

Relational peace among elites in Cambodia? Domination, distrust, and dependency

Johanna Söderström

After a war, elites usually continue to be active, and do not disappear. Historically, attempts to remove the war elites in different contexts have often failed despite concerted efforts and large-scale societal transformation (see e.g. Herz 1948; Edinger 1960; Mayzel 1979; Remy 2002). Scholars have noted a similar recycling of elites in current-day peacebuilding contexts, and have also pointed to the difficulties of disentangling military elites from political elites (Käihkö 2012: 191; Utas 2013; Themnér 2017). The continuation of war elites often results in a serious tradeoff between the promotion of peace and democracy (Söderström 2015; see also Jarstad and Sisk 2008). Overall, continuity of elites tends to be the defining trait despite the upheaval of war and peace agreements. The question, then, is how the legacy of these elites has played out over the years. Among cases where the armed conflict, and particularly a civil war, ended many years ago, Cambodia is a case where the degree of elite continuity is extreme. There, following the first elections, some of the peace signatories formed a coalition government. One of these peace signatories, Hun Sen, is still in government and thus has served as prime minister since 1985.¹

Cambodia's labeling as a hybrid peace case (Richmond and Franks 2007; Öjendal and Ou 2013; Öjendal and Ou 2015) also requires more work in order for us to attempt to decipher what kind and degree of peace is actually in question. While hybridity and hybrid peace are much discussed concepts, they more often focus on the process behind peace, in terms of the interventions and peacebuilding attempts and resulting frictions (see e.g. Mac Ginty 2010; Bargués-Pedreny and Randazzo 2018), and thus the concept is limited in terms of how far it helps us disentangle the resultant peace itself. More recent work has categorized Cambodia as a *negative* hybrid peace, in particular with respect to its governance and judicial institutions (Simangan 2018). While Simangan's work is an important step forward, hybrid peace discussions remain focused on the friction and interaction between the interveners and local actors. This chapter suggests that research needs to focus more on the

actors involved in the main conflict, and, in addition, to use tools that help us understand the peace in more detail, something which the relational peace framework can help with. The current categorization of Cambodia as a hybrid peace thus leaves the analysis lacking in details as to the state of affairs in Cambodia, and the long-term presence of one of the peace signatories in government makes the case particularly relevant from a relational peace perspective.

Cambodia is undoubtedly a case with significant gray areas related to the peace that has developed. Cambodia was under Khmer Rouge rule between 1975 and 1979, and around 1.5 to 3 million people died in this period as a result. Cambodia was plagued by both intrastate and interstate war. In 1979 a new communist government was installed following Vietnamese invasion and support, and Pol Pot (of the Khmer Rouge) was ousted. This was followed by a civil war, with Cold War involvement, where the communist regime was challenged by the newly formed Funcinpec (alliance between the Khmer Rouge, King Norodom Sihanouk, and other opposition groups). From 1979 to 1991 the country was ruled by the People's Republic of Kampuchea, with the support of Vietnam among others, although the Khmer Rouge controlled much of the country. On October 23, 1991, a peace agreement was signed following negotiations which involved the five permanent members of the Security Council, and once external support for the peace was present this pushed all internal parties toward peace. Brown notes that the peace agreement:

was an accord brokered by outside powers and accepted only with deep reservations by the Cambodian parties themselves. Its success depended upon the willingness of the parties to put aside their antagonisms and cooperate across the board in a manner totally foreign to the Cambodian experience. Sihanouk and Hun Sen were the linchpins; were either to be removed, the agreement would at once be in peril. (Brown 1992: 95)

The peace accord was expected to be a fragile one, and heavily dependent on the abilities and desire of the individual signatories to keep the peace. A two-year UN mission followed the agreement, and then elections were held in 1993. The first government was a coalition between the royal Funcinpec party (with Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the son of Sihanouk, as the party leader) and the Cambodian People's Party (with Hun Sen as party leader). At the same time Sihanouk was reinstated as king of Cambodia in 1993. The coalition (known as the Royal Cambodian Government) did not last, however, as Hun Sen overthrew Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh in 1997 in a coup. Moreover, the war did not even end with the peace agreement, as the Khmer Rouge and Funcinpec continued their rebellion until

1999. In 1998, Hun Sen won the elections, and he has been in power ever since. While political violence has decreased since the 1990s, Hun Sen has strengthened his power and continually weakened the opposition over the years (Brown 1992; Barma 2012: 281; Peou 2012; Poluda et al. 2012: 92; for more on power-sharing and political developments in Cambodia, see Leifer 1992; Roberts 2002; Than 2004). Despite the heavy intervention, the merely superficial transformation in Cambodia is sometimes depicted as involving strategic security combined with unaccountability, patronage, corruption, and limited democratization (Richmond and Franks 2007: 45–46).

The role of the elite in Cambodia cannot be overestimated, and Peou notes that “the political elites have since the early 1990s shown little interest in building effective institutions” and that “members of the political and military elites have often pursued their interests by relying on illegal, secretive or even coercive means” (Peou 2012: 200). Barma takes the argument further, claiming that the power-sharing envisaged in the peace agreement failed to produce “true reconciliation among the factions” and that in fact the elites have expanded their patronage and abuse of the state apparatus (Barma 2012: 282; see also Roberts 2002). Thus, paying attention to how these elite actors relate to one another is key to understanding this halted peace process. Cambodia is often talked about in hybrid terms, and Öjendal and Ou note that elites on the two sides (both the dominant party with Hun Sen and the opposition) have resisted the liberal peace project, while also showing an interest in “find[ing] ways for more indigenous power-induced, negotiation-based, consensus politics to emerge” and limiting the amount of violence used (2013: 374). Given this resistance to liberal peace and the centrality of the elite, this chapter delves deeper into the internal elite relations in Cambodia.

Yet while the recent wave of civil wars and ensuing peace have also faced the challenge of an old elite surviving from the war, this group has attracted little attention from peace scholars. The role of post-war elites in protecting or undercutting the peace after the end of a war is central, as these actors hold a disproportionate amount of power. Signatories to peace agreements can take on many different roles in the peace and the ensuing political landscape. The question looms large of what impact the inclusion of these actors has on the development of peace; how do signatories continue to envision peace as guardians of the peace agreement? Having signed the peace agreement, how do they relate to their fellow peace signatories?

