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Cambodia: Background and U.S. Relations

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SUMMARY

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Cambodia: Background and U.S. Relations

U.S. relations with the Kingdom of Cambodia have become strained in recent years in light of Prime Minister Hun Sen's suppression of the political opposition and his growing embrace of China. The U.S. government has sought to remain engaged with Cambodia while applying pressure on Hun Sen to restore democracy. Since arriving in Phnom Penh in September 2019, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy has made overtures to Hun Sen, while the Cambodian Prime Minister has encouraged renewed bilateral contacts, particularly in the economic sphere.

During the past decade, U.S. engagement with Cambodia included U.S. foreign assistance programs, demining and related activities, limited military assistance and cooperation, and U.S. missing-in-action (MIA) recovery efforts. In 2017, as the U.S.-Cambodia relationship began to fray, the Cambodian government suspended Angkor Sentinel, an annual bilateral military exercise launched in 2010.

Hun Sen, age 65, has been Cambodia's leader for 35 years, including as Premier of the Vietnam-backed Republic of Kampuchea between 1985 and 1993 and as Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia since 1993. Following strong performances by the opposition in the 2013 national and 2017 local elections, many observers thought that the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) might take power electorally in the near or medium term. In the years leading 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. In November 2017, the Supreme Court of Cambodia issued a ruling that dissolved the CNRP for "conspiring with the United States to overthrow the government." 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 and introduced legislation to pressure Hun Sen into restoring democratic rights and dropping criminal charges against opposition leaders. Since 2017, the U.S. government has placed some restrictions on U.S. assistance to the Government of Cambodia, suspended military assistance, and announced that it would bar the entry into the United States of "those individuals involved in undermining democracy in Cambodia." In addition to imposing visa and property sanctions, some proposed legislation would authorize the possible suspension of special U.S. trade treatment for Cambodia under the Generalized System of Preferences.

The United States provided an estimated $64.0 million in foreign assistance to the Cambodia in FY2019 and $82.5 million in FY2020. U.S. assistance efforts include the following: promoting human rights and democracy; expanding access to basic education; supporting agricultural sector development; improving sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation; combating infectious diseases and promoting child, maternal, and reproductive health; and assisting in the clearance of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Cambodia, which is among the countries most heavily affected by UXO.

The United States is one of Cambodia's largest export markets, accounting for 21.5% of its exports, of which garments and footwear are the main items. In February 2020, the European Union (EU), Cambodia's largest export market, partially suspended trade preferences for Cambodia under its "Everything but Arms" trade program, in response to Cambodia's violations of civil and political rights. Due to the economic effects of EU sanctions and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, including international trade disruptions, Cambodian economic growth is expected to decline to 1% in 2020, compared to 7% in 2019. As of July 1, 2020, Cambodia had a reported total of 141 cases of COVID-19 and zero deaths.

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." In return for Chinese investment, financing, and assistance, Cambodia has appeared to accommodate or support China's positions on various issues in the Indo-Pacific, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Some experts argue that China's economic engagement has helped reduce U.S. and other Western influence in Cambodia and paved the way for greater Chinese military influence in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia more generally.

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U.S.-Cambodia Relations: Overview

U.S. relations with the Kingdom of Cambodia have become 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). The U.S. government has sought to remain engaged with Cambodia while calling on Hun Sen to restore political rights to opposition politicians and applying pressure through restrictions on foreign assistance and possible sanctions.[1]

During the past decade, U.S. engagement with Cambodia included U.S. foreign assistance programs, demining and related 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 focused on international peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and military-to-military cooperation. Some observers interpreted the unilateral action as a sign that Hun Sen was distancing Cambodia from the United States as the U.S. government was becoming more critical of his policies.[2]

Despite the chill in military relations, the U.S. government has expressed an interest in maintaining security ties. In September 2019, U.S. Army Pacific Commander General Robert B. Brown met with Cambodian General Hun Manet, who is Hun Sen's son and a West Point graduate.[3] The Department of Defense *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, published in June 2019, stated

> DoD seeks to build a productive military-to-military relationship with the Kingdom of Cambodia that protects its sovereignty, promotes military professionalism, and helps it become a responsible and capable contributor to regional security. In early 2017, Cambodia suspended all military-to-military exercises with the United States. We, however, continue to cooperate in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action, medical research, and U.S. Missing in Action personnel accounting.[4]

