



A moderate stance for democracy

The EU and Cambodia's diplomatic tensions

This paper expresses the views of the author and not the views of the European Institute for Asian Studies.

A moderate stance for democracy
The EU and Cambodia's diplomatic tensions

Author: Cindy Cao ¹

Under the supervision of: Dr. Robert Dover ²

Abstract

While officially maintaining a democratic framework, Cambodia has faced months of political crisis since local elections were held in June 2017, resulting in a narrow victory for the governing Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and important gains for the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). The Supreme Court dissolved the only opposition party, the CNRP, and its leader Kem Sokha has been arrested, leaving an unfavourable political environment for the elections that are due to be held on 29 July 2018.

As democratic principles are essential elements of the Cooperation agreement framework the EU and the Royal Government signed in 1997, the European Commission, Parliament and Council have expressed deep concerns and strongly urged the Cambodian Government to ensure the highest standards for the July elections. In February 2018, the European Council threatened Cambodia with economic sanctions, demanded the restoration of democracy and urged the Cambodian leadership to engage in a constructive dialogue with the elected opposition.

This report reflects upon the current impasse and considers what concrete measures may improve relations between the EU and Cambodia. The potential harmful impact of economic sanctions upon the Cambodian population should be borne in mind if the decision to impose them is taken. Rigid coercive European democratisation policy may lead to retaliation towards China, and a confrontational approach may fuel anger and resentment among elites and, by extension, the domestic population, leading ultimately to more authoritarianism. Instead, democratisation must be considered as a non-linear and gradual process that needs to be adapted to local specificities while maintaining essential democratic elements. As such, emphasis needs to be put on both ruling party and opposition, attributing them both with responsibility for the current situation, whilst acknowledging their future roles in developing potential solutions.

¹ Mrs. Cindy Cao is a visiting research fellow at the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), Brussels, Belgium and a PhD candidate in Global Politics at University of Leicester, UK.

² Dr. Robert Dover is associate professor in Security and Intelligence at the University of Leicester, UK.

Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	4
CHAPTER 1: THE EU AND CAMBODIA'S DIPLOMATIC TENSIONS	5
CHAPTER 2: THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS IN CAMBODIA	9
CHAPTER 3: GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE	17
CHAPTER 4: EU ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON CAMBODIA?	26
CHAPTER 5: A MODERATE APPROACH FOR DEMOCRATISATION	37
CONCLUSION	49
REFERENCES.....	52

List of abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
EBA	Everything But Arms
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preference
NEC	National Election Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SRP	Sam Rainsy's Party
UN	United Nations
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1: The EU and Cambodia's diplomatic tensions

Throughout 2017 and 2018, the political situation in Cambodia has been characterised by the dissolution of the main opposition party, the arrest of its leader, the closure or sale of major independent media and what is perceived as a "crackdown" on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and Human Rights groups such as the International Federation for Human Rights.³ The European Union (EU), along with the international community, responded by cutting funds to electoral support and threatening further economic sanctions if the situation does not improve in the run up to general elections on 29 July 2018. The Cambodian Government rejected EU demands along the lines of national security, citing how these opposition voices represent extremist views.

Recent political development in Cambodia

In 2017, tensions between Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP), who have enjoyed power for the past 33 years, and the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), have increased.

On 4 September 2017, CNRP leader Kem Sokha was arrested, charged with treason over his alleged involvement in a conspiracy with the United States of America (USA) to help overthrow Hun Sen's government through a "colour revolution." Both the US and Sokha have rejected the accusation, arguing that Sokha merely aimed to encourage a peaceful and democratic transition of power. In November 2017, the country's supreme court dissolved the CNRP at the Government's request, and ordered a five-year political ban for 118 members of the opposition party. Criticized for leading a political crackdown and using the judicial system in order to leave Cambodia as a *de facto* one-party state, the CPP insists that recent developments result from the independent actions of competent authorities and the judiciary organs to enforce the rule of law. On 26 February 2018, the CPP claimed a sweeping victory in elections for the country's Senate, having won all 58 of the seats that were voted on.

The increasing repression of both written and broadcast media and civil society in Cambodia has been widely documented in the international news. The main English-language newspapers, the Cambodia Daily and the Phnom Penh Post, were respectively shut down and sold to a Malaysian investor with ties to Cambodia's Prime Minister. For the Government's critics, freedom of expression

³ INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (2018), Update for the European Union (EU) Cambodia Human Rights dialogue 13 March 2018, Brussels, Belgium, Key Human Rights issues of concern https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20180312_cambodia_eu_dialogue_bf_en.pdf

has been restricted for political purposes. For its advocates, both forms of media did not address the issues surrounding taxation and Government funding. Some local radio stations were banned from broadcasting programs by Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and Voice of Democracy. Election-monitoring agencies, such as the National Democratic Institute, were threatened and subsequently expelled. Some NGO's, such as Agape International Missions were also closed. The Cambodian Parliament also adopted a lèse-majesté law, prompting concerns from rights groups expressing the new legislation could be used against critics of the Government.

As he has often done over the years, the former CNRP leader Sam Rainsy has gone into self-imposed exile in order to drum up support for his opposition party around the world, and to lobby EU officials to take a stronger stance against the Government of Cambodia. "A simple warning is needed from the international community and the EU that you would not recognise a Government elected into power in this kind of environment," he notably said in 2016. ⁴ The CNRP has urged the EU to remove the duty-free access to their markets. ⁵

EU's response

Events perceived by Europeans as democratic setbacks started to significantly deteriorate a close relationship that both the EU and the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia have enjoyed over the past decades. "With Europeans, we have enjoyed 25 years of privileged relations," said Sok Siphana Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia coming to Brussels in June 2018. "This visit is our first Goodwill mission and there will be others. We want to deepen our relationship with the EU." ⁶ The EU is one of Cambodia's major trading partners, and 45 percent of Cambodian exports go to the EU. ⁷ A disruption in diplomacy could seriously affect EU-Cambodia economics and trade relations. A positive cooperation with Cambodia is also in the EU's economic and security interests. Research shows that efficient and effective democratic systems reduce the uncertainty about future political commitments and promises, reduce the likelihood of civil conflict, and facilitates trade and economic cooperation, thus making cooperation easier and more beneficial for the EU. ⁸ "The EU considers

⁴ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2016), Rainsy tells EU to get tough in speech, 15 July 2016

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rainsy-tells-eu-get-tough-speech>

⁵ THE FINANCIAL TIMES (2018), Cambodian leader leaves little to chance in pursuit of poll win, on 9 July 2018

<https://www.ft.com/content/e08461d4-8022-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>

⁶ Meeting with H.E. Sok Siphanna, Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) and the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) (Minister Rank), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on 25 June 2018, Cospaia Restaurant, Rue Capitaine Crespel, 1, 1050 Brussels, Belgium.

⁷ KHMER TIMES (2018), Cambodia and the European Union, 25 June 2018

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50504419/cambodia-and-the-european-union/>

⁸ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2016), Good Governance in EU External Relations : What role for development policy in a changing international context ? Study, Directorate General for External Policies, Policy Department, p. 12

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU\(2016\)578012_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU(2016)578012_EN.pdf)

Cambodia a partner and a friend,” said an EU official in Brussels. “It has successfully assisted Cambodia's development during the last years. The results are positive in this regard.”⁹

Following Cambodia's deteriorating political context, the international community – mainly the USA, EU and UN – issued several official statements expressing grave concerns about political developments in Cambodia and what is regarded as the continuing deterioration of democracy, respect of Human Rights and the rule of law. Following the resistance of the Cambodian Government, international pressure continued to mount in the run up to general elections set up for 29 July 2018.

The enforced dissolution of the main opposition party, the CNRP, led in December 2017 to the European Commission's suspension of its support for the national elections. The EU Ambassador in Cambodia George Edgar explains: “It's the first time that the main opposition party was completely banned, dissolved by the Supreme Court. This triggered a very strong and serious political reaction on the EU side.”¹⁰ The EU has urged the Cambodian Government to stop using the judiciary as a political tool to narrow the democratic space for political parties, media and civil society.

While Germany imposed visa sanctions on high-ranking Cambodian officials, the EU Council officially declared the possibility of imposing economic sanctions on Cambodia if the political situation does not improve. In December 2017, the European Parliament called on the EU Institutions and the Member States to review Cambodia's fulfilment of its obligations under the preferential trade agreement Everything But Arms (EBA) which contains a Human Rights clause that can trigger a suspension in case of abuse.¹¹ In February 2018, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union announced that the EU may consider “specific targeted measures with regard to the EBA.”¹² The Royal Kingdom of Cambodia dispatched a Goodwill mission to Brussels to pursue negotiations with

⁹ EU official 1 (anonymous). Face-to-face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels.

¹⁰ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

¹¹ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2017), Motion for a Resolution with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure on Cambodia: the banning of the opposition (2017/3002(RSP)) - B8 0686/2017, 12 December 2017.

¹² EU COUNCIL (2018), Council conclusions on Cambodia, as adopted by the Council at its 3598th meeting held on 26 February 2018, from the General Secretariat of the Council to delegations, 6416/18

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6416-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

the EU in June 2018.¹³ The Union also sent a dedicated mission to Cambodia in July 2018 to monitor its Generalised Scheme of Preference (GSP).¹⁴

The EU foreign policy in Cambodia is part of a multilateral action mainly led by the US and the UN. The USA also suspended support for elections, imposed visa sanctions on high-ranking Cambodian officials, including Hun Sen and the President of the Cambodian supreme court, and declared aid cuts over democracy concerns. The UN issued Human Rights assessments and has on various occasions urged the Government to let opposition stand in election. At the UN Human Rights Council, a statement endorsed by 45 Western countries expressed concerns over the situation of Human Rights in Cambodia. Most statements have been rejected by the Cambodian Government saying that actions are politically motivated with the intent to mislead international public opinion.

In short, the EU is mainly concerned by the use of the judiciary as a political tool and demands the release of Kem Sokha, the reversal of the dissolution of CNRP, and an end to repression and intimidation of media outlets and civil society groups.¹⁵ In response, Cambodia insists that recent developments are actions taken by competent authorities and the judiciary organs to enforce rule of laws, protect Cambodian sovereignty, and maintain the core interest of peace and stability in Cambodia for a harmonious society and continued sustainable development.¹⁶

¹³ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018), Cambodia Sends Envoys to Europe to Lobby EU Over Preferential Trade Agreement, 29 June 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-sends-envoys-to-europe-to-lobby-eu-over-preferential-trade-agreement/4460297.html>

¹⁴ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), EU to review Cambodia's EBA status, 1 May 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/eu-review-cambodias-eba-status>

¹⁵ EU COUNCIL (2018), Council conclusions on Cambodia, Ibid.

¹⁶ EU-CAMBODIA (2010), Joint press release : European Union and Cambodia hold 10th Joint Committee Meeting, Brussels 14 march 2018 https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/41392/joint-press-release-european-union-and-cambodia-hold-10th-joint-committee-meeting_en

Chapter 2: The democratisation process in Cambodia

Early in the 1990s, the UN Peacekeeping mission in Cambodia succeeded at conflict resolution but not at implementing a full democracy. The Cambodian system appears to be rooted in traditional politics of fear and violence, involving hostility and intimidation between political elites of the UNTAC time declaring their willingness to inflict damage on each other. Cambodia has a long tradition of political violence, restricting freedom of speech, imprisoning, mistreating and doing away with political opponents, however the international community has turned a blind eye to it and regarded elections to be free and fair.¹⁷ At the last general election in 2013, when the two main opposition parties; the Sam Rainsy Party and Human Rights Party merged into the CNRP, they gained a surprisingly high proportion of votes, demonstrating a public appetite for change and the CNRP's potential to change the Government. As the opposition rejected official results confirming a victory for the CPP, the country plunged into an election crisis involving opposition-led protests and violent repression, culminating in the recent events described above. Tensions between the opposition and ruling party today remain a main source of violence, increasing the risks of a popular uprising and showing the volatility of the electoral process.¹⁸ While its current nature can be seen as a democracy "in transition" or "in stagnation," this report supports the premise that it has developed into a "hybrid" model.

The implementation process

Cambodia adopted a democratic system with a free market economy in the post-Cold War era, when liberal democracy emerged as a global norm and the UN developed into an "interventionist" institution.¹⁹ After decades of foreign rule and authoritarian governments, the 1991 Paris Peace Accords marked the end of the war in Cambodia and a multiparty system was introduced in 1993 with the support of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Largely regarded as an "internationally imposed phenomenon,"²⁰ the UN-led intervention was an attempt to create via democratic elections a power-sharing Government while establishing national self-determination and independence.²¹

¹⁷ WORLD POLITICS REVIEW (2016) Cambodia's Democratic Transition Has Collapsed, With Dangerous Consequences by Kurlantzick, 16 August 2016 <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/19676/cambodia-s-democratic-transition-has-collapsed-with-dangerous-consequences>

¹⁸ THE ASIA FOUNDATION (2017), The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia, pp. 39-44 <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Cambodia-StatofConflictandViolence.pdf>

¹⁹ UN, K. (2009), The Judicial System and Democratisation in Post-Conflict Cambodia, in Beyond Democracy in Cambodia, Chapter 3, p. 70

²⁰ HUGUES, C. (2009), Reconstructing Legitimate Political Authority through Elections ? in Beyond Democracy, Chapter 2, p. 48

²¹ RICHMOND, O. and FRANK, D. (2007) Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia in Security Dialogue 2007; 38; 27, p. 31-33.

In theory, the UN approach assumed that a democratic system is best suited to manage political conflict but, in practice, post-conflict countries are the least favourable environment in which democracy can flourish.²² The UN withdrawal without a long-term institution-building process enabled leaders of the major fighting factions, supported by their respective armies, to fight a civil war to become the key power-holders of Cambodia. Although designed to promote political compromise, the Peace settlement of 1991 can be seen as the result of a "mutually hurting stalemate between still-hostile groups."²³ Political competition in elections was encouraged between bitter enemies before institutions and systems were able to accommodate their political differences²⁴ and without mediating important socio-political cleavages, this was partly the reason a violent conflict broke out.²⁵ As stated in a United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) discussion paper from 1993, "representatives of four competing factions remained fractious politicians rather than statesmen demonstrating their commitment to the best interests of the Cambodian people (...) Regrettably, the Cambodian peace process did not succeed in (...) encouraging the competing parties to address policy issues, individually or collectively, in a serious or constructive manner."²⁶

This "continuation of war by other means"²⁷ explains why political parties were not prepared to allow the winner of legitimate elections to rule.²⁸ When the CPP, still in control of the military, lost the elections to the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), it refused to accept the defeat and threatened the resumption of civil war. The international community turned a blind eye to it, unwilling to confront the CPP militarily.²⁹ A coalition between the FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy's party (SRP) led the CPP to stage a coup d'état in 1997 chasing Rainsy and other non-CPP leaders into exile.³⁰ In the 1990s and 2000s, political activists were routinely murdered and opposition parties nearly put out of business.³¹ Elections have been considered free and fair until today, but the political landscape has been dominated by the CPP to the extent that it has managed to effectively oppose and contain dissent against its rule, and has managed the machinery of elections to legitimise and consolidate its power.³²

²² UNESCO (2006) *Brokered Democracy-Building : Developing Democracy through Transitional Governance in Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan* by BARMA N. in *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)*, Vol. 8, n°2, UNESCO, p. 128

²³ *Ibid*, p. 131

²⁴ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), *Beyond democracy in Cambodia*, p. 6

²⁵ UNESCO (2006), p. 128

²⁶ CURTIS, G., (1993) *Transition to what ? Cambodia, UNTAC and the Peace Process*, discussion paper, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), November 1993.

²⁷ UNESCO (2006), p. 141

²⁸ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 6

²⁹ SPRINGER, S., (2009), *Violence, Democracy, and the Neoliberal « Order » : The Contestation of Public Space in Posttransitional Cambodia* in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99(1), p. 144

³⁰ UNESCO (2006), p. 144

³¹ *WORLD POLITICS REVIEW* (2016) *Cambodia's Democratic Transition Has Collapsed, With Dangerous Consequences*

³² UNESCO (2006), p. 140

This experience reminds us that whilst institution building is important to the democratic process, it is the role played by domestic elites that often goes a long way to determining this processes outcome. Resulting from the conflict, a “heavily elite-driven dynamic”³³ still dominates the political landscape and prolongs the pre-existing nature of the former political system. Imposed elections did not change hostility and violent confrontation between rival political factions.³⁴ The current ruling party CPP led by Hun Sen and opposition CNRP led by Kem Sokha and Sam Rainsy emerged from the politics of violence of the pre-UNTAC period. On one side, the CPP has long been criticised by the West and portrayed as authoritarian with communist leanings,³⁵ these criticisms largely stem from its role as the successor of the People’s Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea, the party which led the one-party state of the 1980s.³⁶ On the other hand, the CNRP is frequently accused of colluding with the US to conspire against the Cambodian government. Additionally, the Cambodian government has declared its suspicions that some Western countries used the UN Human Rights Council to support the candidate of their preference.³⁷

A hybrid system

Interpreting the current nature of Cambodian democracy requires an understanding of the complex interplay of external and internal influences within the global system and against a historical backdrop of Cold War geopolitics.

The EU and the US seem to understand Cambodia’s political development as “democracy setbacks,”³⁸ “a continuing deterioration of democracy”³⁹ or a dysfunction of a *transition* toward liberal democracy that needs to be sanctioned. The Cambodian Government also see it as a “democracy-in-progress.”⁴⁰ However, some scholars understand it as a “non progress of a non transition”⁴¹ and consider the most realistic scenario for the future as that of further stagnation.⁴² For US historian David Chandler, “the Cambodian Government—except, of course, under colonial rule—has always

³³ Ibid, p. 135

³⁴ RICHMOND, O. and FRANK, D. (2007), p. 10.

