Vietnamese-Cambodians who had served in the Vietnamese army. Two of them were now serving with the CPAF, and the third had retired from the Vietnamese army in 1984 as a translator. Despite the fact that all three men possessed Cambodian identity cards, were married to Cambodian women and had children with them, Akashi maintained that they fitted the broadened definition of foreign forces and requested the Phnom Penh authorities to withdraw their Cambodian nationality and bring them back to Vietnam.¹⁰¹ The Vietnamese government was furious and refused to cooperate, arguing that it would violate the UN conventions on human

96 Meeting with H.E. Mr. Hun Sen, Battambang, 16 February 1993, UNA, S-0794-0050-0001; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadow*, 67–68.

97 On 20 October 1992, Akashi found agreement in the Supreme National Council to define foreign forces as "any foreign regular, paramilitary and auxiliary forces, advisers and military personnel who remained in Cambodia thereafter." See: Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 183.

98 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia confounds the peacemakers*, 295; Nate Thayer, "Martial Races: UN search for Vietnamese forces fuels 'ethnic cleansing'," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 March 1993, 30.

99 One engineering battalion was wearing blue berets and stood under UNTAC's command. The other battalion wore Thai berets, and was part of a bilateral arrangement with the SNC. See: "Withdrawal from Cambodia possible," *Bangkok Post*, 13 February 1992; "Security chief slams UNTAC," *Bangkok Post*, 12 February 1993.

100 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 16 February 1993, "Slander of the UNTAC mission by Thailand," UNA, S-0794-0012-0003; Note to the file Meeting with Thai Foreign Minister, 5 March 1993, UNA, S-0794-0012-0003.

101 Withdrawal of foreign forces statement by the UNTAC spokesperson, UNA, S-1829-0311-0003; Henry Kamm, "U.N. Authority Says It Has Found Few Hanoi Soldiers in Cambodia," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1993; Nate Thayer, "Martial Races: UN search for Vietnamese forces fuels 'ethnic cleansing'," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 March 1993, 30.

rights.¹⁰²

Whether Akashi's action was a last attempt to satisfy the Khmer Rouge and persuade them to join the electoral process remains unclear, but it certainly was part of his balancing act to keep up UNTAC's impartiality. The special representative told Kofi Annan, who had taken over from Marrack Goulding as the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in March 1993, that he hoped that the revelations about UNTAC's investigations would increase its stock with the opposition parties, including the Khmer Rouge, and the Cambodian people in general, while a confrontation on the issue with the SOC would do little harm to bolster its impartial credentials.¹⁰³ Annan gave his approval but also expressed concern that the Khmer Rouge could claim that the three men were but the tip of the iceberg and proof of the presence of an even larger number of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia.¹⁰⁴ The Under-Secretary-General was correct. Although Akashi publicly declared that the discovery of the three men proved that UNTAC was trying to get to the bottom of the matter, it completely failed to impress the Khmer Rouge, who only responded that it was ridiculous that it had taken UNTAC sixteen months to find three Vietnamese soldiers while more than 45,000 Vietnamese "troops in disguise" were still hiding in Cambodia.¹⁰⁵ Instead, they further increased their hostile rhetoric by claiming that the UN and the Western powers in the Security Council were aligning themselves with Vietnam in an effort to eliminate the Khmer Rouge while doing nothing about the "invasion" of Cambodia by more than two million Vietnamese settlers.¹⁰⁶ Akashi's efforts to enhance UNTAC's credentials as an impartial party were supported by Security Council resolution 810, adopted on 8 March 1993, which expressed "strong concern" about the "foreign military personnel" that UNTAC had found, and requested their immediate removal from Cambodia.¹⁰⁷ A day later, Akashi announced to the Supreme National Council that UNTAC had found five more Vietnamese-Cambodians who also fitted the description of foreign forces and demanded that they too were expelled back to Vietnam. But again, Hanoi refused to cooperate.¹⁰⁸

Akashi's attempt to emphasise UNTAC's impartiality completely backfired when the Khmer Rouge committed their most atrocious killing of ethnic Vietnamese since the UN presence in Cambodia. On 10 March, a group of eighteen Khmer Rouge soldiers murdered thirty-four Vietnamese-Cambodian civilians at Chong Kneas, a floating village on the Tonlé Sap Lake at the end of the Siem Reap River. Adding to the horror was the fact that the "Vietnamese" victims – who in fact had lived in Cambodia since three generations – were mostly women and children. UN military observers operating in the area had stepped up their patrols on the lake, hoping that their presence might deter any attacks. Unfortunately, they were too late to respond and only arrived on the scene the following morning.¹⁰⁹ Because two of the attackers were shot dead by one of the

102 "Hanoi says U.N. resolution on Cambodia violates human rights," *AFP*, 9 March 1993.

103 Cable Akashi to Annan, 1 March 1993, "withdrawal and non-return of foreign forces," UNA, S-0794-0050-0001.

104 Cable Annan to Akashi, 1 March 1993, "presence of foreign troops," UNA, S-1829-0311-0003.

105 "U.N. Cambodia chief says more Vietnamese troops in Cambodia," *AFP*, 5 March 1993.

106 "UN, Western powers plotting to get rid of us, says Khmer Rouge," *The Straits Times*, 2 March 1993.

107 Security Council Resolution 810 (1993), 8 March 1993, S/RES/810 (1993).

108 Sheri Prasso, "U.N. finds more foreign forces in Cambodia," *AFP*, 9 March 1993.

109 Kiernan, "The Failures of the Paris Agreement on Cambodia," 13; Cable Akashi to Annan, 15 March 1993, "Massacre at Chong Kneas: response by UNTAC," UNA, S-0794-0050-0002; Katrina Peach, "UNMOs Powerless to Protect Ethnic Vietnamese," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 26 March 1993.

victims who had been able to grab a gun and fight back, the UN could identify the perpetrators as belonging to the Khmer Rouge 980th division. UNTAC's special prosecutor issued a warrant for the arrest of the unit's commander.¹¹⁰ A broadcast on the Khmer Rouge radio credited those who were responsible for the attack, and accused Akashi of "protecting the Vietnamese" because of his efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.¹¹¹ Hanoi accused UNTAC of inciting the massacre through its witch hunt for remaining Vietnamese soldiers in Cambodia.¹¹² Some have suggested that through these murders, the Khmer Rouge hoped to force UNTAC and the Phnom Penh government to take protective measures for Vietnamese-Cambodian civilians, thus making them the target of possible charges of being pro-Vietnamese.¹¹³

The diplomatic community in Phnom Penh feared that renewed attacks by the Khmer Rouge on ethnic Vietnamese could blow up the electoral process.¹¹⁴ When Akashi called a staff meeting to discuss what measures UNTAC should take to avoid further attacks, there were two opposing views. Dennis McNamara, the head of UNTAC's Human Rights component, strongly believed that UNTAC should take preventive security measures, arguing that this would fall within the operation's legal possibilities. Sanderson, on the other hand, was reluctant to get involved in what he defined as "internal security operations." The force commander feared that by protecting the Vietnamese Cambodians, UNTAC could easily become a "fifth faction," thereby undermining its "peacekeeping credentials." He argued that the step from being a "supervisor" to being an "enforcer" was a short one which could only lead UNTAC onto a slippery slope towards actions outside the framework of peacekeeping. Akashi acknowledged the reality of widespread anti-Vietnamese feelings among ordinary Cambodians, and therefore felt that UNTAC should avoid being seen as the protector of the "Vietnamese" against "Cambodians." He saw a serious risk of falling into this trap set by Khmer Rouge propaganda.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, it was decided to step up UNTAC military patrols with the aim to deter attacks, but without the specific instruction to protect the civilian population. Annan agreed that anything going beyond these actions would give UNTAC "an enforcement role" for which it was not mandated.¹¹⁶

While UNTAC carefully stayed away from getting embroiled in the Vietnamese issue, the Khmer Rouge continued their violent actions. On 24 March, another eight ethnic Vietnamese Cambodians were killed when their fishing boat was halted by a group of Khmer Rouge who opened fire at point blank range.¹¹⁷ On the same day, Sanderson, on leave in Australia, spoke at a conference on UN peacekeeping in Canberra. In his paper, the force commander made it clear

110 Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 April 1993, "Possible measures to improve security conditions," UNA, S-1085-0030-0008.

111 Nayan Chanda and Nate Thayer, "Rivers of Blood: Khmer Rouge step up drive against Vietnamese," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 April 1993, 22.

112 Cable Akashi to Annan, 13 March 1993, "meeting with the Vietnamese Ambassador on 12 March 1993," UNA, S-1829-0311-0002.

113 Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 124.

114 Cable Annan to Akashi, 16 February 1993, "SecGen's report and Core group consultations," UNA, S-1829-0311-0004.

115 Cable Akashi to Annan, 15 March 1993, "Massacre at Chong Kneas: response by UNTAC," UNA, S-0794-0050-0002.

116 Cable Annan to Akashi, 17 March 1993, "Chong Kneas Massacre," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

117 Nayan Chanda and Nate Thayer, "Rivers of Blood: Khmer Rouge step up drive against Vietnamese," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 April 1993, 22.

that UNTAC's mission was not to defend Cambodia, but to defend the electoral process.¹¹⁸ This meant that UNTAC completely relied on the police forces of the State of Cambodia to maintain public order and contain the violence against Vietnamese Cambodians. In order to avoid being completely passive, UNTAC decided to support the SOC riot police by training and reequipping them.¹¹⁹

The massacres in March sparked a mass migration of some 20,000 ethnic Vietnamese who, in hundreds of boats, floated down the Tonlé Sap Lake and the Mekong River across the border into Vietnam.¹²⁰ In what was called "operation safe passage," UNTAC monitored the security (provided by the CPAF) for the boats with refugees. Sadako Ogata, head of UNHCR, had come to Phnom Penh to celebrate the successful repatriation of more than 370,000 Cambodian refugees from Thailand. This was the impressive result of UNTAC's repatriation component led by Sergio Vieira de Mello, which should have marked the end of the Indochina refugee crisis. Unfortunately, witnessing the fleet of refugees herself, Ogata was compelled to condemn a new campaign of "ethnic cleansing."¹²¹ As the largest exodus in Indochina in more than a decade occurred, Akashi decided not to pursue the search for more Vietnamese forces. The Khmer Rouge thus eventually succeeded in their goal of chasing as many Cambodians of Vietnamese origin as possible out of the country and prevent them from voting in the elections.¹²²

The Khmer Rouge: the main threat to UNTAC's success

The preoccupations of UNTAC's leadership in the first three months of 1993 were mainly with the politically motivated violence by elements of the SOC. By March, however, they were brutally reminded that UNTAC's ability to actually hold elections depended first and foremost on the passiveness of the Khmer Rouge. Since the beginning of the UN's deployment in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge had fired on UN helicopters, intimidated and detained blue helmets, but in the two months before the elections, UNTAC began to suffer casualties as a result of deliberate Khmer Rouge attacks. On 27 March 1993, peacekeepers of the Bangladeshi battalion in Angkor Chun, in Siem Reap province, was attacked by at least forty Khmer Rouge soldiers firing mortars, RPGs, and machine guns at their base. The Bangladeshis rushed to their trenches, returned fire, and after an hour of fighting succeeded in forcing the attackers to retreat. One Bangladeshi soldier was heavily wounded in combat and died from his injuries the day after. Two Khmer Rouge soldiers were also killed, and four locals were injured when they accidentally walked into the line of fire.¹²³ Akashi and others feared that this Khmer Rouge attack on UNTAC, in combination with the killings of the ethnic Vietnamese, might be the starting signal of a large-scale Khmer Rouge

118 J. M. Sanderson (Lt. Gen.), "Preparations for, deployment and conduct of peacekeeping operations: a Cambodia snapshot," Paper presented at the conference on UN Peacekeeping at the Crossroads, Canberra, 21–24 March 1993, 10. Also cited in: Findlay, *The Use of Force*, 126.

119 Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 April 1993, "Possible measures to improve security conditions," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

120 Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 April 1993; Brief for the Force Commander 4 April 1993, UNA, S-1854-0007-0002.

121 Nate Thayer, "Wretched of the Earth," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 April 1993.

122 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 98; Jay Jordans, "Persecution of Cambodia's Ethnic Vietnamese Communities During and Since the UNTAC Period," in *Propaganda, Politics, and Violence in Cambodia: Democratic Transition under United Nations Peace-keeping Propaganda, Politics, and Violence in Cambodia*, eds. Steve Heder and Judy Ledgerwood (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 150.

123 Cable Rideau to Baril, 31 March 1993, "Special report on the Angkor Chum incident," UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.



United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (middle) and his Special Representative Yasushi Akashi (right) in Phnom Penh. Photo credit: UNA, S-0794-0044-0001.

attempt to disrupt the entire electoral process. The special representative requested the Security Council to reaffirm UNTAC's right to use force in defence of the mission, but he did not deem it necessary to send military reinforcements to Siem Reap province. UNTAC was, after all, "not conducting a war against the [Khmer Rouge]," he wrote to Kofi Annan.¹²⁴

UNTAC might have tried to avoid a military confrontation by ignoring and isolating the Khmer Rouge, its policy of preventing provocation failed to keep the Khmer Rouge passive. It seemed to have had the opposite effect, as the Khmer Rouge realised that the easiest way to stop the elections was to chase UNTAC out of Cambodia. Probably with the aim to test the troop contributing countries' tolerance for casualties, the Khmer Rouge stepped up their attacks on UNTAC contingents. In the evening of 2 April, Khmer Rouge soldiers killed three peacekeepers of the Bulgarian contingent at Phum Prek in Kompong Speu Province. The small unit, consisting of twelve Bulgarians, had maintained relatively good relations with the Khmer Rouge. As they had done before, the local Khmer Rouge commander had been invited to come over to the Bulgarian camp for dinner. Everything seemed to be well, but after the meal the commander returned with fifteen heavily armed soldiers who opened fire and chased the unarmed Bulgarian soldiers around the camp, throwing hand grenades into their tents.¹²⁵ Trying to pacify the Khmer Rouge by developing close relations with them turned out to have a dangerous side. Investigators believed that the Khmer Rouge commander had been ordered by a new fanatic superior officer

¹²⁴ Cable Akashi to Annan, 28 March 1993, "Attack on UNTAC Bangladeshi Contingent," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

¹²⁵ Interoffice memorandum Lt. Col. Suresh Nair to Rideau, 4 April 1993, "Investigation on the killing of Bul Batt soldiers in Phnum Prek," UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

to deliberately murder the Bulgarians in exploiting their good contacts.¹²⁶ Sanderson concluded that the cold-blooded killing of the Bulgarian soldiers was “premeditated, carefully planned and precisely executed,” and feared that such acts would be repeated in the near future.¹²⁷ Planners at UNTAC headquarters now realised that the Khmer Rouge considered UNTAC “as their new adversary” and a “stumbling block” for their objectives.¹²⁸

The Bulgarian contingent continued to suffer casualties in attacks by the Khmer Rouge later that month. In the night of 19 April 1993, the UNTAC district office in the town of Oral in Kompong Speu province came under attack by a hundred Khmer Rouge soldiers. The Bulgarian soldiers present at the office radioed for assistance after which two Bulgarian APCs were sent to the location. But before arriving on the scene, they drove into an ambush set by the Khmer Rouge. An RPG hit the first APC, killing one Bulgarian soldier instantly and badly injuring five others. Although the other peacekeepers managed to bring themselves to safety, the Khmer Rouge attackers looted the UNTAC office as well as the surrounding houses of the local population.¹²⁹ As the Khmer Rouge manifested themselves unmistakably as UNTAC’s enemy, Akashi and Sanderson decided to cease their balancing act on the tightrope of impartiality and move closer towards the State of Cambodia in order to safeguard the success of the mission.

The experiment that had to succeed

The situation in Cambodia was looking increasingly grim, but for the United Nations it was unthinkable that UNTAC would fail. When Marrack Goulding addressed UN staffers at UNTAC headquarters during his visit to Cambodia in the last week of January 1993, the head of DPKO seemed to ignore the reality of the disconcerting situation and pretended as if UNTAC was already a synonym for success. He congratulated the UN personnel with the continued successes in Cambodia and further emphasised his expectation that UNTAC’s success would set the stage for future UN successes. UNTAC would illustrate to member states, he asserted confidently, what such large peacekeeping operations could achieve and why they were justified.¹³⁰ Goulding’s determination to present UNTAC as a success – no matter what, no matter how – is understandable when one takes into consideration that the reputation of the United Nations as the guarantor of peace in the new world order was at stake, as different scholars observed at the time. The research group from Columbia University concluded that if the UN would prove unable to bring a measure of peace and security to a relatively small and ethnically homogeneous nation such as Cambodia, the UN’s peacekeeping capabilities would be called into question.¹³¹ Mats Berdal and Gerald Segal more explicitly observed that a failure in Cambodia would have direct negative consequences for

126 Ibid.

127 Interoffice memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 5 April 1993, “Killing of Bulgarian Soldiers at Phum Prek on 2 April 1993,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

128 Plans Branch Seminar 22 – 24 March 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

129 Report on SIT investigation into the attack at New Oral 19 April 1993, 22 April 1993, UNA, S-1854-0072-0005;

Cable Annan to Akashi, 23 April 1993, “SecGen’s letter on UNTAC casualties,” UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

130 “UNTAC successes encourage UN,” *The Peacekeeper: the military force newsletter*, February 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

131 Betts et al., *Time Is Running Out in Cambodia*.

the sustainment of the UN operations in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia.¹³² Akashi understood very well that UNTAC was, in his own words, a “vitally important experiment for the UN.”¹³³ In a radio interview with the BBC he frankly admitted: “I cannot afford not to succeed.”¹³⁴ The famous Indian writer Amitav Ghosh, who visited Cambodia during UNTAC, observed the feeling among the international staff that the future of the UN was on trial. He wrote: “UN personnel were well aware that thousands of highly paid jobs were at stake. The political situation in Cambodia and the exigencies of local politics were, if not irrelevant, then at least secondary to the institutional dynamics that were brought into play.”¹³⁵

Boutros-Ghali realised that UNTAC’s success was of enormous importance for the United Nations as an organisation and for his own credibility as Secretary-General. That is why, on 7 April 1993, the UN Secretary-General travelled to Phnom Penh to personally launch the election campaign and support one of the greatest commitments the UN had ever undertaken. During a meeting with UNTAC’s senior staff, he highlighted that it was “not only the future of Cambodia that is at stake.” UNTAC, he explained, symbolised the “new UN in action,” and a successful outcome of this “pilot operation” would help to set up similar operations elsewhere in the world.¹³⁶ Dennis McNamara, head of the Human Rights component, remembered that Boutros-Ghali’s overwhelming message was: “We’ve got to have these elections and get out.” The elections became an end in themselves.¹³⁷ In his address to the Supreme National Council, Boutros-Ghali openly called on the sense of responsibility of the Cambodian factions’ leaders by emphasising, again, that it was not only for the Cambodian people that UNTAC had an obligation to succeed in Cambodia: “If this experience fails, you will contribute to the failure of similar experiences in Latin America, Asia and Africa, and even in Europe where today we witness the drama of Yugoslavia. So this experience has to succeed.”¹³⁸ The Secretary-General made a last attempt to reason with Khieu Samphan, but was unable to convince the Khmer Rouge leader, who denounced the elections and declared that there would only be more trouble.¹³⁹

For Boutros-Ghali, success in Cambodia was all the more important because it constituted an important experiment of “democratisation,” a process which was a central element of his agenda. During his press conference in Phnom Penh, the Secretary-General stressed that he was deeply convinced that there was a critical relation between peace, development, and democracy.¹⁴⁰ He

132 Gerald Segal and Mats Berdal, “A Cambodia Failure Would Hurt the UN Everywhere,” *International Herald Tribune*, 12 January 1993.

133 Thayer, “Moaners beware,” 27.

134 Yasushi Akashi, Interview in “Peace in the Killing Fields,” part 3 of *The Thin Blue Line*, BBC Radio 4, released 9 May 1993. Cited in: Doyle, “UNTAC – Sources of Success and Failure,” 97.

135 Amitav Ghosh, “Holiday in Cambodia: The U.N.’s strategic dead end,” *The New Republic*, 20 June 1993.

136 Allocution du Secrétaire Général adressée au personnel de l’APRONUC, Phnom Penh, 8 Avril 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

137 Interview James S. Sutterlin with Dennis McNamara.

138 “Si cette expérience échoue, vous contribuerez à l’échec d’expériences similaires en Amérique latine, en Asie, en Afrique et même en Europe où nous vivons aujourd’hui le drame de la Yougoslavie. Donc il faut que cette expérience réussisse.” Cited in: Barbier, *Cambodge, 1991–1993*, 117. Also see: Compte rendu d’entretien de S.E.M. Boutros Boutros-Ghali avec les membres du Conseil National Suprême du Cambodge, Phnom Penh, le 7 avril 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001: “L’échec au Cambodge aurait de mauvaises conséquences dans d’autres parties du monde. Le succès au Cambodge signifiera au contraire le succès pour toute la communauté internationale.”

139 Notes of the meeting of the Secretary-General with UNTAC Senior Staff, UNTAC Headquarters, Phnom Penh, 8 April 1993, UNA, S-1085-0031-0003.

140 Press Release SG/SM/1424, 7 April 1993, AMBZ, BZ-14528.

considered democracy as the crucial link in the chain and a precondition for the long sustainability of peace and development.¹⁴¹ In his memoirs, Boutros-Ghali described democratisation as “the key theme” of his term as Secretary-General. Although it was a controversial topic within the UN Secretariat, he devoted many hours working on the concept, which finally resulted in his third and last agenda-paper, *An Agenda for Democratization*, which was published in 1996.¹⁴² The extent to which the ideal of making peace through democratisation could succeed in Cambodia was nonetheless doubtful. Jarat Chopra and his fellow researchers from Brown University observed during their field trip to Cambodia that the notion of “free and fair” elections would have to be applied in an elastic manner.¹⁴³ During the Secretary-General’s visit to Cambodia, Dennis McNamara candidly made the point to Boutros-Ghali that the human rights situation in Cambodia “did not meet even the most minimal standards,” making it clear that in such an atmosphere it would be difficult to demonstrate that the elections would be free and fair.¹⁴⁴ Akashi admitted that the conditions for an election were certainly not perfect but felt that McNamara demanded “unrealistically high standards in the context of Cambodian reality.” If UNTAC waited for the perfect conditions, the elections would probably never take place, the special representative argued.¹⁴⁵

McNamara’s remarks about the unsafe environment were quickly confirmed as the kick-off of the election campaign was interrupted by a tragic incident. On 8 April 1993, Nakata Atsuhito, a 25-year-old Japanese UNV who worked as a District Electoral Supervisor (DES) was brutally murdered, together with his Cambodian interpreter Lay Sok Pheap, in an isolated district of Kompong Thom province.¹⁴⁶ For many UN volunteers, the murder of their Japanese colleague in the context of a general increase of deliberate Khmer Rouge attacks was a shocking wake-up call, laying bare the risks that were involved in their mission.¹⁴⁷ Groups of electoral supervisors logically panicked and threatened to resign unless guarantees were given that the military component would protect them. This endangered the entire mission because holding elections without the UNVs would be near to impossible.¹⁴⁸ Akashi therefore called the electoral volunteers to Phnom Penh where he tried to convince them to stay by promising that the military would take enhanced security measures to guarantee their safety. This reassured many UNVs, although sixty of the 700

141 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 319; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “the United Nations and democratization,” in *The African Yearbook of International Law*, ed. A.A. Yusuf (The Hague: Kluwer International Law, 1996) 11–16.

142 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 319; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* (New York: United Nations Publications, 1996). During his time as Secretary-General he wrote three Agendas: *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992, *An Agenda for Development* in 1994 and *An Agenda for Democratization* in 1996.

143 Jarat Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 26, 33.

144 Notes of the meeting of the Secretary-General with UNTAC Senior Staff, 8 April 1993, UNA, S-1085-0031-0003.

145 Neutral political environment, statement by Mr. Akashi, 4 April 1992, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001; Yasushi Akashi, “The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” *International Peacekeeping* 1, no.2 (1994): 210.

146 The initial assumption was that the Khmer Rouge was responsible for the attack, but after investigation it appeared that the murder was committed by a Cambodian civilian who had been turned down for a job as a polling official in the district. Jan Powell, *A Long Road to Peace UNV in Cambodia 1992/93* (UNDP: Geneva, 1995), 38.

147 Powell, *A Long Road to Peace*, 38.

148 Highlights of the UNTAC Information Working Group Meeting, 20 April 1993, subject: “Changes in the Politico-Military Situation and implications for Election and UNTAC Security,” ADN, 521PO/2 33; Meeting Sanderson with General Ke Kim Yan commander-in-chief, Cambodian People’s Armed Forces, Phnom Penh UNTAC HQ, 20 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

eventually decided to leave Cambodia before the elections.¹⁴⁹

The murder also sent shockwaves through Japan. A day after the incident, the Japanese defence minister, Toshio Nakayama, declared that an emergency evacuation of all Japanese personnel from Cambodia should be considered if the scenario of a widespread armed disruption of the elections was considered likely.¹⁵⁰ Two days later, Australian foreign minister Evans equally created the impression that Australia might decide to pull-out from Cambodia in the case of a full-frontal Khmer Rouge assault, but he later emphasised that he would not make such a decision unilaterally.¹⁵¹ With Tokyo and Canberra, again, raising doubts publicly about their full commitment to the operation, the Secretary-General believed it necessary to emphasise that peace was not for free. On 12 April, at a press conference in Bangkok, Boutros-Ghali stressed: "If we want to promote peace, we must take the risks which are related to the promotion of peace." He added that since the first peacekeeping operations, more than 700 peacekeepers had been killed in action to achieve the UN's objective of peace. He further assured journalists that "all military measures" were taken against "the aggression and destabilization" of the Khmer Rouge. Whereas the Secretary-General formalistically reminded journalists that UNTAC was a peacekeeping operation and therefore not allowed to engage in peace enforcement, he made it clear that the use of force in defence of the mandate was entirely legitimised.¹⁵² These statements were a long way from the policy of patient diplomacy Boutros-Ghali had advocated until then.

