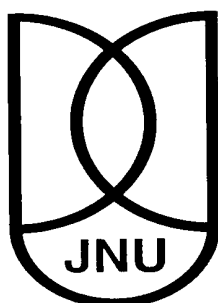


CAMBODIA-CHINA RELATIONS, 1991–2012

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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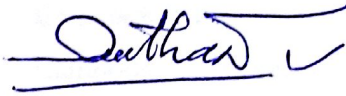
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Cambodia-China Relations, 1991-2012" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.



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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACFTA	ASEAN China Free Trade Agreement
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDLP	Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
CCC	Cambodia Chamber of Commerce
CCHR	Cambodian Center for Human Rights
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDC	Cambodia Development Council
CG	Consultative Group
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPA	Cambodia National Petroleum Authority
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
CPP	Cambodian People’s Party
CRC	Cambodian Red Cross
DK	Democratic of Kampuchea
EBA	Everything But Arms

ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
EDC	Electricite du Cambodge
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ELCs	Economic Land Concessions
EU	European Union
FANK	Khmer National Armed Forces (French: Forces Armées Nationales Khmères)
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for a Neutral, Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
FUNK	National United Front of Kampuchea
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMAC	Garment Manufacturing Association of Cambodia
GRUNK	Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HRP	Human Rights Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KNP	Khmer Nation Party
KNUFNS	Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
MFA	Multi-Fiber Arrangement
MFAPRC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China
MFN	Most Favored Nation
NEC	National Election Committee
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLF	National Liberation Front
NPC	National People Congress
NUF	National United Front
OCIC	Overseas Cambodia Investment Company
ODA	Official Development
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development

PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PM	Prime Minister
PoP	Persons of Concern
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
RCG	Royal Cambodian Government
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SMFD	Student Movement for Democracy
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party
SNC	Supreme National Council
SOC	State of Cambodia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organisation

MAP OF SOUTHEAST ASIA



Source: *Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, Asia Maps*, The University of Texas At Austin,
 URL: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/asia.html>.

PREFACE

Today, Cambodia-China relations have reached the highest plane in their history since independence and still there seems to have not any considerable indication of future deterioration. Bilateral relations between the two countries have been increasingly tightened. The countries signed the treaty of Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation in 2006 and upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in 2010. Economically, China is Cambodia's largest source of foreign direction investment, increasing trading partner and top foreign aid donor. Cultural significance of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese has also helped and contributed to this close relationship between Cambodia and China in the twenty-first century, and Chinese cultural values have increasingly dominated Cambodian society.

Amidst this development, therefore, some of the pressing questions arise: What were the important factors, which motivated China's appreciation for Cambodia in the post-1991 period? What are the mutual interests of political, economic and strategic cooperation between Cambodia and China? How would the ethnic Chinese in Cambodia contribute to this cooperation? To what extent would China's economic involvement in Cambodia contribute to socio-economic development in Cambodia and how would it affect the democratic development in Cambodia? How far does China influence Cambodia's foreign policy in regional politics? Is Cambodia free to implement its foreign policy as far as China's interests are concerned, given that China's massive aid flooding to Cambodia without pre-condition? Finally, what are the impacts of the close bilateral relations on China's regional policy and Cambodia's domestic politics? This study is a humble attempt to find answers to these questions.

The study is divided into six chapters. The Chapter I, *Introduction and Historical Background*, has addressed the background issue of the study and review relevant literatures. Keeping theoretical views of balancing, hedging and bandwagoning strategies in mind, it would also trace issues in, and explain the genesis of Cambodia-China relations since independence throughout various regimes under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Lon Nol, Pol Pot, and Hun Sen/Heng Samrin.

Chapter II, *Cambodia-China Political Cooperation*, has focused on the political development between Cambodia and China in the post-Cold War period. The chapter analyses extensively how Cambodia and China could let bygones be bygones, and develop a relationship from the past hostility and suspicious to the "most trusted

friends.” The Chapter has also elucidated how Cambodia articulates Chinese interests in regional politics and examined the impact of Cambodia’s economic and political dependency on China on its foreign policy decision-making and autonomy.

Chapter III, *Cambodia-China Economic Cooperation*, has discussed economic cooperation between Cambodia and China in terms of investment, trade and foreign aid. The advantage and disadvantage of Chinese aid and investment in Cambodia has been examined. By this way, the chapter deals with China’s role in socio-economic development in Cambodia.

Chapter IV, *Cambodia-China Strategic Cooperation*, has mainly focused on strategic and security cooperation between Cambodia and China. The chapter has also examined how this cooperation helped China to pursue its strategic interests in the region.

Chapter V, *Cambodia-Chinese Cultural Cooperation*, would examine Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese cultural revival and their influence in Cambodian society, and also discuss how the Chinese community could make Cambodia-China bilateral relations possible and cosy.

Chapter VI, *Conclusion*, is the final chapter, and thus, overall concluding observations.

The study is a combination of both descriptive and analytical methods. The study has adopted deductive method from general premises in order to establish the conclusion. In this sense, the study aims to answer the questions (what and when) in describing the nature of the relationship and also explain (why) this relationship is progressing to such a highest plane at the present time.

Moreover, the methods have adopted the application of theoretical perspective derived from strategic variations of balancing, hedging and bandwagoning. The theoretical perspective would be applied throughout discussion of the four important dimensions of bilateral relations between Cambodia and China, namely, political, economic, security and cultural. Accordingly, the methods of data collection would rely on primary and secondary sources extracting from reports, agreements, declarations, books, articles, newspaper clippings and electronic websites.

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This study would not have been possible without grand financial support from Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India. I would like to extend my deep gratitude and thanks to ICCR for providing me this invaluable scholarship.

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Finally, the responsibility for any shortcomings in this dissertation is solely mine.

New Delhi

Khath Bunthorn

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

After the end of Cold War and the conclusion of the 1991 Paris Peace Accord on comprehensive resolution of Cambodian conflict, China did not wait long to return to Cambodia. Several Chinese senior officials visited Cambodia. In the meantime, Chinese army engineer team joined the UN peacekeeping force in Cambodia and consequently terminated support for its former ally, the Khmer Rouge. During the first half of the 1990s, bureaucratic structures were put in place for the resumption of full-scale relations. But both Cambodia and China had remained “suspicious” towards each other due to the former’s dependency on Vietnam and the latter’s support for the Khmer Rouge forces that still fought against the coalition government. Nevertheless, it was the post-July 1997 coup by Hun Sen against his co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, and his Royalist FUNCINPEC party that finally paved the way for China’s full-scale return and marked a significant turning point in Cambodia-China relations. While the West condemned the bloody coup, China voiced that was merely an internal affair of Cambodia, and must be resolved by the Cambodians independently from external interference. Encouraged by China’s charming response, Hun Sen’s enthusiasm for close relations with China began to take shape. Gradually, the state-to-state relations as well as party-to-party formal relations improved significantly. China’s political support and unconditional aid came very much in time of need when Hun Sen’s government was under the Western sanctions. Consequently, multi-faceted cooperation between Cambodia and China had begun to progress and ultimately, China has re-emerged as a major player in Cambodia and gained political leverage.

Politically speaking, Cambodia is the oldest and closest friend of China. Economically, China is Cambodia’s major aid donor, top foreign direct investor, and increasing bilateral trade partner. Culturally, the Chinese cultural values are emboldened deeply in Cambodian society and the Chinese community has played a

crucial role in facilitating political and economic cooperation between the Cambodia and China. Amidst such increasing bilateral ties, heated questions, therefore, rise among scholars, analysts and observers of Southeast Asian and Cambodian affairs about China's strategic interest, political and economic influence, and cultural domination in Cambodia. Many view China's increasing influence in Cambodia as a threat because Cambodia appears to act on behalf of China's interests in the region. Some also criticize the Chinese aid, though excitingly welcomed by the government to have 'no strings attached', and large-scale investment (Burgos and Ear 2010; Pheakdey 2012; Ear 2013). They observe that the Chinese aid worsened corruption, weakened governance and harmed human rights, and the investment destructed Cambodia's natural resources and environment. However, some proponents argue that China's aid and investment contribute to Cambodia's sustained economic growth. Nevertheless, the constant economic growth seems to benefit the ruling elite and create economic inequality. On the other hand, China's political and economic support has provided Cambodian leaders legitimacy to rule the country and balancing weight in resisting Western pressure for good governance and democratic reforms. It is, therefore, relevant in this study to assess China's role in socio-economic development in Cambodia, to examine Cambodia's support for China's growing presence in the region and to evaluate the Cambodian national interests which can be extracted from its close relationship with China. Most importantly, this study has sought to examine the extent to which China has influenced Cambodia and find out to what extent it reduces Cambodia's independence and autonomy in compromising the Chinese interest.

However, it is crucial to review some pertaining literature in Cambodia-China relations. The first is *Theoretical Debates on Nature of Cambodia-China Relations*. Available literature provides different views on nature of China's relations with Southeast Asian countries individually and collectively by implying the concept of *balancing*, *hedging* and *bandwagoning*. From these broad views, one can deductively explain and understand the bilateral relations between Cambodia and China. Similarly, Southeast Asian countries response to China's rising power differently. If major powers have the option of pursuing a balance of power strategy in their responses to the rise of China, this may not be the case with smaller countries like Cambodia. Cambodia for several reasons seeks to engagement with China. Kang (2003) argues that "contrary to the expectations of standard formulations of realism,

and although US power confounds the issues, Asian states do not appear to be balancing against rising powers such as China. Rather they seem to be bandwagoning”.

Cambodia’s relationship with China reveals some sense of balancing factor in reducing, if not against, Vietnam’s influence and resisting the US pressure. As Osborne (2006) demonstrates, “Occasionally there is a sense to be gained from public statements that Cambodia is concerned to maintain a degree of balance in its relations with China and Vietnam.” In this sense, it can be said that Hun Sen with his authoritarian leadership “aims at balancing US, Vietnamese and Chinese interests for Cambodia’s benefit” (Strangio 2012a). Nevertheless, like other Southeast Asian countries, Cambodia does not want to be put in a position of having to choose between China and the United States. Its close engagement with China is mainly motivated initially by national reconciliation and reconstruction, and later on by economic interest and political legitimacy of Cambodian leaders who lack it in international and domestic scene.

For its part, since the end of Cold War, China has been striving to normalise its relations with neighbouring countries through “Good Neighbourliness” policy. Located in the southwestern of China, Cambodia is often described as China’s soft underbelly that falls well within its “Good Neighbourliness” policy. Economically, China has adopted “Go Out” policy by which it encourages Chinese investors to invest abroad especially the developing countries like Cambodia.

However, Cambodia-China relations in the post Cold War, which could be seen developing from mutual suspicion to China’s great influence on Cambodia, are connected to traditional friendship furnished during the 1950s and 1960s. It is, therefore, important to review some of genuine researches on those days where the present leaders of the two countries often emphasise on and consider being the starting point and commencement of the today-close relationship. In ‘General Overview of Cambodia’s Foreign Policy,’ works of three prominent scholars deserve great attention in this study. They are Prof. Roger M. Smith, Prof. Michael Leifer and Prof. P. C. Pradhan.

Roger M. Smith, an Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of Michigan, conducted the foremost study on *Cambodia’s Foreign Policy* back in 1965. One of the specific reasons that Cambodia is worth of study is that, as he maintained, “of all the nonaligned Southeast Asian nations she (Cambodia) appears to

have dealt most effectively with internal opposition to the government”, unlike the neighbouring countries, Laos and Vietnam were politically and territorially divided after 1954 Geneva Accord (Smith 1965) thanks to Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s political consolidation through his *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* (Popular Socialist Community) and *Samach Cheat* (People’s National Congress).

For this advantageous situation Cambodia was circumstantiated to formulate its foreign policy suitable to the local and regional context. Smith attempted to investigate the major considerations, which had led Cambodia to follow a policy of nonalignment in the bipolar world. His pioneer study provided detailed information on Cambodia’s struggle for independence, Cambodia’s relations with major powers (including China) and its immediate neighbours. Nevertheless, the study is based mainly on historical approach.

Equally important, Michael Leifer, a well-known expert of Southeast Asian and in particular Cambodian affairs, presented a remarkable trend in Sihanouk’s foreign policy towards China in the early 1960s. Leifer (1964) observed that by 1963 *Cambodia looks to China* for patron as to protect its security, survival and independence from the traditional expansionist neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam. The threats from the neighbours were not unreal given their regular violations of Cambodian borders and political and material support for anti-Sihanouk elements. Prince Sihanouk played off balancing tactic between the Communists and the United States by not taking either side—neutrality. However, he was convinced that the forthcoming balance of power in the area would reflect the superior position of the Communists and, in particular, the suzerain role of the Chinese People’s Republic. Later on, Leifer (1967) in his genuine book *Cambodia: The Search for Peace* suggested that Cambodia’s policy could be successful only if both sides in the Cold War respected its independence, “either in their own interest or through fear of provoking each other.” Since Communist China was certain to be the dominate power in the region, as Prince Sihanouk predicted, Cambodia had to court the good will of Peking in the hope that it would restrain Phnom Penh’s hostile neighbours.

Another important research on Cambodia’s foreign policy is credited to P. C. Pradhan. His book *Foreign Policy of Kampuchea* (1985) provides substantial accounts on the origin, development and implications of Cambodia’s foreign relations under leadership of Prince Sihanouk, Lon Nol, Pol Pot, and Heng Samrin respectively. It covers a significant historical background of Cambodia’s foreign

policy formulations and applications during the Cold War periods. He made great effort on how Prince Sihanouk consolidated his power and won over his political dissidents—the Rightists who favoured the capitalist world.

The three mentioned literatures are crucial and useful for this study as they provide extensively historical information about Cambodia's foreign policy genesis, development and implications. However, most important is to further look into '*Cambodia in China's Southeast Asian Policy*' theme, which would provide insight into the present relations between the two states, identification of changes and continuities since the post-Cold War days.

With the end of Cold War, international scholars paid less attention on Cambodian affairs especially on Cambodian-China relations, though during the Cambodian conflict (1979–1991) they published timely articles on great power involvement in this regional conflict. One of the reasons was the U.S had shifted its interest particularly from Indochina and generally Southeast Asia after being defeated in Vietnam War. In the early 1990s when Cambodia and China began to normalise their relations, yet specific literature on Cambodia-China relations had remained less or limited. Perhaps, it was until 2000 that there was an article entitle *China's Cambodia Strategy* written by US Army Major Paul Marks, which is recited mostly by authors, analysts and observers subsequently.

In his groundbreaking article, Marks (2000) discusses the application and coordination of China's four national powers (diplomatic, economic, military, and informational) as the instruments to achieve national security policy. He argues that China applies all four instruments of national power to enhance its ties with Cambodia with the intention to establish "regional alliances to counter US influence and to ensure China's security in Southeast Asia." Regionally, China aims at maintaining a divided ASEAN, so that it can prevent an anti-China security consensus from developing; one of the examples was witnessed during Cambodia's chair of ASEAN summits in Phnom Penh in 2012 where ASEAN unity and centrality had been questioned. Marks believes that, "China is pursuing relationship with Burma, Cambodia, and Indonesia with this possible objective."

Interestingly, Nayan Chanda, director of publications at the Yale Center for Study of Globalisation and the author of *Brother Enemy: The war after the war* (1986), looks into the pattern of the contemporary China-Cambodia relations in 'the mirror of history.' He argues that during Ming Dynasty, China had "wary eye to the

north, benign gaze to the south” (Chanda 2002). The first generation of Chinese leaders like Zhou Enlai had adopted similar policy, which has been upgraded and modernised according to circumstance, yet without changing its core objectives—keeping its southern flank in check. Traditionally, the warlike neighbours had threatened imperial China from the north. In the modern time, the threat was replaced by the Soviet Union. Chanda demonstrates that in the post-Cold War era and the demise of the Soviet Union, “a relatively unencumbered China has been paying much greater attention to Southeast Asia, and to Cambodia in particular”. In the meantime, Cambodia-China relations have been characterized by high-level leadership interactions, Chinese aid assistance in Cambodia, mutual political support, and the reemergence of the ethnic Chinese population in Cambodia. The return of Chinese influence in Cambodia, as Chanda argues, is a reminder of China’s centuries-old interest in keeping its southern neighbours in check and the region free of influence from another challenging power.

Similarly, Burgos and Ear (2010) in their article *China’s Strategic Interests in Cambodia: Influence and Resources*, argue that China’s Cambodia strategic interests “are part of a wider strategic agenda in Southeast Asia that is a natural outgrowth of Beijing’s 1955 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”. There are two main objectives of China’s current foreign policy towards Cambodia namely *influence* and *resource*. “To China, exerting greater influence in the region and securing abundant natural resources are two of the most salient motivations to nurture a reciprocal relationship with Cambodia”, they argue. However, many scholars (Burgos and Ear 2010; Marks 2000; Richardson 2010) demonstrate that Cambodia and China gain mutual benefit in their bilateral relations. Economically, Cambodia’s benefits from being among China’s most favoured nations are quite clear. Moreover, Cambodia receives Chinese investments and economic and military aid, both in kind and money, with “no strings attached.” China, on the other hand, benefits from investments in Cambodia and access to Cambodia’s natural resources, energy reserves, arable land and agricultural products (sometimes cause detrimental to the locals), and obtain huge land concession development projects (which are often related to people forced evictions). Strategically, China’s economic support and diplomatic maturity can be conducive to security and stability in Cambodia, and by fostering bilateral cooperation and strengthening the Cambodian economy, in exchange Beijing gets to leverage its influence to mediate regional conflicts (Burgos and Ear 2010).

Cambodia and China have based their relations, as Richardson (2010: 9) argues, on the Five Principles (peaceful co-existence, mutual respect of territory and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in the affairs of others, and mutual equality and benefit), which provide “an alternative to a world of bipolarity, military alliances and dependent development” formulated and advocated by the political realists. Consistently, China’s foreign relations have been based on these Five Principles. Furthermore, there are two consistencies in China’s foreign policy towards Cambodia; first, China would support any Cambodian government it deemed legitimate at a given moment regardless of its political fortunes, affiliations, or ideology, and second, China’s support for legitimate Cambodian governments and leaders was unconditional, and China did not interfere with the internal affairs of Cambodia (Richardson 2010). Nevertheless, these two consistencies seem questionable when China did not recognise the US-friendly Lon Nol government in 1970–75, when its interests were not met. On the other hand, China did benefit from Sihanouk’s neutrality during its tough and isolated times. In the 1950s Sihanouk wrote, “We know perfectly that the “Reds” applaud our neutrality only because it serves their interests” (Smith 1965: 111). Regarding China’s aid motivation, Richardson (2010) assures that China provides generous support to its former enemy (Hun Sen) without condition derives from the Five Principles and has little to do with self-interest. But one Chinese scholar, as noted by Paul Marks, has said that “An immense gap exists between the declaratory principles of friendship, equality, mutual benefit, and noninterference that supposedly guide Chinese diplomacy, and the actual conduct of China’s foreign policy, which characterised by an exceptionally high dose of realism and a lack of openness” (Yahuda 1999: 268; Marks 2000). China has found a good bedfellow in Cambodia, both sharing the common values of “an exceptionally high dose of realism and lack of openness.”

In this connection, it is relevant to further review ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation’ between the two nations into four important dimensions of their relationship which are the main unites of analysis of this present study, namely, *political, economic, strategic and cultural*.

China, as one of the architects of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, which ended decades of Cambodian civil war and eased off Cold War regional rivalry, carefully followed the implement of peace process in Cambodia. Throughout the transitional period, from November 1991 to December 1993, China tried to maintain

its relations with all competing political groups, one of which was China's close ally, the Khmer Rouge who refused to participate in the 1993 UN-sponsored elections. Muni (2002) has described it, among other things, as China's 'policy dilemma', and 'the main reason behind this dilemma was that China wanted to keep its strong stakes in the Cambodian political structure without eroding its links and influence with competing factions.' At this stage, Cambodia-China political relations mainly focused on Cambodian reconciliation and reconstruction. To this end, China had to distance itself from outlawed Khmer Rouge necessarily in re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cambodian coalition government in the post 1993 elections.

In the mid-1990s, China reconsidered its relations with Royalist FUNCINPEC and Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP). However, FUNCINPEC's aggressive courting of Taiwanese investors and a sober reassessment of Cambodia's political future were the reasons for which Beijing shifted its political support from Ranariddh to the former Khmer Rouge official, Hun Sen (Storey 2011; Jeldres 2012). This was evident by Hun Sen's visit to Beijing in July 1996, where his Cambodian People Party and the Chinese Communist Party established their formal ties. China perceived Hun Sen as the dominant political force in Cambodian politics in the long run and the latter proved so after the July 1997 coup, and thereafter he was depicted as Cambodia's 'Mr. Strongman'. Many observers viewed the post-coup as the turning point in Cambodia-China relations. The coup and another consideration of the 1997-98 events that there was a possibility of the US taking sides with anti-Hun Sen forces and even intervening on their behalf in Cambodian politics, brought China closer to Hun Sen (Muni 2002).

While the international community condemned the coup and isolated Cambodia, China recognized the new government in the meetings with Hun Sen in Beijing in 1999 and provided both political and financial support to Cambodia. The meetings also opened the door for exchange of frequent high-level visits. The visit by President and Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin in November 2000, the first visit by a Chinese head of state since Liu Shaoqi's visit in the 1960s, was the cornerstone in Cambodia-China relations (Chanda 2002). Cambodia's obligations in the diplomatic exchange were to support for China's "One China Policy" (Marks 2000), a painless requirement of the Chinese. It has been the fact that Cambodia is strictly committed and adhered to the "One China Policy". Evidently, Hun Sen closed the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Phnom Penh on July 23,

1997. Subsequently, Cambodia backed China on nearly every core diplomatic and political issues such as Taiwan issue and Tibet issues, UNHCR refugee's Falun Gong practitioners, deportation of 20 ethnic Uighur asylum seekers to China, Khmer Rouge tribunal, South China Sea disputes and other important issues. In return, China has played an active role in mobilising international support in favour of Cambodia when issues of human rights, labour and humanitarian crimes were brought against it in the UN (Muni 2002). Such a pattern of Cambodia-China political relations leads some analysts and observers to depict Cambodia as a Chinese 'client state' (Ciorciari 2013) where China's influence has deeply penetrated.

From the mid-1990s, Cambodia-China economic cooperation had been established and enhanced sharply. By 2002, China had emerged as the biggest single aid donor after Japan, and by 2009, it had become the first. From 1997 to 2012, China has offered over US\$10 billion in loans and grants to Cambodia—the aid often praised by Cambodian government to have “no strings attached.” There were over 130 China-funded companies in Cambodia with a total investment of US\$180 million. The Chinese investment in Cambodia tripled from 1997 to 1998, and went up another 40% in 1999, making China Cambodia's first or second largest source of foreign investment. China invested a total of US\$9.17 billion between 1994 and 2012. China undeniably plays a crucial role in Cambodia's economic development. According to a Chinese Aid White Paper in 2011, China says it is providing foreign aid to “help recipient countries to strengthen their self-development capacity, enrich and improve their peoples' livelihood, and promote their economic growth and social progress.”

However, there are controversial views among scholars on questions of Cambodia-China economic relations. China's “unconditional” aid and influx of large-scale investment are in some ways weaning Cambodia off its dependence on the West, but experts warn that too much reliance on any single country is unhealthy for Cambodia (Pheakdey 2012; Jeldres 2012). Beijing economic clout has brought the country considerable political leverage in Cambodia (Strangoi 2012b). In this sense, Cambodia's independence and autonomy in decision-making would be undermined. Despite of the fact that close political relations opened the door to increased Chinese economic interaction with Cambodia—on the one hand his has helped fuel economic growth—but on the other hand has negative implications for the country's already poor record of governance (Storey 2011). Similarly, Kurlantzick (2006a: 5) argues “In the worst possible case, China's success in delivering strong economic growth

could serve as an example to some of the more authoritarian-minded leaders in the region, like Cambodia's Hun Sen, who admires China's economic and political system." For China, any nation-state that actively furthers the Chinese regional strategic agenda is welcomed as a friend, regardless of who is at the helm (Burgos and Ear 2010).

China's relationship with the ASEAN countries in the framework of Good Neighbourliness incorporates its concerns of securing its southwestern flank (Muni 2002). Cambodia occupies an important strategic location in this regard. According to Marks (2000) "Situated in the center of mainland Southeast Asia, the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville would prove an excellent base for projecting maritime power into the Gulf of Thailand and the Straits of Malacca". Such a critical geostrategic position has attracted China to concentrate on Cambodia since 1955 in its national security policy.

The post-1997 coup marked the increased security cooperation between China and Cambodia. Immediately after the coup, China provided 186 trucks and jeeps and many military logistics to Cambodia. Subsequently, the opportunity for advancing defence cooperation was provided by during Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Cambodia in November 2000. President Jiang Zemin had reportedly offered a package of US\$1.57 million in defence assistance to Cambodia during this visit. Accordingly, China provided support for the armed force included financial aid for demobilisation, construction materials for military barracks, schools and hospitals, the refurbishment of the Khmer Rouge-era Kampong Chhnang airfield, and development of Cambodia's naval capability. Cambodian military officers have also undertaken educational and training courses in China. Cambodia and China also agreed to strengthen military exchanges and increase cooperation in the fight against non-traditional security threats as party of April 2006 Comprehensive Partnership for Cooperation. In 2009, the United States suspended a military aid programme that included 200 vehicles in the wake of the deportation of Uighurs, and a year later China delivered 250 military trucks to Cambodia. Today, China is the largest military aid provider to Cambodia.

China's increasing aid and assistance in the field of defence cooperation with Cambodia can be interpreted in term of China's strategy in balancing Vietnam's influence on Cambodia, particularly because Cambodia's recent past was under Vietnam's military occupation (Muni 2002). It is not until Cambodia and Thailand

exchanged gunfire at the border near disputed Preah Vihear temple in 2008-2011, Cambodia is threatened by the neighbouring Thailand and hence developed some degree of balancing.

The ethnic Chinese in Cambodia and the Chinese cultural influence in Cambodian society are the important factors in shaping Cambodia-China relations. Today, Cambodians of Chinese ethnicity represent roughly 2.5% of Cambodia's 14.8 million population. The Chinese cultural values are visible easily in the Phnom Penh capital and every provincial town in Cambodia and seemingly there is no any resistance from Cambodian people.

According to Marks (2000) China's support for the cultural revival of Cambodia's Chinese community has focused primarily on the promotion of the Chinese language. The growth of Chinese-language education and the revival of the Chinese community expanded dramatically in 1998 and 1999, in no small part due to assistance and encouragement from China. The popularisation of the Chinese language in Cambodia far exceeds that in any other Southeast Asian country. The Chinese community serve significantly as the investment channel between China and Cambodia. Moreover, Cambodia's economic sectors are controlled largely by the ethnic Chinese. It can be said that the growing ethnic Chinese community in Cambodia constitute a symbol of the growing economic dependence of Cambodia on China. The growth of the Chinese community and its growing economic and political clout is a considerable asset to China's policy in this region and it is not possible for China to change its approach of cultivating ethnic Chinese (Muni 2002). Therefore, the Chinese community could serve as a significant instrument in Beijing's foreign policy objectives.

Available literature on Cambodia's relationship with China from 1991 to 2012 is to a great extent Sino-centric in nature. Available literature looks at the relations from Chinese perspective while the Cambodian perspective on China has been to a greater extent under examined. This study attempts to look at the relationship from Cambodian perspective. On the other hand, the existing literature on China's relations with Southeast Asian countries focuses on the region as a whole where each state maintains its relations with China differently. The different perceptions, thus, make it difficult to generalise "China-Southeast Asian relations." For instance, Amitav (2003) observes that Southeast Asian states attempt to balance against China, but obviously it is not the case with Cambodia. In this sense, the specific study of Cambodia-China

bilateral relations would contribute to a wider understanding of available literature on China's Southeast Asian policy.

Meaning of Cambodia and China relations changes over times. The relations are complicated but flexible and steadfast according to different political leadership and the changes in global and regional politics. Yet, in the post-Cold War era, Cambodia and China have developed a stronger relationship and agreed to advance it further. Till date, the Chinese leaders stress that, "China and Cambodia are good neighbors, friends, partners and brothers," whereas the Cambodian leaders depict China as Cambodia's "most trusted friend." The meaningful relations would rely on how Cambodia should manage its relations with China without having to lose its diplomatic independence and to achieve national interests.

It is imperative to limit the scope of the study of the relationship between Cambodia and China due to time constrains and level of course. Hence, the year 1991, i.e. the post-Cold War period and the post Cambodian conflict, would be considered as the focal point when the Sino-Cambodia relations were reestablished after the decades of hostility and limit the study upto 2012, significantly, when Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao paid separate state visits to Cambodia to speed up implementation of Cambodia-China comprehensive strategic partnership followed by a promise of additional aid. More importantly, in the same year, Cambodia assumed the rotating chairmanship of ASEAN that has left the regional bloc less united on South China Sea disputes than at any point in its 45-year history. Within this timeframe, it would be able to explain the complexity, dynamics and flexibility in the small and big state relationship and the motivations by which China has gradually come back to the second Kingdom of Cambodia since the end of Cold War geopolitics and the Paris Peace Accord of 1991, and why Cambodia has warmly welcomed this strategic return of China, despite its past support for the Khmer Rouge.

Main objective in this study is to examine the importance and nature of Cambodia to China in its policy towards Southeast Asia and find out how Cambodia should manage to gain its national interests in the relationship with the rising China in global and regional affairs. This study attempts to test the following statements: Firstly, China's economic and strategic objectives in Southeast Asia are central to this comeback to Phnom Penh. Secondly, Cambodia's need for economic development and political legitimacy fosters its warm welcome to the Chinese "full scale" return.

Finally, China's economic involvement in Cambodia contributes to Cambodia's socio-economic development, but weakens its democratic process.

Next section of this chapter traces the genesis, and examines various issues of Cambodia-China relations from Sangkum Reastr Niyum, Khmer Republic, Democratic Kampuchea, People's Republic of Kampuchea, until pre-UNTAC administration.

Historical Background

Throughout successive governments since independence, Cambodian leaders had different reasons and motivations in their relations with China. Prince Norodom Sihanouk used China as a protector against traditional threats from the neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam, though China did not officially promised to act in Cambodia's behalf, and Pol Pot employed it for ideological reasons, as a counterweight to Vietnam and to bring about revolutionary changes in Cambodia. China substantially provided non-military and military aids, and sent thousands of assistant personnel to Pol Pot's DK. Exceptionally, in between Prince Sihanouk and Pol Pot, Cambodia's Lon Nol broke off the diplomatic relations with China and adopted a pro-US policy.

During the cold war, China perceived Cambodia's neutrality and independence from the West as in its best interests. Thus, to maintain its interests in Indochina and beyond, China extended considerable political capital and material support on two Cambodian strongmen, the capricious Prince Sihanouk and the tyrannical Pol Pot, so as to limit both US and Vietnamese influence. However, China achieved a mixed success in its Indochinese policy. After the fall of DK, China extended its support to the Khmer Rouge guerrilla and non-communist resistance against the Vietnamese and against the Vietnamese-installed regime in Phnom Penh resulted in a political stalemate and civil war for over a decade. This chapter will review the political development between Cambodia and China in their dynamic, complexity and flexible relationship from the independence to the Paris Peace conference, as a result of which the United Nations authority had been obligated to supervise a political transition in Cambodia from civil war to democracy.

Cambodia-China under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, 1953-1970

Earliest relationship with Cambodia and China had been initiated by personal friendship Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Premier Zhou Enlai. With the support and encourage from Zhou Enlai, Prince Sihanouk had adopted foreign policy of neutrality in which he hoped Cambodia's security and independence could be preserved amidst power rivalry in the region. With the threat perception from the Communists, Prince Sihanouk looked to China for a protector. However, by the late 1960s, Prince Sihanouk was suspicious China's sincerity and commitment in safeguarding Cambodia's territorial sovereignty from the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong

infiltrations. The relations between the two then got deteriorated. The Prince had to deal with the Communist Vietnamese directly.

Prince Sihanouk's Neutrality

On November 9, 1953, Cambodia attained its independence from France, and was fully ratified by 1954 Geneva Accord on independence of Indochinese states. Unlike the neighbouring countries, Laos and Vietnam that were territorially and politically divided after Geneva Accord, Cambodia “appears to have dealt most effectively with internal opposition to the government” (Smith 1965). Prince Norodom Sihanouk who led a successful Royal Crusade for independence had been honoured as a “Father of National Independence or *Samdech Preah Beyda Ekareach Cheat.*” He abdicated the throne in March 1955 in favour of his father, King Norodom, and became Head of State. This action gave him ‘a free hand to engage in politics’ (Ross 1990). To consolidate his political power, Prince Sihanouk formed *Sangkum Reastr Niyum*¹ as his political base to fight in the September 1955 parliamentary election, in which he won an overwhelming victory—83% of vote, and all the seats in the National Assembly. This provided him a golden opportunity to conduct foreign policy without much inference from internal politics, at least in early stage.

The post independent Cambodia was preoccupied much with the external and internal affairs in safeguarding its territorial integrity and national independence. Leifer (1967: 172) defined Cambodia’s foreign policy as “a process of sensitive response to those aspects of political change that bear on the security of the Khmer state.” Practically, there were three security challenges that Cambodia had to face: (i) Safeguarding the country’s sovereignty from the ‘traditional annexationist ambitions’ of neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam; (ii) limiting the political activities of the Communist Khmer Vietminh, linked to the North Vietnam; and (iii) insulating Cambodia from the Cold War rivalry among China, the United States, and the Soviet Union in Indochina’ (Storey 2011: 176). To achieve these envisaged security strategy, Prince Sihanouk adopted ‘neutrality’ policy in his international relations maneuver. The key elements of Cambodia’s foreign policy were ‘as much as the result of circumstance as of history’ (Gurtov 1971), and its geographical location.

¹ ‘Popular Socialist Community’ or known simply as the *Sangkum*, was a political organisation which included any political group, and was designed to democratise the country and to exert political control under the Prince Sihanouk’s auspices.

Geographically, Cambodia position shared border with its historical antagonist neighbours—Thailand to the west and north, Lao to the north and Vietnam to the east. Even though the colonial French presence effectively safeguarded Cambodia's territorial integrity and survival, the post independent Cambodia had the ironic experience of being politically free yet territorially threatened. On the one hand, Thailand had revisionist aspirations to the bordering provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap, which had been resorted to Cambodia in 1946. And on the other hand, the expanded Vietnam War between the US-backed South Vietnam and the Soviet-backed North Vietnam and uncertainty of Communist intentions posted even more fragile security threats to Cambodia. According to Leifer (1967), "An independent South Vietnam would be an uneasy neighbor. A reunified Vietnam controlled from Hanoi would mean the reappearance of traditional Vietnamese-Cambodian enmity in vigorous and dynamic form." In 1968, in his frankness, Prince Sihanouk said that, "A reunified and Communist Vietnam—as the case is most likely to be—will be a very heavy weight on us" (*The New York Times* 1968).

Even more insecure for Cambodia, is that, its traditional antagonist Thailand and South Vietnam were close allies of the powerful United States. Strategically, North Vietnam was aligned with the Soviet Union, and was bordering with the People's Republic of China. Hence, China felt threats from this alignment of the two Communist states carrying out the strategy of encirclement. Prince Sihanouk saw it as an advantageous situation for maintenance of Cambodia's security by exploiting this Cold War antagonism. He quickly sought to use 'the opposing power to establish a political equilibrium that would safeguard Cambodia's territorial and national integrity' (Leifer 1967). He, therefore, adopted foreign policy of 'neutrality', meaning that Cambodia would 'abstain from all military or ideological alliances' and would 'not commit aggression against other countries, but the event of foreign military invasion, would reserve the right to (a) defend herself with arms (b) request aid from the United Nations, and (c) appeal to a friendly power' (Smith 1965). The policy of neutrality was a dictate of geopolitical, historical and circumstantial necessity. In rationale of his neutral policy, Sihanouk wrote:

Our neutrality has been imposed on us by necessity. A glance at a map of our part of the world will show that we are wedged in between two medium-sized nations of the Western bloc and only thinly screened by Laos from the scrutiny of two countries of the Eastern bloc, North Viet

Nam and the vast People's Republic of China. What choice have we but to try to maintain an equal balance between the "blocs"? (Sihanouk 1958: 583).

Practically, neutrality involved playing off the competing interests to Cambodia's advantage. Sihanouk viewed friendly relations with China as a counter to any predatory ambitions of Thailand and South Vietnam. At the same time, he felt that a symbolic United States presence together with economic assistance would help to maintain internal security and preserve a certain freedom of maneuver in dealing with Communist countries. Tie with Peking, he hoped, would also encourage restraint on the part of the North Vietnamese Government and the Cambodian left wing. In the same way, he expected that the United States would keep its allies in order. In this scenario, Cambodia's policy could be successful only if both sides in the Cold War respected its independence, 'either in their own interest or through fear of provoking each other' (Leifer 1967). Similarly, Gurtov (1971) assured that, "Sihanouk's style of neutralism depended upon his degree of confidence in other nations' willingness and ability to protect Cambodia from her traditional enemies, his fear of Communist intentions and hopes of China's readiness to intervene in Cambodia's behalf, and the over security situation in the Indochina region at any given time." It is fact that Cambodian national security had been threatened more from the Communists internally and externally and less from the Western bloc in the long future. But instead of aligning with the West, Prince Sihanouk used the Communist against Communist. However, he consistently believed that the United States would inevitably have to leave Asia and the Communists would win the war. The Communist camp would dominate Asia; hence, in Sihanouk's perception it would be risky to adopt hostile policy toward the Communist bloc while at the same it was uncertain that the West would be willing to safeguard Cambodia from the Communist threat. He wrote:

It would be absurd to suppose that a tiny country like mine, geographically situated as it is, would risk provoking the Chinese and Soviet colossi now that planes fly so fast and rockets so far.

We are not a "breach" in the Western bloc merely because we cannot be a "rampart." In the even of a world conflict, we might very well become one of the first victims of a harsh occupation. In that case, the "free world" would have other thing to do besides undertaking our

liberation or rather the liberation of what little remain of us (Sihanouk 1958: 585).

China as a patron of Cambodia

Until the early 1960s, Cambodia maintained a balance between East and West, though there was a conviction that the US approved of Thai and South Vietnamese activities against Cambodia and also the accusation that the Thai with American backing, had long harbored the former Khmer nationalist, Son Ngoc Thanh, and his band of rebel Khmer Serei (Free Khmer), which led to a somewhat tempestuous relationship with the United State. Owing to the changing position of the West, first in Lao and then in South Vietnam, Cambodia's foreign policy of neutrality reached a new aspect. Prince Sihanouk realized that the United States no longer acted as an effective countervailing force in Indochina. At the same time, he also believed that the only hope for political salvation was to accommodate with the PRC.

Prince Sihanouk was convinced that both Lao and Vietnam would be controlled by the regime in Hanoi. To secure his country's political future, he sought to align with Communist China on foreign policy issues, and slowly cut his ties with the United States (cancelled US aid in 1963 and severed diplomatic relations in 1965). In this scenario, Cambodia would be avoidable in being incorporated in the Indochinese Federation under the leadership of Communist Party of Vietnam.

Hence, by 1963 Cambodia looked to China for patronage as to protect its security, survival and independence from external threats. Since Communist China was believed to be the dominate power in the region after all, Cambodia had to court the good will of Peking in the hope that it would restrain Phnom Penh's hostile neighbours. Though it was not clear exactly what relationship was envisaged in the future, but it appeared that 'Cambodia would appeal more readily to Peking than a Cambodia incorporated into an Indochinese state with Titoist pretensions' (Leifer 1967). By adopting friendly policy towards China, or 'pro-Chinese neutrality,' Prince Sihanouk also expected to maneuver in direction to preserve his country's independence. Also, he believed that China would not interfere in Cambodian's internal affairs which as long as were not hostile to it. It is noteworthy that Prince Sihanouk had managed to maintain a clear order of priorities, and the security of the nation was his chief objective.

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with China

Indonesian town of Bandung was where the leaders of modern Cambodia and China met for the first time during a conference of Asian and African states, which took place on April 18–24, 1955. The spirit of the Bandung Conference brought Prince Sihanouk and Zhou Enlai closer with their common objectives in anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-neocolonialism. Cambodia-China relations at this stage was very much dependent upon personal friendship between Prince Sihanouk and Zhou Enlai. And it can be described as “honeymoon years” of Cambodia-China relationship.

In Bandung, the two leaders committed to abide by the ‘declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation,’ which included five principles of peaceful coexistence, and a collective pledge to remain neutral in the Cold War. Ten months later, in February 1956, Prince Sihanouk paid a state visit to China for the first time, soon after he repudiated the protection of the SEATO Treaty in Manila (Leifer 1995: 178) and declared his adherence to the policy of neutrality. In a joint communiqué, both countries recalled the traditional friendship and reaffirmed the famous five principles of peaceful coexistence as ‘the immutable rules guiding the relations between China and Cambodia’ (Join Statement 1956). Since then, Cambodia began to receive economic aid from China despite the fact that the two countries share neither common border nor a common ideology or culture. In this connection, Marsot (1969) maintained that, “China’s policy of economic aid to Cambodia involves a consideration of the political relations between the two countries.” Politically, China wanted Sihanouk to stay out of the US alliance system—the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

In November 1956, Zhou Enlai was invited to Cambodia to further cement relations. During the visit, Zhou Enlai impressed Sihanouk by his advice to the Chinese community in Cambodia to strictly “abide by the laws and decrees of the Kingdom of Cambodia, not take part in local political activity and take a practical part in the efforts made by Cambodia to promote its national prosperity and its people’s welfare” (Smith 1965: 105–106). A joint Cambodian-Chinese communiqué was issued calling for observance of the principles of peaceful coexistence to further strengthen relations at diplomatic level.

In July 1958, Cambodia and China agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations and to exchange ambassadors, and Cambodia extended *de jure* recognition

to the People's Republic of China. In the meantime, Prince Sihanouk established an enduring personal relationship with the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai—a special relationship between head of state of the Buddhist Kingdom and the Communist state. In August of the same year, Prince Sihanouk paid a second friendly visit to Peking. In a welcoming speech, Premier Zhou Enlai said that two happy events, the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cambodia and Prince Sihanouk's friendly visit, 'show that a new page is opened in the annals of traditional friendly relations between China and Cambodia' (*Peking Review* 1958). Amidst cheering audience, Prince Sihanouk declared that "Since we regained our national independence, relations between our two countries have improved and grown stronger so that today they can be said to be truly brotherly", added that "purest example of the virtues of peaceful co-existence among nations which have different regimes but are inspired by the same desire for peace and progress" (*ibid.*). Sihanouk also expressed his personal thanks for the Chinese 'unconditional' aid, and promised to support China's cause with respect to both Taiwan and the United Nations.

This move of closer relationship with China was motivated by the Prince's knowledge of the Vietnamese incursions of Cambodian border and the reported buildup of Thai armed strength along the frontier. Just after Zhou Enlai's visit, South Vietnam attempted to occupy certain of Cambodia offshore islands and asserted ownership of them (Smith 1965: 106-7).

The relationship was further strengthened when President of the PRC, Liu Shao-chi, visited Cambodia in December 1960, and signed the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression based on the Five Principles and the spirit of Bandung Conference. Pursuant to this treaty, Cambodia and China assured to 'undertake not to commit aggression against the other and not to take part in any military alliance directed against the other' (Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Cambodia 1960: Article 4).

In December 1963, Sihanouk announced the end of the American aid program, and after that the first Sino-Cambodian military aid agreement was signed. This was the triumph card of the Chinese and the North Vietnamese alike. In his assessment of these moves in Sihanouk's policy, Gurtov (1971) made it clear that:

These developments were motivated by a number of basic policy conclusions Sihanouk had arrived at over some time: that the Americans were bent on using their aid program to keep Sihanouk tied

to them, holding over him the threat of fomenting a rebellion against him; that the Chinese not only respected Cambodian territorial integrity, but would also use their influence in Hanoi to keep the Vietnamese Communists out of Cambodia; that the Americans were not firmly committed to stopping the Communist threat in Laos, were unwilling to interpose themselves in Cambodia's behalf by guaranteeing the country's neutrality, and were supporting a weak reed in Ngo Dinh Diem—whom they later had to cut down—against a powerful nationalist-Communist movement in South Vietnam. Uncertainty over and mistrust of American intentions on the Southeast Asia mainland thus combined with the hope that friendly relations with China would safeguard Cambodia against undesirable future contingencies in Sihanouk's policy of moving farther away from the United States and closer to Peking.

