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Groundbreaking of Journal of Applied Research and Innovation <i>Than Chhorn, Editorial Team</i>	1-9
Challenges and Solutions as Enhancing Cambodia-Russia Relations <i>Sovanny Tak, Ravuth Ros, Mealea Keo</i>	10-28
Democratic Reform of Cambodian-National Assembly (2008-2023) <i>Tola Pheakkdey Kuoy</i>	29-42
The Powerful Competition of China and The United States in Asia and the World <i>Mealea Keo, Sovannara Em, Socheat Sek</i>	43-57
Operational Strategies and Development Impact of PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company: Infrastructure Modernization <i>Kun Mo, Oudom Son</i>	58-73
The Process of Managing TVET Institutions: A Case Study of Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo <i>Sopheap Thou, Oudom Son, Ravuth Ros</i>	74-85
The Effects of Multi-Party Conditions on Cambodian Politic Challenges <i>Panha Kimsean, Ravuth Ros, Mealea Keo</i>	86-100

Ground-breaking of Journal of Applied Research and Innovation

Than Chhorn^{1*}, Editorial Team²

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Abstract

Journal of Applied Research and Innovation (JARI) was officially launched on the 2nd of June 2025, managed by JARI Publisher, under Human Resource University (HRU). JARI was available online, and it is a double-blind, peer-reviewed journal, serving as a dynamic platform for disseminating and exchanging the academic research relevant to practice and innovation of education, instruction, professional development, language, law, business, economy, psycho-pedagogy, public policy, political science, marketing, and technology, in both Cambodian and global contexts. The journal invites scholars, researchers, and practitioners to engage in critical analysis and discussions on themes such as psycho-pedagogical advancement, educational innovation, language acquisition, practice of law, business economics, management, public policy, politics, and technology-enhanced learning. The primary objectives of JARI are to foster knowledge sharing and intellectual discourse, addressing contemporary challenges in education, instruction, language, law, business, economy, and technology. It aims to reach policymakers, educators, and academic institutions by offering diverse perspectives on emerging trends and best practices in teaching and learning. JARI is committed to supporting initiatives that enhance educational quality, promote multidisciplinary practices, and contribute to the sustainable development goals beyond the Cambodian and global contexts.

Key words: *Innovation, practice, know sharing, intellectual discourse, perspective, challenge*

1. Introduction

JARI is a journal that is officially launched to promote the research on the practice and innovation of education, language or linguistics, instruction, psycho-pedagogy, professional development, law, business, economy, public policy, political science, marketing, and technology. This journal is double-blind, peer-reviewed, and open (online) access. It is served as a dynamic platform for disseminating and sharing the academic research results related to the innovation and best practice. However, transformation is the need for teaching and learning and better the educational quality (MoEYS, 2019). Transformation of education is set with the aim of reforming and advancing the teaching and learning quality, developing the human resources, and

streamlining the 21st century-enhanced teaching and learning (Dirk et al., 2021). Hence, transformation of education is a response to the technological era in reforming training and schools, with the development of human skills (Hang-Chuon, 2021).

Transformation is a key factor in improving the quality and significantly contributes to development, innovation, and practice of education, language or linguistics, instruction, psycho-pedagogy, professional development, law, business, economy, public policy, politic science, marketing, and technology. Technological devices are used in transformation to advance the education (Parlak, 2017). Otherwise, transformation can be the system that meets the need of teaching and learning (Taşkıran, 2017). Transformation profoundly influences the educational contexts (Balyer & Öz, 2018). Transformation is the framework for the innovation in teaching and learning.

In brief, JARI aims to invites teachers, scholars, researchers, and practitioners to engage in critical analysis and discussions on themes, such as education, language, instruction, psycho-pedagogy, professional, business, economy, law, public policy, politic science, marketing, and technology. This journal purposively promotes scholars and practitioners share their research results. It is to reach policymakers, educators, and academic institutions by offering diverse perspectives on the theories, trends, innovation, and best practices of learning and teaching, in particular the worked flows and fields.

2. JARI Frameworks

JARI journal has a purposive framework, as such home, about, publications, submissions, guidelines, call for papers/books, conference, announcements, and register or login. Home mentions about the journal and contact us. About comprises about journal; focus and scope; editorial team; reviewers; peer-review process; publication policy, frequency, and ethics; open-access policy; editorial policy; submission policy; acceptance and publication; screening for plagiarism; free of charge; indexing and abstracting; journal registry and quality; privacy statement; and copyright notice. About journal covers the overview, vision, mission, and goal. Editorial team states the advisory boards, editor-in-chief, editors, peer-reviews, assistances, and publishing office. Publications address the issues, special issues, book publications, search, current, and archives. Submission provides the platform of the article, book, book-review, article-review, and book-chapter submitting. Guideline of JARI journal focuses on the author guidelines, reviewer guidelines, reviewer forms, JARI templates, and information for readers, authors, and librarians. Call-for-papers expresses call for articles/article-reviews/book-reviews and call for book/book-chapters.

3. JARI Scope and Focus

The Journal of Applied Research and Innovation (JARI) welcomes all original papers or books in any discipline, field, and subject where the theory, innovation, technology, best practices, and lessons learned are introduced, related to education, instruction, professional development, language, law, business, economy, psycho-pedagogy, public policy, politics, and technology. Original manuscript can be either academic or applied research in English or in Khmer from national or international that contributes to social, economic, and environmental development. JARI accepts all fields and disciplines, which may prioritize research scopes and focus. JARI journal publishes the original research articles, article/book reviews, and original books biannually based on the empirical data, as well as the theoretical, conceptual and methodological manuscripts. Embracing scholarly resources, JARI welcomes papers on the practice and innovation of education, instruction, professional development, language, law, business, economy, psycho-pedagogy, public policy, politics, and technology. In this effort, JARI encourages the authors to publish the original papers and books, focused on the trends, Innovation, and practice of education; teaching methods; applied linguistics/language; psycho-pedagogical practice; digital technological transformation; trends and practice of management; applications of law; applications of business and economy; financial practice; baking launch and workflows; application of accounting; application of taxation; application of audit; public policy; political science; and marketing launch and workflows.

4. Perspectives of Digitalization and Innovation

Digitalization is necessary to system change and improvement in education (Bates, 2015). Reform and innovation of education significantly contributes to the lifelong learning (Sisman, 2016). Transformation of education can be achieved by involving the society and individual needs (Balyer & Öz, 2018). Digitalization of education helps develop the knowledge and digital skills for teachers or learners. In this sense, digitalization of capability helps teachers and students better their teaching and learning quality (Forrester, 2016; IDC, 2015; OECD, 2017). Furthermore, digitalization of teaching and learning competence is the process of upgrading the ability to use digital devices in managing, analyzing, and sharing information. ICT Ability in teaching and learning is about a way of developing the education quality, reform, and transform (Paulo, 2020).

Within education framework, technological skill concerns the improvement of capability of teaching and learning with the digital frameworks. Innovative education is centralized as the process of education to reform the education system (Dirk et al., 2021). With 21st century-education, innovation of digital

education connects teachers and learners to the world through Internet platforms (Hang-chuon 2021; NV, 2017; Paunescu et al., 2022). In this case, higher education institutions (HEIs) should emerge the technologies as a means of bettering education practices to meet key missions for academic institutions (Paulo, 2020; Paunescu et al., 2022). For this mean, educational institutions should develop the digital thinking and digital frameworks to all digital initiatives and approaches - providing rich resources into classroom practice of teaching and learning (Alenezi, 2021; Silva, 2017; Yurev et al., 2020).

5. Research Perspectives and Trends

The challenges of doing research at the academic institutions provides how to advance the research skills in pursuing the doctorate programs. Research is a platform that makes doctorate students or scholars be complicated to graduating the doctorate degree. With research process, graduates or PhD students are suggested to familiarize with the research methods, academic research and writing, and reading skills. This is a mean of research framework to enrich the trends of the 21st century-research. To boost research skills, research competence is the need to better critical thinking of research learners – requiring to know how to use the CAF in research (Chhorn, 2025).

Researched perspective is remained the need to present research issues and trends in the real world (Davies & Elder, 2004). Of course, research is central to conditions of professional development, and researched issues are complex and longstanding (Brumfit, 2004). Applied research is emphasized to the disciplinary research-frameworks used to work on problems in pursuing the PhD programs (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Applied research extends in a systematic way beyond research teaching and learning. This encompasses the assessment of research skills, policy, and project; the use in the professional settings; and corpus research.

The disciplines of applied research focus on the composition, rhetoric, and literary studies, policy studies, political sciences, psycho-pedagogy, public administration, business, economy, law, and sociology. Research-parallel-coevolution needs to understand how and why applied research is broadly defined. Likely, generative research dominates the applied research landscape, competing formal theories where are available. In this sense, applied research claims variation of research fields and areas. By practicing applied research, abstractness of generative research is central as assumption of a research device. In fact, applied research turns to research knowledge with cognition and description (Robinson & Ellis, 2008). Research can be explained to explicitly drive applied research, as corpus, descriptive, and social research (Biber et al., 1999). Research theories present realistic applicability to the sorts of research issues.

A variety of research is still central to the areas of inquiring applied research and umbrella discipline of applied research. Research knowledge of various types is very crucial for research description and analysis. In this case, the research-learners are required to draw on knowledge bases of the research methodology, academic research, analytical reading and academic writing. In applied research, the shift to analyzing data and discourse, description, and interpretation in the social or cultural settings indicate a value of observable research (van Lier, 1997). The useful perspectives arisen out of relevant applied-research is about the advancement of register analysis, genre analysis, and resource of corpus research as application to a wide range of research contexts and teaching and learning situations (McCarthy, 2008). Approach to analyzing the research, along with the techniques to analyzing discourse, is hallmarks of the applied research. In fact, applied research carries out the applied research as a genuine role for the researchers, with formal research based upon the real-world and problem-base

6. JARI Policy and Strategies

With the research strategical framework, JARI was officially managed by JARI Publisher, under Human Resource University (HRU). JARI is a double-blind peer review and available online access, disseminating and exchanging the academic research relevant to the practice and innovation of education, instruction, professional development, language or linguistics, law, business, economy, psycho-pedagogy, and technology, in both Cambodian and global contexts. JARI has the core values, such as (1) quality by ensuring the high intellectual, methodological, practical, and managerial rigorousness in research, (2) unity by showing collaborative, collegial, institutional, and supportive spirit of the academic community, (3) accountability by being answerable, justifiable, and balanced in reporting research implementation to the stakeholders, (4) leadership by showing an attitude of independence and clear direction towards own research purposes as well as institutional research goals, and (5) trustworthiness by producing research results that can potentially gain trust from audiences and users of the research results.

JARI establishes the main vision that focuses on sharing and publishing the researched results on theory, trend, practice, and innovation of education, instruction, language/linguistics, law, business, economy, psycho-pedagogy, public administration, political science, policy, and technology. In addition, JARI sets the missions, including (1) provide chance to educators, teachers, students, scholars, practitioners, or researchers to share and publish the researched results, (2) building up the research capacities and skills of educators, teachers, students, practitioners, or scholars, (3) engaging in advancing knowledge in any fields related to the theory, practice and innovation of the education, instruction, language or linguistics, law, business,

economy, psycho-pedagogy, public administration, political science, policy, and technology, and (4) reinforcing research support for HRU, promoting the educators, teachers, students, practitioners, or scholars to skillfully and expertly research the related fields in any areas, and utilizing research-based knowledge to inform policy makers. JARI further conducts the goals, such as (1) extending the research engagement and competence of professors, educators, teachers, and students, (2) ensuring active research orientation of postgraduate programs, (3) increasing and improving the different kinds of research resources and inputs, (4) increasing the joint-research activities and projects with the external stakeholders and partners, and (5) yearning by showing a strong desire and commitment to engage in different ways in research activities. Importantly, JARI sets the key strategies of the research aspects, as such (1) strengthening the linkage between research activities and teaching and learning practices, (2) improving researcher and institutional research profiles, (3) building a strong and sustainable research-support system, (4) producing high quality, international research publications, and (5) enlarging HRU's research collaboration, partnership, and network to professors, teachers, scholars, and PhD students of postgraduate schools in research.

Advisory boards of JARI have the responsibility of giving any views about the criteria and principles of the article and book publications to concern with the quality, relevance, and originality of submitted manuscripts with ethical standards and publication policies. Editor-in-chief of JARI has responsibility of making decisions about the acceptance for the articles/books publication with quality, relevance, and originality, which reach the ethical standards and publication policies. Editor-in-chief has the roles to receive and assess the submission of original articles, article/book reviews, and/or books. Editor-in-chief, further, has the responsibility to send the original articles or books to the reviewers and assess the reviews of reviewers in order to accept the original article or book submission for publication. Editors of JARI have the responsibility to edit the accepted original articles or books for publication with the ethical standard and quality. Reviewers of JARI journal have the responsibility to review the original articles, books, and/or article or book reviews, sent by the editor-in-chief, to check the plagiarism, bias, quality, and consistence, with the review form. Assistants of JARI have the responsibility to help editor-in-chief in preparing the accepted articles, books, and/or article of book reviews for publication.

