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

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### Citation

Stam, W. (2023, October 18). *The imperative of success: United Nations Peacekeeping in Cambodia (1991-1993)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3645875>

Version: Publisher's Version

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Cambodia scholars Ben Kiernan and Raoul Jennar have criticised this policy as “appeasement.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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,<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> The strong cohesion and the high level of agreement

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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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.”<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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

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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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> The language of the resolution was inevitably watered-down to “strongly deploring” the behaviour of “one of the parties.”<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> Convinced that the Khmer Rouge were bluffing, the prince believed that UNTAC was “too soft” and too much inclined to negotiate with them.<sup>24</sup> 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

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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.<sup>25</sup>

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.”<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.”<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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.”<sup>30</sup> 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

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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.<sup>31</sup>

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."<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> Goulding later remembered that Akashi became "very combative and aggressive towards the Khmer Rouge," and started to ignore his instructions.<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> These developments confirmed to Akashi that the Khmer Rouge were blocking the implementation of

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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.<sup>40</sup>

The Secretary-General, however, was not persuaded by that view and continued to believe that the Khmer Rouge could be persuaded to be reasonable.<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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."<sup>44</sup> Boutros-Ghali promised to support Akashi in "working out an acceptable compromise" by writing a letter back to Khieu Samphan.<sup>45</sup>

Akashi resisted Boutros-Ghali's instructions which, in his view, completely miscomprehended the reality of the situation on the ground in Cambodia.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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."<sup>49</sup> 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

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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.”<sup>50</sup>

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.”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> “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.”<sup>53</sup> 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.”<sup>54</sup> He believed that much more could be done within UNTAC’s peacekeeping mandate.<sup>55</sup>

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.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> Akashi, who knew the UN system from inside out, also took advantage of this confusion to follow a more

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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.<sup>59</sup>

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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, however, he did not believe that Akashi could be managed from New York.<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.”<sup>64</sup>

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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.<sup>65</sup> 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."<sup>66</sup> 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."<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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"

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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.<sup>71</sup> Although there seemed to be some similarities with the Thai-Japanese proposal, a compromise could not be found.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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."<sup>82</sup>

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.<sup>83</sup> The ASEAN initiative also fitted into Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace*, in which the Secretary-General argued that regional

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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.<sup>84</sup>

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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> After his battalion had been deployed

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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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> 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."<sup>91</sup>

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.<sup>92</sup> 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'."<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup>

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.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> The Malaysian

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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.<sup>97</sup> Whereas Goulding continued to argue that the ASEAN option should be kept “in reserve,”<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> 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”.<sup>100</sup>

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.<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup> 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

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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.<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup> 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.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup>

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.<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup> 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.<sup>111</sup>

Although initially somewhat sceptical about whether interdicting the illicit commerce between the Thai and the Khmer Rouge would be within UNTAC's mandate,<sup>112</sup> 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

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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.<sup>113</sup> Through this construction, UNTAC would be enabled to pressure the Khmer Rouge economically without the intervention of the UN Security Council.<sup>114</sup> 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.<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> But such a paragraph was ultimately not included in the resolution as China objected to it.<sup>117</sup>

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.<sup>118</sup> 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."<sup>119</sup>

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,

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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.<sup>120</sup>

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.<sup>121</sup> 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.<sup>122</sup> 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.<sup>123</sup> Akashi believed that they should take full advantage of the Thai promises of cooperation.<sup>124</sup> 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.<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup>

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.<sup>127</sup> 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.<sup>128</sup> 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

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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.<sup>129</sup> 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.<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup> 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.<sup>132</sup> 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.<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> 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.<sup>135</sup> 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.<sup>136</sup> 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.<sup>137</sup>

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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.<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup>

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.<sup>140</sup> 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.<sup>141</sup> 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.<sup>142</sup> 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.<sup>143</sup> 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

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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.<sup>144</sup> 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.<sup>145</sup> 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.”<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup> 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.<sup>148</sup> 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.<sup>149</sup>

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.”<sup>150</sup> 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.<sup>151</sup> 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.<sup>152</sup> He did reemphasise, though, that UNTAC should not show any weakness and suggested that more bluff vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge was needed.<sup>153</sup> 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.<sup>154</sup> 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.<sup>155</sup> 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.<sup>156</sup>

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.<sup>157</sup> Sanderson later recalled that he "benefited mightily" from having a command support unit with a "distinctly Australian hue."<sup>158</sup>

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.<sup>159</sup> 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.<sup>160</sup>

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.<sup>161</sup> 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.<sup>162</sup>

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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.<sup>163</sup> 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.<sup>164</sup>

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."<sup>165</sup> 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.<sup>166</sup> 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 Katoi. 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.<sup>167</sup> 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.<sup>168</sup>

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.<sup>169</sup> 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

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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.”<sup>170</sup> 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.<sup>171</sup> 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.<sup>172</sup>

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.<sup>173</sup> 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.<sup>174</sup> 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.<sup>175</sup>

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.

