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Summary

U.S. relations with the Kingdom of Cambodia have become increasingly strained in recent years in light of Prime Minister Hun Sen's suppression of the political opposition and his growing embrace of the People's Republic of China (PRC). During the previous decade, U.S. engagement with the Kingdom slowly strengthened as Western countries continued to pressure Hun Sen to abide by democratic norms and institutions and as the U.S. government attempted to prevent Cambodia from falling too heavily under China's influence. Following strong performances by the opposition in the 2013 and 2017 elections, the Cambodian government banned the largest opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), in 2017. As a result, the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) ran virtually unopposed in the 2018 National Assembly election. The Trump Administration and Congress have imposed sanctions in order to pressure Hun Sen into restoring democratic rights and dropping criminal charges against opposition leaders.

While the U.S. government has criticized Hun Sen's backtracking on democracy, it also has sought to remain engaged with Cambodia. During the past decade, U.S. interests and foreign assistance efforts in Cambodia have included strengthening democratic institutions and norms, promoting the rule of law, increasing bilateral trade and investment, supporting economic growth, reducing poverty, and improving public health. The U.S. government has supported demining and related activities in Cambodia, which is among the countries most heavily affected by unexploded ordnance (UXO). Military engagement has included U.S. naval port visits, U.S. military assistance and training, and joint exercises.

The United States and other countries have provided funding for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), also known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, established through a 2003 agreement between the government of Cambodia and the United Nations. Since the court commenced proceedings in 2006, it has convicted and sentenced three former Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the period of Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1978). Following the conclusion of two trials in November 2018, the Cambodian government announced that the ECCC's work was concluded, despite calls by some Cambodians and international human rights groups to prosecute additional Khmer Rouge officials.

In recent years, PRC assistance to Cambodia, by some measures, has begun to match total annual foreign aid flows from traditional major providers of official development assistance to Cambodia. China's economic support has given Hun Sen greater political room to maneuver, according to some analysts. In return, Cambodia has appeared increasingly willing to accommodate or support Beijing's positions on various regional issues, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Japan is the largest provider of Official Development Assistance and second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Cambodia.

One of the poorest countries in Asia, Cambodia has performed well on some socioeconomic indicators since the United Nations brokered a peace settlement in 1991 and restored a constitutional monarchy in 1993. The Kingdom's economy has achieved an average annual growth rate of 7.7% since 1995, driven by growth in the agricultural, construction, garment, real estate, and tourism sectors. China, Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries are the main sources of foreign investment. The United States is the single largest overseas market for Cambodian merchandise exports, which consist mostly of garments and footwear.

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Overview

U.S. relations with the Kingdom of Cambodia have become increasingly strained in recent years in light of Prime Minister Hun Sen's suppression of the political opposition and his growing embrace of the People's Republic of China (PRC). During the previous decade, U.S. engagement with the Kingdom slowly strengthened as Western countries continued to pressure Hun Sen to abide by democratic norms and institutions and as the U.S. government attempted to prevent Cambodia from falling too heavily under China's influence.[1] Following strong performances by the opposition in the 2013 and 2017 elections, the Cambodian government banned the largest opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), in 2017. As a result, the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) ran virtually unopposed in the July 2018 National Assembly election and won all 125 seats. The Trump Administration stated that the election "failed to represent the will of the Cambodian people" and represented "the most significant setback yet to the democratic system enshrined in Cambodia's constitution.…"[2]

Between 1975 and 1991, Cambodia endured the four-year reign of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (also known as the Khmer Rouge), during which an estimated 2 million Cambodians died; an invasion and occupation by Vietnam; and civil war. The Paris Peace Agreement, signed by Cambodia and 18 other nations pledging to support the country's sovereignty and reconstruction on October 23, 1991, ended the Cambodian-Vietnamese War and set out a framework for a liberal democracy with periodic and genuine elections.[3] Since the United Nations administered the first postwar national elections in 1993, Cambodia has made fitful progress in its political and social development, including the conduct of elections, a vibrant civil society, and a relatively open mass media.

Hun Sen, age 65, has been the nation's leader for over 30 years, including as Premier of the Vietnam-backed Republic of Kampuchea between 1985 and 1993, and as Prime Minister after the United Nations-sponsored national elections in 1993. National politics are highly personalized, with Hun Sen at the helm, while corruption is widespread and political, legal, and judicial institutions remain weak.[4] Although democratic institutions and practices have developed since the Peace Accords, Hun Sen often has employed undemocratic means to remain in power. According to some experts, the Cambodian leader has bolstered his political strength through a combination of "guile and force"; electoral victories; legal and extralegal political maneuvers; influence over the judiciary, broadcast media, and labor unions; patronage; cronyism; and intimidation.[5] Some scholars have described the Cambodian polity before the election as an example of "competitive authoritarianism," whereby multiparty elections are held and a civil society exists, but the national leader or political party maintains its dominance over them in undemocratic or unconstitutional ways.[6]

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[1] John Pomfret, "Clinton Urges Cambodia to Strike a Balance with China," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2010.

[2] The White House, "Statement from Press Secretary on Cambodia's Flawed Parliamentary Elections," July 29, 2018.

[3] Cambodian Information Center, http://www.cambodia.org/facts/?page=1991+Paris+Peace+Agreements#agreement.

