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Yale-UN Oral History Project

Hedi Annabi

James Sutterlin, Interviewer

1995

New York, New York



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James Sutterlin: So, Hedi, if we could begin with this first question -- I think I know the answer, as a matter of fact -- it was Waldheim who actually appointed Rafi Ahmed, was it not?

Hedi Annabi: No. When Pérez de Cuéllar took over, he appointed -- I mean, Rafi came down from the 35th floor and was appointed Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in Southeast Asia. A misleading title; it was really a political assignment.

JS: But it was before Pérez de Cuéllar became Secretary-General -- the General Assembly passed a resolution, right, asking the Secretary-General to use his good offices?

Is that correct?

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HA: That's right. And he had already designated a Special Representative, who was Essafi, until the end of December 1991, and on the first of January when Pérez de Cuéllar took over, Esaffi became Chef de Cabinet and Rafi came down. There was a swap.

JS: Ah, there was a swap there.

HA: A simple swap.

JS: That clarifies it.

HA: So that's how he started.

JS: And did Pérez de Cuéllar select -- I mean, I remember some of the intricacies of the personnel changes -- but did Pérez de Cuéllar have Cambodia in mind when he chose Rafi Ahmed for this particular position, or was it just to give him a job?

HA: Probably the latter.

JS: The latter.



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HA: I mean, he was Asian -- you can rationalize it, of course. He was Asian, and he was a man from the region. And actually, at the end of the process, ASEAN was insisting very much that it was important to have someone from the region for that post. At that time the whole exercise entered into a different phase, because until this famous ICK in July 1981, the good offices work was really focused on the issue of whether Waldheim should take the risk of convening an international conference on Kampuchea or not. This is what Esaffi really devoted most of his time [to] until the conference was held in July, the 13-17th of July 1981. So, you have the fall-out from that conference, which basically took the rest of the year. But when Rafi came on board, in January 1982, we were starting with a clean slate, in a way, because the ICK (International Conference on Kampuchea) had been convened by Waldheim, but it was, as Co-Tak had called it, a "one-hand clapping conference," because it was boycotted by Vietnam, the Soviet Union

and their friends, and therefore it was clear from the start that the ICK could not produce the solution, since it was not acceptable as a forum for the discussions or the negotiations to one of the parties. Therefore in 1982, when Rafi was appointed and Pérez de Cuéllar came, the whole question was: “How does the UN play a useful role in this?” now that we know that the ICK will only be, and remain, a Vietnam-bashing exercise; I mean, the ICK was basically an instrument of pressure against Vietnam by the international community, you know, to kind of put Vietnam in the dock all the time for its invasion of Cambodia. And the question was -- the ICK is not going to work; it didn't work; it's not going to work; it has created an unhelpful meeting in Kampuchea which also didn't have any chance of getting anywhere because it was not acceptable as an interlocutor to one of the parties -- and the question is, how do you get to this situation -- how do we start a meaningful discussion?



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And therefore, the good offices role assumed a completely different dimension, if you like, and I think what Pérez de Cuéllar likely wanted was to start talking to both sides, since they were not at that time prepared to talk to each other, and start identifying, you know, as a first start, understanding the positions, you know, and motivations behind them, and then slowly, slowly, once the positions are understood, define possible areas of convergence, identify those areas where there was so much contradiction that they couldn't be touched at that point -- but to start looking at what could be done to define areas of convergence and bring the view-points closer together. One idea that was explored at the time was the idea... the ICK was a result of a General Assembly decision in the fall of 1980, which was at the time a resolution sponsored by ASEAN which wanted an international conference to condemn Vietnam and so on and so forth, and the Vietnamese position was, “This is not an international issue; it is a regional issue, so we

can have a regional conference if you like, but not an international conference.” So, the question was, an international conference, which didn’t work, a regional conference, which is unacceptable to ASEAN, “What do you do?” One of the things that we explored initially -- apart from this very systematic, slow exercise of trying to talk to them and understand what the concerns are, what the differences are, and so on and so forth, and see whether there was anything on which they could agree -- was this idea of a limited regional conference, which is very interesting because the Paris conference, in 1991 [the second session of the Paris conference on Cambodia, was exactly that and nothing else. It is exactly that; it’s a limited international conference, or it’s a regional conference *amélioré* so to speak. But, so that was acceptable probably to, you know, the Vietnamese; it was not rejected by ASEAN, but in their mind it was simply not ripe, and they were not interested in keeping the pressure on Vietnam; they didn’t believe Vietnam was ready for serious negotiations, and therefore they never accepted the proposal, but at the same time they did not reject it outright. In 1985, if you look at the 1985 Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, for the first time he came out publicly with this idea, to say, to reveal, in 1985, that this idea had been explored, and that, you know, it wasn’t rejected by anybody, and that at some point this might be the way, this might be the format, which it did turn out to be in 1989, the Paris Conference in 1989 was exactly that, almost to the, you know, the same number of countries, etc., etc. Very interesting. And that was brought up for the first time in the 1985 Report to the General Assembly.