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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.<sup>176</sup> 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.<sup>177</sup> 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.<sup>178</sup> 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.<sup>179</sup> Several reconnaissance flights in the area of operation were undertaken with the Alouette III helicopters that belonged to the Dutch battalion.<sup>180</sup>

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.<sup>181</sup> 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.<sup>182</sup> 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

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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.<sup>183</sup> 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."<sup>184</sup> 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.<sup>185</sup>

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.<sup>186</sup> 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.<sup>187</sup> 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.<sup>188</sup> Despite this vague diplomatic language, it was clear to analysts and journalists that economic sanctions were in the air.<sup>189</sup> 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

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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.<sup>190</sup>

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.<sup>191</sup> France and Indonesia took over and organised a meeting with the Cambodian factions on 7 November at Sihanouk's residence in Beijing.<sup>192</sup> 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."<sup>193</sup> 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."<sup>194</sup> 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.<sup>195</sup>

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.<sup>196</sup> 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.<sup>197</sup> 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.<sup>198</sup> 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

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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.<sup>199</sup>

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.<sup>200</sup> 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.<sup>201</sup> The Council also invited the SNC to consider a similar ban on the export of minerals and gemstones in the near future.<sup>202</sup> 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.<sup>203</sup> 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.<sup>204</sup> 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.<sup>205</sup> 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.”<sup>206</sup>

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

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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.<sup>207</sup> 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.<sup>208</sup> 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."<sup>209</sup> 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.<sup>210</sup>

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.<sup>211</sup> 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.<sup>212</sup> 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.<sup>213</sup> 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

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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.<sup>214</sup>

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.<sup>215</sup> 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.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, the border area also was an important black market for stolen items and weapons.<sup>217</sup> 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."<sup>218</sup> 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.<sup>219</sup>

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.<sup>220</sup> 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."<sup>221</sup> 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

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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.<sup>222</sup> 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.<sup>223</sup> Akashi was clearly embarrassed by Bangkok’s rejection and denied to the press that he had ever asked the Thais for help.<sup>224</sup> 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.<sup>225</sup> 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.<sup>226</sup>

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.<sup>227</sup> 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.<sup>228</sup> 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.<sup>229</sup> 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[?]”<sup>230</sup> “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.<sup>231</sup> The Thai officials promised to talk to the Khmer Rouge leaders, but they weren't too optimistic about their ability to persuade them.<sup>232</sup> 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.<sup>233</sup> 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.<sup>234</sup> 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.<sup>235</sup>

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.<sup>236</sup> A disappointed Akashi subsequently leaked the videotape to journalist William Shawcross, who used the footage in his reporting.<sup>237</sup>

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.<sup>238</sup> 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.<sup>239</sup>

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.<sup>240</sup> 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.<sup>241</sup> 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.<sup>242</sup> 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.<sup>243</sup> 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.<sup>244</sup>

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

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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.<sup>245</sup> 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."<sup>246</sup>

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."<sup>247</sup> 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."<sup>248</sup> 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."<sup>249</sup> 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."<sup>250</sup> 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

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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.<sup>251</sup> 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.<sup>252</sup>

### 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.<sup>253</sup> 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.<sup>254</sup> 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."<sup>255</sup> 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.<sup>256</sup> Although this was theoretically true, it did not fool the Khmer Rouge, nor the press.<sup>257</sup>

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

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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, 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, 9 December 1992, UNTAC HQ, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

256 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 27<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>258</sup> 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.<sup>259</sup> 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.<sup>260</sup> 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.<sup>261</sup> 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.<sup>262</sup>

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.<sup>263</sup> 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.<sup>264</sup> 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.<sup>265</sup> 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.<sup>266</sup> 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

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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.<sup>267</sup> 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.<sup>268</sup>

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.<sup>269</sup> 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."<sup>270</sup> 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."<sup>271</sup> 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.<sup>272</sup> 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.<sup>273</sup> 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

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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.<sup>274</sup> 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.<sup>275</sup> 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.<sup>276</sup>

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.<sup>277</sup> 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."<sup>278</sup> 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."<sup>279</sup>

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

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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.<sup>280</sup> 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."<sup>281</sup> 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.<sup>282</sup> 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*.<sup>283</sup> 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.<sup>284</sup>

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.<sup>285</sup> 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.<sup>286</sup> 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.<sup>287</sup> 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.<sup>288</sup> The prince explained that his change of mind was partly due to a letter he had received from Gareth Evans.<sup>289</sup> 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.

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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.