China's Interests in Cambodia

In several occasions, China assumed respects for Cambodian national integrity, independence and neutrality. The established personal relationship with Prince Sihanouk and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai enhanced political relations between the two countries to a higher plane. The Chinese, however, had in mind their political interests in their relations with Cambodia. China had provided significant economic and military aid to Cambodia in grants and loans, which in turn had raised China's prestige, giving her political significance in the rivalry between the two blocs (Marsot 1969: 198). China's aid also helped cement ties between the two countries. As a result, Cambodia had supported China's interests in almost every way.

During the Cold War, China's friendly and cooperative behaviour towards Cambodia was motivated primarily by its support for Communist movements in Indochinese states. Cambodia had a special position in China's foreign policy, which enabled the close relationship between the two countries to rise. Some important factors are: First, China had no common frontier with Cambodia and thus there was no border conflict. Second, the ethnic Chinese in Cambodia were well treated, though there were some restrictive economic measures against them. Moreover, the Chinese were well assimilated into Cambodian society without dispute with the Cambodians. Third, China's appreciation of Cambodia's policy of neutrality was to detach the latter from joining the Western camp led by the United States through SEATO. Fourth, geographically, Cambodia is located in the heart of Southeast Asia. Thus, China had seen Cambodia's neutrality as a useful example for the other countries to follow. And fifth, most importantly, Cambodia, one of the few non-communist

countries, could be used by China as a broker on international stage, which was then ready to act in such a capacity. Cambodia had supported firmly 'one-China policy' and spoken for China's interests on several issues such as Taiwan issue, Sino-Soviet dispute, and refusal to sign the treaty prohibiting nuclear test in Chinese favour.

For these reasons, Cambodia occupied a particular place in China's foreign policy during the Cold War. Significantly, it was Cambodia who broke the Chinese isolation in the 1960s by campaigning support for Chinese interests at the United Nations. Despite Cambodia and China enjoyed warm relationship, China followed twin foreign policy in which it appreciated Prince Sihanouk's neutral policy, and at the same time, backed anti-Sihanouk leftist elements (the Khmer Rouge).

Relationship Cool Off

Cambodia-China honeymoon continued until 1967 when two facets of Chinese foreign policy collided in Cambodia. First, the Khmer Communists insurgency broke out in Samlut, Battambang province in April 1967, was allegedly connected with the PRC embassy in Phnom Penh. At first, Prince Sihanouk suspected the North Vietnamese, but within a month he had decided that the Chinese the real force behind the Khmer Rouge. Second, the impact of Cultural Revolutions and the Red Guard activities, and the ethnic Chinese propaganda of Maoism led by the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh, was an open anti-Sihanouk leftism (Smith 1968: 75).

He dissolved all Sino-Khmer Associations in Cambodia and threatened to sever diplomatic relations with China. However, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai went to the extent of apologising to the Cambodian government, only then the complete breakdown could be saved (Marsot 1969:197). It is significant to note that while maintaining good relations with Cambodia, China secretly aided the Khmer Rouge's insurgent movement in the jungle of Cambodia. Before this episode ended in early September 1967, Sino-Cambodia relations reached the breaking point and Sihanouk sharply questioned the sincerity of China's professions of friendship (Gurtov 1971: 77). Added to this diplomatic cool off were the visits to Cambodia by prominent Western politicians like Americans (Marsot 1969: 1969).

Besides, the Prince also suspected the Chinese commitment and sincerity towards Cambodia's territorial integrity and sovereignty amidst the expansion of the Vietnamese Communists into eastern Cambodian borders. Prince Sihanouk had tried to secure formal assurance from the Chinese support for Cambodian independence,

yet failed to get satisfactory result. Prince Sihanouk, who became alarmed at the increased Vietcong activity, had taken steps to counter it in his own characteristic diplomacy. Ever since October 1964, he had sought to come to terms with North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) on a frontier agreement. The rationale for this effort was that it would be better to get something on paper before, rather than, the eventual Viet Cong victory. At this point, however, there was little to show for the negotiations that had taken place. The Vietnamese communists had, so far, been unwilling to offer more than verbal assurances (Leifer 1966). In the spring of 1965, Sihanouk made a pact with the China and North Vietnam to allow the presence of permanent North Vietnamese bases in eastern Cambodia and to allow military supplies from China to South Vietnam via Cambodian ports. In June 1967, after they had given declarations of recognition and respect for Cambodia's international boundaries, Sihanouk had established diplomatic relations with North Vietnam, and had bestowed full diplomatic status on the representation in Phnom Penh of the NLF of South Vietnam. In May 1969, Prince Sihanouk had recognised the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, and had raised the NLF representation to embassy level. Though later on the Vietnamese might forget it, Sihanouk (1979) stated in his memoir that, "In 1966–1967, Norodom Sihanouk obtained written statements from the governments of North Vietnam and the Republic of South Vietnam (Vietcong) expressing their official recognition and total acceptance of Kampuchea's present territorial boundaries, including the coastal islands off Kampot and Kep." In the meantime he had established diplomatic relations with the US as well following the US recognition of Cambodia's border.

The year 1969 was the dramatic year of Prince Sihanouk. Beside the economic crisis, which occurred since the termination of American aid in 1963, the Prince, through his political accommodation, had failed to prevent the North Vietnamese and NLF communist from infiltrations into Cambodian territory. In April 1969, soon after the US secret bombing had begun, Prince Sihanouk said that he would change policy towards Vietnam only when the Communists' pressure became too strong for Cambodia's own forces to resist. In that event, he threatened to hand over his power to Lon Nol is anti-communist and pro-US, He said "I will resign as chief of state, and turn the office over to Lon Nol"—that was what going to happen (Chandler 1991: 184). His words seemingly became true when before he left on a pro-longed trip to France ostensibly for medical reason, Prince Sihanouk appointed Lon Nol as prime

minister of the Salvation Government of Cambodia with Prince Sarik Matak as his duty premier. This, among other things, paved the way for Prince Sihanouk's removal as head of state.

Cambodia-China under Lon Nol, 1970-1975

Cambodia and China had reached a difficult stage when the close friend of China, Prince Sihanouk was removed as head of state by the Rightist group led by Lon Nol-Sarik Matak. Regardless what were the exact reasons behind the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk, China did not immediately sever its ties with Lon Nol's regime in favour of its principal ally, Prince Sihanouk. China's immediate priority appeared to have been to try to persuade Lon Nol to pursue Sihanouk's China policy, but failed to reach agreement with him. Then China announced formal recognition of Prince Sihanouk's exile government, right after US President Nixon's decision to widen Vietnam War into Cambodian territory. Then, Cambodia had been dragged into a wider regional war. With the American exit from Indochina, Cambodia fell into the hand the communist Khmer Rouge.

The Overthrow of Prince Sihanouk

On March 18, 1970, Prince Sihanouk was away on a trip from Moscow to Beijing, when the Cambodian National Assembly voted to remove him as head of state. Full power was vested in premier Lieut. Lon Nol and his deputy premier, Sisowath Sirik Matak. And on October 9, 1970, monarchy was abolished and Kingdom of Cambodia was redesignated as the 'Khmer Republic'. The crisis could briefly be viewed as "the logical consequence of accumulated grievances and unsolved developmental dilemmas generated over the course of Cambodia's political and economic evolution since 1954, although it might not have occurred when it did except for specific foreign interest in its executive" (Summers 1973: 252). Pradhan (1985: 143) presciently explained that, "the necessary ingredient was the presence on Cambodian soil of more than fifty thousand of Vietnamese Communists". In the words of Leifer (1970: 185), "The more fundamental cause of his removal was the desire of the ruling group within the Government of Cambodia to exercise power untrammelled by what they regarded as the suffocating omnipotence of the Head of State."

On March 17, 1970, the day before the coup, Prince Sihanouk travelled to France for one of his periodic rest cures in early January 1970, planning to return to

Cambodia via Moscow and Peking. But instead of travelling to France, he secretly went to Rome where he met Gen. Lon Nol and instructed him a secret plan. Prince Sihanouk told Gen. Lon Nol his plan: the general should return to Cambodia and organise anti-Vietnam demonstrations, which the Prince would use as a pretext to ask Moscow and Peking to persuade their protégés to withdraw from Khmer territory (Gurtov 1971: 138; Ponchaud 1977: 186; Martin 1994: 122). General Lon Nol returned from his overseas trip to Cambodia. And on March 8-9, 1970, spontaneous public demonstrations were reported from Svay Rieng province and again on March 11 the NLF and North Vietnamese embassies in Phnom Penh were sacked by mob demonstrators. From Paris, when the demonstrations turned violent, Prince Sihanouk accused his government of letting matters get out of hand. In his calculation, it was a ‘serious political error’ to directly attack the Communists. On March 13, he flew to Moscow. The Government tried to defend itself and offered to send two emissaries, one from the government, Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur and another from Queen Mother, Prince Norodom Kantol to Prince Sihanouk to explain. This proposal was flatly rejected. It is rumored that his wife Monique and General Ngo Hou heavily influenced his decision to refuse them (Martin 1994: 123). In the angry mood, the Prince threatened to shoot the entire cabinet. Then, at 1 p.m. on March 18, 1970, at the instigation of Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak—allegedly backed by the Americans—the National Assembly voted to remove Sihanouk as chief of state. It is not surprised that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) might have involved in the coup d’état preparation, and the US supported the new regime for it advanced their interests, but it seems clear that ‘the decision was a Khmer one and that it involved political factors as well as individual ambitions and antagonisms, so tenacious in rancor in Khmer hearts’ (ibid.: 122), given Sirik Matak’s awkward relationship with his cousin, Prince Sihanouk.

The United States was reluctant to what attitude to adopt in in Cambodian crisis. The fact that, Prince Sihanouk had moved much closer to the US during the last months of his reign and his departure upset the balance they had begun to establish in the Indochinese peninsula (Ponchaud 1977: 191). Such a move of Sihanouk was because the United States had recognised Cambodia’s frontiers (despite opposition to this from Saigon government), thus paving the way for a resumption of Cambodia-US diplomatic ties in June 1969 (Kahin 2003: 280). On March 19, the day after the coup d’état, US State Department announced US recognition of the new regime in

Cambodia. South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu declared his desired to “re-establish diplomatic relations” with Cambodia. Later, on May 27, 1970, Cambodia-South Vietnam diplomatic relations had been reestablished at ambassadorial level. In the same time, Cambodia broke off its relations with North Vietnam and Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (*Keesing’s Contemporary Archives* 1970: 24134). Immediately after the coup d’état, Thailand’s Foreign Minister Thannat Khoman expressed his intention to “officially recognize” Cambodia (*Peking Review* 1970a). Finally, on May 11, 1970, a Cambodian delegation led by Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur went to Bangkok to meet with a Thai delegation led by Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman to discuss political and economic problems. In a joint communiqué published on May 13, 1970, Cambodia and Thailand agreed to resume their diplomatic relations in the near future. Both the countries also expressed their concerns infiltrations of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces into Cambodian borders (Jha 1979: 119-120). And on May 19, 1970, Cambodia and South Korea agreed to resume their mutual diplomatic relations after four years of diplomatic breaking-off (*ibid.*).

Lon Nol reversed Sihanouk's political and economic policies. He denationalized trade and industry, rehabilitated Cambodia's suspended ties with the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. He also suspended agreements to sell rice and other supplies to the Vietcong. He established diplomatic relations with the western countries and appealed for foreign military aid and assistance against the Vietnamese Communist forces presence in Cambodia’s borders. He also changed Prince Sihanouk’s Chinese policy. The Chinese, however, adopted a careful step to approach Lon Nol for the maintenance of Sihanouk’s Chinese policy, yet they got a negative response from Lon Nol’s government.

The Chinese Reaction to the Coup

From Moscow, Prince Sihanouk headed to Peking on a special plane. Upon his arrival in the Chinese capital on March 19, he was welcomed at the airport by Premier Zhou Enlai who then acted as if there was nothing happened with the Prince. The Chinese government, however, provided him with radio facilities through which to respond to his deposition. Sihanouk announced the five-point proclamation and joined with the Khmer Rouge to form National United Front of Kampuchea commonly called by its

French acronym FUNK (Front uni National du Kampuchea) in Peking to fight against the US-backed Lon Nol government.

Initially, Prince Sihanouk's thought was to seek political asylum in France, and claimed that he had no intention of resuming power or office as Head of State but after talks with Zhou Enlai and the Vietnamese premier, Pham Van Dong, he expressed a determination to participate in a sacred struggle 'to obliterate the *coup d'état* (Leifer 1970: 186; Gurtov 1971: 140, Chandler 1983: 250). On March 20, Prince Sihanouk issued the first of many statements to the press in Peking, in which he declared his deposition was 'illegal and unconditional', rejected various charges of corruption, and warned that Cambodia was leading to 'anarchism and war provoked by US imperialism' (*Peking Review* 1970a: 15–17). On March 23, From Peking, Prince Sihanouk declared a five-point proclamation in which he:

- 1) Accused Lon Nol regime of high treason and decreed its dissolution.
- 2) Announced that a Government of National Union would be formed.
- 3) Called for the setting up of a consultative assembly formed from the broadest sections of the community including "all patriotic, progressive, and anti-imperialist tendencies.
- 4) Called for the creation of a National Liberation Army to fight against US imperialism and its agents inside the country.
- 5) Called for the creation of a National United Front for the liberation of the country and to handle the task of reconstruction after victory was won (Pradhan 1985: 148–49).

The Chinese, who had initially expressed their disapproval of the disturbances in Phnom Penh to the Cambodian Ambassador in Peking, were somewhat less forthcoming in what was being represented as a matter for the Indochinese peoples (Leifer 1970: 186). The Chinese were careful to observe the political development in Phnom Penh after the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk. Although the Chinese dutifully published Prince Sihanouk's statements, but they did not associate themselves with them. In the first week after the deposition, the Chinese media issued only two reports. On March 20, they reported the March 11 demonstrations which sacked the embassies of North Vietnam and NLF in Phnom Penh, and on the March 19 attacks on houses of Chinese and Vietnamese residents in Svay Rieng province. They

reported that, “The Chinese people are paying close attention to developments in this grave situation.” And the second report issued on March 23 which, for the first time, mentioned that the deposition of Prince Sihanouk was ‘long premeditated and the Rightist elements of the government were instigated by Washington’ (*Peking Review* 1970a: 22–23). But such a report merely relied on source of foreign media. The report concluded that, “The situation in Cambodia is still developing. People are closely watching the developments and changes of the Cambodian situation” (*ibid.*). To the contrary, on March 22, Commentaries by Vietnamese paper “Nham Dan” couched in strong terms, denounced US imperialism for instigation the pro-US group to stage a coup d’état in Cambodia. The article said ‘the March 18 coup d’état is the biggest of a series of crimes perpetrated by the US imperialists to sabotage Cambodia’s independence and policy of peace and neutrality’ (*ibid.*, p. 24). Similarly, on March 21, Voice of Viet Nam Radio broadcasted a commentary entitled “The United States Is the Chief Plotter of the Coup in Cambodia.” It concluded that “The interests of the struggle for independence and freedom require that the people of Viet Nam and Cambodia and the people of Indochina as a whole must strengthen more than ever before their solidarity so as to spearhead their struggle against the common enemy—the US imperialists” (*ibid.*, p. 25). Well before Peking, Hanoi, by March 22, was already calling resistance to Lon Nol part of ‘the Indochinese people’s fight’ against US imperialism (Commentator article in *Nham Dan*, March 22, 1970). And on March 25, the day the Vietnamese Communist embassies (but not China’s) advised the Cambodian government of the recall of their diplomatic staffs, the DRV issued a statement in supporting ‘Prince Sihanouk’s Five-Point Proclamation, his program, and the just struggle of the Khmer people till final victory’ (*Peking Review* 1970b: 18–19). Also, on March 22, Prince Souphanouvong, leader of the Pathet Lao, expressed his ‘resolute support for the just struggle of Samdech Sihanouk’ and firmly convinced that ‘the struggle will overcome all difficulties and win final victory’ (*ibid.*, p. 27). On the other hand, there was controversy news on the Chinese stand on Prince Sihanouk presence in China. According to a March 28 UPI dispatch from Phnom Penh, Trinh Hoan, a deputy of the Cambodian National Assembly, said that Nay Valentin, former Cambodian Ambassador to China, had mentioned in his report to the Phnom Penh coup d’état authorities that had been told by China’s Foreign Ministry that China “was embarrassed by the presence of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in China” (*ibid.*, 28). Nevertheless, a few days later on March 30, the Chinese media *Hsinhau*

reporters asked Nay Valentin to confirm the matter, but he denied it. He said: “I have never said so, never. Neither has the Chinese Foreign Minister told so” (ibid.).

It was until May 5 that China formally announced recognition of FUNK and supported Sihanouk’s five-point proclamation. In his letter to Prince Sihanouk, Premier Zhou Enlai stated that:

The Chinese Government formally recognizes the Royal Government of National Union Under the Leadership of the National United Front of Kampuchea as the sole legal government of the Cambodian people, formally severs all diplomatic relations already long severed with the Lon Nol-Sirik Matak Rightist traitorous clique and will withdraw the Chinese diplomatic mission, personnel and experts from Phnom Penh.

The Chinese Government is deeply convinced that, under the leadership of Head of State Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian people and the Royal Government of National Union, uniting closely with the fraternal Vietnamese and Laotian peoples as well as with all peace-loving countries and people throughout the world and persevering in armed struggle and protracted struggle, will surely win complete victory in their patriotic struggle against US aggression (*Peking Review* 1970c: 14).

Now, it is clear that when the close friend of China, Prince Sihanouk was ousted, it did not immediately break with Lon Nol and join the North Vietnamese in supporting Sihanouk’s resistance. This was probably because of, accordingly to Gurtov (1971: 140-41), “the consideration that the extension of the Vietnam fighting into Cambodia might overextend the Communist’s capabilities, might lead to American intervention, and, even if successful, would only benefit Vietnamese Communist interests.” There was also another indication for the Chinese delay in response to the new government in Phnom Penh. Peking might have felt that ‘withdrawal [of its mission] would give the Soviet Union an advantage over the Chinese in Cambodia’ (Qureshi 1970: 327). It was said that China had tried to persuade Lon Nol to follow Sihanouk’s Chinese policies, though there was no evidence from China’s source. China’s approach, however, was attested by Lon Nol himself, who said that from the time of the deposition until May 5 (when Peking officially recognised Sihanouk’s exile regime), Chinese representatives “several times” told him that if Cambodia maintained her political and material support of the Communist effort in South Vietnam, the overthrow of Sihanouk would be accepted as an internal Cambodian affair (Gurtov 1971: 141; Shawcross 1979: 124; Kahin 2003:

295). This conversation lasted until May 5, that is, one month and seventeen days after the change of regime in Phnom Penh (Martin 1994: 129). On May 11, 1970, Lon Nol publicised via national broadcast service the three conditions of Cambodian support of the Communists suggested by the Chinese; (1) that Cambodia “permit the supply of arms and medicine from China to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops”; (2) that Cambodia continue “to allow North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops to rest in Khmer territory”; (3) that Cambodian propaganda continue to be friendly towards China and North Vietnam (Gurtov 1971: footnote, p. 141.).

But Lon Nol refused to accept the Chinese conditions. On March 25, Lon Nol government terminated Sihanoukville port, which was used by the Chinese to transit material supplies for Vietnamese Communists, thus affected the important source of supplies for Communist forces in the lower half of South Vietnam. The same day, Lon Nol abrogated the rice deals, which NLF signed in September 1969 (Gurtov 1971: 141). Within days after the removal of Sihanouk, it was reported that South Vietnam aircraft and artillery were supporting Cambodian troops. Besides, there were talks on military cooperation between Phnom Penh and Saigon. At the end of March 1970, Lon Nol had suggested that assistance from all sources would be welcome (Pradhan 1985: 157). The intervention of the Phnom Penh Government became plain when, April 14, 1970, Lon Nol publicly appealed to all countries, regardless of their bloc affiliations, to supply arms and material aid (*ibid.*). On April 29, 1970, South Vietnamese forces supported by American forces and advisers entered Cambodia’s northeastern provinces. Lon Nol for form’s sake protested at this violation of Cambodian sovereignty but was happy that the US had helped his weak regime (Qureshi 1970: 328). Lon Nol disclosed on May 1, 1970, that his Government had not been consulted in advance about the US-South Vietnamese operations, which, he alleged, constituted a violation of Cambodia’s territorial integrity. He said, “From our point of view, American and South Vietnamese operations are rather like the Vietcong. They attacked us just like that without warning” (Pradhan 1985: 159).

Observed all these developments, the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh remained open and if Lon Nol’s statement is to be believed, the Chinese officials had approached him about changing his policies. On April 10, in his speech at Pyongyang Mass Rally, Zhou Enlai, despite his mention of Sihanouk’s deposition and his struggle against Lon Nol government backed by the US, stated nowhere his support for the Prince. He merely said: “Recently, it went further to instigate singlehandedly

the Cambodian Rightist clique to state a coup d'état against the Cambodian Head of State Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, plotting to turn Cambodia into its colony and military base and to expand its war of aggression against Viet Nam and Laos to the whole of Indochina and further to realize its wild designs of forcibly occupying the whole of Indochina and expanding its aggression to the rest of Asia" (*Peking Review* 1970c: 18–21). Peking seemed to be moving closer to the North Vietnamese position when it was announced that an Indochinese People's Summit Conference, called by Sihanouk, had been held on April 24-25, attended by Viet Cong, Hanoi, and Laotian Communist leaders (and, at the close, by Zhou Enlai). The conference did not result in any concrete agreements, but it did underscore North Vietnam's contention that the three anti-American struggles in Indochina were now interrelated (Gurtov 1971: 143).

In view of Lon Nol government troops' repeated setbacks in their attempts to curb the North Vietnamese infiltration, President Nixon authorised the American-South Vietnamese forces to launch a cleanup operation extending forty kilometers inside Cambodian territory and lasting from April 30 to June 30.² It was until this point when President Nixon decided to enlarge the Vietnam War that left China little choice but to support Sihanouk's exile government. On May 1, Chairman Mao Tse-tung made an official statement pressing China's total support for Prince Sihanouk, not merely moral support, but also providing financial assistance—"an interest-free loan to be repaid after the victory"—and abundant military aid, and attempting to get the UN to recognise the RGNUK, instead of the Khmer Republic. Subsequently, on May 3, a speech by Zhou Enlai delivered over a week earlier was published in which Zhou asserted that Chinese territory is "the reliable rear areas of the people of the three Indochinese countries. The brotherly people of the three Indochinese states can believe that in common struggle against US imperialism, the Chinese people will forever be with them" (*ibid.*). Chanda (1986: 65), based on Sihanouk's account, expected a partial explanation as to why Peking maintained relations for a time with the Lon Nol regime. He wrote:

China clearly did not want to cut off ties with Phnom Penh without being certain that the option of armed opposition would work. In particular, the coup had come at a time when, in the aftermath of its

² The South Vietnamese took advantage of this official blessing on an incursion into Khmer territory to avenge and over avenge their compatriots who had been massacred by Lon Nol's men the month before (Ponchaud 1977: 191).

first armed clash with the Soviets, Peking was beginning to look at the possibility of improving relations with Washington. Engaging in a war against Lon Nol could further cloud those relations.

However, Richardson (2010: 73-74) refutes this claim for lack of sufficient evidence to prove. She opines if the claim was true it ‘would have been constituted a significant departure from the Five Principles’ which, according to her, is the primary source of China’s foreign policy motivations. Nevertheless, there is another supportive account in Chanda’s (1986: 65-66) conversation with the Vietnamese party’s principle spokesman, Hoang Tung who told him that in March 1970 the Chinese were not enthusiastic about Sihanouk because of his criticism of Mao during the Cultural Revolution. Tung said, “And our Communist friends in Cambodia nurture a hatred against Sihanouk because of his massacres. Sihanouk had killed many Communist between 1955 and 1965.... When Sihanouk was in Peking [March 1970], neither Zhou Enlai nor Pol Pot took any initiative to win Sihanouk to the side of resistance. It was us, the Vietnamese, who took the initiative. Pham Van Dong [who led a secret Vietnamese delegation to Peking three days after the coup] had the job of persuading Zhou Enlai, while Pham Hung [a Politburo member accompanying Dong who maintained liaison with the Khmer Rouge before 1970] had to persuade Pol Pot.”

The Demise of Khmer Republic and Victory of Khmer Rouge

Soon after the coup, Lon Nol government took a tough stand against the Communist Vietnamese presence in Cambodian territory. He appealed to international community for support against ‘foreign aggressor’. In response, the United States provided military and economic aid, which could save Khmer Republic for five years to come. At the same time, Cambodia was being dragged into full involvement of Vietnam War.

US bombing had began since later 1969 and full scale bombing took place after the April 30 1970, when President Nixon announced the authorization of US military to enter into Cambodian territory to destroy the Vietcong troops and sanctuaries. As the bombing continued, the Vietcong moved westward deep inside Cambodia where they met with Khmer Rouge and Sihanoukist guerrillas forming a strong resistance forces. Bombing also drove a member of Cambodian peasants over to the FUNK guerrilla forces. As war protracted, number of the FUNK guerrilla

forces kept increasing. Now Lon Nol had to simultaneously face the civil war and the war against the foreign aggressor, the Communist Vietnamese. Lon Nol poorly equipped 30,000 strong could never match the Communist Vietnamese forces numbered 40,000 strong already stationed inside Cambodian territory, not to count some 50,000 strong in Lao.

Having failed to lure Lon Nol to its side, China shifted to recognition of Sihanouk's exile government, provided him with shelter and supported the Khmer Communist movement against the US-backed Lon Nol regime. At this stage, China had already established close relations with the Khmer Communist leaders (Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim, Hou Yuon among others) whom months earlier Prince Sihanouk tried to destroy. Prince Sihanouk had to merge his effort against US-backed regime with the Khmer Rouge. For him, the establishment of FUNK proved to be a marriage of convenience that was spurred on by his thirst for revenge against those who had betrayed him (Chandler 1991: 200; Osborne 1994: 214, 218). On the other hand, he also was suspicious that they saw the alliance as a way of using him to install the Khmers Rouges in power (Tully 2005: 156).

From Peking, Prince Sihanouk appealed the people to enter the jungle or *Prey Maquis* and joined with the Khmer Rouge overthrow the Lon Nol government. The Khmer Rouge guerrillas with support from China, North Vietnam and its affiliation with Prince Sihanouk grew quickly. The strength of FUNK forces (the Khmer Rouge and Sihanouk forces), estimated round 3,000 in March 1970, reached as high as 50,000 by mid-1972. By the end of 1972, however, the Khmer Rouge became the controller of guerrilla resistance forces and left the pro-Sihanouk elements behind. Indeed, as early as March 1972 there were reports of Khmers Rouges troops fighting their way to within 16 kilometers of the capital, and by the next month all of Cambodia east of the Mekong, with the exception of some regional capitals, was in the hands of the communists (Tully 2005: 163).

Amidst the growing strength of the resistance war, the United States exiting war strategy under the guise of the Nixon Doctrine had come to the conclusion. On 27 January 1973, the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Agreement to end the war. The Khmer Rouge considered this agreement would enable the United States to shift its operations to Cambodia, thereby, affected its resistance war against Lon Nol government. The Lon Nol government on the United States advice announced a unilateral ceasefire but the Khmer Rouge rejected it.

According to Article 20 of the Paris Agreement, it required removal of all foreign forces from Cambodia. But North Vietnam claimed that Vietnamese troops in Cambodia were not “foreign” in the meaning of Article 20 but were Cambodian citizens of Vietnamese ethnic origin, native to Cambodia and locally recruited. It was fact that Hanoi continued to maintain 40,000 troops in Cambodia and supplied arms, training and logistic support to the Khmer Rouge, though Prince Sihanouk lamented the decline in assistance from North Vietnam and China following the Paris Agreement (Pradhan 1985: 170).

By this time, the United States and China were in process of normalisation of their relations. Both were interested in ushering in an independence and neutral Cambodia. The United States considered Prince Sihanouk return would be the best solution whom the non-communist coalition should be possible with him. Both the United States and China did not want a Hanoi-dominated Cambodia. In May 1973, the United States proposed to China a ceasefire in Cambodia followed by negotiations between Sihanouk and the Lon Nol group and return of Sihanouk to Phnom Penh. China was prepared to follow up the proposal but Prince Sihanouk had lost his effectiveness to take a decision. Controlled by the Khmer Rouge, he asserted in April 1973 that he would “never accept a ceasefire nor compromise” (Pradhan 1985).

The United States ceased its bombing operations completely on August 19, 1973. Now, the FUNK became confident that they would win the battle against Lon Nol government. The announcement, on November 9, 1973, of formal shifting of the centre of government from Peking to Cambodia marked the consolidation by the Khmer Rouge of its power base within the country. Young students, bureaucrats and the like had become openly disillusioned with the Lon Nol regime. Khieu Samphan during his visit to Peking on April 1974 claimed, “we have already liberated more than 90 percent of our territory with upwards of 5.5 million people” (ibid.)

On April 1, 1975, President Lon Nol resigned and exited to the United States. The Khmer Rouge had listed him among “seven traitors” who were marked for execution after the victory. The other six in the Khmer Rouge black list were non-communist, nationalist leaders, namely, Sirik Matak, Son Ngoc Thanh, In Tam, Prime Minister Long Boret, Cheng Heng, who became head of state after Sihanouk’s ouster, and Sosthene Fernandez, the FANK commander in chief. Last-minute efforts, the United States failed in its attempt to arrange a peace agreement involving Sihanouk (Ross 1990: 48). On April 12, United States embassy was closed. At the same, the US

ambassador, John Gunther Dean, invited senior officials of the Khmer Republic to join them. But Sirik Matak, Long Boret, Lon Non (Lon Nol's brother), and most members of Lon Nol's cabinet refused the US protection (ibid.). Sirik Matak sent a letter to Dean rejecting his kindness and expressed his regret: "You leave us...I have only committed the mistake of believing in you, the Americans." (Shawcross 1979: 362). They chose to share the fate of their people, and were executed immediately after Khmer Rouge forces captured Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975. Afterwards, Cambodia entered the Dark Age under the Khmer Rouge regime. Lon Nol fled to United States of America and died there in November 1985. Two weeks before he left Cambodia, Lon Nol said "If the other side took over, they would kill all the educated people—the teachers, the artists, the intellectuals—and that would be a step towards barbarism" (Peter 1985).

Cambodia-China under Pol Pot, 1975-1979

After the American pullout from Indochina in 1975, the Communist states—USSR, China and Vietnam—intensified conflict among themselves and split became unfixable. Given Sino-Soviet rift in the late 1960s, Vietnam chose to align with Soviet Union. Hence Sino-Vietnamese deterioration became inevitable. From the Chinese perspective, Vietnam got closer to the Soviet Union was considered as encirclement strategy against its influence and control. By 1975, the prospect of China being boxed in to the north by the USSR and to the South by Moscow's ally Vietnam was becoming increasingly troubling to China's leaders (Mertha 2014: 4). From the Kampuchean perspective, close alliance with China could establish its defensive and/or offensive balancing against the mighty Communist Vietnamese so as to secure its territorial integrity and independence from the Vietnamese 'Indochina Federation' policy. The Khmer Rouge adopted hyper-Maoist revolutionary, an isolationist and anti-Vietnamese foreign policy, and emerged as China's key ally in power rivalry in balancing the influence of Vietnam in Indochina. Thus, Kampuchea became the center stage of Communist rivalries in Asia—the battlefield of the proxy war.

China as a Source of Khmer Rouge's Ideology

Immediately upon liberation on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge run by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) adopted 'hyperMaoist' revolutionary and extremism. The Khmer Rouge concealed the fact that they were the Communists, but

revealed only their shadowy name as *Angkar Padevat* or Revolutionary Organisation. It is until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 that Saloth Sar known by his code name Pol Pot, publicised the reality and announced Democratic Kampuchea (DK) as the official name of the Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge's utter slogan *maha lout ploh, maha oschar* or the Supper Great Leap Forward had become the ideological element of its revolutionary propaganda during the three-year, eight-month and twenty-day tragic history of Cambodia.

Soon after the Khmer Rouge took over in Phnom Penh, they began to forcefully evacuate the people from all the cities to the countryside. All markets were abandoned, Lon Nol regime currency was removed and the revolutionary currency the Chinese had printed for them was withheld. No religious institution was permitted. All Buddhist monks were defrocked and put to work growing rice. Whereas Buddhist temples were destroyed or turned to be prisons. The first wanted people to be executed were all leaders of the Lon Nol regime beginning with the top leaders—their entire families including infants were also executed. Family life was undermined by physically separating the sexes at work and rest. The Khmer Rouge set out to establish high-level cooperatives throughout the country with communal eating. Children at the age of six onward were separated from their parents for work and sleep. Those who indulged with premarital and extramarital sex were sanctioned to death. Individualism, private property and freedom of movement were not allowed. The regime imposed arranged marriage by which no one had rights to choose his/her soul mate. The entire Vietnamese minority population was subject to expatriate and by 1977 they were to be uprooted. The regime immediately dispatched troops to the borders, particularly the Vietnamese border for territorial defence.

The decision to empty the cities was made by the CPK's leaders shortly before the liberation of Phnom Penh, but it was a closely kept secret and took some Communist commanders by surprise. Chandler (1983), an expert on Cambodian history, observed that various reasons responsible for the decision: the capital was genuinely short of food, the difficulty of administering several million people who had failed to support the revolution, the CPK's leaders were fearful for their own security and perhaps the overriding reason, however, was the desire to assert the victory of the CPK, the dominance of the countryside over the cities and the empowerment of the poor. Phnom Penh became the ghost town. Two months later, on June 21 1975, Pol Pot paid a secret visit to China. He was welcomed like a hero by

his mentor Mao. He told Pol Pot: “you have achieved in one stroke what we failed with all our masses” (Chanda 1986: 16).

The regime divided the people into two categories—those had been driven out of the cities known as “new people” (*pracheachun thmey*) or “April 17 people” (*pracheachun dob prampej mesa*), and those who fought the civil war against Lon Nol forces known as the “base people” (*pracheachun molathan*). The former had been forced to work hard and subject to strict control, whereas the latter had been provided with ‘beguiling glimpses of freedom, self-respect, and power’ (Chandler 1983). The educated, teacher, doctor, the white skinned, and those who wearied glasses were discriminated by the regime as they were called *neay tun* or the *capitalists*, needed to undertake reform lessons by the *Angkar*. The regime propaganda called on the Khmer intellectuals abroad to come home so as to build the nation. But upon their arrival, they were executed, disappeared or sent to the education camp (*yok tov rien sot*).

Mao Zedong’s domestic policies inspired Pol Pot’s domestic policies in a deep sense. During the mid-1960s, Pol Pot witnessed the real views of the Mao’s revolutionary process in China. The Khmer Rouge’s gratitude towards Chairman Mao could be seen in their response to his death in 1976. At the rally in Phnom Penh to mourn the Chinese leader’s passing away, Pol Pot acknowledged Mao’s material and moral support for the Cambodian revolution and expressed that Mao Zedong Thought was the inspiration behind his regime’s policies (Morris 1999).

The most influence elements of Maoism on the Khmer Rouge leaders were the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They wanted to build socialism for Cambodia overnight. The Great Leap Forward became the slogan used by the Khmer Rouge comrades most frequently. Ironically, Pol Pot and his colleagues wanted to make the Great Leap Forward even greater and super than its original implication. In Khmer, *maha lout ploh*, *maha oscha* slogan had been used by the Khmer Rouge comrades means the Super Great Leap Forward. The Khmer Rouge ambitious resolution was dependent much on agricultural factor in which they intended to produce unhusked rice three tones per one hectare, *muy hecta bei ton*. We have the CPK’s testimony as below:

We want to build socialism quickly, we want our country to change quickly, we want our people to be glorious quickly... We have only to organize the strategy and tactics to strike in whatever way is necessary.

This is the Super Great Leap Forward. The Super Great Forward has concrete meaning.... Three tones means national defense. The enemy is hesitant towards us (Chandler et al. 1988).

On the other, Khmer Rouge intended to advance Maoist ideology at the highest degree or at the extremist form of revolution ever witnessed before in the world of social revolution. In 1978, Pol Pot boasted to Yugoslavian visitors that Cambodia we “building socialism without a model” (Chandler 1983). Morris (1999) described Pol Pot’s revolutionary extremism as hyperMaoist. He argued that:

The forced evacuation of the cities; the execution of former government officials, military officers, and the educated; the rapid creation of communes; and the frontal assault upon religion and individualism constituted an application and extension of Maoist ideology to the most extreme degree. In this sense it is fruitful to consider the Khmer Rouge political culture as “hyperMaoist.”

Another important element that the CPK adopted from Mao was the ‘primacy of the subjective factors of human will and ideological purity in triumphing over objective material factors. The statement of the Khmer Rouge as cited by Morris (1999) showed that, “The great victory of the Cambodian revolution, based as it is on the stand of political conscience and revolutionary morals, is irrefutable proof that the human factor is the key and the at the material factor is only secondary.” It might be because of this Mao’s precept that people were force to overwork and lived with starvation. Added to this belief in human supremacy was Pol Pot’s chauvinism. He claimed that the Khmer people could build the Angkor, so did they build anything.

As a result of Pol Pot’s extremist social revolution, over 1.7 million people terribly died by overwork, diseases, malnutrition, and executions. Many have described Cambodian history during Pol Pot rule as the ‘Dark Age’ and ‘Year Zero.’

The Chinese Connection with Democratic Kampuchea

The Sino-Soviet conflict in 1960s, and the Sino-Vietnamese split in between 1968-75 caused China to seek alliance with DK so as to weaken Soviet-backed Vietnamese influence in Indochina. China was the biggest supporter of the Khmer Rouge in military advice/assistance, finance as well as diplomatic support. However, during the struggle against the Lon Nol forces, it was the Vietnamese who helped train the Khmer Rouge guerrillas and set up military units for the resistance war. But after the

April 17, 1975 victory over the US-backed Lon Nol regime, the Khmer Rouge withdrew its trust from the Vietnamese who sought to play a 'big brother role' in Indochina federation. It is imperative to understand how far the Chinese associated themselves with Pol Pot's murderous regime.

China and DK stated to strengthen their relations soon after the Khmer Rouge came to power. No doubt China was behind the Khmer Rouge since the 1960s. Accordingly, the Chinese provided military and nonmilitary aid and assistance to DK. In August 1975, deputy premier Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary went to China. That was a triumphant visit when Peking promised them US\$1 billion of aid over a five-year period with some US\$5 million was to be an outright grant (Chanda 1986: 17). It was China's largest-ever aid pledge. It is believed that the Chinese advisers whose numbers historians put at somewhere between 1,000 and 15,000 were sent to DK. Most of them were military assistants to the Khmer Rouge armed forces. According to sophisticated Khmer Rouge's archive documents the Chinese-Khmer Rouge military agreements were started to negotiate in June 1975, two months after the Khmer Rouge took over in Phnom Penh. The deputy of chief-of-staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, General Wang Shang-jung and Son Sen, the head of Khmer Rouge armed forces, discussed over these agreements. In August and October of that year, Chinese military missions were sent from Peking to Kampuchea "to examine the situation", and by early 1977, large quantities of arms, ammunitions, automobiles and military equipment were delivered from China subsequently (Burchett 1981: 166; Chanda 1986: 18). The Chinese also provided training facility to use all these weapons. In 1976, 471 Kampuchean personnel were sent to China for Air Force training and another 157 for the Navy. By and large, Khmer Rouge relied heavily on Chinese military support. Such military buildups of Khmer Rouge were mainly in preparation against its immediate neighbor. Indeed, the Chinese offered extensive help to DK in its confrontation with Vietnam; it was 'indispensable for Khmer Rouge survival,' for after 1975 the Chinese became the largest source of aid to DK (Mertha 2014).

Even though the Chinese had influenced the foreign policy of the DK, they rejected any involvement in the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. And that were merely internal affair of the DK, the Chinese would never have intervened. China's then-Ambassador to Cambodia Zhang Jinfeng claimed in 2010 that Chinese aid to the regime consisted only of "food, hoes and scythes." He added that, 'The

Chinese government never took part in or intervened into the politics of Democratic Kampuchea” (Doyle 2015). Nonetheless, later in 1979, in his book *War and Hope*, Sihanouk revealed that the DK was almost entirely dependent on the Chinese aid and the Chinese foreign policy direction, in his encounter to Pol Pot-Ieng Sary boast of unprecedented independence of Cambodia. He wrote:

The People’s Republic of China, which is sincerely and authentically anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, has had to take charge in so-called “Democratic Kampuchea” of finance, the pretended “national” economy, industry, national defence, river and maritime ports, diplomacy et cetera. All this could only satisfactorily function thanks to the many-sided and massive aid and extremely important and generous “cooperation” granted by Peking....

Pol Pot and Ieng Sary try to cover themselves with glory by claiming a total independence without precedent for 2,000 years. What a mockery! The reality is that whether China wanted it that way or not...the “foreign” policy of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary government has always been, in fact, in the tow of the Chinese government.

According to Dr. Mong Hay, the Khmer Rouge was a replica of the Maoist regime and any probe into its record could throw unfavorable light on China’s own historical blunders. He said that, “The Chinese communist regime hasn’t accounted yet for the sufferings caused to its own people during years of political campaigns and persecutions” (Bezlova 2009). Of course, the Chinese did not have legal responsibility in the killing field. Yet morally speaking, the Chinese had full capacity to intervene in such obvious inhuman crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge. However, it might be irrational to expect in that way because China also faced almost the same disaster during its Cultural Revolution. Hence the Chinese leaders would prefer to consider the killings in DK as mere internal affairs as long as the Chinese interests did not affected. To restate it, the Chinese in DK was to contain the Vietnamese who suspected to be the agents of the Soviets in Southeast Asia.

China in Kampuchea-Vietnam Conflict

Since April 1975 soon after Pol Pot took power, the conflict with Vietnam had started frequently yet secretly along the border. However, it was by 1977 that the conflict reached its peak. The unsolved border disputes between the two communist countries had its root in a long history. The Vietnamese continued to presence on Cambodian

soil even after the war was over added more tense of the conflict. Offshore islands around the Gulf of Siam were opened for dispute. Despite historical animosity between the two countries, the conflict was rather intensified when Pol Pot suspected the Vietnamese intention to revive the federation of Indochina under their control and influence. Despite large military aid provided to the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese, however, did not want the Khmer to wage full-scale war with the Vietnamese. They want the Khmer Rouge to have enough muscle that they would not be cowed by Vietnam (Chanda 1986). But the Chinese support emboldened the Khmer Rouge aggressive action against the Vietnamese, while the latter viewed it as the Chinese inspiration.

The fact is that the Vietnamese were trying to annex and swallow the Cambodian territory in 17th -19th century and imposed their culture on the Khmer people. They viewed the Khmer people as barbarians to be civilized through exposure to Vietnamese culture, and they regarded the fertile Khmer lands as legitimate sites for colonization by settlers from Vietnam (Ross 1990). The story of *Vinh Te* canal where thousands of Khmer workers were killed by the Vietnamese authority was unforgettable. The story of *Te Ong*, according to which the Khmers were buried alive and their heads were used as stove stands to boil water for tea for their Vietnamese masters, was a painful memory. In the early 20th century, the French annexed Kampuchea Krom or Lower Cambodia (South Vietnam) to Vietnam, which was then under Cochin China Administration. Though before that, Prince Sihanouk tried his best to persuade the French to return Kampuchea Krom. In 1951, Son Sann officially reminded the French government that Cambodia reserved the right to claim Kampuchea Krom, a position which Cambodian delegates would reiterate at the dissolution of Indochina in 1954 (Vachon 2007). But it was in vain; he accepted the lost. But he accommodated the Vietnamese to recognise present Cambodian border in exchange of diplomatic relations in 1969 and permission of the use of Sihanouk port for shipping material supplies to South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Why did Sihanouk help the Vietnamese? Sihanouk's wish was the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from Cambodian territory after the war was over. He said, "I decided to cooperate with the Vietnamese was to put Communist Vietnam in Kampuchea's debt in such a way that it would never again dare raise a hand, so to speak, against our country and our people, its benefactors. To do otherwise would bring them total dishonor." After all the Vietnamese broke their promise. That was

why Prince Sihanouk, later in the 1980s, branded the Vietnamese as the ‘crocodile’—the ungrateful ones.

