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The Role of Government and Civil Society in the Maintenance of Peace and Security

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- ✚ design and conduct trainings to civil servants and general public to build capacity in various topics especially in economic development and international cooperation;
- ✚ participate and share ideas in domestic, regional and international forums, workshops and conferences;
- ✚ promote peace and cooperation among Cambodians, as well as between Cambodians and others through regional and international dialogues; and
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Abstract:

There is generally limited interaction between policy makers and those who think and study international politics in most of the universities and think tank institutions in developing countries including Cambodia. Arguably, the role of foreign policy specialists has diminished. As a result, governments, in particular foreign ministers, tend to neglect this important reservoir of knowledge that is in the hands of academia. The paper aims at analysing the different roles by stake holders in promotion of peace and security including the UN, the government and civil society as well. The paper concludes that a regional mechanism and network of think tanks are needed and stronger cooperation and dialogues in social and economic relations is required to promote regional and global welfare and prosperity. Without such mechanisms, regional states will be tempted to abdicate their responsibilities, thereby allowing external powers to intervene to safeguard their strategic interests.

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The Role of Government and Civil Society in the Maintenance of Peace and Security

Din Merican¹

1. Introduction: Need for Network: Government- Academia Relations

There is generally limited interaction between policy makers and those who think and study international politics in most of the universities in developing countries including Cambodia. Arguably, the role of foreign policy specialists has diminished. As a result, governments, in particular foreign ministers, tend to neglect this important reservoir of knowledge that is in the hands of universities.

Academia and academics have the bloc of time to think about, and research into issues and concerns that confront us as peoples and analyse various options for the long term in the pursuit of peace and security. This dialogue between governments and academics including those in the think tanks is essential if we are to promote understanding and goodwill, which are fundamental in promoting cooperation for peace and security.

2. Civil Society: ASEAN-ISIS and CICP

The role of civil society – Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), media, cultural groups—and the contributions they make today, more than ever, can be truly immense and

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very positive. They have the power of ideas to transform society and politics at domestic, regional and global levels, especially in track 2 diplomacy.²

The challenge is how national leaders can tap the dynamism and experience of civil society to design and execute policies for the betterment of their peoples. Regrettably, civil society organizations are still being viewed with a great deal of suspicion and politicization.

Indeed, it is increasingly clear that leaders in governments (politicians and bureaucrats) cannot solve myriads of problems on their own. Governments and civil societies have to work in concert to deal with global and regional affairs.

In connection with the above, it may be worth noting that since its inception in 1994 and under the leadership of its then Executive Director, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace was able to participate constructively with the Cambodian Government in its efforts to seek entry as a full member of ASEAN, which became a reality in 1999.

Since 1997, CICP is also an active member of the ASEAN Institute for International and Strategic Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), a regional network of national think tanks, which is an acknowledged leader of non-governmental or unofficial initiatives on ASEAN, global and regional security and political and socio-economic issues.

ASEAN-ISIS and CICP have proved that it is possible to engage constructively in term of debates and policy analyses with the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia on regional issues, and other think tanks around the world on global affairs, and with the Cambodian Government on matters of national concern. This, of course, did not happen overnight. It was a time consuming and energy sapping undertaking requiring a lot of tact and patience, as mutual trust and confidence would have to be built up first.

² Track II diplomacy refers to non-governmental channels for bridging diplomacy in peace settlement, peace negotiation and other intervention. Channels such as Academia, private sectors and so on are sometimes very powerful in diplomacy.

By “whispering in the ears of power,” civil society including think tank, NGOs and private sector have had some influence and participation in the process of thinking of both regional and national policies on national, regional and global comprehensive security.³

The Asian Economic Forum through its links with the University of Cambodia is another classic example of multi-layered cooperation and networking for peace and security. It does this by including the private sector and other role players.

