



## SAVING DEMOCRACY IN CAMBODIA

### INTRODUCTION

Cambodia's transition to democracy is in danger. Following a two-year United Nations peacekeeping effort which cost over \$2 billion, national elections were held in May 1993. Democratic forces led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh won a plurality in that election but subsequently were coerced into a coalition government by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), the former communist ruling party installed by Vietnam after its 1979 invasion of Cambodia. Today, the CPP has regained control of the government, and its corrupt behavior is being exploited politically by the increasingly strong Khmer Rouge. As the specter of another civil war looms in Cambodia, the democratic forces around Prince Ranariddh are steadily losing influence.

The 5,000-to-10,000-strong Khmer Rouge again are waging a guerrilla war to regain power. They are exploiting the government's corruption and failure to solve the country's social and economic problems to buttress their own political appeal. The CPP wants to accelerate its war against the Khmer Rouge, but this will only play into the hands of the guerrillas: The Phnom Penh government will likely use war as a pretext to delay or ignore needed political and economic reforms, thereby strengthening the Khmer Rouge's attempt to portray it as indifferent and corrupt.

It is in America's interest to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge to power. It also is in America's interest to prevent a return of large-scale conflict between the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian government. Such a war could risk a renewed proxy conflict between China and Vietnam and threaten wider U.S. security interests in Southeast Asia. It also could cause U.S. friends and allies like Thailand to move closer to China to balance Vietnam, which backs the CPP faction of the Cambodian government. Washington then could face more obstacles of the sort it encountered last October, when Thailand refused to allow the United States to preposition military supply ships in its ports, in part because it feared China's opposition. These supplies were to support U.S. forces in possible conflicts in Korea or the Persian Gulf.

To protect American security interests in Asia and avert another Khmer Rouge disaster, the U.S. should support democracy in Cambodia more actively. During the Reagan and Bush Administrations, U.S. policy clearly favored the pro-democratic factions. Under President Bill Clinton, it has been more neutral. As a consequence, the U.S. lost an opportunity to strengthen the democratic parties during the 1993 election. The Clinton Administration has acquiesced to the CPP takeover and has remained largely silent as the government threatens democratic opponents, delays economic reforms, and becomes increasingly corrupt. It is time for the U.S. to change course by reaffirming its support for democratic leaders and reforms. Therefore, the U.S. should:

- ✓ **Link** U.S. economic assistance to the government's progress toward free-market economic reforms.
- ✓ **Urge** the Cambodian government to expand political freedoms.
- ✓ **Make** U.S. military assistance dependent upon reform of the Army.
- ✓ **Encourage** international donors to link economic assistance to Cambodia to an agenda of free-market and democratic reforms.
- ✓ **Ask** Thailand and Vietnam to help prevent a wider war in Cambodia.

## CAMBODIA'S VIOLENT PAST

Cambodia has had little experience with democracy, its history this century being largely one of autocracy, war, and communism. France ruled Cambodia as colony from 1864 to 1953 and in 1941 installed Prince Norodom Sihanouk as King. Deeply revered as a demigod, especially by the peasantry, Sihanouk remained the central figure in Cambodia's political life for three decades until he was toppled in a U.S.-supported military coup in 1970. Five years later the Khmer Rouge seized power and tried to impose a radical communist utopia, killing over one million people. Though allied with Vietnam during the Indochina conflict, the Khmer Rouge soon revived traditional Cambodian antagonism toward Vietnam and provoked many border incidents and incursions into Vietnam.

Having long harbored the desire to rule all of Indochina, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978. By early 1979, using a nucleus of Khmer Rouge defectors, Hanoi established a puppet government in Phnom Penh led by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). While not as brutal as the Khmer Rouge, this regime was violent and corrupt. Installed by invasion, CPP governments were denied international recognition by the United States and the non-communist states of Asia.

A proxy war over Cambodia began shortly after the invasion and lasted through the 1980s. Vietnam supported the Cambodian government with about 100,000 troops, hundreds of "advisors," and material aid supplied mainly by the Soviet Union. China, with Thailand's assistance, provided military and economic aid to the Khmer Rouge. This aid, plus popular opposition to the CPP's harsh rule and its ties to Vietnam, enabled the Khmer Rouge to mount an effective guerrilla war against the government. Two non-communist groups, the royalist United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), led by Son Sann, a former Prime Minister and longtime opponent of the mon-

archy and Sihanouk, also fought against the Vietnamese-installed government. These two groups were supported by the U.S., Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and, to a lesser degree, China.