Typically, those who sign peace agreements represent the top of the elite at the moment of the peace agreement. Regardless of whether it was military or political to begin with, what role this post-war elite takes on during

peace may matter a great deal. There are many reasons to expect post-war elites from the 1990s – the peace signatories – to continue to be active in society in the post-war phase; the question is in what capacity, and how they serve or undermine peace. It matters how the elites position themselves, not least in terms of how they shape public opinion, and because they may act to promote certain political developments. Matanock and Garcia-Sanchez in particular demonstrate the importance of elites as shapers of public opinion on peace (2017: 156, 164; see also Paffenholz et al. 2017: 53–57). I would argue that this is perhaps even more true in relation to peace signatories, as the weight of those who have signed a peace will be particularly salient in how that peace is reinterpreted or sustained. This chapter focuses on the signatories of the agreements and how they persist in describing their relationships with their counterparts in the peace agreements. Paying attention to how peace is conceived and how this particular group talks about the relationship with the former enemy should deepen our understanding of the kind of peace that has developed over extended periods of time, while studying these elite relations should enable us to pinpoint their long-term involvement in politics (i.e., making conflict or making peace).

The next section of the chapter discusses which specific actors were scrutinized and why, how newspaper article searches were carried out, how the relational peace framework has been operationalized in this case study, and the limitations of these decisions. The elite's relationship with its former enemy of course can be expressed in many different forums; however, the impression made in the mass media is particularly important given the interest in how elite expressions shape larger societal ideas of peace, but also because this may shape deliberation and future behavior (Crawford 2004: 23). The discussion of media is followed by a section that analyzes the relations between the former enemies in Cambodia, paying particular attention to how behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes, and ideas of these relationships have developed over time in order to depict the practices of relational peace in the case of Cambodia.

This chapter seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how peace develops in the long run; in particular the text demonstrates some key turning points and describes whether and how the elite relations conform to relational peace. This chapter examines a range of central actors involved in the peace process and their subsequent political life journeys over twenty-six years in Cambodia. Overall, this approach to examining the post-war relations of elite actors shows how the relationship is colored by ways of interacting, and ways of thinking about the other and the relationship, which do not conform to relational peace, but which rather underscore domination, distrust, and ideas of dependency. Many years after the signing of the peace agreement, there are still reasons for concern. The analysis also demonstrates shifts in

these elite relations over time, and highlights points in time where there were possibilities for larger transformations.

Peace signatories and newspaper articles

The Paris Peace Accords were settled on October 23, 1991, by four factions. The first was the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK, also called the State of Cambodia or SOC), which evolved into the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in the early 1990s; Hun Sen signed the peace agreement as its representative. Second was the Khmer Rouge, where Khieu Samphan was the leader after Pol Pot from 1985 to 1998, and starting in 2007 was tried for genocide and crimes against humanity. Third and fourth, there were two other armed resistance groups: the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec), founded by Norodom Sihanouk and his son Norodom Ranariddh, who also became president of the group; and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), founded by Son Sann. The three resistance groups Khmer Rouge, Funcinpec, and KPNLF together formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), which had acted as a government in exile.

For the current chapter, all the relevant peace agreements signed during the 1990s in Cambodia were scrutinized for names of the signatories, and local and international representatives were identified. For each of the local signatories, short political biographies were collected, and on the basis of these, the individuals who took up any kind of political career after the last peace agreement were included in the newspaper search. The following individuals were identified as peace signatories for Cambodia: Norodom Sihanouk, Khieu Samphan, Hun Sen, Son Sann,² and Norodom Ranariddh. These were the non-international representatives who signed the six documents making up the peace agreement (the first was signed in August 1990, and the final accord was signed on November 20, 1991). The initial search drew on all sources available in the Factiva database (this database covers local and international daily newspapers, magazines, newswires, and TV and radio podcasts among other sources from 200 countries) starting from the date of the final peace agreement (November 20, 1991), and located any English-language articles that mentioned the name of any one of these individuals and the term "peace." This first search resulted in over 13,000 hits, and so a narrower approach had to be taken. As there was one local newspaper published in English (*Phnom Penh Post*), the search was focused on this, as it also is a better reflection of the kind of representations which the Cambodian population as a whole was exposed to even if language

biases cannot be ruled out.³ In May 2018, the paper was purchased by individuals who were thought to have government leanings, and some of the newspaper's journalists quit as a result, so for this reason the search was limited to the end of April 2018, with a start date of July 1992 when the newspaper first began circulation.

The number of hits per se is not the issue here, but rather the overall progression of the representation of the relationship between the peace signatories. Even so, the number of hits was very extensive, and thus it was also possible to introduce an additional limitation, namely, that at least two of the peace signatories should be mentioned by name in each article. Given the interest in dyads, this made sense. Hun Sen represented the government of Cambodia, whereas the other five were all in clear opposition to the government and also, to varying degrees, to each other; thus Hun Sen would have to be named in each article together with any of the other names. Hence, this search focused on the main cleavage. Also, since Hun Sen has been in government since before the peace agreement, it also makes sense to analyze how he in particular relates to the other peace signatories. Ultimately, the most prominent actors in the media are also those who are active in politics, unless certain ones are explicitly censored. Using the criteria regarding peace signatories mentioned, the search produced 592 newspaper articles, which were then coded in Atlas.TI using the relational framework. These articles do not portray the true attitudes and feelings of the actors involved, but rather the ways in which their attitudes and positions are represented in the media and hence to the public.

The coding of the newspaper articles took as its starting point the relational peace definition set out by Söderström et al:

A peaceful relation entails behavioral interaction that can be characterized as deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation between the actors in the dyad; the actors involved recognize and trust each other and believe that the relationship is either one between legitimate fellows or between friends. (Söderström et al. 2021: 496; see also Jarstad et al., this volume, Introduction)

In particular, this framework stresses the importance of paying attention to behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes toward the other, and the idea of the relationship as it is expressed by the parties involved. Together these three components make up a relationship, and if we are to understand a relationship we need to study all three components over time. In addition, Söderström et al. suggest that certain types of behavior, attitudes, and ideas signal that the relationship is one of peace. In the next section I will therefore comment on each in turn, and clarify how each component is both theoretically defined and dealt with in this particular study.

In analyzing the newspaper articles, particular attention was paid to expressions that signal action toward or with the other, verbs where the signatory is the actor, as a way to identify *behavioral interaction*, either as expressed directly by the signatory or as described by the reporter. The relational peace framework highlights three types of behavioral interaction that denote peace, namely deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation. As a result, I paid attention to the degree to which there is an open exchange of views between the actors (with no expectation of consensus), how power is exerted in the relationship, and the degree of cooperation (working or acting together rather than hostile interaction). Similarly, when coding the newspaper articles, attention was paid to the signatory's attitudes toward the other (again expressed directly or described by the reporter). Here two specific types of attitude toward the other are deemed particularly relevant for relational peace, namely recognition and trust (Söderström et al. 2021: 489–494).

