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A Further Look at UNTAC's Performance and Dilemmas: A Review Article

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U.N. Peacekeeping in Cambodia: UNTAC's Civil Mandate. By Doyle W. Michael. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 1995. 117 pp.

The Peace Process in Cambodia. By Frank Frost. Australia: Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Australia-Asia Papers No. 69, October 1993. 61 pp.

International Peace Keeping: Building on the Cambodian Experience. Edited by Hugh Smith. Australia: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994. 252 pp.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United Nations (UN) has been kept busy. Neo-liberal institutionalism as a theory of international relations has since come to the fore of global politics as the United Nations continues to work its way towards regaining its status as the true global player that could affect change in the area of international peace and security. By the end of 1994, the UN had deployed 75,000 "blue helmets" from more than seventy countries in seventeen simultaneous peacekeeping, or observing, missions covering five regions of the world (Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia) at a cost of no less than US\$4 billion a year, and of no fewer than 1,200 "blue helmets" lives.

One of the UN's post-Cold War peace missions was UNTAC (the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia), which was endorsed by the four warring Cambodian factions (the Khmer Peoples' National Liberation Front or KPNLF, the FUNCINPEC or the Royalist Group, the State of

Cambodia or SOC, and the Khmer Rouge). The most critical issue that confronted UNTAC was whether it had made, or could have made, a difference.

When the UN Security Council's Permanent Five (P-5) members were involved in "quiet diplomacy" throughout 1990 in their efforts to hammer out their differences over Cambodia, many Cambodia scholars protested against a UN role in the country. Cultural institutionalists saw no merit in such a risky adventure: the UN venturing into a world where no fertile ground for the seeds of liberal democracy was on tap. Legalists shared the same pessimism, albeit for different reasons. Their arguments were clear and simple: the mission was bound to fail; they chastised the UN and charged it with dancing to the Khmer Rouge's tune. With the "genocidal" faction included in the peace process, the argument went, peace and democracy were not on the cards. Yet, as will be seen, Frank Frost, Michael Doyle and the contributors to Hugh Smith's edited volume have highlighted UNTAC's "qualified" success. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to tackle all the theoretical or conceptual issues of UNTAC at the operational level. Nonetheless, a review of the three books on UNTAC's role (from November 1991 to September 1993) may serve some useful purpose.

UNTAC in Cambodia's Messy Domestic Conditions

Frost's study should be of great interest to those unfamiliar with Cambodia because he has taken a detailed look at the domestic conditions faced by UNTAC during the transitional period. Frost was under no illusion that the mission would get this war-torn country out of the many dilemmas that have existed for decades. Painting a grim picture of Cambodia in his assessment of its socio-economic and political developments, he presents the following arguments: the UN-sponsored peace process effected some positive change, especially at the international level. In Southeast Asia as a whole, there was "substantial progress". The extra- and intra-regional powers involved directly or indirectly in the Cambodian war agreed to reduce tension. Both China and Vietnam began to modify their stance towards each other in "their process of cautious détente". The United States became less antagonistic towards the Indochinese states as it agreed to end the "economic embargo on Cambodia" and "has taken substantial steps towards further contacts with Vietnam" (p. 1). Furthermore, relations among states within the region have gained some momentum as the ASEAN states and those within Indochina continued to expand their political and economic relations.

While Frost recognizes some dramatic positive changes at the global

and regional levels, he seems to suggest that this was not the case at the domestic level. Post-UN Cambodia is still faced with "substantial problems". Although UNTAC succeeded in holding elections in May 1993 with nearly 90 per cent of the registered voters going to the polls, there is no guarantee that "these elections will serve as the first step in a process which will lead to the creation of a new political order capable of promoting domestic reconstruction and stability and a secure regional and international position for Cambodia" (p. 1).

Underlying Frost's study was that Cambodia remained a "tough nut to crack" and that UNTAC faced a series of socio-economic and political challenges. His description of these problems (in Part 3 of his study, pp. 12–35) is, in the following order: the Cambodian factions' continuing competition and conflict, Sihanouk's rôle, economic poverty and recovery (issues and dilemmas), the resettlement programme, and Cambodia's foreign relations. In Frost's view, the Cambodian factions, especially the State of Cambodia (SOC) or the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the Khmer Rouge, continued their suspicions and hostilities throughout the transitional period. As he put it: "The struggle among the factions for power posed major problems for UNTAC in trying to contain and reduce violent competition while preparing the way for the planned elections" (p. 12).