JS: Yes. Another one of the ironies: 1985 is the one year that is missing in the UN web site of all of the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council. I don't know why.

HA: Well, it must be available here...

JS: Oh sure, you can get it [here].

HA: So, from 1982 to 1985 was this slow...

JS: And during that period, Rafi made a number of trips, and...



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HA: ... A number of trips. And one of the trips was...

JS: To Thailand, to Indonesia, and China...

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HA: ... All the five ASEAN [countries], and China, and the Soviet Union eventually.

Initially the Soviet Union was not eager, but eventually it... Because the Soviet Union

was initially saying, "It's a regional problem, why do you want to talk about it?" But

eventually they came back, but Vietnam, Laos, etc.... Except Cambodia, he could not go

for political reasons --this would have been unacceptable.

JS: ... For political reasons.

HA: So, in 1985, after, you know, going through this protracted exercise, the Secretary General decided, himself, to visit the region. Rafi and I were with him -- so we went with him to Vietnam, of course, and we went to Thailand; we went to Indonesia; we went to Malaysia. There was a very long layover in Laos. You know, we met with everybody at the highest level; we met Pham Van Dong; there was a very nice exchange of speeches with Pham Van Dong . I mean, I think he hit it off very well with Pham Van Dong. He was received by the King in Thailand; it went well -- by Suharto. It was good. And after that, in this same 1985 report, he identified -- and I think you referred to it -- he identified what he called, what could be the main elements of a comprehensive political settlement, which are really a number of headings: that there should be reform; that there should be, you know, a non-return to the universally condemned policies and practices. It's interesting, and this is a tidbit, that he had a hand in actually... in that formulation in the sense that we had initially in the draft said "the genocidal policies" of Pol Pot and he said, "No, I do not want to determine that there has been a genocide. So, find another word." So we worked with him and eventually we came up with this "universally condemned policies and practices of the recent past" referring to the Khmer Rouge period, which became the kind of code word for condemning the [actions], which was then incorporated in General Assembly resolutions and so on and so forth.

So, he defined that there has to be elections; there has to be an international supervision of the agreement; there have to be international guarantees. There were a kind of -- I forget now -- seven or eight headings, where he defined for the first time that, "This should be the main elements of a settlement," and where he said, "The format could be also for discussions [at] a regional conference." And nobody really came out strongly against that report. I think the ASEAN were not thrilled because they were still in that

mode of at least the Singaporeans and the Thais -- they were still in that mode of ICK: you know, keep the pressure on Vietnam. Don't discuss any other agenda; they will only budge after pressure, and so on. We even had some very unpleasant discussions at times in Thailand. We had one dinner with them where one of the generals -- when Rafi mentioned the idea of a regional conference -- got up and said, "You are talking so much nonsense, and I have lost my appetite," and he left the table. Interesting episode.

So, in 1985, he defined what he thought were the main elements, and then from 1985 through 1987, I mean, we started kind of trying to slowly fill in what should come under these headings, how each concept -- what it entailed, how it could be carried out, and so on and so forth. And we started seriously trying to -- again -- talk to them on a regular basis, to see how we could fill in this kind of general frame. At the end of 1987, there was one important development, which was that Sihanouk suddenly decided to have a meeting with Hun Sen and a second meeting with Hun Sen in January 1988.

JS: But that was on his own -- in other words, that had not been suggested.

HA: That was, in many ways, a turning point, because these people had never agreed to speak to each other. Suddenly, they started talking to each other, so a number of things became possible. It was agreed that there would be what became known as the JIM, the Jakarta Informal Meeting, with JIM-I and JIM-II.

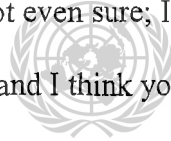
JS: The so-called cocktail parties?