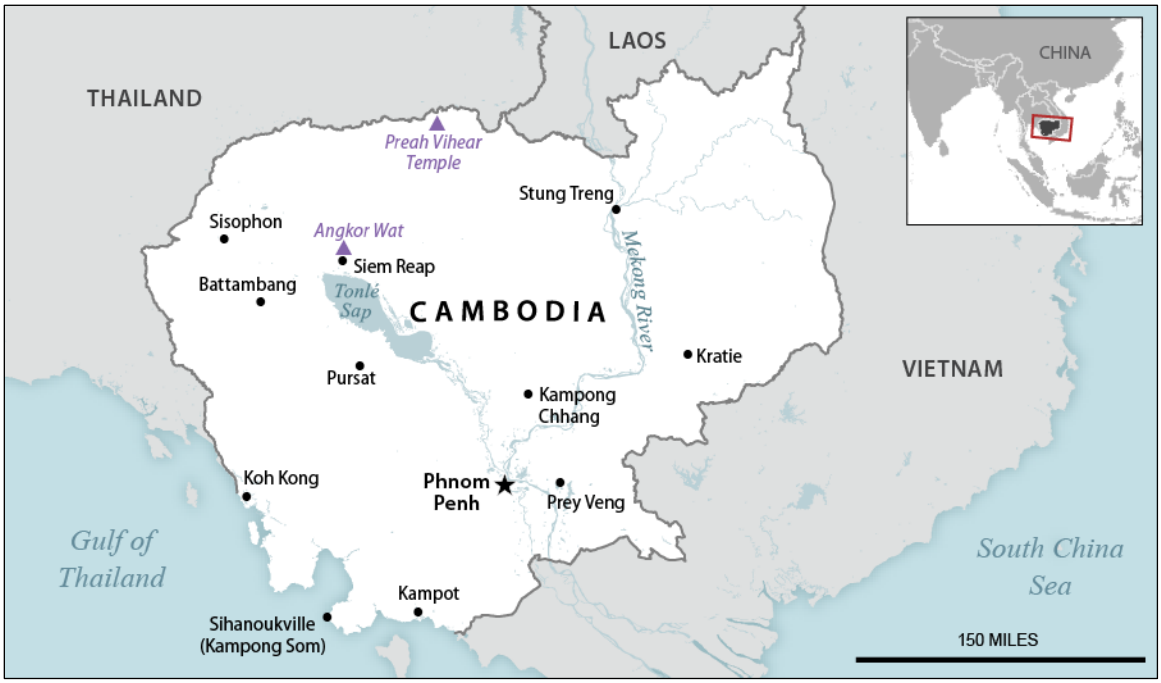
[1] Eugene Whong, "State Department Calls for Cambodian Opposition Leader's Release from House Arrest," *Radio Free Asia*, September 20, 2019.

[2] "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. 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 explanation. 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.

[3] Khuon Narim, "Hun Manet and US General Discuss Army Ties," *Khmer Times*, September 11, 2019.

[4] Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, June 1, 2019, https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF.

Figure 1. Cambodia at a Glance



Area: 69,898 sq. miles (about the size of Missouri)
Capital: Phnom Penh
Population: 16.9 million (2020)
Government: Parliamentary under a constitutional monarchy
Economic Sectors: (percentage of GDP): agriculture (25); industry (33); services (42) (2017)
Life Expectancy: 65.9 years (2020)
Religion: Theravada Buddhism (95% of population)
Literacy: 80% (2015)
GDP per capita: $4,000 (purchasing power parity) (2017)

Source: Map created by CRS. Fact information from CIA, *The World Factbook*, June 11, 2020.

Cambodian Politics

Hun Sen, age 65, has been the nation's leader for 35 years, including as Premier of the Vietnam-backed Republic of Kampuchea between 1985 and 1993 and as Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia since 1993. Between 1993, when United Nations-administered national elections were held, and the suppression of the opposition in 2017, democratic institutions and practices made progress, although Hun Sen often employed undemocratic means to remain in power. Cambodia also developed a vibrant civil society and a relatively free print media, while legal and judicial institutions remained weak and deep-seated corruption persisted.[5] In 2020, Freedom House characterized the country as "not free."[6] The Cambodian leader has maintained and

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

[6] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2020: Cambodia," https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-world/2020.

bolstered his political strength and that of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) 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.[7] Some scholars described the Cambodian polity as an example of "competitive authoritarianism," whereby multiparty elections are held and a civil society exists, but the national leader or ruling party maintains dominance in undemocratic or unconstitutional ways.[8]

Growth and Suppression of the Opposition

In the years leading up to its dissolution by the high court in 2018, many observers thought that the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) might take power electorally in the near or medium term. The 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. The CNRP's growing electoral strength 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 some observers.[9] Some experts reported fewer irregularities in 2017 compared to previous elections, due in part to financial and technical assistance from Japan and the European Union (EU) that focused on improvements in the voter registration system.[10]

In November 2017, the Supreme Court of Cambodia, allegedly at the behest of the government, issued 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 was attempting to overthrow the government were "inaccurate, misleading, and baseless."[12] The Supreme Court also banned 118 CNRP members from participating in politics for five years.[13] The government mandated that 55 opposition seats be filled by third parties, with many of them going to FUNCINPEC,[14] the royalist party that dominated opposition politics until the late 2000s. In addition, the National Assembly amended laws to remove CNRP commune councilors and village chiefs and replace them mostly with CPP members.[15] In the July 2018 National Assembly election, the CPP, which ran virtually unopposed,

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

[8] 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.