In socio-economic terms, the UN faced enormous problems. Cambodia was one of the world's poorest nations. The SOC/CPP ran into a budget crisis. Cambodia lacked "administrative procedures to facilitate aid transfers and the impact of continuing factional conflict in delaying the transmission of aid into the country". "The net result of these problems was a deteriorating economic situation which damaged the socio-economic environment of the peace process" (p. 25). In addition to this was the social crisis faced by the UN in trying to reintegrate more than 350,000 Cambodian refugees from camps near, and on, the Thai border. Despite some difficulties, the repatriation efforts proved successful.

The problems were compounded by Cambodia's neighbours' alleged continued interference in its affairs. On the western border, Thai business linkages with the Khmer Rouge and Thailand's support for the faction were reasons why it did not comply with the UN. As Frost put it: "These arrangements effectively placed Thai interests in the position in their on-going struggle for influence in Cambodia" (p. 31). Continuing Vietnamese interference in Cambodian affairs (alleged by some Cambodian factions) and Vietnamese immigration also posed serious problems for Cambodia.

Frost's description of Cambodia's socio-economic and political problems facing UNTAC offers some food for thought to both scholars and policy-makers. The lesson is clear: any attempt at peace-making, peace-keeping

and peace-building within a war-torn society would have to take into account the various obstacles that will inevitably emerge.

Even though Frost's descriptive study is informative, it is less than satisfactory both in terms of organization of thoughts and in a theoretical context. Had he structured his thinking more carefully or systematically, he would have made his study much clearer and more salient. For instance, if the factions' suspicions and hostilities were the most serious obstacle to the peace process, he should have discussed it in greater detail after (and not before) he identified other less serious issues and dilemmas. In another instance, although it is useful to some interested individuals, his description of the Australian role seems irrelevant and parochial.

His socio-economic and political approach requires further serious systematic thinking. Besides merely describing the various problems, he does not offer any logical explanation as to why domestic problems continued to the degree that they did. First, it is not clear whether or not Sihanouk's political role was relevant to the peace process, albeit Frost gives some attention to the Prince's role. Was Sihanouk a helping hand or a hindrance to the peace process? Or was he irrelevant? Secondly, Frost does not explain why the Cambodian factions, particularly the Khmer Rouge, did not co-operate fully with UNTAC. The concept of power struggle is never properly defined and adequately explained.

UNTAC's Performance: Problems From Within

Some of the pieces of the Cambodian puzzle missing in Frost's study can be found in Hugh Smith's and Michael Doyle's books. Smith's book is worth reading partly because it is a collection of papers (originally delivered in Canberra on 2–4 May 1994) by many individuals who had hands-on experience in the subject matter and partly because they are generally frank in their re-evaluation of UNTAC's work. Some of them are even internationally known for their close involvement. For instance, Lieutenant-General John Sanderson, UNTAC's Military Chief, wrote the introduction and Chapter 2; and Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who was active in the Cambodian process, contributed Chapter 1.

As General Sanderson points out in his chapter, the problems facing Cambodia during the transitional period was not simply about the Khmer Rouge being worse than the lunatic fringe. In acknowledging the problems in the implementation process of the Cambodia agreement, he notes: "There [was] a tendency to blame the Khmer Rouge for initiating breaches of the peace process and their historical baggage" (p. 18). Perhaps the most balanced of all the arguments on Cambodia in the book, Sanderson's analysis recognizes some important conceptual issues, such as the use and

deployment of force, and neutrality. His emphasis on the need to maintain neutrality in peacekeeping is conceptually sound simply because, in my view, piling up the blame on the Khmer Rouge for everything that went wrong was not only misleading but also left the faction with only Hobson's choice.

Despite their acknowledgment of the UN's overall success in Cambodia, other contributors shed light on the difficulties involved in the UNTAC mission at the operational or technical levels. In Chapter 3, Michael Maley outlines "how the elections were established and conducted from a practical point of view" (p. 33). Problems such as the slow deployment of UNTAC personnel, inadequate manpower, administrative efficiency, and cultural and language barriers are briefly discussed. Lyndall McLean's contribution in Chapter 4 is also interesting because he takes a close look at civil administration in transition. Again, although UNTAC was a success story, the civil administrative component did not fare well. In her view, "the mandate was unrealistic, overly ambitious and some aspects were clearly unachievable. The problems that began with a lack of planning were exacerbated by a lack of resources" (p. 56).

