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CAMBODIA'S POST-COLD WAR DILEMMA Democratization, Armed Conflict, and Authoritarianism

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Liberal scholars would contend that democratization is the sure path towards peace. Liberal democracies, they say, have never fought each other. To them, the post-Cold War global resurgence of democracy may be just the perfect assurance that we may well be on the way to living in a peaceful world. What most liberal scholars have not given enough thought to is the question of whether there is a relationship between democratization and war at the domestic, not the international, level. In this article, I will argue that pushing for rapid democratization in conditions of domestic anarchy may result in permanent conflict rather than peace and may work against democracy. Cambodia serves as an interesting study because of its enigmatic history awash with violence and blood. Although the United Nations and the international community have helped to nurture pandemic democratic values in this war-torn state, the process of democratization has so far failed to consolidate itself.¹ Because they adopted an anti-Khmer Rouge policy in favour of rapid democratization, some influential external actors have inadvertently contributed to the perpetuation of the armed conflict and to the creation of a new authoritarian regime.²

U.N. Intervention and Cambodian Democratization

The principal aim of the United Nations in getting involved in Cambodia between November 1991 and September 1993 was to create a neutral political environment for free and fair elections. It may be useful to look at the process of Cambodian democratization, starting from the time the war broke out and explaining why the Cambodian factions signed their peace agreement in 1991. The U.N. mission was a limited success story.

Democracy by External Intervention

After a brief period of democratic experiment following World War II (still under French colonial rule), Cambodia reverted to authoritarianism. Since the late 1960s Cambodia has been at war, thus making it difficult for the country to be a prospect for democracy. After a period of political stability under the leadership of Prince Sihanouk (Head of State), the country plunged into instability and

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chaos. In the past it was communist insurgency that had driven the Prince away from his neutral foreign policy when he bet his political future on both China and North Vietnam in the mid-1960s. His strategy was primarily security-driven: to keep the insurgents, whom he called Khmer Rouge or Red Khmers, at bay by getting the Chinese and North Vietnamese to support him.³

For a while, this policy worked. In the long run, however, it turned against him. By leaning towards the communist world, he managed to disempower the Khmer Rouge movement, which almost collapsed in the late 1960s. Unfortunately, he left his rightist subordinates dissatisfied. One tragedy then followed another. On 18 March 1970, his own trusted Minister of Defence, General Lon Nol, led a *coup d'état* (while the Prince was travelling abroad) and ousted him. The coup, however, did not put Cambodia back in order as a new civil war suddenly broke out. The Lon Nol regime, which stood for democracy, eventually went into defeat.

The Khmer Rouge leaders, who had fought to establish a socialist democracy, won the war but immediately lost the peace. The entire nation was turned overnight into a mass labour camp and killing field; more than one million out of some seven million people perished. Internal rebellion broke out. With the support of some 120,000 Vietnamese troops, the Khmer Rouge rebels turned on their leaders in Phnom Penh. In 1979, the Pol Pot regime was driven out of power; consequently, a new regime, calling itself the People's Republic of Kampuchea, or PRK, came into existence. Backed by Vietnam and the Soviet Union, the new regime picked up the pieces and started from scratch. Unfortunately, Cambodia still did not get back on track. Throughout the 1980s, more slaughtering occurred as the PRK/Vietnamese troops and many Cambodian resistance groups on the Thai-Cambodian borders continued to battle each other.

It was not until the end of the Cold War that a prospect for peace was in sight. By early 1990, it was clear that the great powers (especially the United States, China, and the former Soviet Union) had agreed to put Cambodia behind them. They worked out a political settlement among themselves and put pressure on the Cambodian factions to accept it. The peace agreement was reached on the basis that the United Nations would intervene to rebuild Cambodia by creating a neutral political environment for free and fair elections. I have called this intervention "conflict neutralization" — a process whereby military conflict can be defused by democratic means through a third party.⁴

The United Nations set up a multifarious mission, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, or UNTAC. As Cambodia's legitimate authority, UNTAC was made up of different components with multiple undertakings. First, UNTAC would hold the responsibility to foster an environment in which respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms would be ensured. Secondly, UNTAC would take "direct control" over five major governmental departments (foreign affairs, national defence, public security, finance and information) and "optional control" over other ministries that could influence

the outcome of the elections. Thirdly, UNTAC would ensure that the elections would be free and fair, its main task. Fourthly, UNTAC's military component (15,900 in all ranks) would be in charge of verifying the withdrawal from Cambodia of all categories of foreign forces and their arms and equipment, and supervising the ceasefire and a 70 per cent disarmament of the Cambodian factions' armed forces. Fifthly, UNTAC would also deploy its police force (numbering 3,600 altogether) to help maintain public order. Sixthly, UNTAC would start the repatriation and resettlement of some 360,000 refugees. Seventhly, UNTAC would begin rehabilitation and restoration of Cambodia's basic infrastructure and public utilities.