Preparing for the worst

Hun Sen's offensive of January 1993 to reconquer lost territories brought CPAF troops within kilometres of the Khmer Rouge-controlled town of Pailin.¹⁵³ This seemed to create panic among Khmer Rouge officers who replied by confining all Pailin-based UNTAC personnel to their building, interdicting UNTAC helicopters to land in the area, and accusing an American UNMO of spying for the Vietnamese and Hun Sen, which was a statement as original as it was false. These restrictions and intimidations made Sanderson increasingly concerned about the safety of his team in Pailin which consisted of three UNMOs, three Australian radio operators and several UN mine specialists who were deployed to train the Cambodian factions' soldiers in demining.¹⁵⁴ Since the liaison office had never been very effective, the UNTAC presence in Pailin, in the middle of the Khmer Rouge zone, was primarily of symbolic significance. In practice, messages to the Khmer Rouge leadership were mostly delivered at their compound in Phnom Penh or through the UNMO-team located in the Dutch battalion's UNTAC enclave of Sok San, which was believed to be close to where the real Khmer Rouge decision makers, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, held their

149 Powell, *A Long Road to Peace*, 38; Mark Dodd, "U.N. volunteers in Cambodia may stop work," *Reuters*, 9 April 1993; Robert Rideau, "APRONUC: Une mission originale à plus d'un titre," *Les Cahiers du Retex*, no. 3; Author's interview with Robert Rideau; Meeting on "Electoral Security" on 7 May 1993. See: Internal message Yahmed to Porcell, 18 May 1993, "Report on the 6th Civil Administration Seminar," ADN, 521PO/2 33.

150 "Japan may pull out of Cambodia, warns minister," *The Strait Times*, 10 April 1993.

151 "Khmer Rouge attacks may force troop pullout, says Evans," *The Strait Times*, 12 April 1993; "Australia undeterred by Khmer Rouge attacks -Evans," *Reuters*, 11 April 1993.

152 Press Release SG/SM/4967, 12 April 1993, AMBZ, BZ-14528.

153 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 24 January 1993, 24 January 1993, "Situation in Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003.

154 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 11 January 1993, "situation in Battambang province," UNA, S-1829-0312-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 24 January 1993, 24 January 1993, "Situation in Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0049-0003.

headquarters.¹⁵⁵

Sanderson had been thinking about withdrawing his team from Pailin for some time as he was concerned for their safety in a situation where UNTAC and the Khmer Rouge were potentially heading for a confrontation. But the force commander realised that withdrawing the team from the Khmer Rouge's nominal but symbolic headquarters would reveal that contacts between UNTAC and the Khmer Rouge were deteriorating and signal that the Khmer Rouge were officially outside the peace process. "The problem with closing links with the DK is that it could be the end of the Paris Agreement," he explained generals of the CPAF on 1 February.¹⁵⁶ On 15 March, the force commander nonetheless decided to push for the evacuation of his unarmed team, using the excuse that they were running out of supplies, especially of fuel for their generator, which would make it impossible to generate electricity for radio communications with Phnom Penh, practically cutting them off.¹⁵⁷ Although the Khmer Rouge had forbidden UNTAC helicopters to land in Pailin, resupply through Thailand was still possible. Ultimately, the shortage of supplies was a pretext to conceal Sanderson's concerns for the safety of his team in the heart of Khmer Rouge-controlled territory. Taking the unarmed team hostage would be an easy tactic for the Khmer Rouge to sabotage the entire elections. The force commander made the point to Annan that "an UNTAC presence in a wholly NADK-controlled area could create significant risk if crises develop elsewhere in the coming months" to support his plea for a precautionary withdrawal.¹⁵⁸ Annan acknowledged the difficult situation of the UNTAC team but believed that it was nonetheless of "considerable political significance" to maintain an UNTAC presence in Pailin.¹⁵⁹ When consulted about the matter by Akashi, the P5 also unanimously agreed that it was a matter of principle that UNTAC should remain in Pailin until the end of the mission. France was the most vocal in declaring that it would be "a political mistake" to pull out of Pailin.¹⁶⁰ Boutros-Ghali felt that the team should only withdraw in case the situation would become intolerable, but left the decision to Akashi, who decided to maintain the status-quo as long as possible.¹⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge hardened its rhetoric by the day. On 3 April, Khieu Samphan said in an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that the elections would never bring peace to Cambodia because they were a Western plot to destroy them, which was not totally false. He also warned that the situation would become "more unstable, more insecure, more confusing," and that attacks against Vietnamese living in Cambodia would increase.¹⁶² At the same time, the SOC continued to pressure UNTAC to officially exclude the Khmer Rouge from the peace

155 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 28 April 1993, "Alternative liaison link with NADK," UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

156 Discussion with CPAF delegates 1 February 1993, Sanderson Papers, ADFA, box 2, folder 8.

157 Minutes of the 31st meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 15 March 1993, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

158 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 15 March 1993, "Proposed withdrawal of UNTAC personnel from Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0050-0002. Also see: Cable Akashi (drafted by Lieutenant Colonel Healy) to Annan, 29 March 1993, "proposed withdrawal of UNTAC personnel from Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0050-0002.

159 Cable Annan to Akashi, 18 March 1993, "Proposed withdrawal of UNTAC personnel from Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

160 Cable Akashi to Annan, 30 March 1993, "Core group meeting," UNA, S-0794-0050-0002; Cable Annan to Akashi, 24 March 1993, "Meetings with P5 and Thai Ambassador regarding Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

161 Cable Annan to Akashi, 31 March 1993, "Situation in Pailin," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

162 Nate Thayer, "Bloody Agenda: Khmer Rouge set out to wreck planned elections," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 April 1993.

process.¹⁶³ Sanderson, who after the deadly attacks on his peacekeepers began to lose his usual optimism, told Akashi that it might be time to accede to this request in order not to alienate the SOC from UNTAC.¹⁶⁴ Akashi came very close in doing this at the SNC meeting on 10 April, when he stated that the Khmer Rouge had “taken a dangerous step towards outlaw status.” He warned that Khmer Rouge leaders would be held directly responsible for all attacks they would dare to commit, and threatened that the world would not forgive them if they were to disrupt the elections.¹⁶⁵ The Khmer Rouge responded dramatically by announcing the closure of their office in Phnom Penh and withdrawal from the capital. In the morning of 13 April, a convoy of Khmer Rouge officials and their bodyguards left their compound in the city centre and quickly drove to the airport where they boarded the first flight to Bangkok. Khmer Rouge officials declared that it was not safe for them to stay in Phnom Penh because Akashi had described them as outlaws. In an attempt to deescalate and demonstrate UNTAC’s continued impartiality, Akashi promised Khieu Samphan special UNTAC-security, but this offer was declined.¹⁶⁶

The Khmer Rouge return to the shadow of the jungle where they had stayed throughout the 1980s, signalled their definitive withdrawal from the peace process. This reinforced Akashi’s belief that the removal of UNTAC’s UNMOs in Pailin would give the wrong signal as it could create the impression that the situation was escalating towards open conflict with the Khmer Rouge.¹⁶⁷ This was possible because the fuel supply appeared to hold out after all. However, on 21 April, Australian foreign minister Evans surprised everyone by stating at a press conference in Canberra that the UN team in Pailin would be withdrawn on 29 April because of the deteriorating security situation and “the manifest inability of the election being able to take place there,” which confirms that Australia’s concerns for the safety of its own personnel in Pailin played an important role in Sanderson’s considerations. The UNTAC spokesperson reacted surprised and immediately clarified that no such decision had been taken yet.¹⁶⁸ Intentionally or not, Evans’ announcement put pressure on Akashi to act accordingly. On 29 April, Sanderson informed New York that the UNTAC team would be withdrawn from Pailin the next day.¹⁶⁹ The Dutch enclave in Sok San now remained the only link with the Khmer Rouge.¹⁷⁰ It was not the first time Akashi was overruled on the question of an UNTAC military presence inside Khmer Rouge-controlled territory. The force commander again received cover from his foreign minister who unsuitably tried to influence operational decisions and push the operation into a direction that, also in this case, went against

163 Letter Ambassador Ouch Borith (SOC) to the United Nations Secretary-General, 7 April 1993, ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Declaration of the State of Cambodia, 5 January 1993, AMBZ, BZ 01729.

164 Interoffice memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 5 April 1993, “Killing of Bulgarian Soldiers at Phum Prek on 2 April 1993,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 7 April 1993, “Attaques contre l’APRONUC – pessimisme du général Sanderson,” ADN, 10POI/1 1302.

165 Safety and security of the electoral process, statement by Mr. Akashi, 10 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001; “Akashi – KR a step closer to outlaw status,” *Bangkok Post*, 12 April 1993.

166 Nate Thayer, “Rumours of War: conflict looms after Khmer Rouge pullout,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 April 1993; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 418.

167 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 26 March 1993, “attitude de l’APRONUC sur la question de Pailin,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 April 1993, “Berets bleus à Pailin,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

168 Tony Wright, “Aust pullout shocks UNTAC,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1993; Lindsay Murdoch and Geoffrey Barker, “UN, Evans At Odds,” *The Age*, 22 April 1993; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 201; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 April 1993, “Berets bleus à Pailin,” ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

169 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 29 April 1993, “UNTAC presence in Pailin,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

170 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 28 April 1993, “Alternative liaison link with NADK,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

the will of the P5 members of the Security Council, and again, in particular against the French position.

Although the Khmer Rouge leaders had gone underground, the forces under their command could not be ignored. With an estimated total of 15,000 soldiers, the Khmer Rouge's military capabilities were considered as substantial.¹⁷¹ The guerrillas were conducting a psychological war, leaving everyone in doubt about their intentions and real strength. They started a fierce anti-UNTAC campaign through the distribution of leaflets calling on all Cambodians to oppose UNTAC, telling villagers that blood would flow on election day and that polling stations were going to be shelled with artillery. Their radio broadcasts continued to claim that UNTAC was in league with the Vietnamese and their puppets in Phnom Penh.¹⁷² UNTAC also received information that the Khmer Rouge were redeploying in preparation of a confrontation. It seemed that at least eighty of the NADK commanding officers had been replaced, and fresh recruits were spotted in new uniforms and with new weapons. The Khmer Rouge were also seen moving a large number of artillery pieces and heavy mortars around the country, causing the concern that they were indeed planning to target certain polling sites.¹⁷³ In some villages ordinary Cambodians were offered 500 Thai Baht by the Khmer Rouge for firing an RPG at designated targets.¹⁷⁴ The Khmer Rouge had also stolen many white-painted UNTAC cars, creating the fear that these would be used as trojan horses in attacks.¹⁷⁵

However, in the end, not many officers at UNTAC headquarters believed that the Khmer Rouge would actually dare to mount a largescale attack on the elections for the reason that this would simply cost them too many of their soldiers. Prince Sihanouk, for his part, was also convinced that the Khmer Rouge would do their utmost to prevent the elections from taking place, but did not think they could actually do it.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, even small attacks on polling sites on the first election day could scare off enough Cambodians to go vote, which would either force the cancellation of the elections altogether or seriously endanger the credibility of a free and fair result. It was clear that UNTAC's soft spot was the civilian personnel that operated the voting booths in remote parts of the countryside.¹⁷⁷ On 17 April, Akashi cabled to New York that "the fact must be faced that it would be both relatively easy and very effective for the DK to mount murderous atrocities against UNTAC civilian staff if they considered that this was their last best chance to stop the elections." Akashi realised that if such a scenario would occur, the UN might have no other choice than to further escalate the situation by "requesting the Security Council to consider radical and effective counter-measures."¹⁷⁸ Akashi was thus not planning to call for

171 Exposé fait par le Colonel Pinatel (chef bureau d'information) aux commandants de secteur et responsables électoraux, 27 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

172 Interoffice memorandum Carney to Akashi, "PDK Campaign of Intimidation: positioning for violence," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001; Interoffice memorandum Heder to Carney, 25 April 1993, "More PDK Leaflets from Kampong Cham Province," ADN, 521 PO/2/31.

173 Highlights of the UNTAC Information Working Group Meeting, 20 April 1993, subject: "Changes in the Politico-Military Situation and implications for Election and UNTAC Security," ADN, 521PO/2/33.

174 Cable Colonel Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, "Info Cambodja," NIMH-099, folder 68.

175 Meeting Sanderson with General Ke Kim Yan commander-in-chief of the Cambodian People's Armed Forces, Phnom Penh UNTAC HQ, 20 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

176 Jacques Bekaert, "Sihanouk: Bid to block poll will test KR strength," *Bangkok Post*, 20 April 1993.

177 Exposé fait par le Colonel Pinatel, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002; Cable Akashi to Annan, 3 May 1993, "Military/political assessment of DK capacity and intentions," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

178 Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 April 1993, "Possible measures to improve security conditions," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

UNTAC's withdrawal in case of serious Khmer Rouge attacks, but rather seemed supportive of transforming the nature of the UN operation.

Meanwhile, Khmer Rouge attacks on UNTAC reached a new level of intensity. On 1 May, four hand grenades were thrown into the Dutch compound in Thum Tma Pok in Banteay Meanchey province, severely injuring one marine.¹⁷⁹ On 3 May, five Indian soldiers were injured when their patrol came under fire in Kompong Cham, near the place where a Colombian civilian police officer had been killed earlier.¹⁸⁰ That same night, the important provincial capital of Siem Reap, located near the temples of Angkor Wat, suffered an attack of an unprecedented scale. At three o'clock in the morning, some 500 Khmer Rouge troops launched an assault on the town from five directions. The attack did not come as a surprise as Khmer Rouge forces had been taking up positions around Siem Reap for months. But instead of directly moving on the CPAF headquarters, which seemed to be the logical target, the Khmer Rouge first captured the airfield, and then attacked the position of UNTAC's logistic company from Poland. The Poles immediately returned extensive fire on the attackers, alerting the CPAF forces who were fully taken by surprise. After six hours of fighting in the early morning, CPAF reinforcements arrived and eventually succeeded in pushing the Khmer Rouge out of the town.¹⁸¹ Thirteen Khmer Rouge, one CPAF soldier and four civilians were killed.¹⁸² After the attack, Sanderson said to the ambassadors in Phnom Penh that the logistic unit from Poland had probably prevented Siem Reap from falling into Khmer Rouge hands.¹⁸³ The Poles had defended themselves bravely, but the attack exposed the extent to which UNTAC was dependent on the CPAF to protect itself, the Cambodian population and the electoral process. Sanderson met with CPAF General Meas Sophea to whom he expressed his concern that more attacks of this scale might cause serious problems for the conduct of the elections, but Meas Sophea assured the force commander that his army had the capacity to defend the town.¹⁸⁴ The Indonesian Benny Widyono, who was UNTAC's civilian head in Siem Reap, later remembered how he felt that the failure of the demobilisation process was "a blessing in disguise" as CPAF forces eventually chased the Khmer Rouge out of "his" town. But SOC defence minister, General Tea Banh, mockingly reminded Widyono that it was not the task of his army to protect UNTAC positions and that, according to the Paris Agreements, his army was not even allowed to engage the Khmer Rouge.¹⁸⁵ The remark indeed illustrated the paradoxical situation and the degree to which UNTAC's final objective had become dependent on the State of Cambodia's protection.

UNTAC was not given the time to recover from the shock the attack on Siem Reap had

179 Bijzondere melding Koninklijke Marechaussee, 2 May 1993, SIB, MARSTAF-UNTAC, box 1232, file 24.

180 Cable Akashi to Annan, 3 May 1993, "Military/political assessment of DK capacity and intentions," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

181 Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 4 May 1993, "attaque de Siem Reap par les forces de la PDK (nuit du 3 au 4 mai)," ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 104; Kevin Barrington, "Security Concerns Loom Over Polls," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 21 May 1993.

182 Verbatim notes of force commander's meeting with General Meas Sophea of CPAF, UNTAC HQ, Monday 3 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

183 Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UN Archives, New York, S-0794-0021-0001.

184 Verbatim notes of force commander's meeting with General Meas Sophea of CPAF, UNTAC HQ, Monday 3 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

185 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 106–7.

caused. A day later, an UNTAC convoy ran into a well-prepared ambush set by the Khmer Rouge in Banteay Meanchey province, close to the Thai border. The convoy, consisting of six vehicles with a mine clearing team from India, an election team, five Japanese civilian police officers, and escorted by a group of Dutch marines, drove from the village of Phum Ku to Phum Ampil. Shortly after passing a Khmer Rouge checkpoint, the leading Dutch vehicle was suddenly hit by an RPG. Although damaged, the Land Rover managed to speed away, but the following two cars of the Japanese civilian police were trapped and sprayed with small arms fire from both sides of the road. While the other cars in the convoy managed to turn around and drive out of the firing zone, five Dutch peacekeepers and three Japanese civilian police were seriously wounded. One Japanese officer was killed.¹⁸⁶ Shortly after the attack, Khmer Rouge radio traffic was intercepted saying: "Vive [les] Khmers Rouges! We will continue to kill UNTAC."¹⁸⁷ The next attack followed only hours after the ambush in Banteay Meanchey, when the Khmer Rouge opened fire with mortars and RPGs on the UNTAC camp in Kompong Thom province which was shared by Polish logistic troops and Chinese engineers. For a second time, it was the Poles who succeeded in pushing back the Khmer Rouge by effectively returning fire. The event was symbolic because it was the first time that Chinese forces were attacked by their former allies.¹⁸⁸ "They really have no friends left," an Asian diplomat in Phnom Penh commented.¹⁸⁹

The Khmer Rouge ambush in Banteay Meanchey caused special concern at UNTAC headquarters because it raised the question whether elections could be held in these areas which were theoretically under the control of ANKI and KNPLAF.¹⁹⁰ The area where the Dutch-escorted convoy was ambushed was the centre of ANKI-controlled territory, but the Khmer Rouge was all around in this north-western corner of the country, known as the "liberated zone." It seemed that the Khmer Rouge was now attempting to dominate this area and establish a supply-corridor between the northern part of Cambodia and the western Khmer Rouge heartland.¹⁹¹ If ambushes on UNTAC convoys were to continue, it would be difficult to proceed with the elections in areas outside the SOC-controlled territory, which would make it hard for UNTAC to claim that the elections were "free and fair."¹⁹²

Shortly after the death of the Japanese police officer, the Japanese minister for home affairs, Keijiro Murata, travelled to Phnom Penh to express Tokyo's concerns about the safety of Japanese

186 Ten Cate et al., *Qua patet orbis*, 91; Report from the ambush on the road between Phum Ampil and Phum Ku 4 May 1993 & message Dutchbatt HQ to UNTAC HQ, 4 May 1993, SIB, MARSTAF-UNTAC, box 1232, file 24; Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

187 SIT investigation report on the ambush on Route 691 (Sector 1) on 04 May 1993, 8 May 1993, UNA, S-1854-0072-0004.

188 Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

189 Philip Shenon, "Khmer Rouge Said to Attack Chinese Peacekeepers," *The New York Times*, 6 May 1993.

190 Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

191 Cable Netherlands ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 6 May 1993, "kambodja, nederlandse gewonden weerspiegelen machtsverschuiving in de 'liberated zone'," AMBZ, BZ 14534; Nate Thayer, "Shot to pieces," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 May 1993, 11.

192 Meeting with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001. Exposé fait par le Colonel Pinatel (chef bureau d'information) aux commandants de secteur et responsables électoraux, 27 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-00002; Cable Akashi to Annan, 3 May 1993, "Military/political assessment of DK capacity and intentions," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

police officers and requested Akashi to call them back to Phnom Penh for a security briefing, and subsequently redeploy them to safer zones. Akashi refused and ordered all Japanese personnel to remain at their posts.¹⁹³ Hiroto Yamazaki, the senior Japanese civilian police officer in Cambodia, did not share his government's concerns. "Much of Cambodia is dangerous at this point," he told journalists in Phnom Penh, making it clear that his men would continue to do their work despite the threat of violence. "If we abandon our duty, it is really disgraceful," he added.¹⁹⁴ The nervousness of the Japanese government was also resisted by countries from the region, such as Singapore. A few days after the Japanese police officer was killed in the Banteay Meanchey-ambush, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong visited Tokyo and publicly warned the Japanese government that now was not the time to think about pulling back troops from Cambodia. "We all knew it was not going to be a picnic," he stated, adding that a Japanese withdrawal from Cambodia would imply that Tokyo had decided not to play the international role it was aspiring.¹⁹⁵ The prime minister also made the point that UN forces in Cambodia should be equipped not only to keep the peace, but also to impose it by force if necessary.¹⁹⁶ Although Singapore had only a small contingent of personnel deployed with UNTAC, the government decided to send four Puma helicopters to Cambodia in support of the elections.¹⁹⁷

The notion that UNTAC should be reinforced received increasing support. The core group discussed the matter with Sanderson, but the force commander advised against it for several reasons. The practical argument was that such a force would probably not arrive on time and cause additional logistical problems. It was also considered complicated to reinforce the existing peacekeeping battalions with troops from other countries. But these problems were not unsurmountable, and arguments of a more political-strategic nature were probably of greater significance. Within UNTAC's military staff, the argument was made, in general terms, that a request to member states to contribute more troops to the operation might give the impression that the situation in Cambodia was derailing. Chances were considered slim that UN member states would be willing to continue to support a mission where there was no longer a peace to keep.¹⁹⁸ On what information this presumption was based is unclear, but it was contradicted by the resolve and determination demonstrated by countries from the region to see the operation through to the end, no matter what happened. Kuala Lumpur, again, was particularly vocal in expressing this. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad called on the UN to prepare for the possibility of war in Cambodia, saying he wanted to avoid that the Malaysian battalion would be caught unprepared if the situation was to escalate into a full-fledged conflict. "If they decide to face the war, they must ensure that the peacekeeping force has adequate supplies and arms," the prime minister stated, adding that any UN decision to alter the nature of their duties

193 Cable Annan to Akashi, 6 May 1993, "Japanese demarche," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Philip Shenon, "Japan Presses U.N. on Cambodia Peril," *The New York Times*, 11 May 1993; Cable Netherlands Embassy Tokyo to The Hague, 12 May 1993, "Kambodja / vermeende terugtrekking Japan," AMBZ, 01728.

194 Shenon, "Japan Presses U.N. on Cambodia Peril."

195 Ibid.

196 Cable French Ambassador Singapore to Paris, 13 May 1993, "Cambodge – fermeté Singapourienne," ADN, 10POI/1 1302.

197 Cable French Ambassador Singapore to Paris, 21 May 1993, "envoi de quatre Super-Puma au Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1302.

198 Interoffice memorandum Colonel Huijssoon to Akashi, 15 April 1993, "reinforcement of the military component," UNA, S-1854-0027-0001.

would be supported by Kuala Lumpur.¹⁹⁹ In addition to the call for more military equipment, the Malaysian government also proposed to discuss changing UNTAC's mandate.²⁰⁰ Kuala Lumpur took the initiative to contact other countries that contributed troops to Cambodia and proposed to collectively invite Boutros-Ghali to reinforce UNTAC with heavier materiel, such as armoured cars.²⁰¹ As the proposal received a lukewarm reaction from non-Asian troop contributing countries, it was eventually downsized to an ASEAN request to the Secretary-General to undertake measures to improve and strengthen the security of UN personnel in Cambodia.²⁰² The most important reason, however, for Sanderson to refrain from demanding reinforcements, was to keep the Khmer Rouge passive. The force commander made it clear that he was concerned that bringing in reinforcements could provoke rather than deter the Khmer Rouge.²⁰³

Whereas calling in reinforcements was considered a bridge too far, the measures that were taken in defence of the elections led to a transformation of UNTAC into a more robust force that was ready for a military confrontation. Akashi told the core group ambassadors in Phnom Penh that he was "hoping for the best while preparing for the worst."²⁰⁴ The fear of a serious deterioration of the security situation was illustrated by the fact that every day UNTAC headquarters in Phnom Penh began to look more like a fortress and all UNTAC military staff personnel working there, who normally never carried weapons, were now issued with sidearms. Family members of all UN personnel were ordered out of the country.²⁰⁵ UNTAC battalions were ordered to reinforce their positions with bunkers and fire bays.²⁰⁶ The number of polling stations was reduced from 1,900 to 1,400 in order to limit their exposure to attacks. The measure was initially resisted by UNTAC's electoral component, but Akashi disregarded what he believed was "stubborn perfectionism."²⁰⁷ Contingents were expected to increase their patrols in the densely populated areas in their sector and create a quick reaction force – in case they hadn't already – to respond to emergencies. In Sanderson's absence, Deputy Force Commander Rideau strengthened UNTAC's reserve force in Phnom Penh with a quick reaction force consisting of 150 French legionnaires with helicopters

199 "Prepare Untac force for war, Dr M tells UN," *New Straits Times*, 16 April 1993; Letter by Malaysian Ambassador Phnom Penh to Akashi, 16 April 1993, "Views of the Prime Minister of Malaysia," UNA, S-0794-0009-0002.

200 Cable French Ambassador Kuala Lumpur to Paris, 16 April 1993, "Cambodge – réactions malaisiennes après les déclarations de M. Evans et les derniers événements," ADN, 10POI/1 1302; "Malaysia: Elections must go on," *New Straits Times*, 15 April 1993.

201 Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 23 April 1993, "Kambodja UNTAC voorstel Maleisië voor demarche inzake veiligheid VN-troepen," AMBZ, BZ-1304; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 26 April 1993, "Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1302.

202 Cable Annan to Akashi, 15 May 1993, "Security," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 3 May 1993, "Kambodja UNTAC voorstel Maleisië voor demarche inzake veiligheid VN-troepen," AMBZ, BZ-1304; Cable Akashi to Annan, 11 May 1993, "Meeting with the Expanded Permanent Five," UNA, S-0794-0051-0002.