Both Chapters 5 and 6 are equally interesting: they deal with matters concerning the UN police which are not normally well understood by the general public. Chris Eaton looks at the UNTAC Police component, which was blamed for its lack of discipline. In his view, "too many people employed as United Nations Civilian Police are not in fact police at all" (pp. 60–61). They are not normal community police, but "para-military militia, border-guards or simply military police". In this context, they were not equipped to do their jobs effectively. In Cambodia, the UN police "had none of the tools that underpin[ed] their role in their domestic country: no laws, no justice administration, no courts and no jails" (p. 61). The UN police's problems were further amplified by Mark Plunkett (in Chapter 6) who argues that, for all the difficulties involved, "the mechanisms for the facilitation of justice through domestic legal systems are fundamentally matters for UN transitional authorities" (p. 65).

The most interesting chapter on Cambodia in Smith's book is that contributed by Michael Doyle. Since the third study under review is also by Doyle, it will be more useful to take a closer look at his book rather than his chapter (with the same arguments). Of all the three studies under review, Doyle's is certainly the most useful because his analysis is based on the assumption that failed, or failing, states in the Third World can be rescued by the UN. As a liberal-institutionalist scholar, he has done a wonderful job in identifying the problems that the UN faced during the transitional period and in making recommendations for future peace missions. One of his concluding remarks is very telling: "...the challenges

today's peacekeepers face will be lessened if the diplomats and officials give them politically well-designed mandates to implement the very trying circumstances the peacekeepers will discover in those parts of the world most in need of their services" (p. 88).

Doyle is, of course, interested in the question why the UNTAC mission failed in some areas and succeeded in others. In his enquiry, he attempts to measure successes as well as failures and to identify their sources. In Chapter 4, the successes enumerated were as follows: (1) *self-determination* (in the sense that Cambodia enjoyed, for the first time, the "prospect of true independence from the control of any foreign power"; (2) the UNTAC presence "signalled the end of full-scale war"; (3) the peaceful repatriation of more than 370,000 refugees; and, (4) the UN managed to hold the planned elections. Doyle sees two major areas of failure: "failure to achieve a cease-fire and then canton, demobilize, and disarm [70% of] the [Cambodian] military forces"; and "UNTAC's inability to achieve control over civil administration and prevent breakdowns in law and order and political neutrality" (pp. 32–34).

In terms of sources of success and failure, Doyle divides his explanation into three parts: (1) contributing factors (slow deployment of UNTAC personnel, insufficient planning, discontinuity between the development of the peace plan and its implementation, NGOs' role, a level of poor staff quality and some simple administrative problems); (2) determinants (local support, international support, a multidimensional mandate); and, (3) accounting for variance. The last part of his explanation is inspired by the question why some specific areas of the UNTAC operation succeeded while others failed. His answer is as follows: although there are many causes of the differential success of the UNTAC components, "the simplest and seemingly most powerful explanation focuses on the unwillingness of the parties to cooperate and UNTAC's decision not to attempt to enforce the mandate" (p. 66).

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Doyle's study is his prescription for enhancing the adversaries' consent to the UN. His analysis offers some good leads, pointing to the fact that the UN could have done a better job. UNTAC succeeded in part because of international support, especially from the UN Security Council's Permanent Five. The P-5 were able to persuade the Cambodian factions to accept their settlement. But the P-5's agreement was not the end of the story. The UN should have been ready to take the next step: It "should be ready to implement the mandate as soon after the peace treaty is signed as is practicable" (p. 83). Furthermore, the UN should develop a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the people and "create (not just enjoy) the support of local forces of order" (p. 83). Doyle then correctly warns against the excessive use of force that

some hard-nosed realist and legal scholars have proposed: "the UN must avoid the trade-offs between using too much force and too little" (p. 85). On top of peace-making and peace-keeping, the UN's role in peace-building should be aimed not only at changing political behaviour but also at transforming "identities and institutional contexts". As he put it: "More than reforming play in an old game, it changes the game" (p. 86).

All in all, Doyle's liberal institutionalist analysis of UNTAC is not only informative but also stimulating. Unlike many pessimists who had predicted a gloomy role for UNTAC, he is able to recognize the need for the UN to avoid falling into the same pitfalls. The basis of his analysis rests on his conviction that the UN can come to the rescue of failed or failing states which cannot help themselves. For all the merits worthy of praise in his effort at scholarship, Doyle's work on UNTAC is not without definitive and conceptual difficulties.