The proxy war began to wind down in the late 1980s when Moscow cut off its aid to Hanoi and began to support a peace process involving all major parties. Because of his unique political persona and strong nationalist credentials, Sihanouk was again at the center of the peace process. With key backing from the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, and Australia, Canada, and Japan, peace negotiations resulted in the October 1991 Paris Peace Agreement.<sup>1</sup>

## THE FAILURE OF THE U.N.

The Paris Agreement called for a cease-fire, established a United Nations peacekeeping mandate, and created the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to administer Cambodia pending national elections. Led by Japanese U.N. administrator Yasushi Akashi, this operation set a new standard for cost and complexity of U.N. peacekeeping exercises. Originally estimated at \$1.7 billion, the operation eventually cost over \$2 billion. It was the largest U.N. operation to date, comprising 16,000 troops, 3,600 police, and 1,400 civilian administrators from 44 countries. UNTAC was authorized to take "unilateral action," if necessary, to take control of Phnom Penh's major ministries, including Defense, Interior, Finance, and Communications. It also was supposed to disarm 70 percent of the contending parties armed forces and to provide security and educational support for elections which were to be held by May 1993.

By the end of 1992, however, UNTAC's mission was increasingly threatened as the two largest factions, the CPP and the Khmer Rouge, exploited the U.N. administration to increase their political power. That Akashi was unwilling to enforce the mandate conferred by the Paris Agreement only encouraged the CPP and the Khmer Rouge to challenge UNTAC. For example, UNTAC was unwilling to take control of key ministries like Defense, Interior, and Communications.<sup>2</sup> One result: the CPP denied the democratic parties full access to CPP-controlled radio and television and restricted FUNCINPEC's use of their aircraft. Another result of Akashi's timidity was that the CPP retained control of the police and the military.

The CPP's ability to flout UNTAC authority encouraged the Khmer Rouge to do the same.<sup>3</sup> The Khmer Rouge refused to disarm and would not permit U.N. personnel to inspect areas under their control; by the end of 1992, they were preparing to boycott the May election. Through 1992 and 1993, the Khmer Rouge mounted guerrilla attacks on CPP troops, regularly harassed UNTAC forces and personnel, and were largely responsible for the deaths of 17 UNTAC members. They were also responsible for killing over

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1 ASEAN is composed of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia.

2 Richard D. Fisher, "Averting a Failure of U.N. Peacekeeping in Cambodia," Heritage Foundation *Memo To: President-Elect Clinton*, December 15, 1992, p. 2.

3 Nate Thayer, "Not So Secret Agenda," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 12, 1992, p. 12.

100 ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia.<sup>4</sup> As Khmer Rouge attacks increased, CPP violations became more flagrant. The U.N. would later conclude that the CPP used “wide-scale intimidation and sabotage” to coerce Cambodians to vote for them.<sup>5</sup> CPP forces killed or wounded about 100 FUNCINPEC members alone.<sup>6</sup> UNTAC’s attempt to curb violence by creating an independent court did little to stem CPP violations.

Nevertheless, UNTAC effectively administered the national elections, registering 4.9 million Cambodians and convincing them that their ballots would be secret. Despite Khmer Rouge and CPP violence, the results of the May 1993 election exceeded expectations. About 90 percent of registered voters cast ballots, most of them for the first time. The result was a victory for the non-communists: 45 percent for Sihanouk’s FUNCINPEC; 38 percent for the CPP; and 3.8 percent for Son Sann’s Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP, formerly the KPNLF). This meant the CPP received only 51 of 120 seats in an interim constituent assembly stipulated in the 1991 Paris Agreement. FUNCINPEC won 58 seats; the BLDP, 10; and Moulinaka, a small democratic party, one. The massive turnout and the mainly peaceful conduct of the election were a rebuke to the Khmer Rouge and a rejection of the CPP. They also were a clear statement that Cambodians wanted a peaceful transfer of power.