203 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 30 April 1993, "US Demarche – approach on additional assistance by Phnom Penh ambassadors," UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

204 Meeting with the core group, 9 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

205 Order by Brigadier General Tuswandi, Chief of Staff, 15 May 1993, "Arming of non-formed unit personnel (less UNMOS and UNNOS)," UNA, S-0794-0020-0002; Johan ten Hove, "Untac gokt op 'beetje eerlijke' verkiezingen," *Trouw*, 18 May 1993.

206 Rideau, "APRONUC: Une mission originale à plus d'un titre"; Author's interview with Robert Rideau; Interoffice memorandum by Rideau, Moné, Gibney, 18 April 1993, "Coordination at Sector level," UNA, S-0997-0006-0003; Cable Akashi to Annan, 28 April 1993, "Draft Fourth Progress Report," UNA, S-0794-0050-0023.

207 Akashi, "The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia," 209.

at their disposal, ready to go anywhere, anytime.²⁰⁸ In order to guarantee a twenty-four-hour information bridge between New York and Phnom Penh, Sanderson sent two of his staff officers to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to man a special Cambodia desk.²⁰⁹ Sanderson and Rideau both made several tours around the country to inspect the military readiness of their battalions. Some battalion commanders expressed a reluctance to accept anything that looked like a robust military posture which they substantiated by referring to the limitations of UNTAC's mandate. According to Rideau, much persuasion and "pedagogy" was needed to counter such legalistic arguments.²¹⁰

Whereas limitations of the mandate had previously been emphasised in explaining UNTAC's passivity, there were now reasons to interpret the mandate less restrictively. With regard to the rules of engagement, UNTAC headquarters circulated a message to all battalions that entitled peacekeepers to open fire in a wide variety of situations, including in defence of the mandate.²¹¹ Akashi insisted that the notion of self-defence should be interpreted "fairly liberally."²¹² At a press briefing in Phnom Penh he declared that although peacekeepers were restricted to use force in self-defence, he emphasised that "this very much includes the right to defend our mission." He further underlined UNTAC's robust posture by stating that "we do not hesitate to return fire vigorously if attacked."²¹³ To his staff members, Akashi said that the military strength of the Khmer Rouge should not be underestimated and that UNTAC had to be prepared to put on a fight.²¹⁴

Sanderson realised that it would be impossible to provide absolute security in all Cambodian provinces, but after his tours around the different sectors, he expressed confidence that attacks could be repulsed.²¹⁵ His faith must have been strengthened by the fact that UNTAC troops did demonstrate strength in fending off the continuing Khmer Rouge attacks. On 8 May, a company of Pakistani peacekeepers located in Choam Khsan in Preah Vihear province, came under attack by Khmer Rouge forces that attacked in three subsequent waves. All were driven back by heavy Pakistani counterfire. Whereas one blue helmet was seriously injured, two Khmer Rouges were confirmed killed. Sanderson was pleased with how well the Pakistani had defended themselves and considered it as a sign of UNTAC's determination to maintain its presence in contested areas.²¹⁶ More examples of UNTAC's increased military readiness followed. A week

208 Barrington, "Security Concerns Loom Over Polls"; Cable Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, "Info Cambodia," NIMH-099, folder 68.

209 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 20 April 1993, "passage of information," UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Interoffice memorandum Sanderson to Baril, 5 May 1993, "UNTAC liaison to United Nations, New York," UNA, S-0795-0056-0002.

210 Rideau, "APRONUC: Une mission originale à plus d'un titre"; Author's interview with Robert Rideau.

211 Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 April 1993, "Possible measures to improve security conditions," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Cable Goulding to Akashi, Anstee, Kittani, Nambiar, Ajello, Riza, Wahlgren, Dibumana, Minehane, Misztal, Thapa, Galarza-Chans, Van Baelen, 20 January 1993, "United Nations Rules of Engagement: Statements to the Media," UNA, S-0795-0043-0004.

212 Cable Akashi to Annan, 12 May 1993, "Draft of the Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 810 (1993)," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Cable Akashi to Annan, 14 May 1993, "Revised draft of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 810 (1993)," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

213 Daily Press Briefing, 20 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0036-0004.

214 "Khmer Rouge tougher, stronger than ever: U.N.," *AFP*, 19 May 1993.

215 Meeting on "Electoral Security" on 7 May 1993. See: Internal message Yahmed to Porcell, 18 May 1993, "Report on the 6th Civil Administration Seminar," ADN, 521PO/2/33.

216 Meeting Sanderson with General Meas Sophea of CPAF, UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 18 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

later, an Indonesian patrol ran into a firefight with the Khmer Rouge. The Indonesians not only defended themselves robustly, but even pursued the fleeing guerrillas, wounding two of them.²¹⁷ The day before the elections, the Khmer Rouge continued to demonstrate their recklessness by opening fire on the compound of a Chinese UNTAC engineer company located at the village of Skun in Kompong Cham province. Two Chinese blue berets were instantly killed when an RPG penetrated the barracks through an open window and exploded inside.²¹⁸ The Chinese engineers were traumatised, and Beijing demanded that they were moved to a secure location where they could continue their road-building work in safety. Sanderson and Akashi exceptionally agreed, probably in the hope that the Chinese government would put pressure on the Khmer Rouge to refrain from further violence.²¹⁹

The militarisation of the peacekeeping operation was symbolised by the fact that the United States started to play a bigger role in the phase leading up to the elections. With the situation in Cambodia deteriorating, the Americans began to monitor the operation more closely and provide it with greater support. Two weeks before the elections, the US government established a special working group on Cambodia that followed the situation on a twenty-four-hour basis. US officials regularly visited DPKO to give “intelligence briefings” about Cambodia, despite the unwritten rule at the UN to always employ the more neutral term “information” because of the organisation’s impartial position.²²⁰ This rule, however, was temporarily thrown overboard, apparently the situation demanded so. On 6 May, a US government delegation, consisting of Admiral Frank Bowman and former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Richard Clarke, visited Annan at UN headquarters in New York, and made it clear to the DPKO-chief that the United States was not prepared to see the Khmer Rouge succeed in sabotaging the elections. They urged the UN to make sure UNTAC stood up to the attacks, stiffen its resolve and avoid that certain areas would be disenfranchised during the elections. The Americans offered to procure and transport extra military equipment to Cambodia, not as a pro bono contribution but at the “cheapest Department of Defense rate.”²²¹ Sanderson had already sent his wish list to New York: he required additional helicopters for medical evacuation, thirty mine-resistant vehicles, night-vision goggles and equipment for personal protection such as body armour and helmets.²²²

The talks in New York about shipping more military materiel to Cambodia exemplify how strong the mentality shifted towards a preparedness for escalation. Initially, the UN Secretariat had discouraged battalions to bring capabilities to Cambodia that were considered too robust. The French had decided to equip their battalion with Armed Personnel Carriers (APCs), or *Véhicules*

217 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 138; Cable Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, “Info Cambodja,” NIMH-099, folder 68.

218 Interoffice memorandum Lt Col Suresh Nair to Force Commander, 23 May 1993, “Investigation report on the killing of two Chinese construction coy soldiers at Skon Wu 0938, Sector 5E on 22 May 1993,” UNA, S-1854-0072-0005; UNMO Sector 5 East to UNTAC HQ, 22 May 1993, “detailed report on incident at Chinese engineer company location at Skon on 21 May 93,” UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

219 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 23 May 1993, “Demarche by Chinese ambassador to the SNC,” UNA, S-1829-0270-0007.

220 Cable Annan to Akashi, 11 May 1993, “Intelligence Briefing,” UNA, S-0794-0045-0003.

221 Cable Annan to Akashi, 6 May 1993, “Meeting with United States officials regarding preparations for election and offer of logistic support,” UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

222 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 30 April 1993, “US Demarche – approach on additional assistance by Phnom Penh ambassadors,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

de l'Avant Blindé (VAB) in French, in order to be prepared for a higher threat level. But the UN Secretariat protested against the use of these vehicles, judging them as appearing unnecessarily aggressive, and refused to reimburse Paris. France nonetheless decided to ship the vehicles to Cambodia anyway, at its own charge.²²³ Ironically, in the summer of 1992, it was determined that in case of a degrading security situation in Phnom Penh, the French APCs would be the first to rush from Sihanoukville to the Cambodian capital to re-establish order.²²⁴ Now that the entire context had considerably worsened, the UNTAC mission was actively reinforced and supplied. Two aircraft of the US Air Force brought 5,000 body armour jackets, 19,000 helmets, 15,000 medical dressings and 5,400 flares.²²⁵ Fifteen mine-resistant vehicles were flown in from Namibia.²²⁶ As the US delivered, Japan paid the bill of 1.1 million US dollars for the additional security items and the transportation costs, as well as for chartering eight additional helicopters, making the UNTAC air-fleet grow to a total of sixty-eight helicopters.²²⁷ Australia also contributed six UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.²²⁸ Prime Minister Keating, who had just been re-elected on 13 March, suddenly seemed much less concerned about the safety of Australian personnel and justified this additional contribution by stating that "it is important that the international community holds its nerve and supports UNTAC during the crucial period in the lead-up to the elections." A bipartisan political consensus had developed in Canberra around the idea that the success of the operation was of vital importance to Australia's foreign policy.²²⁹

The protection of international civilian personnel that manned the polling stations was the highest priority for UNTAC's military component, but scepticism remained whether all battalions would be equally able to withstand attacks. Besides the essential 645 UNVs and 50,000 Cambodian electoral workers, some 882 International Polling Station Officers (IPSOs) from forty-four different countries volunteered to come to Cambodia to supervise the elections. Given the rapidly deteriorating security situation, some countries that sent IPSOs expressed great concerns for the safety of their national experts and requested UNTAC to send them to a sector where their own military was also deployed, if they had any troops in Cambodia.²³⁰ Although New York initially resisted such requests, some countries eventually succeeded in getting their IPSOs deployed in the sector of their preference, as was the case with the Dutch in the province

223 François Trucy, *Rapport au Premier Ministre: Participation de la France aux Opérations de Maintien de la Paix* (1994), 153 (consulted in the library of the French Senate, Paris). France has experienced many problems in obtaining the reimbursements for its contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. See: Paul Tavernier, *Les casques bleus* (Paris: presses universitaires de France, 1996), 119.

224 Message Irastorza to Sanderson, 20 July 1992, "Plan Kiri," UNA, S-1854-0016-0008.

225 Statement by spokesperson of the US Department of State, May 12, 1993, "US Assistance to UNTAC," UNA, S-1854-0016-001.

226 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 204; Cable Colonel Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, "Info Cambodja," NIMH-099, folder 68.

227 Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 24 May 1993, "Kambodja / vrijwillige bijdrage Japan t.b.v. veiligheid UNTAC," AMBZ, 01728.

228 Letter US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Sanderson, 11 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0002; Letter US Ambassador Phnom Penh to Akashi, 12 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0009-0001. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 204.

229 Frost, *The Peace Process in Cambodia*, 46; Ian PePhedran, "Choppers, troops for Cambodia Aussie forces boosted," *The Canberra Times*, 11 May 1993; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 21 May 1993, "Activisme Australien au Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1302.

230 Cable Annan to Akashi, 15 April 1993, "Deployment of IPSOs," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

of Banteay Meanchey and the Japanese in Takeo province.²³¹ But it appeared impossible to accept all requests, and UNTAC's refusal to deploy the sixty-seven French IPSOs in the French sector led to some concern in Paris and among the French polling officers themselves.²³² Eventually, the French decided to take measures into their own hands by secretly deploying a group of special forces to Cambodia in order to protect the French IPSOs that worked outside the French sector. The French commandos, wearing blue berets, discretely entered Cambodia and took up covert positions in the vicinity of the polling stations.²³³ But one of the French squads was spotted and halted by a British UNMO who immediately informed UNTAC headquarters, where Sanderson was obviously unpleasantly surprised.²³⁴ The French special operation, organised with the collaboration of Rideau, uncovers a number of issues. First, how strained the working relation between the force commander and his French deputy continued to be. Second, the extent to which an escalation of the situation was considered as a realistic scenario by the French. Third, the lack of French confidence in some UNTAC units to provide for sufficient protection at the polling stations.²³⁵ In preparing themselves for the worst-case scenario and protecting their nationals, the French preferred not to gamble and were willing to go as far as circumventing the UN command structures.

Cambodianisation and voting in safe areas

The French were probably correct in their appraisal that UNTAC alone was not strong enough to provide a watertight protection against Khmer Rouge attacks. A solution for UNTAC's limited military strength was found in subcontracting the cooperating Cambodian factions in the active defence of the mission. In practical terms, this strategy amounted to a Cambodianisation of the UN operation. From February 1993 onwards, UNTAC's military staff had started to work out plans to involve the only army in Cambodia that was capable to protect the electoral process against the Khmer Rouge. The first idea was that Hun Sen's CPAE, together with the armies of the other two cooperating factions, would transfer allegiance from their faction to the Supreme National Council, and set the first steps towards the creation of a new national Cambodian army. This would allow UNTAC to "hire" a security force of 145,000 troops to help with the protection of the elections and provide security in the period thereafter. Although the two smaller factions supported the proposal, the SOC, which would deliver almost all troops for such a security force, did not want to transfer allegiance to the SNC as long as the Khmer Rouge remained a member

231 Cable Annan to Akashi, 7 May 1993, "Security for IPSOs," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja*, 230; Cable Sadry to Annan, 8 May 1993, "arrangements for polling," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

232 Cable Annan to Akashi, 7 May 1993, "Security for IPSOs," UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Bernard Edinger, "Top French general gloomy on UN's Cambodia operation," *Reuters*, 13 May 1993.

233 Author's interview with Robert Rideau; "Cambodge: opération 'Protection des IPSOS' (ordope « Tonle »)," SHD, GR 2002 Z 163/5.

234 Message UNMO Sector 5 East to Sanderson, 22 May 1993, "Special armed squad," UNA, S-0794-0020-0002; Cable General Sanderson to Annan, 23 May 1993, "French military presence in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

235 In February 1993, Rideau encountered Sanderson's resistance when he requested French UNTAC capacity to arrange for the security for the French president. Mitterrand's visit to the temples of Angkor Wat in the turbulent Siem Reap province provided a serious security challenge. Rideau finally ordered a French C-160 Transall to transport French forces from Sihanoukville to Siem Reap to invisibly provide security for the French president. Author's interview with Robert Rideau.

of this body.²³⁶

After shelving the plan of an “SNC army,” Sanderson proposed to the SOC – as well as to the other two factions – to sign an agreement of cooperation for the joint organisation of security during the elections. UNTAC and the State of Cambodia had a common interest in holding the elections on schedule. Postponing the vote would not help Hun Sen because his government was unable to sustain itself for much longer. The SOC needed international legitimacy through an election victory in order to receive international aid and overcome its financial problems. The morale of many CPAF troops was at an all-time low because the government in Phnom Penh was unable to pay many of their salaries.²³⁷ On 2 April, the three cooperating factions signed a document in which they agreed with UNTAC to “take all necessary measures to ensure the safe conduct of the election in Cambodia.”²³⁸ This unmistakably suggested that the Cambodian factions were allowed to use force against the Khmer Rouge in defence of the electoral process. As the strength of ANKI and KPNLAF was negligible, UNTAC’s agreement with these armies was above all symbolic and aimed at dispelling the impression that UNTAC was forming a military alliance with the CPAF against the Khmer Rouge, although this was practically the case.

Hun Sen had long pushed UNTAC to declare the Khmer Rouge outlaws and allow him to mount an offensive. He was therefore more than willing to accept UNTAC’s request to help protect the UN elections against their now common adversary, and pressured UNTAC to define more clearly the scope of the CPAF’s rights to use force, to avoid of being accused of violating the cease-fire.²³⁹ Although Akashi was initially reluctant to allow the CPAF to undertake offensive actions against the Khmer Rouge, he also realised that it was in UNTAC’s best interests to give Hun Sen the possibility to push the Khmer Rouge as far away from the polling stations and other UNTAC positions as possible. By the end of April, there were indications that a large-scale Khmer Rouge attack was impending on Kompong Speu provincial town, which would bring Pol Pot’s forces within thirty kilometres from Phnom Penh and in the position to launch artillery strikes on the Cambodian capital. Hun Sen announced to Akashi that he intended to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Khmer Rouge to chase them out of the area, but expressed concern that such an operation would be condemned by UNTAC as a cease-fire violation.²⁴⁰ Fearing for the safety of UNTAC’s military and civilian personnel in Kompong Speu and the idea that the Khmer Rouge would soon be standing “on the doorstep of Phnom Penh,” Akashi allowed Hun Sen to launch the pre-emptive attack, which was euphemistically referred to as an “active self-defence” operation.

236 Report on the 31st MMWG Secretariat meeting, 23 March 1993, UNA, S-1854-0008-0006; Interoffice memorandum Colonel Huijssoon to Rideau and Akashi, 15 April 1993, “reinforcement of the military component,” UNA, S-1854-0027-0001.

237 Notes of the meeting of the Secretary-General with UNTAC Senior Staff, 8 April 1993, UNA, S-1085-0031-0003.

238 Cooperative arrangement between UNTAC and the Party of the State of Cambodia for the coordination of security measures during the electoral process, 2 April 1993, UNA, S-1854-0018-0004. For UNTAC’s agreements with the other factions, see the same box.

239 Letter Ambassador Ouch Borith (SOC) to the United Nations Secretary-General, 7 April 1993, ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Letter MajGen Prak Mardi (Deputy President of the Coordination Committee) to Sanderson, 12 April 1993, “Request for consideration and taking appropriate measures against the violations of the cease-fire by the DK Party in the areas controlled by the State of Cambodia, violations which seriously threaten the peace process, the life of the Cambodian people and in particular the forthcoming elections,” UNA, S-0794-0050-0003.

240 Cable Akashi to Annan, 3 May 1993, “Military/political assessment of DK capacity and intentions,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0001; Cable Akashi to Annan, 24 April 1993, “Impending attack on Kompong Speu Provincial Town,” UNA, S-0794-0050-0003.

Akashi decided that the UNMOs monitoring the area should be removed for a while as to avoid the impression that UNTAC legitimised the CPAF's actions against the Khmer Rouge.²⁴¹ Akashi thus effectively requested Hun Sen to use offensive force to quell the Khmer Rouge threat, as Hun Sen would later assert.²⁴²

In the weeks before the elections, Sanderson met regularly with CPAF generals Ke Kim Yan, Meas Sophea and Tea Banh to whom he emphasised how dependent UNTAC was on the CPAF to protect the elections against Khmer Rouge attacks. Sanderson made it clear that he expected them to conduct operations to keep the Khmer Rouge away from the polling stations and that the notion of "active self-defence" would be interpreted fairly liberally. "It is [. . .] obvious to us," Sanderson said to general Meas Sophea, "that if any group is building up to attack your positions you have the right to attack them before they attack you."²⁴³ Sanderson was particularly concerned about UNTAC's ability to conduct an election in parts of the provinces of Siem Reap, southern Kompong Thom and eastern Kompong Cham. If the CPAF would not be able to hold the line against the Khmer Rouge in these important provinces, the polling process there would have to be aborted, which would mean that these populous areas would be insufficiently represented in the national elections, calling into question the legitimacy of its results.²⁴⁴ By allowing the CPAF to launch pre-emptive attacks against Khmer Rouge forces, UNTAC outsourced the use of force in defence of its mission to the Khmer Rouge's main opponent. It was only in his latest and most unnoticed analysis of UNTAC that Michael Doyle has appropriately characterised this strategy as "indirect peace enforcement."²⁴⁵ Whereas UNTAC took a purely defensive posture against the Khmer Rouge insurgency, it Cambodianised the necessary offensive use of force.

Although UNTAC's strategy was based on containing the Khmer Rouge as much as possible, this was virtually impossible because the areas under their control did not consist of hermetically closed zones but constituted what Prince Sihanouk referred to as a *peau de léopard*: small enclaves, such as hills and villages, forming little dots on a map like on leopard skin. Moreover, many places in the countryside that were controlled by the CPAF during the day were under Khmer Rouge influence at night.²⁴⁶ This geographical dispersal of the Khmer Rouge created a security challenge, and in order to overcome it, UNTAC more or less copied the same model by creating its own UNTAC leopard dots on the map. The plan for the security of the elections, which was drawn up by Australian Lieutenant Colonel Damien Healy, foresaw a clear subdivision of tasks. UNTAC's military and civilian police were responsible for the protection of the immediate vicinity of the polling stations, with a perimeter of 200 metres, keeping the polling sites out of the effective fire

241 Cable Akashi to Annan, 26 April 1993, "Impending attack on Kompong Speu Provincial Town," UNA, S-0794-0050-0003.

242 This point was made by Hun Sen at a conference celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Paris Agreements. See: Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 107.

243 Meeting Sanderson with General Meas Sophea of CPAF, UNTAC HQ, Monday 3 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

244 Meeting Sanderson with General Ke Kim Yan, Commander-in-chief CPAF, Force Commander's Office, UNTAC HQ, Phnom Penh, Tuesday 20 April 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

245 In his main publications about UNTAC published in the 1990s, Doyle omitted to make this point. It was only at the occasion of the The John W. Holmes Lecture in 2007 that Doyle shared this insight for the first time. Michael W. Doyle, "The John W. Holmes Lecture: Building Peace," *Global Governance*, 13 (2007): 12.

246 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 29 June 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Hun Sen," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002; Observations by Mr. Goulding after his visit to Cambodia, 20–25 June 1992, UNA, S-0795-0043-0005.

range of small arms and RPGs. The CPAF formed the outer circle of defence and was tasked to avert Khmer Rouge attacks and pin them down away from the voting areas.²⁴⁷ Thus in the absence of a neutral political environment in Cambodia on the whole, UNTAC turned the polling stations into safe areas within which this neutral environment was created.²⁴⁸ At exactly the same moment that the UN Security Council officially introduced the term “safe area” in Bosnia, by declaring Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Žepa, Gorazde, Tuzla and Bihać as humanitarian enclaves that were under the protection of UNPROFOR, a somewhat similar construction was applied in Cambodia. The important difference with UNPROFOR was that UNTAC, as Sanderson had repeatedly argued, was not explicitly mandated to protect Cambodian civilians. Officially, the blue helmets around the polling stations were only allowed to protect UN personnel and property.

While the Khmer Rouge-controlled territory was labelled as a no-go area for UNTAC, the rest of Cambodia was divided into high-, medium- and low-risk zones, with each a different level of accordingly applied security measures. The status of every district in the country was reviewed on a daily basis by the sector commanders and electoral officials. In high-risk zones, armed blue helmets were stationed in and around polling stations, with trenches prepared in case of ground attacks or artillery strikes. The electoral staff was issued with the US-delivered helmets and flak-jackets. Quick Reaction Forces and medical support units were standing by to rush to the 1,400 fixed and 200 mobile polling stations.²⁴⁹ Sanderson was satisfied to see UNTAC sector commanders cooperating closely with the CPAF in making their preparations.²⁵⁰

As UNTAC relied heavily on the strength of the cooperating factions for the defence of the elections, it was naturally compelled to return the weapons that it had confiscated from them earlier. The day after the 4 May ambush at Phum Ampil, Prince Ranariddh officially requested the release of some weapons for ANKI forces in Banteay Meanchey province.²⁵¹ The other two factions soon followed this example.²⁵² Sanderson especially felt pressured to release the weapons belonging to ANKI and KPNLAF, as these armies were nearly fully disarmed and the most vulnerable for attacks by the Khmer Rouge. The two smaller factions had enthusiastically handed in their weapons of which many were of excellent quality, contrary to those from the CPAF which Sanderson described as “fundamentally rubbish” and therefore considered that it would be of very limited military value to return them.²⁵³ At the same time, the force commander felt that there was a danger that the CPAF might not fully honour its agreement with UNTAC to provide for security during the elections if its weapons were not given back to them. The return of weapons was thus considered as an important instrument to keep the factions engaged in their commitment

247 Cooperative arrangement between UNTAC and the Party of the State of Cambodia for the coordination of security measures during the electoral process, 2 April 1993, UNA, S-1854-0018-0004; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 136.

248 Chanserey Mum, the French-Cambodian deputy director of UNTAC's civil administration component described the UNTAC polling stations in May 1993 as “safe enclaves.” See: Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia*, 115.

249 Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 810 (1993), 15 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

250 Meeting Sanderson with General Meas Sophea of CPAF, UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 18 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

251 Letter Norodom Ranariddh to Sanderson, 5 May 1993, “046/FP/Cab/PP93,” UNA, S-1829-0270-0007.

252 Letter General Sak Sutsakhan to Akashi, 13 May 1993, “The Return of Cantoned Weapons to the KPNLAF,” UNA, S-1829-270-0007; Meeting Akashi with the Expanded Permanent Five, 17 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-0270-0007.