Doyle's struggle with what constitutes success and failure is obvious. He recognizes this problem when he writes: "measuring success in complex UN peace operations does not lend itself to simple indicators" (p. 32). It is not clear what his dependent and independent variables are. It would be more helpful if he had defined success and failure in terms of what happened to the peace process and explained why the UN succeeded only to the extent that it did. For instance, he should have defined "success" in relative terms, that is to say, success compared to when (the pre-UN era?), to what (old authoritarian politics?) and to what extent (limitations)? If success is the dependent variable, what exactly is the independent one? Only then can one go on to explain why and how the UN could have worked to acquire the adversaries' consent.

Moreover, Doyle's impressive study is often conceptually problematic. As already pointed out, he uses the terms "contributing factors", "determinants" and "variance" to explain the successes and failures of UNTAC, but there seems to be some confusion as to what determines what. For example, if UNTAC had done a poorer job, would it still have enjoyed the same level of local support? If the answer is "no", why should local support be a determinant of success or failure? To view UNTAC as "merely contributing" rather than "determining" does not fit well into Doyle's call for better strategies on the UN's part. In failing or failed states, it is the UN that has the sole responsibility to make things work.

For all the short-comings the UN mission had, it remains a big puzzle why the Cambodian factions (especially the Phnom Penh regime known as the State of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge) did not abide by the terms of their agreement. As Gareth Evans describes the comprehensive political settlement to the Cambodian conflict, he touches on a number of important issues, one of which is the fact that all the Cambodian factions

supported the P-5's negotiated agreement based on the Australian proposal, known as *Cambodia: An Australian Peace Proposal* "Red Book". He explains why Australia (a middle-power) became actively involved in the Cambodia conflict and why everything came together in 1989 and not before. One interesting aspect of this chapter is that middle power diplomacy has been vindicated. Australia, of course, has good reason to be proud of a job relatively well done. But the effective role of "like-minded" middle powers without P-5 agreement, which largely resulted from the collapse of the former Soviet Union, has to be questioned. Moreover, one wonders if Evans' definition of success included Australia's political strategy to exclude the Khmer Rouge from the process of national reconciliation. A close examination of the P-5's foreign policy interests in Cambodia might help us solve part of the Cambodian puzzle.

The P-5 Factor in UNTAC's Operation: Questionable Commitments to Impartiality

While Cambodia's socio-economic and political conditions, and UNTAC's poor performance, must be taken into account when explaining the dilemmas the United Nations faced in Cambodia, it is important to bear in mind that the organization's performance would depend in large part on how its member states (especially the permanent members of the Security Council) are willing and able to finance the UN mission on time and to act in an impartial manner.

Financial Commitments to UNTAC

The P-5 did not have any serious difficulty passing the resolutions pressing the Cambodian signatories, especially the Khmer Rouge, to fulfil their obligations as stipulated by the Peace Agreement and urging the UN Secretary General to implement the Peace Agreement. When it came to their own financial commitments, however, they were decidedly less enthusiastic. Six months after the Agreement was signed, very little money was contributed to the mission. Following the Security Council's Resolutions 668 (1990) of 20 September 1990, 717 (1991) of 16 October 1991, and 718 (1991) of 31 October 1991, the P-5 simply awaited the Secretary General's action. They continued to pass other resolutions pertaining to the UN mission in Cambodia (Resolution 728 [1992] of 8 January 1992, authorizing the expansion of UNAMIC's mandate; and Resolution 745 [1992] of 28 February 1992, approving the Secretary General's 19 February 1992 implementation plan).

Concerning UNTAC's financial needs, the Security Council's resolution 745 (1992) only reaffirmed its full support for the Peace Agreement, expressed its desire to see the restoration and maintenance of peace in Cambodia, the promotion of national reconciliation, the protection of human rights, and the assurance of the right to self-determination of the Cambodian people through free and fair elections. The resolution also indicated the UN Security Council's strong conviction that free and fair elections were essential to a just and durable settlement of the Cambodian conflict, thereby contributing to regional and international peace and security, and the Council's approval of the UN implementation plan and the establishment of UNTAC. More importantly, the Council urged the UN Secretary General to rapidly deploy UNTAC, for the implementation of the peace plan, as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. More specifically, when passing Resolution 745 (1992), the P-5 recognized how important it was for the United Nations to have adequate financial resources. They all shared the Secretary General's view that UNTAC must have the full support of the Security Council and should be given adequate financial resources.