All authors must declare any competing interests related to their article or book, whether financial or non-financial, that could influence their research and interpretation of results. This includes conflicts of interest with products that compete with those mentioned in their manuscript. If unsure whether to

disclose a competing interest, authors should consult their institution. Authors may also check detailed information on competing interest followed by the JARI – Publication Office. A conflict of interest is also called a competing interest, which occurs when the author(s), their sponsor have financial, commercial, legal, or professional relationships with other organizations or people that could affect their research. When submitting paper or book, authors must fully disclose any conflicts of interest. JARI editor-in-chief will use this information to make editorial decisions and may publish the disclosures to help readers assess the article or book. Authors can declare conflicts of interest in their cover letter and in the manuscript submission form in the journal's online system. Conflicts of interest can be financial or non-financial.

7. Concluding Remarks

JARI is launched to promote the research shares on innovation and practice. JARI is a double-blinded and peer-reviewed journal, publishing the scientific research results to the real world. Education transformation helps develop the teaching and learning issues, improve the education quality, and ensure the effectiveness of research contexts. The view of education and research offers the chance to identify challenges and best practice of teaching and learning. The researched results publishing and sharing in JARI will contribute to develop teaching and learning and development of the research capability and skills. The shares of researched findings in JARI will provide the mechanisms for the education reform, curriculum development, education digitalization, and instruction. Greatly, JARI will proffer benefits to quality betterment of higher education, as such advancement of research competencies and skills. Integration of teaching is a guideline to better research skills.

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Challenges and Solutions as Enhancing Cambodia-Russia Relations

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Abstract

This study explores the historical and contemporary dynamics of Cambodia–Russia relations, focusing on the key challenges and potential pathways for enhanced cooperation. Despite a foundation of diplomatic relations established in 1956, bilateral relationship remains hampered by unresolved issues such as Cambodia’s Soviet-era debt to Russia, significant economic disparities, and geopolitical realignments. Cambodia’s requests for debt cancellation have largely gone unanswered, creating friction in diplomatic engagements. Moreover, Russia’s economic instability due to international sanctions and its shifting foreign policy priorities in the ASEAN region further complicate bilateral efforts. Geopolitical factors, including influence from global powers like China and the U.S., continue to shape Cambodia’s foreign policy orientation. This paper highlights the need for strategic diplomacy, diversified economic partnerships, and climate-resilient investment to build a more sustainable Cambodia–Russia partnership amid evolving international pressures.

Key words: *Relations, diplomacy, international pressure, geopolitical challenge, cooperation*

1. Introduction

Over the past 40 years of relations, Cambodia and Russia have been more positive and negative than enemies. Cambodia is a small country in the geopolitical region of the world, and gained independence from the French colony in 1953 and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1956, at a time when the world was competing with two different ideologies: the liberalism led by the United States and the Soviet Union, which were on the side of communism. In fact, the relationship between the two countries, as the Soviets were leftist powers, helped Cambodia in many areas, and especially the Soviets focused on political ideology rather than economics and trade. In addition, the relationship between the two countries inevitably faced negative challenges that arose from direct or indirect influences. Below are some of the challenges facing the two countries. All of these problems inevitably arise in the cooperation between countries, between states, and

between states and federations of states, whether indirectly or directly. These relations often focus on the debt issues, economic issues, geopolitics, trade, tourism, and changes in state leadership, etc.

2. Conceptual Framework of Literature

2.1 Cambodia's Debt to Russia

Proposal for Cambodia's Debt Cancellation: Hun Sen has repeatedly called on creditors, including the United States and Russia, to cancel the debt or convert it into development aid for Cambodia. The United States could consider canceling the debt if Hun Sen's government strengthens its relations with the United States and returns to the path of respecting human rights and democracy, or resumes political negotiations with the opposition. However, Prime Minister Hun Sen has complained about the debt owed to the United States. He said on April 10 that at that time Cambodia owed the United States money, the interest had already risen to the principal. He suggested that the United States should have a way to cancel this debt, like Japan did with Cambodia, which is to provide goods for Cambodia to sell, and when the money is sold, use the money to help develop Cambodia. He said, "Lon Nol" borrowed money, but he didn't know where to use it? " Buy bullets and drop them all over Cambodia. Now our main problem is that they are going to hit us with an axe, break our heads, and demand that we wipe the axe that is stained with our blood" (RFA, 2021).

According to document hosted in the website (cambodia-or-convert-them-into-aid-04102021181709.html), he also said that he failed three times in negotiations with the former US President, Barack Obama, on the debt cancellation issue, with Obama saying that he had difficulty talking to the US Senate and House of Representatives about the debt cancellation proposal. As of 2017, the debt that Cambodia owed to the US during the Khmer Republic period, from beginning to the end, was nearly \$500 million. Former US Ambassador to Cambodia William Heidt claimed in 2017 that the US had never discussed or considered canceling the debt that Cambodia owed. In particular, canceling the debt that Cambodia owed to the US was not a topic that the US had put on the table for discussion, but he said that the US encouraged negotiations to reach a solution to the debt problem. In addition to the US, Hun Sen has also asked Russia to cancel Cambodia's previous debt. Cambodia's debt to Russia, including principal and interest, is over one billion five hundred million (1,500) dollars. Russian officials said that Russia cannot easily cancel this debt. Regarding Hun Sen's request to cancel this debt, neither the US nor the Russian embassies in Cambodia have responded yet (RFA, 2021).

Cambodia has always demanded or requested that the Russian government cancel its debts from the Soviet era. However, Russia seems to ignore

Cambodia's repeated requests for debt cancellation, which seems to be a barrier to the relationship between the two countries, and it is always a topic that both sides often raise in bilateral meetings or meetings of heads of state or state representatives. The Russian government has developed a foreign policy that focuses on better relations with countries in the ASEAN region and internationally, but the strengthening of economic and trade ties between Moscow and Phnom Penh still seems uncertain. Socioeconomic monitoring experts have made different assessments of Cambodia's unresolved debt problem to Russia (Ceath, 2021).

The debt issue is a stumbling block in relations between Cambodia and Russia. The \$1.5 billion debt, or 70%, could be written off by Russia, with Cambodia paying Russia only 30%, or about \$450 million. Cambodia borrowed all of that debt in the 1980s to buy weapons to wage a bloody war between Cambodians and each other. According to the Russian news agency RBTH, citing sources familiar with the Russian government's ASEAN policy, there is no clear indication yet why Russia is refusing to write off the entire \$1.5 billion debt owed by Cambodia (Ceath, 2021).

In the presence of Nikolay Nikiforov, Minister of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, he raised the issue of Cambodia's debt, saying that Russia should have a positive scenario for resolving the debt issue, and the best arrangement would be investment. Russia will encourage a working group of experts to meet to resolve the issue. The Russian side is interested in the electricity, telecommunications, and infrastructure sectors, and the Russian side will receive investment project proposals to resolve the debt. The two sides have raised this issue for discussion several times, but the two sides have not yet reached a common position on resolving the debt. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, believed that both sides should resolve it.

In a bilateral meeting between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in Brussels, Belgium, and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian Prime Minister also discussed the debt that Cambodia owes to Russia in the former Soviet Union, and Russia will use those debts to invest in Cambodia, which is a priority for the Royal Government of Phnom Penh. In addition, Russia plans to provide some technical assistance for the renovation of the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital and intends to help restore some ancient temples in Cambodia (Ceath, 2021).

Moscow supported the initiative of King Norodom Sihanouk, who was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, the Soviet Union demonstrated its loyalty to the Cambodian people by condemning Lon Nol's military coup and not supporting the Democratic Kampuchea regime. Through good relations at that time, the Soviet Union helped rebuild

Cambodia after the collapse of the Democratic Kampuchea regime and reform Cambodian society. Achievements that Russia has helped Cambodia in the past include: the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital, the Cambodian Institute of Technology in Phnom Penh, the military hospital in Battambang, the military base in Samut Ream, the Pochentong Air Force Base, the Combined Military Academy and the Tonle Military Base in Phnom Penh, etc. (Ceath, 2021).

In a bilateral meeting on October 18, 2018, the Head of the Royal Cambodian Government, Hun Sen, also thanked Russia and considered Russia's assistance to be very valuable for Cambodia. The Russian Prime Minister also pledged to continue cooperating with Cambodia in all fields, and since 2019, Russia has been providing Cambodia with significantly more assistance.

2.2 Differences in the economic potential of Cambodia and Russia

The differences in the economic potential of Cambodia and Russia may be due to the situation of the surrounding environment of the two countries. Russia, a former world power and currently Russia, is still a country with regional and global influence and a strong military and economic power, while Cambodia, which was also a country that was once an empire in a region. After experiencing the weakening or invasion of neighboring countries, Cambodia has gradually weakened. A series of wars have made Cambodia a country that has lost a lot of resources and needs to develop everything in all sectors. The different situations of two countries may be due to many factors of people, geopolitics, knowledge and global influence.

Cambodia is one of the Countries most vulnerable to natural climate change. Due to geographical location, weak governance and other vulnerabilities, Cambodia is a country that is vulnerable to natural disasters. Going forward, investment in climate-resilient infrastructure will be important in promoting economic growth and ensuring the sustainability of the national economy in the long term. Now and in the future, as climate change becomes more severe, for example, with warmer temperatures, more erratic rainfall, or longer summers, Cambodia is becoming more vulnerable. According to a recently released Asian Development Bank (ADB) report, Cambodia's economy recovered in 2022 after years of COVID-19. This was largely due to strong export growth and a rebound in tourism. However, the report said Cambodia needs to expand green investment, or climate- and environment-friendly development, as a strategic priority to boost its long-term economic growth potential (Chhan, 2023). Cambodia is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change due to its geographical location, weak governance, and vulnerability to natural disasters. According to The Notre Dame-Global Adaptation Index, Cambodia is among the least prepared countries to deal with climate change, ranking 149th out of 182 countries. In fact, Cambodia

is located in a large floodplain area, so Cambodia is vulnerable to flooding. According to the global risk index for humanitarian crises and disasters, Cambodia has the most vulnerable score, at 9.5 out of 10 (Chhan, 2023). Climate change in Cambodia is expected to increase, and it will increase the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, warmer temperatures, and rising sea levels and salinity in the oceans. According to the ADB, climate change could significantly hinder Cambodia's long-term economic growth potential. Cambodian government aspires to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050. However, climate change could shrink Cambodia's economy by about 10% by 2050. The main reasons are loss of productivity or loss of production capacity due to extreme weather and rising temperatures. Floods and droughts could become more frequent and severe, which could affect agriculture and sea level rise. Saltwater intrusion on land could also further degrade freshwater fisheries and agricultural land. The tourism sector is also vulnerable to climate change, as climate change could damage key infrastructure and tourism demand (Chhan, 2023).

In this regard, ADB recommended that Cambodia should take climate change into account more if it wants to continue its economic growth. Cambodia is a low-emission country, but its emissions are rising due to the deforestation, expansion of rice cultivation, and increasing energy demand in the industrial sector. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions could therefore provide Cambodia with a new opportunity for the economic growth, as the world is currently experiencing growing global demand for environmentally friendly products and services. The transition to a zero-emission economy could also create high-quality jobs and make Cambodia a better fit for global investors who are increasingly interested in green investments. For the ADB, expanding green investment in priority sectors will enable Cambodia to increase its long-term economic growth potential. The Royal Government of Cambodia has set out a strategy to increase the green economic growth through the National Green Growth Strategic Plan 2013-2030 and a long-term strategy for carbon neutrality by 2050. Cambodia has the potential to expand investment in renewable energy and increase energy efficiency, using its abundant solar energy resources. In addition, Cambodia also has the potential to invest in the climate-smart agriculture and natural capital management, given the importance of the agricultural sector to Cambodia's food security and trade potential. Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure will be crucial to boosting economic growth and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the national economy (Chhan, 2023).

Russia's Economic Situation

The Russian economy is also fragile due to the war in Ukraine. The war between Russia and Ukraine has prompted a series of financial sanctions against Russia. A growing list of measures is starting to take a toll on the country's economy. Stock markets are closed and people are queuing up at ATMs to withdraw cash. Russia's escalating war in Ukraine has prompted unprecedented economic sanctions on Russia. In 2021, Russian banks were further cut off from the international financial system. Several banks were removed from the SWIFT payment system, while moves were made to stop the Russian central bank from using up US\$630 billion (€562 billion) in foreign reserves (CNC News, nd).

The sanctions are by far the most severe imposed on Russia since, it invaded Ukraine in 2020. Russia's increasing financial and political isolation is having significant consequences for the world's 11th largest economy (GDP). The Russian currency has fallen by about 30%, one of its lowest levels since the last sanctions, although it has recovered somewhat in the months since. In response, the Russian Central Bank has also made an emergency decision to raise interest rates from 9.5% to 20% and has temporarily suspended the sale of securities held by foreigners. The currency's fall has led to long lines outside ATMs across the country, with fears growing that the ruble will fall further to (CNC, nd).

The Russian Central Bank has announced that the Moscow Stock Exchange will not be open. The bank said in a statement that it had raised interest rates to support financial and price stability and protect citizens' savings from being depleted. The European Commission, the United States, Britain and Canada have taken steps to curb Russia's use of its large foreign exchange reserves, estimated at around \$630 billion. The assets are denominated in US dollars, euros, sterling and Chinese yuan, and the advantage of holding such reserves is that they allow the central bank to intervene significantly to push the ruble down in the event of volatility. However, if Russia finds it difficult to buy its foreign currency, the pressure on the currency will intensify, and the continued long lines of Russian citizens in front of ATMs could develop into more panic on those banks.