Nevertheless, by the end of 1994, much of the U.N.’s work in Cambodia was unraveling. The Khmer Rouge threat was growing while the new government strained under the weight of political infighting, rampant corruption, and human rights abuses by the armed forces. Following UNTAC’s departure in September 1993, as mandated after the passage of Cambodia’s constitution, the CPP regained power as democratic parties were pushed to the side. Before the final election result was announced in June 1993, the CPP began to bully its way back into power. CPP leaders Chea Sim and Hun Sen began to blackmail Prince Sihanouk, threatening violence against FUNCINPEC if they were denied power.<sup>7</sup> Sihanouk’s response in June was to try to form a “National Government of Cambodia” with himself as head of state and Hun Sen and Ranariddh as deputy premiers. Ranariddh bitterly opposed pressure from Sihanouk and the CPP to share power. On June 10 another son of Sihanouk and ally of the CPP, Prince Chakrapong, staged a rebellion in which he led several eastern provinces in an attempt at secession. This effort collapsed after five days, but it was enough to frighten Ranariddh into an interim coalition in which he and Hun Sen were co-prime ministers (although Ranariddh insisted on the title of “First Prime Minister”).<sup>8</sup> Government portfolios were shared: the CPP received 12 cabinet positions; FUNCINPEC, 11; BLDP, 3; and Moulinaka, 1.

After forcing Ranariddh into a coalition, the CPP expanded its powers. CPP members took over most of the important government posts, with Hun Sen as Second Prime Minis-

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4 Nate Thayer, “Bloody Agenda,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 15, 1993, p. 20.

5 Letter from James Ross, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, to Hun Sen, Prime Minister, State of Cambodia, Re: Politically Motivated Violence in the State of Cambodia, January 12, 1993; Mary Kay Magistad, “Cambodian Rulers Cited In Anti-Voting Violence,” *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1993, p. A29.

6 William Shawcross, *Cambodia’s New Deal*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993, p. 18.

7 Shawcross, p. 25.

8 Philip Shenon, “Rival Parties in Cambodia Agree to Form a Coalition Government,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 1993, p. 10.

ter and Chea Sim as President of the National Assembly. The CPP also controls the Defense Ministry, Army, Interior Ministry, Justice Ministry, and Communication Ministry. Power in the CPP, however, revolves around three key figures. The most powerful is Chea Sim. While his formal title is President of the National Assembly, he wields considerable influence over the military and police from his position as CPP Chairman. Second Prime Minister Hun Sen holds the highest formal title among CPP officials but is also a rival of Chea Sim.<sup>9</sup> The third key CPP figure is Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng, who is also Chea Sim's son-in-law and a rising star in the party.<sup>10</sup>

## CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY IN CAMBODIA

There are many challenges to democracy in Cambodia. Some are political while others are economic.

### Government Corruption

Government corruption once again is flourishing. One major cause is the low salaries paid to officials in the oversized bureaucracy. Last year, then Finance Minister Sam Rainsy told a journalist, "You cannot start a business without all the officials asking you for money....[I]nstead of bribing one party, you have to bribe two."<sup>11</sup> Australian Ambassador John Holloway noted, "Every business deal must have a cut for the relevant minister (or Prime Minister) and every transaction involves a percentage for the relevant official."<sup>12</sup> One of the more blatant examples was the \$108 million fee a Malaysian company paid government officials to secure the right to build a gambling casino near the southern port city of Sihanoukville. Prince Ranariddh has called this a "legal commission."<sup>13</sup> Early last year, the CPP-controlled military undermined reforms designed to centralize government control over receipts by taking over the country's logging industry. Former Minister Rainsy tried to reverse the Army's revenue-grab, which has denied the government about \$150 million a year.<sup>14</sup>

### Poverty, Illiteracy, and Lack of Infrastructure

Cambodia faces enormous economic and social challenges. About 70 percent of its 9 million people are illiterate. Annual per capita gross domestic product is \$200. The government will have to import 300,000 tons of rice in 1995 to compensate for anticipated shortages. Infrastructure development is badly needed in the areas of power gen-

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- 9 There is speculation that an abortive coup attempt against Hun Sen, led by CPP Interior Minister Sin Song, was backed by Chea Sim loyalists; see Nate Thayer and Rodney Tasker, "The Plot Thickens," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 21, 1994, p. 20.
  - 10 Nate Thayer, "Enemies Everywhere," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 15, 1995, p. 15.
  - 11 Sheila McNulty, "Cambodian Turmoil Is Rooted in U.N. Failure," *The Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, July 11, 1994, p. 12.
  - 12 Reprinted internal Australian government memo by Ambassador John Holloway, "Cambodia: a wired warning," *The Age* (Melbourne), October 5, 1994, p. 15.
  - 13 "Ranariddh Cited on Commissions From Contracts," *Reaksmei Kampuchea* (Phnom Penh), January 23, 24, 1995, p. 1, in *FBIS-East Asia*, January 24, 1995, p. 58.
  - 14 Nate Thayer, "Say When," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 23, 1995, p. 61.

eration, roads, wells, irrigation, and telecommunication; Phnom Penh can generate only 20 percent of its electrical energy needs.