Having learnt such betrayal lessons, in addition, hostile and distrust towards Vietnamese territorial intentions was ever more deeper in Pol Pot’s mind which impelled him into an alliance with China. The latter for its part was delighted to gain an ally against Hanoi who was viewed as an upstart agent of “Soviet social imperialism” on its southern border (Tully 2005: 191). Both had a coincident interest in counter balancing the Vietnamese ambition of regional hegemony. Ironically, ‘the Chinese were asking DK to play a role that mirrored the one played by the regime DK had overthrown, when the Khmer Republic had been groomed to serve the interest of the Unlisted States’ (Chandler 1983: 270)—the role that the Chinese failed to impose on Lon Nol’s Cambodia.

Pol Pot, a former member of Communist Party of Indochina, suspected that the Vietnamese wanted to reestablish the old federation of Indochina under their hegemony and his suspicion deepened when they signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Lao communist regime in 1977, a move be interpreted as encirclement (Tully 2005: 191.). The idea of Indochina Federation was not unreal. As long ago as 1950, General Vo Nguyen Giap, the victor of Dien Bien Phu, had maintained that “Indochina is a strategic unit; a single theatre of operations. Therefore, we have the task of helping to liberate all of Indochina—especially for reasons of strategic geography, we cannot conceive of Vietnam completely independent, while Cambodia and Laos are ruled by imperialism” (Porter 1981: 88).

Territorial dispute over the procession of offshore islands in the Gulf of Thailand, among other things, contributed to the bitter relations between Cambodian and Vietnam. *Koh Tral* (Phu Quoc) and *Koh Krachak Ses* (Tho Chou) islands have been opened to dispute and claim. These specific islands are located 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) from Cambodian coast of Kep province, and 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the nearest coastal town of Ha Tien, Vietnam. In the late 1960s North Vietnam had recognised these islands in Cambodian sovereignty—just as it had recognised the Spratly and Paracel islands in South China Sea belonging to China (Chanda 1986: 93). But when Vietnam reunited in 1975, it claimed the islands back by force.³

³ From 1975 to end of 1978, the dispute had remained status quo. It was until July 07, 1982, *Koh Tral* (Phu Quoc) and *Poulo-Pangjang* or *Koh Krachak Ses* (Tho Chu) appeared in the Vietnamese territory, on a map attached to the “Treaty on the Historical Water Zone between the People’s Republic of

Among the offshore islands, after negotiations, Poulo Wai Island had been returned to Cambodia in August 1975 (Evans and Rowley 1984: 87; Sundararaman 2000: 37).

In 1975-1976, agreement over the possession of the maritime border in the Gulf of Thailand between the two countries could be not reached. Cambodia demanded that the Vietnamese should respect the border agreement with Sihanouk in the later 1960s, but they rejected this. During the border talks in May 1976, Vietnam negotiator Phan Hien had denied the Brevie line as the demarcation for territorial waters. The talks adjourned at the time had not resumed, but on May 12, 1977, Hanoi had announced that its economic zone extended to two hundred miles from its shores (Chanda 1986: 97-98). Cambodia responded by publishing a map with a dotted line (the Brevie line) on the Gulf of Thailand showing Cambodia's territorial waters. The Cambodia-Vietnam conflict had reached a point when the Pol Pot regime felt the need to issue a dramatic warning to Hanoi that Cambodia's determination not tolerate "any aggression or encroachment by any enemy for near or distant lands against our territory waters and islands" (ibid.)

In late September 1977 Pol Pot embarked on a state visit to China. At Beijing airport, the DK delegation met with China's Premier Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping who was to replace Hua in 1978. The visit probably marked the high point (for Pol Pot at least) of the DK regime. The warm welcome that the Cambodians received probably convinced him that the Chinese would support DK if and when hostilities broke out between Cambodia and Vietnam. In fact, while the Chinese encouraged DK's hostility towards Vietnam, they also hoped for a peaceful solution. Although the Chinese offered extensive help to DK in its confrontation with Vietnam, more realistic than DK's leaders, they did not support a full-scale war, knowing that Cambodia would lose, until they were pushed by Pol Pot and Vietnamese intransigency towards that position in 1978 (Chandler 1983: 271).

The Vietnamese Invasion of Cambodia

In 1977-1978, Cambodia-Vietnam conflict had been in its peak. Vietnam saw the DK-Beijing alliance that was strengthened during Pol Pot's visit to China in September 1977 as a provocative. The Vietnamese, then, had planned to topple Pol Pot and put pro-Vietnamese leaders in power. A secret record of conversation between the

Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam". See *A note by H.E. Dr. Say Bory*, August 16, 2000; [Online: web] Accessed 21 April 2015, URL: http://www.caraweb.org/articles/koh_trol.html.

Vietnamese general Secretary Le Duan and Soviet Ambassador Igor Sherbakov in September 1978 revealed that the Vietnamese Communist Party Politburo had set as its goals “to solve fully this question [of Kampuchea] by the beginning of 1979.” Le Duan also emphasized that it was impossible for Vietnam to wait until Beijing “consolidates itself in Kampuchea” (Morris 1999: 216).

In mid-December 1977 Vietnam mounted a military offensive against Cambodia. “Their goal was not the seizure of territory,” reported *The Worker* (1978), “but triggering the collapse of the Kampuchean government.” No doubt, within a short time, the Vietnamese troops entered 32 kilometres into Cambodia in some areas. DK had severed diplomatic relations with Vietnam. In the first week of 1978, most of the troops went home. They took with them thousands of Cambodian villagers as hostages. The Vietnamese gave military training to some of them in preparation for forming a government in exile. Hun Sen, who had fled Cambodia in 1977 and later became premier of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea in 1985, joined this government. Pol Pot claimed the Vietnamese withdrawal as “total victory” (Chandler 1983). Pol Pot then started seriously purging military officers in the eastern zone. Many of them were suspicious and killed, while many other fled to Vietnamese as refugees. One of them was Heng Samrin who later became the president of the PRK.

By April 1978, more than 100,000 Vietnamese troops were deployed along the Cambodian border. To balance the threat and possible intervention from China, Vietnam joined COMECON in June 1978 as a full member, and in November it signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, with the Soviets pledging to aid it, if attacked (Article 6). In early December, the Vietnamese announced the establishment of Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) in the liberated Cambodian territory to overthrow DK.

There is evidence, for example, that Pol Pot requested that the Chinese provide volunteers but that the request was turned down. The parallels between the last days of DK and the last days of Lon Nol’s regime in 1975 are striking, and ironic (Chandler 1983: 273). The response to Cambodian request was raised in the talks in China. Politburo member in charge of international affairs Geng Biao argued that:

If we send our soldiers to Cambodia, what kind of impression shall we create in the world? In addition to the failure in building up the united front against hegemony by uniting with the Third World countries, we

shall become another new hegemonic power (Keng Piao's Report on the Situation of the Indochinese Peninsula, cited in Chanda 1986: 326).

The situation of DK at this time was not different from that when Lon Nol regime in 1975 was going to collapse and the United States rejected its further request for support. The Chinese refused to provide PLA volunteers to DK and it had to face with the Vietnamese on its own—referring to the so-called “self-reliance” of Pol Pot. However, China did expedite deliveries of military equipment. On Christmas Day 1978, Vietnamese forces over 100,000 men attacked DK on several fronts leading to the capture of Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979. Pol Pot skipped by jeep to the Thai border along with senior officials. There, they were preparing the guerrilla war against the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia. Immediately after the fall of Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese installed the former members of CPK who fled to Vietnam in 1977-78 and some Khmer who lived there throughout the DK regime, such as Pen Sovann, Chea Sim, Heng Samrin, Hun Sen and many others, as the leaders of the new government.

China and Cambodian Conflict, 1979-1991

After Vietnam drove the Khmer Rouge out in 1979, China resuscitated them to resist the Vietnamese and their puppet-Heng Sanin government. China continued its substantial support to the Khmer Rouge. Beside the Khmer Rouge, there were two non-communist political factions—the KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front) and FUNCIPPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia)—which fought against the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Later in 1982, the three resistance factions formed a coalition government know as Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in order to retain a legal recognition from the United Nations and secure international supports. For a decade China attempted to get these factions to cooperate but without real success. Diplomatic battle and armed resistance in the background between internal adversaries and their external patrons had prolonged Cambodian conflict for over a decade. The conflict was not simple an internal matter, but its root cause was the Sino-Vietnamese antagonism with the interplay of the Sino-Soviet relations. The conflict also engaged the interests of Thailand and its regional partners within Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and a lesser extent, those of the United States. The Cold War balance of power had obvious implication on

Cambodian issue. In this balancing tactic, China factor had a great deal in the future settlement of Cambodian problem which deserved deep understanding, and so did internal warring factions. China had taken different (force and diplomacy) strategy to drive out the Vietnamese from occupying Cambodia, and to delegitimise Heng Samrin government. The conflict had been protracted for over a decade. Finally, after intensified negotiations between political factions and their respective external patrons, coupled with the changing in international politics, a comprehensive political settlement of Cambodian conflict had been accomplished. ‘23 October 1991’ Paris Peace Accord marked a new beginning of Cambodian history.

The People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)

Soon after the January 7, 1979, the capture of Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese helped their Cambodian protégés set up a new government, and on January 10, the official name of Cambodia was renamed the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Leading power was vested with the former Khmer Rouge cadres who defected to Vietnam in 1978, those who had lived in Vietnam since the 1950s (Khmer Viet Minh), and members of ethnic minorities untainted by the DK. Among those leaders were Hang Samin, Chea Sim and Hun Sen who remained in power through the 1980s. Hun Sen, in particular, became prime minister in January 1985, just six years after becoming foreign minister (Mehta and J.B. Mehta 2013: 146).

Within a week, the PRK notified the United Nations Security Council that it was the sole legitimate government of the Cambodian people. The PRK and Vietnam held their first summit meeting in Phnom Penh on 16–19 February and cemented their relationship by signing a twenty-five-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (1979). The treaty pressed upon ‘mutual trust and assistance’ of the two countries (Article 1), and attached great importance to ‘the longstanding tradition of militant solidarity, fraternal friendship between the Kampuchean, Lao, and Vietnamese people’ (Article 5). The Treaty, however, reflected the articulation of the Vietnamese interest in reestablishing Indochina Federation in which they had the leading role.

Vietnam was the first country to recognise the PRK. Subsequently, the Soviet Union, other communist states, and a number of pro-Moscow developing countries had also recognised the new regime. Particularly, India was the first non-communist

state to offer recognition of the Heng Samrin-led PRK after Mrs Indira Gandhi came to power in 1980 (Ayoob 1990: 56). This development was an immediate, significant success of the PRK's international recognition. The Vietnamese invasion and occupation did not go without challenges. International community, except India and the Soviet bloc, condemned the Vietnamese expansionism and demanded that they must withdraw their troops from Cambodia before any negotiation would be considered. The Chinese, then, tried to unity the Khmer Rouge and the non-communist resistance groups in fighting a protracted war against the Vietnamese and the PRK forces.

China and Cambodian Political Resistance Groups

With the fall of its ally regime, China supported the resistance groups in fighting against the Vietnamese and their puppet government in Phnom Penh. These groups consisted of the Communist Khmer Rouge and two non-Communist elements—FUNCINPEC and KPNLF led by Sihanouk and Son Sann respectively. Later, to retain international recognition, all resistance groups joint together in CGDK.

The Khmer Rouge defeated by the Vietnamese forces evacuated to the border adjacent Thailand. The Chinese continued to support DK diplomatically and materially. They were joined by non-communist countries like the United States, Western countries and ASEAN. As a result of the vehement campaign against the PRK, the DK retained its UN seat despite its genocidal record. China and the United States supported this state of affairs so as to punish Vietnam for invading Cambodia, standing up to China, and defeating the United States (Ross 1990). The DK remained the strongest faction against the Vietnamese. Ironically, despites its murderous record, the DK had received larger aid from the China and the West than the non-communist groups did.

In February 1981, Prince Sihanouk set up FUNCINPEC in Paris, with a central committee of 100 prominent Cambodian exiles. The FUNCINPEC was formed, with the encouragement of ASEAN states, in order to provide an alternative resistance against the Vietnamese and the Phnom Penh government to that offered by the communist Khmer Rouge, who were still holding out in the remote north-west and west of the country, and to the loose organisation of the KPNLF, who were broadly favoured by the US and western powers in general. Prince Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, was sole authorized spokesman and was the head of

FUNCINPEC's office in Bangkok. The FUNCINPEC grew to be the prominent and popular element among resistance groups because of Prince Sihanouk's charismatic international image and unchallenged leadership.

Another non-communist resistance movement was the KPNLF led by former premier Son Sann (1967–68). Proclaimed on 9 October 1979, the KPNLF sought foreign support to remove the Vietnamese occupation forces and to reimpose prerevolution institutions, except Sihanouk, whom Son Sann had come to distrust. Even though its primary objective was to remove the Vietnamese military presence in Cambodia, 'the Front's second objective remained, however, that of preventing the return of the Khmer Rouge to power' (Peang-Meth 1990: 173). Son Sann was unable to establish an effective military force, however, and obtained very little material support from Vietnam's principal antagonists—China, Thailand, and the United States. In military terms these powers preferred DK.

In 1979 and in 1980, the Khmer Rouge reportedly came under pressure from China to forge a united front under Sihanouk or Son Sann. The ASEAN countries also urged the Khmer Rouge to put its blood-stained image behind it and to mend its political fences with the noncommunist resistance groups. The United Nations informed the Khmer Rouge that a new mode of behavior would be necessary if its deposed regime were to retain its seat in the organization. On the other hand, the success of the People's Army of Vietnam in clearing the border areas, and military defeats suffered by all three guerrilla groups, led the sponsor states to apply pressure on the KPNLF, FUNCINPEC and the Khmer Rouge to coordinate their efforts. They met in Singapore from 2-4 September 1981. In a joint statement they agreed that 'all anti-Vietnamese forces avoid any clashes among themselves,' and 'would refrain from bringing to the public their differences during the whole period of the agreement' (Joint Statement 1981). This resulted in the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea subsequent to the signing of an agreement in Kuala Lumpur in June 1982. Prince Sihanouk, representing FUNCINPEC, was President; Khieu Samphan, representing the Khmer Rouge, Vice-President, and Son Sann Prime Minister. The purpose of the CGDK, as stated in the June agreement, was 'to mobilize all efforts in the common struggle to liberate Kampuchea from the Vietnamese aggressors' and 'to bring about the implementation of the declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea and other relevant UN General Assembly

resolutions' (Declaration 1982). Under the 1982 tripartite agreement, the CGDK had replaced the Khmer Rouge regime as *de jure* representative of DK.

China's Strategy in the Cambodian Conflict

In the Chinese views, the overthrow of Pol Pot, their only socialist ally in the region, had been considered a serious act against them. And the Soviet-backed Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia was meant encirclement directed to China. Thus, China would never tolerate such aggression in any condition. "For China, Vietnam would be cut down to size and repent its role as 'an oriental Cuba' serving the global interests of the Soviet Union," said Leifer (1982). To maintain maximum pressure on the Vietnamese, China undertook three-way strategy during the Cambodian conflict—military pressure by launching attack in Vietnam's northern border; protracted guerrilla war by supporting the Khmer Rouge and anti-Vietnamese resistance groups; and diplomatic isolation by promoting support from the United States, ASEAN and the western countries against the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia and Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin government.

By this way, China had set up a single strategy with two aims: to limit Vietnam's exercise of power (containment) and ultimately to reduce its power (roll back) (McGregor 1990: 267). To put in other words, China had consistently pursued their interrelated objectives for Indochina during the Cambodian conflict; firstly, to reduce the Soviet presence in the region so as to revert the trend of Soviet encirclement in the 1970s; secondly, to seek Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and thus to diminish Vietnamese power on China's southern periphery, to reduce opportunity for an outside power to use Vietnam to undermine Chinese interests and to rollback the Sino-Cambodian relations status in post-World War Two to offset Vietnamese power; and thirdly, to insist on the dissolution of the Vietnamese-influenced Heng Samrin/Hun Sen government (Ross 1991: 1170).

In response to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, in 17 February 1979, China launched a massive attack on Vietnam at its northern border. The attack was to "teach Vietnam a lesson"—primarily reflected Chinese outrage at Vietnam's defiance of Chinese warning during the 1977-1978 period and Hanoi's subsequent creation of a "puppet" Cambodian leadership (ibid.). The Chinese entered northern Vietnam and captured some of the bordering cities. On March 6, 1979, China declared that the gate to Hanoi was open and the their punitive mission had been achieved. Chinese forces

retreated back across the Vietnamese border into China. Both China and Vietnam claimed victory in the last of the Indochina War of the 20th century; as Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodia until 1989. It seemed that China failed to achieve the goal of pressuring the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia. But it was not useless. China had prepared punitive attack on Vietnam even before the latter invaded Cambodia. In Politburo conference held from November 11, to December 15, 1978, Deng Xiaoping argued that 1) a self-defensive counter attack on Vietnam as unlikely provoke a large-scale Soviet attack on China, 2) an attack on Vietnam as an act of self-defense instead of an intervention in Cambodia would not invite an unfavourable international reaction, and 3) the punitive measure would not interrupt China's Four Modernisations and in fact would deter Vietnam from disturbing it in the future (Chanda 1986: 328–329). Most importantly, the invasion and withdrawal from Vietnam was a signal to Moscow that any attempt at expanding its foothold in Southeast Asia would have involved risk of military confrontation with China. Finally, the invasion was to show that first, China meant what it had said, and Deng's repeated threats to punish Vietnam were no bluff, second, the Soviet Union was not a reliable ally, and third, a desire to test the PLA, which had not conducted extensive combat operations since 1962 (Jencks 1979: 803).

Secondly, China had supported the resistance groups in opposition to the Vietnamese occupation and the client government. By this way, China attempted to weaken the Vietnamese economically and therefore expected possible negotiation in its favour. It is fact that Vietnam-Cambodian and Sino-Vietnam ware in 1978–1979 did cost Vietnam dearly. The Vietnamese invasion and military-occupation of Cambodia with more than 180,000 men and the state of preparedness on the Sino-Vietnamese border limited the funds available for developmental programs (SarDesai 1981: 335). Moreover, although the Vietnamese communists achieved their initial goal of toppling Pol Pot regime, but they failed to obtain a quick victory as that would have reduced expenditure and the acceptance of *fait accompli* by the international community (Morris 1999: 219). Deng Xiaoping stated in December 1980 that, "It is wise for China to force the Vietnamese to stay in Kampuchea, because that way they will suffer more and more" (Long 1989). By 1987, the eight-year occupation of Cambodia had brought the Vietnamese economy to the verge of bankruptcy, isolated Vietnam from international community, and damaged Vietnamese morale nationwide, hence, the only way for Vietnam to revitalise its economy is to withdraw its troops

from Cambodia (Zhenmin 1987: 10).

Thirdly, despite its setback in military attack on Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia, China had successfully gathered international community against Vietnam. The United States, the West, the Third World and ASEAN turned against the Vietnamese action in Cambodia. In the meantime, their action prevented any prospects of imminent normalization with the United States. Moreover, the European Union cut off its food aid to Vietnam, except Sweden and France.

Initially, the Vietnamese leaders thought that their invasion and military-occupation of Cambodia would be quickly forgotten given Pol Pot regime's atrocity record. But they were wrongly. Significantly, China's diplomatic mission had been successful in lobbying at the United Nations. At the U.N. General Assembly, Vietnam failed to gain recognition for its client regime. Instead, majority nations continued to recognise the DK as the legitimate representative of Cambodia. And when the guerrilla resistance groups joined the CGDK led by Prince Sihanouk, Son Sann, and Khieu Samphan in 1982, they began to receive greater and greater majorities at the annual meeting of the United Nations committee on credentials (Morris 1999: 222). In the annual U.N. General Assembly resolution on withdrawal of foreign [Vietnamese] troops from Cambodia, the number of voting in favor rose from 91 in 1979 to 110 in 1984. Since then, the Vietnamese succumbed to challenge the CGDK credentials.

By 1985, time was ripe to conduct serious negotiations, which would be included all warring factions and parties concerned in a comprehensive settlement of Cambodian dispute. So doing remained much compromise, concession and softened attitude from very party involved. In this text, China and Vietnam were the main factor involved in a decade long Cambodian political stalemate.

Towards Paris Peace Agreement

From the very outset of the Cambodian conflict, China, supported by ASEAN and the United States, insisted that Vietnam must leave Cambodia, whereas Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Union, insisted that before it could leave Cambodia there must be both guarantees that the Khmer Rouge would play no part in any future Cambodian government and threats from China should be ended (Gordon 1986: 67). This very different position created the stalemate.

In the post-1985 period, however, China had changed its sticking position.

The emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev, a reformist leader, on the Soviet political scene seemed to have been the catalyst in the settlement process. Significant international-level development on Cambodian issue is that China and Soviet started to improve their relations. After unyielding opposition to the Phnom Penh government and its Vietnamese backer, China, in November 1988, made a series of major concessions to the Phnom Penh government, to Vietnam and to the Soviet Union. There were three most important concessions China had offered: (i) agreement to consider a cut-back in arms supplies to the Khmer Rouge, in advance of a total Vietnamese withdrawal, (ii) resuming dialogue with Vietnam which had been stalled since 1979, and (iii) setting a date for a Sino-Soviet summit as the final process of Sino-Soviet normalization that took place since 1982 (Long 1989: 151). More importantly, after Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989, Beijing wanted to improve its international image and hence took serious attempts to resolve Cambodia problem. So doing, China had been playing a role of “regional power, rather than any perception of direct threat to its interests” regional (Sundararaman 2000: 118). On the other hand, Vietnam announced its troop withdrawal by September 1989. There were few reasons that propelled Vietnam to leave Cambodia and agreed to normalise its stance in seek of comprehensive political settlement on Cambodia issue. First, its occupation of Cambodia was costly, in human, economic and diplomatic (isolation) terms. Second, Vietnam launched its economic reform or *Doi Moi* at the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1986 and hence needed to concentrate on it. Third, in 1985, the Soviet Union accounted cessation of its support for, and put pressure on, the Vietnamese to leave Cambodia. And finally, the PRK itself intended to take charge of Cambodia, as it might be able to withstand an assault from the Khmer Rouge on its own (Clymer 2004: 146). In the meantime, the US was also willing to negotiate directly with Vietnam. This provided a favourable situation to discuss the resolution to Cambodian issue among the parties concerned.

Finally, after serious negotiations involved national, regional and international parties, which had been conducted for some time and intensified after 1989, Paris Peace Agreement (PPA), recognised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), was signed on October 23, 1991. A coalition government under a Supreme National Council (SNC) was established and chaired by Prince Sihanouk, which composed of the four political factions. To maintain peace process, the UNSC, with the backing of the factions, endorsed the treaty and agreed to establish in the country a peacekeeping

operation consisting of both soldiers and civil servants under the control of a United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) that would monitor progress towards conducting elections with the participation from all warring factions, temporarily run several government ministries, and safeguard human rights.

A new phase of Cambodia-China relations began to take shape in the post Cold War relaxing environment, though at the early stage, both sides had remained suspicion towards each other due to the recent past hostile, and the merging of Cambodian political factions had remained fragile and volatile. However, all parties attached great importance to peace and political stability in order to achieve national reconstruction and socio-economic development. China abundantly supported Cambodia's peace process and simultaneously cultivated a good relationship with all Cambodian political factions. In this sense, it can be seen that Cambodia has still maintained potential position in China's strategic foreign policy. Since 1991, Cambodia and China started to normalise their relations that have gradually improved over next two decades.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA

After decades of civil war, foreign occupation, social disruption, and change of external environment after the Cold War, Cambodia's four political factions and nineteen countries finally agreed to settle Cambodian conflict through political solutions, commonly known as PPA. The Agreement became a 'historic event' in Cambodian political development that brought about the second Kingdom of Cambodia and the multiparty liberal democracy. Pursuance to the Agreement, on the other hand, the United Nations peacekeeping forces officially known as UNTAC had been deployed to monitor political transition in Cambodia and to organise and monitor elections scheduled in 1993.

Since the early 1990s, Cambodia and China has begun to develop their relationship from trust deficit (1991-1997) to gradually influential, external partnership (1997-2012). This tightening of Cambodia-China relationship is relatively recent and reflects the restructuring of the Cambodian state in the late 1980s. Before this, China's foreign policy interests in Cambodia were shaped in turn by Cambodia's Cold War foreign policy under Prince Sihanouk in the 50s and 60s, and its support for Cambodia's communists from the late 1960s until a new coalition government was formed after the UNTAC-supervised elections in 1993. Due to a decade of resistance war along with diplomatic tensions between China and Cambodia under Hun Sen/Heng Samrin leadership backed by Vietnam, the two sides held mutual suspicion. Although there was mutual suspicion in the beginning, both sides were able heal the past hostile and strengthen close ties by signing treaty of comprehensive of partnership in 2006 and treaty of comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation in 2010. As bilateral relations have deepened, China's influence in Cambodia has also increased. With China's deep influence in Cambodia, Cambodia's independence and autonomy of foreign relations decision has been challenged. Cambodia is seen to have supported and articulated China's interest in every helm. However, before realisation

of such a state of relationship, both states had to begin with diplomatic normalising and trust building.

Diplomatic Normalisation and Building Political Trust

In the post-Cambodian conflict, China's interests in Southeast Asia had remained unchanged but international political environment had transformed dramatically, i.e., the end of Cold War geopolitical rivalries, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, thus China's northern border was not under threat, and significantly the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, thus its southern neighbors were relatively independent from the Vietnamese influence. In this sense, Beijing had broken down the Soviet Union 'encirclement' in Southeast Asia. This proved that the comprehensive political settlement on Cambodian issue reflected considerable Chinese success. The political settlement, as keenly desired by the Chinese, reestablished a sovereign, independent and neutral Cambodia. At this early stage, China's policy towards Cambodia was the focus on political consolidation and diplomatic normalization.

Diplomatic Normalisation

On November 14, 1991, the former Cambodian head of state, King Norodom Sihanouk left for Phnom Penh from Beijing where he had spent more than twelve years in exile. With the King was the newly appointed Chinese Representative to the SNC of Cambodia Ambassador Fu Xuezhong who was serving as China's Special Councilor during the Khmer Rouge regime (Jeldres 2012).

However, the first difficulty in re-establishment of diplomatic normalisation was the attack on Khmer Rouge leaders and members of the SNC, Khieu Samphan and Son Sen, on November 27, 1991, when they returned to Phnom Penh. The attack was widely believed to have been premeditated by the Phnom Penh authority (the SOC) under Hun Sen administration (Jeldres 2012: 83). In February 1992, the first highest China official, Foreign Minister Qian Qichan broke the ice by visiting Phnom Penh—ruled by Hun Sen group that China had until recently labeled as “Vietnamese puppets” (Chanda 2002: 6). In the meeting with SNC, Qian Qichan encouraged Cambodian political factions to work together for national reconciliation (Jeldres 2012: 84).

Subsequently, Khmer Rouge formally announced its withdrawal from SNC and boycotted the forthcoming May 1993 elections in September 1992. This created a

policy dilemma for China since it had wanted to maintain relations with all Cambodian political factions in the process of peace and stability. However, China firmly supported the elections. When Khmer Rouge nominal leader Khieu Samphan visited Beijing in May 1993, Chinese officials warned him “not to disrupted the elections” (ibid.: 84) UNTAC-supervised elections took place from May 23-28, 1993. Not to wait, China recognized the election results in which Prince Norodom Ranariddh’s FUNCINPEC won 45% and Hun Sen’s CPP 39%. In an attempt to compromise, Prince Ranariddh was named first Prime Minister, and Hun Sen second Prime Minister in coalition government.

In August, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to withdraw all of UNTAC peacekeepers by mid-November. The new, fragile coalition government with divided military forces was left to contend with the Khmer Rouge without major external support. At the end of August, China’s Representative Office in Phnom Penh was officially upgraded to an embassy. In September, China’s longtime ambassador to the SNC, Fu Xuezhong was replaced by Xie Yue’e, who had been a Khmer Rouge liaison officer at the Chinese embassy in Bangkok and had deep experience and involvement with Cambodian policy of senior leaders like Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, showed that China was preparing “a high degree of continuity” of its foreign policy towards Cambodia (Richardson 2010: 167-168).

Now China had to distance itself from Khmer Rouge ally in order to develop a good relationship with the new CPP-led coalition government. Meanwhile, China had to cooperate with the less powerful first Prime Minister Ranariddh, and its former enemy, the more powerful second Prime Minister Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, who wrote in 1988 essay describing China as “the root of everything that was evil in Cambodia” given its close ally of the disastrous Khmer Rouge (Marks 2000; Jeldres 2012: 82). Political confidence building, therefore, was central to Cambodia-China relationship so as to eliminate the past bitter hostile and current suspicions.

Building Political Trust

In the 1990s, China’s return to Cambodia had not been welcomed by all Cambodians. Firstly, Cambodian leaders and general people remained suspicious in Chinese commitment to participate in the PPA in which China was one of the signatories due to its close connection with the brutal Khmer Rouge, though it seemed that diplomatic establishment was engaged with full capacity at the official level (Kosal 2009: 6).

And secondly, they worried that the renewed Sino-American rivalry in the Southeast Asian region would once again force Cambodia to become “a pawn in the strategic and geopolitical games” of the two superpowers (Jeldres 2003). Whereas China was also suspicious of Hun Sen and his links to Vietnam, though found little difficulty in supporting the royalist FUNCINPEC party headed by Sihanouk’s son Norodom Ranaridh, given its close relationship with Sihanouk since the late 1950s (Jeldres 2012: 84; Thayer 2013: 224).

However, Cambodia did need Chinese assistance for national reconstruction and most importantly wanted China to end its support for the Khmer Rouge forces that refused to lay down arms and work in a coalition with other political groups. Moreover, due to the retrenched Vietnamese power and Hanoi’s diminished ability to contribute to Phnom Penh’s economic or strategic security, Phnom Penh had the need and opportunity to pursue Cambodia’s traditional diplomatic practice of developing cooperative relations with both Beijing and Hanoi (Ross 1992: 58). In this sense, Chanda (2002) pointed out that, “A rapprochement with China also would restore China’s historic role of cushioning Cambodia against Vietnamese pressure on the east and Thai pressure on the west.” In other words, the return of Beijing policy interest in Cambodia ‘seemed to be re-creating the golden era of the early 1960s’ (Richardson 2010: 156).

Political trust was a priority policy for China to maintain its influence and interest in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia at large. It was also conditioned by the Cambodian side in normalisation with China in the first half of 1990s. To build political trust in its relations with Cambodian political factions, China pursued three approaches. First, China had to distance itself militarily and ideologically from anti-regime and anti-system forces in Cambodia in order to remove years of mistrust and apprehension from the minds of the people and regimes in power; second, trust had to be built through institutional political linkages at various levels of the ruling parties and other dominant political institutions for example Cambodian monarchy. Moreover, China also cultivated contacts with the leadership at various levels through the grant of generous personal favours and political support; and third, China sought to extend its cultural influence at the mass level to generate goodwill and support on a wider basis. By this way, Chinese minority in Cambodia had been an importance instrument, which could be used to facilitate economic linkage with the Chinese and enhance political relations with Cambodia (Muni 2002: 26-27).

In the early 1990s, Chinese diplomacy showed that Beijing was confident in its regional authority and a corresponding willingness to work even with the Vietnamese-installed puppets within a coalition leadership. Evidently, China welcomed the SNC, including Hun Sen (his first time), to Beijing in July 1991 and also invited Hun Sen to pay a formal three-day official visit to China after the meeting. The Chinese diplomatic behaviour thus essentially led to normalising relations with the Phnom Penh government (Ross 1992: 58). Meanwhile, although China claimed in 1990 to have stopped its military and material support for the Khmer Rouge, it did not cut off relationship with this extremist force. On the one hand, possibly China might use the Khmer Rouge to counteract the Vietnamese-influenced CPP in coalition leadership. It is noteworthy that in spite of the ostensible withdrawal ‘the Vietnamese had left in place thousands of military advisors, in the range of 5,000 to 10,000, and had sent their forces in and out of Cambodia to deal with specific engagements’ (Mehta and J. B. Mehta 2013: 136). And on the other hand, if the situation changed to be the Chinese disadvantage, China would resume full support for the Khmer Rouge. In other way, China also had tried to persuade both Prince Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge to form a coalition with the CPP—firstly to accommodate the Khmer Rouge into the Cambodian political structure and secondly to reduce the CPP dependency on the Vietnamese. According to one scholar on Southeast Asian affairs “The Chinese were closely taking note of the fact that the CPP-led government, due to its own internal urge as well as to the influence of other regional and global forces, was trying to become independent of its Vietnam connection” (Muni 2002). Hun Sen and his CPP did realise that “in the current strategic circumstances, only good relations with Beijing could bring peace to Cambodia and permit political stability, regardless of the composition of the Cambodian leadership” (Ross 1992: 58). It should also be noted that Hun Sen had changed country’s official name from the Vietnamese-created People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK; 1979-1989) to State of Cambodia (SOC; 1989-1993) with new free market economy in early 1989 even before the withdrawal of Vietnam troops (Global Security 2012). To the least, it appeared that Hun Sen wanted to have some independence from Vietnam as to improve his government’s international image.

Chinese effort to bring all political groups together was not an easy task, and the Khmer Rouge was very difficult to deal with. China had often been blamed whenever there was any attack on coalition group by the Khmer Rouge forces,

considering that without which the latter would not have been able to live on. Hence, China had to distance itself from outlawed Khmer Rouge necessarily in reestablishing friendly relations with Cambodian coalition government in the post 1993 elections, at least in appearance. In May 1993, *The New York Time* reported that Chinese support for Khmer Rouge grows cooler, by citing diplomat from one of China's neighbors in anonymity that “We’ve seen more tensions between the Khmer Rouge and China in recent years. There’s been a cooling of ties. But it’s not yet possible to say that there’s been a final break” (Kristof 1993). Cambodian government was keen to see China disconnection with the Khmer Rouge so that it would sincerely foster further relations and cooperation between the two countries. In this respect, a keen scholar on Cambodian affairs writes:

Cambodia’s China policy has other domestic strategic implications as well. The coalition leadership has one enemy who has Beijing’s best ally in Indochina—the Khmer Rouge. After the elections, the war did not come to an end as the Khmer Rouge rebels still battled their way to get a piece of the power pie. Although the Khmer Rouge threat has been over-exaggerated, the war has kept Cambodia on its knees, as much of the national budget has been spent on defence and internal security.

Phnom Penh’s China policy was, therefore, to deny the Khmer Rouge access to its most importance friend by wooing leaders in Beijing to its side. Although China recognised the elections that led to the formation of the coalition government and has since supported King Sihanouk and Phnom Penh, the Cambodian government’s policy is to weaken the rebels by adopting a strategy of turning its foe’s friend into its own (Peou 1997a: 30).

In 1994, to get assurance from Beijing on this policy purpose, the two Cambodia’s prime ministers, Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen visited China. Chinese leaders welcomed the visit and viewed it as an approach to the Cambodian peace process and to normalisation of relationship between Cambodia and China. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin expressed in his welcoming speech to the two premiers that, “The visit of the two premiers, so shortly after the creation of the Kingdom demonstrated the attention you are paying to the development of Sino-Cambodian relations.” In responding to the two premiers requested China to end support for the Khmer Rouge, President Zemin wrote:

Concerning the Khmer Rouge problem, which is an internal issue of Cambodia, the Chinese government will not interfere. Regarding the two prime ministers' proposal calling on the Chinese side to stop providing benefits to the Khmer Rouge, I would like to inform you that according to our inquiry, the Khmer Rouge has not received any benefit from the Chinese side at all. China and Cambodia will remain time-honoured good friends forever (Survey of World Broadcast 1994).

The President also pressed that the Chinese government was prepared to expand Sino-Cambodian relationship and cooperation based on the five principle of peaceful coexistence and would continue to render support and assistance to Cambodia's national reconciliation and reconstruction. However as regard to the Khmer Rouge issue, the statement above does not likely deny the Chinese links with the Khmer Rouge, though it merely shows that the Chinese stopped providing material assistance to the Khmer Rouge. Muni (2002) argued that China might have kept informal and secret contacts with the Khmer Rouge and probably not to alienate a former close ally, and in the hope of reviewing their old relationship, partially or fully, if and when the political situation in Cambodia so warranted.

The CPP, FUNCINPEC and China

While China and Cambodia were in the process of political confident building, the former also observed the leadership of Cambodian political factions. As pointed out earlier, during the transitional period, China did not break relationship with any Cambodia's political group or party —the Khmer Rouge, the CPP, FUNCINPEC and BLDP (Son Sann's Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party). China carefully observed the development of political situation interplayed by these four parties. By 1996, however, there were signals that the Chinese were courting Hun Sen and his CPP because of FUNCINPEC expanding its links with Taiwan, which infuriated Beijing.

During the transitional period, the Chinese viewed Prince Sihanouk, a chairman of the SNC, as a key nonpartisan who could unite other politicians for national reconciliation and construction. But the fact is that the CPP was the dominant party since the formation of the SNC. Although the SNC led by equal share of leadership among the four factions, this was apparently in principle rather than in practice; effective control in most of Cambodian administrative structure had remained in the hands of the Phnom Penh regime or State of Cambodia. Ever since

1979, the old regime of Hun Sen/Heng Samrin controlled majority of administration with huge number of the Vietnamese officials, range from 5,000 to 10,000, in the ministries and departments (Peang-Meth 1992: 43; Mehta and J.B. Mehta 2013: 137). Hence, China began to see Hun Sen, the former prime minister of the Vietnamese-installed PRK, as the emerging dominant player in Cambodian politics.

While China had a good relationship with most of the royalists due to its close friendship with Prince Sihanouk, China did not ignore the CPP members, its past adversaries during the 1980s when the Vietnamese forces invaded and occupied Cambodia. In 1992, the CPP delegation headed by its Chairman, Chea Sim, who was also President of the National Assembly of the State of Cambodia (SOC), paid first official visit to Beijing. This visit produced a remarkable success between the CPP and the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) as both parties established first party-to-party relations (Jeldres 2012: 84). It is notable that it was until Chea Sim's visit the Chinese remained considering Hun Sen and his CPP the Vietnamese 'puppet'.

In the year 1996, many observers and analysts (Peou 1997b; Storey 2011; Jeldres 2012) noted that the Chinese began to woo Hun Sen, incensed at FUNCINPEC's courtship with Taiwan. In this year, there were two important events in development of Cambodia-China relations, the Second Prime Minister Hun Sen's July 18-23 visit to Beijing and an earlier April 22-24 visit to Phnom Penh by Chinese General Zhang Wannian (Hayes 1996). Regarding the former, there was a serious indication of China's interest in courting the second prime minister. Reportedly, the Chinese sent the plane from Beijing to Phnom Penh to pick the Second Prime Minister Hun Sen up and brought him home; the plane cost was paid by the Chinese in a sum estimated at around US\$100,000 (ibid.). On the other hand, this time, the Hun Sen's visit to Beijing did not include First Prime Minister Ranariddh, and there was a group of CPP officials with only one FUNCINPEC cabinet member, Agricultural Minister Tao Seng Huor (Peou 1997b). During the visit, bilateral agreements on trade and investment protection were signed. Notably, during meetings with the Chinese leaders Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, Hun Sen expressed his concern about growing Western influence in his country. In Beijing, Hun Sen also expressed his support for Beijing's position on Taiwan and Tibet (Richardson 2010: 170). Hun Sen's expressions indeed reflected the Chinese convergent interest. According to one scholar on Cambodian affairs China's interest in Cambodia was driven by not only economic, but also geopolitical consideration. He writes the following:

China's interest in Cambodia was, of course, not driven only by economic interests. Geopolitics matter a great deal. The leadership in Beijing no doubt preferred to see Cambodia keep a distance from Vietnam, and courting the CPP would serve this strategic interest. Furthermore, the Chinese leaders must have welcomed Hun Sen's resentment of Western pressures on human rights and democracy. China also wanted to avoid being accused of favouring FUNCINPEC. China's main concern is Cambodia's political stability, not respect for human rights and adherence to democratic principles. The main goal is to see a stable Cambodia which is not used by anyone to contain China (Peou 1997b: 98).

The second significant event in the year 1996 was the visit of Gen. Zhang Wannian, a chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff Department and a member of both the party and state Central Military Committees, to Cambodia. During the visit, Zhang signed a US\$1 million military aid package with Royal Government to provide training and equipment to RCAF (Royal Cambodian Armed Forces). While the size of the aid package was not overly impressive, according to one western military analyst "the size of the delegation was a good indication of the general overall interest China has in Cambodia" (Hayes 1996; Jeldres 2012). Despite the military aid package, it had been noted that size of the Defense Attaché's office at the Chinese Embassy in Phnom Penh pegged at 30, including spouses. This was an indication that the Chinese military was serious about developing a long-term relationship with the powers in that were in Phnom Penh (Hayes 1996). Moreover, Zhang's visit and the announcement of military cooperation, at the very least, signaled the Chinese ceased supporting for the outlawed Khmer Rouge. Concisely, the Chinese wanted to show the Royal Government and the doubting Thomases within the CPP that the Chinese political and military hierarchy were, at the very least, solidly in support of the coalition government. As far as the party-to-party is concerned, there was no any agreement was signed between the CCP and CPP during Hun Sen's visit to Beijing, but the issue was discussed. The Chinese were keen to do so, as they were eager to strengthen party ties with their Laotian and Vietnamese counterparts. So ideology (authoritarian affinity) perhaps played a role in China rapprochement with the CPP, thought in the post Cold War China had liberated its foreign policy from ideological constrains following its Open Door and Good Neighbourliness Policies (Muni 2002).

China's relations with the royalist FUNCINPEC party began to deteriorate due to the latter established close ties with Taiwan. China considered FUNCINPEC action a serious offence of Chinese national sovereignty and "One China" policy, countries that have diplomatic relations with China are supposed to respect. For this reason, despite its liking Prince Sihanouk, China had to reconsider the nature of its relationship with FUNCINPEC which also had been seen unable to run the country and in the meantime perceived the CPP as an emerging dominant player in Cambodian politics.

In September 1994, Cambodia and Taiwan signed a memorandum of understanding paving the way for the opening of representative offices in Phnom Penh and Taipei. Later in March 1995, the deputy major of Phnom Penh, Khau Meng Hean, a confidant of First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh, became the first Cambodian official to visit Taipei since 1975, where he made some disparaging remarks that offended China (Jeldres 2012). In the late 1995, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office was opened in Phnom Penh which functioned as an embassy office, providing visas to travelers and promoting cultural as well as trade exchanges (Postlewaite 1995). The Taiwanese businessmen were mostly close to FUNCINPEC government officials. They came to Cambodia for productive investment opportunity as party of Taiwan's "southward policy" and represented a shift in focus from other countries in Southeast Asia to Indochina. Cambodia opened a representative office in Taiwan in January 1996. Sticking to "One China" policy, Phnom Penh assured the leadership in Beijing that it was purely a business-oriented move (Peou 1997c). Cambodia did intent to officially recognise Taiwan as independence from China. Taiwanese unofficial representative office was not unique in Cambodia. As such the office found across Southeast Asia and beyond.

China has regarded Taiwan as one of its provinces awaiting reunification. And it is the China's primary foreign policy concern. On several occasions, the Chinese were reported to have protested strongly, albeit privately, about the Royal Government of Cambodia's expanding links with Taiwan. According to one China watcher, the Chinese felt they had been betrayed by FUNCINPEC. They had supported this royalist party for more than ten years when the Royalists were operating with the resistance factions on the Thai border. "For the Chinese, being ungrateful is immoral," said the scholar. "The Chinese have made a cool calculation. They like the King, but they have to think of their own interests. They waited to see

what the coalition would do for three years and now they have decided to back Hun Sen” (Hayes 1996).