Russia still has some options to keep its economy afloat, with about 15% of its foreign reserves held in China, and the Chinese government is likely to be willing to help its ally. Russia also has one of the world's largest gold reserves, about 2,300 tones, worth about \$142 billion at current prices. However, Sergei Guriev, an economist at Sciences Po University in Paris, told the Financial Times that such options are also uncertain. Anyone who says it will be easy to sell gold or the yuan is talking nonsense. China's state-owned bank

is also blocking financing for Russian oil sales, and China is also fearful of further sanctions.

International rating agencies moved to downgrade Russia. After a series of measures targeting Russia's biggest banks, the United States, the European Union and other Western allies will cut some of the country's banks off the global payments system SWIFT. Until it is clear which banks will be affected, it is difficult to assess. Russia developed its own alternative to SWIFT, known as SPFS. It accounted for about 20% of Russia's domestic transactions, but it struggled to attract foreign banks. Even neutral Switzerland said it was accepting EU sanctions and asset freezes on some Russian individuals and companies. It also joined other countries in imposing sanctions on President Vladimir Putin and other officials. As fears about Russia's financial situation mount, many international companies and foreign investors withdrawn their interests in Russia. The Norwegian government said its \$1.3 trillion oil fund, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, will sell off \$3 billion worth of Russian investments (CNC, nd).

Britain's BP also changed its relationship with Russian state oil company Rosneft, exiting a 20% stake in the company for \$25 billion. Shell will also end its ties with Russian oil giant Gazprom. Other Western energy companies with stakes in Russian oil and gas projects, such as ExxonMobil and TotalEnergies, are considering pulling out. U.S. automaker General Motors Co, Germany's Daimler Trucks and Swedish carmaker Volvo on Monday took some steps. Singapore-based container shipping company Ocean Network Express also suspended bookings to and from Russia, while Maersk (MAERSK.CO) said it was considering doing the same. AerCap Holdings, the world's largest aircraft lessor, said it would end leases to hundreds of planes with Russian airlines because of sanctions. Microsoft also said it would remove Russian state media outlet RT's mobile app from its Windows App Store and ban advertising on Russian state-sponsored media outlets. Meanwhile, Google has blocked RT and other Russian networks from receiving advertising money on its websites, apps and videos, YouTube, or anything similar to Facebook's move, while other investors also pulled out of Russian companies (CNC, n.d).

According to the report, Russia's main trading partners in 2021 were China with a total trade volume of \$140 billion, Germany with \$56 billion, the Netherlands with \$46 billion, Belarus with \$38 billion, the United States with \$34 billion, Turkey with \$33 billion, Italy with \$31 billion, South Korea with \$29 billion, the United Kingdom with \$26 billion, Kazakhstan with \$25 billion, Poland with \$22 billion, France with \$22 billion, Japan with \$19 billion, India with \$13 billion, Finland with \$13 billion, and Ukraine with

\$12 billion. Among Russia's major trading partners, most were countries in European Union, the United States, and its allies. If these countries stopped doing business with Russia, it could severely affect the Russia's trade and economy (CNC, n.d). However, sanctions against Russia by the West and its allies also had some negative effects on the economies of those countries, as Russia was a major exporter of oil, gas, coal, minerals and wheat in the world, and there were concerns that it would drive up energy prices. At the same time, the share prices of some companies doing business with and in Russia failed significantly.

3. Critical Arguments

3.1 Geographical Factors of Cambodian-Russian Political-Economics

Geopolitics is the geographical determination of a state on the main aspects of national strategy, including military, politics, economics, and diplomatic. These are about to fight for the goal of gaining space, power, and territory by cooperating with allies and preventing enemies from becoming as powerful as themselves. However, geopolitics is the factor that determines the level of state-to-state relations of Cambodia and Russia experiencing. Geopolitics influences the political form of state. When the Soviet Union grew in power, communism also spread throughout the world, especially in Southeast Asia. When the United States and its Western allies won the Cold War, the growth of democratic countries increased to more than 140 countries. When China and Russia gained influence on the international scene in the early 2010s, some countries turned from democracy to authoritarian regimes. Throughout history, the international order reflected beliefs and interests of the strongest powers, and the international order would change according to new powers that come in its place, including their beliefs and interests.

Currently, Russian government developed a foreign policy that focused on the better relations with countries in the ASEAN region and internationally, but the economic and trade ties between Moscow and Phnom Penh remained unclear (Thai, 2018). Therefore, Russia only strengthened and continued to connect with its friendly countries, and what Russia should do is geopolitics and economics in the Middle East and Europe. On the other hand, in ASEAN and in Indochina, Russia's influence changed to that of the superpower China in competition with the United States. What was noteworthy was that China was a hegemon or a regional power before the arrival and expansion of the West, supported by the Industrial Revolution. China rose rapidly after Deng Xiaoping's open reform. China's rapid economic growth and development since 1978 were the driving force behind the current shift in the balance of power in economic and political terms in the region and the world.

In fact, in the early 1980s, China's gross domestic product (GDP) was less than 300 billion US dollars. In 2021, China's GDP was over 16 trillion yuan,

making it the world's second-largest economy, behind the United States, which had 22 trillion yuan. Remarkably, since Deng Xiaoping's reforms, GDP increased 30-fold and 750 million people lifted out of the poverty, an unprecedented number in China's recorded history (Thai, 2018). By looking at the definition of Russian policy, it was true that ASEAN was important, but Russia did not focus on Cambodia. In 2016, Russia's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia blossomed, with the Russian government expressing its certainty that Russia wanted to build stronger, long-term friendly relations with ASEAN countries.

According to the Russian historians, Cambodia seems to be far from this important Russian control. Russia's foreign policy, updated at the end of 2017, showed that Russia continued to improve relations with the ASEAN countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore from a comprehensive strategic partnership, with the notable exception of Cambodia, which was not mentioned in Russia's foreign policy (Thai, 2018). The lack of focus on Cambodia may stem from a meeting between Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Hun Sen, who discussed Cambodia's investment and debt as Russia sought to boost diplomatic ties in the region in 2015. During the meeting, Cambodia also raised the issue of a debt owed to Russia of about \$1.5 billion, which arose after the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea. Cambodia asked Russia in the past for debt forgiveness, but not to avail. However, the two leaders agreed to further discuss the debt forgiveness. Cambodia sought more investment from Russia in that amount, as well as opportunities for direct flights between two countries and requested scholarships for Cambodian students and markets for rice and garment products. Although the 2015 meeting saw the two sides signed a number of agreements, including information exchange to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism. Political cooperation between Cambodian People's Party and all Russian political parties, United Russia, understood on cooperation for the future use of nuclear energy, and other investment agreements (Sok, 2015), which may prevent Russia from focusing on Cambodia for its policy of strengthening political influence in ASEAN

3.2 Obstacles to Russian-Cambodian Economic Cooperation

The Soviet Union collapsed in the Cold War, and Russia became the political and geopolitical successor to the former Soviet Union. In particular, since 1993, Cambodia became an independent country and, in principle, can be a full-fledged dialogue partner of Russia in order to seek the mutual interests of both parties. As of 2015, cooperation in all sectors between Phnom Penh and Moscow was still at a remarkable level, with trade between two countries reaching less than \$50 million in 2015. Only 8 Cambodian students received

scholarships for 2016-2017 academic year from Russian government. Even the number of Russian tourists visiting Cambodia decreased significantly in recent years. There were about 80,000 Russian tourists in 2015, compared to over 100,000 in 2014. The inactive cooperation between Moscow and Phnom Penh was a consequence of Russia's foreign policy, which had so far not valued Asia or did not reach out to Asia. Russia had one foot in Europe and the other in Asia. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union, which was equally powerful, and the United States, exerted ideological and political influence over both Europe and Asia. After 1991, Russia, a military giant but an economic dwarf, cut off aid to North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and later decided to reconsider its economic relations with Cambodia. It was observed that until 2015, 2016, and 2017, the total trade volume was as follows:

Cambodia-Russia	2015 (USA)	2016 (USA)	2017 (USA)
Exports from Cambodia to Russia	35,353,766	46,722,174.37	18,763,818.72
Imports from Cambodia to Russia	837,790	8,468,796.26	4,856,773.69
	36,191,556	55,190,970.63	23,620,592.41

This above data was about Russian investment in Cambodian real estate from a small overseas real estate (online) company. Kachmazov was a respected real estate and investment expert, a prolific speaker at the national and international real estate conferences, and regularly published and broadcasted on the property market and provided advice for young investors in Cambodia. There was a decent number of Russians in Cambodia, but Russians seemed to be less interested in the Cambodian real estate market and less interested in investing in the Cambodian real estate. In fact, many Russians spent their winters in South Asia, including Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Most of them rent Russian-style apartments and rent houses in Asia. Experts surveyed apartments and townhouses in Sihanoukville in 2013-2014, but the demand for Cambodian real estate was limited compared to other countries. There were several things that could be attractive about Cambodian real estate such as low taxes, low prices, relaxed lifestyle, friendly people, and new experiences. There were Russians seeing the disadvantages of lower market transparency compared to Europe and restrictions on foreign ownership of Cambodian real estate (foreigners were not allowed to own land). Other Asian countries seemed to be attracting Russians' attention. Asian countries such as Thailand and Vietnam were popular among Russian Far East residents due to their proximity. For example, the people from Vladivostok (in the Far East of Russia) were three times more interested in Thai real estate than Muscovites who preferred to buy real estate and spend their main holidays in Europe because it was closer. Cambodian real estate sellers can make their properties

attractive to Russian customers, whose potential, credibility and persuasion were limited. Russians were always skeptical and ask for facts and evidence. They didn't know "Why should I work with this seller?" The answer was as follows (Realestate, 2016).

Many buyers were looking to buy apartments near the sea for their own living, for a holiday abroad or permanent move. These buyers were located in Spain, Italy, Montenegro, France and Turkey. Since 2014, according to a close study of buyers who wanted to invest in real estate, rather than spend money on holiday villas and apartments. These buyers wanted to buy housing to rent out. A 2015 study found that 63% of commercial real estate market chooses rental apartments. Small hotels were also popular, only 20%, and rental apartments - only 16%. Of the total foreign real estate investment by Russians, the main focus was on property investment abroad. The popularity dates back to the early 2000s, and the period 2012-2013 showed a significant increase in the number of Russian-speaking buyers in several countries, including Spain, Bulgaria, Latvia, Turkey and Montenegro, with Russia taking the lead in the residential real estate market. When the ruble depreciated, the volume of investment fell sharply after 2014. In fact, in 2012-13, Russians invested more than \$400 billion in real estate abroad every three months, and in 2014-15, more than half of the previous year. According to Russian Central Bank, the volume of remittances fell by 30% year-on-year to just \$199 million, compared to \$281 million in the first quarter of 2015 and \$484 million in the first quarter of 2014. Not only had the volume of investment decreased, but also the budget of buyers decreased. On the other hand, there had been a noticeable increase in demand for real estate investments, especially in order to increase income by purchasing residential and commercial buildings, and customers were increasingly interested in development projects.

There were several factors that motivated Russian buyers to invest in real estate abroad. Over the past five or six years, Russians were motivated by the "super-money"; they had enough cash to invest in seaside villas and enjoy a European lifestyle. Between the beginning of 2014 and May 2016, the US dollar appreciated against the Russian ruble by more than 80%. As a result, real estate abroad became more expensive for those with ruble income. The main incentive for the Russian consumers was currently the lowest mortgage rates in Europe and the opportunity to invest in a safe and low-risk market.

Online marketing was essential for international property buyers. According to the National Association of Realtors, three-quarters of buyers started their property search online. Simply speaking, every real estate company had a website. It was important to advertise, increase the ease of use in the search box so that potential buyers could find it among thousands of websites. Since 2014, English-language advertising on the website was Tranio.com. Today,

at least 5% of its fans were from Europe, Asia, the United States and the Middle East, and their distribution was growing steadily.

Tranio was an international real estate agency. It helped customers buy and rent properties directly from foreign agents and developers at no additional cost and without need for any other intermediary. It was not just a real estate website, and it also provided support and advice at all stages of choosing and buying a property. And it was not a typical real estate agency, as it had about 500 partners worldwide and did not favor any agent or developer over any other. It also published news and reports on foreign real estate and provided expert advice. In 2013-2016, the company increased its contracts with 500 partners. Tranio was presented on the real estate market for six years. After a client family bought a house from them in Croatia in 2010, some of the clients had the idea of creating a real estate business. Real estate experts saw the potential of this sector, which had a large number of customers, a wide range of interesting products, and little competition in Russia compared to the vast market opportunities.

The company began to create a website in 2010 and received full rights in March 2011. Initially, the company planned to monetize the site, as real estate websites did, by selling advertising and receiving money from fees for listing properties on the site. However, the company soon became dissatisfied with this idea, because too much advertising often made the site difficult to use and reduced its quality. In 2012, the company changed its monetization strategy and became a mixed-use website and real estate agency. It sold vacation homes by the sea and helped guests enjoy a comfortable life. When a crisis hit the Russian market in 2014-2015, the company changed its strategy even further. Investors increasingly relied on profits, while profits in Europe were steadily falling due to the strong demand and a decrease in construction volumes. The only way to invest money in today's market was to invest in value-added projects, called redevelopment and renovation projects, offering in 2016. The next goal was to create own redevelopment projects. Investors wanted to buy the multi-family residential buildings in Spain, rent them out to create large apartments, and sell them to users who will live in them or rent them out.