The United Nations began its operation in November 1991. Because of the immensity of the Cambodian undertaking, the complexities of the U.N. decision-making process, and the initial lack of resources to get the U.N. mission rolling, the United Nations did not get off to a promising start and only managed to get an advance mission to Cambodia after the peace agreement was signed. Known as UNAMIC, the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia was to pave the way for the real mission (UNTAC) envisioned in the peace agreement. It was not until September 1992 that the mission was in full swing.

Progress

Most scholars agree that, on the whole, UNTAC was a "qualified success". UNTAC managed to accomplish one major objective: the elections were held, despite the fact that the neutral political environment it had sought to create was not perfect and that the disarmament efforts failed dismally. After that, Cambodia continued to struggle to make the transition from political authoritarianism to liberal democracy.

No doubt, today's Cambodia is a far cry from that of the pre-election era where absolute authoritarianism was the style of governance. The U.N.-organized effort left Cambodia with some democratic institutions. Civil society slowly emerged. During the transitional period, the country witnessed the presence of more than 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Indigenous NGOs began to emerge. By 1995, twelve human rights agencies had played an important role in restraining the arbitrary actions of government leaders who had tried to emasculate or shut them down. It should be noted that only a few of them took the radical approach of openly voicing their criticisms of government actions. Most preferred to take a step-by-step approach to democracy by keeping a low profile, talking little but working hard to develop training programmes for teachers, students, and villagers to learn about human rights and democracy.⁵ The media also played a critical role in the process of democratization. By 1995, there were no fewer than thirty newspapers published daily, weekly, and bi-weekly. Although the majority of the newspapers were partisan and politicized, they were permitted in some measure to criticize government and party officials.

At the state level, a liberal democratic constituent assembly was established. During the May 1993 elections, 120 Members of Parliament were elected.

Since 14 June 1993, Constituent Assembly sessions have been held; a President and two Vice-Presidents elected; and working commissions and a Secretariat established. On 30 June 1993, a standing committee was formed to work on a constitutional draft which was put out for parliamentary debate in mid-September; the draft constitution was adopted and promulgated on 24 September 1993. The new constitution enshrines fundamental democratic principles: it recognizes a multi-party, liberal democratic system, the monarch's symbolic power (the king "holds the throne but shall not hold power"), and Cambodian citizens' rights and obligations.⁶

Structural developments supporting the process of democratization can be seen in the establishment of nine different legislative commissions: the Commission for the Protection of Human Rights and the Reception of Complaints; the Commission for Financial Affairs and Banking; the Commission for Economic Planning, Investment, Rural Development and the Environment; the Commission for National Defence and the Interior; the Commission for External Relations, International Co-operation and Information; the Legislation Commission; the Commission for Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Tourism; the Commission for Health Care, Social Services, Employment and Women's Affairs; and the Commission for Public Services, Transportation, Telecommunication and Post. Each commission has between seven and nine members, a chairperson, a deputy chairperson, and a secretary. Each commission also has a constitutional right to call upon members of the Royal Government to clarify issues within its specific mandate.

Since September 1993, the National Assembly has been at work, although by fits and starts. It is the only organ entrusted with the power to adopt laws based on an absolute majority rule. A number of rules, regulations, and laws have been passed, including Internal Rules designed to ensure the efficient and democratic functioning of the National Assembly, the Law on the Supreme Council of Magistracy, the Law on Co-statute of Civil Servants, the Law on Retirement and Disability Pensions for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, the Law on the Council of Ministers' organization and role, a law on urbanization and construction, an investment law, an immigration law, and so forth.

