

Speaking to an imagined community.
How the Paris Peace Agreements shaped ideas of the new political order in
Cambodia 1992-93

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កិច្ចពិភាក្សានយោបាយតុម្រល I



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Speaking to an Imagined Community

How the Paris Peace Agreements Shaped Ideas of the

New Political Order 1992-93



អ៊ិនតាក់

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List of Abbreviations

BLDP	Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
CIVPOL	International Civilian Police
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
DP	Democratic Party
EAS	Existing Administrative Structures
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant Neutre Pacifique Et Coopératif
FUNK	National United Front of Kampuchea
FUNSK	Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation
ICM	International Control Mechanism
NAM	Non Aligned Movement
NPE	Neutral Political Environment
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PPA	Paris Peace Agreements
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
SC	Security Council
SNC	Supreme National Council
SoC	State of Cambodia
SRGS	Special Representative of the General Secretary
TA	Transitional Authority
UN	United Nations
UNAMIC	United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNMIBH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia Herzegovina
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNRPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor
UWM	University of Wisconsin-Madison
VOA	Voice of America

1. Introduction

To mark the official begin of the election campaign on the 7th of April 1993, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali paid his visit to Phnom Penh. The meeting in the headquarter of the United Nation's Transitional Authority to Cambodia (UNTAC) constituted one of the rare occasions where the representatives of all 20 newly founded Cambodian parties came together. Since the beginning of the mission in 1992 thousands of people from 46 nations had worked to organize this country's decisive elections and in his address to the party leaders Boutros-Ghali made it abundantly clear that there was more at stake in this upcoming event than the individual victory or loss of any of those standing before him. Cambodia was to be the model case, symbolizing a new era for the entire world, a triumph of democracy after the end of the Cold War:

“Your experience is of greatest importance, not only for the Cambodian people, not only for the Southeast Asian countries, but also for the international community. [...] The concepts of peace, economic development and pluralist democracy are today inseparable. There are hundreds of different definitions of democracy. The simplest one [...] is the participation of the entire population. And in order to assure this participation “we need a multiparty system [...] Different opinions are important because it is [these opinions] that make a democracy”¹

These promises of change and a better future for Cambodia translated into one word that was repeated incessantly during the year of the intervention: Choice. After 20 years of a war that had left no family intact it would now be up to the people and not their leaders to decide about their fate. On October 23rd 1991 the four main conflict parties had put their signature under the Paris Peace Agreements and agreed to endow the United Nations with unprecedented powers to oversee the organization of the country's first free and fair elections. In order to ensure the ‘participation of the entire population’ UNTAC had created its very own Khmer language radio and TV station. Fictional dialogues between Cambodians and UNTAC personnel like the following one, were broadcasted to both inform and reassure people:

¹ UNTAC, Compte-rendu de la réunion du Secrétaire général avec les représentants des parties politiques, 8 Avril 1993. Unsigned protocol. Original French, my translation.

Aunt: I'm worried about the political environment in the campaign stage.

Niece: Are you worried that there will be trouble if this party or that party tries to show that they have strength some place?

Aunt: Well, if a strong party uses its power to prevent parties from working, what will happen to them?

Ali: This is a difficult problem to solve. But it is UNTAC's goal that during the election campaign, all political parties will work in a neutral political environment.

Uncle: We have been thinking about politics. What exactly does UNTAC mean by a politically neutral environment?

Ali: In a politically neutral environment all parties can set up offices, recruit members and campaign for votes. All Cambodians can visit party offices, talk to politicians, and ask them questions. All parties, the strong as well as the weak, are tolerant of each other. If you let the general public speak freely.

Niece: Sometime some people say things that some people with power don't want to hear or want to let the people say. Then what?

Uncle: That's true. But a war of words is better than a war of guns. I'm sick of all this killing. In Cambodia, our leaders have been fighting each other for a long time. The Paris agreements give your leaders a chance to solve their problems peacefully. The agreements allow them to stop being enemies on the battlefield and start being competitors in the political arena.²

With a total of 20 registered parties competing and a voter turnout of almost 90 percent of the eligible population on election day in May 1993 the United Nations were still hopeful to have gotten their model case; despite a renegotiation of the results and the questionable compromise to install two prime ministers. But after a total of five parliamentary elections that always ended by confirming the leading position of Hun Sen and its Cambodian People's Party, it becomes evident that UNTAC did indeed "not alter the historical nature of power in Cambodia" (Chopra 1994, 52). Despite its relative stability since the UN mission, Cambodia figures among those countries cited to prove the failure of the international community's panacea against internal conflict:

² Radio UNTAC: Dialogue Nr. 27: What is a neutral political environment?

The establishment of a liberal peace with a market economy and a pluralist democracy as its key ingredients, as Boutros Ghali had summarized it for his audience in 1991.

The experience of the United Nations in Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, or Kosovo – to name some of the most dramatic failures or difficult missions – have dramatically decreased the confidence and self-esteem that marked the climate in both diplomatic and academic circles throughout the early 90s. What slowly emerges as the new consensus is the realization that the Western model of politics cannot be imposed on other countries and its people. Ignoring the violence and the suffering caused by ongoing conflicts around the world is politically (some would say, morally) no option either. Which begs the question: What needs to be done to garner local support for the establishment of a stable and peaceful order?

In search for answers the academic literature on state-building has shifted much of its attention from management to politics and from institutions to ideas. While earlier generations of scholars kept a narrow focus on the modes of adapting, transferring and integrating a new political system into a foreign country and the challenges these tasks posed for interveners, more recent contributions aim at evaluating the perceptions of the local actors and elicit the reasons for their cooperation or acts of resistance in the course of such joint efforts. It is in the context of this ongoing debate that we will revisit Cambodia during the year of its intervention. In a standard reading of the narrative that analysis of UNTAC provide, the newly created parties were from the start engaged in a futile battle against the FUNCINPEC and the CPP, the two most powerful contenders. The Cambodian people believed in democracy and showed will and determination by turning out in millions on Election Day despite the threats against their life. But because of the ruling elites' continued disregard of the people democracy could not take root in the country, despite the United Nations' best efforts.

Written by mostly Western scholars in the immediate years after the intervention this summary of events evidently flatters the United Nation and overly simplifies the nature of power in the context of this intervention. More importantly though, it is a narrative that renders it redundant to engage with the concepts and ideas for Cambodia's future that have been presented in the month prior to the elections. The

experience of the 20 parties, which Boutros-Ghali had deemed so important in his speech, has been entirely devaluated.

In the realm of state building research Cambodia has been presented as a closed case for the past two decades. This is mainly due to the fact that the events after the mission fit neatly into the models evoked both by advocates and critiques of the liberal peace model. In line with current wisdom the former would argue that the main fault of the mission lay in its overly ambitious character. Instead of succumbing Cambodia to an interventionist shock-therapy and force a democratic system on a defensive elite in the course of only 13 months it would have been more promising to settle for a pragmatic approach; that is one that was less likely to threaten the interests of the established elite. Critiques of the liberal peace would rather problematize the narrow institutional focus of the reform efforts.

The Paris Agreements represented a state building blueprint that showed little regard for existing political or social structures and had been devised entirely by foreign governments. Its legitimacy was derived from the support of the international community, universal principles of democratic governance and the agreement of the local elite to proceed with its implementation. UNTAC then appears to show how wrong it is to devise strategies based on the premise that a liberal socio-economic system is the ideal everybody should be evolving towards.

The case specific disregard of the ideas for Cambodia's new political order that evolved in the year of the Transitional Authority is thus somewhat understandable. But even the broader review of existing literature on United Nation's missions of this kind shows how little we actually know about the development and the negotiation of ideas in the context of an intervention: How exactly do interveners convey an image of the new political order? How do local political actors imagine the political future? What is the image they convey to their constituency? And how do converging or contradicting ideas affect the relationship between interveners and local actors, and the reforms at large?

The review of current state building literature in *Chapter 2* can further show that this gap in research and the lack of analytical models to approach these questions is partially due to the way in which the critique of the liberal peace has evolved. New

contributions of this subfield highlight the importance of internal legitimacy for the sustained support of political reforms and are guided by an interest in the production of knowledge as it relates to power (they hence also contributed to introduce Foucault to the study of state building). Both as an academic and a political project this research presents itself explicitly as an alternative to the technocratic, top-down approaches that continue to inform implementation strategies: Instead of understanding themselves as experts in state building, both practitioners and academics should approach the task of rebuilding a new political order as a joint project between true partners in peacebuilding.

Analytically, this debate calls for models that can account for the different perspectives of international and local actors in devising legitimate strategies and institutions. While previous state building literature judged its objects of research based on a comparison with pre-defined ideals, the new generation favors theoretical approaches that are more open with regard to the potential of ‘hybrid’ institutions. On one side the resulting analysis do therefore aim at deconstructing the assumptions that legitimize and rationalize the decisions interveners take. On the other side they highlight the agency of the marginalized, the subalterns of state building and their (silent) struggles outside of established policy structures in the realm of the everyday.

Chapter 2 identifies two weaknesses of this critical approach; the first one being that the arguments often reinforce the simplifying notion of the relationship between interveners and local actors as one between imposers and imposed upon: The demand to be more open, more emphasizing and more willing to learn is regularly explicitly constructed as the reversion of a ‘traditional’ approach, one-dimensionally described as coercive. Second, the attempts to demonstrate that local actors are no passive subjects or recipients of the reforms (i.e. that they resist the attempts of imposition) often leads to the transfer of a bargaining model in the world of ideas: Actors are described as having the agency to reject, negotiate or adapt political reforms, which implies the notion of policies as clear cut objects that are being offered, scrutinized and treated with favor or rejection.

It will be argued that the critique has therefore turned its back to quickly on the political elite and their role in shaping the outlines of a new political order.

Dismissively treated as inauthentic and non-representative for true local knowledge and needs, political actors are framed as rational acting power maximizers and their interaction with interveners seems to take place in a world rather isolated from the one of the general population. It is a perspective that de-emphasizes the fact that state building or peacebuilding missions take place in highly politicized contexts where factions and political parties have formed and sustained close ties with their supporters in years of conflict. In other words: It play down the importance that political actors have in promoting ideas that will affect how the people may comprehend and interpret the newly evolving institutions.

To overcome these conceptual limits and contribute to the current search for more dynamic analytical models, able to capture the integrative effects of local-international interaction, the concluding part proposes to shift attention to the symbolic dimension of their engagement. Instead of analyzing new institutions as an expression of converging or contradicting ideas, such a perspective could directly ‘access’ the realm of ideas and observe the meaning behind actors’ decisions to accept or reject a given course of action.

Chapter 3 builds the theoretical basis for such an approach. It takes the current debate over the nature of the state and its implications for state building analysis as a point of departure. The relevance of a deeper engagement with the symbolic dimension of actors’ interaction is tied to a conceptualization of the state as the result of ongoing negotiations and struggles within society. The chapter discusses the theoretical implications of this perspective when applied to the realm of state building and identifies three important hypotheses. Together, they constitute the basic premise of the intended analysis: 1) Notwithstanding their intentions, interveners do always engage in nation building, 2) The practice of interveners is always political in nature, 3) Intervenors are in a competitive relationship with other political actors.

The second part of *Chapter 3* builds on these assumptions. It presents the theory of interpretative authority and discusses the theory’s potential and limits in order to devise an analytical model that is capable of observing the ongoing struggles between local and international actors over the meaning of reforms, while accounting for the power bias between them. The theory proposes an understanding of political authority

that is tied to processes of identity formation. It stipulates that any institution that intends to guide a political transformation without having to rely on threat or coercion needs interpretative authority. Defined as the potential to take decision regarding the nature of the common ground of a society, this particular type of authority is never given, but must be continuously reproduced. It is based on a perpetual circle of interpretations regarding the nature society's common ground issued by such an institution and the expressed acknowledgement of their validity by others.

Based on the theory discussion it is possible to argue that struggles between international and local political actors over the meaning of the new institutions can best be observed in the public political discourse of an intervention society. In order to enforce their own vision of the new political order, international actors need to create opportunities for others to publicly confirm the validity of their ideas for the future. The theory distinguishes between three analytical dimensions: symbolic conditions, opportunities, and interpretative practice. These dimension are used to pre-structure the analysis.

Applied to the case of the United Nation's Transitional Authority in Cambodia the Paris Peace Agreements are defined as the symbol of Cambodia's new political order. To develop interpretative authority UNTAC needed to establish this symbol at the center of the country's public political discourse in order to discipline the ongoing deliberations over the character and meaning of the new institutions. Based on the literature review and the theory chapter the concluding part formulates the research question guiding the analysis as follows: How did the Paris Peace Agreements shape ideas of the new political order in Cambodia during the year of the intervention?

Chapter 4 describes the case design and the methodology used to collect, secure and analyze the empirical data. The study follows an interpretative approach: This means it relies on qualitative data which is submitted to several circles of interpretation guided by the preliminary theoretical framework. In the course of each 'analytical round' categories are developed and refined. Instead of testing pre-defined hypotheses it is the aim of the analysis to make a 'compelling argument' for the chosen perspective, by developing and presenting a sound empirical case study.

The analysis centers on the work of UNTAC's Information and Education Unit (InfoEd). This particular unit was charged with the control of Cambodia's information sector during the intervention. Transitional Authorities are the most encompassing missions of their kind as interveners are mandated to assume the governmental responsibilities of the intervened state. Questions of legitimacy present themselves with particular urgency here. In the case of Cambodia, no blueprints for such missions have yet existed, it was the first of its kind. The Information and Education Unit has been widely praised for its creative interpretation of the mandate, while the politicians of the main factions regularly criticized its members of abusing their mandate.

Prior to the elections in 1993 InfoEd produced a TV program to present the Cambodian public with the 20 newly registered political parties. All of them were invited to discuss their programs and ideas for the future, guided by questions of an UNTAC moderator. While the program was described as an opportunity for the political parties to present their vision for Cambodia's political future, the theoretical framework allows us to inverse this perspective and describe it as an opportunity for UNTAC itself: All of the programs rules and procedures are analyzed as attempts to enforce a particular vision of the new political order and discipline the public political discourse. The local political actors' acts and statements, on the other hand, are perceived as attempts to confirm, reject or re-interpret the TA's interpretative practice. It is in the justifications of the local actors' interpretative practice, and their related attempts to build interpretative authority for themselves, that we can discern the symbolic dimension of international-local interaction and observe how ideas of the new political order come into being.

The chosen focus of the analysis and the possibility to evaluate InfoEd's interpretative practice and the resulting policy strategies is first and foremost based on the available materials: The members of InfoEd have archived the records of the United Nation's very first radio station and large parts of the Unit's internal communication, including analysis reports, documents related to the preparation of the elections and letter exchanges with international and local politicians involved in the peace process. Chapter 4 includes a detailed description of the two main archives, The Radio UNTAC Archive at the University of Wisconsin Madison and the Collection of Cambodian

Election Materials 1992-1993 at the Center for Research Library in Chicago. I undertook extensive archival research at two separate occasions: I first worked in the archives in August and September of 2011 and continued my research in the United States in June and July of 2012. The first stay has been financed as part of the DFG research project on the Institutionalization of Interpretative Authority in Post-Conflict Societies while the second stay was financed with the help of a grant-in-aid by the institution Friends of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries. Two digitized collections comprising over 2000 documents and two catalogues describing their content are the result of this research. Based on these results it was possible to reconstruct the internal workings of this particular unit and observe the decision making processes behind their policies and products.

The TV program Political Roundtable Discussion was saved on video cassettes. Radio and TV UNTAC broadcasted in Khmer only. In the course of my research these records have been digitized, transcribed by a Cambodian research assistant and finally translated into English by me. In the course of this work 10.5 hours of video recordings have been transformed into an English text of over 230 pages. This text forms the main body for the analysis in Chapter 6 and is included as a commented version in Annex I: An introduction details the translation process and the footnotes inform the reader about the meaning of the political representatives' subtle references or remarks. These comments are the result of the research undertaken during two field trips to Cambodia, in the course of which selected archived materials and the Roundtable transcripts were discussed with Cambodian scholars and politicians. The first trip to Cambodia lasted from November to January 2011 and the second one from late August to early December in 2012.

The analysis is complemented by eleven semi-structured expert interviews conducted with seven members of UNTAC's Information and Education Unit and four interviews with former participants of the 1993 elections. The majority of these interviews have been conducted in the course of the second of two field research trips to Cambodia in 2012. *Chapter 4* details the different methodology behind the contact strategies and the interview design. Annex III provides a table with all the statistical details of the interviews.

In a last part, *Chapter 4* describes the chosen approach behind the interpretation of the selected materials according to the leading questions guiding each of the four main analysis chapters.

As the Paris Peace Agreements' authoritative interpreter UNTAC derived its interpretative practice from its mandate. In order to challenge these interpretations the local political actors on the other hand attempted to substantiate their own claims for authority in reference to the country's history and the most pressing political issues of their time. The symbolic dimension of their negotiations over the meaning of the new political order cannot be understood without an awareness for Cambodia's troubled past and its different interpretations thereof. The actors' claims for authority and UNTAC's self-ascribed status as the conflict's neutral moderator are all in one way or another linked to the promotion of a certain perspective regarding their role in the 20 year long conflict. Through their attempts to develop interpretative authority both interveners and local political actors did therefore engage in remapping the borders of Cambodian identity.

Chapter 5 will present the conflict history, which has its roots in the 1960s'. It distinguishes between an internal and an external dimension of the conflict and guides the reader through all five regime changes leading up to the UN intervention in 1992. The focus lies on the narratives developed by the conflicts' main actors, including the foreign governments involved in it, to legitimize their ever changing alliances and ideological affiliations. The analysis depends to a significant degree on the readers' knowledge of these unresolved tensions, as the new rules and procedures implemented by UNTAC to discipline the public political discourse derive much of their meaning from their ability to appeal to the people's collective knowledge. For a quick reminder and overview Annex II provides a short summary of the conflicts main events and turning points. To provide information regarding the context of InfoEd's work and their role in the United Nation's mission, *Chapter 5* will also recount the efforts of UNTAC's individual units. In preparation of the subsequent analysis it assesses their contributions in view of the United Nation's overall goal to change the country's political order based on the goals defined in the Paris Peace Agreements.

The analysis in *Chapter 6* presents the reader with an image of the United Nation's mission that takes into account the perceptions of the local population and the hopeful contenders in the country's first mission: How did they perceive the liberal multiparty democracy that was supposed to be created under UN supervision? This assessment of the Paris Peace Agreements' symbolic conditions as the country's symbol for a peaceful new order is followed by the main analysis. Set against the background of the unresolved tensions between main conflict factions we observe how the Information and Education Unit attempted to promote a vision of the new political order by creating a public centered on the PPA. This public provided UNTAC with the opportunities to offer interpretations of Cambodia's future and the political contenders with opportunities to acknowledge the symbols superior status. The program Political Roundtable Discussions is representative for such a public, and its analysis can reveal the mechanisms behind UNTAC's attempts to generate political authority as interpretative authority. By observing the local political actors attempts to challenge UNTAC's interpretations of their country's political future, we can access the symbolic dimension of their negotiations and struggles and understand how the Paris Peace Agreements shaped ideas of the new political order. The chapter discusses the dynamic of different negotiations and confrontations between UNTAC and the contenders in length, with a particular focus on the mobilized knowledge and its implications for the relationship between the mission's members and the local political actors. The conclusions in *Chapter 7* provide a broader assessment of the potential long-term effect UNTAC's efforts to generate interpretative authority may have had on the establishment of a liberal multiparty system in Cambodia. It further links the analysis to the broader debate over the critique of the liberal peace and the potential of the here proposed model to overcome the conceptual limits identified in *Chapter 1*.

The conclusions highlight that the struggles for interpretative authority that both the international and local political actors engage in would make it difficult to remove the power bias inherent in their relationship by encouraging a more open and inclusive dialogue. Enabling discourse in the context of an intervention society means intervening in discourse. The analysis further provides an impressive image of the way in which institution building and nation building are intertwined. This has

repercussions on the potential of international actors to create legitimate institutions: As all of their acts in this highly symbolically charged context are going to be perceived political by local actors, the negotiations over their place in the new political order are very difficult to control and will almost inevitably lead to new conflicts. In this regard the analysis can demonstrate the unexpected power of local knowledge, when it comes to counter the claims of international actors.

This work further supports the recent trend to question the validity and the worth of established categories of analysis and the labels that come attached to them: local vs. international, liberal vs. non-liberal knowledge, actors and institutions. The observation of the ongoing struggles over the character of the new political order in Cambodia and the interpretative practice employed by those engaged in these decisive struggles show how both international and local actors defy these labels while negotiating the social reality of 'liberal' reforms.

2. State of the Art

2.1. Intervening in States: Experts in State Building or Partners in Peace Building?

International interventions are problematic but necessary.³ This conviction drives much of the studies in International Relations. The fact that scholars are tackling the issue from different angles and as part of their larger different ideological and political projects has still led to a rather dramatic evolution in the subfield of state-building. Originally focused on states, institutions and interests even those scholars that belong to the mainstream – that is more governance and policy oriented school of thought – are now ready to at least take note of the growing literature that aims at reconstructing and revalorizing the local perspective on the West’s intrusive and insistent offers to ‘help’ (Andersen 2012, 208).

Over the course of the last ten years in particular, the analytical lens applied to problems of state failure, civil wars, and international reconstruction efforts has zoomed in on the micro level. What has been termed the local or sociological turn in scholarship on state building is usually mapped out in reference to the huge increase in UN led peacebuilding missions throughout the 90’s and their questionable success (Brast 2013; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Few contributions on the matter go without the obligatory review of the past missions, not only citing the obvious failures such as Rwanda, Iraq or Afghanistan, but also increasingly questioning the substance of the peace in those countries that had been deemed a success earlier on like in Cambodia or East Timor. Grounded in the observations of such “real world events” and large scale human suffering several analyst have left the beaten path of policy reforms and aim their criticism more directly at the liberal consensus itself (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 766).

³ I use a broad definition of interventions here: By interventions I mean all external interventions aimed at establishing domestic peace and stable institutions in countries that are considered to be weak, failing or collapsed states. This is also reflected in my use of the terms state building and peacebuilding.

For the better of two decades the implementation of a market economy, a democratic governance system and the establishment of the rule of law have been the uncontested formula for internationally led interventions aimed at state reconstruction. Even if one considers more recent examples such as the missions to Congo or Haiti it becomes evident that the peace Western interveners envisage for states that reemerge after long and brutal conflicts is modeled after the social contracts that govern relations in their own countries. The idea that liberal principles are universal and hence essentially non-negotiable has had a profound impact on these missions in both theory and practice.

In cases of intrastate conflict the United Nations are nowadays already involved in the negotiation phases of peace agreements between warring faction, during which they do not only act as moderators of the process but often as third parties with a considerable say on the substance of the final document. As a result, most of these agreements oblige the factions to commit to reconstruction efforts that stay true to the norms contained in the liberal peacebuilding model (Bell 2006; Bell and O'Rourke 2010). This contractual obligation is particularly problematic considering that large number of UN mandates for large scale peacebuilding missions originate in agreements that would not have been signed without extensive pressure of external actors (Putnam 2002). The commitment to liberal norms and standards has turned into an internationally accepted currency to secure material and financial support for states' reconstruction efforts.

There has never been a shortage of criticism regarding the translation of these liberal visions and ideals into implementation strategies, but the substance of these contributions has only slowly shifted from management to politics. Throughout the 90s the academic debate remained confined to a rather exclusive club of mostly North American scholars, whose views on the matter had developed in a "political climate in which it was believed that improving knowledge of conflict and peace processes would enable a willing international community to resolve these problems" (Sabaratnam 2011, 17).

From the perspective taken on by such policy strategists local actors were not only part of but themselves constitutive for an 'environment' deemed more or less

difficult. Stedman's much criticized typology of 'spoilers' and 'spoiler behaviour' has to be regarded as the logical consequence of the dominant management approach to state building with its assessment of risks, budget size and opportunity costs. When Stedman wrote that "limited or greedy spoilers can be addressed through inducements or socialization, total spoilers can only be managed with a coercive strategy" he had summarized his own concept as well as the attitude of many officials charged with the implementation of mandates (Stedman 2002, 12).

The most prominent scholars in the field were actively engaged in international democracy promotion and entertained close links to the highest levels of government through assignments as foreign policy advisors or consultants – Stedman, Zartman or Paris are just some examples. By drawing valuable 'lessons learned' through their observations of past and ongoing missions they presented their work explicitly as a service to practitioners. Questioned were raised in regard to the modus operandi of these missions, their budget and timing, but the normative desirability and necessity of such missions and their larger aims was taken for granted.

Overwhelmingly grounded in rational choice theory and institutionalism the more popular studies relied heavily on quantitative data and favored comparative approaches. From this perspective setbacks in state building projects and conflicts between international and local actors in the course of such missions were framed as resulting from either suboptimal strategies, unfavorable conditions, or willful sabotage by local actors (Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Downs and Stedman 2002; Jones 2002; Zartman 1995). In other words: Both the design and the theoretical input of these studies assured that even the most dramatic failures did not threaten the state builders self-ascribed status as experts.

The asymmetric relationship between international interveners and their local counterparts in economic terms and the conviction that evolving towards Western models of governance is tantamount to the development of a more stable and just order has unsurprisingly prompted critiques to draw parallels to the colonial missions of the past. As Chandler has pointed out, many of these contributions have to be regarded as critiques of economic and political liberalism and Western hegemony per se, while

state building and its practice are but a mere vehicle for these larger ideological arguments (Chandler 2010b).

Other authors, most notably Chandler himself, have however been very adept in using the historic contextualization of state building missions to raise awareness for the naturalization of power structures and the detrimental effect this has on the overall goal to build a sustainable peace (Chandler 2010a, 143–187; Hughes and Pupavac 2005; Paris 2002). The United Nation's international administrations in East Timor, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been under particular scrutiny in this regard. During such operations international actors assume a wide range of powers and competences for a given period of time to supervise the creation of new administrative and political institutions. As the most encompassing of all peace operations, many of the issues that have already been pressing in other contexts present themselves with particular urgency here. Most notably the question of legitimacy (Caplan 2001).

The UN mission to East Timor has gained notorious popularity for the conflict laden relationship between international and local political actors, culminating in the resignation of Jarat Chopra the head of UNTAET; frustrated, in his own words, with the “Stalinist” and “colonial” practice of other senior UN officials (Chopra 2002; Lemay-Hébert 2011, 204). Following authors like Caplan or Chesterman who had early on cautioned to respect local ownership, scholars have re-examined how to redistribute responsibilities in the reform process set in motion during such „neo-trusteeships“ (Berdal and Caplan 2004; Caplan 2001; Chesterman 2004).

But despite a growing readiness to acknowledge the imbalance between local and international actors' contributions in the course of these undertakings, scholars and practitioners alike are less keen to put their self-ascribed status as experts to the test. This is evident in both the many attempts to rationalize the necessity of strong international control and supervision, as well as the fact that the term ‘local’ continues to appear either in combination with ‘conditions’, or, as far as actors are concerned, while pondering how to ‘develop incentives for them’ (Butler 2012; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Krasner 2005; Krasner 2004).

Notions that are reminiscent of the ones expressed in UN strategy papers.⁴ As Sending observed, the gap between the rhetoric and the practice of ownership is unlikely to close as long as strategies continue to be underpinned by assumptions of superiority: Universal knowledge and international sources of legitimacy continue to take precedent over local knowledge and local sources of legitimacy (Sending 2009; Sending 2010). It is thus in spite of the fact that scholars have critically analyzed and commented international peacebuilding missions for almost two decades that the predominant perception of local actors as either passive, disruptive, or teachable subjects of the reforms remains.

The following subchapter will review recent publications in state building literature that have contributed to the aforementioned ‘local turn’. Together with most of their peers these authors share the conviction that new institutions cannot take root against the will of the key actors and the people in these countries. But instead of understanding acts of rejection and resistance as symptoms of failure or a confirmation of unfavorable assumptions about local actors’ mindsets they intend to valorize their perceptions.

This project has two aspects: It involves an analytical reinvestigation of past missions’ mixed outcomes and the subsequent attempt to adjust the parameters of local-international interaction in the context of such joined projects for the future. The long-term aim of this academic venture is the transformation of the asymmetrical expert-layman relationship into one between genuine partners in peacebuilding.

2.2. Seeing like a Peace Builder: Adjusting the Relationship between Local and International Actors

The authors under review here still do cover a wide range of positions and are far from agreeing with each other about the best way to proceed analytically or practically. All of them do however choose their point of departure based on the insight that it is necessary to adjust the mode of observation before changing the mode of action. It is

⁴ See exemplary: United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies, UN Doc. S/2004/616, August 23, 2004.

worthwhile mentioning that the circle of academics has broadened considerably to include a great number of European scholars, but continues to exclude scholars outside of the Northern hemisphere.

According to Mac Ginty and Richmond this “partial ghettoization of the debate” is among others “related to the political economies of publishing and research” (2014, 13). The contributions can be broadly assigned to two groups, one being more concerned with the interaction between international and local political actors and the other one with a heightened interest in the communication between international actors and the local population. In contrast to the rather complacent character of earlier academic debates, the dialogue that has begun to evolve now is marked by a greater willingness to turn the mirror around and include the interveners’ own assumptions on the list of ‘objects’ to study (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012).

Another characteristic of these contributions is a pronounced trend towards in-depth case studies based on empirical approaches, qualitative data and sociological theories. These choices correspond to the renewed interest in understanding how actors in post-war contexts understand events and institutions and come to take their decisions.

It is not only the lessons learned from past failures but also common sense that led observers and practitioners to posit that international peacebuilding missions cannot succeed without the cooperation of local actors. In order to secure their long-term commitment to the peace-process it inclusive approaches are now already called for in the planning stages of a mission. “Mandates” summarizes Ndulo, “must be guided by the understanding that peace making and peacebuilding are primarily the responsibility of local rather than foreign actors” (Ndulo 2011, 796).

The working principle of ‘local ownership’, a term that started its career as the “new shibboleth of the development community in the late 90s”, quickly became a standard reference in UN strategy papers (Chesterman 2007, 4). The principle is deemed especially important in the context of so called ‘complex peace operations’ that are concerned with “the reconstruction of public institutions in failed and collapsed states” (Englebert and Tull 2008, 106). On the one side narrowly defined as “the extent to which domestic actors control both the design and implementation of political processes” (Donais 2009, 3), the principle of ownership often takes on a more

emotional connotation, as the idea that local actors should become ‘attached’ to their institutions (Chesterman 2007). In academic circles the term has by now been mostly dismissed as a buzzword without much substance as local actors are still mostly excluded or sidelined during almost all phases of a mission.

It is in the midst of this debate that several scholars have shifted their focus from the presumed qualities of local capacities and the management of their various deficiencies to the assumptions guiding the implementation strategies of interveners. The prevalence of preconceived ideas that international actors hold with regard to their local partners has in this regard been evoked as one important factor for the inconsistent inclusion of those concerned by the reforms. Missions are conducted as a response to a perceived problem with the administration of a country. International actors consider local politicians therefore often as incapable and untrustworthy as the very institutions they intend to reform (Baskin 2004; Wilde 2001). The fact that international officials can devise their strategies in a context that is relatively free from the social and political constraints, which determine the scope of action for their local counterparts has been identified as equally problematic. A case in point is the pronounced reluctance of UN officials to hand over authority over the countries’ new institutions during the missions to Kosovo and East Timor.

As a counterbalance to the general trend of framing local political actors as immature and simply ill prepared to take over, some authors turned instead to the rationalities leading the interveners to take their decisions. According to Hehir interveners had developed their expectations based on illusionary ideas that regularly took precedent over the political, or socio-economic realities in the given country. They “desire to create political communities which mirror a vision of the Western state – democratic, pluralist, efficient, just, fair – which doesn’t actually equate with existing Western states but rather with an idealized composite image of Western democracies” (Hehir 2011, 1074).

Measured against such an ideal idea local actors were thus in an impossible situation to prove their readiness. Lemay-Hebert’s study of UNTAET and UNMIK does insofar complement this analysis as it examined how the “mental image” interveners had of the two countries as “empty-shells” that had to be rebuilt from

scratch guided state building policies. According to Lemay-Hebert these attitudes contributed to a range of problems during the implementation phase, as they underestimated or misjudged the importance of existing local institutions and acted dismissively with regard to local concerns and input (Lemay-Hébert 2011).

In order to reform the relationship between interveners and the local elite, contributions like this advocate implicitly to change the practice but also the mindset of the former. Something that is rather difficult to translate into clear cut peacebuilding guidelines. In policy circles the principle of local ownership had by and large been understood as an appeal to change hiring politics: Enhanced recruitment of local staff for higher positions, involvement of local advisors in the drafting phases of important projects etc. While this may have changed the management side of these missions it did certainly little to change interveners' attitudes. In this regard it would be of the essence to change the way the international community perceives of their own role in the course of such missions. The keyword here, as drawn from the contributions, is 'contextualization'.

Strategies should not be drawn from universal templates or blueprints, but instead developed in dialogue with the local authorities. Legitimacy and appropriateness of peacebuilding strategies should not be assumed, but considered dependent on a given social context and instead of perceiving of missions as part of a history of other missions, they should be evaluated in the historical context of the country in question (Donais 2009; Kurz 2010).

Past studies have indeed shown that the eagerness to avoid a repetition of past negative experiences in other missions often impairs officials' judgment with regard to the situation at hand, leading to the detriment of relations between international and local actors. Still under the impression of their problems in Kosovo the UN had for instance largely excluded East Timorese in both the negotiation and implementation phase of its mandate. There was a tendency, Caplan writes with regard to UNTAET, "to apply the wrong lessons from the UN's operations in the Balkans" (Caplan 2001, 54); while Chopra saw a "blind ambition borne of bitter experience in Somalia, Afghanistan and elsewhere" at fault (Chopra 2002, 981).

While there are certainly few scholars who would dismiss this long overdue demand to be more sensitive to the local perspective, some have raised important questions with regard to its practical implications. The suggestion to be more open to local input and ready to let go of preconceived ideas is not one that can be implemented on a purely individual level; as the hiring of anthropologists or other country based experts to accompany military personnel may have suggested (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 37). In particular, if the concern for legitimacy applies not simply to the short-term goal of maintaining good relations between interveners and their local partners, but rather to the long-term goal of building a legitimate order.

Amidst calls for a more inclusive approach with regard to the local elites at the height of the ownership debate Chesterman had already measured the gap between insight and results. According to him reports and strategy papers tiptoed around the “the central question”, namely how the often demanded ‘open and collaborative dialogue’ with local authorities “would be managed and how [its] objectives would be determined” (Chesterman 2007, 7). Several years later, Campbell takes a step in the same direction when she draws attention to the “high degree of organizational learning and adaptation” that the necessity to identify, observe, and integrate ever new variables into peacebuilding strategies entails (Campbell 2011, 91).

In regard of these prevailing issues some scholars have suggested an altogether different approach to intervention policies: Developing new modes of peacebuilding together with those, in whose name this reforms have always been initiated: The people. And while this debate proceeds loosely under the headline of a ‘post-liberal peace’ its contributions can be understood as an attempt to actively tackle the various problems that piled up as a result of the fruitless attempts to use the enhanced readiness to be more responsive to local demands as a currency for real changes on an implementation level.

The reasoning behind the search for new modes of peace making and the decision to do so in partnership with the local population rather than the local elite, could be said to proceed along the following lines: Previous research has indicated that the exclusion of local actors and the disregard of their contributions delegitimizes state building policies and prevents the sustained support of the new institutions. The

importance of their inclusion has been successfully argued for, but standing in the way of true reforms are interveners assumptions of superiority.

Intervention policies that present themselves as being predominantly concerned with institutions, enable – and will continue to do so – the preservation of the interveners’ conceptualization as being the ‘experts in charge of affairs’. Instead of focusing all the attention on the adaptation of foreign models and the local elite, a small group of people with an often “controversial claim to represent local constituencies “ (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 764) it appears to be more promising to develop and implement new modes of social and political exchange ‘bottom-up’ with the support and input of the local population. Considering the works of Lederach, Pouligny, or Talentino, who have all delivered sound empirical material and arguments to demonstrate the crucial link between identity and legitimacy in conflict resolution and state building one can consider this to be a project that has been long in the making (Lederach 1997; Pouligny 2005; Talentino 2004; Talentino 2007).

Unlike the earlier generations of state building literature that presented themselves as being written by and for experts and practitioners, this new debate can be characterized as a predominantly intellectual and academic venture with an explicit political aim: Creating a new partnership for peace. Many of the contributions relate to each other based on the tacit agreement that their suggestions and ideas are still a tough sell on the market of policy reforms. The demand to get rid of strategy templates and initiate a learning process that aims at developing policies on a case-by-case basis creates first and foremost a lot of insecurity.

One of the first realms of activity that have been incited in the context of this new research agenda was thus centered around the attempt to show that the failing of former projects is actually a result of erroneous assumptions over the nature of state building. “Its crucial failure” wrote Wesley about the traditional technocratic top-down approach, “would appear to lie in its very conception of the state as an independent variable, ideally divorced from politics, economy, and society.” Drawing on sociological concepts the article argues further that “a legitimate, stable state can only emerge from the dominant understandings, compromises, and categories arising from within these spheres of human activity” (Wesley 2008, 380–381).

In its analysis of the conceptualization of state failure, the problem that external interveners both diagnose and treat, Lemay-Hebert likewise showed how most articles developed their arguments based on a Weberian understanding of the state. Its ‘failing’ can then be likened to its incapacity to provide certain goods. In an attempt to delineate the limits of the institutional approach the study argues with Durkheim that “institutionalization and the instrumental capacities of statehood are important” but “it is in the realm of ideas and sentiment that the fate of states is primarily determined” (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 24). This notion of statehood has two important consequences for the practice of statebuilding and peacebuilding. First of all it would mean that it is not by choice, but by its very nature a project “that does not only aim at rebuilding state institutions but the very organization of state-society relations” (Bellina et al. 2009; Sending 2009). And second, it is a project that can never succeed in spite of, but only because of the contributions of local actors. Accepting these premises means to acknowledge that interveners have never been in a position to truly manage peacebuilding; instead they themselves have been acting on erroneous assumptions over their own role, their realm of influence and the effect of the choices they took.

For the sphere of analysis this perspective entails first and foremost the vast multiplication of factors to take into account, a dissolution of known categories, and the loss of established benchmarks against which to measure and evaluate observations. Seeing like a state builder meant to act upon the vision of a project with a clear beginning and end, it meant to see the formation of institutions and procedures, and, perhaps most importantly, it involved the conviction that these visible markers of change provided information about their content and substance.

In comparison to the clear-cut shapes that mark the landscape of state building, the proponents of a new partnership in peacebuilding are for now faced with a rather blurry version of the objects they are approaching. “Engaging with local peacebuilding means to engage with the idea of resistance to liberal models and principles”, Richmond and Mac Ginty wrote. A useful starting point for research would therefore be the assumption of “humility and not-knowing” (2014, 14).

2.3. The Making of a New Political Order: Modes of Observation

The rather unattractive prognosis of having to undertake the tedious task of exploring uncharted territory for the next years to come is mainly counterbalanced by the sound empirical evidence confirming its necessity, if not urgency. For virtually every mission the United Nations' undertook in the past two decades, scholars (and journalists) have assembled multiple examples of problems that resulted from the dismissive attitudes of interveners or their disregard of local interests, culture and customs. "Why peacebuilders are blind and arrogant and what to do about it" is how Sending summarized this matter to chart a way forward (Sending 2009). Such reports do not only pertain to the short-term effects of international-local interaction, but more crucially to the long term-effects that this ignorance has on both the efficiency and effectivity of intervention projects. With regard to the UN's efforts in East Timor Hohe criticized that the

"Transitional Administration built institutions on the assumptions that there were no strong concepts and ideas existing on the local level, and that the population just had to be 'taught' democracy. This ignored the fact that human beings grow up in a social environment with powerful ideas of how to classify and understand their world. Local perception of practices was perceived as cultural 'folklore' and was not accorded much significance. Therefore, international attempts often failed or had marginal impact" (Hohe 2002, 570).

In a very similar argument Talentino remarks with regard to Bosnia that because "top-down and bottom-up processes work independently, the shape of the state envisioned by outside actors may not correspond to the identities developed by internal actors. [In Bosnia] many citizens oppose the federal structure mandated by the international community and resist attempts to make it stronger"(Talentino 2004, 561).

According to Andersen, the central argument these authors derive from their analysis is the conviction that internal legitimacy is of primary importance in the making of a stable new order and that this legitimacy stems from understanding social dynamics and knowledge (Andersen 2012). One of the long term goals of this academic project is therefore – and this puts them again in agreement with the mainstream state building literature – to avoid the kind of institutions that have been described as "illusions", "potemkin like" or in their entirety as "phantom states" (Bliesemann de

Guevara and Kühn 2010; Chandler 2006, 46): Superficial structures that serve mainly to uphold the appearance of a legitimate order in the interest of continued relations between foreign governments, but remain distant to and irrelevant for the lives of the people.

After the successful promotion of internal legitimacy as a crucial principle in the making of any new order, the criticism of the liberal peace model is faced with its next big challenge. The new perspective proposed in the course of the local turn makes it necessary to develop analytical models that can meet the simultaneous demands of being flexible enough to capture country and case specific characteristics and still provide generalizable information regarding past and future missions of this kind.

Certain, this is in essence a problem every theoretical model deals with. What renders this issue particularly difficult here, is the fact that established analytical categories are likewise under scrutiny: Authors have pointed out that seemingly descriptive terms like for instance local and international, external and internal are themselves loaded with assumptions that may hinder the development of a neutral observer position (Andersen 2012; Goodhand and Walton 2009; Kurz 2010; Mac Ginty 2011). The highly politically charged nature of the studies' focus, namely interventions that are conducted with the aim of changing the socio-political structure of foreign countries, adds a problematic normative dimension.

In order to approach these issues authors depart from the understanding that there is a need for more dynamic models; that is models that can capture the evolving nature of policies, opinions and ideas and accept the newly postulated fluidity of categories and concepts. It is, in other words, the attempt to finally let go of the obsession with results and assume a more procedural perspective. Something that has been recommended early on (Baskin 2004, 125). As a response to these challenges scholars seem to converge on two themes: Negotiation and communication.

The focus on negotiation caters the need for a deeper understanding regarding the limits of international strategies and the reasons for local opposition. More attention to the rules and dynamics of communication, on the other hand, may contribute to gain information on the decision making processes that precede such acts of resistance.

An analysis of the “complex negotiations that go on between exporters and importers of liberal peacebuilding” in the case of Sri Lanka for instance revealed how local actors “instrumentalize the interventions of external actors, and the ways in which they are ‘translated’ as they go through these multiple brokering arrangements.” The authors state that due to these interventions by local actors “liberal peacebuilding may look very different from how it was originally framed, once it ‘hits the ground’” (Goodhand and Walton 2009, 307).

In order to capture systematically how such translations proceed and how strategic agendas are modified as a result of the interaction between interveners and local actors, Mac Ginty proposed the hybrid peace model. Devised as an analytical tool it probably represents the most comprehensive attempt to observe the dynamic of peacebuilding as a joint project of interveners and local actors. By placing his model in a “wider structural context” Mac Ginty acknowledges the power bias between them, but highlights the capacity and agency of local actors (Mac Ginty 2011, 212). With its emphasis on their ability to negotiate the substance and the impact of the liberal peace project this approach represents a move away from the subjectifying perspective on people in post-war societies. Additionally it addresses the normative problem by encouraging observers to approach the systems that emerge without deciding a-priori that non-liberal institutions are symptoms of an incomplete or deficient process of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2011).

Other examples for this trend to assess the limits of strategic intent and capture the evolving character of actors and institutions are Chandler’s suggestion to focus on the concrete social practice of interventionism or Andersen’s proposal to apply the theory and methodology of relational sociology to state building analysis (Andersen 2012; Chandler 2015).

What binds all of these studies together is the expressed need to understand the reasons for resistance. The newly found consensus here is that local actors may have good reasons to reject reforms: they can assess the socio-economic conditions much better than international actors and are thus in a better position to decide over the feasibility of a given project. This evidently represents a 180 degree turn away from the earlier generations of literature where local resistance was framed as pathological

and dangerous. But with their demand to be more open to the knowledge generated on a local level these authors go also a step further than scholars that have simply advocated the need to accept opposition: With a focus on the bargaining process between elites Barnett and Zürcher for instance propose a more pragmatic approach to peacebuilding. International actors should not insist on all-too progressive reforms that threaten the interests of elites, but scale down their expectations and settle for the “least bad state” (Barnett and Zuercher 2009). If one does, however, not understand resistance as an unavoidable nuisance but rather as a productive and necessary component of engaged and cooperative reform development, the need to learn more about the local perspective becomes imminent.

