

# Failure of un peacekeeping in cambodia history essay

[History](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Introduction**

The United Nations (UN) operation in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993 was, at the time, the most ambitious and expensive undertaking in the peacekeeping experience of the organization. At a cost of around US\$1.7 billion, 22,000 military and civilian personnel were deployed to implement the comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, the Paris Agreement, which had been concluded at an international conference in Paris on 23 October 1991. The peacekeeping operation represented a number of firsts in both the number of contributors and the diversity of the military components assigned to UNTAC. Thirty-four nations participated with representatives from every continent, major religious group and major world power. UNTAC for the most part has been hailed a success as a peacekeeping operation. UNTAC monitored a ceasefire, repatriated refugees, organized and ran an election, and overcame the support and supply problems of the largest peacekeeping operation undertaken by the United Nations. According to the peace agreement, Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict, the United Nations first considered the situation in Cambodia in 1979. Later that year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to monitor the situation and initiate efforts to find a peaceful solution to the problem. In July 1981, the International Conference on Kampuchea was convened in New York. The Secretary General renewed his offer to find a peaceful solution to the Cambodian problem. He requested contacts be established with the principle countries concerned in order to assess their positions on the Cambodian problem. The Secretary General, in 1985, was able to identify a number of

objectives as starting points for negotiations. His efforts over the next three years centered on refining these objectives. In December 1987, Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Mr. Hun Sen (Prime Minister of SOC) initiated a dialogue in France. Following these talks, the Secretary General put forward the objectives identified in 1985. He proposed the integration of the various objectives for the final goal of an independent, neutral, and nonaligned Cambodian state.

## **The Failure of UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia**

Normally, we can see everything constantly consisted of pro and con. Not different from this case, the operation of UNTAC (United Nations Authority in Cambodia) also brought not only the success but also the failure. Due to the crisis and civil war inside Cambodia among four groups such as SOC (State of Cambodia), Party of Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge), Funcinpec, and KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front), UN decided to intervene Cambodia. First, SOC was installed by Vietnam in 1979 and guided the country till 1993, and the former Soviet Union stayed behind Vietnam. Mr. Hun Sen led SOC, and his organization had a huge administrative and police structure. However, SOC got a second seat after the first position, Funcinpec, in the election in 1993. Second, Khmer Rouge was led by an extremist Marxist faction, Mr. Pol Pot. He was recognized as a cruel leader during his period from 1975 till 1979; moreover, he killed up to 1.5 million people. Starvation, disease, epidemic, overwork, execution, infrastructure, and economic was seriously remained. Pol Pot regime was recorded as tragedy history of Cambodia. Third, Funcinpec was an independent, neutral, peaceful, and cooperative party which ruled by King Norodom Sihanouk. This party did

<https://assignbuster.com/failure-of-un-peacekeeping-in-cambodia-history-essay/>

not have strong military as Khmer Rouge, but it won the election due to its fame. Finally, according to Ledgerwood (1994), he said KPNLF, " Khmer People's National Liberation Front Pro-Western force containing some members of Vietnam War-era Lon Nol government; like FUNCINPEC, never as strong military as Khmer Rouge. Bitterly divided, KPNLF split into two parties before the election, one of which (headed by Son Sann) won seat in new parliament." In 1975 to 1979, Cambodia was under the control of Pol Pot regime, and it was called Democratic Kampuchea. Vietnam started to invade Cambodia and drop out Khmer Rouge in 1979 by set up a new socialist government called the People's Republic of Kampuchea. For the next 12 years, a coalition stayed in Thailand that include the remnants of the Khmer Rouge and two weaker forces, the Cambodian royalist faction loyal to the former king, Norodom Sihanouk who led Funcinpec party and the pro-Western KPNLF were revealed resulting the anger of this civil war. It was an unusual alliance which was supported by China, the United States, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and its allies were the supporters of recently government and Vietnam. It could know that more than one half million Cambodian people fled the country. Otherwise, some 200, 000 created their settlements in western countries, and another 350, 000 refugee camps were located along the Thai-Cambodia border. Peace negotiation took place in 1988, and Vietnamese backed government changed its name to the State of Cambodia (SOC). Also, it declared the reforming inside Cambodia such as making Buddhism as the state religion, allowing the free market economy, and providing the legal ownership of the land to the private sector. After the outsiders saw the bad