Expanding capital to international property buyers was to protect business from Russian threats. Strengthening Russia's relations with Cambodia was a key component of President Vladimir Putin's broader goal of expanding Russian influence in the ASEAN bloc. Medvedev's historic visit to Phnom Penh in November 2015 further underscored Cambodia's importance to Putin's Southeast Asia strategy. Medvedev's visit was the first official visit by a Russian leader to Cambodia since Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited Phnom Penh in 1987. The diplomatic process was an

important step toward resolving any lingering tensions between Russia and Cambodia persisted for a decade after 1991. Despite these developments, the shift toward a Russian-Cambodian partnership has been fruitful, albeit with obstacles stemming from inefficiencies in Cambodia's economic system and some negative historical legacies (Samuel, 2016).

In the economic sphere, bilateral trade between the two countries had grown significantly over the past decade. According to data from Russian Federal Customs Service, imports from Cambodia to Russia last year amounted to more than US\$200 million, and exports from Russia to Cambodia were nearly US\$20 million (Kin, 2021). Despite signs of progress towards a long-term Russia-Cambodia economic partnership, there were a number of obstacles that could slow down or ultimately prevent the alliance from achieving results. One issue was regulatory and planning institutions of Cambodian economy, with Mekong Oriza expressing concern that Cambodia's approach to cooperation with Russia focused on developing independent public-private partnerships rather than as part of a joint process.

Despite the Cambodian government's initiatives was to lower electricity prices, cut taxes, and streamlined the bureaucracy, Cambodia's rice industry still received higher production costs than its Southeast Asian neighbors. All of that extra spending could eventually cause Russia to divert its investments to Vietnam or Thailand or Laos, depriving Cambodia of much-needed foreign capital to sustain its economy (Russia's Gateway to ASEAN, 2016). Russia and Cambodia's comparative advantages and sources of economic strength were not complementary. This lack of synergy was evident in 2015, when trade between Phnom Penh and Moscow fell by 16 percent. The two countries tried to address the problem by expanding the scope of economic cooperation and extending these new agreements until 2020. But regional business leaders suggested that Cambodia's trade with Russia will not help boost Cambodia's economic development much, as Russia's economic strength lies in its exports of cheap fossil fuels. Cambodia needed to be careful to ensure that closer ties with Russia did not undermine or undermine its long-standing alliance with China. Phnom Penh maintained close ties with China since the rise of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1975 and had historically viewed close ties with Beijing as a counterweight to Vietnam's hegemonic ambitions (Samuel, 2016).

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (1980) was an agreement on economic and technical cooperation on the issue of the joint venture Kasotim. The joint venture Kasotim was a Cambodian-Russian tropical wood processing joint venture in which Cambodia held 49% of the shares, represented by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Russian side, represented by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which held 51%

of the shares. It was established in 1980. According to the minutes of the meeting with Russia on the request of Russian side to withdraw from the joint venture in September 2016 at Forestry Administration under chairmanship of Sierra, Deputy Director of Department of Forestry Administration, and attended by officials of the Forestry Administration representing the Russian side. Sierra welcomed the ladies and gentlemen present at the meeting and informed the meeting that the meeting was a meeting at the request of the Russian side, requesting the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to discuss the joint venture Kasotim. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries authorized the meeting. Dr. Khon Sareth reported on the recent activities of Kasotim, in which Dr. Khon Sareth reported on the activities of Kasotim, a group of investors engaged in forest concessions in Cambodia. In response to an e-mail from the Russian side, which asked for a number of questions to be discussed at that time and other relevant issues, the Russian side proposed to comment on at this time.

Despite this long-standing partnership, Cambodia was careful to demonstrate to the international community that it had an independent foreign policy and was not completely beholden to China. Critics of Hun Sen saw Cambodia's pro-China stance on the South China Sea dispute at the ASEAN summit as evidence of Phnom Penh's dependence on China. A degree of orienting towards Russia could be effective in showing that Cambodia was not simply a satellite in Beijing's sphere of influence (Samuel, 2016).

Russia was committed to improving relations with Cambodia, especially in the economic sector, with new leadership of Royal Government of Cambodia. This was stated by Anatoly Borovik at a press conference on December 26 last year. Russia intends to exchange visits of high-ranking and highest-ranking leaders with Cambodia. Borovik mentioned that Russian Embassy examined the possibility of preparing a number of agenda items: documents, agreements to be signed with Cambodia during the next visit. In front of Cambodian journalists, the diplomat stated that despite being subject to Western sanctions, Russia was able to maintain Russian economic growth at around 5 percent. This showed that Russia still played an active role in trade with many countries, including Cambodia. Regarding the currency exchange for payments between the two parties, Anatoly Borovik said that the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) and the Russian Ministry of Finance continued discussions to achieve this soon. At this point, he criticized the West for imposing sanctions against Russia and trying to block other countries from making payments with their country. According to Anatoly Borov, the dollar in circulation today received lot of dissatisfaction from various countries. Russia and other major powers such as China, India, etc. implemented mutual payments in their national currencies to avoid using the dollar. Meanwhile,

Russian scholarships continued to be provided to the Cambodian students, currently numbering 40 places each year. Russia will provide the additional scholarship quotas if Cambodia wished to increase exchanges or send students to study in Russia. As for the issue of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Cambodia did not vote in favor of Moscow over the military operation in Kiev. On this point, the ambassador stated that “Russia respects Cambodia’s decision because Cambodia is an independent, democratic state and can implement a comprehensive policy, so Russia never interferes with any independent and sovereign state. However, Russia’s position is to try to explain to its Cambodian counterparts about the attempts of Western countries to drag Ukraine into this chaotic situation.” The Russian representative also took the opportunity to defend the operation in Ukraine and explain the reasons that led Russia to send more troops into Ukraine (Thun, 2023).

3.3 Changes in foreign policy

After suffering economic pressure from the United States and the European Union due to the problem in Crimea, Russia changed its policy. The Crimean crisis made Russia seek support from other countries in the international arena, and Cambodia showed its disapproval of Russia's actions in Ukraine. At the same time, Cambodia was also affected in the relations between the two countries. Russia's position was to integrate Crimea into the Russian Federation, respecting the results and supporting the referendum on March 16, 2014. If Crimea felt into NATO, NATO structures would move closer to the Russian border, causing serious security concerns. On December 15, 2014, Lavrov said that Ukraine would undergo a constitutional review with the participation of all regions and political parties. In this way, Ukraine can keep the two regions in the east of the country as Ukrainian territory. On December 19, 2014, the United States imposed an embargo on goods, technology, and services entering Crimea. On the same day, Canada imposed a ban on the sale of technology to Russia in the oil and gas industry and warned that the Russian government had violated the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Canada did not accept the illegal occupation of Crimea and the provocation of military action in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's position Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko told the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg, France, that Ukraine would only be able to normalize relations if Russia returned Crimea to Ukraine. Without the return of the territory, relations between the two countries would not be normalized (United Nations, 2018).

The United States and European Union imposed increasingly harsh sanctions on Crimea, which had a negative impact on trade, economic, and political cooperation with Russia. On March 27, 2014, the UN General Assembly

voted in favor of Kiev's proposal, with 100 countries voting in favor, and 11 voting against, and 58 abstaining (including China) (United States, 2014). Cambodia's position on Crimean issue was that Cambodia took a principled stance of not supporting the secession of sovereign states, such as Kosovo's secession from Serbia. Cambodia did not recognize Kosovo, and in the UN elections on March 27, 2014, Cambodia took a dissenting stance. The UN General Assembly just adopted a resolution urging Russia to "end its temporary administration of Crimea" since February 2014. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine) were occupied by Russian Federation. The international community didn't recognized Crimea as part of Russia's annexation.

With the UN Secretary-General Resolution 68/262, since Russia annexed Crimea, the peninsula was militarized, with the deployment of weapons such as missiles, aircraft, nuclear weapons and troops to the region. Russia-led military exercises in Crimea demonstrated Russian aggression, according to Ukraine. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Monday (New York time) adopted a new resolution urging Russia to end its temporary administration of Crimea without further delay. The resolution on military activities in Crimea, the port of Sevastopol (Sevastopol) parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov were adopted with 63 votes in favor, 17 against and 62 abstentions. The resolution did not bound, but it was politically significant. The resolution, which was proposed by countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the United States, Australia, Canada and Turkey, also called on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its troops from Crimea and end its occupation of parts of Ukraine without further delay.

Western countries, especially the United States, accused Russia of illegally annexing the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine by organizing a referendum in 2014. In response, Moscow rejected all allegations and claimed that the overwhelming majority of Crimeans, more than 95.5 percent, voted for their own reunification with Russia. The United States began imposing sanctions on Russia in March 2017, accusing it of annexing Crimea and conducting military operations in Ukraine (FRN, 2017). In response to the crisis in Ukraine, the United States imposed sanctions on a number of Russian individuals involved in Crimea, denying them visas to enter the United States and freezing their assets in the United States. Sanctions was also imposed on Russian state banks, major businesses, including oil giant Rosneft, and arms manufacturers. To make matters worse, in early August 2017, the United States Congress passed a bipartisan bill to impose sanctions on Russia, which was signed into law by President Trump (Tolksdorf, 2018). The new law further tightened existing sanctions over the Ukraine crisis and introduced new measures, such as restrictions on major Russian industries such as

railroads, shipping, and mining. In addition, the United States has joined forces with its allies to impose sanctions on Russia, including the European Union, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, Japan, and Australia.

3.4 Russia's Seeking Support from Other Countries

The United Nations adopted a resolution and approved Russia's actions in Crimea. The resolution was overwhelmingly approved, with 141 out of 193 member states voting in favor. Notably, only five countries voted against the resolution: Russia itself, Belarus, Syria, North Korea, and Eritrea. The remaining 35 countries abstained, including China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and several African countries (Gnem, 2022). Russia sought support from a number of friendly countries both in the region and beyond. Russia strengthened its ties with Turkey during Putin's visit to Turkey on December 1, 2014. Russia and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding on natural gas after Russia decided to cancel a project to transport natural gas to Europe via Bulgaria. Meanwhile, Russia continued to improve relations with India during Putin's visit to India on 1 December 2014. Russia and India signed 20 agreements covering energy (building 10 nuclear power plants), military cooperation and bilateral trade. The two sides agreed to increase trade to US\$20 billion by 2015. Beijing made its proposal on 24 February 2023, the first anniversary of Moscow's invasion. The Russian offensive killed tens of thousands of civilians and soldiers, with its forces accused of indiscriminate bombing of Ukrainian cities and other atrocities. While most countries in the world condemned Russia, with many imposing sanctions on all sides, People's Republic of China refused to do so, refusing to call Putin's war an invasion. Instead, Beijing strengthened ties with Moscow, including deploying more than 2,000 troops, as well as warplanes and warships, to the Vostok 2022 military exercises in Russia (Ipdefenseforum, 2023).

Putin and Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping declared an "unlimited friendship" between the two nations. Notably, just weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine, Beijing made its offer to Russia, but a top NATO official warned the People's Republic of China against providing arms to Russia. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told Reuters. "That is why the United States and other allies have been very clear in warning against it. And certainly, China should not support Russia's illegal war," (Ipdefenseforum, 2023). Newsweek reported: Russia issued a limited response to China's offer, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying that the details should be the subject of careful analysis. Peskov indicated that he was treating the Chinese friend's plans with great care. Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President Zelenskyy, tweeted that any plan that would allow Russia to occupy any part of Ukraine "is not a plan for peace, but a freezing

of war and the defeat of Ukraine, the next stage of Russian genocide.” (Ipdefenseforum, 2023).

4. Conclusion

The relationship between Cambodia and Russia, though historically rooted and marked by the past cooperation, remained fragile and encumbered by unresolved issues. Chief among these was the lingering debt Cambodia owes to Russia from the Soviet era, which continued to strain diplomatic relations and hindered potential development partnerships. Additionally, the economic imbalance between two nations, exacerbated by Russia’s global sanctions and Cambodia’s vulnerability to climate change, limited mutual investment opportunities, and economic synergy. The study mentioned Geopolitical shifts—the rise of China’s influence in Southeast Asia and Cambodia’s efforts to maintain a balanced foreign policy—further complicate this bilateral relationship. While both nations express a willingness to enhance cooperation, particularly in trade, infrastructure, and education, these efforts must be underpinned by transparent negotiations, strategic alignment, and mutual economic interests. Moving forward, Cambodia and Russia must engage in pragmatic diplomacy to overcome historical grievances and adapt to the realities of a changing global order.

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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
Molinaka Party	55,107	1.37%	1
Other 16 Parties	446,101	11.12%	0
Total	4,011,631	100.00%	120

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 5th 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 5th 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 1st amendment, 2nd amendment, 3rd amendment, 4th amendment, 5th amendment, 6th amendment, 7th amendment, 8th amendment, 9th amendment, and 10th amendment. 1st 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 1st Vice-President, or 2nd Vice-President of the National Assembly. 2nd 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.