HA: Yeah -- which is the-- I mean -- what the cocktail party turned out to be. The “cocktail party” was coined by Foreign Minister Mochtar, during on a bilateral visit to Vietnam. But after that he left, and Alatas became Prime Minister and Alatas picked up the idea, which was really the idea of bringing these people together. They agreed; they reached an agreement to have, for the first time, at the end of July 1988 in Jakarta, the four Cambodian parties. Now, a month before that -- and this is very, very important -- the month before that, in June 1988, we had prepared this framework, this elaboration of these seven or eight elements we had defined in the 1985 report. We had actually written what we called, a “framework for a comprehensive settlement,” which was a more detailed plan of between seven and ten pages at the time, which presented a complete kind of scenario as to how this could be done. Pérez de Cuéllar decided to ask Rafi to travel not only to the region, but also to Cambodia for the first time, which had been untouchable until then completely. But Sihanouk and Hun Sen had started talking, so, while the Thais and some others were not happy, they could not oppose it, because it had become ridiculous. If they could talk to each other, you know, then certainly the Secretary-General who is neutral could talk to whomever. And he asked Rafi to take this plan, which was the first comprehensive plan, what we called, the “framework for a comprehensive settlement,” ever put down on the table, ever written on this, and put down on the table. He asked Rafi to go and meet, to travel to Phnom Penh, and to give it to, you know, the Phnom Penh regime, to give it to the four Cambodian parties, Vietnam, the ASEAN, and the Permanent Five.). And it’s very interesting because, as I said, this was the first time anyone had tried his hand at actually putting on paper a comprehensive scenario. What is interesting is that when we, I mean -- I’ll just jump a while for the sake of the demonstration -- when we got to the Paris conference at the end of July 1989, when

we landed in Paris, and had our first meeting with the French, one of them, who is now the number two man here today, at the mission here, looked at us and said “You have prepared this plan?” We said, “Yes, of course, we have ...”, and he said, “You know, the whole, everything we have done to this point, is based on that.”

JS: That’s very interesting.

HA: Everything. Everything is based on that; everything that we are trying to develop or think of is based on that. So, I think it was very significant because of that, that plan. It has never been made public. I’m not even sure; I think I may have it still somewhere, and I think if I find it I’ll give it to you, and I think you should, if you want to, publish it as part of his memoirs...



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JS: I think we should.

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HA: ... Because that was really -- as I said, nobody had done it before, and it turned out, when you look at the Paris agreements at the end of the day -- three years later, this was in June 1988 -- when you look at the Paris agreements in October 1991, it’s a more detailed thing, but it’s basically there.


JS: It’s necessary to put this in, because in fact, I have read now quite a few of the scholarly studies of Cambodia and none of them has mentioned it.

HA: It's never been made public, but there is a nice summary there in a long paragraph of it. I mean, in one paragraph.

JS: Yes, but I'd like to have the whole text if I could.

HA: I think I still have it somewhere.

JS: Of course, it should be in the Secretary-General's files, but as I told you I can't find it.



HA: I don't have any files. I asked Janet again today whether she had taken it, and she said, "No, as you know, they took everything except East Timor." They even took the files from the ad hoc meeting on Kampuchea, which was a corpse by that time, which was of no interest to anyone, but anyway... And the other interesting thing about this plan put on the table, was that it was given to everybody one month before the Jakarta informal meeting, before the JIM, one month before that. And that meeting in Jakarta, which we also attended, was the first time where these guys were actually brought together around the table. And we told them, you know, "This is not an official proposal by the Secretary-General," -- which is also in his style -- "it's food for thought."

JS: It's ideas.

HA: "It's ideas, and it's ideas to help you determine how we could go in practice about solving this problem. And it's for you to decide." So, they had it with them a month

before the JIM. So, Jakarta in July; there was a further JIM in February 1989, and where the habit of sitting and talking was kind of being developed, where we were again, and then Sihanouk met with Hun Sen in Indonesia, if I remember correctly, in May. If you look up the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, all of these events you will trace back.

JS: Not too well, because they are not very detailed.

HA: They are not very detailed, except the last year or two they were a little more detailed, because we were becoming heavily involved. After this meeting between Hun Sen and Sihanouk in Jakarta in May 1989, the French decided that the time had come. They thought, I think mistakenly as it turned out, that Hun Sen and Sihanouk had reached some kind of a deal, and that the time was ripe to call everybody to a conference and, you know, put it on paper. So, they then contacted us and told us that they spoke to the Secretary-General, and told him that they were thinking of convening this conference – this was in May, 1989, when they told us. And from May 1989 to the actual convening of the conference, at the end of July – the conference met on the 30th of July – Pérez de Cuéllar was there, he made his speech, a long, nice speech.

JS: I don't have the text yet.

HA: I wrote that speech.

JS: Well, I have to get it then.