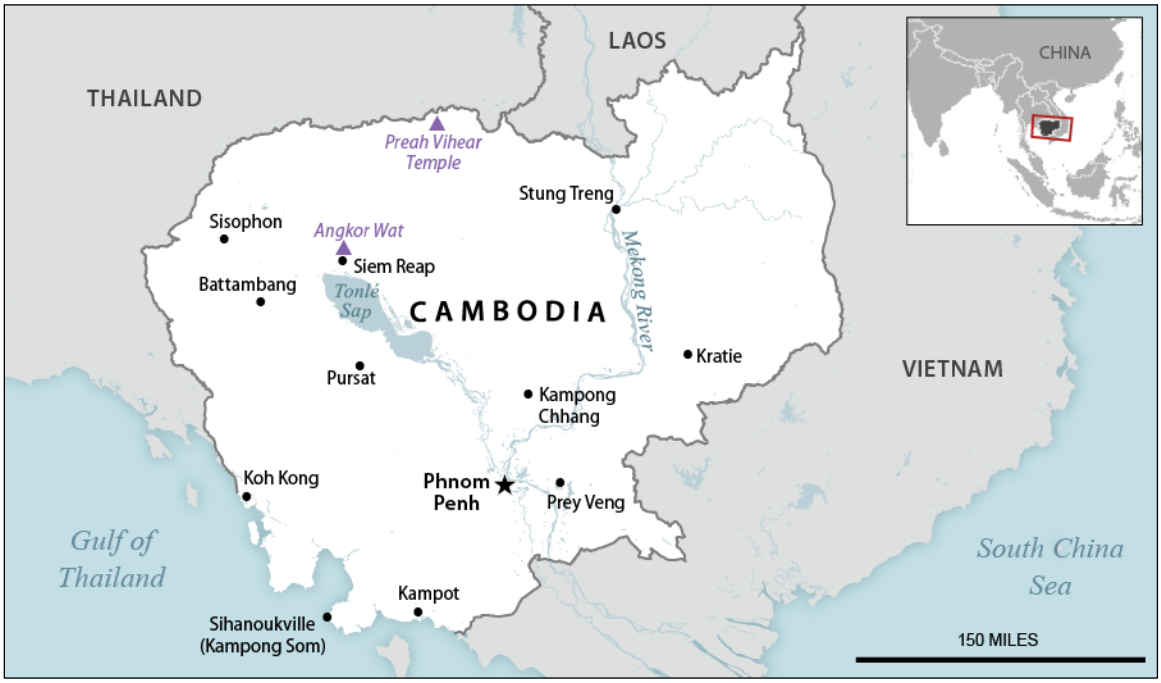
[4] Sebastian Strangio, "In Cambodia, Everything Is Different but Nothing Has Changed," *Asian Review*, October 31, 2016.

[5] Sebastian Strangio, "The House That Hun Sen Built," *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2015.

[6] Lee Morgenbesser, "Cambodia's Leader Just Cracked Down on the Opposition, and the Consequences Will Be Dramatic," *Washington Post*, February 24, 2017; Lee Morgenbesser, *Beyond the Facade: Elections in Southeast Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 2016; Steven Levitsky and Lucas Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2010.

The Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), a union of two opposition parties led by Sam Rainsy, a long-time opposition leader, and politician and human rights activist Kem Sokha, made significant gains in the 2013 parliamentary election and 2017 local elections. Following the party's strong showing in the 2017 commune council elections, many political observers predicted that the 2018 national elections would continue the trend of increasing competitiveness between the CPP and the CNRP. Furthermore, some observers reported fewer irregularities in 2017 compared to the 2013 National Assembly election, due in part to financial and technical assistance from Japan and the European Union that focused on improvements in the voter registration system.[7]

Figure 1. Cambodia at a Glance



Area: 69,898 sq. miles (about the size of Missouri)
Capital: Phnom Penh
Population: 16.4 million (2018)
Government: Parliamentary under a constitutional monarchy
Economic Sectors: (percentage of GDP): agriculture (25); industry (33); services (42) (2017)
Life Expectancy: 65 years (2018)
Religion: Theravada Buddhism (95% of population)
Literacy: 77% (2015)
GDP per capita: $4,000 (purchasing power parity) (2017)

Source: Map created by CRS. Fact information from Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 2018; World Bank.

[7] Ben Sokhean, "NEC Releases Official June 4 Election Results," *Cambodia Daily*, June 26, 2017; "Cambodia: Commune Elections Not Free or Fair," *Human Rights Watch*, June 12, 2017.

Hun Sen, on the one hand, has maintained electoral support, particularly in rural areas, due in part to Cambodia's three decades of relative political stability and economic development under his regime.[8] The CNRP's growing electoral strength, on the other hand, reflected the will of a younger and more globalized electorate that is less focused on Cambodia's past turbulence, more concerned about corruption and inequality, and more demanding about government accountability and performance, according to observers.[9] Nearly two-thirds of the country's population are under the age of 30 and half are under the age of 25.[10]

In November 2017, the Supreme Court of Cambodia, at the behest of the government, made a ruling that dissolved the CNRP for "conspiring with the United States to overthrow the government."[11] Then-U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia William Heidt stated that Hun Sen's accusations that the United States is attempting to overthrow the government were "inaccurate, misleading, and baseless."[12] In addition, the Supreme Court banned 118 CNRP members from participating in politics for five years.[13] The government allowed 55 opposition seats to be filled instead by third parties, with many of them going to FUNCINPEC, the royalist party that dominated opposition politics until the late 2000s. The National Assembly also amended laws to remove CNRP commune councilors and village chiefs and replace them mostly with CPP members.[14]

Since 2008, the government has pursued several defamation charges against former CNRP president Sam Rainsy, a move regarded by many observers as politically motivated. Sam Rainsy subsequently has spent most of his time in self-imposed exile. In December 2017, the government charged Sam Rainsy with treason for posting a video on social media urging security personnel not to "obey orders from any dictators if they order you to shoot and kill innocent people."[15] Former CNRP vice-president Kem Sokha was detained between September 2017 and September 2018, awaiting trial for treason, allegedly for collaborating with the United States to foment a popular overthrow of the CPP.[16] Kem was released on bail and placed under house arrest in September 2018. A U.S. Embassy spokesperson stated, "We continue to call on the government of Cambodia to drop all charges against Mr. Sokha, remove restrictions on the political rights of him

[8] Vannarith Chheang, "After Thirty Years of Hun Sen, Where Is Cambodia Now?" *East Asia Forum*, March 18, 2015.

[9] Julia Wallace, "As Demographics in Cambodia Shift, Youth Seek Political Change," *New York Times*, February 17, 2016.

[10] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, December 12, 2017; United Nations Population Fund, "Cambodia Youth Data Sheet 2015," http://cambodia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Flyer_Cambodia_Youth_Factsheet_final_draft_%28approved%29.pdf.

[11] Joshua Berlinger, "Cambodia Court Orders Main Opposition Party to Dissolve," *CNN*, November 17, 2017; Sebastian Strangio, "Cambodia's Crumbling Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, September 14, 2017.

[12] U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh, "Opening Statement by Ambassador William A. Heidt at a Press Availability," September 12, 2017.

[13] In December 2018, the national legislature passed a measure allowing opposition members to apply to have their bans lifted, subject to conditions. Andrew Nachemson, "Trick or Real? CNRP Split over Cambodia Move to Ease Politics Ban," *Al Jazeera*, December 13, 2018.