3rd 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. 4th 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. 5th 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.

6th 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. 7th Amendment: Promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. NS/RKM/ 1014/022 dated October 23, 2014, to give constitutional status to the National Election Committee. However, 8th 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. 9th amendment was occurred on February 14, 2018, during the extraordinary session of the 5th legislature of the National Assembly. 10th amendment was occurred on January 28, 2022, during the 7th session of 6th 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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The Powerful Competition of China and the United States in Asia and the world

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Abstract

The geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States grew and sparked the political, economic, and security challenges worldwide. This paper argued China's major initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Made in China 2025, which aimed to strengthen its influence in the fields of infrastructure, technology, and the global economy. The United States used a variety of strategies, including economic sanctions, trade wars, and strengthening military alliances, to contain China's growing influence in the region and the world. The impact of the rivalry in key regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and the Indo-Pacific, was that both countries preferred to compete through investment and diplomacy. The central ideological perspective of this rivalry focused on the global strategy between democracy and communism. The risks and opportunities in cooperation between China and the United States, through a focus on multilateral diplomacy and conflict resolution, were highlighted. Cambodia was considered a country in Southeast Asia that did not play a significant strategic role in power struggles, and Cambodia needed to strengthen its relations with the two superpowers with a sense of urgency.

Key words: *Powerful competition, international, influence, economy, strategy, geopolitics*

1. Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, the situation seemed to calm down for a while. This situation soon turned into a new heat wave with the rise of a country with an ancient culture, a vast territory and the largest population in the world, namely China. 21st century was an era of globalization, an era of competition in trade, technology, science and economic expansion of the superpowers, especially the United States. At the same time, after surpassing Japan, China was the second largest country in the world after the United States in terms of economy, which the world saw as a competition that led to economic crises or instability in security and order from the world, due to the strengthening of its hegemony by the United States and the desire to reorganize the order of China in Asia. This was an analysis of the competition between China and the United States - focusing on the influence and power competition between China and the United States. The article described how the growing influence

of two countries affected the international balance, especially in the security and economic sectors of the Asia-Pacific region. This research can help to develop the effective strategies for diplomacy, governance, and international coordination to prevent conflicts and maintain global security in the region and Cambodia.

2. Conceptual Framework of Literature

2.1 Recall the theory and Diplomatic Relations

The power struggle between China and the United States was explained in terms of a number of international relations and geopolitical theories. These explained the behavior of two countries and various dimensions of the power struggle. The explanation of this struggle could be based on the main theories. Realism emphasized the struggle for power and national security, minimizing the possibility of cooperation between the two states. However, realism could interpret the competition between China and the United States from the perspective of the “security factor” that understands that war was inevitable. Liberalism focused on interdependence of countries and role of international institutions in promoting cooperation to ensure peace. Liberalism emphasized economic and trade issues of China-US relations.

Constructivism focused on the identities, norms, and ideas that drove the state behavior in organizing international relations. It explained the neutrality and ideological positions of states such as China and the United States. In addition, centralist theory believed that the international system was a society in which stated cooperate with each other, with a peaceful and united character. Geopolitical Theory analyzed the control of national organizations over the territory. Friedrich Ratzel and Halford Mackinder developed theories on the control of large mountain ranges and heartlands.

Neo-Marxism interpreted that the main cause of competition in international relations was capitalism and development relations. Likely, Thucydides Trap analyzed the threat of power struggles between a new, rising power (China) and an existing power (the United States), which led to conflict. Democratic Peace Theory believed that democracies were always at war with each other, and that the growth of democratic states would increase peace. Economic Interdependence theory emphasized international economic interdependence, with the specific agreements on maintaining peace. World-System Theory analyzed global international relations as a whole as a core-periphery system and economic sectors controlled by influential countries.

Sino-US diplomatic relations officially began in 1979 under the “One China” principle, which recognized Beijing as the legitimate administration of China. After the Cold War, the relationship developed through gradual cooperation, while at times experiencing tensions. Diplomatic relations between China and the United States were formally established under the leadership of President

Jimmy Carter and Chinese Supreme Leader Deng Xiaoping. The Cold War moved towards effective engagement under the constraints of normalizing relations between countries (Jie 2005). The establishment of formal relations in 1979 marked a significant shift from the previous two decades, which were characterized by hostility and mutual antagonism during the Cold War. The relationship was strongly driven by shared opposition to Soviet influence and efforts to maintain strategic balance by both countries. At the same time, they also initiated new political relations to make the world system more peaceful and developed.

2.2 Economic and Trade Engagement

With the China's Economic and Trade Strengthening, China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 created major trade opportunities, but also created inequalities and intellectual property issues. The trade war between China and the United States under Trump administration highlighted the deeper nature of trade issues. China's entry into the WTO in 2001 was a pivotal moment for both countries. U.S. businesses saw opportunities for investment, market access, and access to the low-cost manufacturing, while China benefited from an influx of foreign capital, technology, and expertise, transforming itself into the "factory of the world." The China-U.S. trade relationship grew to become one of the most important bilateral trading relationships in the world, although trade imbalanced and concerned about the intellectual property rights persist (Lawrence 2006).

China's WTO membership led to significant growth in trade between the two nations, but also led to increased tensions, particularly over issues such as trade deficits and allegations of the unfair trade practices. This economic relationship laid the foundation for later conflicts, particularly over tariffs and trade imbalances. After China officially joined the WTO, trade relations between the United States and China grew significantly, and the United States also changed its economic relations with China to combat significant global trade competition. China developed a strategy to balance its regional trade with the RCEP agreement. RCEP was supported by China, which saw it as a successful move for Beijing to expand its influence across the region and establish its dominance over Asian trade. The RCEP agreement, which was established in 2012, was a trade agreement between the 10 ASEAN countries plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, and India (which withdrew from the agreement in 2019). The agreement covered a population of about 2.1 billion. The member countries of the agreement had a gross domestic product (GDP) equivalent to about 30% of the world's total GDP (khmer.voanews.com 2020).

The aim of the agreement was to lower tariffs, open up trade in services, and promoted investment to help developing countries catch up with the rest of

the world. In particular, the RCEP agreement was expected to reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export products to signatory countries without having to meet separate requirements for each country. The agreement also focused on intellectual property rights, but would not address environmental protections or labor rights. The RCEP was important because it created new trade rules for the region and had the support of China but not the participation of the United States. The agreement reinforced China's broader geopolitical ambitions in a region where it had little competition from the United States since US President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). At the time, the TPP was on track to become the world's largest trade deal until Washington withdrew, claiming that the deal would cost US jobs.

However, the RCEP was not as comprehensive as the TPP or Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). "This is not a fully-fledged agreement," said Alexander Capri, a trade expert at the School of Business at the National University of Singapore. "The problem with RCEP is that there are 15 countries with very different stages of development and priorities in their countries." (khmer.voanews.com). India, meanwhile, withdrew from the agreement in 2019, citing concerns about cheap Chinese goods flowing into the country, although it could join later. India expressed concerns about market access, fearing that its companies or manufacturing plants could be hit hard if cheap Chinese goods flowed into the country. Textiles, dairy and agriculture were considered the three most vulnerable industries for India.

BRIC group was formed in 2009, providing a platform for member states to challenge the US-led global order. The group currently had five members, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was claimed that 40 countries expressed interest in joining the group at its 15th annual summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 22 to 24 August 2023. The acronym BRIC, which initially did not include the letter S for South Africa, was first coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, in a study of the economic growth potential of four countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China. The BRIC group was then established as an informal club in 2009, providing a platform for member states to challenge the US-led global order and its Western allies. The grouping was initiated by Russia. To date, BRICS was not a formal multilateral organization like the United Nations, the World Bank (WB) or the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). However, the leaders of the BRICS member countries hold annual summits, and each country holds the rotating presidency for a year. Brazil, Russia, India and China are the founding members of BRIC. South Africa, the smallest member in terms of economic influence and population, was the first country

to expand its membership of BRIC in 2010. With the participation of South Africa, BRIC became BRICS (thmeythmey.com 2023).

The group currently comprised more than 40 percent of world's population and a quarter of the world's economy. In addition to geopolitical issues, the group also focused on other issues: economic cooperation and strengthening multilateral development and trade cooperation. In addition, BRICS worked on the principle of consensus. All countries in BRICS were members of the G20, the group of 20 largest developed and emerging economies in the world. According to South Africa, the rotating presidency of BRICS in 2023, more than 40 countries expressed their interest in joining the forum. Among these countries were Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Algeria, Bolivia, Indonesia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cuba, the Republic of Congo, Comoros, Gabon, and Kazakhstan. These countries saw BRICS as an alternative to global institutions that they perceived to be dominated by Western powers. They hoped that BRICS membership would help them achieve many benefits, including capital for development and strengthening trade and investment relations (thmeythmey.com 2023).

Developing countries' discontent with the global order grew since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, partly because rich countries stockpiled vaccines at a time when many needed them to fight the pandemic. Iran, which owned about a quarter of the Middle East's oil reserves, expressed hope that a BRICS membership mechanism would be agreed soon. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter and unofficial leader of OPEC, was among more than a dozen countries that participated in the "Friends of BRICS" dialogue in Cape Town in June 2023, also receiving the support from BRICS members. Meanwhile, Argentina in July 2022 said it received formal support from China in its bid to join BRICS. Ethiopia, one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, said in June 2023 that it applied to join BRICS. President Luis Arce of Bolivia expressed interest in BRICS membership and was expected to attend the group's summit. The Bolivian government said in July 2023 that it committed to reducing its reliance on the dollar for trade and instead increasing the use of the yuan, a move in line with the BRICS leaders' goal of reducing reliance on the US currency. In July 2023, Algeria said it applied to join BRICS and became a shareholder in the New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS Bank. The North African country had significant oil and gas resources and had a strategy to diversify its economy and strengthened partnerships with China and other countries (thmeythmey.com).

2.3 Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Economic Influence

The BRI was launched in 2013 to expand trade and infrastructure in Asia, Africa and Europe. However, it also raised concerns that countries that signed up to the initiative could fall under Chinese influence. The influence of the

rivalry between China and the United States on ASEAN grew significantly in recent decades. Because ASEAN was a region of strategic importance, both economically and militarily, the United States and China were competing for influence in region. This rivalry was mainly characterized by contradictions in the fields of economics, military relations, and diplomatic strategy.

China increased its economic influence in ASEAN through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was currently using investment strategies to control key infrastructure in the region. China provided aid and investment to many ASEAN countries for transportation, energy, and maritime projects, which were expanding the appeal of Chinese economic power in the region (Jones 2021). On the positive side, China was ASEAN's largest trading partner, trading in a wide range of key goods. In addition, China signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with ASEAN countries and other Asia-Pacific communities to strengthen the regional economy. However, the United States also strengthened its economic partnership in the region through significant trade and investment with many countries. The United States tried to get ASEAN to develop strategies to reduce China's economic influence and develop other economic projects, such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) (Jiang 2022).

With U.S. Economy and Trade, the United States strengthened its economy and trade by building alliances and expanding its geopolitical footprint. The United States, along with its closest allies Australia and the United Kingdom, announced a new trilateral security partnership known as AUKUS. U.S. President Joe Biden said: "The United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom have long been loyal and capable partners, and now we are even closer together" (Biden 2021). The formation of the Quad, which included four members, including The United States, Japan, Australia, and India. The primary purpose was to protect security and coordinated efforts to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia would work more closely with India, Japan and the United States, which were very close allies (Scott 2020), focusing on several key areas. The Quad was a security dialogue alliance established in 2007 outside the ASEAN framework and had no formal treaty structure or headquarters. The anti-China orientation, as the Quad shifted its focus to countering Chinese influence, gradually led the United States to escalate border disputes (India-China, Japan-China) and concerned about trade routes in the Asia-Pacific. Other topics at the summit included climate change, COVID-19 vaccine distribution and the situation in Afghanistan, with the United States making a clear call for a joint venture to produce vaccines in India. Commitments and implementation, with member states needed to strengthen their practical implementation to respond to increasing challenges. The Quad was seen as a strategic alliance to safeguard

regional security. Although it lacked a formal treaty structure or a broader organization, the alliance was an important factor in creating a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region. The geopolitical expansion of the United States revealed the intentions of the US government, led by President Donald Trump, to expand the waters off the US coast to allow for oil and gas drilling. It revealed many controversial views and areas of the project. The project aimed to create new jobs, increase government revenue, and fulfill its goal of becoming an energy superpower. The expansion plan envisaged the sale of licenses for drilling for oil in 47 offshore areas over a five-year period, and issued several permits in Alaska, the Mexican, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans (www.rfi 2018). The US oil and gas development idea emerged in the context of boosting the economy. It drew strong criticism from environmentalists and other grassroots groups concerned about the impact on the environment and marine communities.