Besides the legislative body, Cambodia, after UNTAC, has enjoyed a democratically elected government and a supposedly democratic judicial system. Made up of three major parties, the coalition government has undergone few changes and is expected to stay in power beyond the planned 1998 elections. The judicial system has also been structured in accordance with democratic principles. At the theoretical level, the government was committed to the creation of an independent judiciary. This does not mean, however, that in structural terms the institution has become acceptably solid. Although the National Assembly passed the law governing the Supreme Council of Magistracy, the Council had yet to begin functioning. The proposal that a Constitutional Council be established has yet to be taken up seriously. It has been alleged that, in practice, the judicial system was still at the mercy of the central political authorities,

especially those belonging to the Cambodian People's Party (that is, the CPP-dominated Ministry of Justice).

Problems: Towards Authoritarianism?

For all the accomplishments mentioned earlier, the process of Cambodian democratization has come under attack on a number of fronts. Despite the fact that it was democratically elected, the new government's political legitimacy has been questioned. One observer has questioned UNTAC's success.⁷ The *Asian Wall Street Journal* put out an editorial, "Cambodia's Communist Comeback".⁸ The *New York Times* was pessimistic in tone when publishing an article entitled "Outsiders Gone, Cambodia Unravels".⁹ Another writer characterizes the Cambodian government as "dictatorial, corrupt and brutal".¹⁰ What are the signs of democracy under threat?

While progress in political reform at the structural level has been made, Cambodia cannot seriously be considered democratic. At the interactive or behavioural level, defined in terms of how elected leaders treat one another and other unelected elements and critics, Cambodia's democratic system remained fragile. Authoritarian behaviour remained largely unaltered. The government has become intolerant of freedom of the press. In 1994, two newspaper editors critical of the government were shot dead. Others were prosecuted, jailed, or threatened with death. The two prime ministers had very little regard for human rights activists. In March 1995, Hun Sen flew to New York and requested that its human rights monitors be withdrawn from Cambodia. On 18 July 1995, the National Assembly passed a law for the media aimed at curbing any pejorative and scathing remarks that might affect "national security and political stability".

Major government policy decisions could not be openly challenged by members of the National Assembly. Items on each agenda were usually presented for discussion in parliament and questions would be raised. However, no sophisticated analysis was provided and no opposition party members were present. This was in large part due to the coalition nature of Cambodian politics: all four political parties whose members were elected into parliament shared power within the government. In policy matters, the two prime ministers called most of the shots. Whether their political decisions were effectively implemented by their subordinates is a different matter altogether.

Concentration of formal power in the hands of a few top leaders can also be illustrated by the actions against political opponents. In October 1994, First Prime Minister Ranariddh (under pressure from Second Prime Minister Hun Sen) sacked his Finance Minister Sam Rainsy who belonged to his own party, FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Peaceful, Neutral, and Cooperative Cambodia). This came after Rainsy had criticized the government for corruption and mismanagement. He spoke against the military whose generals were involved in illegal logging transactions, as a result of which he received death threats. After the third International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC) meeting in France in March 1995 where the

two prime ministers attacked Rainsy for urging donors to attach conditions to their aid to Cambodia, they accused him of trying to prevent the world from giving more aid to Cambodia. Ranariddh regretted that Rainsy was Khmer, a Member of Parliament, and a member of his own party. Hun Sen absurdly compared Rainsy with Pol Pot: "Now we have a second Pol Pot against aid to the Cambodian people". In June 1995, Rainsy was finally expelled from the National Assembly.

Action against opposition elements did not just end there. Apparently with the blessings of the two prime ministers, Information Minister Ieng Mouley (who belonged to the Buddhist Liberal Party or BLDP) worked his way to power by ousting the president of his party, former KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front) leader Son Sann, and expelled other BLDP Members of Parliament from the party, including Son Soubert (the National Assembly's Second Vice-President), and head of the National Assembly Human Rights Commission, Kem Sokha. Like Rainsy, they faced the prospect of being expelled from the Assembly. Unquestionably, Hun Sen saw the BLDP's divisions as a blessing because they paved the way for his own party's domination.

But the real tragedy that befell the BLDP took place when violence rather than democratic means was used to deal with political challenges: two grenades were thrown at members of the Son Sann camp during their meetings in late September 1995. One grenade injured twenty-four people, including women, children, and Son Soubert (son of Son Sann and Second Chairman of the National Assembly); the other grenade injured seven BLDP members loyal to Son Sann. Although no one claimed responsibility for the incident, it was clear that the unidentified attackers belonged to one or both of the two dominant parties. After Ieng Mouley's success in the leadership struggle, the government moved to ban Son Sann's planned party congress to be held on 1 October. In fact, it was FUNCINPEC Co-Minister of Interior You Hokry who reversed his decision of 18 September granting permission for the holding of the congress by saying the next day that it would not be allowed to take place unless the BLDP was reunited as one party (obviously under the leadership of Ieng Mouley who was under the influence of the two prime ministers). Prime Minister Hun Sen had some prior knowledge about the grenade attacks, but did nothing to prevent them; but in opposing the congress he expressed concern about "security problems, like grenade attacks".