³⁵ McCARGO, D. (2005), Cambodia : Getting away with authoritarianism ? in Journal of Democracy, Volume 16, Number 4, October 2005, p. 101

³⁶ HUGUES, C. (2009), p. 34

³⁷ UN WEB TV, Cambodia, UPR Report Consideration - 37th Meeting, 26th Regular Session Human Rights Council <http://webtv.un.org/en/ga/watch/cambodia-upr-report-consideration-37th-meeting-26th-regular-session-human-rights-council/3643434510001/?term=&page=8>

³⁸ White House (2018), Statement from the Press Secretary on Reduction in Assistance to the Government of Cambodia, issued on February 27, 2018 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-reduction-assistance-government-cambodia/>

³⁹ EU Council (2018), Council conclusions on Cambodia

⁴⁰ GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Cambodia, Stability and development first, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. To tell the truth. February 2018 <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/4T2-Cambodia-Stability-and-Development-First.pdf>

⁴¹ McCARGO, D. (2005), p. 107

⁴² CROISSANT, A. (2004), From Transition to Defective Democracy : Mapping Asian Democratization in Democratization, Vol 11, No. 5, December 2004, pp. 156-178.

been authoritarian. It's never been democratic. It's never been an open, competitive political society. I don't see that as happening in the future."⁴³

This report supports the idea of a *hybrid* form of democracy, neither fully democratic, nor strictly authoritarian - between Western liberal norms and Cambodian traditional politics.⁴⁴ The political system is inevitably grounded in local conditions and dynamics, including historical political heritage, whilst having been introduced and inspired by external influences.

Internal politics

Internal politics are historically contingent, and are dependent upon history and context. Political violence, threats of assassinations, the misuse of the judicial system, corruption and a patronage system based on loyalty and rewards are far from being abolished. Neo-patrimonialism is the traditional and predominant form of governance.⁴⁵ The notion of "patronage," a key feature of Cambodian politics, lends itself to hierarchical power. Historically, rulers used force rather than moral rights in order to retain power.⁴⁶ Patterns of domination and repression have led to the development of a society of fear, physical violence and military presence.⁴⁷ "No Khmer leader since independence (...) has accepted without resistance a challenge to the absolutism of their authority," states Roberts.⁴⁸ This absolutism dictates the structure of one party state.

"Tensions are easily created in Cambodia when parties stand to suffer from political defeat. This is due to the absence of any institutionalized experience of how to handle such defeats peacefully."⁴⁹ Both ruling and opposition parties tend to demonise each other, "engaging in the nasty politics of character assassination, killing (...) any hopes for solidifying the culture of dialogue."⁵⁰ "Every political party is struggling for power in order to survive. Because when you lose, you are in trouble."⁵¹ Hatred and old suspicions from the Cold War are still very present in the Cambodian

⁴³ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018) China-Cambodia Relations Benefit Many, Likely to Deepen, Chandler Says, on 2 May 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/china-cambodia-relations-benefit-many-likely-to-deepen-chandler-says/4373990.html>

⁴⁴ BAAZ, M. and LILJA, M (2014), Understanding Hybrid Democracy in Cambodia: The Nexus Between Liberal Democracy, the State, Civil Society, and a "Politics of Presence" Asian Politics & Policy—Volume 6, Number 1, p. 6

⁴⁵ BRENN, J (2018) Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018

⁴⁶ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 20

⁴⁷ HASSELKOG, M. (2009), (Re)Creating Local Political Legitimacy through Governance Intervention? in Beyond Democracy in Cambodia, Chapter 7, p. 194

⁴⁸ ROBERTS, D., (2009) The superficiality of statebuilding in Cambodia: patronage and clientelism as enduring forms of politics. In: The dilemmas of statebuilding: confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations. (Eds: Paris, Roland and Sisk, Tim), Routledge, p. 7

⁴⁹ BAAZ, M. and LILJA, M (2014), p. 9

⁵⁰ EAST ASIA FORUM (2017) Cambodia's politics of survival threatens democracy by S. Peou, 21 November 2017 <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/21/cambodias-politics-of-survival-threatens-democracy/>

⁵¹ VOICE OF AMERICA (2017), Q&A: Interview with Professor Sorpong Peou: Cambodia's Culture of Retribution and Politics of Survival, the Setback for Democratic Liberalization, 19 January 2017 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/interview-with->

political class.⁵² The continued fighting between them made it seem impossible “that they would take turns running the country, as would be expected in Western democracies. There has been no trust between them, with each treating one another like bitter enemies and if given the opportunity would slit each other’s throats,” said Chan Sophal, Director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Cambodia.⁵³ The notion of democratic dialogue is undermined on both sides by repeated declarations to inflict damage on each other.

Risks for the elite are increasing. On the opposition side, CNRP leader Kem Sokha is detained and Sam Rainsy is in self-imposed exile, threatened with criminal charges following his appeal to boycott elections.⁵⁴ On the ruling side, the CPP’s leaders and Hun Sen have already been threatened with legal action due to human rights abuses and corruption.⁵⁵ These politicians fear that they may face exile, lengthy prison terms or judicial or extra-judicial death if they do not maintain their grip on power. For Chandler, Prime Minister Hun Sen is scared something would happen to him if he would lose power. Historically in Cambodia, opposition leaders would not allow a former leader into participatory politics but would seek to permanently sideline that former leader in violent or non-violent ways.⁵⁶

This strong hostility between political parties, coupled with a mounting international pressure in the name of democracy and Human Rights, creates a potentially politically and socially explosive situation. Violence in the country may occur if citizens feel their voices are not heard – as “peaceful” demonstrations are not always “peaceful” and are often violently repressed. From the CPP’s point of view, the Government did prevent a ‘colour revolution’, although one can argue that the CNRP dissolution fuelled anger and resentment among party members and their supporters. Sam Rainsy called several times for the army and Cambodians to unite and fight the CPP.⁵⁷ Similarly, from the very first elections in Cambodia, the country has been “gripped by fear that bordered on paranoia,

[professor-sorpong-peou-cambodia-culture-of-retribution-and-politics-of-survival-the-setback-for-democratic-liberalization/3681519.html](http://www.khmertimeskh.com/50111870/professor-sorpong-peou-cambodia-culture-of-retribution-and-politics-of-survival-the-setback-for-democratic-liberalization/3681519.html)

⁵² CAMBODIA DAILY (2014), Former KPNLF Celebrate 35th Anniversary in Cambodia Daily, by Alex Willemyns, on 6 March 2014 <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/former-kpnlf-celebrate-35th-anniversary-53619/>

⁵³ KHMER TIMES (2018), Democracy stumbles in Cambodia, by Chan Sophal, 5 March 2018

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/50111870/democracy-stumbles-cambodia/>

⁵⁴ XINHUA (2018) Cambodia warns against any calls for election boycott, 9 April 2018,

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/09/c_137098287.htm#0-twi-1-65546-7250227817ecdff034dc9540e6c76667

⁵⁵ EAST ASIA FORUM (2017), Cambodia’s politics of survival threatens democracy

⁵⁶ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018) Poor squeezed democracy never rooted in Cambodia, Chandler says, 3 May 2018

<https://www.voacambodia.com/a/poor-squeezed-democracy-never-rooted-in-cambodia-chandler-says/4375907.html>

⁵⁷ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Former opposition leader tells soldiers, Cambodians to unite to fight CPP, 12 June 2018

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/former-opposition-leader-tells-soldiers-cambodians-unite-fight-cpp>

rather than stability and a climate of voter confidence. Insecurity – or the threat of insecurity – was ubiquitous in Phnom Penh, in the provinces, and in all districts and villages.”⁵⁸ The political configuration that emerged from the war may be one of the factors explaining why the resumption of violence in Cambodia remains a threat today. “Politics in Cambodia, both at the village and national level, continues to be associated with a powerful sense of threat and the regular deployment of coercion (...) as a mean to repress dissent.”⁵⁹

External influences

UNTAC enabled the normalization of diplomatic relations, leading to greatly increased levels of development assistance.⁶⁰ However, many point to the promotion of liberal economic market forces as the principal driver of external neoliberal foreign policies when explaining the political situation in Cambodia. Springer sees free market economics as a causal factor in the country’s inability to consolidate democracy.⁶¹ A researcher also argues that the international community has not considered democratisation as a top concern but instead political stability to “attract business and investments from Europe, the US and so on.”⁶² Political stability in Cambodia came in the form of one party consolidating its grip on power. The Cambodian case challenges the neoliberal vision that greater economic wealth leads to democracy and peace, instead showing that socio-economic inequality makes realising liberal democracy more difficult.⁶³ In this sense, liberal interventionism can be regarded as exacerbating the very problem it was supposed to solve. As Ear wrote in 2009, a relation of connivance seemed to be established when Hun Sen declared that the Kingdom does not regard criticisms, suggestions and recommendations provided by donors as interference in internal affairs and donors returned a status quo of continued indulgence.⁶⁴

In addition, the international pressure stemming from Western countries appears to emphasize more procedural aspects of democracy, while less attention is being paid to the content of electoral debates.⁶⁵ On one hand, the CPP’s methods to remain in power and their use of violent rhetoric has been widely condemned. On the other hand, the highly controversial CNRP’s anti-Vietnamese rhetoric that was pointed out by the United Nations⁶⁶ and which lead to death threats of Human

⁵⁸ CURTIS, G (1993)

⁵⁹ HUGUES, C. (2009), p. 61

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ SPRINGER, S., (2009), p. 138

⁶² Researcher (anonymous). Interview by email on 17 April 2018.

⁶³ CROISSANT, A. (2004), p. 168.

⁶⁴ EAR, S. (2009), *The Political Economy of Aid and Regime Legitimacy in Cambodia* in *Beyond Democracy in Cambodia*, Chapter 6, p. 163-164

⁶⁵ HUGUES, C. (2009), p. 32

⁶⁶ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2014) Anti-Vietnam talk by CNRP ‘alarms’ envoy, by Kevin Ponniah, 17 January 2014
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/anti-vietnam-talk-cnrp-%E2%80%98alarms%E2%80%99-envoy>

Rights groups condemning it and promoting social cohesion⁶⁷ – has been revived.⁶⁸ This calls into question the capacities of both main parties to respect democratic principles and ensure a positive cooperation with neighbouring countries. In addition, when the EU focuses on formal aspects to hold free and fair elections, it emphasizes the question of whether voters are offered a choice and it disregards whether this choice would make sense in terms of voters' conception of political authority and understanding of power.⁶⁹ In Cambodia, a large majority of citizens also agree there must be elections with more than one party competing, but few identify parties' policies, views or ideology as motives for voting.⁷⁰ Attention being paid predominantly to procedural functioning is what has led to the establishment of a system that has looked good in the short term, but that is vulnerable in the medium and long term.⁷¹ In semi-authoritarian fashion, the CPP held regular elections, but the opposition never had a chance of winning.⁷²

A hybrid system

The Cambodian case shows the mutual influence between global and local politics, the world system and Cambodia, and the structure and its agents. Traditional politics inherent in Cambodian society and external influences created a hybrid model that still prevents liberal democracy from fully taking root in Cambodia. Inconsistent practices with democratic principles as enshrined in Cambodia's constitution need to be addressed. Included amongst these are: an overall environment of intimidation and political violence, the lack of an independent and transparent judiciary system, patronage and clientelism. Addressing these issues would not only improve Cambodia's reputation and therefore its position to negotiate foreign investments and other cooperation matters, but it is also likely to dramatically decrease the risk of a popular uprising or "colour revolution," in turn reducing the risks of brutal repression.

The implementation of externally promoted reforms at a national level established a framework through which elites 'asset strip' the foreign resources (...), using these assets to support clientelistic systems of hierarchy and patronage.⁷³ This situation left those who wish to engage in Cambodian

⁶⁷ VOICE OF AMERICA (2014), Not Only Vietnamese Threatened by Racism, Rights Worker Says, by Men Kimseng, 25 February 2014 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/not-only-vietnamese-threatened-by-racism-rights-worker-says/1858791.html>

⁶⁸ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017), CNRP clings to anti-Vietnamese rhetoric, 26 June 2017 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-clings-anti-vietnamese-rhetoric>

⁶⁹ ASIAN FOUNDATION (2003) quoted by HUGUES, C. (2009), p. 62

⁷⁰ In 2003, while 88 per cent of Cambodians agree there must be elections with more than one party competing, only 28 per cent identify parties' policies, views and ideology as motives for voting.

LILJA, M and OJENDAL, J. (2009) The Never-Ending Hunt for Political Legitimacy in a Post-Conflict Context in Beyond Democracy in Cambodia, Chapter 10, p. 303

⁷¹ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 5

⁷² FOREIGN POLICY (2014), Cambodia's Long March Toward Democracy, by Peter Bartu and Andrew Grant <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/25/cambodias-long-march-toward-democracy/>

⁷³ RICHMOND, O. and FRANK, D. (2007) p. 44

politics (from non-governmental perspectives) trapped in a structural condition of violence and fear. For John Harley Breen, the current Cambodian system is also partly the result of the international community's inability to perceive political realities on the ground. Governments and donors advocating for democracy and human rights have focused on serving their own interests, while domestic actors have taken advantage of the democratic agenda for personal gain.⁷⁴ Due to the international community's prioritisation of economic concerns over political ones and the need to preserve political stability, elections have regularly taken place since the 1990's, providing an "acceptable façade but little substantial change."⁷⁵ Elections were flawed regarding political dissidence but judged "credible" by international observers.⁷⁶

What is seen today is more of an inter-elite struggle rather than a political competition between groups with different socio-political ideologies. Ojendal and Lilja warn that this kind of *procedural* democracy involves downside risks, with reversion to quasi-dictatorship or a one-party state, demonstrable in a few African countries, chief among these.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ BREEN, J (2018) Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018

⁷⁵ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 4

⁷⁶ HUGUES, C. (2009), p. 31

⁷⁷ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 15

Chapter 3: Geopolitical landscape

Despite waves of democratisation led by Western countries in the post-Cold War era, a trend toward authoritarianism and populism with an authoritarian twist prevails throughout the world.⁷⁸ All the countries of Southeast Asia have at some point been or continue to be authoritarian.⁷⁹ Today, a changing international order is heavily influenced and vexed by China's economic, diplomatic and more recently military rise. China has emerged as one of the most influential powers on the world stage, with this influence compounded by the US isolationism promised under President Trump's loudly proclaimed "America First" doctrine.⁸⁰ For some, Cambodia's democratic deterioration occurs in the context of President Trump's voluntary handing over of American regional and global leadership to China.⁸¹ In addition, the competition for influence, resources, and security between the US and China in the Southeast Asian region is pitting the two against each other.⁸² Soft power is used on both sides – East and West – to influence the Cambodian Government and public opinion through the non-forcible projection of culture, ideology and political systems. Countries are setting up strategic alliances and international pressure is not imposed multilaterally on Cambodia.

The internal conflict in Cambodia can – in some ways – be seen as a political tussle between competing superpowers: on one side China and on the other the US and the EU, with either supporting the main political forces in the country, the ruling CPP and opposition CNRP respectively. Although China does not intend to interfere or counter the EU and US' democratisation policies, it is wary of what the success of such policies might mean for China in the future. As such, the Chinese Government's unconditional assistance and investment plays in favour of the ruling CPP. Whilst the EU does not intend to support any political party in particular but rather democratic values as a good in themselves, it has demanded the reinstatement of the CNRP and the release of its leader. In this sense, the internal divisions within Cambodia are reflected on the world stage, in turn, exacerbating the domestic situation.

⁷⁸ CHANDLER, D. (2018) China-Cambodia Relations Benefit Many, Likely to Deepen, Chandler Says

⁷⁹ Idem.

⁸⁰ RUHLIG, T (2018) China's international relations in the new era of Xi Jinping – implications for Europe in EU-Asia at a glance, European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), March 2018 http://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EU_Asia_at_a_Glance_Ruhlig_2018.pdf

⁸¹ EAST ASIA FORUM (2018), The end of Cambodia's ersatz democracy, 5 February 2018 <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/02/05/the-end-of-cambodias-ersatz-democracy/>

⁸² DETH, S. O, SUN, S. and BULUT, S. (2018), *Cambodia's foreign relations in regional and global contexts*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 261 http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_51313-1522-2-30.pdf?180119031120

EU-Cambodia

The EU-Cambodia relationship has developed considerably since the normalisation of their relations in 1997,⁸³ predominantly in economic and development terms. In addition to this however, EU Ambassador in Cambodia George Edgar recalled how “Human rights and respect for democratic principles are explicitly referred to in the cooperation agreement which we signed with Cambodia in 1997.”⁸⁴ Despite the Cambodian Government’s regular propensity for waiting for election results to be announced and then releasing its critics from prison,⁸⁵ the EU only made a decisive move in 2017.

For the EU, “The situation changed in November with the dissolution of the CNRP rather than in June with the (generally well-run) commune council elections.” Explaining this change, the EU Ambassador pointed principally to the dissolution of the opposition party by the supreme court,⁸⁶ stating how “Dissolution of the CNRP removed the only credible competition in the 2018 national election. It also resulted in the removal of more than 5000 opposition commune councillors who were elected in a process in 2017 that was recognised by all parties as representing the will of the electorate.” Another EU official echoed: “We don’t consider elections as legitimate if they exclude the main opposition party (...) We strongly disagree with the use of the judiciary system for political purposes.”⁸⁷ A researcher also states: “A line has been crossed with recent events. Past elections in Cambodia, despite being always characterized by some episodes of violence, have always maintained an appearance of fairness. Recent developments (...) represented an escalation (...) that could not be ignored or tolerated anymore.”⁸⁸ For John Harley Breen, “the recent political events have exasperated terms set under the Paris Agreements (...) While Hun Sen’s crackdown on democracy and civil society has escalated in tangent with his consolidation of power since 1993, the unabashed anti-western rhetoric in recent years and blatant crackdown on the CNRP, NGOs, and independent media strike me as the final death knell for objectives set out under the Paris Agreements, which Hun Sen dismissed last year.”⁸⁹

⁸³ EU-CAMBODIA (1997) Cooperation agreement between the European Community and the Kingdom of Cambodia, signed on April 29, 1997 and entered into force in November 1999.