3. United Nations Leadership in Global Affairs

From the outset, I would like to state my support for the United Nations for its role in global affairs. Despite increasing pessimism coupled with a heightened sense of helplessness about multilateral institutions in global affairs, I remain convinced that leadership for global and regional affairs can only come from and through the United Nations.

For small nation states like Cambodia, the UN is perhaps the only institution at the global level where our views can be articulated and effectively communicated and our interests are protected. At the regional level, we need to reinvigorate ASEAN so that our views and concerns on global peace and security can carry more weight than what is possible if we acted alone as individual states. Both the UN and ASEAN are indispensable to us if we are to meet the challenges of a unipolar world of geo-politics in the 21st century.

The UN, which was created in the aftermath of the Second World War II, not only provides legitimacy, but also is an effective mechanism of international law and order. It is based on the principle of collective action for global peace and security.

Today more than ever before we face new and unprecedented challenges brought about by growing interdependence and technological change. Over the last 17 years or so, we have to

³ Kao Kim Hourn, *Whispering in the Ears of Power- The Role of ASEAN Track Two Diplomacy* (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 2002). See also, Hadi Soesastro, Clara Joewono and Carolina G. Hernandez, editors, *Twenty Two Years of ASEAN-ISIS: Origin, Evolution and Challenges of Track Two Diplomacy* (Yogyakarta: ASEAN-ISIS and CSIS, 2006) for details.

deal with global issues, which require urgent and prompt collective action, often on a massive scale.

4. A Changed Global Environment

In between the past years of the previous century and the early years of the new millennium, two major changes have taken place. First, the world witnessed the first major shift in international relations (balance of power) with the end of the Cold War as symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991). Second, a tectonic change in geo-politics occurred after September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C.

Capitalising on an outpouring of public sympathy and a sense of outrage of the international community over these attacks, a new Administration in Washington declared its war on terrorism starting with the invasion of Afghanistan, vowing to stay the course “until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated”.⁴

These two events, coming so close to each other — merely 12 years apart—have today caused peoples the world over to take their peace and security much less for granted than at any time in recent memory. The global balance and the relative sobriety once provided by the superpowers and multi-polarity based on the international rule of law and collective security system of the United Nations have been replaced by a unilateralist hyper-power.

We are, therefore, faced today with an international political situation—with its attendant ill-effects on the global economy—which, if left to its own devices, could seriously undermine global peace and security and perhaps even lead to our region and the rest of the world, in particular the Middle East, to the brink of disaster.

⁴ “Bush reinforces anti-terror pledge”, *BBC News*, January 26, 2002

5. Peace, Security and Prosperity

Peace, security and prosperity are three universal needs that people – be they in Cambodia or Canada, America or Argentina, Palestine or Poland, Egypt or Ethiopia—care about most. Even island nations like England and Singapore, landlocked Laos, Austria find their national borders porous when it comes to combating drug and human trafficking, trans-border crimes, epidemics, HIV/AIDS, international terrorism, controlling illegal immigrants and tackling problems associated with environmental degradation and climate change.

I have highlighted these for the simple reason that history has shown that there is no White Knight, however powerful and omnipresent, who can manage or police the international system on its own. The Iraq War and its aftermath is not history.

We are all indirectly living through this human tragedy. The news networks like CNN, Al-Jazeera, BBC World and CNBC never cease to remind us all of its grim realities. Iraq proves that even a hyper-power cannot manage, let alone lead the world on its own. The same also applies to trans-borders issues and the increasingly dynamic and complex global economy.

6. Need for Cooperation

The message is loud and clear: we need to cooperate on global peace and security and do so effectively. Major Powers do not have the answers or solutions to the myriad of human problems and challenges. Often they have narrow national self-interests, which conflict with the regional and global good.

This also applies to leadership at the national and regional levels. What is required in my view is the capacity of our leaders to rise above narrow parochial concerns to see the big picture and then craft win-win solutions, which can come when they see the tangible benefits of multi-layered cooperation and networking in the interest of global peace and security.