Such actions were justified by the government in the name of internal security; their roots can be traced to the ongoing war with the Khmer Rouge rebels. It may be worth recalling that Rainsy had spoken against the war policy and Son Sann was seen as pro-Khmer Rouge. Before the elections, he had shown sympathy for the Khmer Rouge defiance of UNTAC and had considered pulling his party out of the electoral process. Even after the elections, Son Sann continued to call for national reconciliation with the Khmer Rouge. Many Cambodians were arrested on suspicion that they were Khmer

Rouge “agents” — something Rainsy had fought against when the draft law to outlaw the Khmer Rouge was being debated in the National Assembly.

Another tragic political event which dealt a big blow to the emerging process of democratization took place when Prince Norodom Sirivudh was charged with terrorism because of his alleged attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Hun Sen. He was first put under house arrest, and asked to leave the country, but then stripped of his parliamentary immunity and taken to prison. He was charged under the law that bans the Khmer Rouge rebels “or anyone who commits acts destroying the Royal Government of Cambodia”. If convicted, he could have faced up to life imprisonment. However, the manner in which the evidence was presented showed that the charges were based on questionable facts. The Prince apparently did say that he wanted to kill Hun Sen, but it was a joke rather than a real plot. He was finally forced into exile without being given a chance to defend himself in a court of law.

What really bothered the government, and particularly Hun Sen, was not the murder plot but Prince Sirivudh’s stand on political issues. Unlike Prince Ranariddh, Sirivudh was unwilling to go with the CPP all the way and he even accused the leadership of his own royalist party of being disloyal to King Sihanouk. Like Sam Rainsy, he openly criticized the government’s corruption. He pressed Hun Sen’s party to share power with FUNCINPEC on a more equal footing and objected to the idea that the two dominant parties should form the next coalition government, asserting that if this were the case, the next elections would be just “a show”. The Prince also made known his preference for making peace with the Khmer Rouge rebels and criticized the government’s heavy spending on defence.

The lack of change in attitude is understandable, given the nature of the threat from the Khmer Rouge rebels. Perhaps the biggest challenge to the government’s political legitimacy was the Khmer Rouge rebels. Although there was little or no chance of their returning to power, the Khmer Rouge were far from being finished. Yet, Phnom Penh has refused to return to the negotiating table and will not accept anything less than the rebels’ total surrender. Meanwhile, government officials have admitted that while a few years earlier they had thought that they could win the war, they now felt that the war might drag on for an indefinite period of time.¹¹ Many dissatisfied Cambodians have said that if an election were to be held today they would vote for the Khmer Rouge if they took part.¹² Some villagers were even reported to have fled to the Khmer Rouge side to avoid government soldiers’ abuses.

By the end of 1995, Cambodia still had shallow democratic roots; it remained far from being on the right track towards enduring peace and sustainable democracy. The government’s political legitimacy was being challenged from within and from without. Left with Hobson’s choice between continued war and surrender, the rebels could only remain obstinate and pathological; they constituted more than a thorn in the Cambodian flesh, and were still a force to be reckoned with.

Democratization versus Peace

Cambodia's democracy has not thrived, and the country has reverted to traditional authoritarianism. This trend may be inevitable particularly when the process of democratization becomes occluded. While the government has upheld the constitution as its lethal weapon to eviscerate the Khmer Rouge, major external players have used democracy as a means to excoriate, ostracize, and deprecate the rebels — that is, since the Khmer Rouge did not participate in the elections they have no place in Cambodian politics.

