

# Democratic Reform of Cambodian-National Assembly (2008-2023)

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## Abstract

This research paper examined the evolution of democracy in the Cambodian National Assembly from 2008 to 2023, marked by significant political developments, challenges, and bold reforms. After the 2008 election, Cambodian People's Party (CPP) further consolidated its power, raising concerns about diminishing role of opposition parties and weakening of democratic standards. This study analyzed major events, including the 2013 election, which was marred by widespread allegations of electoral fraud and triggered mass public protests demanding political reform. The paper also argued the consequences of the 2018 election, in which the CPP achieved a sweeping victory amid political suppression and the dissolution of the main opposition party, Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). By 2023, the National Assembly reflected a complex interplay between authoritarian governance and aspirations for the democratic reform, raising profound questions about the future trajectory of democracy in Cambodia.

**Key words:** *Democracy, national assembly, politics, challenge, reform*

## 1. Introduction

In 1946, four Royal Decrees were issued granting freedom of press, freedom of the association, freedom to form the political parties, and announcing the enforcement of the law on general elections to elect a Provisional Assembly (Constitutional Assembly). On September 1, 1946, the first general election was held in the Kingdom of Cambodia to elect a legislative assembly tasked with advising the King in the drafting of the country's constitution. This Constitutional Assembly consisted of 67 members and was responsible for drafting and approving the first Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The first Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia was promulgated on May 6, 1947. This 1947 Constitution established a bicameral legislature consisting of National Assembly (Lower House) and the Royal Council of the Kingdom (Upper House). From 1947 to 2023, the members of parliament were elected through universal, direct suffrage by a single-member majority vote.

Following Paris Peace Agreements of October 23, 1991, Cambodia organized its first post-conflict general election in mid-1993. This election was organized by United Nations and conducted under conditions of widespread insecurity across almost all areas.

## 2. Conceptual Framework of Literature

### 2.1 Elections and the Structure of the National Assembly, 2008–2023

On September 1, 1946, the first general election was held in the Kingdom of Cambodia to elect 67 members of Constitutional Assembly. This Assembly was tasked with drafting and approving the first Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. With the Cambodian history, first Constitution was officially promulgated by the King on May 6, 1947. This Constitution was drafted under the influence of two major ideological currents (Mihaïev, 1984). Under the 1947 Constitution, Cambodia adopted a constitutional monarchy regime. On May 6, 1947, the Constitution was officially enacted. A new electoral law was announced by Royal Decree No. 363 NS, dated September 26, 1947, to pave the way for first election of members of National Assembly, scheduled for December 1947.

The bicameral legislature included National Assembly (Lower House) and Royal Council of the Kingdom (Upper House). Its members were selected through both appointment and electoral processes—some were appointed by the King, others elected by National Assembly from outside candidates, and still others chosen through indirect universal elections representing provinces or Phnom Penh. There were professional representatives and civil servant representatives elected directly. The Constitution underwent the frequent and extensive amendments in response to the prevailing political context. Since 1947, the Cambodian Constitution revised no fewer than seventeen times. These include 1947 Constitution (was amended numerous times according to political will), 1972 Constitution of the Khmer Republic, 1976 Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea, 1981 Constitution of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, 1989 Constitution of the State of Cambodia, 1993 Constitution of the Second Kingdom of Cambodia, subsequent revisions in 2003, 2008, 2018, and 2023. From 1946 to 2023, National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia organized seventeen parliamentary elections. The following were the historical data and outcomes of those elections (Pen, 2021).

Table: Cambodian National Assembly Election Data (1946–2023)

Period	Date of Election	No. of Political Parties Participated	Winning Political Party(ies)	No. of Seats
1946–1947	01 Sep 1946	03	(Constitutional Assembly)	67

Period	Date of Election	No. of Political Parties Participated	Winning Political Party(ies)	No. of Seats
1947–1951	21 Dec 1947	05	03 (People's Representatives)	75
1951–1953	09 Sep 1951	05	04	78
1955–1958	11 Sep 1955	08	01	91
1958–1962	23 Mar 1958	02	01	61
1962–1966	19 Jun 1962	01	01	77
1966–1972	11 Sep 1966	01	01	82
1972–1975	03 Sep 1972	03	01	126
1976–1979	20 Mar 1976	01	01	250
1981–1993	01 May 1981	01	01	117
1993–1998	23–25 May 1993	20	04	120
1998–2003	26 Jul 1998	39	03	122
2003–2008	27 Jul 2003	23	03	123
2008–2013	27 Jul 2008	11	05	123
2013–2018	27 Jul 2013	08	02	123
2018–2023	29 Jul 2018	11	01	123
2023–2028	23 Jul 2023	18	02	125