Scholars have therefore begun to re-examine the possibilities for an ‘open and collaborative dialogue’ with local actors. Something akin to this had already been demanded during the ownership debate and, as noted earlier, largely failed. Taking a closer look at the conceptualization of the exchange between international and local actors now and then, in particular with regard to its intentions, one can note two main differences. The dialogue that was supposed to enhance local ownership was concerned with input, information, and participation: Interveners were asked to enhance the transparency of their decision making procedures and be more open to local suggestions.

Likewise, it was recommended to integrate local actors more systematically in the process of translating given strategies into concrete policies. In other words: It was a dialogue that aimed at enhancing acceptance and support of internationally pre-defined models. On the contrary, those scholars that intent to transform the relationship between interveners and local actors into one between true partners in peacebuilding depart from the understanding that a better peace can be constructed through communication and deliberation. In order to develop institutions that stay true to the structures of local politics and culture they highlight the necessity to question how interveners’ preconceived ideas continue to shape intervention policies. In this regard peace builders would therefore need to develop “discursive understandings of peace and facilitate a negotiation of a discursive practice of peace in which hegemony, domination, and oppression can be identified and resolved” (Richmond 2008, 462).

Such a negotiation should furthermore proceed without determining a priori what the new order will look like.

“Donors⁵ often seek to either eradicate or transform traditional forms of rule and customary law in the context of state building. To harness and transfer the legitimacy of such practices onto the state, donors should focus not on specifying outcomes but on defining appropriate processes for debates and negotiations between different groups about the definition and implementation of state law and rule. Here, support for *arenas and mechanisms for dialogue and negotiation between different actors* representing different interests and bases of legitimacy seems important also for facilitating learning processes regarding the building of consensus, constructive partnerships between different types of actors, and a sense of mutuality and citizenship [highlight in original].” (Bellina et al. 2009, 37)

It is this emphasis on mutual learning and understanding that now drives much of the scholarly activity concerned with conflict resolution and the building of stable and peaceful states. Research is encouraged to develop models that can ‘see’ politics outside of the established institutions and suggest ways to make local knowledge over these dynamics fruitful for the development of policy strategies. In the long term this approach is destined to contribute to a reform of the way in which peace builders approach countries at conflict. This means, first and foremost, to develop arguments and analytical tools that will allow them to put off the project of ‘constructing’ institutions and rather begin the joint project of peacebuilding by discerning the outlines of a new order with its limits and potentials as imagined by the people.

2.4. Deliberating Ideas in the Making of a New Order: Conceptual Limits and a Way Forward

The sketch of recent developments in peacebuilding research shows that the achievements of the liberal peace critique are quite substantial: It has been argued rather successfully that both practitioners and academics could profit from changing their expert status to self-declared amateurs of peacebuilding. And despite the shortage of coherent dynamic models to capture the local-international negotiation and communication procedures the available studies have already shed new light on the

⁵ The authors give no definition of the term donor, but imply in several paragraphs that this refers to international actors engaged in state building activities, including foreign governments, supranational organizations, or non-governmental agencies.

character of evolving practices and institutions. The following chapter will briefly describe the contribution this dissertation seeks to make to the current debate in its search for new empirical data and theoretical models. In order to do so it will first discuss the two main shortcomings of the current criticism. The argument is that the debate has not yet managed to escape the niche it developed in: It is through its self-styled ‘opposition-character’ that the debate sets its own conceptual limits.

This problem is first of all evident in the conceptualization of international and local actors as imposers and imposed upon. Attempts to prove earlier generations of scholars and state builders wrong, who had developed their policies and analytical models based on the understanding that foreign countries could, in fact, be pressured in the ‘right’ direction have not weakened but rather reinforced this notion. The introduction to the anthology *A Liberal Peace?* is exemplary in this regard (Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam 2011).

As indicated by the question mark in the title it sets out to advance our “understanding of peacebuilding intervention”. The editors then proceed by presenting “empirical research that investigates the degree to which the liberal peace is, in fact, imposed on post-conflict and transitional states and societies.” With a focus on local actors and conditions in foreign countries some authors argue for instance that this project is doomed to fail because of reluctant elites and established bureaucratic routines.

Others take on a more normative position and hold that economic superiority shouldn’t be abused as a free pass to proceed with ruthless interventions: “Respect for the ‘Other’ [...] includes the reluctance to impose universal models” (Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam 2011, 1–3). With their studies the authors can indeed show that ‘imposition’ is neither feasible nor morally acceptable; but this does little to challenge the simplifying understanding of the power bias between them. The same dichotomy is applied when attempting to explain the deteriorating relationships between local and international actors on all institutional levels, from the elite to the sphere of the ‘everyday’.

Autessere’s groundbreaking study on the subculture of international peacebuilders for instance showed how knowledge production, socialization and the

everyday routines in the circles of these interveners alienate them from the very society they intend to appease and reform. Instead of furthering the goal of building a true partnership for peace their presence in the country often led to additional conflicts. In this regard the study asks “why many of these people, who would in fact benefit from effective international efforts, reject or distort them”. The answer, she finds, lies in the “very act of imposition” (Autessere 2014, 108). “Intellectuals and authorities regularly complained that interveners tried to impose their ideas, values, and standard operation procedures with no respect for local knowledge and customs.” These results do confirm earlier works by Talentino, who likewise showed that “resentment [against imposition] results in obstructionism” (Autessere 2014, 109).

While there is nothing to say against the demand to be more sensitive and respectful in dealing with one another it is clearly important not to equate the perception of imposition with the nature of power in the context of an intervention on an analytical level. Which leads to the second problem: Earlier generations of scholars have, as Autessere details, explained resistance with local actors’ “lack of understanding of international strategies, the presence of vested interests, the financial and logistical constraints of the projects, or the Western or liberal characters of the programs” (Autessere 2014, 108).

In their attempts to demonstrate actors’ agency and frame their opposition as valid and rational behavior the reviewed analysis tend to attribute reforms with an almost material character. Mac Ginty’s hybrid peace model for instance had encouraged analysts to observe the realm of “peace processes and peace accord implementation” with an eye on the agency of local actors to negotiate the substance of externally imposed reforms (Mac Ginty 2011, 211). His article includes several example of hybrid structures that have formed as a result of local resistance, subversion, and their ability to uphold local alternatives to internationally crafted institutions: The informal economy in Iraq, or the new Bosnian state, which he describes as a “distortion of liberal ideas melded with nationalism, realism and a socialist legacy” (Mac Ginty 2011, 219). Despite the study’s acknowledgement of the non-linear character that preceded the creation of these structures, the ideas and assumptions that have driven acts of resistance or subversion remain in the dark. To

put it more bluntly: Instead of observing processes Mac Ginty actually observes results and explains them with processes. Other studies or analysis are equally silent on the matter: What are actors' perceptions of the reforms? How do international actors convey their ideas of the changes to come? How do converging or contradicting ideas of the new political order affect the relationship between interveners and local actors?

In order to find an answer to these questions it is neither helpful to further the distinction between liberal and non-liberal preferences, nor to trace all of the international actors' claims back to their assumptions of superiority. Instead it would be important to advance our understanding of the concrete practice with which interveners seek to enforce, uphold, and confirm their vision of the new political order in the course of a mission and under what circumstances local actors are likely to react to these interpretations of their future.

In other words: It would important to account for the symbolic character of local-international exchanges and negotiations regarding the future political order. It is in regard of these prevailing issues that this work intends to make the following contribution: It will 1.) Provide an analytical model to observe the symbolic dimension of international-local negotiations over the new political order and 2.) Provide empirical data that can demonstrate the importance to account for this dimension while advancing the debate over alternative models of peacebuilding.

With its focus on Cambodia's public political discourse and the ideas presented by the 20 newly founded Cambodian parties prior to the UNTAC organized elections in 1993 the intended analysis seems to go against the here described trend in state building literature: It observes politics in traditional institutional structures and is interested in interaction on the level of political elites. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical framework used to capture the dynamic of their interaction. It will become evident that it is possible to learn a lot about the nature of power in the context of an intervention if we focus our attention on the ongoing deliberations of the different visions for a peaceful new order that become an option in transitional times. Instead of turning towards the 'everyday' in an attempt to discover hidden forms of agency and knowledge, the analysis of the public political discourse in the context of an

intervention society intends to determine more precisely *what kind of knowledge is mobilized under what circumstances* to defend contesting claims over legitimate political reforms. Such ongoing deliberations are not taking place in a sphere completely removed from the population, but are very much embedded in the reconstruction efforts that encompass both the state and the nation.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

The previous literature analysis showed a trend towards a more positive assessment of the integrative effects of local-international interaction: Instead of fixing on the institutional ideal state builders may have had when devising their strategies, the new modes of observation intend to account for the ideas that drive the decision making processes of their local counterparts in the joint project of making a new political order. How do interveners try to enforce and uphold their vision of the new political order and what are the practices employed by local actors to confirm or counter these ideas? How can we capture this symbolic dimension of negotiations in the context of a state building mission?

In order to develop an analytical model that can account for this particular dynamic this chapter will proceed as follows: In a first step it will discuss the theoretical assumptions guiding this work. The research interest with its suggested perspective on local-international interaction is grounded in a specific understanding of the state: Institutions and ideas are considered mutually constitutive. The chapter presents the relevant elements of this perspective and discusses the theoretical implications for the analysis. In a second part the chapter introduces the theory of interpretative authority: This theory allows us to access the symbolic dimension of local and international interaction and still account for the power bias inherent in their relationship.

With regard to the case at hand a concluding chapter will further detail the theoretical implications of the proposed approach and devise an analytical model. In preparation of the operationalization this chapter also reflects on the potential of an analysis based on this theoretical perspective to overcome the conceptual limits identified in Chapter 2. The final research question will reflect these considerations.

3.2. The State as a Result of Ongoing Negotiations and Struggles: Theoretical Implications

There are two distinct understandings of how to conceptualize the state in current statebuilding literature. The first one considers the state to be separate from society and the second one assumes that state and society are in a mutually constitutive relation. This work will build on the second assumption. In order to clarify the theoretical implications this understanding has for approaching the analysis I will briefly recall the debate over the nature of the state as presented in current publications. As the central category of all analysis its evolvement provides a good indicator for the evolvement of the state building debate at large.

As Foucault phrased it there is “no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault 1995, 27). The powerful nature of perceiving the state as an entity that hovers over its subjects is therefore first and foremost evident in the silence of state building literature on this central category. Rather than a concept it represented a truth in the Foucauldian sense. Autesserre remarks in this regard:

“Consider for instance the dominant collective understanding that interveners should approach their roles in a top-down manner through regular interactions with national and international elites. This understanding originated in the practice of diplomacy in classical antiquity, and each critical historical juncture – such as the 1648 treaty of Westphalia and the rise of international organizations in the twentieth century – has reinforced it” (Autesserre 2014, 34).

While the perceived redundancy to elaborate on ones’ understanding of the state proved the hegemonic character of this definition, the recent trend to trace the production of knowledge back to this assumption indicates the greater shift in the field of state building research. The most comprehensive effort in this regard is the edited volume *The semantics of statebuilding and nationbuilding: looking beyond neo-Weberian approaches*. In the introduction the editors outline the intentions of this publication as follows: By engaging with “philosophical, sociological, historical and economic perspectives” the contributors will shift attention from “statebuilding as a professional practice to the meanings associated with it”. And further: “Central to the process is our

understanding that language is both the most important tool for building anything of social significance and the primary repository of meaning in any social setting.” Departing from this understanding they present analysis that are concerned with the perceptions of scholars and interveners: How have they conceptualized central categories such as “state, state fragility and statebuilding” and what kind of repercussions does this have on “‘good practices’ for statebuilding, demonstrating how the semantics of statebuilding construct, reproduce and maintain particular visions of order” (Lemay-Hébert, Onuf, and Racik 2014, 1).

Of particular relevance for the present work are Lemay-Hébert’s two contributions, as they revolve directly around the question of how the so-called Weberian or neo-Weberian approach to statehood has been challenged by other conceptualizations.⁶ Weber’s dominant understanding of the ‘state as government’⁷ had provided the rationale for interventions aimed at reconstructing state institutions. As already outlined in *Chapter 2* the related technocratic top-down approach allowed interveners to understand themselves as experts charged with treating various institutional deficiencies. ‘State structures and societal forces’ were conceptualized as two separate spheres.

Scholars and practitioners alike subsequently drafted their strategies and recommendations based on the assumption that there is a “distinction between statebuilding and nationbuilding” and hence “that it is possible to conduct statebuilding operations from the outside without entering into the contested sphere of nationbuilding. [...] In other words, it is possible to target the institutions of a given state, to strengthen state capabilities, without engaging in the dreaded realm of identity-building” (Lemay-Hébert 2014, 92). Applying a reverse reading of these postulations the question is hence, what are the analytical consequences of understanding the ‘state

⁶ The following paragraph paraphrases his findings unless indicated through other citations. In a slightly different form, Lemay-Hébert’s chapter had already been published in 2009 under the title “Statebuilding without Nation-Building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutionalist Approach.” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3 (1): 21–45. Findings here may be based on both his article and his book chapter.

⁷ Lemay-Hébert quotes a number of scholars that have underlined that Weber’s definition of statehood ought to be seen in connection with his concept of the nation.

as social system'? If we turn our attention towards the context of a statebuilding or peacebuilding mission, three aspects will gain particular importance:

1. Interveners always engage in nation building

The first one is obvious: Whether or not interveners intend to, their activities will always have an impact on the constitution of the collective identity of the intervened society. In building this argument Lemay-Hébert describes in depth how different sociological thinkers have shown that state and nation have to be perceived of as mutually constitutive. Defined as a “sociological process subject to alteration, modification, reinterpretation, or even wholesale creation by politics [...] the nation is a social entity, a social reality, only insofar as it relates to the modern state” (Lemay-Hebert 2014, 96). The design and implementation of intervention policies with the corresponding attempts to reconstruct or create institutions are therefore bound to have concrete “repercussions on socio-political cohesion (Lemay-Hebert 2009, 41). Hence, no conclusions can be drawn from the strategic conceptualizations of mission as ‘statebuilding’ or ‘nationbuilding-missions’ as regards the actual engagement of interveners in the realm of the ideas.

2. All practice is political in nature

The fact that even the most technocratic reforms have political consequences is a common reminder in current literature. Bellina et al. for instance point out that “any intervention by external actors, however technical it may be, will affect the relative position of different local groups and is thus inherently political” (Bellina et al. 2009, 36). In a similar vein Wesley argued that “however technocratic their intention, statebuilding missions inevitably find themselves factored into local rivalries. As agents of reform, interventions cannot fail to incur the opposition of those in the political elite that were benefiting from the previous system” (Wesley 2008, 380). With the focus on elite conflicts and power structures the political nature of interventions is here framed in terms of interests and benefits. Linking this argument more directly to the postulated interrelatedness of state and society allows us to also see the symbolic dimension of

interveners' decisions and their political consequences. In implementing their mandate international actors derive their authority "in no small part from [their] claim to *know* what needs to be done to prevent future conflicts, and to help build a liberal democratic state" (Sending 2009, 2).

This claim of knowledge has to be regarded as inherent to every practice and every decisions interveners present as legitimate. By understanding society and the state as mutually constitutive this also means that such a claim is not only concerned with the way institutions are supposed to look like, but, by extension, also with the way society and the state should relate. Interventions are therefore not only irreducibly political because they affect actors' positions and their power. They are political because all of the interveners' actions represent an attempt to influence how the people may perceive, comprehend, and interpret the new order.

3. Interveners are in a competitive relationship with other political actors

The fact that the local political actors have to respond to the values and principles propagated by interveners has of course long been acknowledged. It is, however, usually conceptualized as an activity to which the interveners remain strangely external: Manning for instance criticizes that international actors often fail to take the important challenges into account that the local political elite faces when attempting to balance the expectations of now two 'constituencies': their voters and the international community (Manning 2004; Manning 2007).

The presence and influence of an international authority pressures these actors to conform to the new rules and regulations of the game and to prove their commitment to liberal norms. This might further the need to modify "the collective identity the party offers to its followers" (Manning 2004, 60). Other authors presuppose the same possibility to neatly separate communication spheres in a post-conflict setting when they define actors as 'importers' and 'exporters' of liberal ideas, or describe the different language politicians use in their attempts to please international and local expectations (Goodhand and Walton 2009; Limani-Beqa 2011). Just like the earlier conceptualization of state and society that underpinned statebuilding analysis, these

descriptions evoke the image of a liberal dictate that hovers somewhat ominously over local actors heads. Such a perspective simultaneously overemphasizes the strategic intent and control local actors have over questions of collective identity and de-emphasizes the active role international actors have in its creation.

With a focus on the social dynamics set in motion in a post-conflict setting it has been argued elsewhere that the society in question should be perceived of as an intervention society, that is a society that encompasses interveners and local actors (Bonacker et al. 2010). The concept removes the analytically unhelpful separation between interveners and the local society and draws attention to the concrete practice that constitute ‘insides’ and ‘outsides’ (Andersen 2012; Bonacker et al. 2010).

With regard to the here developed theoretical argument it allows us to further clarify the relationship between interveners and local political actors. An intervention society, just like any society, is engaged in continuous struggles and negotiations over the nature of the state. But unlike every other society it is marked by a heightened importance of the political realm. In paraphrasing Grenier the authors Goodhand and Walton describe interventions as “charismatic moments”⁸ (2009, 314); that is a time during which “the autonomy of the political dynamic as a whole seems to be enhanced” and political actors and ideas “shape politics in a dramatic way” (Grenier 1996, 12). According to them, the “peace process then is best seen an intensified political environment providing a range of opportunities for different actors to generate legitimacy in different ways” (Goodhand and Walton 2009, 316).

By embedding this postulation in the concept of an intervention society the relationship between interveners and local political actors can no longer be adequately described in terms of imposers and imposed upon. Rather, they have to be understood as competitors that engage in the realm of ideas, where they struggle over the meaning of the new institutions and their role in reforming the relationship between society and the state.

⁸ Strictly speaking they do not define the intervention as constituting the charismatic moment, but argue that interventions take place in charismatic moments and are hence always political. Given their definition of the peace process I consider this slight adaptation to be a valid one.

3.3. Summary: Consequences for the Analytical Model

The theoretical implications of understanding the state as a social system enhanced the understanding of the intended observation target: The struggles and negotiations between interveners and local political actors over the meaning of the reforms. It allows us to argue that the sphere of institution building and the realm of ideas are not two separate spheres but connected. Furthermore, we can perceive local and international actors as competitors, which puts the latter's self-ascribed role as uninvolved conflict moderators to the test.

To observe this symbolic dimension of their interactions it is now necessary to devise an analytical model that is able to capture this particular dynamic. Such a model needs to address two problems: First of all, it needs to account for the power bias between interveners and local political actors. Even if one does not want to base the analysis on the distinction between 'strong universal, liberal principles' and 'weak, local, non-liberal principles', the fact remains that interveners do still have a considerable advantage in transforming their "material into moral power" (Mac Ginty 2011, 213). The second problem relates to the 'location' of this negotiation. The realm of ideas is not exactly a precisely limited space. The fact that it is by definition subject to continuous alteration and re-interpretation adds a problematic temporal dimension. To summarize: While the theoretical conceptualization of the state as a social system and the related implications for the process of statebuilding denotes what we intend to observe, the questions of how and where this observation may take place is still open.

The following subchapter will therefore introduce the theory of interpretative authority. After presenting the general concepts of this theory and its leading assumptions it will consider its implications for the case at hand and finally present an analytical model that integrates the results of the foregoing discussion: This model can capture the competitive aspect in the relationship between interveners and local political actors and the techniques they employ to ensure that their respective vision of the new political order may have an impact on society's realm of ideas.

3.4. The Theory of Interpretative Authority

At this point it is necessary to describe the larger context of this work. The dissertation is part of a comprehensive research project, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), entitled: The Institutionalization of Interpretative Authority in Post-Conflict Societies. An Analysis of the Transitional Authority in Kosovo and Cambodia. The project aimed at developing an adaptation of the theory of interpretative authority to analyze the transition from conflict to peace in the context of a UN transitional authority. It focuses on processes of authority building.

The original theoretical model has been developed by Andre Brodocz to describe the particular type of power exercised by the constitutional court in Germany – and thus the constitutional court in an established democracy (2003, 2009). Not endowed with the power to sanction when challenged and yet highly respected by all other institutions its interplay with the different levels of government and this particular type of power says something about the way the political society as a whole functions and its members communicate with one another.

The analysis describes the symbolic character of this exchange, tied to categories of understanding that have to be communicated and constantly reinterpreted to serve as shared categories of understanding. One of the key assumptions the theory builds on is the idea that political communities are created around the interpretation of certain symbols. These symbols have to remain highly ambiguous in order to incite and regulate the constant re-negotiation of the fundamental terms characterizing a given society.

The power of the German constitutional court thus rests in part on the important status the German constitution has in inciting an ongoing conversation between the members of this particular political community. In this discussion the community constantly reaffirms and recreates notions of the shared understanding that constitutes its common ground.

In its adaptation for the post-conflict setting the theory focuses on international administrations. International administrations constitute the most encompassing of all interventions. To this date the United Nations have been mandated to set-up such a

structure six times: in Namibia (UNTAG 1989-1990), in Cambodia (UNTAC 1992-1993), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH 1995-2002), in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES 1996-1998), in East Timor (UNTAET 1999-2002) and in Kosovo (UNMIK, since 1999). In all of these cases the United Nations' Security Council provided extensive mandates to rebuild a legitimate state. To this end, the UN were thus entitled to take over the state's government and assume its main responsibilities.

As the previous chapter showed, questions of legitimacy present themselves with particular urgency in the context of such extensive missions. The amount of available studies that describe and explain the conflicts between local and international actors during UNMIBH, UNTAET and UNMIK testifies to this problematic. With a hint of sarcasm one could thus say that these missions are quite useful from a researcher's point of view.

Scholars interested in the study of legitimacy in state building find in them an incredibly rich source of case studies. And maybe even more importantly: The particular institutional structure of these administrations makes them especially approachable from an analytical point of view. Interveners do not establish themselves as one authority amongst others, but they claim to represent the state's authority for the duration of the mission. As such, they need to assure that all actions can be traced back to the mandate that establishes them as such an authority. The international legitimacy is thus enshrined in the mandate and it is in reference to this source that interveners need to publicly defend their actions as legitimate. This generic structure facilitates the operationalization of observations concerned with legitimacy development.

The theory of interpretative authority builds on an understanding of legitimacy that is grounded in social dynamics. Legitimacy is not considered something that is given. Instead it is tied to actors' ability to constantly reproduce a belief in their legitimacy (and hence the legitimacy of their actions) in the realm of political discourse. For the analysis legitimacy thereby becomes "important in its own right as ongoing public contestation" (Andersen 2012, 206). The theory stipulates that this process of public contestation cannot be regarded as open-ended from the interveners' point of view. Rather, they have to assure that notions of legitimacy converge on the particular political order they represent in the course of a state-building mission. The

establishment of such a discourse serves two distinct goals: First of all it will enable interveners to implement their mandate with the support of their local counterparts. After the mission ends, this is the second aim, such an established political discourse is vital to guarantee the stability of the new order because it ensures that legitimacy continues to converge on the state.

The theoretical argument is therefore that state builders need to establish themselves as the interpretative authorities in order to further both their short- and long-term goals with regard to the order they envision for the intervened society. Interpretative authority is defined as follows: It is the recognition that is accorded to an institution for its status as the authoritative interpreter of a political order and its symbols. In a situation of dissenting interpretations, this institution has the authority to decide what constitutes the common ground of a society without having to rely on the threat or the execution of sanctions (Bonacker et. al. 2014).

3.5. Three Analytical Dimensions

The theory distinguishes between three analytical dimensions in order to capture the attempts of actors and institutions to establish themselves as interpretative authorities: The symbolic conditions, the opportunities, and the interpretative practice.⁹

Symbolic Conditions

The first analytical dimension is concerned with the existence and the status of the collective ideas that create a political community. According to the theoretical framework societies integrate as political communities around the interpretation of such symbols. The collective identity of a community can then be described in regard to both its symbols and the status of these symbols in relation to each other. In an established democracy like Germany or the United States for instance, the collective identity of the political community tends to evolve around the constitution. As an

⁹ This chapter draws on Bonacker, Thorsten; Brodocz, André; Distler, Werner; Travouillon, Katrin. 2014. Deutungsmacht in Nachkriegsgesellschaften. Zur politischen Autorität internationaler Administrationen in Kambodscha und im Kosovo.

expression of the mutual promise people give each other to act together¹⁰, political communities integrate by giving this symbol the central position in public political discourse. The superior status of the constitution as a symbol of collective identity in the United States is evident in the fact that the two questions ‘is this constitutional’ and ‘is this who we are as a people’ are deeply intertwined. Other societies may integrate around symbols like national myths, a traditional leadership figure like the king, or other founding texts.

Because of their ambiguity these symbols can incite and regulate a discourse over categories of shared understanding. An institution that is accorded with the status to legitimately decide what constitutes an appropriate interpretation in cases of unresolved issues constitutes an interpretative authority. It is in the act of issuing such an interpretation that political authority as interpretative authority is exercised. Strong symbolic conditions do thus describe a situation where *one* symbol for a society’s common ground is safely established and conflicts arise only in regard to its interpretation.

Approaching the analysis of a post-conflict society through this theoretical framework, means to first establish what kind of symbols public discourse evolves around. The difference between an established, peaceful society and a society divided by war can then be described with regard to the status these symbols have: Most often they stand for conflicting interpretations over society’s common ground. In absence of a symbol that is considered representative for the entire political community, no institution can claim interpretative authority. The symbolic conditions are hence uncertain.

¹⁰ Paraphrasing Arendt, as quoted in (Brodocz 2014, 43).

Opportunities

The second analytical dimension is concerned with the opportunities for institutions to present themselves as authoritative interpreters. As an institution is dependent on the repeated public acknowledgement of its superior status in order to exercise interpretative authority, it needs to have opportunities to this end. In established democracies these are for instance the political functions an institution is entitled to perform. The determination of the Higher Court as the institution entitled to legitimately interpret the constitution, and the status of the constitution as a symbol for society's common ground are in this regard mutually reinforcing.

In societies torn apart by conflict all actors that strive to establish political authority would therefore first of all need to make use of temporary structures to deliberate the substance of a new common ground. Peace agreements can in this regard be perceived as temporary symbols that provide the formerly warring factions with such opportunities for public deliberation. International interventions that are based on Security Council mandates (which are often part of peace agreements) create a situation in which both local and international actors are provided with opportunities to deliberate the new political order. Unlike international actors who can only participate legitimately in this deliberation through opportunities directly tied to the mandate, local actors may also make use of already established institutions such as parties or the local media.

Interpretative Practice

The third analytical dimension is concerned with the interpretative practice of an institution. In the context of the theory of interpretative authority this practice is defined as the use an institution makes of an opportunity to generate authority by articulating an interpretation of society's common ground. The practice is therefore strategic, but also limited in this intend as the interpretations are grounded in a knowledge over collective identity and social order that is not simply accessible to rational choice. As these interpretations are 'public' by definition, the practice is not only concerned with verbal statements, but also with actions that can be interpreted as statements by others.

Symbolic conditions, opportunities and interpretative practice are in a mutually constitutive relationship. The particular challenges actors in a post-conflict situation are faced with can again best be described by juxtaposing it with the dynamic as it presents itself in an established democracy: The symbol and its authoritative interpreter are already established in political discourse. In these strong symbolic conditions the interpretative practice serves to confirm and uphold this situation: In order to intervene in interpretative conflicts and issue an authoritative interpretation the institution can make use of established opportunities.

In a post-conflict situation actors would first need to promote the status of a symbol as representative for society's common ground. In order to change the symbolic conditions for the potential establishment of interpretative authority from uncertain to strong actors need to a) establish appropriate opportunities and b) engage in an interpretative practice that can demonstrate the superior integrative power of the symbol they seek to represent. They succeed in creating stronger symbolic conditions when their interpretative practice is being repeatedly and increasingly acknowledged in public. Analytically the dynamic between the three dimensions is thus that of a circular reinforcement.

3.6. Summary: Consequences for the Analytical Model

Based on the previous discussion of the theoretical assumptions and models guiding the analysis it is possible to argue that international and local political actors engage in continuous struggles over the meaning of the new institutions. These struggles evolve around their respective attempts to promote symbols that can serve as symbols for society's common ground. In order to be acknowledged as an interpretative authority institutions are dependent on repeated public acknowledgement of their symbols' superior status. An analysis that seeks to advance our understanding of the concrete practice with which interveners seek to enforce, uphold, and confirm their vision of the new political order in the course of a mission thus needs to depart from the symbol they attempt to establish at the center of the intervention society's political discourse.

The Peace Agreement as a Symbol of the New Political Order

Just like the rise of United Nations interventions in peacebuilding, the increasing proliferation of peace-agreements as part of the settlement of violent conflict is a phenomenon of the post-Cold War period (Bell 2006, 373). Bell described how these developments are intertwined and can be attributed to the growing internationalization of local conflict resolution and the resulting emphasis on building a ‘positive peace’: “Peace agreements have become relevant to attempts to reconstruct societies in the wake of interstate conflict” (Bell 2006, 373). The international interest in the settlement of these conflicts has also contributed to the trend of involving actors other than the affected parties in fixing their terms. The United Nations for instance is in many instances directly involved “as some type of third party to the agreement”, that is “the UN, a UN agency, or a UN representative was party or signatory, mediator or facilitator, observer, witness or negotiator to the agreement” (Bell and O’Rourke 2010, 953).

In the case of Cambodia the UN had been a signatory to the Paris Peace agreements. These agreements included a mandate that would endow the UN with all powers necessary to oversee their implementation. It has often been remarked that mandates serve as constitutions of such international state building or peacebuilding missions. Ndulo specifies in this regard that a mandate, defined as the “broad objectives and specific instructions that define, limit, and guide” such a mission determines what interveners “are authorized, obligated, inclined, and equipped” to do (Ndulo 2011, 784–785).

The conceptualization of implementation mandates as ‘guides for action’ depoliticizes the intervention and reduces the character of peace agreements to a list of unambiguous goals. Constitutions are certainly a way to organize authority, but, as quoted earlier, they are also a formalized way of promising each other to act together. Peace agreements and its related mandates do therefore establish international and local actors as participants in the joint project of rebuilding a political order. Rather than ‘solving’ a conflict they alter the character of ongoing negotiations over the political future. As such they are guides of encompassing social changes.

In order to capture the dynamic of these changes in Cambodia and further our understanding of the impact that local and international actors had on this process the analysis will therefore highlight the symbolic dimension of the Paris Peace Agreements. As the temporary symbol of Cambodia's new political order it took center stage in the country's public political discourse for the duration of the United Nations' intervention from 1992-1993.

The International Administration as an Interpretative Authority

International missions that are officially sanctioned by the United Nations derive their authority from a Security Council mandate. The procedures preceding its approval are designed to assure that the goals of such missions are considered to be drafted in the interest of the affected people and not in the interest of the foreign governments entitled to take these decisions. A mandate is considered to give international actors the authority to legitimately intervene in the internal political affairs of another country.

The theory of interpretative authority conceives the relationship between a mandate and the authority of interveners in a less linear manner. Instead of understanding authority as something that is 'given' and 'used' in order to implement a mandate, it stipulates that the mandate provides interveners with the opportunity to generate political authority. As the theory will be applied to the UNTAC mission in Cambodia it is useful to briefly recall the definition of 'symbolic conditions'. For the duration of the mission the Paris Peace Agreements (this includes the implementation mandate) symbolized Cambodia's new political order.

It was legitimized through the signatures of all Cambodian conflict factions and the support of the international community. For the duration of the mission it determined the international administration as its authoritative interpreter: This means that only UNTAC representatives were in a position to intervene legitimately in conflicts over the interpretation of the mandate.

It is still not possible to speak of strong symbolic conditions for the Paris Peace Agreements as their validity was limited in time. Rather they entered the discourse over Cambodia's new political order with a strong competitive advantage. Instead of seeing the power bias between international and local political actors originate in their

respective status as representing ‘international’ or ‘local’ knowledge, it can thus be described as a function of the agreements symbolic status: As long as the international actors succeeded in keeping the Paris Peace Agreements at the center of society’s deliberation over the future political order they would contribute to strengthen the PPA’s superior status. With regard to this strong symbol local political actors were not in a position to legitimately intervene in conflicts over its meaning. To establish themselves as potential interpretative authorities over the future political order they could either challenge the interveners’ interpretations of the PPA or attempt to build up an entirely different symbol as representative for society’s new common ground.

The Public of an Intervention Society

Reviews of UN interventions include almost inevitably a discussion of the missions’ mandate. As guides for legitimate action the individual goals mandates circumscribe take on the function of benchmarks: Successes and failures of a mission are evaluated by comparing the results to the intended outcomes, and future mission will be provided with an improved version that allows a wider scope of action or foresees more and better personnel and equipment.

In contrast to the traditional definition of the mandate the here proposed function as the ‘symbol of the new political order’ encourages a more holistic view on mandates. The legitimacy of a mission does then not only depend on the correct and successful implementation of individual goals. Rather, interveners also need to succeed in keeping the mandate at the center of the political discourse over the future to develop and maintain political authority as interpretative authority.

This conceptualization opens up two main possibilities to approach the analysis. In order to observe the symbolic dimension of the negotiations over the new political order one could attempt to observe how the different actors intervene in public discourse in order to strengthen their interpretative authority: This would entail the need to find a way to compare the respective strengths of given symbols based on the support they can garner. For the operationalization such an approach holds a number of difficulties, the main one being the availability of empirical data: ‘Support’ of a given symbol can only be measured in the repeated public acknowledgement of its

superior status. The analysis would therefore have to trace the transformation of societal norms and link these changes to the public deliberation of state-society relations during the intervention. In order to allow for a more focused approach the analysis builds on the second possibility: It will observe how interveners attempt to maintain their competitive advantage by keeping their mandate at the center of society's discourse over the new political order.

In terms of the theoretical framework this means that we will focus only on the public of the intervention society as constituted through the opportunities the interveners take or create to invite acknowledgement of the mandates superior status as the country's symbol of the new political order. Because of the institutionalized power bias local political actors cannot simply reject or ignore such invitations: As the mandate has been established as the temporary symbol of society's new common ground they will have to make use of given opportunities to make their own voices heard and present their interpretations of the future and their role in it.

The discussion of the theories and theoretical assumptions allows us to argue the following with regard to the case at hand: With the creation of UNTAC the Paris Peace Agreements were institutionalized as Cambodia's temporary symbol of the new political order. The Transitional Authority was given the status of its interpretative authority: Only they were in a position to issue legitimate statements regarding the nature of the new common ground as enshrined in this symbol. In order to keep the PPA at the center of the intervention society's public political discourse the transitional authority needed to create opportunities for the local political actors to confirm its interpretative practice.

Because of the radical changes in the institutional structure and the related insecurity over the validity and meaning of existing norms and values intervention societies are highly politicized: The public discourse in such a tense political atmosphere is relentlessly concerned with the production of knowledge over the substance and borders of common identity. This implies a heightened awareness for the symbolic dimension of political acts and engagement. Local actors that intend to obtain a position of power after the end of the intervention can thus not simply ignore interveners'

interpretations. Rather, they have to engage with them *publicly* to consolidate their claim for interpretative authority over the new political order once the mission terminates. It is in these public struggles that we can discern how the Paris Peace Agreements shaped ideas over the new political order in Cambodia.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

After decades of a debate that revolved around institutional design and best practice current state building literature now recognizes the benefits of integrating local actors and local knowledge into their strategies for a more durable peace. This has led scholars to approach emerging ‘non-liberal’ institutions differently: Instead of denouncing them as faulty or problematic they are interested in the synergetic effect of local-international interaction and its potential for the production of internal legitimacy.

The literature review showed that publications that offer such alternative concepts are marked by two characteristics that may conceptually limit the evolving analytical models: They describe the power bias between international and local actors as one between imposers and imposed upon and they show a tendency to define ‘objects of negotiation’ in order to give local actors the ‘agency’ to negotiate their substance. In order to overcome these limits the concluding part suggested to focus on the symbolic dimension of their negotiations: How do actors try to enforce their visions of the new political order? If, as quoted earlier, anything meaningful is devised in language first, it merits closer attention how people come to think about the new institutions and what shapes their ideas and expectations of them.

The theory part established how to limit and define the parameters of the intended analysis: It described the symbolic dimension as one that is concerned with the meaning of society-state relations. Understood as part of an intervention society interveners and local political actors struggle and negotiate over these meanings as they reform or build institutions. With the theory of interpretative authority it was further possible to describe an analytical model that accounts for the power bias between international and local actors. It draws attention to the negotiations as they take place in the public of an intervention society.

As a result of the theory discussion it has been argued that in Cambodia this public has been created and upheld through the International Administration’s interpretations of the Paris Peace Agreements and the related occasions for other

political actors to confirm them. The research question that will guide the analysis is therefore: How did the Paris Peace Agreements shape ideas of the new political order in Cambodia? The introductory ‘how’ of the question refers to two distinct elements of the research project: For once, it refers to an interest in the role the agreements had in the process of devising an imaginary of the country’s future. In this regard, the question asks for the mechanisms driving this process and the possibility to capture and describe them with a theoretical model. And secondly, it asks for results: What kind of ideas developed in the context of the mission?

Designed as a single case study the intention of the analysis is therefore to contribute to the discussion with a vivid example of a negotiation over the meaning of state-society relations as it took place in the context of the United Nations’ Transitional Authority in Cambodia. It proceeds inductively with the aim to refine the preliminary theoretical framework through observation and interpretation of the empirical material. The shortest way to defend this decision would be in reference to Kuhn’s statement that “a discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and that a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one.”¹¹

As the analysis involves many more decisions taken on my part the following chapter will further explain and defend the case design, the operationalization of the analysis, and the organization of the different chapters including a detailed description of the empirical material each chapter is based on.

In total the analysis draws on seven semi-structured expert interviews with former members of UNTAC’s Information and Education Unit (InfoEd), four interviews with Cambodian politicians that have participated in the UNTAC sponsored elections in 1993, the English translation of 10.5 hours of video recording of a Khmer UNTAC TV program entitled Political Roundtable Discussions produced by InfoEd in preparation of the elections, and internal as well as public documents related to InfoEd stored in two different archives: The Radio UNTAC Archive at the University of

¹¹ As paraphrased and quoted by (Flyvbjerg 2006, 27)

Madison-Wisconsin, the collection Cambodian Election Materials, 1992-1993 stored at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago.

4.2. Case Design

In order to denote the conceptual limits of rational choice theory Bates, Figueiredo and Weingast describe the difficulties its proponents have in making sense of ‘transitional times’. In moments of transitions

“rules are ill-defined and symbols, emotions, and rhetoric seem to count for more than do interest, calculations, and guile. [...] moments of transition constitute moments of maximal uncertainty; in moments of transition, people may therefore ‘not know’ where their interests lie. (1998, 605)”

The authors argue that cases like these are best approached in an interpretative manner. Given that their description of a transitional moment perfectly fits the focus of my research, this quote provides an excellent starting point for the following debate of the chosen methodology.

Andrade details that interpretative research is a subcategory of qualitative research. All interpretative approaches belong to this category, but not all qualitative research is also interpretative. Whether or not this definition applies is based on the researchers “ontological assumptions”. Interpretative researchers assume that “social reality is locally and specifically constructed ‘by humans through their action and interaction’” (Andrade 2009, 43)¹². Epistemologically this approach therefore postulates that “understanding social reality requires understanding how practices and meanings are formed and informed by the language and tacit norms shared by humans working towards some shared goal”(Andrade 2009, 44).¹³

This conceptualization of reality has consequences for the role of the researcher. The latter assumes that “action and events do not speak for themselves but instead must be interpreted” (Bates, Figueiredo, and Weingast 1998, 628). It almost goes without saying that this characteristic has prompted critiques to accuse the method

¹² The author quotes several studies in each sentence to verify her statements. For better readability these quotes have been omitted here.

¹³ Andrade quotes Orlikowski, W. J., & Baroudi, J. J. (1991). Studying information technology in organizations: Research approaches and assumptions. *Information Systems Research*, 2(1), 1-2.

of being unscientific in lacking “sufficient precision, objectivity, and rigour” (Andrade 2009, 42). Even more so when the analysis is developed in a non-comparative manner, focusing on the dynamics of a single case.

There is a vivid debate between a variety of ‘schools of thought’ over the limits of a given methodology or preference for quantitative over qualitative, constructivist versus rational choice etc. The intention of this chapter is not to weigh in on this subject. Rather it recognizes that a researcher that follows an interpretative approach has a particular obligation to identify the theoretical assumptions the work is based on and to present “the chain of evidence” (Andrade 2009, 50).

As part of such a presentation it is necessary to make the reader aware of the general *mode opératoire* behind the design: Studies that follow an inductive, interpretative approach and aim at building theory proceed in a heuristic manner. “The theory is emergent in the sense that it is situated in and developed by recognizing patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments” (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007, 25). Literature review, the drafting of the preliminary question, the preliminary theory development, data collection, and data analysis are followed by one or several turns during which the results of all previous steps are reviewed, refined and the subsequent steps adjusted. All chapters are therefore to a certain degree already saturated with the results of previous analysis.

The theory chapter also constitutes part of the evidence: It laid open the general theoretical assumptions this work is based on. As a “sensitizing device” it will later guide the analysis (Andrade 2009, 50). Social constructivism can by definition not aim for the establishment of a single truth. These studies are better described as the attempts to make a compelling argument for a different or new theoretical perspective. It should encourage and enable the reader to apply the same perspective to other cases. In defending the usefulness of single case studies, Eysenck therefore remarked that “sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual

cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something” (Flyvbjerg 2006, 6).¹⁴

The case of UNTAC provides us with this opportunity for a variety of reasons: As the first large scale joint operation UNTAC did not have any blueprint to follow up on. Officers were encouraged to be creative and given quite some leeway in the implementation of their tasks. This was in particular the case for the Information and Education Unit, responsible for the management of UNTAC’s public communication. In almost all of the reports that followed the Transitional Authority’s withdrawal from Cambodia the work of this unit has been praised as outstanding. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the members of InfoEd succeeded in establishing a direct link with the Cambodian population via Radio UNTAC – the missions very own radio station, broadcasting in Khmer only.

Headed by two directors that were both fluent in Khmer InfoEd’s team equally included a group of young Khmer scholars, knowledgeable in the country’s troubled history and its political landscape. It is thanks to their personal engagement that the records of their work are still accessible. Stored in several archives around the world the documents and recordings make it possible to observe the making of a Transitional Authority’s public communication that is unique in its comprehensiveness and authenticity.

Before presenting the operationalization of the questions that guided each chapter of the analysis I will now introduce the two archives that provided the main source for the empirical material. Included in the presentation of the results of this archival research is a description of the TV program Political Roundtable Discussions. This particular program has been broadcasted on TV and Radio UNTAC in the five month prior to the 1993 election with the intention to inform voters about the 20 newly formed political parties. The translation of this program forms the main corpus for the analysis of the public that UNTAC created. Thereafter, I will describe the methodology behind the interviews conducted with former members of the responsible Information

¹⁴ Quoting Eysenck, H. J. (1976) ‘Introduction’, in Eysenck (ed.), *Case Studies in Behaviour Therapy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

and Education Unit and Cambodian politicians who competed in the UNTAC sponsored elections – three of which have also participated in the televised Political Roundtable Discussions.

4.3. Collection of Data

4.3.1. The Archives in the Research Process

The work with the archives lies at the very heart of the entire research process: From familiarizing myself with the situation in Cambodia during the transitional year, to formulating my own research questions and searching for answers – the archives made it possible to reconstruct and interpret this decisive time of Cambodia’s political history.

For almost three years I collected, catalogued, watched, read, translated, discussed and analyzed hundreds of records. In the process a clear picture of the internal politics of one particular unit of UNTAC emerged, the Information and Education Unit, short InfoEd: Its staff members, their role during the transitional year, their individual projects and the difficulties they encountered; it was even possible to get a sense of the professional and personal conflicts between them. Sharing and discussing what I had learned with others, allowed me to get in touch with several of the former key members and to conduct interviews with them. Finally, I was able to trace down members of the local political elite that these people had dealt with on a daily basis and hear their side of the story.

In a social-constructivist interpretation of the work process one could therefore say that the archives enabled me to both ‘find’ and ‘create’ the public of UNTAC’s intervention society.