So far as the Taiwanese issue is concerned, another incidence which caused Beijing discontent, was the air-link agreement between RGC and Taiwan signed in February 1997. The agreement would allow the latter’s EVA Airways to operate direct flights to Phnom Penh (Peou 1997c). But it had roused the strong reaction from China. Without being specific, a Chinese diplomat in Phnom Penh told the *Phnom Penh Post* (1997) that China might retaliate against the RGC for signing the “secret agreement.” “We will definitely take action if things take a wrong turn, because Taiwan is an inalienable part of China,” he said. “The People’s Republic of China is firmly opposed to any official agreements made between Taiwan and those countries that have diplomatic relations with China.” Then Beijing sent delegation to Cambodia for clarification of the deal, and obtained Cambodia’s reassurance of its “One China” policy. In response to the Chinese wrath, Vichit Ith, RAC’s chairman and chief executive officer, issued a carefully worded statement that “As the flag carrier, we abide by the Royal Government’s stance of a ‘one China policy.’ As a result, should RAC have the intention to fly to Taipei, we will need to get the guidance from the Civil Aviation Authority of China in Beijing” (Vittachi 1997). Then Cambodia agreed to send a delegation to Beijing in April for China’s official permission to start the air-link (Peou 1997c).

The Second Prime Minister Hun Sen was reported as saying earlier he denied any knowledge about the air agreement. He reassured the Chinese Ambassador that Phnom Penh was not wavering on its stance towards Beijing, but that, in the interest of Cambodia’s economic growth, it was important to nurture trade and investment ties with Taiwan (Vittachi 1997). To the Chinese, it seemed that the First Prime Minister Ranariddh would be responsible for the deal, which caused resentment of the Chinese and he would have to take the consequences.

Jeldres (2012), a former Australian Ambassador to Cambodia and Official Biographer of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, offers another reason of the Chinese shift in its calculation of Cambodian internal politics. It was in 1996 when the Chinese Embassy reported with concern on an incidence, which involved the sudden cancellation by the Cambodian Ministry of Industry of a contract between the Guangdong Engineering Industries Co. and the Cambodian Cement Co., a company owned by Sino-Khmer based in Hong Kong with close links to FUNCINPEC and the

Royal Palace. The contract was signed in 1992 to provide for the two companies to repair and upgrade the State Cement Factory in Chakrey Ting in Kampot province. According to Jeldres (2012), “this factory was a highly emotional matter for both the Cambodian and Chinese governments, as it has been given to Cambodia by China during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period under Norodom Sihanouk.” The Chinese told Cambodian Ambassador in Beijing that they were very unhappy with the cancellation of the contract and stressed that if that matter was reconsidered by the Cambodian government, it would have “negative consequences on the relationship between the two countries” (Report No. 129/MD/96). Cambodia did not reconsider the contract and it was awarded to a Swiss company, ignoring the Chinese partner’s investment of US\$10 million in ongoing repair work at the factory.⁴

The Chinese finally had to make a choice between FUNCINPEC and the CPP after years of following the political development in Cambodia under a fragile coalition government. Internal uneasiness within the coalition too drew China’s attention to closely look for Cambodia’s ‘strongman.’ By 1996, the Khmer Rouge became deeply divided with mass defections by dissidents to the government. They were no longer useful for the Chinese foreign policy instrument. Meanwhile, China’s eager return to Cambodia was to make sure that Cambodia would not be controlled or influenced by any external powers in containing China and internal political players would ensure to serve China’s interest. The situation proved to be in the favour of the CPP because of FUNCINPEC’s courtship with Taiwan, the Hun Sen’s emerging dominant role in Cambodian politics and to some extent CPP-CCP affinity in authoritarianism.

Cambodia-China Relations at the Turning Point

China’s policy towards Cambodia had come to the final conclusion after three years observation of the domestic political development in Cambodia. Political rivalries in the uneasy coalition government run by the two strong parties—Norodom Ranariddh’s FUNCINPEC and Hun Sen’s CPP—resulted in a bloody coup in which Hun Sen seized the sole power in government from his co-prime minister Ranariddh.

⁴ Up to date the Chakrey Ting cement factory is owned by the Chinese and they aid a new factory expected to be operational in 2014. Chinese firm Huaxin Cement Co. has purchased a 40% stake in this new factory (*The Phnom Penh Post*, 20 June 2014).

While members of international community opposed Hun Sen's actions, China took a different stand regarding the coup as Cambodia's internal affairs and to be resolved by the Cambodians. In the aftermath of the victorious coup, Hun Sen emerged as Cambodia's 'Strong Man' whom the China had to embrace firmly. Markedly, military confrontation opened the door for Chinese influence and fostered close relations between Beijing and Hun Sen (Jeldres 2006).

The July 5-6 Coup

Immediately after military fighting erupted in Phnom Penh between forces loyal to the two Prime Ministers, Thomas Hammerberg, the U.N. Special Representative on Human Rights in Cambodia made it clear in his October 1997 report to the United Nations General Assembly: The events of July-5-6 were a 'coup d'état' (United Nations 1997). However, different views over Hun Sen's actions to be called a coup or not was dependent on the viewers. Those who supported or sympathized with the Second Prime Minister viewed them as preventing Prince Ranariddh from staging a coup against the government. Those who put the blame on Hun Sen considered his actions a coup.

Curtis (1998), an author of *Cambodia Reborn?*, contended that the July 1997 events were more "an opportunistic coup de force" rather than a coup d'état. Widyono (2007), a former representative to the U.N. General-Secretary, said Prince Ranariddh provoked Hun Sen's actions. However, from academic point of view one scholar on Cambodian affairs argued that the overthrow of Ranariddh was a pre-emptive coup (Peou 1998a). From structural approach, he argued "Hun Sen's actions must be explained in terms of his struggle for hegemonic preservation, as his party and adversaries braced themselves for the next election scheduled for 1998." Hun Sen said his actions were not a coup d'état. "If I made a coup d'état I would change the monarchy to a republic, suspend the constitution and arrest (Ranariddh's royalist party) ministers, but everything is still the same," he said (CNN 1997). According to political scientists, "coup" can be defined as "sudden and violent overthrow of a government, almost invariably by the military or with the help of the military" (Robertson 1993: 118). To put it abundantly, a coup is a seizure of power by "a group within the system, who make no attempt to change society as a whole, but are only interested in removing political leaders from power" (Peou 1998a).

Genesis of the coup derived from long tensions between the two prime ministers dated back to elections in 1993 from which Prince Ranariddh emerged with the trappings of seniority, while Hun Sen and his formerly communist CPP kept most of the real power. All government institutions were dominated by the CPP, and despite fact that FUNCINPEC won majority votes in the elections, CPP had firm control at local levels—provinces, districts and communes. Moreover, even in the government administration, CPP controlled nearly very decision making process. Their political marriage of convenience became stained in 1996 when the First Prime Minister Ranariddh was no long able to keep patient and began to demand more power-sharing. He saw himself as a “puppet” in coalition government. “Being First puppet prime minister, puppet vice-prime minister, puppet ministers, puppet governors and deputy governors and soon-to-be puppet chiefs of districts...being a puppet is not so good” (Barber and Munthit 1996).

Furthermore, in mid-July 1997, the coalition partnership between the two prime ministers began to deteriorate as both tried to get the Khmer Rouge remnants to their own side and Ranariddh’s near-completed negotiations with the Khmer rouge remnants intensified the rift (Brown and Zasloff 1998; Peou 1998; Sundararaman 2000; Storey 2011). In negotiations with the Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC had seemed on the verge of success for it used to be allies with the Khmer Rouge during the resistance war against the Vietnamese-backed PRK in the 1980s. And also the Khmer Rouge leaders negatively viewed Hun Sen as “contemptible” and a “puppet” of Vietnam, evidently enough to say that they would make peace with FUNCINPEC, not with the CPP (Thayer 1997). FUNCINPEC’s increasing collaboration with the rump Khmer Rouge (hyperMaoist Pol Pot was excluded from negotiations; Khieu Samphan, Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister and other moderate Khmer Rouge were persuaded to join RGC) would have shifted the military balance in its favour which had grown vulnerable to Hun Sen. The CPP officials and some observers viewed Ranariddh’s move a virtual revival of the “non-communist resistance” which fought Hun Sen’s Vietnam-backed government from Cambodia’s northwestern border with Thailand in the 1980s (*The Phnom Penh Post* 1996a). In addition, on February 27, 1997, Ranariddh’s launch of National United Front (NUF), comprising FUNCINPEC, the BLDP, the Khmer Nation Party (KNP) led by the former Finance Minister and senior FUNCINPEC leader Sam Rainsy, and the small Khmer Neutral Party, would hinder Hun Sen’s road to build up hegemonic victory in the proposed May 1998

national elections. A day after, CPP issued statement described the front's formation as "welded broken plate", among other things—a clear reference to the reunion between Ranariddh and Rainsy who was dismissed from FUNCINPEC (Munthit, 1997) in May 1995 at CPP Prime Minister Hun Sen's urgings (Peou 2000: 192).

With the existing military superiority, the Second Prime Minister decided to launch a pre-emptive coup against the First Prime Minister Ranariddh in 5-6 July 1997 in the streets of Phnom Penh. Within a week lasting, the well-prepared CPP forces loyal to Hun Sen announced triumphant over the FUNCINPEC's. The coup was involved in torture, summary executions and custodial deaths, unlawful mass arrests, detention, and intimidation of political opposition, aimed at rooting out Ranariddh loyalists (Human Rights Watch 1997). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1998) releases a report in May 13 documenting 41 extrajudicial executions that had taken place during 2-7 coup period. Soon after 5-6 July clashes, order and stability had been relatively restored in Phnom Penh, though political purges and widespread extrajudicial executions of FUNCINPEC military figures were carried on by Hun Sen's forces. No investigation and punishment for the most serious human rights violations was conducted as in the case Ho Sok, FUNCINPEC's Secretary of State, Minister of Interior, who has been murdered in the custody in his ministry.

As a result of the coup, the CPP yielded a complete control of the military and government, destroyed the infrastructure and property of opposition parties (depriving them of the ability to function in Cambodia) and forced Prince Ranariddh into exile in France and other opposition figures fled to Thailand for safety. Adams (2007), currently Asia director at Human Rights Watch, argues that "The CPP's successful threat to use force if its conditions [of power-sharing] were not met," even though it lost in the 1993 UNAC-supervised elections, "may have emboldened Hun Sen to use military force if his hold on power was ever threatened again." Similarly, Brown and Zasloff (1998: 263–264), professors at US universities, pointed out that "Hun Sen had shown himself determined to acquire and hold power, and he was not deterred by democratic niceties." In this respect, they further observed Hun Sen's move as follows:

Hun Sen may have calculated that Ranariddh's concessions to the odious Khmer Rouge, so reviled in the West and particularly the United States, offered him a propitious moment to seize power. If he

moved rapidly, he would not encounter opposition that might reverse his dominance. The United States would probably not intervene independently from ASEAN, which would surely reaffirm its policy of nonintervention in the affairs of its members or prospective members. Japan would probably not intrude.

International Reaction

The responses of international community to the political turmoil in Cambodia varied in “speed and intensity” and “what surprised most observers was not the coup itself, which many had foreseen in the making, but rather the brutality with which it was conducted” (Um 1998). After the violent coup erupted many foreign governments registered silent protests through the evacuation and reducing number of their embassy staffs and suspension of aid and assistance.

The United States expressed the most persistent criticism of the coup. Immediately after the 5-6 July events, the US condemned the killing and attributed responsibility for it to Hun Sen (Marshall 1997). The US, which had appropriated US\$35 million in aid for the fiscal year along with US\$7 million in Defense Department funds suspended assistance for thirty days following the coup (Erlanger 1997). On August 8, the State Department announced that it was resuming humanitarian aid, which accounted for about half of the US\$35 million package. Freeing of developmental aid, humanitarian assistance had been made contingent upon an improved political climate in Cambodia and evidence of the liberalization and democratization of the political process, including the conduct of free and fair elections. Accompanying the decision to withdraw embassy officials, the State Department also encouraged all US private citizens to leave Cambodia by commercial flights as soon as possible (Lenaghan 1997). Australia also suspended its annual US\$1.5 million military assistance to Cambodia, but would continue to provide about US\$32 million in humanitarian assistance for education, health, rural, development, and housing. Among the donor countries, the most unequivocal in its response to the coup came from Germany, which had made drastic cuts all aid to the Cambodia (Wain 1997).

Japan in pursuit of its pacific post Second World War policy, along with France refrained from outright verbal condemnation of the Hun Sen regime by describing that ‘the current political crisis is an internal conflict between Ranariddh and Hun Sen and that the ousting of Ranariddh was not a coup d’état’. However,

Japan, which was then the largest aid donor to Cambodia giving US\$150 million a year, delayed its assistance until acceptable stability would be secured. Yukio Imagawa, Japan's former ambassador to Cambodia expressed that international pressure such as suspension of economic aid would not be very effective because "such aid is aimed at helping Cambodian people, not political parties" (*The Japan Times* 1997).

In addition to suspension of aid, the United States also lobbied of the U.N. Credentials Committee which deliberated on Cambodia's representation, stating that "the US will not be in a position to concur in the seating of a Cambodian delegation which represents a regime that seized power through undemocratic means" (*The Phnom Penh Post* 1997). Objected by China and the Russian, the US effort to retain the legitimacy of Ranariddh and his appointed envoy succeeded in creating a stalemate that resulted in the decision of the Commission to keep the seat vacant until the legitimate representation could be conclusively determined.

Diplomatic pressure also came from ASEAN, which moved to indefinitely delay on the Cambodia's membership of the group, initially scheduled for July 1997. At the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur held on July 27, ASEAN was to seek assurances from the Hun Sen regime of its continued commitment to the "constitution, liberal democracy and pluralism". Hun Sen referred to mediation efforts as "interference" in Cambodia's internal affairs. On July 10, Hun Sen, clearly annoyed at the international community's criticism of his actions, told reporters that if ASEAN interfered in Cambodia's internal affairs, then "I'll decide not to enter, because I didn't die by not joining ASEAN before" (*CNN* 1997). To this denunciation, ASEAN statesman said that "we don't accept this situation which has happened; we wanted to register our disapproval. We don't want to interfere [but] there are principles and this is where we stand" (Lenaghan 1997).

After freezing aid to Cambodia in the wake of the coup and initially refusing to recognize Ranariddh's ouster, the international community had gradually begun to signal its acceptance of Hun Sen's power grab as a *fait accompli*. The international community stressed the importance of holding free and fair elections in Cambodia as scheduled in May 1998, which would resolve Cambodian issue. In the late July 1997, the Japanese put forward four conditions for continuation of aid: respect for human rights; maintenance of constitutional government; observance of a 1991 Paris peace accord that set up Cambodia's coalition government; and holding free and fair

elections next year to choose a new government (Masaki 1997). After a few weeks, Japan resumed its aid to Cambodia and expressed itself in favour of ASEAN efforts to find an acceptable solution (*The Daily Yomiura* 1997). In August 1997, the ASEAN ministers “reaffirmed the necessity for all political parties in Cambodia to participate fully in the elections and reiterated ASEAN’s readiness to help Cambodia with technical cooperation in facilitating these elections” (Richardson 1997). By August 1997, ASEAN and other major countries appeared to tone down their position on Cambodian crisis even before 1998 elections. At ASEAN Foreign Minister Meeting (AFMM) in Singapore, ASEAN states had individually stated that they could continue to have bilateral relations with the new Cambodian government without having to recognise it (*The Nation* 1997a), though ASEAN rejected Cambodia’s admission to the regional grouping last month. Meanwhile, three key signatories of Cambodian Paris Peace Accords followed similar policy—Japan and France made it clear that they would recognise the new administration and continue their assistance programmes, and the US softened its earlier position by continuing contact with the new regime, although its suspension of economic aid imposed in July had remained intact (ibid.) except direct help for the Cambodian people would continue (*The Nation* 1997b).

Moderate response of the international community to Hun Sen’s a bloody coup, was due to the concern that economic constraints might compel Cambodia towards greater dependence on China. In 1996, the PRC had distanced itself from the Khmer Rouge. Further, China had sought closer relations with the Phnom Penh government through its foreign assistance programme (the second largest to Japan among Asian countries) and through its investment, which extended from logging and wood-processing concessions to construction of a proposed US\$70 million power plant (Um 1998). Under international pressure and economic sanctions in response to July violent events these economic ties assumed even greater importance to Cambodia. In this respect, Hun Sen looked for China as a patronage and played China card against his internal and external oppositions. Ahead of AFMM in Singapore, Hun Sen was quoted as saying Cambodia would “stop playing the Asean card and play other [China] cards” if the regional group took years to consider Phnom Penh’s membership (Sawatsawang and Ashayagachat 1997).

China’s Response

Following the July 1997 fighting, Hun Sen played the China card and began to court Beijing. Much to the pleasure of the Chinese Embassy, he shut down the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office on July 23. To justify his action, Hun Sen claimed that Taiwan's had been covertly supporting the FUNCINPEC forces. Further, the Phnom Penh municipality authorities alleged that the office was "responsible for terrorism," (Sambath and Barron 2003).

Hun Sen's action was a signal to China that Cambodia would firmly abide by "One China" policy. "Peking's embassy in Phnom Penh is sufficient to look after the interests of [all] Chinese people in Cambodia," he said. In its statement, the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Phnom Penh's actions "rude and absurd" and accused Peking the "big black hand" behind Hun Sen's accusatory statements. On July 26, the Chinese ambassador in Cambodia joined Hun Sen in hosting a discussion with the Chinese community including Taiwanese investors in Phnom Penh for purpose of restoring confidence in which the latter showed his control of the country affairs. Such actions upset Taiwanese investors and prompted them to consider suspending operations and withdrawing their investments in Cambodia (*Taiwan Info* 1997).

Perhaps for this favourable condition, China response to the July 1997 coup was different from that of other foreign countries by adopting "indulgent attitude towards Hun Sen's coup" (Brown and Zasloff 1998: 268). China took the advantage of the country's temporary diplomatic isolation to move into pole position in Cambodia's external relations (Storey 2011). Ignoring the killings of royalist officials, China was the first country to recognise the change of regime soon after the July events. China along with Russia supported Cambodian delegation led by Hun Sen and Ung Huot, newly appointed First Minister in place of the ousted Ranariddh. With the US pressure, however, the UN General Assembly's credentials committee did not recognise them as Cambodia's legal representatives, and left Cambodia's seat vacant in the 1997 session (*The New York Times* 1997). By considering the crisis as Cambodia's internal affairs, China upheld the policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of other countries. It refused to impose sanctions on Cambodia and admonished the US and Australia for interfering in Cambodia's internal affairs (*Agence France Presse* 1997). Hun Sen and Ung Huot went to visit King Sihanouk in mid-August at his Beijing residence, and were then received by Premier Li Peng at a Communist Party seaside resort. Reportedly, the Chinese premier told Hun Sen and

Huot that China would “never interfere”, adding that Cambodia’s problems “must be resolved by the Cambodian people” (Chaumeau 1997). In December 1997, China provided a US\$10 million loan to Cambodia to replace the aid suspended by international donors, US\$2.8 million out of which was used to purchase Chinese manufactured military trucks and jeeps to equip RCFA loyal to Hun Sen. The deal, however, caused discontent of opposition and concern of ASEAN. Opposition Sam Rainy said at a December 17 press conference that, “This [deal] is illegal because any loan contracted by the government should be authorised by the National Assembly. The National Assembly is not aware of this loan contracted with China for military purposes.” On the other hand, ASEAN was concerned over a secret military build up by Hun Sen in advance of expected elections next year. Moreover, ASEAN was wary that China might want to use Cambodia as a launch pad to subvert ASEAN.

At the donation ceremony for the 186 trucks and jeeps from China, Hun Sen praised China’s attitude towards Cambodia since July in the following words:

Although some international community members have not yet clearly understood the real situation in Cambodia, a number of friendly countries have maintained their just fair stance on the Cambodian issue. Among them, the PRC, which as firmly adhered to the principle of peaceful coexistence, continues to respect the Kingdom of Cambodia’s independence and sovereignty and does not poke its nose into Cambodian internal affairs (Phnom Penh National Radio 1997; see also Chaumeau 1997).

China’s rapid recognition of Hun Sen-led government resulted from the military coup was due to the fact that China was concerned over the consequences of the unnecessary violence: the “terrible blow” to economic development, the failure to reconcile and overcome differences between the parties, and the renewed prospect for inference from abroad (Richardson 2010: 181). However, China joint with ASEAN countries in fostering general elections, which would include all political parties to resolve Cambodian political conflict. At annual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held on 27 July 1997, in which Cambodian issue dominated the discussion, “China... agreed that [it] wanted Hun Sen to maintain a coalition government. They believe this should include a role for Ranariddh’s royalist FUNCINPEC party until elections scheduled for May 1998 could create a new government in Phnom Penh” (Hiebert 1997).

After all, Hun Sen's coup opened the door for China's influence in exchange for international breathing space and sole legitimacy for his government. Phnom Penh embraced Beijing during July crisis successfully neutralised the position of internal and external oppositions. In this sense, responses of international community did not alter the coup outcome. Primary objective in Hun Sen's military action was to destroy royalist FUNCINPEC forces before they could establish balance strength of his and pivotally to seek political hegemony in the country. To legalise his action, Hun Sen did not change the political system of the country, nor did he intend to change the constitution. Rather he replaced the ousted First Prime Minister Ranariddh with Ung Huot, a FUNCINPEC parliamentary member and Foreign Minister who had no history of military experience. His premiership finally appeared to have been accepted by international community that perceived political compromise better option than traditional way of sanctions. All politicians had been ensured with safety upon their return from exile and allowed to participate in 1998 elections under international observers including China. Prince Ranariddh stood trial and sentenced by Phnom Penh's military court in absentia and then pardoned by the King under political reconciliation, and thereafter returned to his active political life. Hence, more or less, international community was united in its disapproval of the coup and pressured Hun Sen to turn back on democratic path at least in principles.

The July 1998 Elections

The July 1998 elections yielded different results in contrast to the 1993 UNTAC-supervised one; Hun Sen's CPP won 41.2% votes (64 of 122 total seats in the National Assembly), Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC 31.7% (43) and Sam Rainsy's SRP 14.3% (15). Taking into account the political environment in Cambodian context and occurrence of irregularities, intimidations and violence mostly on opposition parties during electoral process, one local election observation NGO called Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia or COMFREL (1999) described the overall electoral process "reasonably credible." And members of the international community rated the election as being free and fair, reflecting the will of the Cambodian people. But, the opposition refused to accept the electoral results, claiming that "serious irregularities and fraud" robbed them of their victory. The opposition staged peaceful demonstrations against the election results. Again, 18 people were killed and many injured by government forces in crackdown of the demonstrations. Indeed, on account

of international electoral standard, the electoral process in Cambodia fell far short of democratic norms (Manikas and Bjornlund 1998: 153).

China, one of 34 member countries of Joint International Observation Group, welcomed the election as having been free and fair. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tang Guoqiang told local media on August 6 that his government was “happy with the [election] results.” He urged the Cambodian parties to respect the results and expressed its hope that they “will work hard to create a new parliament and government in a spirit of national harmony” (Peou 1999: 25). Since no party won two-third majority votes as required to form a government by a single party, again coalition was mandatory. With the international community pressure and his father King Sihanouk’s insistence, Ranariddh agreed to negotiate with Hun Sen to break the post-election political impasse. Both agreed to form a coalition government and to establish a new upper house of Parliament and senate. As a result, Ranariddh would become president of the National Assembly, CPP’s president Chea Sim would become head of the new senate, which would also make him head of state in the absence of the king, Hun Sen would become prime minister. Sam Rainsy was left out from the coalition and thus his party would look set to be the parliamentary watchdog. “From time to time we can challenge them,” Rainsy said (Hayes 1998). Now Hun Sen gained his legitimacy through popular elections, which he had tried more ten years to get it. Nevertheless, it was for the first time in almost three and a half decades that, as Michael Hayes the founder and publisher of *The Phnom Penh Post* clearly observed, “Cambodia is on the verge of finding itself with a government that is recognized internationally, a political environment without any significant competing ideologies, an absence of any major armed conflict internally among warring factions vying for power, the near-complete dissolution of the Khmer Rouge as a threat to national security, and no regional or international powers attempting to interfere in the nation's domestic affairs.” It seemed that international community had no better choice but to endorse elections results in order that civil war and armed conflict would be avoidable. It is hard to believe that Hun Sen, if defeated in elections, would relinquish power while at the same time he had almost total dominion over political and military power in Cambodia (Adams 2007). In this regard, one Khmer political specialist argues that:

To be sure, their endorsement of the election outcome helps to create political stability, as the war has ended and Hun Sen remains Cambodia's "strongman", and is seen as capable of holding "sticks" to make his policies stand. But for Hun Sen's CPP to run the country effectively, it will need co-operation from the opposition parties. This is a tall order. With exclusive control over the military, security, and judicial institutions, the CPP will be tempted to break any stalemate by force (Peou 1998b: 296).

From the setout, China preferred to see a peaceful and stable Cambodia which could provide a good environment for economic development, though, unlike the United State, democracy and human rights had no place in the Chinese consideration. To the least, China viewed the post-election situation was "conductive to developmental purpose: FUNCINPEC was too weak to challenge the CPP, the CPP had no excuse not to focus on development, foreigners had fewer opportunities to intervene, and donors would resume aid with the successful formation of a new government" (Richardson 2010: 185). China now had much confident in strengthening further bilateral relations with Cambodia. It became easier for the Chinese to deal with only one dominant ruling CPP and vice-versa. For Hun Sen, economic development would be his primary focus, and liberal democratic development would be limited to the extent that it would not threaten his power consolidation. To this end, China's model of economic development—a model that limits political liberties—would provide blueprint for his authoritarian leadership.

Strengthening Bilateral Relations

In post 1998 elections, witnessed with a remarkable peace and stability, Cambodia and China relations had a greater opportunity to improve their relations. This could be seen through exchanges of frequent high-level visits between the two countries. Several agreements on multifaceted cooperation and partnership have been signed, which often followed by unconditional aid pledges and low- or free-interest loans, development assistance, and influx of investment. It has been observed that China has adopted inducement approach to pursue strong ties with Cambodia and other countries in the region. Ciorciari (2013) points out that "Beijing has used its economic largesse and political heft as attractive forces, becoming Cambodia's top investor and aid provider, as well as a key diplomatic friend." And Cambodia as a weak state means that Beijing has greater latitude to choose policies of either intimidation or

accommodation. Indeed, China opted for the latter in relations with Cambodia and vice versa. However, bilateral relations have been strengthened, China's influence in Cambodia also has been deepened.

Towards A Solid Relationship

From 1999 to 2006, Cambodia-China relations had developed stronger and stronger. During this period, the two countries signed numerous, political, economic and security agreements and treaties, of which the Treaty of Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation, signed in 2006, levitated Cambodia-China relationship to a new height. An in 2010, the Treat was upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation symbolising a solid relationship between the two countries.

The close Beijing-Hun Sen relationship strengthened during the Cambodia leader's February 1999 visit to China in his capacity as the newly appointed Prime Minister of Cambodia. During the four-day meeting in Beijing, leaders of the two states signed five cooperation and financial assistance deals worth more than US\$220 million to help resuscitate the Cambodian economy (Sawano 1999). Cambodia Foreign Minister Hor Namhong called the visit "a success" having secured from China US\$4.8 million grant aid and a US\$18 million low-interest loan, and other US\$200 million for infrastructure and water resource projects (Levy 1999). Besides, Beijing and Phnom Penh also agreed to an extradition treaty and signed pacts on cultural and tourism cooperation, the details of which were not revealed. In his Beijing-visit briefing letter to King Sihanouk, Prime Minister Hun Sen revealed that China pledged US\$1.5 million to help fund demobilisation of Cambodia armed forces (Saito 1999a). China briefed the visit as "a new high" in Cambodia-China relations (Marks 2000). Chai Zhizhou, Economic and Commercial Councilor at the Embassy of the PRC in Phnom Penh, admitted that the Chinese US\$220 aid package for Cambodia "is one of the largest" among more than 100 of China's diplomatic allies from Africa to Romania (Kyne 1999a). The visit also marked the beginning of frequent high-level exchanges between Cambodian and Chinese governments (Table 1).

On November 13, 2000, the visit by the Chinese President and Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin, the first visit to Cambodia by a top Chinese leader since Liu Shaoqi's visit in 1963, created a new history in Cambodia-China relations; considerably, it was a recall of the traditional relationship between the two countries

during Sihanouk's era. Welcoming preparation by government of Cambodia would be so impressive and special for the historic visit. Estimates of the crowd along with invited Chinese community ranged from 100,000 to 200,000 brandished bright Cambodian and Chinese flags along Jiang's 11-km route from Pochentong Airport to Royal Palace, where he would be the guest of King Sihanouk. The King and Queen accompanied with Hun Sen, and his wife Bun Rany, the government's top official and the diplomatic corps were welcoming the President at the Airport (Maeda *et al.* 2000). A new century marked a new high in Sino-Cambodian relations after almost a decade of political trust building. Significantly, state hospitality and unprecedented welcoming preparation in the city by government of Cambodia was a clear indication of how much Cambodia valued its relationship with the dominant power in the region. Foreign Minister Hor Namhong quoted as saying that "It is a new step to strengthen and expand our relations in all fields with China" (*The New York Times* 2000).

Table 1: Official Visits between Cambodia and China (1992-2012)

Year	Month	From China	From Cambodia	Rank
1992	Feb	Qian Qichen	—	Foreign Minister
	Jul	—	Chea Sim	National Assembly Chairman
1994	Jan	—	Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen	First and Second Prime Ministers
1996	May	—	Hun Sen	Second Prime Minister
1999	Feb	—	Hun Sen	Prime Minister
	Jul	—	Hor Namhong	Foreign Minister
2000	Nov	Jiang Zemin	—	President
2001	Feb	Chi Haotian	—	Defence Minister
	Mar	—	Chea Sim	Senate President
	May	Li Peng	—	Chairman of NPC
2002	Nov	Zhu Rongji	—	Premier
2004	Jan	—	Hun Sen	Prime Minister
2005	Aug	—	Norodom Sihamoni	King
2006	Apr	Wen Jiabao	—	Premier
2008	Feb	Yang Jiechi	—	Foreign Minister
2009	Dec	Xi Jinping	—	Vice President
2010	Dec	—	Hun Sen	Premier
2012	Mar	Hu Jintao	—	President
	Nov	Wen Jiabao	—	Premier
	Sep	—	Hun Sen	Premier

Source: Newspapers and other published sources

Note: Only politically important visits have been incorporated. Several visits related to socio-economic and cultural cooperation, and those visits by the lower levels of leadership have not been included. Though, some errors still possibly exist.

President Jiang Zemin met Cambodian leaders, King Sihanouk, Prime Minister Hun Sen, Senate President Chea Sim and National Assembly President Prince Ranariddh. The meetings produced a “complete consensus” on the value and strength of the relations between the two states in the new century (Maeda *et al.* 2000). Particularly, in the meeting with Prime Minister Hun Sen, President Jiang Zemin pressed upon the importance of peace and stability, national reconciliation and economic development in Cambodia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China [MFAPRC] 2000a). Even though China was then getting close to Hun Sen, King Sihanouk remained important factor and the role model of Cambodian leaders in pursuit of their relations with China. Jiang stated that, “under the leadership of King Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen, the Cambodia people are able to remove outside disturbance, meet all challenges and resolve difficulties to build Cambodia even better.” From MFAPRC (2000a) source, Hun Sen expressed that China’s proposal on developing stronger bilateral relations “is a precious gift for the whole Cambodian people” and “is of long-term and strategic significance for Cambodia.”

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to further promote the bilateral ties reflected in the Joint Statement on the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation (MFAPRC 2000b). It was the first detail document ever produced since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in the early 1990s. The Joint Statement included twelve points detailed the framework of their bilateral multifaceted cooperation which included respects for international law, frequent exchange of visits and contacts, regional and international cooperation (ASEAN, GMS and UN), enhancement of economic cooperation, expansion of tourism exchanges, increasing cooperation on culture, education, public health and sport, and cooperation on the cross-border organised crimes like drug trafficking, money laundering, illegal immigration and others. Strictly, Cambodia reassured adherence to the “One China” policy, recognising Taiwan as an inalienable part of Chinese territory and continued to support China’s cause of peaceful reunification. China also reaffirmed its respect for Cambodian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. As far as cooperation in international affairs is concerned, the PRC and Cambodia envisioned four connected areas: 1) to strengthen the role of the United Nation; 2) to make the international political and economic order more air and equitable; 3) to promote

democracy in international relations; 4) to uphold the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries.

Closely examined the Joint Statement, it should be clear that Jiang Zemin's visit marked a start of "full scale" Chinese comeback to Cambodia "as party of Beijing's push to increase its influence in Southeast Asia" (*The New York Times* 2000). Close Cambodia-China relations reached a peak where Cambodia apparently chose its alliance between the West and China. One Western diplomat told *The Phnom Post* that "You can make China happy or you can make the West happy. Cambodia has to weigh the two" (Postelwaite 2000). In this sense, the Joint Statement reflected that Cambodia decided to enter into full alignment with China in the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, the Chinese comeback did not go without challenge. China's connection with Khmer Rouge regime that killed 1.7 million people within three years, and the question of international Khmer Rouge tribunal haunted the President's visit. Few days before his arrival, the opposition-aligned Student Movement for Democracy (SMFD) expressed strong demand for Jiang apology (Kyne 2000). Referring to the Chinese supplies the Khmer Rouge with more than a million dollars in support during the 1970s and 1980s, SMFD Secretary General Un Sam An said "We can [therefore] blame China for the deaths of more than one million Cambodians [during the Khmer Rouge regime]." Dr Lao Mong Hay, Executive Director of Khmer Institute for Democracy, cited as saying that "China owns Cambodia an apology," added that, "The Chinese [from 1975-1979] followed Mao's doctrine [of violent revolution] and directly assisted the Khmer Rouge to oppress and commit massacres of my fellow Cambodians." Since Chinese influence started to grow, one Cambodian government official advocated in favour of the Chinese: To improve relations with countries is better [than demanding apologies]. On the same day of Jiang visit, there were two separate events, one at the Choeng Ek "killing fields" and other on the Phnom Penh campus of the Institute of Technology, voiced against the Chinese past support for the brutal Khmer Rouge regime (Soenthrith 2000). Participants demanded for China apology and not to interfere in the proposed international tribunal. Dozens of students from the Democratic Front of Khmer Students and Intellectuals protesting along route Jiang passed through, showed the signs proclaiming: "Cambodia is not a Chinese province" and "China! Apologise for the Crime against the Cambodian People!" However they were confiscated by the motorcade came by.

In 2001, there were three subsequent high-level visits by Chinese senior leaders, Defence Minister General Chi Haotian, Foreign Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng and Secretary-General of the Chinese Communist Party and Chair of the National People's Congress Li Peng. Particularly, Li Peng was invited by President of the National Assembly Norodom Ranariddh and Prime Minister Hun Sen for a three day official good will visit on May 18-20—making him the first Chinese NPC chairman who visited Cambodia since the establishment of diplomatic relationship between China and Cambodia in 1958 (*People's Daily Online* 2001a) and the fourth leading Chinese official to visit Cambodia in the past six months. The visits were seen as a solid indicator of the steadily closing ties between Cambodia and China.

Notwithstanding, serving as then China's premier, Li was known for his role in the military crackdown on pro-democratic demonstrators at Tiananmen Square on the historic day of June 4, 1989. His visit to Cambodia gathered a speculation among foreign diplomats and public opinion that China would attempt to block on the passage of the long-stalled Khmer Rouge tribunal draft law, which had been in limbo since January of that year over technical detail. Though Hun Sen denied that China did not talk about the issue. Opposition leader Sam Rainsy protested against Li's visit and called him the "butcher of Tiananmen" in a written statement (Thayer 2001). Fawthrop (2001) of the *Phnom Penh Post* presumably observed that:

It is clear that China is not only cultivating Cambodia as a "special friend" in the region alongside a pariah called Myanmar to increase Chinese influence in Asean, but is piling up goodwill, aid and investment in a sustained bid to head off what they see as the unpalatable threat of a Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

Reportedly, during the meeting with Li Peing, Hun Sen took an opportunity to request for more financial support from China; with amount of US\$60 million in which US\$48 in aid to build roads in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces and US\$12 in credit or interest-free loans to pay for military demobilization of 15,000 soldiers. He also sought the disbursement of US\$50 million that China had previously pledged for engineering support. Li promised to take back these requests to Beijing for consideration (Thayer 2001; Reed 2001; Moriarty 2001).

Despite the strengthening of state-to-state relations, China also pushed to develop close ties between the Chinese Communist Party and the two ruling political parties of Cambodia—the royalist FUNCINPEC and the former communist CPP.

However, China and CCP did not have a formal tie with the rising opposition SRP mainly due to the latter's close relations with the West and its persistent criticism of close Cambodia-China relations. However, in December 2001, Wei Jianxing, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CCP, along with forty-member delegation arrived in Cambodia for a four-day visit starting on December 13 (*Kyodo* 2001). Although Wei met the two parties' leaders, Ranariddh and Chea Sim separately, he expressed, in similar words, that the Chinese side highly valued FUNCINPEC's principle and the CPP's policy "of paying top attention to national interest and cooperate with other parties to jointly contribute to economic construction and national development" (*People's Daily Online* 2001b; *ibid.* 2001c). So his bottom line was "cooperate with other parties."

The year 2002 marked two significant events for Cambodia with the visit of China's Premier, Zhu Rongji, and Cambodia's chair of 8th ASEAN Summit and Great Mekong Sub-Regional Summit. During the Summit, Zhu declared that Beijing, in his four-point proposal for "close and more stable" friendship, was writing off all old Cambodian debts to Beijing, some dating back to the 1960s (MFAPRC 2002; Osborne 2003). On November 2, Hun Sen, with conclusion of the meeting with his counterpart Premier Zhu Rongji, described it a gift "beyond our expectations." How much were the debts? It is not unusual that government of Cambodia, probably for political reason, neither shows to the public nor does it provide any accessible mean to data of country's foreign debts. Hence, neither side was certain about actual amount of a writing-off debt. Perhaps it did not include the recent loans of more than US\$210 million that Cambodia received since 1999. Yet, according to Sam Rainsy, opposition leader and former Financial Minister, the debt cancelled was in fact loans to the Khmer Rouge (Falby 2002). In any case, the declaration reflected the continuing growth of close relations between Cambodia and China.

In April 2004, Prime Minister Hun Sen paid a six-day diplomatic visit to China. It was unprecedented as 57 mostly CPP government officials accompanied the Prime Minister (Sokheng 2004; Samean and Leung 2004). Hun Sen met Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, attended the Boao Economic Forum, and visited several provinces. The two countries signed 16 bilateral agreements for aid and loans to Cambodia, including a number of contracts with private Chinese companies that promised to build a golf club in Siem Reap, a 10-story "tallest building in Cambodia" in Phnom Penh, and a large textiles plant in Sihanoukville. Foreign Minister Hor

Namhong expressed that it was the first time that “a vast agreement” had been signed during the visit (Samean 2004).

During his talks with Wen Jiabao, Hun Sen expressed his gratitude for Chinese “precious” and “selfless” assistance to Cambodia over the years, and also reaffirmed Cambodia’s adherence to “One China” policy. He declared China was Cambodia’s “long-term strategic friend and developing cooperation with China was “an important orientation in Cambodian foreign policy.” Premier Wen, on the other hand, said that China would adhere to policy of “good relations of neighbourhood, peaceful coexistence and common prosperity with neighbourhood” in its friendly and cooperative relations with Cambodia. He added that China supported Cambodia in its endeavour to maintain national stability, promote national unity and develop its economy. China also supported Cambodia’s independent and self-reliant development path (MFAPRC 2004).

However, the visit was seen that CPP had sought the Chinese support admits almost-nine-month political deadlock in the post 2003 elections. Cambodian media reported based on Khmer Intellectual, an anonymous but often-accurate website disseminating political information, that several visits by high-ranking officials of the Chinese Communist Party had resulted in \$50 million being given to Cambodia to support the caretaker government’s worsening financial crisis. It continued that as seen on the website April 9 a large portion of the money was earmarked for a group of business tycoons who were the financial bases of the ruling CPP, who would be asked to invest in a number of industries to consolidate the CPP grip on the economy (Sokheng 2004). If that was true, the ruling CPP was dependent on China not only for external support, but also for internal political rival purpose. In the event that the opposition party pearled for international donors to put pressure on the CPP-led government, China often lent its support for the CPP. However, in almost every meeting with Cambodian counterpart, Chinese leaders frequently emphasized on “political stability” and “economic development” as instrument for national prosperity. Regarding the political standoff (and other issues) among the major parties (CPP, FUNCINPEC and SRP), China was seen to have played a mediator role to reconcile. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson told the press that:

As a friendly neighbor of Cambodia, we follow closely the development of its domestic situation. It is our sincere hope that

leaders of various factions in Cambodia will proceed from the overall interests of ethnic unity and national prosperity, make concerted endeavors to stabilize the situation, form a new government and concentrate their efforts on nation building (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Norway 2004).

In 2005, there was a political tension on border issues and the Supplementary Border Treaty with Vietnam between former King Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen. Hun Sen threatened to abolish monarchy to republic if the former King would have not agreed to the Treaty so as to verify the border re-demarcation with Vietnam (*The Phnom Penh Post* 2005; Sisovann 2005). Then China sent high-ranking officials to meet Cambodian leaders, Mr. Chea Sim, leader of the Senate and president of the CPP, King Sihamoni, Prince Ranaridh, speaker of the National Assembly and leader of Funcinpec party, and Prime Minister Hun Sen. Though publicly aimed to strengthen cooperation and relationship, political observers viewed it as China's intention of mediator role in Cambodian political tension (*VOA* 2005a). Cambodia's stabilized environment served great importance for China to pursue its policy of good neighbourliness. Political instability or turmoil would have invited external intervention as the recent past proved so, which would disturb China's quiet but increasing influence in Cambodia.

Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation

The year 2006 indicated another point of “sound development momentum” of bilateral relations between Cambodia and China as on April 7-8 Premier Wen Jiabao of China's State Council paid a successful two-day official visit to Cambodia. According to a joint communiqué issued at the end of Premier Wen Jiabao's visit, the Chinese and Cambodian governments signed ten agreements and decided to establish a Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation—six years after the Joint Statement on the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation signed by the two countries during President Jiang Zemin's visit to Cambodia in November 2000. Much to the pleasure of Cambodian government was China's announcement of an impressive aid pledge.

According to Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation the two countries agreed to expand exchanges and cooperation in several areas: 1) Consolidating traditional friendship and enhancing mutual trust; 2) Promoting economic cooperation and trade and achieving common development; 3) Boosting exchanges and

cooperation in agriculture, transportation, culture, education, health, information industry, sports, tourism and training as well as local and people-to-people exchanges; 4) Enhancing party-to-party and parliamentary exchanges and the sharing of experience in government; 5) Expanding military exchange and strengthening cooperation on non-traditional security issues; 6) Strengthening coordination both bilaterally and multilaterally to safeguard shared interests, peace stability and development in the region and the rest of the world: i) Strengthening coordination and collaboration in the United Nations and other international organisations; ii) Working together to promote the ASEAN-China strategic partnership for peace and prosperity, implement the Programme of Action for ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership and speed up the establishment of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area; iii) strengthening coordination and cooperation in ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting and the World Trade Organisation. The Chinese side expresses the hope to see Cambodia become an APEC member at an early date (*Xinhua* 2006).

Despite the signing of the Treaty of Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation and other agreements, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao pledged US\$600 million in foreign aid—just US\$1 million less than that of 17 Consultative Group members (foreign aid donors) collectively pledged at their meeting earlier month (Samean 2006). The Chinese aid, unlike that of other aid donor countries attached with conditions of transparency or accountability, came with “no strings attached” or without lecturing the recipient countries on good governance and democratic reforms, which was much attractive to Hun Sen’s government. During a speech at the inauguration of foreign investment projects outside the capital Phnom Penh, Hun Sen explicitly thanked China for not linking the two issues, and rebuked other donors by saying, “China talks less but does a lot” (*Associated Press* 2006) and China “will never use this [development assistance] as a condition to interfere in internal affairs of other countries” (MFAPRC 2006).