ASEAN offers enormous potential for regional and global good, although its progress as a regional grouping over the last 30 years since its founding in 1967 has been painfully slow.

Just as regional and global affairs must be collective and multilateral premised on the United Nations Charter and achieved through international institutions, the role of leadership in civil society is equally crucial in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security.

Countries, big or small, rich or poor states must re-commit themselves, individually and collectively, to the fundamental purpose of the United Nations.

What does the UN Charter say?

Article 1 of the Charter proclaims that the UN's primary purpose is "to maintain international peace and security" by taking "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression and other breaches of the peace".

In other words, what Article 1 of the Charter says rather unambiguously is that the construction and preservation of global peace and security, that is both to deter aggression and to stop acts of war against nation states, must be based on an effective system of international law and order. This, in turn, should be premised on the principle of collective action, which must be executed by the United Nations.

Only the United Nations can provide leadership for global peace and security. We cannot blame an organization because of the failure of its membership.⁵ For example, the First Gulf War (1991) was a success because its membership was acted under the banner of the United Nations to confront an aggressor (Saddam Hussein's Iraq) to restore the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Kuwait.

Before Kuwait, that fundamental *raison d'être* remained unfulfilled for several decades after the Second World War. This was because of the Cold War. The then two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union along with the other members of Permanent Five on the United Nations Security Council (P-5) chose to pursue their own national self-interests, and were engaged in an ideological war with their proxies in various locations of the world.

⁵ James Traub, *The Best Intentions: Kofi Annan and the UN in the Era of American Power* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006) for a balanced treatment of the United Nations and its Secretary-General.

As a result, the United Nations could do little about many crisis situations such as the 1956 French-British-Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal, war in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Cambodia (in the 1970s), not to mention the Middle East Conflict. The United Nations also failed to act on other conflicts including Tibet, Cyprus and Kashmir. The Second Gulf War is a recent case in point.

In view of the foregoing, the worst form of global leadership would appear to have come from the UN Security Council. When there is no unity of purpose or consensus among the Security Council (P-5), the whole world suffers as a result.

Much remains to be done at the global level today more than ever. Prospects in this regard seem bleak—at least so long as the current American and British Administrations are around. Any discussion at this stage regarding leadership on the part of the powerful in bringing about global peace and security can be at best academic in nature.

7. Regional Leadership for Peace and Security

This brings me to the question of leadership for peace and security in the regional terms and context where the picture is quite different.

Regional focus on peace, security and prosperity are needed and seem more promising. And this has been the case since the end of East-West tensions of the previous century. The easing of conflict has since enabled regions to seek solutions to their problems on regional terms. The resolution of the Cambodian conflict is a classic cause and a shining example.

The Cambodian Solution

The resolution of the Cambodian Conflict was an excellent example to indicate how regional collective action, aided by fortuitous circumstances, enabled ASEAN to seek a solution to the Cambodian problem through the UN.

In Cambodia, as a regional problem, the UN finally succeeded, even if it came after much destruction and death spanning over two decades by the Khmer Rouge regime. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the resultant rapprochement between China and Vietnam, the cooperation of P-5, and the persistence of ASEAN intervention brought about the return of peace to Cambodia. The major powers saw that it was in their interest to restore peace and security in Southeast Asia. The Cambodian proxies found that they no longer had any backers to prolong the civil war.

The Cambodian question showed us that only the United Nations could provide the kind of leadership and template. The role of civil society in term of raising awareness and advocacy was seen for the first time to have played a important role in facilitating the work of the UN prior to, during and after the UNTAC operation and the UN-supervised elections of 1993.

Cambodian Leadership

More importantly, we must acknowledge the role of Cambodian leaders in securing peace and security, and reconciliation for their country. With strong aspiration of national reconciliation from Cambodian sides, the civil war was successfully ended by peace negotiations and national integration.