Access to the Archives

According to a popular quote of Derrida there is “no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation” (Derrida 1996: 4). Archives are political because they allow for

a meaningful and critical engagement with the present, where ideas and demands for the future are devised. The importance of archives in the process of nation building has hence long been acknowledged in the field of information and archival studies and numerous authors have inquired into their function as loci for the formation of a common identity (Bastian 2001; Caswell 2011; Cunningham and Philips 2005; Onuoha 2013).¹⁵

The access I had to these archives can be described as exclusive. From a researcher's point of view the possibility to do this type of pioneer work with records that had hitherto been unused in an academic context is certainly exciting. But set in the larger context of Cambodia's ongoing painful efforts of nation-building in the wake of two decades of war this privilege of mine has to be regarded as highly problematic. Most UN peacekeeping missions are conducted with the explicit aim to introduce or stabilize democracy and give the people a meaningful role in the making of their country's history. In this context, the principle of ownership is central to all UN activities.

The records of this activity are not created *by* the UN and are hence their property. They are created *within* the intervened society and it is in this evolving society that they should remain.¹⁶ It is more than just a contradiction in terms that the UN effectively denied the same people in Cambodia they promised democracy access to the records documenting this decisive time in their history. Interviews and conversations with former UNTAC officers indicate that the UN lacked a coherent strategy regarding the future management of their records. While some have apparently been chosen to become part of the larger UN archives situated in New York, the majority of available documents has been saved by individual UNTAC staff members,

¹⁵ I am grateful to Michelle Caswell for this information and insightful discussions on the topic.

¹⁶ With this argument I present a version of the one archival scholars have made to defend the custody claims of descendants of former colonial societies. With regard to the colonial archives of the British Virgin Islands that had been seized by the Danish and US government, Bastian argued that "*although public records were physically created by Danish clerks and other Danish officials [...] the functioning of those offices, as in any administrative office, indirectly reflected the transactions and serviced the needs of the whole society. In this respect, therefore, the records were created by and within the entire colonial milieu*" (Bastian 2001: 111). Consequently, the descendants of this community can claim custody of the records.

who recognized and appreciated their value. In the course of my research I came across five important UNTAC archives, with only one of them situated in Cambodia. Two are in the US, and the other two in Australia and France.

The fact that it is so easy for the political parties in Cambodia today to toy with different interpretations of the country's past and to exploit the symbolic value of the Paris Peace Agreements according to their own needs is not simply the fault of Cambodia's current regime as Western observers would often like to have it. As an organization the UN has certainly failed the country, when it introduced an array of new ideas but left the population with nothing to work with. My work with the UNTAC records should be evaluated in light of these arguments.

4.3.2. The UNTAC Archives in the United States

The archival research in both archives situation in the United States has been conducted in two phases. I first worked in the archives in August and September of 2011 and continued my research in the United States in June and July of 2012. Phase I has been financed as part of the DFG research project on the Institutionalization of Interpretative Authority in Post-Conflict Societies. The initial focus lay on the identification of non-violent interpretative conflicts between members of the local political elite and UN members. In the development and the solution of these conflicts, this was the theoretical assumption, the actors involved were likely to voice and justify their respective claims for interpretative authority.

After a preliminary analysis of the material in Germany and the subsequent formulation of the research question guiding this work, I returned to the US. This second stay was thankfully financed with the help of a grant-in-aid by the institution Friends of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries. This time I gathered data with a much narrower focus on the Political Roundtable Discussions, including the identification of its participants, the background of the newly founded political parties, their programs and relationship with UNTAC.

4.3.3. The Radio UNTAC Archive at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

In September 1993 the United Nations presented the University of Madison-Wisconsin with the complete archive of the world's first peacekeeping radio-station: Radio UNTAC. To inform the Cambodian public about the work of UNTAC, and to encourage their participation in the making of the country's new political order, Radio UNTAC had been on air for one year and broadcasted a total of 232 shows. Initially their audience could only listen to them for a half hour news segment each day, but the airtime was continuously increased. In the 'hot phase' before the elections they broadcasted non-stop for up to nine hours a day.

After the end of the mission, the radio's 'complete history', as one official called it in an accompanying letter, had taken on the form of 2462 paper documents, 10 VHS tapes, 13 audio packs, 333 audio cassettes, 350 reels and 1417 digital audio tapes (DAT). The collection filled several huge shipping boxes. Although they arrived in the US only weeks after the end of the mission it would take 14 years before these boxes were opened and the content inventoried. In 2011 I was the first researcher, who visited the university in order to explore its contents with an academic interest in the material. Based on information given by Larry Ashmun, the head librarian for the Southeast Asian materials at the library, and archived documents it was possible to reconstruct the brief history of the archive and find a likely explanation for the long delay between its arrival in 1993 and its rediscovery in 2007.

According to archived letters and faxes that had been exchanged in the days prior to the shipment in September 1993, John Davis, a Research Associate at the East Asian Legal Studies Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM), had contacted the UN and expressed interest in acquiring a series of UNTAC videos.¹⁷ These programs had been produced in order to teach and inform the Cambodian public about the proceedings of the peace process as laid out in the Paris Peace Agreement. Davis received a positive reply and was asked if there was "the possibility of the University's acting as a sole repository for the archives of Radio UNTAC." In this letter the archive is described as a series of DAT tapes that "will fill a standard filing

¹⁷ UNTAC Letter: Mr. Schotter to Mr. Davis, 1993

cabinet.”¹⁸ Only two days later, on August 4, 1993, the Associate Director for Collection Development confirmed that the UWM would accept the “offer of both the UNTAC video series and the audio tapes produced by Radio UNTAC.”¹⁹ This confirmation was followed by another fax with reference to a telephone conversation with Tim Carney, the Director of the Information and Education Unit, who had apparently “indicated that it would also be possible to get the scripts/transcripts of the programs.”²⁰ The reply noted that everything that would serve to make it easier to understand the video’s contents would be welcome.

As promised and arranged for, the boxes containing all the above cited material arrived at the Memorial Library only one month later. In the accompanying letter Jeffrey Heyman, Radio UNTAC’s controller and a former librarian, expressed his happiness upon the fact that “the materials will be made available for scholarly research.”²¹ The combined material, as he put it “...represents the holdings of the radio’s archive, and thus are a complete history of not only the United Nations’ first peacekeeping radio station, but also of the UN-organized electoral process in Cambodia.” The thousands of audio and paper documents evidently demanded a much bigger storage room than the ‘standard filing cabinet’ originally referred to.

Though only speculation on my part, the letter exchange seem to indicate that the university had postponed the question of how to adequately store and catalogue the archive. The opportunity of receiving more and more material presented itself in the course of only a few days and none of the letters describe the volume of the complete archive. In October 1993 the huge shipping boxes arrived in Madison. According to Larry Ashmun only two of the boxes had been opened in an apparent attempt to get a glimpse at the content while the others remained closed. Surely with the intention of this being a temporary solution, they were safely stored in a dark vault in the Memorial Library; and this is where the boxes, due to a lack of funding, resources, or interest stayed: Unpacked, uncatalogued and finally forgotten.

¹⁸ UNTAC Letter: Mr. Schotter to Mr. Davis, 1993

¹⁹ UNTAC Fax: Mr. Pitchman to Mr. Schotter, 02. 08. 1993

²⁰ UNTAC Fax: Mr. Wells to Mr. Schotter, 04. 08. 1993

²¹ UNTAC Letter: Mr. Heyman to Mr. Pitchman September 1993

In 2007, fourteen years after the boxes had been shipped over all the way from Cambodia, a colleague contacted Ashmun as the new head librarian of Southeast Asian Studies and asked him how he wished to proceed with ‘the boxes up there’. After the rediscovery of the forgotten archive Ashmun hired Dacil Keo, a student at the UWM, to compile an inventory of the huge amount of material that still sat in the original UN shipping boxes.

Months of work resulted in the ‘Complete Inventory of the Radio UNTAC Material’, which detailed the content of the archive. As already indicated earlier, the UNTAC collection consists of 2462 paper documents and a total of 2100 different sound recording media. In the course of Keo’s work the audio and paper documents had been taken out of the original boxes, classified and organized and were then repacked in a total of 44 cardboard boxes. In its renewed form the Radio UNTAC Archive was once again locked in the vault of the Memorial Library.

4.3.3.1. Organization of Research

At the time of my research the archive was still located in the vault at the Memorial Library and remained uncatalogued. Keo’s inventory listed the types of paper and audio documents stored in the different boxes. The majority of paper documents are program scripts for the moderators of Radio UNTAC, which have been organized according to their dates of broadcast. In a first step it was therefore necessary to establish how the inventory related to the stored material. Given the very limited timeframe and the huge amount of uncatalogued material, I then conducted a brief literature research to gather information on Radio UNTAC and noteworthy events during the transitional period.

Radio UNTAC was on air from 9 November 1992 until 22 September 1993. After identifying three possible events of conflict that coincided with this timeframe, I reviewed the scripts for the related programs and wrote a detailed content description of five boxes and 367 files. Between the end of Phase I and the start of Phase II (seven month later) I partially translated a Khmer transcript of the program ‘Political Roundtable Discussions’ into English. In Phase II I reviewed the Khmer language

documents and parts of the available audio material for specific information on the political parties competing in the first elections.

4.3.3.2. Results

Overall, the quality of the archived documents can be described as very good. As the programs had to be intensely vetted before going on air, there are several slightly different versions of each script. Radio UNTAC broadcasted in Khmer only. Especially in the start-up phase of the radio station, the scripts were nevertheless prepared in English and sometimes French before being translated into Khmer. Most of the scripts are therefore written in two languages, while the audio and video material is mainly in Khmer, with the exception of some interviews or other sound material gathered in preparation of the broadcasts.

Radio UNTAC had been established to provide the Cambodian people with reliable information on the ongoing peace process. The detailed review of the program scripts confirmed that the daily news section was focused on the political developments in the country and included interviews with UN key personnel, as well as official UN statements and announcements. As already mentioned, the mission was unprecedented in many regards, one being the extensive powers accorded to UNTAC in the holding of the country's elections. Unlike in previous international missions, the UN was mandated to organize and conduct the nationwide elections instead of only supervising them.

It was one of Radio UNTAC's most important tasks to motivate the Cambodian people to cast their vote despite ongoing fights between the four conflict factions. The program scripts reflect these efforts: the listeners are given detailed instructions on how to register and participate, there are statements aimed at reassuring the people of the secrecy of their vote, while educational programs inform them about their new rights and responsibilities as voters. In accordance with the United Nation's mandated task of establishing a neutral political environment prior to the elections Radio UNTAC provided the representatives of the newly registered political parties with a forum to present themselves to their electorate.

Apart from these programs dedicated to the mission and its tasks, Radio UNTAC also broadcasted reports on the overall development in Cambodia and the lives of its people. These particular program scripts include interviews with Cambodian entrepreneurs, reports about schools, hospitals or health organizations and a section dedicated to arts and culture in Cambodia. Several educational programs present mine-awareness campaigns, or provide the listeners with information on how to prevent common diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and dengue fever.

With regard to the project's objective to analyze authority building processes the program scripts were of great interest as they clearly reflected UNTAC's efforts to establish a 'neutral voice' in order to intervene in the political discourse. They did however, not contain any information that would have allowed to draw conclusions regarding the authority building strategies of the local political actors. Interviews with Cambodian officials or representatives of the new parties, as well as programs that gave them a forum to express their political agenda were simply announced in the script by means of a brief headline but not transcribed. The search for original statements by Cambodian politicians became therefore quickly a priority.

Through the literature research and document review I identified two programs that had been designed with the intention to give the representatives of the new parties an opportunity to present themselves: Equal time, Equal Access and The Political Roundtable Discussions. Radio UNTAC recorded all of its live broadcasts on digital audio tapes (DAT). With the program scripts it was possible to identify the dates on which these programs had been broadcasted, as well as the respective time slots. Unfortunately, a DAT player was unavailable at this and other contacted universities, so that I could neither listen to, nor digitize this audio material.

In response to my account of these problems Ashmun made me aware of a collection of UNTAC videotapes at the UWM (the very tapes, as I would find out later, which had initially been requested and were thus responsible for the new home of the entire radio station). Unlike the paper and audio material, these videotapes had been cataloged and integrated in one of the libraries main collection. The titles of two sets of recordings turned out to be 'Equal Time, Equal Access' and 'Political Roundtable Discussions'. On our request, the Digital Media Center at the UWM began to digitize

these videotapes and provided me with a digital copy upon my return to Germany after Phase I.

Due to the limited time frame it had not been possible to review a collection of Khmer documents in a box marked 'Miscellaneous' on site. It included among others Khmer newspapers, UN information material on the electoral process, a Khmer version of the Paris Peace Agreements and what appeared to be a small collection of programs and information material prepared by the new Cambodian parties.

During the review of this material in Germany, I discovered the complete Khmer transcript of the first Political Roundtable Discussions. The topic of this particular program was National Reconciliation. Phase II of the archival research was conducted with the aim to gather material that would complement this transcript. Because of the video material, I already knew that UNTAC had organized four rounds of roundtable discussions. A search for transcripts of the remaining three roundtables in the archive remained unsuccessful. As the UNTAC literature centers on the former conflict factions and mentions the other parties only in passing, it was of particular importance to collect material with information on those new contenders. For this purpose I focused on the open reel and audio tapes in the collection.

These record mediums mostly contain sound material gathered in preparation of the programs, including the recordings of interviews with UN officials or Cambodian party representatives, programs of foreign broadcast stations, such as VOA or BBC, as well as jingles. The audio material had been organized according to the type of the recording medium, as the labels contain only scarce information on the content of the individual tapes. In all of the tapes I chose and listened to the sound quality had significantly suffered, probably due to the long storage time. Only 45 tapes contained statements by Cambodian politicians in an acceptable sound quality.

During Phase I and Phase II a total of 367 files, 45 audiotapes and 8 videotapes had been chosen for further analysis and transformed into pdf files and digital audio and video formats.

4.3.4. Stephen Heder Collection. Cambodian Election Materials 1992-1993 at the Center for Research Libraries, Chicago

Among Cambodian scholars Stephen Heder is well known for his extensive knowledge on the Khmer Rouge. In the wake of the war he conducted hundreds of interviews with refugees, defectors and soldiers. Based on his findings he authored the influential study ‘Seven Candidates for Prosecution’ together with Brian Tittermore (Heder and Tittermore 2001). Due to his expertise on the matter he had also been called as a witness during the Khmer Rouge trial at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC). During UNTAC, he served as the Deputy Director for the Information and Education Unit.

His collection entitled ‘Cambodian Election Materials, 1992-1993’ includes analysis reports on the political development in Cambodia’s different provinces, documents with background information on the central institutions of the transitional authority, such as the Supreme National Council (SNC) and the political parties, letter exchanges between UNTAC’s key personnel and Cambodia’s political elite and UN strategy documents. In total this collection represents important topics of InfoEd’s internal communication during the year of the intervention.

The scanned documents were saved on 595 microfiches, with each of these fiches containing up to 24 individual pages. Currently, the fiches are in the possession of the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. Member organizations can consult the online catalogue of the collection to order the fiches. The catalogue lists the content of the archive as organized in five boxes and gives the titles of individual fiches or thematic sets, such as ‘Sihanouk’, ‘Media Reports’ or ‘UNTAC Unfair’ of up to 13 fiches in alphabetic order. The research library also provides microfiche reader for researchers who wish to work with its collections in Chicago. In this case, the fiches have to be ordered in advance.

4.3.4.1. Organization of Research

I chose and secured files of Heder’s collection in two phases. Once at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago during a two week stay following the archival research

at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The second time, Ashmun ordered a subset of fiches to the UWM. In order to save the data on the microfiches the individual documents have to be marked, scanned and saved in a picture format. This process requires a special microfiche reader and is extremely time consuming.

The research during Phase I was still tentative in nature and mainly geared towards finding reports on non-violent conflicts between UN members and Cambodian actors. Most of the documents I scanned at the Center for Research Libraries are therefore UNTAC Analysis Reports or belonged to thematic sets, such as ‘UNTAC Unfair’, or ‘Constitution’.

During Phase II I reviewed the online catalogue for documents that would complement my work with the roundtable videos. These were in particular fiches with background information on the new parties and the electoral process. Instead of scanning the individual pages with a reader, all ordered microfiche were copied with a special copy machine at Memorial Library.

The process of scanning and converting the saved data was postponed in order to save time for the work with the Radio UNTAC Archive while in Madison. Due to the time restraints the work with the Heder Archive was focused on securing as much of the chosen data as possible. All of the material had to be converted and reviewed in Germany.

4.3.4.2. Results

While the Radio UNTAC Archive is by and large a collection of work results, the Heder Archive represents UN policy strategies in the making. The Information and Education Unit was responsible for the supervision of the media sector. It monitored the Cambodian media and its members conducted field research to obtain a broader picture of the perception the Cambodian people and political actors had of the peace process. Based on their findings they produced their own media coverage of the mission and informed all other units about perceived problems related to UNTAC’s image and work. By means of the circulated memos, reports, letters, drafts and discussion papers it is possible to reconstruct important decision making processes.

Through mediums like Radio UNTAC the United Nations tried to present themselves as exactly this, namely a united actor with a coherent strategy and one voice. With Heder's collection this impression can be deconstructed as the documents reveal the heterogenic nature of the policy making processes within the units and the different ideas and interests driving the strategies behind the scenes.

For the research at hand this material is of particular importance as it became evident that the internal communication is clearly guided and structured by diverse interpretations of the UN mandate as formulated in the Paris Peace Agreements. The reactions of Cambodian officials regarding the different measures taken by the UN are conveyed through various letter exchanges between the UN and the local political elite. In the majority of these letters the Cambodian actors criticize UNTAC and challenge their authority. Equally important for the analysis are several files that compile detailed information on the new parties and their representatives, as well as preparatory documents for the roundtables with a commented draft of the topics and questions.

All of these documents could only be identified after converting and cataloging the data. This work has been done by my research assistant Laura Vollmann. The first set of material, secured during the work at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, consisted of tif-files. These individual pages had to be first converted into one-page pdf-files and then remerged to complete documents. The second set of material consisted of microfiches, which had to be subjected to the complete process of scanning and converting. The pdf documents were then catalogued, by assigning a number to each fiche and each document. The fiches kept the title as listed in the original catalogue and additionally the new catalogue listed the title of each document and, if possible, a date indicating when the respective document had been created. In total, the work with the Heder Archive resulted in 1551 documents and a corresponding 92 page catalogue.

4.3.5. The Transcript of the Political Roundtable Discussions

The Political Roundtable Discussions are an UNTAC produced TV program that aired from late December to early May 1993 – and thus during the five months of the

transitional year that has been described as the most intense ones by many observers. Cambodia's first democratic elections took place in May 1993. The Information and Education Unit had produced the program to inform the voters about the new political parties. Each week an UNTAC representative welcomed four party representatives that were invited to present the audience with two minute answers to a set of three prepared questions. All 20 newly registered party participated in the program. Altogether UNTAC produced a set of four Roundtables dedicated to different subjects: National Reconciliation, Human Rights, Economy and National Constitution.

The half-hour recordings of these shows were broadcasted via TV and Radio UNTAC. Only very few people in Cambodia had access to a TV set, but thanks to a concerted donation campaign initiated by the Japanese government a huge number of radios had been distributed all over the country. Notes in the archived program script indicate that the roundtables have been replayed at least twice a week. Additionally the Electoral and the Human Rights Unit were provided with video tapes to show the recordings at village gatherings throughout the country. The videotapes of the Political Roundtable Discussions archived at the University of Wisconsin-Madison contained 10.5 hours of recording. A complete Khmer transcript of the program existed only for the first series of roundtables. According to the introduction of this transcript it had been prepared with the intention to be distributed. I could not establish if this has ever been the case.

The translation process was therefore preceded by cataloging and transcribing the available video material with the help of Hang Chan Sophea, my Cambodian research assistant during two field research trips to Cambodia. Based on the videos we had to establish the title of each recording, in which order the individual sessions had been broadcasted and who participated in each session.

The individual roundtables were always introduced by a brief jingle and the generic title of the program 'Political Roundtable Discussions'. Neither the subject of the roundtable (Human Rights, Economy etc.) nor the number of the session to each of these subjects (discussion of group number 1, 2, 3 etc.) were given in the title. These information had were derived from the brief introduction by the moderator representing UNTAC at the beginning of each session. During the introduction, the camera zoomed

in on the nametags in front of each representative, including the symbol of the party. These information were used to allocate the names and symbols of all 20 competing parties. Hang Chan Sophea then wrote the full Khmer transcript of the remaining three roundtable sessions.

Chapter 6.4 of the analysis is based on my translation of these transcripts. The text comprises a total of 226 pages. To my knowledge this translation represents the only available non-Khmer language record of the programs and ideas that the representatives of all 20 competing parties voiced during UNTAC.

4.3.6. Interviews

The focus of my research lay on the attempts of the international administration to strengthen the symbolic status of the Paris Peace Agreements. As such it was important to understand the reasoning behind a given interpretative practice. The interviews with the former InfoEd members were conducted to this end. To better understand the effects that the international actors' claims had on their relationship with the local political actors it was, however, important to reduce the bias inherent in the available material: The majority of archived materials represent intervention policies through the lens of international actors. In order to obtain a more unfiltered perspective interviews with the former Cambodian election competitors were included in the research. The following pages documents the methodology behind the contact strategies and the design of the interviews.

4.3.6.1. Type of Interview Partners and Contact Strategies

The choice of interview partners was determined through selective sampling. Here, interview partners are chosen on the basis of preliminary research that identified them as people with a specific, thematic expertise. For the purpose of the analysis it was important to conduct interviews with members of two different groups: 1) Former members of UNTAC's Information and Education Unit, preferably those actively involved in the making and the distribution of the Political Roundtable Discussions and

2) Cambodian representatives of the parties, who participated in the UNTAC sponsored elections; again preferably those, who had also participated in the Political Roundtable Discussions. The members of the two groups have been approached with different strategies, taking into account the political development and the personal careers of the prospective interview partners. Both the preparation and the actual conduct of the interviews took place during the two field research trips to Cambodia in 2011 and 2012. Annex III provides a table with all statistical details of the interviews, i.e. the dates, type, length, language and place of these interviews.

Establishment of Contact to Former Members of UNTAC

In order to maximize the response rate from potential interview partners it is always helpful to be introduced by a mutual acquaintance. This all the more so, if the topic of the interview is considered controversial and the interviewer can't offer the partner anything in return for the risk he or she may take. In the context of my field research the necessity to build trust through a viable third party occurred mainly when attempting to contact the former Cambodian politicians. But this two-step-strategy proved also helpful when contacting the former UNTAC personnel. I was either introduced via email or contacted potential interview partner with reference to these mutually known colleagues or friends. All seven contacted former UN members agreed to an interview. The success of this contact strategy was likely also due to the fact that none of the prospective interview partners continued to work in a crucial position in the UN apparatus, or in any other positions that might have restricted their willingness to discuss their experiences during UNTAC. The time in between the establishment of the first mutual contact to the day of the actual interview averaged six month.

Establishment of Contact to Former Competitors in the UNTAC Elections

As might be expected it was far more demanding and time consuming to establish the contact to the former Cambodian representatives who participated in the UNTAC elections. These difficulties can be mainly assigned to two reasons:

1. Incoherent representation of names

Potential interview partners were first identified because of their participation in the Political Roundtable Discussions. A considerable number of these representatives did not continue their political career. As the recorded program was in Khmer only, the names of the representatives were also only featured in Khmer writing. There is no standard system for the Romanization of the Khmer alphabet, and names are usually romanized according to the sound of the consonant and vowels when pronounced. It adds to the problem that roman letters represent different sounds in different languages.

²² To give an example: The letter J represents the same sound for a German native speaker, as the letter Y or the letter combination IE does for an English or French native speaker.

Therefore, even the sound of a simple name like អៀង មូលី can be represented by a vast number of different spellings and combinations of the first and last name: Ieng / Jeng / Iang / Yeng // Muli / Muly / Mulie / Mouli etc. This greatly complicated the research of the whereabouts of those representatives that had not pursued a political or otherwise public career successfully. Most of the relevant information was therefore found by searching the original name on the homepages of Khmer language newspapers or blogs.

2. Current position and political affiliation of the prospective interview partner

To successfully formulate interview requests it was of great importance to not only research the current position of the prospective interview partner, but also the career

²² The transliteration system developed by Huffman (1970) has acquired the status of a standard reference among English speaking Khmer scholars. The majority of them work with their own slight adaptations of Huffman's design though.

steps leading up to this position. The interviews were to be conducted with the specific aim to learn more about the experiences of the former representatives in the 1993 elections. As the changes that came with the intervention continue to determine the political situation in the country today, it was likely that the professional and political biography of the former party representatives would influence their readiness to talk about their past statements due to:

Changing Party Affiliations

Party affiliations have a very short durability in Cambodia. Since the UN sponsored elections in 1993 the career of most successful politicians involved a position in two or more different parties. This is either due to their individual decisions (often because of inner party quarrels), or a result of their forced re-orientation after parties' dissolution. A case in point is the career of Pol Ham, who participated in the 1993 Roundtable Discussions as a representative for the Buddhist Liberal Democracy Party (BLDP). This party was dissolved in 1997. The above mentioned Ieng Mouly (this being the standard spelling of his name) had served as the vice president of this party. Subsequent to the dissolution of the BLDP he founded a new party – the Buddhist Liberal Party (BLP) – and was hence the leader of those members loyal to him. The supporters of the former BLDP leader Son Sann, among them Pol Ham, became members of the newly created Son Sann Party (SSP).

Both the BLP and the SSP failed in the 1998 elections. Over the course of the next 14 years Pol Ham became a UN official, held the position of the speaker for the Human Rights Party (HRP), founded in 2009, and is now the Second Vice Chairman of the National Salvation Party – product of a merger between the HRP and the Sam Rainsy Party in 2012. The difficult career paths of the prospective interview partners had to be reconstructed as they influenced the decision on whether or not it was worthwhile to invest time in the establishment of contact. In the case of Pol Ham the decision was taken in favor of contacting him.

Though he held different positions in different parties, his affiliation with the BLDP in 1993 and his current position are still the expression of a somewhat coherent

political stance: His political messages then and now are rather consistent. Ieng Mouly on the other hand, would not have liked to be reminded of his past representative function for the BLDP. His actions in 1997 were widely regarded as a betrayal of his fellow party members, leading to the break-up of this party.²³ In his case the decision thus fell against the attempt to contact him.

A considerable number of politicians who represented a party other than the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in 1993 have since joined the ruling party or become otherwise affiliated with the government. Given the tense political situation in the country and the strong party control it was rather difficult to contact those former roundtable participants: They don't have anything to gain from an interview, but a lot to lose. They might also not be inclined to put themselves in a situation that might lead to questions about their decisions behind joining the ruling party.

No Viable First-Contact Person

Unsurprisingly, the careers of the two representatives for the Cambodian People's Party in 1993, who is governing the country since the UN sponsored elections, were comparatively easy to reconstruct: Sok An has steadily climbed up the CPP's career ladder. In 2012 he held the position of Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia. Sar Kheng, who also participated in the Roundtable Discussions, had since become the Minister of Interior and was also among the six CPP cadres who held the position of Deputy Prime Minister in 2012. In both cases their stable political affiliation would allow for an interview centered on their experiences in the 1993 election, but in order to contact them with a request such it would have been necessary to be introduced by an equally high-ranking politician or other close acquaintance. This was not possible in the rather short time frame of the field research.

²³ Barber, Jason. 1995. "Mouly's History: The Disputes That Split a Party." *Phnom Penh Post*, September 22. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/moulys-history-disputes-split-party>. Last accessed on 4th February, 2015

Turnout of Contacts with Members of Group 2

This first review of prospective Cambodian interview-partner was followed by the establishment of a list with five possible interview partners and as many different contacting strategies. In all cases a letter was prepared and sent via email to the prospective interview partner: Either through the personal first-contact person, or, if an email address was available, directly to the respective person. The letter outlined the research interest and the focus of the interview. It highlighted that the person would be interviewed in its role as a former participant in the UNTAC elections. It further indicated that I was particularly interested in his motivation to participate in the first elections and his experiences during the campaign in 1993. Of the five former representatives two declined and three agreed to an interview. Additionally, I was provided with the contact details of another potential interview partner, who agreed.

As a general rule the strategy to establish contact through another first-contact person, who introduced or recommended me, proved to be the most successful strategy.

4.3.6.2. Methodology of Interviews

Based on the preliminary research and the selective sampling strategy all interviews were prepared as semi-structured expert interviews. The interview partners were therefore not predominantly addressed in their function as representatives of a given group. Rather, it was the aim of the questions to learn more about their perspectives on a specific matter and benefit from their thematic expertise. All interviews relied on a combination of communication strategies:

“Strategies which generate story-telling: entering into a conversation, general explorations and ad-hoc questions; and [strategies] which generate understanding: specific explorations with elements of references to previous answers, questions directed toward understanding and confrontation” (Witzel 2000)

These strategies translate into different types of questions. The interviews were guided by a set of approximately twelve leading questions and a subset of ten follow-up questions. With one exception the interview partners were not provided with these questions in advance. In order to prepare for the interview they were, however, given

an overview on the topics I intended to address; either via email or during brief preparatory conversations.

Interviews with former members of UNTAC's InfoEd

The preparation of these interviews was greatly facilitated by the fact that many of the former InfoEd members had written articles or even books about their experiences during UNTAC. In them they detail their impressions of the peace process and describe a number of incidents and observations that were deemed useful for the analysis. Strategy-wise these interviews were therefore predominantly geared towards 'understanding'. I attempted to build a coherent picture of the considerations behind the design of the Political Roundtable Discussions and the interaction between international and local actors during these events. As such the questions were mostly procedural and factual oriented and contained a number of cross-references. Heder, Marston and Roberts provided information on the translation of the neutrality principle in communication strategies, Guillou described the perspective of the UNTAC moderator, Heyman gave an account of the difficulties in getting TV and Radio UNTAC on air, and Abric provided me with details on the writing of the program script and the setting of the scene.

Interviews with former participants in the UNTAC elections

The available literature on the transitional year in Cambodia contains next to no information on the perceptions of the local political actors. The design of the interviews with former participants in the elections has therefore been adapted to learn more about the motivation of the contenders and their experience of this decisive year. Instead of focusing on factual details or technicalities the questions were therefore developed with the intent to generate story-telling. This means the leading questions allowed the interview partners to talk freely about his experiences and express his perspective on a given issue.

The fact that the events of interest lay 20 years in the past had to be considered in the formulation of the questions. Allowing the interview partner to connect to his or

her emotions and to revive vivid memories of the past is of particular importance during in-depth interviews. Some of the techniques used in this type of interview were therefore integrated in the design, for instance the ‘trigger-function’ of the opening question. The opening question is considered crucial when conducting in-depth interviews. It is supposed to set the frame for the following questions, allow the interview partners to ‘travel back in time’, visualize the situation and relate to their emotions at the time. A good opening question can thereby provide the interviewer with hints regarding the interview partners’ attitude towards the described events, rather than just a description of the events themselves.

In the time leading up to the UN mission Cambodia was divided between the four different conflict factions and the fighting between them continued. Many people had sought refuge at the border to Thailand and Vietnam because they did not agree with the Vietnam backed State of Cambodia (SoC) under Hun Sen. His government was also referred to as the ‘Phnom Penh side’, while the leaders of the three opposition parties were often abroad, pleading for the support of the international community in order to end what they perceived of as a foreign occupation of the country. In addition many Cambodians, who had fled the country during or shortly after the Pol Pot regime, had closely observed the fate of Cambodia from abroad, ready to go back if the time proved right.

The registration documents of the newly founded parties in 1992 confirm that the majority of them had been established by Cambodians with French or American citizenship. In other words: The whereabouts of a Cambodian politicians in the early 90s sheds light on his political affiliation and memories of this particular time period are bound to be a trigger for emotions, as it was then that those people were reconstituting their lives in the light of the political developments in Cambodia. Based on these considerations the opening question for the Cambodian interview partners was: The mission and everything that followed was determined by the Paris Peace Agreement, which is being referred to as *fundament, basis or formula* [in Khmer] throughout the mission. What did you do, the day the Paris Peace Agreements were signed? As expected all interview partners did indeed remember clearly what they did

or where they were at this moment and the information contained in their answer paved the way for further focused inquiries.

To help the interview partners to remember specific situations or details of a certain issue they were presented with archive material during the interview – original quotes from politicians, excerpts from letters or documents, as well as the transcripts and excerpts from the roundtable videos etc. This proved to be very helpful. Pol Ham for instance was only able to give a more precise account of his participation in the 1993 Political Roundtable Discussions, after we had watched an outtake of his performance on video.

The interview was conducted in two parts: The first part was concerned with their experiences during the mission, while the second part focused on the roundtable discussions itself. In order to ‘thicken the plot’ the second part did therefore contain a number of cross-references. Guillou for instance had described the situation during the roundtable discussion as “tense” and stated that the organization of these roundtables constituted the “breaking of a taboo”. Her statements were repeated and the interview partners asked, whether or not they agreed with this description.

In order to uphold a dialogue throughout the interview and create the atmosphere of a deep and engaged conversation rather than an interview in which questions are ticked off, all other questions were also formulated with the intention to provoke emotions and memories and keep the interview partner talking.

Questions were discarded when the interview partner had already given enough information on a specific subject. Technical details were clarified with short questions during the interview, and all statistical questions regarding the position and the interview partners’ careers were posed at the end in order to not disrupt the narrative character of the interview. To establish if the respective person also qualified as a first-contact to other prospective interview partners they were usually provided with the Khmer name list of Cambodian representatives who had participated in the Roundtable Discussions (in many cases the whereabouts of them could not be established via internet research, due to the above described problems.) Additionally they were directly asked for the details of one or two specific persons when the preliminary research had

already revealed a professional or personal relationship of another participant to the interview partner.

The interview was designed for the time period of one hour. A number of short notes and back-up questions had been prepared to facilitate the continuation of the interview in case it would become clear that the interview partner was willing to stay longer. After two hours maximum the interview was always closed: Previous experience shows that the professional atmosphere and framework of an expert interview is hard to maintain after this time limit and that the statements – because the partners tend to censor themselves less carefully – become increasingly difficult to use as quotes without making the interview partner feel as if he or she was caught ‘off guard’. This is also evidenced by the fact that the number of statements introduced as ‘off record’ by the interview partner increases significantly after 1.5 hours.

Securing of Data

The securing of data was greatly facilitated by the fact that all interview partners agreed to have their statements recorded with an audio-device. Only in one case no recording device was used because the background noise was too severe. Here, notes were taken during the interview and formed the basis of a detailed protocol that was written with no delay directly after the interview so as to remember the statements she made as genuinely as possible. All other interviews were secured as transcripts.

4.3.6.3. Brief Evaluation of the Chosen Strategy and Methodology

In hindsight both, the strategy for the establishment of contact and the chosen methodology for the interview, can be considered very successful. Given the difficulties resulting from the tense political situation in the country prior to Cambodia’s 2013 parliamentary elections, the time-consuming pre-research that was necessary to establish contact, and the limited time frame for field research in Cambodia the number of Cambodian representatives that agreed to an interview on this sensitive topic turned out to be much higher than expected. The same holds true for the interviews with the international members of the UN mission. Here, the turnout had a

100% success rate, and the interview partners continued to provide me with useful information on further archives or interview partners. Taken together the interviews did not only help to clarify all the contextual details required for an in depth analysis of the Political Roundtable Discussions, but they also allowed for the assemblage of a vivid picture of the hopes and expectations that fueled the preparation of Cambodia's 1993 elections for both sides – the international community and the new Cambodian political elite.

4.3.7. Analysis and Organization of Chapters

The theoretical framework stipulates an interdependence between three different dimensions: The symbolic conditions, the opportunities, and the interpretative practice. As discussed in *Chapter 4* the analysis intends to focus on the *attempts* of the international authority to strengthen the status of the Paris Peace Agreements as the country's symbol of the new political order. The translation of UNTAC's Political Roundtable Discussion forms the main corpus of analysis. Additionally the analysis draws on the results of the archival and field research to evaluate and contextualize the interpretative practice of the Transitional Authority and the local political actors.

Chapter 6.1 will provide the reader with a brief evaluation of the Paris Peace Agreements' status as a symbol of Cambodia's new political order. The focus of the analysis will lie on the competition between the Transitional Authority and the political parties over the meaning of the new institutions. This competition is geared towards the Cambodian people as their decisive audience. Designed as a background chapter to the main analysis *Chapter 6.1* will therefore evaluate the structure of public political discourse in Cambodia and assess how the wider population could perceive of the PPA's central promise, namely to establish a 'liberal, pluralist democracy'.

Based on the theoretical framework the categories of the main analysis are defined as opportunities and interpretative practice. The research interest further determined that the interaction between international and local actors will be assessed with a focus on the efforts of the Transitional Authority to use its competitive advantage as the Agreements' authoritative interpreter to promote a particular vision of the new political order. Following an interpretative approach the analysis of the Political

Roundtable Discussions faced the following challenges: The main categories (opportunity, interpretative practice) used to approach the analysis are themselves already the result of an interpretation. It was therefore necessary to further determine the categories as an expression of this foregoing interpretative process. The challenge here was to obtain categories that are precise enough to structure the material, but still open enough to guide the subsequent analysis. As all of the TA's practice has to be relatable to the PPA to present itself as legitimate, *Chapter 6.3* establishes how the Information and Education Unit interpreted its mandate to define its policy strategies. This preliminary analysis allows us to argue that the Roundtables are an opportunity for the TA to promote their vision by establishing rules of procedural and discursive neutrality aimed at focusing the debate over the new political order on the PPA. The theory stipulates that UNTAC is dependent on others' expressed acknowledgement. All of the procedures and rules that UNTAC set in place are thus analyzed with regard to their potential to incite such acknowledgement by the local political actors. In its entirety the program reflects UNTAC's efforts to discipline the political discourse over the new political order.

The expressed aim of the analysis is to understand how the Paris Peace Agreements shaped ideas of the new political order. It is based on the theoretical assumption that the state is a social product. That means, it is the result of continuous societal struggles over the meaning of its institutions and their role in defining the relationship between society and the state. Set in the context of an intervention society the Transitional Authority is considered to be involved in these struggles. This in turn implies a competitive relationship with the local political actors, who are bound to react to the TA's implicit entitlement to define their political future. In order to capture this symbolic dimension of their engagement, it was necessary to establish how the interpretative practice of international and local actors relate. This analysis proceeds in two parts: *Chapter 6.4.1* will focus on the struggles over the rules of procedural neutrality, while *Chapter 6.4.2* and *6.4.3* will analyze the local political actors' discursive behavior under the restrictions of discursive neutrality.

Both chapters are based on the same basic pattern to guide the analysis: Procedures and rules set in place by UNTAC are defined in their relation to the PPA.

In a second step the analysis evaluates them as a statement on the proposed nature of the new political order. Finally, the analysis evaluates the attempts of local political actors to confirm, reject or re-interpret the validity of a given statement. As expressions of the local actors' own attempts to develop interpretative authority it is in the justifications of their decision to confirm, reject, or reinterpret the claims of the Transitional Authority that we can discern the symbolic dimension of the ongoing negotiation over the meaning of the political reforms.

The following *Chapter 5* will review the Cambodian conflict history. This chapter and the analysis in *Chapter 6.1* show that the intended establishment of a 'liberal, multiparty democracy' triggered the greatest insecurity in regard to the relations between the people and their government, between the political actors competing for power, and between Cambodia and foreign states. Promoting a vision of the new political order and developing interpretative authority was therefore very much dependent on the political actors' potential to present a convincing image of the way in which these groups of actors and the people relate. The individual cases presented in *Chapter 6.4.3* all follow this basic structure and contain brief concluding remarks that relate the results to the larger theoretic framework.

5. History

“This 30th of July 1989 is, for the Cambodian people who have suffered for many years, a historical day, because it marks without doubt the beginning of the genuine peace and freedom process for itself and the return of Cambodia to full and complete independence, in its territorial integrity.”

Norodom Sihanouk

”Le conflit au Cambodge a duré déjà presque vingt ans, provoquant des pertes considérables en vies humaines, des souffrances inimaginables, des séparations déchirantes de plusieurs millions de familles et des destructions qui ont plongé le pays dans la ruine totale, plus particulièrement quand le Cambodge tombait sous le régime génocide de Pol Pot. C’est là l’essence même et la nature du problème cambodgien.”

Hun Sen

5.1. Introduction

Anybody familiar with the devastating conflict in Cambodia will immediately recognize that the contentious issue keeping it alive for so many years is very well captured in these two quotes above – both of them opening lines of the respective speeches at the 1989 Paris Peace Conference (Acharya et al. 1991). The issue being: Has Cambodia been invaded and occupied by Vietnam, or are the Vietnamese troops supporting the incumbent Cambodian government against the threat of yet another bloody Khmer Rouge revolution?

Though many actors and nations had their share of responsibility in the longevity of Cambodia’s conflict, as with every other war there were only two sides to choose from. As a result, those, who called each other allies, had often little more in common than their contempt for the other side. Shifting geopolitical and local ties had fostered the peculiar alliance between the royalist Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif (FUNCINPEC) under Prince Sihanouk, the republican Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF) headed by their charismatic leader Son Sann and the infamous communist Khmer Rouge, responsible for the death of millions of Cambodians during their few years of reign

from 1975 until 1979. United in an exile government, they had declared it their goal to oust the ruling People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime under Heng Samrin and Hun Sen, which had been installed with the support of Vietnam. Together with their Cambodian allies Vietnam had led the joint invasion of Cambodia that successfully toppled the Khmer Rouge on January 7, 1979 – the day that would alternatively come to be referred to as the day of Cambodia's liberation, or the beginning of Vietnamese occupation.

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1989 representatives of all four Cambodian factions and 18 other nations met in Paris under the auspices of the United Nations to find a durable solution to the conflict in Cambodia. The conference lasted a month and is well documented by a collection of the actors' opening addresses, final statements, and the written communication that had been circulated within the four committees dealing with the different elements of the peace process. On October 23rd 1991 the actors' compromise was finally codified in the Paris Peace Agreements. With their signature the Cambodian actors committed themselves to transition peacefully to a pluralist, liberal democracy under the guidance of a United Nations Transitional Authority. The large-scale intervention, culminating in the country's first nationwide free, democratic elections, would take place from February 1992 until September 1993. After 20 years of an ongoing war, fought with heavy international involvement and resulting in an immense loss of lives the signing of the agreements was considered a great historic moment. When the representatives of the four Cambodian factions, the United Nations and 18 other nations put down their names on October 23rd in Paris, relieved commentators around the world expressed their hopes that this may finally constitute the end of the long war and the beginning of a peaceful, prosperous and more just future.

As Cambodian history has proven to be a great disappointment for most of the population and international onlookers alike, today only few will assert that 1991 marked a significant change in the life of the Cambodian people. More often the Paris Agreements are being referred to as a broken promise or a great chance that was missed. It is of course not the event itself that has changed, but the place and its significance

for Cambodian history it is being attributed with by the Cambodian people and the international community.

Looking back from present times, one can see that the international perception of Cambodia is very much determined by two apparent ‘breaks’ in its history: The Khmer Rouge genocide and the UN international intervention with its promise of democracy. This selective interested is evidenced by the amount of literature that has been produced to explain what is ultimately presented as the never-ending ‘tragedy of Cambodian history’.

There are on one hand, the books written by academics and survivors in their very own attempts to come to terms with the complete destruction of the small South East Asian country in the years 1975-1979; and on the other hand, the contributions written by political scientists and former members of the large scale mission in the early 90s: Their early accounts describe their observations and the challenges of organizing the elections, while the later ones analyze why the Cambodian democratization process has utterly failed to meet the expectations of its international observers. So much do these two events determine international perception that the author herself has many times heard people express the conviction that the primary aim of the UN intervention was to stop the Khmer Rouge genocide.

The following chapter will make the reader familiar with the complicated conflict history, the time leading up to the Paris Peace Conference and the following United Nations’ intervention from 1992-93. In only 50 years Cambodia went through a series of fast paced regime changes. Domestic policies and international interests and alliances were at all times deeply interwoven, and amongst each other Cambodia’s leaders continued to adjust their status from enemy to partner in quick succession.

The narratives of liberation and oppression they spun to justify their reach for power during this time form the main repertoire used by the political actors in their bid for a leading position ahead of the elections in 1993. While the reports on UNTAC tend to take the UN’s neutrality for granted and focused on the factions expressed commitment to peace and reconciliation, this chapter will highlight what it means to bring history back into the equation: It will become evident that the interaction between international and local actors in the course of the mission was very much determined

by their conflicting interpretations of the past and conflicting ideals for Cambodia's future.

