

A TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND REPORT

# PEACEKEEPING TRANSITION

**THE  
UNITED  
NATIONS  
IN  
CAMBODIA**



*Janet E. Heining*

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# **PEACEKEEPING IN TRANSITION**

*To C. Ross Wagner*

*a gifted teacher who introduced me to East Asia*

## FOREWORD

When historians reflect on international relations during the years immediately following the cold war, they may be considerably more generous than are commentators today in their assessment of the performances of leaders around the world. The disarray and unevenness that are currently criticized may well be judged an inevitable and immediate by-product of the radically altered state of global politics. After all, the West's principal adversary in the cold war, the Eastern Bloc, has crumbled into a group of nations, each struggling with revolutionary political and economic transformations; at the same time, the "winning" coalition is struggling with the disharmony that results from the reassertion of individual national politics and priorities.

Each nation in the newly expanded "free world" must discover, by trial and error it seems, where its central international interests now lie, what foreign activities its people will support, and how its goals can be most effectively pursued.

The major international institutions, too, are in the process of shedding their former skins and inventing new roles to play. Preeminent in this category is the United Nations, an organization forged by the winners of World War II, constrained by the frozen certainties of the cold war for most of its history, and suddenly the seemingly logical choice to play an active part in virtually every world crisis as it develops.

Prominent among the new activist pursuits of the United Nations is the placement of its peacekeeping forces in a host of countries, often nations where such involvement would have been impractical, if not impossible, in the past. To be sure, between 1945 and 1980, fourteen UN peacekeeping missions were sent into the field (half in the Middle East), but these efforts were puny compared to the dispatch of UN forces to trouble spots around the globe in recent years. By 1993, the United Nations had such forces in seventeen countries, totaling 75,000 personnel

at a cost of \$3.29 billion annually. The most extensive involvement was its peacekeeping mission in Cambodia.

In many ways, the painful recent history of Cambodia reflects that of the world itself in the decades following World War II. It became a major battlefield in the cold war after escaping from colonial domination. The long struggle between the superpowers and their proxies for influence in Cambodia culminated in the ascension of an indigenous political force—a political movement marked by stark extremism that engaged in genocide on an immense scale. Indeed, the universal revulsion generated by the death and destruction brought by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia transcended cold war rivalries, laying the foundation for the large-scale peacekeeping effort that has been in place since 1991.

With the salience of the United Nations' role in Cambodia in mind, the Twentieth Century Fund decided to support Janet Heininger's study of the UN peacekeeping mission. She emphasizes its effort to organize a democratic vote, and searches for general lessons from the Cambodian experience for other UN missions.

Heininger's study is one of the first to assess this experience comprehensively. Indeed, Heininger's in-depth analysis of the Cambodian case helps us to understand the extent and nature of the United Nations' successes and shortcomings—and it offers lessons for future peacekeeping enterprises.

On behalf of the Trustees of the Twentieth Century Fund, I thank her for this contribution to the work we have been and are continuing to sponsor on the new missions of international organizations. Two Fund projects, *Beyond Charity*, Gil Loescher's study of the role of the United Nations in dealing with refugees, and *U.S. Policy and the Future of the United Nations*, a collection of essays, were published in the past year; *Utopia Lost*, Rosemary Righter's analysis of the future of the United Nations, will be released this fall.

Richard C. Leone, *President*  
The Twentieth Century Fund  
September 1994

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**A**t a dinner hosted by the Aspen Institute's Indochina Policy Forum in 1991, Pauline Baker reminded me that I had been trained as an academic and encouraged me to go back and start writing again. Little did either of us know that this monograph would result from that conversation.

It has been my great pleasure to work with the Twentieth Century Fund toward the publication of this work. Harry Ozeroff persuaded the Fund to support it; Michelle Miller provided valuable suggestions for revising it; and Steven Greenfield's superb editing immeasurably improved it.

I wish to thank the people whose brains I picked and off whom I bounced ideas as I was preparing to write: Elizabeth Becker, senior foreign editor at National Public Radio; Fred Brown, director, Southeast Asian Studies Program, at Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies; Maureen Steinbruner, president of the Center for National Policy; Ken Quinn, deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs; Richard Bush, committee liaison for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Steven Kentwell and Michael Smith, first secretary and minister for political affairs, respectively, at the Australian Embassy; and Jennifer Hills, UN district electoral supervisor in Battambang province. These people were exceedingly helpful in shaping my thinking about UNTAC.