The “win-win” strategy conducted by Prime Minister Hun Sen which was used to integrate the Khmer Rouge military structure to the Cambodian army and to provide them space for development and participating in rebuilding the nation can finish the war and achieve a full peace. Cambodia has pursued a course of reconciliation and compromise in order to ensure a stable and peaceful political future for the country. With its win-win policy, the Royal Government managed to dismantle the political and military organization of the Khmer Rouge. The remaining remnants of the Khmer Rouge defected to the government; others were arrested pending the trial for the genocidal crimes that they had committed in the past. At present, Cambodia is only one integrated, self-contained territory under one government, without separatists and rebels, for the first time in over three decades. Now in Cambodia there are no more Khmer Rouge rebels, leaders or troops. All have come into one fold. What was intended in the Paris Peace Accords of 1991 but could not be ensured by UNTAC, is

now a reality because Cambodians have come together among themselves, not at the behest or prodding of external forces.

The win-win policy is elaborated as follows:⁶

- First, providing guarantee for security, life and physical safety to all those who had volunteered to defect from the Pol Pot's political and military organization in order to join the government and the mainstream of the society.
- Second, their career and profession were protected through the process of integration, except for those who had political function.
- Third, their mobile and immobile private property is being recognized by the government.

Providing the three guarantees responded to the interests of those who served in the rank of the Khmer Rouge and lived in the zone controlled by the Khmer Rouge. It became an effective means to crack down on Pol Pot's militarist policy and the "iron-corroded-by-rust" strategy. Ultimately, the Khmer Rouge's political and military organization was dismantled. Peace and national reconciliation were fully restored. National and territorial unity, the lack of secessionist zones and the reconciliation within the framework of one Constitution, one monarch and one government emerged in this unfortunate country. Now this is the diamond opportunity for socio-economic rehabilitation and reconstruction through the government's triangle strategy.

Regional Leadership

In the Cambodia example there were no case for conflict prevention in the 70's when was stated during the Vietnam War. However one saw instead conflict resolution at work with regional effort in facilitating and mediating all parties in conflicts to work together. There was a successful involvement of ASEAN in the aftermath of the 5-6 July 1997 faction fighting in Phnom Penh involving the force loyal to the then First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh and the force loyal to the then Second Prime Minister Hun Sen. Cambodia was at the brink of a civil war again after the Paris Peace Agreement of 1991 and the United Nation organized election in 1993.⁷

⁶ Prime Minister speech at the Acceptance of Honorary Doctor Degree on November 15, 2001. The speech can be accessed at <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=456>

⁷ See Ung Huot (2006), Post Conflict Peace Building: A Cambodian Case Study, CICP Working Paper No.11

ASEAN was requested to intervene in restoring political stability of Cambodia. The Troika was formed comprising Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. One may argue that it was against the principle of non- interference in the Domestic affairs of a State, in this case it was Cambodia, Member Observer of ASEAN. The answer was that ASEAN acted that way at the request of the then foreign Minister of Cambodia, at the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN in Kula Lumpur in late July 1997. ASEAN could mediate and contribute to the solution, marked by the return of Prince Norodom Ranarith to Phnom Penh and the organization of the general election in 1998. It is believed that this constitute the basis for the present peace and stability today.⁸

It was as much an act of Cambodian and regional leadership with the cooperation of the international community. Cambodia is an example of multi-layered cooperation at both regional and global levels and networking with civil society.⁹ There have been other success stories at regional and through inter-regional cooperation since Cambodia, such as Timor Leste and Aceh.

Timor Leste: Work-in-Progress

Timor Leste became independent following the UN-sponsored agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the United States and a decision by Indonesian President B.J. Habibie to allow UN-supervised popular referendum (held on August 30, 1999). It was an exercise of self-determination, which enabled for the people of Timor Leste to vote for full independence from Indonesia. Violence ensued and a peacekeeping force led by Australia (INTERFET) intervened to restore order. It was replaced by United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET).