Finally, in reading the newspaper articles, depictions of the relationship as a whole were also coded in order to capture the signatories' own *idea of the relationship*. Here, however, it was more important to limit the search to direct attributions by the signatories themselves, rather than descriptions by the reporter. How do the signatories term the relationship, and how do they name the role of the other – a political partner, opponent, enemy, etc.? The relational peace framework suggests that two ways of formulating the idea of the relationship are particularly consistent with relational peace, namely where the relationship is thought of as a friendship, and where it is seen as a relationship where the actors involved have a legitimate coexistence, each seeing the other as a fellow (Söderström et al. 2021: 494–496; Jarstad et al., this volume, Introduction).

In going through the material, many different indications of behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes, and ideas of the relationship were recorded and analyzed, not just those that are identified with relational peace, in order to get a sense of how the relationship with the other as a whole has developed over time. These additional elements will be addressed where appropriate below.

Elite relations in Cambodia

In this section, the elite relations between the Cambodian peace signatories are scrutinized with respect to the relational peace framework, taking each component in turn. Starting with behavioral interaction, the text below maps out how the elites depict their interactions with each other over time. First, however, a brief note on the general development of politics in Cambodia

over this time period is necessary. The first election in Cambodia was held in 1993, with Funcinpec receiving 45 percent and the CPP 38 percent, resulting in Hun Sen and Ranariddh becoming second and first prime ministers respectively. Hun Sen and the CPP managed to coerce Ranariddh into this power-sharing arrangement via claims of electoral fraud (Roberts 2002: 104; see also Ponniah 2018). In 1997 Hun Sen seized power in a coup, forcing Ranariddh to step down. In 2003, the CPP's support had increased, but a new deal was made with Funcinpec in 2004. Ranariddh was not the leader of Funcinpec in the 2008 and 2013 elections, but returned as leader of the party for the election in 2018; however, the party only received 6 percent of the votes. While the data collected for this chapter stop in April 2018, the CPP and Hun Sen received all seats in the parliament in July, in an election generally considered as flawed (BBC News 2018b). Indeed, it is the relationship between Hun Sen and Ranariddh which dominates the bulk of the data over this time period.

Behavioral interaction

Behavioral interaction between the different dyads was the most frequently encountered of the three types of components in the data, as behavior is more easily reported in the media than expressions of attitudes and ideas of the relationship by the actors. In this section, the behavioral interaction is discussed chronologically. Broadly speaking, the dyad of Hun Sen and Ranariddh is most prevalent in the data.

During 1993, accusations, critiques, and statements of no cooperation were not uncommon in the *Phnom Penh Post*. In relation to the Khmer Rouge the antagonistic behavior was even more pronounced, for instance with Hun Sen encouraging indictment: "State of Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen called for nominal Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan to be tried for genocide" (April 9, 1993).⁴ In addition the Khmer Rouge is accused of not complying with the peace agreement. The lack of deliberation between the actors was also followed by hints that the parties were preparing for violence. Toward the end of 1993, there are some indications of attempts at reconciliation and at least having talks with the Khmer Rouge, and potentially ceasing to fight each other. The more positive examples of behavioral interaction during 1993 were particularly tied to Ranariddh and Hun Sen, and were largely seen in statements of cooperation, sharing power, and sometimes even consensus-creation. This was, of course, tied to their coalition government:

The Provisional National Government of Cambodia (PNGC) has begun functioning with two co-presidents, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, who were once bitter enemies. They have now, at least for the present time,

worked out their differences and agreed to bury the hatchet and sit at the same table. (July 16, 1993.a)

Sihanouk and Hun Sen also show evidence of constructive behavioral interaction, but more in the sense of meeting each other and giving expressions of support.

During 1994 there are statements indicative of failed attempts at deliberation, and even indications that Hun Sen was losing interest in negotiating with the Khmer Rouge. The behavioral interaction between Ranariddh and Hun Sen largely consists of meeting, agreeing, doing things, and saying things together. Together they also express critique against the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge on the other hand refers to continued use of violence in order to convince its opponents: "So unfortunately we are obliged to push more on the battlefield to convince them they will not get anything more by military means" (May 20, 1994.a). Sihanouk's behavioral interaction with Hun Sen, on the other hand, is more concerned with expressing a desire for Hun Sen's support, although it also hints at domination, as Sihanouk does not seem to be free to act without the other:

I will accept to return to power, but I need also Hun Sen's support. If he does not support me it is useless for me to go back to Cambodia because I do not want to shed blood to fight a secession led by Hun Sen [...] I need Hun Sen. I need his support. I need the approval of his party. I cannot return to power to go back to Cambodia unless I have the assurance that Hun Sen and his party will join me in my government. (June 17, 1994.a)

Toward the end of the year Sihanouk expresses the fact that he is dominated by Hun Sen, and also that he will not interfere or dominate in turn: "I will no longer intervene in their affairs" (December 30, 1994.b).

During 1995 the indications of behavioral interaction within the dyads are largely positive and constructive, with Hun Sen and Ranariddh cooperating together, working together, and often speaking together. Sihanouk is open to cooperation with all others, including the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk and Hun Sen's behavioral interaction is more concerned with degrees of domination. For instance, toward the end of 1995, the following suggests that Sihanouk's freedom to act is limited by Hun Sen's power:

The King of Cambodia, His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk Varman, bowed to this reality, gave Caesar what is Caesar's, and, in order to save his half-brother from the prison life or death, asked Hun Sen to allow Sirivudh to go into exile in France. Hun Sen agreed and Sirivudh departed on 21 December. (December 29, 1995.b)