ambitious of Vietnam to invade Cambodia by the mean of helping this country, they put diplomatic and economic pressure on Vietnam. Then Vietnam forced to leave Cambodia and absolutely withdrew in September 1989. Furthermore, the peace negotiation occurred very quickly. The aid to Vietnam and Cambodia were disappeared immediately due to the breakup of former Soviet Union. With the intervene of the outside super power, all parties agreed to sign a peace agreement in October 1991 by eliminate their military forces and gave a chance to UN deeply throughout the country and establish an election. At that time, UNTAC started to operate fully in Cambodia. The elements of its unsuccessful factors were consisted of disarmament, personnel inequities, civilian people, social relations, administration and staffing, and regional support. First, disarmament was one of the failures during UNTAC operation. " UNTAC's major failure was that it never disarmed the combatants. Under the peace agreement, all forces were to gather in specific sites and surrender their arms, after which training and literacy programs would be provided to the soldiers." In contrast, all four parties inside Cambodia fail to disarm their arm forces. The Khmer Rouge was not able to disarm their force, and SOC could eliminate only about 25 percent of its military. Meanwhile, the other two parties including Funcinpec and the pro-Western KPNLF disarmed up to 50 percent of their forces even though both militaries were weak. The Khmer Rouge still kept attacking Cambodian people, and it directly attacked UNTAC position by wounding and killing UN staff. Also, SOC invaded the opposite political parties. As a result, the pattern of violence still happened such as torture, bombing, and execution. Second, the UN faced not only the external problem but also the

internal issue. Different nation was a cause which contributed the inequities in the pay of soldiers. According to Ledgerwood, he argued that " In mission, some governments gave their soldiers the full UN wage in addition to their local salary while others kept most of the money and only paid the soldiers their local wage the Cambodia. As a result, soldiers from different countries faced the same dangers for very different compensation, and this inevitably affected morale (1994)." In addition, there were complaints about the personnel of UNTAC. They could bring shame to every member of this organization. UNTAC military and police acted in bad behavior such as drink too much alcohol, commit the crime, and cause civilian people' death. Therefore, personnel from all nations that are responsible for UN peace keeping in Cambodia should operate under a central UN command with a standard requirements, protection, and compensation. Third, UNTAC did not have enough training and discipline for the 3600 members' civilian police component in the purpose to train and educate the local police and help to maintain human right in the process of mission. UN police officers also have resulted of the most expensive components of the mission because the civilian police officers including military observers and civilian staff got the full \$130 per diem payments and a total of \$300 million which was the extra money to their salary. They also got five days of compensatory time off every month away from their posting site because they operated their duty 24 hours a day. Moreover, the civilian police or military that were sent to Cambodia during UNTAC mission came from many different countries. Some civilian polices spoke English or French; as a result, there was no common language. Otherwise, some of them were poor; they were lack of skill even

driving a car. They did not pay attention to their. The older police did not listen to the younger's police who gave the command at the station. They seemed not realize, response, and fulfill their duty, so their work might be useless to operate the process. It would be better if UNTAC sent those militaries back to their home. Indeed, the civilian police should be reformed for the future mission. Police officers should be selected from the same countries to facilitate the command structures or disciplinary action. Fourth, UNTAC brought the social relation conflict in Khmer society. As I can say, UNTAC police officers created the bad environment such as drinking alcohol, causing traffic accident, and making sexual action with prostitutes. Moreover, Cambodian people tended to believe the Khmer Rouge propaganda because they saw UNTAC military have sex with Vietnamese prostitutes, and brought those women to live with them at the rural area. Seriously, they introduced and brought the dangerous disease which known as HIV to Cambodian society. Fifth, UNTAC contributed the problem of administration and staffing during its mission. UN itself produced some problems of the Cambodia peacekeeping mission. " Akashi has noted that the effectiveness of UNTAC would have been greatly enhanced if personnel and equipment had arrived more promptly." (Ledgerwood, 1994) Finally, regional support was another failure source of UNTAC operation. The conflict appeared whether all parties agreed with the result after the election.