### **Dependence on Foreign Aid**

Cambodia depends heavily on foreign aid. It has received about \$1.5 billion in foreign aid since 1992, for example, and about half of its \$350 million budget for 1994 came from this source. This dependence lulls the government into thinking it can delay reform.<sup>15</sup> For example, foreign aid allows the government to spend 60 percent of its annual budget on the salaries of civil servants and soldiers. However, the 140,000-strong bureaucracy is about two to three times what the country needs, and most of these bureaucrats are holdovers from the socialist CPP government who lack the understanding and training needed to promote economic freedom. Foreign aid, therefore, is helping to retard, rather than promote, progress toward democracy.

### **Crackdown on the Press**

Cambodia's new experience with a free press is threatened by a proposed media-control law, an early draft of which would impose criminal penalties on loosely defined offenses relating to defamation, humiliation, and national security.<sup>16</sup> Although a free press did not exist before 1992, the press has grown to include 30 Cambodian-language newspapers, three English newspapers, and two television stations, one private and one state-owned. Ominously, Prince Ranariddh said that journalists' past misbehavior has invited strict regulation.<sup>17</sup> Newspaper editors already have been arrested for printing stories unfavorable to the government, and two editors have been murdered.

### **CPP Intimidation of the Democratic Opposition**

Intimidation of democratic politicians by the CPP and the CPP-controlled military constitutes a major danger to democracy in Cambodia. Prince Ranariddh stated publicly last December that the CPP intended to murder Sam Rainsy,<sup>18</sup> and National Assembly members associated with Son Sann's party have complained of rising intimidation. Some Assembly members even are considering the possibility of seeking political asylum if conditions worsen.<sup>19</sup>

### **Corruption and Incompetence in the Army**

The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) is the government's main defense against the Khmer Rouge. But the RCAF, through its incompetence, corruption, and growing criminality, also poses a threat to democracy. Its incompetence was demonstrated in the 1994 offensive against the Khmer Rouge stronghold of Pailin, an area rich in gemstones and lumber and a center for Khmer Rouge commerce with Thailand.

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15 For more on the negative effects of foreign aid, see Bryan T. Johnson and Thomas P. Sheehy, *The Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1995).

16 "Battle for the Media," *Asiaweek*, January 6, 1995, p. 22.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Gretchen Peters, "PM Jokes of Plot to Kill Rainsy," *The Cambodia Daily*, January 9, 1995.

19 "Report Views Threats Against BLDP MP's," *Phnom Penh Post*, January 27, 1995, p. 2, in *FBIS-East Asia*, January 31, 1995, p. 57; "Cambodian lawmakers look for exit routes," *The Washington Times*, February 3, 1995, p. A19.

In late March, 5,000 RCAF troops mounted a successful campaign to recapture Pailin, but by the end of April, they were routed by a 3,000-strong Khmer Rouge counter-attack. RCAF officers were more interested in looting Pailin than in creating defenses. At the first indication of an attack, RCAF generals fled by helicopter as their leaderless troops fled on foot to Battambang, Cambodia's second-largest city. About 40,000 refugees were forced to flee the Khmer Rouge.<sup>20</sup>

Failure was almost pre-ordained. The RCAF had expanded from 128,000 in 1993 to about 150,000 in 1994, mainly as a result of the corrupt practice of listing "ghost" soldiers so commanders could collect their pay. This selling of ranks explains why the RCAF at that time was burdened with about 2,000 generals and over 10,000 colonels. Moreover, it continues to waste money, buying new tanks, armored cars, and training jets and refurbishing its MIG-21 jet fighters,<sup>21</sup> all of which will be useless against the Khmer Rouge.