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

[10] 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.

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

[15] 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

won a complete victory, taking all 125 seats in the lower house. The Trump Administration declared 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.…"[16]

The government detained former CNRP vice-president Kem Sokha between September 2017 and September 2018, accusing him of treason for allegedly collaborating with the United States to foment a popular overthrow of the CPP.[17] Facing international pressure, Cambodia released Kem on bail in September 2018, but he was confined to his home. His trial commenced in January 2020.[18] Former CNRP President Sam Rainsy, facing numerous charges that many observers view as politically motivated, lives in self-imposed exile in France.[19] The government holds 32 prisoners and pretrial detainees on politically motivated charges, including 23 members of the banned CNRP, according to Human Rights Watch.[20]

Restrictions on Civil Society

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.[21] In 2017, the Cambodian Foreign Ministry expelled the Washington, DC-based National Democratic Institute (NDI), which was engaged in democracy promotion 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 English-language *Cambodia Daily*, known as an opposition newspaper, to shut down in 2017,

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17, 2017.

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

[17] "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.

[18] Trial proceedings have been postponed due to COVID-19. Ouch Sony, "Appeal Court Upholds Decision to Allow New Evidence in Kem Sokha Trial," *VOD*, May 14, 2020; Prak Chan Thul, "Cambodia to Open Treason Trial of Opposition Leader Kem Sokha," *Reuters*, January 14, 2020.

[19] Luke Hunt, "Counting the Costs of Sam Rainsy's Failed Return to Cambodia," *The Diplomat*, November 13, 2019.

[20] "Families Demand Cambodia Court Drop Charges, Free Detained Opposition Activists," *Radio Free Asia*, June 19, 2020; Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: End Crackdown on Opposition," June 17, 2020.

[21] 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."

[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.

ostensibly for failing to pay taxes. Its publishers stated that the tax charges were illegal and meant to "intimidate and harass" the paper.[24]

Since the sale in 2018 of the *Phnom Penh Post*, a major English language daily, to a Malaysian businessman with ties to Hun Sen, the government now exerts heavy influence over most major media outlets. Reporters Without Borders ranked Cambodia 144th out of 180 countries in its 2020 World Press Freedom Index, down from 132nd in 2017.[25] The government intimidates and controls independent media through lawsuits, criminal prosecutions, taxation, and occasional violent attacks on journalists, according to Freedom House.[26]

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, 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.

Cambodian Economy

Since the early 1990s, Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in Asia, has made significant progress on some socioeconomic indicators, although poverty and malnutrition in rural areas

[24] Kevin Ponniah, "Cambodia Leader Tells Critics to Pay Up, or Pack Up," *BBC News*, August 24, 2017.

[25] Reporters Without Borders, https://rsf.org/en/cambodia.

[26] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2020: Cambodia," https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-world/2020; Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Coerced Sale of Last Independent Newspaper," May 8, 2018.

persist.[27] The Kingdom's economy, which largely was destroyed by the Khmer Rouge and subsequent conflicts, achieved an average annual growth rate of 8% between 1998 and 2018, and it expanded by 7% in 2019, largely driven by foreign investment and the development of the agricultural, garment, construction, real estate, and tourism sectors.[28]

Due to the economic effects of EU sanctions and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), including international trade disruptions, the economy is expected to grow by less than 1% in 2020, but to rebound beginning in 2021.[29] (See "EU Sanctions," below.) The pandemic-induced slowdown has seriously impacted three key sectors—tourism, manufacturing, and construction—which contributed over 70% of Cambodia's economic growth and 39.4% of paid employment in 2019.[30]

The United States is one of Cambodia's largest export markets, accounting for over 20% of Cambodian exports in 2018, compared to the European Union, which reportedly purchased nearly 40% of the Kingdom's exports the same year.[31] U.S.-Cambodia trade was valued at $5.8 billion in 2019, including $5.3 billion in Cambodian exports to the United States and $514 million in Cambodian imports from the United States. Total bilateral trade grew by 85% since 2014, driven by a surge in Cambodian exports.[32] China is the largest investor in Cambodia in terms of cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI). Other major sources of FDI include Japan, other Southeast Asian countries, and the United Kingdom.[33]

Cambodia's garment industry, largely run by companies from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, forms a pillar of the nation's economy, employing nearly 1 million workers, more than 80% of whom are women.[34] The sector produced 55% of the Kingdom's exports in 2019.[35] According to one estimate, more than half of the country's 500 garment factories have suspended operations due to COVID-19.[36]

Cambodia acceded to the World Trade Organization in 2004, and is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area. Cambodia also is a party to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade pact that includes the 10 ASEAN member

[27] World Bank, "The World Bank in Cambodia," April 17, 2020.