The Constitution and War

Although the leaders in Phnom Penh have always claimed that they cherish democracy, they still govern with a firm hand and have failed to bring their country up to democratic standards. They have used the new constitution as a vehicle to punish the Khmer Rouge. Perhaps the most important indicator of the new Cambodian politics of exclusion has been the government leaders' resistance to King Sihanouk's efforts at promoting national reconciliation between Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rouge. To all intents and purposes, the King did not mean to exonerate the rebels, but he saw that peace could be obtained by striking a political deal with them. In late December 1993, the King again urged Phnom Penh to consider a political formula that would incorporate the rebels into the government. Before that, in November, he had presented a proposal that the rebels be given ministerial posts in exchange for their disarmament and agreement to hand over their zones of control to the government.

The King failed in his effort, however. Prime Minister Ranariddh considered the proposal "unconstitutional" and repudiated it. Dejected, the King wrote to the Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan saying that he had "already done ... [his] task".¹³ Sihanouk was reported to have declared that "from now on, I will be 10 times less active as far as Cambodian problems are concerned".¹⁴ Nevertheless, the King still tried to push ahead with the process of national reconciliation. He repeatedly presented his ideas to the two protagonists. In April 1994, for instance, he developed a new idea to bring them back to the negotiating table. By this time, however, his efforts appeared to be more symbolic than real. As king of the country, he could only do his best to get his people out of the ongoing war. He had come to recognize his own political limitations; there was very little he could do to affect positive change. As he put it: "Samdech Hun Sen is not in favour of the idea of talks with Mr Khieu Samphan. Samdech Preah Norodom Ranariddh is not disposed to negotiate with Mr Khieu Samphan".¹⁵

Still the King pressed on. On 6 May 1994, he offered two options. One was to organize a new general election (after a durable and total ceasefire) so that the rebels could participate; the other was to pursue the old formula in which they would give up their zones and join the government. The government again rejected the first option and accused the King of meddling in political affairs. Seeing his efforts fail again, Sihanouk, as was his usual way, announced on 10 May 1994 that he would travel to Beijing on 18 May to resume his medical treatment.

At this juncture, he was well aware that he had run out of political clout. He thus planned his next move. Unless he was given “extraordinary powers” through a two-thirds majority rule, he would rather keep his low profile. But he discounted the resort to any use of force on his part. In other words, he was at the mercy of the Cambodian leaders. “I will accept to return to power but I need also Hun Sen’s support. If he does not support me, it is useless for me to go back to Cambodia because I do not want to shed blood to fight a secession led by Hun Sen,” he said.¹⁶

King Sihanouk’s failure to forge a political compromise between the Khmer Rouge and the government culminated in the National Assembly’s vote to outlaw the rebels in early July 1994. Despite his warnings from Beijing that he would not sign the law, the government went ahead and passed it. On 15 July, National Assembly President Chea Sim (CPP) signed on the King’s behalf, making it clear who really was in charge.

External Constraints on Peace

Whether external pressure can make or break democracy is a subject for debate. Foreign powers have often been involved in toppling democracies. During the UNTAC period, however, the international community galvanized the democratization process. External actors had chosen war against the Khmer Rouge as an expeditious instrument to consolidate Cambodia’s fledgling democracy.

After the elections, Australia apparently wanted to see democracy in Cambodia develop as fast as possible. Its officials in Phnom Penh did not support any effort that would allow for national reconciliation between the government and the Khmer Rouge. In a cable to Australia in June 1993, Phnom Penh-based Australian Ambassador John Holloway accused Sihanouk of being “disruptive — still pathetically pursuing power”. “Though riddled with cancer”, said Holloway, “he has belittled the government, tried to cause splits in the ruling groups and thrown aside the government strategy of outlawing the Khmer Rouge”.¹⁷ Australia’s anti-Khmer Rouge policy continued. After UNTAC’s departure in September 1993, the Australian Government continued to be militarily involved in Cambodia. Two non-lethal military projects were undertaken to assist the Cambodian army. The first project involved the training of eighteen soldiers to become English instructors. The second was a multi-phase communication programme to provide reliable communications between army headquarters in Cambodia.

The year 1994 saw Australia taking an active interest in helping to rebuild the Cambodian Government’s military capabilities. In May, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans even suggested that military aid to Cambodia was legitimate because it was in line with the Peace Agreement — that is, Cambodia as a sovereign state had the right to seek foreign military aid. In this context, his government was seriously considering Cambodia’s request for military aid.¹⁸ In mid-July, an Australian delegation (made up of ten people, including six members of the Australian Defence Force) arrived in Phnom Penh. The purpose of

this visit was to study the type of military aid Australia could give to Cambodia. According to Melbourne Radio Australia, the Australian Defence Minister, Robert Ray, would focus on training and increasing the professionalism of the Cambodian armed forces.¹⁹

From late 1994, Australia stepped up its military co-operation with Phnom Penh. Gareth Evans took a greater interest in the military developments along Cambodia's borders with Thailand. In November, he even protested that Thailand continued to harbour and trade with members of the Khmer Rouge. He also suggested ways in which the Khmer Rouge could be further marginalized. In February 1995, Cambodia and Australia signed a memorandum of understanding to pursue friendly relations and military co-operation.