The aid promised, and the signing of investment agreements and a Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation “had elevated the bilateral relationship to a new height” as well as symbolized China’s deepening influence in Cambodia. In December 2010, Cambodia and China reached the higher plane in their bilateral relations when Prime Minister Hun Sen and President Hu Jintao met in Beijing and agreed to raise bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of

Cooperation. At the end of meetings, the two sides signed a number of agreements on strengthening cooperation in energy security, infrastructure development, finance, and consular affairs (*Xinhua* 2010a; Sutter and Huang 2011). As bilateral relations have strengthened cemented by China's million US dollars of aid and grants, China's influence has overtly increased. In the past, Hun Sen has depicted China as Cambodia's "most trusted friend" (Osborne, 2004: 29). Chinese Ambassador Pan Guangxue once described the deep relationship with between the two countries that, "China and Cambodia will always be good neighbors, close friends, trusted partners and dear brothers" (*The Phnom Penh Post* 2011). What had been the Chinese influence in Cambodia during its two-decade-long tightening political relations with Cambodia?

Deepening China's Influence

Since the post-1997, Cambodia has articulated the Chinese political interests at almost every helm. However, it has been found that Cambodia's commitments in the diplomatic exchange are to comply with several relatively painless Chinese requirements in exchange for much-needed economic development (Marks 2000). Repeatedly, publicly, and some sometimes, unnecessarily, Cambodian leaders have voiced their strong adherence to "One China" policy, and supported China's gross human rights violation. On the other hand, they have also articulated China's interests in the regional bloc with regard to its territorial claim in South China Sea.

Taiwan Issue

First and foremost is the support for Beijing's "One China" policy regarding Taiwan issue in which Cambodia considers Taiwan as an integral part of China, resolutely opposes to the Taiwan's independence declaration and backs China's national reunification policy.

King Norodom Sihanouk, the architect of Cambodia-China relations in the 1960s, had maintained strong support for China's "One China" policy and advised the next generations of Cambodian leaders to do the same. In August 1999, King Sihanouk even suggested that, in his letter to Hun Sen, government ban Taiwanese investors from displaying the Republic of China flag or engaging in other such "subversive activities" on Taiwan's National Day (*Huashang Ribao* 1999). In few weeks after the July 1997 coup, Hun Sen ordered the closure of Taiwan's Economic

and Cultural Representative Office in Cambodia. As noted by Marks (2000), unlike most countries (especially, in Southeast Asia) that maintain diplomatic relations with Beijing at least allow unofficial Taiwanese representatives to issue visas and to look after citizen affairs, Cambodia is an exception. In March 2000 Cambodia even closed a private business dedicated to “promoting cultural and business interaction between Taiwan and Cambodia” at the request of the Chinese Embassy, which proudly proclaimed its triumph in a press release. In May 2003, at the Cambodiana Hotel, where he spoke at a conference on tourism, Prime Minister Hun Sen said:

I have expressed again and again about dealing with Taipei only in commerce, tourism and investment. But now there are people trying to open a Taiwan office in Phnom Penh to benefit themselves. I would like to say briefly, ‘No!’ We have supported only the one-China policy (Sambath and Barron 2003).

By adherence to “One China” policy, Hun Sen has banned government ministers from visiting Taiwan, attending Taiwanese-sponsored functions or meeting Taiwanese officials (Storey 2006). Back in 2000, The Chinese government reacted angrily when opposition leader Sam Rainsy joined both the May 12-15 meeting of the Council of Asian Liberal Democrats (CALD) in Jakarta, which was attended by representatives of Taiwan’s pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), as well as the May 20 inauguration of Taiwan’s DPP President Chen Shui Bian in Taipei. Rainsy believed he did not violate “One China” policy; he supported Taiwanese democracy not independence. He expressed that “I support democracy for those 23 million Taiwanese just as I advocate democracy for Thailand, the Philippines, Burma and Indonesia ... It doesn't mean that I support DPP policies on independence” (Kyne 2000).

In March 2005, King Sihamoni and former King Sihanouk issued a joint statement in supporting China’s NPC in passing the Anti-Secession Law and backing “China’s right position in a bid to realize national reunification” (MFAPRC 2005). In the meantime, Prime Minister Hun Sen also expressed support for the Anti-Secession Law and supported any action and measure China would take on the Taiwan issue. His government expressed its belief that China would surely achieve the goal of national reunification (*Xinhua* 2005a). According to this Law, China “shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures”—authorisation of military action—against Taiwan should it declare formal independence (*Xinhua* 2005b: Anti-

Secession Law, Article 8). Thus the Law, becomes the so-called “legal weapon” to fight Taiwan’s secessionism.

In July 2007, the U.N. denied a Taiwanese request for membership, maintaining that Beijing is the only representative of China (Weixue 2007). To show Cambodia’s allegiance to China, Foreign Affairs Minister Hor Namhong said in a statement that Cambodia’s UN ambassador should seek to oppose Taiwan’s moves for recognition, added that Cambodia would raise the issue at the next meeting of the ASEAN, as he asserted that Taiwan’s continued insistence to be independent of China would destabilize the region (VOA 2007).

NATO “Accidental” Attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade

On May 7, 1999, the NATO accidental attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia during the Kosovo conflict, killed 3 Chinese journalists and injured 20 diplomats, and outraged the Chinese public (BBC 1999a). In his support for the Chinese, Prime Minister Hun Sen condemned and considered “the attacks on the embassy...a violation of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations and international law” and “always condemns any use of force in the framework of the international relations, which is contrary to the spirits of the U.N. Charter,” Hun Sen said in a letter to Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji (Kyodo 1999). King Sihanouk expressed condolences to the victims and their families and strongly condemned NATO’s acts.

In Phnom Penh, on May 13, a group of approximately 100 Chinese residents of the capital led a protest march that ended outside the gates of the American Embassy. Overwhelming majority of the protesters were Chinese business people from Mainland China, waited in vain to present a protest letter to US Embassy staff (Sotheacheath and Kyne 1999).

Tibet Issue

Cambodian government also supports China’s position over Tibet issue in part of its adherence to “One China” policy. Cambodia’s position on Tibet can be seen through its refusal of Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader H.H. Dalai Lama from attending the World Buddhist Conference held in Cambodia in December 2002, and its support for China’s violent actions during Tibetan unrest in March 2008.

In 2002, under Beijing pressure, Cambodia having Buddhism as a state's religion refused H.H. Dalia Lama, the world-famous Tibetan spiritual leader from attending World Buddhism Conference. "We can't invite the Dalai Lama because our policy doesn't allow us to do that," said Chhorn Iem, a secretary of state for the Ministry of Cults and Religion (Chandara 2002). However, Hong Kong and Taiwan were invited to the Conference but allowed to fly the Chinese flag and the universal Buddhist flag respectively. As of 2007, the ban kept status quo because China's stance had not altered either. "I am not sure of what lies in the future. I cannot predict government policy in the future," he said (*DPA* 2007). Cambodia's H.H. Dalia Lama position has remained unchanged unless Beijing gives green light.

In March 2008, Cambodian government officials and retired King Norodom Sihanouk voiced their support for China's actions in the wake of a security clampdown following unrest in Tibet amid widespread anger over brutal and repressive Chinese policies. Protests that turned violent erupted in the Tibetan capital Lhasa on March 14 marking the 49th anniversary of Tibet's failed uprising against China's communist rule.

On March 20, the retired King Sihanouk wrote on his Website showing support for "One China" policy. Without direct reference to the riots in Lhasa, he condemned "any attempt at the division of China concerning Tibet or anything else," added that "I have always declared that Tibet was an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China" (Lodish and Sisovann 2008). Similarly, CPP government officials talked to the reporters in supporting "One China" policy that "Neither Taiwan nor Tibet should be separated from China. This is Cambodia's stance..." and viewed the Lhasa protests as "to hinder" China's event of Olympic Games planned for Beijing in August (*ibid.*). Such a public statement voiced in supporting China might not be necessary, though Cambodia adherences to "One China" policy, given the Chinese government used "lethal force against unarmed protesters" which had killed 200 Tibetans (*Agence France Presse* 2010). In this sense, Cambodia's opposition lawmaker Yim Sovann condemned China's unnecessary use of violent and urged China to respect Tibetan human rights. "I condemn the killing of the people. [The protesters] respect the Buddhist principle.... China cracked down with violence. This we cannot accept," he said. He did not think Cambodia had anything to gain by publicly supporting China at this juncture, and the Cambodian government would be better served prioritizing internal issues (Lodish and Sisovann 2008).

Falun Gong Practitioners

Also in 2002, Cambodian government deported a Chinese couple, practitioners of Falun Gong, who held UNHCR ‘persons of concern’ (PoC) status, back to China (Carmichael 2002). Pertaining to international law the government is obliged to protect PoCs. It is of significant interest to brief introduction of Falun Gong and to know why it has been banned by China’s communist government.

Falun Gong or Falun Dafa is system of mind and body cultivation, in other words, it combines an exercise regimen with meditation and moral tenets. It emerged in large part out of ideas prevalent in some aspects of alternative Chinese medicine, which derive from “*qigong*, a set of movements through which one channels vital energies, and Buddhist and Daoist principles” (Lum 2001). It sounds much like India’s *Yoga* practice. Falun Gong was introduced to the public in China in 1992. In April 1999, 10,000 of its practitioners staged a peaceful protest at the Communist party’s headquarters in Beijing to demand an end of official harassment of its members. It was at this point that Falun Gong came to be regarded as a threat to the Chinese state (Beaumont 2009). It was a largest protest ever happened since the pro-democratic demonstration Tiananmen Square in 1989. Jiang Zemin, the then-general secretary of CCP, demanded the movement be “defeated.” As a result, two months later, it was banned and made illegal for “advocating superstition, spreading fallacies, hoodwinking people, inciting and crating disturbances, and jeopardizing social stability” (Griffiths 2014). Since then, at least 2,000 of Falun Gong members have been reportedly killed and those arrested and put in re-education camp have been subjected to “forced labor, torture, arbitrary execution and organ harvesting.”

Muslim Uighur Asylum-Seekers

Another critical issue that Cambodian government succumbed to the Chinese pressure and influence was the support for China’s deadly crackdown on Uighur rioters in the restive Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in July 2009 and extradition of 20 ethnic Uighur asylum seekers back to China in December of the same year.

According to the Chinese government, unrest between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese had left 184 dead, though according to a trusted media, 400 Uighurs had been killed in Urumqi, Xinjiang’s capital (Rith and Shay 2009). The riot was the largest ethnic conflict in China since the Tibetan uprising of March 2008, and perhaps the biggest protest in Xinjiang in years that highlighted the deep-seated frustrations

felt by some ethnic minorities in western China over the policies of the Communist Party. Cambodian government showed its support to China's violent crackdown in Xinjiang. Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a statement saying that, "The government of China is taking appropriate measures to address the problem and restore social order" (Rith and Shay 2009).

As a result of the riots and riot deadly crackdown, influx of Uighur Muslims fled to China's neighboring countries and 22 of them reached Cambodia at various points in November 2009 and applied for political asylum through UNHCR (Strangio 2009a), a country consists as many as of 500,000 total number of members of the Islamic community, in a total population of 15 million (Osborne 2014). Cambodia has an obligation to protect the Uighur asylum seekers under the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention of which it is one of the signatories. On December 15, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said in a news briefing that those Uighurs "are involved in crimes" and warned, "the international refugee-protection system should not be a haven for criminals to evade legal sanctions" (Strangio 2009b). Ilshat Hassan, director of interior affairs for the World Uighur Congress, rebuked the Chinese comments by stating that "According to [Chinese] law, any Uighur dissident is a criminal"—rejecting that none of the 22 Uighurs had been involved in any activities that are crimes under international law.

However, the Chinese pressure was too heavy for Cambodian government to resist. On December 19, 20 ethnic Uighurs were forcefully deported to China where they would face torture and execution, in a hurry, just few days ahead of a three-day visit by Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping. On December 22, Xi arrived in Cambodia and joined a ceremony during which he thanked Cambodian government for the deportation of the 20 ethnic Uighurs to China, and signed 14 economic aid agreements totaled US\$1.2 billion, deals worth more than the cumulative economic aid offered previously by Beijing over the past 17 years (Sokha and Strangio 2009; *Associated Press* 2009). Ear (2013: 28), Associate Professor at Diplomacy and World Affairs, Occidental College, contends that "There is no ethical dimension to Chinese aid money." Human rights groups lashed out at the Cambodia's deportation of the Uighur asylum-seekers labeled a "grave breach" of international law under Beijing's pressure, though Cambodia said that was the implementation of its immigration law. Undeniably, Cambodia's Depute Prime Minister Sar Kheng admitted in the leaked record that Cambodia was in a "difficult position due to pressure from outside forces"

(Loy 2011). The US and other countries sharply criticised Cambodia. The US said it was “deeply disturbed” by the forcible deportations which “would affect Cambodia’s relationship with the US and its international standing” (ibid.). The affect appeared in April 2010 when the US cancelled a shipment of 200 lorries and trailers to Cambodia (Sokheng and Strangio 2010). Ironically, two months later, China filled the military aid gap vacated by the US with the shipment of 257 military lorries to the RCAF (Yuthana 2010).

The fate of the deportees was predictable. A year later, according to Human Rights Watch, some of them had been tried and sentenced to death, while others had been sentenced to prison (Adams 2010). Cambodia’s deportation of a group of Uighur asylum seekers to China is a clear indication that Cambodia would break its obligation under international law, rather than to cause discontent its powerful patron. As a result, it would take many years for Cambodia to regain both its regional and its international stature.

Khmer Rouge Tribunal

China had repeatedly claimed that the trial of Khmer Rouge leaders was Cambodian internal affairs. It was Cambodians’ rights to make their own judgement and decisions independent of any external pressure or interference (MFAPRC 2000c). China, thus, had not supported the establishment of international tribunal proposed by the U.N. to try the Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes committed in Cambodia, estimated 1.7 million people died during the their rule between 1975 and 1979, of whom China was the close ally.

In March 1999, China used its veto power to reject U.N. proposal (*BBC* 1999b). Many observers and analysts assumed that China vetoed the international tribunal being afraid it would reveal its connection with the Khmer Rouge genocide. Further, the Chinese tried to use their influence to persuade Cambodian leaders not to create the Khmer Rouge tribunal. According to a Western diplomat in Phnom Penh, “Chinese diplomats tried to block the passage of legislation by the Cambodian National Assembly to establish a tribunal to try leaders of the former Khmer Rouge regime in meetings with senior Cambodian leaders over the 2000/2001 New Year weekend” (Jeldres 2012). In another instance, the US ambassador to Cambodia, Ken Wiedemann complained, in 2001, that “Chinese diplomats had been literally following in American footsteps to prevent” the bill from reaching the signing state to

establish a tribunal (Chanda 2001 & 2002). Compromisingly, Cambodian government and the UN backed actively by Europe, Japan and the US, finally, agreed to establish a joint UN-Cambodia Khmer Rouge tribunal called ECCC (Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia) in Cambodia in 2003 (ECCC 2015), after controversial negotiations took place between the two sides since the late 1990s. Law on the Establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed During the Period of Democratic Kampuchea (2004) describes the competence of the Court in Article 2:

to bring to trial senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those who were most responsible for the crimes and serious violations of Cambodian laws related to crimes, international humanitarian law and custom, and international conventions recognized by Cambodia, that were committed during the period from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979.

In 2006, ECCC has began its procedure of the first case, and in the same year Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong headed to Beijing for, among other things, Khmer Rouge tribunal talk with his Chinese counterpart (*VOA* 2006). Arguably, Namhong's visit aimed at explaining the Chinese about the true nature of the ECCC, perhaps the ability that Cambodian government, whose many officials are the former Khmer Rouge cadres, would possibly control, influence or interfere the Courts to the extend that it would not affect the Chinese image for its past connection with the Khmer Rouge. Indeed, six years later, being the first critic, Amnesty International (2011) publicly cited "There is a strong perception that the Cambodian government has tried to influence, and thus subvert, the work of the ECCC."

Despite China's political influence mentioned above, there were some other events that could explain China relatively prevailed on Cambodia. In one occasion, Chinese diplomats expressed strong discontentment to the Ministry of Information about "unfriendly report" about Chinese interests in the local Malaysian-owned newspaper *Sin Chew Daily* (Fullbrook 2006; Jeldres 2012: 89). Similarly, it is make known that Cambodia opposition politicians complain of Chinese support for the ruling CPP, and journalists report that when they write about subjects displeasing to China—like Taiwan—the embassy harasses them (Kurlantzich 2006a: 5). Back in 2003, anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh caused serious break in diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Thailand. The Chinese, then, played the role of a broker

calling both sides to meet in Beijing, with China's help, they laid out their grievances. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi further warned that Cambodia and Thailand "to normalise relations as soon as possible," (Kurlantzick 2006b: 275) "or risk angering China" (Jeldres 2012: 90).⁵ China repeated the same role during Cambodia and Thailand forces exchanged gunfire over Preah Vihear temple dispute in 2008 (*Xinhua* 2008a; Storey 2011: 84). Another considerable indication of China's influence was the arrest and extradition of French architect Patrick Devillers who associated with a disgraced Chinese official Bo Xilai and his wife Gu Kailai who was suspected of murder, on China's request in June 2012 (Bradsher 2012).

China's influence does not cease to grow here; in stead, it is increasingly and obviously visible. China is demanding more from its Cambodia friends. Next, Cambodia would play a bigger role in articulating China's interests in regional context—the role that would damage its international image harder than ever before. Well, Cambodia would take a rotating chair of ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in 2012 where world leaders would gather to discuss various global and regional issues, one of which was sensitive issue of South China Sea.

Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship and China's Influence

China's deep influence on Cambodia has also been revealed in the context of regional affairs, which is part of China's strategic comeback to Cambodia since the post Cold War. Cambodia, gained its membership in ASEAN on April 30, 1999, has further expanded China's scope of influence in this regional bloc. As a capacity of ASEAN chair in July 2012, Cambodia backed China's interests in South China Sea left severe rift within ASEAN member states. As such drew strong criticism from academic and international media experts over the allegedly biased role Cambodia had played in articulating China's interests which undermined ASEAN centrality.

ASEAN Unprecedented Event

During July 8-13 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), ASEAN failed to issued a joint communiqué at the end of meeting, unprecedented event in the 45 years of its history. China seemed to have utilized its influence with Cambodia to obstruct attempts by ASEAN to address the problem, causing a breakdown in ASEAN unity.

⁵ As in his note, Jeldres (2012: 94) verified this information with a Thai diplomat posted previously in Beijing, at a discussion in Bangkok on 15 November 2009.

As media had widely reported, the reason was the rejection of Cambodia as the ASEAN chair to incorporate the positions of the Philippines and Vietnam regarding their disputes with China over South China Sea. Based on the leaked account, the Philippines wanted to include “Scarborough Shoal” which has been in dispute with China in the joint communiqué, whereas Vietnam addressed concern over China’s creation of Sansha City over deputed South China Sea islands, and China’s National Offshore Oil Company’s invitation for foreign exploration bids in other contested maritime areas as “serous violations of Vietnam’s sovereignty and jurisdiction over its Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf” and wanted the joint communiqué to reflect its concern (Thayer 2012a). The Philippines and Vietnam were supported by Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand who felt that ASEAN should speak with one voice. However, Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Nahong refused to include strong wording—the Philippines’ Scarborough Shoal and Vietnam’ EEZ and continental shelf—in the joint communiqué, in order to “de-escalate tension...in South China Sea,” given that these were bilateral issues and should not be included in the AMM joint communiqué. Throughout its 45-year history, it was for the first time ASEAN failed to speak as one in Phnom Penh where in the 1980s ASEAN had united in its creditable diplomatic role to seek a comprehensive political settlement of Cambodia conflict.

Criticism on ASEAN Chair

Reactions of international media, academic experts and observers on Cambodia’s ASEAN role reflected common view that Cambodia was pushing the interests of China, which has poured loans and investment into the country in recent years. China had been seen using Cambodia chair to weaken ASEAN unity for its self-interests.

Prearranged or not, Cambodia’s stance over the South China Sea depute was identical with that of China’s. China does not want the “internationalisation” of the disputes, which have been considered to be bilateral issues, and should be resolved directly between the rival claimants and not in broader multilateral forums. China warned nations to avoid mentioning the territorial spats during the ASEAN meetings and repeatedly called for joint development. Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying, few days before the conclusion of AMM, said China would start talks with ASEAN on a legally binding Code of Conduct in the South China Sea “when conditions are ripe” (*Bloomberg News* 2012). In this sense, one senior director of the Southeast Asia

Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, argued, “In fact, what happened in Phnom Penh is a critical piece to answering questions about what China wants and what China wants to be (Bower 2012). Dr. Lao Mong Hay, an independent political analysis based in Phnom Penh, observed, “it’s very difficult to deny there are no strings attached to Chinese aid and economic assistance in Cambodia. The attitude and position taken by Cambodia at the last [ASEAN] meeting shows that it was toeing the Chinese line (Strangio 2012b). An unnamed senior diplomat in the region was widely quoted as saying that, “China bought the chair, simple as that” (Perlez 2012). Or to put in the words of Osborne (2012a), scholar on Southeast Asian affairs, “Cambodia pays its China’s due,” given that China is Cambodia’s most important aid donor. Mitton (2012), a veteran journalist, reported that when four drafters (Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, Anifah Aman of Malaysia, Albert Del Rosario of the Philippines, and Pham Binh Minh of Vietnam) submitted the first draft to the ASEAN chair “the Cambodians, in a breach of ASEAN protocol, showed it to the Chinese, who said it was unacceptable unless the South China Sea reference was removed. So the Cambodians sent it back for amendment.”⁶ A former Singaporean diplomat said, “The whole world, including most ASEAN countries, perceived Cambodia’s stance as the result of enormous Chinese pressure” (Mahbubani 2012). Cambodian foreign ministry official Kao Kim Hourn rebuffed criticism and called it an “unfair accusation” (Kate and Caoutte 2012). Other Cambodian government officials accused the Philippines and Vietnam of attempting to “sabotage” and “hijack” the joint communiqué during the ASEAN meeting (Sereythanh 2012; Kuong 2012).

But the evidence of Chinese influence was clear. Recall back in 2011, China even provided office supplies and equipment worth 2.7 million Yuan (about US\$423,000) to Cambodia for hosting ASEAN summit in 2012 (*Xinhua* 2011a). Moreover, just few days before April 3-4 ASEAN Summit, Chinese President Hu Jintao arrived in Phnom Penh for a four-day visit during which he met King Sihamoni and Prime Minister Hun Sen. Hu signed 10 infrastructure cooperation agreements and promised tens of millions of dollars in grants and loans, and both countries also

⁶ Regarding the breach of ASEAN protocol, the late Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, according to the leaked record, said, “Within hours, everything that is discussed in ASEAN meetings is known in Beijing, given China’s close ties with Laos, Cambodia and Burma.” James O’Toole (2010), “First Cambodia doc in leak”, *The Phnom Penh Post*, 30 November 2010.

agreed to double bilateral trade to US\$5 billion by 2017. Hu and Sen agreed that South China Sea should be resolved bilaterally and took the issue off the formal agenda (Samean 2012; Thul 2012a). However, due to pressure from some of ASEAN members—the Philippine and Vietnam—the dispute had been put on ASEAN agenda for the final day of ASEAN Summit. Besides, two months after AMM deliberation ended in unprecedented failure, Prime Minister Hun Sen visited China, where his counterpart Wen Jiabao pledged more than US\$500 million in new soft loans and grants to Cambodia. Aun Porn Moniroth, a senior official at the Cambodian Ministry of Economy and Finance, was quoted by the *Reuters* as saying that, “the Chinese government also voiced high appreciation for the part played by Cambodia as the chair of ASEAN to maintain good cooperation between China and ASEAN” (Thul 2012b). It is better to note that, for the past 18 years, China has given US\$10 billion in foreign aid and soft loans to Cambodia (*The Economist* 2012a) compared to a sum of around US\$12 billion Cambodia has received from other development partners.

Question of Clientalism

From these events, there is a growing question that if Cambodia and China is more than just friends. Ciorciari (2013), an associate professor at University of Michigan, fairly asserted that, “Cambodia is drifting from a position as ‘China’s closest friend in Southeast Asia’ towards something beyond an arm’s-length diplomatic friendship.” One Thai analyst suggested, “Cambodian leadership would have not risked so much of its credibility, had it not been so beholden to Beijing,” added that “China has become an open patron state of Phnom Penh” (Pongsudhirak 2012). Thayer (2012b), an emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defense Force Academy, mentioned that Cambodia was “showing itself as China’s stalking horse.” *The Straits Times* commented “Cambodia...conducted the proceedings more or less in China’s orbit” (Joo 2012). *The Economist* (2012b) referred to Cambodia as China’s “de facto proxy within ASEAN.” Others have referred to it as a Chinese “client” or “satellite” (Wallace and Sainsbury 2012).

Critics on Cambodia’s position on the South China Sea have proved that Cambodian officials spoke not for themselves but instead as Chinese puppets. In other words, Cambodia’s single act of obstinacy is reflection of China’s influence and not Cambodian interests (Thayer 2012c). Indeed, small states like Cambodia often seek great-power support, but their leaders have never wished to be portrayed as the client

state because identification as a client can have damaging domestic and diplomatic repercussions (Ciorciari 2010: 18-25). Thus, not surprisingly, Prime Minister Hun Sen told fiercely to the reporters in press conference at the end of the ASEAN Summit in April 2012: “What I hate and am fed-up with is talk about Cambodia working for China,” he further stressed that “Cambodia is not goods to be bought by anyone” (Strangio 2012a; Lewis 2012a).

However, to weaken ASEAN is not of Cambodia’s long-term interest. Cambodia did struggle to gain membership in this regional bloc in the 1990s, perceiving that national interest and foreign policy would have been safeguarded. On the other hand, ASEAN is only regional platform that Cambodia can realistically hope to have any real voice and role in international and regional affairs than what it can manage on its own Cambodia; it is not wise to hold the whole organization to its own interpretation of ASEAN’s interests (Acharya 2012). About all, Cambodian government does wish for a more politically and economically integrated ASEAN. But at time being, Chinese aid is critical not only for Cambodia economic development but also for the CPP’s legitimacy to rule, given the absence of any significant economic assistance from ASEAN (Un 2013a). Moreover, ASEAN inability to help Cambodia during border conflict with Thailand has been another factor for Cambodian leaders to recalculate its security policy reliance on ASEAN bloc vis-a-vis China.

It seems to be accepting that as long as Cambodian political leadership remains unchanged, “China’s interest will almost certainly be advanced and protected” (Storey 2006), “Cambodia...will do other than act with concern to take the fullest account of Chinese interests” (Osborne 2012b), “we can expect that Cambodia’s relationship with China to remain intact,” said Ian Storey (Wong 2012), and “Both nations will continue to be good friends” (Pheakdey 2012). Since Hun Sen and CPP elites have been well benefited from Chinese unconditional aid and investment for economic development, personal enrichment, and political entrenchment, a close relationship with China will remain intake. In this manner, Cambodia remains beholden to China’s foreign policy concerns and thus risks becoming China’s client state losing its independence and autonomy in its foreign relations.

CHAPTER III

CAMBODIA-CHINA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

In China's "Good Neighbourliness" policy which evolved during the 1980s and has been pursued vigorously since then, economic reforms and liberalisation have been among the topmost priorities. To that end, China's policy of economic regeneration of its southwestern region—Yunnan and Guangxi—has motivated China's economic relationship with Cambodia, given that the latter is geographically in proximity to that region. Chinese policymakers could not avoid the obvious conclusion that Cambodia, as one of its neighbours, through closer economic integration and cooperation, could play a crucial role in boosting the economies of its remote provinces (Muni 2002). Apart from its political and strategic interests in Cambodia, economically, access to cheap labour, markets and natural resources is paramount in any friendships that China pursues with Cambodia and across the world.

Cambodia, begins to heal and stabilise from the decades of civil war, unrest and international isolation during the Cold War, has become one of the emerging economies in the region due to its high growth rate coupled with new market opportunities and high potential for local economic development and attracting investment (Sotharith 2010). Cambodia's economic development, however, has relied heavily on foreign aid, which constitutes almost half of its national budget. With its promising reforms and acute need for postwar development, Cambodia is one of the favoured recipients for foreign aid or official development assistance (ODA). While political relations between Cambodia and China have improved since the post-1997, there has been a massive influx of Chinese trade and investment in Cambodia, making China the top foreign investor and important trading partner, and its economic footprint has grown rapidly over the past two decades. FDI inflows crucially contribute to Cambodia's economic development and liberalisation (Pheakdey 2012). FDI in Cambodia rose by 72.6% year-on-year in 2012 thanks to the economic restructuring in China and subsequent re-organisation of the global production hub of Southeast Asia (ITUC/GUF Hong Kong Liaison 2014).

At the same time, Cambodia also receives a formidable amount of ‘non-conditional’ economic and military aid from China; hence, provides opportunity for China to increase its influence in Cambodia, and emboldens Cambodia against the Western pressure for democratic reform and anti-corruption.

Investment and Trade Cooperation

Cambodia-China investment and trade relations were also normalised with conclusion of the process of political normalisation between them in November 1991. From the mid-1990s, China quickly started its economic cooperation with the Royal Government of Cambodia and established itself as Cambodia’s most important economic partner. Unlike some foreign investors—discouraged by rampant corruption, political instability and a relatively small domestic market—Chinese investors were attracted by low-labour costs, the country’s national resources and attractive investment incentives. Moreover, they wish to use the ASEAN-China FTA as a duty free platform, and then re-export the goods back to China. While China is becoming expensive for manufacturers, the flip-side is an increase in wealth creation. China’s middle class is expected to reach 600 million by 2025. It means that investing in production facilities with lower operational costs close to China makes a lot of commercial sense.

Investment

In early 1990s, Cambodia remained a fragile state threatened by the Khmer Rouge remnant forces and uneasy coalition government of Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen. As a result, favourable economic environment could not be established. However, in the second half of the 1990s, Cambodia-China investment cooperation began to shape slowly. In 1996, Cambodia and China signed the agreement on trade, investment promotion and protection (ASEAN Briefing 1996), and in 2000 set up an economic and trade cooperation committee (MFAPRC 2000a). Since then, economic and trade relations between China and Cambodia have shown fast development and the areas for cooperation kept expanding.

The value of projects approved from China increased steadily in the post-1997. Chinese investment bounced up from US\$36 million in 1997 to US\$112.5 million in 1998 (Saito 1999b). The increase of economic cooperation, probably, was a result of some foreign investors’ withdrawal from Cambodia due to country’s

instability caused by July-1997 bloody coup by then-Second Prime Minister Hun Sen to remove his First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh from power, and human rights violations that followed. By the end of 1999 when Cambodia became member of ASEAN, China's largest investments had gone to Cambodia in comparison to other new ASEAN countries (Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) and was considered to be the preferential destinations of Chinese investments.

Up to June 2002, China had invested over 100 projects in Cambodia, with its contractual sum worth US\$0.3 billion—ranking the 4th place of foreign investment in Cambodia (ASEAN-China Centre 2010). From 1994 to 2006, China became the second largest investor in Cambodia with an annual average of US\$1.6 billion, next to the first ranking Malaysia that invested nearly US\$2 billion (Council for the Development of Cambodia 2013). However, according to Cambodian statistics (Table 1), since 2008 up to date, China has emerged as the largest foreign investor in Cambodia, invested US\$4.3 billion or 40.14% of the total, nearly four times the capital of second-placed South Korea that invested US\$1.2 billion, or 11.39% of the total (*Xinhua* 2009). According to the figures of the Council for Development of Cambodia, from 1994 to 2012, total of Chinese investment in Cambodia has reached US\$9.1 billion (*Xinhua* 2013a; Table 2).

A large chunk of Chinese investments have gone into garment and footwear manufacturing, agribusiness and hydropower. Garment industry is the backbone of Cambodia's economy. This sector accounts for 80% of Cambodia's export and is the largest foreign exchange earner of the country. Comprising of over 500 factories, it employs more than half a million workers, 90% of them are female (*Xinhua* 2013b). Cambodia's low-cost labour has attracted substantial investment in the textile industry from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and other countries. Among foreign investors in Cambodian textile industry, almost 90% of it is owned by the Chinese investors (Vannarith 2009). Larger garment producing countries such as China utilised Cambodia as an intermediary to avoid the export quotas placed on them by the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA). In 1996, Cambodia's garment industry was beneficial from Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status granted by the US and the signing of a framework cooperation agreement with the European Union (EU). Then, American and European companies used Cambodian factories to avoid limitations on imports of products from quota-restricted countries like China (Lee 2011). Although Cambodia's MFN status ended by 2004, meaning that Cambodia had its quota for

garment exports to the US and EU lifted, China has remained under quota restrictions as part of the safeguard measures imposed the US and the EU before it could become a member of WTO (World Trade Organisation). Hence, China sees opportunity to avoid restrictions by investing in garment industry in Cambodia. As a result, Cambodia's exports of garment and textile continue to increase even after the lifting of MFN status when it expected to face greater competition from other garment-exporting developing countries (Sotharith 2010: 39). Moreover, as a least developed country, Cambodia has been benefited from Everything But Arms (EBA) granted by the EU, meaning that Cambodia is given "full duty free and quota-free access" to the EU for all their exports with the "exception of arms and armament" (European Commission 2013).

Table 2: Top Investors in Cambodia (1994–September 2012, in million USD)

Country	1994-2006		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Jan- Sept)	1994-2012.9	
	Total	Rank							Total	Rank
Cambodia	4,341	-	1,323	3,932	3,753	391	1,930	261	15,931	-
China	1,581	2	180	4,371	893	694	1,193	230	9,142	1
Korea	1,361	3	148	1,238	121	1,027	146	150	4,191	2
Malaysia	1,960	1	241	3	7	167	235	0	2,614	3
UK	107	11	26	6	0	0	2,238	25	2,429	4
USA	428	5	3	671	1	36	144	5	1,290	5
Vietnam	81	12	139	21	210	115	631	84	1,281	6
Taiwan	576	4	40	21	27	92	82	78	916	7
Thailand	384	6	108	74	178	2	0	120	866	8
Singapore	271	8	2	52	272	37	14	83	732	9
HKG	248	9	26	0	7	30	331	56	697	10
Russia	279	7	0	102	235	0	0	0	617	11
Israel	0	14	2	300	0	2	0	0	304	12
France	208	10	35	6	50	0	0	3	303	13
Japan	22	13	113	8	5	0	6	2	157	14
Others	269	-	205	84	127	222	393	26	876	-
Total	12,116	-	2,656	10,889	5,859	2,691	7,012	1,123	42,346	-

Source: *Cambodia Investment Guide*, Council for the Development of Cambodia 2013, p. II-4.

With shift of Cambodian government policy from over-reliance on garment and tourism—the two backbones of Cambodian economy—agriculture sector comes under focus. The government is striving to promote rice export to 10 million tones per year by 2015. To archive this, Prime Minister Hun Sen looked to China for technology, investments and market access and a bilateral rice export agreement was

signed in 2011. Chinese investments in agribusiness and crop plantation are quick to take the lead after 2012 by the symbolic import of 1000 tones of Cambodian rice by the central enterprise, China National Cereal, Oil and Foodstuffs Corporation. Besides, Chinese provincial governments of Shandong, Shaanxi, Guangxi, Guangdong and Jilin sealed reciprocal agreement with Cambodia to open agricultural production bases for technology export and invest in timber, rubber, rice, cassava plantations, processing and export (ITUC/GUF Hong Kong Liaison Office 2014). In agricultural sector, Chinese companies' investments could easily out-compete the small-scale, local plants for market domination, given their large scale investment, the technology lead, and the access to export to China and the ASAN market.

Table 3: Chinese Hydropower Projects in Cambodia

Project				Company	Amount
Kamchay (2008-2011)	hdrowelectric dam			Sinohydro Corporation	US\$280 million (financed by China Exim Bank)
Strung Atay (2008-2012)	hydropower dam			Datang	US\$255 million
Kirirom III (2009-2012)	hydropower dam			State Grid Corporation of China	US\$47 million
Tatay (2010-2014)	river hydropower dam			China National Heavy Machinery Co Ltd	US\$540 million (financed by China Exim Bank)
Lower Stung Russei Hydropower State (2010-2014)	Chrum			China Huadian Corp	US\$580 million

Source: *Briefer on Chinese Investments in Cambodia*, Hong Kong: ITUC/GUF Hong Kong Liaison Office.

Chinese companies are very active in hydropower market in Cambodia. So far, five Chinese firms have invested a total of US\$1.6 billion to construct five hydroelectric dams (Table 3) with the total capacity of 915 megawatts in Cambodia (*Xinhua* 2011b). In 2006, Chinese company, Sino-Hydropower Corporation invested US\$280 million in Kamchay hydropower dam with the total capacity of 193 megawatt. Then, it was the largest foreign investment in Cambodian history (Fullbrook 2006). Electricity generated from the hydropower dams is sold to Cambodia public enterprise, Electricite du Cambodge (EDC) (Vannarith 2009: 14).

Chinese companies also invest in real estate, tourism, large-scale infrastructure, natural resources and energy, telecommunications and construction. Regarding real estate investment, China had long before wanted to create Chinese-controlled city, looking like “a new Hong Kong” in the heart of Cambodia. *The*

Phnom Penh Post reported that “The project called for an investment of more than US\$1 billion by Chinese-controlled companies in exchange for Cambodian authorities turning over a 20 square kilometre plot of land adjacent to Phnom Penh and agreeing to allow 200,000 ethnic Chinese to immigrate to inhabit and develop the land” (Thayer 1994). There were reports that it was the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping’s son-in-law, Wu Jianchang who pursued such proposal with the Cambodian government. However, the project proposal was finally rejected by Cambodian government, though it had received approval from eight different government agencies (Muni 2002). According to the Council of Ministers—headed by the two Prime Ministers and vested with the authority to approve any such project—main reason for the rejection of such a massive project proposal was the concern over large number of foreign immigration. Chinese real estate investment is also attracted by the recent development projects on the Koh Pich or Diamond Island in the Greater Phnom Penh area, the Chinese city of dream eighteen years ago. The development, named Koh Pich Riviera, is part of Overseas [Chinese] Cambodia Investment Company’s (OCIC) US\$300 million project and is slated for completion in 2017 (Leanghuor 2012). However, the island’s largest such project is the US\$700 million Diamond Island Riviera three 33-story condominium towers supporting a 650-foot infinity-edge pool, a shopping mall, hospital, an international school, two pedestrian shopping streets—plus two additional 29-story condominium towers (Horton 2014). This project is a joint venture between the OCIC and Chinese Jixiang Investment (Meng 2014). *The New York Time* suggested that Diamond Island is unlikely to become the Chinatown that the Phnom Penh government has long hoped would attract more mainland tourists. Although the Chinese companies invest in island’s projects, Chinese tourists and residents are not a common sight in that part of the city (Horton 2014).

Also, China has shown a stronger desire to the access of Cambodia’s hydrocarbon reserves, which would feed its thirst for energy resources. In 2005, US energy company Chevron discovered oil and gas deposits off Cambodia’s southwest coast in the Gulf of Thailand, estimated at 400 million barrels of crude oil and three trillion cubic feet of gas (Economic Institute of Cambodia 2008). It is not clear to know that how many Chinese firms are investing in Cambodia’s oil but in 2007 the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) reportedly won the right to drill in Cambodia’s offshore Block F, covering 7,026.7 square kilometers (*Xinhua* 2011c).

However, *The Cambodia Daily* has, later in 2012, confirmed the above report and further revealed that the China's state-owned Sinomach China Perfect Machinery Industry Corp. and the Cambodian Petrochemical Company signed an agreement on the US\$2.3 billion refinery in Kampot province (Naren and Hruby 2012; *China Daily Mail* 2012). The two state-owned companies have secured 8-hectare (80 square kilometre) plot for the refinery outlets, which would be installed the high-and-latest technology that has not been used by any Southeast Asian nations. The Kingdom had expected to tap its first oil reserves by December 12, 2012 (12-12-12), not from the Chinese Blocks but from the US Chevron Overseas Petroleum (Cambodia) that has been exploring Cambodia's offshore Bloc A in Gulf of Thailand, but reportedly, it has been delayed until 2016 (Weinland 2012).

Trade Partner

China is one of Cambodia's important trading partners. Over the last two decades, Cambodia-China trade has intensified, simultaneously, when political relationship between the two countries has also tightened. China is now Cambodia's increasingly important trade partner. However, there has been a constantly asymmetric exchange of bilateral trade between Cambodia and China as the former lacks resources, quality products, information on the market, and means.

Bilateral trade between Cambodia and China remained very small from 1993 to 1996, though it gradually increased. In 1993, bilateral trade was US\$23 million and in 1996 increased to US\$76 million (International Monetary Fund 2000). China's intervention in Cambodia following the 1997 coup witnessed a marked rise in bilateral trade upto US\$103 million in 1997. Trade cooperation has increased dramatically, especially after Cambodia became a full member of ASEAN in April 1999. In 2007, Cambodia-China trade has rose to more than US\$1 billion (Table 4), and both countries agreed to further increase bilateral trade volume. At the same time, China became Cambodia's second largest trading partner after the United States, whose two-way trade with Cambodia was US\$2.5 billion.

In February 2008, Cambodia established a special economic zone (SEZ) in Sihanoukville to produce goods for duty-free export to China. That same month China's foreign minister visited Cambodia and provided tax exception for four hundred Cambodian goods entering China (Thayer 2009). However, Cambodia has suffered from massive trade deficit with China. In 2009, Cambodia exported only

US\$16.33 million to China, whereas China imported US\$881.28 million to Cambodia, over 53 times larger than Cambodia did to China. It can be seen that Cambodia is still unable to maximise the benefits from trade cooperation with China due to its lack of resources, quality products, information on the markets, and means (Sotharith 2010).

At the regional level, Cambodia-China economic cooperation was characterized by how favourable economic environment could be created. During the official visit of Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Yi to Phnom Penh in March 2004, Cambodia and China signed a package of economic cooperation agreements aimed at increasing bilateral trade volume to US\$500 million in 2005 from US\$320 million in 2003 (Kosal 2009). Both countries also agreed to promote favourable economic environment especially in the field of agriculture, information and communication, human resource development, two-way investment, and Mekong river basin development—the five priority areas of ASEAN China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA).

Since the ASEAN-China Free Agreement came into effect in January 2010, China has become the largest trading partner and number-one exports destination for ASEAN countries. China-ASEAN trade increased sevenfold between 2000 and 2010, to US\$232 billion (Pheakdey 2012). As comparing with China's bilateral trade with any given ASEAN countries, Cambodia's trade with China has caught the highest growth. By September 2012, Cambodia's bilateral trade with China valued up to US\$3.17 billion, making China Cambodia's third largest trading partner after Thailand (US\$4.36 billion) and Vietnam (US\$3.55 billion), though China passed the US whose two-way trade with Cambodia was US\$2.79 billion (IMF 2013). In April 2012, during the course of President Hu Jintao's visit to Cambodia, the two sides agreed to double current trade to US\$5 billion by 2017 (Thayer 2013). The increasing of bilateral trade between Cambodia and China is considerably driven by China's imports of garment raw materials, machinery, motorcycles, cars, foodstuffs, electronics, furniture, medicines and cosmetics, and Cambodia's exports of agricultural products, rubber, fishery, timber and textiles to China.

Notwithstanding the targeted-volume bilateral trade, the Cambodia's exports to China are far fewer than those China's exports to Cambodia because the third countries such as Vietnam and Thailand buy products from Cambodia and export to China. There is a need to promote direct trade between the two countries. It is

suggested that Cambodian and Chinese business people have to meet more often in order to establish friendly-business environment. However, Cambodia's trade deficit with China and other bilateral trade partners (Vietnam, Thailand etc.) has been primarily caused by low productivities due to lacks of resources and skilled labour. By 2012, Cambodia sees US\$2.78 billion trade deficit with China, by exporting to China only US\$195.85 million while importing US\$2.97 billion, according to IMF statistics (see Table 4). Amidst this large trade deficit with China, Cambodia sees China as a potential market for its rice and cassava exports. According to Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh, Cambodia plans to export about 300,000 tones of milled rice to China per year (Makara 2012). And in 2011, China National Food Industry (Group) Corp, a Chinese agricultural firm, signed a deal with Cambodia's local company Ly Ye Rubber Co Ltd to purchase 1 million tones of dry cassava to export back to China (Bunthy 2011).