[14] May Titthara, "CNRP Commune Seats Doled Out," *Khmer Times*, December 4, 2017; Ben Sokhean, Mech Dara and Ananth Baliga, "'Death of Democracy': CNRP Dissolved by Supreme Court Ruling," *Phnom Penh Post*, November 17, 2017.

[15] David Hutt, "Will Cambodia's Repressed Opposition Rise Up?" *Asia Times*, January 21, 2018.

[16] "Statement of the Royal Government on Kem Sokha, who was arrested in flagrante delicto by the judiciary police officers in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia," September 3, 2017, http://pressocm.gov.kh/en/archives/11871.

and other opposition leaders, and engage opposition leaders in an urgent dialogue aimed at building genuine national reconciliation."[17]

Modern Political History of Cambodia

The Kingdom of Cambodia became independent from France in 1953. Beginning in 1969, during the Vietnam War, the United States conducted a four-year, sustained, large-scale bombing campaign and incursion into officially neutral Cambodia aimed at stopping the flow of North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies. According to some historians, the U.S. bombing helped the Communist Party of Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) gain followers and military recruits in rural areas. In March 1970, the military forces of pro-American General Lon Nol overthrew the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in a military coup. A civil war followed, culminating in Lon Nol's defeat in April 1975 by Khmer Rouge forces and the founding of "Democratic Kampuchea."

The Khmer Rouge attempted to create an agrarian, communist society, a policy that included the forced depopulation of cities, establishment of rural communes, and executions of many educated and wealthy Cambodians and ethnic minorities. During its brutal three-year reign, roughly 2 million out of a population of 8 million Cambodians died from execution, torture, overwork, starvation, and disease.

In January 1979, Vietnamese forces drove the Khmer Rouge from Phnom Penh. A 13-year internecine war ensued, in which an uneasy coalition of Khmer Rouge, Cambodian nationalists, and royalist insurgents, with assistance from China, fought the Vietnamese-backed Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge military officer who had defected from the regime in 1977 and fled to Vietnam, served as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the PRK. Following the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989, a United Nations (U.N.)-brokered peace settlement, also known as the Paris Agreement, officially ended the war in October 1991.

In 1993, the United Nations administered elections for a 120-seat Constituent Assembly while Prince Sihanouk returned to Cambodia and was crowned King. For a decade and a half, three major political parties vied for power and influence: the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) under the leadership of Hun Sen; the royalist FUNCINPEC Party (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia),[18] led by Sihanouk's second son, Norodom Ranariddh; and the opposition Sam Rainsy Party. After four years of cooperating with FUNCINPEC under a power-sharing agreement, Hun Sen staged an armed takeover of government in 1997. In the face of considerable international pressure and the withholding of foreign aid, Hun Sen held new parliamentary elections in July 1998, which the CPP narrowly won. The CPP and FUNCINPEC again agreed to form a coalition government, with Hun Sen as Prime Minister and Norodom Ranariddh as President of the National Assembly. This uneasy partnership continued until 2006, when Ranariddh was ousted as the leader of FUNCINPEC, which began to decline as a major political force in Cambodia.

In 2004, King Norodom Sihanouk abdicated the throne due to illness and his eldest son, Norodom Sihamoni, succeeded him as King. Norodom Sihanouk died of heart failure, at the age of 89, in Beijing, China, in October 2012.

Crackdown on Government Critics and Civil Society

Beginning in 2015 with new government restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and during the lead-up to the 2018 national elections, the Cambodian government placed increasing restrictions on political and social activism, civil society, free speech, and foreign-funded democracy programs.[19] During 2015-2017, more than 25 opposition members and

[17] Prak Chan Thul, "U.S. Urges Cambodia to Remove Restrictions Against Opposition Leader," *U.S. News and World Report*, September 11, 2018.

[18] *Front Uni National Pour Un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique Et Coopératif.*

[19] In July 2015, the Cambodian Parliament passed a broadly worded law on nongovernmental organizations (Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations, or LANGO), which authorizes the Foreign Ministry to halt the activities of any international NGO that fails to register with the government, and empowers government authorities to ban any NGO that engages in activities that "jeopardize peace, stability and public order or harm the national security, national unity, culture, and traditions of the Cambodian national society."

government critics were arrested, and many fled the country.[20] In June 2016, government critic Kem Ley was killed under suspicious circumstances.[21] In 2017, the Cambodian Foreign Ministry expelled the Washington, DC-based National Democratic Institute (NDI), which was engaged in democracy programs in Cambodia, on the grounds that NDI was not registered with the government. Government media outlets also alleged that NDI, which received financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), was involved in a conspiracy involving the CNRP and U.S.-funded NGOs to overthrow the government.[22]

In 2017, the government closed more than one dozen Cambodian radio stations that sold airtime to Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA). RFA, facing political and economic pressure from the government, closed its Phnom Penh office.[23] Authorities also ordered the *Cambodia Daily*, known as an opposition newspaper, to shut down in September 2017, ostensibly for failing to pay taxes. In 2018, the government made its first arrest under a lèse-majesté law, passed by the National Assembly in February 2018, which makes insulting the monarch a crime.[24]

U.S. Responses

Congress periodically has imposed conditions upon some U.S. assistance to Cambodia in order to promote democracy and human rights in the Kingdom. From 1998 to 2007, Congress prohibited government-to-government assistance to Cambodia in order to pressure Hun Sen into fully instituting democracy, but allowed U.S. assistance to NGOs and some humanitarian programs to continue. Congress lifted the ban in 2007 due in part to improving democratic processes, although most U.S. assistance efforts in Cambodia continue to be channeled through NGOs. The FY2014 and FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Acts placed conditions related to democratic governance upon some assistance to Cambodia.[25]

The Administration and the 115th Congress (2017-2018) took numerous steps in response to Hun Sen's recent suppression of the opposition, which include the following:[26]

- In November 2017, the Trump Administration withdrew $1.8 million in assistance to the National Election Committee (NEC).[27]

[20] Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017: Cambodia*, April 20, 2018.

[21] Julia Wallace and Neou Vannarin, "A Life Sentence in Cambodia, But Kem Ley's Murder Is Far from Solved," *New York Times*, March 23, 2017.