## **A Success of UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia**

UNTAC's operation could be reducing many major functions: conducting the elections and form national government during the period of Paris Peace Agreement then reduced the disarming and the military forces of four

<https://assignbuster.com/failure-of-un-peacekeeping-in-cambodia-history-essay/>

Cambodian factions. All the activities and benefits they had produced, were designed to verify the success of these two main functions. Although, in 1993 the UN Peacekeeping in Somalia and Bosnia were failed to keep peace, it had many troubles occurred during that period and it also sharpened the ongoing policy over UN Peacekeeping operation and the question on US participate on such mission. At that time the large and difficult situation happened during the UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia but it still successful and completed in mid-November 1993. Conducting the elections: In the late 1993, the key elements of planning process in UNTAC's failure had been created: it's was simply impossible to conduct free and fair elections in economic, human and social environment in Cambodia. It's nearly the time for national elections, the expectation of the success of UNTAC and the future of Cambodia seems predictable but there would be the fighting and disagreement between the parties throughout the country. There was no "neutral political environment." Despite these conditions, the elections were held between 23 and 28 May 1993 and proved successful beyond all expectations. No one seemed to have correctly assessed the degree to which the Cambodian people wanted to express their free will. In reflection, UNTAC's Information and Education Division did very good job convincing Cambodians that the elections would be fair and that individual votes could be kept secret, precluding fear of retribution. To cast their votes, Cambodians put aside fears of personal reprisals and disregarded Khmer Rouge threats to attack the polling stations. Had there been a series of successful attacks against polling booths on the first day (there were more than 1400 polling sites), voter turnout during the six-day election period



likely would have been smaller. An amazing 89.6 percent turned out to vote during polling conducted over the six-day period. UNTAC's major achievement and biggest risk was the election, successfully held in May 1993 despite the protect by the Khmer Rouge. Pre-election violence, including the murder of a Japanese electoral volunteer and his interpreter, had almost caused the cancellation of the election. As it turned out, about 96 percent of the eligible populace registered to vote and – despite Khmer Rouge threats to attack polling sites and take revenge on anyone who voted – just under 90 percent of those registered went to the polls. The election resulted in large wins for the royalist FUNCINPEC party (45 percent) and the Cambodia People's Party (the political party of the SOC administration: 38 percent), as well as smaller gains for a party associated with the pro-Western KPNLF faction. Since no single party won the two-thirds majority needed to approve a new constitution, a coalition government was formed that included all three parties. Every day they work for organizing the election – many volunteer, mostly young and idealistic, from many different countries, they spent their six months to a year to work together to receive the register the one who eligible voters in their districts. Even through, the experience of UN running the elections, it made all the citizens believed that democracy was a goal worth risking their lives for in another corner of the world.

Information and Education: The second major success of the mission was the UN radio station. The UN official spread the speeds or message by radio to the people, which remains the key source of information in Cambodia due to minimal literacy, limited print circulation, and the very small area reached by television transmissions. Many Cambodian people including the UNTAC were

foster about the ability of Cambodians people to comprehend the choices had offer from the election – the questions in their minds was whether they or not they could vote their conscience without getting back. UNTAC convinced Cambodians that their vote and their candidates would be secret and the radio provided information without any of these political biases, playing the messages of all the registered. The spoke man openly about political intimidation and violence, getting across the message that the UN was not a blind as it appeared despite its inability to disarm the factions or stop political intimidation and human right abuses. Disarming the Function: Many questions were asked during the debate began within UNTAC. At the time signing Paris Peace Agreement, Cambodia had been dramatic changed what had been envisioned at the time of the signing of the Paris accord. Some people said that the United Nation should use force entry into the areas of khmer Rough controlled. The question was whether or not the Military Component should abandon the strict requirements for impartiality demanded by peacekeeping and authorize the use of force to implement provisions of the mandate. Some within the Military Component were of the opinion that the United Nations should force Certainly this was also the opinion of the large and vocal nongovernment organization community in Cambodia, whose work was significantly hampered by the worsening security situation. Others who wanted the UNTAC to assert itself militarily argued that failure to respond aggressively to the increasing violations of the Paris accord would discredit the United Nations.

## **Conclusion**

" The UN's most ambitious post-cold-war dream was to rebuild the shattered countries. The dream itself is not shattered, or not yet; it worked unexpectedly well in Cambodia. Each peacekeeping mission is different, and UNTAC was unique in its size, cost and complexity. The world views UNTAC as a model for shattered countries. It was a success for completing the elections and establishing a legitimate government, yet it failed to disarm and demobilize the Khmer Rouge, who are still waging war against the new government. UNTAC was a success but it came very close to failing. The United Nation peacekeeping effort in Cambodia achieved its most important objective. It ended within the time specified by the mandate, and it stayed within budget. Compared to the difficulties being experienced in Somalia and the Balkans, UNTAC can be judged a success in spite of failure to disarm the factions. The future of Cambodia now rests with that nation's democratically elected leaders.