

Armed Groups in Cambodian Civil War

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Armed Groups in Cambodian Civil War

Territorial Control, Rivalry, and Recruitment

Yuichi Kubota

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My interest in political violence was initially provoked by the active media coverage of internal armed conflicts during the 1990s. As a high school student, I was shocked by news of the brutal mass killings in those conflicts. For instance, the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 made me wonder why such a mass slaughter had suddenly occurred. Viewing this from a society mostly dominated by a single ethnicity—not to suggest there are never any ethnic conflicts in my country, Japan—it was not easy for me to understand the circumstances that brought about such large-scale, multiethnic collective actions of violence. Although I had arrived at only a vague sense of the problem, my exposure to these events increased my interest in the study of civil war and prompted me to become involved with some NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) that focused on international development and humanitarian assistance.

The close of the Cambodian civil war in 1991 was also an unforgettable event for me (and probably for others of my generation). The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) were sent off as part of the UN peacekeeping operations after heated controversies over the necessity of their overseas dispatch. The JSDF's dispatch caused many citizens to turn their attention to post-conflict peacekeeping and peace-building in Cambodia. As a result of the emerging interest, manpower and material resources were committed to the country for sustainable development in various fields. Fruitful relationships, a fortunate byproduct, were thereby firmly constructed between Cambodians and Japanese people, not only at the governmental level, but at the popular level as well.

My fieldwork in Cambodia, which makes up a crucial part of this book, was possible, thanks to these networks. My job experience in an NGO linked me to researchers and fieldworkers in Cambodia, and discussion with these experts allowed me to adopt an appropriate

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