<http://investmentpolicyhub.unctad.org/Download/TreatyFile/2472>

⁸⁴ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017), Decision on EU funding for election committee due soon, 11 December 2017
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/decision-eu-funding-election-committee-due-soon>

⁸⁵ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Are we ready for the wind of change ? 16 May 2018
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/are-we-ready-winds-change>

⁸⁶ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

⁸⁷ EU official 1 (anonymous). Face-to-face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels

⁸⁸ Researcher (anonymous). Interview by email on 17 April 2018.

⁸⁹ BREEN, J (2018) Interview by email on 25 April 2018.

As a response, the EU raised its voice in accordance with the European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018 that recognises that “development needs to be country-led (...) founded on democratic values.”⁹⁰ As an EU official explained to me in interview, “it is very clear that the EU doesn’t support the CNRP and doesn’t support any political party in particular. We support democratic values, freedom of expression and a multiparty system. (...) The Government agrees to talk with other opposition parties but we do insist. CNRP is the main opposition party and all CNRP officials are banned.”⁹¹ Another EU official insisted: “I do not say the CNRP is better or worse than the CPP. The only thing I say is that we believe in democratic process and procedures. If Cambodia claims to be a democracy, they need to change their system.”⁹² Without calling into question the EU’s impartiality in principle, the EU demands are consistent with the CNRP objectives in practice.

The international community: EU-USA-UN

Trump’s administration had pledged to deeply cut development aid to several developing countries, including Cambodia, even before political tensions in Cambodia mounted.⁹³ The EU appears to follow the US democratisation policy. “If the US goes, the US will take the EU with it as well,” said the Cambodian Government in 2017.⁹⁴ Both the EU and the USA cut aid to national elections in December 2017. For the EU Ambassador in Cambodia, “the EU and the USA differ in terms of development policies but both want to see a democratic system in Cambodia.”⁹⁵

Along with the EU and the USA, the UN also repeated calls on the Cambodian Government “to restore the space for any Cambodians to exercise the right to stand for election without fear or intimidation.”⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that only European, other Western or Western-driven countries figure on the list of 45 countries that criticised the Government of Cambodia at the UN Human Rights Council on 22 March 2018. No Asian country, not even full democracies as Japan or South Korea participated.⁹⁷ The impartiality of the UN has been called into question on the Cambodian side when a discussion about the situation in Cambodia was held at the United Nations headquarters in December 2017. This discussion was conducted in the presence of the Delegation of the EU and

⁹⁰ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (2014), European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018 https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/european_strategy_for_cambodia_2014-2018_en_1.pdf

⁹¹ EU official 1 (anonymous). Face-to-face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels

⁹² EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels.

⁹³ ASIA TIMES (2017), Cambodia clampdown threatens Chinese interests, by D. Hutt, 30 October 2017

<http://www.atimes.com/article/cambodia-clampdown-threatens-chinese-interests/>

⁹⁴ Idem.

⁹⁵ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

⁹⁶ UN OHCHR (2008), End of Mission Statement, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Professor Rhona Smith, Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22819&LangID=E>

⁹⁷ UN OHCHR (2008), Extranet, 37th session of the Human Rights Council, Item 2, General Debate, Delivered by Permanent Representative Jillian Dempster, list of supporters of the statement at time of delivery on 21 March 2018

the Permanent Mission of the USA to the UN with CNRP representatives ⁹⁸ and without officials from the CPP. ⁹⁹

We can interpret these facts, on the one hand, as a consensual respect on the Asian side for the principle of “non-interference” and on the other, a Western coordination of policies to maximise the impact of the international pressure to fully democratise Cambodia according to Cambodia’s Constitution. While the aligned Western policies could be perceived by Asian Governments as a way to coerce nations that are escaping their sphere of influence, ¹⁰⁰ the EU and its closest allies pursue their democratisation policies in order to maintain a global order and respect for international law, democratic values, universal Human Rights, civil liberties and political freedoms.

Strong bilateral ties: Cambodia-China

Cambodia-China bilateral relations are known for being mutually beneficial although asymmetric and unbalanced. Beijing and Phnom Penh have been forging stronger economic and political links ¹⁰¹ for the past two decades. ¹⁰² For Cambodia, China is an important means of facilitating economic development. ¹⁰³ China has become Cambodia’s largest foreign donor¹⁰⁴, biggest source of imports¹⁰⁵, and biggest investor, providing the country with nearly one-third of its foreign investment in 2017. ¹⁰⁶

Militarily, Beijing is the biggest source of assistance to Cambodia’s armed forces ¹⁰⁷, who have always relied on alliances with major powers ¹⁰⁸ due to Cambodia’s location between its threatening

⁹⁸ RADIO FREE ASIA (2017), Panelists Call For Review of Cambodia’s UN Membership, Targeted Sanctions, 20 December 2017 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/panel-12202017161510.html>

⁹⁹ KHMER TIMES (2017), Partiality of EU and US on the situation in Cambodia, 19 December 2017, <http://www.khmertimeskh.com/5096665/partiality-eu-us-situation-cambodia/>

¹⁰⁰ NEW EASTERN LOOK (2018), America’s Awkward “Pivot” to Asia: US-Cambodia Confrontation Widens by J. Thomas, 24 January 2018 <https://journal-neo.org/2018/01/24/americas-awkward-pivot-to-asia-us-cambodia-confrontation-widens/>

¹⁰¹ REUTERS, (2018) Cambodia kicks off drills with 'great friend' China as U.S. ties sour, by Thul PC, 17 March 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-china-military/cambodia-kicks-off-drills-with-great-friend-china-as-u-s-ties-sour-idUSKCN1GT05F>

¹⁰² FINANCIAL TIMES (2016), FT Investigation: How China bought its way into Cambodia, by James Kynge, Leila Haddou and Michael Peel, 8 September 2016 <https://www.ft.com/content/23968248-43a0-11e6-b22f-79eb4891c97d>

¹⁰³ SAMBATH (2015), Cambodia-China Relation : Past, Present and Future, IIMBA, College of Management, July 2015

¹⁰⁴ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018), U.S. Cutting Aid to Cambodia for Recent Democratic Setbacks, 28 February 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/us-cutting-aid-to-cambodia-for-recent-democratic-setbacks/4272907.html>

¹⁰⁵ SOUTHEAST ASIA GLOBE (2018), EU and China not in competition in Cambodia, says EU ambassador, by Musaaazi Namiti, 8 February 2018 <http://sea-globe.com/eu-and-china-not-in-competition-in-cambodia-says-eu-ambassador/>

¹⁰⁶ NEW YORK TIMES (2018) Embracing China, Facebook and Himself, Cambodia’s Ruler Digs, by Hannah Beech, 17 March 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/world/asia/hun-sen-cambodia-china.html>

¹⁰⁷ THE DIPLOMAT (2015), Cambodia’s Strategic China Alignment. A number of factors are driving Cambodia’s strategic convergence with China by Cheunboran Chanborey, 8 July 2015 <https://thediplomat.com/2015/07/cambodias-strategic-china-alignment/>

¹⁰⁸ Idem.

neighbours, Vietnam and Thailand. For China, Cambodia is part of its ambition to develop a prominent diplomatic presence in the region. Moreover, Cambodia stands in a good strategic location. The Sihanoukville seaport is useful for China to position itself for military purposes. This is due to China's increasing exports and demand for oil driving the Chinese navy to pay more attention to sea-lanes.¹⁰⁹ On a general level, both countries are willing to cooperate in order to create a peaceful and stable region.

As political allies, they offer each other mutual support in the United Nations and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In 2015, when Cambodia supported China at ASEAN by using its veto power on the territorial disputes in the South China Sea,¹¹⁰ it positioned itself as an ally interfering in favour of China in regional affairs.¹¹¹ Along with most Asian countries, both share the same political appreciation of an "international cooperation that does not violate state sovereignty"¹¹². In the 1990's, when Cambodia faced political isolation, China already opposed the imposition of international sanctions, urging Western countries to stay away from Cambodia's internal affairs.¹¹³

Japan: in between

Japan, as the Asian region's sole long-standing democracy,¹¹⁴ has strong political and economic leverage over Cambodia due to its considerable development assistance and investment. Tokyo has adopted a far less confrontational approach – when compared to the EU and US – mindful of, as some believe, Asian culture, "in which people try to avoid causing others to lose face, and therefore is taking a more discreet, softer approach."¹¹⁵

Using aid rather than sanctions, Japan expressed its wish to see Cambodia have a good relationship with the entire international community,¹¹⁶ while showing its unwillingness to interfere in the internal affairs of its Asian neighbour. For its advocates, Japan may be holding out hope that dialogue with CNRP is still possible closer to July's elections. Its strict respect for the non-

¹⁰⁹ SAMBATH (2015), op. cit., p. 9

¹¹⁰ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017), Sokhonn defends Cambodia's position on South China Sea, by M. Dara, 10 August 2017 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sokhonn-defends-cambodias-position-south-china-sea>

¹¹¹ NIKKEI (2018) Cambodia acts tough toward US with China in its corner by A. Tomiyama, 1 March 2018 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Cambodia-acts-tough-toward-US-with-China-in-its-corner>

¹¹² Tim Ruhlig, researcher. Face-to-Face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels.

¹¹³ DETH, S. O, SUN, S. and BULUT, S. (2018), p. 237

¹¹⁴ REILLY, B. (2007), Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region : Is There an « Asian Model » of democracy ? in Comparative Political Studies, September 2007, p. 1351

¹¹⁵ SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (2018), Cambodia's former opposition leader Sam Rainsy urges Japan to lean on Hun Sen to ensure fair elections, 14 avril 2018 <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2141727/cambodias-former-opposition-leader-sam-rainsy-urges-japan>

¹¹⁶ THE NEW YORK TIMES (2018), Tokyo's Envoy Urges Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia, 23 March 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/03/23/world/asia/ap-as-cambodia-japan.html?smid=tw-share>

interference principle may be in order to avoid any confrontation with Asian countries and in particular, China. In addition, Tokyo engages in “a more pragmatic diplomacy that mixes donations and negotiations in a form of proactive pacifism.”¹¹⁷ For its critics, Tokyo’s interest would be to remain allied with Cambodia, regardless of the outcome of discussions, “content to ensure stability at the expense of democracy and rights.”¹¹⁸ CNRP supporters held several protests around the world to demand Japan to withdraw its support of elections and impose visa sanctions on high-ranking officials.¹¹⁹ Others believe Japan’s policy functions to compete against China’s growing influence in the region, countering its assertive authoritarianism.¹²⁰

Although strongly criticised by the CNRP, the Japanese delegation to the United Nations continuously expressed concern for the political situation in Cambodia and urged all stakeholders to promote dialogue. “In order to resolve this issue, Japan believes it is important for all stakeholders, including the ruling party as well as the opposition, to promote dialogue among the Cambodian people. (...) We call for a further effort by the Cambodian Government and other stakeholders to ensure that the national election will be carried out in the proper manner that reflects the will of Cambodia’s citizens.”¹²¹

Geopolitics and Cambodia’s democracy

Do competing influences in the world affect the Cambodian democracy? Many fear the rapprochement between Cambodia and China would negatively impact the democratic development of Cambodia. The EU is strongly engaged in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and rule of law worldwide. This commitment underpins all internal and external policies of the European Union.¹²² “Human Rights are central in EU foreign policies. We consider these values as universal. I consider it is legitimate to raise this issue,” said the EU Ambassador in Cambodia.¹²³ In Cambodia, the EU “takes this stance because it is a democratic system and the Government does not respect its own rules and Human Rights standards.”¹²⁴ While most believe that China – as a one-party state

¹¹⁷ ASIA TIMES (2018), Why Japan won’t criticize Hun Sen

¹¹⁸ ASIA TIMES (2018), Why Japan won’t criticize Hun Sen by David Hutt, 29 March 2018, <http://www.atimes.com/article/japan-wont-criticize-hun-sen/>

¹¹⁹ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018), CNRP Supporters to Protest Japan Support for ‘Illegitimate’ Elections, by Men Kimseng, 13 June 2018. <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cnrp-supporters-to-protest-japan-support-for-illegitimate-elections/4435909.html>

¹²⁰ ICHIHARA, M. (2017) The Changing Role of Democracy in Asian Geopolitics, September 14, 2017 Canergie Endowment for International Peace

¹²¹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Japan urges parties to talk, on 9 July 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/japan-urges-parties-talk>

¹²² EU EXTERNAL ACTION (2018), Human Rights & Democracy https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/human-rights-democracy/414/human-rights-democracy_en

¹²³ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

¹²⁴ EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels

– is promoting its own model of governance in Asia,¹²⁵ others think that its focus on the principle of interference means that Beijing will not undermine or encourage Cambodia's democratisation or autocratisation.¹²⁶

Brussels appears to be willing to minimise a lingering whiff of the Cold War. EU Ambassador George Edgar stated: "We don't see ourselves as competing with China and there's no geopolitical competition with China. We want to support Cambodia for the benefit of the poor. We provide assistance in education, public management reforms, agriculture... Our projects are for the benefits of the people of Cambodia."¹²⁷ Another EU official added: "The EU encourages Cambodia to cooperate with China but we want to say that they do not need to copy the Chinese model of political system."¹²⁸

On a more general level, some European decision makers such as the former German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel worried about the threat that China could represent for democratic values: "China is developing a comprehensive system alternative to the Western one, which, unlike our model, is not based on freedom, democracy and individual human rights."¹²⁹ In this idea, Beijing is not expected to contest Hun Sen's consolidation of power given to its own one-party system. In the same line, Naim adopts a harder stance. The scholar sees generous aid programmes of China as "toxic."¹³⁰ Without bids, conditions and needs to reform, Chinese aid would undermine democratisation policies. "It is development assistance that is nondemocratic in origin and nontransparent in practice."¹³¹ China's will to reshape the world represents in his opinion "a threat to healthy, sustainable development (...) pushing an alternative development model."¹³²

Other scholars however, believe China is unwilling and unlikely to export its political model abroad. China officially declared at the UN, it will "never pursue hegemony, expansion or sphere of

¹²⁵ TIME (2018), Press Freedom Is Under Attack Across Southeast Asia. Meet the Journalists Fighting Back, By Feliz Solomon, Helen Regan, Laignee Barron, Eli Meixler, Joseph Hincks, Suyin Haynes, and Casey Quackenbush, on 22 June 2018 <http://time.com/longform/press-freedom-southeast-asia/>

¹²⁶ Tim Ruhlig, researcher. Face-to-Face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels.

¹²⁷ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

¹²⁸ EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels

¹²⁹ THE ECONOMIST (2018), China's political meritocracy versus Western democracy, by Daniel Bell, 12 June 2018

<https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/06/12/chinas-political-meritocracy-versus-western-democracy?fsrc=scn/tw/te/bl/ed/chinaspoliticalmeritocracyversuswesterndemocracyopenfuture>

¹³⁰ FOREIGN POLICY (2009), Rogue Aid, by Moises Naim, 15 October 2009 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/15/rogue-aid/>

¹³¹ Idem.

¹³² Idem.

influence." ¹³³ Indeed, for Daniel Bell, unlike the EU and the US, China "will not use moralising political rhetoric, not to mention force, to promote its political system abroad." ¹³⁴ A 2016 empirical study presents evidence that China does not disperse higher amounts of aid to autocratic regimes than democracies, and that there is not any relationship between Chinese foreign aid amounts and changes in regime type in recipient countries. It concludes that the hypothesis that China is using aid as an indirect form of autocracy promotion is unsubstantiated. ¹³⁵

I argue that China represents an alternative development model for Cambodia and consequentially, challenges its democratisation. This is not due to an intended expansion of the Chinese model, but as the result of China's pursuit of its national interests. Although the country has the ability to stifle EU democracy support if it wishes to do so, Beijing would only counteract it where it perceives a challenge to the Chinese Communist Party's survival. Where this is not the case, as in Cambodia, Beijing is likely to focus on protecting its economic and strategic interests, regardless of regime type. ¹³⁶ In the same vein, for Tim Ruhlrig, researcher on Chinese foreign policy, "although China doesn't have the intention to undermine the European democratisation policy, it offers an alternative to Cambodia because it provides unconditional assistance and investment, unlike the EU. As long as the EU does not interfere with China's core interests and there is no risk of spill over to China, China would not necessarily undermine the democratisation process in Cambodia." ¹³⁷ However, as a matter of fact, China supports the CPP's resistance to EU demands by providing alternative assistance and investment, a pattern that has been repeated in Latin America and parts of the African continent. As Norén-Nilsson writes, "China's full political and economic support enables Cambodia's shift to autocracy." ¹³⁸

The different policies of the EU and China in Cambodia reflect their respective views on global order. On one hand, "China advocates for a plurality of societies that have a legitimate right to co-exist. For Chinese leaders, Cambodia would not need to choose between the European democratic model or the Chinese development path. Cambodia needs to find the *Cambodian way*." ¹³⁹ For Tim Ruhlrig, China in the short term does not need to conspicuously prevail over and above the Europeans, but is content to take a far longer view and to support regimes where it sees a long-term strategic interest in doing so.