During 1996, the behavioral interaction depicted begins in constructive and cooperative terms. Hun Sen's and Ranariddh's interaction is mainly

portrayed by references to cooperation, joint statements, deliberation, and negotiations. Yet these statements come as a result of some disagreement, particularly because it seems as if Ranariddh is unhappy with the degree of power-sharing between himself and Hun Sen: “The Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) is threatening to refuse any more power-sharing bids by Funcinpec, after Prince Norodom Ranariddh demanded greater equality between the government partners” (April 5, 1996). Hun Sen in turn asks for apologies from Ranariddh. Hun Sen even “publicly threatened to use force against ‘unconstitutional’ enemies and privately claimed Funcinpec was plotting against him” (May 3, 1996.b). The tension in their behavioral interaction becomes quite clear this year (see also Roberts 2002: 110). Ranariddh in turn answers by threatening to stop their cooperation and deliberation, and expressing a desire for more non-domination from Hun Sen. Hun Sen and Ranariddh, however, end up cooperating and working together to deal with the Khmer Rouge for the purpose of national unity. They openly recognize that, while they disagree on many things, they have some shared goals and thus enter into negotiations. Hence at this time the two seem to be trying to discuss and solve problems together. This cooperation seems to be largely motivated by their attempt to deal with the Khmer Rouge, and indeed speaking out against the Khmer. Ranariddh describes this cooperation as follows: “since I met with Samdech Hun Sen to deal with this question, we [are] working with each other quite well” (September 20, 1996.b). Yet Ranariddh seems to continue to be frustrated with their relationship, and with what could possibly be termed domination on the side of Hun Sen, and so he demands greater equality in their relationship: “Ranariddh hits out at Funcinpec’s lack of equal power with the CPP. The demands are not well-received by the CPP and Hun Sen” (December 27, 1996.b). Hun Sen seems to want to continue working together to deal with the Ieng Sary rebels (part of the Khmer Rouge), recognizing that Ranariddh has been unhappy with their interaction. Hun Sen’s expressions of behavior toward Ieng Sary include willingness to use force, refusal to negotiate, and refusal to interact: “Hun Sen said the government did not want further negotiations with the breakaway group [...]. The government was not concerned with what Sary wanted, but would concentrate on accepting rank-and-file soldiers who wanted to defect, Hun Sen said” (October 4, 1996.c). Sihanouk and Hun Sen’s interaction is more limited; often Sihanouk expresses a willingness to cooperate and sign requests from Hun Sen, and notes that he will not act against Hun Sen: “We are not forming and we will never form a group of anti-Hun Sen or anti-CPP ‘plotters’” (December 27, 1996.a). Hun Sen in turn seems to be more threatening in his behavior toward Sihanouk.

In 1997, relations deteriorate further. During July the tension leads to violent confrontations (resulting in casualties) between the CPP and Funcinpec,

and Ranariddh is forced to flee the country and leave power (for more on the developments leading up to this, see Roberts 2002). The July coup is in part facilitated by concerns about access to positions of influence for lower echelons within government, and fragmentation within Funcinpec. This is visible in the behavioral interaction between Hun Sen and Ranariddh as well. There are still some expressions of cooperation, and examples of occasions where they work together, particularly when recounting the interactions over past years. But as seen here, the moment of more positive interaction is just that, a mere moment: “After months of threats and anger, the co-Prime Ministers last week embraced each other for the cameras in a reconciliation which lasted less than 24 hours” (May 16, 1997.d). This public embrace and show of affection was quickly followed by accusations and blame between the two. There followed threats and encouragement of the public to not vote for the other (particularly by Ranariddh), as well as expressions of domination (particularly by Hun Sen). Both actors refuse to negotiate and deliberate, and Ranariddh even expressed threats of violence against Hun Sen: “My priority is diplomatic and political struggle, but I have clearly warned the US if you do not help me put pressure on Hun Sen you will have civil war, a bloody civil war, and you cannot avoid having the participation of the Khmer Rouge” (August 15, 1997.h). Hun Sen in turn accuses Ranariddh of treason and wants him to be prosecuted, while Ranariddh at the end of 1997 seems to be open for new negotiations:

But the Prince did not completely shut the door opened by Hun Sen. [...] Ranariddh said he was ready to renounce all claims to the premiership, if the Hun Sen government would drop the charges against him and allow him to run in the 1998 elections. “I would be willing, even against the will of the people, and against legality [and] legitimacy, to compromise,” he said. “I’m not going to claim my place as First Prime Minister, but the bottom line should be the dropping of the charges.” (November 21, 1997.c)

During that year the interaction between Sihanouk and Hun Sen continues to be focused on meetings, negotiations, and domination of Sihanouk by Hun Sen. In contrast, Hun Sen and Khieu Samphan’s interaction is characterized by warnings, threats, and expressions of blame. For instance, it was reported that the “Second Prime Minister Hun Sen [...] warned Khieu Samphan that he would be ‘hacked’ with knives if he came back to Phnom Penh,” even if Hun Sen was more open to issuing pardons later on (June 13, 1997.a).

During 1998 the interaction between Hun Sen and Ranariddh continues to be depicted in rather antagonistic terms, deteriorating further, with both actors accusing the other of inappropriate behavior and of interfering with the other. Hun Sen justifies his use of coercive means as a way to stop a

coup d'état by Ranariddh. Ranariddh in turn claims that he is willing to stop the violence if Hun Sen does the same, and Ranariddh expresses a refusal to be dominated by Hun Sen and a greater openness toward CPP in contrast with Hun Sen:

If we don't get two-thirds, we will cooperate with the CPP, not with Hun Sen. If the CPP takes two-thirds of the seats, we will be the opposition. A fourth option is a coalition government. I will never serve under Hun Sen but my party members will be free to do so. The fifth option, if we are not allowed to be the opposition, is resistance. (February 27, 1998.a)

Other statements by Ranariddh display a similar position where Ranariddh believes cooperation is impossible and refuses to be dominated by Hun Sen, such as “Ranariddh, for his part, has told that Post [the newspaper] that he ‘will never serve under Hun Sen’ in the future” (February 27, 1998.b) and “Prince Ranariddh told me that ‘If I am alive, it must mean Hun Sen is dead. If Hun Sen is alive, then Ranariddh is dead’” (March 27, 1998). These statements clearly demonstrate how the two are in opposition to each other and show the antagonism embedded in the relationship, yet by March, Ranariddh had returned to the country. After the July elections, where the CPP won over Funcinpec, Ranariddh has changed his position, and instead of calling for Hun Sen's resignation, he calls for more negotiations and talks: “We have to talk. We still have a long, long, long way to go. We have to talk step by step. Please contribute to facilitate the solution and not create any difficulties” (September 18, 1998.b). During 1998, Ranariddh and Khieu Samphan continue to negotiate and cooperate, whereas these interactions are condemned by Hun Sen, who calls these negotiations illegal January 2, 1998.a). Similarly, the relationship between Sihanouk and Hun Sen continues to be characterized by domination by Hun Sen and submission by Sihanouk (Sihanouk abdicated as king and head of state in 2004, and died in 2012).