The Paris Peace Agreements may have temporarily ended the discussion over the institutional design of the new political order and the modes of its implementation, but during the intervention the agreements continued to structure and guide an ongoing debate over the character of the changing relationships between the local and international actors and the Cambodian people. Creating a new political order means to challenge established structures of political authority with its notions of hierarchy and the rights and obligations derived from it. These notions cannot be prescribed, but they have to be interpreted, justified and integrated into existing frameworks of meaning.

Understood as the representation of an undecided past and an unknown future the peace agreements both created and managed the conflicting visions for Cambodia's future pursued by local and international actors involved in UNTAC's mission. Departing from this historic knowledge an inquiry into the rules and dynamics of this ongoing negotiation can show how the Paris Peace Agreements shaped not only the institutions but also the ideas of Cambodia's new political order.

5.2. Internal Dimension

Sihanouk and the Left. Between oppression...

Though justified with ideology and true convictions on the part of all those involved, observers seem united in their assessment that the confrontations and struggles between Cambodia's main political protagonists are more coherently explained when focusing on their desire to gain and uphold power.

While the Cambodian people publicly express nothing but their highest appreciation for the late king Sihanouk and seem to remember the years of his reign from 1955-1970 as a period marked by relative wealth and peace, historians and other international observers of Cambodia's political scene describe the same times in everything but admiring or apologetic terms. His policy-style is judged contradictory, brutal and vain and his inconsistent stand towards the left, constantly wavering between

oppression and integration, is identified as one of the main factors destabilizing the country in the 1960s and 70s (Becker 1998; Chandler 1999; Chandler 2000a; Kiernan 1997). “Sihanouk’s relations with the left”, summarizes the historian David P. Chandler, “were subject to his volatile moods and to his tactic of playing radicals and conservatives against each other” (Chandler 2000a, 58).

The political scene of Cambodia in 1955 was dominated by left-leaning intellectuals, who had built their party profile and constituency based on their demand for independence from France. It was in particular the urban elite that also took on an increasingly firm anti-American stand. After his unexpected abdication of the throne in order to compete in the elections stipulated by the 1954 Geneva Agreements, Sihanouk campaigned aggressively by integrating his competitors core demands into his own program, whilst at the same time using his powers over Cambodia’s administration to establish what might be termed a level-playing field for his ambitions (Chandler 1999, 49).

Notwithstanding the presence of the International Control Commission assigned to supervise the elections, members of the opposition were arrested, threatened, and killed (Kiernan 1997, 159–162; Vickery 1982, 89–99) and “because of violence and fraud” all of the National Assembly’s 91 seats would go to the members of Sihanouk’s newly created *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* movement (Chandler 2000a, 49). Within months of becoming a private citizen Sihanouk effectively ended pluralism in Cambodia: “After this election the Sankgum never again had any real challengers” (Vickery 1982, 99). The majority of the Sangkum’s political posts were assigned to conservative members, but Sihanouk also sought to secure himself the support of the left by integrating popular, left-wing intellectuals in his government. His policy tactics contributed to a division of the left in moderates, who could operate in the open, and more radical communist activists, who were forced to conceal their political agenda and build their movement underground (Kiernan 1982b).

One of the last organized political groups that openly opposed Sihanouk’s politics prior to the 1962 elections, the communist *Pracheachon*, was dissolved after many of its key-members were arrested and jailed on trumped up charges. In the same year the secretary of the communist Worker’s Party of Kampuchea disappeared; an

event that left its members terrified and strengthened their conviction that any open display of opposition to Sihanouk was suicidal (Chandler 2000a, 60).

In the aftermath of the 1967 Samlaut uprising Cambodia's Royal Government finally also turned against its more moderate government members. The "military tried to link the Phnom Penh intellectual left to [the protests]" and shortly after these accusations were voiced, Hu Youn and Khieu Samphan, two of the most popular left-wing members of Sihanouk's government, fled the city – many would follow them (Vickery 1982, 108). Students took to the street, protesting the politicians' apparent execution through the government.

Though slightly different in their judgments as regards Sihanouk's actual level of influence on his government members and his role as a driving force behind the growing divide between left and right in the 1960s that would ultimately result in the civil war, scholars seem to agree that Sihanouk's action contributed to strengthen and radicalize the left (Becker 1998, 101; Kiernan 1997, 206, 304). As resistance was met with oppression, more and more people had to fear for their lives and were "driven underground and into the maquis, where peasant unrest was increasing" (Kiernan 1982b, 167)

... and integration

The keyword explaining Sihanouk's policy approach throughout the years of his Sangkum reign is 'balance'. Initially he proved to be quite successful and cunning in appeasing and accommodating the right and the left, the conservatives, moderates and socialists, the US and Vietnam. Starting in the mid-sixties, however, amidst the growing internal divide between the political opponents in Cambodia and faced with the simultaneous escalation of the war in neighboring Vietnam, decisions of his that were intended to appease one side, could only be read as a declaration of war by the other.

In the late 50s and early 60s it was in particular Sihanouk's outspoken anti-Americanism that provided those "Communists operating in the open" with an "opportunity to form a united front and operate with Sihanouk's protection" (Chandler

2000a, 57). Among the actors who initially profited from this integrative policy approach are three men, who will later become most prominent for the stories of their rise and fall in Democratic Kampuchea: Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn and Hou Nim. They all climb to high positions of power within the Khmer Rouge regime, but only Samphan will survive the internal purges and maintain his rank, while the other two are executed after a period of incarceration at the infamous Toul Sleng prison in Phnom Penh. Young and talented intellectuals were not only used to balance demands from the left and right, but apparently also because Sihanouk hoped to profit from their foreign policy and economic expertise (Kiernan 1997, 202; Vickery 1984).

In 1959 Samphan had successfully defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Cambodia's Economy and Industrial Development* and Kiernan quotes Laura Summer's suggestion that Sihanouk kept the left in his government against the expressed wishes of its conservative members, "partly out of continuing conviction that the young progressives held the key to sorting out the country's economic mess" (Kiernan 1997, 202). The hopes both sides put in each other's support were soon dashed; Sihanouk's "socialist experiment" failed and the left-wing was first side-lined by the governments' traditional elite and later repeatedly publicly humiliated and threatened whenever Sihanouk deemed it useful to his own causes (Becker 1998, 101). Despite massive vote buying by the well-endowed conservative candidates continued harassment, and the fact that "...Sihanouk campaigned actively and specifically against them" a great number of Communists gained seats in the 1966 elections, most prominently Samphan, Youn and Nim (Kiernan 1997, 233). The government still remained heavily dominated by the right led by Lon Nol. The National Assembly designated him, "the Communists' archenemy", as prime minister right after the election (Chandler 2000a, 75).

Under his leadership any type of cooperation between the opposing factions became illusionary. While the 1967 Samlaut uprising and the governments brutal oppression of it cemented the enmity between the opposing factions inside of Cambodia, it was Sihanouk's failed foreign policy strategy that provided the rational for his removal from power (Becker 1998, 115; Kiernan 1997, 19). Essentially, he had

only succeeded in drawing Cambodia ever deeper into the conflict between Vietnam and the United States.

The conservatives had observed both his rapprochement with the Vietnamese communists and his alienation from the US with dismay. When Sihanouk was on a trip abroad, they too acted. Upon his arrival in China, he was delivered with a letter that informed him about his dismissal from office (Chandler 1999, 199). Observers agree that the only surprise about the coup-de-etat against Sihanouk was that it came so late.

It was the declared anti-Americanism of both Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge that again provided the two enemies with a pretext behind which they could mask their own ambitions and present themselves as acting in the nation's best interest. Cambodia – that was their message to the people – had to be liberated from yet another imperialist (Becker 1998, 139). The putsch meant that Cambodian and Vietnamese Communists could act together in the open, while Sihanouk was left to give them his blessing, hoping to be reinstated to full power should they succeed (Chandler 1999: 85).

With the roles reversed it was now Sihanouk, who was “at [his enemies] mercy” (Chandler 2000a, 99). The Khmer Rouge used him to secure international support and recruit soldiers, but soon after their victory over the Lon Nol regime the prince was of no use to them anymore. Throughout the years of his captivity in Phnom Penh, he had to fear for his life. Chandler aptly characterizes the first widely publicized propaganda meeting between Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge in 1973 – two years before the ‘liberation’ of Phnom Penh – as “eerie”:

“Nothing was as it appeared; no one could speak his mind. Everyone, except a handful of unidentified leaders was being observed, suspected, and used. The visit, in this sense, foreshadowed the political atmosphere of Democratic Kampuchea.” (Chandler 2000a, 99)

Democratic Kampuchea and the Enemies of the Party's Glorious Revolution

In view of the UN's propagation of democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, equality and participation during the intervention in the early 90s, it is of great importance to recall the policy style of Democratic Kampuchea's rulers and the political atmosphere it created. Madness and paranoia are the words most often used to describe what motivated the Khmer Rouge leadership to order the killing of their fellow

people, but the accounts of observers and analysts show that even the greatest insanities follow an internal logic.

During the years of Sihanouk's Sangkum reign, the Communist Party had adopted a survival strategy. Apart from the few members openly working for his Sangkum government Cambodia's communists had advanced their agenda underground and "built their party in secret for more than a decade" (Becker 1998, 73). Anonymity and secrecy were paramount in preparing the revolution and continued to be highly valued principles even after the Khmer Rouge had declared victory. With few exceptions, neither the Cambodian people nor the world's leaders knew who governed Democratic Kampuchea. Pol Pot revealed his identity to the world as late as 1977 together with the declaration that DK is a communist country – that too had remained the object of speculation until then.

Even Sihanouk, when rallying for support for the Khmer Rouge, was oblivious as to who his new allies were (Vickery 1982, 109). At the occasion of his first visit in 1973 he was presented with the so-called 'Three Ghosts', who falsely claimed that "they were in charge of the resistance": Nim, Youn and Samphan (Chandler 2000a, 97). Sihanouk's former government partners, the ones he had driven underground and who were believed dead for a long time before resurfacing again, now shaking hands with their former enemy (Chandler 1999, 228–229). Just like these three, all other members of the Communist Party, who would later emerge as its leaders, had also taken to the jungles between 1963 and 1967 to escape Norodom Sihanouk's "witch hunt" (Becker 1998, 3; Carney 1989b, 18). Now these same people were able to use their former self-declared 'enemy number one' as the nominal head of the FUNK to conceal their social agenda and true identities and steer the country's affairs from behind the curtains (Kiernan 1982a).

Immediately after the 'revolutionary victory' of April 17th, 1975 the Khmer Rouge began to implement their radical social agenda. Khmer society was to be purified through re-education and re-organization in near complete isolation from the world. With the borders sealed off, and the fax and telephone lines cut, news of the extreme transformation the country underwent traveled extremely slowly. And even when it reached their audience, it was unlikely to be believed: A successful but

undeclared communist revolution, led by Cambodians hostile to communist Vietnam, free to violently overturn Khmer society under the oversight of the well-known prince Sihanouk as Head of State – in sum, these accounts didn't fit anybody's' interest and ran counter to most of the firm beliefs the West held over the nature of communism.²⁴

Today, even those who have only fleeting knowledge about Cambodian politics from 1975-79 are able to recite the core elements of the Khmer Rouge's transformation program: Public and private life as the people knew it ended when markets and money were abolished, religion was banned and education replaced by political propaganda. The cities were evacuated, the people forced out into the countryside, separated from their families and assigned to work for the realization of a communist utopia. Eating was communalized, simple black peasant clothes became the peoples' uniform and women had to wear their hair short.

In order to ensure that these visible markers of equality and modesty were matched by true revolutionary spirit, the Khmer Rouge relied on a variety of mechanisms to decide who was in need of re-education or had to be eradicated: People underwent basic political training, had to reveal their biography and criticize themselves or others for their perceived revolutionary shortcomings. The peasantry was labeled 'old' or 'base' people and accorded a higher status than the 'new people', coming from the cities or abroad.²⁵ As such these 'new people' were under much closer scrutiny than those belonging to the other category and much more likely to be killed as counterrevolutionaries during the first year under the new regime.

While the Communist Party hid behind Norodom Sihanouk and the FUNK when engaging with the world beyond Cambodia's borders, the people inside of the country learned to fear an omnipresent but faceless *Angkar*. The word translates into the neutral term 'organization' and did not hint at the political or ideological ideas at the source of the drastic changes that uprooted everybody's lives. A peasant demeanor and lifestyle was officially hailed as the new ideal one had to strive for, people of higher

²⁴ Becker notes that early reports from the former Khmer Rouge soldier Ith Sarin about the Communist Party had been discredited because they already hinted at problems between Vietnam and Cambodia. It was believed that the communist side was a uniform block (Becker 1998, 151)

²⁵ Carney provides a more detailed description of the class system under the Khmer Rouge including the official ranks of individual party members (Carney 1989a, 82–84, 99).

education were suspicious and among the first to disappear. Those who wanted to survive quickly learned to conceal their true identities. Scholars are not entirely in agreement, when it comes to judge the coherence and depth of the Khmer Rouge's ideological commitment. Kiernan prominently considers race to be the most important driving force behind the movement. According to him it, "a political worldview [...] of national and racial grandiosity [became] the dominant strand of Khmer communism under the leadership of Saloth Sar" (Kiernan 1997, 32).

Other authors have either openly rejected this interpretation or put considerably more emphasis on their class analysis: The majority of the highest ranking CPK members knew each other from their years in Paris in the early 50's, where they studies were financed by government scholarships. There, they engaged with the Communist movement and regularly met in reading groups, studying Marx' theories. Samphan's doctoral thesis draws on Marxist and Maoist categories when analyzing Cambodia's socioeconomic situation and Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Hou Youn and others regularly defined the revolutionaries as 'members of the working class', who have to engage in 'class struggle' to overcome Cambodia's 'class contradictions' (Chandler 2000a, 39; Hinton 2005, 53, 54). According to Thion, "[c]ommunism certainly appeared to be the most sophisticated tool" when the revolution was still in its preparatory phase, but it was just as evident that the "objective conditions were not favorable to it" (Thion 1983, 20). In other words: There was little evidence of 'class contradictions', but a lot of proof that the applicability of Communism itself was full of contradictions when it came to Cambodia. The country was at best in its earliest stages of industrialization – necessarily preceding communism according to theory – and had by no definition a vast working class. After 1975 the CPK cited these obvious theoretical misfits as evidence for the superiority of the Cambodian revolution: Under their supervision Khmer society had mastered a 'very spectacular great leap forward' bypassing all other phases (Jackson 1989a).

References to Maoist China soon became more commonplace. Asserting the status of China as an important partner (and mentor) was essential in overcoming another contradiction inherent to the Khmer Rouge's revolution: Their nationalism was much greater than any Marxist inspired internationalism – together with a strong anti-

imperialism this has been called the most defining characteristic of their ideology (Chandler 2000a). In this regard it became one of the party's greatest obsessions to deny any ties to the Vietnamese communist movement.

The party's history was in a constant review process and the object of an increasingly paranoid (and deadly) discourse (Chandler 1983). Nothing, neither the past, nor the present, nor one's own background continued to be the source of a truth one could safely talk about. Even among each other the cadres were encouraged to conceal their true identity, use 'revolutionary names' instead of their real ones, and never question Angkar's orders. Essentially the Khmer Rouge controlled the country by keeping the people in a terrorized state of greatest uncertainty: The past world and the past self had to disappear in thought and appearance to dissolve in a new, yet unspecified collective.

Even with extensive research at hand, there is no definite explanation for the speed with which the revolution so violently turned against its own makers and started to consume itself. Starting as early as 1976 the party began to examine its own ranks for traitors and enemies – all of whom had to be neutralized in purges throughout the country. In search for answers scholars have closely examined under which conditions the core members of the Communist Party or the Angkar have been socialized under and how this has affected the psychological mindset of the organizations as such. The years under Sihanouk have doubtlessly been defining in many ways. Becker described his early tactics aimed at crushing the communist movement as "psychological warfare" and Chandler suggests that Pol Pot adopted his withdrawn leadership style "partly in reaction to Sihanouk's flamboyance" (Becker 1998, 82; Chandler 2000a, 49).

Many authors point out that the Khmer Rouge elite was thoroughly convinced of their revolution's superiority. Their goal was to create a truly economically independent country (Twining 1989, 110). Complacent and arrogant the leaders did not accept that the misfit between their high expectations – as superficially laid out in the so called 'Four Year Plan' – and the disappointing reality of the country's productivity and economic development was the result of their own miscalculations. Instead they suspected treason. Democratic Kampuchea was divided into different administrative

entities, the largest being the zones.²⁶ The economic plan foresaw certain results for each of them. Expectations as formulated by the leadership were particularly high for the Northwestern Zone. Overpopulated with starving, sick people who were assigned to produce not only rice but also build complicated irrigation systems, the rice production in 1977 fell way below the established marks (Becker 1998, 238, 239; Chandler 2000a, 68). In the system of terror, those in charge were anxious to please the leadership, which is why they “sent in reports of a good harvest” and provided the Center with so much rice that the people under their supervision had to survive on gruel (Becker 1998, 239). Once discovered, the devastating state of the zone was blamed on lower ranking cadre, who were quickly found and eliminated together with “tens of thousands of citizens” (Chandler 2000b, 70).

Purges in other regions soon followed. Though the initial accusations varied – treason, manipulation and betrayal of the revolution due to individualism, collaboration with Vietnam, the KGB or CIA, plotting to overthrow the party etc. – the solution was always the same: Cleansing of the zones, by killing the alleged suspects, perpetrators, their families,²⁷ and allies.

The records of forced confessions, written down by the victims and their interrogators in DK’s secret political prison Toul Sleng in the capital Phnom Penh, can offer hints as regards “the party’s new obsessions” (Becker 1998, 267). The prison, also known as S-21, was vital to the regime: It provided the leadership with a rationale for their radical actions and gave them culprits to pay for their own failures. Chandler termed the place, who’s primary objective was to produce false evidence for the party’s paranoid fears, an “ante-room to death” (Chandler 2000b, 15).

Becker finds that the categories of people imprisoned and later executed here, is consistent with the party’s changing directives. At first it is primarily the ‘new people’, who are subject to Angkar’s special and deadly attention, later workers, whose loyalty is being examined in the course of the organizations “decision to move ahead with industrialization”, and in 1978 former communist officials – that is people from

²⁶ For a detailed description of the administrative system under the Khmer Rouge, see (Carney 1989a).

²⁷ Quinn (1989) indicates that the families were targeted from 1977 and 1978 onwards.

the Khmer Rouge's own ranks – form the majority of victims (Becker 1998, 266). Orders to kill always came only after the prisoner had fully confessed to the torturers' accusation. After the Vietnamese had invaded Cambodia, they found a huge archive in the compounds of S-21 with thousands of pages of written confessions alongside the now infamous mug shots of former prisoners (Chandler 2000b).

Nic Dunlop quotes from an interrogators handbook that “[torture] is not something we do for fun. We must hurt them so that they respond quickly” (Dunlop 2006, 127). In the end, everybody gave the expected answers, including lists with names of other ‘traitors’ to feed the prison’s killing machine. Secrecy had initially been the fundament for the party’s success, but the S21 records give testimony as to how this approach later contributed to its quick decline.

The leadership was engaged in a frantic self-dialogue: as those who spoke for themselves were immediately silenced the elite would only hear the confirming echoes of their own suspicions. Once a path of action was chosen, nothing could function as a corrective anymore. This is probably why so many authors evoke the expression ‘irony’ in their observations of the party’s decisions and the results they created. In 1978 these new allies would invade the country and end the Khmer Rouge’s reign.

The New Revolution in the People’s Republic of Kampuchea

After the FUNSK and the supporting Vietnamese troops had launched their invasion on December 25, 1978 it took them two weeks to force their way to Phnom Penh and declare victory. Under Heng Samrin a new government was formed (Chea Sim was appointed Minister of Interior and Hun Sen got the position of Foreign Minister) and until 1989 Cambodia would be known under the name of People’s Republic of Kampuchea.

In contrast to the huge attention that scholars have devoted to the time leading up to the regime of the Khmer Rouge, the time in between their fall in 1979 and the United Nation’s mission in 1992 has remained a white spot on the map of Cambodia’s recent history for a rather long time. There are only two extensive (English language) studies on the inner workings of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and the

difficulties its leaders were faced with in their attempt to consolidate their power and rebuild the state amidst an ongoing war and severe international sanctions. Slocomb's study draws on Marxist theories and has been rebuked by many for its alleged uncritical stance towards the new communist regime. Gottesman's work appeared only little later and has since become a standard reference for Cambodian scholars. Like Slocomb's work it relies in large parts on internal PRK documents, mainly the minutes of the Council of Minister and Council of State meetings (Gottesman 2003; Slocomb 2003). These records shed some light on the factors responsible for the rise of the leadership trio that will remain in power long after Cambodia has made its next transition to a constitutional monarchy and the effects of continued international pressure on the country's internal affairs throughout the 80's.

In order to gain stability and legitimacy the new regime was faced with a huge number of difficult choices and decisions. Gottesman and Slocomb deliver an impressive account of the PRK's efforts to bring the shattered country back on track. The descriptions of individual reforms like the reintegration of the Riel, five years after the complete abolition of money, show how deeply institutional and societal factors are intertwined: The success of this project was as dependent on the authorities' ability to organize pricing and the distribution of money as it was on the people's ability and willingness to trust the state (Gottesman 2003, 97–100).

Like the PRK's predecessors a part of the endeavor to build domestic legitimacy involved the rewriting of Cambodia's recent past. The new rulers had to establish a narrative that would render the renewed change in leadership, concept of enemy and the political system plausible. A matter that was certainly expected to be a great challenge as the majority of the new leadership were themselves former Khmer Rouge, now collaborating with Cambodia's historic enemy Vietnam, fiercely opposed by the peoples' beloved Norodom Sihanouk, in a political system that propagated the same communist ideology as the genocidal regime the people were now taught to hate.

Initially the people were mainly grateful for the end of the terrible regime they had lived through. The newly founded People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) continued to adhere to a communist ideology, but abandoned the radical visions and policies of their predecessors. The dire state of the state economy and the ongoing war

made it still difficult for Cambodians to find a way back into a life one could describe as normal or stable. In order to enhance the people's commitment to the new state the authorities were eager to prove that the change of leadership was tantamount to a clean break with the past. The Khmer Rouge trials that took place in Phnom Penh from August 15th to 19th 1979 were very much set up to this end.

Accused of the crime of genocide Pol Pot and Ieng Sary were sentenced to death. As both of them lived safely in their refuges along the Thai border, this verdict would never be enforced. Of greater importance was the opportunity to present Cambodia and the world with a narrative that would endow the new regime with legitimacy: The violence and death in the country, this was the new party line, was the result of Sary's and Pot's reactionary policies and their personal betrayal of the Cambodian people; the achievements of the communist revolution were hence left intact. "Domestically, the trial helped the PRK define its enemies while reassuring the population" (Gottesman 2003, 64–66).

The new status of Norodom Sihanouk as an enemy was a much harder sell. In December 1981 the Prince had released a statement together with Son Sann, the leader of the KPNLF and Samphan that informed the world about the creation of a coalition government for Democratic Kampuchea (Sihanouk, Sann, and Samphan 1981). After three years of war he discussed his military strategy and long term goals in an interview. Engaged in guerilla fights throughout the country, Sihanouk admitted that the exile government gained territory during the rainy season, only to lose it again during the dry season. The situation appeared to be in a deadlock and their fight for liberation, as he put it, was as dependent on the weather as it was on international aid. Asked about his reasons to once again team up with his former enemies, the Prince urged his audience to put off the Khmer Rouge question and focus on the Vietnamese danger.

"We are good patriots, but it seems that the Communists are better soldiers and better fighters. Therefore, the Vietnamese mainly fear the Khmer Rouge because the Khmer Rouge are very cruel people and they are very tough. The Nationalists, however, are not cruel and they are not so tough." (Schier and Sihanouk 1984)

The PRK leadership was indeed under a lot of pressure due to the relentless attacks that resulted in many casualties and used up precious resources. In 1984, some "230,000

Cambodian civilians and several thousand resistance fighters controlled by the Khmer Rouge, KPNLF and FUNCINPEC” lived in camps along the border with Thailand (Slocomb 2001, 196). The notorious K5 plan was supposed to put an end to their insurgencies. Its initial objective was to defend Cambodia with a huge wall and a 700 km long canal.

This would never be realized. Instead thousands of civilians were drafted to build roads, cut down forest and establish a long line of defense that consisted mainly of stretches with clear terrain, a fence and a wide and deadly minefield (Slocomb 2001, 198). Work on K5 became a dreaded duty, as the forcefully drafted workers fell prey to diseases and accidents in huge number. The parallels to the situation under the Khmer Rouge were thus almost compelling.

Ironically the construction was quite effective in keeping the declared enemies from entering the country, but the recruitment and forced labor used to build it drove people in huge numbers out of Cambodia. With them these refugees brought tales of exploitation that the opposition was quick to use for their own propaganda. Slocomb concludes her account of these events by pointing out that despite the “very real achievements of the PRK in terms of the reconstruction of Cambodia after the horrors of the preceding decade, the people have judged the history of that period primarily by their memories of what happened in the course of the implementation of the K5 Plan” (Slocomb 2001, 210).

5.3. The International Dimension of the Cambodia Conflict

The Prince on the International Scene

In his memoirs, heroically entitled, ‘My war with the CIA’, Norodom Sihanouk recalls his decision to collaborate with the Khmer Rouge as follows:

“All my life I have dreamed and fought for my country’s independence. I did not win it from France in order to abandon it now. The monarchy must not now stand aside. It is certain that US imperialism will be beaten in Indochina and we must participate in that struggle. The Americans will be beaten by the Vietnamese and our own Khmer Rouge, together with us.” (Sihanouk 1972, 29)

Had he known how ‘his Khmer Rouge’ would treat Cambodia and its people, Sihanouk might have left us with less weighty words. But as his memoirs were already published in 1972 this remains his description of how he allegedly refused to leave his people and retire to France as suggested by his wife, when hearing about the news of the coup against him in 1970.²⁸

Sihanouk’s relation to the US had been extremely strained long before these events. It was in particular the war in neighboring Vietnam that led him to make a number of policy choices with far reaching consequences for himself and Cambodia’s internal affairs. From 1963 on the tension between the two countries intensified: In August Sihanouk had severed diplomatic ties with South Vietnam, which also sent a strong message to their ally the United States. Notwithstanding the oppression of his domestic communist movement, Sihanouk had thereby signaled “a shift to the left and an escalation of his regime’s hostility to the US” on the international scene (Kiernan 1997, 205). It also meant the end of his strict policy of neutrality. His move was followed by the implementation of various measures destined to create Sihanouk’s very own version of socialism. Against the expressed wishes of his right-wing government he announced the nationalization of trade, major businesses and banks. Most of these policies had been laid out in Samphan’s doctoral thesis on the Cambodian economy – only one of the reasons, why the CPK party leadership could later claim that they had forced Sihanouk’s government into the ‘internal contradictions’ that eventually led to its collapse (Becker 1998, 101).

Building the same argument Kiernan observes that the war between the United States and Vietnam did indeed force him to “lean towards Hanoi and Beijing in foreign policy while taking ever more repressive measures against the grassroots and rural domestic left” (Kiernan 1997, 16). In case of a communist victory North Vietnam was to respect Cambodia’s independence, while China had the means and the interest to act

²⁸ In one of the many descriptions by historians regarding Sihanouk’s actions that immediately preceded and followed the coup, David Chandler notes that “one of the first things he did on landing in Beijing was to ask the French ambassador about the possibility of being granted political asylum in France.” (Chandler 1991: 197).

as his powerful patron, providing him with financial and (later) military support. In 1963 these contributions were urgently needed, as Sihanouk took yet another decision that was widely unpopular with his government: Despite Cambodia's dependence on foreign support he renounced US aid: Based on an agreement from 1955, the US had been Cambodia's military "chief supplier" (Vickery 1983, 103).

Rather than appeasing the conservatives their concerns were exasperated when China and the Soviet Republic (clearly motivated by their very own global political considerations) quickly stepped in to fill at least parts of the gaping financial hole the decision of their Head of State had ripped into the national budget. While Lon Nol, Sirik Matak and other high ranking officials of his government moved closer towards the United States behind Sihanouk's back to plot his fall, the prince himself did little to defuse existing tensions between the two countries: Based on a "secret agreement" the Vietnamese Communists started to move men and arms through Cambodian territory in 1964; a fact that did not remain hidden from the Americans for very long (Chandler 2000a, 67). Starting on October 4th 1965 the United States pursued an illegal bombing campaign of Cambodia to target 'Vietcong insurgents'. Though the public overseas became aware of the illegal targeting of Cambodia in 1970 and large student protests erupted all over the States, it would last until August 15th 1973 before Congress put an end to it. Owen and Kiernan write that the unimaginable weight of 2.756,941 tons of bombs had been dropped on a country slightly smaller than the US state of Oklahoma, demanding a devastating toll (Owen and Kiernan 2007).²⁹ Also in 1965 Sihanouk hosted a conference attended by representatives of the communist and neutralist oriented 'Indo-Chinese' movements. Among others it called for "the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam and for the "liberation of the South" (Kiernan 1997, 218).

²⁹ They add: „To put 2.756.941 tons into perspective, the Allies dropped just over 2 million tons of bombs during all of World War II. Cambodia may be the most heavily bombed country in history.“ Their numbers are based on Air Force data released by President Bill Clinton in 2000 after his visit to Vietnam. The data was „intended to assist in the search for unexploded ordnance left behind during the carpet bombing of the region.“ The finding corrected beginning of the bombing campaign to 1965 not 1969 as previously held (Owen and Kiernan 2007).

After all these symbolic gestures of opposition on Sihanouk's part it took no one by surprise when he finally broke off diplomatic relations with the US in November 1965. Late in the 60's, clearly prompted by increasing US military engagement in Vietnam, Sihanouk's demeanor – at least rhetorically – showed signs of renewed appreciation of the West and the state media started to express a bias towards anti-communist propaganda (Vickery 1983, 108). As far as relations with the US were concerned, this was too little too late. From their point of view the conservative members of the Lon Nol government were by far the better candidates to secure American interests in the region.

In the end Sihanouk's strategic alignment with North Vietnam did him more harm than good. The heavy US bombing did not decimate but increase the presence of Vietcong on Cambodian territory and came with a horrible death toll among his own people in addition to the devastating economic effects. In sum, these facts provided sufficient justification for his long prepared removal from power by Nol and Matak. It also provided the two putschists with the support of many that had been disenchanted with the prince's foreign policies for a long time, in particular the conservative urban elite and those who had been politically side lined by the prince in the previous decade (Kiernan 1997, 303). According to Timothy Carney "enthusiasm in Phnom Penh was high when Sihanouk was deposed in 1970, at least partly because it gave Cambodia an opportunity to fight the Vietnamese" (Carney 1989b, 30). Indirectly his rapprochement with Hanoi had also adversely affected the relations between the Khmer and Vietnamese Communists. The latter were eager to keep the situation in the country stable as to not endanger their own policy goals, while the Khmer Rouge pressed for a change of government (Kiernan 1997, 267, 275).

After the conservatives had taken over power in Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese still undertook propaganda efforts in Sihanouk's favor, "distributed leaflets and broadcast [his] appeals from sound trucks" (Carney 1989b, 22). The prince did little in return for the received support and whatever his strategic considerations in crafting relationships between the two governments may have been, they certainly did not change his traditionally hostile perception of the Vietnamese.

The Khmer Rouge began to purge Hanoi trained Khmer communists as well as people from Vietnamese background in their ‘liberated zones’ several years before their overthrow of the Lon Nol government (Chandler 1999, 210). Jackson points out that Sihanouk (then their ally and head of the FUNK) knew about the killings of the ethnic Vietnamese and, if the tone of the Prince’s own comments is any indication, did likely approve of them:

“In 1969 there were more than 400.000 [of them] in Kampuchea. After their coup, Lon Nol and his supporters eliminated or banished to South Vietnam at least half of these Yuons [a derogatory word in the Khmer language for referring to Vietnamese]. The Khmer Rouge finished the job between 1973 and 1975, as I had it from Khieu Samphan.” (Jackson 1989b, 45–46)

It is probably fair to say that it was not Norodom Sihanouk’s political will that crafted the relationship between Cambodia and China. Before the 1970’s coup the prince’s attitude towards the powerful People’s Republic was mainly determined by his perception of the Khmer communist movement’s strength and the chances of a North Vietnamese victory. As a rule of thumb, any step away from the United States brought him closer to China: Though the effects of both communism and US imperialism were of greatest concern to him, he decided that the communist threat was easier to control and compromise with. China did its best to support him in this illusion. In 1965, after Sihanouk’s open rejection of the States, “relations between the two countries reached their peak” (Kiernan 1997, 219). Kiernan writes that the declared friendship between him and China’s leaders, as well as their generous military and financial support, led Sihanouk to grossly misinterpret the strategic alignments chosen by the Khmer communists. After the peasant uprising in Samlaut in 1968, that marked the beginning of the communists’ armed struggle against his government, Sihanouk blamed Vietnam not China “for inspiring [the] rebellion”(Kiernan 1997, 281).

Unknown to him, Vietnam had not only actively discouraged an armed struggle against Sihanouk and refused to provide the Khmer Rouge with weapons, but, more importantly, China had grown extremely close to the CPK Center since the mid-sixties and was privy to the otherwise secret identity of its highest ranking members (Kiernan 1997, 280). For China and the Khmer Rouge alike it was vital to hide this fact from Sihanouk and lead him to believe that Hanoi was the driving force behind the

Cambodian communist movement. Only then would he perceive of China as a partner able to counterbalance the communist forces in his country and maintain the delicate balance between his desire to support Vietnam against the US, but keep them off Cambodian territory (Chandler 1999, 195).

After the 1970 coup against him, China became Sihanouk's most important foreign ally, though he downplayed the significance of their contributions in public. Chandler points out that his call to oppose the new government, broadcasted via Beijing Radio, made no mentioning of China (Chandler 1999, 201). Contrary to Sihanouk's own recollection, historic evidence thus seems to point to the Chinese as the main architects behind the National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK).

The awkward alliance between him and his long-time enemies, the Khmer Rouge, was very much in China's interest: The region was safeguarded against a US takeover by proxy, while the Khmer communists, their partners, had to fear no international condemnation as the Prince was officially the leader in charge (Mertha 2014). Without the Chinese as the powerful patrons of both sides it is also unlikely that the Khmer Rouge would have welcomed Sihanouk back in Phnom Penh after their victorious take-over of Phnom Penh and the authors agree that it is only thanks to them, that they kept him alive.

The International Orientation of the Lon Nol Government

Sihanouk's powerful Sangkum government member Lon Nol had himself earned the reputation as the communists' archenemy. In his position as chief of police he had overseen and organized the violent repression of the nascent Cambodian communist movement, and incarcerated and killed its members in the late 50s and 60s. As he was declared president of the Khmer Republic, immediately set in place after the coup, the new regime came to be identified with his name. Especially in the preparatory phases, however, the former deputy Prince Sisovath Sirk Matak was one of the main driving forces behind the putsch.

The coup was surrounded by many rumors as regards the role of the CIA – Prince Sihanouk was convinced that they were the masterminds behind the events and

ultimately targeted him for assassination (Sihanouk 1972). Historians do in fact corroborate some of his suspicions: Based on interviews with high ranking officials from the US and former members of the Lon Nol regime, Kiernan concludes that accusations against the CIA are unfounded, but that “a good deal of evidence points to a role played by sections of the US military intelligence establishment and the Army Special Forces” (Kiernan 1997, 300). His interviewees also confirm the existence of a plan to assassinate Sihanouk, possibly even drafted by US officials.

While the exact dimension of US involvement in the change of government in 1970 remains an issue of speculation, it is a matter of fact that the regime received generous financial aid from Washington and cooperated closely with their American allies – to the point of sacrificing thousands of Cambodian lives for their cause. Carney lists the combined financial and military support supplied to the Khmer Republic by the United States as more than 1.5 billion dollars – help that was crucial to the regimes five year long survival (Carney 1989b, 31; Kiernan 1982a, 285).

This aid, however, came with many strings attached and the country paid a steep price in return. Without informing the new government, the US invaded Cambodia together with South Vietnamese troops early in 1970, essentially abusing Cambodian territory to fight their own war (Chandler 1999, 204). In the years from 1970 to 1973 Cambodia also experienced the heaviest US bombing since the beginning of the illegal campaigns. Many of the millions of internally displaced people found refuge in the cities after their villages had been leveled to the ground (only to be forcibly evacuated from there some years later by the Khmer Rouge). Officially these campaigns were justified with the presence of Vietcong insurgents inside of the country. Despite the massive destruction of the Cambodian countryside and the devastation caused among the Cambodian people, Vickery therefore reports that the bombing “produced no reaction in Phnom Penh other than relief” (Vickery 1982, 111).

The years of the Khmer Republic saw a huge increase in open violence and hostility towards ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia. International interests – that is the interests of the United States – dictated internal politics. Cambodians traditionally perceive of the Vietnamese as their hereditary enemies and the Lon Nol regime, eager to please their powerful ally, either stirred up these emotions or did nothing to appease

them. Directly after taking over power, his executive “rounded up and killed thousands of Vietnamese civilians in Phnom Penh and its environs”(Chandler 1999, 203). As might be expected, the murder of civilians put a considerable strain on the Republic’s relation to their South Vietnamese ‘partners’.

Public opinion in Cambodia had already shifted as early as 1973 when people began to openly voice their dismay with the crumbling government. In military matters the Lon Nol regime relied on US strength and arms to the point that “government newspapers expressed the hope that the bombing would continue indefinitely” (Chandler 2000a, 225). Additionally the internal relations of the leadership showed serious frictions and popular members like In Tam were sidelined or dismissed, leaving matters to Lon Nol, whose abilities as a commander in chief were questionable at best: Reports about his strong beliefs in the power of Buddhism, spirits and ghosts and the resulting bizarre policies became more frequent and concerned his domestic as well as his international partners (Chandler 1999, 205).

Chandler quotes the US embassy’s chief of the political section in Cambodia as noting in his diary in March 1973 that “US policy has been unwittingly to increase the chance for a Communist victory” (Chandler 1999, 226) – an observation that would soon prove to be true.

International Influence on the Khmer Rouge

The Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) held self-reliance and complete independence higher than any other principle. Adherence to these dogmas drove internal and foreign policy decisions. While their predecessors had fostered strategic relations with either Vietnam or the United States, the Khmer Rouge rejected any formal alliances with both of them. In one of the earliest declarations after taking power they announced that no military bases of foreign powers would be tolerated in Cambodia: A message that was addressed to both the United States and Vietnam (Jackson 1989b, 41). In his discussion of the influence the ideal of total sovereignty had on Democratic Kampuchea’s policies, Jackson quotes Samphan’s doctoral thesis as a likely source of inspiration. In it he identified “international economic integration”

as the “root cause” for Cambodia’s low productivity and economic underdevelopment (Jackson 1989b, 42).

Denying ties with North Vietnam and presenting the history of their party and the communist revolution as completely separated from their neighbor’s struggle, could of course not be achieved by means of a simple statement. In his *Pol Pot Biography*, Chandler traces the success of the Cambodian communist movement back to the 1950 decision of the Vietnamese led Indochinese Communist Party to form independent armies in Laos and Cambodia. Back then, the most important goal was to achieve independence from France, which is why Vietnamese leadership was tolerated (Chandler 2000a, 29–31).

Much later, as the war between Vietnam and the US developed, the relations between the two communist parties were increasingly strained due to contradicting domestic policy aims: The Cambodian communists saw no benefit in a purely ‘political struggle’ against the Royal Government, while Hanoi needed the prince’s support and did thus refrain from encouraging the Cambodian communists to take up arms: “The North Vietnamese tactical concern in Cambodia lay in assuring supplies, transit of men and material, and sanctuary for their war to conquer South Vietnam. Major help to the local communist movement was not part of their aims” (Carney 1989b, 20). Rather, they urged them to wait for a revolutionary success in Vietnam. In order to adequately prepare for this event, many Khmer Communists had received extensive political and military training in Hanoi since the mid-50s (Kiernan 1997, 178, 279).

Given the devastating state of the Cambodian economy after long years of war and heavy dependence on foreign aid, the conviction that complete self-reliance could in fact be achieved on such short notice was based on little else but the Khmer Rouge’s firm belief in the superiority of their revolution. Notwithstanding (or possibly precisely because of) the blatantly obvious better grade of organization, training and financial resources of the Vietnamese Communists, the Cambodian side was early on concerned with the symbolic reassurance of their party’s higher standing: The decision to rename

the party from Workers' Party to Communist Party of Kampuchea in 1966³⁰ implied that "the Kampuchean communist movement was, in historical and ideological terms, more 'advanced' than the Vietnam Workers' Party" (Kiernan 1997, 220).

Once in power and content with the success of having bypassed Vietnam in their quest for a full revolutionary victory, the rewriting of the party's history as one that had evolved independently from the Vietnamese communists became one of the new regime's biggest obsessions. Changing the birthday of the Party from 1951 to 1960 was of particular importance in this context, as the later date would deny Vietnam's crucial role in nurturing the nascent movement: "[It would allow Pol Pot] to embark, as he probably had planned to do for some time, on a full-scale war against Vietnam, as well as a radical program of collectivization inside Cambodia which owed nothing to Vietnamese models and advice" (Chandler 1983, 290). The leadership wanted to prove that they had invented a true Khmer version of communism; foreign guidance or international models were consequently denied or downplayed.³¹

It is important to note that the attitude of the Party Center with regard to Vietnam does by no means reflect the convictions of all Khmer Rouge. Early on the communists split into two groups, with one being described as the more moderate, pro-Sihanouk, pro-Vietnamese. According to Kiernan, this position reflects the foreign policy approach of Hanoi (Kiernan 1997, 68). Many of those considered moderate and rather Vietnam friendly rose to higher ranks in the Eastern Zone of Democratic Kampuchea. This Zone, bordering South Vietnam, would later become infamous for being the scene of extremely brutal purges during which hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants were killed and for three of its leading cadre: Heng Samrin, Chea Sim and Hun Sen, who would all flee to Vietnam and later return, oust Pol Pot from power, and become the leaders of the new People's Republic of Kampuchea. It is described as a zone with

³⁰ Elisabeth Becker states that the name of the Party was changed in 1971 (Becker 1998: 93, 557). She does not quote any sources to support this date and no other historian corroborates this claim.

³¹ There is significant disagreement between scholars regarding the open acknowledgement of foreign influence by the Khmer Rouge. This can be exemplified by the contradicting statements regarding China's role. While Becker writes "Only once did Pol Pot say that the thought of Mao Zedong had been an inspiration" (Becker 1998: 185) Quinn states Pol Pot "acknowledged the key role of Mao's thought" at multiple occasions in public statements (Quinn 1989, 220).

comparably good conditions – that means less frequent executions and laxer implementation of the communalization policies ordered by the Center. Vickery details that

the East Zone Communists, more than those of any other zone, represented the tradition of the Indochina Communist Party and the first Cambodian Communist group which emerged from it. [...] They had therefore grown up politically in close contact with Vietnamese Communism [and] they maintained [...] close relations with Vietnam. (Vickery 1983, 107)

Between 1975 and 1977 Cambodia and Vietnam had intermittently attacked each other along the border over territorial claims. After border talks between the Vietnamese and Cambodian leadership had failed in 1978, the Center ordered the East to attack Vietnam, thereby sparking the 3rd Indochinese War (Slocomb 2003, 32). Their early cross border raids were widely unsuccessful, which quickly led to accusations of treason against the cadres in charge (instead of facing the fact that the Vietnamese army was simply better equipped and trained) (Becker 1998, 299).

In 1978 the people of the Eastern Zone became caught up in a vicious circle of arrests, torture and executions: By April a total of 409 of their cadres had been brought to Toul Sleng. Their ‘confessions’ then led to the arrest of further Eastern Zone commanders and commissars who were all arrested and executed on the spot or brought to Phnom Penh (Kiernan 1997, 393–394). Only weeks later the Center sent loyal troops into the Zone: Until the end of the year an estimated 100.000 to 250.000 of the inhabitants in the Eastern Zone were dead.³² Pol Pot’s troops carried out mass executions on a daily basis, and there are hundreds of disturbing testimonies to entire villages being wiped out by soldiers. At the same time an estimated third of the Eastern Zone population was forcibly transferred to the West, only to become the preferred targets of further ‘purification campaigns’ there (Kiernan 1997, 403–411; Slocomb 2003, 335).