I want to thank Richard Solomon, now president of the United States Institute of Peace, for clearing up an important point, and Jeanne Dixon and Joan Luke Hills at the United Nations Information Centre for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness in tracking down important details on UN operations. Rick Kessler, of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, graciously provided me with a copy of the committee's report on UN peacekeeping. Bill Durch, senior associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, repeatedly helped clear up details about UN peacekeeping issues. Bob Sutter, senior specialist in the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division of the Congressional



Research Service, made available CRS materials and wrote recommendations in support of my grant proposals (as did Fred Brown). Bill Herod, director of the Indochina Project, not only made the Project's files available to me, but gave me valuable advice as well. Robert Muller, executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, provided useful information about the Cambodia Mine Action Centre.

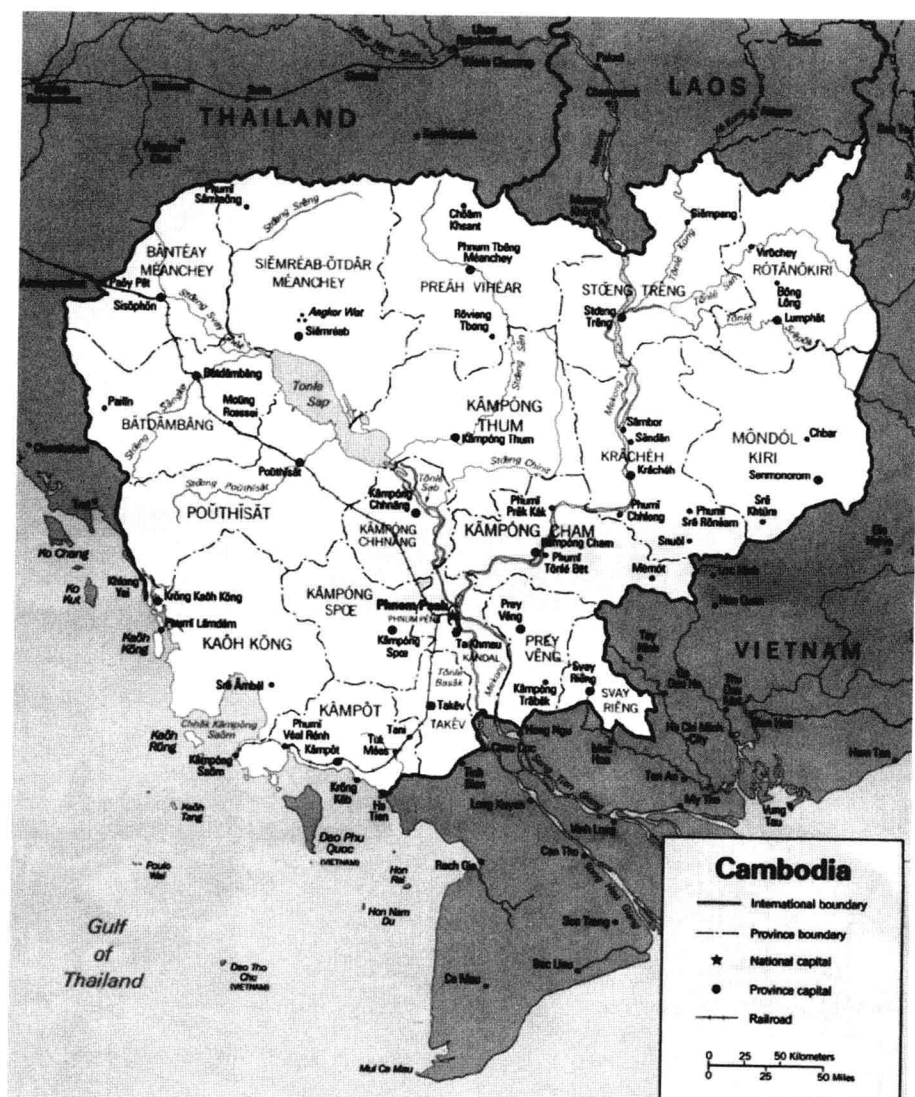
I was privileged to hear Yasushi Akashi on numerous occasions during and after UNTAC's implementation when he came to Washington to report in a variety of forums about UNTAC. I was also privileged to attend a lunch with Lt. General John Sanderson, who spoke off-the-record, near the end of UNTAC's mission, about his evaluation of the United Nations' experience in Cambodia. Peter Swarbrick, who had been Akashi's assistant in Cambodia, delved into his files to clarify details about the electoral process.