France also seemed to choose instant democracy over peace; it remained intransigent on the Khmer Rouge question. Before the elections, Paris had made it clear that compromise with the faction was out of the question. After the elections, the French Government continued the policy of non-compromise with the rebels. In 1993, French military officers visited Cambodia twice, in July, and then in September. The first visit led by French Minister of Defence, Francois Leotard, resulted in the signing of a military co-operation agreement. France then sent fifteen military experts to help rebuild the Cambodian armed forces. The second visit was led by Admiral Calmon. Admiral Jacques Lanxade, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of France, later made a four-day visit to Phnom Penh between 17 and 21 October. He promised to send military experts to help reform the Cambodian armed forces and agreed to draw up a more comprehensive defence co-operation agreement. Moreover, France agreed to leave behind the supplies and equipment of the French U.N. peacekeeping force.

After the Cambodian elections, Washington was willing to make peace with the CPP, but refused to allow any accommodation with the Khmer Rouge. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton made it clear that his government would not favour the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the new government. He stated: "At the present time, we do not see how it would be possible for the U.S. government to be in a position of providing assistance that might involve the Khmer Rouge".²⁰ One year later, the United States sent construction equipment (4 caterpillar tractors, 1 excavator, 2 levellers, 1 water cistern truck, 6 power generators and 3 welling machines) for the Cambodian armed forces. According to Phnom Penh Radio, "this is the first time that the United States has given aid in the form of equipment for road and bridge construction to the Kingdom of Cambodia and also sent demining specialists to train the RKAF Engineering Corps".²¹ On 17 September 1994, a U.S. delegation led by Brigadier General Mark Hamilton said that the U.S. Government would only consider giving non-lethal aid to Cambodia. On 14 September, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific confirmed that the Cambodian armed forces would have to be reformed and made more effective before lethal aid could be contemplated.²² Soon afterwards, Assistant Secretary

of State for East Asia and the Pacific, Winston Lord, and Deputy Secretary of State Talbott visited Cambodia, the latter being the highest ranking U.S. official to visit the country since 1970.

U.S. lethal aid has remained a possibility while Washington continues to provide non-lethal military aid. The United States has also offered political and moral support for the government's policy against the Khmer Rouge. This is, of course, nothing new. Secretary of State James Baker had come down hard on the rebels on the very day that the peace agreement was signed. For the first time, a top-ranking American political leader had publicly admitted that the Khmer Rouge reign of terror had left one million Cambodians dead and that "the world is shocked at the horrors of Khmer Rouge annihilation". To Baker, it was "an abomination of humanity". He had stated that Washington 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".²³

Washington's switch of position on the genocide issue to the one taken by its former enemies (the SOC and Vietnam) after the elections showed its double standards. On the one hand, Washington had in the Paris Agreement agreed that the Khmer Rouge should be a legitimate player; on the other hand, it wanted the "genocidists" to be put on trial for crimes against humanity. This is a perfect catch-22 situation facing the "accused". One could, of course, argue that the American policy towards Cambodia was ambiguous: it is up to the Cambodians to settle their own animosities. However, as already pointed out, the American position was clear: no compromise with the Khmer Rouge "genocidists".

More evidence suggests that Washington was active in pursuing legal means to achieve its political end. On 30 April 1994, Senator Charles Robb's legislation on the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. The Act was designed to investigate the Khmer Rouge's genocide in the period from 1975 to 1979. It did not say why Washington did not do anything against the Khmer Rouge from 1979 to 1991. In fact, Washington used the Khmer Rouge and supported them indirectly to repel the Vietnamese occupation army. On 14 September 1994, however, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Peter Tomsen gave "full support to the decision by the Cambodian parliament to outlaw the Khmer Rouge".²⁴