One of the problems in Timor Leste is that the international community virtually walked away after the referendum. Countries in political transition continue to need the international community for some time to come. Today, Timor Leste enjoys observer status in ASEAN. However, much work remains to restore peace and stability there.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See Din Merican, *Cambodia's Engagement in ASEAN: Lessons for Timor Leste* (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 2007). For an excellent treatment of ASEAN's role in Cambodia before and after UNTAC, see A.K.P. Mochtan, ed., *Cambodia: Toward Peace and Reconstruction* (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993) and *ASEAN-ISIS Memorandum No. 4* (ASEAN-ISIS, October, 1993)

Aceh: Exercise in ASEAN-EU Partnership

As for Aceh, a joint venture, as it were, between regional organizations, the European Union (EU) and ASEAN, helped in an internal matter of sovereign state. The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) is a concrete example of an action-oriented and comprehensive political and security cooperation between two regional groupings.

EU's civilian crisis management expertise and financial resources and ASEAN's local knowledge and ownership made a difference. This model could be replicated and adapted to deal with Southern Thailand, Mindanao (The Philippines) and to resolve conflicts in Sri Lanka and Kashmir.

Leadership at regional and global levels can only come through building peace and security with others. I call this cooperative security. This is because it is reciprocal. It does not flow from one side demanding unilateral advantage at the expense of the other. Additionally, regional peace, security and prosperity must be viewed as part and parcel of the construction of a durable structure of international order.

Countries of Southeast Asia have long realized that nations act more effectively in concert than separately. The creation of ASEAN in 1967 was the first step in strengthening regional peace and stability. To underpin this, the second step was the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 1976. In 2002, the ASEAN Summit in Bali agreed to build an ASEAN Community by the year 2020. It will comprise three pillars, namely, the ASEAN Political and Security Community, an Economic Community, and a Social and Cultural Community. In a nutshell, this is to contribute to global peace and security.

Recently, ASEAN Defense Ministers displayed leadership when they agreed in principle to establish an ASEAN Peacekeeping Force. This will not only strengthen regional peace and security, but also contribute to making the UN more effective.

8. Conclusion

Leadership in regional and global affairs for peace and security is a cooperative undertaking with strong commitment. Regional peace and security must be seen as part and parcel of a durable global order that has the support of the international community and the participation of actors involved in the conflict.

Increasingly, we need a network of think tanks and dialogues to enhance cooperative regional order as well as social and economic relations to promote welfare and prosperity of the people in the region. Without such mechanisms, regional states will be tempted to abdicate their responsibilities, thereby allowing external powers to intervene to safeguard their strategic interests.

We therefore need to work regionally, inter-regionally and through the UN for global peace, security and prosperity. In other words, the UN and the multilateral route is the most effective way we can reach the sort of shared peace and security which we need in order to deal with problems at home and abroad.

Yet as we look around and beyond our neighborhoods, we find that the global community remains divided because of racial prejudices, religious obscurantism, and growing economic and social disparities. Is this because we lack leadership at all levels of the international community to craft a better world for ourselves, and our future generations? Or are we too self-indulgent to see the next realities? Why is it so difficult for us as individuals, as nations, regions, and as a global community to get away from being trapped in a “culture of impunity”? The alternative is there for all to see.

It is a “culture of accountability” that we must create and nurture so that peoples can live in peace and security, to enjoy freedom from fear and freedom from need.¹⁰ We can no longer take things for granted, be it with our social and economic relations, our environment, and our politics. Our world has changed so much from the days of our ancestors, yet we remain primitive in the way we look our existence and our relations. We remain in a Hobbesian

¹⁰ Allan Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional and Global Issues* (Singapore:Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

world, as if we are caught in “a vast web of deceit and humbug,”¹¹ and cannot find our way of this morass.

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¹¹ Robert Higgs, *Against Leviathan: Government Power and a Free Society* (Oakland, CA: The Independent Institute, 2004), p xv.

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