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I want to express my deep gratitude to the General Accounting Office, and specifically Tetsuo Miyabara, senior evaluator with the National Security and International Affairs Division, who made available GAO's enormous cache of documents used to compile its report, *UN Peacekeeping: Lessons Learned in Managing Recent Missions*, of December 1993. That material included GAO interviews and original UNTAC documents, as well as GAO's own preliminary analyses.

I want to thank my children, Caroline and Theodore, who patiently put up with the diversion of my attention while I was writing. Five-year-old Theodore did tell me, however, that seven chapters was too many. I should stop with the four I then had written, he said, because writing was making me grumpy.

This monograph could never have been written without my husband, James A. Reuter, who, though he knew little about Cambodia, took the time to edit every draft of every chapter, even on nights when he would come home at 1:00 a.m. during the mark-up of health-care reform legislation, and plunge, bleary-eyed, into yet another revision. His lack of knowledge about Cambodia made him my best editor. If I couldn't make it clear to him, it certainly wasn't going to fly elsewhere.



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

A surprising thing happened in May 1993: the United Nations hosted an election in Cambodia, and the Khmer Rouge did not disrupt it. As little as ten days before the elections, it looked as if the 1991 peace accord might unravel through a violently disrupted or boycotted election. Contrary to most predictions, and in abrupt reversal of its actions leading up to the elections, the Khmer Rouge did not engage in a sustained campaign of terror and intimidation against Cambodia's voters. To the surprise of the international community—and probably to many Cambodians—the May 23–28 elections went off without any serious hitch. As a *New York Times* editorial put it: “In a surprising democratic triumph, more than 90 percent of eligible Cambodians braved death threats to cast their votes in an election that monitors certify as free and fair.”<sup>1</sup>

What made the May elections so striking was that the effectiveness—and success—of one of the United Nations' largest, most ambitious, and costliest peacekeeping operations turned on the outcome of those elections. Had they not been certified as free and fair, or had they been violently disrupted by the Khmer Rouge, the UN operation would have been deemed a failure. Coupled with the increasing difficulties with UN operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia, a failure in Cambodia would have been a serious blow for the United Nations. It would also have been a blow for the international community, which has increasingly turned to the United Nations to resolve problems that countries have neither the will nor the funds to tackle unilaterally or in regional coalitions.

On the surface, the UN mission in Cambodia must be judged a success. The elections were free and fair. The winner of the elections, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, established an interim coalition government. His son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, and his rival, Hun Sen, who had been the

prime minister of the Vietnamese-installed Phnom Penh regime, joined together as cochairmen of the Interim Joint Administration, or Provisional National Government.<sup>2</sup> Even the Khmer Rouge president, Khieu Samphan, suggested in mid-July as he returned to Phnom Penh after a three-month, self-imposed exile, that the Khmer Rouge might call off its fourteen-year insurgency if it were guaranteed a formal role in the coalition government and if its troops were merged into a national army.<sup>3</sup>

The transition to a new government went more smoothly than had been expected. The newly elected Constituent Assembly began work on June 14, 1993. On September 21, it adopted a constitution that permitted Sihanouk to become king and effectively blocked Khmer Rouge participation in the new government by requiring that ministers and vice-ministers be chosen only from parties represented in the Assembly. Since the Khmer Rouge had refused to participate in the May elections, it had no elected representatives.<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations technically ended its eighteen-month operation on September 26, 1993, meeting the timetable set by the 1991 agreement that brought it to Cambodia.<sup>5</sup> The first contingent of peacekeeping troops withdrew on August 2, and the remainder by November 30, 1993.<sup>6</sup> Many of the United Nations' civilian workers had left by the middle of August.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, it is unclear whether the new government and King Sihanouk will be able to bring true peace to Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge's intentions remain suspect. As Marvin C. Ott of the National War College noted, "The current leadership of the Khmer Rouge is identical, to a man, to that which produced the killing fields. . . . If political maneuvers prove unfruitful, they will act upon the Maoist dictum that all political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Having kept their military stockpiles and fighting units intact, the Khmer Rouge will get down to the business of the real 'election'—and this one will be conducted with weapons instead of ballots and terror instead of speeches."<sup>8</sup>