From 1999 onward, the number of indications of behavioral interaction reported in the media clearly decreases, and from 2000 onward, this decrease reflects the change in political circumstances in the country at this point in time. Funcinpec's role had decreased, and Ranariddh made a political comeback only in 2015. CPP won the elections of 2003, but it did not get a two-thirds majority, which meant that it was unable to form a government on its own. As a result, forming a government became particularly difficult, with heightened tensions. It was only in 2004 that the impasse was resolved and Hun Sen could form a government with the support of Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy Party (for more on this, see Than 2004).⁵ The indications in the newspaper during this time largely reflect an acquiescent Ranariddh, with the dyad between him and Hun Sen mostly described as one that is working together and talking to avoid conflict (both within the dyad itself

and with the Khmer Rouge). In 2005, Hun Sen is quoted as describing the interaction between the two:

continued cooperation between CPP and Funcinpec is considered to be Cambodia's prime opportunity to preserve peace and stability and would heal the scars left behind by the decades-long war. "Concession and stability are invaluable, but it is not easy to obtain and safeguard them. Peace is key to ensuring co-existence and cooperation to prevent internal disintegration and hostility," said Hun Sen. (December 2, 2005)

During 2010, Ranariddh again opens the door to cooperation with Hun Sen (and particularly with the CPP), but also expresses disappointment concerning their past cooperation, as he felt used by Hun Sen. For instance, Ranariddh noted the following:

I do think we have a middle path. I don't like the word "collaboration" – collaboration sounds like during the Second World War when Petain of [Vichy] France collaborated with the Nazis. I rather like to talk about cooperation. I share some concerns with the opposition parties; only the approaches are different. I believe that if we cooperate with the ruling party in the same system, maybe it will be more efficient. (December 20, 2010)

I made him [Hun Sen] prime minister three times, in '93, '98 and 2003. He didn't say anything at that time – he took advantage of this. (December 20, 2010)

While the behavioral interaction between Ranariddh and Hun Sen is largely described in cooperative terms, statements by Ranariddh also hint at the presence of domination in the interaction.

Between 2011 and 2016 very little is reported on any of the dyads. Son Sann was already dead, and Sihanouk died in 2012. Khieu Samphan was facing a war crimes tribunal and was sentenced in 2014. Ranariddh had been ousted from Funcinpec, and he made various attempts to work with other political parties before returning to Funcinpec in 2015. Ranariddh's political comeback is described in BBC reports as being due to his reconciliation with Hun Sen (BBC News 2018a).

During 2017, however, Ranariddh explicitly expresses a refusal to be dominated by Hun Sen. This was perhaps particularly visible in reports such as "Funcinpec's Prince Norodom Ranariddh vowed his party [...] would not become 'slaves' to Hun Sen" (October 19, 2017). The slave metaphor is quite a strong rejection of the domination that seems to be present in the relationship. In connection with this rejection of a slave–master relationship, Ranariddh also expresses why he is willing to cooperate or comply with Hun Sen: "For points that we need to agree with for the sake of peace for the nation, we will comply with; we will oppose the points that we should oppose. The most terrible is the one that always opposes [or] always complies" (October 19, 2017). Peace is thus still seen as an

issue on the national agenda. When cooperation is talked about, it tends to refer to past interaction. In 2018, an election was held and Hun Sen won overwhelmingly, but the victory was compromised as the main opposition had been outlawed and was unable to participate in the election.

Overall, while there are instances of behavioral interaction that suggest cooperation and deliberation, there are also ample indications of behavior which would not fall in the category of relational peace, such as threats, domination, and the use of force, but tend toward more antagonistic relations. At the end of the war Ranariddh had a much stronger electoral position, but over time Hun Sen became more powerful, and this is certainly reflected in the way the interaction between the two developed over time, where Ranariddh's attempts at appeasement only seem to encourage more domination by Hun Sen. Ultimately, domination appears to be the one element limiting transformation of the relationship.

Subjective attitudes toward the other

These behavioral interaction patterns are, in turn, also combined with expressions of subjective attitudes toward the other. Such descriptions are rarer than behavioral descriptions. However, the point of the analysis of the newspaper material from the *Phnom Penh Post* is not to quantify the description, but to pinpoint the overall relationship that comes through in these newspaper reports. Overall, the attitudes toward the other actors are reported as negative throughout 1993–2017 (of course, a bias in favor of more negative news is possible given the type of data). The types of attitudes that are apparent focus on critique, accusations, blame, distrust, and a lack of recognition. Some examples of such statements are the following:

Hun Sen: “we must have the courage to blame the Khmer Rouge for the recent acts of violence and genocide.” (May 7, 1993)

Hun Sen: “I am very disappointed that I let myself be cheated by the disreputable acts of Prince Ranariddh.” (May 21, 1993)

“Ranariddh also blamed Hun Sen for creating the rift within Funcinpec, accused Hun Sen of being a puppet of the Vietnamese.” (May 16, 1997)

Ranariddh: “I have told Hun Sen that I am always willing to talk, but he is not sincere. He says I have hidden Khmer Rouge forces in the city, but it is a lie, just a pretext. They have been preparing a coup for a long time. They were very well prepared. Hun Sen says we are betraying the Constitution by talking to the Khmer Rouge, but it is a pretext to launch a coup. [...] He wants to set up a so-called coalition government without me. It is not acceptable. A lot of my soldiers will never accept it. It is clearly a coup and must be condemned by the world community.” (June 12, 1997)

The instances of subjective attitudes in these dyads also contain expressions of fear, more accusations, and a lack of trust. For instance, Ranariddh notes: “Hun Sen said I am not courageous, that I have to return to Phnom Penh and face a trial, but I am not crazy! Who trusts Hun Sen’s tribunal? [...] Hun Sen is a murderous Prime Minister” (July 25, 1997). Hun Sen in turn is reported as lacking trust in, and recognition of, Ranariddh, for instance in 1998: “In response to Ranariddh’s request [to the UN to launch an investigation], Hun Sen says on April 10 ‘The essence of power is that when you talk you are listened to and respected,’ adding that Ranariddh should resign if he doesn’t trust a government ministry” (January 2, 1998).

Depictions of Ranariddh’s attitudes toward Hun Sen after this largely point to a lack of trust, even distrust, and seeing the other as not legitimate, but also include suggestions that hateful language toward Hun Sen should be avoided. This dyad’s subjective attitudes are dominated by instances of describing the other as the problem and of dislike and lack of approval, and Ranariddh suggests that he feels as though he has been taken advantage of. Roberts argues that: “The continued struggle between Ranariddh and Hun Sen over access to power denied the possibility of trust emerging. That trust was also dangerously challenged by Ranariddh’s confrontational attitude and activities, and by Hun Sen’s dislike of the prince” (Roberts 2002: 116). The generally negative descriptions of attitudes could be suspected of being the result of journalistic bias. However, in the contexts of these relations, had former enemies expressed more positive attitudes toward each other that would certainly have been newsworthy.