In the midst of the first purge Heng Samrin, a commander in the Eastern Zone, led troops loyal to him into the jungle from where he fought the troops sent by the Center. His troops were joined by district chief Chea Sim and around “3000 armed men

³² Kiernan (1997: 404) writes that “a total death toll of 100,000 among easterners in 1978 [...] can safely be regarded as a conservative estimate. The real figure is probably around 250,000 dead.”

and 30.000 civilians” in his followership (Slocomb 2003, 34). When they ran out of supplies they contacted the Vietnamese for help. After Sim had guided his people across the border in October, Vietnamese launched a rescue mission in order to find Samrin and his men and bring them back to Vietnam. The operation was successful and once in safety the dissident troops began to plan a joint attack against Democratic Kampuchea. Such a possibility had been prepared since 1977, when the Vietnamese drafted plans “to recruit an army and a political front from among the Cambodian refugees in southern Vietnam” (Slocomb 2003, 33).

Already waiting in Vietnam was Hun Sen, who would later become Cambodia’s declared ‘strong-man’. He graduated from of the military schools in the Eastern Zone set up by the Vietnamese, which were closed by the Party Center in 1971. According to Kiernan it was these schools that “made the Eastern Zone forces the most effective CPK combat units”(Kiernan 1997, 310–311). In Democratic Kampuchea Hun Sen rose to the rank of commander, before defecting to the Vietnamese in 1977. He claims his decision was based on both his dismay with the destruction of Cambodia under Pol Pot and fear for his own life (Becker 1998: 440). Together, the defectors and their men formed the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (FUNSK) in order to launch a final attack on Cambodia together with their Vietnamese allies. This time the aim was not to establish a new system, but to overturn the ruling government in order to install a ‘true’ version of socialism instead of the faulty one already in place³³:

The ideological, political and military struggle with Vietnam was certainly the most defining relation Democratic Kampuchea had with another country. Also to be considered are, however, the United States and in particular China. US foreign policy interests in South East Asia had a deep impact on Cambodia in the 60s and early 70s; Kiernan holds that the “revolution would not have won power without US economic and military destabilization”, which he calls the “most important single factor in Pol Pot’s rise”(Kiernan 1997, 16). But from 1975-1979 the United States took on a largely

³³ For a description of the FUNSK 11 point program as declared to followers on December 2, 1978 see (Gottesman 2003; Slocomb 2003).

symbolic significance: They became the antonym for everything the DK wanted to stand for, the personification of a destructive force more than an actual adversary. “[W]ords like CIA and KGB [in the S-21 confessions] became generic descriptions of enemies” (Chandler 2000b, 93).

Very real, on the contrary, were the contributions and the interference by China when it came to DK’s government affairs. Mertha details the extent of Chinese aid to Cambodia: The Chinese government did not only provide the government with billions of dollars in financial aid. DK also profited from Chinese efforts to rebuild the country’s infrastructure and economy. Chinese experts, technicians and engineers oversaw the reconstruction of roads, railways and production sites and Cambodians were supported by Chinese workers in the course of realizing these projects (Mertha 2014). “Without Chinese support, the DK regime would almost certainly have collapsed” (Mertha 2014, 15). But the same propaganda machine that preached independence and self-reliance downplayed this relationship too (Jackson 1989b, 41).

China’s interest in Cambodia arose out of geopolitical considerations: Supporting the coalition between Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge (the FUNK) against the Lon Nol regime, was to prevent a US take-over by proxy, and, once they had succeeded, China wanted to keep them in place to safeguard the region. Pol Pot and other members of the CPK had paid several visits to China throughout the 60s and were able to observe the country’s transformation under Mao Zedong. From 1970 until 1973 the then exiled Royal Government had its ministries formally installed in Beijing, where Sihanouk resided as the Head of State. As a “symbolic reduction” of Sihanouk’s role in their movement, the Khmer Rouge transferred these ministries to Cambodia in November 1973, a decision for which they had China’s blessing (Carney 1989b, 29).

With financial and military support China continued to build its role as a generous patron of the Pol Pot regime from 1975 to 1979. Early on Ieng Sary had negotiated a “Chinese military aid package for Cambodia of 13.000 tons of weapons”, and the country proved to be a reliable partner, whenever the Khmer Rouge came under pressure even after Mao’s death in 1976 (Mertha 2014). It is help for which they received precious little in return (Mertha 2014, 9). As part of some symbolic political gestures Pol Pot did however choose China to make some of the few public

announcements directed at an international audience; most notably when he revealed his identity as DK's leader to the world and declared the revolution a communist victory in 1977.

When Vietnam and Cambodia finally clashed China readily took the Khmer Rouge's side, delivering weapons and ammunition for them to sustain their guerilla war. China had already suspended aid to the Hanoi regime in 1978, after Vietnam had joined the COMECON and thus signaled a shift in the direction of the Soviet Union. Following Pol Pot's removal from power and the installation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, China briefly invaded Vietnam to punish them for their role in Democratic Kampuchea's downfall.

The international influence on the development of the PRK

The development and implementation of policies in the People's Republic of Kampuchea was always affected by a complicated mix of domestic strategies, ideological ties and the economic realities of the country. After their victory and the ad hoc establishment of a new administrative structure, Vietnam had three priorities: End the war, promote loyal Cambodian leadership to assure political stability, and establish a communist economy (Gottesman 2003, 96). All three priorities were evidently suited to further their own geopolitical strategies. In order to keep the new Cambodian leadership on track, the related reforms were supervised by Vietnamese advisors. It would be wrong to say that these advisors simply offered their help, but it is not correct either to say that they imposed their ideas.

Despite the fact that they had the consequences of communism's grave failures right in front of their eyes, many of the former Khmer Rouge cadres were not yet ready to give up on the idea that this system could work eventually (Gottesman 2003). Given that there are next to no statistics covering the years of this isolated regime, it is still difficult to put the achievements and failures of the PRK regime in numbers. In 1991, after the UN mission was already decided upon, there were plenty of reports that decried the harsh conditions in the country – but they mostly failed to account for the

fact that the poverty of the people and the struggles of the new leadership were in no small part due to the economic sanctions the West had imposed on them.

During the ten years between the intervention and the withdrawal of the Vietnamese army the PRK underwent a number of political reforms. In sum they indicated a growing willingness on part of the leadership to downscale the importance of communist ideology and prepare Cambodia's rapprochement with economically more successful countries. In this regard, its development mirrored the wider global trend. Gottesman indicates that Vietnam was most successful in setting up a Cambodian army; and the fact that tens of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers died in Cambodia between 1979 and 1989 can also be read as proof of their commitment to keep the Khmer Rouge from regaining power (Gottesman 2003, 143).

The development of the economy on the other hand, has to be regarded as a failure with respect to Hanoi's initial goals. Government authorities were never able to provide for the people's many needs in a satisfactory manner. In a system touting a communist ideology this evidently had an effect on the credibility of the government as such: "The state commercial system had failed and only private merchants were bringing food and consumer goods into Phnom Penh and the other towns" (Gottesman 2003, 203). The PRK was therefore early on inclined to allow the evolution of a small scale private sector, and towards the end of the 80s a more pragmatic leadership under Hun Sen began to envision a market economy. These plans were met with less and less opposition from Vietnam, also because they were faced with communism's economic unsustainability in their own country.

Cambodian leaders did in fact have quite some leverage with regard to Vietnam's reform intentions, but this independence was evidently not apparent to the Cambodian people. The continuous presence of Vietnamese advisors and its military in the country unsettled many and led to a lot of tensions. In order not to lose domestic support Cambodian officials were therefore particularly eager to show their muscle in symbolically important matters, notably the highly delicate immigration issue (Gottesman 2003, 125).

People had complained about the lax enforcement of immigration policies between Vietnam and Cambodia: The perceived unrestrained influx of Vietnamese

workers and their families nurtured deep seated fears of their nation's annihilation. But a quick solution to this problem was not in sight and the issue provided the exiled opposition with excellent material for their propaganda machine. In contrast to the comprehensive influence of the Vietnamese, the Soviet Union stayed largely in the background. They provided the PRK with material and expensive advisors, which nobody dared to refuse (Gottesman 2003, 146). China on the other hand supported the Sihanouk-Sann-Sary coalition with support for their campaign against the PRK. It was also due to their pressure that Democratic Kampuchea kept Cambodia's seat at the United Nations.

Foreign countries affected Cambodian politics not only through their money and advisors. The PRK was also increasingly concerned regarding its international standing. How the international community perceived Cambodia was a factor to consider regarding the long-term survival of their state and had an impact on several decision making processes: In addition to its economic reforms the PRK presented itself more and more open to democratic changes, abolished the death penalty, allowed small (and very well controlled) elections on the commune level and renamed itself State of Cambodia in 1989 – thereby giving up the communist heritage of its name.

From the international point of view these changes did of course little to make the PRK acceptable from a political point of view. Suggestions to solve the ongoing conflict between the four factions by means of a UN supervised election had already been tabled in 1981 by China and ASEAN (Gottesman 2003, 118). But this proposal became only worth considering when local interests and the geopolitical situation finally converged: With the end of the Cold War both the Soviet Union and Vietnam lost their respective incentives to further invest in the small Southeast Asian country.

Hun Sen on the other hand knew that he could not withstand the opposition forces without their military aid. In 1987 he launched a policy of national reconciliation announced his decision to 'switch from the military to the diplomatic field' to his party members (Gottesman 2003, 278). He and Sihanouk began a series of talks that would ultimately lead to the Paris Peace Conference in 1989 and the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991.

5.4. After the Paris Peace Agreements: UNTAC and the Establishment of a New Political Order

5.4.1. Introduction

With the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991 Cambodia made its reappearance on the center stage of international attention. The long awaited diplomatic success was hailed as an opportunity for the country to make a fresh start and become a member of the international community after decades of war and isolation. In order to prepare the country's first nationwide democratic elections the conflict parties had agreed to the establishment of a UN transitional authority. It would be up to the Cambodian people to decide who was to become their next leader and the United Nations would do everything in their power for them to make their choice in free and fair elections – this at least is how Cambodia's fate was summarized and presented to the world.

Signed on October 23 1991 in Paris, the Peace Agreements encompassed four separate documents: 1) the Final Act of the Paris Conference on Cambodia, 2) the Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, 3) the Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia; and 4) the Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia. Out of these four, only the two agreements were legally binding treaties (Findlay 1995: 11).³⁴ The Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict detailed the mandate of the United Nations and by signing it, the Supreme National Council (SNC) formally delegated all powers necessary to ensure its implementation. The SNC constituted a legal novelty: As article 78 of the UN prohibits putting a sovereign member under trusteeship Cambodia was going to be represented by the SNC for the duration of the transitional period.

³⁴ In the following the expression „the Agreements“ is used in reference to both the Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict and the Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia. The chapters will paraphrase the Agreements.

Until the formation of a new government this institutions embodied Cambodia's 'sovereignty, independence and unity' and represented the country's 'unique legitimate body and source of authority'. Headed by Norodom Sihanouk the SNC consisted of 12 members. The incumbent State of Cambodia was represented by six members, while the remaining three parties, namely FUNCINPEC, the BNLDP, and the Khmer Rouge, who had formerly collaborated in the exile government, were each given two of the remaining six seats.¹

Justified with the necessary establishment of a neutral political environment (NPE) prior to the country's first nationwide democratic elections, the powers delegated by the SNC encompassed the placement of all elections, administrative agencies, bodies and offices, which could directly influence its outcome, under direct UN supervision.³⁵ For the first time, the UN also obtained the powers to organize the elections in the context of such a mission. In previous cases it had only been mandated to supervise them.

All together UNTAC consisted of seven units, which were assigned with different responsibilities in the context of the mission: Military, Police, Civil Administration, Human Rights, Repatriation and Rehabilitation, and Information and Education. The Paris Peace Agreements determined that the end of the transitional period was to be marked by the formation of a new government: A constituent assembly elected through free and fair elections would have to draft Cambodia's new constitution and transform itself into a legislative assembly.

Put in sheer numbers the situation in Cambodia was as grave as it can be when UNTAC arrived: In rankings on health care, life expectancy, and per capita income the country found itself at or near the very bottom of the lists, while securing high places in statistics on the number of unexploded land-mines buried in the ground and – accordingly – ranked first among the world's countries with the highest percentage of physically disabled people (Chopra 1994, 56).

As a result of the ongoing civil war close to half a million of refugees lived in dire conditions along the borders and thousands of people within the country continued

³⁵ Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Article 6

to live in temporary dwellings, without knowledge about the whereabouts or the fate of their family members. Observers called the country morally and politically bankrupt (Carney 1993, 3), its population traumatized and stated the country's "institutions of every sort [were] shattered, from family to nation" (Chopra 1994, 57). The challenges the UN mission would have to deal with were judged enormous. Consequently, with a pledged budget of close to two billion US Dollar and more than 20.000 international staff members, the mission became the most expensive and largest of its kind.

In order to ensure that the factions complied with the cease-fire agreement and to begin with the clearing of mines the UN had sent UNAMIC, a small advance mission, to Cambodia, which became operational in November 1991. On March 15, 1992 when UNTAC was formally established with the arrival of the UN Special Representative of the General Secretary (SRGS) heading the mission, Yasushi Akashi, the larger mission absorbed this advance group.

The entire mission was set up to last 13 months. Considering the unresolved problems between the main conflict parties, the economic devastation of the country, and the novelty of the democratic system it has been rightly remarked that it had never been UNTAC's intention to fully democratize Cambodia. Rather, the mission aimed at the establishment of a legitimate government. In the future, such a government could then receive encompassing support to rebuild and reform the key-sectors of the country. In the process of preparing the elections UNTAC had to deal with a huge number of issues; most of them had been foreseen in the planning stages, like the difficult details of registering eligible voters, some of them had been underestimated, like the establishment of control over the existing administration, and again others had to be assumed on a rather ad hoc basis, like UNTAC's involvement in the conflicts over land. In order to establish some kind of level playing field for the new political game, UNTAC had to simultaneously address the problematic legacy of Cambodia's past, its present, and lay out the groundwork for a different future.

5.4.2. UNTAC and the Past: Addressing the Legacies of the Conflict

With their signature under the Paris Peace Agreements the four conflict factions had committed themselves to a peaceful transition, but even with UNTAC's arrival political power and status were still measured as a function of existing administrative control and military strength. It was therefore crucial for UNTAC to create conditions in which compliance with the agreements' terms could be perceived of as beneficial to all parties involved. The international administration had to prove to the leaders of the different faction that they had a chance to gain or keep positions of power by means of peaceful participation in the envisaged elections. Three issues were of particular importance in this regard, namely the establishment of control over the existing administrative structures, the withdrawal of foreign forces and the demobilization of the soldiers.

Article 6 of the Paris Peace Agreements authorized UNTAC to supervise or control all administrative structures that might interfere with the organization of free and fair elections. To ensure a neutral political environment in which the people could exercise their new right to vote without fear of threat or coercion the agreements detailed that foreign affairs, national defense, finance, public security and information would be given special attention.

UNTAC's efforts in this regard were under close scrutiny and throughout the mission the former members of the exiled government remained dissatisfied with the results. Contrary to the expectations of many Cambodians, the UN did not intent to take over the Cambodian government for the duration of the operation, but 'only' to correct for the political bias resulting from SoC control over the administration in order to establish a neutral political environment prior to the elections. After all, the administration of the State of Cambodia and its organizational patterns and routines had been established from 1979 on – and thus for more than a decade by the time of UNTAC's arrival. The Civil Administration Unit that was meant to put this apparatus under 'effective control' consisted of merely 400 to 500 people, who were not even fully deployed until September 27, 1992. Only a minority of these staff members were proficient in the Khmer language. Under these circumstances compliance could not be enforced but the unit's work "relied on the willingness of local authorities" (Chopra

1994, 31–32), which was described as “partial and begrudging” (Findlay 1995, 62). Doyle put it more bluntly when he concluded that the “State of Cambodia simply administered around UNTAC” (Doyle 1995, 35).

According to Chopra the UNTAC police unit CIVPOL could have supported the Civil Administration Unit in its important task to establish neutral institutions prior to the elections. Not only mandated to supervise but also to control CIVPOL was nominally “in a powerful position to challenge abuses of power and direct law and order”. They did, however, apply a very narrow interpretation of their supervisory powers and did “not even attempt to carry out its control tasks” (Chopra 1994, 44).

Apart from the missing cooperation between UNTAC’s different units and the low priority given to Civil Administration in the larger context of the mission effective control over the EAS was also hindered by the fact that the administrative structures of Cambodia’s different provinces were put under the control of different nations, each relying on and trying to implement “their own styles of administration” (Chopra 1994, 34). Observers judged the impact of the Civil Administration Unit by and large a failure – which puts them in agreement with the assessment of the opposition parties.

The second issue that was of vital importance from the opposition’s point of view was the return of the foreign forces. Section IV, Article 8 of the Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that UNTAC’s Military Unit was to verify the withdrawal of any foreign forces, advisers, and military personnel remaining in Cambodia, together with their weapons, ammunition, and equipment. UNTAC’s performance in this matter was severely criticized throughout the mission and the issue became a touchstone for the administration’s legitimacy. Amidst heated accusations and suspicions voiced by politicians and the people UNTAC tried rather desperately to sustain its neutrality.

The departure of Vietnamese military personnel was monitored via checkpoints along the border and additionally UNTAC investigated into the frequent accusations of foreign forces living under concealed identities in Cambodian villages. Apart from the initially slow setup of the border checkpoints that drew some criticism, international observers unanimously judged UNTAC’s work as substantial and thorough (Findlay 1995, 34). Cambodians were of a different opinion: In their propaganda the Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC and the BLDP strived to blur the lines between members of the

foreign forces, Vietnamese migrant workers and even Cambodians of Vietnamese descent. To them, they all represented unwanted and hostile foreigners that were in one way or another connected with the Hanoi government and its alleged plan to undermine Cambodian politics and culture.

Estimations as to the numbers of concealed enemies living in the country hovered around one million people and were thus a far cry from the three men UNTAC actually identified as members of foreign forces living illegally in Cambodia according to the provisions of the Agreements. All three held small positions in the SoC military and were married to Cambodian women. Unsurprisingly, the Cambodians “found it hard to understand why UNTAC could not find the Vietnamese that every Cambodian had seen and had heard about” (Jordens 1996, 148–149).³⁶

The symbolic value of the issue is not only evidenced by the factions’ accusations against UNTAC for its failure to ‘find’ the Vietnamese spies, but also by the immense attention the UN devoted to the verification of the three men’s identity. After Vietnam’s refusal to acknowledge their status as foreign forces and to take them back the UN Security Council hurried to express its “strong concern at recent reports by UNTAC of a small number of foreign military personnel serving with the armed forces of the SOC in violation of the Paris Agreements” in its resolution (Amer 1993, 220–221).

Doubts about UNTAC’s efficacy in supervising the withdrawal of Vietnamese military were exacerbated by the fact that cross-border migration did indeed pick up after the signing of the Agreements. In the wake of economic liberalization and the sudden cash flow that poured into the country many Vietnamese men and women migrated to Cambodia to work in the construction business or to feed the growing sex-worker industry (which only served to confirm Cambodians’ long-held convictions about the morality of Vietnamese women) (Jordens 1996. 138-139). Quickly, rumors about Vietnamese obtaining Cambodian citizenship to vote for the incumbent government in the upcoming elections spread and UNTAC could do little more than

³⁶ According to Findlay UNTAC later discovered another four men, which matched the criteria of foreign forces (Findlay 1995: 37).

counter these accusations through their own information channels, in particular through Radio and TV UNTAC run by the Information and Education Unit (Amer 1993, 215; Jordens 1996, 147).

The third issue concerned the foreseen demobilization of the conflict factions. The Paris Peace Agreements detailed that the cease-fire and disarmament would be implemented in two phases. Phase I began immediately after the agreements and demanded of all factions to observe the new orders to refrain from hostilities. During Phase II the UNTAC Military Unit would supervise, monitor and verify the cease-fire. In a related step the unit would then focus on the factions' demobilization including the regrouping, cantonment and ultimate disposition of all Cambodian forces and their weapons. Early on, it became clear that the mission could not rely on the full cooperation of all conflict factions.

The greatest concern in this regard was the Khmer Rouge's slow withdrawal from the peace process. Phase I of the peace process had officially started with the Agreements' entry-into-force on October 23, 1991. In the five month until UNTAC's arrival the cease-fire was violated on multiple occasions and the Khmer Rouge refused to grant UNAMIC officials access to territories under their control (Findlay 1995, 25). Equally concerning from the UN's point of view was the sudden absence of the Khmer Rouge representatives from the Mixed Military Working Group meetings which had taken place on a regular basis since December 28, 1991 (Amer 1993, 212–213). They had given little or no explanation for their behavior and early on each side called out the other for not conforming to the regulations of the peace plan. This changed little even after UNTAC's deployment. The Khmer Rouge in particular insisted that the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia was neither adequately encouraged nor supervised by the UN. Their preoccupation with the Vietnamese issue was evident in their propaganda as well as in the repeated requests they addressed the United Nations with (Roberts 2000).

Apart from the diplomatic tension between the UN and the Khmer Rouge leadership, violent clashes between troops of the Khmer Rouge and the SoC continued to occur on a regular basis. The fighting reached a critical point in January 1993 when SoC troops tried to recapture zones under Khmer Rouge control. Their successful move

was followed by several retaliation attacks (Chopra 1994, 28). Due to these and other repeated violations of the cease-fire agreement Phase I could not be fully implemented, which inevitably led directly to the failure of Phase II: the disarmament and cantonment phase.

The Khmer Rouge widely refused to provide the UN with the necessary information to estimate the numbers and location of mines in their territories and the weaponry in their possession, or to hand them over. Of the four conflict factions only the KPNLF demobilized fully, while FUNCINPEC's troops were considered demobilized to 50 percent and the SoC's to 25 percent. "The end result was that, while the two smaller factions had mostly disarmed the SOC kept the best part of its army intact and the KR suffered no impairment of its fighting capacity whatsoever" (Findlay 1995, 38–39).

There is mixed judgment regarding the intentions of the Khmer Rouge. Some are of the opinion that they were genuinely prepared to transform into a political party and compete in the elections and only withdrew their consent because the UN was unable to truly accommodate their interests in the peace process (Roberts 2000), while others doubt that the Khmer Rouge ever intended to submit themselves to Cambodia's democratization and the resulting rules (Chopra 1994, 30; Findlay 1995, 49). It was probably already clear by January 27, when the Khmer Rouge failed to register as a political party, that their dropout of the peace process was final. It would take until April 4, 1993 though, until they officially declared their decision to withdraw.

The legacies of the past did not only affect the level of government. Most heavily they weight on the Cambodian people. Two decades of war with its bombings and forced relocations had torn almost every family apart. During the years of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PDK) international attention and aid had largely been devoted to the refugees in the camps alongside Cambodia's borders. Khmer Rouge soldiers ran many of these camps and the constant flow of aid towards these regions had also ensured the survival of those loyal to Pol Pot. The factions under the leadership of Norodom Sihanouk and Son Sann largely recruited their followership from these places too and the camps quickly gained the (accurate) reputation of being opposition strongholds.

Part V of the Agreement on a Comprehensive Settlement put forward that Cambodian refugees and displaced persons located outside Cambodia have the right to return to Cambodia and to live in safety, security and dignity, free from intimidation or coercion of any kind. Given the political tensions arising from the fact that the repatriation of refugees equaled the massive immigration of opposition voters from the State of Cambodia's point of view, in addition to the pure logistical challenges of transporting hundreds of thousands of people through the huge mine-field of a country still at war, and the need to provide them with acceptable living conditions and possibilities to earn money at their manifold destinations, this task was deemed no easy one. In retrospect the work of the Repatriation and Rehabilitation Unit would constitute one of UNTAC's undisputed successes, with observers unanimously praising the mission's achievements and problem solving capacities in this matter (Amer 1993, 220; Doyle 1995, 2; Jeldres 1993, 109).

Via TV UNTAC the people witnessed emotional family reunions with overjoyed mothers and fathers who embraced the children they had long thought dead. UNTAC's success is mostly accorded to the heavy involvement of the UNHCR, who had helped to administer the camps since the early 1980s and who had been involved in all crucial planning stages of the peace-plan concerning this undertaking (Findlay 1995, 53). Initially, the intention had been to complete repatriation of the 370.000 refugees by the end of the year as this date coincided with the registration deadline for voters' registration. Despite the efforts of the UNHCR and the Military Unit UNTAC failed to meet this ambitious goal and completed the process only by April 1993 (Chopra 1994, 62).

The UN was aware of the long-term problems that tailed the reintegration of so many people into a divided country with an overwhelmingly poor population. On the one hand, there were the pure economic challenges of providing the returnees with some kind of livelihood. As a possible solution to the problem each refugee was promised two hectares of land upon their return. But due to "the lack of sufficient mine-free arable land", they were soon offered other options (Findlay 1995, 53). These included for instance the receipt of a one-time payment (which turned out to be the

most popular compensation) or the offer to simply wait for the availability of a suitable spot (Chopra 1994, 62).

On the other hand there were the social tensions that arouse only partially from the competition for land and employment. As Chopra summarizes it, there were not only the internally displaced and the refugees, but also thousands of demobilized soldiers totaling “two-thirds and three-quarters of a million [that] would need reintegration into a population of about nine million itself in need of rehabilitation” (Chopra 1994, 56). In other words: With the completion of the repatriation process, the larger and much more complicated process of national reconciliation only began.

5.4.3. UNTAC and the Present: Establishing Law and Order

Throughout the preparatory phase the establishment of a neutral political environment (NPE) was not only hindered by the regular clashes of the factions’ military arms, but also by severe incidents of political violence, from voters’ intimidation to murder. Apart from CIVPOL these incidents were also investigated by the UNTAC’s Human Rights Unit in order to establish whether or not a particular incident was motivated by political or other reasons. This judgment determined further proceedings. According to internal reports members of the FUNCINPEC party constituted the main targets (Ledgerwood 1996). The continued attacks on members of the opposition parties were deemed a symptom of UNTAC’s failure to effectively control the SoC security forces and provide the new political parties with a neutral political environment to compete in (Findlay 1995, 60). In January 1993, Norodom Sihanouk briefly resigned from his position as head of the SNC and retreated to Beijing to protest the violence against ‘his’ party although he was the founder of the party, he officially was no longer a member – a fact that the party itself liked to deny or downplay in its campaigns. He only resumed his responsibilities after Akashi had personally paid him a visit and assured him of UNTAC’s increased efforts to promote safety for the candidates (Amer 1993, 218–219).

One of the measures immediately put in place was the creation of a “special prosecutor’s office and court system designed to indict, prosecute, sentence, and

imprison individuals responsible for political crimes” (Chopra 1994, 40–41). In the reports the authors highlight time and again that UNTAC was only as powerful as its control over the SoC apparatus was great. Accordingly there are hundreds of incidents that have been quoted to evidence UNTAC’s de facto impotence in the face of political violence, as a result of the local authorities’ refusal to cooperate in the arrests, detainment or prosecution of the accused.

Cambodians of Vietnamese descent were another particularly vulnerable group as they were viewed as representatives for the Khmers’ hereditary enemy. Changes in government and the period of disorganization surrounding it had in the past almost inevitably led to violence against them: The killing of Vietnamese could always be interpreted as some kind of political statement. UNTAC formed no exception to this pattern. Amnesty International reported that during the six month prior to the elections Khmer Rouge soldiers killed almost 200 civilians of Vietnamese descent. Apparently unfazed by the possibility to meet any kind of armed resistance, most of the massacres were preceded by violent threats against the targeted community and the local authorities often knew weeks in advance of the planned atrocities (Jordens 1996, 140).

The brutal killings of men, women and children received wide media coverage – in particular the massacre of 33 people in Chnong Kneas village, where most of the victims were women and children. With their attacks the Khmer Rouge revived elements of the terror the Cambodian people had experienced in the 70s and in the wake of these atrocities thousands of people, most of whom were born or had lived in Cambodia for decades, fled the country (Amer 1993, 221; Jordens 1996, 139).³⁷ UNTAC drew severe criticism for its management of the tensions between Cambodia and Vietnam and the resulting consequences. Jeldres put forward that it would have been the UN’s responsibility to (forcibly) repatriate the 600.000 illegal Vietnamese settlers that lived in Cambodia at the time according to his estimation. He thereby endows much of the parties’ propaganda with reason and – contrary to well established

³⁷ After the UNTAC sponsored elections most of them tried to return to the country they considered their home but were denied entry. Considered Vietnamese by the Cambodians and Cambodian by the Vietnamese thousands of them became trapped at the border, where they lived under deplorable conditions on their boats. For a discussion of their situation and legal status see (Berman 1996).

facts – presents the massacres of Vietnamese as a result of public emotions running high, rather than planned attacks executed by the Khmer Rouge (Jeldres 1993, 108). Chopra on the other hand discusses UNTAC's shortcomings in this matter in the context of CIVPOL's weak performance and its failure to protect Vietnamese settlers effectively (Chopra 1994, 43).

Many high-ranking officials declared that as a peace-keeping mission, UNTAC was not authorized to intervene in armed conflicts – even if, as was the case with all massacres, one party had no means to defend itself. Others insisted on more decisive action, quoting UNTAC's responsibilities to “assure the protection of human rights, and the non-return to the policies and practices of the past” as laid out in the Paris Peace Agreements (Jordens 1996, 145–147). In sum, the authors judge that UNTAC was apparently more concerned with the organizations of the elections and not willing to intervene more actively with either words or weapons in this sensitive issue for the price of jeopardizing its impartiality.

The human rights provisions detailed in Part III and Annex 1, section E of the Agreements were in fact quite substantial: As pointed out by many observers in the aftermath of the violence against the ethnic Vietnamese UNTAC was responsible to establish an environment in which human rights would be respected. Accordingly, one of the main tasks of the Human Rights Unit was the investigations in incidents of political violence, often in close cooperation with the Cambodian authorities. As a signatory to the Agreements, Cambodia had committed itself to facilitate UNTAC's efforts. In 1992 and 1993 the SNC signed a total of seven human rights conventions. Based on these conventions UNTAC was able to establish new procedures for arrest and trials and promote the independence of the magistrates, which constituted a “major step forward in creating respect for the rule of law” (Duffy 1994, 94–95, 101).

Despite the achievements and orders from ‘above’ the local authorities remained rather unresponsive of UNTAC's efforts to reform the judiciary, the police or the prison system. Under the PRK/SoC the only criminal code ever drafted was a document that declared ‘betraying the revolution’ a crime. Gottesman comments that “only subsequent circulars clarified that ‘betraying the revolution’ meant any act deemed to be in opposition to the regime, its ideology, or its Vietnamese patrons” (Gottesman

2003, 241). This opened the door for all kinds of legal abuses and corruption was rampant. With a focus on the zones under SoC control UNTAC did therefore conduct a broad survey of the prison system, released political prisoners and implemented a range of programs to improve the conditions of imprisonment (Duffy 1994, 101).

With its work the Human Rights Unit attempted to lay the foundation of an overall reformed justice system future generations could build on. In practice, the unit was therefore working in two separate teams: One concerned with the fieldwork of investigation and the other one with human rights training and education (Duffy 1994, 94).

5.4.4. UNTAC and the Future

The ultimate goal of the large and expensive mission to Cambodia was obviously to have a lasting effect on the institutional framework and change the attitude of governmental representatives towards the state. With regard to the wider population UNTAC's work was therefore heavily geared towards empowerment through education. The Human Rights Units installed officers in the accessible zones of the different provinces and informed the people about their rights. Simultaneously they provided other components with support in the educational training of the governmental administration and the police. With the help of the newly translated relevant legal texts they received lessons concerning their obligations, and the rights of the citizens they were supposed to serve.

All of these efforts would have been in vein without the creation of a legitimate government. Consequently, the preparation of the elections had the highest priority. According to the Paris Agreement UNTAC's mandated powers encompassed every important aspect of this endeavor. The international administration was entitled to set up the legal framework that would determine the registration process, the formation of the new parties, and the general elections. Furthermore, UNTAC was mandated to organize and facilitate the campaigning period, which included to ensure all competing parties fair access to the media.

For the Cambodian people the Agreements foresaw the implementation of an electoral education process, so that they could live up to their new role as voters. Whenever existing laws contradicted the intentions of the Agreement, UNTAC was able to suspend or abolish them. Though it was underlined that all measures would be taken in consultation with the SNC, the authority to make binding decisions lay solely with the head of the mission, the Special Representative to the Secretary General Yasushi Akashi.³⁸

Designed to constitute the end of the ambitious mission as well as the beginning of Cambodia's democratic political future, the planning and proceeding of the elections under the lead of the Electoral Unit were influenced by every other aspect of UNTAC's work: In order to ensure the registration of the voters it was essential to successfully complete the repatriation process. The return of the refugees was also vital to reassure the opposition parties, as they overwhelmingly represented the constituency of the KPNLF and FUNCINPEC. For the opposition it was of even greater importance that UNTAC's Civil Administration would establish effective control over the SoC administrative apparatus prior to the elections.

CivPol and the Military Unit tried to curb the ongoing violence in the country as politically motivated killings intimidated the members of the established factions, the newly emerging parties and the voters. In the month leading up to the elections UNTAC's international staff members themselves became increasingly the target of abduction and malicious attacks at their hands. Several peacekeepers were murdered by the KR soldiers and after the death of a Japanese member of the UN Volunteer Corps in April 1993 the peace process was in serious jeopardy (Findlay 1995, 76–77). Given the multitude of violent attacks and the high level of intimidation in many of the country's provinces UNTAC had to admit that the establishment of a Neutral Political Environment had essentially failed. The elections nevertheless proceeded as planned. According to Findlay the UN came to the conclusion that it had already invested too much to pull out, but couldn't invest more to stay longer (Findlay 1995, 39–40).

³⁸ Compare Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict, Part II Article 12, 13, 14; Annex I, Section D, Annex III

Therefore everybody focused on the positive aspects of the pre-election process, such as the high numbers of registered voters as representative for the will of the population to participate, and decided to go ahead.

UNTAC's Information and Education Unit: Shaping ideas of the new political order

In the evaluation of UNTAC's work the Information and Education Unit has received a lot of praise. With Radio UNTAC the unit had created a novelty in UN peacekeeping mission and in "assessing how well its own message was being received by the Cambodians Info/Ed developed what may have been the UN's first political intelligence department" (Doyle 1995, 55). It was widely recognized that the information provided by Radio UNTAC played a significant role in motivating the people to cast their vote despite the tension filled atmosphere ahead of the election. With its radio programs and other media distribution InfoEd provided an alternative to the factions' 'propaganda' and contributed to a fair competition by giving the smaller parties access to a bigger audience.

The following analysis does not question this achievement. But by drawing attention to the symbolic dimension of the unit's direct communication with the Cambodian people it can demonstrate the highly political aspect of the 'neutral alternative' they offered: By creating a new public in the context of Cambodia's interventions society the unit sought to develop interpretative authority and to discipline the local political actors' discourse over the country's political future.

6. Analysis

6.1. Assessing the Conditions: The PPA as a Symbol of the New Political Order

Considering the very recent, very complicated past of all actors involved in the Cambodian peace process, the radically different interpretations of the conflict history as asserted by the main Cambodian actors, and the profound change in the relationship between the Cambodian people and their government that this mission wanted to bring about, it seems imperative to inquire into the management of the tensions that were bound to prevail in the implementation phase. The entire interaction of these actors was determined by the Paris Peace Agreements. The history review presented in *Chapter 7* does therefore suggest that these Agreements may have ended the debate over the country's new governmental institutions, but remained at the center of an ongoing negotiation over the character and purpose of the country's new political order.

The theory of interpretative authority sees the strength of a symbol and the possibility of an institution to develop and exercise political authority in a mutual constitutive relationship. In order to implement the Paris Peace Agreements and lay the foundation for a new political order, UNTAC was dependent on the repeated public acknowledgement of political actors and the people that these Agreements did in fact represent a change in the way society and the government relate.

The ongoing violence between the four conflict factions posed a difficult issue in this regard. It demonstrated to everybody that the conflict had not been resolved, but rather temporarily transformed. The early meetings between Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk, prior to the Peace Conference, had been justified with everybody's desire to promote 'national reconciliation'. UNTAC attempted to build on this established theme by encouraging Sihanouk to take on the position as head of the Supreme National Council. His son Rannaridh became the head of the FUNCINPEC Party and Sihanouk was henceforward praised as Cambodia's symbol of national reconciliation by international and local political actors.

Endowed with this type of ‘neutrality’, this was UNTAC’s hope, he could mediate between the different factions and keep the Khmer Rouge in check. Especially in the early months of the intervention Sihanouk did in fact intervene on behalf of UNTAC, but with the final drop-out of the Khmer Rouge, UNTAC’s perceived lax implementation of the Vietnamese withdrawal, and the ongoing attacks against the members of his former party, he withdrew his support and began to openly question the legitimacy of the mission.

Many of these debates and UNTAC’s reconciliation efforts did, however, evolve on a diplomatic level behind closed doors and were thus not truly different from the ‘political spectacle’ the people were used to. In the strict sense of the word the Paris Peace Agreements promised the Cambodian people the establishment of a ‘liberal pluralist democracy’. But how could the people imagine such a political order?

During UNTAC the term democracy was usually paired with the Khmer expression *put brakot*, emphasizing its *true* nature. Under the Khmer Rouge Cambodia had been known as Democratic Kampuchea and the insistence on the true character of the new ‘untacist’ democracy was also meant to absolve the discredited term. Vis-à-vis the population the word ‘liberal’ – or rather the word ‘free’ (*serey*) in Khmer – was mainly used in descriptions of the new economy. After more than a decade of international sanctions against the State of Cambodia (SoC) a free market would end the country’s economic isolation and reestablish a profitable exchange of goods and money across the country’s borders.

The expression pluralist had been translated into Khmer as *peahupak*, which combines the word for party with the prefix *peahu*, meaning great, multi or many. In official documents it was therefore often translated with ‘multiparty’ instead of ‘pluralist’. From the citizens’ point of view it was this idea that captured the essence of political reforms most clearly. The past had taught the Cambodian people two things about politics: That they are subordinate to their political leaders and that political labels are void of any meaning. Their country had been designated a monarchy, a republic, a democracy and a socialist state in the course of less than 50 years, while the same actors continued to dominate the scene in different roles.

The common trait of all past regimes had been that they essentially constituted one-party systems. Occasionally the Cambodians had been asked to vote, but these elections were mere invitations to express their support and never intended to change established power-structures. Much like any other revolutionary leader UNTAC did therefore try to promote the new political order as a liberation of the people that would follow the long awaited abolishment of existing oppressive structures. In a multiparty democracy, this was how UNTAC summarized its political vision, the government was depended on their vote and therefore bound to act in the interest of the people and not its own.

UNTAC's central message of 'having a choice' clearly gained credibility through the subsequent registration of the 20 parties. The successful completion of this process had been important for the Transitional Authority for a variety of reasons. Preceded by lengthy debates to determine who was eligible to compete, the party formation demonstrated to the people that most of the actors were willing to submit to the new rules. Here, it was certainly of greatest significance that three of the four conflict factions had followed the procedures and confirmed their commitment to transform 'the war of guns into a war of words'. Ironically, even the Khmer Rouge did not question the superior status of the Agreements. After dropping out their criticism was directed against UNTAC's biased interpretation of the PPA – not against its stipulations or potential as a solution to the conflict.

The registration also signaled a certain equality between the political elite and the people, as the latter were likewise required to submit to certain procedures to participate in the elections. Factions turned into political parties and people into voters. Each successful party registration was announced by means of a public notification in UN Special Representative's Akashi's name, linking the procedure to the stipulations of UNTAC's electoral law.³⁹ The notification was distributed via radio and copies were placed on "on prominent display at all premises in Cambodia occupied by [UNTAC's]

³⁹ UNTAC New Parties FDRP: Public Notification of the Provisional Registration FDRP as a Political Party, 25.11.1992

Electoral Component”⁴⁰ for the people to take note. More than just a technicality, the implementation of the registration formalities formed part of a socialization process that rewarded the elite for compliance and signaled the broader population the validity of the new rules ahead of the election. On a symbolic level all of the new parties became signatories to the Paris Peace Agreement, which significantly strengthened its status as representing the future political order.

Looking past the visible markers of institutional change, it becomes quickly obvious though that UNTAC was hard pressed to incite trust in the viability of the reforms. This skepticism is evident in the statements of representatives on every level, foreign observers, members of the established parties, members of the new parties, and of course in the concerned comments and questions of the people. An Information officer reported from a conversation with some villagers:

“The meaning of elections to these people is clear: they are one means of bringing peace to Cambodia. Democracy is not a concern; the problem of Vietnamese illegal settlers is not a concern. The most important electoral issue for these villagers is how to end over twenty years of war. ‘We want the elections to stop Khmers fighting Khmers’, they said.”⁴¹

Observing the ongoing violence in the country, the people found it increasingly difficult though to see how a competition of this kind could contribute to the establishment of a peaceful order. In response to a radio program hosted by UNTAC, thousands of people all over the country sent letters describing their concerns in hope for an answer by the Transitional Authorities. ‘What will happen to the losers of the elections?’ was a question they posed over and over again and to which there seemed to be no truly satisfying answer.⁴²

Many of the foreign observers shared the people’s concerns that the creation of the new parties was not per se a guarantee for a more just and peaceful future, albeit for different reasons: “Their leaders include a donut king and a convicted rapist on the

⁴⁰ UNTAC Electoral Chronology: Public Notification of the Official Registration of Political Parties, 23.02.1993

⁴¹ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on Conversations with Villagers in Takeo about Elections, 29.04.1993, p.2

⁴² This statement is based on my preliminary research with the collection Letters to Radio UNTAC.

lam.⁴³ They have proposed platforms ranging from turning Cambodia into the Detroit of Southeast Asia to extending the national borders by 2,000 square kilometers”⁴⁴ summarized a journalist the sometimes bizarre peculiarities of Cambodia’s would-be leaders and their plans.

The registration records show that the majority of those who were able to comply with UNTAC’s registration formalities came from abroad. In a way all of the parties bore testimony to Cambodia’s recent history of quick and brutal regime changes. Some of them had been formed with the support of Cambodian refugees that had established successful lives abroad and were relatively new to politics – but many more represented the attempts of chassed politicians and members of the various resistance movements to make a come-back.

Former members of Sihanouk’s *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* occupied leading positions in the new parties as well as people, who had been involved in the putsch against him. Sometimes for as long as 20 years these refugees had observed Cambodia’s fate from afar or been actively involved in the creation of an opportunity to return. And although some of them had pre-established loyalties to one of the former factions, their absence from Cambodia had cut them off from any valid information as regards their current power structures and political tendencies. Kol Pheng described the decision making process that preceded the creation of the new Khmer National Congress Party as follows:

“We discussed about how we can contribute to the peace development [...] the rehabilitation of Cambodia. Some suggested that we should start a NGO; some suggested we should start a political party, and finally we decided why don’t we try a political party? At that time the political party, the FUNCINPEC that I am in right now, was the most powerful party. But we do not have... we intended to join but some sympathizers here in

⁴³ The author is referring to the leader of Cambodia’s Khmer Farmer Liberal Democracy Party, Mr. Pon Pireth, who escaped from prison after being found guilty of rape in a trial supervised by the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO). While UNTAC recognized “the seriousness of the offence [...] there is no provision in the Electoral Law to disqualify anyone from being a candidate on the accounts of a criminal record. [...] We feel therefore that we should not attempt to remove [him] as a candidate [...] by amending the law. This approach may open up a whole can of worms, especially given what must be a large number of crimes against humanities committed during the period of conflict.” UNTAC New Parties FLDP: The Case of Mr. Pon Pireth, President of the Khmer Farmer Liberal Democratic Party, 19.04.1993

⁴⁴ Burslem, Chris. 1993. “Small Parties Could Be Cambodia’s Big Hope.” Phnom Penh Post, May 21. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/small-parties-could-be-cambodias-big-hope>.

the States... we decided that we do not know enough people inside that we trusted. So we decided to test it out ourselves. To see what happens if we start a new party.”⁴⁵

To a certain degree the simultaneous presence of so many former ‘enemies’ in the country was well suited to confirm the UNTAC narrative of a new beginning, free of oppression. But uncertainty as a result of missing reliable information affected both the members of the emerging political elite and the people. Throughout the intervention Cambodia remained a patchwork of more or less clearly defined zones under the control of the different factions.⁴⁶ The Information and Education Unit sent officers on field trips to selected provinces in order to report on UNTAC’s progress in its attempts to establish a situation conducive to free and fair elections. Visits at the offices of party officials in the different provinces and casual conversations with people they met along the way provided snapshots of a life in Cambodia that was still very much marked by fear: of other factions, the state authorities, superiors, and – on a more general note – the future.

“Representatives [of the opposition parties in Siem Reap province] described a pattern of widespread, pervasive and multiform repression and violence by SOC organs and agents directed at both nascent political and the general public. [...] Acts of political violence against party members range from insults and verbal threats to death threats, murder and attempted murders and violent armed attacks on and/or ransacking of party offices.”