[28] Ibid.; Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, June 11, 2020.

[29] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Report: Cambodia," June 17, 2020.

[30] World Bank Group, "Cambodia Economic Update: Cambodia in the Time of COVID-19," May 2020.

[31] Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook: Cambodia*, op. cit.; "Cambodia Garment Exports at Risk as EU Wraps Up Tariff Review," *Nikkei Asian Review*, August 16, 2019.

[32] U.S. Census Bureau via Trade Data Monitor.

[33] Council for the Development of Cambodia, http://www.cambodiainvestment.gov.kh/why-invest-in-cambodia/investment-enviroment/investment-trend.html.

[34] Economist Intelligence Unit, op. cit.; "The Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) Urges the EU to Maintain the EBA Program," *PR Newswire*, August 15, 2019.

[35] Economist Intelligence Unit, op. cit.

[36] David Pierson, "New Clothes Pile up at Cambodian Factories. Coronavirus Forces U.S. Brands to Cancel Orders," *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2020.

states and 6 other Indo-Pacific countries, including China. RCEP is expected to be finalized in 2020.[37] Cambodia is also in negotiations with China on a free trade agreement.[38]

Significant Developments in 2019 and 2020

U.S.-Cambodia Relations

Since arriving in Phnom Penh in September 2019, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy has made a number of overtures to Prime Minister Hun Sen, despite ongoing human rights concerns, while Hun Sen reportedly has encouraged more bilateral contacts, particularly in the economic sphere. Some analysts say that the U.S. government is pursuing a two-pronged approach, both threatening and, in some cases, carrying out sanctions in response to Hun Sen's backtracking on democracy, on the one hand, and reaching out to Cambodian society, particularly its youth, civil society groups, and military and economic leaders, on the other.[39] In November 2019, Ambassador Murphy met with opposition leader Kem Sokha, and he urged the Cambodian government to drop what many observers view as politically-motivated charges against Kem Sokha and other politicians, civil society leaders, and journalists.[40] In April 2020, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Hun Sen reportedly discussed the COVID-19 pandemic and other issues in a phone conversation.[41]

EU Sanctions

In February 2020, the European Union, Cambodia's largest export market, partially suspended trade preferences for Cambodia under its "Everything but Arms" (EBA) trade program, due to the "duration, scale and impact of Cambodia's violations of rights to political participation and to the freedoms of expression and association." The suspension affects selected Cambodian garment and footwear products and all travel goods and sugar, amounting to roughly one-fifth of Cambodia's annual exports to the EU. The European Commission stated that "there has been no significant progress" in the preceding year in Cambodia on civil and political rights.[42]

Coronavirus Measures

As reported by the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center on July 6, 2020, Cambodia had a total of 141 cases of COVID-19 and zero deaths.[43] Prime Minister Hun Sen

[37] 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. Ted Cordero, "Trade Ministers of ASEAN Countries, Partners Sign Regional Free Trade Pact," *GMA*, June 24, 2020.

[38] Economist Intelligence Unit, op. cit.

[39] David Hutt, "Why the US Has Gone Soft on Cambodia," *Asia Times*, October 29, 2019; "Hun Sen Directs Government to Renew Cooperation with United States," *Voice of America*, October 28, 2019.

[40] U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "Comments of Ambassador W. Patrick Murphy to Press at Kem Sokha's House," November 11, 2019.

[41] Niem Chheng, "PM Hun Sen, US' Pompeo Discuss Virus, Relationship," *Phnom Penh Post*, April 8, 2020.

[42] European Commission, "Trade/Human Rights: Commission Decides to Partially Withdraw Cambodia's Preferential Access to the EU Market," February 12, 2020; Leonie Kijewski, "EU to Suspend Some of Cambodia Trade Benefits over Human Rights," *Al Jazeera*, February 11, 2020.