[22] "Ananth Baliga and Niem Chheng, "PM, US's War of Words Escalates," *Phnom Penh* Post, September 12, 2017; Ananth Baliga, "Breaking: NDI to Be Shuttered, Foreign Staff Expelled," *Phnom Penh Post*, August 23, 2017; National Democratic Institute, "Statement on Cambodian Government's Decision to Shut Down NDI's Office in Cambodia," August 23, 2017; Amnesty International, "Annual Report 2016/2017," February 22, 2017.

[23] Ananth Baliga, Mech Dara and Niem Chheng, "RFA Shuts Down Cambodia Operations amid Media Crackdown," *Phnom Penh Post*, September 12, 2017.

[24] Cambodian authorities detained a teacher for posting on Facebook that the King and other members of the royal family colluded with the government to outlaw the CNRP. Eli Meixler, "Cambodia Has Made Its First Arrest Under a Repressive New Law," *Time*, May 14, 2018.

[25] P.L. 113-76 §7043(c) and P.L. 115-31 §7043(c).

[26] In addition, Members of the 115th Congress introduced the following bills that would impose restrictions on relations with Cambodia: The Cambodia Accountability and Return on Investment Act of 2018 (S. 2412); The Cambodia Democracy Act of 2018 (H.R. 5754), which passed in the House on July 25, 2018; and The Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Act, 2019 (S. 3108 and H.R. 6385). For a discussion of policy options, see Olivia Enos, "Holding Cambodia Accountable for Its Descent into One-Party Rule," *The Heritage Foundation Issue Brief No. 4894*, August 7, 2018.

[27] Sopheng Cheang, "EU Suspends Aid to Cambodian Election Commission," *Washington Post*, December 12, 2017.

- On December 12, 2017, the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing on U.S. policy options to promote democracy and human rights in Cambodia.
- On November 16, 2017, the Senate passed S.Res. 279, urging the Department of the Treasury to consider blocking the assets of senior Cambodian government officials implicated in the suppression of democracy and human rights abuses.[28]
- In December 2017, the Trump Administration announced that the U.S. government would "restrict entry into the United States of those individuals involved in undermining democracy in Cambodia."[29] In August 2018, in response to the National Assembly election, the Administration announced that it would "expand" the restrictions.[30]
- Pursuant to Executive Order 13818, which implemented the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (Section 1261 of P.L. 114-328), in June 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned Cambodian General Hing Bun Hieng, commander of Hun Sen's bodyguard unit, "for being the leader of an entity involved in serious human rights abuses" over a span of two decades.[31] Sanctioned individuals are denied entry into the United States, and any assets that they hold in the United States are blocked.
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141), enacted on March 23, 2018, imposed conditions upon U.S. assistance to the Government of Cambodia related to democracy and regional security. The act mandated funds for democracy programs and "programs in the Khmer language to counter the influence of the People's Republic of China in Cambodia."[32]

In the 116th Congress, on January 8, 2019, Senators Cruz and Coons introduced the Cambodia Trade Act of 2019 (S. 34), which would require a report on the continuing participation of Cambodia in the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.[33] On January 11, 2019, Representatives Yoho, McCaul, and Engel introduced the Cambodia Democracy Act of 2019 (H.R. 526), which would impose visa restrictions upon and block assets of Cambodian senior government officials that the President determines have undermined democracy or committed or directed serious human rights violations.

Some policy experts maintain that continued U.S. engagement is the most effective course for promoting democratization from within and countering PRC influence. Some contend that many Cambodians view the United States favorably, and that Washington should continue to promote U.S. interaction with democratic forces in the Kingdom.[34] In September 2018, Prime Minister

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The European Union also suspended assistance to the NEC, and the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the European Commission to impose visa restrictions on some Cambodian officials and to freeze their assets. Ray Downs, "E.U. Parliament to Freeze Cambodian Officials' Assets for Human Rights Abuses," *UPI*, December 15, 2017.

[28] A companion bill, H.Res. 661, was introduced in the House.

[29] Department of State, Press Statement, "Visa Restrictions on Individuals Responsible for Undermining Cambodian Democracy," December 6, 2017.

[30] Heather Nauert, Spokesperson, Department of State Press Briefing, August 15, 2018.

[31] Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Two Individuals and Five Entities Under Global Magnitsky," June 12, 2018.

[32] P.L. 115-141, §7043(b).

[33] The GSP program provides duty-free treatment on some Cambodian exports to the United States.

[34] Prak Chan Thul, "U.S. Turns to Music in Bid to Woo Cambodians," *Reuters*, March 7, 2018; Sebastian Strangio,

Hun Sen, in a speech before the United Nations General Assembly, stated, "We are heartedly regretful to highlight the fact that human rights nowadays have become 'a mission to impose civilization' for some powerful nations or, perhaps, as their operating standards as the pretext for interference under the name of political right protection."[35]

U.S.-Cambodia Cooperation

U.S.-Cambodian relations expanded after 2007, when political and human rights conditions in the Kingdom improved and the U.S. government lifted some restrictions on U.S. assistance. Principal areas of U.S. engagement have included U.S. foreign assistance programs, demining activities, limited military assistance and cooperation, U.S. missing-in-action (MIA) recovery efforts, and U.S. naval port visits. In 2017, the Cambodian government suspended Angkor Sentinel, an annual bilateral military exercise launched in 2010 that focuses on international peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and military-to-military cooperation. Some observers interpreted the unilateral action as a sign of Hun Sen's further distancing the Kingdom from the United States.[36] The Cambodian government also postponed indefinitely a U.S. humanitarian mission in the Kingdom, the U.S. Navy Mobile Construction Battalion (also known as Seabees), without an explanation. The Seabees had worked with RCAF since 2008 and performed more than $5 million in community service projects throughout the country.[37]

In January 2019, U.S. Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Southeast Asia Joseph H. Felter met with Cambodian military officials in Phnom Penh. The two sides discussed regional security issues and bilateral cooperation, including ways to improve defense ties and restart joint military activities. Felter also called on the Cambodian government to drop treason charges against Kem Sokha.[38]

U.S. and Other Foreign Assistance

Postwar Cambodia has been heavily dependent upon foreign assistance from major foreign aid donors, particularly Japan, South Korea, the United States, Australia, and France.[39] Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Cambodia totaled $797 million in 2016, not including assistance from China.[40] The Kingdom's reliance upon foreign assistance, while still significant,

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"Cambodia Becomes the World's Newest One-Party State," *Foreign Policy*, November 17, 2017; Kongkea Chhoeun, "Should Western Countries Impose Sanctions on Cambodia?" *Asia Times*, September 14, 2017. See also House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, "Cambodia's Descent: Policies to Support Democracy and Human Rights in Cambodia," December 12, 2017.