¹³³ REUTERS (2015), Xi says China "will never pursue hegemony," 28 September 2018 (video)

<https://youtu.be/2OUKGqoGCgQ>

¹³⁴ THE ECONOMIST (2018), op. cit.

¹³⁵ LOOTZ (2016), Using aid for autocracy promotion? A quantitative analysis of China's foreign aid effect on regime types, Georg-August-University Göttingen.

¹³⁶ CHEN, D. and KINZELBACH, K. (2015), Democracy promotion and China: blocker or bystander? In *democratization*, Volume 22, 2015, pp. 400-418

¹³⁷ Tim Ruhlrig, researcher. Face-to-Face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels.

¹³⁸ EAST ASIA FORUM (2018), The end of Cambodia's ersatz democracy, 5 February 2018

¹³⁹ Idem.

According to Sambath, "China doesn't care who runs Cambodia as long as the ruler is amenable to helping China maintain its strategic position in the region."¹⁴⁰ As stated above, the Government of Cambodia supported China at ASEAN in 2015 regarding territorial claims in the South China Sea. This move was particularly important as some researchers predicted in 2014 that China would "tolerate greater (political) freedoms in Cambodia if the opposition backs China's territorial claims in the South China Sea over Vietnam's."¹⁴¹ The CNRP, instead, took a strong anti-China stance, unwilling to win Chinese sympathy. "The Vietnamese and Chinese are coming into our country more and more. This is the last stage. We must stand up together," said former opposition leader Sam Rainsy.¹⁴² This stance, as an example of the CNRP's vision to cooperate with its Asian neighbours, calls into question its ability to meet the Chinese strategic interests. When asked about Kem Sokha's arrest, Beijing said it supports "the Cambodian Government's efforts to protect national security and stability"¹⁴³, showing its support of the CPP on this issue. If the Chinese Government does not seek to export its political model abroad, and if the CNRP would have adopted a pro-Chinese line, it is possible that China would not resist or encourage a change of regime through free and fair elections in Cambodia.

¹⁴⁰ SAMBATH (2015), *op. cit.*

¹⁴¹ FOREIGN POLICY (2014), *Cambodia's Long March Toward Democracy*

¹⁴² THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), *Former opposition leader tells soldiers, Cambodians to unite to fight CPP*

¹⁴³ ABC (2017), *Australian speech the key 'treason' evidence against Cambodian opposition leader by Cochrane, 6 September 2017*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-06/australian-speech-evidence-of-treason-against-cambodia-kem-sokha/8876044>

Definition, history and typology

Sanctions can be described as a peaceful means of causing damage on a country and punishing democratic backsliding “between words and wars.”¹⁴⁴ As a political entity that (with a few exceptions) lacks the capacity to project military power, the EU has sharply increased the use of sanctions as its only coercive foreign-policy tool in response to human rights violations or democratic backsliding or to deter countries from actions that have negative security consequences for the EU.¹⁴⁵ Member States of the European Community started to impose sanctions in the eighties and this practice increased in frequency and sophistication in the nineties.¹⁴⁶ As the EU was expanding its activities in the security sphere, it published the “Basic principles” in 2004, announcing that the Union will impose sanctions “to uphold respect for Human Rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance.”¹⁴⁷ It developed its own regionally coordinated role in the implementation of sanctions, particularly in the areas of trade and finance.¹⁴⁸ The EU is now comparable to the USA, the world’s biggest sanctioning power.¹⁴⁹

The EU considers two types of sanctions: in a broad and narrow sense. Sanctions in a *broad* sense, or diplomatic sanctions, include actions such as the interruption of diplomatic relations with the targeted country. Sanctions in a narrow sense include arms embargoes, travel bans, asset freezes, and economic sanctions.

Grauvogel and Von Soest distinguish two other types of sanctions: comprehensive and targeted. First, *comprehensive* sanctions target the economy and/or population as a whole, these include economic sanctions or development aid sanctions.¹⁵⁰ For example, a complete suspension of the trade deal which grants tariff-free access to the EU market for Cambodian exports would be a comprehensive sanction. Second, *targeted* sanctions comprise measures that focus on a specific group of people such as political leaders, national decision-makers or key supporters of a particular

¹⁴⁴ WALLENSTEEN, P., et al. (2003) Making targeted sanctions effective. Guidelines for the implementation of UN Policy Options, Uppsala University, p. iii.

¹⁴⁵ EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013), op. cit, p. 1

¹⁴⁶ PORTELA, C. (2005), Where and why does the EU impose sanctions ? Politique européenne, 2005/3 (n° 17), p. 83-111.

¹⁴⁷ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2004), Basic Principles on the Use of Restrictive Measures (Sanctions), 10198/1/04 REV 1, PESC 450, Brussels, 4 June 2004

¹⁴⁸ WALLENSTEEN, P., et al. (2003), p. 30.

¹⁴⁹ DREYER, I. and LUENGO-CABRERA, J., (2015), On target ? EU Sanctions as Security Policy Tools, EU Institute for Security Studies.

¹⁵⁰ GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C (2014), Claims to legitimacy count : Why sanctions fail to instigate democratisation in authoritarian regimes in European Journal of Political Research 53, p. 641.

regime. These targeted sanctions include visa bans and asset freezes. When Germany banned issuing visas to certain Cambodian officials, it opted for a targeted sanction against certain individuals. Grauvogel and Von Soest also consider military sanctions such as arms embargos and halting of military cooperation, as well as measures that would only affect a particular economic sector, as targeted.¹⁵¹ When the EU Council warned Cambodia in February 2016 that it could consider sanctions with regard to the EBA, it explicitly mentioned the consideration of “targeted measures.”¹⁵²

Sanctions on Cambodia ?

An EU official stated: “I know that the European External Action Service (EEAS) is concerned by the poorest communities. We do not want to harm poor people in garment industries for example and their exports to the EU. (...) I do not know what decision they will make. They need to wait and see how the regime behaves,” adding that “the Government has to change its position. In the Council Conclusions, our message is clear. We want the Government to go back on the path of democracy if they want to re-establish good relations with the EU.”¹⁵³

In terms of development cooperation, Vice-President Mogherini talked on behalf of the Commission in March 2018 about the willingness “to preserve the significant progress made over decades on Cambodia's social development goals, as suspension of aid could be detrimental to the population.”¹⁵⁴ An EU official also explained: “The development cooperation is successful in Cambodia and we do not want to cut that because it could affect the poorest people.”¹⁵⁵

When the EU Council threatened sanctions, it referred to the EBA. The CNRP has urged the EU to remove the duty-free access to its markets enjoyed by most Cambodian exports. However, Brussels has held off on withdrawing trade preferences for fear of hurting ordinary Cambodians, including more than 800,000 who work in the garment industry.¹⁵⁶ The decision is expected to be in line with the European commitment to develop sanctions “in such a way as to minimise adverse

¹⁵¹ Idem.

¹⁵² EU Council (2018), Council conclusions on Cambodia

¹⁵³ EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels

¹⁵⁴ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2018), Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the Commission, 1 March 2018 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2017-007487&language=EN>

¹⁵⁵ EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels

¹⁵⁶ THE FINANCIAL TIMES (2018), Cambodian leader leaves little to chance in pursuit of poll win, 9 July 2018 <https://www.ft.com/content/e08461d4-8022-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>

consequences for those not responsible for the policies or actions leading to the adoption of sanctions. In particular, the EU works to minimise the effects on the local civilian population.”¹⁵⁷

As of today, as Cecilia Malmström said: "The EU is proud to provide the most economically vulnerable countries of the world with free access to our market. The EBA initiative has had a significant impact on development and poverty eradication in Cambodia. (...) Removing Cambodia from the trade scheme is a measure of last resort, if all our other efforts have failed to address these concerns.”¹⁵⁸

European interests

Support for good governance in Cambodia is not only a question of the EU's values; "it is in the EU's own economic, security and political interest.”¹⁵⁹ According to a study published by the European Parliament,¹⁶⁰ the volume of trade and economic cooperation is higher among democracies than among non-democratic regimes. Democracies are expected to be more stable, producing fewer security externalities, and countries that receive democracy aid are less likely to experience civil conflict. Finally, cooperation with democracies is easier and more beneficial for the EU.

It is also in the EU's interest to target a country like Cambodia. The EU has been criticised for not punishing every authoritarian Government in Southeast Asia¹⁶¹ and for engaging with dictatorships and one-party systems in the region.¹⁶² For the EU, "in Vietnam or Laos for example, we established cooperation with one-party states. Cooperation is made on this basis. Cambodia is supposed to be a democracy and we established relations on this basis.”¹⁶³ Some analysts argue that there would not be any ideological reason to sanction Cambodia more than Vietnam, but Cambodia is, in practice, the "right size and vulnerability.”¹⁶⁴ "Probability of success of the modest policy change is significantly higher than that of the major changes in the target country.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ EU COUNCIL (2018), Policies, Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts them, EU restrictive measures <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/>

¹⁵⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018), Cambodia: EU mission assesses human rights and labour situation, press release, 12 July 2018 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4467_en.htm

¹⁵⁹ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2016), Good Governance in EU External Relations : What role for development policy in a changing international context ? Study, Directorate General for External Policies, Policy Department, p. 12 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU\(2016\)578012_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU(2016)578012_EN.pdf)

¹⁶⁰ Idem.

¹⁶¹ CHANDLER, D. (2018) Poor Squeezed, Democracy Never Rooted in Cambodia, Chandler Says

¹⁶² NIKKEI (2018), Sanctions will not resolve the Hun Sen problem

¹⁶³ EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels

¹⁶⁴ EAR, S. (2018) quoted in ASIA TIMES (2017), Cambodia clampdown threatens Chinese interests

¹⁶⁵ SHAHADAT, M., and VAN BERGEIK, P., (2012) Reconsidering economic sanctions reconsidered. A detailed analysis of the Peterson Institute Sanction database, working paper n° 549, International Institute of Social Studies., p. 24

Changing a Cambodian political system built on democratic foundations is more likely to succeed compared to achieving major regime change in Vietnam.

By imposing sanctions, the EU could gain domestic and international political benefit. It could seek to enhance its domestic reputation and credibility by satisfying interest groups including Human Rights groups with significant power and influence; the International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch; as well as some Members of the Parliament. On the world stage, the EU may not want to lose credibility in international bargaining by allowing the Cambodian Government to continue defying the international community's demands while not suffering sanctions.

Cambodian interests

The first Cambodian priority is to "maintain stability and peace."¹⁶⁶ The prospect of chaos and destruction in the country should the CPP be undermined by democratic processes is a major fear amongst top Cambodian leaders. "A pervasive culture of violence loomed as a legacy of war and the Pol Pot regime."¹⁶⁷ The CPP explains the CNRP dissolution in an effort to root out a foreign-backed "colour revolution". In a book released by the Cambodian Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister reaffirms his intention to prevent a war that could reoccur in Cambodia. "The opposition has said they do not possess weapons but their words, actions and potential violence are the triggers that can initiate a war."¹⁶⁸ The Government accuses CNRP leaders of inciting violence, referring to various incidents including the protests in 2013-2014 that sought to be peaceful but turned out violent and were violently repressed.¹⁶⁹ In addition, direct threats on the personal security of elites could be another reasons to maintain a grip on power. Widely accused of Human Rights violations, CPP top leaders reacted by tightening control over their power, using the courts to prosecute political opponents.¹⁷⁰

The second claim on the Cambodian side concerns their "independence and sovereignty."¹⁷¹ As a small country, Cambodia has an interest in promoting and establishing friendship and good cooperation,¹⁷² and states that it seeks to prevent Cambodia from becoming dependent to

¹⁶⁶ GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Cambodia, Stability and development first

¹⁶⁷ Idem.

¹⁶⁸ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Government unit publishes 132-page treatise on threat of 'colour revolution,' by Mech Dara and Daphne Chen, on 14 February 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/government-unit-publishes-132-page-treatise-threat-colour-revolution>

¹⁶⁹ Idem.

¹⁷⁰ EAST ASIA FORUM (2017), Cambodia's politics of survival threatens democracy

¹⁷¹ GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Cambodia, Stability and development first

¹⁷² Idem.

Washington. "As grateful as Cambodia can be towards Western assistance throughout these years, (...) History has proved that foreign-imposed agenda has (...) led to bloodshed and senseless destruction."¹⁷³ The Government recalls the US historical role in shaping the country: the US bombing, the support of the Khmer Rouge at the UN¹⁷⁴ and the war era debt. "You attacked us and demand that we give money" with interest.¹⁷⁵ There is a suspicion that the uprisings and colour revolutions that have been seen in the last 20 years have been organised and financed by western powers and whilst there is very little evidence to support such notions, it has meant that the Cambodian opposition has also faced charges that it is essentially a paid front of western powers. "Colour revolution is a new political tool and strategy to invade without using armed forces under the pretext of democracy and Human Rights," according to the Cambodian Government.¹⁷⁶ For their own interests, the US would try to dominate a country through aid, advisers and loans, then the next phase would be "to instigate internal unrest, to the extent of backing riots and insurrection."¹⁷⁷

The third point is about "growth and prosperity."¹⁷⁸ Considering that 45% of exports from Cambodia go to the EU under the EBA,¹⁷⁹ access to European markets are vital for the Cambodian economy. Although it is possible that Cambodia would prefer to concede on political rights and freedom instead of suffering the cost of sanctions, this seems unlikely. Most researchers believe that the threat alone will not make the Cambodian Government budge.¹⁸⁰ In the economic sanctions game, the Cambodian Government has repeatedly declared its unwillingness to capitulate. By resisting to EU demands, Cambodia would gain an enhanced international reputation and insurance against future potential sanctions.¹⁸¹ Hun Sen encouraged the EU to freeze assets of Cambodian leaders, saying he had no money abroad and any actions by the EU would not hurt him.¹⁸²

¹⁷³ Idem.

¹⁷⁴ Idem.

¹⁷⁵ THE NEW YORK TIMES (2017), Cambodia Appeals to Trump to Forgive War-Era Debt, by Julia Wallace, 2 April 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/02/world/asia/cambodia-trump-debt.html?_r=0

¹⁷⁶ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Government unit publishes 132-page treatise on threat of 'colour revolution,'

¹⁷⁷ BOLTON, K, (2017) Cambodia targeted by Globalists for « Color Revolution » ? in Foreign Policy Journal, 2 October 2017 <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2017/10/02/cambodia-targeted-by-globalists-for-color-revolution/>

¹⁷⁸ GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Cambodia, Stability and development first

¹⁷⁹ KHMER TIMES (2018), Cambodia and the European Union, by Cheang Sokha, 25 June 2018

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50504419/cambodia-and-the-european-union/>

¹⁸⁰ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Europe voices 'serious concerns' over rights, by A. Nachemson, on 16 March 2018 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/europe-voices-serious-concerns-over-rights>

¹⁸¹ LACY, D. and EMERSON, N., p. 30

¹⁸² REUTERS (2017) Cambodia's Hun Sen challenges EU and U.S. to freeze assets, 15 December 2017

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-politics/cambodias-hun-sen-challenges-eu-and-u-s-to-freeze-assets-idUSKBN1E90JT>

Potential consequences of sanctions

Whether targeted or comprehensive, sanctions may lead to highly undesirable consequences: the possible increase of political repression, retaliation against the West, or the pivoting towards “non-democratic regimes” such as China. Enforcing a democratisation process through rigid coercive democratisation policy whilst ignoring political realities on the ground is likely to lead to more authoritarianism.

What impact on democracy?

Sanctions, widely known as “double-edged swords”,¹⁸³ could bring opposite results to the defined objectives of the EU.¹⁸⁴ Designed to support democratisation, sanctions have a low probability of success and worse, could damage the democratisation process by supporting an authoritarian rule and increasing the likelihood of political repression.

Some scholars are categorical: “Economic sanctions have little independent usefulness for pursuit of non-economic goals.”¹⁸⁵ As John Harley Breen states, “it is hard to see how sanctions will have any long terms benefit. Sanctions are generally blunt instruments and if the EU were to adopt these measures they would not likely have a significant impact politically.”¹⁸⁶ Sebastian Strangio goes further. He acknowledges that “it is hard for Western Governments to stay silent about recent events in Cambodia,” but warns “harsher sanctions are unlikely to advance democracy, and may be counter-productive.”¹⁸⁷ Research based on statistical evidence predicts a 5%,¹⁸⁸ 22 %¹⁸⁹ or 30 % chance of success.¹⁹⁰ For the European Council, “it is extremely hard to tell how effective they are.”¹⁹¹ Inadequate monitoring of EU sanctions would be the reason why the EU describes the imposition of sanctions as “shooting in the dark. On this point, they argue that: “we know the target is out somewhere, and with enough firepower we may be relatively sure we have inflicted some damage, but it would help a great deal if we knew whether our bullets were flying in the right direction.”¹⁹² Shooting in the dark? It could instead backfire.

¹⁸³ WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (2015) How effective are economic sanctions?, by TRENIN D., (Director Canergie Moscow Centre) <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/02/how-effective-are-economic-sanctions/>

¹⁸⁴ HOVI, J., HUSEBY, R. et al, (2005) When Do (Imposed) Economic Sanctions Work ? in World Politics 57, 479-99, p. 481.

¹⁸⁵ PAPE, R. (1997), Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work, in *International Security*, Volume 22, Issue 2 (Autumn), p. 93

¹⁸⁶ BREEN, J. Interview by email on 25 April 2018.