While the P-5 talked tough about getting UNTAC into the field, they hesitated about committing themselves to its actual operation. When Resolution 745 (1992) was passed, Russia's remarks about UN expenditures for Cambodia revealed its weak financial commitments to the fragile peace process. Stressing the need to carry out the UNTAC operation as soon as possible, it suggested that it should be done in the most effective and economical manner, and that they expected to see the Secretary General's preliminary calculations of possible UNTAC expenditures substantially reduced. Russia's reluctance to become financially committed to this operation was evidenced by its assertion that the success of UNTAC would "in the last analysis, be determined not by how many 'blue helmets' and other United Nations representatives are sent to Cambodia, [but] by how durable and lasting the process of national reconciliation and agreement in that country will be and by how harmoniously the seeds of respect for democracy and human rights sown there will sprout".

While agreeing with the UN report concerning the Council's full support and adequate financial resources, Britain could only express its hope that the UN would stick to the target date of April or May for the holding of elections. As far as UNTAC's financial needs were concerned, it had only paid or pledged to support humanitarian activities in Cambodia: £2 million pledged for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an 11 million pledge for humanitarian activities by international organizations in Cambodia over the next three years, and £750,000 given to the World Food Programme to help displaced Cambodian persons.

France also spoke in terms of how urgent it was to get UNTAC started before the rainy season. Its representative at the Council said, "any delay would be very harmful". He accentuated the need for adequate financial resources to conduct the operation. France should be given credit for its quick action. It was the first among the P-5 to send its personnel (112 in all) to Cambodia in November 1991 as part of UNTAC and made a voluntary contribution to the amount of US\$8 million.

Also committed to the rapid deployment of UNTAC, China nevertheless expressed concern about the cost of its field operation. At the Council's meeting on 28 February 1992, the Chinese representative drew particular attention to the need for accomplishing the tasks "in the most economical and effective way". He expressed China's support for the Secretary General's adoption of economic measures on the premise of ensuring the fulfilment of the agreement.

While the United States was also of the opinion that the time had come for UNTAC to be rapidly deployed, it only stated a commitment to making a contribution to the immense cost and scale of the operation. At the same time, it asserted that the efficiency of UNTAC would not only reduce overall costs but would also benefit the UN operation.

In spite of the P-5's total share amounting to about 55 per cent of operational costs (at least US\$800 million), they did not act quickly to ensure UNTAC's rapid deployment. By May 1992, UNTAC was still operating on the basis of an advance of US\$200 million appropriated by the General Assembly. In short, the problematic deployment of UNTAC personnel definitely limited its overall performance, thereby contributing to cease-fire violations and the abortive disarmament effort. Despite their formal recognition of the UN dilemma in carrying out this most ambitious mission, the P-5 seemed to lack financial commitment to enhance UNTAC's legitimate authority. The only financial commitment that looked promising was the US\$880 million pledge made by the international community at the Tokyo conference in June 1992. Yet, eight months later only US\$25 million had been provided by the donor countries. While the American pledge was in the amount of US\$135 million, by March 1993 almost none had been tendered.

China, France and the United States: Towards the Khmer Rouge

The Cambodian factions' perception of the great powers' intentions was more shaped by the latter's policies. Since both Russia and Britain played the role of bystanders, it is more useful to focus on China, France and the United States. From a legal point of view, as defined in the context of the Peace Agreement, China took a more conciliatory approach towards

Cambodia. While it did not initially wish to offend the international community, China continued to maintain low-profile support for a political process that would allow the Khmer Rouge to play an effective electoral role. Unlike the other great powers, China insisted on the four Cambodian parties promoting national reconciliation. At the signing of the Agreement, Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, conveyed his government's position that the four Cambodian parties should carry on the spirit of national reconciliation and mutual accommodation and should faithfully implement the Peace Agreement.

When everyone accused the Khmer Rouge of violating the cease-fire, China took a sympathetic view. Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's plan to visit Cambodia was cancelled when the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan, was almost lynched by a mob after his arrival in Phnom Penh. China was also reported to have objected to the proposed SOC-FUNCINPEC alignment directed at containing the Khmer Rouge in the electoral process.¹ Until Resolution 793 (1992) was passed, China had offered support for the Khmer Rouge's participation in the peace process. As late as August 1992, China was reported to have still delivered its assistance in the form of funds and supplies to the Khmer Rouge.² Continually pressured by the international community, China later kept its distance and finally bowed to the other great powers' anti-Khmer Rouge policy.