UNTAC’s presence in this province, the officer concluded, seemed to be “a mere superficial itch” to the comfort of the established CPP, who aimed at creating an overall “tense and insecure environment”.⁴⁷ Most of the repression against competing parties was reportedly committed by the hands of the SoC/CPP or the NADK, the Khmer Rouge military: The former in order to assure sufficient votes for their own party, and the latter to protest the ‘untacist’ elections as such. But in the more remote and poverty-stricken areas of the FUNCINPEC controlled areas UNTAC Information Officers also witnessed growing impatience and anger with the royalist led movement:

⁴⁵ Interview Kol Pheng, December 22, 2012

⁴⁶ UNTAC Maps: Province and Districts of Cambodia

⁴⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on the Political Environment in Siem Reap Province. Discussions with Political Parties, 29.03.1993, p. 2-3

“The predominant feeling is one of intense frustration, helplessness and despair. People see themselves, and rightly so, as totally dependent for their subsistence and security upon a leadership whom they regard as oblivious, selfish, opportunist and corrupt.”⁴⁸

With sufficient distance between them and their superiors many expressed interest in the new parties, which led the officer to assess that there was “potential for political opposition”. It is, he continued “however unlikely, that opposition parties will open military offices in such a wild, remote, sparsely-populated, lawless and military-dominated zone.”⁴⁹ In these remote areas UNTAC’s efforts to provide the people with reliable information about the electoral process were not only challenged by the ever present security threats to members of the opposition, but by more basic problems, such as bad radio reception and non-existent TVs.

Party members and associates were of course eager to reach the people with their messages, but remained “unwilling to show their face at a political rally and thereby end up ‘targeted’.”⁵⁰ In conversations with UNTAC members they made several proposals to deal with these problems and increase their chances for the elections. The SoC’s continued firm grip on the structures of the state was at the center of the oppositions’ complaints and many urged UNTAC to enforce its mandated authorities with more determination. In reference to the Paris Agreements the chairman of an opposition party informed an UNTAC officer that the Transitional Authority

“[...] was applying procedures that simply do not work with Cambodians, implicitly suggesting that sweet-talking leads to nowhere and that what Cambodians understand are power relations. [...] ‘Why UNTAC does not take over? It has the right to do so. If it needs help, we will help it.’”⁵¹

Others suggested to join forces with other parties for the campaign period. An officer summarized his observations of the weekly meeting of political parties:

⁴⁸ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Political Environment in FUNCINPEC/ANKI Controlled Zones. A Report on the Perceptions and Feelings of ANKI Soldiers, and Officers, and Civilians towards their Leaders, 24.03.1993, p. 5 (207)

⁴⁹ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Political Environment in FUNCINPEC/ANKI Controlled Zones. A Report on the Perceptions and Feelings of ANKI Soldiers, and Officers, and Civilians towards their Leaders, 24.03.1993, p. 9

⁵⁰ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Summary Report on Kompong Cham, 27.04.1993, p. 3-4

⁵¹ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on the Neak Tasou and MOULINAKA for Freedom Party, 15.12.1992, p. 4

“At the meeting, the latest [...] ‘Roundtable’ video was screened, followed by a discussion. [It] centered on a proposal made by the DP representative that [...] political parties organize combined campaign trips to districts and communes, supervised by UNTAC to guarantee security and equal exposure. While representatives of some of the smaller parties supported the proposal, the provincial representative of the FUNCINPEC party all but condemned the idea on the basis that it would result in favoritism. [...] [He] went so far as to accuse the smaller parties of ‘conspiring’ to gain unfair advantage.”⁵²

None of the small parties had great financial means at their disposal, which made it even more difficult for them to get their own message across. Accordingly, most of them focused all of their attention on Phnom Penh, the “political hot house” of the country.⁵³ As of March 18th, 1993 FUNCINPEC had opened 301 party offices, the CPP 246, and the BLDP 74. These were evenly distributed over several provinces. The smaller parties averaged 8 offices and showed next to no presence outside of the capital. Three parties had no offices at all.⁵⁴

The airtime UNTAC provided them with on TV and Radio was for many the only chance to directly reach an audience outside of the capital. But even there, people complained about a perceived lack of substance in the parties’ programs. In a report from a field trip to Phnom Penh an Information Officer quoted a Cambodian acquaintance: “I asked one hundred people who they are going to vote for in the elections, and not one of them had any idea. They say the parties are all the same!” Many complained, the officer added, that “the political parties spend all their time hurling abuse at each other, while all together, they blame UNTAC for the current problems in implementing the Peace Accords.”⁵⁵ This report was widely distributed and read by the directors of all units in late January 1993. Other reports confirmed that people desired to know more about the country’s new parties but found information

⁵² UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on a Field Trip to Siem Reap Province, 06.03.1993, p. 14-15

⁵³ The entire sentence reads: “The political hot house that is Phnom Penh probably accurately reflects the much lower temperature of provincial views.” Handwritten remark on UNTAC Analysis Reports: Field Trip Report. Phnom Penh, 7-12 January 1993, 18.01.1993.

⁵⁴ UNTAC Electoral Chronology: Established Political Party Offices, 18.03.1993. The reach of the individual parties’ campaigns can also be inferred from the following information: During the campaign period from April 7 to May 18 1993, the CPP held a total of 833 rallies, with a total of 544.788 people attending, FUNCINPEC a total of 298 with 137.676 attendants. In the same time period the small parties averaged 10 rallies with some thousand attendants, and six parties held no rallies at all. UNTAC Electoral Chronology: Consolidated Report of Political Rallies/Meetings held, 18.05.1993

⁵⁵ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Field Trip Report. Phnom Penh, 7-12 January 1993, 18.01.1993, p. 9

about their platforms inadequate.⁵⁶ The limited resources of the small contenders were only partially to blame for this matter.

In an analysis report on the available material outlining the new parties' programs an officer writes:

“In comparison to the glossy, modern look of some of the major Cambodian political bulletins, the Democracy Bulletin of the Democratic Party is printed in a no-fuss black and white typescript. The Bulletin's lackluster presentation style is carried over in content. This is no doubt a deliberate tactic to avoid direct criticism and the possibility of harassment.”⁵⁷

In their attempts to maneuver through Cambodia's (real and figurative) mine-field of political conflicts the new contenders were not inclined to present ideas that would turn them into a target of the dominant forces.⁵⁸ All of them were well-aware of the fact that UNTAC's presence in the country was limited and adjusted their strategies to create the conditions for peaceful coexistence.

“The line of the LDP representative in Sot Nikum (he didn't give anyone else a chance to speak), was summed up as ‘we live with the tiger and therefore must act in such a way as to avoid being eaten’. [He] stressed over and over again that the LDP are not in power in Cambodia, and thus must respect and abide by the wishes of the ‘host party’. [He] even described the SoC as ‘patriotic’ for having allowed opposition parties [...] [In this province] ‘big brother had never killed little brother’ despite the fact that ‘big brother prays constantly for little brother's death.’”⁵⁹

In another report another party member described his efforts to preempt conflicts with the authorities:

“I have told them that we did not want to pick the fruits from the branches, but merely satisfy ourselves from those that had fallen to the ground.”⁶⁰

These elaborate euphemisms, coined to express the political climate of oppression and fear, stand in sharp contrast to the rather ‘bland’ style of the newcomers' programs (a fact often remarked by observers). It shows that even the political actors, who intended

⁵⁶ UNTAC Analysis Reports: FUNCINPEC/ANKI in O'Smach, 03.03.1993, UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on a Field Trip to Siem Reap Province, 06.03.1993; UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on the Political Environment in Siem Reap Province. Discussions with Political Parties, 29.03.1993.

⁵⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Digest and Analysis of the Democratic Party Bulletins, 13.01.1993, p. 2

⁵⁸ Some observers have pointed out that it is also likely that newcomers intended to build up a platform and a followership in order to join forces with one of the big parties later. This would ensure individuals a higher entry position.

⁵⁹ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on a Field Trip to Siem Reap Province, 06.03.1993, p. 13-14

⁶⁰ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on the Political Environment in Siem Reap Province. Discussions with Political Parties, 29.03.1993, p. 6

to establish themselves as opposition players in Cambodia, did not assume that there is a direct link between the new institutions and political change. Rather, they perceived of them as emerging opportunities that they could use to slowly negotiate the extent of influence that the major players would grant them.

What can this brief overview on the nature of political competition in Cambodia during UNTAC tell us about the status of the Paris Peace Agreements as a symbol for the new political order? The theory of interpretative authority draws attention to the place a symbol occupies in the ongoing deliberations of a society's political identity. From the citizens point of view the emerging 'multiparty system' was the most visible marker of change. The transformation of the factions and the creation of parties did therefore have a positive effect on the willingness of Cambodians to deliberate their future in terms of party politics and elections. But UNTAC's analysis reports show that the Transitional Authority faced a number of challenges when it came to link these institutional reforms to the idea of meaningful political change.

It is not the aim of this work to evaluate the populations' perception of UNTAC and the here presented statements are by no means an exhaustive analysis of the symbolic conditions. But they can demonstrate how important it is for an institution that aims to develop interpretative authority (this is by definition any institution that aims for a peaceful political change) to communicate with the population and to convey a convincing image of the future. The high voter turnout may have been useful to claim that the mission was legitimate, but by and in itself this says nothing about the meaning people have given these reforms or the degree to which the new norms and values have in fact taken center stage in the political discourse over the future.

This overview is of particular importance to get a sense for the background against which the work of UNTAC's Information and Education Unit is set. Or, in terms of the theory, it is important to get a sense for an environment marked by uncertain symbolic conditions. As already discussed, this unit was charged with the communication of the Transitional Authority. The following chapter will determine how this unit's particular type of intervention related to the stipulations of the Paris

Peace Agreements. This analysis will form the basis for a closer observation of the results and effects of their interpretative practice.

6.2. Creating Opportunities for Public Acknowledgment

As Cambodia's temporary symbol of the new political order the Paris Peace Agreements provided both local and international actors with opportunities to deliberate the country's future. In order to keep the PPA at the center of Cambodia's newly emerging political order, UNTAC was particularly dependent on the local politicians' voluntary acknowledgement of its superior status. In a highly politicized context as the one created by UNTAC's intervention, everybody's awareness for the symbolic dimension of statements and acts is significantly raised. The previous chapter has discussed the party formation under this perspective: The local actors' willingness to submit to the rules constitutes 'compliance', but on a symbolic level it also confirms the legitimacy of UNTAC's interpretative practice and the validity of the PPA as the symbol for the new order.

With their actions the local actors signaled that they saw good reasons to participate in the peace process. For the same reason it had been important to UNTAC that Prince Sihanouk continued to intervene in discourse in his new function as Head of the Supreme National Council. Every time an actor presented itself as a representative of one of the newly created institutions he or she symbolically confirmed the significance of the new common ground.

These examples demonstrate the intimate link between symbol, interpretative practice and opportunities: The latter are only to a certain extent 'given'. Rather they have to be continuously created by UNTAC through an interpretative practice that relates to the PPA. It is in this perpetual circle of interpretation and acknowledgement that a symbol can structure and guide a political community's ongoing deliberation over the future.

6.3. A Neutral Political Environment: InfoEd's Interpretative Practice

The work of UNTAC's Information and Education Unit was formally legitimized under Article 6 of the Paris Peace Agreements.

In order to ensure a neutral political environment conducive to free and fair general elections, administrative agencies, bodies and offices which could directly influence the outcome of elections will be placed under direct United Nations supervision or control. In that context, special attention will be given to foreign affairs, national defence, finance, public security and information. To reflect the importance of these subjects, UNTAC needs to exercise such control as is necessary to ensure the strict neutrality of the bodies responsible for them.

Annex Section D, entitled Elections, further detailed that

In the exercise of its responsibilities in relation to the electoral process, the specific authority of UNTAC will include the following: [...] Ensuring fair access to the media, including press, television and radio, for all political parties contesting in the election.

In the evaluations of UNTAC's work the interventions of a given unit were regularly discussed with regard to the scope of action that the mandate had provided them with. We have already seen that most of the criticism was directed at CiVPol and the Military Unit for not fully using its mandated authority. InfoEd on the other hand was praised for its creative interpretation of the brief stipulations and the broad range of activity it incited. In both criticism and praise the observers thus acknowledge the relative autonomy given to international actors in deciding over a legitimate course of action on a day to day basis.

The Paris Peace Agreements provided InfoEd with the opportunity to supervise and control the information sector to ensure a neutral political environment. No party should have an unfair advantage over others. This intention is likewise confirmed in the stipulation to ensure fair access to the media. But how can we define the 'neutrality' of a given environment? During the drafting process of the Paris Agreements the ongoing violence between the factions and the SoC's full control over the entire government structure was of greatest concern to everybody at the negotiation table.

To 'neutralize' their impact meant to demobilize the factions and to ensure that the SoC was not in a position to monopolize the existing administrative structures.⁶¹ In

⁶¹ I am grateful to Benny Widnyono for making me aware of this original interpretation of the NPE clause in the Paris Peace Agreements. Widnyono served as the UN governor of Siem Reap province

diplomatic circles the meaning of the ‘neutral political environment’ was hence discussed as a *negative*; its existence was defined by the *absence* of violence and monopolized power.

How does this definition relate to the activity of the Information and Education Unit? InfoEd was divided in three subunits: Production, Control, and Analysis and Assessment. The first unit was concerned with the production of educational materials related to the peace process. It is in the context of this unit that Radio UNTAC was created as an effective tool to provide the population with UN approved information. The Control Unit was directly charged with the implementation of Article 6. The CPP, FUNCINPEC and the Khmer Rouge were the only parties in possession of radio stations powerful enough to broadcast over a wide range. As the latter refused to cooperate with UNTAC in the later stages of the intervention and did not grant access to the zones under their control, the officers vetted in particular the contributions of the two main parties. The smaller contenders used printed materials, including the already mentioned Bulletins or leaflets with information on their program.

“Narrowly defined, the role of the Analysis/Assessment Unit was to evaluate the impact of the materials produced by the Production Unit on the general Cambodian population” (Marston 1997, 278). In practice this meant that officers would provide the Production Unit with reports on the criticism, the questions and the rumors they heard in their conversations with the people. The Production Unit would then adapt its information accordingly. The serious and continuous integration of this feedback accounted for much of the radio’s popularity: Radio UNTAC successfully conveyed the idea of engaging in a true dialogue with the Cambodian people.

The principle of neutrality became central to all of this activity. Marston recalls that InfoEd’s entire media production was “extensively vetted for any sign of political bias in the use of language or the situation described or for anything which was not in accord with the wording of the Paris Agreements” (Marston 1997, 281). In order to ‘create a neutral political environment’ UNTAC was first and foremost dependent on

during the Transitional Authority, and was appointed to the position as the UN Secretary General’s Political Representative to the new government of Cambodia from 1994 until 1997.

the notion of its own neutrality. For a unit that was charged with communication the possibility to intervene effectively in the country's public discourse was thus based on its ability to speak with a neutral voice.

It is, in fact, striking how many former members of this unit define their own role and the role of the mission as one that was concerned with 'language' and 'voice'. Radio UNTAC's voice – the one the mission came to be identified with – had to be “steadfastly neutral in political issues” and trustworthy to inform and reassure people in the context of continued heated propaganda by the different political factions (Zhou 1994). As members of the mission, they represented the “international voice”, and with this very voice they spoke about people's rights and change.⁶² “We had to be the one voice people could trust. That's a big responsibility.”⁶³

The Control Unit was charged with the supervision and control of the Cambodian information sector. Just like the development of UNTAC's own 'voice' in the context of Production the statements of the different parties were evaluated and criticized based on the principle of 'neutrality'. To this end InfoEd had developed the Media Guidelines. Originally intended to take precedence over SoC's media laws, they laid out general rules concerning the right of access and the presentation of a balanced view in democratic media. It stipulated for instance that media should give parties, groups or individuals whose views have been misrepresented the 'right of response', and noted that a democratic media seeks to publish views and counterinterviews at the same time. Even in their “watered-down” version as mere guidelines they became the main reference source UNTAC acted upon when confronting media representatives in cases of perceived breaches against new journalistic standard (Marston 1997, 231).

At the time of the intervention all of the media was clearly linked to a specific party. Criticizing the media was therefore tantamount to criticizing a political party. The implementation of these guidelines was all but straightforward and the officers found themselves relentlessly engaged in discussions over the meaning of InfoEd's guiding principle.

⁶² Interview with John Marston, December 23, 2012; Interview with Anne Guillou, November 20, 2012

⁶³ Interview with Jeffrey Heyman, November 30, 2012

“When I commented to the editor of Nokorbal Cheat on the fact that his newspaper now had anti-Vietnamese rhetoric which we had never seen there before, the editor pointed out that there were also anti-Thai articles; together it constituted a new sort of ‘neutrality’.” (Marston 1997, 256)

The editors’ argument is rather difficult to counter, as indeed, the principle of neutrality can be translated into ‘everybody gets treated the same way’ – if one applies a procedural perspective. In order to maintain a neutral stance in discourse, however, the meaning of the term remains highly ambiguous. The interventions of the Control Unit were hence severely criticized by the main contenders, who, because of their domination of the public sector, found themselves at the receiving end of InfoEd’s criticism. In an analysis report entitled UNTAC Unfair an InfoEd officer detailed the CPP’s accusations that “UNTAC would listen to and publicize all accusations against SOC without waiting to hear the SoC version of events.” The quoted SoC official “alleged that ‘FUNCINPEC never respects the agreement and UNTAC does not warn the party at all’.”⁶⁴ In the same vein Hun Sen “questioned UNTAC’s neutrality: ‘If UNTAC is going to carry out supervision, it should do so on all sides. It cannot control just one side and leave others’.”⁶⁵

With their frequent references to the intentions of the Paris Peace Agreements and the signatories’ commitment to the establishment of a neutral political environment the SoC officials showed that they knew how to use the Agreements language to criticize the Transitional Authority’s work according to their own standards. The other competitors took issue with UNTAC’s take on neutrality for entirely different reasons. While the CPP complained over the biased interventions by UNTAC, the other contenders criticized the Transitional Authority’s apparent *laissez faire* approach.

“The UN had to control all the mass media, TV, and so on because the other political parties did not have any TV or radio stations. They therefore could have control over all of that for the benefit of everyone. What was really revolting for me was their final argument. They said they could not control the CPP TV because on the ground of freedom of expression. Can you imagine? And then we were frustrated because we didn’t have any means of propaganda and finally they created the UN radio; they gave you ten minutes. What can you say within ten minutes?”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ UNTAC in the Media: UNTAC in SoC Media. August 1992-February 1993, 25.02.1993, p. 5

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 11

⁶⁶ Interview Son Soubert, December 4, 2012

With the elections approaching all parties were eager to present the electorate with a clear agenda. This led to another conflict with UNTAC: The members of the former exile government saw the roots of the conflict in Vietnam's occupational policy and put Cambodia's issues with the 'Hanoi government' and its people at the center of their programs. Anti-Vietnamese sentiments were expressed openly and frequently. In view of the violent attacks against the ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia, UNTAC decided to outlaw the use of the term 'vuon' in official statements of the media: Foreign observers consider this a derogatory term for people of Vietnamese citizens, but only few Cambodians agree with this interpretation, which in turn led to a number of confrontations between InfoEd and party representatives.⁶⁷

What does this description of InfoEd's work tell us about the link between the Paris Peace Agreements and UNTAC's activity in the sector of information? Production, Control and Analysis and Assessment justified all of their interventions in relation to Article 6 and UNTAC's mandated authority to establish a neutral political environment prior to the elections. But the interpretative practice as derived from the mandate is itself already based on an interpretation of the Agreements stipulations that does not correspond to the drafters' initial reasoning. Instead of applying a negative understanding of the neutral political environment, defined through the absence of something, they defined the NPE in a *positive* manner: As the *expression* of a specific political culture.

This is noteworthy for a variety of reasons. UNTAC's mission was the first mission of its kind and took place in the early 90s. The individual members of the unit may have given different weight and meaning to the interventions legitimized through the principle of neutrality. But it shows that much of InfoEd's work was based on the acknowledgement that the transformation of a country's political culture involves more than just a change of institutions – and that its members were very much interested in shaping this deeper transformative process.⁶⁸ In his analysis of Cambodia's changing

⁶⁷ Interview John Marston, Interview Jason Roberts, January 6, 2013

⁶⁸ How little is known about the work of this unit is also evident in the following statement by Talentino, who wrote a highly acclaimed article on the role of perceptions in peacebuilding: "International actors

media Marston remarked that “it almost goes without saying that lying behind the attempt to make the state media more neutral is the attempt to define a unified national identity” (Marston 1997, 255). This work philosophy seems to contradict the widespread notion of unengaged and ‘chirurgical’ approaches to peacekeeping in the early 90s as reflected in state building literature. It rather proves the emerging notion that we can infer only very little from the strategic intent behind the design of a mandate for the level of implementation.

The politicians’ criticism of UNTAC further shows that international and local actors disagreed with regard to the legitimacy of InfoEd’s interventions. For the purpose of the chosen analysis here, it is not so much an issue whether or not it was legitimate from a legal point of view. Rather, it is important to note that InfoEd clearly attempted to promote a specific vision of political culture and that the practices aimed at disciplining the public discourse were considered a political act by the local actors. The ensuing confrontations and negotiations confirm the need to understand more about the nature of power that defined their relations.

It is the aim of the analysis to observe how the Paris Peace Agreements shaped ideas of the new political order. The main corpus of the analysis will be provided by a transcript of the UNTAC produced TV program Political Roundtable Discussions. InfoEd started to broadcast recordings of the show on TV and Radio UNTAC in December 1992. From January 1993 on representatives of the 20 political parties were invited on a weekly basis to present their views to the Cambodian public.⁶⁹

tend to focus their efforts on the macro-level and assume that citizens will catch on to both the intent of reforms and their value. That is a foolish assumption in any society, and more so where traditions of consent and inclusion are absent and violence has hardened societal divides. [...] Public education campaigns should therefore be a much larger part of peacebuilding efforts and should seek to both inform and involve the citizenry more directly. This means that international personnel need to pursue non-traditional avenues to help citizens learn about reform, such as by taping radio programs, holding town meetings, making reforms the subject of plays and puppet shows, holding essay contests in schools, and a variety of other things that have probably never been contemplated” (Talentino 2007). With the potential exception of the essay contest all of these suggestions and many more projects had in fact been put into practice by UNTAC’s Information and Education Unit during the 1992/93 intervention.

⁶⁹ This information is based on my interpretation of the dates given in copy of the roundtable script on national reconciliation. The date given for the first roundtable is the 18.12.93. This is obviously a typo. The second one is 13.01.93, then 20.01.93 and 03.02.93. Accordingly, the first recorded roundtable took probably place on December 18th 1992.

The last episode of the Political Roundtable Discussions ran briefly before the elections, which means that the program aired during the five months that were arguably the most tense and conflict-filled ones of the whole mission. This program provides an ideal opportunity to observe the symbolic dimension of negotiations between local and international actors in an intervention society: Scripted by InfoEd, the design of the program relates directly to the identified stipulations of the Paris Peace Agreements and UNTAC's particular interpretative practice. All of the party representatives had been invited to join the program, their participation was hence voluntarily. But in order to present their views they were obliged to respect the Media Guidelines.⁷⁰ The theory of interpretative authority allows us to understand UNTAC's role as a 'neutral moderator' of the program as an effect of its particular interpretative practice. Rather than simply providing the invited parties with an opportunity to present their ideas, the Roundtables constitute an opportunity for the Transitional Authority to enforce a particular vision of the future liberal, multiparty democracy and generate interpretative authority

6.4. UNTAC's Political Roundtable Discussions

6.4.1. Setting the Scene: Procedural Neutrality

In the introduction to a booklet with the complete Khmer transcripts of the first Roundtable series on National Reconciliation Tim Carney, the Head of InfoEd, summarized the importance of the program as follows:

“Now that all 20 political parties prepare to compete in the elections for a Constituent Assembly in May 1993 it is crucial that the Cambodian people get to know all of these parties, their symbols, and their views regarding all the issues that affect this nation.”⁷¹

The decision to produce the Political Roundtables as a TV show and not for the radio had been taken despite the more limited reach of its distribution.⁷² Only few people in Cambodia were in possession of a TV and electricity was expensive. Still, in a country

⁷⁰ Interview Isabelle Abric, November 25, 2012

⁷¹ The booklet was intended for circulation among the Cambodian people.

⁷² Interview Isabelle Abric

with such a high rate of illiteracy a TV show had for instance the advantage of helping the people to memorize the symbol of their favorite party. But aside from such practical considerations UNTAC was certainly well aware of the added visual effects they could achieve with such a program. In order to assess the competitive advantage that UNTAC had in creating this image, the analysis will therefore first turn towards the set-up of the program. In accordance with the theoretical framework all of its rules and procedures will be understood as interpretations of the Paris Agreements. In sum they represent UNTAC's efforts to generate interpretative authority based on its mandated authority. Any actor or institution that strives for interpretative authority is dependent on other's public acknowledgement of its interpretations. This entails the need to create opportunities for others to confirm him or her in this status. The Political Roundtable Discussions will be hence be regarded as such an institutionalized opportunity.

The program opened with a jingle of traditional Cambodian instruments. Those, who watched the program on TV UNTAC would follow the eye of the camera: It first focused on the drawing of a ballot box before guiding the onlookers' view along the handwritten Khmer title of the program. After the first cut the onlooker faced four Cambodian politicians and an UNTAC representative, lined up behind a table, two seated to the left, and two to the right of the moderator, little name cards in front of them that also displayed the parties' symbols and names. A dark blue curtain in the background intensified the impression of looking at a stage.

The considerations behind the choice of moderators to speak on UNTAC's behalf during these programs demonstrate the problematic link between neutrality and power. Radio UNTAC had hired a number of Cambodian moderators for all of its broadcasts, but the nature of the medium allowed them to stay anonymously if necessary. During a TV program such a solution was hardly possible. The job was therefore considered "too dangerous" by many.⁷³ The reluctance to charge Cambodians with tasks that had a representative function was mutual. Apart from fears for their personal safety UNTAC deemed this detrimental to its efforts of maintaining a neutral and trustworthy voice:

⁷³ Interview Anne Guillou, November 20, 2012

“... the Cambodians were afraid of doing this, I think, and also it would not have been free and fair because that was from inside Cambodia, in Phnom Penh. Most of the people sent were from the CPP side so it would not have been perceived as being fair.”⁷⁴

In the early shows, UNTAC was always represented by a foreign Khmer speaking UNTAC official: Either Heder or Guillou. Later on, two Cambodian moderators joined the show to represent UNTAC. But both of them didn't actually reside in Cambodia; instead they “came from outside”.⁷⁵ Not associated with any of the powerful parties UNTAC decided that they could play their part without jeopardizing its neutral appearance. In the very first broadcasts Stephen Heder welcomed the viewers and explained the program's purpose and its basic rules:

“Welcome to all of you. You are about to watch the second program of UNTAC's ‘Political Roundtable Discussion’. Every week you will get to know four political parties that have already provisionally registered. Each political party will present its political program to you and the entire country as you all will have to choose a party that you like and that you will vote for shortly. Today, just like every other time, the four parties have been chosen to come through a drawing of lots. Thanks to all the party representatives that have taken the opportunity to meet here. You all have two minutes to answer each of my questions concerning national unity and reconciliation.”

The choice of language and form of address mark this program as one that is exclusively directed at a Khmer audience. There are no English subtitles and none of the names are romanized. The representatives look directly at the camera and during the half hour program there is almost no direct interaction between the participants. During the following roundtables it would become custom for the UNTAC moderator to introduce the participants one by one and tell the audience which party they represented.

The arrangements clearly reflect UNTAC's attempt to introduce neutrality on a procedural level. In essence such procedures are based on the credo that everybody gets treated the same way: Only registered parties are eligible for participation, and neither the order of appearance, nor the amount of speaking time or the seating arrangement is to suggest any preference of UNTAC, or any type of pre-established powerbase. Though these arrangements might seem banal at a first glance, they did constitute the

⁷⁴ Interview Anne Guillou

⁷⁵ Ibid.

rather radical imposition of a new protocol, in the sense that they negated an existing hierarchy.⁷⁶

In front of their perceived audience the politicians would have to compete by voicing their ideas for the country's future, and it would be up to the Cambodian people to establish a new hierarchy with their vote. In a country that had experienced the fast-paced change from one autocratic rule to another in the course of only 40 years and did thus not include many people who had ever had a real choice with regard to their government, the symbolic power of this image was profound and meant nothing less than "the breaking of a taboo".⁷⁷

In order to get a sense for the excitement that people reportedly felt when watching the rather monotonous two-minute statements, delivered by an overall tense, nervous, or outright annoyed looking group of invitees, it is of particular significance to recall the novelty of transparency in political communication. Under the Khmer Rouge anonymity and secrecy had been instruments of power and destruction as much as they had been means of survival. And although certainly not to the same degree the regimes that preceded and followed them had not exactly encouraged people to present their opinions publicly, or – unthinkable – even contradict and criticize those in power. Even after UNTAC's arrival acts of political violence occurred on a regular basis and it was already clear that the elections would essentially take place in a country still at war. Yet here these mainly unknown individuals, (seemingly) unaffiliated with any of the established parties appeared nationwide on TV, identified with their names and acted in the interest of their own parties and thus by definition against the well established players.

According to Heder's introductory remarks only representatives of those parties that had provisionally registered had been invited and given the right to present their ideas. With this reminder it was clear to the Cambodian viewers that the Khmer Rouge – which, under the name of Party of Democratic Kampuchea, constituted the only 'non

⁷⁶ This observation and the following section owes very much to my reading of John Marston's (1997) analysis of the changing media landscape during UNTAC, entitled: Cambodia 1991-94: hierarchy, neutrality and etiquettes of discourse.

⁷⁷ Interview Anne Guillou

provisionally registered party' after the end of the deadline – would not participate in the program and were thus quite literally out of the picture. The Roundtable Discussions thereby served as a reminder of the conditions of access to the new public space and replicated the symbolic value of the actors' compliant behavior.

According to the results of a drawing of lots, each week four representatives got invited to present their views. Neutrality here was expressed in the equal chance of each party to obtain an invitation. The random assignment did also determine the seating arrangement and the order in which the representatives were allowed to answer the questions. At the beginning of each roundtable the moderator introduced the participants and then proceeded to ask the first question to each of them in the same order. The next round for question number two then started with the representative that had answered the previous question as the second one etc.

What such a seating arrangement and the corresponding speaking order meant for the representatives of the more powerful parties can best be illustrated in reference to an incident during the preparation period of the 1989 Paris Peace conference: "It was widely reported that the Khmer participants could not agree on who would sit next to whom. The term 'squabbling' was used". In recounting the debate Roberts criticized these remarks as expressing among others "the degree of ignorance of Khmer political culture" (Roberts 2000, 22). In Hun Sen's own words, accepting the arrangement would have meant accepting "the legitimacy of an equal distribution of power when we did not accept the legitimacy of the Khmer Rouge [...] to sit with them was to recognize them" (Roberts 2000, 23). Hun Sen interpreted the seating arrangement here in view of the party's quite particular relationship with the Khmer Rouge at the time; but his recollections still show that the Cambodian politicians were all but insensitive towards the symbolic power of formal procedures.

The two-minute-rule for answers achieved a similar effect and turned out to be the one rule participants and observers of the Roundtable Discussion tended to remember most vividly. Oek Serey Sopheak, who represented the LNDP at the time, recalled: "We had to be very careful about the timeframe and... not to go beyond. I

remember rehearsing for a lot of times to stay in the time frame.”⁷⁸ Anne Guillou, who acted as the UNTAC moderator several times, remembered that

“Everything was strictly planned. Nobody could be interrupted. And everything was focused on time, as far as I remember. Time was kind of an obsession. As if the quality was symbolized by time. Nobody was able to speak spontaneously. All the questions were prepared in advance; people came and read from the paper. I also did that, actually, because I was afraid of making a mistake. We had pressure on us too. So I didn't say anything except during my time.”⁷⁹

When watching the videos it becomes quickly obvious that the strict time limit accounts for much of the reported awkwardness of the program. In between the representatives statements the UNTAC moderator would always thank the previous speaker and introduce the next one, giving him the word with a polite: Please.

The majority of speakers was clearly not used to speaking in public and upon hearing their ‘starting signal’ they would look down on their notes and read out their prepared answers, anxious to respect the time limit, which gave their presentations a rushed yet monotonous melody. One Cambodian observer pointedly characterized them as “*langue de bois*”.⁸⁰ Here, as with the other rules, the most powerful effects were achieved because of what they denied to the ‘big players’ and not what they granted to the others. The “...CPP was not happy with the fact that they had exactly the same time as other, very small parties. They thought that, as they were the biggest one, this was not fair.”⁸¹

As with the seating arrangement the symbolic dimension of these procedures derived its importance from the parties’ awareness of an audience: The symbolic negation of an existing hierarchy could only take effect in the realm of ideas; it played on the shared knowledge that all participants and viewers had about the traditional authoritarian interpretation of ‘fairness’ by negating its validity.

The Cambodia’s People’s Party (CPP) considered the demand to present themselves at eyelevel with competitors that, to them, were insignificant an insult and

⁷⁸ Interview Oek Serey Sopheak, November 26, 2012

⁷⁹ Interview Anne Guillou

⁸⁰ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Excerpts of Notes of Recent Conversation with Sak Saraeun, Chairman of the ADDP, 09.04.1993, p.2

⁸¹ Interview Anne Guillou

they refused to participate in the first roundtable session under the title of National Reconciliation.⁸² UNTAC took the dramaturgic decision to leave the chair reserved for the CPP representative in this particular episode empty. The camera zoomed in on the name card and party symbol, while Heder expressed UNTAC's "deep regrets about the absence of one political party that didn't agree to participate in our program, namely the Cambodian Peoples' Party." He went on to explain that "UNTAC had sent the Cambodian Peoples' Party an invitation to participate here today together with the other parties, but it has just received an official message, saying that this party doesn't wish to participate in today's program" (RT1, 39).

After their absence from the first series of roundtables the CPP did appear in the subsequent sessions on Human Rights, and Economy.⁸³ Their initial refusal and reluctant decision to join the other parties later is particularly apt to illustrate the *modus operandi* of UNTAC's interpretative authority. The CPP had its own radio and TV stations and dominated much of the public space. From a strategic point of view they did not need to participate in the Roundtable Discussions to present themselves to the viewers. UNTAC was also not in any position to force them to participate. So what constituted the 'compelling reason' for them to come?⁸⁴

In the here presented framework the PPA represents the temporary symbol of Cambodia's political order. In contrast to its mandated status of being in authority UNTAC's status of representing an authority was highly depended on its interpretations of the Agreements: In an ever changing context all its actions had to be retraceable to this source and considered its valid interpretation in the eyes of the public. If an interpretation did indeed qualify as such, the resulting measures became by definition an extension of this source and the common ground it represented. UNTAC's neutrality was the *sine qua non* for the delicate task of constantly 'translating' the PPA into a more and more detailed agreement without changing its

⁸² Interview Anne Guillou; Interview with Oek Serey Sopheak, Isabelle Abric

⁸³ They might have participated in the session on the National Constitution too. Of this particular session, one video is missing.

⁸⁴ Unlike an agent who is in authority, an agent who is an authority can issue commands that "constitute a compelling reason to comply, but not an obligation" (Zaum 2006, 457).

original character; and only through the constant acknowledgement of their interpretation could they maintain their status as authoritative interpreters.

Applying this perspective to the example at hand the participation of the other 19 parties in the first session of the Roundtable Discussion can be read as the symbolic confirmation of UNTAC's interpretation: By accepting the conditions and by using the opportunity UNTAC had provided them with, they acknowledged its status as an interpretative authority in front of the now decisive Cambodian public. In this setting the CPP's refusal to participate in the public created by the PPA had to appear as an act of disrespect that was not directed against UNTAC but against the new common ground itself.

Apart from the CPP's refusal to join the first session (and the noted tendency of their representatives to use the two minutes to say three times as much as anyone else), there are two more incidents that qualify as attempts to negotiate the procedures determined by UNTAC. The first example concerns the preparations for the program. The former representative of the LDP, who participated in all four roundtable sessions, recalled:

“We thought that, since it was a TV program it would be about the image [...]. I put a lot of names in color but once there, Steve Heder was very astonished and surprised to see that. Other parties did not prepare that so I had an advantage over them. It was, however, not my fault. I was not told not to do that. But later on, Steve Heder and others asked me to stick to black and white. Since I was the only one, the program would look very imbalanced. The LDP would have a lot of advantage. I said, ‘okay’ as I did not want to make anybody else angry against my party. But I pointed out to Steve that it is not fair because the others should think about that. Now you penalize the one who has the idea and it is not against the rule.”

The representative's expressed disappointment is as understandable as justified. Technically both his acknowledgement of the rules and his creative usage of the given opportunity constituted exactly the kind of behavior UNTAC had set out to encourage: The participants were supposed to develop political authority by presenting the viewers with unique ideas. But in order to convey the image of a perfectly neutral political environment, a visually ‘balanced’ program was valued even higher.

The second example concerns an exchange between Heder and Vanthun, the representative of the Republican Coalition Party, during the first roundtable session. It

was Vanthun's turn to answer, but instead of addressing the viewers, his first words were directed at Heder:

“Before answering to the second question, I would like to ask you to help me think something through; namely if I came here for any good reason, or if we are only supposed to come here to reply to these questions acting as clowns; to suggest solutions when you already know what the results of the game are going to be. But however, we have greatest interest [in the issues] and honestly want to make a contribution in the search for a solution.”

The question is purely rhetorical; Vanthun didn't pause for a second and kept looking at his notes at all times while presenting his answer. After he finished his complete statement an equally motionless Heder replied to Vanthun:

“Thank you Mr. Ouy Vanthun, representative for the Republican Coalition Party, for your answer. And with regard to your question; in the name of UNTAC I would like to clarify that everything UNTAC does has only one goal, namely to implement the Paris Peace Agreements without any bias, in order to ensure that those parties who respect these agreements have equal opportunities to participate in free and fair elections.”

The polished phrasing of this statement and the fact that Heder – like Vanthun – continued to consult his notes while speaking, indicate that the answer to the statement was as prepared and rehearsed as the question itself. Heder didn't remember this particular scene 20 years later, but wasn't surprised when hearing what he had answered:

“I paraded the line. [...] As I say, procedural impartiality, procedural neutrality is simple. You don't have to be neutral in order to act neutral. Arguably, nobody is neutral. It's just a matter of playing a role. [...] Once we had agreed amongst our unit I don't think we even had to discuss it.”⁸⁵

The exchange demonstrates that the characterization of interveners and local actors as imposers and imposed upon often fails to adequately capture the dynamic of their relationship. In the scene Vanthun questions both UNTAC's intentions and the potential effects of such a program. He insinuates that UNTAC isn't as neutral as it pretends to be and that the small parties cannot expect to be rewarded for the originality of their ideas. In order to reaffirm his neutral status Heder replied that he speaks in the

⁸⁵ Interview Stephen Heder, November 25, 2012

name of UNTAC and acts only on behalf of the Agreements. After voicing his doubts Vanthun then continues to answer the question without pressing any further.

The theory of interpretative authority stipulates that the power bias that puts the international actors in a considerably stronger position than their local counter parts results from their status as the authoritative interpreter of the Paris Peace Agreements as the symbol of the new political order. Unlike the local actors the Transitional Authority is therefore in a position to determine rules of legitimate and appropriate political behavior. In contrast to the other examples though that very much demonstrated how the parties' acknowledgement of these procedures strengthened UNTAC's interpretative authority, Vanthun's intervention exposed the mutual dependency of all players. Or, to briefly borrow from Goffman here, he showed that they have to act as a team to support each other's performance.

He called the Roundtables out for what they are: An elaborate act. At the same time though he acknowledged that he has to accept the premise of the play if he wants to preserve the opportunity that allowed him to speak up in the first place. He thereby signaled that there are compelling reasons for him to comply. And it is not despite but because of UNTAC's directing role that Heder is also confined to 'parade a line', to stick to the script: Only by constantly reaffirming its neutral status can UNTAC develop interpretative authority. As a symbol of the new political order the Paris Peace Agreements are then not simply a contract to abide by, but they are the most important point of reference to symbolically confirm the continued existence of a common ground.

Conclusions

The UNTAC produced TV program was presented as an opportunity for the political parties to present themselves to the Cambodian public. By drawing on the theory of interpretative authority its design was discussed as a representation of UNTAC's broader attempt to enforce and uphold a particular vision of Cambodia's new political order. In order to sharpen this vision and provide the Cambodian people with a distinct image, the focus lay on the 'multiparty' element of the liberal democracy and, related,

the idea of ‘having a choice’. This contrasted most clearly with the political history of the country, marked by autocratic leadership and one-party-systems. The positive interpretation of the ‘neutral political environment’ clause allowed InfoEd to further promote a certain political culture and thus add substance to the one dimensional image. The rules and procedures UNTAC defined for the participants are an expression of this interpretative practice. Their analysis demonstrated how a Transitional Authority can use its competitive advantage as the authoritative interpreter of the PPA: It regulated the access to the public of the intervention society and thus the very realm in which the struggles over the meaning of the new institutions take place. An authoritative interpreter can only strengthen its symbol through the acknowledgement of others. The public of an intervention society constitutes an institutionalized opportunity for others to express this acknowledgement.

The design of the program assured that the participants appeared only in their role as representatives of their parties, and hence as representatives for an institutional design determined by the Agreements. It further diminished the participants’ possibilities to use pre-established symbolic resources in their own favor – rather UNTAC played on this knowledge in such a way that it strengthened its own image as authoritative interpreter of the new political order: Procedural neutrality achieved its main effect here by appealing to the shared knowledge the people had with regard to the protocol usually reserved for the more powerful. To someone who doesn’t partake in their understanding of traditional notions of hierarchy and political power the groundbreaking character of the stiff set-up is simply not visible. The choreography of the roundtables was created for the eyes of the Cambodian people, but the real drama could only manifest itself in the act of watching.

As far as the procedural aspects of UNTAC’s interpretative practice is concerned the analysis highlighted the mutual dependency of all player in granting and confirming each other a place in an ongoing negotiation over the meaning of the new political order. Furthermore, it demonstrated that in order to generate political authority as interpretative authority the engagement of the wider population is of vital importance as both means and ends of these struggles relate to the realm of ideas and the shared knowledge of the people.

6.4.2. Writing the Script: Discursive Neutrality

With its interpretative practice UNTAC successfully regulated the access to the public of the intervention society. The analysis of the Political Roundtable Discussions as a representation of this public demonstrated how the implementation of these rules reinforced its status as interpretative authority and the symbolic strengths of the Paris Peace Agreements. Aimed at a Cambodian audience it was the expressed intention of the program to present the Cambodian people with the 20 newly formed parties and their programs. To this end, all of the invited representatives would be given the chance to answer to a set of three questions.

It almost goes without saying that the degree of control the Transitional Authority could exercise over the character of these statements was comparably limited. The previous discussion of UNTAC's positive interpretation of the Neutral Political Environment and its related interpretative practice showed that UNTAC did nonetheless intend to regulate the political discourse. For the creation of the program, InfoEd's Production Unit did therefore have to solve the same problem that the Control officers were regularly faced with: How to guard its own neutral status, while implementing measures that were considered highly political by their local counterparts.

The roundtables were designed to accommodate for invitees and the party representatives had two minutes to answer each of the questions. The title of the program is thus extremely misleading. UNTAC's Political Roundtable Discussions did not present the Cambodian public with any kind of actual debate between the representatives of the parties. The politicians engaged only with their invisible viewership behind the cameras. The stiff format did not allow the UNTAC moderators to interrupt the speakers, or comment on their performance. To guard a perfectly neutral appearance they had to restrain themselves to briefly introduce the topic and explain its relevance for the peace process, ask the questions, and guide the order of speakers.

The questions are arguably the most important measure that UNTAC could use to discipline the representatives' public presentation. Just like the procedural measures, everything the moderators said had to clearly relate to the Paris Peace Agreements as

their main source of legitimacy. In a first draft of questions sent to Carney, the director of InfoEd, Heder underlined his effort to “take language directly from the Paris Agreements” in phrasing the introduction to these questions: “In this sense, at least, the questions should be non-controversial.”⁸⁶ In the same document he presents a list of six potential topics: Human Rights, Economic Policies, Foreign Policies, National Unity and National Reconciliation, the Vietnamese Issue, and Law and Order. Under each headline he outlined the relevance of the topic and three questions that could be posed to the candidates. The scarce handwritten notes scribbled on the side of the document don’t offer much insight as regards Carney’s decision making process. An analysis report on the other hand, that had circulated only two month earlier, may explain why Foreign Policy, Law and Order and the Vietnamese Issue did not make the final selection.