HA: In French -- I wrote it in French, because obviously he wanted to make it in French. And from May when they took the decision to call that conference until the end of July, we worked very closely with them, going to Paris on one of the occasions for drafting, at the request of Pérez de Cuéllar, to help them develop the concepts for the conference, you know, how to organize it, how to go about the arrangements, and we had a very heavy input.

JS: Now, presumably the French had asked...?

HA: We also saw cables from the various delegations, given to us, saying to their interlocutors, the French in diplomatic meetings in Paris, with some of the people they wanted to invite, that the best and most sophisticated input they have received so far regarding the organization of the conference, and the declaration, and the ideas to be discussed were from the United Nations, from us.

JS: Do you know if the French had asked Pérez de Cuéllar for assistance?

HA: Yes, yes, yes. And not only that, all the papers -- the Paris conference broke up into a steering committee and three sub-committees -- each paper which formed the basis for the discussion in each of the meetings was UN-produced, from A to Z. From A to Z. I don't know if I can remember them all now, but we presented a paper on what was called at the time -- because at the time this was, you know the Paris conference in 1989; Vietnam and friends did not accept that the UN would be the implementing agency, so it

was all couched in terms that it could be anybody -- it was called an “international control mechanism.” You know, the ICM. And then you could have just changed one of the words and it would have been the UN. We put the whole paper on what this international control mechanism would be, what it would do, on the military side. We presented a whole paper on the election and how they should be held and the modalities, and what should be the system for the election. We presented a paper on the repatriation of refugees and rehabilitation and reconstruction. I think it was five – basically, they were all produced by the UN, and were all adopted as the basis of the discussions. We really had a very, very important part in the conference. And Pérez de Cuéllar participated... As a result of that, Pérez de Cuéllar was a full participant in the Paris conference. You know, he was a delegation like all the other delegations, sitting, of course, next to the co-chairs.



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JS: And participated in the action discussions?

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HA: Well, he came for the opening...

JS: Yes, but I mean, but...

HA: ... And then like all the ministers he left after a couple of days.

JS: ... But what I mean is: the UN, in the person of his representative, namely Rafi, participated actually in the discussions as a party?

HA: Absolutely.

JS: As a party?

HA: Absolutely. As a *full* participant in the conference, and we were in each committee, and, you know, on everything that involved verification, monitoring, and so on, we were the kind of reference, if you see what I mean. Also, by virtue of the papers we had prepared. And then, the first conference... The only decision that was taken at the ministerial level by Pérez de Cuéllar was that in his speech, in his opening speech, he said, “We’ve come a long way, and that there are still a number of significant differences, and we hope that we will all seize this opportunity to bridge them, and so on, but then eventually we will need an international mechanism to verify this, and, you know, these things have to be prepared, and so on and so forth: surveys need to be conducted, and so on and so forth.” Without any prejudice as to what your final decision might be regarding who will be the implementing agency, I propose that the UN, the services of the UN, will send a fact-finding mission that will look at how the verification and so on can be implemented, and what the role of the international control mechanism will be.” He did this without prejudice as to what decision they would take. And it was accepted, which was, you know, the foot in the door. After that, it became more and more difficult to say that all of this would be implemented by somebody else, and not by the UN. The original position from where Vietnam was coming from, they wanted a mechanism similar to the 1956 agreements, what was it called at the time, “*la Commission Internationale du Controle*” – the CIC. Or ICC in English -- the International Control Commission, like we had in the Vietnam agreements and so on. So, they wanted something like that, not the

UN: a number of acceptable countries, very light, symbolic verification, and so on. Not this kind of heavy involvement.

But after that, you see, we did this... While the conference was sitting we sent this reconnoiter mission. It came back with a report; the report was presented to the conference: "This is how it will be done; this is how..." And that, in a way, made it after that very, very difficult for these people to continue to say, "The UN cannot implement this, or cannot be the implementing agency."

JS: Just to interrupt, did the Khmer Rouge cooperate with that mission?

HA: Yeah -- they met; they met. They went and met with everybody, and so on and so forth.

JS: That's a very complete report; I had a chance to look at it.

HA: After a month, everything was collapsing. I mean, there were two or three issues which were not resolved, like for example: who would implement this, the UN or an international control commission, but I don't think that was a major issue. There was the issue, which became a show-stopper, of the use of the word "genocide;" would we use the word "genocide"?

JS: In the conference?