Based on Cambodian Politics Before and After the 1993–2003 Elections, the internal conflict among Cambodians lasted for nearly two decades. The five permanent members of UN Security Council (United States, France, United Kingdom, China, and Russia) agreed to let United Nations take responsibility for resolving the Cambodian issue. A conference was held in Paris on January 15–16, 1990. Following the meeting, a 16-point peace plan was made public. This UN peace plan served as the framework for the political settlement in Cambodia, based upon six key components: (1) monitoring the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces, (2) effective presence of the UN during the transitional period to ensure internal security, (3) organizing free and fair elections under direct UN supervision, (4) all processes to be under oversight of Special Representative of UN Secretary-General, and (5) the establishment of a Supreme National Council to guarantee territorial integrity of Cambodia during the transitional phase (Cambodian Institute for International Relations, 2007), and (6) sixth and final meeting, held in New York from August 27–28, 1990, resulted in a framework plan under comprehensive political-agreement

on Cambodian conflict, comprising 36 articles and divided into five chapters (UN Security Council, USA, 1990).

The final agreement on the comprehensive political settlement of Cambodia was signed on October 23, 1991, in Paris, France, with 23 participating countries. On May 23, 1993, a historic day for Cambodia and its people, democratic elections were held to determine leadership through public trust—acknowledging the people as the source of political power. A total of 3,268 candidates from 20 political parties ran for 120 seats in the National Assembly, competing across 21 provinces and municipalities (So, 2006). The election was conducted over five days, from May 23 to May 28, 1993. The May 23, 1993 general election results, organized by UNTAC, were as follows:

Party	Valid Votes	% of Total Votes	National Assembly Seats
FUNCINPEC	1,824,188	45.47%	58
Cambodian People's Party (CPP)	1,533,471	38.22%	51
Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP)	152,764	3.81%	10
Molnaka Party	55,107	1.37%	1
Other 16 Parties	446,101	11.12%	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,011,631</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>120</b>

While FUNCINPEC won the most seats, the victory was not absolute and insufficient to approve a constitution or form a government alone, as two-thirds majority was required. The 1993 Constituent Assembly included 120 members. Its role was to draft and adopt a new Constitution for Cambodia and transform into a legislative National Assembly, which would then form a new government. On September 20, 1993, the Constitution was adopted by Constituent Assembly. It established a constitutional monarchy and reinstated Prince Norodom Sihanouk as King of Cambodia. Constitution was amended several times to enable the next elections, specifically scheduled for July 26, 1998, such as first amendment (March 31, 1998 by adjusted election process timeline), second amendment (May 5, 1998 by allowed the National Election Committee (NEC) to adjust timeframes and conditions related to Articles 37, 48, 58, 61, 62, 137, and 137 repeated), and third amendment (May 8, 1998

by changed the ballot counting process from polling stations to commune/sangkat-level counting centers).

From July 28, 1998, NEC gradually released the preliminary election results publicly. By August 5, 1998, the aggregated results showed 4,902,488 valid ballots nationwide. The top parties were CPP: 2,030,802 votes, FUNCINPEC: 1,554,374 votes, and Sam Rainsy Party: 699,653 votes. There were also 155,169 invalid votes (3.1%) and 19,538 spoiled ballots (0.4%) (NEC, 1998). Based on Constitutional Council’s decision, NEC allocated the 122 National Assembly seats as such Cambodian People’s Party (CPP): 64 seats, with 2,030,790 votes, FUNCINPEC: 43 seats, with 1,554,405 votes, and Sam Rainsy Party: 15 seats, with 699,665 votes. With the July 27, 2003 Election, the number of National Assembly seats increased to 123, with the creation of one additional seat for the newly established province of Oddar Meanchey. A total of 6,341,834 eligible voters were registered for the 3rd legislative term, equivalent to 93.95% of all eligible voters nationwide (National Statistics Summary, 2003). According to official NEC results released in late August 2003, 5,277,494 voters cast ballots (83.22% turnout). Of these, 5,168,837 were valid (97.94%), and 108,657 were invalid (2.06%). The 2003 general election results compiled by the NEC (So, 2006) were:

Party	Valid Votes	% of Total Votes	Assembly Seats
Cambodian People's Party	2,447,259	47.35%	73
FUNCINPEC	1,072,313	20.75%	26
Sam Rainsy Party	1,103,423	21.87%	24
Other Parties	518,771	10.03%	0
Total	5,168,837	100.00%	123

However, the democratic process and the subsequent mandate elections was conducted. The 4th legislative election (2008) for the National Assembly was held on July 27, 2008, with 12 political parties registering with the NEC. Of those, 11 parties were officially approved by the NEC with their party and candidate lists. The official results showed that two opposition parties (Sam Rainsy Party and Human Rights Party) gained seats in the National Assembly, indicating that the democratic process in parliament continued to evolve positively from one mandate to the next. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia stipulates: “The National Assembly shall hold its first session no later than 60 days after the election upon convocation by the King. All elected members must take an oath before assuming their duties as stated in Annex 5 of the Constitution” (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). Accordingly, following the announcement of the official election results, the first session of each new National Assembly mandate was held, and elected members must take their oaths. On September 24, 2008, National Assembly

held its first session under the presidency of the King. The Sam Rainsy Party, which had initially declared it would boycott, suddenly reversed course and joined the session just minutes before the King's arrival. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Party was absent (Puy, 2016). The vote of confidence for the government was not problematic, as Cambodian People's Party had secured more than 50% + 1 of the seats.

The Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) was established through an agreement in Manila, Philippines, on July 17, 2012, between pro-democracy leaders (Radio France Internationale, 2012). This unification, supported by the public, brought together leaders from both opposition parties who agreed to follow a common democratic path, with Sam Rainsy as the party president and Kem Sokha as vice president. The 5th legislative election was held on July 28, 2013, across 19,009 polling stations nationwide. A total of 6,735,244 voters cast their ballots from the 2012 voter list, which contained 9,675,453 registered voters across all 24 provinces and municipalities (Keo, 2022).

Only two parties won seats: the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) secured 68 out of 123 seats, and the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) won 55 seats (Keo, 2022). The CNRP refused to accept these results and declined to take their seats in the National Assembly, alleging electoral irregularities. These allegations, supported by analysis from election monitoring groups and civil society organizations, sparked nationwide protests (OHCHR link).

Tensions rose, and both parties had to find a solution, such as (1) engage in dialogue to resolve the political deadlock, (2) encourage political leaders to negotiate and propose more solutions to overcome the post-election crisis and resume Assembly activities, (3) address the deadlock by honoring the King's constitutional role (Articles 8 and 9) as a figure who calls upon political leaders to resolve conflicts, (4) request assistance from the United Nations, and (4) build trust among the public and consider a referendum. As part of this "culture of dialogue," the CNRP took its seats in the National Assembly in August 2014. On July 22, 2014, the third top-level meeting between both parties resulted in a political agreement to resolve the crisis. This summit was based on principles agreed upon by the parties' leaders on April 9, 2014. The outcomes of the nearly five-hour meeting included (Keo, 2022): agreement to jointly resume participation in the National Assembly; agreement on selecting the composition of electoral commission; agreement on scheduling future elections; agreement on power-sharing between the legislative and executive branches; agreement on reforming Senate leadership; agreement to reform key national institutions; particularly independent bodies, to serve the nation and the people according to democratic principles; and agreement to study and amend related legal provisions to implement the agreement effectively.

This marked a new chapter, giving the opposition greater opportunity for engagement in the Assembly and the electoral commission. Various reforms were undertaken after nearly a year of political stalemate. The 6th legislative election was held on July 29, 2018. On August 15, 2018, the NEC officially announced that voter turnout was 83.02%. The CPP received 76.85% of valid votes, FUNCINPEC came second with 5.89%, the League for Democracy Party third with 4.86%, and the Khmer Will Party fourth with 3.35% (NEC Source). CPP won all 125 seats in National Assembly—an unprecedented result in post-1993 Cambodian election history (<https://sopheaksrey.wordpress.com/2018/08/15/>). Candlelight Party viewed the Constitutional Council’s decision to reject its registration and candidate list for the 7th National Assembly election (2023) as:

1. Contrary to the spirit of the Paris Peace Agreements of October 23, 1991, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and various laws—particularly the Law on the Election of National Assembly and the Law on Political Parties.
2. Violating the Candlelight Party’s right to participate, as it was lawfully registered according to the Political Party Law and recognized by the Ministry of Interior and NEC, having contested the 2022 commune council elections and the April 9, 2023 municipal council elections.
3. Infringing on citizens’ rights to vote and to stand as candidates—rights guaranteed by the Constitution and international covenants on civil and political rights.
4. Undermining the will of nearly two million Cambodians who voted for the Candlelight Party in the 2022 commune elections.

