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

Stam, W.

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PROPOSITIONS BELONGING TO THE PHD THESIS
**“The Imperative of Success: United Nations Peacekeeping
in Cambodia (1991–1993)”**

1. The peacekeeping failures in the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) and in Somalia (UNOSOM II) have strongly contributed to the interpretation of UNTAC as a success.
2. UNTAC was guided by the misconception that feigning success was similar to achieving success.
3. A strict adherence to the peacekeeping principles was not the reason for UNTAC’s ability to secure a “successful” outcome in Cambodia. On the contrary, the notions of impartiality and the use of force only in self-defence were stretched to the point of violation in order to save the mission, and paradoxically, the credibility of UN peacekeeping itself.
4. The myth that UNTAC achieved “success” by strictly adhering to the peacekeeping ethos has been reinforced by a caricatured presentation of some of the key actors: Sanderson, Lordin and Akashi as the peacekeeper, the warrior and the diplomat.
5. UNTAC was the embodiment of post-Cold War optimism about liberal institutionalism, but the dynamic of the operation was actually determined by individual member-states following their national agendas and protecting their strategic interests.
6. The theoretical and legalistic distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement has long distorted a thorough understanding of the true challenges and dilemmas in UN peacekeeping operations.
7. Debates about UN peacekeeping have been overly focused on the utility of force and not enough on the political willingness to accept the risks that are involved in peacekeeping operations.
8. Research on UN peacekeeping has so far hardly been based on archival sources, but the increased access to archives on UN operations in the 1990s, notwithstanding declassification challenges, provides an opportunity for a new wave of in-depth historical research and therefore with new insights.
9. UN peacekeeping is a hybrid diplomatic-military activity, and a peacekeeper must constantly seek a balance between acting as a soldier and a diplomat.
10. UN peacekeeping operations can only be effective if UN member states match their declared ambitions with true commitments. But as long as Western countries continue to refrain from contributing infantry battalions, the future of UN peacekeeping is highly uncertain.
11. UNTAC headquarters in Phnom Penh should have been provided with an “operational peace diarist”, a professional historian who, in the tradition of Thucydides, writes a first-hand historical analysis of decision making processes and other events of significance.
12. Knowledge of the past is a precondition for understanding the present and foresee possible futures.