[35] "Statement by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly," September 28, 2018, New York, USA.

[36] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Hun Sen Loosens US Ties Ahead of Crucial Elections," April 10, 2017; "Cambodia's Decision to Nix Military Exercises with US Leaves Many Scratching Their Heads," *Southeast Asia Globe*, January 19, 2017; Angkor Sentinel, *GlobalSecurity.org*, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/angkor-sentinel.htm.

[37] Hul Reaksmey, "Cambodia Scraps US Aid Program, Accepts $150M from China," *VOA*, April 7, 2017; Matthew Burke, "Cambodia Kicks Out Navy Seabees with No Explanation," *Stars and Stripes*, April 5, 2017.

[38] Sun Narin, Aun Chhengpor, Sokummono Khan, and Ky Mengly, "Interview: Senior Pentagon Official Visits Cambodia, Talks Phnom Penh Ties, Indo-Pacific Strategy," *VOA Cambodia*, January 19, 2019.

[39] In order of amount of ODA in 2016. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Creditor Reporting System*, https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1.

[40] Ibid.

has declined during the past decade-and-a-half. ODA fell from 120% of central government expenditures in 2002 to less than a third in 2015, according to World Bank figures.[41]

Some analysts contend that ODA for Cambodia, part of a "multibillion dollar international effort to transplant democracy in Cambodia since the early 1990s," long has kept Hun Sen's authoritarian tendencies in check, but has lost its effectiveness in doing so.[42] The United States provided roughly $235 million in assistance related to good governance, democracy, and civil society between 1993 and 2018.[43] In recent years, by some measures, assistance from China, which comes without conditions for good governance and human rights, has roughly matched the total assistance from major providers of ODA.[44]

The United States provided an estimated $79.3 million in foreign assistance to the Kingdom in FY2018, a decrease of 10% compared to FY2017. U.S. foreign assistance to Cambodia includes efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and civil society; reduce child and maternal mortality; and combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs provide English language instruction and aim to expose the next generation of Cambodia's military leaders to "American ways and values."[45] U.S. demining assistance supports the removal of landmines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO). The Trump Administration's FY2019 foreign operations budget request would reduce annual assistance to Cambodia by nearly 75% compared to FY2017.

Khmer Rouge Tribunal

The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), an international tribunal established through an agreement between the government of Cambodia and the United Nations, began proceedings in 2006 to try Khmer Rouge leaders and officials responsible for grave violations of national and international law.[46] The ECCC, which has convicted three Khmer Rouge senior figures at a reported cost of $300 million, has been financed through contributions by the Cambodian government and with donations by foreign countries, particularly Japan, both directly to the ECCC and to a U.N.-administered international trust fund.[47]

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[41] Prak Chan Thul and Matthew Tostevin, "China's Big Money Trumps U.S. Influence in Cambodia," *Reuters*, September 11, 2017.

[42] Sebastian Strangio, "Cambodia Becomes the World's Newest One-Party State," *Foreign Policy*, November 17, 2017. According to one estimate, DAC nations provided $12 billion in loans and grants to Cambodia between 1992 and 2012 for development and democracy building efforts, although some experts argue that the money was misspent or that it reduced government accountability. See James Kynge, Leila Haddou and Michael Peel, "FT Investigation: How China Bought Its Way into Cambodia," *Financial Times*, September 8, 2016; Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014; Sophal Ear, *Aid Dependence in Cambodia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

[43] Data from USAID, Foreign Aid Explorer, "governance and civil society" assistance, https://explorer.usaid.gov/.

[44] Luke Hunt, "Analysts: Cambodia to 'Pay Price' for Siding with China," *VOA*, July 29, 2016. Due to the commercial benefits accruing to China and large nonconcessional loan component, development financing and assistance from China largely do not meet the OECD's criteria for ODA.

[45] Congressional Budget Justification, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2019.

[46] The tribunal has 17 Cambodian judges and prosecutors and 10 international judges and prosecutors. As a safeguard against bias, verdicts require a "super-majority"—a simple majority plus the vote of at least one international judge.

[47] Sopheng Cheang and Grant Peck, "Verdicts on Khmer Rouge Leaders May be Tribunal's Last Gasp," *WBTV*, November 15, 2018.

The U.S. government withheld assistance to the ECCC from 2006 to 2008 due to doubts about the court's independence due to alleged Cambodian government interference. In 2008, the United States began providing annual contributions to the international trust fund.[48] In addition, the U.S. government has contributed to the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), an archive, library, and public service center focused upon Khmer Rouge atrocities, providing $9.8 million to DC-Cam since 2005.[49] Since 2010, some U.S. foreign operations appropriations measures have placed conditions upon assistance to the tribunal in order to discourage corruption and political interference within the court and to ensure that the Cambodian government also was contributing to its costs.[50] The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141) states that no assistance may be made available for the ECCC.[51]

ECCC prosecutors charged five former Khmer Rouge leaders with crimes against humanity and war crimes. In 2012, "chief executioner" Kaing Guek Eav, who ran the infamous Toul Sleng prison in Phnom Penh, was sentenced to life in prison. Former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary died in March 2013, before the completion of his trial, while his wife, former Minister of Social Affairs Ieng Thirith, was declared mentally unfit for trial.

In August 2014, the court sentenced former leaders Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan each to life in prison for some crimes against humanity, and in a separate trial in November 2018, each was convicted of additional crimes, including genocide.[52] Although Cambodian and international human rights groups have advocated prosecuting midranking Khmer Rouge officials, Hun Sen has opposed further indictments, arguing that they would undermine national stability.[53] At the end of the trials of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in November 2018, Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng announced that the tribunal's work was finished.[54]

Cambodian Debt

The Cambodian government has requested that the U.S. government forgive the debt that the pro-U.S. Cambodian government of General Lon Nol incurred during the early 1970s. As U.S. bombing and civil war wracked the country, the U.S. Department of Agriculture loaned the Lon Nol government $274 million on concessionary terms for American rice, wheat, oil, cotton, and other commodities. The U.S. and Cambodian governments have not come to an agreement on the debt, which has grown to over $500 million, including interest and penalties. The last bilateral discussion of the debt reportedly occurred in 2011.