253 Meeting Akashi with Phnom Penh Ambassadors on Siem Reap (& other) incidents, UNTAC HQ, Wednesday 5 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

to project the elections.²⁵⁴ Sanderson admitted to Annan that it was “a major political step,” but argued that it was justified by the threat the Khmer Rouge posed to the elections.²⁵⁵

Considering the fact that returning weapons to combatants was in complete contradiction to the principles of peace and UN peacekeeping, New York reacted very reluctantly to the idea. Annan feared that it could provoke the Khmer Rouge, who were already accusing UNTAC of siding with Hun Sen. The disconnect between New York and Phnom Penh was once again clearly illustrated when Annan added that he did not believe that the security situation in Cambodia had deteriorated to the level that justified the return of weapons to the factions.²⁵⁶ Akashi was astonished about the misconception in New York about the seriousness of the situation in Cambodia and emphasised that he saw “no other alternative than agreeing to the request for the return of cantoned weapons by the three factions who cooperate.” He felt that the Khmer Rouge had no grounds to criticise UNTAC as they had themselves flatly refused to hand in any of their weapons. He also felt the “moral obligation” to the three cooperating armies not to endanger their ability to withstand attacks by the Khmer Rouge.²⁵⁷ Eventually, the UN Secretary-General and the P5 acknowledged that the safety of the electoral process depended to a large measure on the Cambodian armed forces, and accordingly, allowed the three cooperating factions to retrieve their weapons they had put under UNTAC guard.²⁵⁸

The Khmer Rouge clearly understood that UNTAC was cooperating with the CPAF in defence of the elections and this seemed to have a deterrent effect on at least some of their units. A few days before the polling, a Khmer Rouge commander presented himself to a company of French peacekeepers in Takeo province with a revealing proposal. He promised not to attack during the elections if UNTAC could guarantee that the CPAF would not move into the Khmer Rouge-controlled zones.²⁵⁹ In other areas, however, Khmer Rouge commanders were less inclined to make deals. In the night of 20 May, a large Khmer Rouge force targeted the UNMO building in the small town of Stoung in Kompong Thom province. The military observers were evacuated by an Indonesian APC under heavy fire. Fierce fighting followed between the CPAF and the Khmer Rouge in the surrounding jungle.²⁶⁰ Later that day, Sanderson emphasised to the cooperating factions in the Supreme National Council that in the regions adjacent to Khmer Rouge areas it was “necessary for some offensive actions to take place for self-defence,” which included actions to restore control of villages that would otherwise be deprived of the opportunity to vote.²⁶¹

254 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 13 May 1993, “Return of cantoned weapons,” and “Meeting with the Expanded Permanent Five,” 17 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-270-0007; Meeting on “Electoral Security” on 7 May 1993. See: Internal message Yahmed to Porcell, 18 May 1993, “Report on the 6th Civil Administration Seminar,” ADN, 521PO/2/33.

255 Cable Sanderson to Annan, 5 May 1993, “Cambodian factions’ request for return of cantoned weapons,” UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

256 Cable Annan to Akashi and Sanderson, 5 May 1993, “Cambodian factions’ request for return of cantoned weapons,” UNA, S-1829-0272-0002.

257 Cable Akashi to Annan, 14 May 1993, “Return of cantoned weapons,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0002.

258 Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 810 (1993), 15 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-0272-0002; Cable Akashi to Annan, 17 May 1993, “Today’s meeting with the Expanded Permanent Five,” 17 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-0270-0007. Ultimately, however, Prince Ranariddh decided not to insist on the request of the return of the weapons to his army so not to provoke the Khmer Rouge. See: entretien M. Akashi avec S.A.R. le prince Norodom Ranariddh, 11 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

259 Journal des marches et opérations du bataillon français au Cambodge du 29 Novembre 1992 au 17 Juin 1993 dépendant de l’Autorité Provisoire des Nations Unies Au Cambodge – Secteur 6, SHD, GR 2000 Z 114 5.

260 Weekly military information summary 20 – 93 Period 15 May–21 May 93, UNA, S-1829-0314-0005.

261 Daily Press Briefing, 21 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

Sanderson had been very careful in his phrasing, but journalists quickly understood that the force commander actually gave the CPAF a “go-ahead” to conduct pre-emptive strikes against the Khmer Rouge.²⁶² This is confirmed by the fact that, on the same day, Akashi reiterated to Hun Sen that offensive actions by his army, aimed at re-taking areas that had been lost to the Khmer Rouge previously, would be seen by UNTAC as falling under the right to self-defence.²⁶³

The successful defence of the elections

In the morning of 23 May, on the first election day, everyone held their collective breath, and some mistook the rumbling of a heavy thunderstorm for Khmer Rouge artillery. But the Khmer Rouge did not mount a large-scale attack and the Cambodians streamed to the polling stations in massive numbers. On the first day alone, a staggering 2.2 million Cambodians, nearly half of the registered voters, came out to cast their vote. Dressed in their nicest clothes and in good spirits, the Cambodians waited patiently for hours in front of the polling stations in a festive atmosphere. Only the fact that the polling stations looked like small fortresses, with all the sandbags and barbed wire, and were guarded by vigilant blue helmets, reminded everyone of the precarious security situation.²⁶⁴

However, the dominant idea that the Khmer Rouge remained completely passive during the elections is incorrect. Although the overall situation remained indeed calm, some scattered attempts of disruption did occur, but only to be repulsed effectively by UNTAC and especially by the CPAF. In the early morning of 23 May, Khmer Rouge soldiers attacked a village in Kampot province where French peacekeepers were preparing a polling station for the first election day. The foreign legionnaires engaged the Khmer Rouge forces and succeeded in forcing them to withdraw, but it was nonetheless decided to close several polling stations in the district as a precautionary measure.²⁶⁵ In Siem Reap, some voting booths were also closed due to Khmer Rouge artillery fire. The following four election days also went well. In some places, even some unarmed Khmer Rouge soldiers showed up at some polling stations.²⁶⁶ Incidents continued to occur, but on all occasions, UNTAC and the CPAF proved very effective in quickly chasing the Khmer Rouge attackers away. On the second election day, Khmer Rouge soldiers managed to fire several RPGs at a polling site in Kampong Cham province, but they were immediately dislodged by CPAF forces. Also on the 24th, in Botum Sakor, a village near Sihanoukville, a small Khmer Rouge unit approached a polling station, but CPAF troops quickly arrived and drove them off without firing a shot.²⁶⁷

262 Mark Dodd, “U.N. authorises offensives to guard Cambodia polls,” *Reuters*, 20 May 1993; Tan Lian Choo, “UN gives go-ahead for use of force,” *The Strait Times*, 21 May 1993; Nicholas Cumming-Bruce, “UN approves force against Khmer Rouge as poll nears,” *The Guardian*, 21 May 1993; Daily Press Briefing, 21 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0020-0002.

263 Meeting Akashi with Hun Sen, 20 May 1993, UNA, S-1829-0270-0007. Akashi also confirmed this agreement with Hun Sen to the Japanese press. See: “UNTAC to let Phnom Penh regain territory, daily says,” *Asian Political News Kyodo News International*, 24 May 1993.

264 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 120–21; Cable Colonel Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, “Info Cambodja,” NIMH-099, folder 68.

265 Journal de Marche et Opérations du Bataillon Français au Cambodge du 29 Novembre 1992 au 17 Juin 1993 APRONUC – Secteur 6, SHD, GR 2000 Z 114 5.

266 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 148.

267 Situation at polling stations in Cambodia as at 241000 HRS May 93 Cambodia time, UNA, S-1829-0314-0005; Cable Huijssoon to The Hague, 24 May 1993, “Info Cambodja,” NIMH-099, folder 68.

On 27 May, a mobile polling station was attacked by Khmer Rouge elements in the notorious district of Soth Nikhum, east of Siem Reap city. Three Cambodian voters were injured and a major from the Bangladeshi battalion was shot in the leg, but again, the attackers were driven off by intervening CPAF forces.²⁶⁸ Scholars Michael Doyle and Jarat Chopra, who were both present during the election days in Kompong Thom province, observed that the UNTAC-CPAF security cooperation was working very effectively.²⁶⁹ Whereas UNTAC defended the elections, the CPAF effectively protected it. Officer-scholar Patrice Sartre has emphasised the difference between using force in self-defence and for protection, arguing that self-defence can, by definition, only be defensive, whereas protection can involve locally and momentarily offensive action.²⁷⁰

The total voter turnout of 89.6 per cent of the registered Cambodian voters was a number most Western democracies could only dream of. It seemed like a miracle and the relief was enormous. Akashi later described it as the best day of his life.²⁷¹ It certainly delivered the UN a much-needed victory. The Khmer Rouge had clearly failed in its objective to scare off the Cambodian voters and chase UNTAC out of the country. Akashi was pleased to certify on 29 May that the polling had been free and fair. Even Prince Sihanouk, who had been overtly sceptical about the “UNTACist” elections, also called it a “tremendous and historic success.”²⁷² Besides a testimony of the courage of the Cambodian people, the high voter turnout was also a demonstration that UNTAC had succeeded in convincing the overwhelming majority of the Cambodian population that their ballot would remain secret at every polling station. Scholars have largely acknowledged that UNTAC’s civic education activities played a pivotal role in building this confidence in the democratic process.²⁷³ It has also been pointed out that the civilian components would not have been able to do their work without the support of the military component that ensured a safe electoral environment.²⁷⁴ Indeed, the military component’s “greater show of military strength” and display of “firmness and determination” was also an important element in effectively deterring the Khmer Rouge and giving the Cambodians the confidence to go out and vote.²⁷⁵ UNTAC demonstrated a will to succeed and used all necessary means to achieve this outcome. Sanderson later recalled that UNTAC “went at [its] task with a will.”²⁷⁶

In the end, the elections were saved basically because the Khmer Rouge did not launch an all-out attack on the polling stations. The question they did not do this has been a topic of much speculation. Most of the explanations that have been put forward by scholars and contemporaries suggest that it was a last-minute decision made by the Khmer Rouge leadership. It has been argued

268 Daily press briefing 27 May 1993, UNA, S-1854-0075-0002; Widyono, *Dancing in shadows*, 121.

269 Doyle, “The John W. Holmes Lecture,” 12; Michael W. Doyle and Ayaka Suzuki, “Transitional Authority in Cambodia,” in *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 147.

270 Patrice Sartre, “La robustesse du maintien de la paix des Nations Unies: Ni contraindre ni céder mais protéger pour convaincre,” in *La paix par la force: Pour une approche réaliste du maintien de la paix « robuste »*, eds. Jocelyn Coulon and Alexandre Novosseloff (Outremont: Athéna éditions, 2011), 72.

271 Akashi, “The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” 204.

272 Daily press briefing 29 May 1993 12:00, UNA, S-1829-0270-0006.

273 Jenner, “Cambodge: l’entreprise inachevée,” 59; Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 185; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 86, 152; Doyle, “UNTAC: Sources of Success and Failure,” 92; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 212.

274 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 230, 212; Also see: Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 167. Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 419. Brocades Zaalberg has demonstrated that the close civil-military coordination and the leading role of the military in the electoral process was essential in organising successful elections.

275 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 230; Jenner, “International Triumph in Cambodia,” 148.

276 Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

that diplomatic pressure from several countries might have convinced the Khmer Rouge that it would be better to remain passive. Akashi personally believed that the Thai military, which stood under Japanese and American pressure, helped to persuade the Khmer Rouge to keep quiet.²⁷⁷ The Chilean historian Julio Jeldres, who was Sihanouk's personal secretary from 1981 to 1991, has argued that just before the elections, Chinese officials warned Khieu Samphan that Beijing would withdraw all its support if they would mount attacks against the elections.²⁷⁸ It is hard to imagine, however, that the Khmer Rouge bowed for Beijing's pressure as they had not demonstrated any inclination in the preceding year to listen to their former patron. Moreover, if this had been the case, the Chinese could easily have claimed credit for saving the peace process, which would have helped to enhance their damaged international standing after the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989. But they did not make any such assertions. Journalist William Shawcross has pointed at Sihanouk's arrival in Cambodia on the day before the start of the election, which might have had a decisive effect, given the great respect Sihanouk enjoyed among many of the Khmer Rouge. Khieu Samphan had tried to persuade the prince to sit out the election in Beijing, but Boutros-Ghali's and Mitterrand's letters urging him to return to Phnom Penh seemed to have had a greater effect on him. The prince ultimately decided to return to Cambodia and support the elections, which was a significant blow for the Khmer Rouge.²⁷⁹ To this must be added that when Khieu Samphan visited Sihanouk at his residence in Pyongyang, where he normally lived two months a year during his time in exile,²⁸⁰ the prince had urged him not to commit any violent actions.²⁸¹ It is also possible that the Khmer Rouge preferred to keep their hands clean in order to have a better chance to join a national reconciliation arrangement after the elections.²⁸²

The question whether there have been behind-the-scenes diplomatic pressures or not does not alter the fact that some individual Khmer Rouge units did attempt some small-scale attacks on polling stations. Moreover, interviews with Khmer Rouge "self-demobilisers," or defectors, conducted by the American Cambodia-scholar Steven Heder and other Khmer-speaking colleagues of UNTAC's analysis and assessment unit,²⁸³ suggest that general orders were actually given to launch attacks on polling stations, and that these instructions remained in force through the elections. The testimonies also suggest that the main purpose of the attacks was to scare away voters, but that the killing of Cambodian civilians was to be avoided. Shelling and attacking the area around the polling stations would suffice. But the Khmer Rouge defectors told Heder that

277 Report on the visit of Mr. Yasushi Akashi Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cambodia to Washington, DC, 20–21 July 1993, UNA, S-1085-0031-0001.

278 Julio A. Jeldres, "Cambodia's relations with China a steadfast friendship," in *Cambodia: progress and challenges since 1991*, eds. Pou Sothirak, Geoff Wade and Mark Hong (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 84.

279 Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 77.

280 The sixty-room palace at the shore of Lake Changsuwon was specially built for the Prince in 1974 as a gift from North Korean president Kim Il-Sung, with whom Sihanouk maintained a close relationship, based on a personal friendship and not on ideological or strategic interests. Sihanouk was always accompanied by another gift from Kim: a squad of North Korean bodyguards. See: Sebastian Strangio, "North Korea's New Friend?," *The Diplomat*, 14 August 1991.

281 Cable Akashi to Iqbal Riza, 12 May 1993, "Meeting between Prince Sihanouk and Mr. Akashi on 5 May 1993 in Beijing," UNA, S-0794-0051-0001; Message de Norodom Sihanouk à ses bien-aimés compatriotes, 10 May 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0001.

282 This was the prediction made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia during a working luncheon with the core group on 2 April 1993 in New York hosted by Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans. See: Cable Akashi to Annan, 5 April 1993, "Australian working luncheon on Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0045-0002.

283 Which was essentially a think tank of Khmer-speaking Cambodia experts within UNTAC's Information and Education Division.

they were unable to carry out these instructions because the deployment of CPAF and UNTAC forces made it too difficult for them to approach polling stations close enough. Heder concludes that the inability or unwillingness of individual Khmer Rouge detachments was the main reason for the fact that very few polling stations were eventually attacked.²⁸⁴ Raoul Jennar has also pointed to the statements by Khmer Rouge defectors explaining that the security measures put in place by UNTAC and the CPAF had made them decide to abandon their plans to sabotage the elections.²⁸⁵ This analysis concurs with the experience of officers of the Dutch battalion who also believed that the Khmer Rouge indeed intended to attack polling stations, but did not get the chance because they could not find any “soft targets” in the Dutch sector, as all the voting-safe-areas were hard targets. The Dutch marines also felt that the use of the Cambodian factions’ armies had contributed greatly to the overall security.²⁸⁶ Karl Ferris, the most senior American officer in Cambodia and later director of the Peacekeeping Institute at the US Army War College in Carlisle, has pointed out that the failure of the Khmer Rouge to disrupt the elections must in large part be credited to UNTAC’s security plan.²⁸⁷

Sanderson also assessed that the Khmer Rouge’s failure to mount large-scale attacks reflected a fear for heavy losses in a serious effort to disrupt the polls, which they could not afford.²⁸⁸ In interviews with journalists and researchers, the force commander pointed at the fact that in the weeks preceding the elections, the CPAF had successfully pushed back the Khmer Rouge from the main population areas and polling stations.²⁸⁹ In the days after the elections, Sanderson wrote to the CPAF commander-in-chief, General Ke Kim Yan, that the collaboration with the CPAF “enabled the UNTAC-sponsored election to be conducted successfully.”²⁹⁰ And during a meeting with Ke Kim Yan, the force commander personally thanked him: “I am very grateful for the co-cooperation we received from CPAF. I think this was a very important aspect of the whole campaign. CPAF and UNTAC were able to secure the election process.”²⁹¹ To the core group ambassadors in Phnom Penh, Sanderson declared that the success of the elections “was partially due to the role of the CPAF,” which provided vital security in areas where they thought the Khmer Rouge would be likely to launch assaults.²⁹²

Karl Ferris has argued that the joint effort to protect the elections did not jeopardise UNTAC’s impartiality. This assertion might be defensible if one presents the UNTAC-CPAF security alliance, as Ferris does, as UNTAC requesting the three cooperating factions to “assume

284 Heder, “The Resumption of Armed Struggle,” 99–103.

285 Jennar, “Cambodge: l’entreprise inachevée,” 59–60. Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 441–42.

286 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 150.

287 Karl Ferris, “UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia: On Balance, A Success,” *Parameters*, 24, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 45.

288 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 208; “Teaching the Khmer Rouge a lesson,” *Business Times Singapore*, 10 July 1993.

289 Michael W. Doyle, “Authority and elections in Cambodia,” in *Keeping the peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, eds. Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone and Robert C. Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 86.

290 Letter Sanderson to General Ke Kim Yan, Vice Minister of the State of Cambodia, 11 June 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

291 Meeting Sanderson with General Ke Kim Yan, Commander-in-chief CPAF, Friday 4 June 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001.

292 Meeting with the EP-5, 17 June, Cambodiana hotel, 1500–1910. See: Cable Akashi to Annan, 21 June 1993, “Special Core Group Meeting Phnom Penh 17/18 June,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.



Soldiers of the Cambodian People's Armed Forces (CPAF), the army of Hun Sen's State of Cambodia.
Photo credit: © Michel Riehl /ECPAD/Défense.

responsibility for security in the countryside of the areas under their control.”²⁹³ But this interpretation becomes less convincing when held against the fact that the focal point of the cooperation was the CPAF, which was encouraged by UNTAC to launch pre-emptive strikes against an identified opponent under the euphemistic label of “active self-defence.” Other scholars have depicted the cooperation between UNTAC and the CPAF as a measure to prevent the three cooperating parties from becoming vulnerable, to commit the undisciplined CPAF to the electoral process, to curb banditry, and as a catalyst for the unification of the Cambodian armed forces after the elections.²⁹⁴ These analyses seem to have been influenced by Sanderson’s own post-UNTAC accounts in which he has not given the CPAF the same credit for the success as he did in the immediate aftermath of the elections. Instead he asserted that it was Hun Sen’s army, rather than Pol Pot’s, that posed the greatest threat to the elections.²⁹⁵ It is true that the power of the CPAF, which had only partially disarmed, was hanging as a sword of Damocles over the post-election period. But the fact of the matter is that UNTAC needed the CPAF to effectively prevent the Khmer Rouge from successfully disrupting the electoral process in the first place. Rather than posing a threat to the elections, Hun Sen’s army became UNTAC’s auxiliary peace enforcer. Considerations for the post-election period certainly seemed to have played a role, but Sanderson’s argument that this was the main reason for the security agreement conceals UNTAC’s strong dependence on the CPAF to achieve its main objective. Publicly, Sanderson has

293 Ferris, “UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” 45.

294 Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 170; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 137; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 229.

295 Sanderson, “UNTAC: Successes and Failures,” 27; Sanderson, “UNTAC: The Military Component View,” 135.

made the argument, which has often been endorsed by scholars, that UNTAC's "alliance with the Cambodian people" was the essential element for the elections' success.²⁹⁶ There is no doubt that UNTAC's effort to persuade the Cambodians to go out and vote was absolutely vital, but this somewhat romanticised narrative masks the importance of the alliance the force commander forged with the army of the Phnom Penh government against, what had become, a common adversary. In the end, this alliance was more instrumental in saving the success of the elections.

Stabilising "success"

The Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that UNTAC would withdraw once the constituent assembly had adopted a new constitution and a new government was formed. This was to be done within ninety days. In this turbulent last phase of the operation, UNTAC focussed on its withdrawal and tried to consolidate its "success." The operation turned from an election implementation force into a stabilisation force that helped the provisional government to build the necessary capacity to face an insurgency by the Khmer Rouge.

The "success" of the elections created a pleasant illusion of peace and democracy, but UNTAC was quickly confronted with the harsh, complex and far from peaceful reality. While the Khmer Rouge had not caused any large-scale disruptions during the elections, their behaviour continued to be hostile, although it varied per region. Whereas in north-western Banteay Meanchey province NADK elements approached the Dutch battalion with a proposal to conduct joint patrols, in other places they continued to intimidate and attack UNTAC. On 30 May, a unit of the French Foreign Legion in Kampot province got into a firefight with sixty Khmer Rouge soldiers. The next day, an UNTAC convoy with Uruguayan and Polish peacekeepers was ambushed by the Khmer Rouge in Kompong Cham province. One Uruguayan soldier was killed and a Pole was seriously injured.²⁹⁷ On 7 June, a platoon of peacekeepers from Pakistan located in Preah Vihear was attacked by a Khmer Rouge unit of more than a hundred soldiers. After shelling the Pakistani position with mortars, they advanced closely while firing and shouting "UNTAC out." It was clear that the Khmer Rouge's objective was to chase UNTAC out of the country. The Pakistani peacekeepers defended themselves effectively and after two hours of exchanging fire, they forced the withdrawal of the Khmer Rouge, who left two dead behind. Two Pakistani soldiers were injured in the fighting.²⁹⁸ These were serious incidents, the UN operation in Cambodia was completely overshadowed in the international media by the escalating situation in Somalia, where twenty-four Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in an ambush by forces loyal to General Aidid, after which the Security Council responded by effectively declaring war on the Somali warlord. Compared to Somalia, the relatively quiet elections in Cambodia had provided uplifting news that seemed to announce the successful completion of the operation.

296 Sanderson, "The UNTAC Military Component," 126. This argument has been cited in: Findlay, *Cambodia*, 112; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 134; Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 86; Jeni Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 120.

297 Daily press briefing 31 May, 7.00 p.m., UNA, S-0794-0036-0004; Peter Eng, "After Peaceful Election, Khmer Rouge Step Up Attacks," *The Associated Press*, 31 May 1993.

298 Interoffice memorandum, Lt Col Li Bolin to Sanderson, 12 June 1993, Investigation report on the attack against Pakistan platoon in Phnum Tbeng (VA9001) sector 03 on 7 June 93, UNA, S-0794-0051-0003; Cable Akashi to Annan, 16 June 1993, "Post-election contingency planning," UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

The Cambodians might have voted with enthusiasm in the polling, the ideal of peace through democratisation quickly encountered the reality of the Cambodian political culture which had traditionally been characterised by an absolutist winner-takes-all mentality.²⁹⁹ As most Cambodia scholars had predicted, it became clear that the immediate aftermath of the elections was just as significant for the composition of the new government as the voting results of the UNTAC-organised elections.³⁰⁰ When preliminary returns of the count indicated that FUNCINPEC was taking the lead, Hun Sen immediately raised complaints that security seals on ballot boxes were broken and counting errors had been committed.³⁰¹ To many, it did not come as a surprise that Hun Sen refused to give up power. Prince Sihanouk understood this and made his move on 3 June – days before the official count of the votes was published – by announcing an agreement between FUNCINPEC and the CPP to form a “Provisional National Government” with himself as head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces and police. Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh would be vice-presidents and share power fifty-fifty. Neither Ranariddh nor Akashi had been consulted by Sihanouk, and both were careful to recognise the new government because the P5 were not in agreement about Sihanouk’s proposal. Although France tried to convince the other P5 members to support this power-sharing deal for the sake of stability, the United States strongly opposed the initiative out of concern that it would become a permanent solution in which Ranariddh would be denied power and control, which did not reflect the outcome of the elections.³⁰² Sihanouk, sensitive as always to US interventions, was particularly irritated by the American objection and withdrew his initiative the next day.³⁰³

The definitive election results, published on 10 June, revealed that Ranariddh’s FUNCINPEC had won with more than 45 per cent of the vote. Hun Sen’s CPP followed second with 38 per cent of the casted votes. Third came the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), the political party of the right-wing KPNLF, receiving a minor 3.8 per cent. With FUNCINPEC as the clear winner of the elections, the Khmer Rouge did not object to the results, revealing that it hoped to strike a deal with Ranariddh with whom they maintained close contacts. Whereas Ranariddh had always preached reconciliation with the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen had made it clear that he would continue his struggle against the guerrilla insurgents.³⁰⁴ Tensions were rising as the SOC now accused the UN and foreign countries of rigging the election results. Several demonstrations were held by hardliners of the CPP, demanding UNTAC to leave. In one confusing incident, occurring in the dark of night, Malaysian peacekeepers were fired upon by CPAF forces.³⁰⁵

In a dramatic acceleration of events, Prince Norodom Chakrapong, one of Sihanouk’s sons

299 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 32.

300 Doyle, *UNTAC’s Civil Mandate*, 72.

301 Akashi, “The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” 207.

302 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 469; Interview with Ambassador Charles T. Twining by Charles S. Kennedy, 26 May 2004, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress, Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib001474/>; Déclaration du porte-parole du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, le 3 juin 1993 & déclaration du porte-parole du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, le 1^{er} juin 1993, UNA, S-0704-0008-0004; Cable Levitte to Phnom Penh, 10 June 1993, “Cambodge,” ADN, 521PO/2/27.

303 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 462–65; Nate Thayer, “Bloodied Foreigners,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 June 1993, 10–11.

304 Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 39.