HA: In the conference. But the real stumbling block was what was referred to as power-sharing or the “transition arrangements” with the three resistance factions wanting a transitional coalition government and Hun Sen saying, “I’m the government, here; I’m doing OK. There is no way we are going to have a quadripartite government.” They wanted a quadripartite government. “We can have, perhaps, a bipartite government, but we can never have a quadripartite government with the Khmer Rouge, these people who have committed genocide. We can have a Supreme National Council. I have my government, and we can have a Supreme National Council where everybody comes to meet and so on, but I’m not going to dismantle my government – there is no way.” So that was the real stumbling block.

So, we parted on the 30th of August, and I mean it looks like it was a failure but it was not a failure. I think “failure” is really unfair. It was suspended, and although all we could produce after thirty days were three paragraphs, that we were planning to meet, but a lot, a lot of work got done in those thirty days, where we worked day and night for thirty days thrashing out the issues, and all on the basis of the papers we had presented. So, that I think served a very useful purpose. Then, August, September, October, everybody was frankly... wanted to close it down. Big hole there, nobody really knew how to pick up the pieces and how to restart this, except to keep at it slowly. But at that time, Australia came up with this idea that looked new but was not really new, which was the idea of a UN interim administration.

JS: That was Gareth Evans, right?

HA: Gareth Evans. The idea had been suggested by Sihanouk back in 1981. He said “This is nothing new, why is everybody [talking about it]; I suggested this back in 1981.” It had been put by this guy who was a congressman for New York, Solarz. He came to the Secretary-General -- I was in that meeting -- and suggested this idea of an interim administration. But what made the difference was that for the first time this idea was put forward by a foreign minister, a man who was a responsible member of the government who was playing an important role in all this. That gave it a lot of publicity, but it was clear that it was a non-starter. There was no way we could take over this country; I mean, that’s not going to work. But from there, Rafi said, “We cannot have a UN interim administration, but we can have a heavy UN involvement. A tripod kind of thing, where you have the existing administrative structures and you have the Supreme National Council, where everybody can participate and everybody can therefore say they are on board, and the UN could be, you know, a supervisor in this, and control that everything is fine.”

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JS: And Rafi discussed that with all of the parties?

HA: Yes. In our discussion we said, “Your idea of an interim government is a non-starter but the concept of what we called ‘an enhanced role for the United Nations’ may provide something that is acceptable to everybody, in between, that is acceptable to everybody and more realistic.” It is that concept that was picked up by the P-5 when they decided to begin their exercise in January 1990. Now, again, very interesting: suddenly the P-5... The Paris conference collapsed at the end of August, nothing really happens after that. Gareth Evans comes up with this idea, and people start playing around

with it, and basically we take the position that an enhanced role for the UN in the interim is not going to work, that there is no way that the UN would be allowed to take over this country, this is not a colonial country, even if people argued that Vietnam has colonized Cambodia. So, what we can do is an enhanced role, with this complicated arrangement that you don't destroy the existing structures because they exist and the country is being more or less run, but you put something there. Now, it's a question of how much power that 'something' has over the government, and how much power we have *vis-à-vis* the government so that this trilateral arrangement can function and be credible to everybody. But, the design was there.

The P-5... I should say the US took the initiative. Everyone was looking at, "How do you restart this Paris process?" And the US decided to have this P-5 consultation at the ministerial level, I mean, deputy ministerial level, at the level of what's-his-name at the time, the Assistant Secretary of State.

JS: The Deputy to the Secretary of State.

HA: No, not deputy – Assistant Secretary of State, who worked then as Ambassador to the Philippines and who is now in the Institute of Peace and so on. Solomon, Dick Solomon. They had this first meeting in Paris, just the P-5, in January. And they decided to meet every other month. They decided to have these meetings since everything very quickly came to, "Yes, but, can the UN do this? Can it not do...? How do you...?" And since we had had, as I said, this important input in the Paris conference, after meeting on their own, it was decided that in for every other meeting, we would be invited, and we kind of joined this group, it became P-5 plus us. Alternating meeting; once in Paris; once

in New York; Paris; New York; alternating between Paris and New York. And every time they would meet, of course, with Pérez de Cuéllar. If the meeting was in Paris, they could come and inform him of the results. If it's here, then they would meet with him as part of the exercise. Between January and the end of August 1990, they worked out this, what they called, this "framework," again, which is an elaboration of what Pérez de Cuéllar had asked the parties in June 1988, I mean, more detailed than that, with some variations obviously, this idea of the Supreme National Council and so on.