The examples of more positive attitudes are largely related to the dyad between Hun Sen and Sihanouk, and here there are examples of descriptions of trust and recognition. Sihanouk expressed belief in his counterpart’s capability, appreciation for his support, perceiving the other as legitimate, as well as recognizing Hun Sen’s skills as a politician. There are some expressions of disappointment, but also a declaration that he will not act in an “anti-Hun Sen or anti-CPP” manner (December 27, 1996). Hun Sen offers some expressions of recognition of Sihanouk, and even depicts Sihanouk as the father of the nation: “We want you to stay as our father. You are the cement to our nation” (August 29, 1997).

Ideas of the relationship

Expressions concerning how the actors envision the relationship are far less common in the articles from the *Phnom Penh Post*. Here only some dyads are explicitly talked about, particularly the relationship between Hun Sen and Norodom Ranariddh. The first comment does not suggest a particularly close relationship but merely an acknowledgment of an equal standing

between the two as they entered a coalition government together: “I respect his age because he is older than I am,’ Hun Sen said, adding that work procedures pursued by the two co-premiers would be equal” (September 24, 1993). As we move into 1996 the relationship is more often described as having cracks, mixed with assertions that the relationship is firm. These assertions seem to be made to suppress rumors to the contrary. Ranariddh makes statements suggesting he is unhappy with the degree of equality in the relationship: “Prince Norodom Ranariddh demanded greater equality between the government partners” (April 5, 1996) and states that “the coalition government was a ‘slogan’, [...] or an ‘empty bucket’” (April 5, 1996). This was succeeded by Hun Sen calling Funcinpec “unconstitutional enemies” (May 3, 1996). This was ostensibly followed by more positive depictions of the relationship in September of the same year, when Ranariddh expressed having a common vision with Hun Sen, and Hun Sen in turn talked about their interactions as a “family gathering” (September 6, 1996). During 1998, comments about the relationship mainly come from Ranariddh, who suggests that he and Hun Sen are not of equal standing and that there is no legitimate coexistence between the two: “There is no comparison between Hun Sen and me” (February 27, 1998); “Prince Ranariddh [...] has repeatedly said he can never again work with Hun Sen” (February 27, 1998); and “If I am alive, it must mean Hun Sen is dead. If Hun Sen is alive, then Ranariddh is dead” (March 27, 1998). It is clear that there is very little positive valence attached to the relationship, and only during brief periods do we see some degree of fellowship between the two.

A very telling example of how the relationship between Hun Sen and Ranariddh is regarded is visible in the newspaper in 2002, when Ranariddh describes the dependency in the relationship between the CPP and Funcinpec: he states that they both need each other, adding, “It doesn’t matter whether we love each other or not. It is the same as in a marriage – we cannot choose a good or a bad wife” (September 13, 2002.b). Invoking images of marriage, but also a relationship where love is not necessarily part of the equation, says a lot about the kind of relationship these actors envisage. The sense of dependency in the relationship continues in the depictions during the 2000s, but also reflects the fact that the relationship is not perfect. In Hun Sen’s statements to the public, he also tends to stress how important their relationship is for the welfare of the country, while also in fact hinting at the possible chaos that may affect the country if they are not able to work together: “The CPP and Funcinpec are like an aircraft. If the wing on one side is broken, the plane will crash” (December 20, 2002) and “Whenever our two parties are strong and reconciling in their leadership of the state and national construction, the country and its people will certainly be enjoying peace, stability, social order and harmonized progress” (December

2, 2005). Ranariddh also seems to recognize this dependency and the lack of options embedded in their partnership. The partnership appears unwanted but also unavoidable. It is a partnership, or fellowship, of necessity, where interaction is necessary for the sake of the country.

Depictions of the relationship between Sihanouk and Hun Sen contain references not only to family metaphors, but also to disparate power positions over the time period, for example, when Sihanouk calls Hun Sen his “godson” (January 10, 1997). Descriptions of the relationship between Hun Sen and the Khmer Rouge are consistently referred to as one between enemies. But it is clear from the material that these dyads are less central than that between Hun Sen and Ranariddh to political developments in Cambodia during the period. The relationship overall between Sihanouk and Hun Sen is summarized in Figure 2.1.

In contrast, Figure 2.2 presents a summary of the main dyad (Hun Sen–Ranariddh) over the entire time period. There emerges a picture of the overall relationship between the two as an unholy alliance, where the required trust and equality in the relationship never prospered enough to transform it. Hun Sen continued to use his position of power to weaken the other

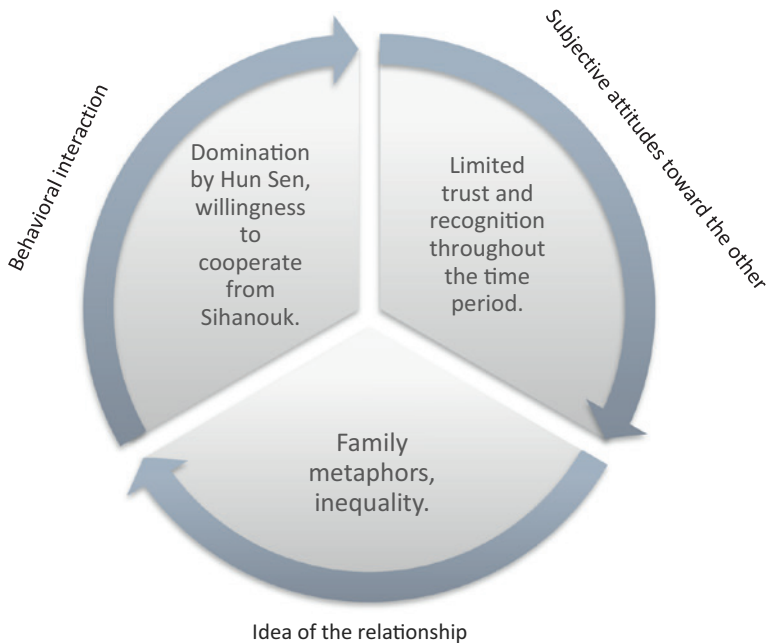


Figure 2.1 Relational interaction between party leader and Prime Minister Hun Sen and King Sihanouk, 1993–2012