¹⁸⁷ NIKKEI (2018), Sanctions will not resolve the Hun Sen problem, by Sebastian Strangio, on 7 May 2018

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Sanctions-will-not-resolve-the-Hun-Sen-problem2>

¹⁸⁸ PAPE, R., op. cit.

¹⁸⁹ A 2013 study by a group of academics called the Targeted Sanctions Consortium mentioned by BOYLE, D. (2018), Donor scramble as Cambodia hits undo on democracy, in the Interpreter, on 11 June 2018, The Lowy Institute

<https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/donor-scramble-cambodia-hits-undo-democracy>

¹⁹⁰ SHAHADAT, M., and VAN BERGEIK, P., (2012), op. cit.

¹⁹¹ EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013)

¹⁹² Idem.

First, "sanctions strengthen authoritarian rule if the regime manages to incorporate their existence into its legitimisation strategy."¹⁹³ Coercive measures may be perceived as an attack on the entire Cambodian society and by extension on "Asian" culture. The CPP repeatedly framed the international pressure as a threat to Cambodia's sovereignty, adding that the Government would continue to fight "foreign interference and colonisation."¹⁹⁴ The Government could demonise external sanctions and use them as a legitimising device¹⁹⁵ to secure its rules of repression and loyalty. As John Harley Breen said, "the sanctions could backfire by feeding into the Government's rhetoric that the US is trying to interfere in Cambodia's domestic affairs. This reinforces the Government's position on the need for greater authority and control."¹⁹⁶ If we consider as an example the US sanctions on Hun Sen's bodyguard General Hing Bun Hieng - accused of having committed serious Human Rights violations against civilians - some consider that this targeted measure will "serve as a warning to Cambodia's Government that it must cease its abuses or face punishment from the international community."¹⁹⁷ However, a scholar warns: "The Cambodian Government has already taken a nationalistic posture towards external interference and painted the opposition as tools of foreign powers. This will only provide further ammunition, while not actively helping the opposition"¹⁹⁸ and ultimately lead to more authoritarianism. In addition, it fuels the anti-American sentiment and reduces any prospect for positive diplomacy between Cambodia and the "free world."

Second, popular unrest, especially in the Cambodian context, could result in rebellions, demonstrations, riots and protests towards the Government. As it has been repeatedly done in the past, former CNRP leader Sam Rainsy called soldiers and Cambodians to unite to fight CPP.¹⁹⁹ In this situation, "repressive regimes are likely to increase political repression,"²⁰⁰ justifying it through internal security. As seen in Freedom Park, many protests in 2013 and 2014 that intended to peacefully challenge the Government, following allegations of electoral fraud, ended in a bloody crackdown. In that sense, the strategy is provocative aiming at pointing fingers at an increasing political repression. "Sorry for the violent clash today," said the CNRP, "it was the security guards who started the violence and attacked the protesters as they often have done before."²⁰¹ The CPP

¹⁹³ GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C, p. 635.

¹⁹⁴ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Spokesman vows Cambodia will fight against 'colonisation' after US cuts aid, 1 March 2018 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/spokesman-vows-cambodia-will-fight-against-colonisation-after-us-cuts-aid>

¹⁹⁵ GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C, p. 637.

¹⁹⁶ BREEN, J. Interview by email on 25 April 2018.

¹⁹⁷ ASSOCIATED PRESS (2018), Cambodia scorns US sanctions against senior military officer, by Sophean Cheng, 13 June 2018 <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/13/cambodia-scorns-us-sanctions-against-senior-military-officer.html>

¹⁹⁸ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018), US Sanctions Cambodian General Over Human Rights Abuses, 14 June 2018 <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-sanctions-cambodian-general/4438322.html>

¹⁹⁹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Former opposition leader tells soldiers, Cambodians to unite to fight CPP

²⁰⁰ RILEY, E. and TRAVIS, C. (2011), Better or Worse ? The effects of economic sanctions on Human Rights. Revisited, p. 11

²⁰¹ TIME (2014), In Cambodia, Dozens of Security Guards Are Hurt in an Opposition Crackdown, <http://time.com/2984689/cambodia-freedom-park-clash-violence-cnrp-mu-sochua-keo-phirum-men-sothavarin/>

argues “protests, demonstrations which leads to riots in the name of Human Rights and democracy is sacred while the rights of the people who suffered from the riots and demonstration is ignored.”²⁰² In 2017, Prime Minister Hun Sen declared to opponent Sam Rainsy: “your tongue is the reason for war. If you still make insults and threats to kill, you have to prepare your coffin. To protect the peace for millions of people, if necessary, 100 or 200 must be eliminated. Please listen carefully.... Whoever intends to undermine peace will receive what you deserve.”²⁰³ As in 1998, political tensions between Hun Sen and Sam Rainsy led to serious turmoil and violence²⁰⁴ that remains unpunished according to some Human Rights groups.²⁰⁵

Third, in the case of Cambodia being excluded from EU trade agreements, alliances and other forms of economic cooperation, the democratisation process is likely to be negatively affected. Indeed, scholars found that “economic trading and integration are important elements of fostering respect for Human Rights.”²⁰⁶ Economic sanctions are likely to damage diplomatic relations. Creating economic wealth and building a strong and educated middle-class is expected to increase the appreciation for Human Rights. In addition, the situation in Cambodia may negatively impact upon prospects for a region to region FTA between the EU and ASEAN.

Cambodian populations at stake

Although targeted sanctions may cause less unintended harm to populations, businesses and third parties compared to comprehensive sanctions, we need to consider their side effects.²⁰⁷ As stated above, even when sanctions are very targeted against only one individual, it fuels the Government’s narratives of “foreign domination” and unleash an atmosphere of distrust, legitimising the use of force to ensure peace and stability. In addition, targeted Cambodian leaders could intentionally design strategies to evade sanctions against them.²⁰⁸ If a high-ranking official would be sanctioned with an asset freeze, he could still dig into the State coffers to replace what he lost at the expense of the populations. If we consider another targeted sanction such as the suspension of EU funding to elections in December 2018, it impacts the national budget as the Government will make up for the

²⁰² KHMER TIMES (2017), Hun Sen recalls Paris peace deal, by M. Sophon, 16 October 2017, <http://www.khmertimeskh.com/5086217/hun-sen-recalls-paris-peace-deal/>

²⁰³ THE CAMBODIA DAILY (2017), ‘Prepare Your Coffin’: Hun Sen Repeats Bloody Power Promise, 22 June 2017 <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/prepare-coffin-hun-sen-repeats-bloody-power-promise-131626/>

²⁰⁴ CAMBODIA DAILY (1998), Rainsy Urges Rebellion if Gov’t Shoots, By Stew Magnuson and Lor Chandara, August 25, 1998 <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/rainsy-urges-rebellion-if-govt-shoots-10340/>

²⁰⁵ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2012), Cambodia: 15 Years on, No Justice in Grenade Attack, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/29/cambodia-15-years-no-justice-grenade-attack>

²⁰⁶ RILEY, E. and TRAVIS, C. , p. 12

²⁰⁷ WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al. p. 20.

²⁰⁸ WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al., p. 21.

lost funding. “This means that we suffer a double loss through spending on a meaningless election and loss of money from the national budget,” said a former CNRP member.²⁰⁹

Although partial and limited to one economic sector, a suspension of the EBA could have a negative impact upon the hard-won results of the EU-Cambodia cooperation aiming at socio-economic development²¹⁰ as well as damaging European and Cambodian businesses and their workers. As the EBA constitutes a lynchpin of Cambodia’s economy,²¹¹ economic sanctions could cause more harm than benefit regarding Human Rights violations. It would be ruinous for the country and directly affect populations, with consequences ranging from higher levels of poverty and unemployment to poor health and education conditions. “Sanctions would decimate some of Cambodia’s poorest communities, undermining the political activity of workers as decreasing wages would result in workers becoming more preoccupied with day to day survival,” warns researcher Breen.²¹²

In the garment industry for example, it could indirectly impact the lives of 800,000 workers.²¹³ Some estimate that “within 18 months, up to 50 per cent of manufacturers would move out of Cambodia.”²¹⁴ As financial burdens would rise on employers, business enterprises would be less likely to reinforce their staff skills through education. In Cambodia where competitiveness is primarily derived from its very low wages,²¹⁵ sanctions would increase prices for consumers and be a burden for European companies that essentially need to maintain a profitable and steady income stream.²¹⁶ Removing preferential trade access would cause a major industry disruption for Cambodia’s exports and would likely lead to factory closures that are not in the EU’s interest.²¹⁷

Geopolitical consequences

Considering Japan’s limited military role in the region, Cambodia’s provisional alignment with China is a strategic decision.²¹⁸ Retaliation in the region was expected. Phnom Penh is moving further

²⁰⁹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Polls a budget buster? By Mech Dara, 30 May 2018

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/polls-budget-buster>

²¹⁰ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (2014), European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018

²¹¹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), A sector too big to fail? By Robin Spiess, 5 April 2018

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/sector-too-big-fail>

²¹² BREEN, J. Interview by email on 25 April 2018.

²¹³ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), A sector too big to fail?

²¹⁴ Idem.

²¹⁵ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), A sector too big to fail?

²¹⁶ Idem.

²¹⁷ REUTERS (2018), EU, U.S. reluctant to remove trade preferences for Cambodia garments: Fitch's BMI, 24 April 2018

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-politics-garments/eu-u-s-reluctant-to-remove-trade-preferences-for-cambodia-garments-fitchs-bmi-idUSKBN1HV0BL>

²¹⁸ THE DIPLOMAT (2015), Cambodia’s Strategic China Alignment. A number of factors are driving Cambodia’s strategic convergence with China

away from the West and pivoting even closer to Beijing. “Let me ask those of you who have accused me of being too close to China,” Prime Minister Hun Sen said, “what have you offered me besides cursing and disciplining me and threatening to put sanctions on me?”²¹⁹ In the words of Petrescu, further official assistance to Cambodia would make of China its “black knight”.²²⁰ It would reduce the negative impacts of sanctions by providing aid and importing goods that are sanctioned.²²¹ “The CPP becomes less dependent on Western aid with all the conditions for democracy and Human Rights attached.”²²²

If economic sanctions were imposed, China could take advantage of the situation by using new investment opportunities created by the withdrawal of European companies. Cambodia appears to constitute a conducive target for EU economic sanctions, however there is a real risk that the vacuum left by a sanctions regime could present an opportunity for nations like China to advance their own economic and political agendas.

Although the Cambodian Government is willing to gain freedom from interference (in particular from Washington), as a small and least developed country, it needs to promote and establish friendship and cooperation with superpowers and countries the world over. Regarding trade and aid, it would not be in the interest of Cambodia to lose millions of dollars of development assistance and European market access. As the sixth fastest-growing economy in the world in 2018, Cambodia has been driven by garment exports and tourism.²²³ The garment industry accounts for the majority of EU-Cambodia trade,²²⁴ with around 45 percent of its exports destined for the EU.²²⁵ The EU can gain some international and domestic benefits through the imposition of sanctions but it is not without risk. The Cambodian Government will – most probably – be able to enhance internal cohesion and forge new international links by resisting the sanctions. Thus, sanctions do not represent a zero-sum game for the EU and Cambodia, more realistically resulting in negative impacts for either side.²²⁶

²¹⁹ THE NEW YORK TIMES (2018), Embracing China, Facebook and Himself, Cambodia’s Ruler Digs In

²²⁰ PETRESCU, I. , p. 8

²²¹ Ibid, p. 12

²²² BREEN, J (2018) Interview by email on 25 April 2018.

²²³ WORLD BANK (2018), Cambodia Overview retrieved on 2 May 2018

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>

²²⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018), Director-General for Trade, Cambodia

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_111485.pdf

²²⁵ KHMER TIMES (2018), Cambodia and the European Union, by Cheang Sokha, 25 June 2018

²²⁶ LACY, D. and EMERSON, N., A (2004) Theory of Economic Sanctions and Issue Linkage : The Role of Preferences, Information, and Threats, in The Journal of Politics, Vol. 66, No. 1, February 2004, p. 28

Retaliation towards China is significant as Phnom Penh has downgraded military ties with Washington and Canberra.²²⁷ China has granted more than 100 million USD in military aid to Cambodia, demonstrating the deepening of China-Cambodia military cooperation.²²⁸ The significance of the defence ties can be interpreted in different ways. While some believe mediated joint military exercises are a way of flexing muscles to the West, others emphasize the need to ensure security in the region and in the Cambodian political context, where the risks of a popular uprising is increased. The increasingly large military presence in the context of the upcoming controversial elections compounds an atmosphere of fear where journalists are intimidated and voters pressured to vote following a call to boycott elections by former opposition leader Sam Rainsy. A provocative, reactive strategy involving the population is likely to result in political repression, leading to more authoritarianism and increasing the pressure on people in a climate of fear.

²²⁷ THE DIPLOMAT (2018), China-Cambodia Defense Ties in the Spotlight with Military Drills, by By Prashanth Parameswaran, 21 March 2018 <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/china-cambodia-defense-ties-in-the-spotlight-with-military-drills/>

²²⁸ REUTERS (2018), China pledges over \$100 million military aid to Cambodia, 19 June 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-china/china-pledges-over-100-million-military-aid-to-cambodia-idUSKBN1JFOKQ>

Bridging concepts of “democracy”

Although democracy advocates would like to see western-style democracy in Cambodia as soon possible, despite international and national support for the idea, it is not guaranteed that pursuing “democratization politics” as they are currently implemented is the most rational choice. Indeed, it is likely to act as a counterproductive catalyst, emboldening and entrenching authoritarian rule. In Cambodia, “the meanings attached to liberal democracy are not read the way the international society hoped they would be.”²²⁹ There is a bridge to build over the gap between the European liberal understanding of *democracy* and how it is translated in the Cambodian political life.

Both the EU and Cambodia agree on a democratic development path but differ in their visions for it. The EU defends the liberal democratic model, demanding the immediate reinstatement of the CNRP, the release of Kem Sokha, and a democratic space for media, press and civil society, in line with the European model. The EU is mainly concerned about the use of the judicial system for political purposes. The Cambodian Government, however, demands that the EU recognise the “Cambodian Way.” The lack of or weak exposure to democratic traditions, the population’s low levels of education, the lack of ownership of the process, and a culture of violence all challenge the implementation of an “utopic democracy.”²³⁰ As recalled in an official document, the 1991 Paris Agreements “sought to transplant in one swoop a perfect model of liberal democracy in a country that never knew this kind of political system.”²³¹

Although the essence of democracy should not be damaged, it is imperative to consider some local specificities in order to build a “Cambodian democracy.” There are several basic key elements which are necessary conditions for a democratic form of governance. According to a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2004, these elements are the: separation and balance of power, independence of the judiciary, a pluralistic system of political parties and organisations, respect for the rule of law, accountability and transparency, free, independent and pluralistic media, respect for human and political rights, the right to vote and to stand in elections.²³²

²²⁹ BAAZ, M. and LILJA, M (2014), p. 19

²³⁰ GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Cambodia, Stability and development first

²³¹ Ibid, p. 2

²³² MEYER-RESENDE M. (2011), International consensus : essential elements of democracy, in Democracy Reporting international, October 2011

Current challenges come from the institutional foundations of the multiparty democracy laid out in 1991,²³³ criticized for only being wishful thinking²³⁴ and for being historically imposed and disconnected from internal realities.²³⁵ By drawing lessons from the past, the EU “should not seek to impose rigidly all the elements of Western democracies”²³⁶ but should encourage a political evolution that is best suited to local experiences and capacities.²³⁷ “The EU cannot pretend simply to export its model of human rights and democracy, since it generates strong reactions and contestations. The EU needs to be more modest in its approach, paying attention to the local context, to the local actors, and the local ways of framing concepts such as human dignity, democracy, participation, inclusion.”²³⁸ The European strategy to “foster respect for Human Rights and democratic participation”²³⁹ needs to be reconsidered in light of traditional patterns of decision-making that are rooted in Cambodian society.

Therefore, internal and external democracy promoters need to identify, analyse and gradually transform existing networks of governance. For Breen, neopatrimonialism is the traditional and predominant form of governance, and domestic actors have taken advantage of the democratic agenda for personal gain. Personal relations combined with the legal rationalism of the state have cemented the CPP’s control over the state’s administrative apparatus, especially given the loyalty of factions within the military and police.²⁴⁰ Democracy promoters do not have any other choice but accept and integrate local politics into foreign policy as a pragmatic necessity. For example, if international actors understand that the judicial system is used against political opponents as a response to the Government’s perception of facing an existential threat,²⁴¹ they may address the root cause with the ultimate goal of ensuring respect for the rule of law. Cambodia’s politics of survival will continue to undermine democracy unless national and international stakeholders understand and respond to the inherent problem. Addressing the root conflict between CPP and CNRP top leaders and ensuring their personal security may help them to establish an independent judiciary system and ultimately, a democratic system.

“To address these issues the EU and other international actors should remain engaged and assist Cambodia further in its political and economic development. The international community should

²³³ OJENDAL, J. and SEDARA, K., « Real Democratization in Cambodia? An Empirical Review of the Potential of a Decentralization Reform, » Working paper n°9, Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy, 2011

²³⁴ Idem.

²³⁵ OJENDAL J. and LILJA, M. (2009), p. 2

²³⁶ ROBERTS, D., pp. 149-170.

²³⁷ Idem.

²³⁸ ISA, F., NOGAL, E. et al (2016), Challenges to the Effectiveness of EU Human Rights and Democratisation Policies, European Commission, 3 June 2016.