So, they agreed on that at the end of August, and the next step was to try and get the Cambodians -- because this had been done without the Cambodians -- to get the Cambodians to buy this framework, which was done in Jakarta in September. And then it was decided that this framework needed to be elaborated and transformed into a full-fledged, detailed peace agreement. There started a series of meetings to actually draft that. Well, we were again very, very heavily involved, and were in fact, apart from the kind of "cover piece," which was a very general thing, which was negotiated between the French, the Indonesians and us, in Jakarta, during a meeting in two nights until three or four o'clock in the morning. After that, the French asked us to write all of the annexes, and we wrote all the annexes for them, and they practically fitted them in there, lock, stock, and barrel -- the annexes on the military aspects, the annex on the election, the annex on refugees... All of the annexes were written entirely by us.

JS: Now, Rafi had a whole staff to work on this, right? Rafi and you, and somebody from the legal office...?

HA: The whole staff was, I mean, our office was Rafi, myself and Linda.

JS: Linda Hazov?.

HA: ... Who, as you know, died a few months ago.

JS: Yes, I was so shocked to hear that.

HA: I was so shocked. I was devastated.

JS: It was very sudden.



HA: ... Such a lot of it, such a lot of work.

JS: Was it cancer?

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HA: She had a brain tumor, which, of course, with metastasis and so on...

JS: She was a lawyer as a matter of fact, so she had the legal background.

HA: But of course, in parallel, there was the task, for that was created here. When the P-5 started their exercise, Pérez de Cuéllar established a task force on Cambodia because it was, you know, starting to look more and more like we were going to be heavily involved, and a lot of thinking had to be [done]. That task force involvement, of course,

was necessary. There was no way we could carry all of this, and it started getting very technical with military...

[end of side 1]

[side 2]

HA: ... So this framework was translated into a full-fledged draft agreement and that was completed at a meeting we had in Paris between the P-5, Indonesia and us, nobody else. And once the agreement was completely written on the 26th of November, then again we started the exercise of trying to sell it to the Cambodians and to the neighboring states, you know, ASEAN and Vietnam. In December, the French organized a Paris meeting of the SNC [Supreme National Council] which had been created by that time to try and sell it to them. They didn't buy it completely. And then in January the co-chairmen of the Paris conference, the French and the Indonesians and us, traveled together -- so, I mean, it really shows how heavily... we had become indispensable to this exercise -- traveled to Vietnam to try and convince the Vietnamese to buy onto the agreement, and Vietnam just threw it out of the window. We had very tough meetings with them. And then we went of course to Thailand and so on and so forth.

Then, Indonesia organized some more meetings; the SNC had some of its own meetings in December; things started to very slowly fall into place. You know, there were issues like: what system of election? What should be the decision-making mechanism in the SNC? It's presided over by Sihanouk, but if you go for consensus and there's no consensus, then the SNC can't decide, I mean the whole process is stopped.

The UN cannot be hostage to, you know, a decision process mechanism that doesn't work. There has to be some way to break the deadlock. And again, the proposal came from us -- that the Special Representative should have the right to make the determination. The election system compromise came from us one side wanted it to be à la Namibia. And another side was saying, "You need to have small constituencies because it is a tradition in Cambodia, and there was no tradition there, they have to know their MP, and so on and so forth" which was a logistical nightmare, you know... definition of... I mean, it would have been impossible -- of constituencies, people had been transferred from here to there -- how would you deliver it? So, the compromise also came from us, which was proportional -- because we had proposed the one -- proportional representation on a nationwide basis, with one nationwide constituency, à la Namibia. The others were proposing this micro thing, and we came up with a proposal of proportional representation at the provincial level, which kind of was a compromise but had some rationale to it from a technical point of view. And they bought onto that.

So, slowly, slowly, some of these last little things that were still stopping this agreement...

JS: And that was in a series of conversations and meetings?

HA: Serial meetings, one was in Jakarta, one was in Bataya -- they are referred to in that introduction, Bataya where the electoral... Actually, the idea of proportional representation by province came from Linda, who had worked quite a bit on this electoral systems issues, and she came up with that, which Rafi sold to them, and they accepted it as a compromise.

Until September here again... In September, on the occasion of the General Assembly, there was a meeting of the co-chairmen with the SNC and then the members of the Paris conference where the last details were hammered out. And then the French decided to call the conference for 21-23 October. As I said, by then we had written all the annexes for them; they even asked -- at the last minute they realized they didn't have a, what is it called now, a Final Act. We wrote the Final Act the day before we took the plane to be in Paris; we sent them the Final Act. It's amazing, it's amazing. And so we got to Paris on the 21st, and on the 23rd the agreements were signed, and that was it. Pérez de Cuéllar had come back for the signature. He made another speech there.