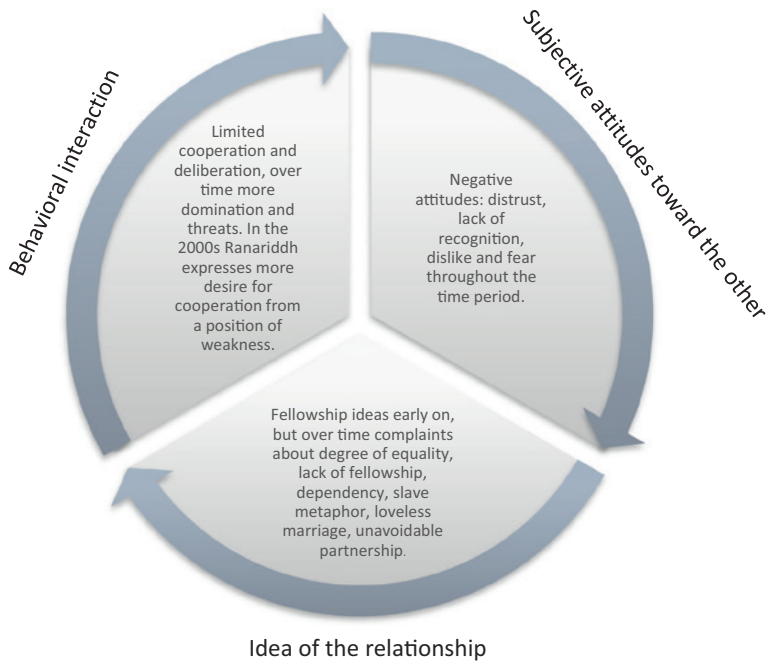


Figure 2.2 Relational interaction between party leader and Prime Minister Hun Sen and Funcinpec party leader Ranariddh, 1993–2017

actors, often invoking peace as the reason for his opponents to acquiesce and compromise.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the elite relations among the peace signatories in Cambodia have been scrutinized with an eye to the relational peace framework. The behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes, and ideas of the relationship within each dyad largely seem to move together, and hence dyads with more positive interactions are also dyads with more positive attitudes and ideas of the relationship. Notably in the case of Cambodia, the various dyads seem to be on quite different terms with each other. The dyad between Hun Sen and Ranariddh, who were political party leaders during most of the period studied, is the most intense and frequently described in the media. This relationship was also more peaceful and constructive in its character at the beginning of the period, and was partially formalized through their

coalition government. This dyad, however, also contained antagonistic behavior, distrust, lack of recognition, and tendencies toward domination, elements that also held the dyad back from further transformation, placing it far from the ideal relational peace. When positive openings from one actor are not reciprocated by the other, the potential for larger transformations of the relationship is moot. Overall, the main relationship is best characterized by domination, distrust, and ideas of dependency. At best this relationship can be described as a peace of domination, or a peace between master and servant, as the expressions and practices of this relationship resemble antagonistic relations or a peace between agonists. In contrast, the dyad between Hun Sen and King Sihanouk minimally meets the criteria of relational peace, but it is also a relationship which is less central to political developments in Cambodia. The relational framework employed here has allowed for a close analysis of how elite relations developed in Cambodia after the peace agreement was signed, and has added depth to the hybrid peace label often applied to Cambodia, by taking the internal elite relations seriously and thereby revealing deep-seated challenges for the overall peace in Cambodia. What we see is Hun Sen consolidating his position, whereas the other counterparts largely disappear from politics or have lost their own power bases, which forces them to appease Hun Sen instead of questioning his rule, ultimately accepting a relationship, and a peace, on his terms.

This chapter has made clear that imbalances occur between the Cambodian actors in the dyads, in terms of power as well as in terms of relational peace elements. Some actors talk more about some actors than others in the media, and are more inclined to depict certain relationships. Some behaviors or frustrations also seem to be more regularly voiced by one side than by both, especially perhaps if the behaviors or attitudes are seen as negative. In the data for Cambodia, several dyads were tracked, and this made coding individual newspaper articles difficult. However, some of the contrasts across these dyads are interesting, revealing how the material as a whole is richest in relation to the Hun Sen–Ranariddh dyad. It was also evident that behavior was more readily reported than attitudes in the media, as one would expect. While some aspects come up more than others in these media reports, I do not see this as a problem with the framework; it simply reflects the fact that when actors talk about their relationships and when the media report on them, descriptions of behavior are more common and attitudes less so, and ideas of the relationship are even rarer (at least in this case). However, it does mean that it is easier to analyze and find nuances, and shifts over time, in the behavioral interactions than in the subjective attitudes and the ideas of the relationship.

This study also suggests that behavioral shifts are more frequent, whereas shifts in attitudes and ideas of the relationship appear to be more slow-moving

(even if the overall trend is the same). If we are to talk of the patterns of interaction, however, these smaller shifts, which sometimes appear over days or weeks, perhaps do not really qualify as shifts in the pattern itself. What qualifies as the practices of a relationship need to show some degree of regularity over time. This instability in the relationship, especially the Hun Sen–Ranariddh dyad, is perhaps part of the pattern itself, reflecting that it is a relationship where the two actors involved are in the midst of potentially reformulating the relationship. However, domination by Hun Sen seems to have been the main detrimental element in the relationship. In fact, this case suggests that non-domination is a crucial element of relational peace, and when it is lacking it seems to create serious obstacles for transforming the dyad.

This chapter also contributes to current attempts to make peace more researchable; by approaching peace as relational, method choices can be more succinctly discussed and evaluated. The newspaper articles seem particularly suitable for application to the framework. The fact that the dyads were so clearly delimited (without fuzzy boundaries) made searching for articles and ensuing coding easier. A central limitation of this study is the use of only one newspaper. It certainly introduces a bias in the material, but this newspaper is at least likely to catch the larger trends in the relationship and how they are communicated in the media. And these are the trends that are likely to shape public opinion anyway. At present, there are no indications that the particular newspaper has any particular leanings during the time period in question that would make it likely to distort specific dyads or actors.

A reasonable extension of this project, if we want to study peace in Cambodia, would be to try to capture all expressions relevant to the entire armed group (beyond specific individuals) involved in the peace agreements using a similar approach, but this would have required more work and been more complicated. In many cases, new individuals within the same group move to the frontlines and often continue to pursue the same goals as the previous leader. Contrasting the relations between new and old leaders across the same dyad would be an important next step, and another way to further contribute to the literature on elite continuity in post-war contexts. The description of relational practices in this chapter is a starting point for exploring how elite behavior and responses link up with other events. If we are to understand and explain variations in peace, the role of these actors cannot be ignored, as the case of Cambodia clearly demonstrates. Whether these elite patterns are repeated in other cases, however, is yet to be explored. How other sections of society responded to these shifts, both other elites and society at large, is not unimportant, but it would require a different kind of data. This larger web of relations constitutes the peace as

a whole in Cambodia, but given the central role of elites in Cambodia in shaping outcomes and public opinion, the continual tension among previous enemies is a real cause for concern and a central facet of the manifestation of peace in Cambodia.