[43] Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html.

initially downplayed the coronavirus, according to some observers, to help curry favor with PRC leaders.[44] However, public health measures and restrictions that were implemented beginning in March 2020 have appeared to prevent a large number of COVID-19 cases.[45] As of June 18, 2020, the U.S. government had provided over $11 million to assist in Cambodia's response and recovery from COVID-19, including $6 million for laboratories, case tracking, communications, and other activities.[46]

Despite the relatively low number of cases, the Cambodian government has aggressively pursued those who speak out freely about the virus. Cambodian authorities reportedly arrested over 30 people on charges of spreading "fake news" related to COVID-19.[47] The government reportedly released most of them but continued to hold about a dozen who were affiliated with the CNRP.[48]

In April 2020, Cambodia's parliament unanimously passed a state of emergency law, which authorizes the King to declare a state of emergency in situations of war, pandemics, and "national chaos." If a state of emergency is declared, in addition to giving the government the prerogative to place bans or limits on movement and gatherings, the new law would authorize the government to restrict the dissemination and broadcast of information, engage in digital surveillance, and impose penalties on those who violate the law.[49] According to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia, "The broadly worded language on the protection of national security and public order, ostensibly aimed at addressing COVID-19, can potentially be used to infringe on the right to privacy and unnecessarily restrict freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly."[50] Cambodian leaders stated that the law was in compliance with the constitution, and Hun Sen reportedly said that there is a "slim chance" of it being invoked.[51]

U.S. and Other Foreign Assistance

Postwar Cambodia has relied heavily upon foreign assistance from major foreign aid donors, including Japan, France, the United States, South Korea, and Australia.[52] Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries for Cambodia totaled $594 million in 2018, not including assistance from China.[53] Some analysts contend that ODA for Cambodia, part of a "multibillion dollar

[44] David Hutt, "Will the COVID-19 Crisis Spell the End of Cambodia's Hun Sen?" *The Diplomat*, April 2, 2020.

[45] Rebecca Ratcliffe, "Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam…How Some Countries Kept COVID at Bay," *The Observer*, June 14, 2020.

[46] Department of State, "Update: The United States Continues to Lead the Global Response to COVID-19," June 18, 2020; U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "The United States Provides Additional $7.5 Million to Cambodia's COVID-19 Response," May 21, 2020.

[47] Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: COVID-19 Spurs Bogus 'Fake News' Arrests," April 29, 2020.

[48] Ry Sochan, "CPP Rolls Out Plan to Address Fake News," *Phnom Penh Post*, May 6, 2020; Lindsey Kennedy, Nathan Paul Southern, "Hun Sen's Coronavirus Crackdown," *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2020.

[49] "Full Text of Approved State of Emergency Draft Law," https://www.information.gov.kh/detail/422898.

[50] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Cambodia's State of Emergency Law Endangers Human Rights, Warns UN Expert," April 17, 2020.

[51] "Cambodia's Senate Approves State of Emergency Law as UN Expert Warns of Its Risks to Rights," *Radio Free Asia*, April 17, 2020; Niem Chheng, "PM: Law Likely Next Week," *Phnom Penh Post*, April 7, 2020.

[52] In order of amount of Official Development Assistance in 2017. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Creditor Reporting System*, https://www2.compareyourcountry.org/aid-statistics?cr=730&lg=en&page=31.

[53] OECD, *Creditor Reporting System*, https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1. Chinese assistance generally does not meet OECD standards for ODA, due to its large non-concessional loan component, commercial

international effort to transplant democracy in Cambodia since the early 1990s," long kept Hun Sen's authoritarian tendencies in check, but had lost its effectiveness in doing so.[54] By some measures, in recent years, assistance from China, which comes without conditions for good governance and human rights, has roughly matched the total assistance from OECD countries.[55]

The United States provided an estimated $64.0 million in foreign assistance to the Cambodia in FY2019 and $82.5 million in FY2020. U.S. assistance efforts include the following: promoting human rights and democracy, including civil society, independent media, and worker, women's and land rights; expanding access to basic education; reducing poverty; supporting agricultural sector development; improving sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation; combating infectious diseases and promoting child, maternal, and reproductive health; and assisting in the clearance of unexploded ordnance. U.S. assistance also supports reintegration of Cambodian deportees from the United States.[56] (See textbox, "U.S. Deportations of Cambodians," below.) International Military Education and Funding (IMET) programs, which have provided English language instruction and aimed to "influence the next generation of Cambodia's military leaders," were suspended in 2018 in response to setbacks to democracy.[57]

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.[58] There were over 64,700 UXO casualties in Cambodia between 1979 and 2017, including more than 25,000 amputees and over 19,700 deaths.[59] In 2017, there reportedly were 58 casualties, including 48 deaths, part of an "overall continuing trend of significant decreases in the number of annual casualties."[60] About 50% of contaminated land has been cleared.[61] Between 1993 and 2019, the U.S. government contributed over $154.6 million for UXO removal and disposal, related educational efforts, and survivor assistance programs in Cambodia.[62]

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elements, and economic benefits accruing to China.

[54] Sebastian Strangio, "Cambodia Becomes the World's Newest One-Party State," *Foreign Policy*, November 17, 2017; 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.

[55] Luke Hunt, "Analysts: Cambodia to 'Pay Price' for Siding with China," *VOA*, July 29, 2016.