The talk of the town, while the agreements were being signed, was that Rafi *must* be the Special Representative. There is no other solution, you know. He had become the center stage of this whole thing. Pérez de Cuéllar was very correct -- he knew that Rafi didn't want it, because Rafi was hoping that having, you know, been so much in the limelight, being so appreciated by all the P-5, by everybody, that he would get, under the new SG in 1992 -- he would get one of these political departments that were being discussed. And therefore he was saying, "No, I'm not interested in going to Cambodia." And Pérez de Cuéllar was very correct, saying "Rafi, I understand. I cannot force you, and I will let my successor make that decision."

JS: There's one or two more...

HA: But, in Paris, he was under heavy pressure by the P-5 group to appoint someone, and to appoint Rafi. And he didn't do it; he didn't want to force Rafi -- which was correct. He could have done it, but he didn't do it. He said, "After all, my successor may

not like my choice, and I respect your view, you don't want to do it, you'd like to stay in New York." And he didn't do it.

JS: But of course, there are one or two memos in the file where Rafi has raised the question with the Secretary-General: "You're going to need to appoint somebody soon." But as you say, the Secretary-General, according to the memo, hardly answered.

HA: Before even going to the Paris conference at the end of September, the 30th of September, 1991, so three weeks before the Paris conference, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Council saying that since this was in the works, and it takes time to get things in place, "I propose the establishment of an advanced mission in Cambodia" -- this is UNAMIC -- which the Council approved on the 16th of October before the agreements were signed, on the understanding that it would become applicable once the agreements were signed. The agreements were signed on the 23rd of October; on the 9th of November, the General and the head of UNAMIC, who was the Ambassador from Bangladesh, arrived in Cambodia to start establishing the advance party. Then he worked, of course, in the last three months of 1991, on preparing the implementation plan -- because the Council endorsed the agreements on the 21st of October and then asked the Secretary-General to present an implementation plan, which was a massive exercise. So, we sent these last survey missions to get the information that we were not getting, and then prepared the implementation plan which was only submitted to the Council on the 19th of June 1992, and then on the 28th of February 1992, the operation was established.

JS: What I wanted to ask was about money, because in all of the other operations that were taking place at that time, money had been a real problem. Were there objections on the part of the P-5 to any budget projections, of the five permanent members?

HA: No. That is what is, again, staggering, when you see how they react today.

JS: I know -- well, even *then*.

HA: The only thing... I mean, we of course presented, and then we started to prepare; we were toying around with numbers and presented estimates and so on. The only thing -- I mean, there was what was called the Core Group, established here, by nine or ten countries, but they represented most of the assessed contribution among them, so there was the P-5, and there was Germany and Canada, and Japan in it, and there was Indonesia not because they paid a lot but because they were co-chairmen. But, together they represented a lot, and they, of course, said that they would like to work closely with us as we prepared the budget. They said, "We understand that it is going to be very big, and so on and so, but when you present it, present it be tranches of six months at a time so that we can sell it to our Finance Ministries." But there was absolutely no... It was interesting how high our credibility was. I don't think that it's at all attributable to our credibility but it's also attributable to the general mood of the international community *vis-à-vis* Cambodia, there was a sense that...

JS: Because at this very time in the Western Sahara, they were objecting to the budget very much.

HA: Nobody every objected when we said, “We need sixteen thousand troops.” They sent us too much. Today, they would go through the roof. When we said that we needed thirty-two hundred police, nobody discussed it. Everything is taken as “this is it,” you know? It is really amazing when you think of the situation today.

JS: Hedi, this is marvelous. I don’t want to take any more of your time, except there is one other question which struck me as kind of odd, where the Secretary-General...

HA: We still have seven or eight minutes, because I have another appointment at 4:00. Today is one of those days, because he is a man who is coming to try and go through the history of our thing in Rwanda. There is this big controversy about the genocide, and did we know? And what did we do about it? And so on and so forth.

JS: ... This actually is very important. What you have just been saying is the main example, as far as I know, of the UN role *not* being included in any of the histories that have been written so far. Most of them skip over it, almost entirely.

HA: Absolutely, absolutely.

JS: They refer to the Indonesian cocktail party, so to speak, and then just vaguely say that the Secretary-General was exercising good offices. And in connection with the Paris conference, there is practically no mention of the United Nations.

HA: I mean, what would you see -- what does the press see? The press sees the French taking an initiative, and you know, and solving...

JS: Yes, but scholars need to look into this...