Khmer Rouge violence did not cease with the May 1993 elections. A series of sporadic attacks and government counterattacks took place throughout the rest of the year. In early December 1993, a Thai army unit was caught transporting largely Chinese-made weapons to the Khmer Rouge. The same day, Thai police raided a heavily guarded compound in Thailand's Chantaburi province and uncovered a vast arsenal in a dozen warehouses. A Cambodian arrested that day identified himself as a Khmer Rouge guerrilla and claimed that the weapons belonged to the Khmer Rouge. Senior Thai officials quickly attempted to hush up the episode and cover up the continuation of the close relationship between the Thai military and the Khmer Rouge.<sup>9</sup>

While some observers argue that continued Khmer Rouge violence is a strategy designed "to make it clear to the other factions that they will pay a terrible price in bloodshed if the Khmer Rouge are not given some sort of role in the Government," the group's longer-term objectives are

unclear.<sup>10</sup> Although weakened by defections, the Khmer Rouge still controls parts of Cambodia with vast stocks of weapons and an army of an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 troops, and it has tens of millions of dollars stashed away in Thai banks.<sup>11</sup>

With the final verdict not in, therefore, the UN mission in Cambodia must be evaluated using criteria other than merely the conduct of the elections and the organization's success in meeting the timetable for conclusion of its mission.

### THE EXPANSION OF UN PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS

In six years (1988–1993), the United Nations created eighteen new peacekeeping operations, compared with a total of thirteen in its first forty-three years. Five peacekeeping operations were established during 1988 and 1989, with an estimated cost of \$629.8 million, 31 percent of which was paid by the United States. In 1991 and 1992, the UN Security Council created another nine operations.<sup>12</sup> In October 1993, there were seventeen active UN missions, compared to only five in 1987.<sup>13</sup> Sixteen were still active in January 1994.

In 1993, the United Nations spent \$3.29 billion for seventeen missions and 80,000 peacekeepers on four continents.<sup>14</sup> This was more than twice the 1992 expenditure of \$1.4 billion and nearly a sevenfold increase in the number of peacekeepers from just 11,500 at the beginning of 1992.<sup>15</sup>

The most ambitious of these operations was that in Cambodia. Called the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), it was established after the signing of a comprehensive peace plan in Paris by the various Cambodian factions and eighteen countries on October 23, 1991. UNTAC marked a major departure in UN peacekeeping. It was unique among UN peacekeeping operations in terms of its size, multidimensional mandate, complex administration, and unprecedented authority over a country. Despite its shortcomings, it sowed the seeds of democracy and human rights in Cambodia. Although authorized as a peacekeeping mission, it entailed far more.

### PEACEKEEPING AND PEACE ENFORCEMENT MISSIONS

Traditional peacekeeping missions, like those in Cyprus, the Golan Heights, and Lebanon, interpose neutral UN military personnel between parties or governments that have agreed to stop fighting. In these operations, UN forces observe, monitor, supervise, or verify cease-fire and related agreements. Their purpose is to prevent further outbreaks of conflict and promote permanent settlement of disputes. They operate with the consent of the parties involved, tend to be lightly armed, and function under rules of engagement that permit them to fire back only in self-defense. One of the best definitions of how UN peacekeepers use force is William

Durch's description that "what constitutes appropriate self-defense will vary by mission, but because they are almost by definition outgunned by the disputants they are sent out to monitor, any recourse to force must be calibrated to localize and defuse, rather than escalate, violence."<sup>16</sup>

Traditional peacekeeping missions are authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Peacekeeping deployments are made after armed conflicts subside to ensure that agreements are implemented. They are premised on cooperation: their methods are inherently peaceful, and they help bridge the gap between the will to make peace and the achievement of it.<sup>17</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum are peace enforcement missions, like those in Somalia and the former Yugoslav republics. Peace enforcement missions are undertaken without the consent of the parties involved, when other strategies to deal with an armed conflict have failed and the international community concludes that armed intervention is warranted in response to an act of aggression or in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Historically, peace enforcement missions have been rare. During the entire cold war period, only two peace enforcement operations were undertaken by the United Nations: the Korean War in 1950 and the Congo mission in 1960. Since 1990, however, the United Nations has authorized four such missions.<sup>18</sup> In November 1990, the Security Council sanctioned military action, subsequently led by the United States, against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. In December 1992, it approved an operation to restore order and permit delivery of food in Somalia—again, led by the United States. The third recent case was the authorization of measures to ensure safe delivery of humanitarian aid and freedom of movement of personnel in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992 and 1993. In July 1994, it authorized the United States to lead a multinational invasion of Haiti to drive out the military rulers and restore exiled president Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power.