²³⁹ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (2014), European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018

²⁴⁰ BREEN, J (2018) Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018

²⁴¹ EAST ASIA FORUM (2017), Cambodia’s politics of survival threatens democracy

work with the CPP to address underlining long-term issues such as Cambodia's aid dependency, the dollarization of its economy, and the lack of coherent revenue system which would increase domestic accountability. Additionally, while the current political climate is admittedly difficult, I would urge donors to continue their support grassroots for Cambodian NGOs and local community activists, while ensuring they are free of stringent short term conditions," said John Harley Breen in Brussels to a conference gathering EU and Cambodian officials. ²⁴²

A flexible democratisation process adaptable to specific Cambodian evolutions should not be understood as an argument in favour of or as an excuse for an authoritarian regime, but rather as a pragmatic approach to dealing with on-the-ground realities. Although a hybrid democracy may not be the most desirable outcome, it is the most likely given how the Cambodian system has adapted and rejected elements of democracy through history. Joint efforts to democratise need to focus on the essential structural elements of democracy, and adapt specific actions and demands to the local context. Moreover, a recognition of the need to accommodate and frame the democratisation process in the context of Cambodian politics in the region would enable the EU to address irritation and criticism about "foreign interference." Concepts of "international assistance based on international law" and "principle of non-interference/national sovereignty" need to be accommodated in the debates as complementary and grounded in the same moral values.

Security: a common purpose

The EU acts on the premises that liberal democracy and peace go hand in hand. The Cambodian Government, in contrast, remains trapped in a security bind of its own making where it points its finger at the CNRP, alleging that it incites violence through a foreign-backed attempt at colour revolution. Although the CNRP dissolution was an attempt to uproot a colour revolution, one can argue that it has increased the prospect of violence. With the potential EU sanctions, coupled with a resistance from the Cambodian Government, peaceful protests may take place with the intention of being peaceful, but are likely to turn violent.

"The best way to ensure there are no protests after an election is to ensure a process that is transparent and fair so that parties have no grounds to dispute the results," said the EU Ambassador. ²⁴³ For Europeans, peaceful, free and fair elections would appease tensions between political parties, regarded as a main source of violence in Cambodia. "I don't see how stability can be ensured through the dissolution of the main opposition party," said an EU official. "I just want to

²⁴² BREEN, J (2018) Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018

²⁴³ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

say that stability and peace are not opposed to multiparty democracy.”²⁴⁴ The fact that democracies do not fight each other is one of the most well-established findings.

There is however, a dilemma for external democracy promoters. It has been recognised that transitioning to a democracy creates an environment permissive to the outbreak of a conflict by inducing exclusionary nationalism and polarisation in the society.²⁴⁵ Scholars suggest that democracy aid can decrease the risk of conflict.²⁴⁶ Others advise external democracy promoters to not « shun the democracy/security dilemma and work to enhance the compatibility between these two objectives, trying from the outset to think on how to democratise but stabilise. »²⁴⁷

To demonstrate its intention to preserve security and prevent violence, the EU could support the Japanese delegation to the UN that urged all stakeholders, including the ruling party as well as the opposition, to promote dialogue among the Cambodian people.²⁴⁸ For the past 20 years, threats of mass protests are used by opponents to protect themselves from political repression in case of disagreement, while security concerns are used to legitimise Government’s actions, often condemned as public violence by the international community. Cambodian political actors are caught in a vicious cycle leading to more authoritarianism, unacceptable loss of human lives, and an increase of military presence instilling an atmosphere of fear. There is a necessity for the Cambodian Government, in agreement with the opposition, and with the support of international actors, to break this cycle. Guarantees need to be provided on both sides.

A pre-condition: an internal democratic dialogue

The CPP and CNRP’s disagreements are strong and rooted in history. Lowenthal and Bithar emphasize the importance of democratic dialogue by drawing lessons from successful and failed democratic transitions. A key for success was the role played by the elite: some were leaders in authoritarian regimes and others were prominent in opposition movements. The authors advise: “Democratic reformers must be ready to compromise as they prioritize incremental progress over

²⁴⁴ Idem.

²⁴⁵ SAVUN, B and TIRONE D, (2011) Foreign Aid, Democratization, and Civil Conflict: How Does Democracy Aid Affect Civil Conflict?, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 55, No. 2, April 2011, Pp. 233–246

²⁴⁶ Idem.

²⁴⁷ SCHMID, D., and BRAIZAT, F. (2006), The adaptation of EU and US democracy promotion programmes to the local political context in Jordan and Palestine and their relevance to grand geopolitical designs, Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri, Paris) & Center for Strategic Studies (CSS, Amman), Published with the support of the European Commission, p 23.

²⁴⁸ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Japan urges parties to talk, by Niem Chheng, on 9 July 2018

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/japan-urges-parties-talk>

comprehensive solutions.”²⁴⁹ Cooperation is needed and focusing on past grievances tends to be counterproductive, so democratic reformers should instead consistently project a positive and forward-looking vision. It is also important to marginalize those who refuse to renounce violence or who insist on uncompromising demands. Most importantly in the Cambodian case, “to persuade elements within the regime to be open to change, reformers must make credible assurances that they will not seek revenge or confiscate the assets of regime insiders.”²⁵⁰

As reported by Chandler, Sam Rainsy failed to inspire trust by committing to engage CPP leaders in opposition.²⁵¹ A representative from the Cambodian Government said: “Sam Rainsy was the one to destroy the culture of dialogue after a family gathering between Sam Rainsy’s family and Hun Sen’s family. Do you know what he said after that? He did an interview with *Libération*. He said that: “Mr. Hun Sen introduces his family to me because he fears that his destiny will become like Kaddafi.” How would you encourage the culture of dialogue in such a manner? Do you think that trust and confidence can be built that way?”²⁵²

Building trust between the CPP and CNRP would be a continuous progress, gradual and incremental. The dangers that lie in a refusal to compromise are clear. Transition leaders have to balance the desire to hold the previous regime accountable with the need to foster peaceful mutual acceptance among formerly bitter enemies. “Dismissing maximalist positions often calls for more political courage than hewing to attractive but impractical principles. Transition-making is not a task for the dogmatic.”²⁵³

One can argue that whilst both ruling party and opposition have been part of the problem, both remain key elements of the solution. Harsh anti-Hun Sen rhetoric by the CNRP, complemented by sanctions by the international community, accusations and condemnations by Human Rights groups – although legitimate – are unlikely to encourage and foster the needed democratic dialogue that could potentially drive Cambodia towards a democratic path.

²⁴⁹ FOREIGN AFFAIRS (2016), Getting to democracy. Lessons learnt from succesful transitions, By Abraham F. Lowenthal and Sergio Bitar, January/February 2016 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-14/getting-democracy>

²⁵⁰ Idem.

²⁵¹ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018) Poor Squeezed, Democracy Never Rooted in Cambodia, Chandler Says

²⁵² Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018.

²⁵³ FOREIGN AFFAIRS (2016), op. cit.

A long term perspective

As the EU Ambassador in Cambodia explained, “democracies do not just spring up overnight.”²⁵⁴ Strategic patience and a long term perspective are needed, as “we should not expect miracles and rapid transformations.”²⁵⁵ Many understand democratisation as “a continuum rather than as binary.”²⁵⁶ Democratisation is about altering traditional practices, such as patronage and clientelism, and re-defining state relations. For example, in Cambodia, parties buy their votes by giving small gifts or money to their supporters.²⁵⁷ Changing this habit where populations see their direct and personal interest will take time. Policies should not rely on idealised models of democracies that are not grounded in contextual realities, but instead necessitate strategic patience and a pragmatic and long term perspective.²⁵⁸ “We can enhance our chances of winning by empowering women, boosting programs that fight economic inequality and teaching our children the critical thinking skills they need.”²⁵⁹

Some consider in their policy recommendations that “there needs to be a higher tolerance for risks and setbacks.”²⁶⁰ Overtime, policy makers and decision makers need to deal with uncertainty and monitor whether what is being tried actually works, and to adapt and adjust accordingly.²⁶¹ Because of the pressure to show ‘results’, international actors such as the EU continue to pursue forms of democracy promotion that are short-term, instead of building democracy from a long-term and non-linear approach.²⁶² In Cambodia as in many countries, donors focus on elections but less on the strengthening of continuous accountability mechanisms.

Instead of focusing on the ruling party, requesting the re-instatement of the opposition party, the EU should ensure beforehand both ruling and opposition parties are committed to respect the fundamental rules of the electoral game. As Chandler explains, “loyal opposition” is not a phrase that exists in Cambodia. (...) Sam Rainsy never suggested, “When I come to power, I’d welcome Hun Sen in an opposition party. He has had long experience in the country. I welcome his advice.” He never came up with a sentence like that. [Instead he said], “When I am in power, I am in

²⁵⁴ EDGAR, G., EU Ambassador in Cambodia. Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018

²⁵⁵ MENOAL, A. (2013) Emerging democracies. Rising to the challenge, ODI, Briefing 84, November 2013, p. 6

²⁵⁶ GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C, p. 636.

²⁵⁷ VOICE OF AMERICA (2017), *Cash, Oaths and Holy Water: Inside the CPP’s Quest to Identify Its Own True Supporters*, 15 November 2017 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cash-oaths-and-holy-water-inside-the-cpps-quest-to-identify-its-own-true-supporters/4114993.html>

²⁵⁸ MENOAL, A. (2013), p. 6

²⁵⁹ TIME (2018), *Democracy Isn’t Perfect, But It Will Still Prevail*, by James Stavridis, 12 July 2018

http://time.com/5336615/democracy-will-prevail/?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=time&utm_medium=social&xid=time_socialflow_twitter

²⁶⁰ MENOAL, A. (2013), p. 6

²⁶¹ Idem.

²⁶² RAKNER, L. and MENOAL, R. (2007) *Democratisation’s Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned*, Research project (RP-05-GG) of the Advisory Board for Irish Aid, Working paper 1, August 2007, p. 48

power.”²⁶³ This suggests that international actors should not assume that a democratically elected Government will automatically transform the Cambodian society into a liberal democracy without reverting to another one-party system.

Democratic consolidation requires the evolution of a democratic political culture in Cambodia where all the main political players accept to make concessions. For Roberts, the transition from a single party to a multi-party system requires that the interests of the elite be upheld.²⁶⁴ Elections where everyone agrees to play by pre-established democratic rules and losers accept the results will take a long time. Kem Sokha was aware of this important issue: “We do not consider any Cambodians to be enemies or want to take revenge (...) Whoever wins, whoever loses, we have to talk together for the national interest and the people together. We need to give them [the CPP] belief that they can live peacefully with us and with their existing wealth.”²⁶⁵ Stressing the notion of “mass protests” over “dialogue” on one side, and imprisonments and harassment on the other, creates a circle of mutual threats at the expense of any prospect for positive democratic cooperation.

Cambodian history shows that the impact of elections that were called democratic was limited. An unchanged focus is likely to lead to the same result: a superficial pluralism. The EU short-term demands to release Kem Sokha and re-instate the CNRP under the media spotlight are perceived from the CPP’s perspective as demonstrating partiality and lack of neutrality. The focus on the use of the judiciary as a political tool to narrow the democratic space however, is a long-term concern that may bring a more substantial change. Particular attention needs to be paid to other democratic policies that damage the system’s structures in the long-term. For example, a public SMS informing people that “the NEC prohibits all parties and their supporters from doing campaigns that criticize, attack or compare the policies of their own parties with other parties”²⁶⁶ considerably alters the emergence of ideological pluralism through the constitution of political parties.

The Government of Cambodia appears to use different strategies to maintain a façade of democracy. “The introduction of new parties, most of which are minor and insignificant, is specifically designed to uphold the facade of electoral competition,” said Lee Morgenbesser.²⁶⁷ Andreas Striegnitz, desk officer at the European Parliament also pointed that: “the seats of the CNRP have been redistributed to other political parties – so to people which have not been elected. This is utmost undemocratic,

²⁶³ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018) Poor Squeezed, Democracy Never Rooted in Cambodia, Chandler Says

²⁶⁴ ROBERTS, D., pp. 149-170.

²⁶⁵ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017), Opposition leader Kem Sokha talks politics, power and Hun Sen, 20 June 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Slu3Y0P-K_8&t=211s

²⁶⁶ <https://twitter.com/alexwillemys/status/1016640268668289024>

²⁶⁷ NEW YORK TIMES (2018) As Vote Nears, Cambodia’s Leader Has Opponents, but No Competition, by Julia Wallace, 11 July 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/world/asia/cambodia-election-hun-sen.html>

and therefore for members of the European Parliament unacceptable.”²⁶⁸ Cambodian leaders also previously maintained an appearance of multi-party democracy in a strategic way. It would “tighten the screws, and then release the pressure at a strategic juncture to secure maximum political benefits.”²⁶⁹ A minor technical concession – such as the release of some political prisoners - from the Cambodian Government would help to gain some international credibility, while remaining insignificant to pose any real threat to the CPP’s power. Looking at, for example, the pardon for Sam Rainsy immediately before the 2013 elections, the release of a political opponent “helps sustain the facade of elections, but did not leave these leaders enough time to organise and compete.”²⁷⁰

Considering the politics of fear and survival, some guarantees need to be established to address threats of killings or imprisonment that may drive CPP leaders refuse being replaced and maintain their grip on power through the use of undemocratic practices and measures, ultimately leading to more authoritarianism. If the EU misunderstands or ignores the roots of conflict between political parties in Cambodia, it may prolong and aggravate democratic dysfunction through an interruption of the “Cambodian way.” The inter-elite struggle needs first to be detangled through the development of specific procedures laid out by the democratic process before free and fair elections can take place.

Strategic sanctions and democracy aid

An economic sanctions game begins with a threat by a coercer, followed by a reaction from a target, followed by an action by the coercer that either escalates or deescalates the conflict.²⁷¹ Two stages - the threat and the imposition of sanctions - are critical in the process. For some, “it is the threat, not the imposition of sanctions that changes a target state’s behaviour”²⁷² considering that a state that ignores a threat is unlikely to change its behaviour after sanctions are imposed.²⁷³ Others argue it is possible that sanctions do work “only after being imposed.”²⁷⁴

As the European Council states, “the EU should resist the temptation of using sanctions in order to be seen to do something even if the intended result is realistically unachievable.”²⁷⁵ However, if

²⁶⁸ STRIEGNITZ, A (2018) Speaker at a EIAS conference on 28 June 2018

²⁶⁹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018) Analysis: The PM’s catch and release strategy, 2 May 2018
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/analysis-pms-catch-and-release-strategy>

²⁷⁰ Idem.

²⁷¹ Idem.

²⁷² Ibid, p. 27

²⁷³ LACY, D. and EMERSON, N., p. 27

²⁷⁴ HOVI, J., HUSEBY, R. et al, p. 479.

²⁷⁵ EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013), p. 3.

sanctions are imposed, the EU's priority should be to minimise detrimental humanitarian effects²⁷⁶ on populations and third parties according to EU principles.²⁷⁷ Avoiding a worsening of humanitarian and social conditions is particularly important, not only in terms of values, but also to maintain domestic and international support.²⁷⁸

"Sanctions need to be calibrated, rather than being of the all-or-nothing variety."²⁷⁹ As comprehensive sanctions involve too many unintended effects, the EU should prioritise targeted sanctions.²⁸⁰ The scope of sanctions should be minimum because costly sanctions to Cambodia are likely to be costly to the EU. In addition to this, more hardship is likely to be inflicted upon the population in general, with on infants particularly affected.²⁸¹ This process of imposing sanctions also requires monitoring²⁸² in order to identify and anticipate impacts²⁸³ of EU measures.

The sanctions strategy is likely to be based on a gradual increase through sequencing and selection: gradually increasing the number of persons, institutions, etc. on the list of targets, or gradually adding new types of sanctions.²⁸⁴ Regarding a potential EBA suspension, such harsh and abrupt sanctions entail the risk of missing the gradual democratic improvement through a disruption²⁸⁵ and foster a certain degree of suspicion and imbalances in the world system. If the EU would decide to remove Cambodia from the preferential tax-free and quota-free EBA trade agreement, partial sanctions will be less detrimental for ordinary citizens compared to extensive ones.²⁸⁶

In this case, targeting the Cambodian sugar industry might result in more coercive potential than doing the same with the garment sector when attempting to protect human rights in Cambodia. The duration of economic sanctions needs to be as short as possible. It is statistically proven that "the larger the length of the duration of economic sanctions, the less likely that the economic sanction would be successful."²⁸⁷

²⁷⁶ WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al., p. V.

²⁷⁷ EU COUNCIL (2018) EU restrictive measures, Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts restrictive measures, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/>

²⁷⁸ Idem.

²⁷⁹ EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013), p. 3.

²⁸⁰ WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al., p. 9.

²⁸¹ PETRESCU, I., p. 12

²⁸² WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al., p. 11.

²⁸³ Ibid, p. 20.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁸⁵ Idem

²⁸⁶ RILEY, E. and TRAVIS, C. (2011), p. 17

²⁸⁷ SHAHADAT, M., and VAN BERGEIK, P., p. 22

Finally, maintaining good diplomatic relations between the EU and the Cambodian Government is proved to have a higher possibility of success,²⁸⁸ and would “increase the overall effectiveness of coercive measures.”²⁸⁹ EU officials should bear in mind that “the more cordial the relationship between the target and the sender, the more likely that the economic sanction would be successful.”²⁹⁰ Coercive measures can create tensions and lead to counter-productive results while positive diplomacy based on incentives and rewards is more likely to succeed. Scholars recall that democracy incitement should always be preferred to radical negative measures.²⁹¹ Therefore, an increase of democratisation aid in parallel with strategic sanctions could potentially maximise results and build on a commonly agreed conception of democracy as a long-term, non linear process. For example, the Cambodian Government identified a need for skills reinforcement of the political class when it made a request to the EU to “properly coach people who choose public life on the proper democratic behaviours and principles.”²⁹²

Geopolitics

The risk of a rigid, coercive process of democratisation is that ultimately, current authoritarian trends in Asia will be reinforced. Both EU and Cambodian policies need to be prudent, maintaining realistic expectations in order to prevent from plunging back into the *realpolitik* of a bipolar order seen during the Cold War. Choosing a moderate stance through diplomacy and reassurance over economic hardship and sanctions, without ignoring fundamental geopolitics of Asia, could help minimize geopolitical competition.