3. Critical Arguments

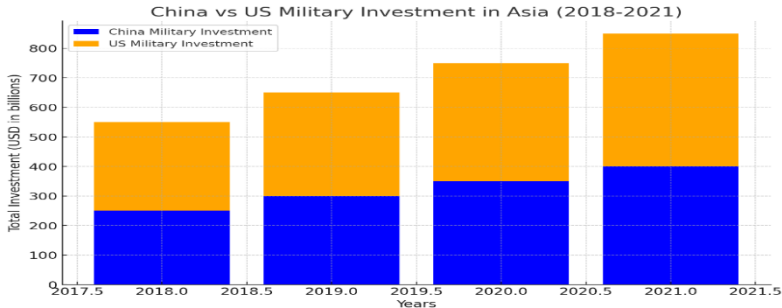
3.1 Technological Competition

Development of 5G technology, artificial intelligence, and electric vehicles became a major point of contention between the two countries. The “Made in China 2025” initiative raised concerns about allegations of technology theft and espionage by China (Kennedy 2020). The economic rivalry between the US and China intensified during the 2010s, as China focused on developing high-tech industries in the face of US dominance in these sectors. The Made in China 2025 initiative set out the clear goals. Technological competition was a central focus of the US-China rivalry in recent years, with the US seeking to restrict China’s access to key technologies, leading to blacklisting of companies such as Huawei and the imposition of export controls on advanced semiconductors. This competition reflected broader concerns about China’s rapid technological progress and its implications for the world’s major economies. Competition in technological and economic fields became a key challenge in the relationship between China, the technological and economic competition, and the United States. Since China’s technological development in the mid-2010s, it drove greater competition in high-tech sectors.

3.2 Expanding Military Capabilities and Regional Security

China expanded its military capabilities in the South China Sea, raising concerns from the United States about freedom of navigation at sea. The United States strengthened its alliances with Japan, South Korea, and Australia to contain China’s military influence. China’s military development, especially in South China Sea, greatly increased tensions between countries in the region and the United States. China increased its military capabilities by implementing an A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) mindset to counter

military contributions to the US-led alliance. China's military development, especially in the South China Sea, greatly increased regional security tensions. China implemented an A2/AD policy to protect this region. This graph (Figure1) showed the combination of Chinese and US military investments in Asia. China significantly increased its military capabilities over the past two decades, focusing on modernizing its navy, developing A2/AD capabilities, and asserting control over disputed areas such as the



South China Sea. This military expansion poses challenged to the existing security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. In the last decade, China significantly expanded its military power, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Huge investments in new weapons technologies and military capabilities aimed at expanding its influence throughout the region. This expansion raised additional concerns from neighboring countries and the United States, seeing China as gradually trying to become a military power and focusing on expanding China's military and regional security capabilities. China's Military Expansion aimed at expanding its military power.

Likewise, China purchased the modern military equipment and developed the innovative weapons technologies, such as warships, unmanned aerial vehicles, and multi-purpose weapons. Additional expansion of capabilities became a security power in the region to counter future threats. China's military expansion was a key strategy to increase its influence and influence in the region and internationally. This included the development of modern warships, high-tech weapons such as medium-range combat and defense systems, and high-security support systems. China unveiled new weapons systems such as the J-20 and J-35 stealth fighters, large warships, and the HQ-19 missile system (multimedia.scmp.com). China advanced a variety of capabilities, including developing multi-domain combat systems such as drones for reconnaissance and attack and space-based threat prevention systems (defense.gov/News). China was increasing its military capabilities to become a regional security power and to create a balance of power in the

international arena. It played a key role in protecting national security, countering future adversaries, and pursuing the national goals for its own power expansion (rand.org/pubs/commentary 2023).

The emergence of military capability raised concerns among other countries. The United States saw a loss of centrality and new challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, which observed that “China’s military buildup in the South China Sea has led to expectations that China will further assert its regional and maritime security interests” (cambridge.org). More, China increased its investment in new weapons technologies, including high-speed weapons and control of countermeasures beyond the region. The largest investment in China’s new weapons technologies was to make China a powerful military power that impact the defense spending of its neighbors. With the regional security implications, China’s growing military capabilities caused serious concern in the region as its neighbors began to reshape their defenses. Japan and Australia saw China’s emergence as a military power as a means to exert greater influence over regional security. Clearly, the country’s leadership implemented planned to expand its capabilities to counter Chinese advanced equipment. In addition, China’s increased military investment led to strong opposition from the United States, which was in the process of focusing on its own military development. To ensure that its influence in the Asia-Pacific region remains strong.

China’s growth of the military capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region had a significant impact on regional security. Neighboring countries such as Japan and Australia reshaped their defense strategies to counter China’s growing military power. However, Japan increased its defense budget by 50% and purchased weapons such as Tomahawk cruise missiles, which focused on improving anti-missile capabilities (thediplomat.com 2022). Australia also made a similar contribution by signing a military cooperation agreement with Japan and the United States. The agreement facilitates military training and cooperation between the two countries. Australia’s countermeasures plan included the purchase of nuclear-powered ships and the modernization of defense systems under the AUKUS agreement (csis.org 2024). The United States strengthened cooperation with allies to counter the China’s military buildup and the development of capabilities to threaten regional security. The alliance focused on increasing operational capabilities to restore regional balance of power (thediplomat.com 2022). These actions demonstrated that many countries were serious about creating sustainable security in a region that is under many challenges.

By changing international security systems, China’s security posture in the region prompted its neighbors, such as Vietnam and Indonesia, to begin to adjust their defenses to enhance their maritime capabilities. China’s growing

naval capabilities raised concerns and preparedness among its neighbors to counter its growing military power. This shift clearly demonstrated that the Asia-Pacific region became a highly contested security arena, raising concerns that it could lead to a power struggle between several countries. China continued to expand its claims in the South China Sea, and China's emergence as a maritime power increased pressure on potential competitors for resources and economies in the region (thediplomat.com 2023). The military rivalry between the United States and China in the ASEAN region also became more pronounced and significant. China expanded its military influence through the buildup of its naval forces and the construction of military infrastructure in the South China Sea, which raised concerns about regional security. As China expanded its military power, the United States also continued to cooperate with its allies in the region, primarily Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Philippines. US-ASEAN military cooperation was expanded through the joint maneuvers and military interoperability to protect land and maritime security.

The military rivalry between the US and China in the ASEAN region became a major issue. China expanded its military power in the South China Sea by building military infrastructure and establishing numerous naval bases. However, this expansion created regional concerns, which led countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines to revise their national defense strategies (thegeopolitics.com). As a member of the ASEAN alliance, the US also expanded military cooperation with countries such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea to protect security and ensure freedom from military expansion in the region (Burgess 2020). Military cooperation and joint training were key formulas for protecting land and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific under the US-ASEAN alliance (Wiśniewski 2023).

3.3 Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

China used the soft power through strengthening Confucius Institutes and cultural outreach to enhance its appeal and influence in Asia, Africa, and South America. In addition to hard power, China also invested in soft power initiatives, including cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and media influence. The Confucius Institute, a state-run media outlet, and global cultural events were all part of China's strategy to shape global perceptions and strengthen its soft power. In addition to its military and economic soft power, China also increased its use of soft power based on culture, the arts, and cultural diplomacy. This use of soft power aims to promote China's global influence and focuses on strengthening cultural ties and international recognition.

China's soft power created conditions for progress by promoting Chinese culture to the world. China established Confucian Centers and institutions in

various countries to present appropriate voices and cultures. Nye (2004) explained that “Soft power is the ability to get others to agree or follow through on shared cultural values.” Chinese culture, which focused on ancient Chinese civilization and science, attracted many countries. In addition, Chinese culture provided the world with arts and a variety of traditions, which made China a country with global influence and reputation. For example, the broadcast of Chinese films attracted countries such as ASEAN countries, including Cambodia.

Cultural diplomacy was an important tool that China used to strengthen the international relations. China’s cultural diplomacy promoted the development of international relations through advocacy, cultural reform, and the sharing of national arts. China also carried out many cultural activities, such as organizing the Global Arts Festival and participating in art events. China’s cultural diplomacy achieved international attraction through sharing its own culture and accepting the customs of others. According to China’s soft power strategy, there were other studies on the use of public attraction strategies and the exchange of Chinese culture on the international stage. It highlighted the problem of integrating these soft strategies in an international context (Su & Pan., 2013). China spent considerable resources on organizing international cultural programs and sharing the cultural experiences with neighboring countries and other international organizations.

Furthermore, China’s Soft Power impacted China’s cultural diplomacy that had a positive impact on the regional cooperation and security influence. According to Nye (2004), “soft power is an important means of building current reputations and international agreements”. This contributed to strengthening China’s cultural values and attracting international partners to China. In short, through the use of soft power through culture and cultural diplomacy, China built up a strong influence. This soft power was not only cultural, but also military, and was an important tool by which China could exert influence worldwide.

China and the United States both used diplomatic strategies to gain support from ASEAN countries. China made its diplomatic strategy more powerful and effective through the ASEAN-China Dialogue Partnership, which further strengthened China’s diplomatic relations with ASEAN. The United States, on the other hand, focused on increasing strategic engagement with many ASEAN countries to counter China’s growing influence (Ha, H. T. (2021). Both powers adopted a strategy that focused on geopolitics rather than on strategic regions, such as Cambodia.

In the past, “Asia-Pacific” was the geopolitical region of the major powers, the term most often heard, but it was “Indo-Pacific,” the most strategically important region of the major powers. “Asia-Pacific” was used to refer to a

geopolitical region that extended from Asia to two other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, which were in Oceania but were generally considered to be part of Asia, but were also part of Asia. Later, “Asia-Pacific” was expanded to include two other major powers: first, Russia, which was generally considered to be a European country but was also geographically located in Asia, and second, the United States, which was located on the other side of Pacific Ocean. The “Indo-Pacific” was a purely geographical location, ageopolitics that highlighted the change or evolution of the strategies of the great powers in the region. The evolution of the strategy from “Asia-Pacific” to “Indo-Pacific” focused on two main points: First, increasing importance of India and the Indian Ocean, which were seen as important and potential areas, both economically and in terms of global security. India, in addition to being the second most populous country after China, was also currently the fastest growing economy. Economists generally predict that by 2030 (i.e. in just 11 years), India challenged the United States to become world’s second largest economic power behind China (RFI. 2018).

Cambodia were a buffer zone for the superpowers since the colonial era. To this day, Cambodia remains a strategic area of ideological competition between the West and the East, which made it difficult for Cambodia to adapt to any superpower or a potential superpower. In fact, Cambodia had no economic, geopolitical, or military advantage like other countries in region, such as Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, which were countries in the geopolitical region of the South China Sea, a geographical or maritime area that was claimed by the United States and prevented by China from freely navigating without China’s permission. Cambodia had nothing at all except for strengthening democracy and human rights in the West and being a country that supported China in preventing a consensus for the South China Sea dispute in ASEAN and one China for the international community. In brief, the United States and China competed economically, militarily, and diplomatically in ASEAN to gain greater influence in the region, with the exception of Cambodia. This competition affected ASEAN's security and economic development, but on the positive side, it gave ASEAN many options in its relations with the two superpowers.

4. Conclusion

The political, economic, and military interests of China and the United States expanded their international influence. China tried to coordinate itself to become a major economic leader through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while the United States used the military treaties and economic sanctions to counter Chinese influence through strengthening its geopolitical alliances and expansion, as well as strengthening trade with the countries of all stripes. The impact of the power struggle greatly affected Southeast Asia and Cambodia.

This was a key strategic area or buffer state in the relationship between the two superpowers. In addition to arguments of power struggle between China and the United States in security, economic, and military fields, international institutions such as United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) were firmly established in the management of international disputes around the world. All these important institutions played their best roles to promote international agreements strongly. Creating new alliances through good diplomatic relations, as tradition, helped Cambodia develop itself better in the international community. The United States and China should seek new agreements to defuse the heated global trade war. Southeast Asian countries increased their participation in international institutions to ensure that their relations with major powers were clearly managed.

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Operational Strategies and Development Impact of PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company: Infrastructure Modernization

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Abstract

With increasing trade volumes, urban mobility demands, and logistics requirements, this study aimed at modernizing the transport infrastructure. Critical components of this modernization effort were the development of high-quality expressways that connected key economic centers, reduced logistical bottlenecks, and facilitated cross-border commerce. The PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company (CPEC) played a central role in advancing the Cambodia's transport infrastructure, serving as a strategic corridor linking the national capital to country's primary maritime gateway, and thereby supporting broader regional integration agenda within ASEAN and the Greater Mekong Subregion. This study employed a multi-method approach to examine CPEC's operational strategies and development impacts. Key data sources included official project documentation, operational performance records, interviews with company executives, field observations, and feedback from local stakeholders such as government agencies, logistics companies, and communities affected by the expressway development. Capacity building and knowledge transferred constitute another pillar of CPEC's operational model. The company implemented the systematic workforce development initiatives by training engineers, technicians, and administrative staff in modern construction management, digital project monitoring, and international best practices in expressway operations. These initiatives strengthened Cambodia's domestic human capital in the infrastructure development, ensured the sustainable long-term capabilities. In sum, the PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company exemplified a model of infrastructure modernization that balanced technical efficiency, economic growth, and social responsibility.