Although France worked hard to maintain its neutrality and impartiality throughout the Cambodian negotiation process, particularly by hosting the two Paris conferences, it did not always act in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Its anti-Khmer Rouge policy could not be understood by simply reading General Michel Loridon's wish to do away with the faction once and for all. According to one scholar, France urged Sihanouk to turn against the Khmer Rouge. After the Prince arrived in Cambodia, he attempted to form an alliance with the SOC.

The French conduct of diplomacy towards Cambodia can be further explained in terms of how it dealt with the SOC at the non-official level before the signing of the Agreement. Apparently with a desire to reassert its influence over Indochina, France opened an Alliance Francaise to teach French to Cambodians. In addition, France offered a training programme in all fields, including a one-month training course in France to the SOC's top civil servants (including vice-ministers). In addition, some Cambodians did go to France to study in such fields as administration, management, finance, economics and law. According to a French diplomatic source, this programme was part of France's contribution to the future reconstruction of Cambodia, because it was easier for Cambodian civil servants "to acquire knowledge and expertise through the language they already knew".

France's closer relations with the SOC became obvious when the Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, accompanied by twenty-five representatives of leading French enterprises, visited Cambodia on 22 November 1991. Upon arrival at Pochentong Airport, they were welcomed by SOC Prime Minister Hun Sen, Foreign Minister Hor Namhong, and several other ministers and their deputies. The two sides discussed in detail the conditions necessary for the effective implementation of the Peace Agreement. On 24 November, Dumas admitted that the SOC had insisted on France taking part in the formation and adaptation of the economic, administrative, and judicial structures in Cambodia, as well as French intervention in agriculture, including rubber plantations. Hun Sen allowed Dumas "to identify a number of sectors that require[d] urgent assistance, which France [was] happy to provide". While appearing to be cordial with the SOC, France had no interest in making concessions with the Khmer Rouge whatsoever. In January 1990, for instance, President Francois Mitterand issued a strong declaration: "No compromise is acceptable with the Khmer Rouge". This position remained absolute. France wanted to see other Cambodian parties in power. When asked to comment on the proposed alignment between the SOC and FUNCINPEC against the Khmer Rouge during his visit to Cambodia in November 1991, Foreign Minister Dumas made the point that he would not object to it. "What goes on inside the political forces — an arrangement in view of the forthcoming electoral campaign — is only normal", he said.

In short, France did not act impartially or, at least, give the strong impression that it was neutral in the Cambodian conflict during the UNTAC period. According to one analyst, France was "eager to re-establish its influence in Cambodia and Vietnam". As a result, "it condemned the Khmer Rouge and was cool towards the KPNLF but fairly supportive of [FUNCINPEC]". Furthermore, "it was keen to see co-operation between Sihanouk and Hun Sen . . . [and] became increasingly supportive of the SOC. It [was] the first Western country to give official aid to the SOC and to send its highest-ranking foreign ministry official to Phnom Penh before the signing of the Peace Agreement".³

There is room for argument about which side Washington was on during the transitional period. A number of analysts have pointed out that the United States' main strategy was to oppress the CPP and to deprive Vietnam of its influence in Cambodia. David Roberts, for instance, argues that Washington preferred to see the KPNLF and FUNCINPEC win at the expense of the CPP.⁴

According to Roberts, Washington's foreign policy was "geared towards financial support for those parties in opposition to the CPP". The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) developed a strategy

in support of this political objective. Its bottom-up approach was “concentrated on local, small-scale initiatives, not large-scale infrastructural projects which clearly benefit[ed] the Hun Sen/CPP regime”. After the elections, USAID’s approach shifted from private volunteer organizations/non-government organizations’ activities to infrastructure and co-operation with the SNC. Based on this strategy, Roberts drew the conclusion that “the single objective of United States aid/foreign policy had altered little since 1992. The pattern of marginalizing the CPP ha[d] been maintained at all levels. . . .”⁵

Roberts was further convinced by what he saw in the post-election period: America was bent on keeping France out of the American sphere of influence, oppressing the CPP, and punishing Hanoi for the U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War. In fact, Roberts’ whole argument seems to have been inspired by what a senior American UNTAC official had said: “In order to do what we want to do in Cambodia, we can do without Prince Sihanouk. We can do without the CPP. We have ninety million dollars to keep the officials and soldiers of the SOC and to buy the CPP Deputies necessary to get the 2/3 [majority] and then put in place the coalition of our choice”.⁶

This kind of argument has some validity and limitations. No doubt, Washington would have desired to see FUNCINPEC and the KPNLF win the electoral battle since they had been its clients throughout the 1980s. But, to assume that opposition to the CPP was Washington’s single foreign policy objective is flawed. Washington may have pursued a policy to marginalize the CPP, but it did not intend to see it exit from the political scene. In fact, the possibility of the Khmer Rouge returning to power was of concern to American policy-makers more than anything else.