HA: What they don't see is that not only all the basic papers at the beginning of 1989 were ours, they were all written by us, and all very well received, and then the actual agreement -- and the French said, "We don't know how we should go about supervising the cease-fire and this and that -- you just tell us." We wrote the annexes for them, all the annexes.



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JS: That makes it all the more important...

HA: If you look at them one by one, they were all written by us.

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JS: ... Gotta find the files. As I said, they are not in the archives.

HA: Including the Final Act on the UN at conference?

JS: No, that's there.

HA: They had forgotten that they needed a Final Act, [and said] "Can you write one for us?"

JS: Of course, the Final Act is in the archives, but not the background. But let me ask you this one more question...

HA: But we never really publicized this either, except in here, in a very low-key way, not self-serving, very modest. But at least it does show that the UN was heavily involved, although it does not show all of it -- it doesn't say that we wrote the agreements, because people would have said "These guys are boasting." But it's an historical truth.

JS: Can you comment on or clarify this rather odd conversation that the Secretary-General had with Colin Powell when he went to Washington, in which he said the Chinese were in favor of the smallest possible role for the Khmer Rouge, and that the Chinese had told him that?

HA: Yes. I think if you go to the context of the time. The Chinese were very much interested in their four modernizations, and they were exploding economically, and so on and so forth.

JS: They were just beginning.

HA: And so, this was their interest. They wanted to modernize and so on, these four modernizations. They needed the US, and the whole Cold War was coming to an end. You know, the whole context was changing. The Chinese knew they had a problem. The Khmer Rouge was unsellable. The Khmer Rouge was indispensable in terms of their regional strategy, because they (the Khmer Rouge) were the only credible military force

among the three resistance factions. And so, they were indispensable to them to keep the Vietnamese on their toes and to keep pressure on the Vietnamese that this isn't going to end, you know? If you have forever, you know, a dry-season offensive and wet-season offensive, back and forth like the tide -- it comes and goes -- dry season the Vietnamese have the advantage and the wet season the Khmer Rouge come out again, and so on and so forth. And so, that was indispensable.

At the same time, the Chinese knew they had a real problem. They were members of the Security Council; they were modernizing; they were opening up to the outside world. They needed to look good, and they knew the Khmer Rouge was a terrible handicap on that. So, they were like de Gaulle -- you know, what de Gaulle said was "*toujours avoir deux fers au feu*" -- two stokes in the fire. The Khmer Rouge was their instrument on the ground. Sihanouk was always back -- as you know, Sihanouk still had...

JS: Has a house there...

HA: ... always had this palace. We had lunch with him there several times in his palace. We have photographs at the same table with Linda, Sihanouk, and Rafi and I, which I still have somewhere. So, Sihanouk was the international card *vis-à-vis* the outside world. And the Khmer Rouge were under pressure. So, it makes sense in that sense, that when the time for a deal came, the Khmer Rouge had to be part of it, and the Chinese made sure of that. But, you know, not prominent; Sihanouk would be prominent because he's the respectable figure. So, I think it makes sense in that context.

JS: They were being a little disingenuous. I mean, they didn't want a prominent role, that's true, for the Khmer Rouge. But they wanted to protect them still.

HA: Oh no. There is no question... But, you know, they were part of the P-5 exercise that led to the framework, and then they were part of the exercise that led also to the writing of the agreements, and so on. So, they were a part of it all the time, but they were there to make sure the Khmer Rouge was not excluded from the picture. There is no way. Therefore, from the very beginning, the assumption was made that, while morally disputable, the Khmer Rouge had to be part of the equation or there would be no deal, because the Chinese would not agree.



JS: Let me ask you a final question. Among the P-5, was there any outstanding personality? In other words, who...

HA: Claude Martin was a...

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JS: ... A strong force?

HA: ... A very strong conductor.

JS: And what was his position in the French government at that time?

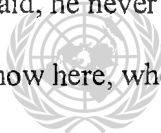
HA: He was Director of Political Affairs for Asia in the Foreign Ministry.

JS: And that was equivalent to the Assistant Secretary of State?

HA: Exactly. It's the third level. I think Solomon was also, played a very, very constructive, balanced role -- a very good man, Solomon.

JS: And they themselves...?

HA: Martin, Claude Martin was one of these brilliant types, but sometimes not pleasant. I mean, he would be on his knees when he needed us, and then he could the next day ignore us. For example, he never said, he never acknowledged publicly the help we gave him. It was this other guy, who is now here, who said, "Everything we prepared is based on (...?)."



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Yale-UN Oral History Project

Hedi Annabi

James Sutterlin, Interviewer

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