Instead of undermining the Khmer Rouge, such corruption and incompetence only contribute, however inadvertently, to its growing public support. So do the Army's human rights abuses. According to a leaked U.N. report, CPP commanders in Battambang Province used their uncontrolled powers to arrest, detain, interrogate, torture, and execute Cambodians suspected of belonging to the Khmer Rouge. They also maintained a secret detention center in which at least 35 Cambodians were killed between July 1993 and May 1994. The report concluded that "Villagers feel totally helpless as they see no recourse against official arbitrary violence and abuse."<sup>22</sup> Australian Ambassador to Cambodia John Holloway observed that, "As government forces move thorough the countryside, unpaid and out of control, looting and committing a wide range of crimes, the Khmer Rouge gains more potential support."<sup>23</sup>

Instead of pursuing a counterinsurgency strategy that combines military action with military, political, and economic reform, Phnom Penh appears more interested in accelerating a conventional war against the Khmer Rouge. This approach inevitably will fail to resolve the economic and political issues exploited by the Khmer Rouge. Both Ranariddh and CPP officials repeatedly have requested lethal and non-lethal military assistance from Australia, France, the United States, and Cambodia's Southeast Asian neighbors. Their war against the Khmer Rouge is costly. One Cambodian source told officials at The Heritage Foundation that last year's failed assault on Pailin and an earlier failed attack against the town of Anlong Veng wasted \$10 million. Australia, France, and the U.S. justifiably have insisted that Phnom Penh institute basic military reforms before more aid is given. Phnom Penh officials now say their goal is to reduce the Army to a force of 50,000 men and 100 generals over a period of three to four years.<sup>24</sup>

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20 William Dowell, "Debacle At Pailin," *Time* (International Edition), May 2, 1994, p. 52; Barry Wain, "In Order to Reform Cambodia, Start with the Military," *The Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, October 10, 1994, p. 16.

21 Robert Karnoil, "'Cheap' arms for Cambodia Army," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 17, 1994, p. 4; "Israel to update Cambodian MiG-21s," *Janes Defence Weekly*, February 11, 1995, p. 3.

22 Nate Thayer, "Murder With Impunity," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 18, 1994, p. 22.

23 Holloway memo, *op. cit.*

24 Wain, "In Order to Reform Cambodia, Start with the Military."

## The Khmer Rouge

With between 5,000 to 10,000 guerrillas, the Khmer Rouge today control about 6 percent of Cambodia's population.<sup>25</sup> According to captured documents, as early as 1988 the Khmer Rouge began implementing a long-term strategy that stressed building popular support by exploiting issues of rural poverty and government corruption. Its leaders did not envision a military victory, but they did expect to enter a U.N.-brokered government and exploit its weaknesses.<sup>26</sup> Before China ended assistance in 1991, the Khmer Rouge stockpiled enough weapons and ammunition for five years of fighting.<sup>27</sup> Today, they often buy weapons from government soldiers, using a portion of the estimated millions of dollars they make each month selling gems and logs mainly to Thai traders.<sup>28</sup>

In 1993-1994, the Khmer Rouge stepped up their guerrilla attacks against the government. Attacks against foreigners also are increasing, undermining foreign confidence in the new government. The April 1994 kidnapping and subsequent killing of two Britons and an Australian received much international attention.<sup>29</sup> On January 15, Khmer Rouge guerrillas killed an American tourist; on January 30, they threatened to kill more "if U.S. military aid continues."<sup>30</sup> If the Khmer Rouge were to regain power, they very likely would re-introduce a brutal dictatorship. Their leadership has changed very little since the 1970s and still includes supreme leader Pol Pot, regional military commander Ta Mok, and Foreign Minister Khieu Samphan.

The Khmer Rouge have exploited historic Cambodian-Vietnamese antagonism by painting the CPP as a lackey of Vietnam, using this resentment to justify repeated attacks on Vietnamese settlers, some of whom have lived in Cambodia for generations.<sup>31</sup> Khmer Rouge accusations of Vietnam's continued influence were used to justify non-compliance with UNTAC directives to disarm and open their areas to inspection. Khmer Rouge propaganda also exploits a 1982 treaty, imposed on the CPP government by Hanoi, that ceded great amounts of Cambodian territory to Vietnam.

## U.S. POLICY SHOULD STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY IN CAMBODIA

Under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the U.S. provided political and material support to the democratic factions led by Son Sann and Prince Ranariddh as they opposed the Vietnamese-installed CPP government. Unfortunately, beset by its own tran-

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25 While the government claims 5,000 defected from the Khmer Rouge in 1994, the Khmer Rouge still deny the government access to much of the countryside; see Robert Karnoil, "Khmer Rouge urged to 'wipe out' the enemy," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, January 21, 1995, p. 11.