The Cambodian government argues that the debt is revocable because the Lon Nol government, brought to power through a coup d'état, was illegitimate. It also claims that some of the U.S. agricultural commodities never reached Cambodia and that Lon Nol used some of the loans for military purposes.[55] U.S. officials have stated that

[48] The U.S. Congress appropriated $2 million and $1.5 million to the international trust fund in FY2016 and FY2017, respectively.

[49] "United States Announces New Contribution to Help Preserve Cambodia's Historical Documents," USAID, April 3, 2017.

[50] See foreign operations appropriations legislation: P.L. 113-76, §7043(c); P.L. 113-235, §7043(c); P.L. 114-113, §7043(c); P.L. 115-31, §7043(c).

[51] P.L. 115-141, §7043(b).

[52] Sopheng Cheang, "Cambodia Says Khmer Rouge Tribunal That Convicted 3 Is Done," *Miami Herald*, November 18, 2018.

[53] "Expanding Khmer Rouge Trials Could Spark War: Hun Sen," *The Nation*, February 28, 2015.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Julia Wallace, "Cambodia Appeals to Trump to Forgive War-Era Debt," *New York Times*, April 2, 2017; Luke Hunt, "Hopes Fade for Cambodia Winning US Debt Relief, Analysts Say," *Voice of America*, February 14, 2017; Colin Meyn and Ben Sokhean, "US Hits Back at Government over $500 Million Debt, Democracy," *Cambodia Daily*, February 6, 2017.

various forms of debt relief are unwarranted due to Cambodia's relatively low debt-to-GDP ratio and its fiscal ability to repay the debt.[56]

Unexploded Ordnance

Cambodia is among the world countries most heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance (UXO), including cluster munitions, landmines, and other undetonated weapons left from U.S. bombing during the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978, and civil wars during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1969, the United States launched a four-year carpet-bombing campaign, dropping 2.7 million tons of ordnance, mostly cluster munitions, on Cambodia, more than the amount that fell on Germany and Japan combined during World War II. Up to 25% of the cluster bombs failed to explode, according to some estimates.[57]

There have been over 64,000 UXO casualties in Cambodia since 1979, including over 19,000 deaths. The economic costs of UXO include land prevented from being used for agricultural purposes, forestry, and cattle, and disruptions to irrigation and drinking water supplies. An estimated 761 square miles of the country remain contaminated with UXO.[58]

With the help of international assistance, Cambodia has reduced the UXO casualty rate from roughly 250 people per year a decade ago to about 100 annually in recent years, according to the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor.[59] About 50% of contaminated land reportedly has been cleared, although many of the remaining areas are the most densely affected.[60] The Cambodian Mine Action Authority is finalizing plans to clear all contaminated land by 2025. Despite progress, the migration of many poor Cambodians to areas that have high concentrations of UXO reportedly has contributed to a recent spike in casualties.[61]

Between 1993 and 2016, the U.S. government contributed over $124 million for UXO removal and disposal, related educational efforts, and survivor assistance programs in Cambodia. USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund has supported programs to help provide medical and rehabilitation services and prosthetics to Cambodian victims of UXO.[62] Congress appropriated

[56] The U.S. government reportedly has cancelled some portions for which there is a lack of documentation and waived interest on unpaid interest. It has offered to reduce the loan or reschedule payments, but only if Cambodia signs a bilateral debt agreement, which the Hun Sen government has refused to do. See also Joe Yun, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Statement before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "Cambodia's Small Debt: When Will the U.S. Forgive?" September 30, 2010; and Scot Marciel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Statement before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "An Overview of Cambodia Debt and the Need for Debt Recycling: How Can the U.S. be of Assistance?" February 14, 2008.

[57] Zsombor Peter and Aun Pheap, "Follow the Money," *Cambodia Daily*, June 25, 2016; Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Cambodia, http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2017/cambodia/view-all.aspx.

[58] "Cambodia Sees Increase in Landmine/UXO Casualties in 8 Months," *Xinhua*, September 27, 2018.

[59] Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, op. cit.

[60] Michael Hart, "Can Cambodia Meet Its Target to Remove Landmines by 2025?" *Asian Correspondent*, December 4, 2017.

[61] Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, *To Walk the Earth in Safety 2017*, December 13, 2017.

[62] Ibid.

$5.5 million and $4.5 million in FY2016 and FY2017, respectively, for Department of State demining efforts in the Kingdom.[63]

U.S. Deportations of Cambodians

More than 1,900 U.S. residents of Cambodian descent, of whom about 1,400 have felony convictions, are subject to deportation, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).[64] Between 2002, when the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on repatriation, and 2017, roughly 600 Cambodian nationals who were permanent U.S. residents and who had been convicted of felony crimes were deported to Cambodia. Many of them came to the United States during the 1980s as refugee children, and never have lived in Cambodia or had left when they were very young. Many Cambodians subject to deportation have jobs and families in the United States, and many served prison time in the United States for crimes committed during their youth. Under the Trump Administration, the number of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese nationals who have received orders of removal has risen significantly. In 2018, 110 U.S. residents of Cambodian descent were deported to Cambodia, compared to 29 in 2017 and 74 in 2016.[65]

In 2017, the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) deemed that the Cambodian government was uncooperative or hindering U.S. deportation efforts, and in violation of its international obligations, and placed Cambodia on a list of "recalcitrant countries." The U.S. government imposed limited visa restrictions upon Cambodian Foreign Ministry employees and their families pursuant to Section 243(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.[66]

Economic Conditions[67]

In the past decade-and-a-half, Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in Asia, has performed well on some socioeconomic indicators.[68] The Kingdom's economy, which largely was destroyed by the Khmer Rouge and subsequent conflicts, has achieved an average annual growth rate of 7.7% since 1995 and 7.0% since 2014, driven largely by foreign investment and the development of the agricultural, construction, garment, real estate, and tourism sectors.[69] China, Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries are the main sources of foreign investment in Cambodia.[70]

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[63] Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs Conventional Weapons Destruction (NADR-CWD). Data from Department of State.

[64] Anh Do, "As More Cambodian and Vietnamese Immigrants Are Targeted for Deportation, Advocates Say They 'Can't Stay Silent,'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2018.