Key words: *Operational strategy, infrastructure, modernization, logistics, mobility, trade*

1. Introduction

Cambodia's post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development placed infrastructure modernization at the core of national development strategies. Decades of armed conflict, including the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979) and subsequent civil unrest, devastated country's transportation

systems, leaving road networks fragmented, bridges destroyed, and rural access severely limited. By the early 1990s, most rural areas lacked paved roads, urban centers suffered from traffic congestion, and the concept of high-speed expressways remained largely unknown in Cambodia. The absence of reliable transport infrastructure posed a major barrier to trade, investment, and the integration of domestic markets with regional economies, hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development. With recognition of critical role of transport infrastructure as a strategic enabler of the economic growth, the Cambodian government launched a series of policies aimed at modernizing national highways, rural roads, and urban expressways. Transport infrastructure was not only vital for domestic mobility, but also for facilitating foreign direct investment, industrialization, and regional integration within ASEAN and the Greater Mekong Subregion. High-standard expressways were viewed as essential corridors linking industrial zones, ports, and urban centers, reducing travel time, increasing logistical efficiency, and stimulating local economies. Within this context, the PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company (CPEC) was established to implement the flagship expressway projects. CPEC employed a public-private partnership framework, leverages foreign technical expertise, and integrates advanced digital management tools to enhance project efficiency and sustainability.

The government's commitment to infrastructure modernization aligned with broader economic strategies, such as the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV and National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), in which it emphasized the importance of connectivity, logistics efficiency, and industrial development. Expressways (such as Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville route) were seen as not only transport projects but also strategic instruments for national economic transformation. These expressways facilitated the movement of goods, reduced transaction costs, attracted the foreign investment, and strengthened Cambodia's position as a regional trade hub. Additionally, infrastructure development supported the social objectives by improving accessibility to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, particularly isolated rural regions. The primary objective of this study was to analyze the CPEC's operational strategies and evaluated the socio-economic impacts of its expressway projects. Specifically, the study addressed three interrelated research questions.

Operational strategies and technological innovations referred to what contribute to successful planning, construction, and maintenance of CPEC expressways. This included assessing workflow efficiency, digital integration, intelligent traffic management systems, predictive maintenance, and workforce capacity-building programs. Economic and Social Outcomes was about how the CPEC's infrastructure development influenced Cambodia's

economic growth, trade facilitation, regional connectivity, employment generation, and social welfare. The analysis explored both direct impacts (e.g., reduced travel times and logistics costs) and indirect impacts (e.g., local business growth, tourism, and urban expansion). Lessons for the future Infrastructure Development concerned with which the lessons learned from CPEC's operational model. Stakeholder engagement practices can be applied to future infrastructure projects in Cambodia and other developing countries. This involved identifying best practices, potential challenges, and strategies for sustainable, inclusive, and technology-driven infrastructure development. The Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway served as the central case study for this research. As Cambodia's first high-standard expressway, it exemplified the integration of international engineering standards, modern project management techniques, and digital operational tools in a developing-country context. Expressway also illustrated socio-economic transformations that modern transport infrastructure can catalyze, from improving national supply chains to enhancing regional trade competitiveness.

To contextualize CPEC's experience, the study drawn on comparative lessons from ASEAN neighbors such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Philippines, where expressway projects successfully contributed to economic growth, regional connectivity, and social development. By examining these experiences, this study situated Cambodia's infrastructure modernization within the broader patterns of Southeast Asian development, highlighting both opportunities and challenges for replicating and scaling high-standard transport projects in emerging the economies. In summary, this study provided a comprehensive analysis of CPEC's operational strategies and development impact, bridging historical, technical, economic, and policy dimensions. It aimed to inform policymakers, infrastructure planners, investors, and international development agencies on how to design, implement, and sustain large-scale expressway projects that maximized the economic, social, and environmental benefits in Cambodia and similar developing-country contexts. Through a combination of empirical analysis, stakeholder insights, and comparative international perspectives, the study underscored the strategic importance of transport infrastructure as a catalyst for national development and regional integration.

2. Conceptual Framework of Literature

2.1 Historical Context of Expressway Development

Following Cambodia's political stabilization in the early 1990s, national reconstruction efforts prioritized restoring the basic connectivity across the country. Decades of conflict had left the transport infrastructure in disrepair, isolating the rural communities, disrupting trade, and hindering economic recovery. Early reconstruction focused on rehabilitating the primary arterial

roads linked provincial capitals, secondary roads connecting rural districts, and essential bridges to facilitate movement of goods and people. Donor-funded initiatives, particularly by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), played a critical role during this period. Projects emphasized improving road accessibility to rural communities, reducing transport costs for agricultural products, and reconnecting provinces with major urban centers. For example, the ADB's Rural Road Rehabilitation Program and the World Bank's Transport Sector Project contributed to the restoration of hundreds of kilometers of roads, improved drainage, and basic maintenance systems. Despite these efforts, road quality remained uneven. Many roads were prone to flooding, potholes, and rapid deterioration due to limited maintenance capacity. Urban centers, particularly Phnom Penh, faced growing traffic congestion as economic recovery led to increased vehicular demand. Although these post-war projects re-established connectivity, they did not yet introduce high-standard expressways capable of supporting high-speed freight and passenger transport. This highlighted the need for a strategic shift toward expressway development as Cambodia's economy began to integrate with regional and global markets.

By the mid-2000s, the Cambodian government recognized that the modern expressways were essential to sustaining economic growth, attracting foreign investment, and promoting regional trade. Strategic policy reforms were introduced to integrate expressway planning into broader national economic development plans. Feasibility studies identified key transport corridors connecting Phnom Penh with industrial zones, the Sihanoukville seaport, tourism hubs, and neighboring provinces. These studies assessed traffic volumes, projected economic benefits, engineering feasibility, environmental impacts, and potential social implications. The findings highlighted urgent need for high-speed, high-capacity roadways to facilitate logistics efficiency and reduce travel time between major economic centers. Legal and institutional frameworks for public-private partnerships (PPPs) were developed to attract the private investment and technical expertise. These policies established groundwork for concessions, revenue-sharing mechanisms, and risk allocation between government authorities and private partners. By introducing PPP regulations, Cambodia aimed to mobilize financial resources beyond public budgets, ensure timely project implementation, and benefit from international engineering and management expertise. This marked conceptualization of Cambodia's first high-standard expressways, laying the foundation for projects such as the Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway. While actual construction would occur later, these early policy shifts represented a strategic alignment of infrastructure development with national economic priorities.

The 2010s signaled a decisive move from conceptual planning to large-scale expressway investment. Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway became the flagship project under PPP model, representing Cambodia’s first attempt at a high-standard, controlled-access highway. The CPEC, in collaboration with China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), spearheaded the project. Legal instruments and contractual frameworks clarified concession terms, environmental obligations, revenue-sharing models, and dispute resolution mechanisms. This ensured transparency, accountability, and alignment with both national regulations and international best practices. The expressway was designed to meet global engineering standards, including multiple lanes for high-speed traffic, modern drainage systems, safety features, and digital integration for the traffic management. Construction followed a phased approach encompassing land acquisition, detailed engineering, environmental compliance, and stakeholder engagement, reflecting the complexity of implementing such a large-scale infrastructure project in a developing country context.

2.2 Key Challenges in Expressway Development

While the Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway represented a milestone in Cambodia’s infrastructure modernization, CPEC faced several critical challenges, such financial risk, technical capacity, traffic management and safety, and Regulatory Alignment. With the financial risks, construction costs for the expressway exceeded USD 1 billion, requiring innovative financial strategies. PPP model mitigated government fiscal risk but necessitated rigorous financial modeling, investor confidence, and long-term revenue projections to ensure project’s financial sustainability. Based on the technical capacity, domestic expertise in expressway engineering, advanced project management, and maintenance was limited. Collaboration with CRBC not only provided technical knowledge but also facilitated on-the-job training for Cambodian engineers and technical staff, strengthening the national human capital for future infrastructure projects. Environmental and Social Impacts set the large-scale expressway construction that required the careful management of land acquisition, resettlement, and biodiversity preservation. Comprehensive environmental impact assessments (EIA) and participatory stakeholder engagement programs were implemented to minimize social disruption and ensure compliance with both national and international standards.

Traffic Management and Safety required implementing of automated traffic control systems, clear signage, road safety protocols, and emergency response mechanisms, in which it was essential to minimize accidents and congestion. Digital technologies, including intelligent traffic systems (ITS) and predictive maintenance tools, were deployed to optimize operational

safety. For regulatory alignment, the effective coordination among multiple ministries, local authorities, and regulatory agencies was necessary to ensure timely permitting, compliance with construction and environmental standards, and overall project governance. This period required the clear communication channels, integrated monitoring systems, and periodic policy reviews. Addressing these challenges demanded a multifaceted approach, combining technical expertise, financial innovation, regulatory oversight, and stakeholder participation. The lessons learned were critical for informing the future infrastructure projects in Cambodia and other developing countries.

Table 1: Risk Categories and Mitigation Strategies

Challenge	Description	Mitigation Strategy	Outcome
Financial	High capital costs	PPP financing	Secured full funding
Technical	Lack of local expertise	CRBC training programs	Developed local capacity
Social	Resettlement conflicts	Community engagement	Reduced opposition
Safety	Traffic accidents	Automated monitoring	Lower accident rates

2.3 Economic and Political Environment

Cambodia’s political landscape during 2000s was characterized by relative peace, constitutional governance, and institutional consolidation. This period of stability provided the foundation for long-term infrastructure planning, effective policy implementation, and attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI). Stable governance allowed government to negotiate and implement public-private partnership (PPP) agreements with domestic and international partners, ensuring the alignment of infrastructure projects with the national development strategies. Additionally, political stability enhanced investor confidence, particularly among multinational corporations and financial institutions seeking long-term engagement in Cambodia’s transport and logistics sectors.

Infrastructure development in Cambodia is closely linked to the country’s economic growth, driven by several key sectors, such as agriculture, garment industry, tourism, and foreign direct investments. The agriculture employed approximately 40% of Cambodia’s population, making rural connectivity essential for market access and supply chain efficiency. Roads and expressways reduce transport time and costs for agricultural products, increasing competitiveness in domestic and regional markets. Cambodia’s export-oriented garment sector relied on the reliable transport corridors for timely delivery of goods to ports and international markets. Improved road

infrastructure enhanced supply chain efficiency, reduced the delays, and supported industrial competitiveness. Growth in tourism required improved road accessibility to accommodate increased passenger traffic and facilitate regional mobility. Expressways contributed to the tourism development by reducing travel times and enhancing visitor experiences. With foreign direct investment, Cambodia's clear PPP frameworks, coupled with modernized infrastructure, attracted FDI in manufacturing, logistics, and service sectors. Investors viewed the high-standard expressways as critical for operational efficiency and regional trade connectivity.

The Cambodian government has actively promoted PPPs as a strategic mechanism to mobilize investment, share risk, and enhance technical expertise in infrastructure projects. Key policies included PPP Infrastructure Guidelines (2015), which provide legal clarity for private sector participation, fiscal incentives, and environmental compliance requirements. Policy alignment with ASEAN trade and transport corridors ensures that infrastructure investments contribute to regional integration, trade facilitation, and cross-border connectivity. These policies have been critical in enabling CPEC to implement large-scale expressway projects efficiently and sustainably.

Effective stakeholder coordination was essential to the success of the CPEC projects. Key stakeholders included government agencies, local authorities, private sector and financial institutions, international partners, and communities and academic institutions. With the government agencies, the ministries of public works and transport and environment (MPWTE) oversaw the policy formulation, regulatory compliance, and environmental protection. They provided the oversight for project approval, permitting, and monitoring. Provincial and district authorities manage land acquisition, resettlement programs, and community engagement, ensuring that the infrastructure development aligns with local needs and mitigates social impacts. Based on the private sector & financial institutions, these actors provided project financing, construction execution, and risk management. Their involvement ensured the financial sustainability and operational efficiency. International Partners (CRBC) contributed technical expertise, international project management standards, and joint sustainability practices. They facilitated knowledge transfer and support capacity-building initiatives for local engineers and technical staff. Based on the communities and academic institutions, local communities provided social feedback, participate in resettlement and training programs, and benefited from the employment opportunities. Academic institutions contributed through workforce development, research, and environmental monitoring.

2.4 Operational Strategies

With the technological integration, the CPEC adopted a suite of digital and technological innovations to enhance project efficiency, monitoring, and sustainability. Digital Project Management Tools were conducted with platforms that tracked the construction progress, budget adherence, quality control, and risk management in real-time. Building Information Modeling (BIM) and virtual/augmented reality (VR/AR) facilitated detailed design visualization, construction planning, and clash detection. Blockchain ensured transparent procurement, contract management, and financial transactions, reducing fraud and enhancing accountability. Predictive Analytics, such as traffic forecasting models, predictive maintenance algorithms, and automated alerts optimized the expressway operations and maintenance schedules.

CPEC leveraged the PPP framework to balance risk, financial sustainability, and technical capacity. Agreements defined revenue-sharing arrangements, construction milestones, long-term operation and maintenance obligations, and legal responsibilities. PPP model ensured that the private sector partners were incentivized to deliver the quality infrastructure while the government oversight-maintained alignment with the public development goals. CPEC prioritized the workforce development, community engagement, and environmental awareness. Engineers, technicians, and administrative staff receive structured training programs, fostering knowledge transfer and long-term capacity development. Environmental workshops were conducted to ensure compliance with EIAs and to raise awareness about biodiversity and sustainability. Regular meetings with affected communities facilitated social acceptability, address grievances, and integrate feedback into project planning.