305 Cable Akashi to Annan, 11 June 1993, “Anti-UNTAC activity inspired by SOC,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003; Fax Lt Col Suresh Nair to Sanderson, 12 June 1993, “Investigation report on the attack on Mal Batt location at Phum Tapoung TV 9368, sector 8 on 07 June 93,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

and SOC-deputy prime minister, suddenly staged a “secession” of three populous provinces in the east together with General Sin Song, the minister of National Security. Two days later, five more provinces in eastern Cambodia joined the self-declared “autonomous zone” and Hun Sen alluded to the possibility of a violent revolt.³⁰⁶ Again, Sihanouk decided to step in by proclaiming a new Provisional National Government of Cambodia and practically renewing his previous proposal of equal power-sharing between Hun Sen and Ranariddh, with himself as head of state. Ranariddh now realised he had no other choice than to compromise with the all-powerful Hun Sen. With the provisional government installed, the secessionist movement suddenly collapsed, and Chakrapong and Sin Song fled to Vietnam.³⁰⁷ The crisis suddenly ended because Hun Sen had gained what he wanted, and now accepted the election results.³⁰⁸ This time, US ambassador Twining persuaded Washington to accept the arrangement that created two Prime Ministers, and Akashi did the same vis-à-vis UN headquarters in New York.³⁰⁹ UNTAC was a bystander of these happenings which Akashi described as “very Cambodian.” The special representative believed that “a *modus vivendi*” should be found in which the Cambodian armed forces would remain effectively in the hands of Hun Sen while the most visible posts in the new government would go to Ranariddh’s party as the winner of the elections. He felt that it was better for the UN not to get more deeply involved in Cambodia and that, ultimately, the problems of Cambodia were for Cambodians to solve. UNTAC’s priority now was to “ensure the success of a venture into which it has invested so much credit.”³¹⁰

The most immediate threat to the UN’s “success” in Cambodia remained the Khmer Rouge who still occupied a considerable part of the country, with an army of at least 10,000 active troops.³¹¹ It was therefore important that the provisional government had the military capacities to effectively defend itself against the insurgency. Sanderson also recognised this and claimed a pivotal role in the amalgamation of the factions’ forces into a new Cambodian army. Already in late January 1993, he had started negotiations with the cooperating factions’ armies about the creation of a post-election security force in order to stabilise the period after the elections and commit the factions’ armies to the new authorities.³¹² The factions – especially the bankrupt SOC – had no recourses to pay their forces, and it was not difficult to imagine what problems could arise when thousands of unpaid soldiers would refuse to report for duty. In March, Sanderson had shared his concerns about the post-election period with Gareth Evans, after which the Australian foreign minister instructed his staff to develop a new policy paper, entitled “Cambodia: Beyond the elections,” which essentially proposed that UN member states should financially and materially support the provisional government of Cambodia. Other core group countries also recognised

306 Akashi, “The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” 207.

307 Philip Shenon, “Cambodian Secession Movement Seems to End as Its Leader Flees,” *The New York Times*, 16 June 1993.

308 Communiqué of the Cambodian People’s Party, 20 June 1993, UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

309 Kenton Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1969–2000: A troubled relationship* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 164; Akashi, “An Assessment of UNTAC,” 157.

310 Cable Akashi to Annan, 16 June 1993, “Post-election contingency planning,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003; Cable Akashi to Annan, 21 June 1993, “Special Core Group Meeting Phnom Penh 17/18 June,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

311 Cable Akashi to Annan, 21 June 1993, “Special Core Group Meeting Phnom Penh 17/18 June,” UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

312 Report of 22nd Secretariat level MMWG meeting, 28 January 1993, UNA, S-0797-0004-0009.

these problems and were supportive of the idea.³¹³ The Mixed Military Working Group Secretariat, Sanderson's policy making office within the plans branch, developed the idea into a concrete operational plan in which UNTAC would take care of paying the salaries of the troops, policemen and civil servants who rallied to the provisional government, and the newly elected government when it was in place. Initially, the UN Secretary-General showed little enthusiasm for the idea as he considered it politically difficult to make payments to the armed forces of the Cambodian factions which it was actually supposed to separate and disarm.³¹⁴ Such actions went beyond the provisions of the Paris Agreements, but Boutros-Ghali seemed to ignore that circumstances had changed considerably and that UNTAC could hardly be considered an impartial peacekeeping operation anymore.

Almost immediately after the elections, Sanderson took the plan to another level. On 10 June, the force commander convened the generals of the CPAF, ANKI and KPNLAF in the Mixed Military Working Group, during which the amalgamation of their armies into the new Cambodian Armed Forces (CAF) was officialised.³¹⁵ Symbolically and politically, this was a huge development because two former factions belonging to the "resistance" now joined forces with their former enemy in Phnom Penh. Practically, however, the CAF was old wine in new bottles and came down to a small reinforcement of the CPAF that remained by far the dominant force with approximately 40,000 active soldiers, while ANKI and the KPNLAF each struggled to deliver an additional 5,000 men.³¹⁶ Sanderson took a prominent position in the construction of the new Cambodian army and Prince Sihanouk enthusiastically offered the UNTAC force commander to become the CAF's commander-in-chief. Obviously, this proposition could not be accepted, neither by Sanderson nor by the UN, as it would put UNTAC's force commander in the awkward position to lead three Cambodian parties in counterinsurgency actions against the Khmer Rouge, something he had always wanted to avoid.³¹⁷ Sihanouk's proposition nonetheless illustrated how UNTAC's role had changed, in the prince's perception.

These developments made alarm bells go off in Paris where it was felt that Sanderson was going far beyond his responsibilities.³¹⁸ The force commander's initiative was perceived by Paris as yet another example of Canberra's "activism" in Cambodia, bypassing the leadership of the UN Security Council, and as a ploy to lay the groundwork for Australian influence in the Cambodian military.³¹⁹ The French consequently decided not to wait any longer and to accelerate their own plans for setting up a bilateral Franco-Cambodian defence cooperation. French minister of Defence, François Léotard, visited Cambodia on 6 July and signed an agreement with Hun Sen and Ranariddh to provide military advice, support and training to the armed forces of the new

313 Horner and Connor, *The Good international Citizen*, 213; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 298.

314 Notes of the meeting of the Secretary-General with UNTAC Senior Staff, 8 April 1993, UNA, S-1085-0031-0003; Sanderson, "UNTAC: Successes and Failures," 28.

315 Cable Akashi to Annan, 11 June 1993, "communiqué issued by MMWG," UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

316 Cable Akashi to Annan, 21 June 1993, "Special Core Group Meeting Phnom Penh 17/18 June," UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

317 Cable Goulding to Boutros-Ghali, 16 June 1993, "Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0046-0001.

318 Cable Paris to Phnom Penh, "Cambodge: position de l'Australie sur la coopération militaire," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

319 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 20 May 1993, "Coopération militaire – Activisme Australien," ADN, 10POI/1 1312; Cable French Ambassador Canberra to Paris, 22 July 1993, "Relations franco-australiennes au Cambodge," ADN, 10POI/1 1312.

government.³²⁰ The Khmer Rouge understood the game for future influence that was being played and publicly accused France and Australia of trying to seize control of the Cambodian army.³²¹

The role Sanderson claimed in the construction of the new Cambodian army indeed went far beyond the Paris Agreements. It also further compromised what was left of UNTAC's impartial peacekeeping role. By halfway through June, the core group officially reached agreement that the UN should pay all Cambodian soldiers, policemen and civil servants of the three factions who swore allegiance to the new Cambodian authorities. It was acknowledged that this would help UNTAC in developing some leverage vis-à-vis the Cambodian factions to enforce respect for the election results and loyalty to the provisional government.³²² The core group defended the decision by emphasising that UNTAC had a "uniquely broad mandate" that provided it with the possibility to take this action.³²³ It nonetheless took some time before the necessary 20 million dollars were found to fund the programme, especially because the UN Secretariat was reluctant to request the UN member states to make an additional contribution to an operation that was nearing its end and had already cost so much. Eventually, the solution was found in a trust fund with voluntary contributions by interested member states.³²⁴

UNTAC took an ambiguous position in the negotiations between the provisional government and the Khmer Rouge. Prince Ranariddh felt that it would be better to have the Khmer Rouge inside a new government of national reconciliation than hostile in the jungle, which would also compensate for his lack of military and administrative power vis-à-vis Hun Sen.³²⁵ On 1 July, after ten weeks of isolation, two Khmer Rouge envoys, Chan Youran and Mak Ben, were sent to Phnom Penh to discuss with Sihanouk the possibility of an advisory role in the new government and joining the new Cambodian army. UNTAC intervened in the negotiations and determined a set of conditions for the Khmer Rouge to join the new Cambodian government and army. These included the opening up of the Khmer Rouge zones for UN military observers, a pledge of allegiance to the new coalition government and a commitment to the constitutional process. The Khmer Rouge did not accept these terms and the talks failed to lead to an agreement.³²⁶ Among the P5 there was little appetite to support a solution that gave the Khmer Rouge a role in the new government. The implicit objective of the Paris Peace Agreement, excluding the Khmer Rouge from a future Cambodian government, had been achieved, albeit not through the electoral process as had been intended. Visiting Cambodia on 6 July, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, declared that the United States would "find it very difficult to be supportive of a government that included the Khmer Rouge." This put extra pressure on Sihanouk who knew

320 Accord entre le gouvernement de la République Française et le Gouvernement Provisoire du Cambodge relatif à la coopération technique dans le domaine de la Défense, 6 July 1993, UNA, S-0794-0008-0004.

321 "Khmer Rouge accuses West of attempts to control Cambodian army," *AFP*, 6 July 1993.

322 Cable Levitte to French PR New York, 13 June 1993, "Cambodge: confirmation de la réunion des « cinq plus », ADN, 521PO/2/27.

323 Fax Australian Ambassador Phnom Penh to Akashi, 19 June 1993, "Political Elements for a Draft Letter from Cambodia Core Group Countries to UNSG," UNA, S-0794-0051-0003.

324 Letter dated 14 July 1993 from the Secretary-General to the United Nations Security Council, S/26095; Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 301; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 19 June 1993, "réunion à haut niveau des cinq plus – Phnom Penh 17–18 juin 1993," ADN, 521PO/2/27.

325 Michael Leifer, "The Khmer Rouge Have a Hard Foot in the Door," *International Herald Tribune*, 23 July 1993.

326 Sheri Prasso, "U.N. outlines conditions for Khmer Rouge reintegration," *AFP*, 1 July 1993; Sheri Prasso, "Khmer Rouge envoys visit Phnom Penh, new government approved," *AFP*, 1 July 1993;

that his country was in desperate need for American reconstruction aid.³²⁷ The prince publicly cautioned against making a deal with the Khmer Rouge: "We already tried their fruit. It was sweet, but it was also poisonous."³²⁸

Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge continued to fight while talking to make it clear that they could not simply be ignored.³²⁹ On 7 July, Khmer Rouge forces under command of general Ta Mok attacked and conquered the historic twelfth-century temples of Preah Vihear at the Thai-Cambodian border.³³⁰ Although of little military significance, the seizure was highly symbolic and a clear provocation.³³¹ Sihanouk stated furiously that if the Khmer Rouge would not give back the temples and maintain their autonomous zone, he would officially declare them outlaws.³³² UNTAC pretended to play the role of a passive bystander, hinting that its peacekeeping role was over. "This is a problem for the provisional government of Cambodia and the Cambodian armed forces . . . they're responsible for the security of Cambodia," Sanderson declared to journalists.³³³ In reality, however, UNTAC actively supported the provisional government. After the donor countries had settled the budgetary question, the Cambodian Armed Forces were officially established on 15 July. Shortly afterwards, UNTAC launched "Operation Paymaster" to pay the soldiers who had sworn allegiance to the provisional government. It was a complex enterprise, in which heavy bags with billions of banknotes were distributed by helicopters across the country. Peacekeepers took care of the security, transportation and allocation of the salaries to the Cambodian soldiers.³³⁴ UNTAC also handed back the 50,000 confiscated weapons to the newly formed Cambodian army which, painfully enough, also included 800 landmines.³³⁵

On 13 July, Khieu Samphan returned to Phnom Penh with the message that he would open the Khmer Rouge-controlled zones if they were given an advisory role in the new government and a place in the new Cambodian army. But the provisional government did not respond to the proposal. Prince Sihanouk left the country for two months to undergo medical treatment in North Korea and China, which meant that the negotiations between the government and the Khmer Rouge would only continue after UNTAC's departure from Cambodia.³³⁶ In the meantime, the Khmer Rouge continued to murder Vietnamese-Cambodians and engage UNTAC units. River patrol boats of the Philippine Marine detachment in Kratie province were riddled

327 Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia*, 164; Interoffice memorandum Ataul Karim to Behrooz Sadry, "Visit of Mr. Khieu Samphan to Phnom Penh on 13 July, 1993," UNA, S-0797-0002-0001; "Hard to back Cambodia if Khmer Rouge in government: US ambassador," *AFP*, 5 July 1993.

328 Ker Munthit, "Beware Their Sweet Fruit," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 2 July 1993.

329 Janet Snyder, "Sihanouk drops Khmer Rouge role under US threat," *Reuters*, 20 July 1993; "Khmer Rouge talk peace while fighting," *Bangkok Post*, 17 August 1993; Philip Shenon, "Khmer Rouge Violence Said to Signal Goal," *The New York Times*, 4 August 1993;

330 "Khmer Rouge guerrillas capture Cambodian temple," *Reuters*, 7 July 1993.

331 Prince Sihanouk had a personal attachment to the temple as it was occupied by Thailand in the late 1950s, but won back by Cambodia three years later when the prince took Thailand to International Court of Justice in The Hague. Sihanouk considered the case as one of his landmark achievements.

332 Kevin Barrington, "Force may be necessary to deal with the Khmer Rouge: Sihanouk," *AFP*, 8 July 1993.

333 Mark Dodd, "U.N. says it can't intervene in temple seizure," *Reuters*, 9 July 1993.

334 John C. Brown, "Army Pay-off Gets Underway," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 13 August 1993.

335 "U.N. hands back cantoned weapons," *AFP*, 22 July 1993; Letter Jason Bleibtreu to Akashi, 2 August 1993, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Meeting Akashi with the EP-5, 27 August 1993, UNA, S-0794-0052-0003.

336 Rodney Tasker and Nate Thayer, "Back in the Fold: Khmer Rouge offers to join national army," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 July 1993.

with bullets by the Khmer Rouge though its crew miraculously escaped without getting hit.³³⁷ On 1 August, an UNTAC border checkpoint called “CT-1” in Preah Vihear province was first shelled and then attacked by at least a hundred Khmer Rouge fighters. The thirteen peacekeepers from Pakistan manning the post did not defend themselves, and were captured and detained by the Khmer Rouge, before being handed over to the Thai authorities.³³⁸ A day later, the Khmer Rouge attacked a passenger train travelling from Sihanoukville to Phnom Penh. The train was derailed by a mine near Kampot and engaged with machine guns and rockets. French peacekeepers who arrived at the scene shortly after the attack discovered that at least ten Cambodian passengers had been killed and thirty-five were injured. The Khmer Rouge staged a similar attack two weeks later, in which two more Cambodians were killed.³³⁹ It was clear, indeed, that the Khmer Rouge could not be ignored.

Operation Paymaster, as well as the import of military supplies from abroad – despite the fact that the Paris Agreement prohibited this – made it possible for the armed forces of the provisional government to strike back at the Khmer Rouge. On 8 August, the CAF launched a large offensive, marking a very symbolic change, because it was the first time that the non-communist resistance forces fought together with those of the State of Cambodia. While Hun Sen’s forces pushed back the Khmer Rouge in Kompong Thom province, ANKI and KPNLAF troops spearheaded the offensive in north-west Cambodia. After pounding the Khmer Rouge positions with artillery for two days, they captured an important Khmer Rouge base at Phum Chhat, close to the Thai border. It was an important tactical success, and a total of 970 Khmer Rouge fighters and six generals surrendered.³⁴⁰ In Bangkok, Khieu Samphan called for urgent talks with Phnom Penh to stop what he defined as a “Vietnamese-led campaign against the Khmer Rouge, supported by UN forces.”³⁴¹ Although UNTAC did not actively support the offensive, Sanderson described the actions as falling under the provisional government’s “legitimate self-defence.” After all, he said to a journalist, it was the Khmer Rouge who had started the attacks on the UNTAC border checkpoint, conquered the Preah Vihear temples and posed a constant threat to the temples of Angkor Wat. As long as the Khmer Rouge continued to conduct what Sanderson described as “actions that were contrary to the Paris Agreements,” he believed that the provisional government had to deal with the Khmer Rouge “from a position of strength.”³⁴²

But the CAF-offensive was only a temporary tactical success, and the far from beaten

337 Interoffice memorandum Strategic Investigation Team to Force Commander, 20 August, “NADK murder, hostage taking and ransom of Vietnamese villagers at Chhnok Tru,” Kampon Chhnang, UNA, S-1854-0072-0003; Interoffice memorandum Strategic Investigation Team to Force Commander, 14 August 1993, “Killing of Vietnamese at Peam Chhkaok,” UNA, S-1854-0072-0003; Incidents in Cambodia, UNTAC Personnel Detained, UNA, S-0794-0046-0001.

338 Report for FC on the NADK attack on CT-1, 1 August 93, UNA, S-0794-0021-0001; Incidents in Cambodia, UNTAC Personnel Detained, UNA, S-0794-0046-0001; SSUNMO’s comments on the report on NADK’s attack on CT-1 on 01 August 1993, UNA, S-1854-0066-0002; Philip Shenon, “Khmer Rouge Violence Said to Signal Goal,” *The New York Times*, 4 August 1993.

339 Incidents in Cambodia, UNTAC Personnel Detained, UNA, S-0794-0046-0001.

340 Ker Munthit and Chris Burslem, “Army Poised to ‘Sweep’ KR,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 10 September 1993; William Branigin, “Former Foes Unite to Attack Khmer Rouge,” *The Washington Post*, 20 August 1993; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 482; Kevin Barrington, “Offensive over: Khmer Rouge positions captured,” *AFP*, 20 August 1993; William Branigin, “Cambodian Army Seizes Key Khmer Rouge Base,” *The Washington Post*, 21 August 1993.

341 Rodney Tasker “First Blood: Khmer Rouge backs off from government attacks,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 September 1993.

342 David Brunnstrom, “Khmer Rouge much weaker, U.N. general says,” *Reuters*, 26 August 1993; “Interview with Gen. Sanderson,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 24 September 1993.

Khmer Rouge showed no mercy to their former allies who were trapped inside the Sok San enclave where the company of Dutch marines had folded its tents on 15 July. The provisional government requested Bangkok to help with the evacuation of the 963 KPNLAF soldiers and their families, but the Thai government did not want to cooperate.³⁴³ UNTAC's support for the provisional government had its limits, as it was careful to become directly involved in the conflict itself. The UNTAC leadership had no appetite either to put its forces at risk in the last weeks of the operation by sending them on a helicopter-borne rescue operation. They played the neutrality card and declared that UNTAC was officially not allowed to use its helicopters to transport any Cambodian military personnel, despite the fact that it had previously done so. As a consequence, the KPNLAF soldiers had no other option than to attempt to escape the encirclement and try to reach the government-controlled area on foot through hostile territory. Forty of them got intercepted by the Khmer Rouge and were massacred.³⁴⁴

On 24 September, the Cambodian Constituent Assembly proclaimed a new constitution. The assembly decided to make Cambodia a constitutional monarchy in which Prince Sihanouk became a king who would reign but not rule. Despite the new packaging, it was basically the continuation of the provisional government: Ranariddh was appointed first prime minister and Hun Sen second prime minister, with both receiving the same powers. The ministerial posts were equally divided, with the important interior and defence ministries receiving co-ministers from both parties. This surprising construction was highly original, but in reality, Hun Sen continued to control the military, the police and the bureaucracy, while Ranariddh's power existed mostly on paper.³⁴⁵

The promulgation of the new constitution meant the end of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, and Akashi and Sanderson left the country in the two following days. In his final days as force commander, and already looking back on a satisfactory mission, Sanderson emphasised that the success of UNTAC was especially linked to the respect for the sharp distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. In his farewell message to the UNTAC military component, Sanderson wrote that the successful conclusion of the most ambitious peacekeeping mission ever was a historic moment for Cambodia and for the UN. There was no doubt, he declared, that "UNTAC has been a success in the face of enormous difficulties and frequent predictions of failure." The force commander added that he took great satisfaction from the idea that in achieving this result, UNTAC had "maintained the peacekeeping ethos throughout [the entire] mission."³⁴⁶ On the eve of his departure from Cambodia, Sanderson stated to a journalist from *The Phnom Penh Post* that UNTAC remained a peacekeeping operation right until the end, and that this had been absolutely essential for its success. "If we had moved to peace enforcement, then we wouldn't have had an election," the force commander stated.³⁴⁷ However, behind these assertions hid the reality that the elections would not have been possible without outsourcing enforcement tasks to the CPAF. Publicly, however, Sanderson remained very reluctant to give credit to the role of Hun Sen's army, but during his farewell speech at the airfield of Phnom

343 "Thais reject request for Cambodian troops passage," *Reuters*, 23 September 1993.

344 Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 482. Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja*, 283.

345 Strangio, *Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Hun Sen*, 63.

346 Force commander's order of the day completion of the UNTAC mandate, UNA, S-1854-0024-0001.

347 "Interview with Gen. Sanderson," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 24 September 1993.

Penh on 25 September, the force commander did not omit to “congratulate” the CPAF generals Ke Kim Yan, Tea Banh and Meas Sophea for their cooperation with UNTAC in guaranteeing the security of the elections.³⁴⁸

Akashi left Cambodia on a less triumphalist note. Speaking to the press corps at the Foreign Correspondents’ club in Phnom Penh on 13 September, Akashi stated that he did not think that UNTAC had been an unqualified success. When questioned by a reporter why he had decided not to move blue helmets into the zones of the Khmer Rouge, Akashi replied that he had “neither the mandate, nor the equipment, nor the kind of troops which would have incurred 300 lives,” and immediately reprimanded the questioner as a follower of French Brigadier General Michel Loridon. Losing 300 blue helmets, he added, was “more sacrifice than we can bear”.³⁴⁹ The completely hypothetical number of casualties Loridon had mentioned in his interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Loridon actually said 200) had clearly become the symbol of the price, which was considered unreasonably high, for alternative courses of action. UNTAC eventually suffered eighty-two fatalities, civilian and military personnel. Twenty of them were killed as a direct result of hostile actions, all of which occurred in the year 1993, especially in the three months around the elections, when the tensions with the Khmer Rouge escalated. Apparently, for the UN and its member states, this was not an unreasonable price for achieving the elections, which was only one part of UNTAC’s objectives in Cambodia. Publicly, Akashi declared that, however satisfied with the end state of the operation, he regretted to leave the problem of a Khmer Rouge insurgency to the new Cambodian government.³⁵⁰ Away from the cameras and microphones, the special representative admitted that UNTAC’s peacekeeping mandate, falling under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, had prevented him from fully achieving his mission. Before boarding his airplane, Akashi confided to US ambassador Twining that he believed that UNTAC should actually have been a Chapter VII operation.³⁵¹ This statement was in line with what he told a visiting delegation of British members of parliament, with whom he shared his view that “a somewhat broader mandate with ‘teeth’ would have provided ‘greater flexibility’ over the question of entering the Khmer Rouge’s zone.” Though the special representative again used UNTAC’s mandate as an excuse, he also admitted to the British MPs that UNTAC had actually been venturing into “chapter six-and-a-half” or even “six-and-three-quarters” in fulfilling its mission.³⁵²

Akashi publicly elaborated on this when, two months after his departure from Cambodia, he gave a guest lecture at Columbia University in New York about his experience in Cambodia. He explained to his audience that at the beginning of the operation, UNTAC interpreted its right to use force in self-defence in “the most strict sense,” which according to Akashi resulted “in a somewhat passive attitude vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge.” This narrow interpretation, however, evolved towards

348 “U.N. force commander leaves Cambodia,” *AFP*, 25 September 1993; Mark Dodd, “Senior Cambodian peacekeepers depart,” *Reuters*, 26 September 1993.

349 Sheridan Prasso, “UNTAC chief declares mission a ‘qualified success,’” *AFP*, 13 September 1993.

350 Sheila McNulty, “UN Mission Chief Ends Job With Regrets About Khmer Rouge,” *The Associated Press*, 26 September 1993; Sheila McNulty, “Largest U.N. Peacekeeping Mission Ends After Transforming Cambodia,” *The Associated Press*, 29 September 1993.

351 Twining personally believed that this was UNTAC’s main weakness, and argued that the UN Security Council had made UNTAC a Chapter VI operation in order not to scare off potential troop contributors. Interview with Ambassador Charles T. Twining by Charles S. Kennedy, 26 May 2004.

352 Cable Akashi to Annan, 2 March 1993, “visit by British MPs,” UNA, S-0794-0050-0001.

a broader one when the Khmer Rouge became a serious impediment to the accomplishment of its mission.³⁵³ In a later paper by Akashi, he more explicitly made the point that “the UNTAC military leadership” – meaning Sanderson – “did not initially have a clear understanding of the degree to which the use of force was permitted under the rules of engagement,” and that this mindset only changed after UN headquarters clarified the broad possibilities of interpretation for legitimate self-defence.³⁵⁴ It is possible that the message Goulding sent in January 1993 to all heads of missions might have given some extra incentive to interpret the notion of self-defence more liberally, but the decision to press on with the elections while the Khmer Rouge did not remain passive as had been hoped, automatically implied that UNTAC would have to use force in defence of the mission.

Sanderson later acknowledged that it was “in the light of changed circumstances” that the notion of self-defence “was extended to the use of minimum force and proportionate response in defence of the electoral process.”³⁵⁵ But the central point in his post-UNTAC publications remains that the key to UNTAC’s success was the strict adherence to the peacekeeping principles and preventing the operation to dabble into enforcement. Scholars have generally endorsed this position by arguing that the force commander made the right decision to adhere to the traditional peacekeeping approach, with Trevor Findlay’s influential 1995 SIPRI report about the Cambodian peace operation leading the way.³⁵⁶ However, the argument that UNTAC maintained its impartiality and did not use military force to impose its mandate is difficult to maintain when taking into consideration that UNTAC outsourced the active use of force to the CPAF during the elections, and thereafter supported the provisional government’s counterinsurgency operation against the continuing threat of the Khmer Rouge. UNTAC was about much more than implementing a peace agreement in Cambodia. It was about demonstrating the potential of multidimensional UN peacekeeping as an instrument for post-Cold War conflict resolution. In defence of this mission, the end justified the means. Paradoxically, the very principles of UN peacekeeping were violated in protecting the reputation and future of UN peacekeeping, and more broadly, the United Nations Organization itself.

After UNTAC: virtual peace and democracy

UNTAC’s presence in Cambodia laid the groundwork for a pluralistic political culture. The elections, in which twenty political parties participated, brought the notion of democracy to a population that had been largely unfamiliar with it. Thirty newspapers were founded, four human rights associations took office and many other NGOs were active in Cambodia after UNTAC. The successful repatriation of 372,000 Cambodian refugees living in refugee camps in Thailand was also a great humanitarian achievement. But UNTAC’s failure to disarm and demobilise the factions’ armies had a lasting impact on Cambodian society. After UNTAC’s departure from

353 Akashi, “The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia,” 214. This article is based on the lecture given at the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University on 29 November 1993.