Table 4: Cambodia's Top Import and Export Partners (2006–2012, in million USD)

Export Partners	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total 2006-2012
1. United States	1,898.92	2,363.09V	1,970.88	1,552.77	1,903.41	2,551.91V	2,545.18V	14,786.16
2. Hong Kong, China	542.56	17.09V	839.85	1,646.28	1,383.66	38.53V	61.20V	4,529.17
3. Canada	115.16	189.19V	292.03	195.76	274.23	527.86V	599.21V	2,193.44
4. United Kingdom	153.03	211.72V	155.71	179.71	235.16	486.12V	650.96V	2,072.41
5. Germany	233.49	298.27V	138.13	108.80	112.26	502.13V	601.68V	1,994.76
6. Singapore	138.83	76.67V	113.32	482.28	429.22	172.71V	517.57V	1,930.6
7. Vietnam	75.04	186.82V	169.34	115.51	96.25	390.55V	442.06V	1,475.57
* China, Mainland	15.50	46.44V	12.91	16.33	65.02	168.26V	195.85V	520.31
Import Partners								
1. Thailand	415.03	1,490.84V	696.92	464.76	689.12	3,161.26V	4,137.53V	11,055.46
2. China, Mainland	523.85	969.38V	934.95	881.28	1,184.71	2,550.38V	2,976.83V	10,021.38
3. Vietnam	269.91	1,145.21V	470.97	493.54	486.47	2,647.51V	3,113.63V	8,627.24
4. Hong Kong, China	539.22	673.29V	589.63	484.22	552.31	769.82V	891.64V	4,500.13
5. Singapore	156.84	482.24V	303.75	208.95	155.36	1,000.02V	1,087.21V	3,394.37
6. South Korea	146.09	309.57V	229.39	209.11	247.84	495.80V	652.62V	2,287.42
7. Indonesia	85.34	134.04V	96.19	145.51	175.03	285.45V	321.41V	1,242.97

Source: Author's calculation based on *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 2013* (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund).

*Figure included is for reference purpose only; China is not Cambodia's top export partner.

China's Foreign Aid

Lengauer (2011: 35) defines foreign aid or development assistance as “one of the most common instruments used by government to achieve foreign policy goals, which

can attain many forms—mostly it comprises the transfer of money, goods or services from one country to another.” Beijing’s top foreign policy is to maintain an independent, powerful, and untied China that can pursue its China’s number one policy goal—economic development. China has experienced economic growth for the three decades and become the second largest economy in the world. China’s continued growth needs mineral and agricultural resources motivated by which China invests in developing countries like Cambodia that are rich in natural resources. China’s foreign policy is also driven by political interests at both regional and global levels. In this sense, foreign aid plays important role in advancing these economic and political interests in recipient country.

China’s Foreign Aid White Paper

In April 2011, Information Office of State Council (2011) of the People Republic of China released the country’s first White Paper on China’s Foreign Aid, which reveals aid policy and provides an official account of how Chinese assistance was managed and distributed from 1950 to 2009. The White Paper, however, came in response to various accusations of China’s foreign aid policy to have been motivated by a desire to secure natural resources and lacked of transparency.

Chinese foreign assistance has long been a subject of scrutiny and controversy. It doesn’t easily fit into the OECD’s definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), according to which ODA is defined as ‘grants and concessional loans for development and welfare purposes from the government sector of a donor country to a developing country or multilateral agency active in development. A loan is considered sufficiently concessional to be included in ODA if it has a grant element of at least 25%, calculated at a 10% discount rate’ (OECD 2008). On the contrary, much of Chinese foreign aid is financed through the China Export-Import Bank (Exim Bank) in the form of concessional loans that directly benefit Chinese economic interests, and grants and interest-free loans carried out by embassies and consulates rather than development agencies. Most importantly, project-level data on Chinese aid is essentially unavailable to the public. As a consequence, scholars, policy-makers, and aid workers have agonized over the true nature of Chinese development assistance—whether it really helps recipient nations develop, or simply feeds China’s appetite for extractive resources.

According to China's White Paper, China's budgeted foreign aid swelled by nearly 30% a year between 2004 and 2009. In total, China spent 256.29bn yuan (US\$38.54bn) in foreign assistance from 1950 to 2009—roughly the same amount the US provided in 2010 alone. More than 40% of Chinese aid (106.2bn yuan) was spent on grants (“aid gratis”). The remaining 60% was split fairly evenly between interest-free loans and concessional loans. By end of 2009, China provided largest aid to Africa amounted to 45.7% and second largest to Asia amounted to 32.8%. The report claims that China is providing foreign aid to: “help recipient countries to strengthen their self-development capacity, enrich and improve their peoples’ livelihood, and promote their economic growth and social progress”. There is a clear declaration that Chinese aid is a “model with its own characteristics”—the aid which is said to have “no strings attached.”

Although China published its first foreign aid White Paper that attempted to provide transparent account of how Chinese assistance is managed and distributed, it failed to provide sufficient information on country-by-country figure for that foreign aid. The White Paper, thus, is subject to criticism of its transparency. The secrecy of the Chinese government regarding aid volume, according to Lengauer (2011) carries several domestic and international motives. First, the Chinese government wants to avoid being questioned by the recipient countries on different amount of aid given to them for they might ask for more. Second, publicly revealing that it gives million-million-dollars to other countries could provoke criticism, from within the country, as large portion of the Chinese people are still poor. Third, the exact amount of aid given to developing countries are hardly known by the Chinese themselves, because their aid is a mix of concessional loans with trade and investment financing.

Motives of China's Foreign Aid

China's “going out” policy into the world aims to seek and secure access to natural resources and markets to fuel and sustain its own growth. As a result, the Chinese government and Chinese firms has enticed developing state power-holders with grants and loans, generous aid packages, and a culturally more amenable way of doing business (Sullivan 2011). In general, China's foreign aid to developing countries like Cambodia is driven by a variety of reasons or motives, which can put into three main categories:

1. *Economic motives*: the securing of natural resources, such as oil, gas, but also copper and other minerals as well as breaking into new consumer markets and hence increased trade;
2. *Political motives*: the establishment of strategic diplomacy;
3. *Ideological motives*: formerly spreading the communist ideals, nowadays spreading Chinese values and hence increasing China's soft power—though less intense compared to religious ideology or the West's quest of spreading and strengthening democracy globally (Brautigam 2009: 14; Lengauer 2011: 44).

According to one study, economic and commercial interests are at the heart of Chinese aid motivation (NYU Wagner School 2008). Primarily, China's foreign aid is motivated by its need for natural resources and raw materials (petroleum, minerals, food and fiber). China is now the world largest energy consumer, with a 19 % share of the global total as it surpassed Japan in 2003 and the US in June 2011 (NPR 2011).

China is seen to have provided aid for investment purpose, which is closely linked to its commercial benefit, to open up new export markets for Chinese products and helping PRC companies to invest and set up manufacturing plants in foreign markets (NYU Wagner School 2008). Similarly, as China is not a member of the OECD, it is not obliged to comply with DAC (Developmental Assistance Committee) guidelines on foreign aid. In some aspects Chinese foreign assistance resembles ODA, but in others it shares "characteristics of foreign investment" (Lengauer 2011). In other words, whether in the form of grants or concessional loans, Chinese aid comes "with strategic economic interests as the primary driver and rationale for their investments" (Siphana 2011: 32). Hence, foreign aid can be considered as a mean of foreign investments and business.

Second importance in Chinese foreign aid motive is the establishment of strategic diplomacy. Central to China's aid to developing countries like Cambodia is the isolation of Taiwan. Currently, there are twenty-three states recognizing and maintaining diplomatic relations Taiwan as a de facto independence of the Republic of China, while the People's Republic of China is recognised by one hundred-seventy states. China has long been in confrontation with Taiwan on this issue, warning against any declaration of formal independence, which would trigger Beijing to take Taiwan by force (Lengauer 2011). China is still competing with Taiwan for

diplomatic recognition in a few countries in Africa and Latin America and China provides aid only to countries that recognise Beijing (Lancaster 2008: 42). In this same category, an impetus for Chinese aid disbursement is to garner support in international organizations, such as the United Nations (Lengauer 2011) and regional multilateral organisations like ASEAN. Even though, in global strategic objectives, China does not want to be regarded as a major donor, but it has desires to position itself as a strong power in the international community, and increase its structural power and its legitimacy. In this respect, aid provisions should bear witness to China's influence as a leader in the developing world (Copper 1976: 12). China's capability to provide large foreign aid to developing countries and international agencies apparently helps project China power.

The third is that China's foreign aid motivation is the improvement of the appreciation and esteem of Chinese culture and values (Lengauer 2011). In this sense, China attempts to expand its international influence by applying "soft power" through aid provision (Singh 2011). Chinese government's win-win approach, as well as idea of a "harmonious world" spreads Confucian values and principles. However, in sharp contrast to the United States and former Soviet Union, China in recent decades has not been devoted to advancing any higher international ideological concept such as world democracy or world communism. Ideology has been secondary to advancing China's national interest, at least since the death of Mao (Johnson 2009: 17).

After all, China has utilised its aid program to better tie development assistance to discrete policy objectives, including cultivating important political actors, promoting Chinese companies abroad and bolstering China's peaceful rise.

China's Foreign Aid or ODA to Cambodia

China has made good use of foreign aid in its policy instrument in Cambodia. China has provided substantial aid and economic assistance to Cambodia for the last two decades. However, Characteristic of Chinese foreign aid or official development assistance (ODA) is different from that of the original aid donors. While their aid is often linked to a range of good governance reforms, respects for Human Rights, and democratic reforms, Chinese aid often comes in concessional loans which has bankrolled the contraction of roads, hydropower dams and other infrastructure works without strings attached. As China's official development assistance continues to flow in Cambodia, there are two controversial views; first China's aid helps boost

economic development and poverty reduction, and second, China's aid hinders democratic reforms and good governance and deepens corruption.

According to Cambodian government statistics, from 1992 to 1998, total ODA by the end of 1998 was US\$46.692 million (Ministry of Commerce 2000: 46). Since 1999, Cambodia has become one of the largest Chinese aid recipients (Kyne 1999a). During Prime Minister Hun Sen's visit to Beijing in February 1999, China pledged US\$220 million to Cambodia including a 40 million yuan (US\$4.8 million) grant, a 150 million yuan (US\$18 million) low-interest loan, a US\$200 million aid for infrastructure and water resources projects (Levy 1999). Then, in December 2007, China participated in the Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum (CDCF), which included all original aid donor countries and international agencies. Surprisingly, China became the top provider of development assistance to Cambodia (Jeldres 2012). Just in 2012, Cambodia received four aid packages from China in nine months. These include US\$70 million in aid (almost US\$40 million in grants and more than \$30 million in loans) pledged by President Hu Jintao during a visit to Cambodia in April 2012 (Sokheng and Worrell 2012), a 19 million USD military aid deal signed in May (Sokheng 2012), a 430 million USD loan signed in June of the same year (Reuy 2012), and US\$500 million in soft loans and grants pledged by China during Prime Minister Hun Sen's visit to Beijing in September 2012 (Thul 2012b). According to Cambodian government figures, total loans and grants from foreign donors including China during the period of 1993 to 2012 have amounted for US\$10 billion, (Theara 2013). Particularly, by 2012, Chinese loans and grants to Cambodia reached US\$2.7 billion (Pheakdey 2013). Recently, China increased infrastructure aid from US\$185 million in 2010 to US\$376 million in 2012 (Theara 2013). So far, China provided aid and loans to fund the construction of more than 2,000 kilometres of roads and bridges, according to Chinese and Cambodian officials (Wong 2012). China's non-conditional aid is often praised and warmly welcomed by Cambodian government officials. In 2009, at a ceremony marking the construction of the US\$128 million Cambodia-China Prek Kdam Friendship Bridge in Kandal province, Prime Minister Hun Sen told his audience that "China respects the political decisions of Cambodia. They are quiet, but at the same time they build bridges and roads and there are no complicated conditions" (Strangio 2009c).

As mentioned earlier, China pursues three categories of its foreign aid—grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans. Cambodia has received distinctive

foreign aid from China, mainly in the form of concessional loans, which come without strings attached. Large concession loans are embarked on infrastructure and agriculture development (Table 5).

Table 5. Chinese Concessional Loans and Grants in Cambodia

Project title	Start	Completion	Loan amount*
1. Construction and rehabilitation of NR 78 from O’Pong Moan, S. Treng Province to Banlung, Rattanakiri Province	Nov. 2009	April 2013	510.77 million yuan
2. Construction of Prek Kdam Bridge (975 meters)	Jun. 2007	Sept. 2010	USD 28.8 million
3. Kanhhot Irrigation Project in Battambang Province	Nov. 2010	Mar. 2014	USD 49.9 million
4. Construction of Greater Mekong Sub-region Information Superhighway Cambodia Section	Jan. 2006	Dec. 2007	135 million yuan
5. Rehabilitation of NR 8 from Ksach Kandal to Vietnam Border	Mar. 2007	Jun. 2010	USD 71.5 million
6. Rehabilitation of NR 76 at Junction of NR 7 Snuol to Sen Monorom, Mondolkiri Province (127 km)	Feb. 2007	Jul. 2010	USD 51.9 million
7. Rehabilitation of NR 7 from Kratie to Trapaing Krel	Oct. 2004	Dec. 2007	USD 61 million
8. Rehabilitation of NR 59, Kamrieng-Phnom Preuk-Sampov Loun-Malai-Kaun Damrey	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2014	509.6 million yuan

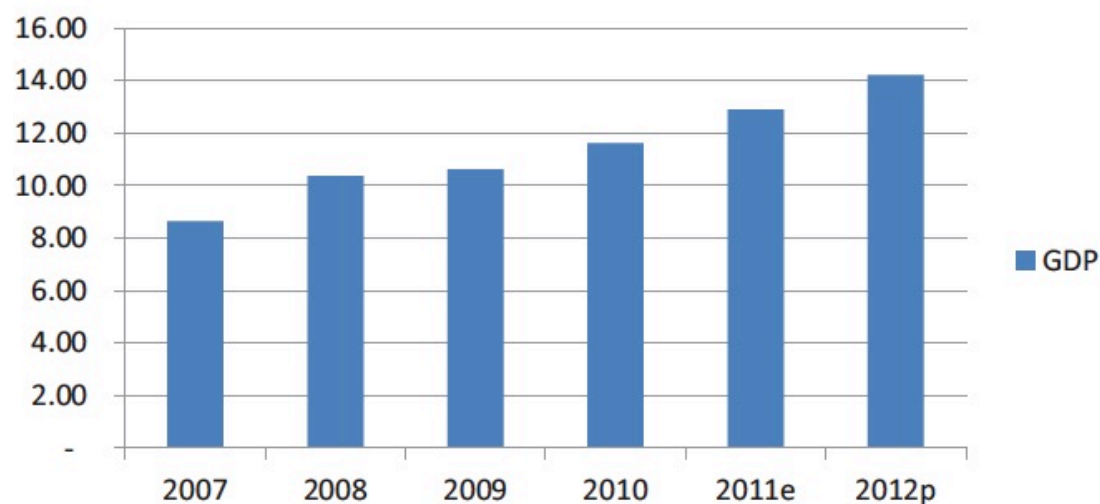
*All projects have been financed with concessional loans with grace period ranging from 7 to 20 years, a fixed interest rate from 1.25% to 2% per annum, and an amortization period ranging from 13 to 20 years. Source: Adapted from Siphana, S. et al. (2011: 33, Table 16).

Nevertheless, according to Chinese official, China’s aid to Cambodia is an effort to boost progress in a nation that ranks among the world’s least developed, where gross domestic product per capita stands at about US\$830—one of Asia’s lowest—and some 30% of its 14.5 million people live below the poverty line. China’s foreign ministry said in response to queries from *The Wall Street Journal* that China’s aid “is not only advantageous to the economic development of Cambodia, but also conducive to narrow the development gap within Asean, to promote Asean economic integration process” (Wong 2012).

Cambodia became a full member of ASEAN in 1999 and WTO in 2004 and has experienced an economic boom over the last fifteen years with average annual growth of 8%. However, due to global crisis in 2009, Cambodia experienced a contraction with GDP grew by 6% in 2010 and steadily grew to an estimate of 6.8% in 2011. GDP growth was forecasted to be 6.5% and 7% for the year 2012 and 2013 respectively (Chart 1). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2012-13: 2) annual report, Cambodia’s macroeconomic situation has improved, though certain indicators still need to be closely monitored. Cambodia is

transforming from a rural and agricultural society to an urbanized one built on manufacturing, tourism and construction as a result of which people are increasingly migrating to urban areas. In the meantime, Cambodia has seen steady improvements of its Human Development Index over the last decade, increasing from 0.44 in 2000 to 0.54 in 2012; its economy is one of “the fastest growing economies” in the region with remarkable progress in “economic and human development” (UNDP 2012-13: 12). Most importantly, the proportion of people below the poverty line in Cambodia was 22.9% in the year 2009, which reduced to 21.1% in 2010 and further to 19.8% in 2011 (UNDP 2012-13: 6).⁷ Moreover, Cambodia has been striving to become lower-middle-income nation in the near future. According to Ministry of Economy and Finance Secretary of State Hang Chuon Naron, at the end of 2012, the country’s per capita GDP amounted to about \$970, putting it in the below-\$1,025 bracket that the World Bank classifies as “low-income” (Lewis 2013).

Chart 1: Cambodia GDP from 2007 to 2012 (USD Billion)



Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, No. 199-July 2012

Partially, China’s aid and investment play increasingly vital role in Cambodian economic development and poverty reduction for last two decades. China’s investments have changed Cambodia’s landscape in many ways. Chinese investment in garment sector has boosted exports, accounting for 80% of the

⁷ Compliance to the international norm for low and low-middle income countries, the government suggests that a person is deemed to be poor if he or she has a consumption level less than 3,871 Riels (approximately US\$1) per day (at 2009 prices). The earlier poverty line—drawn in the 1990s—was 3,332 Riels per day (at 2009 prices) (UNDP 2012: 6).

country's exports worth US\$1.5 billion and created job for local people, employing almost 400,000 workers—90% of them young women—in more than 400 factories nationwide (Campbell 2013). Further, China's invested hydropower helps reduce electricity bill and provide electricity to around 78% of the population who currently do not have access to reliable electricity (UNDP 2010). From China's investment in mining, oil and gas, government is expected to benefit financially through taxes and royalties. From China's aid, Cambodia builds roads, bridges and highways, which has shortened journey times and increased travel, indirectly contributed to poverty reduction (Pheakdey 2012 & 2013). Chinese investment in tourism sector (the second pillar of Cambodian economy) has also been attracted more international and regional visitors to the country. With deepening friendly relationship between the two countries, Chinese visitors have kept rising remarkably as Cambodia is very popular destination for Chinese tourists. Cambodia has attracted 333,890 Chinese visitors in 2012, up 35% year-on-year (*Xinhua* 2013c). Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism sees China as a huge market for Cambodian tourism with a plan of targeting 600,000 Chinese tourists in 2015 and 1.3 million in 2018, according to *Xinhua* News (2013c).

With all that mentioned, China's growing presence in Cambodia seems impressively provided opportunity for Cambodia's economic development and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, as observers and analysts assert, China's cash has caused grievous political and social problems in Cambodia—the dark side of China's involvement in Cambodia.

Questions about China's Foreign Aid and Investment

Famous about China's foreign aid to Cambodia and rest of developing countries is it is given without strings attached—no pressure and demand for democratic reforms, good governance, anti-corruption, respects for human rights, transparency. A part from political and cultural aspects, China's aid is strongly motivated by economic ambition. Even though China's aid and investment has remarkably fostered Cambodian economic boom, conversely, China's “no strings attached” aid has deepened corruption, worsened good governance, and weakened democratic development whereas Chinese investment has involved human rights abuses, environmental destruction, and natural resource exploitation. On the contrary, China in Cambodia has economically benefited the ruling elites and provided government strong arm in balancing Western influence and pressure for reforms.

Bad Side of China's Aid and Investment

As in many developing countries like Africa and Latin America where Chinese economic footsteps has reached, China economic activities in Cambodia have courted controversy, including a litany of complaints such as lack of transparency, corruption, backroom deals with Cambodian politicians, land grabbing, illegal logging, and unregulated mining operations.

Chinese-owned garment factories have been accused of violation of worker rights and exploitation, poor working conditions, particularly fire safety, child labour and worker safety and health. Hundreds of garment factory workers, especially female, often get fainted during working hours due to poor standard of factory buildings and insufficiency of healthy food. As of 2012, workers are paid with US\$61 minimum wage, US\$12 food and health allowances, and a US\$10 monthly bonus if the workers do not miss a day of work (Pheap 2012),⁸ In fact, the Asia Floor Wage Alliance, a group of trade unions and labor rights activists, calculate that a living wage in for Cambodian garment workers should be US\$283 per month (Ludovica 2014). As a result, workers have to work extra hours in to get around US\$140 monthly. In several times, workers staged protests in demanding higher wage to at least US\$150 but they were often harshly dispersed by government security forces.

Government's economic land concessions (ELCs) policy has created a heated issue related to foreign investments in Cambodia particularly those from China and Vietnam. Chinese investors, however, have acquired huge ELCs from Cambodian government for their investments in agriculture and development projects such as resorts and real estates. According to local NGO report, from 1994 to 2012, the Cambodian government granted over 4.6 million hectares in concessions to 107 Chinese-owned firms (Titthara 2012). Chinese companies allegedly expanded the ELC given by the government to overlapping people's land nearby or surrounding, involved in land grabs, forced evictions and deforestations. "Chinese companies control about a quarter of the 17 million hectares of agricultural land and forest available in Cambodia. Because of these concessions, many villagers have lost their homes and land," one land reform project coordinator told *The Phnom Penh Post*

⁸ During 2013-2014, tripartite battle for higher wage was at peak between workers, investors and government's concerned officials fueled by instable political situation in the post-2013 election. Consequently, government agreed to raise minimum monthly wage to \$128 to be effective from 2015. See Sean Teehan and Mom Kunthea (2014), "Minister adds \$5 to garment wage", *The Phnom Penh Post*, 12 November 2014.

(ibid). A case of forced evictions is clear in the capital city of Phnom Penh where the 133-hectare plot of land including Boeung Kak lake was, in 2007, leased to local developer Shukaku Inc, owned by CPP Senator Lao Meng Khin for a 99-year development project. According to media reports, Shukaku had established a partnership with China's Inner Mongolia Erdos Hung Jun Investment Co (Chakrya and O'Toole 2011) that spent US\$5 million (32 million yuan) on a 50% stake in Shukaku (Ruo 2011). The project was resulted in 4,000 locals ultimately displaced—some with low compensations, some by forced evictions and some resisted to remain on their land—which according to rights groups has been the largest and most prominent example of the urban evictions (Chakrya and O'Toole 2011). Land disputes over Boeung Kak lake propelled World Bank halting its further loans to Cambodian government in 2011 until proper solution with the residents was reached (Weinland and Chakrya 2011; Ruo 2011). Such a development that affected people livings caused concerns about who would be benefited from it, given that the poor had to move from cities where they could earn their living to places where they could not. “The policy of the government is to cut poverty, but all these evictions only make people homeless and poor,” said Pung Chhiv Kek of Licadho (*The Washington Post* 2012). ELCs have remained the big issues in Cambodia, which involved “deforestation” as well as “forced eviction.” Government's effective measures to these problems is unlikely, as Finch and Kramer (2012) of *The Phnom Penh Post*, state that:

There was little likelihood the government would successfully reconcile the competing interests of Cambodia's people, who hope to retain their lands and livelihoods, and those of private companies, whose only interest in the land is as a means by which to profit from its resources – to the detriment of the country's delicate ecosystems and beleaguered people.

Another clear case of deforestation-connected land concessions to Chinese companies is “a Mondulkiri forest concession of 200,000 hectare—20 times larger than the legal limit of 100,00 hectares” (Global Witness 2008). According to the Britain's Global Witness report, the forest concession was granted secretly to Pheapimex, an ethnic Chinese-owned Cambodian conglomerate having a joint venture with China's Wuzhishan plantation firm (ibid). Illegal logging has badly affected indigenous minority people who rely on the forests for their traditional livelihoods. The worst is

that, ELCs in Monduliri for instance becomes no-entry-zone for Cambodian police. “It’s like a country within a country,” said Inferior Minister Sar Kheng (Pomfred 2010). In other words, Pomfred (2010) insists that “Spreading investment and aid along with political pressure, China is transforming a huge swath of territory along its southern border. Call it Monroe Doctrine, Chinese style.”

It has been revealed that in 2011 alone 9,973 cubic metres of precious [rosewood] logs were bought by China from Cambodia for a total of almost US\$22 million (Boyle 2012), and some total of 36,000 cubic metres have been recorded entering China from Cambodia between January 2007 and August 2012 (Levis 2012). It is critical that the export to China of millions of dollars-worth of luxurious wood reportedly appears to have paid “no taxes” (Global Witness 2007: 6).

It’s noteworthy that, as acknowledge by the UN, international human rights and local NGOs, ELCs is the major source of land grabbing disputes, forest destruction and human rights violations in Cambodia.⁹ According to local human rights organisation Licadho (the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights), more than 400,000 Cambodians have been affected by land grabs and evictions since 2003, report conducted in 12 provinces across half the country (Hodal 2012). Seriousness of the problems can be realisable when, in April 2012, “Cambodian police shoot dead leading anti-logging campaigner” and founder of the Natural Resource Protection Group, Chhut Vuthy, when he had taken the journalists to see large-scale forest destruction and illegal rosewood smuggling near a Chinese-built hydroelectric dam in Koh Kong (*The Guardian* 2012). “The killing of Chhut Vuthy has shaken Cambodia” (*The Economist* 2012c). No proper interrogation and investigation had been conducted by government authorities who about two weeks later declared “Case closed” (*Bangkok Post* 2012). It is also crucial to note that Vuthy murder case is the second after the first much brutal killing of Chea Vichea, a prominent trade unionist leader, who was shot dead in Phnom Penh in January 2004. He was the leading activist for labour rights of garment factory workers in Cambodia. Doubt has remained that “Who Killed Chea Vichea?” which has also been turned into 55-minute documentary film directed by Bradley Cox; the film has been banned in

⁹ Illegal logging is epidemic issue in Cambodia and government does not seriously act to stop further logging and providing forest concessions to private companies. It is clear when CPP Lawmaker Chheang Vun said deforestation is good for economy. See Mech Dara and Dene-Hern Chen (2013), “CPP Lawmaker Says Deforestation Is Good for Economy”, *The Cambodia Daily*, 7 November 2013.

Cambodia (Luce 2010).

Beside gross ELCs problems caused by Chinese investment largely, Cambodia's natural resources have been exploited by the Chinese as well. In view of Cambodian prominent political commentator Dr. Lao Mong Hay, China's investment has benefitted Cambodia economically in the short term but the relationship would have a negative effect in the long term. "For now, Cambodia is gaining economically from China, but in the meantime we are losing our natural resources," he told RFA's Khmer Service. He added that Chinese investment has led to more benefits for China than for Cambodia, as most China-backed projects underway in Cambodia employ only Chinese workers (Samean 2012). Other two Cambodian economists also share similar feeling. Cambodia-based economist Chan Sophal expressed that "They [Chinese] help us, but they also look into the resources we have, such as mines, oil, gold, iron, and land. They need land to grow agricultural and agroindustrial crops to meet the demands of the Chinese population," and US-based Tith Naranhkir said "China needs Cambodia...If a security problem occurs, for example, a war with Taiwan, China may need Cambodia...Secondly, for economic, it needs gas and oil (RFA 2008).

Another main issue connected to Chinese large-scale investment and aid provision is rampant corruption. China is pouring more money into Cambodia than all the other nations combined—US\$9.1 billion in recent years. The large influx of Chinese money into Cambodia has fuelled the already endemic corruption problems, which have caused deep concerns among international donors and Cambodian people alike. Lack of transparency in aid management exacerbates further corruption. According to Corruption Perceptions Index 2012 released by Transparency International (2012), Cambodia continues to be perceived as one of the world's most corrupt countries and is considered the worst in terms of public-sector corruption among its ASEAN counterparts—scored 22/100 and ranked 157/176 relatively higher than Laos and Myanmar that scored and ranked 21/100; 160/176 and 15/100; 173/176 respectively. Sok Touch, dean of Khemarak University in Cambodia, said Chinese aid comes with "no strings attached...But Chinese aid, we have seen that it lacks of transparency in bidding with the public and the spending of this aid" (Khemara 2014). Hence, Chinese aid has fueled rampant corruption. In 2009, US ambassador to Cambodia, Carol Rodley, estimated that Cambodia lost about US\$500 million to corruption each year (Strangio and Sokha 2009; Lindsay 2009).

Moreover, there is allegation that Cambodia has been in favouring Chinese investment, highly considering “China’s investment interests above that of other nations” (Fullbrook 2006; Pheakdey 2013). It was in July 2006 when Cambodia’s National Assembly voted to guarantee profits with government cash for Chinese Sino-Hydro Company’s Kamchay hydropower plant even if its performance is lower than project result respected (Fullbrook 2006). In this manner, Close observer of Sino-Cambodian relations, Prof. Thayer concludes precisely that:

China does not set conditions on its aid and this could lead to influence peddling among Cambodian government officials. Chinese aid policies may also contribute to corruption. Chinese companies operate in their own interests. Their influence over Cambodian government officials could lower environmental protection standards and the enforcement of labour standards and working conditions. Chinese influence could lead to opportunity costs where contracts are awarded to Chinese companies over more qualified and competitive bidders. Finally, Chinese influence at all levels could result in special protection from Cambodian law enforcement agencies akin to “extra territoriality” during the colonial era (Thayer 2012d).

In response to such a criticism, Hun Sen said Chinese companies not favoured but just first served. “I would like to publicly declare that the Cambodian investment policy is ‘first come, first served,’” he said (Vannarin 2013). Indeed, what he said is more than true, for the fact that the Chinese investors have strong connection with CPP’s ethnic Chinese who have the power in government’s decision-making bodies. They have enjoyed higher opportunity than other foreign investors.

Furthermore, what has caused Cambodian civil society and people is the unknown debt. There is no exact official figure for Cambodia’s debt to China so far. Some observers estimate at US\$4 billion or something between US\$2 billion and US\$6 billion (Um 2011; Pheakdey 2012). However, Minister of Economy and Finance Keat Chhon, in February 2012, put the figure down at about \$1.8 billion (Reuy 2012). Although Hun Sen often hails China’s aid and loans “no strings attached,” a recent study shows that its “concessional” loans to Cambodia carry interest rates (1.25%–2%) five times higher than loans from Japan (0.1%–0.36%) and South Korea (0.1%–0.38%), and four times higher than those from the EU countries (0.2%–0.75%) (NGO Forum 2010). Somehow, China’s is relatively less impressive that it seems on the surface as its spread across three or four years while the Western-led Consultative Group (CG)’s budget is disbursed annually (Fullbrook 2006). As

said previously, unlike traditional donors whose all grants are free and loans concessional, China's foreign aid or ODC is a mixture of grants and loans weighted considerably in favour of loans (Coghlan 2008: 12; Sullivan 2011: 60). Most of projects financed by the China's grants and loans are operated by Chinese companies without public bargaining. Coghlan (2008) describes the process of negotiating between the Chinese and Cambodian government as below:

The process of negotiating Chinese grants and loans usually begins during an official visit, when Hun Sen starts negotiations by making specific requests for China to consider helping particular projects. The Chinese government then specifies how much assistance there is available for Cambodia, and together both sides negotiate specific projects. The next step is for the Chinese government to begin the tendering process for Chinese contractors, with the winning Chinese contractors then presenting their budget for the projects. If the budget is less than expected, the Chinese government reuses the balance, if the budget is more, then the Chinese will usually supplement the budget. The contractors who are successful then begin the process of implementing the projects, which are then jointly monitored by both the Chinese and the RGC.

From Coghlan's process description, leading to argument that a lack of transparency and accountability can potentially create new rent-seeking opportunities for powerfully connected political and economic elites within the Cambodian state (Sullivan 2011).

China's Investment and Assistance and Cambodian Elites

Cambodia's foreign policy-makers have engaged with China for three binding reasons—political legitimacy or respectability, balancing force against Western pressure and economic interest. China's investment and assistance in Cambodia has provided opportunities for the Cambodian ruling elites to sustain their power and wealth through patronage network.

The first reason is very crucial for Hun Sen as he has lacked it for as much long as he has been in power. Neither he has good image or reputation on international stage nor in domestic sphere. The writer William Shawcorss described Hun Sen in an article appeared in the 14 November 1996 *New York Review* and later quoted by Tully (2005: 225) as "an increasingly dangerous psychotic" who shown that he would not stop at violence to get his way. Dr. Stephen Heder, the London

professor, described Hun Sen as a “ruthless political criminal”; Lao Mong Hay, executive director of the Khmer Institute of Democracy, described Hun Sen as “a Machiavellian prince,” a compelling communicator and “a Maoist in that he believes power comes from the barrel of the gun”; and Sam Rainsy, a pro-democracy advocate and now Hun Sen’s main political rival, called the prime minister a “murderer” (*Associated Press* 2000). Being an ally of the powerful, mutually respectful China helps him to improve his image. Secondly, Chinese economic activities in Cambodia, as mentioned early, have boosted Cambodia’s economic growth for the last the two decades. And finally, Western pressure in any form has never been a pleasure for Hun Sen. His “China card” has been effective in countervailing the West influence and pressure. Cock (2010: 259–60) argues that by establishing economic ties with China, Cambodia’s ruling class has opportunity for “reshaping the space within which to navigate and deflect pressures from external actors that press for political reforms.”

In Cambodia, foreign policy is also determined remarkably by domestic political factor. Power rivalry among political parties or between the ruling party and opposition party has given rise to foreign policy choice. While main opposition party CNRP (Cambodian National Rescue Party)—a merge of Sam Rainsy Party and Human Rights Party in 2012—has the US and EU backing substantially, in countering strategy, Hun Sen’s CPP makes close ally with China. Within the present political development, CPP has had dominant power legitimately through National Assembly elections held regally by CPP’s affiliated National Election Committee (NEC). In Hun Sen’s perspective, Western demand for democratic reforms attached with their ODA is likely equally meant asking for a share of power with opposition rivals. Moreover, opposition leaders oftentimes call for suspension of Western aid to the CPP’s government when there are abused of human rights, gross corruption revelation, and especially violence and intimidation against its members. This has exacerbated Hun Sen’s move closer to China. Priority interest of both is not democratisation but economic development. Hence, domestic political consideration has defined Cambodian government’s foreign policy making. Given the identical type of democratic configurations and liberal development, Cambodia might be better to get close to Western democracies, especially the US, but the former has choose to be much closer to China because “Sometimes, leaders may have to resort to suboptimal foreign policy due to domestic political demands” (Hussain 2011). So by allying with China, Hun Sen is balancing Western influence as well as competing opposition party

in domestic political context. “The wily Hun Sen plays countries off against each other—China and the West, but also China and Vietnam,” Cambodia’s neighbouring rival from the east, quoted Ian Storey, an academic at the Singapore-based Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Wong 2012). On the other hand, Cambodia gains an ally that can use its power to help Cambodia in the international arena; having UNSC veto power, China always supports Cambodia at the U.N. For example, March 1999, it vetoed the UN proposal to establish international court to try the Khmer Rouge leaders (*BBC* 1999c). Given the rise of China’s influence in Cambodia, the Cambodian government is currently in a good position to resist Western pressure. Much in Cambodian favour, the US has changed its Cambodian engagement from demanding respect for human rights and democracy to focusing on anti-terrorism, anti-drug trafficking, and countering China’s influence (Un 2012: 206 & 2013b: 148)—a new form of “pivot to Asia” or “rebalancing” policy advancement. The US is adopting similar step in accommodating Myanmar’s military rule as well aiming at reducing China’s influence and putting it on path towards democracy.

As pointed previously, China’s policies towards Cambodia are determined by one consistency, that is, Beijing doesn’t care who runs Cambodia as long as the ruler is keen on helping China maintain its strategic position in the region (Biedermann 2010) and that economic development is China number one priority in its foreign policy. To this consistent policy maneuver, China comes up with the novel terms of the “Five Principles” as the guideline of Chinese foreign policy practice (Richardson 2010). Similarly, it seems that Hun Sen does not care who should be his external friends, as long as they could help him in sustainably consolidating his power to rule in Cambodia. One of the most famous maxims of Chinese communist leader Deng Xiaoping, dating back to the years before the Cultural Revolution, goes “It doesn’t matter if a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice” (Speake and Simpson 2009). By undermining democratic political institutions, China’s economic assistance constitutes not only economic benefits to the CPP elites, but also legitimacy to continue to run Cambodian affairs (Un 2013: 83). China should be such a cat for Hun Sen and vice versa. However, Hun Sen does not completely turn his back to the West and international donors. He seems to play “China card” very well as seen that over the last two decades, Cambodia has continued to receive economic and development assistance from both China and international donors. While aid from international donors often goes to public institutional strengthening, China’s is diverted to

development of infrastructure, agriculture, and energy. To evaluate the result these differentiated objections of aid provision to Cambodia from China and international donors, one can see that, despite Cambodia has enjoyed constant economic growth with average of 6 to 7 percent annually, Cambodia has till recorded one of the world most corruption states, and underdeveloped foundations of democratic principles such as freedom of express, free and fair elections, judicial system. Nicolas Agostini, International Federation for Human Rights, reveals that “For two decades, [Prime Minister Hun Sen] has been able to make promises to everyone, including Western donors, to ensure that the flow of foreign funds does not stop. But he has reneged on almost all of his promises pertaining to human rights and rule of law,” (Seiff 2013).

Other than using China to countervail external actors’ influence, China’s economic assistance has helped Cambodia’s ruling elites to sustain their wealth and power with the expanse of the poor and undermine democratisation. One Chinese expert writes that “new opportunities for rent-seeking and personal enrichment are available to Cambodian state power-holders and their business associates through Chinese investment and aid, to the detriment of the prospects for democratic reform” (Sullivan 2011: 50). Cambodian elites have benefited greatly from China’s economic development assistance and investment in Cambodia. The profitable economic engagement with China can be both in pecuniary and political terms due to the fact that the political and economic systems in Cambodia are so closely intertwined (Ciorciari 2013). In Cambodia, a modernized bureaucracy are combined with personalized patronage networks—blurring the line between the public and private spheres—that is what Un and So (2011: 294) call it a “neopatrimonial state.” Patrimonialism, and the provision of material aid and political legitimacy by international community have been central to the endurance of Cambodia’s ruling elite (Cock 2010). Indeed, Hun Sen, a longest-serving prime minister in Asia, has retained his dominant power in Cambodian politics largely through reinvention of “the century-old patron-client relationship” characterized by electoral politics (So 2010). He has controlled all the military, economic and political spheres of power, which are closely intertwined. Small number of these CPP elites—high-ranking government officials and business tycoons—who are close to Hun Sen have been vested with decision-making power. The relationship between high-ranking government officials and business tycoons are bond through blood, marriage, and shared business interests (Ciorciari 2013).

Cambodian economy has been controlled mostly by a group of wealthy individuals, known as *Oknha*, tycoons or economic mandarins, who make generous financial or in-kind contributions to the ruling CPP of which they are central members. In return, these *Ohnha* are granted with economic land concessions, favourable treatment and the selective application of laws by the government in which they themselves have decision-making power. Many of them are ethnic Chinese such as Kith Meng and Yeay Phu (aka Choeung Sopheap) who have cultivated trusted connection with the Mainland Chinese due to their cultural and linguistic familiarity. Even though, Hun Sen and his CPP enjoy popularity in the countryside for their assurance of relative peace and stability, and more recently unsteady but significant economic growth, yet “their control over the flow of money through key patronage networks remains an important pillar of their political power” (Ciorciari 2013). China’s willingness to involve in corruption has further tightened this patronage system. Chinese businessmen and investors regularly pay the Cambodian officials in order to get their business documents undersigned. This corruption practice of between Cambodian officials and Chinese investors has, as pointed out earlier, exacerbated rampant corruption in Cambodia. That said, it is clear that Cambodian ruling elites have substantially profited through their engagement with Chinese economic activities Cambodia. This economic relationship will remain intact as long as the current CPP-ruling elites are in power. For them, there is seemingly no any better alternative other than China. The US and the West offer little trust among CPP elites, given that the latter are being accused in hindering democratic reforms and human rights abuses in Cambodia—authoritarian leadership. Whereas the CPP elites dislike the West that back the their principal-rival opposition party and interference in Cambodia’s internal affairs. Both neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam are also not a liable alternative due to unresolved territorial disputes and a history of perceived Thai and Vietnamese encroachment on Khmer territory. Moreover, the two neighbours’ economic capability to provide aid and development assistance to Cambodia and their willing to do so has relatively been lower as compare to cash-rich China. Hence China has remained an attractive aid provider to the CPP, as a consequence, China’s influence in the country has deepened further.

Growing China’s economic footprint in Cambodia has enabled the latter to strengthen its socio-economic development. However, lacks of transparency and involvement of endemic corruption, China’s aid and investment have benefited rent-

seeking Cambodian elites at most and helped sustained their power to rule Cambodia indefinitely, thereby resisting external actors' demand for democratic reforms. China's investment involved land grabs, forced evictions, and illegal loggings, which have been sensitive issues in Cambodia, affected the poor at most. Nevertheless, China has used its official aid effectively to seek influence over Cambodian government officials. Political and economic influence in Cambodia has also transferred into security and strategic leverage in a broader sense. China has also become the largest source of military aid provision to Cambodia. Examination of Cambodia-China security cooperation since the early 1990s, therefore, contributes to further understanding of China's influence in Cambodia and its strategic interest in the region as well.

CHAPTER IV

CAMBODIA-CHINA STRATEGIC COOPERATION

China has long been invested its foreign policy interest in Cambodia through personal cultivating with Cambodian regime leaders and even anti-regime elements. In the 1960s, despite having had cosy relations with the royal government of Cambodia presided over by Sihanouk, China secretly provided support for the communist Khmer Rouge's insurgent movement in the jungles of Cambodia. It reflected that "China would support any Cambodian government it deemed legitimate at a given moment regardless of its political fortunes, affiliations, or ideology" as long as the regime leader is amenable to helping China maintains its strategic position in the region (Richardson 2010). For its part, Cambodia saw China as "a protector and friend of Cambodia" in its security threats from the neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam (Jeldres 2012: 82).

In December 1978, Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia and drove out China's protégé, the Khmer Rouge, to the Cambodian-Thai border, and occupied Cambodia over the 1980s. In response, in February 1979, China launched a costly punitive attack at the Vietnamese border in the north, primarily to teach Vietnam "a lesson." Though China made incursion twelve miles into Vietnam, destroying infrastructure, but fell far short of persuading Vietnam to [immediately] withdraw from Cambodia or address of Sino-Vietnamese disputes by means of negotiation (Brown and Zasloff 1998). Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia was perceived to be the threat to the Chinese southern flank and to regional security and stability. Along with ASEAN and the US, China then continued to provide political and financial support to the Khmer Rouge and non-communist resistance groups in their fights against the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia and the Vietnamese-installed PRK. Withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia and delegalisation of the PRK was made known to be the precondition of China before any means of negotiation would take place. Finally, under international pressure, economic hardship and reforms at home, and essentially the collapse of the Soviet Union, the

biggest backer of the Vietnamese, Vietnam compromised to the Chinese demand and withdrew its final forces from Cambodia in September 1989. And the legitimate power was also transferred from the Vietnamese-installed Hun Sen/Heng Samrin government to the SNC under Sihanouk leadership. China secured most of its objectives for Cambodia and was confident that the Hun Sen leadership, Hanoi's erstwhile ally and "puppet," understood the necessity of recognising China's regional authority. Therefore, Beijing was prepared to cooperate with the Hun Sen leadership to achieve its strategic interests in Indochina [and Southeast Asia at large] (Ross 2009). On the other hand, the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia took place in July 1989–October 1991 resolved Cambodia-China relations and contributed to re-integrating China into major power multilateral negotiations. China also provided financial assistance to Cambodia's reconstruction under the October 1991 Paris Peace Accord which totaled at least US\$250 million during the year 1992, and contributed "47 military observers, an engineering battalion of 400 men ... more than 3 million *yuan* ... and 100-odd vehicles of 14 types" (Richardson 2010: 160-162). After the U.N.-sponsored elections in 1993, China recognized and supported the new coalition government. Beside political normalisation, China also began to establish defence ties with Cambodia essentially through military aid provision. As in the past, China used military equipment to buttress relations with Sihanouk and Pol Pot and recently revived such a practice with Hun Sen (Storey 2011). In other words, China has used the instruments of military aid to gain influence in Cambodia and other developing nations.