On August 5, 2023, the NEC officially announced the results of the 7th National Assembly election held on July 23, 2023: of the 18 participating parties, only two won seats. The CPP won 120 out of 125 seats.

## **2.2 Roles, Powers, and Power-Sharing**

With the organizational Structure, the National Assembly was an institution endowed with legislative power and played a crucial role in implementing the principle of separation of powers and practice of multiparty liberal democracy. The leadership of National Assembly included the President, the First Vice-President, and the Second Vice-President, all elected by the members of the Assembly. According to Constitution and procedural rules on the election of these three officers, “The National Assembly must convene its first session no later than 60 days after the election upon convocation by the King” (Constitutional Assembly Meetings of Kingdom of Cambodia, 1947–2007). Before commencing its work, the Assembly must approve its internal regulations, confirm the validity of the mandates of each member, and elect

separately President, Vice-Presidents, and all members of various specialized committees by a two-thirds majority vote (Constitutional Assembly Meetings of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1947–2007). The internal rules required a quorum of at least fifty percent plus one of the total members to hold votes in the Assembly (Royal Kram, 2006).

During the 5th mandate in 2013, the political crisis lasting over a year after the election required negotiation between Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). Although the CPP won 68 seats and the CNRP won 55 seats, the CPP was able to operate all national institutions based on 2006 constitutional amendments. To promote national reconciliation, two parties agreed to share power in the National Assembly — including positions of President, Vice-Presidents, and leadership of specialized committees — through bundled voting and to jointly grant confidence to the Royal Government in case the procedures of Articles 82 and 119 of new Constitution could not be fulfilled (Additional Constitutional Law, 2004). When Articles 82 and 119 could be applied, the procedure under Article 3 of this Additional Constitutional Law was unnecessary. Through this political compromise, on August 26, 2014, Kem Sokha was silently elected by Assembly as the First Vice-President of the National Assembly, replacing Ngoun Nhil, a CPP member.

The Constitution granted extensive powers to President of National Assembly. Article 87 states: “The President of the National Assembly shall preside over sessions of Assembly, endorse laws and resolutions adopted by the Assembly, ensure the implementation of Assembly’s internal regulations, and manage all international relations of the Assembly” (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). The President’s power in international affairs represents a reduction of the King’s prior prerogatives in this domain. Simultaneously, the President of National Assembly was the second highest official after the King. Upon the King’s death, and in the absence of the President of the Senate, the President of the National Assembly assumed the role of Acting Head of State, holding the status of a constitutional monarch (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). Similarly, the role and rank of the Second Vice-President of National Assembly were comparable to those of the First Vice-President. The Constitution specified the order of succession for acting head of state such as First Vice-President of the Senate, First Vice-President of the National Assembly, Second Vice-President of the Senate, Second Vice-President of the National Assembly.

The Second Vice-President of the National Assembly was also a member of the Royal Council of the Throne (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). Standing Committee was an essential body of the National Assembly responsible for institutional continuity between Assembly sessions. The 1999

Constitution provided that the Standing Committee comprised the President of National Assembly, the Vice-Presidents, and the heads of all specialized committees (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). The President and Vice-Presidents served as the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Standing Committee. The National Assembly convened ordinary sessions twice a year, each lasting at least three months. If requested by the King, the Prime Minister, or at least two-thirds of Assembly members, the Standing Committee must convene an extraordinary session (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). This meant the Standing Committee has the authority to convene the extraordinary Assembly sessions. For the Standing Committee meetings to be valid, more than half of its members must be present (Internal Rules of the National Assembly, 1993).

According to Constitution, before commencing its duties, the Assembly must approve its internal rules, confirm the validity of members' mandates, and collectively elect leadership positions by an absolute majority of all members (2006 Amendments, new Article 82, Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999). The internal rules specified that under the presidency of the Assembly President, elections must be held to select members of the Assembly's various committees (Internal Rules of the National Assembly, 1993). During the last three mandates, the National Assembly of Cambodia had ten specialized committees. In these mandates, elections for the President, Vice-Presidents of Assembly, Presidents and Vice-Presidents of specialized committees, and the Royal Government were conducted as a bundled package, even though CPP had more than 50% + 1 of votes in the Assembly. However, the election of these committee leaders did not strictly follow democratic principles but was based on the spirit of the political agreement.