354 Akashi, “An assessment of the UNTAC,” 163.

355 Sanderson, “Dabbling into War,” 157.

356 Findlay, *Cambodia*, 129; Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 174; Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 157; Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 104; Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 102, 105; Berdal and Leifer, “Cambodia,” 25; Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 136.

Cambodia, the country was not the peaceful democracy the Paris Agreements had envisioned. The Khmer Rouge were still in control of some 20 per cent of Cambodian territory, maintaining an army of 10,000 active fighters and their lucrative trade in logs and gemstones at the Thai border continuing unchecked. In April 1994, the Khmer Rouge and the new Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) were involved in the heaviest fighting the country had seen since the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989. Negotiations with the Khmer Rouge conducted by Prince Sihanouk failed to lead to an agreement or a cease-fire, and the government decided instead to officially declare the Khmer Rouge outlaws in July. The Khmer Rouge responded with a campaign of violence and the formation of a “government of national unity” in Preah Vihear province.³⁵⁷

The quasi-democratic power-sharing construction between Ranariddh and Hun Sen was uneasy and unstable from the start. It was a marriage of convenience, maintained by FUNCINPEC because it had no choice and maintained by the CPP as a necessity for international recognition and to keep foreign aid flowing in. The donor community pragmatically accepted the mirage of reforms, although violations of human rights were commonplace and a free press was more fiction than reality.³⁵⁸ Though Ranariddh had won the elections and held the title of first prime minister, it was Hun Sen who maintained the real power. Ranariddh grew increasingly frustrated with being constantly outmanoeuvred by Hun Sen, being treated as a “puppet,” and in March 1996 openly threatened to leave the coalition if his party would not be given more power.³⁵⁹

Tensions were temporarily interrupted in August 1996 when Hun Sen suddenly announced that Ieng Sary, known as Brother Number Three and deputy prime minister of the Pol Pot regime, defected to the government. Hun Sen, who had always pushed for outlawing the Khmer Rouge, had made a spectacular turnabout by cordially receiving and pardoning the secretive Khmer Rouge figurehead, while claiming the credits for the surrender of some 2,000 Khmer Rouge fighters who benefitted from a government amnesty programme.³⁶⁰ This major success triggered further competition between the co-prime ministers to win the remaining Khmer Rouge leaders into their camp. To strengthen his position vis-à-vis Hun Sen, Ranariddh secretly negotiated with Khieu Samphan in Paris and the remote Khmer Rouge stronghold in Preah Vihear about joining his newly formed anti-CPP coalition, the National United Front (NUF). As Khieu Samphan and Ranariddh were close to making a deal, the Khmer Rouge movement imploded further. On 9 June 1997, Pol Pot ordered the murder of his defence minister Son Sen, along with his wife and twelve other people. The massacre led to an internal rebellion, led by General Ta Mok. Pol Pot was captured and sentenced to life imprisonment after a bizarre show trial in the jungle.

But Pol Pot’s capture did not stop the tensions between the two prime ministers in the protracted run-up to the 1998 general elections. Both Ranariddh and Hun Sen reinforced their personal bodyguard battalions and armed clashes soon broke out. Seeing his position threatened by Ranariddh’s increasing combativeness, arms importations, and ostensibly successful negotiations with the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen took decisive action. On 5 and 6 July 1997, his

357 Cable Widyono to Goulding, 8 May 1994, “Weekly report No 3 for the week of May 2–8 1994,” UNA, S-1829-0273-0005; Widyono, *Dancing in shadows*, 149; The RCAF, led by 2,000 generals and 10,000 colonels, was plagued by corruption and incompetence and could not prevent the Khmer Rouge forces making impressive military gains.

358 Julio A. Jeldres, “Cambodia’s Fading Hopes,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no.1 (1996): 154; Strangio, *Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Hun Sen*, 220.

359 Sorpong Peou, “Hun Sen’s pre-emptive coup: Causes and Consequences,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1998), 87.

360 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia confounds the peacemakers*, 255–56; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 232–36.

army unleashed an offensive with tanks and APCs on strategic positions in Phnom Penh. After thirty-six hours of fierce fighting, Hun Sen's forces took the FUNCINPEC headquarters. None of Cambodia's leaders were in the country when the fighting occurred. Ranariddh had fled to France the day before. King Sihanouk was in Beijing for medical treatment and therefore unable to call both parties to order. Hun Sen returned from "vacation" in Vietnam and "took control" of the situation, arguing that his forces had only taken pre-emptive action against Ranariddh's provocations and colluding with the Khmer Rouge. The head of Ranariddh's army, together with many of his troops, was summarily executed, while remaining forces retreated to the Thai border where they succeeded to defend their last stronghold of O Smach with support from Khmer Rouge forces. FUNCINPEC officials fled Phnom Penh and abandoned their seats in parliament and positions in government. With Hun Sen in power in Phnom Penh and the royalists and the Khmer Rouge pushed into the north-eastern jungles, Cambodia seemed to be back to where it had been in the 1980s.³⁶¹ Although there was disagreement among observers whether Hun Sen's intervention should be described as a coup d'état, the consequence was that FUNCINPEC was completely crushed, split into five different factions, and most of its members became refugees or went into hiding. Hun Sen emerged as the strongman who consolidated his power and purged the government bureaucracy. He effectively removed any political opposition and silenced the pro-opposition media for the year leading to the elections.³⁶²

Ranariddh protested in foreign capitals and at the United Nations against Hun Sen's coup, comparing it to Pol Pot's takeover in 1975, but nobody really took the prince seriously. The UN declared Cambodia's seat at the General Assembly vacant and ASEAN postponed the admission of Cambodia into the regional organisation. Although key donor countries did freeze a large part of their aid programmes, which constituted half of Cambodia's annual government budget, they refrained from officially condemning Hun Sen's actions as a coup d'état, acknowledging that both sides had clearly been guilty of building up their military forces and courting the Khmer Rouge.³⁶³ Mediation by Japan made Hun Sen agree to a plan that allowed Ranariddh to return to Cambodia and take part in the elections. Hun Sen understood that Ranariddh's participation was necessary to uphold the international credibility of the poll. This was important because Cambodia's state finances, at this stage, still depended for more than half of its total budget on Western aid. As Ranariddh returned to Cambodia, the prince was put on a show trial, convicted for raising armed forces against the government and colluding with the Khmer Rouge. Following the Japanese plan, his sentence of thirty years in prison was reversed after receiving a royal pardon from his king father, just in time to allow him to participate in the elections.³⁶⁴

Although the electoral process of the elections on 26 July 1998 was clearly flawed, with the opposition silenced and the CPP in full control of the electoral machinery, the polling itself was calmer than in 1993, which was the only reference available. Again it was the massive voter turnout of 93.74 per cent of the registered electorate that revitalised hopes for the Cambodian

361 Peou, "Hun Sen's pre-emptive coup," 94–96.

362 Sue Downie, "Cambodia's 1998 Election: Understanding Why it Was Not a 'Miracle on the Mekong,'" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1 (2000): 48; Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia confounds the peacemakers*, 249, 263.

363 Chanborey Cheunboran, *Cambodia's China Strategy: Security Dilemmas of Embracing the Dragon* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 70; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 261.

364 Sorpong Peou, "Cambodia in 1998, from despair to hope?," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (January/February 1999): 21; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 262.

democracy. The CPP came out first with 41.4 per cent of the vote, FUNCINPEC second with 31.7 per cent, thus reversing the result of the 1993 election. Breakaway FUNCINPEC member Sam Rainsy's party received a surprising 14.4 per cent, especially from the educated urban youth. Hun Sen received most votes in the countryside where the CPP was in control of practically every village and where stability-longing Cambodians were almost completely secluded from political debate.³⁶⁵ Although international observers judged the July 1998 election itself to credibly reflect the will of the Cambodian people, it was nothing like a free and fair exercise, with a pre-election period filled with assassinations, intimidation and manipulation.³⁶⁶ Keen however to prevent a relapse into civil war, and conscious that Hun Sen was vital for the stability of the country, foreign governments and observers approved of the elections that provided a way out of Cambodia's cycle of political instability.³⁶⁷ As the CPP had not obtained enough seats for a majority in parliament, a second coalition between the CPP and FUNCINPEC was established, this time with Hun Sen as the only prime minister. Ranariddh contended himself with the lucrative position of president of the National Assembly, as he had lost the power struggle against his rival.³⁶⁸ Cambodians and international observers began to question what was left of the UN's self-declared "success" of 1993. Scholars became more inclined to acknowledge that UNTAC had only succeeded in establishing a "virtual peace" in Cambodia and that the ideal of a liberal peace had clearly failed.³⁶⁹

The elections occurred shortly after Pol Pot died of a heart attack in April 1998, which caused the final disintegration of the Khmer Rouge. Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea (Brother Number Two) accepted Hun Sen's amnesty offer and defected to the government in December of the same year. A few months later, the government troops overran Anlong Veng and captured General Ta Mok and Comrade Duch, the former chief of the notorious S-21 Tuol Sleng torture prison from which only twelve out of 20,000 detainees survived. With all of the remaining Khmer Rouge leadership in government hands, the United Nations called for an international trial, but Hun Sen only accepted a Cambodian court as he wanted to retain control over potential prosecutions. Hun Sen, as well as other key members of the CPP, had been former Khmer Rouge commanders themselves and probably feared to be persecuted themselves. After years of negotiations between the Cambodian government and the United Nations, a mixed tribunal, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), comprised of both international and Cambodian judges and lawyers, was opened in 2006. Eventually, only three members of the Khmer Rouge regime were convicted by the ECCC in the thirteen years of its existence. Comrade Duch was the first defendant to be convicted in 2010, and the only Khmer Rouge leader to admit

365 Brinkley, *Cambodia's Curse*, 142; Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 267.

366 Downie, "Cambodia's 1998 Election," 49–52.

367 International Crisis Group, *Cambodia's Flawed Elections: Why Cambodia will not be Ready for Free and Fair Elections on 26 July 1998*, ICG Report No2, 16 June 1998; International Crisis Group, "Cambodia's Elections Turn Sour Cambodia Report," 10 September 1998.

368 Widyono, *Dancing in Shadows*, 262.

369 Kao Kim Hourn, "Background paper" in *The Nexus between Peacekeeping and Peace-building debriefing and lessons, report of the 1999 Singapore Conference*, eds. Nassrine Azimi and Chang Li Lin (London: Kluwer Law International, 2000), 159; Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, "Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia," *Security Dialogue*, 38, no.1 (March 2007); Paris, "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism," 65; Roland Paris, "Peacekeeping and the Constraints of Global Culture," *European Journal of international Relations* 9, no. 3 (2003), 455; Sorpong Peou, "The UN's modest impact on Cambodia's democracy," in *The UN Role in Promoting Democracy – Between Ideals and Reality*, eds. Edward Newman and Roland Rich (Tokyo: United Nations University Press 2004); Sorpong Peou, "Cambodia in 1997: Back to Square One?," *Asian Survey* 38, no.1 (January 1998).

his guilt and ask for forgiveness.³⁷⁰ Nuon Chea (Brother Number Two) was given a life sentence in 2014, but died in prison five years later. Ieng Sary died during his trial in 2013 and his wife, Ieng Thirith, a former minister for social affairs with senile dementia, was declared unfit to stand trial and was released in 2012. On 22 September 2022, in its final decision before dissolution, the court rejected the appeal of 91-year-old Khieu Samphan, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for genocide and crimes against humanity.³⁷¹

The fact that the West had been able to use its leverage of aid-packages to force Ranariddh's return after his ousting in the 5-6 July 1997 coup, made Hun Sen realise that he needed financial and diplomatic support from China. The Cambodian prime minister pleased Beijing by closing Taiwan's trade office in Phnom Penh, after accusing Ranariddh – who maintained close ties to Taiwanese businesses – of receiving Taiwanese financial support for his military build-up. Beijing quickly delivered a \$2.8 million shipment of military materiel to Hun Sen's security forces and provided a \$10 million loan to compensate for the suspended aid flows from Western countries after the coup.³⁷² Developing a close relationship with China also allowed Hun Sen to distance himself from Hanoi, and undo himself of the image of being the man who thanked his position to the Vietnamese.

In the elections of the following two decades, the CPP maintained its parliamentary majority but millions of Cambodians voted for the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), a new unified opposition party led by Sam Rainsy. In the run-up to the elections of 2018, Hun Sen's government launched a crackdown in which politicians and members of the opposition were attacked and arrested. Sam Rainsy was forced into exile overseas and banned from political activity. Kem Sokha, who replaced Rainsy as CNRP president, was also arrested and charged with conspiring with foreign governments against the CPP. Protestations from the West were having no impact. With Beijing's backing, Hun Sen did not need to please the West anymore through upholding the appearance of democracy. Discourses about human rights, threats of sanctions and Western support for the Cambodian opposition only pushed Hun Sen closer to Beijing.³⁷³ It was a historic turn. Whereas in 1988 Hun Sen had described China as "the root of all that was evil in Cambodia," the prime minister now repeatedly declared that China was Cambodia's "most trustworthy friend."³⁷⁴

Cambodia has much to offer in exchange for Chinese aid, investments and political support. First, China has privileged access to Cambodia's natural resources. The Thai logging and mining companies of the 1990s have now largely been replaced by Chinese.³⁷⁵ More important, however, is the fact that Phnom Penh has become an important geostrategic partner for Beijing. Since Cambodia joined ASEAN in 1999, it has increasingly defended China with regard to the

370 Strangio, *Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Hun Sen*, 240–43.

371 Adrien Le Gal, "Au Cambodge, bilan mitigé pour le tribunal chargé de juger les dirigeants des Khmers rouges," *Le Monde*, 9 October 2022.

372 Cheunboran, *Cambodia's China Strategy*, 63.

373 Sebastian Strangio, *In the Dragon's Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020) 92, 102.

374 Cheunboran, *Cambodia's China Strategy*, 2.

375 Daniel C. O'Neill, "Who Wins in China's 'Win-Win' Relations with Cambodia," in *The Deer and the Dragon: Southeast Asia and China in the 21st Century*, ed. Donald K. Emmerson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 249; Cheunboran, *Cambodia's China Strategy*, 194.

territorial disputes in the South China Sea, using its veto power to block any joint statement by the regional organisation against China's illegal island-building activities.³⁷⁶ China is currently building military facilities at the strategically located Ream Naval Base near Sihanoukville, which will become Beijing's second overseas outpost capable of hosting large naval vessels (after Djibouti). The demolition of US-funded facilities on Ream Naval Base and the relocation of a Vietnamese friendship monument off the site are symbolic for the centrality of Cambodia in the struggle for strategic influence in the Indo-Pacific region.³⁷⁷

In the past years, Hun Sen has been making his final reckoning with the international intervention in his country's affairs, which started with UNTAC.³⁷⁸ He has publicly glossed over UNTAC's heritage, claiming that peace only came to Cambodia when the Khmer Rouge imploded as a result of his "win-win policy" in the late 1990s in which he offered Khmer Rouge figureheads and soldiers amnesty. He explicitly warned foreign historians not to exclusively focus on UNTAC, but also study his actions in the second half of the 1990s.³⁷⁹ Although not entirely agreeing with Hun Sen's fierce criticism on UNTAC, Akashi has given the Cambodian prime minister the credit he claimed when the former UNTAC-chief wrote in 2012: "One has to pay tribute to Mr Hun Sen, the Prime Minister, for having achieved the final demise of the Khmer Rouge."³⁸⁰ It is true that the amnesty policy constituted a very effective strategy to bring the Khmer Rouge insurgency to its knees. And indeed, peace and stability only really returned to Cambodia in 1998, after the Khmer Rouge movement disintegrated and the power struggle between Hun Sen and Ranariddh came to an end. Since then, Cambodian democracy, however, has only existed in name.

376 Strangio, *In the Dragon's Shadow*, 91.

377 Ellen Nakashima and Cate Cadell, "China secretly building naval facility in Cambodia, Western officials say," *The Washington Post*, 6 June 2022; Jack Detsch, "U.S. Looks to Check Chinese Advances at Cambodian Naval Base," *Foreign Policy*, 5 December 2022.

378 Strangio, *In the Dragon's Shadow*, 93.

379 Leonie Kijewski, "Hun Sen says he, not Untac, brought peace to Cambodia in 90s," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 5 January 2018; "Hun Sen: Peace brought by Khmers, not 'foreign hands,'" *The Phnom Penh Post*, 26 March 2018; Brice Pedroletti, "Au Cambodge, l'anniversaire des accords de Paris donne lieu à des interprétations divergentes," *Le Monde*, 25 October 2021; Ry Sochan, "Hun Sen blasts analysts for UNTAC-era nostalgia," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 8 November 2021.

380 Akashi, "An assessment of the UNTAC," 154.

Conclusion

The final outcome of UNTAC seemed almost magical, particularly when compared to the news that was coming from other parts of the world where UN peacekeeping operations were already derailing. In early June 1993, just a few days after the world had been pleasantly surprised by the successful elections in Cambodia, twenty-four Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in Somalia, which instigated a Security Council-condoned hunt for warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. In early October 1993, when the new Cambodian government was installed and the last blue helmets were leaving Cambodia, UNOSOM II turned into a catastrophe when eighteen US soldiers and hundreds of Somali fighters and civilians were killed in firefights in the streets of Mogadishu. Without doubt, this stark contrast has had a strong influence on the generally positive verdict on the UN operation in Cambodia. In the following years, the atrocities committed under UN eyes in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia further contributed to making Cambodia stand out as a mission where the UN had obtained results, instead of being humiliated. Rare were the observers who contested the UN's triumphant self-congratulatory statements and endorsed the plain but sharp observation of *AFP's* Cambodia correspondent Sheridan Prasso: "There is a reason why the U.N. operation in Cambodia looks so good. It's because operations in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia look so bad."¹

Indeed, UNTAC's outcome was good news for the United Nations, because it allowed the organisation to show the world that it was able to bring such a large and complex operation to a satisfactory end. The narrative that UN peacekeeping could be successful as long as it strictly adhered to the traditional principles of UN peacekeeping, was convenient for the UN and its member states, especially after the escalating operations in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. This narrative has been readily adopted in scholarly analyses of the 1990s and still informs current academic debates about UN peacekeeping. This study suggests that it is time to reconsider this interpretation. The increased accessibility of archival sources has made it possible to study the complex nuances that drove the Cambodian peace process and get a more detailed understanding of what determined the contradictory outcome of this largely forgotten peacekeeping operation. By illuminating the role of agency, this study allows us to see more clearly the structures behind UN peacekeeping operations in the 1990s. Cambodia was a vital experiment in the laboratory of peacekeeping in the post-Cold War era, and the imperative of success was a driving force behind this operation. Failure was simply not an option because the role of the United Nations as the guarantor of international peace and security was too strongly attached to it.

The process of enforcing success began with the Paris Peace Agreements, which resulted from the desire of the great powers to find a comprehensive political settlement to end the Third Indochina War rather than from the spirit of compromise among the Cambodian factions. Finalising a comprehensive political settlement to redefine great power relations in the post-Cold War period was of greater importance than achieving a sustainable peace in Cambodia. As the

¹ Sheridan Prasso, "Cambodia: A \$3 Billion Boondoggle," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 51, no. 2 (March/April 1995): 36.

Cambodian factions did not feel equally satisfied, the Paris Agreements offered an unstable peace and an uncertain point of departure for those who were tasked to implement it. The Cambodian case demonstrates that a long-negotiated peace settlement does not necessarily provide the best basis for a successful peacekeeping operation, because it does not guarantee the commitment of all parties to the peace. The incomplete reconciliation among Cambodians was the first structural factor that impeded UNTAC from completely achieving its objectives. Connected to this was the fact that the Khmer Rouge were never truly committed to the peace process. Although some scholars have argued that the Khmer Rouge were willing to implement the peace agreements, this study reveals that, even before UNTAC's arrival, Pol Pot decided to use the Paris Agreements as a strategic weapon to achieve his politico-military objectives, as Cambodia-watchers such as Ben Kiernan, Michael Vickery, Raoul Jennar and Christophe Peschoux had been predicting and suggesting all along. The sudden disappearance of the relatively flexible General Mao Savy, and the subsequent stonewalling of UN efforts, while constantly proclaiming full adherence to the Paris Agreements, were unmistakable indications that the strategy outlined by Pol Pot on 7 February 1992 was immediately put into practice.

The second reason that put the operation on a collision course from the start was the fact the UN was strongly focussed on executing its own implementation plan while ignoring the Khmer Rouge's strategy of using the Paris Agreements to legitimise their obstruction. Despite the ringing of alarm bells by UNAMIC-commander Loridon, the UN Secretariat in New York remained unalerted about the Khmer Rouge's obstructive behaviour for too long, as it was preoccupied with managing a sweeping reorganisation and an ambitious global agenda. At the very moment that the new Secretary-General began writing his *Agenda for Peace*, the UN operation in Cambodia was already dangerously unravelling. Lise Morjé Howard has been correct to argue that there were "organisational dysfunctions" in the first months of the UN deployment in Cambodia. Herman Salton's finding that the UN Secretariat's internal fragmentation negatively affected the UN peacekeeping operation in Rwanda, is also true for Cambodia. However, the dominant idea in the existing scholarship that the Khmer Rouge refused to disarm in reaction to UNTAC's delayed deployment and its inability to control the SOC administration is an incorrect interpretation, because it ignores the Khmer Rouge strategy of using the peace agreements as their "weapon" and thwarting the peace process from the beginning. Whereas consent was not withdrawn in an official way, there was no cooperation in the field. Khieu Samphan seems to have successfully charmed the Secretary-General with his sophisticated letters, making Boutros-Ghali believe that the real problem facing UNTAC was not the Khmer Rouge's limited commitment, but rather getting money and troops as quickly as possible to Cambodia. As these efforts were not served by the news of a disintegrating peace agreement, a posture of keeping up the appearance of success was adopted. Contrary to what has been argued by Sorpong Peou, UNTAC went to great lengths to address the Khmer Rouge's alleged "security concerns" and made important concessions in order to meet their demands and obtain cooperation. But confidence building measures, such as Sanderson's decision to give priority to the early deployment of UNTAC checkpoints at the border with Vietnam, did not satisfy the Khmer Rouge who only responded by demanding an even higher price for their cooperation. Wishful thinking, expressed by a willingness to believe the Khmer Rouge's words rather than judge them on their acts, resulted in UNTAC sleepwalking into

the failure of disarmament.

More important was UNTAC's inability to exploit the momentum of its arrival in March 1992 to salvage the situation and make the difference with UNAMIC sufficiently perceptible. UNTAC's ability to assert its authority and make its presence felt was not only impeded by the lack of resources and the slow arrival of troops, as has been traditionally argued, but also by the initial reluctance of the cautiously operating force commander to deploy UN forces to Kompong Thom, and the subsequent unwillingness of the Indonesian contingent to obey orders. UNTAC's inability to consolidate this fragile local cease-fire through a swift deployment of UNTAC troops to the province was, painfully enough, in no small part due to behind-the-scenes tensions and competition between the leading sponsors of the Cambodian peace process. UNTAC failed to capitalise on its awe and the wait-and-see attitude which the Khmer Rouge adopted in the first weeks of the operation, losing important momentum, authority and credibility in this early stage of deployment while it waited for the total build-up of the unwieldy UN force. This strongly reduced the chances for UNTAC to achieve its first main objective of disarming and demobilising the factions.

Deputy Force Commander Loridon's public criticism on the UN's diplomatic methods made the position of the French general untenable, but some of his provocative remarks touched upon a real question: whether it was possible to accomplish UNTAC's objectives without taking some measure of risk. His urgings for more assertiveness and bluff, not for peace enforcement as the conventional narrative suggests, led to an immediate clash with Sanderson. Whether the Khmer Rouge would have opened fire on UN peacekeepers entering their zones is uncertain, but this constituted a risk Sanderson was unwilling to take, and the domestic political context in Australia was an important determining factor in this assessment. Sanderson's cautious approach was fully in sync with the position of the Australian government that had publicly promised that UNTAC would be a non-coercive peacekeeping operation involving limited risks. The narrative of achieving peace in Cambodia through peacekeeping rather than peace enforcement was important during the operation to ensure that at least two leading and symbolically important troop-contributing countries, Australia and Japan, would be able to sustain their commitment to the operation. The struggle of the governments in Canberra and Tokyo to find a balance between their ambition to make a strategically important contribution to the operation in Cambodia that aimed to redefine their nations' identities in the post-Cold War world, and a domestic political climate demanding zero casualties, as well as the weight of their history in the region, conditioned a risk-averse conduct of command. Whereas Loridon believed that a certain military dynamic was required to assert UNTAC's freedom of movement and authority, Sanderson had much less manoeuvre space to accept the risk of escalation and casualties, as it could potentially lead to a forced withdrawal of the Australian contingent, and an unacceptable political failure for the government in Canberra. The force commander, by character more inclined to define his role more as a diplomat than as a soldier, had to take these domestic political dimensions into account.

This context puts the alleged low-tolerance for casualties among troop-contributing countries in a more accurate perspective. Apart from Australia and Japan – two countries that did not contribute any infantry battalions that would be ordered to move into Khmer Rouge territory – there is no evidence to support the assertion that troop-contributing countries uttered

protestations against an approach that involved more risks. Moreover, this narrative is contradicted by the official proposal from Kuala Lumpur to deploy Malaysian and Indonesian forces into the Khmer Rouge zone in an effort to deblock the situation. Despite the fact that this “ASEAN solution” enjoyed support in New York and among members of the P5, the force commander’s concern that it could create divisions within UNTAC, and the idea that it would be a concession to the Khmer Rouge, prevented the initiative from being implemented.