[65] Kimberly Yam, "ICE Deported Yet Another Group of Cambodian Immigrants," *Huffington Post*, December 19, 2018; Charles Dunst, "Dozens More Cambodian Immigrants to Be Deported from U.S., Officials Say," *New York Times*, December 12, 2018; Kimberly Yam, "The U.S. Just Quietly Deported the Largest Group of Cambodians Ever," *Huffington Post*, April 7, 2018.

[66] U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Visa Sanctions Against Two Countries Pursuant to Section 243(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act," July 10, 2018.

[67] Michael F. Martin, Specialist in Asian Affairs, contributed to this section.

[68] The World Bank in Cambodia, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview.

[69] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, August 20, 2018; Asian Development Bank, "Cambodia: Economy," 2017.

[70] In order of amount of FDI. Chheang Vannarith, "China and Investments It Has Made in Cambodia," *Khmer Times*,

Cambodia's garment industry, largely run by companies from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, forms a growing pillar of the nation's economy, employing roughly 800,000 workers and constituting about 40% of the nation's GDP.[71] Since 2000, Cambodia has risen from being the 39th-largest exporter of textiles and apparel to the 15th largest in 2016, according to World Bank trade data.[72] Garment and footwear products constitute about 80% of Cambodian merchandise exports, with 43% reportedly going to the EU and 29% to the United States.[73]

Economic development has brought social and environmental costs. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians reportedly have been displaced as government, business, and foreign entities, often in collusion, have confiscated their land and homes, sometimes forcibly or without proper compensation, to make way for agricultural, mining, logging, tourism, and urban development projects. Although forced relocations have continued, the number of cases reportedly has declined in recent years.[74] Cambodia has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world and illegal logging continues, due to strong demand for wood from China and Vietnam, corruption, and suppression of environmental activists.[75]

Labor relations have shown some signs of strain in recent years, particularly as the garment industry has developed. Garment workers participated in large-scale demonstrations for higher wages in 2013-2014, which coincided with antigovernment demonstrations led by the CNRP.[76] Cambodia's National Assembly adopted a new Law on Trade Unions in 2016, which some analysts say imposes greater restrictions on labor rights.[77] In August 2017, the Cambodian government announced that it would enact a national minimum wage law, which some analysts surmise was done to boost labor support for the CPP.[78]

U.S. Trade

In 2017, U.S.-Cambodia bilateral trade was worth nearly $3.46 billion, including $3.06 billion in Cambodian goods exported to the United States.[79] Although China surpassed the United States as Cambodia's largest trading partner in 2012, the United States remains the largest single overseas market for Cambodian merchandise exports.[80] According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, over half of U.S. imports from Cambodia in 2017 were knitted or crocheted clothing.[81]

July 28, 2017.

[71] Robin Spiess, "A Sector Too Big to Fail?" *Phnom Penh Post*, April 5, 2018.

[72] World Bank, World Integrated Trade Solution, https://wits.worldbank.org/Default.aspx?lang=en.

[73] Roseanne Gerin, "Cambodian Garment Unions Fear Possible End of EU, US Trade Preferences," *Radio Free Asia*, December 1, 2017.

[74] Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017: Cambodia*, April 20, 2018.

[75] Abu SMG Kibria, "How Politics Is Killing Cambodia's Forests," *The Diplomat*, September 21, 2016.

[76] "Cambodia: Labor Unrest and Political Uncertainty," *Stratfor*, January 2, 2014.

[77] Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Cambodia*, March 3, 2017; Cambodia Passes Disputed Trade Union Law As Tension Flares," *Reuters*, April 4, 2016.

[78] Alex Barnes, "Cambodia's Proposed Minimum-Wage Law Likely to Reduce Industrial Unrest through 2018, Employers Likely to Receive Concessions," *IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis*, August 25, 2017.

[79] Global Trade Atlas.

[80] Global Trade Atlas; World Bank.

[81] Knitted or crocheted articles of apparel and clothing accessories (HTS Chapter 61) in 2017 totaled $1.6 billion, or 52.3% of total U.S. imports from Cambodia. The next biggest item was nonknitted and noncrocheted articles of apparel and clothing accessories (HTS Chapter 62), worth $562 million, or 18.3% of total U.S. imports from Cambodia.

Some Cambodian products, including handbags and travel goods, receive preferential or duty-free tariff treatment under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences program.[82] Some policymakers have considered suspending GSP treatment upon certain Cambodian exports to the United States worth about $400 million annually in order to pressure Hun Sen into reversing his suppression of democracy. Other experts argue that restrictions on Cambodian exports may hurt Cambodian workers and encourage Cambodia to seek even closer relations with China, while it is uncertain whether such economic sanctions would weaken Hun Sen politically.[83]

Cambodia acceded to the World Trade Organization in 2004, and the Kingdom has made commitments to reduce tariffs and fulfill other obligations by 2018 as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area. Cambodia also is a party to the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade pact that includes the 10 ASEAN member states and 6 other Indo-Pacific countries, including China. Negotiations to reach a final agreement are expected to continue in 2019.[84]

Cambodia and China

The PRC has become Cambodia's largest economic benefactor at a time when major ODA donors have become increasingly critical of Hun Sen's authoritarian policies. China's economic support has lessened the influence of foreign assistance conditions imposed by Western aid donors and given Hun Sen more political room to maneuver, both domestically and internationally, according to some analysts.[85] In return, Cambodia has appeared increasingly willing to accommodate or support Beijing's positions on various regional issues, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Cambodia is said to be the Southeast Asian country upon which China exerts the greatest influence, and to be China's "most reliable partner in Southeast Asia."[86]

According to one assessment, China has provided Cambodia about $15 billion in assistance and concessionary loans over the past two decades, and around 42% of the kingdom's external debt is owed to China.[87] PRC foreign assistance to Cambodia, which has included development financing and grants, Chinese-built infrastructure, government buildings, and sports facilities, as well as support for public health and education, has become a dominant influence on the

[82] In general, textiles and apparel are excluded from the GSP program.

[83] "The End of Cambodia's Ersatz Democracy," *East Asia Forum*, February 5, 2018.

[84] ASEAN member countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. RCEP's members include ASEAN countries plus Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand. "China-Backed RCEP Trade Deal Pushed Back to 2019," *Bangkok Post*, November 13, 2018. For further information about RCEP, see CRS In Focus IF10342, *What Is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership?*, by Michael F. Martin et al.