External Impact on the War

Did foreign meddling have any impact on Cambodian politics? From a Cambodian perspective, apparently yes. Sihanouk attributed his failure to form a National Government of Cambodia to include all adversaries to foreign interference. As he put it: "another obstacle that hinders [him] from establishing the NGC ... is that UNTAC and the diplomatic corps, some UNTAC members, foreigners, and ambassadors have accused [him] ... of staging a coup d'état, being avidly greedy for power, and daring to make a declaration contrary to the Law of the Paris Conference on Cambodia, the 1991 Paris Accords". His frustrations led him to conclude that as long as UNTAC stayed, he could

do nothing: "We have to wait until September, when UNTAC leaves. They will transfer authority to Cambodia and give us independence".²⁵

Sihanouk remained outspoken when it came to foreign interference in the process of national reconciliation in his country. In his letter from Beijing dated 19 July 1993, he wrote: "In spite of my repeated statements, the United States continues to threaten Cambodia unofficially with all sorts of hostile measures should I or the Cambodian government accept the Khmer Rouge as government members or advisors, or members of the Cambodian National Armed Forces". He also stated that he could no longer stand up to the United States: "I have always fought all types of foreign interference in Cambodia's internal affairs. But with Cambodia devastated and in need of the aid and support of rich foreign powers, I am no longer up to the task of fighting the United States as I did from 1955 to 1975". He then added: "Moreover, I have been frequently angered by the US's incessant warnings, which have made me even more ill than I was in the recent past. So as not to spend my final days in a mental institution, I hereby abandon my plans to organize in September 1993, or later, a round-table discussion with Mr Khieu Samphan or any other member of the Khmer Rouge".²⁶ For Sihanouk, the United States was an obstacle to peace.

Soon after the elections, Prince Ranariddh also admitted in an interview that "foreigners always ask us to try to eliminate the Khmer Rouge".²⁷ Hun Sen was also reported to be irked by pressure from some foreign powers against making any political compromise with the Khmer Rouge faction. As one reporter put it: "Even Hun Sen himself, who is the acclaimed arch-rival of the Khmer Rouge and currently a co-leader of the new temporary coalition government — had remarked that alien countries should not manipulate their foreign assistance as a means of brushing aside the Khmer Rouge".²⁸

It seems that as the war dragged on, the Phnom Penh government became more amenable to external powers' wishes. The government did not deny that it received foreign military aid. In fact, it may have magnified publicity to foreign aid to legitimize its domestic political authority. On 14 August 1994, for instance, Phnom Penh Radio acknowledged the military support of the United States, Australia, France, and the ASEAN member states. It even stressed that "the United States, Australia, and France were ready to provide military aid to the RGC to eliminate the Khmer Rouge".²⁹ On 8 November, it also claimed that the world should listen to Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans who believed that the Cambodian armed forces should be well equipped and empowered "to completely destroy or at least neutralize the Khmer Rouge rebels".³⁰

In short, the power of foreign actors in shaping Cambodia's domestic politics should not be underestimated. A structurally fragile and vulnerable state, Cambodia was subjected to foreign ideas and pressures. Foreign actors such as Australia, France, and the United States were influential because they were Cambodia's major aid donors. Washington and Paris together provided Cambodia with about US\$100 million a year.

Conclusion

Cambodia's post-Cold War dilemma can be explained in terms of the external push for rapid democratization at the expense of peace; consequently, only a few superficial signs of liberal democracy have emerged. With the war continuing, Cambodia's nascent democracy failed to show resilience and will not grow into maturity. Nothing is clearer than what Prime Minister Ranariddh said when defending his authoritarian policies, that is, that "discipline is more essential in our society than democracy". The rationale behind this argument rests upon a number of factors, one of which is that the Khmer Rouge exploit liberal democracy to discomfit his fragile regime. As he put it: "Not now when there are many elements within our society, notably the Khmer Rouge, to take advantage of the democracy issue and turn the country into another killing field".³¹ After the elections, the Khmer Rouge could have been politically neutralized and could have served as a credible opposition party to keep the government in check; but the faction was not allowed into the political game. The primary interest of the major external powers was to see the Khmer Rouge completely eliminated. As long as the Khmer Rouge army continues to pose a direct threat to Phnom Penh's political legitimacy, countries such as Australia, France, and the United States would be tempted to tolerate Cambodian authoritarianism. Even if the war could be ended at some point with the defeat of the Khmer Rouge, authoritarianism would probably still prevail because external support has emboldened the incumbent regime and would by then have made it the sole and absolute power-holder used to the idea of getting its way in a undemocratic manner.³² Future opposition would still be looked upon as the resurgence of "Khmer Rouge-type communism" that must be suppressed.