Entitled Report on Public Perceptions of UNTAC in the City of Phnom Penh it paints, according to the officer’s own account, a rather “disturbing” picture. Based on conversations with Cambodians from all social spheres she detailed why the general population had grown frustrated with UNTAC’s work. One issue in particular stands out, namely the increasing insecurity in the streets of the capital. This was blamed on UNTAC for a number of reasons, all of which are in one way or another linked to its interpretation of the mandate. Under its human rights mandate UNTAC had released a number of prisoners and initiated training programs for the police.

Faced with violent crimes on an ever more frequent basis, the people were not exactly open for the subtle differences between political prisoners and criminals: “Many [of the released] are believed to be thieves who are now robbing people again.” Equally difficult to understand was how law enforcement could muster up the required authority without being “accused of human rights abuse” when “UNTAC will not let thieves be beaten or shot [...]; thus thieves are not afraid.”⁸⁷ Further adding to the problematic character of the Law and Order Issue was its link “to the Vietnamese issue”. For once, because of the “traditional animosity and the notion that Vietnamese

⁸⁶ UNTAC Roundtable: Roundtable Draft Questions, 30.11.1992

⁸⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on public perceptions of UNTAC in the city of Phnom Penh, 18.09.1992, p. 3

are immoral”, but also because people accepted “the KPNLF and PDK propaganda to the effect that the Vietnamese should go home, but UNTAC is protecting them.”⁸⁸ Against this background it becomes evident why InfoEd’s directors settled on less thornier issues and abstained from asking the representatives what they would do in order to “resolve the problem of illegal immigration of Vietnamese and other foreign nationals into Cambodia” or stop “recent crime in the towns and the countryside before it happens” as suggested in the first draft of roundtable topics.⁸⁹

In order to discipline the discourse and strengthen its interpretative authority UNTAC was highly dependent on its neutral appearance. The reasoning behind the drafting and the selection of the questions demonstrates that this principle was given highest priority. In the end the choice fell on the topics and questions listed in Table 1.⁹⁰ All of them clearly relate to the stipulations and goals that were laid out in the four documents comprised in the Paris Peace Agreements. It is important to note that despite the liberal agenda of the mission, neither the word liberal, nor the word democracy or democratic appears in any of the questions. The signatories of the Agreements had committed themselves to a liberal political order, but the agreements did not define the future economy of Cambodia other than one that should “promote Cambodian entrepreneurship and make use of the private sector, among other sectors, to help advance self-sustaining economic growth.”⁹¹

Furthermore, it becomes evident that all questions feature the same basic elements and structure: The invitees are not addressed personally but as representatives of their parties, the questions are (with one exception) not concerned with past or current events, but with the future or – more specifically – the time after the elections, and the value of the presented solutions is explicitly framed as being dependent on the people’s vote through the repetitive use of the formula ‘if your party wins the election’. To a certain degree one could therefore consider them as closed questions in disguise:

⁸⁸ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on public perceptions of UNTAC in the city of Phnom Penh, 18.09.1992, p. 3-4

⁸⁹ UNTAC Roundtable: Roundtable Draft Questions, 30.11.1992, p.3-4

⁹⁰ My translation

⁹¹ Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia

They present themselves as open, but are intentionally designed as a strong incentive for an affirmative answer. Effectively, UNTAC could thereby achieve to center and discipline the debate as the act of answering itself would almost inevitably constitute a confirmation of the questions' most basic elements: That the results of the elections would be accepted, that the new government would respect human rights and an opposition, that refugees and migrants would be received with open arms, and that a future Cambodia would be independent, sovereign, neutral and founded on the respect of the new constitution.

Table 1: Topics and Questions of the Roundtable Discussions

I) National Reconciliation

1. What kind of policies and measures would you choose to achieve national reconciliation between Cambodians who have different political tendencies?
2. If you are the election winner, can your party guarantee that the Cambodian territory will not break apart into different political regions?
3. How can your party guarantee the harmonic return of the Cambodian refugees and migrants into the national society, so that they can contribute to the reconstruction of the country?

II) Human Rights

1. A number of organizations for the protection of Human Rights have taken up work since UNTAC's arrival in Cambodia. If your party wins the upcoming elections, what kind of measures would your party take in order to guarantee the respect, implementation and protection of the fundamental rights and liberties of the Cambodian people?
2. What kind of projects does your party have and what kind of effective measures will you take in order to guarantee that the policies and practices of the past won't be allowed to return to Cambodia?
3. In the past there have been a number of incidents of political violence in Cambodia. What kind of opinion does your party have with regard to this problem?

III) Economy

1. What kind of practical policies and measures would your party adopt to ensure that reconstruction efforts will reach all levels of Cambodian society, including the more disadvantaged?
2. If your party wins in the upcoming elections, what would your party do in order to advance the possibilities for a self-sustaining economy in Cambodia?
3. What does your party plan to do in order to coordinate Cambodia's bilateral, regional and international economic relations?

IV) National Constitution

1. If your party wins in the upcoming elections, what kind of measures will you take and what kind of policies will you adopt in order to ensure that the National Constitution as adopted by the Constituent Assembly will turn Cambodia into a truly sovereign, independent and neutral state?
2. What type of constitution will your party choose as a model in order to ensure that Cambodia will be truly sovereign, independent and neutral, a European, an Asian or a domestic system?
3. If your party wins the elections, can your government establish an independent court that will protect the different rights as inscribed in the National Constitution?

All of UNTAC's statements or questions were closely tied to the provisions of the Paris Agreements. By presenting the questions as an extension of the PPA they could be justified as representing the common ground agreed upon by all parties. In both confirming and reminding them of their commitment the question were designed to prompt the representatives' acknowledgement of its validity and contained the implicit demand not to violate the therein-expressed intentions. The interpretative practice reflected in these measures is thus aimed at reproducing the consensus inherent in the mandate and at upholding the collective legitimization derived from it.

Independently from the content of the representatives' answers the program was therefore a public display of UNTAC's interpretative authority. While maintaining the neutral appearance of an uninvolved arbiter, they created a context in which it was nearly impossible for the parties to refuse them their acknowledgement of the validity

regarding the future proceedings as laid out by UNTAC. The mere exchange of questions and answers was furthermore a simple yet effective way of keeping the Paris Peace Agreement symbolically at the center of the Cambodian politicians' public discourse about the new political order and to reassure people of the continued existence of a common ground.

The representatives were provided with the questions a week ahead of the recordings and were obliged to respect the Media Guidelines. On a more technical level the delay between record and broadcast of the program has to be considered another effective measure on UNTAC's part to regulate the content of the presentations. Similar procedures had been in place for programs like Equal Time, Equal Access, where party representatives read prepared statements to be broadcasted via Radio UNTAC: If the recorded messages did not conform with the guidelines they had to come back and read a revised statement (Zhou 1994). In the case of the Roundtables this was not an option, but the party officials were still informed about perceived breaches and instructed to respect the rules during subsequent recordings. The fact that UNTAC provided all the roundtable participants with the questions in advance allowed them to prepare adequately and made it more likely that no one broke the established rules during the actual recording of the program: An event that, incidentally, no one on UNTAC's side would have actually been prepared to respond to.⁹²

The program is presented as an opportunity for the 20 newly formed parties to present themselves to the Cambodian people: They are addressed as future voters that will have to make an informed choice. The possibility of a peaceful future is explicitly linked to the institutional democratic reforms. With the theoretical perspective chosen here, it is possible to identify how the interpretative practice of the Transitional Authority creates a public of the intervention society centered on the Paris Peace Agreements – and thus an opportunity for UNTAC to generate authority: To enable political discourse in an intervention society means to intervene in discourse.

With regard to the procedural measures that determined access to the decisive public, the Transitional Authority was in a position to fully use its competitive

⁹² Interview Anne Guillou; Interview with Isabelle Abric

advantage. The effect, however, was rather limited: As the created image played on the idea of breaking pre-established hierarchies by submitting everybody to the neutral procedures, it was mainly the appearance of the CPP that underlined the novelty of the multiparty system. The other former conflict factions had always presented the Paris Peace Agreements as ‘their’ agreements (and thus downplayed their true sentiments about the nature of the Agreements)⁹³ – submitting to the new rules and presenting themselves as equal to the newcomers did not come with the aura of defeat for them.⁹⁴

Letting the representatives speak as advocates of the new political order was considered to have a potentially greater effect, but bore likewise more risk from the Transitional Authority’s point of view: Local actors may use this opportunity to present alternative ideas or question the neutrality of UNTAC. All of the described measures were aimed at minimizing this risk, disciplining the discourse and thereby exercise control over the ideas the Cambodian people were presented with. But in order to observe how the local actors reacted to the Transitional Authority’s implicit entitlement to define their future political order it is necessary to first clarify the precise link between UNTAC’s interpretative practice, the resulting measures and their symbolic dimension. In other words: We need a way to identify what precisely the local actors may negotiate here.

In the case of the procedural measures the link was clear: UNTAC derived its interpretative practice from (their interpretation of) the neutrality principle in the PPA and the local actors attempted to reject or negotiate the resulting procedures of access. On a symbolic level the Transitional Authority and the local actors negotiated the meaning of a multiparty democracy with its distinct norms of transparency and fairness as imagined by UNTAC.

To clarify this matter it is useful to recall that UNTAC used two types of measures to discipline the debate and ensure the ‘neutrality’ of the presentation: It

⁹³ “We believed that [the UN] would implement all the stipulations within the PPA but as you know, I did not happen so. They did not do that. It is very difficult for us to assert our point of view because the whole framework was within the interest of the five perms.” Interview Son Soubert

⁹⁴ In reports from other, similarly organized events and public discussions the officers do report though that the members of the bigger factions regularly broke the established rules and that their contributions were broadcasted despite threats to cut them off after their allocated time slot. This happened at media outlets other than Radio or TV UNTAC.

obligated the participants to comply with the Media Guidelines and it centered the debate on the Paris Agreements. John Marston, who was charged with the implementation of the guidelines and hence with the task to ensure the ‘neutrality’ of the state media, had defined these particular measures as a ‘new etiquette of discourse’ in his own analysis of the evolving Cambodian media. According to Marston an etiquette represents a multitude of categories of understanding; as society changes these categories change too. One important function of etiquette is its potential to contribute to the temporary creation of a common ground as it “neutralizes or euphemizes” power relations in a given situation, to allow for the productive interaction of actors with conflicting tendencies or interests (Marston 1997, 34). In his analysis he traced the newly developing etiquette in reference to the changing use of personal pronouns and forms of addresses after the signing of the PPA.

The correct use of pronouns in Khmer is of greatest importance because they are chosen in consideration of the complex relationship between the speakers. Changes in standard forms of address are therefore indicative of changes in the understanding of hierarchy. Marston analyzed political cartoons in order to assess these changing perceptions; in particular of the relationships between people traditionally regarded as powerful and the general population. As an anthropologist he is interested in how the new socio-political context affects the configuration of personal relationships and people’s understanding of their place in society.

The analytical framework Marston developed with its sensitivity for context, perceptions, meaning and the effects of peoples’ interactions on their self-constitution is thus characteristic for an anthropological approach – but it also captures the analytical perspective that recent state building literature on internal legitimacy calls for. Of particular interest in this regard is the acknowledgement that social reality is by definition ‘hybrid’ in nature and has to be analyzed as the result of integrative effects:

“[I]f we want to talk about the discourse of neutrality in Cambodia in this period, we must talk about the role of the U.N. in producing and promoting a discourse of neutrality, and it is ultimately no less a Cambodian discourse because non-Cambodians had a role in the negotiation of it as a social reality.” (Marston 1997, 275)

To speak of attempts to neutralize or euphemize the discourse, instead of an attempt to democratize discourse holds two advantages: a political and an analytical one.

Politically it evidently allows the ‘euphemization’ of the interveners’ role. The efforts to reform the media seem to bypass ideological intent: It is not the aim to establish a *liberal* order, but rather a *peaceful* political culture. The implicit equation of liberalism with peace does then no longer need to be addressed. What may appear problematical on a political level, holds a distinct analytical advantage though that will also benefit the observation we intend to make here: Instead of deciding a priori that the interpretative practice is ‘liberal’ in nature, we can instead focus on the implicit attempts of interveners to euphemize or neutralize state-society relations. This will likewise allow us to observe the nuances of local actors reactions to the interpretative claims of the Transitional Authority and to move beyond the liberal/non-liberal bias usually applied to analyze the vision local political actors have for their country’s future.

The fact that the local political actors participating in the Roundtables had to abide by the Media Guidelines is of little use for the analysis. The constant negotiation between the Control Unit and the media representatives had already produced a certain set of clearly defined ‘no-goes’. As with the rules for the procedures the local actors simply had to accept them in order to gain access to the new public. For this reason the analysis will center on UNTAC’s questions as the main element used to promote a new ‘etiquette’ and discipline the politicians own presentations.

Based on the review of Cambodia’s history in *Chapter 5* it is possible to argue that the transformation of three types of relations generated most of the insecurity: 1) The relationship between the factions was now defined as a relationship between political parties; 2) The government was said to be dependent on the people, and no longer the other way around; 3) Instead of negotiating their place in the world through strategic alliances with other foreign governments, Cambodia was supposed to become part of the ‘international community’.

These transformations are taken for granted and are implicit in all of the questions UNTAC asked the invited party representatives. For UNTAC’s attempt to promote a new political order and develop interpretative authority the politicians’ public acknowledgement of the value and validity of these ideas played an important role. The following analysis intends to observe how the local political actors negotiated

this ‘new etiquette’ with their interpretative practice to generate interpretative authority for themselves. It is not designed as an exhaustive discussion of the contenders programs and visions for Cambodia. Rather, the different cases have been chosen to analyse and illustrate a given tendency to behave towards the discursive etiquette that UNTAC derived from the Paris Peace Agreements. All cases are organized according to the same basic structure and implicitly answer the following questions:

1. What does UNTAC neutralize or euphemize with its questions?
2. What are the tensions the candidates decide to highlight or address?
3. What kind of knowledge do the representatives mobilize in order to confirm, reject, or re-interpret a given etiquette?

6.4.3. Performing on Stage: Authority Building and the Negotiation of a New Etiquette

Confirmation: Case 1

With each question UNTAC intended to invoke the imaginary of the time immediately after the elections by prompting the representatives to describe the actions envisioned ‘should your party win the elections’⁹⁵. The therein expressed confidence of achieving the important goal of creating a political order, in which anybody could become a respected government official entitled to take actual decisions, stood in sharp contrast to the reality of a competition that was marked by intimidation and violence.

Many of the representatives present at the roundtable therefore used the occasion to appeal to Cambodia’s political elite – old and new – urging them to respect the Paris Peace Agreements. Still firmly rooted in the present with all its tensions they emphasized that this agreement that was so difficult to achieve had “paved the way”, and constituted “an opportunity” not to be missed, a “formula” to be followed, the

⁹⁵ If not indicated otherwise, all quotes are taken from my translation of the Khmer transcripts. Short terms, questions, or other elements that are repeatedly used are quoted without reference to the session or page number in order to enhance readability of the analysis. In all other cases the quotes indicate the number of the Roundtable (RT1 National Reconciliation, RT2 Human Rights, RT3 Economy, RT4 National Constitution) and the corresponding page number of the translation.

“center, the foundation” of the peace process, or, in the words of another representative: “The most important measure to achieve national reconciliation is first and foremost that the Paris Peace Agreement must be 100% successfully implemented, because this issue affects all the other problems” (RT1, 29). In asserting to govern as laid out by the PPA it is in particular the representatives of the small parties that continually confirm and acknowledge an existing “sphere of consensus” (Marston 1997, 36) – as intended by UNTAC.

The former conflict parties on the contrary, tended to pair any explicit reference to the agreements with a reproach to others for not respecting its provisions (while they do)⁹⁶. As the election’s favorite contenders, these parties could afford to highlight existing tension to garner local and international support.

“[FUNCINPEC] members portrayed themselves as victims of a permanent SoC threat, which to an extent has credibility. They maintain that they are so dedicated to the cause, they are willing to risk their lives for it. [...] Therefore, if the CPP wins the elections, it will be a result of their successful intimidation of political party member. If FUNCINPEC wins, it will be a legitimate expression of popular choice [...]”⁹⁷

In terms of self-preservation the need to uphold the peace process towards the establishment of pluralism was obviously much greater on the side of the small parties than it was for the CPP or FUNCINPEC.

“We cared a lot about not to oppose or to criticize the ruling party directly. We said things that should or should not be done for the sake of the people of Cambodia but we never pointed fingers to anyone or to any institution.”⁹⁸

Uncertainty paired with the established “logic of national reconciliation”⁹⁹ thoroughly influenced the interpretation of the Paris Peace Agreement and its resulting status as the symbol of Cambodia’s new order by those contenders. Depending on the topic of the roundtable the agreement was presented as the guarantee to eliminate corruption, end poverty and social inequality, avoid another “catastrophe” or, more directly, another genocide and reintegrate Cambodia into the international community. Usually

⁹⁶ During the roundtable sessions the FUNCINPEC and the BLDP denounced the politically motivated killings of their own party members, while the CPP representatives deplored the continued accusation against their own party by their opponents and UNTAC, and pointed to the grave actions of the Khmer Rouge instead.

⁹⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on a Field Trip to Siem Reap Province, 06.03.1993, p. 13

⁹⁸ Interview Oek Serey Sopheak

⁹⁹ Ibid.

juxtaposed with Cambodia's past, its wars and killings, the PPA's greatest promise appeared to be not so much the new democratic order, but the non-recurrence of the past.

Any symbol that succeeded in becoming the focal point of a society's re-integrative discourse is marked by its great ambivalence. In order to build their political authority vis-à-vis their audience all the party-representatives attempted to offer valid interpretations of the opportunities enshrined in the agreement. Ultimately they strived to represent the realization of this potential to motivate and convince the voters. Unlike the established parties that could refer to past achievements and shared experiences in order to create a sense of identification with the people, the small parties' authority was highly depended on a convincing image of Cambodia's democratic future.

What united Cambodians was their "fear that they will again be confronted with mountains of bones, rivers of blood and an ocean of suffering" (RT2, 52; compare also RT2, 76). In the process of this interpretative practice all these representatives therefore came to identify democracy with peace. In their visions different political tendencies were declared meaningless and subordinated to the common goal of reuniting and reconstructing Cambodia; in many cases to the point of presenting the election results as somewhat secondary – after all they would all come together in a "nationally reconciled government" and continue to work together in the spirit of the "higher national interest".

"I would like to make an appeal to all the people, in particular to those who are in the parties, please come together, reach for each other's hands and cooperate in order to steer the Cambodian ship towards becoming a civilized country. I am certain that if we don't reconcile this ship of ours will sink. This is why I want to tell everybody in the different parties, that I do believe that the ship must be rowed, pushed and poled forward and for this reason my party needs all the people to reconcile in order to rebuild Cambodia." (RT1, 57).

The candidates' awareness for the powerful potential of this theme is also evident in some of the newly founded parties' names, among them the Khmer Neutral Party or the Liberal Reconciliation Party, and party symbols that display shaking hands (Republican Coalition Party and the FDRP) or the peace dove (Cambodge Renaissance and the Republican Coalition Party). Even the Cambodia's People's Party attempted to profit from this narrative and first unveiled a symbol that bore strong resemblance to

the UN's 'trademarks': a dove framed by a wreath of branches. UNTAC was not pleased by this mimicry and the CPP later exchanged the dove with an angel distributing flowers.¹⁰⁰

Regardless of whether this particular interpretative practice was conducted out of opportunism or true convictions, it contributed to solidify the Paris Peace Agreements and on the same token codify democracy as something to which there was no alternative.

Confirmation: Case 2

While many people would have liked to vote for a 'UNTAC Party'¹⁰¹, the members of the mission were constantly concerned to appear without interests and agenda. There was a great awareness of words with considerable "political weight"¹⁰², heavy enough to cause an imbalance and affect the neutrality of a given statement. One well-documented example for the conscious change in vocabulary these considerations entailed is the search for a neutral term to address 'the people' as the available words "were all politically marked".

"The word pracheachon was associated with the socialist period and the word pracheapolrot was associated with the Lon Nol period. In order to avoid using one or the other, the decision was made to combine them into a single compound word pracheachonpracheapolrot." (Marston 1997: 282)

What makes for the weight of words that are forms of address is that they do "not only affect but shape relations." (Marston, 1997: 117). The use of a neutral form of address, no matter how awkward the pronunciation, could therefore serve two important ends: For once it helped to further refine the tone of UNTAC's 'trustworthy voice' and secondly, it signaled the people that they belonged to no one. One of the central

¹⁰⁰ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Use of the Dove Symbol by the CPP, 07.08.1992. The authors of the report "strongly recommend that UNTAC act immediately to forbid the CPP and all other parties from using the dove on any of its emblems, flags and other symbols". It remains unclear though, why the CPP finally retracted the proposed symbol and why the party Cambodge Renaissance was allowed to keep the dove – in particular considering that this party's symbol also figured the outlines of Cambodia's map which is further reminiscent of the UN's imagery.

¹⁰¹ Interview Fabienne Luco, November 22, 2012; Interview Oek Serey Sopheak. Benny Widyono commented that most of the ballots declared invalid during the election, were in fact ballots where the people had made their cross next to the UNTAC emblem. Personal conversation with the author. April 2013, San Diego, CA.

¹⁰² Interview Anne Guillou

messages that the Transitional Authority had aimed at them was that they had the freedom of choice. This choice would enable them to sanction the parties that tried to intimidate or threaten them and promote those that would act in the country's best interest: "Our weapons are our votes. [...] If any political party uses violence against people, it shows that they don't have any good plan for the future. [...] We can vote for any party. It is up to us."¹⁰³ Choosing a new form of address was a way to symbolically adjust their status: As *pracheachonpracheapolrot* the people had no obligations, no historic debts that tied them to one of the established parties. Many of the short introduction-speeches performed by the UNTAC moderator at the beginning of each roundtable were a variation of this message.

"Yasushi Akashi said that: A fair, strong and open electoral process will give the Cambodian people (*pracheachonpracheapolrot kampuchea*) the opportunity to identify with and vote for those political party candidates, who respect Human Rights. One way in which the Cambodian people can prevent political violence in the future is to vote against those who are committing acts of political violence today. UNTAC hopes that the program Political Roundtable Discussions will help the Cambodian people to judge the Human Rights policies of each party and decide which party to support by casting their secret ballot in the upcoming elections." (RT2, 62, 72, 82)

Just like UNTAC used a new form of address to euphemize the political freedom of the people, the new parties carefully chose their words when it came to speak to their fellow Cambodians. Although they would evidently not use UNTAC's artificial compound word (with one notable exception, tellingly by the Khmer Neutral Party), most of them were eager to confirm that times for the people had changed.

Speaking to a divided country the choice of all candidates naturally fell on inclusive terms that emphasized a sense of belonging, but the character of this relationship as expressed in the different terms revealed some clues regarding the nature of the society they imagined to take decisions for "should their party be elected". The royalist parties tried to exploit their ties with *Samdech Oev*, the dear Father Prince,¹⁰⁴ and addressed the roundtable audience emphatically as "one great family", or "the rulers of Cambodia", while others used the more nationally exclusive *khmae*

¹⁰³ Radio UNTAC: Dialogue No. 28. The Power of the Vote.

¹⁰⁴ Kate Frieson (1996) analyzes the FUNCINPEC's electoral strategy in her article: The Politics of Getting the Vote in Cambodia.

yoeng (we Khmer), or – this usually employed by the new parties – chose to emphasize the peoples’ new political function and status by addressing them as “you, the voters”.

The choice of words was embedded in a larger vision of Cambodia’s future as a truly fresh start, or the continuation of a history they perceived of as unfinished. Some of the competitors were indeed completely new to the political scene; like the aforementioned ‘doughnut king’, a former refugee who had made (and then lost) a true fortune with the sale of these sugary baked goods and provided a successful business model for thousands of migrants arriving in the United States.¹⁰⁵ In line with his personal narrative he had created the Free Development Republican Party, propagating the possibility of a Cambodian version of the American dream for his fellow people.

Many more, however, had re-emerged from the past with the intention of a comeback. The person who was most likely to succeed in this endeavor was In Tam. Born in 1917 he was already 75 years old at the time of the elections and his impressive CV included several high posts in Sihanouk’s Sangkum government and the Khmer Republic under Lon Nol, where he briefly served as prime minister.¹⁰⁶ Immensely popular with the people both Nol and “Matak had always viewed [him] as a potential rival” (Chandler 1999, 213). In Tam’s career provided the background narrative necessary to reinforce “the weak link between the old and widely respected Democrat Party and its new incarnation.”¹⁰⁷ Without a more recent history or an established follower base the party was very much identical with his persona:

“Because His Excellency In Tam, the leader of our Democratic Party, is on a mission abroad, and because I have received the permission of His Excellency by phone from the United States, I have the great pleasure to participate in the Roundtable Discussion UNTAC has organized, by representing his Excellency In Tam” (RT1, 18)

After this one-time appearance of the party’s secretary, In Tam spoke personally on his parties behalf. Dressed in a white military uniform that was supposedly meant to revive memories of the old days, His Excellency looked slightly out of date between the mostly young Cambodian men in Western suits. Much of what he said confirmed the

¹⁰⁵ McPherson, Poppy. 2013. “The Story of the Man They Called the Doughnut King.” Phnom Penh Post, October 11. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/7days/story-man-they-called-doughnut-king>. Accessed on 30th January 2015

¹⁰⁶ UNTAC New Parties DP: CV of In Tam, 30.09.1992

¹⁰⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Digest and Analysis of the Democratic Party Bulletins, 13.01.1993, p.2

importance of the Paris Agreements and democratic governance, though he spoke without passion and rarely addressed the viewers directly. This demeanor only changed when the questions provided him with an opportunity to relate the new system to the survival of Cambodia:

“In this regard we would like to make an appeal to all the Cambodians, all the parties, to please understand that we are currently repeating history; we are fighting with each other and are destroying our country, wiping out the West, wiping out the East [...]; in another 30 years will have disappeared from the face of the earth, so please.... Please, I would like to make an appeal to all the people to unite to create one national reconciliation government; don't postpone the elections, missing them is not an option, when we miss them we open the door for the millions of foreigners to come, and our country will collapse.” (RT2, 70)

His messages are matched by a form of address that draws not only a line between foreigners and Cambodians, but more specifically and nationally exclusive, distinguishes between those that are only Cambodian and truly Khmer with only the latter ones being his ‘brothers and sisters’. The notion of Khmerness and its role in reframing national identity will be further discussed in the next subchapter. Here, it is important to note that the act of voting is interpreted as an act of patriotism that renders political affiliations meaningless. The people are indebted to their country, not to a particular leader or party.

The brief republican era of Cambodia served also as a model for those parties that wished to limit Norodom Sihanouk's role in a future government. The Prince had officially resigned as the FUNCINPEC's leader in 1990 (a fact that the party liked to downplay in their propaganda) and taken on the task to represent Cambodia as head of the Supreme National Council. Encouraged by several states and Cambodian parties it had been contemplated though to hold presidential elections and reinstate him as the country's executive leader.¹⁰⁸ Those against such a plan tended to keep their opinion to themselves. In this regard, the Republican Coalition Party formed an exception. A report on this party states:

“Its leadership is comprised of former officials of the Khmer Republic (1970-75) who belonged to the Social Republican Party of Lon Nol, the Republican Party of Sirik Matak,

¹⁰⁸ UNTAC Electoral Chronology: For Internal Discussion. A Presidential Election in Cambodia – An opinion. 02.06.1992; UNTAC King Sihanouk and the Royal Family: Presidential Elections in Cambodia. 24.08.1992

or the Democrat Party of In Tam. [The party] intends to carry on where the Khmer Republic left off in 1975.”

The party was openly anti-royalist and “conceded that it will take long beyond the election to win popularity” on such a platform. “Its president is Cheng Heng, one of the leading proponents of the March 18 1970 coup against Sihanouk. [He] wrote to Sihanouk in Peking informing him of his dismissal from office.”¹⁰⁹ During the Roundtables the party was always represented by the slightly defiant Vanthun, who argued vigorously against the ‘forgive and forget approach’ advocated by many others when it came to Cambodia’s past. Stating that its people had “never known democracy, and only experienced violation and oppression” (RT2, 89) he criticized all past regimes for their arbitrary use of the state’s institutions:

“I would like to remind the people again that during the times of French colonialism, foreigners rendered judgment through the French, and the Cambodian people had the very lowest rank. During feudalism the king had the people killed through his own court. During communism the party elite who killed the people had every right to do so.” (RT4, 202)

In this context, the consistent use of *procheapolrot*, the form of address associated with the Republican period, served symbolically as a re-affirmation of the 1970 coup and a criticism of the more recent rulers. He denounced that every leadership that presents itself as working on behalf of the people, but does so without any independent institutions, will ultimately abuse their inferiors. As *procheopolrot* the people would be able to regain control. The Cambodia’s People’s Party (*kunapack procheachoun Kampuchea*) evidently continued its use of the term *procheachun*. In comparison to the tame and measured answered of many other party representatives Vanthun’s statements are incredibly direct. It is thus unsurprising that the party’s leaders were afraid to become the target of political violence and had asked for UNTAC’s protection.¹¹⁰ The most ambitious attempt to explain the value of a democratic system in the context of the Roundtable Discussion had been undertaken by the Free Republican Party. Bit Seanglim, the party’s president, attended every roundtable and presented the audience with short, but highly complex commentaries on the principles of democratic

¹⁰⁹ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Report on the Republican Coalition Party, 11.01.1993

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

governance. Delivered with a stern face and a slow deliberate tone that befitted their didactic purpose, these statements were just as hard to listen to as they were to translate. Asked how his party would promote national reconciliation, he said:

“My name is Bit Seanglim, I am the president of the Free Republican Party, which has the image of the white eagle as its symbol;¹¹¹ we have chosen a policy that highly values the opinion of the voter. The voter hands over the power from below to the leader above, but if he doesn't see the leader using it wisely the voter can topple the leader by a vote of no-confidence, both, at the end of the mandated term or before it.” (RT1, 16)

As the Cambodian people had never before been addressed as ‘voters’ by a potential leader such a statement had a near performative character: It signaled that it wasn't the act of voting that would make the difference, but the acknowledgement of having become a voter. Considering these carefully crafted messages – always introduced by reminding the listeners of the party's name and symbol – it is somewhat of a puzzle to note what term had been chosen to translate ‘the people’.

Bit Seanglim used neither the socialist *procheachun*, which is understandable, nor *procheapolrot*, which would have been the obvious choice, given the party's name (Free Republican Party/ *kunapack satiaranrot sereyniyum*) and program. Instead, he used *procheareas*. This particular term “was associated with the monarchy, and literally means, ‘subjects’ of the king” (Marston 1997, 282). There are two likely explanations: Either, the author(s) of the answers as or were unaware of the literal meaning and had chosen it as a neutral translation for the term ‘citizen’, or they were indeed aware of this connotation, but still chose it with the intention to reinterpret its meaning in a democratic context. In this regard it might be important to note that the answers he gave during the Roundtable Discussions do not sound like they have been drafted in Khmer. The complex thoughts are somewhat betrayed by a slightly clumsy style that is characteristic of a text that has been translated from a different language. It is thus likely that the text has been written by Seanglim and potentially other foreign educated intellectuals, who were simply not aware of the connotation the term *procheareas* carried in modern day Cambodia. Whatever the reasons: The choice of

¹¹¹ As Burslem has pointed out, the party symbol is modeled on the American 25 cent coin. Burslem, Chris. 1993. “Small Parties Could Be Cambodia's Big Hope.” Phnom Penh Post, May 21.

this term oddly contrasts with the intended message of giving the people more power as voters.

The examples clearly show the limits of strategic intent when it comes to re-imagine Cambodia's democratic future. Accepting the need for a different relation with the people, the representatives tried to present their audience with a vision that convincingly captures their new status. Depending on the degree to which they mobilized the country's history in their explanations, they also attempted to circumscribe their own authoritative status in the current and future system. Taken together these singular choices and their contextualization can therefore be perceived of as expressions of an ongoing negotiation to rephrase national identity in the context of a changing political order.

Case 3

It was not part of UNTAC's mandate to implement a market economy. The Paris Peace Agreements dealt with the needs of the economic sector in the Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia. It set forward that the "main responsibility for deciding Cambodia's reconstruction needs and plans should rest with the Cambodian people and the government formed after free and fair elections. No attempt should be made to impose a development strategy on Cambodia from any outside source." In the course of a first rehabilitation phase UNTAC was supposed to ensure that the populations basic needs would be met, including housing, basic infrastructure and public utilities. The Economy Roundtables were designed to present the people with their future representatives' long-term objectives. They were recorded in February and March of 1993 and coincided partially with the country's most serious period of inflation:

"The riel underwent a 70 per cent depreciation [...] resulting in the temporary closure of the gold and gems markets, petrol stations and even produce markets as the currency found its new level [...] The price of a kilogram of first quality rice, for instance, jumped from 450 riels in mid-March to a high of 3,000 riels on 20-21 March, settling to some 1,800-2,000 riels by mid-April. The prices of fish and meat rose by 80 per cent, keeping pace with general inflationary increases." (Curtis 1993, 19)

The cause of the inflation remained unknown, but gave rise to all kinds of speculations and contributed to an atmosphere of insecurity and fear. UNTAC was well aware that

these rather dramatic developments only two months before the elections would also negatively impact their own image. Apart from ‘peace’, the other promise that was associated with UNTAC and came with an exclamation mark was ‘prosperity’. Its legitimacy was thus very much dependent on presenting the people with some attainable results. In the introduction to the Roundtable the moderator reminded the audience of the positive contribution UNTAC’s presence had already made to the country’s economy:

“UNTAC has stimulated development in a rather short period of time, it has boosted the reconstruction business and trade, provided Cambodians with work and has supported the work of the many new enterprises.”

Despite the growing tensions between the Transitional Authority and several of the political parties, none of the representatives at the Roundtable used the occasion to challenge UNTAC, or question the narrative that had attained the status of a truth after the end of the Cold War: Socialism equals isolation and underdevelopment, while liberalism stands for integration and prosperity. In the words of the FUNCINPEC representative:

“In advanced countries it is acknowledged that political liberalism and economic liberalism cannot be separated from one another. There are communist or formerly communist countries that used to govern all of these areas autocratically, which have experimented with having political liberalism, but no economic liberalism, and there are other countries, which have tested to have economic liberalism, but no political liberalism; all of them have failed the same. One example is the Soviet Union, which has already dissolved. A second example is Vietnam and the current State of Cambodia, which have given some economic liberties but no political liberties, which is the reason for the current grave social crisis.” (RT3, 162-163)

Cambodia would transition to a liberal market economy, this was confirmed more or less explicitly by all parties. But the answers to the three questions UNTAC posed them during the program demonstrate that this transformation involved a re-orientation that touched upon a much broader understanding of ‘order’: Before the intervention the world outside of Cambodia’s borders had been presented to the people as a menacing place, populated mostly by enemies and a few patrons, willing to support the country’s efforts for independence and self-reliance.

The idea of economic prosperity had been inexorably linked to the idea of political independence. Considering Cambodia’s complicated history with Vietnam

and its perceived role in the long conflict, ‘independence’ was furthermore strongly equated with hermetically sealed borders. The envisaged transition to a free market economy was difficult to reconcile with this perception and essentially necessitated a redefinition of Cambodia’s place in the global order. According to UNTAC’s questions the new economy would have to be self-sustaining and there was no doubt that Cambodia would engage in bilateral, regional and international economic relations.¹¹²

While detailing their economic plans for the future the representatives therefore also presented the outlines of a new map that designated the world’s regions and countries with a new purpose. In contrast to the old enemy/patron distinction the newly emerging categories had multiplied and were oftentimes overlapping. Five are of particular importance in regard to the then most pressing questions of who Cambodia is and who it wants to be in relation to the world outside of its borders.

Big Powers

By using terms such as big powers or big leaders the representatives signaled that the Cold War period and its power structure still had a bearing on their policy strategies. Some representatives used the occasion to build on the liberation narrative inherent in the economic reforms, but others presented themselves more wary:

“If the state relies on the financial aid of the big foreign powers, sooner or later we will have to cooperate with these foreign big powers. For this reason the state wants to protect its independence, in order to live of its own financial means, of its own country. Therefore, the state must make an extremely strong effort to create development, prosperity and diverse national resources. [...] But the state must proceed carefully with regard to everything that drives the national economy and ensure that it remains in the hands of the Khmer and the Khmer immigrants and will under no circumstances be governed by foreign countries.” (RT3, 144)

Creating a market economy meant to create structures of economic interdependence and in view of the country’s history, where leader after leader had to “run away to beg

¹¹² Question 2: If your party wins in the upcoming elections, what would your party do in order to advance the possibilities for a self-sustaining economy in Cambodia? Question 3: What does your party plan to do in order to coordinate Cambodia’s bilateral, regional and international economic relations?

foreigners for help” (RT1, 21) many were concerned as regards the lack of control this involved.

Neighboring Countries

This insecurity was even more evident in the representative’s efforts to reconcile the demand to foster regional economic integration with the expressed wish to keep Vietnam at arm-length. The development of a prosperous economy seemed to depend on integration, but one of the most important aims of a prosperous economy was political independence. During the Roundtables the representatives visible struggled to solve this apparent contradiction in order to provide their audience with a convincing image of Cambodia’s future regional cooperation.

In Tam for instance acknowledged that Cambodia would have to join ASEAN, but underlined that this doesn’t mean that a political integration à la EU would automatically follow: [The Europeans] want to get so close. We couldn’t live like that” (RT3, 159). Willingness to participate in regional economic institutions was hence also presented as a signal to potential investors and donors that Cambodia truly intended to put the past behind it:

“There is only this project that can provide our country with the currency that we need so urgently to buy machines, factories and modern technical knowledge to build and reconstruct our country as quickly as possible. But this project can only be implemented if our country has a democratic government and true political stability, and wants to be in peace with all other countries, in particular with the neighboring countries in our Southeast Asian region.” (RT3, 147)

As already discussed the term liberal (*serey*) was presented to the Cambodian people most often in combination with descriptions of the economic system to underline the country’s new freedom (*sereypiap*) to partake in a more mobile and interrelated world. In this regard the economy provided the new political leaders also with a narrative to depoliticize their relations with “our neighboring countries”. These would allow the Cambodian people “to trade goods freely, FREE TRADE.” (RT3, 146)

Markets

The concept of ‘international markets’ played a similar role in depoliticizing Cambodia’s relations with other countries.

“[W]e have the liberty to trade goods on the national and the international market, short, with all the countries in the world. So, in order to foster development in Cambodia we need to strengthen the trade of goods with countries both near and far. We can produce some goods that can be sold easily, tailored to the needs of the international market; and we have other goods and materials that we cannot produce ourselves and which we need to import as required according to the needs of the Cambodian people.” (RT3, 168)

Tied to the idea of ‘the world as market’ was the possibility to the present the Cambodian borders as permeable to goods, money, and knowledge – but closed for the unwanted immigrants. The concept was also necessary to make the benefits of the new economy relatable to the Cambodian population, which lived in a country with only one major city and was overwhelmingly confined to farm for a living. “[I]t is of outmost importance that the relations with foreign countries contribute to find markets for our people that produce rice and other agricultural products to sell there.” (RT3, 142)

Developed Countries

The dire state of the country’s economy put Cambodia at the bottom of almost all rankings evaluating the quality of live. For the Cambodian people this acknowledgment was also a problematic issue in terms of their national pride. The representatives of the party’s frequently used the example of “highly developed liberal countries” (RT3, 135) or “civilized countries” (RT3, 166) to chart the country’s way forward to a different future. Most of the parties had been founded by formerly exiled Cambodians and refugees. They were eager to use one of the few advantages their association with these foreign countries could bring them, namely the skills and know-how they had developed during their years outside of Cambodia. In their discussion of the economic challenges a new government would have to face the representatives thus confirmed the need for politicians “that have adequate economic skills and expertise (RT3, 143)”, praised the expertise of their own members – our president is “an agriculturalist who has worked abroad and received a golden trophy in France” (RT3, 178), we should renew the economy “by making use of the experience and the capabilities of our party [in] Taiwan, Singapore, Japan and the USA” (RT3, 141) –, or advertised more broadly the “superior knowledge” of their leader (RT3, 163). Their expertise would allow the

economic reconstruction of Cambodia and assure that the “honor of our people that has become so small will be raised to great heights again” (RT3, 140).

International Community

The representatives of the parties had no illusions regarding Cambodia’s potential to stand on its own feet anytime soon:

“Cambodia has escaped a large war, with injuries and scars that are unparalleled. It is evident to us that today our country is completely destroyed. And our people are shattered and poverty stricken; from those in the hearts of our cities to the people living everywhere else in Cambodia. The refugees that return from the different borders are in the same state of poverty than the people inside of the country [...] our country can’t be reconstructed quickly (RT3, 139-140).

The vast majority of the newly founded parties (if not all) was linked to or sympathetic with the former opposition factions; in any case they were hostile towards the SoC/CPP. This also meant that they shared the same conflict interpretation, namely that the greatest problem UNTAC needed to solve was the occupation by Vietnam. The idea of liberation, sovereignty and independence was historically difficult to reconcile with foreign aid. Still, all of the parties acknowledged this necessity. The concept of an ‘international community’ allowed them to demand financial assistance while upholding the idea of a country that was free at last from foreign interference. In the representatives’ statements the ‘international community’ is presented to the people as a moral judge that would decide over Cambodia’s fate by granting or denying them entry.

Our Cambodian country, in the state that it is in today, must become part of the international community But before we can enter [ASEAN] they ask us to become a state under the rule of law ETAT DE DROIT; that means to have a territory, to have citizens, to have a law, to have a government that comes from the people. So, now we really have to make an effort and do everything to fulfill these four characteristics. So, this is why the Democratic Party asks you to [...] please participate in the elections; so that there are 90 percent or even more, so that they can see that we want to be a country that obeys the law and lives under the rule of law together with each and everybody. Today they regard us as people living under the rule of the jungle, today there is nobody who recognizes us; so if we do not all go to the elections, if we can’t be bothered to vote, then we will continue being a country that is excluded from the global community, so mobilize everything there is” (RT3, 159)

The idea that Cambodians would need to show manners and prove their worthiness to the world if they wanted peace and prosperity was very often repeated during the mission: “Don’t forget, the world is watching!”¹¹³ Or: We have to solve our problems now, “if we don’t do this, the international community will abandon the Cambodians and we will again be isolated with absolute certainty” (RT1, 4).

With these descriptions the representatives confirm the propagated potential of liberal institutions to foster peace and prosperity – but these developments are explicitly linked to Cambodia’s new place in the world: The value of the new institutions is defined in terms of the value accorded to them by others. Considering just how much emphasis the representatives put on the necessity of international recognition, one could argue that the Cambodian people did not turn out in such high numbers on Election Day because they felt that they had a choice, but that they voted because they had none. This case demonstrates that the character of the new economic order is mainly substantiated in reference to Cambodia’s defining foreign relations – not liberalism as an economic theory or ideology.¹¹⁴ None of this means that the Cambodian representatives have ‘misunderstood’ the reforms: All of them simply confirm the benefits of the aspects that are of greatest importance to them. It rather shows how all institutional reforms, no matter how technical they may be presented, are deeply interwoven with the broader question of national identity.

Rejection

During the first roundtable session on ‘National Reconciliation’ all party representatives had to answer a question that dealt with the reintegration of those Cambodians that had left the country. “How can your party ensure the harmonious integration of the Cambodian refugees and Cambodian immigrants into national

¹¹³ Radio UNTAC program transcript, Program 35 (Eviction Special), 18.03.93, p.6

¹¹⁴ This also explains why several parties see no contradiction in presenting the nominally socialist economic system of Sihanouk’s *Sangkum* as the model for the new capitalist order: The *Sangkum* represents a time, when the “people lived in dignity” (RT3, 155), and when Cambodia was prosperous and the “biggest exporter of rice” (RT3, 167). Likewise, the party that was most adamant in its demonization of communism (Party Republic Democracy Khmer) presented a reform program that showed a lot of similarities to planned economy, with suggestions to relocate people from populated to less populated areas, plans to provide the poor with animals and farming equipment, or build state owned factories to provide people with work (RT3, 173-174, 177).

society so that they can contribute to rebuilding the nation?” The seemingly harmless question touched at the heart of the unresolved issues that had created the long-lasting conflict. Migrants and refugees were not simply considered people that had fled the country as a consequence of the war. Rather, the fact of their absence was framed as both a political and a moral issue.