It may be worth recalling the fact that American policy-makers had changed their stance towards the CGDK in the summer of 1990 in order to get the Cambodian belligerents to negotiate. From that point on, their central concern was not simply to end support for the Khmer Rouge but to make sure that they would not regain power in Cambodia. While this new policy or strategy did not really prevent the Khmer Rouge from signing the Peace Agreement, it created further suspicions that Washington would try to eliminate them in the political process.

It might also be helpful to recall that the American policy towards the Khmer Rouge prior to the signing of the Peace Agreement was only just emerging. Throughout 1989, Representative Chester Atkins asked the State Department to put pressure on Sihanouk to turn his back on the Khmer Rouge. Atkins’ colleague, Jim Leach, also “renewed a call for an international tribunal to try Pol Pot”. In April 1991, when the Cambodian negotiations were still under way, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon explained Washington’s strategy to contain the Khmer Rouge.

A Peace Agreement as proposed by the P-5 would benefit the SOC. With the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would lose their “main propaganda focus: Vietnamese support for Phnom Penh”. As a result, they would “have to defend their genocidal practices of the late 1970s”. In his careful calculation, they would not win enough seats: “no one expects the Khmer Rouge to do well in that situation”. Even if the Khmer Rouge had participated in the electoral race, they might have won a limited share of the vote but were “unlikely to gain any significant power in a new government”.

Washington’s political strategy did not end with the Khmer Rouge’s predictable loss. It moved further to a dangerous zero-sum game that would put the Khmer Rouge away once and for all after the elections. In July 1991, Richard Solomon made his government’s position on the Khmer Rouge clear. On the genocide issue, Washington “most strongly” shared Hanoi’s opposition to the return to power by the Khmer Rouge. “We have publicly stated this in the past and will continue to do so during the settlement process,” said Solomon. Just six days prior to the signing of the Peace Agreement, Solomon asserted that his government “would be absolutely delighted to see Pol Pot and the others brought to justice”. SOC Prime Minister Hun Sen was now to blame for the Peace Agreement’s exclusion of provision for a trial. According to Solomon, “Mr Hun Sen had promoted the idea over the summer months of a tribunal to deal with this issue. For reasons that he would have to explain, he dropped that idea at the end of the negotiations”.

Even when the Agreement was being signed, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker made a detrimental statement which generally echoed the second pillar of Washington’s foreign policy in Asia and specifically condemned the Khmer Rouge’s past atrocities. For the first time, he admitted that their reign had left more than one million Cambodians dead and pointed out that the violence they had used against their own people “ha[d] few parallels in history”. He added: “The world is still shocked at the horrors of Khmer Rouge annihilation”. In his view, the Khmer Rouge were “no ordinary oppressors”.

While James Baker’s moral and political condemnation of the Khmer Rouge’s past policies and practices as “an abomination to humanity” was morally justified and sent a powerful message that never again would the international community allow them to recur, it did not end there. In addition to his support for the promotion of human rights in Cambodia and for the SNC’s acceptance of a multi-party democratic political order, he added that his government would “support efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the mass murders of the 1970s if the new Cambodian government chooses to pursue this path”. Washington was on the

brink of a serious dilemma, having to choose between the Peace Agreement, which allowed the Khmer Rouge to enjoy legitimacy in the electoral process, and the moral/legal obligation to exclude them.

However admirable this policy may have appeared on the surface, it was not morally feasible when taking Cambodian history into account, nor legally justifiable when taking the Peace Agreement into consideration, nor politically realistic in the context of the Cambodian conflict. From a moral point of view, it was extremely difficult to quantify the degree of crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge, as described by James Baker. No Cambodian leaders, including those in the SOC/CPP circle, were blameless. All were guilty of some criminal action that deserved punishment. Washington itself was at one point "accused by Sihanouk of committing genocide in Cambodia during the Lon Nol era". The American sins of commission took place during the well-known and extensive bombings of the Khmer Rouge zones in the first half of the 1970s.⁷ According to Michael Haas, "Washington had too much blood on its hands to single out Polpotism as an evil to be eradicated".⁸