According to the spirit of the Constitution, National Assembly held ordinary sessions twice a year. Each session lasted at least three months. If there was a request from the King, or a proposal from the Prime Minister, or from at least one-third of the members of the National Assembly, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly must convene an extraordinary session (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993). However, the quorum required for each session was amended to require the presence of 7/10 of the total number of National Assembly members (Internal Rules of the National Assembly, 1993). The issue of quorum ceased to be a recurring problem starting from the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th terms because the constitutional amendments lowered the quorum requirement from two-thirds (2/3) to fifty percent plus one (50%+1), thereby granting the ruling party full control of power. From the 4th to the 7th terms, the quorum problem was no longer an obstacle to the continuation of Assembly sessions because the Constitution and the internal rules of the Assembly were amended concerning quorum

numbers, setting the quorum at two-thirds, equivalent to 83 members for convening sessions to adopt decisions by an absolute majority.

### C. Roles and Powers of the National Assembly

According to the power granted by 1993 Constitution, Chapter 13 regarding the amendment and revision of the Constitution, Cambodia's Constitution has become a flexible document adapting to political circumstances desired by politicians. Chapter 13, Articles 131, 132, 133, and 134 (Constitutional Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1947–2007) stated that:

- This Constitution is the supreme law of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
- All laws and decisions of state institutions must strictly comply with the Constitution.
- The initiative to amend or revise the Constitution is a right reserved for the King, the Prime Minister, and the President of the National Assembly, upon the proposal of at least one-quarter of the total number of members of the National Assembly.
- Amendments or revisions to the Constitution must be made by a constitutional law approved by a two-thirds majority of all National Assembly members.
- Amendments or revisions are prohibited during a state of emergency as defined in Article 86.
- Amendments or revisions cannot affect the multiparty liberal democratic system and the constitutional monarchy.

Article 132 of the Constitution granted the power to initiate constitutional amendments or revisions to the King, the Prime Minister, and the President of National Assembly, upon a proposal from one-quarter of the total National Assembly members (Constitutional Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1947–2007). The National Assembly also held power to participate in the formation of Constitutional Council. Article 118 stated: "The Constitutional Council consists of 9 members with a four-year mandate. One-third of its members are renewed every three years. Three members are appointed by the King, three are appointed by the National Assembly, and three are appointed by the Supreme Council of the Magistracy" (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993).

The term "immunity" or "freedom from fear and prosecution" (Samdech Chuon Nath) referred to the legal authority granted to protect individuals or groups from prosecution or punishment that others might be subject to. This included parliamentary immunity and diplomatic immunity. Parliamentary immunity was "a special right granted by the Constitution to members of the National Assembly (representatives) and members of the Senate, to protect these persons from prosecution in order to allow them to perform their duties freely" (Samdech Chuon Nath). Each representative was democratically

elected by the people through elections as stated in Article 76 of the Constitution. The Constitution described parliamentary immunity as follows: "Representatives have parliamentary immunity. No representative shall be accused, arrested, detained, or imprisoned for opinions expressed or votes cast in the fulfillment of their duties. Accusations, arrests, detentions, or imprisonments of any member of the National Assembly may only be carried out with the consent of the National Assembly or Standing Committee of the National Assembly during a session, except in cases of clear criminal offenses. In such cases, the competent ministry must report immediately to the National Assembly or the Standing Committee for decision. The decision of Standing Committee must be submitted to the next session of the National Assembly for approval by a two-thirds majority of all members. In all cases, detention or prosecution of any representative must be suspended if National Assembly votes to suspend by a three-fourths majority of all members" (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1999).