[85] Peter Ford, "US-Cambodia Relations at Their 'Worst Point,' As China Steps in to Fill the Void," *ThinkProgress*, December 14, 2017; Sebastian Strangio, "Cambodia Becomes the World's Newest One-Party State," op. cit.; Economist Intelligence Unit, "CPP Is Cementing One-Party Rule," February 22, 2017.

[86] Bernhard Zand, "China Solidifies Its Influence in Southeast Asia," *Der Spiegel*, October 11, 2018; "China Cashes in on Cambodian Anti-American Sentiment," *Sputnik News* Service, October 15, 2017; James Kynge, Leila Haddou and Michael Peel, "FT Investigation: How China Bought Its Way into Cambodia," op. cit.; Jeffrey Becker, "What Is the PLA's Role in Promoting China-Cambodia Relations?" *The Diplomat*, April 29, 2017.

[87] Pheakdey Heng, "Are China's Gifts a Blessing or a Curse for Cambodia," East Asia Forum, August 29, 2018; Kuch Naren and Ben Pavior, "Bilateral Trade with China Jumps to $4.8 Billion," *Cambodia Daily*, April 12, 2017; Luke Hunt, "Analysts: Cambodia to 'Pay Price' for Siding with China," op. cit.

Kingdom's development.[88] A PRC entity is constructing one of Cambodia's largest development projects, a $3.8 billion deep-water port on the Gulf of Thailand.[89]

By some accounts, China is the largest foreign investor in Cambodia, with cumulative investment of between $14 billion and $16 billion.[90] Major sectors for Chinese investment include agriculture, garments, hydropower, infrastructure, mining, and tourism. According to one report, China accounted for nearly 30% of investment capital in Cambodia in 2016, while that from the United States constituted less than 4%.[91]

Cambodians have expressed mixed views about China's economic influence. Some say that Chinese investments and infrastructure have brought tangible economic benefits and spurred economic development.[92] Cambodian social and political activists have expressed concerns about Chinese economic projects, including their quality, effects on the environment, and lack of transparency. Furthermore, many Cambodians have been evicted from their homes to make way for Chinese-backed economic projects, or their communities have been adversely affected by an influx of Chinese businesses, workers, and tourists.[93]

Domestic and regional demand for energy and foreign investment largely from China have driven hydropower projects in Cambodia and neighboring countries. Chinese firms reportedly have invested roughly $2 billion in the construction of seven dams in the Kingdom.[94] Many experts have warned about environmental degradation and ecological damage, loss of fish stocks, displacement of communities, and adverse effects on livelihoods due to unregulated hydropower projects on the Mekong River.[95] A proposed, Chinese-backed, 2,600-megawatt hydropower project, the Sambor Dam, would dwarf other dams in Cambodia. According to a government-commissioned report that reportedly was leaked in 2018, the Sambor megadam, if built, would have devastating impacts on food security in the region, particularly in Cambodia and Vietnam. Experts say that it would block fish migrations between southern Laos and Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake, destroy fish habitats, and prevent sediment from flowing downstream and fertilizing agricultural areas in the Mekong Delta.[96]

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[88] Darren Touch, "What Does Chinese Investment Mean for Cambodia?" *The Diplomat*, February 2, 2018.

[89] James Kynge, Leila Haddou and Michael Peel, "FT Investigation: How China Bought Its Way into Cambodia," op. cit.

[90] May Titthara, "China Woos Hun Sen at Beijing Dinner," *Khmer Times*, December 1, 2017; Chheang Vannarith, "China and Investments It Has Made in Cambodia," *Khmer Times*, July 28, 2017; "'Belt and Road' Initiative Will Bring Closer China-Cambodia Cooperation: HKSAR Official," *Xinhua*, February 27, 2017.

[91] Prak Chan Thul and Matthew Tostevin, "China's Big Money Trumps U.S. Influence in Cambodia," *Reuters*, September 11, 2017.

[92] David Hutt, "How China Came to Dominate Cambodia," *The Diplomat*, September 1, 2016; Simon Denyer, "A Rush to Invest in Cambodia's Infrastructure Is Part of a Larger Quest to Expand Regional Influence," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2015.

[93] George Wright, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment on the Rise in Cambodia," *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2018.

[94] Many Chinese-built projects are financed through Chinese state-backed loans, and ownership is based upon a "build-operate-transfer" (BOT) arrangement. Through BOT, the host country pays a PRC entity to build and operate a project for a period of years, often as long as 40 years, and then ownership of the facility eventually is transferred to the host country.

[95] Nyshka Chandran, "Southeast Asia Is Betting on Hydropower, But There Are Risks of Economic Damage," August 9, 2018; "Environmental Experts Voice Concern about Effects of Dam Projects in Cambodia," *Radio Free Asia*, March 16, 2017.

[96] Amanda Kaufmann, "Dams Spell Catastrophe for Cambodia, But an Alternative Exists," *Southeast Asia Globe*, September 5, 2018; Tom Fawthrop, "Leaked Report Warns Cambodia's Biggest Dam Could 'Literally Kill' Mekong River," *The Guardian*, May 16, 2018; "Study Says China-Backed Dam Would Destroy Mekong," *Associated Press*,

Beijing has become a principal provider of military assistance to Cambodia, extending loans and military equipment, including small arms, tanks, trucks, helicopters, and aircraft, to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. China reportedly also has provided military education and training and sponsored exchanges of senior military leaders. Some analysts see PRC-Cambodian military cooperation as a response to growing security ties between the United States and Vietnam.[97] Since 2016, China and Cambodia twice have carried out *Golden Dragon*, a joint military exercise involving over 400 People's Liberation Army (PLA) and RCAF soldiers involved in combat, counterterrorism, UXO removal, humanitarian, and disaster response exercises.[98] The two countries reportedly plan a larger Golden Dragon event in 2019.[99]

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May 17, 2018; International Rivers, "Sambor Dam," https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/sambor-dam.

[97] Neou Vannarin, "Analysts See Cambodia Bolstering Military Ties with China," *VOA*, July 21, 2015.

[98] Prashanth Parameswaran, "China-Cambodia Defense Ties in the Spotlight with Military Drills," *The Diplomat*, March 21, 2018; Huang Panyue, "Highlights of China-Cambodia 'Golden Dragon 2016' Joint Drill," *China Military*, December 27, 2016.

[99] Mech Dara, "Cambodia to Hold Larger Military Drills with Chinese Army," *Phnom Penh Post*, September 27, 2018.