26 Nate Thayer, "KR Blueprint for the Future Includes Electoral Strategy," *Phnom Penh Post*, August 27, 1992, p. 1.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Sheila McNulty, "Border trade a financial boon for Khmer Rouge," *The Washington Times*, February 3, 1995, p. A19.

29 Willis Witter, "Communists again threaten Cambodia," *The Washington Times*, November 9, 1994, p. A23.

30 McNulty, "Border trade a financial boon for Khmer Rouge."

31 After Vietnam's 1979 conquest of Cambodia, it is estimated that 500,000 new Vietnamese settlers moved to Cambodia, further exacerbating ethnic tensions.



sition, the incoming Clinton Administration failed to heed warnings of the need to strengthen both UNTAC and Cambodia's democratic leaders against attacks from the CPP.<sup>32</sup> In early 1993, the State Department curtailed U.S. support for the democratic factions and adopted a policy of neutrality toward the critical election campaign. This was a mistake. It gave the CPP the opportunity to portray the U.S. as supportive, which, while not true, lowered the morale of the democrats. In addition, the Clinton Administration's unwillingness to criticize the CPP contributed to its boldness in undermining Prince Ranariddh and other reform-oriented democrats after the elections.

The Administration's reluctance to use its moral leverage to support democracy continues. On January 29 Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott was asked in Phnom Penh whether he had received assurances from the government that "acts of intimidation" against the National Assembly would cease. He responded, "We heard disavowals of any high-level government sponsorship of such intimidation, and we were heartened by that...."<sup>33</sup> In other words, given the opportunity to ask that government intimidation be halted, he failed to do so. Two weeks after Talbott's visit, the government shut down an opposition newspaper.<sup>34</sup>

The U.S. should use its moral and financial leverage to insist that the CPP-dominated government implement needed reforms as a price for receiving U.S. aid. This financial leverage is considerable. U.S. economic assistance from 1991 through 1993 amounted to \$110 million, plus \$517 million to support UNTAC. In March 1994, Washington pledged to provide \$142.3 million in Agency for International Development (AID) economic assistance from 1994 through 1997. This included a pledge of \$37 million for FY 1996. In addition, the U.S. will provide \$6 million to help destroy an estimated 10 million land mines laid during the last decade. Over \$90,000 for a small military training program was allocated in 1993.

Failure by the U.S. to use its leverage to promote needed reforms in Cambodia could cause the civil war to spread. Increasing corruption and authoritarianism only help the Khmer Rouge gain strength to press the war against the government in Phnom Penh. Should the conflict grow, Vietnam would be tempted to bolster the CPP. A wider war is not in America's interest because it would tend to diminish U.S. influence in Southeast Asia, prompting Thailand and China to intervene again to counter Vietnam. Thailand already is moving closer to Beijing because it seeks to balance Vietnam's power in the region. Despite a close U.S.-Thai military relationship based on a 1956 security treaty, Bangkok refused Washington's 1994 request that it preposition military supplies on U.S. ships in Thai ports. A reluctance to offend China is one reason Bangkok refused the U.S. request, even though stationing supplies closer to possible wars on the Korean peninsula or in the Persian Gulf could save American lives.

U.S. policy toward Cambodia needs to get back on track. To do this, the U.S. should:

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32 Al Santoli, "Cambodia Needs a More Potent U.N. Presence," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 1993; Richard D. Fisher, "Avoiding the U.N.'s other conflict," *The Washington Times*, January 25, 1993, p. E3.

33 Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, press conference, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, January 29, 1995.

34 Gretchen Peters, "Gov't Cracks Down on Khmer Press," *The Cambodia Daily* (Phnom Penh), February 16, 1995.

✓ **Link U.S. economic assistance to the government's progress toward free-market economic reforms.**

Washington should tell Phnom Penh that it must rapidly implement free-market economic reforms to sustain economic growth, build popular support, and undercut the Khmer Rouge. In fact, promoting economic freedom should be Washington's top priority for Cambodia. To accomplish this, AID's FY 1996 economic assistance request of \$37 million should be linked to specific goals. For example, AID funding for the training of government officials should be linked to an official commitment to produce a timetable for reducing the size of the bureaucracy. U.S. officials also should publicly criticize instances of government corruption. If these goals are met, funding for programs of the Center for International Private Enterprise, an affiliate of the National Endowment for Democracy which received \$60,000 from AID this year for work in Cambodia, should be increased to promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the private sector. Moreover, along with its annual assessment of human rights, the State Department should issue an annual assessment of economic freedom in Cambodia.