NOTES

1. On what Western liberal democracy constitutes, see Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is ... and Is Not", *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, edited by Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993). Although the following procedures are not sufficient conditions for liberal democracy, they are indispensable to its presence: 1) control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials; 2) elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon; 3) practically all adults have the right to run in the election of officials; 4) practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government; 5) citizens have a right to express themselves on political matters, broadly defined, without the danger of severe punishment; 6) citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information, which should be available and protected by law; 7) citizens also have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups; 8) popularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding (albeit informal) opposition from unelected officials. Democracy is in jeopardy if military officers, entrenched civil servants, or state managers retain the capacity to act independently of elected civilians or even veto decisions made by the people's representatives; and 9) the polity must be self-governing and it must be able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.

2. In this context, I respectfully disagree with those who have argued that Cambodia can be a prospective liberal democracy only if the Khmer Rouge faction is both excluded from the electoral process and punished for its leaders' crimes against humanity, known as "genocide". See, for instance, Ben Kiernan, ed., *Genocide and Democracy: The Khmer Rouge, the UN, and the International Community*, Monograph Series 41 (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1993).
3. Sorpong Peou, "Cambodia's Foreign Policy after the Cold War: The Search for Security Continues", Working Paper No. 96 (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1995).
4. Sorpong Peou, *Conflict Neutralization in the Cambodia War* (Malaysia: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
5. Interviews, July and August 1995.
6. Kingdom of Cambodia, *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia* (1993).
7. Keith B. Richburg, "The UN's Success in Cambodia? Look Again", *International Herald Tribune*, 11 December 1995, p. 2.
8. *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 30 November 1995, p. 6.
9. *New York Times*, 3 December 1995.
10. Robert D. Kaplan, "For the Third World, Western Democracy Is a Nightmare", *International Herald Tribune*, 1 January 1996, p. 4.
11. Interviews, March and July 1995.
12. Personal conversations with villagers in Cambodia.
13. *Straits Times*, 3 December 1993, p. 6.
14. *Straits Times*, 21 December 1993, p. 8.
15. *Phnom Penh Post*, 8–21 April 1994, p. 8.
16. *Phnom Penh Post*, 17–30 June 1994, p. 3.
17. *Star*, 12 October 1994, p. 21.
18. Melbourne Radio Australia; *FBIS-EAS-94-095*, 17 May 1994, p. 85.
19. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *FBIS-EAS-94-138*, 19 July 1994, p. 53.
20. *FBIS-EAS-93-127*, 6 July 1993, p. 48.
21. *FBIS-EAS-94-141*, 22 July 1994, p. 44.
22. *Phnom Penh Post*, 23 September–6 October 1994, p. 4. Between 1993 and 1994, U.S. non-lethal military aid to Cambodia amounted to approximately US\$3 million.
23. For more details, see Sorpong Peou, "A Further Look at UNTAC's Performance and Dilemmas: A Review Article", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 17, no. 2 (September 1995): 219–21.
24. *Phnom Penh Post*, 23 September–6 October 1994, p. 4.
25. *FBIS-EAS-93-107*, 7 June 1993, p. 39.
26. *FBIS-EAS-93-138*, 21 July 1993, p. 45; *Straits Times*, 21 July 1993, p. 4; *Star*, 21 July 1993, p. 21.
27. *Newsweek*, 12 July 1993, p. 52.
28. *FBIS-EAS-93-150*, 6 August 1993, p. 30.
29. *FBIS-EAS-94-155*, 11 August 1994, p. 71.
30. *FBIS-EAS-94-218*, 10 November 1994, p. 67.
31. Norodom Ranariddh's report on vital issues, *Phnom Penh Post*, 25 August–7 September 1995, p. 8.
32. Second Prime Minister Hun Sen has now become increasingly confident in his ability to suppress the opposition force and has recently dared to challenge the West. He has argued that Western-style democracy is not applicable to Cambodia. *Phnom Penh Post*, 1–14 December 1995, p. 6. He also called for demonstrations against Western embassies in Phnom Penh because of their governments' alleged "interference" in Cambodian affairs. *Phnom Penh Post*, 15–28 December 1995, p. 3.