In the eyes of the people the whereabouts of a person in 1992 and 1993 expressed an affiliation with certain factions. From the CPP’s (accurate) point of view the border camps constituted opposition strongholds, while the FUNCINPEC, BLDP, and LNDP underlined their various efforts of helping and assisting the refugees (who would soon become their voters). After decades of poverty and with the colorful promises of economic prosperity in clear sight Cambodians also feared the financial burden that the arrival of thousands of have-nots would entail. As farmers and unskilled workers the majority of the country’s population differed only marginally in education and status, which made of every arrival a direct competitor for land and jobs.

To a slightly lesser degree the assumption of established political associations did also apply to those Cambodians living abroad, who were often accused to be ‘slaves of the big powers’.¹¹⁵ With regard to this group of migrants UNTAC mainly euphemized the tensions that had built up as a result of the grudge many of those who had lived through the war held with regard to those who had left. The fact that they suffered while others presumably didn’t was often described as a betrayal to their fellow people and it was not uncommon to rebuke those who returned after living and studying abroad as arrogant opportunists.¹¹⁶ These two aspects made this an issue that affected the process of national reconciliation.

As far as the character of these internal relationships was concerned, the representatives mainly confirmed the established etiquette and did their best to present themselves as a welcoming party whose arms (and ranks) were wide open. In order to dilute the notion of existing conflicts between the Cambodian people one dominant

¹¹⁵ In this particular quote, the representative asks the audience to stop accusing those coming from abroad to be the slave of some *moha omnadj*, which literally translates into higher authority and refers to China, America, or France (RT1, 36).

¹¹⁶ I thank Hang Chan Sophea for this information.

narrative focused on the forced and painful absence of those Khmer ‘outside of the country’ and their possible future contributions:

“All the Cambodian people, high-school and university students, teacher, professors, government personnel, civilians, dignitaries and others have been killed, and some had to flee and run for their lives, separated from their families, friends and their home country, fleeing from their motherland to live under the protection of foreign countries”(RT1, 35)

Given the chance, they would all return and with them desperately needed assets in the form of knowledge, skills and money. Emphasizing the project of reconstructing Cambodia, the promise was that unity could be restored through the pursuit of a common objective. Aside from these rather predictable suggestions and assurances, the debate took an interesting turn as some representatives took issue with the wording of the question and used the occasion to shift the roundtable off UNTAC’s intended focus.

In their Khmer translation of the term ‘Cambodian immigrants’ UNTAC had used the expression *anikedjun khmae*. Unlike the words for refugees (*djun piah kluan*) or displaced persons (*djun plahbdoh ti konlaeng*) the word *anikedjun* is not part of the concerned stipulation in the Khmer version of the Paris Peace Agreements.¹¹⁷ Documents related to the preparation of the program as well as inquiries with those involved confirmed that the UN personnel nevertheless perceived of this as a completely neutral term.¹¹⁸ But while the representatives usually repeated the phrasing of the question when wording their answer, the term *anikedjun khmae* is only used in the intended form by four of the 19 candidates participating in the first Roundtable, while ten choose to distinguish between “Khmer inside and outside of the country” instead (*khmae noev knong neng noev kravy brotheh*), and five others explicitly criticize the choice of this word and refuse to use it in reference to their fellow Cambodians. The word *anikedjun*, as one candidate puts it, is a word that we use “only for foreigners who happened to be born in Cambodia [...] for example the *anikedjun djin* and the *anikedjun yuon*.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Agreement on a Comprehensive Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Part V, Article 19 and 20; Annex 4

¹¹⁸ UNTAC, Roundtable Draft Questions, 30 November 1992

¹¹⁹ Chinese and Vietnamese. The word *yuon* was used by two representatives during the first Roundtable. After these two incidents UNTAC reminded the participants that the use of this word will not be tolerated (Interview, Isabelle Abric) and no one used it during the three following Roundtables.

For this reason, he adds, his party does not want to “hear the expression *anikedjun khmae* in this country”. This word, concurs another candidate, “must only be used for foreigners”. To explain why the term *anikedjun* is of such a negative or even offensive character one representative warns that it would intensify the artificial dividing line between Khmer who live inside and outside of their country (*bratheh djiat*) that was first introduced by the SoC, then adopted by UNTAC and now sadly by the Khmer themselves.

Awareness for the idea that forms of address have the power to shape relations, is expressed in the statement the use of this word could be tantamount to the desire of turning Khmer against Khmer.¹²⁰ All of these candidates do therefore interpret the word as one that dangerously aims at redefining Khmer identity in geographic or political terms. In other words, the term *anikedjun khmae* expresses the idea that someone who is of Khmer descent could become a foreigner to its own people – and (in a reverse reading) that the *anikedjun djin or vietnam* could become Khmer. Rejecting the term *anikedjun khmae* means to reject both of these assumptions.

In order to unravel the complex issues and their perceived effect on the process of national reconciliation that the representatives refer to here, it is necessary to turn to the ongoing conflicts between UNTAC and the former factions. To identify and register the Cambodian voters the electoral law needed to stipulate who was eligible to participate in this process. The established consensus that this right would only apply to Cambodians entailed a lengthy debate over the common markers of nationality. Despite the SNC’s decision to accept the law after some slight amendments the members of the former exile government continued to use the issue to undermine UNTAC’s authority. According to this interpretation the Transitional Authority’s perceived inability to ‘recognize’ the Vietnamese and thus handle the problem appropriately endangered the elections mainly in two ways: For once because the presence of armed forces in disguise would hinder the establishment of a neutral

¹²⁰ FUNCINPEC’s representative hints at this possibility in his answer.

political environment, and second, because the hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants would obtain the right to vote.¹²¹

“Khieu Samphan, generally perceived as distinct and separate from the NADK, was a number of times praised (and sometimes quoted) for his position of Vietnamese immigrants and allegations of the continued presence of Vietnamese forces. [...] The historical view – that Vietnam’s encroachment threatens to turn Cambodia into ‘a second Champa’ – portrays Vietnamese migrants as the ‘thin edge of the wedge’ in the impending ethnic/national annihilation of Cambodia. Many people expressed the view that the elections will fail because of the presence of Vietnamese nationals in such great numbers. The consequence of this failure, they predicted, will be further instability which will in turn engender conditions conducive to the realization of ‘Vietnam’s intentions’, that is, to ‘swallow Cambodia’.”¹²²

The propaganda of the main contenders (excluding the CPP) deliberately aimed at blurring the lines between nationality and ethnicity, suggesting that the two concepts are equivalent.

“One man quoted Khieu Samphan’s statements that Europeans can’t even identify each other’s nationality with any certainty, so how can they be expected to tell the difference between Asians? [...] [Another man] asked the Information Officer in all seriousness whether there was a machine capable of identifying a person’s ethnicity. Disappointed to hear that to the Information Officer’s knowledge no such machine existed, he remarked that it would probably be the only fail-safe way of preventing Vietnamese from voting in the elections.”¹²³

The herein proposed idea that only a Khmer is truly Cambodian and vice versa originates in colonial times and had been reinterpreted and to different degrees legalized by every new leader since (Edwards 1996). After the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements the concept of Khmerness had once again become an important locus of identity, offering a sense of belonging and victimhood and it was in particular the main contenders that competed to determine its borders and content (Edwards 1996). The often repeated reproach that UNTAC stumbled around like a blind man, unable to see what all Khmers could see thus indicates only a part of the perceived problem. A much stronger case against UNTAC’s interpretative authority could be

¹²¹ The same Information Officer that wrote the here quoted report, also mentioned that some of these fears were even less accessible to reasoning: Elections will fail, not necessarily because Vietnamese in disguise will vote, but simply because of their presence: Vietnamese in the country equals instability and thus further war.

¹²² UNTAC Analysis Reports: Field Trip Report: Phnom Penh, 7-12 January 1993, 18.01.1993

p.2

¹²³ Ibid.

made by insinuating that they were indeed *not able* to see what was clear to everyone's eyes – even if they intended to. As foreigners they were excluded from a specific knowledge that was originally Khmer.

Measures that the Transitional Authority took based on what these parties called a 'distorted view' were outright rejected, among them UNTAC's decision to prohibit the use of the term *youn* in official statements and the media. This word was considered a derogatory term for people from Vietnamese descent and as such inflammatory language. UNTAC insisted on compliance with this rule wherever they had the authority to do so (that is mainly in UNTAC produced Radio and TV programs), while the Cambodian politicians never stopped to oppose its interpretation of the term. In a letter written to Tim Carney, UNTAC's Head of Information and Education, BLDP leader Son Sann very well captured the position of many Cambodians on the matter when he heatedly declared the prohibition of the word's usage in official contexts as the illegal imposition of a "new form of cultural colonialism" and rejected UNTAC's interference as an "inacceptable abuse of its mandate".¹²⁴ To make his case, he interpreted the measure as standing in the tradition of Vietnam's occupational policies:

"Since the Vietnamese occupation in 1979 Hanoi has prohibited the use of the word 'youn' in the Cambodian vocabulary, by replacing it with the word 'Vietnam', which usually refers to the country and not the people. But this is obviously part of its policy to vietnamize Cambodia. By using the word 'Vietnam' one risks to forget that there are 'Youn', that means Vietnamese, who have been sent in great numbers to our country. At the same time, Hanoi has artificially introduced a new concept of the 'chonn kampuchea' (Cambodian people) instead of 'Khmer'. In Cambodia, 'chonn kampuchea' includes all the people residing in Cambodia, including the Vietnamese who therefore have the same legal status as those who are of Cambodian blood. This is a process of dekhmerisation to the benefit of vietnamization. It is regrettable that UNTAC acknowledges this Vietnamese policy of dekhmerization by forcing us to use the word 'Vietnam' to say 'Vietnamese' instead of the Khmer word 'Youn'."

His argument culminates in the statement that using the word *yuon* is "not at all a racist reaction, but the defense of our national identity and Khmer culture". In this interpretation the acknowledgement of an ever present threat to the Cambodian nation as embodied in the country's migrants is inexorably linked to the possibility of

¹²⁴ Son Sann to Tim Carney, Phnom Penh, le 13 Mai 1993, Original French, my translation.

distinguishing between youn and Vietnamese.¹²⁵ Using the word *youn* is tantamount to keeping the memory of their existence alive: The word is thus not only of symbolic value, but considered a real weapon in the fight against the nation's quiet annihilation. The rejection of the concept *anikedjun khmae* roots in the same tradition of thought and offered the political parties a fertile ground to develop interpretative authority:

"I know our people's love for the nation, longing to come back [...] The dear Father Prince [Sihanouk] and our leader the Prince [Rannaridh] have always said, no matter where you are, you are all children of the dear Father Prince. [...] As you already know, we are all brothers and sisters. [...] I know exactly what the problem of the word 'anikedjun' is [I know that] our people must have a problem with this word 'anikedjun,' because we Khmer are one family." (RT1, 13)

Devoid of any concrete suggestions regarding the financial or economic issues related to the reintegration process, the FUNCINPEC representative Norodom Sirivudh suggestively explained and 'solved' the problem at hand by reference to Khmer society's shared knowledge. His party, that is the great promise of Sirivudh's answer, represents the knowledge that *is* the common ground. As already discussed, most of the new and in particular small parties' leaders came from abroad. Their insistence on the possibility to recreate unity through the pursuit of a common objective, the reconstruction of Cambodia, describes their own story and valorizes the contributions they themselves can offer. In contrast to the programs and ideas they offered, Sirivudh suggested that there is no need to restore unity among the people – in its perpetual existence it simply has to be recognized and acknowledged. The fact that the royalist FUNCINPEC won the election cannot prove how much this narrative appealed to those addressed. But his answer shows that in this perfectly supervised political environment, national identity is an important source to challenge a new etiquette and the kind of social change it promotes.

Reinterpretation

At the 1989 Paris Peace Agreements Cambodia's competing would-be-leaders had already learned to speak of the atrocities committed against the Cambodian people in terms of Human Rights violations. Khieu Samphan accused Hun Sen of having

¹²⁵ Edwards wrote that the concept of Khmerness could never be interpreted to include Chinese or Vietnamese. "Indeed, distance must be maintained to perpetuate the myth: the strangers in our midst are the living embodiment of the threat to Cambodian existence" (1996, 56-57)

committed such crimes, Hun Sen decried the genocide committed by Samphan and his ‘brothers’, and Sihanouk declared that the Khmer Rouge’s crimes should not be addressed without taking the PRK’s deplorable Human Rights record into account. As a frame of reference Human Rights were not used to circumscribe the crimes, but to measure the scale of somebody else’s fault. In the context of UNTAC’s mission the international community attempted to promote the concept for a different purpose. Claiming and defending Human Rights was presented as a guarantee against further abuse of the people at the hands of the state.

The second series of Political Roundtable Discussion was devoted to this subject and it was here that the Cambodia’s People’s Party made its first appearance. Like the other 19 candidates their representative Sok An was presented with the following question:

”A number of organizations for the protection of Human Rights have taken up work since UNTAC’s arrival in Cambodia. If your party wins the upcoming elections, what kind of measures would your party take in order to guarantee the respect, implementation and protection of the fundamental rights and liberties of the Cambodian people?”

The here presented notion of a fresh start thanks to the presence of new (international) organizations and a future government that would cater to the needs of its people out of respect for their universally accepted rights was bound to strike a chord with the CPP. While UNTAC was under constant criticism for their inability to effectively control the state’s key institutions, the CPP tried to prove that they remained indispensable and very much in charge of affairs. An UNTAC Officer complained in this regard about the terminology used in Cambodian broadcasts and their detrimental effect on the neutral political environment:

“If the racist term ‘Yuon’ is outlawed, what about the politically non-neutral terms consistently used by the Cambodian People’s Party in the SPK broadcasts, namely ‘the State of Cambodia’ the ‘Phnom Penh Government’, the ‘Government of the State of Cambodia’ etc.”¹²⁶

The party’s very successful propaganda angered not only UNTAC but also the members of the other parties, who would blast UNTAC for their inefficient work. In

¹²⁶UNTAC Analysis Reports: Terminology used in Cambodian Broadcast, 25.08.1992

one unfortunate instance an UNTAC provincial director had used the ‘State of Cambodia’ as part of an address on his business card.

“As you well know, the spread of such misinformation [...] supports the view held by some members of the Cambodian population, and by one partie to the Paris Agreements in particular, that UNTAC is a tool of the SOC. [...] We suggest that [a memo] state in no uncertain terms that the SOC is not a ‘government’ but a partie to the Paris Peace Agreements, and that UNTAC staff should use the term ‘the existing administrative structure’ to refer to SOC.”¹²⁷

In order to discredit the validity of the promises attached to the idea of a ‘new beginning’ the CPP needed to project the image of a successful past into the times that would follow the elections. Instead of confirming or simply rejecting UNTAC’s sketch of a peaceful new order, this entailed the need to re-interpret the party’s past achievements and present them as the blueprint to a future that was already well under way before the international community intervened.

During the roundtable the CPP representative Sok An thus highlighted past achievements and presented the party’s very own notion of what constitutes a political order based on the principles of Human Rights. The protection of Human Rights, as he puts it, had always been fundamental to the party’s program and was arguably its most important *raison d’être* : After all it had been them, who had answered to “the cries” of the Cambodian people to “protect their Human Rights [...] in between the years 1975 and 1978” and ended the genocide. This allusion to his party’s essential role in the termination of the Khmer Rouge’s rule is combined with an interpretation of the Human Rights concept inspired by socialist ideology¹²⁸: “The Cambodian people had nothing [...] if one talked about Human Rights, it was because they lived like slaves [and] died like animals [...] After the liberation the fundamental Human Right was the right to live...” He then stressed the dependency of all other Human Rights and liberties, such as the freedom of expression or health care on the non-recurrence of “the genocide the greatest enemy of Human Rights”. No other institutions or organizations devoted to Human Rights, he elaborated further, had either the “power nor the effective

¹²⁷ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Use of Terms, 17.08.1992

¹²⁸ In a socialist reading Human Rights are often denounced as a luxury of the developed western countries. The defense of these rights would serve as an ideological tool, distracting the people from the harsh reality and the struggles of the working class poor around the world.

means” to oppose this enemy. A victory of his party would therefore constitute “the guarantee that Human Rights achievements in Cambodia won’t be lost again.”

In this obvious attempt to claim interpretative authority over the term Sok An outlined the ‘evolution’ of Human Rights achievements in Cambodia, framing them as non-universal and dependent on an able provider. His answer is of particular interest because he demonstrates the (sometimes cynical) acknowledgment of UNTAC’s rules, while efficiently using the space provided by filling the term with meaning in relation to peoples’ experiences.

“The only thing that the CPP could work on was peoples’ lives. When you were killed during those three years, eight month and twenty days, who came to liberate you? And when you come back, who will provide you with something to eat? And since '89, who will provide you with a title for your property you are sitting on? The Westerners come and talk about human rights, freedom and democracy. This is worthless for people who are almost dying. Is this really what you want, what you feel that you need, or do you rather prepare basic needs like a house, land to cultivate rice, survival, etc.? You compare theory and real live here. For them, this is why the concept of human rights opposed reality.”¹²⁹

The fact that his party had ‘understood’ the meaning of Human Rights in Cambodia long before anybody else did lent credibility to his implicit rejection of the international community’s interpretation of this term. During UNTAC many people viewed the equality-credo of democracy with great suspicion. In letters to Radio UNTAC they expressed their fear that “democracy means anarchy” because the acknowledgment of Human Rights would deprive the state of its disciplinary power: “...the robbers will do whatever they want [...] there will be robberies and slaughters everywhere and Cambodia will end in anarchy.”¹³⁰ Sok An did not forget to address this prevalent fear:

“The way in which Human Rights are explained is not appropriate for the current situation in Cambodia and might have grave consequences for society; the killer has the same rights as the victim, the thief has the same rights as the owner...”

The Cambodia’s People’s Party was very successful with this re-interpretation. Many people found it difficult to reconcile the ideas presented by UNTAC with the social reality of their lives.

¹²⁹ Interview Oek Serey Sopheak

¹³⁰ Interview Anne Guillou

“Cambodia is a society with such a strict hierarchy. And you come and present the idea of Human Rights. The idea that everybody is equal. This does not fit any cultural concept on the local level.”¹³¹

The benefit of prisoners’ rights and the concept of political crimes turned out to be particularly hard to convey and UNTAC’s reforms in this regard led to a lot of resentment and conflicts.¹³²

“While SOC media accusations against other parties seem to be having effect, it also seems widely understood that joining a political party other than the CPP can be an open invitation to a visit by robbers and/or murderers. The Information Officer was told by several people that offenders are no longer put in prison for political crimes. This is because between now and the election they would probably be freed by UNTAC, and after the elections they will be freed by the new government anyway. So the easy solution for the authorities is ‘just to kill them on the spot’.”¹³³

Despite the fact that many feared the powerful state party and wished for a change, there were also all those people that felt it would be wiser to count on the established party to keep the peace (these two sentiments were not mutually exclusive). Their position allowed it the CPP to characterize the transition to the new order under their auspices as the reliable and appropriate continuation of a process that had started long ago under a different label. The uncertainty of the future that unsettled so many was thus eased with the promise of stability.

Evidently, none of the smaller parties had similar symbolic or material resources at their disposal. And while their answers won’t be subjected to an extensive analysis here, one notable aspect shall be pointed out: Just like the CPP they emphasized the dependency of these rights on the existence of a powerful interpreter and provider. But even in their determination to illustrate the democratic promise as positive as possible, many failed in their attempt to actually imagine an end of autocratic rule and an independent influential position for themselves. Their focus lies not so much on the question of Human Rights implementation, but on the need to protect them with a vast array of institutions and measures, such as non-governmental organizations for the protection of Human Rights subjected to the administration of the

¹³¹ Interview Isabelle Abric

¹³² Interview Fabienne Luco

¹³³ UNTAC Analysis Reports: Field Trip Report. Phnom Penh, 7-12 January 1993, 18.01.1993

UN, the introduction of severe punishments for corrupt judges and government authorities who violate Human Rights, or foundations to support the people in their lawsuits against the rich and powerful, to name only a few.

Behind their emphatic appeals to UNTAC and the international community not to abandon Cambodia and to use their powers to the fullest extent, their requests to educate the Cambodian people about the true meaning of democracy and their continued reassurances that their own party has clearly understood the concept of Human Rights and won't "consider Cambodia [its] private possession" lurks the fear that the Paris Peace Agreements are but a script for the powerful candidates, who "only play democracy" and fool their audience with "the heart of a demon and the mouth of an angel."

7. Conclusion: How the Paris Agreements shaped Ideas of the New Political Order

Current scholarship on state building and peacebuilding is increasingly willing to acknowledge the importance of social factors. The critique of the liberal peace model has successfully argued that a sole focus on institutions, norms, and interests is not sufficient to understand the dynamics of transitions from conflict to peace. Initially, this debate derived much of its emphasis from the undeniable failure of many large scale interventions. Instead of explaining the problems and disappointing results with the perceived deficiencies of local actors and institutions, attention was drawn to the effect that the interveners' own unquestioned expectations and assumptions had on the development of 'conflicts after the conflict'. More recent contributions express greater confidence that the basic criticism of the West's implicit assumptions of superiority has already been received and its validity (at least to a certain degree) acknowledged. The overt critique of the 'liberal' in liberal peace has been replaced by more nuanced studies, searching for alternative models of analysis and techniques of observation. This academic project has a clear political intention, namely to transform the relationship between international and local actors from one between experts and laymen into one between true partners in peacebuilding. The fundamental question in the context of this debate is not 'What should a peaceful order look like?', but 'What can a peaceful order look like?' Legitimacy has emerged as a keyword to find an answer to this question, which in turn led to a revalidation of local resistance. Emerging hybrid or non-liberal institutions are approached with an interest in the stories they can tell us about the reasons for local actors' support or rejection of thereof.

It is in regard to this debate that this work intends to make two distinct contribution: First of all it aimed at developing an analytical model capable of accessing the realm of ideas more directly in order to observe how international and local actors negotiate over the meaning of the political reforms. And second, with its

study of the Cambodian peace process under the United Nations Transitional Authority it intended to present sound empirical data to make a case for the relevance of such an approach. The following chapter will review the analysis by linking the case specific results to the broader debate on internal legitimacy in peacebuilding.

The review of the critical liberal peace debate identified two conceptual limits inherent in the development of new analytical models used to approach emerging institutions: A rather one-dimensional conceptualization of power as imposition and a marked tendency to define clear cut objects of reforms. These definitions are, so the argument, remnants of the ‘habitat’ the critique initially developed in. To oppose the predominant perception of local actors as disruptive or teachable objects of reforms the studies were particularly intent to demonstrate their agency to negotiate and subvert hegemonic attempts. *Chapter 1* closed by proposing to shift attention to the symbolic dimension of local-international interaction: How do international actors convey their vision of a new political order and how do these efforts relate to the local actors own visions for their country’s future? The realm of ideas is arguably rather resistant to coercion or threat. A closer examination of the ongoing negotiations that ensue in the context of an intervention over the meaning of reforms can thus be used to chart a way forward and overcome the debate’s limitations.

Chapter 3 took the current debate over the conceptualization of the state as government versus the state as a social system and its implications for our understanding of state building practice as a point of departure. The basic premise of the analysis is the inherent political nature of interveners’ engagement: No matter how technical the reform or how well defined the intent, interveners’ acts always represent a claim to know what a peaceful order looks like. The act of reform implementation cannot be separated from the intention to influence how the people may interpret the new order. While the critical peace debate refers to the ‘state as a social system’ mainly in order to argue for the relevance of an open dialogue or engagement with the local population to determine potential reforms, the model is here used to re-conceptualize the relationship between international and local political actors: In the context of an intervention society every actors that proposes reforms is also engaged in the struggles over the meaning of the newly evolving state. Intervenors and local political actors are

thus in a competitive relationship with one another. The second part of *Chapter 3* presents the theory of interpretative authority. It builds on the hypotheses derived from the first part of the theory discussion to devise an analytical model that is capable of capturing how ideas are proposed and negotiated in the context of an intervention society. An institution that is accorded the status of an interpretative authority is in a position to formulate what defines the common ground of a political community. In other words, it is an institution that can formulate why and how people want to act together. It is a definition that implies an intimate relationship between authority and identity. Applied to the realm of state building the theory stipulates that all actors that want to have a bearing on the country's political future, need to build such interpretative authority. For interveners it is of particular importance that notions of legitimacy converge on the state. In this regard they will attempt to focus all public deliberations over the new political order on the states' new institutions. The theory distinguishes between three analytical dimensions: Symbolic conditions, opportunities, and interpretative practice. For the analysis these three dimensions and the hypotheses derived from the first part are systematically applied to the configuration of the relationship between international and local political actors in the context of the United Nations' Transitional Authority in Cambodia. The resulting analytical model established the following:

An intervention society is characterized by great insecurity regarding its fundamental categories of understanding. This provides actors with the possibility to build interpretative authority: In public deliberations over the meaning of the reforms they seek to re-establish a common ground regarding these fundamental categories. International actors partake in these public negotiations by communicating their own vision of the new political order. In Cambodia, the international actors could claim access to this realm of negotiation in reference to the Paris Peace Agreements. On a symbolic level these Agreements were perceived as representative for the country's new political order. To assure their superior status over other potential symbols UNTAC needed to assure that public deliberations over the future converged on the PPA as the relevant symbol. To observe the techniques used by UNTAC to discipline the discourse the analysis focused therefore on the public created and controlled by

UNTAC. As each act of the Transitional Authority would have to relate to the PPA as their source of legitimacy, this public is by definition every opportunity created by UNTAC for itself and others to publicly speak about the peace process. This public can also adequately reflect the power bias between international and local actors, as the formers are institutionalized as the Agreements authoritative interpreters. The analysis was geared towards the identification of the interpretative practice UNTAC derived from the agreements to influence the competition in the realm of ideas to its advantage. In a related step this also meant to identify what kind of knowledge the local actors mobilized to promote their own visions and potentially challenge the Transitional Authority. The negotiations over the meaning of the new reforms can hence be discerned in the interpretative practice the local actors employ in the public of an intervention society. The presentation of this analytical model and the related theory discussion thus led to the formulation of the main question: How did the Paris Peace Agreements shape ideas of the new political order in Cambodia 1992-93?

In order to access this symbolic dimension of the interaction between UNTAC representatives and the Cambodian political actors the analysis focused on one particular occasion, created by UNTAC to present all 20 new parties to the Cambodian people: A TV program entitled Political Roundtable Discussions. In this highly controlled setting it was possible to identify the interpretative practice UNTAC had derived from the PPA in order to discipline the image and presentation of the parties. The analysis is based on the video material and the translated program script of all four sessions. An overview of the symbolic conditions that preceded the main analysis provided information regarding the strategic considerations behind the practice we can observe in the context of this particular opportunity: The Information and Education Unit charged with the control of Cambodia's information sector wanted to offer a 'neutral' alternative to existing party owned media and it attempted to promote a new political culture. Interviews with former member of this particular unit, analysis documents, and materials related to UNTAC's own media production made it possible to reconstruct the intervention milieu in which this practice developed and from where it derived its meaning. By perceiving the individual rules and regulations established for the program as a particular interpretative practice that aimed at building

interpretative authority and thus enforce a particular vision of the future political order it was further possible to demonstrate that InfoEd grounded its strategies in a positive interpretation of the neutral political environment that UNTAC was mandated to establish. What constituted a negative in diplomatic terms – namely the absence of monopolized power over the media and the end of political violence – thus came to inform the working ethics of several officers and officials associated with this unit. The legitimacy of the interventions derived from this practice had been questioned by several local political actors in the course of the intervention, while international observers described them only in approving terms. With the analytical model developed in *Chapter 3* the criticism regarding the procedures and the rehearsed statements of the politicians could be analyzed in their relation to the vision of Cambodia's political future as promoted by UNTAC. With the establishment of procedural neutrality the TA intended to promote a convincing image of the new liberal democratic multiparty system. All of the questions that the moderator posed them during each round of the roundtable program constituted, to different degrees, attempts to establish a new “discursive etiquette” by “euphemizing or neutralizing” the Cambodian people's most defining political relations (Marston 1997). The time immediately prior to the country's first elections has to be regarded as a ‘charismatic’ time, that is a time during which “the autonomy of the political dynamic as a whole seems to be enhanced” and political actors and ideas “shape politics in a dramatic way” (Grenier 1996, 12). This implies a heightened awareness for the symbolic dimension; statements and acts are perceived as charged with meaning. It was therefore expected that the local actors would not only confirm UNTAC's interpretations of their future political order, but use the occasion to generate interpretative authority by either confirming, rejecting or re-interpreting the new etiquette.

Political Authority as Interpretative Authority

The Political Roundtable Discussions are an ideal case study because this program represents a situation that was entirely under the control of the Transitional Authority. One goal of the analysis was to capture the power bias between local and international actors in the realm of ideas and present a more nuanced description of their relationship

to contrast the predominant conceptualization of them as imposers and imposed upon. The rules and procedures could be clearly related to UNTAC's expressed intention to provide the Cambodian people with an idea of the new political order. With its interpretative practice the Transitional Authority created an opportunity for the country's political actors to deliberate Cambodia's future. At the same time the Transitional Authority attempted to control the image and discipline the discourse to ensure that all presented ideas converged on the PPA as the symbol for the new political order. The analysis of the local actors' attempts to negotiate these rules and procedures with their own interpretative practice allowed us to observe how the Transitional Authority's competitive advantage played out. *Chapter 6.4.1* presented several of their attempts to negotiate the procedural neutrality. Their explicit and implicit arguments revealed that all of the representatives rightly interpreted the setting as a symbolic statement on UNTAC's part: It broke with established categories of understanding regarding the relationship between political actors with a more or less established power base and presented this new image to the Cambodian people. It became furthermore evident that the local actors felt compelled to comply with these rules because they were aware of the people's attention. UNTAC could only exercise interpretative authority because it had succeeded in creating a public that mattered. This sheds an interesting light on the role of the relationship between interveners and the wider population as it suggests a direct link between the legitimacy the population accords to the TA's role in the peace process and the compliance of local political actors. While several authors consider it important that interveners, and in particular Transitional Authorities, strive to communicate more directly with the people, it is usually not considered that this process of legitimization may have a direct influence on the TA's interpretative authority and hence its authority vis-à-vis the political actors. The analysis of UNTAC's attempts to establish a new etiquette in *Chapter 6.4.3* revealed more mixed results. If we would focus on the role of the media alone, one could of course argue that the mere existence of such a program had an impact on UNTAC's legitimacy.

“I think the excitement was not about what they were actually saying but about the idea that this whole phenomenon was possible at all. That was the drama and

people watched perhaps for that reason, if they watched it; for just the idea that things could be said that couldn't be said before."¹³⁴

In the context of the intervention Radio and TV UNTAC certainly signaled a change in the political economy of public discourse. However, in order to draw more general conclusions regarding the nature of power that determines the relationship between actors that intent to develop interpretative authority it is more important to focus on the interpretative practice of the local political actors. Addressed as representatives of their parties they were not only pressed to find solutions to the problems they were presented with, but rather to lay out a vision of the political community in whose name they claimed to speak.

What kind of knowledge did they mobilize to react to the Transitional Authority's efforts to discipline the political discourse? First, we can note an overall tendency to confirm the interpretations they were presented with. As with the procedural rules, the statements of the representatives reflected the awareness that using the opportunity to speak and acknowledging the superior status of the PPA as the symbol for Cambodia's new order were almost impossible to separate. A closer look at the interpretative practice employed to substantiate these confirmations on the other hand, shows that they came with unintended consequences from the TA's point of view. Unlike UNTAC none of the representatives was in a position to derive its legitimacy from the promise of a new beginning alone. To build interpretative authority it was of greater importance to confirm the validity of existing categories of understanding: By mobilizing common knowledge over concepts charged with meaning such as liberty or independence the 'confirmation' actually only extended to the broad promises UNTAC itself wanted to be associated with: Peace and prosperity. The acknowledgement did thus certainly have a positive effect on the short-term goal of upholding the legitimacy of the Transitional Authority itself, but probably less on the long-term goal of associating the specific liberal institutions with the attainment of these ideas. While the cases discussed under the headline of Confirmation demonstrated the limits of the local actors' strategic intent, the case of rejection showed

¹³⁴ Interview John Marston

how a symbolically charged context defies even the most careful preparations on the TA's part. The usage of the Khmer term *anikedjun* in their translation of the expression Cambodian immigrants led to a 'debate' over the limits of UNTAC's legitimate interference in Cambodian affairs. By drawing on records of UNTAC's internal communication it was possible to demonstrate that the tensions the representatives chose to highlight here, rooted in widespread concerns over yet another foreign attempt to define the character of Khmer identity. The last case presented an attempt by the formerly ruling party to promote an alternative interpretation of the concept of human rights. Similar to the case of rejection the interpretative practice was used to draw a distinct border between 'our' common ground as opposed to the one 'they' want to define. Interveners draw much of their legitimacy from the claim to directly represent the people. The interpretative practice of the local political actors, drawing attention to the shared knowledge and experience of the people should be regarded as a rejection of this claim. It highlights that interveners aren't 'above' politics, but, like anyone else, come with a certain agenda. As pointed out at the outset the case of the Roundtable Discussions had been chosen because it represents the public of an intervention society and thus an opportunity for the TA to be in perfect control of the political discourse. Considering the discipline shown by all the participants and the fact that this entire scene played out well within the realm of formal compliance with the Agreements stipulations the cases demonstrate just how little interveners can actually control transformative processes in the realm of ideas: Even without clearly defined 'objects of negotiation' it was possible to observe the local actors' agency and witness how they define the degree of social changes acceptable to them in open discussion with the interveners' insistent proposition.

Statebuilding as Nationbuilding

The theory discussion recalled the current debate over perceptions of the state as government and the state as social system and its implications for the realm of state building. The results of the empirical analysis confirm, what had remained so far a rather theoretical argument: By conceptualizing the relationship between international and local political actors as one between competitors in the realm of ideas it became

evident how deeply intertwined question of institutional reforms and national identity are. Lemay Hebert had argued that

“Given that ‘the state makes the nation’, it is impossible to avoid nationbuilding activities in statebuilding processes centered on institutions. The argument is not that the institutional approach cannot lead to nation-building. To the contrary, the creation of institutions has concrete repercussions on the nature of the socio-political cohesion. A better option in framing statebuilding interventions is to therefore grapple with this reality, rather than avoiding it” (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 32)

The results of the roundtables demonstrate that it was indeed impossible for the TA to guide a discourse over the value of the new political order without inciting a much broader debate over the character of Cambodia’s political identity.

Liberal or non-liberal: categories beyond the labels

The entire analysis abstained from defining the interpretative practice of either group of actors in terms of liberal or non-liberal. After having reviewed the different cases and detailed the interpretative practice employed by international and local actors to negotiate the character of the new political order the question thus is, whether or not this description would add anything of substance to the conclusions.

UNTAC’s interpretative practice had to relate to the Paris Peace Agreements. They stipulated that Cambodia would transition to a liberal pluralist democracy. All of the question did likewise describe liberal political institutions or were at least phrased in a way to elicit the representatives’ public commitment to a liberal order. The members of the Information and Education Unit likewise openly admit that they “believed in democracy and peace” and were “committed to restore democracy” at the time: They clearly equated a peaceful order with a liberal order. The emphasis on choice has to be related to this commitment: In line with liberal ideology the people were consistently addressed as autonomous subjects. But in order to describe the interpretative practice they used to negotiate the new order as a social reality the label ‘liberal’ is rather void of meaning. It might also led us to underestimate the restrictions inherent in the ‘free space’ interveners claim to create. The analyzed examples reveal the intimate link between freedom and discipline in the context of an intervention society.

In fact, the label might provide observers with a false sense of ‘understanding’. This is particularly evident if we turn to the interpretative practice used by the local actors to challenge their interpretations. Current analysis use the ‘liberal’ label to describe *what* the local counterparts reject, and implicitly also to explain *why* they choose this course of action: Resistance by the local community is resistance against liberal institutions or liberal forms of knowledge. But this doesn’t capture the concerns the representatives voiced in regard to the new institutions. A potential exception is the last case, namely the reinterpretation of the human rights principle by the CPP representative. Here, it would be possible to argue that the party in power did indeed reject the ‘liberal’ character of the new order. Provided that the overall aim of any intervention is to establish a peaceful order, it is probably more important though to understand the justification for the rejection or reinterpretation of a given principle (i.e. the interpretative practice) instead of simply judging actors’ decision based on the assumption that they are not inclined to support the establishment of a liberal order. Analytically, the observation of the interpretative practice can furthermore teach us something about the way, in which local actors build legitimacy vis-à-vis the people. This will have an impact on how they come to perceive of the new institutions.

The new dialogue that current peacebuilding literature aims for, intends to reform the relationship between interveners and local actors by giving more weight to local forms of knowledge and by deconstructing the superior status of liberal ideas. Based on the results of the analysis two aspects are imminent to consider. The first one concerns the conceptualization of power inherent in this demand. It is based on the notion that international actors are ‘blind and arrogant’ and use their material power to impose ideas on foreign actors. The analysis suggested that the relationship between them is more complex and that the mobilized knowledge cannot be neatly ascribed to either category of actors. The power bias can hence not be removed simply by inverting their relationship. Focusing on the symbolic conditions of actors’ sources of legitimacy and their interpretative practice may provide better information on how to devise this new dialogue. In any case it can raise awareness for the fact that ‘enabling’ a discourse over

a country's political future in the context of an intervention society is a symbolically charged and hence highly political undertaking.

The second aspect concerns the fact that the 'superiority' of Western knowledge and institutions was often most enthusiastically embraced by the Cambodian politicians themselves. One could of course argue that these representatives were only given a platform because the Perm-5 had already imposed a liberal order on Cambodia. This may have oppressed the potential of other, more local ideas and their supporters. Such an argument though, ignores the economic realities in many post-conflict societies. People interested in implementing political reforms are often foreign educated and might be eager to put their country in the footsteps of 'developed' Western models. Several authors simply reject such an elite as inauthentic and not truly representative for the people. As already stated at the outset, it is clearly of the essence to engage the wider population more directly in the making of a new, peaceful order. But with regard to the conceptualization of the new partnership it might be important to ask oneself, if the intention to address local counterparts predominantly as representatives of the local-local in order to deconstruct one's own role as a representative of 'superior knowledge' is not just as condescending. The interpretative practice of the local actors clearly demonstrated that reforms in itself are 'meaningless'; they have to be related to the world of the people. It is thus despite the overall consensus that the interveners' have the authority to establish near hegemonic narratives that local knowledge turned out to be quite a powerful resource to counter interveners' claims: Not as a hidden form of agency, but as open rejection.

Cooperation or Conflict

The introduction argued that Cambodia has been perceived a close case in the realm of state building, because the outcomes of the peace process neatly fit into the established categories of both proponents and critiques of the liberal peace. This concluding part will briefly pick up this thread in order to add one last argument for the relevance of an approach that takes the symbolic dimension into account. Common wisdom has it that the CPP was opposed to UNTAC's liberal agenda and that the mission was under

constant threat because of the incumbent party's lack of cooperation and the fact that the Khmer Rouge had resorted to violence again. The analysis showed that another conflict accompanied the entire mission: The Khmer Rouge were not alone with their opinion that UNTAC had sided with the CPP (and by extension Vietnam). Growing impatience with the Transitional Authority could also be observed in the ranks of the FUNCINPEC and the KPNLF. The analysis allows us to link events and problems that are usually discussed separately and understand why the seemingly harmless interventions by the Information and Education Unit elicited such harsh reactions by the leaders of the opposition parties. As Susanne Woodward has argued: "Crucial to the way a conflict ends are the parties' campaigns to win external support (including intervention) for their side by shaping outsiders' perceptions of the causes of war" (2007, 155). Prior to the intervention the interpretation of the opposition parties had the clear support of the 'international community': Cambodia was under Vietnamese occupation. This interpretation was the justification for denying the State of Cambodia recognition and for keeping Democratic Kampuchea's seat at the United Nations. But already in the preparation of the intervention the Perm 5 members began to frame the conflict as an internal one – which would have confirmed the interpretation of the incumbent government. During our interview Son Soubert, at the time member of the opposition, remembered:

"We forced the French to change the title. They called it the 'Comprehensive Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict' and I said it is not a Cambodian conflict; it was not fought between Cambodians but between foreign forces and Cambodians. And then they changed it to 'Cambodia Conflict'."

Considering that the State of Cambodia was in control of the entire administrative system and had had the time to build its power base for almost a decade, the crucial importance that this interpretation had as the opposition's source of legitimacy becomes apparent. The fact that UNTAC 'couldn't find' any Vietnamese soldiers, and that the Information and Education Unit wanted them to use a 'neutral' language thus contributed to the widespread conviction that the UN mission was rather supportive of the CPP. The neutrality of UNTAC had initially been accepted and acknowledged by all conflict parties: The CPP was not in a position to denounce the international

intervention as an occupying force because of its cooperation with Vietnam. The opposition, who presented themselves as the liberators from Vietnamese oppression, had likewise no interest in questioning UNTAC's neutral status or their own defining role in the settlement of the conflict. But this commitment began to waver, as they observed how UNTAC seemed to slowly withdraw their support of the conflict interpretation that was so central to their own claims of interpretative authority. Archived documents tell us that some FUNCINPEC members were already inclined to join the Khmer Rouge in their boycott of the elections. And Sihanouk, predictably not content with his role as a 'neutral moderator' of the conflict parties, had begun to present himself as an alternative interpretative authority. In the end, it may have been UNTAC's quick departure that saved them from losing the support of all local conflict parties.

Just like the results of the analysis this brief review can also demonstrate how important it is to observe the interpretative practice employed by all actors in the course of an intervention. What does or does not constitute a legitimate way of action is often not decided by drawing on predefined norms or values. Labels like liberal or non-liberal may be attributed to quickly, taking attention away from the knowledge actually mobilized in negotiations over the character of evolving ideas and institutions. The here presented results confirm that "peacemaking environments are marked by dynamism and a complex interactionism through which the actions of one party result in responses by others" (Mac Ginty 2011, 218). By observing the symbolic dimension of negotiations over a new political order this 'complex interactionism' can be partially unraveled and its repercussions on the relationship between international and local actors better understood.

Prospects

The analysis focused on a very brief time-frame in the context of a short mission. It was possible to observe how ideas were shaped, and what kind of concepts developed, but in order to make the here proposed model fruitful for transitional analysis it would be necessary to evaluate what factors decide over the long-term success of a given

perspective. This means first and foremost to supplement the analytical concept in such a way as to measure the weight of ‘non-symbolic factors’, i.e. the wider political and economic context.

The study intended to make a contribution to overcome the conceptual limits inherent to the current liberal peace debate by adding complexity to the nature of power that governs the relationships of actors in an intervention society. It drew attention to the fluidity of categories and questioned the validity of labels attached to ideas and institutions. To structure the analysis it was, however, still necessary to distinguish between local and international actors, internal and external – although it could be shown at various instances how void of meaning these categories truly are: First of all it was evident that international actors were anything but ‘external’ to the ongoing process of building a national identity. Another example that comes to mind are the Khmer moderators at the Roundtables. They were considered ‘neutral’ as they did not live in Phnom Penh and were hence not connected with any of the parties. The distinction between internal and external in this case was the result of perceptions about political affiliations, rather than their place of birth. Many of the representatives on the other hand, that had to be subsumed under the label of ‘local’ actors in this work, were identified as ‘foreigners’ by the Cambodian people who watched and discussed the program with me: A single sentence by one of the party representatives was often sufficient for the Cambodian viewership to reject their status as ‘locals’. In order to draw the boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ Cambodians see a particularly intimate connection between language and identity. The way some of the foreign educated representatives spoke the language marked them as outsiders. We wouldn’t trust someone as our leader, who can’t speak Khmer, several people confirmed to me. In other words: It was the concrete social practice of actors, that identified them as external or internal, not their place of birth or designated position. Instead of deciding a-priori what constitutes ‘external’ or ‘internal’ it would be more consistent to develop these categories as a result of the observed interpretative practice.

This work does not contribute to clean up the ‘messy’ character of interventions and their analysis that has been acknowledged in recent state building scholarship; quite on

the contrary. It rather supports the emerging notion that a thorough critique of established categories and labels is still of the essence: Where are they useful to guide our analysis and where do they promote a false sense of security and knowledge? In order to change the relationship between international and local actors the current trend emphasizing communication and mutual learning processes is certainly a step in the right direction – albeit not without pitfalls, as discussed earlier. To reconcile the here presented analytical models with more traditional approaches of intervention analysis one could begin by promoting a different perspective on the ‘symbols’ that structure actors’ relationships during an intervention, namely mandates and peace agreements: Considering the ongoing negotiations between all actors involved in the making of a new order it seems promising to cast aside the technical term of ‘implementation’ and begin to think of the related practice as a process that is more concerned with ‘translations’.

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