[56] Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Explanatory Statement, Division G; Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2019, Appendix 2.

[57] Ibid. The White House, "Statement from the Press Secretary on Reduction in Assistance to the Government of Cambodia," February 27, 2018.

[58] For further information, see CRS Report R45749, *War Legacy Issues in Southeast Asia: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)*, coordinated by Michael F. Martin.

[59] Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Cambodia: Casualties," http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/cambodia/casualties.aspx.

[60] Ibid.

[61] The Halo Trust, "Cambodia," https://www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/south-asia/cambodia/.

[62] Department of State, *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, 19th Edition, April 2, 2020. These activities are carried out largely by U.S. and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), in collaboration with the Cambodian Mine Action Center, a Cambodian NGO, and the Cambodian government.

Foreign Aid Restrictions

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 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, FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 Consolidated Appropriations Acts placed conditions related to democratic governance, among other restrictions, upon some U.S. assistance to Cambodia.[63] The Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA, P.L. 115-409), also imposed democracy-related and other conditions upon U.S. assistance to the government of Cambodia.[64]

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94) states that none of the funds may be made available to the Government of Cambodia unless it is determined that the government is taking effective steps to strengthen regional security and stability, "particularly regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea"; "assert its sovereignty against interference by the People's Republic of China, including by verifiably maintaining the neutrality of Ream Naval Base"; and "respect the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia as enacted in 1993."[65]

U.S. Deportations of Cambodians

Between 2002, when the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on repatriation, and 2020, over 750 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 some have never lived in Cambodia. 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, some of them minor offenses. Over 200 U.S. residents of Cambodian descent were deported to Cambodia between 2017 and January 2020.[66] 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.[67]

[63] P.L. 113-76 §7043(c); P.L. 115-31 §7043(c); P.L. 115-141 §7043(b); P.L. 116-6 §7043(b).

[64] P.L. 115-409, Title II, §201(b).

[65] Exceptions: The certification "shall not apply to funds appropriated by this Act and made available for democracy, health, education, and environment programs, programs to strengthen the sovereignty of Cambodia, and programs to educate and inform the people of Cambodia of the influence efforts of the People's Republic of China in Cambodia." Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94), Division G, §7043(b).

[66] Charles Dunst, "The Trump Administration Just Quietly Deported 25 Cambodian Immigrants," *Washington Monthly*, January 15, 2020; Ate Hoekstra, "Deported to a Place They Never Considered Home," *UCA News*, July 10, 2019; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "ICE Removes 37 Cambodian Nationals," July 3, 2019; Charles Dunst, "Dozens More Cambodian Immigrants to Be Deported from U.S., Officials Say," *New York Times*, December 12, 2018.

[67] 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. For further information, see CRS In Focus IF11025, *Immigration: "Recalcitrant" Countries and the Use of Visa Sanctions to Encourage Cooperation with Alien Removals*, by Jill H. Wilson.

Cambodia and China

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."[68] In return for PRC assistance, Cambodia has appeared to accommodate or support China's positions on various issues in the Indo-Pacific, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Some experts argue that China's economic engagement has helped reduce U.S. influence in Cambodia and paved the way for greater Chinese military influence in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia more generally. They maintain that China's engagement also has enabled Hun Sen to resist pressure from Western aid donors as well as Cambodians citizens to restore democracy and improve Cambodia's human rights record.[69] During the height of China's battle against the COVID-19 in February 2020, Hun Sen traveled to Beijing and met with Chinese leaders. In return for Hun Sen's demonstrations of support to China during the outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, the PRC government provided COVID-19 assistance to Cambodia, reportedly the first Southeast Asian country to receive medical supplies from China.[70]

PRC Official Finance to Cambodia

According to the database compiled by AidData, between 2000 and 2016, China provided Cambodia $9.08 billion in "official finance," the second highest amount in East Asia after Malaysia. This total include $8 billion in infrastructure investment, $800 million in debt relief, $115 million in humanitarian assistance, and $100 million in budget support.[71]

China is Cambodia's largest foreign investor, particularly in the garment industry, and largest source of imports and tourists.[72] Other major investment sectors include infrastructure; hydropower; telecommunications, including 5-G; mining; agriculture; and tourism. PRC foreign assistance to Cambodia has included development financing and grants, Chinese-built infrastructure, government buildings, and sports facilities, as well as support for public health and education.[73] Cambodia reportedly has accepted $600 million in Chinese loans as part of its participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative.[74] A PRC entity is constructing one of Cambodia's largest development projects, a $3.8 billion deep-water port, factories, and tourist facilities near the town of Sihanoukville on the Gulf of Thailand. The construction activities also

[68] Philip Heijmans, "China-Backed Dara Sakor Project in Cambodia Rings Alarm Bells in Washington," *Bloomberg*, July 7, 2019.