The fourth factor that caused disaster for the disarmament of the factions was New York’s pressure to move forward with the operation despite an implementation plan that might have reflected the Paris Agreements, but was unadopted to the realities of the situation in Cambodia as well as the limited resources at the disposal of the United Nations. It is important to note that the faultiness of the implementation plan was acknowledged from the beginning by the UN Secretary-General himself, who openly admitted that it required adjustment along the way. Moreover, the plan’s feasibility was broadly questioned, not only by the highest UN military commanders in Cambodia, but also by the members of UN Security Council and those of the core group. But their explicit calls for a more flexible approach were ignored by Akashi, Goulding and the Secretary-General who clung frenetically to the plan as it stood while they diligently looked for the necessary funds to realise the operation. From the outset, the focus of the UN leadership was more on organising elections within the pre-established timeframe and budget than on achieving the first major objective of disarming the Cambodian factions, which the peace agreements stipulated as a vital precondition for the creation of a neutral political environment and the creation of a sustainable peace. They had boxed themselves in with declarations that the elections could not be held any later than May 1993. As a consequence, the operation was driven by the timetable, which meant that no time could be wasted on inconvenient contingencies such as a party that deliberately tried to delay the peace process. By contrast, in the smaller UN peacekeeping operations that were deployed at the time, disarmament and demobilisation were completed successfully because the UN leadership was less in hurry and more flexible. Like UNTAC, ONUSAL in El Salvador (1991-1995) also encountered the problem of factions refusing to proceed with the demobilisation of their troops. When this led to a crisis in the fall of 1992, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali personally intervened and brokered a new agreement between the parties. The subsequent successful DDR-process was crucial in the transition to peace in El Salvador.² The same goes for ONUMOZ in Mozambique (1992-1994), where the UN insisted that elections could only take place after the disarmament and demobilisation of the parties had been completed. Boutros-Ghali travelled to Mozambique in October 1993 for direct talks between the parties to overcome the delaying demobilisation process, which together with Special Representative Aldo Ajello’s flexibility and pragmatism, resulted in a revision of the unrealistically ambitious timetable and a breakthrough with regard to the stalling demobilisation.³ Yet, whereas offering carrots to the parties was a sufficient measure to break the deadlocks in Mozambique and El Salvador, it is unlikely that this would have moved the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Despite the fact that it was officially a purely military decision to determine the starting

2 Lise Morjé Howard, “United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador,” in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, eds. Joachim A. Koops et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 356.

3 Mats Berdal, “United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ),” in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, eds. Joachim A. Koops et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 422.

date for Phase Two, the force commander's reservations were completely disregarded by the UN's civilian leadership, which was more preoccupied with maintaining the appearance of success than with finding solutions for the unravelling situation on the ground. "Success", at his stage of the operation, was already defined in New York as achieving the final political objective: organising elections and putting in place a new legitimate Cambodian government within the predetermined time frame. This was what military sociologist Christopher Dandeker described as the "satisfactory condition" that had to be achieved.⁴ The UN, with higher priorities in other parts of the world, lacked the ability to be flexible, stop the operation and change course. The Secretary-General personally prevented the reconvening of the Paris Conference, which was a pivotal decision and a lost opportunity to rethink the failing disarmament process. Undoubtedly, the Khmer Rouge would have taken a firm line in a bid to gain more concessions, but it would at least have clarified the situation, and allowed for a concerted effort of international pressure. However, a decision to go back to Paris would have caused further delays and amount to overtly admitting that the operation was not going according to plan, which risked to blemish the UN's renewed credibility. The heavy UN machine had been set in motion, and putting the system in reverse was considered too drastic a measure as one feared detrimental implications for the UN's ability to find money and troops, not only for UNTAC, but also for other UN peacekeeping operations elsewhere. This element must sound familiar to scholars of military history. Forms of inflexibility, such as excessive caution and insisting that all is going according to plan while this is evidently not the case, have been identified by historians as key aspects that often lead to the failure of a military campaign.⁵

The problem of the Khmer Rouge's feigned cooperation became undeniable when UNTAC's leadership was being halted by a bamboo pole in Pailin. Although the incident merely confirmed the position the Khmer Rouge had maintained for the previous five months, it was a highly significant moment that not only symbolised UNTAC's powerlessness, but also constituted a turning point in Akashi's policy. Views about Akashi's leadership in Cambodia might have been influenced by the reputation he acquired when leading UNPROFOR in Bosnia, but as special representative in Cambodia, he advocated much more resolute action than is assumed in the literature. The bamboo pole incident prompted Akashi to believe that patient diplomacy alone would be insufficient to get the Khmer Rouge to cooperate and that it was time to apply more sticks than carrots. Whereas in most accounts, the policy of Sanderson and Akashi is explained in the same breath as nonconfrontational, in actuality, their views differed significantly. Pressure from different sides to act more assertively further encouraged Akashi to distance himself from New York and adopt a French-promoted policy of trying to force the Khmer Rouge to be reasonable by cutting their income gained through the trade in logs and gems with Thai businesses. But the force commander resisted the idea of using his soldiers to seal-off the Thai-Cambodian border, and successfully persuaded Akashi to drop the idea through the infeasible plan for Operation Dovetail.

In Cambodia, the initiative was largely in the field because there was no clear political guidance: not from the UN Security Council which was divided nor from the UN Secretariat, which had a limited appreciation of the situation. Behind the scenes, several countries, but

⁴ Dandeker, "From victory to success," 26.

⁵ Robert Pois and Philip Langer, *Command Failure in War: Psychology and Leadership* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Cited in: Lawrence Freedman, *Command: The Politics of Military operations from Korea to Ukraine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 4.

especially France and Australia, tried to push the operation into opposite directions through their formal and informal channels of influence. As co-chairman of the Paris conference and president of the Security Council, France was, in theory at least, the leading country in the Cambodian peace operation. But both the French plan to pressure the Khmer Rouge into cooperation with UNTAC-implemented economic sanctions as well as to give Prince Sihanouk the power to save the peace process stranded, not in the least because of Australian resistance. Ultimately, the Australians were more successful in determining the course of the peacekeeping operation, revealing that, as in any military operation, it simply matters who is in command. Canberra had well understood this at an early stage when it lobbied to deliver the force commander. Australian foreign minister Evans was the first to explicitly redefine the strategic objective of the mission by suggesting to forget about disarmament and concentrate on organising elections. It was a strategy that served Canberra's objective of avoiding an escalation and achieving a presentable success. Although Akashi was officially at the helm, Sanderson had a stronger voice with regard to policy decisions in the field. Despite Security Council resolution 792, which provided UNTAC with additional political support to enforce the economic blockade on the Khmer Rouge, Sanderson avoided to undertake any action that might provoke them. The consequence of this policy was that the embargo on logs and gems was largely ineffective. It was not so much that UNTAC lacked the power, the means or the mandate to pressure the Khmer Rouge towards compliance, as scholars have generally claimed; rather, it was the unwillingness of key actors to take the risk to try it. It must be noted that Akashi's tougher policy vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge was not supported by the Secretary-General. It seems therefore relatively surprising that, after he finished his mission in Cambodia, Akashi was asked by Boutros-Ghali to become his special representative in the former Yugoslavia and lead UNPROFOR. Perhaps it was a sign of recognition that, in the end, Akashi had been right in his scepticism about the chances that the Khmer Rouge could be persuaded back into the process through quiet diplomacy.

The incentive to pressure the Khmer Rouge into cooperation disappeared the moment the implicit decision was taken in September 1992 to isolate them. Although it was never admitted publicly, this actually implied the acceptance that the Paris Peace Agreements were dead. Instead of seeing UNTAC's strategy as that of a departing train, as Stephen John Stedman has proposed, it was more based on keeping the Khmer Rouge passive, while maintaining the commitment of the other factions to the elections. In doing this, Akashi took far-reaching measures against the political intimidation of FUNCINPEC officials by the State of Cambodia, but saw himself forced to reduce the pressure as soon the Khmer Rouge started attacking UNTAC forces. Ultimately, however, the strategy based on the presumption that the Khmer Rouge would remain passive as long as UNTAC would keep up its impartiality turned out to be flawed. Further emboldened by UNTAC's demonstrations of weakness, the Khmer Rouge turned into an adversary that actively tried to prevent UNTAC from achieving its mission.

What was left of UNTAC's mission, now that the disarmament and demobilisation of the factions' armies had failed? As argued, organising elections, on time, had been the focus of the UN leadership from the start. The disarmament and demobilisation of the parties had been a first vital hurdle to take, but which was skipped once it turned out too difficult a challenge. The finishing line of elections provided UNTAC with a clear political purpose and strategic direction, which

has been identified by Mats Berdal and David Ucko as essential for any peacekeeping operation.⁶ Whereas in the first months of the operation, Sanderson's cautiousness had not been beneficial for UNTAC's authority and effectiveness, the experienced military planner skilfully led the operation towards its final objective of elections. He retrospectively wrote: "The good fortune in Cambodia was in having a clear objective – the election. No matter how circumstances changed, the conduct and verification of the election stood out as the focal point of the mission and it was critical not to be diverted from it."⁷ But was the political purpose to install a liberal democracy in Cambodia, or was it, more pragmatically, to achieve a presentable success? It was a combination of both. The Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that a legitimate democratic government was to be installed in Cambodia. But "success" was also connected to the central idea of the liberal peace theory that bringing democracy, however feeble at the outset, would form the best basis for peace.

Scholars have pointed out that in the run-up to the elections, UNTAC succeeded in organising itself and enhance its effectiveness. The closer civil-military cooperation within UNTAC, as pointed out by Brocades Zaalberg, or learning to operate as a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, as formulated by Morjé Howard, were certainly important in achieving the immensely complicated task of organising and securing the elections. Peou and Jennar have also been correct in pointing out that UNTAC's posture became more determined and dissuasive as the elections approached. However, it has not yet been sufficiently underlined that it was the political imperative of success of this vital UN experiment that led to a greater commitment, a sudden mobilisation of resources, and a willingness to take more risks to achieve the mission's final objective. Most crucially, UNTAC adopted a more liberal interpretation of its mandate, taking the notion of using force in defence of the mission very literally as elections were conducted in small safe areas under the protection of blue helmets, thereby showing what it may have done to UNTAC's credibility if applied earlier in the mission.

The main point, however, that scholars have largely overlooked in their assessment of UNTAC, is the importance of the security alliance UNTAC forged with the CPAF in defending the elections. By encouraging Hun Sen's army to conduct pre-emptive strikes on closing-in Khmer Rouge units, UNTAC effectively outsourced the offensive use of force to protect its mission. The fact that, by doing this, UNTAC violated the principle of impartiality has been largely ignored by scholars. Jeni Whalan, for example, has argued that UNTAC was able to win the confidence of the Cambodian military leaders by engaging with them through the Mixed Military Working Group, providing the operation with legitimacy and power.⁸ But her analysis, that focusses on a power-legitimacy model, has left UNTAC's loss of impartiality unmentioned. Whereas the MMWG had indeed been designed as the primary tool in the hands of the force commander to coordinate the implementation of the peace agreements with the Cambodian factions and build trust among them, it has been demonstrated here that during the first months of the operation – both during UNAMIC and UNTAC – the MMWG was unable to provide the peacekeepers with much power because the Khmer Rouge thwarted the effectiveness of the meetings. As soon as the Khmer

6 Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, "The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Problems and Prospects," *RUSI Journal*, 160, no.1 (February/March 2015): 7.

7 Sanderson, "The UNTAC Military Component," 124.

8 Jeni Whalan "The Local Legitimacy of Peacekeepers," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 11, no. 3 (2017): 314; Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 138.

Rouge left the meetings, the MMWG automatically became efficient, because it transformed into a platform of coordination between UNTAC and the cooperating factions for protecting the elections against the spoiler party.

The fact that some hostile actions by Khmer Rouge forces during the polling days were effectively taken care of by the CPAF, reveals that the security alliance was of vital importance to deter a Khmer Rouge disruption of the electoral process. This also meant that the risks that were involved with defending the elections against the Khmer Rouge were “transferred” to the troops of the State of Cambodia, to use the terminology of military sociologist Martin Shaw.⁹ UNTAC certainly tried to uphold the pretence of impartiality, especially by pushing its efforts very far in finding Vietnamese forces. But the idea that a confrontation with the Khmer Rouge could be avoided turned out to be an illusion. Sanderson’s decision to close the symbolic UNTAC representation in the Khmer Rouge fiefdom of Pailin signalled that the days of diplomatic peacekeeping were over. Peacekeepers are supposed to be soldiers without enemies, but in the spring of 1993, UNTAC peacekeepers defended the elections against an identified aggressor. This meant that UNTAC was no longer the “honest broker with no interests other than to assist the warring parties to obtain a peaceful resolution,” as Duane Bratt described the purpose of impartiality.¹⁰ The fact that UNTAC ceased being a neutral peacekeeping force was again confirmed when it became actively involved in strengthening the authority of the Cambodian provisional government by playing a central role in building up a new Cambodian army. Preoccupied with withdrawing from Cambodia as quickly as possible and consolidating the satisfactory outcome of the operation, UNTAC was no longer fostering compromise or a cease-fire between the parties, but acquiesced to the new Cambodian army’s counterinsurgency operations against the Khmer Rouge, in order to consolidate its “success.” UNTAC had changed from an election protection force into a stabilisation force.¹¹

Despite the fact that scholars have largely subscribed to the argument that UNTAC respected the peacekeeping principles throughout its mission and that alternative courses of action would have amounted to Somalia-like peace enforcement and escalation, such a presentation of a two-option scenario provides an insufficient understanding of the decisions that ultimately led to the outcome of the operation. The incorrect claim that Loridon proposed a peace enforcement operation has served this narrative. It has also concealed the fact that Akashi and Sanderson held different visions, and the fact that the force commander blocked the special representative’s plan for using more sticks than carrots, in favour of the policy preferred by his own government. The strict adherence to the peacekeeping principles was not the reason for UNTAC’s ability to secure a “successful” outcome. On the contrary, the notions of impartiality and the use of force only in self-defence were stretched to the point of violation in order to save the mission in Cambodia and the credibility of UN peacekeeping itself. Although one could argue that UNTAC succeeded in some parts of its mandate, but failed in others, the concept of UN peacekeeping, as presented by the United Nations, was not successful in Cambodia. By studying the duration of peace after

9 Martin Shaw, *The new Western way of war: risk-transfer war and its crisis in Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 81.

10 Bratt, “Explaining peacekeeping performance,” 64.

11 For a definition of stabilisation operations see: Cedric de Coning, “Is Stabilization the new normal? Implications of stabilization mandates for the use of force in UN peacekeeping operations,” in *The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping*, ed. Peter Nadin (London: Routledge, 2018), 90.

war, intervention and non-intervention, Virginia Page Fortna concluded that peacekeeping, and especially multidimensional peacekeeping, “works,” although the Cambodia case causes some confusion. However, even if Cambodia would have remained completely stable after UNTAC had left, and had developed into a model liberal democracy, it would be incorrect to argue that peacekeeping had actually “worked” in Cambodia, because the UN had not played by the UN peacekeeping rules. Though many wanted to believe that the liberal internationalist ideal of building peace through impartial peacekeeping had worked in Cambodia, in reality, this turned out to be a delusion.

Whereas in the 1995 *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali expressed scepticism about combining peacekeeping with elements of enforcement, the outcome of the Cambodian operation could only be achieved by doing just that. UNTAC’s mandate was interpreted and applied according to the circumstances, and the theoretical line separating peacekeeping and peace enforcement moved along with it. The determining factor in this was the preparedness to take risks. When the risks involved in certain actions were considered too high, such as in deploying peacekeepers into the Khmer Rouge-controlled or contested zones, the limitations of the mandate were used as an excuse for inaction. But when the pressure increased to deliver a success, on Akashi personally and on the UN as a whole, the mandate was interpreted more flexibly. Eventually, UNTAC actually acted more in line with the ideas exposed in *An Agenda for Peace* than in the *Supplement*, as it operated without the consent of all parties, sacrificed its impartiality and used (indirect offensive) force to protect and achieve its mission.

In Cambodia, UN peacekeepers ventured into a grey area, just as they would do later in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. John Ruggie’s notion of the grey area is probably inherent to the complex nature of peacekeeping as a hybrid diplomatic-military activity, in which decision makers are constantly looking for a balance between diplomatic and military methods in fulfilling their mission. In Cambodia, a diplomatic approach was maintained with regard to disarmament and demobilisation, which failed to bring results and, if maintained, would not have allowed UNTAC to achieve the objective of the elections either. Eventually, the imperative of success made UNTAC switch to a more military approach. There was an enhanced commitment on all levels by both the UN Secretariat and troop contributing countries to accept more risk and use force. The political will to disarm the factions and maintain a cease-fire was much weaker than to achieve the elections. By comparison, political scientist James Gow has argued with regard to the situation in Yugoslavia that the lack of political will to use force was the central explanatory factor for the failure of UNPROFOR. He points out that diplomatic efforts remained unpersuasive because of categorical declarations from the outset that the peacekeepers would never use force. Gow demonstrates that, on the other hand, results only emerged after some form of coercion had been applied.¹²

Much of the contemporary debate among scholars and practitioners about UN peacekeeping revolves around the validity of the peacekeeping principles and the role and the utility of force in

12 James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 140, 304.

UN peacekeeping operations.¹³ The gap between the theory of peacekeeping and the realities of the changing nature of peacekeeping on the ground since the turn of the century receives much attention from analysts. At the beginning of the 2000s, the Security Council began to establish new missions, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, under the leadership of Jean-Marie Guéhenno, sought to lay the conceptual groundwork that allowed peacekeeping operations to operate in difficult and non-permissive environments. The Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, known as the “Brahimi report” after the Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi who chaired the panel, published in 2000, as well as the “Capstone report” of 2008, proposed to reframe the notion of impartiality, noting the limitations of a passive response and the impossibility of equal treatment when one party violated the terms of a peace agreement.¹⁴ Out of these introspective papers, as well as the “New Horizon” document published in 2009, grew the new concept of what has been termed “robust peacekeeping,” aimed to deter spoilers from undermining a peace process. It is both a military and a political posture, in which firmness of the Security Council and troop-contributing countries is just as important as an operation’s demonstration of willingness to respond decisively to attacks and obstructions to the implementation of its mandate.¹⁵

Partly as a consequence of these developments, scholars have observed that in the last two decades, UN peace operations have come to increasingly resemble stability operations or counterinsurgency interventions. The two concepts have been “converging on each other”, according to Karsten Friis.¹⁶ One of the characteristics of modern UN peace operations is that they are often deployed at the request and in support of a host state government, a situation in which it is impossible to remain impartial. Despite these changes, the UN continues to champion its original peacekeeping principles of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence and to defend the mandate. Political scientist Peter Rudolf has pointed out that whereas the functions and forms of UN peacekeeping have changed profoundly at the operational

13 Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, “War, what is it good for?,” in *Modern War and the Utility of Force: Challenges, Methods, and Strategy*, eds. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3.

John Karlsrud, *The UN at War: Peace Operations in a New Era* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Berdal and Ucko, “The United Nations and the Use of Force,” 666; Stephen Ryan, “United Nations peacekeeping: A matter of principles,” *International Peacekeeping* 7, no.1 (2000); Shashi Tharoor, “Should United Nations Peacekeeping Go ‘Back to Basics?’,” *Survival* 37, no.4 (1995); Mats Berdal, “What are the Limits to the Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping,” in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, eds. Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Cedric de Coning, Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud, *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Mateja Peter, “Between Doctrine and Practice: The UN Peacekeeping Dilemma,” *Global Governance* 21 (2015); Peter Nadin, ed., *The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Stephen Ryan, “United Nations peacekeeping: A matter of principles?,” *International Peacekeeping* 7, no.1 (2000); Emily Paddon Rhoads, *Taking Sides in Peacekeeping: Impartiality and the Future of the United Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016); Charles T. Hunt, “All necessary means to what ends? The unintended consequences of the ‘robust turn’ in UN peace operations,” *International Peacekeeping* 24, no.1 (August 2016): 10; Thierry Tardy, “A critique of robust peacekeeping in contemporary peace operation,” *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 2 (2011); John Karlsrud, “The UN at war: examining the consequences of peace-enforcement mandates for the UN peacekeeping peacekeeping operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali,” *Third World Quarterly* 31, no.1 (2015): 41.

14 *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (A/55/305 S/2000/809); *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines*, March 2008 Peacekeeping Best Practices Section. Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training, DPKO.

15 Robust Peacekeeping Draft Concept Note, 2009, 3. Thierry Tardy, “Quel maintien de la paix « robuste » pour quel maintien de la paix efficace ? vers une approche réaliste de la robustesse,” in *La paix par la force ? : Pour une approche réaliste du maintien de la paix « robuste »*, eds. Jocelyn Coulon and Alexandre Novosseloff (Outremont: Athéna éditions, 2011), 30.

16 Karsten Friis, “Peacekeeping and Counter-insurgency – Two of a Kind?,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (2010): 49–66.

level, at “the declaratory level,” the UN continues to adhere to its three basic principles.¹⁷ But the UN’s declarations are confusingly contradicting. The 2015 report of the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) called for the “flexible and progressive interpretation” of the peacekeeping principles, while recognizing that they will always play a key function in UN peacekeeping.¹⁸

The key difference between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency is indeed defined by the three peacekeeping principles: peacekeepers are impartial, whereas counterinsurgents take sides; peacekeepers work with the consent of all the parties, while counterinsurgents do not enjoy overall consent; peacekeepers use force only in self-defence and (theoretically) in defence of their mandate, whereas counterinsurgents obviously enjoy much wider possibilities of using force.¹⁹ Indeed, impartiality has been described as the “oxygen,” “lifeblood” and the “bedrock” of UN peacekeeping, because it refers to the position of the UN as an unbiased third party, which is a core value the organisation seeks to project.²⁰ Lise Howard therefore believes that negating the three peacekeeping rules is detrimental for the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping. She strongly makes the normative point that peacekeeping is not counterinsurgency, and that the two should remain strictly separated.²¹ Counterinsurgency experts Thomas Mockaitis and John Mackinlay do not agree, and have pointed at the inherent similarities between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency.²² They believe that, if these operations would have abandoned the pretence of adhering to the peacekeeping principles, they may actually have been more successful.²³ Neither Mockaitis nor Mackinlay have referred to UNTAC in their studies because the idea that this UN operation achieved its “success” through adherence to the peacekeeping principles did not seem to support their case. It has been argued here, however, that UNTAC could not maintain its impartiality and also adopted the characteristics of a counterinsurgency operation. Howard contends that “peacekeepers are not war-fighters” and that “blurring the lines” between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency “is not a winning strategy.”²⁴ But in Cambodia, the lines also became blurred, in order to save the “success” of the operation. This does not necessarily mean that abandoning the peacekeeping principles is a formula for success in any UN operation. It rather demonstrates that blanket statements on what works and what does not in peace operations are inaccurate and hold no historical or predictive value.

Both the arguments of Howard and the counterinsurgency advocates have merit. The key point that this study about the Cambodian peacekeeping operation unveils, is that the situation on the ground can change unexpectedly and very rapidly. Enjoying the consent and cooperation of all the parties in a peacekeeping operation is not a continued guarantee, but these values are often superficial and can very easily crumble. When a UN operation loses consent and cooperation from one of the belligerents, but the UN Security Council and the key member states involved

17 Peter Rudolf, “UN Peace Operations and the Use of Military Force,” *Survival* 59, no. 3, (2017): 162.

18 Report of the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations, A/70/95–S/2015/446, (2015), 32.

19 Brocades Zaalberg, “Peacekeeping and Counterinsurgency,” 82; Morjé Howard, *Power in UN peacekeeping*, 31.

20 Paddon Rhoads, *Taking Sides in Peacekeeping*, 1–2.

21 Lise Morjé Howard, “Peacekeeping is Not Counterinsurgency,” *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 5 (2019): 545–548.

22 John Mackinlay, *the Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to bin Laden* (London: Hurst and Company, 2009) 66–70.

23 Thomas R. Mockaitis, “From counterinsurgency to peace enforcement: New names for old games?,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 10, no. 2 (1999): 40–57.

24 Lise Morjé Howard, “Peacekeeping is Not Counterinsurgency,” *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 5 (2019): 545–548.

remain determined to achieve the operations' objectives, the move towards a counterinsurgency strategy seems almost inevitable. Though UNTAC did not use offensive force against the Khmer Rouge itself – but subcontracted this more risky task to Hun Sen's forces – it did try to separate the Cambodian population from the insurgents through a hearts-and-minds approach and by allowing the population to go vote in areas that were under its protection. Moreover, with the elections approaching, UNTAC's troop contributing countries suddenly committed extra resources and demonstrated a stronger political determination to achieve an outcome that would save the enterprise in which so much money and credibility had been invested, by which they inexplicitly acknowledged that the operation needed more power to deter the opponent.

Berdal and Ucko have pointed out that the reason for the United Nations to continuously reconfirm its adherence to the traditional peacekeeping principles and emphasise the distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, is highly political. It helps to meet the reservations of risk-averse troop-contributing countries. The concept of 'robust peacekeeping', serves to provide UN operations the possibility to use force, while retaining the traditional framework and principles of classical peacekeeping.²⁵ In other words, it is a way to keep member states willing to provide enough blue helmets, which are, incidentally, being supplied less and less by Western countries and for a large part by member states from the Global South. It has been demonstrated here that this dynamic was already at play during UNTAC, where the distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement was primarily aimed at securing the continued support from troop contributing countries and used as an excuse for adopting risk-averse strategies. This point has also been made by the Brazilian lieutenant general Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, who, in 2017, published a very frank UN-sponsored report, in which he argued that mandates, rules of engagement and the peacekeeping principles are often used as a justification by commanders who are under pressure from their capitals to avoid risks.²⁶ In his report, the former force commander of UN missions in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo explicitly pleaded for a more robust posture in UN peacekeeping, emphasised the necessity to take risks, and provide an updated interpretation of the basic principles for peacekeeping.²⁷

Lise Howard has interpreted the report by Santos Cruz as a call for UN peacekeeping to become more like counterinsurgency and resisted its conclusions.²⁸ Howard is right to warn for the problems peacekeeping operations will encounter if the UN pretends to uphold the peacekeeping principles, but cannot respect them in the field. However, interpreting Santos Cruz's report through the lens of a dichotomy between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency misses the key point the general actually tries to make, which is that one needs to acknowledge that peacekeeping operations, like any military mission, involve risks. This was exactly the argument UNTAC's Deputy Force Commander Michel Loridon made in Cambodia, but which was also

25 Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, 'The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Problems and Prospects', *RUSI Journal* 160, no. 1 (February–March 2015) 11.