China's Military Aid and Defence Cooperation

In the UNTAC period, Cambodia-China military ties did not take off. Suspicion over China commitment to the Paris Peace Accord because of its close link with the disastrous Khmer Rouge was the reason to this backdrop. As mentioned earlier, Cambodian coalition government, newly formed in the post-1993 elections, asked China to stop its support to the Khmer Rouge forces in order to have a friendly relationship between the two countries. Meanwhile, China continued to regard Hun Sen and his CPP as being the Vietnamese "puppets." Subsequently, the situation began to change, as China saw no importance in, and hence distanced itself from, the Khmer Rouge. This paved the way for the substantially improved military-to-military contacts between Cambodia and China. Through decades of bilateral cooperation

enhancement, China is now Cambodia's largest provider of military aid.

Significant military relations began with a four-day visit to Phnom Penh by Chinese General Zhang Wannian, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PLA, in April 1996, where he met with top government and defence officials. General Zhang and his delegation paid a "goodwill" visit at the invitation of the Co-Defence Ministers. The Chinese also met Co-Premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, National Assembly chairman Chea Sim, Co-Defence Minister Tea Banh, and the armed forces chief of staff, General Ke Kim Yan (*The Phnom Penh Post* 1996b; Richardson 2010: 172). As mentioned previously, the highlight of Zhang's visit was a US\$1 million military provision to Cambodia government for training and equipment support to RCAF (Hayes 1996). The visit, on the hand other, should have eliminated any suspicions within the CPP whether the Chinese were providing support to the outlawed Khmer Rouge. In a nutshell, it showed that China was seriously to establish long-term relations with the coalition government. China's move was also considered to reflect its desire that Cambodia should not rely heavily on Western military assistance (Frost 1996).

In the aftermath of Hun Sen's July 1997 coup against Norodom Ranarith, Cambodia and China have forged defense cooperation commensurate with increased economic and political ties. While international donors suspended military aid to Cambodia following the July 1997 fighting, in December, China delivered 116 military cargo trucks and 70 jeeps worth US\$2.8 million to Cambodian government (Marks 2000; Jeldres 2003; Storey 2006). Subsequently, China has provided the RCAF with financial support for demobilisation, logistic for military barracks, schools and hospitals, scholarships and trainings, and funding the refurbishment of the Khmer Rouge-era military airfield at Kompong Chhnang (Storey 2006). In August 1998, China sent a police training team to Cambodia to conduct two-week training in investigative techniques and physical security to 100 Cambodian policemen (Marks 2000).

A series of high-level visits in 1999 was the indication of the increased security cooperation between the two states. In March 1999, Cambodia's Co-Defence Ministers, Tea Banh and Prince Sisowath Sirirath, traveled to China for a five-day visit at the invitation of Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian. The two Co-Defence Ministers met with Vice President Hu Jintao and Chief of the PLA General Staff Fu Quanyou. China described this visit as an indicator of the emergence of China's

foreign military relations “as an energetic and dynamic part of China’s all-around foreign policy” (Marks 2000). In October 1999, at the invitation of Fu Quanyou, Commander in-Chief General Ke Kim Yan led a 12-member Cambodian delegation including army commander Lieutenant General Meas Sophea and the commanders of the navy and air force to China for a six-day visit to China (Marks 2000; Muni 2002). Shortly thereafter, there was a visit to Phnom Penh by the Senior Commissar of the PLA Logistics Department Zhou Kunren (Marks 2000). An unconfirmed Cambodian media report claimed that Zhou offered Cambodia 250 tanks, 230 artillery pieces, 100 military trucks, and an undisclosed number of machine guns. Nevertheless, Hun Sen reportedly responded that he would accept the aid but not at this time.

These military contacts were only the initial stage of defence ties between Cambodia and China. However, they would likely develop further. It was true that Cambodia had no funds to buy China’s hardware, but it would send military personnel to China for training and would accept Chinese training assistance if offered (ibid.). In July 2000, Cambodia published its first Defence White Paper describing modest cooperation with China in the following words:

In the military field, China is also attempting to build closer relations with Cambodia. This includes granted non-refundable assistance for training, shelters, health, engineering and transportation. In the area of human recourse training, China has accepted RCAF personnel for training in strategic, tactical, technical and medical fields. The Cambodian Ministry of National Defence will attempt to strengthen its relations, especially in the areas of engineering and specially training (Ministry of National Defence 2000).

Cambodia-China security relations got advanced further with the visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Cambodia in November 2000. The twelve-point Joint Statement on the framework and bilateral cooperation included the strengthening of “armed forces” factor as well (MFAPRC 2000a). During this visit, reportedly, President Jiang pledged US\$1.7 million in defence assistance to Cambodia (Sambath and Doyle 2001a). In pursuance to the wide range of consensus reached by the leaders of Cambodia and China during President Jiang Zemin’s visit, Chinese Defence Minister General Chi Haotian visited Cambodia in February 2001, marking the first visit of a Chinese defence minister to Cambodia as part of China’s military diplomacy tour in the region that included Vietnam, Laos and Nepal. General Chi unveiled US\$2.5 million in military aid to Cambodia, which was US\$828,000 greater

than the expectation of Cambodia's military leadership. "This figure is quite a surprise," said Prince Sisowath Sirirath/Sereyath, Co-Defence Minister (*ibid.*). The aid, reportedly, was earmarked for rehabilitation of Preah Ket Melea military hospital in Phnom Penh and construction of a military training center in Kompong Speu province. Having had an opportunity during General Chi's visit, Prime Minister Hun Sen asked China to help cut the country's bloated military by providing a US\$12.5 million loan for demobilisation—an alternative demand while foreign aid donors did not make any promise on funding Cambodia's demobilisation programme in their recent meetings (Sambath and Doyle 2001b). General Chi responded by promising to take this request back to Beijing for consideration. However, in the month before the 2002 ASEAN Summit of which Cambodia held a rotating chairmanship, China promised increased military aid to Cambodia in 2003 would be tripled to US\$2.4 million (*The Economist* 2002).

From 2005 onward, China's military assistance specifically focused on enhancing Cambodia's maritime capabilities to help safeguard projected offshore oil sites in which Chinese companies have considerable interest. On the other hand, Cambodia possesses strategically critical position for China, offering deep-sea ports in Southeast Asia, through which China ships most of its oil imports from the Middle East. In 2005, China pledged six naval patrol boats for combating "piracy and smugglers operations" along with 400 police motorcycles to the Cambodian Ministry of the Interior (*VOA* 2005b), and in 2007, the Chinese government provided a preferential loan to Cambodian government to buy another nine vessels for an estimated US\$60 million from China State Shipbuilding Company (*Xinhua* 2007; Burgos and Ear 2010; Storey 2011). The acquisition of patrol naval boats serves great maritime security interest of Cambodia, which can safeguard Cambodian waters from the widespread illegal fishing by Thai and Vietnamese trawlers, on-going smuggling by domestic and international entities and the increase petroleum exploration. Delivering an opening speech to a seminar on maritime security hosted by the Australian Embassy, Hun Sen said:

A few years ago, I was very concerned that Vietnam and Thailand have good naval forces while our navy lacked resources and that someday pirates and terrorists might think Cambodian seas are safe for them. Because of this thought, I went to China to seek boats for our navy after the ships from Russia had become old (Samean 2007).

These totaled fifteen naval patrol boats are based in Ream Naval Base, in Sihanoukville (aka Kompong Som), which was also financed the upgrade by the Chinese. As of 2012, however, there have been no reports of Chinese warship arriving at Ream, but the first Chinese warship Zhenghe with 411 crews docked in a nearby Sihanoukville port in November 2008, as party of a five-day goodwill visit (*Xinhua* 2008b; *VOA* 2008).

Further, in 2010, China provided 250 military trucks to Cambodia when the US postponed its military aid programme in Cambodia including the shipment of 200 military trucks, as a retaliation of Cambodia's expulsion of 20 Uighur asylum seekers back to China in December 2009 (Sokheng and Strangio 2010; Yuthana 2010). However, Defense Minister Tea Banh was disappointed in loss of US Aid. He said "When [the aid was] about to come, there was a suspension, or freezing, that's the issue," adding that "Some issues are unrelated, but then they affect smooth cooperation, and that's what has caused us to be disappointed" (*VOA* 2010). As part of this agreement, in 2011, China provided 50,000 new uniforms to the Cambodian military, which was indicative of the strong bilateral relationship between Cambodia and China (Yuthana 2011).

As part of the Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation Treaty signed in April 2006, Cambodia and China agreed to expand military exchanges and increase cooperation in combating non-traditional security threats (*Xinhua* 2006). In December 2010, Cambodia and China agreed to upgrade their bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (*Xinhua* 2010a; Sutter and Huang 2011). Pursuance to this agreement, exchanges of frequent high-level visit were implemented. For instance, in June 2011, Defence Minister Tea Banh visited Beijing met with the then Vice President Xi Jinping and "called for cultivating relations between the two countries and their armed forces to a higher level" (*Xinhua* 2011d). Beside naval assistance, during a visit of a member of China's communist standing committee Zhou Yongkang in August 2011, China also granted loans of US\$200 million to Cambodia to buy the Chinese-made Z-9 series military helicopters, used for disaster management and "to fight terrorism" (Reaksmey 2011). Reportedly, 12 helicopters would be purchased and delivered in April 2013 (Soenthrith 2012). In May 2012, Defense Minister Liang Guanglie visited Phnom Penh where he signed a military cooperation agreement with his counterpart Defense Minister Tea Banh (*Xinhua* 2012a). This agreement called for the continuation of joint training of

military personnel and for China to continue to provide financial support for the construction of military training schools and medical facilities (Sutter and Huang 2012).

Military cooperation, on the other hand, has been reemphasized during Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Cambodia in April 2012. In Joint Statement, the two countries reiterated to further deepen security cooperation including maintaining contacts between the ministries of defence and military forces, military training, building of military academies and schools, logistic support (Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the United Nations 2012). The Statement also included non-traditional security cooperation such as combating transboundary trafficking in persons, telecommunication fraud, terrorism, drug control, capability building in law enforcement, and case investigation assistance.

It's noteworthy that Hu arrived in Cambodia for an official state visit only days before ASEAN regional meeting began. Reportedly, Hu announced the grants of US\$19 million in defence aid to Cambodia. Coincidentally the fund pledges came less than 24 hours before Chinese Defence Minister Liang Guanglie was scheduled to speak at the ASEAN Defence Ministers meeting in Cambodia in May 2012, ostensibly to explain the country's stance on South China Sea issues (Sokheng 2012). A high-level visit and aid announcement, arguably, explicated the Chinese intention to influence Cambodia's position over maritime disputes some ASEAN members. Such a Chinese diplomatic practice has been persistently witnessed in its relationship with Cambodia since 2000.

Finally, China has attached a great strategic and security interest to its civil and military assistance to Cambodia. The dominant influence status China has in Cambodia in political, socio-economic and security cooperation can be compared to that of China-DK relations during the second half of the 1970s. China's strategic intention in the tiny and poorly developed Cambodia has been a hot topic of discussion among concerned scholars and analysts as part the subject of China's global and regional rising power. Of course, Cambodia also has maintained security objectives in accommodating the rising China.

Strategic and Security Interests

China has a wide range of strategic objectives in Cambodia as part of its regional and global power acquisition. According to Burgos and Ear (2010), "China's domestic

and regional security relations with its neighbors are essentially shaped by shifting ideological configurations, the evolution of foreign relations with other countries, and geographical proximity.” Regarding the latter, Cambodia, as mainland Southeast Asian state, lies within China’s immediate proximity and therefore constitutes a geostrategic importance as a friendly buffer state. Moreover, it comprises the potential to help advance China’s pursuit of economic development and a larger diplomatic and strategic footprint.

Since the Cold War, China has demonstrated a longstanding desire for access to Cambodia. Long back to the Sihanouk era, China used Cambodia to channel its military supplies to North Vietnam and the Vietcong and to counter Vietnam during the Khmer Rouge regime (Marks 2000). China provided strong political and material support including massive military supplies, and sent over 15,000 military assistance to DK. During this period, Chinese military engineers supervised the slave-labour construction of a military airfield at Kompong Chhnang province which was (and is) capable of handling any aircraft in the world, some 90kms far away from Phnom Penh (ibid.; Mertha 2014: 85). In fact, the Khmer Rouge military forces did not possess air force, therefore, China’s intention was clear that the airfield was used a forward base for the PLA air force. It is interesting to know that China also provided funds to refurbish Kompong Chhnang airfield as part of its defence cooperation with Hun Sen’s Cambodia (Storey 2006).

Today, China is keen to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries that have sea ports that can serve Beijing’s growing hunger for oil from the Gulf. Cambodia hopes its closer ties to China will help it counter the influence of its rival, neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam. China’s military aid and assistance to Cambodia may also give China long-term strategic benefits. As mentioned earlier, China assisted Cambodia to acquire fifteen naval patrol boats which are based in Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville. Ream docking facilities have been refurbished by Chinese funds and the nearby port of Sihanoukville has been upgraded by Chinese companies. China argues that it is helping increasing Cambodia’s capacity for cracking down on drug smuggling, trafficking activities and pirates, and in patrolling the sea border (*Associated Press* 2007). Although this may seem in principle a generous gesture, there is a speculation that China overtly attempts to establish a military bulwark to counteract present and future threats that may arise in the region. According to Ian Storey, a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

(ISEAS), Singapore, access to these ports provides China two potential strategic advantages:

First, a visiting Chinese naval flotilla could be used to put pressure on Hanoi during times of heightened Sino-Vietnamese tensions. Second, some observers have speculated that China has adopted a “string of pearls” strategy aimed at securing vulnerable sea lanes of communication and protecting seaborne energy supplies in particular (Storey 2006).

China believes that the United States already controls the sea routes from the oil-rich Persian Gulf through the Malacca Straits. China calls this strategic vulnerability to disrupted energy supplies Beijing’s “Malacca Dilemma” (*The Washington Times* 2005). Should Taiwan conflict have erupted in military confrontation, the United States could severely cripple Chinese resistance by blocking its energy supply, on the contrary, the PLA poses little threat to United States’ energy security (ibid.). Hence, to secure its energy supplies, China pursues “strings of pearls” strategy, which involves gaining naval access to ports located in countries friendly to the PRC from which to launch a response. Ream or Sihanoukville might be one such “pearl” (others would be in Burma, Pakistan and Bangladesh). On the other hand, Beijing could build on improved military capacity in Cambodia’s islands in the Gulf of Thailand to squelch any tangible threats might rise in the future, so doing could grant China valuable time to deliver reinforcements as needed (Burgos and Ear 2010).

More importantly, China continues to promote its national strategy of building regional alliances to counter US influence and to strengthen its own security in Southeast Asia. Cambodia, being one of very few alliances of China in the region, could serve China secure its regional strategic objectives.

Situated in the center of mainland Southeast Asia, the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville would provide an excellent base for projecting maritime power into the Gulf of Thailand and the Straits of Malacca. Cambodian airfields could also make up for China’s lack of in-flight refueling capacity for warplanes providing maritime air cover. Such bases would not only protect China’s interests, they would drive a wedge both within ASEAN and between ASEAN and the United States (Marks 2000).

Geopolitically speaking, China’s wider strategic interest in Cambodia can easily be connected to its security and sensitive issues in the South China Sea which

is rich of resources mainly oil and natural gas (Burgos and Ear 2010). However, it has not been sure that if the ongoing tensions in South China Sea disputes turn out to be a military conflict, Cambodia would provide its naval bases for China using against its traditional ally, Vietnam that toppled the DK and put the current ruling CPP in power. Indeed, China is the largest source of Cambodian's military aid assistance, up to US\$5 million annually, though Vietnam helps train more Cambodian soldiers numbering between 200 to 500 per year (Rith and Cochrane 2005). Yet, it is worth noting that practical and sudden cooperation between two countries in a populous region could be hamstrung by "historical suspicions, cultural prejudices, geopolitical rivalries, and evolving priorities" (Burgos and Ear, 2010).

Cambodia Balancing Its Neighbours?

Cambodia has benefited from its defence cooperation with China. China's military assistance has helped Cambodia to strengthen its military capacity and modernise its military hardwards. However, at time being, Cambodia's military capability cannot match with that of its neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam. China's aid and assistance to RCAF benefits military officials more than national defence in general. According to Bader (2015: 78) China's military support to RCAF "is better understood as the narrowly targeted provision of privileges to an important subgroup within Hun Sen's winning coalition, rather than a contribution to Cambodia's national defence as a whole, which would classify as a public good."

As elaborated earlier, in terms of political and economic calculation, Cambodia balances the influence from the West by aligning with China. It should be seen that CPP-led government's alignment with China is more likely an attempt to ensure its political hegemony in the country, to a lesser extent, rather than any foreign policy formulation, which strategically aims to balance any country. Cambodia knows how to "plays China off of the Western donor groups and China's aid—even if not necessarily linked to any downgrading of human rights—could have the effect of a kind of race to bottom on human rights" Kurlantzick said as quoted in *Asia Times Online* (Strangio 2009c).

Apparently, Cambodia's military cooperation with China can also be viewed as an act to balance its neighbouring countries. As signatories of the 1991-PPA, Thailand and Vietnam are obligatory to respect Cambodia independence, territory and sovereignty. Cambodia has maintained good relations with its neighbours. There was

no security threat from Thailand until bloody border clashes happened in 2008-2011 over the dispute of Preah Vihear temple (Thul 2011). From Cambodian perspective, border conflict with Thailand posted a clear security threats to Cambodia. Even though Chinese assistance has contributed to building Cambodian army's capacity and national defence, the RCAF are "far from a level that would enable Cambodia to rival its neighbours" and instead of attempting to arm Cambodia heavily, "China has used military aid as a sign of political support" (Ciorciari 2013). In 2010, China delivered 250 military vehicles to Cambodia, shortly after the US suspended a military aid programme, including the delivery of some 200 military trucks, as a retaliation of Cambodia's deportation of 20 Uighur asylum-seeker back to China in December 2009 (Sokheng and Strangio 2010; Yuthana 2010). As part of this commitment, in 2011, China donated 50,000 new uniforms to the Cambodian military, which was indicative of the two countries' strong bilateral relationship. The donation was made following Cambodia and Thailand agreed to end vicious fighting along the countries' shared border that broke out in April that year. Carlyle Thayer suggested that China's uniform donations constituted a soft gesture by China urging Thailand to exercise more restraint in the contested border areas. "When China announces that it's providing these uniforms, that has political implications, but uniforms aren't going to kill you," he said. "[China's] not taking sides, but I think it [still] has a chilling effect on Thailand" (Yuthana 2011). On the other hand, Cambodia's defence ties with China can be a counterweight in reducing Vietnam's influence. As China's influence in Cambodia has increased, Vietnam's influence in Cambodia has waned comparatively. Nevertheless, Cambodia still maintains a good relationship with Vietnam and the latter is also a major country that provides military assistance, especially in terms of military training and Vietnam is the second largest military aid provider to Cambodia after China (Rith and Cochrane 2005). Even though Cambodia shows its support for China's position in the South China dispute, which obviously undermines Vietnamese interest, defence relations between the two countries remain unchanged.

At time being, there is no clear evidence that Cambodia attempts to balance its neighbours. But Cambodia is in a good position to do so while keeping close relations with China. "Cambodia can use its relations with China to leverage a settlement with Thailand over overlapping claims in the Gulf of Thailand" said Thayer (2011), an Australian defence expert. Nevertheless, one Thai analyst argues that Beijing's

forging ties with Hun Sen regime in Cambodia has had the effect of “pulling the country out of the Vietnamese and Thai orbit” (Chachavalpongpu 2012). To a higher degree, since the 2008-2011 border clashes with Thailand, Cambodia’s alignment with China can be viewed as a balancing act against Thailand, but comparatively Cambodia has maintained lower degree in balancing Vietnam as of now both countries has remained cosy in their relationship. “As [an] immediate neighbour, Hun Sen has to keep Vietnam happy. After all, it was Hanoi who put him in power,” Ian Storey, a senior fellow at Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, told *The Straits Times* (Ghosh 2014).

After all, Cambodia-China defence cooperation, like cooperation in political and economic fields, has improved steadfastly. China is Cambodia’s largest military aid provider. China has used its economic inducements to convince Cambodian government that it must take into account the Chinese interests. Strategically, Cambodia’s port of Sihanoukville is essential for China’s power projection in Southeast Asia and can be used by China in time of possible military conflict over South China Sea. By enhancing Cambodian naval, it can protect China’s oil shipment from the Middle East against piracies and smugglings. On the other hand, even though China’s material supports to RCAF has contributed to the country’s defence modernisation, they have also benefited Cambodia’s military officials or political elites. Finally, Cambodia’s close ties with China can serve as a balancing act against its immediate neighbours, though clear evidence of that has remained supportively low.

In spite of progress in the illustrated cooperation in the fields of political, economic and defence relations, simultaneously, cultural ties between Cambodia and China have remarkably deepened. Chinese cultural influence in Cambodian society and the role of Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese are of paramount importance to the toughened relationship between the two countries today. In the next chapter, this aspect of Cambodia-China relations is discussed widely.

CHAPTER V

CAMBODIA-CHINA CULTURAL COOPERATION

Coupling with increasingly advancing economic, political and military rise which has aroused deep uneasiness among segments of the elites, the establishment, and the public in a handful countries, “the Chinese leaders have been aware of the growing relevance and importance of cultural diplomacy and have made extensive use of cultural platforms to project China’s peaceful rise image and soft power” (Lai 2012: 83). There has been congested writings about China’s growing prosperity and rapidly expanding military might and diplomatic influence, yet further study is needed on the elements of China’s foreign policy that are aimed at subnational Chinese diaspora populations in Southeast Asia and how this policy affects foreign relations between regional countries. Ethnic Chinese community has functioned as one of China’s soft power projection in promotion of China’s peaceful rise. Being China’s soft underbelly, Cambodia, well known for being host to an increasing number of Chinese diaspora and its well accommodation with them, is a useful case study of Chinese cultural influence in the region.

In bilateral context, Cambodia-China cultural relations can be characterised by three features; Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese who have largely controlled economic activities in Cambodia, their links to Mainland Chinese that have further bolstered political and economic bilateral cooperation, and the Chinese cultural influence in Cambodian society that has indicated two-way process of cultural integration or assimilation between ethnic Chinese and Khmer people (dominant ethnicity in Cambodia). It is generally accepted that the role of Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese has made political and economic relationship between Cambodia and China possible and cosy (Marks 2000; Chanda 2002; Vannarith 2009; Long 2009). Amidst the increasing influence of China’s political and economic might, it has been seen that China’s cultural profile is also growing remarkably in Cambodia. Unfortunately, Khmer culture—its origin and closeness derived largely from India’s Hinduism and Buddhism influence—has nothing to do with Mainland China. Like in political and

economic bilateral relations, Sino-Khmer cultural relationship is asymmetric in nature and practice. Cambodian culture has no minor influence on the Chinese in Mainland, though it does on Cambodia's ethnic Chinese especially in adaptation of Buddhism, for instance. Jacobsen (2009) characterizes Chinese diaspora as "an enduring sense of transnational group identification and global linkages, which makes it well suited as an international channel for Chinese sojourners, migrants and merchants." Historically and contemporarily Cambodia's ethnic Chinese have been relatively well-integrated members of society.

Nevertheless, Chinese minority in Cambodia is plainly visible, sensible and growing, needless to mention their vibrant presence in the capital of Phnom Penh. Muni (2002) classifies them into three categories: (i) Cambodians of Chinese descent, (ii) recent migrations linked to the growing Chinese control of the Cambodian economy, and (iii) illegal migrants, some of which are using Cambodia as a transit station for obtaining illegal passport and travel documents for their onward journey to other countries.

Brief History of Ethnic Chinese in Cambodia, 1953-1991

Fate of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese met with ups and downs in its historical trajectory in Cambodia. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Chinese in Cambodia were the largest ethnic minority in Cambodia. There were an estimated 425,000 lived in Cambodia in the late 1960s, but by 1984, only about 61,400 Cambodians of Chinese ancestry remained (Ross 1990: 106). The downside of the Chinese was due to the 20-year period of repression that began with legalized discrimination under Lon Nol from 1970 to 1975, deteriorated into horrific ethnic cleansing under the Khmer Rouge, and official discrimination under the Vietnamese and PRK from 1979 to 1989 (Marks 2000). However, since 1989 the Chinese status began to improve after the SOC under leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen lifted restriction against them.

Ethnic Chinese in Post-Independence Cambodia

Prof. William E. Willmott is the first scholar who conducted genuine research on ethnic Chinese in Cambodia. According to Willmott, in the 1953-1962, there was a large number of ethnic Chinese in Cambodia, about 7.4% (Willmott 1970: 6) of total 5.7 million population of Cambodia (Ross 1990: 83). Ethnic Chinese had been divided according to the geographical location they were originated and linguistic to

which they belonged. They represented to five major linguistic groups; namely, the Teochiu accounted for about 60 percent was the largest, followed by the Cantonese (accounting for about 20 percent), the Hokkien (accounting for about 7 percent), and the Hakka and the Hainanese (each accounting for about 4 percent) (Willmott 1970: 6–8; Ross 1990: 106–108). The division was a result of the French practice of “direct rule” over the Chinese through their *higuan* also known as *congregations*. They lived in Cambodia’s major cities and provinces such as Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampot, Takeo and Ratanakiri.

According to Willmott, Khmer-Chinese relationship was relatively cordial when compared with those in other Southeast Asian countries (Willmott 1970: 8). This cordial relationship between the two distinctive ethnicities were possible mainly due to the fact that presence of another sizeable minority group, the Vietnamese (400,000), had absorbed much of the hostility Khmer felt towards resident foreigners. Socio-culturally speaking, other he other hand, intermarriage had been prevalent between Khmer and Chinese and assimilated in the Cambodian population and became ordinary subjects without any difficulties (ibid.: 8 and 17).

Economically, the Chinese had predominated largely in commerce, an area that they faced no competition with Khmer who primarily engaged with farming. Even before and during the French rule, the Chinese had acted as “the economic middlemen between Khmer peasant and aristocrat, leasing monopoly farms from the king, collecting revenue from his subjects, and organizing the rice and fish trade from which the court obtained substantial income” (Willmott 1970). However, arguably for national security reasons, in 1956, Prince Sihanouk enacted Immigration Law which prohibited eighteen occupations on foreigners in Cambodia including the Chinese; namely, tax collectors, water-way transportation, publishers, salt dealers, immigration office, employment agencies, general goods distributors, weapon traders, producing-repairing radio/electronics, barbers, money lenders, jewelers, taxi drivers, long distance crews, loggers, and crop traders (Willmott 1967: 46). It appeared that these restrictions meant the “nationalisation” of occupations, which were preominated by the Chinese. Nevertheless, the career-restrictions had not prevented ethnic Chinese from maintaining economic dominant position, given that they were holding Cambodian citizenship. In 1963, reportedly there were nine richest men; all from Chinese extraction, seven Teochiu and two Hokkien (ibid.: 99). They were among the most powerful economic leaders in the countries, and of course they involved in

economic formulation policy, which could benefit the Chinese community. These men made regular donations to the Chinese hospital and to other Chinese causes.

Politically, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Chinese community in Cambodia had been advised to stay out of Cambodian politics and encouraged to integrate into Cambodian society by the Chinese leaders. For example, during Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to Cambodia in 1956, he said to the Chinese community to strictly abide by the Cambodian laws and decrees and not to take part in any political activities (Smith 1965: 105–106). However, in the late 1960s, due to the impact of Cultural Revolution under Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese community got involved in communist propaganda activities in Cambodia. As a result, Prince Sihanouk terminated all Sino-Khmer Associations in Cambodia. August 1967, Cambodia had imposed stickier control on the Chinese schools and universities, an effort to stop the spread of Mao's "thought" and communism in Cambodia (Intelligence Report 1968: 20).

Despite political concerns, during Sihanouk's years, the Chinese community in Cambodia had enjoyed the higher minority rights than ever. Their talents in economic affairs have been highly regarded by Cambodians. "Cambodians regard the Chinese as desirable son-in-law," the late Prof. Leifer (1967) wrote in his book *Cambodia: The Search for Security*.

Ethnic Chinese as a "Fifth Column" under Lon Nol

Anti-Chinese feeling and policies arose after Gen. Lon Nol seized power from Prince Sihanouk by bloodless coup in March 1970. With policy shift from Sihanouk's neutrality to pro-West and anti-communism, the PRC was viewed as source of threat and the Chinese community were suspected to be China's agent or a "fifth column," who were loyal to China than to Cambodia, spreading communism and subversion.

The year 1970 marked the beginning of Cambodia's disastrous civil war, the communist Vietnamese infiltrations and the American carpet-bombing. However, there is no much information or study on the Chinese community during the Khmer Republic during the 1980s, though Willmott (1981: 42) assumed that a Sino-Khmer elite dominated commerce in Cambodia from the time of independence well into the era of the Khmer Republic. Beside Marks (2000) who briefly revealed that Lon Nol and his wife were the Chinese-Cambodians, and he had Taiwanese advisors from 1972 to 1975, and who in contrast followed anti-Chinese policy, it was not until 2005

there was a research thesis on *The Chinese Minority in Cambodia*. The study reveals that the Chinese community had been oppressed by the Khmer Republic, though they were luckier than the thousands of the Vietnamese who were massacred by the state-sponsored pogrom (Chan 2005). However, the Chinese conducted their business as usual and seemed no life threat had been reported against them (Kamm 1970). Yet, Lon Nol issued strict measures of controlling the spread of communism in the country. Chinese schools and newspapers were shut down, and the Chinese were issued special identity card papers, and charged with special taxes. According to interviewee's account later, Lon Nol authorities viewed "Chinese was a communist language" and suspected the Chinese who could speak fluent Khmer and were well-educated "a Communist spy" (Chan 2005: 50). According to Elizabeth Becker, then a *Washington Post* correspondent in Cambodia: "One pro-government newspaper warned that the Chinese of Phnom Penh might reap the same 'bitter souvenir' as the Chinese of Indonesia, who were slaughtered in the 1965 uprising" (Becker 1986: 141).

Under oppression of the Khmer Republic and in response to the call of Prince Sihanouk from Beijing to join resistance war, many ethnic Chinese students from Phnom Penh and other provincial capitals entered the liberated zone occupied by the Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces and the Sihanouk-led FUNK who were fighting against the US-backed Khmer Republic (Chan 2005: 52). There is less information on life of the Chinese community in FUNK. But, according to Willmott (1981), by 1973 GRUNK/FUNK had adopted a new agricultural programme from family farming to cooperatives. Thus, presumably commercial activities would be completely eliminated from the liberated zone. For this reason, Willmott (ibid.) suggested that:

Without an identity as a class, and isolated from the urban centres of organisation, it seems likely that the remaining rural Chinese would have lost their ethnic identity into the mass of peasants by assimilation into the Khmer culture.

However, such a discrimination under the Khmer Republic was not based on race or ethnic prejudice, it was the affect of ideological consideration i.e. anti-communist campaign. Ethnically, there was no clash between the Khmerness and the Chineseness in Cambodia.

Ethnic Chinese as “Capitalist” Class under Khmer Rouge

The Khmer Rouge took power in April 1975. Ethnic Chinese were far discriminated under this regime than the previous ones. It was catastrophic for the Chinese community that the Khmer Rouge proceeded with agricultural policy mentioned—the cooperatives—by immediate abolition of the local market among other things. According to Willmott, this abolition virtually eliminated retail trade “and the traders (almost all Chinese) became indistinguishable from the unpropertied urban classes” (Willmott 1981: 43).

In addition to having their major livelihood eradicated, the Chinese also suffered because of their class membership. They were mainly well-educated urban traders, thus possessing three characteristics—the capitalists—that were anathema to the revolutionary regime (Willmott 1981: 43; Ross 1990: 108). Hence, the discrimination against the Chinese was not based on “ethnicity” but on “class” (Willmott 1981). In this respect, Becker (1986: 256) relates “In the case of the Chinese, race and class were indistinguishable in the Cambodian revolution.” For this reason, most ethnic Chinese had to hide their identity. However, there was no special discrimination against them in the Khmer Rouge regime. The Chinese shared the same brutal treatment as other urban Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge regime and that they were not particularly targeted as an ethnic group in the Khmer Rouge purge until after the Vietnamese invasion.

Ethnic Chinese under the PRK & SOC: From Discrimination to Freedom

In the aftermath of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the collapse of the disastrous Khmer Rouge regime, the pro-Vietnamese and pro-Soviet PRK seeded some light for ethnic Chinese like Cambodian people in general. Some oppressive restrictions imposed on them by the DK had been lifted. Chinese newspapers were permitted and the ban on speaking Chinese at home was removed (Tsui and Tollefson 2007: 100–115).

But due to the protracted civil war between the Vietnamese-installed PRK and the Chinese-backed resistance groups including the Khmer Rouge force, some restrictions, discrimination and suspicion were imposed on Chinese minority. The Vietnamese began to distinguish between the Chinese and Khmer. On account of a Chinese Khmer Rouge-survivor, there was a feeling of discrimination among Khmer people because they identified local Chinese residents with the support China was

giving to the Pol Pot regime (Willmott 1981). The Vietnamese authorities were apparently encouraged them to leave to Cambodia and urging them across the border into Thailand. Observers believed that the anti-Chinese stance, of the Vietnamese government and of its installed-PRK officials in Phnom Penh, made it unlikely that a Chinese community on the earlier scale would reappear in Cambodia in the near future (Willmott 1981; Ross 1990).

Nevertheless, when Vietnamese troops had begun to withdraw from Cambodia during the late 1980s, the SOC, replica of the Vietnamese-created PRK, adopted substantial reforms in state policies, one of which was to allow minority rights. After 1989, the ethnic Chinese enjoyed dramatic improvements among the ethnic groups. Since 1990, a vibrant Chinese community had reemerged after the SOC introduced a policy of cultural and religious freedom for ethnic Chinese and encouraged immigration again (Willmott 2012: 17). By end of 1990, the Chinese community was given permission for the formation of the first overseas Chinese association since 1975 (Ledgerwood 2013). In the meantime, the first Chinese language schools were reopened, and in 1991 Chinese New Year was officially celebrated for the first time since 1975.

Ethnic Chinese in Modern Cambodia

During two decades of Cambodian civil war, ethnic Chinese had suffered sobbingly as had their counterpart Khmer people. However, when the SOC adopted policy permitting multilingual education and allowing cultural and religious freedom for minorities groups in 1990, China's cultural revival has began to take shape rapidly in Cambodia over the next five years, that some observers have described as "massive renaissance of Chinese cultural identity" (Edwards and Chan 1996:81–82; Ledgerwood 2013). This opportunity for revival of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese has, later in the 2000s, been supported by China's policy of "soft power" promotion. In this respect, the Chinese leaders have introduced new initiatives, such as "Confucius Institutes, exports of Chinese cultural products, and recently, efforts to make the Chinese media global players" (Lai 2012). In addition, China's "Go Out" policy has encouraged the influx of new Chinese into Cambodia for investment opportunities, which has been supported by the local ethnic Chinese. The engagement between Mainland Chinese and Cambodia's ethnic Chinese has, therefore, fueled economic

cooperation between the two countries. Meanwhile, new Chinese immigrants also flow in Cambodia remarkably.

China's Growing Soft Power in Cambodia

According to Joseph Nye, who introduced the concept of “soft power” in the late 1980s, soft power means “getting others to want the outcomes you want” by co-opting with people rather than coercing them, and is also considered the “second face of power” (Nye 2004: 5). A country’s soft power, according to Nye as he later states, rests on three resources: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye 2011: 84). “A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries—admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness—want to follow it,” he wrote (Nye 2004: 5).

China’s political system is not attractive because of its unpopular authoritarianism and socialist communism. Lam (2014: 8) puts it “the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) increasingly draconian efforts to impose ideological control on 1.3 billion Chinese has not only stifled their creativity but also detracted from the worldwide appeal of the *China model*.” However, China’s foreign policy of non-interference in other state’s internal affairs, and its cultural values can be potential resources of soft power, though these are limited by its political system. In the context of Sino-Khmer relations, China’s cultural values have increasingly appeared in Cambodia as its connection with notorious Khmer Rouge genocide has been gradually forgotten among Cambodian people. China’s “soft power” can be seen in many forms such promotion of Chinese language (and Confucian Institutes), Chinese-language newspaper in Phnom Penh, and support for Chinese-Cambodian social organisation.

First, China’s first initiative of soft power policy is to support the studies of Chinese language in Cambodia. According to Marks (2000) the growth of Chinese-language education and the revival of the Chinese community expanded dramatically in 1998 and 1999 because of China’s assistance and encouragement. There were only 13 Chinese language schools in December 1995, but jumped to 60 in September 1999, and at the end of 1999, the number was up to 70, with tendency to grow further. Of All, Dwan Hwa (also written as Duan Hua and Toun Hua) Chinese School in

central Phnom Penh—137 years old in 2012—is the first Chinese school of the Kingdom established in 1875 to serve the progeny of the city’s dominant Teochiu (also written as Teo Chew) community (Kyne 1999b). In 1999, this school enrolled 2800 students, most of who were younger generation of ethnic Chinese and in 2007 it was booming to more than 15,000 student enrollments making it the largest Chinese-language institute outside mainland China (Lo and Tsang 2007). Chinese-language schools in Cambodia are run with generous support from Khmer-Chinese associations in Cambodia, Guangdong Jinan University and Chinese government. The Chinese government generously provides partial funding for school construction and requests the Cambodian government to return Chinese schools that were confiscated by previous regimes or buys them back if necessary. It also offers textbooks incorporating Cambodian history and geography at Jinan University in China, conducts inspection visit, and funds participation in conference on Chinese-language teaching in China and other Asian countries (Marks 2000).

Chinese-language study has reached a new high since in December 2009, when the Confucian Institute of the Royal Academy of Cambodia was established and inaugurated by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Phnom Penh, and held its first Chinese-language class in January 2010 (*Xinhua* 2010b). The Confucian Institute is jointly run by the Royal Academy of Cambodia and China’s Jiujiang University in Jiangxi Province. The RAC is the national academy and university of Cambodia and CIs are China’s official cultural promotion agencies overseas funded by Chinese government. Unlike the some Americans who accused CIs of being “Trojan horses” that may “indoctrinate young Americans into thinking that the Chinese Party-State will not be a threat to its own people or to the world at large” (Yang and Hsiao 2012), Cambodians enthusiastically welcomed their presence in the country.

CIRAC is purposefully and mainly established for government officials. It would serve great interests for the Chinese government in influencing the Cambodian government official. Dr. Khlot Thyda, rector of the RAC and the CI, said that “the opening of its first Chinese-language class is of great significance for both sides, especially the big chance for our government officials to study and understand Chinese culture, as well as to promote the exchange of culture between the two countries.” Surprisingly, it was reported that 50 students—most of whom were the government officials from the Council of Ministers, ministries of interior, defense,

education and information, and some universities—attended the first class (ibid. 2010). Aggressively moving further, CIRAC has reached the military barrack, the brigade No.70 of the RCAF located in the outskirts of Phnom Penh with the opening of an institute for Chinese-language classes (*Agence Kampuchea Presse* 2011). Knowing Chinese language is “A bridge for Cambodian soldiers to be able to continue their studies in China” (ibid.). In November 2011, CIRAC opened its branch in Sihanouk-high-school, Preah Sihanouk province as to “develop young Cambodian diplomats in Chinese” (*AKP* 2011). In March 2012, CI provided free Chinese classes to 30 members of Senate’s (the upper house of the Parliament of Cambodia) 300 employees and interested learners were then slowly increasing (Pi and Kunthear 2012). Now, CI’s has four centres, expanded from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap and Sihanoukville—the main city and provinces of Cambodia.

There are two main factors that have bolstered Chinese-language study in Cambodia i.e., the increase of Chinese investment in garment industry and the growth of Chinese tourists, the third-largest tourist arrival group after Vietnam and South Korea. Both sectors require more Chinese-language skilled staff. For those who know Chinese will have preferential employment opportunities and well-paid position. The more increase of Chinese investment, the more popular the Chinese language is. Now, it is the second most popular language for Cambodians and Cambodia’s Chinese after English and its popularity is growing. “To know the Chinese language is best for my job,” said Sok Leakhena, a bureau chief with the Senate cabinet (ibid.). Not only Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese who are interested in learning Chinese, Cambodian teenagers also flock to learn it. Back in 2000, Marks (2000) estimated that there was at least 30% of to total students. And of course, number kept increasing then. Enrolment of Cambodians and Cambodia’s Chinese has been increasing year on year. Duan Hau School’s principal Li Huiming estimates that there are now about 30,000 Cambodians studying Mandarin at more than 50 Chinese schools nationwide (Cheong 2013). A part from the mentioned Chinese-language schools, there is growing number of Chinese language sources available at universities and private coaching classes.

In addition to employment-motivated factors, another point that has inspired the learning of Chinese language is, specifically for young students, the attractive scholarship to study in China. Each year, China has provided at least 50 scholarships for Cambodians in contributing to Cambodian human resource development (*Xinhua* 2012b). So far, China has provided about 506 scholarships to Cambodian students

(*Xinhua* 2011e and 2012b). Yan Tingai, a former Chinese ambassador to Cambodia, was quoted by Marks (2000) as saying that:

The popularization of the Chinese language in Cambodia far exceeds that in any other Southeast Asian country. This feather in the cap of Cambodia's Chinese has made an enormous contribution to both glorifying Chinese culture and developing the friendship between Cambodia and China.

China's culture "go out" policy has become the third pillar of its diplomacy beside economy and politics. As a part of its cultural diplomacy, Chinese language is influentially growing in Cambodia. "The pool of Cambodians who speak Chinese are a natural constituency for China to expand its cultural, political and economic influence...Mandarin speakers have a stake in China's continued involvement in Cambodia," said Carlyle Thayer, a professor emeritus at the University of New South Wales, Australia (Cheong 2013).

The second importance of China's soft power initiative is to globalise its media. China has also substantively supported the Chinese media to go beyond the border to improve its global image and promote Chinese culture. In Cambodia, the printed-media newspapers in Chinese language have further promoted Chinese language. Since 1992, Chinese-language newspapers began to be published in Phnom Penh. Currently, there are four Chinese-language newspapers in Cambodia including *Commercial News* founded in 1992, the *Jian Hua Daily* first published in August 2000 by the Association of Chinese in Cambodia, the *Cambodia Sin Chew Daily* initiated in 2000 and funded by the *Malaysian Sin Chew Daily*, and the youngest *Phnom Penh Evening News* launched in 2010 (Cheung and Shum 2006; Nyiri 2012: 108). The first two publish pro-Chinese government articles and news and reportedly stand mute on Khmer Rouge trial. Whereas the *Sin Chew Daily* published unfriendly news about China and is accused by Beijing of being pro-Taiwan, and thus often faced fierce pressure from Chinese Embassy (Cheung and Shum 2006). The Cambodia-China Friendship Radio (FM 96.5 MHz, FM 105 MHz SR) was established under cooperation between Radio and TV of the two countries and operates 18 hours a day (06-42:00) in four languages: Khmer, Mandarin, English and Teochiu (Siphath 2015). In November 2012, China's Yunnan Radio and Television Group also signed agreement with National Television of Cambodia (TVK) to establish the first China's digital TV in the Kingdom, which would be launched by

2014 (*China Daily* 2012). In addition, in November 2011, the largest Chinese bookstore was launched in Phnom Penh worth more than US\$3 million investment from China's Xinzhi Books, making it the world's first Chinese operated and invested bookstore outside Mainland China, according to local media (Weinland 2011).

Third, Chinese government actively supports Chinese overseas organisations. In November 1990, Hun Sen issued decree restoring certain rights to minorities in Cambodia including the rights of association (Marks 2000). Since then, several ethnic Chinese associations and organisations in Phnom Penh and provinces have been established. Organisations and associations of ethnic Chinese in Cambodia play very important role in promoting Chinese culture, tradition, performing community functions as well as projection of Chinese soft power. Cambodia-Chinese General Assembly is one the important ethnic Chinese organisations in Cambodia. In the 1990s, its main role was to restore Chinese social institutions that had been severely deteriorated for about two decades during Cambodia's civil war.