[69] David Hutt, "Will the COVID-19 Crisis Spell the End of Cambodia's Hun Sen?" op. cit.; Prak Chan Thul and Matthew Tostevin, "China's Big Money Trumps U.S. Influence in Cambodia," *Reuters*, September11, 2017.

[70] "A Friend Indeed, Cambodia Thanks China for Continued Assistance Under Any Circumstances," *Khmer Times*, April 26, 2020; George Styllis, "Cambodia Awaits Payday as Hun Sen Cozies up to China," *Nikkei Asian Review*, April 17, 2020; Nicola Smith, "Why It Pays for China's Neighbors to Play Down the Coronavirus," *The Telegraph*, February 14, 2020.

[71] See AidData, "China's Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset," http://china-dashboard.aiddata.org/.

[72] David Hutt, "China Throws Hun Sen an Economic Lifeline," *Asia Times*, May 1, 2019. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*: Cambodia, op. cit.

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

[74] Hannah Elten, "Chinese Naval Base in Cambodia," *Global Risk Insights*, October 6, 2019; Malcolm Davis, "China's Cambodia Gambit," *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, July 29, 2019; "Cambodian Leader, in Beijing, Says China Pledges Nearly $600 Million in Aid," *Reuters*, January 22, 2019.

include an international airport at Dara Sakor, also on the Gulf of Thailand, that some analysts believe could be used for military as well as civilian purposes.[75]

PRC military assistance to Cambodia includes financing, small arms, trucks, tanks, helicopters, and aircraft. China also has provided military education and training and sponsored exchanges of senior military leaders. In 2018 and 2019, the PRC reportedly provided Cambodia with a total of nearly $200 million in military financing.[76] Since 2016, China and Cambodia have carried out four annual *Golden Dragon* joint military exercises, including one in March 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2020 exercise, 3,000 soldiers from China and Cambodia reportedly focused on anti-terrorism and humanitarian activities.[77]

Possible PRC Access to Cambodian Naval Base

Since 2018, U.S. suspicions have grown regarding reported PRC interest in the development of and access to a naval base at Ream, which lies about 12 miles south of Sihanoukville.[78] Cambodian and Chinese officials have denied the existence of such plans. Hun Sen stated that a foreign military base would be unconstitutional, and that access to the port may be provided to multiple countries.[79] Some experts argue that despite Chinese and Cambodian denials, Beijing may be planning to develop a wider security architecture in the region, beginning with Cambodia, and that its claims of relatively benign activities during its early stages may be made to obscure long-term military intentions.[80]

Hydropower Projects

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 over $2 billion in the construction of seven dams in Cambodia.[81] 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.[82] Cambodia relies heavily on the Mekong and Tonle Sap Lake, which the river feeds into, for its food security.[83] In 2019, a number of issues, including drought and damming of

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[75] Hannah Beech, "A Jungle Airstrip Stirs Suspicions about China's Plans for Cambodia," *International New York Times*, December 26, 2019. Jeremy Page, Gordon Lubold and Rob Taylor, "Naval Outpost in Cambodia Bolsters China's Ambitions," *Dow Jones Institutional News*, July 22, 2019.

[76] Jack Myint, "Cambodia Update," U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, May 23, 2019.

[77] Ralph Jennings, "Shrugging Off COVID-19 Fears, China and Cambodia Hold Joint Military Drills," *Voice of America*, March 18, 2020.

[78] "US Welcomes Cambodian Assurances on Reported Chinese Naval Base," *Radio Free Asia*, August 2, 2019; Jeremy Page, Gordon Lubold and Rob Taylor, "Naval Outpost in Cambodia Bolsters China's Ambitions," *Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 2019.

[79] Ankit Panda, "Cambodia's Hun Sen Denies Chinese Naval Base Again—But What's Really Happening?" *The Diplomat*, June 2, 2020.

[80] Prashanth Parameswaran, "Why a New China Naval Outpost in Cambodia Would Matter," *The Diplomat*, July 23, 2019; Charles Dell, "Hiding in Plain Sight: Chinese Expansion in Southeast Asia," *War on the Rocks*, May 9, 2019.

[81] "Chinese Investment in Energy Creates New History for Cambodia: Cambodian Minister," *China Daily*, October 11, 2016.

[82] Hannah Beech, "'Our River Was Like a God': How Dams and China's Might Imperil the Mekong," New York Times, October 12, 2019; Nyshka Chandran, "Southeast Asia Is Betting on Hydropower, But There Are Risks of Economic Damage," August 9, 2018.