In general, peace enforcement missions are authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which in Article 42 permits UN forces to "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."<sup>19</sup> Although neither Chapter VI nor Chapter VII explicitly mentions peacekeeping or peace enforcement, this language has been interpreted as permitting the use of force beyond self-defense to achieve the mission's objectives. Although neither the Korean War nor the Congo operation were authorized under Chapter VII, their mission definitions and extensive use of force qualify them as peace enforcement. The Korean War was undertaken to repel cross-border aggression, while the Congo operation was designed to prevent civil war.

Peace enforcement missions are dangerous, involve considerable risk to UN personnel, are exceedingly costly, and can be of long duration. By contrast with most traditional peacekeeping missions, UN personnel in

peace enforcement operations may match the level of force arrayed against them, as in Korea, or outgun their opponents, as in Somalia. In cases where they are outgunned, though, as in the former Yugoslav republics, the enforcement side of the mission can easily run into trouble.

### PEACE-BUILDING MISSIONS

Neither peacekeeping nor peace enforcement definitions fully describe the tasks undertaken by the United Nations in the wide array of missions embarked on since the end of the cold war. Mandates have become more complex, and the size, frequency, and makeup of peacekeeping missions have differed from the peacekeeping operations of the cold war period. In large part, this has been due to the international community's attempt to utilize peacekeeping for more than conflict management. In Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, the Western Sahara, Angola, and Cambodia, UN diplomatic efforts have been followed by peacekeeping operations with mandates that include conflict resolution.

Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans terms this departure "expanded peace keeping," describing it as a more activist, multifunctional move "to go far beyond traditional peace keeping by assisting the parties in implementing the settlement that they have arrived at in Stage II peace making, assisting them to bring about a genuine and durable solution."<sup>20</sup> In cases in which the mission involves containment or disarmament of belligerents, significantly more military force is needed than in traditional peacekeeping missions.

These new, multifaceted missions can include a variety of tasks: military, police, human rights, information, elections, rehabilitation, repatriation, and administration. They frequently involve facilitating the resolution of domestic conflicts or civil wars rather than cross-border disputes. Often, in situations where violence has been the result of ethnic conflicts or internal political struggle, the ultimate goal of these missions is the restoration of a stable democratic government, particularly if the conflict has caused the collapse of state institutions.

In his June 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali used the term *peace-building* to describe these new tasks. Under this definition, postconflict peace-building is undertaken to prevent a recurrence of conflict by attempting to construct a new environment to consolidate peace. Measures to enhance a sense of confidence among the people may include "disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation."<sup>21</sup>



To rebuild societies that have been shattered by war or other major crises, the United Nations couples meeting basic humanitarian needs with activities to strengthen or reestablish institutions that engender confidence in a legitimate government. Peace-building also entails the education of a populace concerning its rights and responsibilities—a critical element in achieving a just and durable peace.

#### **PEACEKEEPING AND PEACE-BUILDING IN NAMIBIA**

The first UN operation to combine traditional peacekeeping with peace-building was the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia from April 1989 to March 1990. UNTAG was designed to assist in the transition of Namibia to independence from South Africa. It performed traditional peacekeeping functions, including monitoring the cease-fire between the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the forces of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). But it also took on duties associated with peace-building by monitoring elections for a constituent assembly that were run by South Africa's administrator general and by monitoring the South African police to ensure that they were not being used for political intimidation.<sup>22</sup>

While UNTAG's peacekeeping functions were essential to the performance of its mission, its most important—and successful—roles fell into the category of peace-building. "UNTAG was to serve as a counterweight to South Africa's presence, to behave impartially, and to monitor and reinforce a climate of security. But most important, it was to build confidence in and to legitimize the peace process, the elections, and the result of the transition: the new state of Namibia."<sup>23</sup>

#### **EXPANDING ON PEACEKEEPING AND PEACE-BUILDING IN CAMBODIA**

At the time it was established, the operation in Cambodia was the most extensive and expensive UN peacekeeping effort ever.<sup>24</sup> Although subsequently exceeded in size and cost by the Somalia mission, which at its height had more than 28,000 troops, and by the nearly 28,000-person operation in the former Yugoslav republics, no mission has matched that in Cambodia for the scope of responsibilities, the number of countries represented in the staffing (more than one hundred, with thirty alone involved in the military component), or the degree of control exercised by the United Nations over the internal workings of a country.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Namibia, where it oversaw the transition to independence and supervised elections held by South African authorities, the United Nations was mandated to assume the actual management of Cambodia and take it through the transition from civil war through free elections to the establishment of a democratically elected government. In Cambodia, the United Nations ran the elections, rather than merely monitoring them.