✓ **Urge the Cambodian government to expand political freedoms.**

Washington must tell Cambodia's co-Prime Ministers, Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen, that restricting political freedoms only strengthens the appeal of the Khmer Rouge. Cambodia needs more freedom, not less. Washington should publicly oppose attempts to limit the freedom of the press. It also should tell Hun Sen and other CPP officials that increasing threats against opposition politicians and journalists will result in less U.S. economic and military assistance. Meanwhile, U.S.-sponsored visitors programs should emphasize bringing democratic leaders to the United States.

✓ **Make U.S. military assistance dependent upon reform of the Army.**

The U.S. should continue to refuse large-scale military assistance until the Cambodian military is overhauled. Washington should require that Phnom Penh also produce a timetable for reducing the RCAF and urge that the savings be used to increase remaining soldiers' wages, thereby decreasing the incentives for crime. The U.S. should strongly urge the Cambodian government to formulate an integrated counterinsurgency program that includes retraining of the RCAF, swift reduction of human rights abuses by the military, protection of organizations engaged in rural economic development, and civic action programs. U.S. officials also should be ready to cite publicly any Cambodian Army units involved in human rights abuses. U.S. officials should tell the Cambodian government that its planned purchase of tanks, armored cars, and combat aircraft is a mistake; the money should be used instead to pay soldiers and fund rural civic action programs. Finally, AID should directly assist the ongoing efforts of the Institute for Human Rights and Democracy, led by Cambodian human rights activist and U.S. citizen Kassie Neou, to conduct human rights training for military and police officials.

✓ **Encourage international donors to link future economic assistance to Cambodia to an agenda of free-market and democratic reforms.**

Washington should ask other major assistance donors to join it in pressing Cambodia to make needed reforms. Having given about \$1 billion to fund Cambodian pro-

grams before, during, and after the U.N.-sponsored transition, Washington should now use its voting power in the Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank to link future aid to a commitment by Cambodia to implement political and economic freedoms. It also should use meetings of the International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC), which coordinates annual aid to Cambodia, to press for a clear linkage between future assistance and implementation of political and economic reforms, in addition to pressing Phnom Penh to shift spending for tanks and aircraft to economic development.

✓ **Ask Thailand and Vietnam to help prevent a wider war in Cambodia.**

The U.S. should ask Thailand and Vietnam to support its efforts to promote democratic and free-market economic reforms in Cambodia. After public criticism from the U.S. in 1994, Thailand has reduced contacts between its military and the Khmer Rouge. The U.S. should praise this move by the Thai government and tell Bangkok that the only way to undermine the Khmer Rouge and prevent a return to civil war is by promoting economic growth and political freedom in Cambodia. Washington also should ask Bangkok to reconsider its 1994 refusal to host U.S. ships with prepositioned military supplies. The U.S. should emphasize to Thai political and military leaders that such supplies must be based in Thailand in order to deter conflicts on the Korean peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and that wars in either region would quickly affect the economies of Southeast Asia, including Thailand's.

The U.S. also should add promoting peace in Cambodia to the agenda of outstanding issues to be considered as relations are improved with Vietnam. Washington should tell Hanoi that it can promote peace by renegotiating the 1982 border agreement with Cambodia—a treaty ceding territory to Vietnam that was forced on Phnom Penh by Hanoi. This gesture would go far toward removing a political issue now effectively exploited by the Khmer Rouge.

## CONCLUSION

By failing to overcome political infighting, corruption, and military abuse, the new Cambodian government is creating conditions that could allow the Khmer Rouge to return to power. At the same time, the Clinton Administration has failed to promote American interests in Cambodia adequately. It should insist that the new government move seriously to implement reforms sufficient to undermine the Khmer Rouge. If civil war ensues, a renewed proxy conflict between China and Vietnam could erupt to threaten American interests and influence in Southeast Asia.

To avoid this outcome, the new Congress should insist that the Clinton Administration press the Cambodian government to make economic and democratic reforms. Democracy and free-market reforms are the best way to undercut the growing support for the Khmer Rouge, which threatens the peace in Cambodia and throughout the region.

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