Notes

This work is generously financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, grant numbers M16-0297:1 and P19-1494:1. I am very grateful for comments during the workshop “Relational Peace” in Uppsala in 2019, especially from Jason Klocek and Isabel Bramsen, and at the Varieties of Peace Asia Conference in Jakarta in 2019, especially from SungYong Lee; also, a special thank you to Alejandro Esteso Pérez, who provided assistance with the data collection.

- 1 This makes him one of the longest-serving heads of government in the world at the time of writing.
- 2 Son Sann rarely appears in the newspaper articles, and after serving as a minority member of the coalition government formed in 1993, he left Cambodia in 1997 and then died in 2000.
- 3 I have informally surveyed other scholars working on Cambodia to ask their impressions of this particular newspaper and its bias, and the informal conclusion so far is that it probably does not skew what is generally reported in the local media in any significant sense, although it is impossible to completely rule out any bias. As it is a local English-language newspaper, one could possibly assume that the *Phnom Penh Post* is likely to cater mainly to upper- and middle-class readers, but unfortunately, I have not been able to find any other literature which explicitly compares different newspapers in Cambodia to claim this in any authoritative way (Songsukrujiroad et al. 2015: 97).
- 4 Each quotation from *Phnom Penh Post* will be referenced using its date of publication in this manner, and if there was more than one article in each issue, they are indexed with a subsequent letter a, b, or c, etc.
- 5 The Sam Rainsy Party is today the main opposition party in Cambodia.

References

- Bargués-Pedreny, Pol, and Elisa Randazzo. 2018. “Hybrid peace revisited: an opportunity for considering self-governance?” *Third World Quarterly* 39(8): 1543–1560.
- Barma, Naazneen H. 2012. “Peace-building and the predatory political economy of insecurity: evidence from Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan.” *Conflict, Security & Development* 12(3): 273–298.
- BBC News. 2018a. “Cambodia Prince Ranariddh injured and wife killed in car crash.” June 17, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44511982> (accessed August 30, 2019).

- BBC News. 2018b. "Hun Sen: Cambodia's strongman prime minister." July 27, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-23257699> (accessed August 30, 2019).
- Brown, Frederick Z. 1992. "Cambodia in 1991: an uncertain peace." *Asian Survey* 32(1): 88–96.
- Crawford, Neta C. 2004. "Understanding discourse: a method of ethical argument analysis." *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* 2(1): 22–25.
- Edinger, Lewis J. 1960. "Post-totalitarian leadership: elites in the German Federal Republic." *American Political Science Review* 54(1): 58–82.
- Herz, John H. 1948. "The fiasco of denazification in Germany." *Political Science Quarterly* 63(4): 569–594.
- Jarstad, Anna K., and Timothy D. Sisk, eds. 2008. *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Käihkö, Ilmari. 2012. "Big man bargaining in African conflicts." In *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks*, ed. M. Utas, 181–204. London: Zed Books.
- Leifer, Michael. 1992. "Power-sharing and peacemaking in Cambodia?" *SAIS Review* 12(1): 139–153.
- Mac Ginty, Roger. 2010. "Hybrid peace: the interaction between top-down and bottom-up peace." *Security Dialogue* 41(4): 391–412.
- Matanock, Aila M., and Miguel Garcia-Sanchez. 2017. "The Colombian paradox: peace processes, elite divisions & popular plebiscites." *Daedalus* 146(4): 152–166.
- Mayzel, Matitiah. 1979. *Generals and Revolutionaries: The Russian General Staff During the Revolution; A Study in the Transformation of Military Elite*. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag.
- Paffenholz, Thania, Anne Zachariassen, and Cindy Helfer. 2017. *What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues?* Geneva: Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.
- Peou, Sorpong. 2012. "Violence in post-war Cambodia." In *The Peace In Between: Post-War Violence and Peacebuilding*, ed. A. Suhrke and M. Berdal, 192–210. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Poluda, Julian, Judith Strasser, and Sotheara Chhim. 2012. "Justice, healing and reconciliation in Cambodia." In *Peacebuilding, Memory and Reconciliation: Bridging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches*, ed. B. Charbonneau and G. Parent, 91–109. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ponniah, Kevin. 2018. "In 1993, the UN tried to bring democracy to Cambodia. Is that dream dead?" BBC News, July 28, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44966916> (accessed August 30, 2019).
- Remy, Steven P. 2002. *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Richmond, Oliver P., and Jason Franks. 2007. "Liberal hubris? Virtual peace in Cambodia." *Security Dialogue* 38(1): 27–48.
- Roberts, David. 2002. "Political transition and elite discourse in Cambodia, 1991–99." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18(4): 101–118.
- Simangan, Dahlia. 2018. "When hybridity breeds contempt: negative hybrid peace in Cambodia." *Third World Quarterly* 39(8): 1525–1542.

- Söderström, Johanna. 2015. *Peacebuilding and Ex-Combatants: Political Reintegration in Liberia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Söderström, Johanna, Malin Åkebo, and Anna Jarstad. 2021. "Friends, fellows, and foes: a new framework for studying relational peace." *International Studies Review* 23(3): 484–508.
- Songsukrujiroad, Sappasiri, Thanawit Chaiyasuk, and Pimyupa Praphan. 2015. "Appraisal analysis: Thailand in the view of Phnom Penh Post on the Preah Vihear issue." *Thammasat Review* 18(2): 96–115.
- Than, Tin Maung Maung. 2004. "Cambodia: strongman, terrible man, invisible man, and politics of power sharing." *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2004(1): 71–86.
- Themné, Anders, ed. 2017. *Warlord Democrats in Africa: Ex-Military Leaders and Electoral Politics*. London: Zed Books.
- Utas, Mats. 2013. "Generals for good? Do-good generals and the structural endurance of wartime networks." Blog, May 29, 2013. <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2013/05/> (accessed August 2, 2013).
- Öjendal, Joakim, and Sivhuoch Ou. 2013. "From friction to hybridity in Cambodia: 20 years of unfinished peacebuilding." *Peacebuilding* 1(3): 365–380.
- Öjendal, Joakim, and Sivhuoch Ou. 2015. "The 'local turn' saving liberal peacebuilding? Unpacking virtual peace in Cambodia." *Third World Quarterly* 36(5): 929–949.