[83] Zoe Osbourne, "Mekong Basin's Vanishing Fish Signal Tough Times Ahead in Cambodia," *The Guardian*,

the Mekong in Laos and China, resulted in record-breaking low levels of water, which compounded depleted fisheries and worsening soil conditions. In March 2020, the Cambodian government announced that hydropower projects along the Mekong would be put on hold for 10 years and that it would pursue alternative sources of energy.[84]

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.[85] 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.[86]

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.[87] Although Cambodian and international human rights groups and the ECCC's international judges have advocated prosecuting former mid-ranking Khmer Rouge officials, Hun Sen has opposed further indictments, arguing that they would undermine national stability.[88]

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. Between 2008 and 2017, the United States provided annual contributions to the international trust fund.[89] 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 between 2005 and 2017.[90] 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.[91] Foreign operations appropriations measures since 2018 have included funding for research and education programs associated with the Khmer Rouge; the FY2018 and FY2019 appropriations acts stated that no assistance may be made available for the ECCC.[92]

December 16, 2019.

[84] Prak Chan Thul, "Cambodia Puts Plans for Mainstream Mekong Dams on Hold For 10 Years, Official Says," *Reuters*, March 10, 2020; Tyler Roney, "Mekong Dams Destroy Tonle Sap Lake," *thethirdpole.net*, April 27, 2020; "Southeast Asia's Hydropower Boom Grinds to a Halt as COVID-19 Stalls Projects," *Channel NewsAsia*, April 21, 2020.

[85] 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.

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

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

[88] Andrew Nachemson, "Last Khmer Rouge Cases Are in Limbo; Cambodian Judges on an International Tribunal Block a Trial, *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2020; International Justice Monitor, "Khmer Rouge Tribunal Leaves Unresolved Whether New Case Will Proceed to Trial," January 9, 2020. "Expanding Khmer Rouge Trials Could Spark War: Hun Sen," *The Nation*, February 28, 2015.

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

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

[91] P.L. 113-76, §7043(c); P.L. 113-235, §7043(c); P.L. 114-113, §7043(c); and P.L. 115-31, §7043(c).

[92] P.L. 115-141, §7043(b), P.L. 116-6, §7043(b), and P.L. 116-94, §7043(b).

U.S. Government Actions and Selected Legislation

Some policy experts advocate imposing economic and visa sanctions on Cambodia and Cambodian officials to pressure Hun Sen into reversing his suppression of democracy. Others argue that continued U.S. engagement, particularly with Cambodian youth and democratic forces in the Kingdom, is the most effective course for promoting democratization from within and countering China's growing influence.[93] The Trump Administration and Congress have taken some steps to pressure Hun Sen into restoring democracy in Cambodia, including the following:

- On November 16, 2017, the Senate (115th Congress) 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.
- 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."[94] In August 2018, in response to the National Assembly election, the Administration announced that it would "expand" the restrictions.[95]
- 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.[96]
- S. 34: Cambodia Trade Act of 2019 (Senator Cruz, introduced January 8, 2019) would require a report on the participation of Cambodia in the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, and whether it should be withdrawn.[97] A similar bill, H.R. 1376, was introduced in the House (Representative Lowenthal, February 26, 2019).
- H.R. 526: Cambodia Democracy Act of 2019 (Representative Yoho, introduced January 11, 2019) 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. H.R. 526 was agreed to in the House on July 15, 2019. A similar bill, S. 3081, was introduced in the Senate (Senator Gardner, December 18, 2019).

[93] Olivia Enos, "Holding Cambodia Accountable for Its Descent into One-Party Rule," *The Heritage Foundation Issue Brief No. 4894*, August 7, 2018; Prak Chan Thul, "U.S. Turns to Music in Bid to Woo Cambodians," *Reuters*, March 7, 2018; 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.

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

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

[96] Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Two Individuals and Five Entities Under Global Magnitsky," June 12, 2018. Sanctioned individuals are denied entry into the United States, and any assets that they hold in the United States are blocked.

[97] The GSP program grants duty-free treatment on some Cambodian exports to the United States. In general, the GSP program includes handbags and travel goods but excludes textiles and apparel.

- S. 1468: Cambodia Accountability and Return on Investment Act of 2019 (Senator Graham, introduced May 14, 2019) would prohibit U.S. foreign

- assistance to the government of Cambodia unless the government is taking effective steps to "strengthen regional security and stability, particularly regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea ... "; "protect its sovereignty from interference by the People's Republic of China"; and "respect the rights and responsibilities enshrined in the Constitution.…" In addition, S. 1468 would restrict entry into the United States and block assets of Cambodian senior government officials involved in undermining democracy, and suspend Cambodia's eligibility for GSP tariff treatment, among other provisions.
- S.Res. 416: "A resolution calling for the peaceful return to Cambodia of opposition party members and democracy activists" (Senator Markey, introduced November 7, 2019).

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