### 3. Critical Arguments

#### 3.1 Package Election and Constitutional Amendment

King Norodom Sihamoni announced that he would convene the first session of National Assembly on September 23, 2013, which was a session where the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) pledged to cooperate with the hope of forming next government. In that letter, King Norodom Sihamoni declared "I will invite all elected representatives of the 5<sup>th</sup> legislature to open the first session on September 23, 2013" (The Cambodia Daily Khmer [CDK], 2013). On July 22, 2014, during 3rd meeting between two parties, a political agreement was reached. This summit was based on principles agreed upon between leaders of both parties on April 9, 2014. The political solution agreed upon in this nearly five-hour summit was a unity to solve problem, select composition of institution responsible for organizing elections, set power between legislative executive authorities, reorganize the leadership structure of senate, reform the key national institutions serving the nation and citizen, and study amendments to the judicial code to ensure implement (Keo, 2020). On August 8, 2014, the extraordinary session of 5<sup>th</sup> legislature of the National Assembly was held under the chairmanship of Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of National Assembly, to approve a proposal to amend six new articles of National Assembly's internal regulations. This was the first time that 55 members of CNRP participated in the meeting. The proposal to amend six new articles in internal regulations was unanimously approved by 122 votes out of 122. Removal or suspension of parliamentary immunity was not legislated (CDK, 2005). Previously, Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and CNRP disagreed on clarifying legitimacy of representatives and parliamentary immunity (Keo, 2020).

### 3.2 Political Crisis Resolution through Constitutional Means

In response to Cambodia's political situation, Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993) was amended 10 times-7 times up to 2014 (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2015) and 3 more times in 2023. These amendments included 1<sup>st</sup> amendment, 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment, 3<sup>rd</sup> amendment, 4<sup>th</sup> amendment, 5<sup>th</sup> amendment, 6<sup>th</sup> amendment, 7<sup>th</sup> amendment, 8<sup>th</sup> amendment, 9<sup>th</sup> amendment, and 10<sup>th</sup> amendment. 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance on July 14, 1994, to regulate the delegation of King's Royal Prerogative to the Head of State according to rank. Before this amendment, delegation to Head of State did not strictly follow Article 11 of Constitution; some laws required approval by the President of National Assembly, others by 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, or 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President of the National Assembly. 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/0399/01 dated March 8, 1999, to establish a new institution, Senate. The political crisis after the 1998 election—where no political party had a sufficient majority to form a government alone—led to power sharing and role allocation of political officials by the National Assembly President's code going to FUNCINPEC party, while Senate President's code went to the Cambodian People's Party.

3<sup>rd</sup> amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 0701/11 dated July 28, 2001, to grant royal prerogatives to the King for creating and awarding the national orders or medals. 4<sup>th</sup> amendment: was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 0605/018 dated June 19, 2005, to amend quorum rules for National Assembly and Senate meetings to facilitate the administrative operations of both institutions. Distrust among politicians eventually led to introduction of a package election system for all institutions. 5<sup>th</sup> amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 0306/018 dated March 9, 2006, to amend the procedures for establishing parliamentary leadership and government formation. Attempts to create a coalition government failed due to factional rivalries between royal group and Sam Rainsy, along with growing support for Sam Rainsy's party and efforts to allow his return from exile. This also opened opportunities for Cambodian People's Party, which sought a simple majority (50%+1) to end political crises in Cambodia as in the past.

6<sup>th</sup> amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 0208/008 dated February 15, 2008, to amend territorial administrative management of the Kingdom of Cambodia. 7<sup>th</sup> Amendment: Promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 1014/022 dated October 23, 2014, to give constitutional status to the National Election Committee. However, 8<sup>th</sup> amendment was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 0218/002 dated February 27, 2018, to promote Khmer national values based on

protecting national sovereignty, national independence, and national unity against external interference. 9<sup>th</sup> amendment was occurred on February 14, 2018, during the extraordinary session of the 5<sup>th</sup> legislature of the National Assembly. 10<sup>th</sup> amendment was occurred on January 28, 2022, during the 7<sup>th</sup> session of 6<sup>th</sup> legislature of the National Assembly. In addition, the additional constitutional law aimed to guarantee proper operation of national institutions. It was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/0704/001 on July 13, 2004, to ensure at all times the effective functioning of national institutions in accordance with fundamental principles of democracy, multiparty freedom, and the needs of necessity.

#### 4. Conclusion

The path toward a democratic National Assembly in Cambodia was filled with challenges, but it was by no means unattainable. As the country moved forward, it required the close cooperation between domestic actors and international stakeholders to improve an atmosphere of mutual respect in dialogue and democratic reforms. Strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting multiparty democracy, and ensuring accountability would be crucial for revitalization of democracy in Cambodia. Ultimately, the future of Cambodia's National Assembly will depend on the collective will and commitment of people to uphold democratic values amid the various ongoing challenges.

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