From a legal point of view, Washington's "hidden agenda" appeared to have contradicted the Peace Agreement. According to Serge Thion, James Baker "want[ed] to have it both ways: to sign an agreement that jack[ed] up the Khmer Rouge into a legitimate position and to distance himself from them on moral and legal grounds".⁹ Whatever the American intention might have been, Baker's policy statement sent two important, though detrimental, messages to the fragile democratic process. Firstly, it predetermined the electoral outcome. The fact that Baker asserted clearly that his government would support the newly-elected Cambodian government if it decided to bring those murderers to justice implied that the new Cambodian government would not be the one controlled or shared by the Khmer Rouge. Secondly, this political judgement also violated the Peace Agreement which allowed all four signatories to participate effectively in the electoral process in the hope that each could be elected into the Constituent Assembly and could form a new government.

Politically, Washington's strategy was impractical and lacked common sense, for it could be viewed as a perfect case of lulling the enemy into a false sense of security by pretending to play by the rules of the political game. To say that the Khmer Rouge would definitely not form a government was one thing, but to unduly alarm them under the threat of retributive justice was another. It sent a strong and clear message not only to the other parties (especially the SOC/CPP) that they would be more legitimate, thus more entitled to do as they pleased with the democratic process, but also to the Khmer Rouge that, under any circumstances, they would lose

in the elections and might be subjected to retroactive punishment for their acts of genocide.

Even during the transitional period, some political elements in Washington pressed for legal action against the Khmer Rouge. In 1992, U.S. Senator Charles Robb introduced legislation in the Senate, known as the "Khmer Rouge Prosecution and Exclusion Act". Notwithstanding the fact that the legislation was not passed, it nonetheless sent a signal to the Khmer Rouge about the United States' potential readiness to put them on trial for their past crimes against humanity should they lose in the elections. In the context of the Peace Agreement that legitimizes the Khmer Rouge, the United States could be perceived as having had the potential to act in bad faith.

Thus, the broader implications of the policy objectives of France and the United States were quite apparent to the Khmer Rouge. Under all circumstances, they were not only considered unfit to rule but would most likely be subjected to future prosecution and punishment. To the Khmer Rouge, Russia, Great Britain, France and the United States were of the same mind with regard to their political future in Cambodia. It should not be too difficult to understand why the faction was critical of UNTAC's overall performance and its final decision to pull out of the electoral contest.

Conclusion

In sum, although the three studies offer (in different ways) some useful complementary guide for understanding the dilemmas the UN would face when trying to transform war-torn states into peaceful and democratic ones, they should not be read uncritically. The bottom-line is that none of the authors has dealt effectively with the burning question of why the Khmer Rouge was the only party that had called it quits just before the elections took place. The advice one could give to readers is that they should consider the problem of perceived insecurity when seeking to discern domestic adversaries' political behaviour in failed or failing states and pay more attention to the role of the great powers (not just middle ones) in the peace process. The writers under review overlooked the P-5's foreign policy objectives and their impact on Cambodia's peace process. In order for scholars to understand more fully why UNTAC succeeded only to the extent that it did, more research is needed. They would learn more about the mission if they do not overlook the P-5's foreign policy objectives which are still guided by their own interests in the post-Cold War era. Thus, the UN would get less frustrated and perform better if it could avoid putting itself too deeply in the shoes of a "bad workman who always blames his tools" by learning more about the tricks of the trade in domestic

peacekeeping, and if the P-5 could act in a less ideological, and more impartial, manner.

NOTES

1. According to Prince Ranaridh, the proposed coalition between his party and the SOC was viewed by China as a threat to the peace plan. The Chinese said that they did not want to hear about this coalition any more. The Prince eventually bowed to the Chinese pressure. Foreign Broadcast Information Service-East Asia Service (FBIS-EAS), 9 December 1991.
2. *Bangkok Post*, 4 August 1992.
3. M.H. Lao, "Obstacles to Peace in Cambodia", *Pacific Review* 6, no. 4 (1993): 389.
4. David Roberts, "Democratic Kampuchea?", *Pacific Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 108.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
7. William Shawcross, *Side-shows: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). During my discussion with him in May 1993, Shawcross quoted a remark: "What the United States started, the Khmer Rouge completed".
8. Michael Haas, *Cambodia, Pol Pot and the United States* (New York: Praeger 1991), p. 22.
9. Serge Thion, "Genocide as a Political Commodity", in *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia*, edited by Ben Kiernan (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University, 1993), p. 164.

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