Chinese government through its Embassy has maintained close links with ethnic Chinese associations in Cambodia aiming at controlling them to certain extent. For example, Chinese would agree to financially support only the Chinese-language schools that run by school board composed of members of a provincial, district, or, if in Phnom Penh, hometown (Teochiu, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Canton) Cambodia-Chinese Association (Marks 2000). Further, China supports this association by sponsorship of trips to China on special occasions like the PRC Anniversary Celebration.

That said, it could be seen that China has made extensive efforts to spread cultural influence in Cambodian society where its people are modest in resistance to the foreign culture. Nevertheless, Chinese cultural influence in Cambodian society does not confine to the Chinese-language education but also includes cuisines, entertainment, beliefs, festivals and way of life. Ethnic Khmer, who live in the cities where ethnic Chinese community are found dominant more than any part of the country, often adopt or imitate to be the Chinese thought they do not have Chinese decent bondage. Especially, some middle-class Khmer locals often consider themselves the Chinese much to gain respect and honour. They have celebrated Chinese festivals broadly in particular the Chinese New Year (aka Spring Festival) and the Qingming Festival (aka Tomb Sweeping Day and Chheng Meng among the Khmer locals) as if they are theirs own, thanks to Cambodian cultural diversity and

close relationship between Cambodia and China. It is noteworthy that Chinese New Year is the largest unofficial holiday celebrated by around 80% of Cambodians regardless their ethnic background (*Xinhua* 2012; Pheakdey 2012; Schneider 2012). Every year Cambodia's Prime Minister sends his greeting message to the Overseas Chinese in Cambodia on Spring Festival. "Cambodia is a warm house for all brotherly people, including Cambodians with Chinese descent....My wife and I would like to join the pleasure with all brotherly Chinese people and bless all of you with prosperity, fortune, and longevity," Prime Minister Hun Sen wrote in the letter (*Xinhua* 2012c).

As said earlier, Cambodian people had emotionally distrusted and resented the Chinese for their connection with the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime during the second half of the 1970s. Until the early 2000s, Cambodian students held protests against Chinese senior leaders' visit to Cambodia, such as President Jiang Zemin (2000), Defence Minister Chi Haotian (2001) and NPC Chairman Li Peng (2001), and demanded apology from Beijing for its role in supporting the genocidal Khmer Rouge. Such unwelcoming gestures of the Cambodians towards China have disappeared gradually due to China's economic development activities in the country. Moreover, it is almost impossible now to hear any Cambodians question about China's aggressive support of Chinese culture in Cambodia, a sharp contrast from twenty years ago. This is due to, beside economic reason, Cambodian leaders have fully supported the Chinese culture and participated in various Chinese cultural activities. Marks (2000) concludes that "The bottom line is that neither at the man-on-the-street level nor among the political leadership does China's promotion of Chinese culture cause undue concern." This trend remains in favour of China unless and until there is a political leadership change in Cambodia.

New Chinese Migrants into Cambodia

While Chinese cultural influence in Cambodia has been growing with the generous support from Chinese government, Cambodia has remained an attractive destination for ethnic Chinese eager to emigrate abroad. The influx of Chinese national has further enlarged the ethnic Chinese community in Cambodia. Over the last twenty years, Cambodia has received around 50,000 to 100,000 new Chinese migrants; most of them are hawkers, traders, technicians and staffs, a great deal of them are undocumented, and some of them are "floating business people" between China and

ASEAN or within ASEAN rather than settle down at the first arrival (Guotu and Wangbo 2010).

Before the mid-1990s, many of the Chinese migrants took Cambodia as a transit place before they went on to the third country. Being a war-torn country, Cambodia's people had been mercifully granted [refugee] visa to live in the developed countries such as the United States, France, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. "After securing Cambodian citizenship, some of these migrants use Cambodia as a staging post for settlement in another country" (Hay 2000). Since the 2000s, new Chinese immigration has undergone some changes. They come to developing countries like Cambodia for business purposes. Most of them, from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and to less extent Malaysia, are well-educated people entering Cambodia with hug capitals. Cambodia has become a host to an increasing number of Chinese investors. They have established their respective chambers of commerce or associations and recruited local Chinese as partners or as agents, thereby reinforcing the dominant economic position of the ethnic Chinese in Cambodia (Muni 2002). One can easily feel a vibrant presence of the new Chinese migrants in Phnom Penh, especially. The row of Chinese restaurants that have cropped up on the short lane near Phsar Thmei is the clear evidence of recent arrivals in the last decade from Beijing and the Chinese hinterland. It has been noticed that ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Mainland China make overwhelmingly high percentage of the foreigners who are granted citizenship by the government each year (Hayes 2009). Each and every shop displays Chinese identity—trademark with Chinese characters, small alters to Chinese gods, shop decoration in Chinese styles—which can be taken as a sign of the continued Sino-Khmer domination of commerce in the Kingdom.

The influx of Chinese migrants into Cambodia has been mainly accelerated by China's "Go Out" policy, which encourages Chinese companies to invest abroad. Easy visa policy on arrival for just US\$20 has further increased number of Mainland Chinese entry into Cambodia (Chanda 2002), thanks to the increasingly close relationship between the traditional friends, Cambodia and China. Perhaps Cambodia may be a distinctive country whose ruling leaders are much fond of the Chinese investors, given government's "pro-business" policy and "significant investment protection measures," among other things (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2011).

During a March-2001-visit by An Min, China's deputy minister for foreign trade and economy, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen told him that:

“I want investment from mainland China but I also want to send a message to ethnic Chinese living around the world...especially those living in countries where they are discriminated against, to come to Cambodia and bring capital and technology (Chanda 2003: 218).

Despite the capital they have brought into Cambodia for investment, in contrast, the Chinese migrants have involved very anti-social crimes. The Chinese mafia is apparently investing in Cambodia. They are widely known for providing foreign tourists with easy access to drugs and sex. The then director of the NGO Acting for Women in Distressing Circumstances Pierre Legros said that the “Malaysian-Chinese mafia” are behind the sex trade in Cambodia, and that “organized crime is applying pressure on the Cambodian government” (Finlay 2008). More recently, many Chinese nationals are involved in fraud marriage and human trafficking (Kongkea 2013a; Kunthear 2014). The Chinese mafia groups are also indulged in online fraud, phone scam, and international extortion ring. Reportedly, since the beginning of 2010, more than 500 Chinese and Taiwanese nationals accused of such crimes had been arrested in Cambodia and deported (Kongkea 2012 and 2013b).

Beside some bad migrants, skilled workers entrepreneurs have entered Cambodia from China. As many Chinese-invested projects are often operated by the Chinese contractors and managers as well as tech-supported by the Chinese from Mainland China, it requires that a large number of Chinese managers, technicians and even labours should be imported into Cambodia. Moreover, there is increasing number of teachers and journalists who come from the mainland to run Cambodia's Chinese-language schools and presses. The interaction between the new and old Chinese has changed the way of latter life in Cambodia. “The public articulations of what it means to be Chinese are now increasingly shaped,” Nyiri (2012) argues “not by Sino-Khmer cultural elites but by transnational relationships centered on China as a new friend of Cambodia.” It means that Cambodia's ethnic Chinese feel now more nationalistic toward Mainland China. “Desirable attributes of Chineseness include,” Nyiri (2012) continues “an entrepreneurial acumen that works to support linguistic

skills that conform to the standards of Chinese culture as understood in the People's Republic of China.”

Ethnic Chinese Role in Political, Economic Cooperation

It is indisputable that Cambodia's ethnic Chinese have played vital role in diplomatic relations and economic cooperation between Cambodia and China, which has contributed to sustained economic growth in Cambodia. In the 1990s, they have reemerged to take a leading, even dominant role in the Cambodia's political and economic life. Ethnic Chinese have occupied much of the government cabinet and three-quarters of the board of the national chamber of commerce (Bruce 1998).

Like in the 1960s, Cambodian economy is highly dependent on, and largely controlled by, ethnic Chinese companies who have had a large stake in the country's economy. And Cambodia-China economic cooperation has relied on the business cooperation and trade relations between Cambodia's Chinese community and Overseas Chinese (Varanarith 2009). Ethnic Chinese and Sino-Khmer play the role of “middlemen both between Chinese capital and the neopatrimonial Cambodian state and between Chinese managers and Khmer labor” (Nyiri 2012). In an article published in 2006 in *The Cambodia Daily*, Chinese Chamber of Commerce president in Cambodia, Jimmy Gao, said Chinese investment is “a question of what Cambodia needs now,” and that the Chinese “are suitable to a tough position, because we were so poor 20 years ago.” He further acknowledged that Sino-Khmers could act as a bridge between the two communities (Thul and Plaut 2006). In several occasions, Chinese officials have also encouraged more Chinese investors to invest in Cambodia (*Xinhua* 2011f) where around 350,000 to 700,000 ethnic Chinese (excluded new Chinese migrants mentioned previously) are present and they can speak Chinese. At lower level, ethnic Chinese understand bureaucratic situation in Cambodia and know well how to work with Cambodian government officials in dealing with license acquisition—the corruption way of doing things—and hence can facilitate Chinese investors more effectively. Most Chinese investors from different part of the world feel like at home when they enter Cambodia. Chinese identity Chinese is displayed everywhere in Phnom Penh, from shop to house, from malls to villas. Among the expat community, two aphorisms are regularly heard about the Chinese presence in Cambodia: “The Chinese are everywhere” and “The Chinese are going to take over” (Wight 2013).

Traditionally, Cambodia's ethnic Chinese were not rice farmers like most Cambodians, but rather buyers to whom the farmers sold their surplus and merchants who sold everything else for agricultural requirement. In modern Cambodia, they once again take up these functions. In a business field, ethnic Chinese occupy wholesales in Phnom Penh as well as provincial towns and they distribute goods and products to Khmer retailers. Their economic capacity is being multiplied by an influx of Chinese investment, both official and private. But most Chinese investors prefer to employ ethnic Chinese for they can speak China, especially in garment factories. Also there is division in garment factories, ethnic Khmer are labourious workers whereas ethnic Chinese are managers, inspectors, or overseers, and the low-paid workers are ethnic Khmer; the high-paid supervisors Chinese. According to Ken Loo, secretary-general of the Garment Manufacturing Association of Cambodia (GMAC), there are about 30,000 Chinese from China, including Hong Kong, working in the garment sector (Lo 2006). However, Chinese are skilled workers, but Khmer are not in garment industry and hence their skill decides their working nature and wage.

At the top level, Cambodia-China economic cooperation has been mainly based on the connection or relationship between Cambodia's tycoons, mostly Chinese decent and Chinese investors. Among the top ten tycoons in Cambodia, there are six Chinese-Cambodians, and all of them are close to Hun Sen's ruling party and his financial bases, and in return, they have received political protection and investment guarantee. Government relies on these people to attract foreign direct investments, especially those from China. In this respect, it is interesting to re-quote Chea Sim, CPP president and senate president, who is also a Chinese descent. "Most Khmers want to be government officials; they don't like business and are not good at its," a publication of the Association of Chinese in Cambodia quotes China Sim as saying. "You should unite and liaise with your relatives and friends overseas, attract foreign direct investment and become a bridge to developing the economy" (Yang 2003). The prestigious business titles of "*Oknha*" have been bestowed upon them by the King himself or generally under Prime Minister Hun Sen's requests. To obtain this special title one has to donate at least US\$100,000 to national development projects practically. So all tycoons included in the list below have their name comes with "*Oknha*" as an indication of wealth and power in the Kingdom. This small, yet influential group of people has determined the entire economy of the country; most of them are members of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce (CCC), an institution

“representing private sector interests in commercial, industrial, service and craft and agricultural sectors and dedicates to the economic well-being of their territory and of the country as a whole” (CCC 2015). They are not actively involved in politics publicly, though they are CPP’s central members and have the task to consolidate the party so does their wealth and power sustain.

Table 6: Cambodia’s Top Ten Tycoons (Six of Them are Sino-Khmer)

Name and Nickname	Business and Political Positions
<p>*Kith Meng “<i>Mr. Rough Stuff</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chairman and CEO of the Royal Group of Companies, including mobile phone company Cam GSM Co., Cambodia Television Network (CTN), Cambodia News Channel (CNC), MyTV, Cambo Six European soccer betting Co., and CamLot Lottery Co., monopoly Canon distribution; Joint ventures with Australian-based ANZ Bank, and Kuala Lumpur-based Infinity General Insurance. - Elected President of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, an advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen, and Cambodian Red Cross board member, headed by Hun Sen’s wife, Bun Rany.
<p>*Sy Kong Triv “<i>Pacific Giant</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chairman of KT Pacific Group, a manufacturing and distribution company that provides one of the largest verities of services in the country; owner of KTE Mitsubishi electronics and the Mondial Center, the largest business and wedding reception center in Phnom Penh; joint venture of British American Tobacco (BAT), Eastern Steel Industry Corporation and SCA Airport; co-director (along with Lao Meng Khin) of a Chinese tree planation company called Wuzhishan LS. - Vice President of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, and an advisor to the Association of Khmer-Chinese of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
<p>*Kok An “<i>Gambling King Pin</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing director of ANCO Brothers Company, Ltd, a Cambodian company that distributes tobacco for Singapura United Tobacco Ltd. (SUTL). - CPP senator, advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen, member of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, and Cambodian Red Cross board member.
<p>*Yea Phu & Lao Meng Khin “<i>Couple Power</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-owners of Pheapimex Fu Chan Co. Ltd, a controversial logging company that has expanded to cover salt iodization, iron ore extraction, bamboo cultivation, pharmaceutical imports and hotel construction; both of them are have a joint venture with Sy Kong Triv through Wuzhishan LS for a pine tree plantation in Mondulkiri province. - Lao Meng Khin, is Vice President of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, a CPP senator and advisor to Hun Sen. - Yeay Phu (aka Choeung Sopheap) is a board member of the Cambodian Red Cross, is reportedly a close friend and business associate of Bun Rany.
<p>*Lim Chhiv Ho “<i>The Gatekeeper</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manager Director of Attwood Import Export Co., Ltd, official distributor in Cambodia for Hennessy Cognac and polar brands of beer and whisky including Johnnie Walker and Heineken, and expanding to cover hotels, real estate and property contracts from the government to develop SEZs in Sihanoukville and Babet bear the Vietnamese border. - Vice President of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, and a Cambodian Red Cross board member and fundraiser.
<p>*Pung Kheav Se “<i>Banking Pioneer</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The founder of Canadia Bank, the largest bank in the country, he holds one-fourth of the nation’s bank deposits; owner of the Independence Beach Resort Hotel in Sihanoukville and the new upscale Sorya Shopping Center in Phnom Penh, Chairman of Cambodia’s Foreign Trade Bank and the Association of Banks in Cambodia; **President of Overseas [Chinese] Cambodia Investment Corporation, investing in the 387-hectare satellite city project worth \$1.6 billion, called Diamond Island (aka Koh Pich) in Phnom Penh.

<p>Ly Yong Phat <i>“King of Koh Kong”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen, and Advisory member of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce. - Importing and exporting cigarettes, generating electricity, and running casinos and resorts; the CEO and Chairman of the cigarette distributor Hero King Co. Ltd, Industry Co., Ltd, and the Koh Kong Plantation Co., Ltd. - CPP senator, advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen, Vice President of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, and Cambodian Red Cross board member.
<p>Mong Reththy <i>“Hun Sen’s Money Man”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Founder of Mong Reththy Group Co., Ltd, exporting rubber to Singapore, Malaysia, China, and other Asian countries, Samang Khmeng Wat (Luck of Pagoda Boy) Construction Co., Ltd, receiving exclusive contract to construct buildings for all of Prime Minister Hun Sen’s charity projects; Owner of a private port, Ornha Mong Port (aka Keo Phos Port) near Sihanoukville; joint venture with Thai billionaire Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi to build the first Cambodian sugar refinery by December 2008. - CPP senator, advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen, Vice President of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, and member of the Cambodian Red Cross.
<p>Sok Kong <i>“Mr. SOKIMEX”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The president of SOKIMEX, the largest petroleum supplier in the country selling to the government and the private sector, the company expanded to provide transport, power, agro-industry, rubber plantations, and tourism services, it also acquired the ticketing rights to Angkor Wat in 1999. *Owner of Sokha Hotel Group (aka Sokha Hotels & Resorts), including Sokha Angkor Resort, Siem Reap, Sokha Beach Resort, Sihanouk Ville, Thansur Bokor Highland Resort, Kampot, and Sokha Phnom Penh - Honourary President of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce.

Source: Viewing cable 07PHNOMPENH1034, CAMBODIA’S TOP TEN TYCOONS, *Wikileaks*, 9 August 2007. * Indication of Chinese-Cambodians. ***Updated information.*

Now these key Sino-Khmer *Oknha* play a crucial role in facilitating Chinese investment in Cambodia which is part of China’s “Go Out” policy in Southeast Asia. In the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh, there are several business associations and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which provide an institutionalized network that facilitates investment by Chinese companies. Practically, Sino-Khmer elites, with close ties to both the Cambodian government and officials of the CCP at various levels host business delegations from Mainland China. The investors, then, financially reward the facilitators for their role in managing business for them. Moreover, the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce offers much comfortable environment for discussing business in Cambodia for its members are mostly Sino-Khmer businessmen. For instance, in June 2010, there were 80 Chinese business delegations met with 100 Cambodian business tycoons headed by Kith Meng, President of CCC for investment opportunities and local business partners, aimed at strengthening trade cooperation between the two countries (*People’s Daily Online* 2010). During the meeting Kith Meng promoted Chinese investment to come to Cambodia citing Cambodia’s attractive business environment. “By combining China’s experience in developing manufacturing industries, in combination with an increasingly reliable

electricity supply and improved physical infrastructure here and relatively low cost labor force, Cambodia is the favorable place for Chinese investors,” he said.

Cambodia’s ethnic Chinese *Oknha* have built a strong connection with Mainland Chinese investors through share stake or joint venture in various economic projects in Cambodia. Many of these Sino-Khmer *Oknha* have joint venture with Chinese investment projects. Lao Meng Khin and Sy Kong Triv have joint venture with Chinese Wuzhishan SL, a controversial illegal logging company (Table 6). Lao Meng Khin whose Shukaku company acquired land concession to develop Boeung Kak Lake in Phnom Penh where around 4,000 locals have been evacuated, has share stake with China’s Inner Mongolia Erdos Hung Jun Investment Co (Chakrya and O’Toole 2011). Furthermore, Pung Kheav Se’s OCIC has joint investment projects with Chinese Jixiang Investment in various constructions on Diamond Island in Phnom Penh; one of the largest projects is five-star Diamond Island Riviera worth US\$700 million (Meng 2014). This is just to mention very few cases in their joint business. Both the Chinese investors and Cambodia’s elites have mutual benefit. The Chinese investors who have big capital and resources can get their business license or concession and protection by the help of Cambodian elites. The latter, in turn, use the Chinese foreign direct investment to acquire large land concession exceeding legal status from government and they may also share stake in the Chinese investment companies. So doing could relatively avoid public criticism.

As illustrated earlier (Chapter III) that Hun Sen has sustained his power through “patron-client relationship” characterized by electoral politics for over the last two decades. He has bridged “the gap between the political and private sector by cultivating mutually beneficial relationship with the country’s most prominent business tycoons” (*Wikileaks* 2007). It should be noted in the *Table 6* that besides running business with monopoly license in different sectors, (female) Sino-Khmer, mostly government officials’ wives, have also held membership with the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) headed by Prime Minister Hun Sen’s wife, Bun Rany. As a humanitarian organization, CRC has received multi-million US dollar donations from these elites. Yet, CRC is unquestionable by any authority. Moreover, (male) *Oknha* are also serving as advisors to Prime Minister Hun Sen. Partially, this is how patronage system has been created by Hun Sen in connection with influential tycoons. It was very popular during the late 2000s that tycoons offered charity for development projects like schools, wells, roads, pagodas etc. through Hun Sen as a result of which

he claimed creditability and the tycoon is added more special privilege by having Prime Minister's support. On the other hand, Hun Sen relies on these Sino-Khmer elites to attract foreign direction investment from China. Kith Meng, Kok An, Yeay Phu, Lao Meng Khin, Sy Kong Triv, Ly Yong Phat, and Mong Reththy regularly accompany Hun Sen's overseas trips to China.

Beside Sino-Khmer business tycoons, there are several other high-ranking government officials who are Chinese descent. As mentioned already, Chea Sim, the president of CPP and of senate, is also a Chinese descent (Marks 2000). Intestinally, Hun Sun's wife, Bun Rany has a Chinese descent of Cantonese ancestry in China born in Kroch Chhmar, Kampong Cham province rich of ethnic Cham and Sino-Khmer (Mehta and J. Mehta 2013: 65). Marks (2000) argued earlier that Hun Sen's decision to remove restriction on ethnic Chinese in the 1990s was due to this personal interest in addition to his economic aspiration to transform Cambodia into "free market" capitalism in which he believed only capitalism could bring about development to Cambodia. Hakka Chinese Sok An is a Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for the Office of the Council of Ministers, a CPP Member of Parliament (MP) for his home province Takeo. He is Prime Minister Hun Sen's right hand. In term of executive power, he is most powerful next to Hun Sen, probably. He is also chairman of the Cambodia National Petroleum Authority (CNPA) who has presided over all contracts awarded to oil companies, acting as the point person for potential investors. He is often likened to "a many armed Hindu god" due to his tendency to have a hand in everything. His relationship with Hun Sen has been strengthened when his son, Sok Puthyvuth, married to Hun Sen's daughter Hun Mali (Global Witness 2009: 38). Former 15-year-serving Minister of Commerce and CPP MP, Cham Prasidh is also an ethnic Chinese (Gottesman 2004: 427) who, reportedly, paid tribute to his ancestors in the eastern Chinese coastal city of Xiamen, China, in September 2012 (*The Cambodia Herald* 2012). Another CPP MP, Chea Sophara, former governor of Phnom Penh, has Chinese blood as well (Marks 2000). He used to be famous for better development of Phnom Penh during his term, until he was removed in February 2003 following riots in which the Thai Embassy was sacked and burned and Thai business interests destroyed (Hayes et al. 2003). Nevertheless, it should be restated that the Cambodia's ethnic Chinese are flexibly and smoothly integrated into Cambodian society though they have well preserved their identity.

From this strong network of Sino-Khmer within the ruling elites, and the connection between old and new based on businesses and family linkages, it can be concluded that this tendency provides excellent opportunity for Cambodia and China economic cooperation for a long term. Those Cambodian-Chinese businessmen become the backbone for Chinese businesses as they have very good connections with the powerful Cambodian leaders. Such connections provide great business opportunities to Chinese communities. China, therefore, has better investment environment in Cambodia than those other foreign countries. Chinese leaders have exercised on Overseas Chinese policies in the context of its modernisation and of broader globalisation by incorporating the overseas Chinese into the Chinese modernisation strategy. The Chinese leadership utilises the global regimes of migration, mobility and trans-nationalism to affirm the CCP's political legitimacy, to extend China's political standing, to reassert Chinese culture, and to benefit China's economic performance. In this respect, Barabantseva (2005), author of *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities, and Nationalism: De-Centering China*, 2011, said:

China's adaptability to the flexible nature of the global economic system signifies a departure from its position as a single territorially-restricted unit. It employs a new type of ideology of ethnic nationalism to engage in a single but territorially dispersed project ensuing in the Chinese nation-state being trans-nationalised.

There are three underlined facts to be presented as far as ethnic Chinese in Cambodia are concerned: First, despite their relatively small population, the Cambodia's ethnic Chinese are very much present in all economic sectors of the country. Second, the influx of new Chinese migrants both documented and undocumented is transforming the meaning of Chineseness of ethnic Chinese in Cambodia. Finally, the "full scale" coming back of PRC and their toughened cooperation with Cambodia should not be overlooked. These are indications of the beginning of a new period of the Cambodian Chinese minority.

CONCLUSION

Cambodia-China relations today is the closest than ever before in history. Historical relationship was complicated and flexible, dynamic and steadfast during various regime changes in Cambodia. However, the current relationship between the two nations is basically the offspring of political trust building between China and Hun Sen since the early 1990s.

In the Cold War, Cambodia-China relationship was characterised by the balancing acts against traditional threats. Primarily, the PRC appreciated and cooperated with Cambodia's neutrality policy of Prince Sihanouk. It was due to its desire to keep the United State out of the region and reduce Vietnamese influence in Indochina. For its part, Cambodia used China to countervail threats from neighboring Thailand and Vietnam. Cambodian foreign policy was a "dictate of necessary" according to its geographical location, size of territory and population, and limited self-defense capability. By implementing neutrality, it hoped to remain out of Vietnam War for a decade and a half. Khmer Republic under Lon Nol made a shift in foreign policy replacing neutral policy with the adaptation of a pro-US policy, involving Vietnam War and confronting North Vietnam and Vietcong directly. Communist Khmer Rouge came to power in April 1975, and implemented "hyperMaoist" revolutionary policies and caused catastrophe to 1.7 million lives. Its close alignment with China, on the other hand, had triggered conflicts with Vietnam, and as a result, Vietnam launched a full-scale offensive to topple Khmer Rouge in December 1978. The fall of Khmer Rouge regime brought to an end genocidal Pol Pot, yet foreign occupation and resistance war continued to the next decade, cause further international isolation and switched to other form of suffering Cambodian people had undergone. In contrast to find out any possible resolution to end the conflict, China lent its support to Cambodian resistance groups including the Khmer Rouge in their fight against Vietnam and its Phnom Penh regime. The conflict had ripened in the late 1980s. Coincident with the changes in international politics—disintegration of USSR, normalization of China's bilateral relations with USSR and Vietnam, New World order—comprehensive political settlement of Cambodian conflict had reached at the Paris Peace Conference in October 1991. Then, UNTAC

authorised its peacekeeping forces assuring administration to monitor peaceful transition and organise elections in Cambodia in 1993. China supported the UNTAC and participated in peace process; first time in history that it was a part of international multilateral organisation mission.

From this background scratch comes the present study of Cambodia-China bilateral relations for the last two decades, which can be characterised as a relationship derived from suspicion to influence. Centrality of this study has evolved from three crucial statements: firstly, China's economic and strategic interest in Southeast Asia has been central to its relations with Cambodia, secondly, the least developed Cambodia's need for economic development and political legitimacy has fostered its warm welcome to China's comeback to Phnom Penh, and finally, China's economic involvement in Cambodia has contributed to Cambodia's socio-economic development, but weakened its democratic process. The dissertation has tried to prove these statements, which have reflected motivations of Cambodia and China to strengthen their bilateral relations.

This dissertation has attempted to explore four interrelated dimensions (political, economic, security and cultural) responsible for deepening bilateral relations between Cambodia and China. Through investigations of these four dimensions, the dissertation has offered the answers to research questions cited earlier: What were the important factors, which motivated China's appreciation for Cambodia in the post-1991 period? What are the mutual interests of political, economic and strategic cooperation between Cambodia and China? How would the ethnic Chinese in Cambodia contribute to this cooperation? To what extent would China's economic involvement in Cambodia contribute to socio-economic development in Cambodia and how would it affect the democratic development in Cambodia? How far does China influence Cambodia's foreign policy in regional politics?

The findings show that China has persistent interests in Cambodia since the early 1990s. China participated in multilateral peacekeeping forces in Cambodian during UNTAC period. China cultivated its relationship with all Cambodian political factions including its former enemy, Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of the SOC and PRK. Since the military clash in July 1997, the 1998 elections, and the disintegration of Khmer Rouge remnant forces following the death of Pol Pot, in which Hun Sen

rose to power unchallengeable domestically, Cambodia and China has overcome their suspicion and moved forwards multifaceted relationship consolidation.

Cambodia has been a target of China's "Good Neighbour" and "Go Out" policies. Politically, "Good Neighbour" policy aims at creating peace and guaranteeing stability in China's southern flank, which can provide a favourable environment for implementation of its economic "Go Out" policy—China's number one priority in its foreign policy modernisation in the post-1997 Asian financial crisis. Cambodia is a small market for Chinese product export, but is rich of national resources, such as timber, oil, gas and mine. Cambodia also provides China with production base thereby it can export to Southeast Asian in shorter distance, saving time and resource consumption. On the other hand, at the earlier state, Cambodia embraced China, as it believed that the latter could help Cambodia to achieve political reconciliation, and national reconstruction and development. Moreover, from 1997 onwards, Cambodia-China relations have been determined by China and Hun Sen cultivation. In the aftermath of Hun Sen's military clash with Prince Ranariddh in which the latter was removed from power, China provided Hun Sen breathing space while facing international isolation and pressure. China offered him the most needed economic and military aid, and diplomatic support. Military was critic for the fact that it showed China's solidarity with Hun Sen if Ranariddh would receive any military support from the West without which his military forces could not fight with Hun Sen's decisively. It was from this critical point that Cambodia and China were able to overcome the past suspicion and political trust steadfastly grew. Since then, China has become Cambodia's major external supporter. High-level exchanges have increase between Cambodia and China since 1999. In 2006, the two countries signed Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation, which was upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in 2010.

While political relations have improved, no doubt, economic cooperation too has begun to increase. Between 1997 and 1998, Chinese investment increased over triple from US\$36 million to US\$112.5 million. China has substantially utilised its foreign aid to gain political and economic leverage in Cambodia where its national interests are served. By investing increasingly upto US\$0.3 billion in 2002, China took the 4th ranking among foreign direct investors, and US\$1.6 billion in 2006 2nd ranking, and US\$4.3 billion in 2008 1st ranking. In total, from 1994 to 2012, China has invested US\$9.17 billion in Cambodia. However, currently there has been no

report on Cambodian investment in China. As far as bilateral trade is concerned, traditionally, China has invested in textile industry, agricultural sector, tourism, resort and real estate. Recently, China has become actively in energy investment such as hydropower dams, mining, oil and gas. In bilateral trade, China is Cambodia's important trading partner, though Cambodia has faced huge trade deficit with China. Since 1997, two-way trade between the two countries has boosted rapidly. In 2007, bilateral trade was US\$1 billion. To boost Cambodia's export to China, in February 2008, the latter provided tax exemption to 400 Cambodian goods entering China. However, this special treatment has not yet benefited Cambodia much due to its lacks of productivities. China turned to be Cambodia's third largest trading partner in 2012, export-import valued US\$2.79 billion, both countries have committed to increase bilateral trade to US\$5 billion by 2017. China's imports to Cambodia are garment raw materials, machinery, motorcycles, cars, foodstuffs, electronics, furniture, medicines and cosmetics. Cambodia's exports to China are agricultural products, rubber, fishery, timber and textiles. However, Cambodia sees China as a potential market for its rice and cassava exports. If this is realised, Cambodia can reduce trade deficit with China to some extent; as of 2012, Cambodia has US\$2.78 billion trade deficit with China, by exporting to China only US\$195.85 million while importing US\$2.97 billion. Nevertheless, the Cambodian trade deficit with, and its inability to invest in, China are the indication of asymmetric exchanges of interests between the small-power relationships that be the case in Laos and Myanmar as well.

Beside the increase in trade and investment cooperation between the two countries, Cambodia has also received substantial economic and military aid in concessional loans or in-kind from China. During the last two decades, China has provided US\$10 billion in aid to Cambodia, and in 2012 alone China extends US\$2.7 billion grants and loans to Cambodia. Much of China's aid goes to infrastructure and agriculture development projects. Cambodia also has received China's aid for health care as well as human resource development (in forms of scholarships and trainings). In defence cooperation, China is Cambodia's top military aid provider worth up to US\$5 million annually. Following the July-1997 fighting, China gave US\$2.8 million in military aid to Cambodia. During Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Cambodia in November 2000, he pledged US\$1.7 million defence assistance to Cambodia. However, when Chinese Defence Minister General Chi Haotian visited Cambodia in February 2001, he unveiled US\$2.5 million in military assistance which

was exceeded what was pledged earlier by President Jiang Zemin. Again, in 2005, China agreed to provide six patrol boats along with 400 police motorcycles to the Cambodian Ministry of the Interior. In 2007, China provided soft loans to Cambodia to purchase nine vessels worth US\$60 million, and also financed the upgrade of Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville. In 2010, China delivered 250 military trucks to Cambodia, shortly after the US suspended a military aid programme, including the shipping of 200 military trucks, due to Cambodia's deportation of 20 Uighur asylum seekers back to China in December 2009. Also, in 2011, China gave 50,000 new uniforms to Cambodia military amidst border fighting with Thailand. In the same year China granted loans worth US\$200 million to Cambodia for purchasing 12 Chinese-made Z-9 series military helicopters.

Despite the fact that China's foreign aid and assistance to developing countries uniquely come with "no strings attached" and is well known for its fast delivery and complete projects, it lacks transparency and accountability, which resulted in enabling deeper corruption. China does not touch upon aid management or any reforms in its foreign aid and assistance. There is no project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, it does not involve the civil society. Arguably, in such circumstances, China's state-owned companies that are responsible to operate the projects, often produce lower standard or poor quality, for example, in constructions. In Cambodian public opinion, China's poor constructed roads are often described colloquially as "*thver rohot*" literally means, "doing forever."

However, China's political and economic relations have been tightened this much strong resulted from pivotal role that Cambodia's ethnic Chinese have played. Historically they had predominately controlled commerce activities in Cambodia. After twenty-year oppression and discrimination by various regimes in Cambodia during the 70s and 80s, ethnic Chinese has reemerged to replay their traditional role in commerce and business in Cambodia. Ethnic Chinese cultural revival has also been actively supported by the Chinese government that intends to apply "soft power" strategy through its cultural values in Cambodia and Southeast Asia so as to create positive views on China's economic, political and military rise. Chinese government provides generous fund to Chinese-language schools, offers scholarships to study in China and sponsors trips of ethnic Chinese to join special celebrations in China. China's CI is on the rise in Cambodia establishing many braches in major provinces

and cities. It requires more Chinese teachers and specialists to be imported from Mainland China. It may not be exaggerated to say that “Phnom Penh is China’s satellite city” in term of Chinese cultural display and the Chinese control of commerce in the city with the influx of new Chinese migrants. Four major Chinese-language newspapers, radio broadcast, and Chinese cable TV has further promoted Chinese culture as well as influenced public opinion about China’s peaceful rise global benevolent image. Indeed, Chinese cultural influence is increasingly penetrated in Cambodian society. It is hard to make any change in this trend. As in the past, hostility towards Vietnamese absorbs all the feeling of hatred Cambodians have towards the Chinese. However, ethnic Chinese have well integrated into Cambodian society, whereas the Vietnamese have been hard to assimilate into Cambodian society.

Moreover, ethnic Chinese tycoons or Sino-Khmer *Oknha* are the channel between Overseas Chinese and local businessmen. Local Chinese have also facilitated the new Chinese migrants flooding into Cambodia to seek various job opportunities as they are treated preferentially from Sino-Khmer tycoons or bosses. Most of them are skilled workers and well-educated migrants who have potential to compete with low-skilled local ethnic Khmer. The new and old Chinese in Cambodia have been imminent source of Cambodia-China strong economic cooperation. Arguably, Cambodia-China economic cooperation has been merely resulted from interplay between this narrow group of Sino-Khmer *Oknha*, who have strong connections with powerful Cambodian government officials particularly with Hun’s family that constitutes patronage network, and Overseas Chinese. Politically speaking, they, the Sino-Khmer such as Kith Meng, Yeay Phu, Sy Kong Triv, Kok An and others, have regularly accompanied Prime Minister Hun Sen’s trips to China to facilitate trade and investment discussions between the two countries. Their cultural and language affinity has been great sources of mutual trust and confidence.

From above findings, it is suggested that China has been fulfilling well accomplished its national interest, which is the culmination of its effort in strengthening bilateral relations with Cambodia. After two decades of steadfast bilateral relations between Cambodia and China, the latter has now become, in the eye of ruling elites, a very important partner and trusted friend of Cambodia. China has utilised its “charm offensive” effectively to induce Cambodia to its favour diplomatically, politically and economically. Cambodian leaders have been impressed

by China's "no strings attached" aid, "non interference" policy, and cultural affinity China has cultivated. As a developing country Cambodia needs China's cash more than credible image in international stage. As having elaborated earlier, Cambodia supports China in almost very critical diplomatic and political issue. Cambodia is the stickiest follower of China's "One China" policy in Southeast Asia. Cambodia defied its UN obligation to protect refugees and asylum seekers by deporting two UNHCR PoC practitioners of Falun Gong and twenty Uighur asylum seekers back to China where they would be faced detention and torture. Furthermore, Cambodia persistently backed/backs China's territorial claims over disputed South China Sea even running the risk of angering its close friend, Vietnam, causing brief diplomatic break with the Philippines, and shaming ASEAN unity and centrality vividly. ASEAN founding leaders do likely not mind about Cambodia's articulation of China's interests, but the creditability of ASEAN unity, centrality and consensus or the well-known "ASEAN Way" had been threatened by the role Cambodia had played. In this regards, it has become challenging to Cambodian government to deny China's deep influence in Cambodian foreign affairs. General concerns remain on assumption that Cambodia certainly loses its independence in foreign relations by agreeing to all of China's demands. That is the danger of Cambodian foreign affairs. In addition, Cambodia is seen as a source of polarisation of ASEAN cohesion as the regional organisation is going to establish ASEAN Community by December 2015.

But as in the statement mentioned above that Cambodia's need for economic development and political legitimacy are central to its relations with China. This is to say that to exchange for economic development and political legitimacy, Cambodia perhaps has dangerously compromised its independence and autonomy in foreign decision-making to a certain extent. Indeed, China's economic activities in Cambodia have established political legitimacy for Hun Sen and his CPP to continue to run Cambodian affairs indefinitely. Uneven but significant economic growth at the average 7% per year, the construction of more than 2,000 kilometres of roads and bridges funded by China in form of aid and concessional loans, and booming of a dozen of skyscrapers in Phnom Penh have earned Hun Sen a remarkable creditability. With experience in such an economic growth, to some degree as a result of china's foreign aid and investment, the ruling party has won domestic legitimacy to some extent. However, human rights violations, poor governance, rampant corruption, and cronyism and patrimonialism in the CPP-ruling class that come along with China's

economic activities in country have reduced CPP popularity to a great extent. In addition, in the absence of transparency and accountability in China's aid and investment, coupled with the adverse social and environmental impacts of Chinese-controlled concessions, it has been clear that Chinese economic involvement in Cambodia has benefited a small but powerful well-connected Cambodian politico-economic elite in the short term, and not the majority of Cambodians in the long term. In other words, the profitable economic engagement with China can be both in pecuniary and political terms due to the fact that the political and economic systems in Cambodia are so closely intertwined through patronage network, from which Cambodian elites have profited handsomely. Hence, Chinese economic involvement in Cambodia has provided the CPP-ruling elites the opportunity to grasp the economic benefits, personal enrichment, as well as political legitimacy to the detriment of equitable and just model of development and democratic reforms so as to retain power to run country's political structure. In addition, a convergence of interest between Cambodia and China has evolved. Political and economic cooperation between the two countries is not only useful in stabilising power of the ruling elites in Phnom Penh, but also to achieve China's strategic interests while Chinese companies being directly beneficial from their investment in Cambodia.

So far as Cambodia's traditional donors are concerned, Cambodia continues to play "China card" to rebut any meaningful demand for democratic reforms. And in absence of any effective measure from international community to redirect the current Cambodian government towards democratic path in accordance with the spirit of the 1991-Paris Peace Agreements, China's economic development approach will, in no way, make any difference. Unlike in the Cold War period, Cambodia now provides little strategic interest for the West. Moreover the US has shifted its way of engagement with Cambodian government from outraged criticism on human rights abuses and state-violence against social and political activists to cooperation in combating drugs and terrorism. Cambodia is now in a position to resist demand for political reforms by opposition party, civil society and traditional donors. On the other hand, international community also fears that if economic or political pressure is directed overwhelming towards Cambodian government it risks pushing Cambodia into China's orbit. It has been observed that since the post-1997, international donors (Japan, Australia, UN agencies, and in the very least US) have moderated their stance in dealing with CPP-led government insofar as human rights are concerned, and kept

watching Cambodia's promises of reforms. But such promises, in views of analysts, are mostly timed to the schedule of meetings with donors of foreign aid, rather than some coherent strategy of political and economic transformation. Due to the increasing multifaceted-bilateral cooperation between the two countries, the current Cambodian government will likely be even more disinclined to follow through on its commitments to democratic reform so long as China remains as a viable alternative to Western aid and investment. Nevertheless, the West, through local and international NGOs in Cambodia, has relatively been successful in keeping human rights issue, corruption and other social and political concerns in Cambodia in the spotlight. As a result, it has challenged government's public credibility.

From a general observation on Cambodia-China relations, it is commonly believed that as long as Cambodian political leadership remains unchanged, China's interest will almost certainly be "advanced and protected" to the fullest account, and the relationship between the two countries will remain intact and continue to be good friends. Undoubtedly, this relationship remains strong because both China and Cambodian ruling elites have mutually benefited—China yields economic and strategic interest in the region whereas Cambodian ruling elites wealth and political legitimacy. But whether leadership change in Cambodia is realisable is a difficult question, given that the current ruling CPP has consolidated absolute control over country's important bodies, the legislature, executive and judiciary, needless to mention the control of the media, armed forces and national capital. In viewpoint of the current situation, it is speculated that Cambodian democracy can be developed only to the extent that it does not thwart the current ruling leaders to consolidate their power in Cambodian political sphere. Any democratic reform that is perceived to have serious impacts on the CPP power structure is unlikely to be concretised. But it should be noted that the core of Cambodia-China relations have heavily relied on the first generation of the post-UNTAC Cambodian leaders. Since it has been nearly three decades passed, it is the next generation will decide the future of Cambodia and its relations with China. Young Cambodians are potential force for future development of Cambodia who will replace the current leaders. But the young Cambodians, to a great extent, have negative views on China's involvement in Cambodia as China has merely engaged with the ruling elites and exchanged benefits among themselves without considering bad consequences on ordinary people and concerns of opposition party and civil society, the evidences of which have already discussed in details.

Thinking about five to ten years ahead, close relationship between the two countries could be completely changed given the current dissatisfaction of the “state-centric” approach to development currently implemented by the Chinese and the Cambodian ruling elites. As such, the remedy is dependent on China’s changing attitude towards demand of the young Cambodians and Cambodian people in general.

Glitter of such a trend could be seen during Cambodian national elections in July 2013 and political situations that followed. In spite of election irregularities and manipulation in favour of the ruling CPP, the result was a caution for the CPP since the 1998 elections. The CPP won just 68 seats of the 123 in the National Assembly, compared with 55 for the opposition CNRP. Thus it made CNRP’s greatest gains in a decade thanks to Sam Rainsy’s newly unified party. Then, led by opposition CNRP, tens of thousand protesters mostly young students and garment factory workers came to the street to challenge the election result and called for Hun Sen to step down. This movement led some observers to think of “Cambodian Spring” referring to “Arab Spring,” the democratic uprisings that arose independently and spread across the Arab world in 2011. Hence, the change is foreseeable. The changes of political landscape—increasing people participation and involvement in politics, and the aspiration for democratic reforms—in Cambodia will impact the relationship between Cambodia and China. Thus, it is a new phenomenon that deserves further study or research on the effects of domestic politics on external relations in the context of Cambodia and China relations. As history had proved, China, nevertheless, would opportunistically embrace any new government of Cambodia. After all, China is very pragmatic about its national interests.

However, befriending any country or predominating of any political party in Cambodia should not be considered with negative mindset. The important reconsideration is that Cambodian leaders should adopt a “people-centric” development approach in which ordinary Cambodians would benefit from China’s aid and investment in the country as a whole. To have a meaningful relationship between the two countries, it is indispensable to ensure that Cambodian government manages Chinese aid and investment in an equitable, accountable and transparent manner, so that any benefits accrued from it are more likely to be outweighed by its adverse affects such as human rights abuses, severe environmental impacts and community livelihood deterioration. On the other hand, Beijing will need to go beyond its current approach and consider the concerns and interests of the local community. In this

manner, increasingly close relationship between Cambodia and China not only benefits a narrow group of the ruling elites, but also the marginalised Cambodian people at large. This is also the projection of China's peaceful rise and global image as being a responsible major power.

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