26 Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*, 19 December 2017, 12: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3845635>

27 Louise Riis Andersen, "The HIPPO in the room: the pragmatic push-back from the UN peace bureaucracy against the militarization of UN peacekeeping," *International Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2018): 359; Richard Gowan, "Fighting Words: The Cruz Report Restores a Military Voice to Peacekeeping Debates," *IPI Global Observatory*, 19 February 2018; Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Peacekeepers Must 'Not Fear to Use Force' to Foil Attacks, Report Says," *The New York Times*, 22 January 2018.

28 Morjé Howard, "Peacekeeping is not Counterinsurgency," 546.

readily interpreted as a plea for counterinsurgency or peace enforcement. In the first sentence of his report, Santos Cruz writes: “Peacekeeping is a risky activity. A certain number of casualties may occur even if all necessary preventive measures are taken.” As Loridon had done, Santos Cruz urges troop contributing countries to “change their mindset, take risks and show a willingness.” Also; Santos Cruz emphasises the importance of peacekeepers showing “determination” in fulfilling their mandate and deterring spoilers from continuing their disruptive campaigns. Santos Cruz’s affirmation that a strong posture will gain respect and reduce casualties, strongly resembles Loridon’s “shoot at us if you dare” mentality.²⁹ This analogy shows that the issue of “risk” should not be overlooked in the study of peacekeeping operations because it is such an important factor that informs decision making processes, not only in UN peacekeeping operations, but also more broadly in the realm of foreign interventions and international security issues as has been argued by Yaacov Vertzberger.³⁰

Robust peacekeeping has often been presented as a response to the inability of UN operations in Bosnia in 1992–1995 and Rwanda in 1994 to prevent massive killing from occurring on their watch. However, this study reveals that the concept of robust peacekeeping has been applied *avant la lettre* in Cambodia. We have seen that UNTAC succeeded in its final objective of organising elections because it turned itself into an increasingly robust peacekeeping force. The operation clearly signalled its intent to implement its mandate and its determination to withstand attempts to disrupt the elections. If UNTAC would have demonstrated the same mentality during the phase of disarmament, a more sustainable peace may have been achieved in Cambodia. However, UNTAC considered itself – and probably was – insufficiently robust to defend the elections against the Khmer Rouge. It therefore relied on the assistance from the Khmer Rouge’s main adversary, Hun Sen’s State of Cambodia, to protect the operation’s final objective. This means that in order to secure its impartiality, a UN peacekeeping operation needs to be sufficiently robust itself, so it can avoid relying too heavily on one of the parties, and in most cases on government authority.

Answering the normative question what kind of activity UN peacekeeping should be goes beyond the scope of a historical study. It can only attempt to make a contribution to the discussion by providing a context of one of the largest, though understudied, peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations. The former head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, indicated in his memoirs about his time in office that, as an operator in charge of UN peacekeeping operations, he found it useful to read history books because it allowed him to think with “the fraternal companionship of other actors before me who had had to deal with confusion, grapple with the unknown, and yet had made decisions.”³¹ Hopefully, the context of the operation in Cambodia can contribute to a better understanding of current debates about UN peacekeeping and its challenges.

29 Santos Cruz, *Improving Security*, 1, 11, 12.

30 Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, *Risk taking and Decisionmaking: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 400.

31 Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *The Fog of Peace: A Memoir of International Peacekeeping in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), xvi.

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¹ I thank Thijs Brocades Zaalberg for giving me access to his private collection containing copies from this archive.

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Nederlandstalige samenvatting

De noodzaak tot succes: peacekeeping in Cambodja 1991–1993

De *United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia* (UNTAC), de VN-vredesoperatie die tussen 1991 en 1993 was ontplooid in Cambodja, was op dat moment de grootste, duurste en meest complexe vredesoperatie in de geschiedenis van de Verenigde Naties. Niettemin heeft UNTAC maar weinig aandacht gekregen in de academische literatuur, waarin de ontspoorde VN-operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië, Somalië en Rwanda domineren. Hoewel Cambodja over het algemeen wordt beschouwd als “succesvol,” spreken wetenschappelijke analyses vaak verwarrend genoeg van een “gemengd succes”, een “gekwalificeerd succes” of een “gematigd succes”. Dit komt doordat de vredesoperatie werd geconfronteerd met het probleem dat een van de ondertekenaars van de vredesakkoorden, de beruchte Rode Khmer, weigerde medewerking te verlenen aan de VN en zich manifesteerde als wat in de *peacekeeping*-literatuur wordt aangeduid als een “spoiler party.” Dit proefschrift onderzoekt hoe het mogelijk was dat de VN een resultaat bereikte dat over het algemeen als succesvol wordt beschouwd, terwijl de missie in Cambodja niet de volledige instemming en medewerking van alle partijen genoot. Er wordt geanalyseerd hoe UNTAC omging met deze gebrekkige medewerking, en waarom het eerste hoofddoel van UNTAC, de ontwapening en demobilisatie van de soldaten van de Cambodjaanse facties en hun re-integratie in de samenleving (DDR) is uitgelopen op een complete mislukking, terwijl het tweede hoofddoel, het organiseren van vrije en eerlijke verkiezingen, wel werd bereikt.

In de bestaande academische literatuur is de meest gangbare verklaring voor de “succesvolle” uitkomst van UNTAC dat de operatie zich strikt had gehouden aan de traditionele peacekeeping-doctrine, bestaande uit drie principes: de instemming van alle partijen (*consent*), onpartijdigheid (*impartiality*), en het gebruik van geweld alleen ter zelfverdediging (*the non-use of force except in self-defence*). Luitenant-generaal John Sanderson, de Australische *force commander* van UNTAC, heeft zelf herhaaldelijk het punt gemaakt dat de strikte naleving van de peacekeeping principes een essentieel ingrediënt vormde van het succes van de operatie die hij in Cambodja leidde. Deze analyse werd in de tweede helft van de jaren negentig overgenomen door hoofdzakelijk politicologische studies die oordeelden dat UNTAC de wijze keuze had gemaakt om zijn *peacekeeping*-mandaat te respecteren, en zich niet had laten verleiden tot *peace enforcement*, zoals in voormalig Joegoslavië en Somalië was gebeurd, met desastreuze gevolgen. Op basis van nieuw vrijgegeven archiefmateriaal laat dit proefschrift zien dat dit beeld niet langer houdbaar is.

De Cambodjaanse Vredesakkoorden die op 23 oktober 1991 werden ondertekend maakten officieel een einde aan de Derde Indochinese Oorlog, wat een complexe verstrengeling was van een burgeroorlog in Cambodja, een regionale strijd om de hegemonie in Indochina tussen China en Vietnam, en een centraal strijdtoneel van de globale Koude Oorlog. Het genocidale schrikbewind van de Rode Khmer werd ten val gebracht in januari 1979 toen het Vietnamese leger het land binnenviel en een marionettenregime installeerde in Phnom Penh. De Rode Khmer en twee andere verzetsbewegingen, de royalistische FUNCINPEC en de anticomunistische KPNLF, begonnen, met steun van buitenlandse mogendheden, een guerrillaoorlog tegen dit

pro-Vietnamese regime dat onder leiding stond van premier Hun Sen. Pas nadat Moskou een normalisering met Peking probeerde te bewerkstelligen en Vietnam aankondigde al zijn troepen terug te trekken uit Cambodja begonnen de onderhandelingen over een vredesregeling. Omdat een eerste vredesconferentie in 1989 niet tot een akkoord kon komen vanwege een te grote verdeeldheid tussen de Cambodjaanse partijen, besloten de vijf permanente leden van de VN-veiligheidsraad een alomvattend vredesplan op te leggen. De noodzaak om tot een alomvattende politieke oplossing te komen voor het voortdurende conflict in Indochina was hierbij leidend, en de hete aardappel van het handhaven van de fragiele vrede tussen de Cambodjaanse facties werd overgedragen aan de Verenigde Naties.

De belangrijkste zwakte van de vredesakkoorden die op 23 oktober 1991 in Parijs werden ondertekend was dat er geen sanctiemechanisme was ingebouwd. Hier maakte Pol Pot gebruik van door al voor de komst van UNTAC de Parijse akkoorden als “wapen” te gebruiken om het vredesproces te traineren en de politiek-militaire doelen van de Rode Khmer te verwezenlijken. Omdat de vooruitgeschoven *United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia* (UNAMIC) geen medewerking en bewegingsvrijheid genoot van de Rode Khmer, waren de ongewapende militaire liaison officieren (MLOs) van de VN niet in staat het staakt-het-vuren te handhaven, noch om de nodige verkenningen uit te voeren ter voorbereiding van UNTAC. De toenemende obstructie en de plotselinge vervanging van een relatief meewerkende Rode Khmer-generaal door een hardliner gaven UNAMIC weinig hoop, maar deze signalen drongen niet door in New York, waar het VN-secretariaat volledig in beslag werd genomen door een ingrijpende reorganisatie onder de nieuwe secretaris-generaal, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Het gebrek aan financiële middelen vormde tevens een belangrijke handicap voor de kleine vooruitgeschoven missie. De speciale vertegenwoordiger van de secretaris-generaal, Yasushi Akashi, die aan het hoofd stond van UNTAC, was gedurende zijn eerste maanden in functie voornamelijk bezig met lobbyen in Tokyo en Washington voor het beschikbaar stellen van de financiën die benodigd waren voor deze immense operatie.

UNTAC verloor belangrijk momentum doordat het verschil met UNAMIC onvoldoende voelbaar was voor de Cambodjaanse partijen. Dit werd niet alleen belemmerd door de trage aankomst van militair en civiel personeel in Cambodja, maar ook door de aarzeling om blauwhelmen te positioneren tussen de strijdende partijen in de provincie Kompong Thom. Dit was hoofdzakelijk het gevolg van de uiterst voorzichtige aanpak van de *force commander*, die zich bewust was van het standpunt van de Australische regering die meermaals publiekelijk had beloofd dat UNTAC een operatie zou zijn met slechts beperkte risico's.

In de aanloop naar de ontwapeningsfase was UNTAC vooral sterk gefocust op het uitstralen van succes, wat zich voornamelijk vertaalde in het vasthouden aan het vooraf bedachte operatieplan en het daarbij behorende tijdschema. Dit stond een tijdige erkenning van de gebrekkige medewerking van de Rode Khmer en een flexibele reactie daarop in de weg. Door het ophouden van de schijn van succes liep de ontwapening van de Cambodjaanse facties uit op een mislukking. Hoewel academici tot nu vooral hebben gewezen op de tekortschietende financiële steun, was het voornamelijk het gebrek aan flexibiliteit waardoor de kansen op een succesvolle ontwapening en demobilisatie sterk verminderden. Dit kwam tot uiting in het feit dat de civiele leiding van de VN krampachtig vasthield aan het oorspronkelijke uitvoeringsplan, ondanks de expliciete oproep van de vijf permanent leden van de VN-veiligheidsraad om het onvolmaakte uitvoeringsplan aan te

passen aan de realiteit ter plaatse. Plaatsvervangend commandant van UNTAC, Brigadegeneraal Michel Loridon, werd door de Franse regering vervangen nadat hij in de Franse media openlijk zijn scepsis had geuit over de VN-strategie in Cambodja. Hoewel ook *force commander* Sanderson voorzichtig zijn twijfels uitte over de haalbaarheid van de ontwapeningsfase, besloot hij onder grote druk van de civiele VN-leiding de vooraf bepaalde startdatum volgens schema te hanteren. Boutros-Ghali geloofde dat Rode Khmer-leider Khieu Samphan wel zou bijdraaien zodra UNTAC in zijn geheel zou zijn ontplooid in Cambodja. Wensdenken en de gevoelde noodzaak om succes uit te stralen, leidde ertoe dat UNTAC slaapwandeland afstevende op de mislukking van de ontwapening en demobilisatie.

Pas toen het Nederlandse mariniersbataljon, en niet veel later, Sanderson en Akashi zelf, de toegang tot het door de Rode Khmer gecontroleerde gebied werd ontzegd, werd de realiteit van de gebrekkige medewerking van de Khmer Rouge onmiskenbaar duidelijk. Boutros-Ghali achtte het echter niet nodig de Veiligheidsraad in te schakelen en verzocht Akashi met “stille diplomatie” te blijven proberen de Rode Khmer tot medewerking te bewegen. Opvallend genoeg wees de secretaris-generaal ook het voorstel af om de Vredesconferentie van Parijs weer bijeen te roepen. De zware VN-machine was in gang gezet en een herziening van het plan werd als een te drastische maatregel beschouwd die mogelijk nadelige gevolgen zou kunnen hebben voor de bereidheid van lidstaten om geld en troepen te leveren, niet alleen voor UNTAC, maar ook voor VN-vredesoperaties elders.

UNTAC was er niet in geslaagd om in een vroeg stadium een voet tussen de deur te krijgen toen het de kans had. Met hun expliciete weigering deel te nemen aan het ontwapenings- en demobilisatieproces verwijderden de Rode Khmer hun masker van geveinsde medewerking en verschansten ze zich achter onredelijke eisen. Door het besluit van Boutros-Ghali om de operatie volgens schema voort te zetten verzandde het ontwapenings- en demobilisatieproces in een oppervlakkige exercitie, waarmee een eerste cruciale stap in de missie praktisch werd overgeslagen.

Volgens het traditionele beeld in de academische literatuur hield UNTAC vast aan een voorzichtige aanpak van geduldige diplomatie ten opzichte van de Rode Khmer, waarbij Akashi is gekarikaturiseerd als een voorzichtige en risicomijdende VN-bureaucraat. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt echter dat Akashi zich achter de schermen juist verzette tegen de instructies van Boutros-Ghali, die naar zijn mening onvoldoende begrip had van de situatie ter plaatse in Cambodja. Omdat de aanhoudende steun van China aan de Rode Khmer een krachtige reactie van de VN-Veiligheidsraad in de weg stond en omdat het VN-secretariaat in een staat van organisatorische verwarring verkeerde, lag het initiatief voor een groot deel bij Akashi. Hoewel hij geen beroep wilde doen op Hoofdstuk VII van het VN-Handvest, was de speciale vertegenwoordiger van mening dat er veel meer gedaan kon worden binnen het bestaande mandaat van UNTAC.

Achter de schermen probeerden Frankrijk en Australië de operatie via hun formele en informele kanalen in tegengestelde richtingen te duwen, maar omdat Canberra de sleutelpositie van *force commander* in handen had, waren de Australiërs uiteindelijk succesvoller in het bepalen van de koers. Akashi raakte in een vroeg stadium overtuigd van een Frans voorstel om de Rode Khmer onder druk te zetten door met blauwhelmen de Thais-Cambodjaanse grens af te sluiten en zo een einde te maken aan de lucratieve handel in tropisch hardhout en edelstenen, wat een belangrijke bron van inkomsten vormde voor de Rode Khmer. Hoewel een dergelijke actie

gelegitimeerd was binnen het mandaat van UNTAC, verzette de *force commander* zich hiertegen en dwong hij Akashi dit idee te laten vallen door een onuitvoerbaar plan, genaamd Operatie Dovetail, te presenteren. Het voorstel van Maleisië om Aziatische blauwhelmen in te zetten in de Rode Khmer-zone werd eveneens afgewezen door Sanderson, wat laat zien dat de veelvuldig herhaalde bewering dat geen van de bijdragende lidstaten bereid was hun blauwhelmen in het risicovolle Rode Khmer-gebied te laten opereren, onjuist is.

Terwijl de meeste studies het beleid van Sanderson en Akashi in één adem hebben uitgelegd als “niet-confronterend,” verschilden de opvattingen van de civiele en militaire leider van UNTAC over de te volgen strategie in werkelijkheid aanzienlijk. Hoewel Akashi officieel aan het roer stond, stuurde de *force commander* naar een koers die was gebaseerd op het vermijden van een confrontatie met de Rode Khmer, wat overeen kwam met het beleid van de Australische minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Gareth Evans, die vanaf september 1992 actief aanstuurde op het achterwege laten van de ontwapeningsfase, het uitsluiten van de Rode Khmer van verdere deelname aan het vredesproces, en het verleggen van de operationele focus op de verkiezingen. Ondanks de aannahme van een resolutie door de VN-Veiligheidsraad, waarin UNTAC expliciet werd opgeroepen de nodige grenscontroleposten op te zetten om het verbod op de export van tropisch hout af te dwingen, ondernam UNTAC geen actie en probeerde Akashi tevergeefs de verantwoordelijkheid voor de uitvoering van het embargo af te schuiven op Thailand. Zijn publieke verklaringen met betrekking tot de beperkingen van zijn *peacekeeping*-mandaat fungeerden als een excuus voor de strategie die was gebaseerd op het voorkomen van een confrontatie met de Rode Khmer.

Het organiseren van verkiezingen veranderde in een doel op zich, maar om dit te bereiken moest de Rode Khmer wel passief blijven. Om hen niet te provoceren, en de deelname van de twee kleinere facties (FUNCINPEC en KPNLF) bij de verkiezingen veilig te stellen, probeerde Akashi de schijn van onpartijdigheid hoog te houden, door enerzijds vergaande maatregelen te nemen tegen de misbruik van de staatsmacht door de regering in Phnom Penh, en anderzijds door UNTAC's zoektocht naar de zogenaamd achtergebleven Vietnamese troepen, waar de Rode Khmer continu een punt van maakten, tot het uiterste te drijven. Maar de gedachte dat UNTAC onpartijdig kon blijven en een confrontatie met de Rode Khmer vermeden kon worden bleek een illusie te zijn. Toen er in maart 1993 doelbewuste aanvallen op UNTAC en etnische Vietnamezen werden uitgevoerd, daalde het algemene besef in dat de Rode Khmer een onmiskenbare bedreiging vormde voor het welslagen van de verkiezingen, en daarmee ook voor de missie, die niet alleen ging over het uitvoeren van de Cambodjaanse vredesakkoorden, maar tevens een belangrijke geloofwaardigheidstest vormde voor de Verenigde Naties. Hoewel er aanvankelijk veelvuldig was gewezen op de beperkingen van het mandaat om de passieve houding van UNTAC te rechtvaardigen, noopte de noodzaak tot succes tot een vrijere interpretatie van het mandaat en een robuustere militaire houding. Zelfs Boutros-Ghali, die voorheen altijd had vastgehouden aan een strategie van stille diplomatie, begon te benadrukken dat het nemen van risico's en het accepteren van slachtoffers onvermijdelijk waren in vredesoperaties, en dat het gebruik van geweld ter verdediging van het mandaat volkomen gelegitimeerd was. Met het sturen van extra militair materieel naar Cambodja, gaven landen uit de regio, maar ook daarbuiten, een duidelijk signaal van politieke vastberadenheid om de operatie waarin reeds veel geld en geloofwaardigheid

was geïnvesteerd te behoeden voor een falen.

De belangrijkste maatregel die UNTAC nam om de verkiezingen te beschermen tegen de dreiging van de Rode Khmer was het sluiten van een alliantie met het leger van de regering in Phnom Penh (CPAF), waarmee het principe van onpartijdigheid werd geschonden. Terwijl UNTAC zelf een robuustere maar puur defensieve houding aannam, werd het offensieve gebruik van geweld ten behoeve van de actieve verdediging van de verkiezingen uitbesteed aan de CPAF, de vijand van de Rode Khmer. De legers van de twee kleinere meewerkende facties (ANKI en KPNLAF) gingen eenzelfde veiligheidspact aan met UNTAC, maar vanwege hun geringe aantal troepen was dit voornamelijk van symbolische betekenis. UNTAC zag zich wel genooddacht de ingenomen wapens aan hen terug te geven, wat volledig inging tegen het mandaat en het principe van *peacekeeping*. Tekenend voor de spanningen omtrent de onmogelijkheid onpartijdig te blijven was het feit dat Sanderson uit voorzorg besloot zijn liaison-team uit het Rode Khmer-stadje Pailin terug te trekken, terwijl de P5 van de VN-veiligheidsraad en het VN-secretariaat principieel wilden vasthouden aan deze symbolische aanwezigheid. Hoewel de schijn van onpartijdigheid werd opgehouden, probeerde UNTAC, met het opzetten van *hearts-and-minds*-projecten en een eigen radiozender, de Cambodjaanse bevolking voor zich te winnen en de beïnvloeding door de Rode Khmer in de kiem te smoren. Dergelijke methodes, waarbij werd gepoogd de Cambodjaanse bevolking zoveel mogelijk te scheiden van de Rode Khmer, hadden echter meer te maken met *counterinsurgency* dan met *peacekeeping*. Omdat UNTAC er niet in was geslaagd een neutrale politieke omgeving in heel Cambodja te bewerkstelligen door de mislukte ontwapening, werden de stembureaus zelf veranderd in zwaar bewaakte veilige zones, waarbij de CPAF de taak kreeg toebedeeld eenheden van de Rode Khmer op afstand te houden. Het feit dat tijdens de verkiezingsdagen enkele aanvalspogingen van de Rode Khmer effectief werden afgeslagen door de CPAF, toont aan dat de veiligheidsalliantie van essentieel belang was. De betrekkelijk rustig verlopen verkiezingen en de opkomst van 89,6% van de geregistreerde Cambodjaanse kiezers gaven UNTAC de overwinning die het nodig had om de operatie tot een succes te kunnen verklaren.

Dat UNTAC niet langer een neutrale vredesmacht was werd na de verkiezingen nogmaals bevestigd toen de VN actief betrokken raakte bij de opbouw van een nieuw Cambodjaans leger, en zorg droeg voor de bezoldiging van de militairen die trouw zwoeren aan de nieuwe regering. UNTAC streefde niet langer naar het handhaven van een staakt-het-vuren tussen de partijen, maar gaf zijn goedkeuring aan de *counterinsurgency*-operaties van het “nieuwe” regeringsleger tegen de Rode Khmer.

Er kan dus geconcludeerd worden dat een strikte naleving van de *peacekeeping*-principes niet de reden was dat UNTAC erin slaagde een “succesvol” resultaat te bereiken. Integendeel, het principe van onpartijdigheid werd door UNTAC geschonden om geschonden om het succes van de missie te bewerkstelligen en daarmee, paradoxaal genoeg, de geloofwaardigheid van *peacekeeping* zelf te redden. Hoewel men zou kunnen stellen dat UNTAC in sommige delen van zijn mandaat slaagde en in andere faalde, was het concept van *peacekeeping*, zoals gepresenteerd door de Verenigde Naties, niet succesvol in Cambodja.

Op basis van de ervaringen en observaties in de vroege jaren negentig hebben academici vaak de conclusie getrokken dat VN-vredesoperaties succesvol waren zolang ze zich strikt aan de traditionele principes van de *peacekeeping* hielden, en dat *peacekeeping* niet vermengd dient te

worden met elementen van *peace enforcement*. Dit onderzoek toont aan dat deze opvatting niet houdbaar is. In Cambodja werd het mandaat geïnterpreteerd naar gelang de omstandigheden, en de theoretische scheidingslijn tussen *peacekeeping* en *peace enforcement* bewoog daarin mee. Bepalend daarbij was de mate van bereidheid om risico's te nemen. Wanneer de risico's te groot werden geacht, werden de beperkingen van het mandaat gebruikt als excuus. Maar op het moment dat de druk toenam om tot een succes te komen werd het mandaat een stuk flexibeler geïnterpreteerd.

Hoewel de VN de traditionele drie principes (de heilige Drie-eenheid) momenteel nog altijd officieel beschouwt als het fundament van *peacekeeping*, worden in de praktijk VN-operaties steeds vaker ingezet met stabilisatietaken ter ondersteuning van een door rebellen bedreigde regering. In het kader van het normatieve academische debat over de voorwaarden voor succes in VN-vredesoperaties, is het inzicht van belang dat het "succes" van de eerste grote VN-vredesoperatie na het einde van de Koude Oorlog alleen bereikt kon worden door afstand te nemen van de *peacekeeping*-principes, terwijl het traditionele narratief het tegendeel beweert. Deze constatering betekent echter niet dat het loslaten van de *peacekeeping*-principes per definitie een succesformule is voor iedere VN-operatie. Het toont eerder aan dat algemene verklaringen over wat wel en niet werkt in vredesoperaties vaak onnauwkeurig zijn en geen historische of voorspellende waarde hebben. Wat de Cambodjaanse vredesoperatie ons wel leert is dat de situatie in een vredesoperatie onverwacht zeer snel kan veranderen, en dat de instemming en medewerking van alle partijen niet blijvend is gegarandeerd. Tevens laat het zien dat een VN-vredesoperatie, om haar onpartijdigheid te waarborgen, zelf voldoende robuust dient te zijn, zodat ze niet te veel op één van de partijen, en in de meeste gevallen op de regeringsfactie, hoeft te leunen.

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Curriculum vitae

Wietse Stam (1991, The Hague) studied History at Leiden University (2009–2016), the University of Strasbourg (2012–2013) and Sciences Po Paris (2014–2015), after which he worked as a trainee at the political department of the Netherlands embassy in Paris. He wrote his PhD dissertation at the Institute for History of Leiden University and was a visiting scholar at Columbia University while doing his research at the United Nations archives in New York. At Leiden University, Wietse taught courses in the BA and MA programmes of Contemporary History and International Relations. He currently works as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Military History where he is involved in the research project *The Netherlands and Afghanistan 2001–2021*. As a reserve officer in the Dutch military, he works as an operational diarist, in which capacity he covered the war in Ukraine and the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