Cambodia should strike a balance between East and West. “To be overly dependent on anybody, whether it be China or America, is bad. Diversifying is good. Do not put all your eggs in one basket. Cambodia is putting all of its eggs in China's basket,” said Sophal Ear.²⁹³ If Cambodia needs to rely on China to counter-balance predatory ambitions from neighbouring countries Vietnam and Thailand, it also needs the Western world to maintain a certain latitude in dealing with non-democratic countries in its region.²⁹⁴ It needs to be nimble in avoiding being confined or constrained into those binary choices. For the EU ambassador in Cambodia, “there isn’t a geopolitical competition between the EU and China, and Cambodia is not obliged to choose one or the other. It should be able to have

²⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 34

²⁸⁹ GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C, p. 639.

²⁹⁰ SHAHADAT, M., and VAN BERGEIK, P., p. 22

²⁹¹ SCHMID, D., and BRAIZAT, F., op. cit. p. 23.

²⁹² GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018), Statement addressed to the EU, Brussels, June 2018.

²⁹³ VOICE OF AMERICA (2018), Q&A: Ear Sophal, Author of ‘The Hungry Dragon’, on Chinese Influence in Cambodia 2 May 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/interview-ear-sophal-author-of-the-hungry-dragon-in-chinese-influence-in-cambodia/4372583.html>

²⁹⁴ DETH, S. O, SUN, S. and BULUT, S. (2018), p. 242

mutually beneficial relations with a range of partners.”²⁹⁵ Cambodia should maintain a good relationship with China but not solely rely on this country. By respecting Human Rights and promoting democracy in a way that is recognised by the United Nations, the Government of Cambodia will make itself more attractive to foreign investments - mainly from the EU and the US - which represent a good source of Government taxes.²⁹⁶

It is recognised that multilateral action is more efficient at exerting international pressure on the Cambodian Government to democratise. However, the EU and US should adapt their actions with regard to the current US-Cambodia and EU-Cambodia relations while pursuing their common purpose. Considering the American image and the political credits of the American Government and administration in Cambodia as well as the Government of Cambodia’s willingness to cooperate positively with the EU, the EU and USA should not systematically merge their interventions, whilst avoiding conflicting intervention. “Parallel intervention on the field can sometimes bring about better synergies than a commonly designed strategy.”²⁹⁷ A formal frame for coordination could help harmonise EU and US efforts for democracy promotion with information exchange and cooperation with the entire community of international donors in Cambodia.²⁹⁸ However, the degree of interaction and cooperation between US and EU officials need to be adjusted to the specific context of international relations in order to achieve their common purpose. Frames of co-ordination should be created within this specific context of international relations.

In that sense, the EU could increase its cooperation with the Government of Japan, which remains an important democratic anchor in a region where most countries are not democratic. The Japanese Government have also managed to positively cooperate with the Government of Cambodia while contributing to the international pressure calling for Cambodia’s democratisation. Only a strong and impartial force encouraging parties into dialogue²⁹⁹ can provide a way out of the current political impasse. As the UN, the USA and the EU have not been perceived as impartial by the Cambodian Government, the process of reconciliation could be monitored by a more neutral actor. Again, some suggest Japan,³⁰⁰ thanks to its softer democratisation policy, has been more accepted by the

²⁹⁵ SOUTHEAST ASIA GLOBE (2018), EU and China not in competition in Cambodia, says EU ambassador

²⁹⁶ SAMBATH (2015), op. cit.

²⁹⁷ SCHMID, D., and BRAIZAT, F. (2006), op. cit, p 23.

²⁹⁸ Idem.

²⁹⁹ CHHEANG, V. (2018), Sanctions won’t stop Cambodia’s democratic collapse, 9 January 2018, ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/01/09/sanctions-wont-stop-cambodias-democratic-collapse/>

³⁰⁰ THE NATION (2018), Can Malaysia’s wind of change reach Cambodia? By Tong Soprach, on 18 May 2018 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/opinion/30345769>

Cambodian Government. Japan shares the view that all political parties should be able to participate in the electoral process and has pushed for negotiations between the CPP and CNRP.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018), Japan pushes CNRP dialogue, by Leonie Kijewski and Yon Sineat on 26 March 2018
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/japan-pushes-cnrp-dialogue>

Conclusion

In 2018, in response to what is perceived as a political crackdown led in 2017, the EU threatened the Government of Cambodia of economic sanctions through the partial or complete suspension of the EBA trade agreement.

The uncertainty due to a lack of evidence about the impact of EU sanctions challenges the use of coercive measures to pursue political goals. Discussing the prospective effects of said measures, researchers at the European Council suggested that, "In short, it is like shooting in the dark."³⁰² Sanctions may compromise the integrity and efficacy of fulfilling their primary goals, and any shot in the dark could in fact backfire. The harmful impact on the Cambodian population, especially the poorest communities and workers, would undermine progress made through decades of efforts in aid and economic cooperation. The suspension of the EBA would not only severely damage the cordiality of relationships, but also legitimise the accusation of "foreign interference" from the Cambodian Government and most post-colonial Asian states opposed to a "neo-imperialist" intervention in their internal affairs. In addition, popular unrest, demonstrations and protests could not only turn violent, but also increase political repression from the Cambodian Government.

On the geopolitical level, although we are unlikely to return to a world divided into two distinct political blocks, it is undeniable that tensions are mounting between the USA and China, and this confrontation is pitting the EU and Cambodia against each other. In a global context where pressure to liberalise and democratise is increasing and trends towards authoritarianism prevail, especially in Southeast Asia, Brussels must seek to minimise exacerbating the narrative of an East-West competition. In addition to this, Phnom Penh is likely to reduce the impact of sanctions by turning to its Asian partners and inevitably Beijing. Reliance on the Chinese one-party state for development is likely to gradually influence Cambodia's policy priorities at the expense of a liberal democratic system. Appeasing tensions and encouraging cordial diplomatic relations between the EU and the Government of Cambodia seem to be a necessity to achieve democratisation in Cambodia.

Considering the mutual influence between global and local considerations, the two main political forces in the country - the ruling CPP and opposition CNRP - are divided and aligned with competing world powers. Although the EU does not intend to support any specific party, but rather democratic values as a whole, it is understood to offer *de facto* support to the CNRP. Although China may not

³⁰² EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013), Shooting in the dark? EU sanctions policies, by Konstanty Gebert, Policy brief. https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR71_SANCTIONS_BRIEF_AW.pdf

be willing to interfere in EU policies, its increasing support to Cambodia and its vision of a “right for plural societies to co-exist” undermine Western policies of democratisation. Any “Cambodian democracy” has to mediate between external influences as well as complex domestic politics dominated by traditional governance and pre-existing systems.

Old suspicions and hatred rooted in fighting factions from the 1980’s are often overlooked but have a lingering influence, leaving Cambodian politics trapped in a condition of structural violence and fear. The refusal from both CPP and CNRP and their current leaders to accept each other in a two-party system should be treated with great sensitivity given some natural bias. Although a high sense of relativism is required to understand the issue, this paper argues that the imposition of EU sanctions, whether targeted or comprehensive, would increase this tone and is unlikely to create favourable conditions for dialogue between political parties and their respective supporters in the global arena. If we can consider both CPP and CNRP as part of the problem, they are both also part of the solution. With reference to past democratic transitions, scholars emphasise the role played by leaders in authoritarian regimes and in opposition parties. Incremental progress can be fostered by encouraging a positive and forward-looking vision, renouncing mutual threats, violence and uncompromising demands. There is a need to balance the desire to hold the previous regime accountable with the need to foster peaceful mutual acceptance and democratic dialogue in order to ensure gradual democratic progress.

The EU, along with the international community, has sent billions of dollars of conditional aid to Cambodia with the aim of establishing liberal democracy there since the model was inserted in 1991. If both declare their willingness to deepen cooperation, their challenge today is to bridge the gap between the European liberal understanding of *democracy* and how it is translated in Cambodian political life. This gap creates long running tension and hostility locally and globally. Although a hybrid system may not be the most desirable outcome, it is the most likely and it should be accepted as a pragmatic necessity. If the EU misunderstands or ignores the roots of Cambodian power structures, it may prolong and aggravate democratic dysfunction through an interruption of the “Cambodian way.” External intervention can not substitute for a democratic process and an enforced democracy – implemented by the coercive measures - may not be the appropriate course of action. Emphasis could be put on the importance of heterogeneity and ideological diversity, peace and dialogue, instead of elections as a procedural mechanism. Bridging differences and a variety of points of view – locally and globally – is possible through further negotiations and concessions on all sides pursuing long term goals.

If sanctions are imposed, they need to be short, temporary, partial, and calibrated to minimise humanitarian effects on populations and negative consequences for European businesses. By imposing soft sanctions based on strategic sequencing and selection aimed at extracting minor concessions, the EU would not suffer the loss of reputation and credibility associated with backing down against Cambodia after threatening sanctions. It would also enhance its reputation on the international stage as a strong coercer, demonstrating the humanitarian concerns sewn into its own coercive measures. In addition, it would help to maintain domestic and international support for EU's democratisation policy. However, both the EU and the Government of Cambodia need to cooperate to achieve democratic progress. This will require patience and tolerance, ensuring that the interests of the Cambodian elite be upheld as a pragmatic necessity. Running parallel to strategic sanctions, a policy of incentives and rewards and an increase of democracy aid could potentially positively impact EU-Cambodia relations. The inter-elite struggle needs to be detangled before free and fair elections can take place, since the Cambodian system adapts and rejects elements of democracy. Achieving cooperation on equal terms, given the socio-economic and political imbalances between the EU and Cambodia, would also enable all involved to address historical bitterness concerning "European domination."

Whilst a soft approach may be criticised for leading to stagnation or slow progress, we argue that a confrontational one bears the risks of increased authoritarianism.

References

Books

- BOHMAN, J. and REHG, W. (1997)
Deliberative democracy, Essay on reason and politics, MIT press, London, 478 p.
- DETH SOK, U., SUON, S et al (2018)
Cambodia's foreign relations in regional and global contexts, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, 470 p.
- DREYER, I. and LUENGO-CABRERA, J., (2015)
On target ? EU Sanctions as Security Policy Tools, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 91 p.
- HUGUES, C., and UN, K (2011)
Cambodia's economic transformation, Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 385 p.
- OJENDAL, J., LILJA, M. et al (2009)
Beyond democracy in Cambodia. Political reconstruction in a post-conflict society, Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 320 p.
- WALLENSTEEN, P. ,et al. (2003),
Making targeted sanctions effective. Guidelines for the implementation of UN Policy Options, Results from the Stockholm Process on the Implementation of Targeted Sanctions, Uppsala University, 158 p.

Academic articles

- BAAZ, M. and LILJA, M (2014),
Understanding Hybrid Democracy in Cambodia: The Nexus Between Liberal Democracy, the State, Civil Society, and a "Politics of Presence" Asian Politics & Policy—Volume 6, Number 1, pp. 6-24.
- BARMA N. (2006),
Brokered Democracy-Building : Developing Democracy through Transitional Governance in Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan by in Interational Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS), Vol. 8, n°2, UNESCO, pp. 127-161
- BOLTON, K, (2017),
Cambodia targeted by Globalists for « Color Revolution » ? in Foreign Policy Journal, 2 October 2017
- BOYLE, D. (2018),
Donor scramble as Cambodia hits undo on democracy, in the Interpreter, on 11 June 2018, The Lowy Institute

- CHEN, D. and KINZELBACH, K. (2015),
Democracy promotion and China: blocker or bystander? In *democratization*, Volume 22,
2015, pp. 400-418
- CHHEANG, V. (2018),
Sanctions won't stop Cambodia's democratic collapse, 9 January 2018, ISEAS–Yusof Ishak
Institute
- CROISSANT, A. (2004),
From Transition to Defective Democracy : Mapping Asian Democratization in *Democratization*,
Vol 11, No. 5, December 2004, pp. 156-178.
- CURTIS, G., (1993)
Transition to what ? Cambodia, UNTAC and the Peace Process, discussion paper, United
Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), November 1993, 24 p.
- GRAUVOGEL, J. and von SOEST, C (2014),
Claims to legitimacy count : Why sanctions fail to instigate democratisation in authoritarian
regimes in *European Journal of Political Research* 53, pp. 635-653.
- HOVI, J., HUSEBY, R. et al, (2005),
When Do (Imposed) Economic Sanctions Work ? in *World Politics* 57, pp. 479-99.
- ICHIHARA, M. (2017),
The Changing Role of Democracy in Asian Geopolitics, September 14, 2017 Carnegie
Endowment for International Peace
- ISA, F., NOGAL, E. et al (2016),
Challenges to the Effectiveness of EU Human Rights and Democratisation Policies, European
Commission, 3 June 2016.
- LACY, D. and EMERSON, N., A (2004)
Theory of Economic Sanctions and Issue Linkage : The Role of Preferences, Information, and
Threats, in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66, No. 1, February 2004, pp 25-42.
- LOOTZ (2016),
Using aid for autocracy promotion? A quantitative analysis of China's foreign aid effect on
regime types, Georg-August-University Gottingen.

- MENOCAL, A. (2013)
Emerging democracies. Rising to the challenge, ODI, Briefing 84, November 2013.
- McCARGO, D. (2005),
Cambodia : Getting away with authoritarianism ? in *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 16, Number 4, October 2005, pp. 98-112.
- MEYER-RESENDE M. (2011),
International consensus : essential elements of democracy, in *Democracy Reporting international*, October 2011
- OJENDAL, J. and SEDARA, K. (2011),
« Real Democratization in Cambodia? An Empirical Review of the Potential of a Decentralization Reform, » Working paper n°9, Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy, 25 p.
- PAPE, R. (1997),
Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work, in *International Security*, Volume 22, Issue 2 (Autumn), pp 90-136.
- PORTELA, C. (2005),
Where and why does the EU impose sanctions ? *Politique européenne*, 2005/3 (n° 17), p. 83-111.
- PETRESCU, I. (2010),
The Humanitarian Impact of Economic Sanctions, University of Essex, 41 p.
- RAKNER, L. and MENOCAL, R. (2007)
Democratisation's Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned, Research project (RP-05-GG) of the Advisory Board for Irish Aid, Working paper 1, August 2007, 62 p.
- REILLY, B. (2007),
Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region : Is There an « Asian Model » of democracy ? in *Comparative Political Studies*, September 2007, p. 1350-1371.
- RICHMOND, O. and FRANK, D. (2007),
Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia in *Security Dialogue* 2007; 38; 27, pp. 27-48.

RUHLIG, T (2018)

China's international relations in the new era of Xi Jinping – implications for Europe in EU-Asia at a glance, European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), March 2018, 10 p.

SAMBATH (2015),

Cambodia-China Relation : Past, Present and Future, IIMBA, College of Management, July 2015, 12 p.

SAVUN, B and TIRONE D, (2011)

Foreign Aid, Democratization, and Civil Conflict: How Does Democracy Aid Affect Civil Conflict?, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 55, No. 2, April 2011, Pp. 233–246

SCHMID, D., and BRAIZAT, F. (2006),

The adaptation of EU and US democracy promotion programmes to the local political context in Jordan and Palestine and their relevance to grand geopolitical designs, Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri, Paris) & Center for Strategic Studies (CSS, Amman), Published with the support of the European Commission, 29 p.

SHAHADAT, M., and VAN BERGEIK, P., (2012)

Reconsidering economic sanctions reconsidered. A detailed analysis of the Peterson Institute Sanction database, working paper n° 549, International Institute of Social Studies, 45 p.

SPRINGER, S., (2009),

Violence, Democracy, and the Neoliberal « Order » : The Contestation of Public Space in Posttransitional Cambodia in Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 99(1), pp. 138-171.

Official Documents

THE ASIA FOUNDATION (2017)

The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Cambodia-StatofConflictandViolence.pdf>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2004),

Basic Principles on the Use of Restrictive Measures (Sanctions), 10198/1/04 REV 1, PESC 450, Brussels, 4 June 2004

EU-CAMBODIA (1997)

Cooperation agreement between the European Community and the Kingdom of Cambodia, signed on April 29, 1997 and entered into force in November 1999.

<http://investmentpolicyhub.unctad.org/Download/TreatyFile/2472>

EU-CAMBODIA (2010),

Joint press release : European Union and Cambodia hold 10th Joint Committee Meeting, Brussels 14 march 2018 https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/41392/joint-press-release-european-union-and-cambodia-hold-10th-joint-committee-meeting_en

EQUITABLE CAMBODIA AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL (2013),

Bittersweet Harvest: A Human Rights Impact Assessment of the European Union's Everything But Arms Initiative in Cambodia https://www.inclusivedevelopment.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Bittersweet_Harvest_web-version.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018),

Director-General for Trade, Cambodia

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_111485.pdf

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (2013),

Shooting in the dark? EU sanctions policies, by Konstanty Gebert, Policy brief. https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR71_SANCTIONS_BRIEF_AW.pdf

EU COUNCIL (2018),

Council conclusions on Cambodia, as adopted by the Council at its 3598th meeting held on 26 February 2018, from the General Secretariat of the Council to delegations, 6416/18

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6416-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

EU COUNCIL (2018),

Policies, Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts them, EU restrictive measures

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/>

EU COUNCIL (2018),

EU restrictive measures, Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts restrictive measures,

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/>

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018),

Cambodia: EU mission assesses human rights and labour situation, press release, 12 July 2018 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4467_en.htm

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2016),

Good Governance in EU External Relations : What role for development policy in a changing international context ? Study, Directorate General for External Policies, Policy Department, p. 12

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU\(2016\)578012_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU(2016)578012_EN.pdf)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2018),

Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the Commission, 1 March 2018

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2017-007487&language=EN>

EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (2014),

European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/european_strategy_for_cambodia_2014-2018_en_1.pdf

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2016),

Good Governance in EU External Relations : What role for development policy in a changing international context ? Study, Directorate General for External Policies, Policy Department, p. 12

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU\(2016\)578012_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU(2016)578012_EN.pdf)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2017),

Motion for a Resolution with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure on Cambodia: the banning of the opposition (2017/3002(RSP)) - B8 0686/2017, 12 December 2017.

GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018),

Statement addressed to the EU, Brussels, June 2018.

GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA (2018),

Cambodia, Stability and development first, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. To tell the truth. February 2018 <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/4T2-Cambodia-Stability-and-Development-First.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (2018),

Update for the European Union (EU) Cambodia Human Rights dialogue 13 March 2018, Brussels, Belgium, Key Human Rights issues of concern https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20180312_cambodia_eu_dialogue_bf_en.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2012),

Cambodia: 15 Years on, No Justice in Grenade Attack, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/29/cambodia-15-years-no-justice-grenade-attack>

UN OHCHR (2008),

End of Mission Statement, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Professor Rhona Smith, Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018 <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22819&LangID=E>

UN OHCHR (2008),

Extranet, 37th session of the Human Rights Council, Item 2, General Debate, Delivered by Permanent Representative Jillian Dempster, list of supporters of the statement at time of delivery on 21 March 2018

UN WEB TV (2018),

Cambodia, UPR Report Consideration - 37th Meeting, 26th Regular Session Human Rights Council <http://webtv.un.org/en/ga/watch/cambodia-upr-report-consideration-37th-meeting-26th-regular-session-human-rights-council/3643434510001/?term=&page=8>

WHITE HOUSE (2018),

Statement from the Press Secretary on Reduction in Assistance to the Government of Cambodia, issued on February 27, 2018 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-reduction-assistance-government-cambodia/>

WORLD BANK (2018),

Cambodia Overview retrieved on 2 May 2018

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>

News articles

- ABC (2017), Australian speech the key 'treason' evidence against Cambodian opposition leader by Cochrane, 6 September 2017 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-06/australian-speech-evidence-of-treason-against-cambodia-kem-sokha/8876044>
- ASIA TIMES (2017), Cambodia clampdown threatens Chinese interests, by D. Hutt, 30 October 2017 <http://www.atimes.com/article/cambodia-clampdown-threatens-chinese-interests/>
- ASIA TIMES (2018), Why Japan won't criticize Hun Sen by David Hutt, 29 March 2018, <http://www.atimes.com/article/japan-wont-criticize-hun-sen//>
- ASSOCIATED PRESS (2018), Cambodia scorns US sanctions against senior military officer, by Sophean Cheng, 13 June 2018 <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/13/cambodia-scorns-us-sanctions-against-senior-military-officer.html>
- BBC (2017), Treason charge for Cambodian opposition leader accused of US plot, 5 September 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41158333>
- CAMBODIA DAILY (1998), Rainsy Urges Rebellion if Gov't Shoots, By Stew Magnuson and Lor Chandara, August 25, 1998 <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/rainsy-urges-rebellion-if-govt-shoots-10340/>
- CAMBODIA DAILY (2014), Former KPNLF Celebrate 35th Anniversary in Cambodia Daily, by Alex Willemyns, on 6 March 2014 <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/former-kpnlf-celebrate-35th-anniversary-53619/>
- EAST ASIA FORUM (2017), Cambodia's politics of survival threatens democracy by S. Peou, 21 November 2017 <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/21/cambodias-politics-of-survival-threatens-democracy/>
- EAST ASIA FORUM (2018),

The end of Cambodia's ersatz democracy, 5 February 2018

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/02/05/the-end-of-cambodias-ersatz-democracy/>

FINANCIAL TIMES (2016),

FT Investigation: How China bought its way into Cambodia, by James Kynge, Leila Haddou and Michael Peel, 8 September 2016
<https://www.ft.com/content/23968248-43a0-11e6-b22f-79eb4891c97d>

FOREIGN AFFAIRS (2016),

Getting to democracy. Lessons learnt from successful transitions, By Abraham F. Lowenthal and Sergio Bitar, January/February 2016
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-14/getting-democracy>

FOREIGN POLICY (2009),

Rogue Aid, by Moises Naim, 15 October 2009
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/15/rogue-aid/>

FOREIGN POLICY (2014),

Cambodia's Long March Toward Democracy, by Peter Bartu and Andrew Grant
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/25/cambodias-long-march-toward-democracy/>

KHMER TIMES (2017),

Hun Sen recalls Paris peace deal, by M. Sophon, 16 October 2017,
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/5086217/hun-sen-recalls-paris-peace-deal/>

KHMER TIMES (2017)

EU not taking action on garment industry, by Mom Kunthear, 14 December 2017
<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/5095913/eu-not-taking-action-garment-industry/>

KHMER TIMES (2017),

Partiality of EU and US on the situation in Cambodia, 19 December 2017,
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/5096665/partiality-eu-us-situation-cambodia/>

KHMER TIMES (2018),

EU sanctions unlikely, experts say, by M. Kunmakara, 28 February 2018
<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/110838/eu-sanctions-unlikely-experts-say/>

KHMER TIMES (2018),

Democracy stumbles in Cambodia, by Chan Sopha, 5 March 2018
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/50111870/democracy-stumbles-cambodia/>

KHMER TIMES (2018),

Cambodia and the European Union, by Cheang Sokha, 25 June 2018
<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50504419/cambodia-and-the-european-union/>

NEW EASTERN LOOK (2018),

America's Awkward "Pivot" to Asia: US-Cambodia Confrontation Widens by J. Thomas, 24 January 2018 <https://journal-neo.org/2018/01/24/americas-awkward-pivot-to-asia-us-cambodia-confrontation-widens/>

NIKKEI (2018),

Sanctions will not resolve the Hun Sen problem, by Sebastian Strangio, on 7 May 2018 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Sanctions-will-not-resolve-the-Hun-Sen-problem2>

POLITICO (2017),

Europe's 'blood sugar'. The European Union's human rights legacy is tainted by its inaction in Cambodia, by Jack Davies, 4 July 2017
<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-blood-sugar-cambodia-human-rights-trade/>

RADIO FREE ASIA (2017),

Panelists Call For Review of Cambodia's UN Membership, Targeted Sanctions, 20 December 2017 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/panel-12202017161510.html>

REUTERS (2015),

Xi says China "will never pursue hegemony," 28 September 2018 (video)
<https://youtu.be/2OUKGqoGCgQ>

- REUTERS (2017) Cambodia's Hun Sen challenges EU and U.S. to freeze assets, 15 December 2017 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-politics/cambodias-hun-sen-challenges-eu-and-u-s-to-freeze-assets-idUSKBN1E90JT>
- REUTERS, (2018) Cambodia kicks off drills with 'great friend' China as U.S. ties sour, by Thul PC, 17 March 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-china-military/cambodia-kicks-off-drills-with-great-friend-china-as-u-s-ties-sour-idUSKCN1GT05F>
- REUTERS (2018), EU, U.S. reluctant to remove trade preferences for Cambodia garments: Fitch's BMI, 24 April 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-politics-garments/eu-u-s-reluctant-to-remove-trade-preferences-for-cambodia-garments-fitchs-bmi-idUSKBN1HV0BL>
- SOUTHEAST ASIA GLOBE (2018),
EU and China not in competition in Cambodia, says EU ambassador, by M. Namiti, on 8 February 2018
<http://sea-globe.com/eu-and-china-not-in-competition-in-cambodia-says-eu-ambassador/>
- THE DIPLOMAT (2015),
Cambodia's Strategic China Alignment. A number of factors are driving Cambodia's strategic convergence with China by Cheunboran Chanborey, 8 July 2015
<https://thediplomat.com/2015/07/cambodias-strategic-china-alignment/>
- THE DIPLOMAT (2018),
China-Cambodia Defense Ties in the Spotlight with Military Drills, by By Prashanth Parameswaran, 21 March 2018
<https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/china-cambodia-defense-ties-in-the-spotlight-with-military-drills/>
- THE FINANCIAL TIMES (2018),
Cambodian leader leaves little to chance in pursuit of poll win, 9 July 2018
<https://www.ft.com/content/e08461d4-8022-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>
- THE NATION (2018),

Can Malaysia's wind of change reach Cambodia? By Tong Soprach, on 18 May 2018 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/opinion/30345769>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2014),

Anti-Vietnam talk by CNRP 'alarms' envoy, by Kevin Ponniah, 17 January 2014
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/anti-vietnam-talk-cnrp-%E2%80%98alarms%E2%80%99-envoy>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017),

CNRP clings to anti-Vietnamese rhetoric, 26 June 2017
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-clings-anti-vietnamese-rhetoric>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2016),

Rainsy tells EU to get tough in speech, 15 July 2016
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rainsy-tells-eu-get-tough-speech>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017),

Opposition leader Kem Sokha talks politics, power and Hun Sen, 20 June 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Slu3Y0P-K_8&t=211s

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017),

Sokhonn defends Cambodia's position on South China Sea, by M. Dara, 10 August 2017
<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sokhonn-defends-cambodias-position-south-china-sea>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2017),

Decision on EU funding for election committee due soon, 11 December 2017
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/decision-eu-funding-election-committee-due-soon>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Government unit publishes 132-page treatise on threat of 'colour revolution,' by Mech Dara and Daphne Chen, on 14 February 2018
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/government-unit-publishes-132-page-treatise-threat-colour-revolution>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Spokesman vows Cambodia will fight against 'colonisation' after US cuts aid, 1 March 2018 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/spokesman-vows-cambodia-will-fight-against-colonisation-after-us-cuts-aid>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Europe voices 'serious concerns' over rights, by A. Nachemson, on 16 March 2018 <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/europe-voices-serious-concerns-over-rights>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Japan pushes CNRP dialogue, by Leonie Kijewski and Yon Sineat on 26 March 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/japan-pushes-cnrp-dialogue>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

A sector too big to fail? By Robin Spiess, 5 April 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/sector-too-big-fail>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

EU to review Cambodia's EBA status, 1 May 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/eu-review-cambodias-eba-status>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018)

Analysis: The PM's catch and release strategy, 2 May 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/analysis-pms-catch-and-release-strategy>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Are we ready for the wind of change? 16 May 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/are-we-ready-winds-change>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Polls a budget buster? By Mech Dara, 30 May 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/polls-budget-buster>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Former opposition leader tells soldiers, Cambodians to unite to fight CPP, 12 June 2018 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/former-opposition-leader-tells-soldiers-cambodians-unite-fight-cpp>

THE PHNOM PENH POST (2018),

Japan urges parties to talk, on 9 July 2018
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/japan-urges-parties-talk>

NEW YORK TIMES (2017),

Cambodia Appeals to Trump to Forgive War-Era Debt, by Julia Wallace, 2 April 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/02/world/asia/cambodia-trump-debt.html?_r=0

NEW YORK TIMES (2018),

Embracing China, Facebook and Himself, Cambodia's Ruler Digs, by Hannah Beech, 17 March 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/world/asia/hun-sen-cambodia-china.html>

NEW YORK TIMES (2018),

Tokyo's Envoy Urges Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia, 23 March 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/03/23/world/asia/ap-as-cambodia-japan.html?smid=tw-share>

NEW YORK TIMES (2018),

As Vote Nears, Cambodia's Leader Has Opponents, but No Competition, by Julia Wallace, 11 July 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/world/asia/cambodia-election-hun-sen.html>

NIKKEI (2018),

Cambodia acts tough toward US with China in its corner by A. Tomiyama, 1 March 2018 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Cambodia-acts-tough-toward-US-with-China-in-its-corner>

NIKKEI (2018),

Sanctions will not resolve the Hun Sen problem By Sebastian Strangio, 7 May 2018 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Sanctions-will-not-resolve-the-Hun-Sen-problem2>

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (2017),

Hun Sen counts on China as he cracks down in Cambodia – has he miscalculated ? by E. Morton, 17 September 2017

<http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2111437/hun-sen-counts-china-he-cracks-down-cambodia-has-he-miscalculated>

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (2018),

Cambodia's former opposition leader Sam Rainsy urges Japan to lean on Hun Sen to ensure fair elections, 14 avril 2018

<http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2141727/cambodias-former-opposition-leader-sam-rainsy-urges-japan>

SOUTHEAST ASIA GLOBE (2018),

EU and China not in competition in Cambodia, says EU ambassador, by Musaaazi Namiti, 8 February 2018

<http://sea-globe.com/eu-and-china-not-in-competition-in-cambodia-says-eu-ambassador/>

STRAIT TIMES (2018),

Japan has a role to play in Cambodia's future: The Yomiuri Shimbun on 20 March 2018 <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/japan-has-a-role-to-play-in-cambodias-future-the-yomiuri-shimbun>

TIME (2014),

In Cambodia, Dozens of Security Guards Are Hurt in an Opposition Crackdown, <http://time.com/2984689/cambodia-freedom-park-clash-violence-cnrp-mu-sochua-keo-phirum-men-sothavarin/>

TIME (2018),

Press Freedom Is Under Attack Across Southeast Asia. Meet the Journalists Fighting Back, By Feliz Solomon, Helen Regan, Laignee Barron, Eli Meixler, Joseph Hincks, Suyin Haynes, and Casey Quackenbush, on 22 June 2018 <http://time.com/longform/press-freedom-southeast-asia/>

THE ECONOMIST (2018),

China's political meritocracy versus Western democracy, by Daniel Bell, 12 June 2018 <https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/06/12/chinas-political-meritocracy-versus-western->

[democracy?fsrc=scn/tw/te/bl/ed/chinaspoliticalmeritocracyversuswesterndemocracyopenfuture](https://www.voacambodia.com/a/democracy?fsrc=scn/tw/te/bl/ed/chinaspoliticalmeritocracyversuswesterndemocracyopenfuture)

VOICE OF AMERICA (2014),

Not Only Vietnamese Threatened by Racism, Rights Worker Says, by Men Kimseng, 25 February 2014 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/not-only-vietnamese-threatened-by-racism-rights-worker-says/1858791.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2017),

Q&A: Interview with Professor Sorpong Peou: Cambodia's Culture of Retribution and Politics of Survival, the Setback for Democratic Liberalization, 19 January 2017 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/interview-with-professor-sorpong-peou-cambodia-culture-of-retribution-and-politics-of-survival-the-setback-for-democratic-liberalization/3681519.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

U.S. Cutting Aid to Cambodia for Recent Democratic Setbacks, 28 February 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/us-cutting-aid-to-cambodia-for-recent-democratic-setbacks/4272907.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

US Sanctions Cambodian General Over Human Rights Abuses, 14 June 2018 <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-sanctions-cambodian-general/4438322.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

China-Cambodia Relations Benefit Many, Likely to Deepen, Chandler Says, on 2 May 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/china-cambodia-relations-benefit-many-likely-to-deepen-chandler-says/4373990.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

Q&A: Ear Sophal, Author of 'The Hungry Dragon', on Chinese Influence in Cambodia 2 May 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/interview-ear-sophal-author-of-the-hungry-dragon-in-chinese-influence-in-cambodia/4372583.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

Poor squeezed democracy never rooted in Cambodia, Chandler says, 3 May 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/poor-squeezed-democracy-never-rooted-in-cambodia-chandler-says/4375907.html>

VOICE OF AMERICA (2018),

Cambodia Sends Envoys to Europe to Lobby EU Over Preferential Trade Agreement, 29 June 2018 <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-sends-envoys-to-europe-to-lobby-eu-over-preferential-trade-agreement/4460297.html>

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (2015),

How effective are economic sanctions?, by TRENIN D., (Director Canergie Moscow Centre) <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/02/how-effective-are-economic-sanctions/>

WORLD POLITICS REVIEW (2016),

Cambodia's Democratic Transition Has Collapsed, With Dangerous Consequences in World Politics Review, by Kurlantzick, 16 August 2016 <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/19676/cambodia-s-democratic-transition-has-collapsed-with-dangerous-consequences>

XINHUA (2018),

Cambodia warns against any calls for election boycott, 9 April 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/09/c_137098287.htm#0-twi-1-65546-7250227817ecdf034dc9540e6c76667

Interviewees

- H.E. George Edgar, EU Ambassador in Cambodia, Interview over the phone on 25 May 2018
- EU official 1 (anonymous). Face-to-face interview on 25 May 2018 in Brussels.
- EU official 2 (anonymous). Interview face-to-face on 4 June 2018 in Brussels.
- John Harley Breen, researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LES), Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre (SEAC) – speaking on a personal capacity. Interview by email on 25 April 2018.
- Tim Ruhlig, researcher at the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS). Face-to-face interview on 25 May 2018, at EIAS, 26 Rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels, Belgium.
- Researcher (anonymous). Interview by email on 17 April 2018.



EIAS

European Institute
for Asian Studies

European Institute for Asian Studies – EIAS a.s.b.l.
26 Rue de la Loi, 10th Floor, 1000 Brussels/Belgium
Tel.: +32 2 230 81 22 E-mail: eias@eias.org Website: www.eias.org

 EiasBrussels

 European Institute for Asian Studies

 @EIASBrussels