The partnership with CRBC was pivotal to CPEC's operational success. Over 50 years of international experience in infrastructure development allowed for adoption of global best practices and facilitated knowledge transfer to local engineers and project managers through joint workshops, mentoring, and technical collaboration. Implements joint environmental and safety compliance programs, ensuring the sustainable construction practices. Supports job creation and economic growth prioritized local hiring, local procurement, and capacity-building initiatives. The operational workflow of CPEC encompassed four integrated stages. Planning and Development conducted feasibility studies, environmental and social impact assessments (EIAs/ESIAs), cost-benefit analysis, and detailed design. Construction executed the resource management, quality assurance, safety protocols, and adherence to technical specifications. Maintenance implemented the preventive and corrective maintenance, monitored KPIs, and managed the asset lifecycle to extend operational efficiency. Innovation integration

incorporated digital monitoring, automation, green infrastructure practices, and smart traffic management to enhance operational performance.

3. Critical Arguments

3.1 Economic and Social Impact on Strategic Planning

CPEC's flagship expressway exemplified the innovation, safety, and sustainability. Green expressway was designed with eco-friendly materials, stormwater management systems, and emission reduction strategies. Safe Expressway provided features speed control, automated traffic monitoring, emergency lanes, and integrated safety protocols. Innovative expressway implemented the smart tolling, automated traffic alerts, and logistics optimization to enhance efficiency. Value Proposition highlighted the travel time between Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville that reduced from 6–8 hours to approximately 2:30 – 3:00 hours, significantly improving trade corridor efficiency and facilitating economic development along the route

Table 2: Economic and Social Impact

Indicator	Pre-Expressway	Post-Expressway	% Improvement
Travel Time (Phnom Penh → Sihanoukville)	6–8 hrs	2.5–3 hrs	60–65%
Traffic Volume (Vehicles/day)	3,000	10,000	233%
Employment Created	0	12,000	100%
Trade Flow (USD bn)	0.5	1.2	140%

Alignment with national goals ensured the relevance and sustainability. Construction coordination showed efficient resource allocation that reduced delays and cost overruns. Maintenance & KPIs detailed the automated monitoring that ensured long-term operational sustainability. Technology adoption enhanced transparency, predictive maintenance, and operational efficiency. Stakeholder engagement reduced resettlement that conflicted and built local capacity. Vietnam's PPP expressway model showed similar success in risk-sharing but required the stronger environmental compliance; Thailand's tollway system demonstrated advanced digital toll.

The comparative analysis highlights lessons from regional PPP experiences. Hanoi–Hai Phong Expressway demonstrated successful financing through Build-Operate-Transfer(BOT) models, but delayed environmental approvals led to stakeholder conflicts (Nguyen & Tran, 2020). Cambodia can adopt stronger EIA procedures to prevent delays. Tollway projects, such as Bangkok Outer Ring Road, utilized advanced toll collection automation and traffic monitoring, reducing congestion and improving revenue collection (World Bank, 2019). CPEC incorporated similar ITS systems to enhance

efficiency. Metro Manila Skyway PPP emphasized urban integration and phased expansion to mitigate traffic disruption (Asian Development Bank, 2017). CPEC could apply the phased construction in the future secondary expressways.

Table 3: International Comparison of PPP Expressway Models

Country	Project	PPP Model	Key Lessons	Applicability to Cambodia
Vietnam	Hanoi–Hai Phong Expressway	BOT	Risk-sharing, strong financing	Adopt EIA safeguards
Thailand	Bangkok Outer Ring Road	Concession	Digital tolling, traffic management	Integrate ITS technology
Philippines	Metro Manila Skyway	BOT	Phased construction, urban planning	Consider phased approach
Cambodia	Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Exp	PPP/Concession	Stakeholder engagement, tech adoption	Replicable in secondary corridors

CPEC’s KPI framework demonstrated a holistic approach to infrastructure performance evaluation, covering construction, operations, finance, social outcomes, and environmental sustainability. By systematically tracking these indicators, CPEC not only ensured the project efficiency and accountability but also generated evidence-based insights for policymaking, stakeholder reporting, and continuous improvement. KPI system provide a replicable model for other developing countries seeking to monitor large-scale expressway projects effectively.

Table 4: Example CPEC KPI Dashboard

KPI Category	Metric	Target	Achieved
Construction	Milestone completion (%)	100%	98%
Operational	Average travel time reduction	60%	62%
Financial	Toll revenue efficiency (%)	95%	93%
Social	Local employment created	10,000	12,000

KPI Category	Metric	Target	Achieved
Environmental	Emission reduction (CO ₂ tons/yr)	15,000	16,200

3.2 Policy and Operational Contributions

The operational experience of PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company (CPEC), particularly implementing Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway, offers significant insights for policymakers, infrastructure planners, and development agencies. The success of CPEC demonstrated that large-scale expressway projects in developing-country contexts requires a combination of strategic planning, technological innovation, stakeholder coordination, and sustainable practices. Drawing on the lessons learned, several policy implications and actionable recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and social acceptability of future infrastructure projects. One of critical lessons from CPEC is the importance of strategic, integrated planning. Expressway projects should not be developed in the isolation but aligned with the national economic priorities, regional connectivity objectives, and urban-rural development strategies.

Integrated planning ensures that infrastructure investments maximize economic and social returns while complementing other sectors, such as industry, tourism, and logistics. Establishing a national infrastructure plan identifies the priority corridors, economic zones, and connectivity hubs. Comprehensive feasibility studies encompass the traffic demand modeling, economic impact assessments, environmental considerations, and social cost-benefit analyses. coordination across ministries and local authorities ensures the alignment of road networks, land-use planning, and regional development initiatives. Integrated planning reduces the redundancies, optimizes resource allocation, and provides investors with a clear framework for project development, thereby attracting higher levels of private investment.

3.3 Technological Innovation and Program Development

CPEC's adoption of technological innovation is central to improving project efficiency, safety, and sustainability. The technologies, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR), predictive analytics, and blockchain transform planning, construction, and operational monitoring processes. Promoting digital project management platforms to enable real-time tracking of construction progress, resource utilization, and quality assurance. Implementing VR/AR-based visualization tools to detect design conflicts, optimize the construction sequencing, and improve the stakeholder communication. Utilizing predictive analytics is for traffic forecasting, maintenance scheduling, and operational optimization.

Adopting blockchain solutions are about for the transparent procurement, contract management, and financial accountability. Technological adoption

enhances project transparency, minimizes errors, improves asset lifecycle management, and reduces the long-term maintenance costs, providing a replicable model for future expressways.

CPEC's success underscores the effectiveness of well-structured public-private partnerships (PPPs) in mobilizing investment, sharing risk, and accessing technical expertise. Legal frameworks, risk-sharing mechanisms, and contractual clarity are essential to ensure long-term sustainability and operational efficiency. Standardized PPP is developed to contract templates outlining revenue-sharing models, concession periods, and construction and maintenance obligations. financial risk is established to mitigation measures, such as government guarantees or blended financing mechanisms, to attract private investors. Performance-based indicators and regular audits are integrated to monitor the compliance with contractual obligations. Capacity building within public institutions is encouraged to manage PPP agreements effectively.

By optimizing PPP frameworks, Cambodia can leverage private sector efficiency while safeguarding the public interests, ensuring the projects are delivered on time, within budget, and to quality standards. Developing domestic expertise is essential for sustainable operation and maintenance of high-standard expressways. CPEC's collaboration with the international partners, such as CRBC highlights the value of knowledge transfer and workforce development. Training programs are implemented for engineers, technical staff, and project managers, focusing on safety, sustainability, and advanced construction techniques. Academic-industry partnerships are encouraged to incorporate modern infrastructure engineering curricula and practical internships. certification and continuing education programs are established to maintain high standards of technical competence in project planning, construction, and maintenance. Investing in capacity development ensures that Cambodia can independently manage future infrastructure projects, reducing reliance on foreign expertise and fostering domestic innovation.

3.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Sustainability Integration

Stakeholder engagement is critical for social acceptance, environmental compliance, and operational success. CPEC demonstrates that consultation, transparency, and feedback mechanisms strengthen community trust and mitigate social risks. Regular community consultations are conducted to address concerns, explain project benefits, and incorporate local input. Implementing robust grievance redress mechanisms to resolve disputes related to land acquisition, resettlement, and environmental impacts. Collaborating with the civil society organizations and academic institutions is very important for the environmental monitoring and the social impact

assessments. Sustained stakeholder engagement promotes social equity, reduces project delays due to disputes, and enhances legitimacy of infrastructure initiatives.

Sustainability should be embedded into all stages of expressway planning, construction, and operation. CPEC's green design principles, including emission reduction, stormwater management, and biodiversity preservation, serve as a model for responsible infrastructure development. Eco-friendly materials and construction techniques are incorporated to minimize the environmental footprints. stormwater and drainage systems are designed to prevent flooding and erosion. carbon reduction strategies, including electric vehicle-friendly infrastructure and energy-efficient lighting are needed to implement continuous environmental monitoring are conducted to ensure compliance with the national and international standards. Sustainability safeguards long-term ecological and social benefits are integrated to align the infrastructure development with the national climate and environmental objectives.

In brief, lessons from CPEC provide a comprehensive policy framework for scaling high-standard infrastructure projects in developing-country contexts. The key takeaways include the need for integrated planning, adoption of cutting-edge technologies, effective PPP management, workforce capacity development, stakeholder engagement, and environmental sustainability. By applying these principles, Cambodia can continue to modernize its transport infrastructure, enhance regional connectivity, and achieve sustainable socio-economic growth, while creating a replicable model for other developing nations undertaking similar projects.

3.5 Operational KPIs for CPEC

Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the large-scale infrastructure projects is essential for ensuring the efficiency, sustainability, and socio-economic impact. The PPSHV Cambodian Expressway Company (CPEC) implements a comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework to track project performance across construction, operations, finance, social impact, and environmental compliance. By systematically measuring these KPIs, CPEC can identify the areas for the improvement, optimize resource allocation, and enhance accountability to stakeholders. Construction KPIs assess the efficiency, quality, and timeliness of expressway development.

Milestone completion rate sheds light of the measures the percentage of construction milestones achieved on schedule. High milestone completion rates indicate effective project management and adherence to timelines. With quality inspection pass rate, tracks proportion of construction elements meeting predefined quality standards. This ensures that expressway is built to international specifications, minimizing maintenance costs and safety risks.

Budget Variance monitors deviations from the planned expenditures. Maintaining minimal budget variance reflects strong financial management, cost control, and forecasting accuracy. By evaluating construction KPIs, CPEC can ensure that projects are delivered efficiently, on time, and within budget, while maintaining structural integrity and compliance with design standards.

Operational KPIs evaluate the performance of the expressway during its functional phase, focusing on traffic efficiency, safety, and user experience: Traffic flow efficiency measures average vehicle speeds, congestion levels, and throughput rates. Efficient traffic flow reduces the travel time, enhances logistics, and improves economic productivity along the corridor. However, the travel time reduction quantifies the decrease in travel time compared to pre-expressway conditions. This KPI demonstrates the tangible benefits of the infrastructure investments for businesses and commuters. Accident rate per 1,000 vehicles tracks the road safety by monitoring the frequency of accidents. Lower accident rates indicate the effective traffic management, safety protocols, and preventive measures such as signage, emergency lanes, and ITS deployment. Hence, operational KPIs provide the insight into the functional performance of expressway and effectiveness of technological and managerial interventions.

Financial KPIs ensure that the expressway remains economically viable and delivers expected returns to investors and the government. Toll Revenue Collection Efficiency measures the proportion of tolls collected relative to potential revenue. High collection efficiency reflects the effectiveness of automated tolling systems, compliance, and financial management. Return on Investment (ROI) evaluates financial returns compared to project costs. Positive ROI indicates that project is generating expected economic value and sustaining operational costs. Financing cost adherence tracks the compliance with the planned debt service schedules, interest payments, and financing agreements. Effective cost adherence ensures fiscal sustainability and investor confidence. Financial KPIs are critical for the long-term sustainability, enabling CPEC to attract future investment and maintain public-private partnership credibility.

Social KPIs measure the project's impact on local communities, workforce development, and public acceptance. Number of Local Jobs Created quantifies direct and indirect employment generated during construction and operational phases, contributing to regional economic development. Community Satisfaction highlights the surveys and feedback mechanisms assess local perceptions of the expressway's social and economic benefits. High satisfaction indicates successful engagement and social acceptability. Number of Resettlement Complaints tracks the grievances related to land

acquisition and resettlement. Mitigation of complaints demonstrates the compliance with social safeguards and participatory planning. Therefore, Social KPIs ensure that infrastructure development contributes positively to human capital, community well-being, and equitable economic growth. Environmental KPIs assess the ecological sustainability of expressway projects, reflecting adherence to national and international environmental standards. CO₂ Emission Reduction monitors the reductions in the carbon emissions due to improved traffic flow, adoption of green technologies, and modal shifts in transport. Hectares of Reforested Land tracks afforestation and biodiversity restoration initiatives implemented to compensate for construction impacts. Stormwater Management Compliance measures the adherence to designed drainage and water management systems, preventing flooding, soil erosion, and water contamination. Thus, environmental KPIs are essential for the sustainable infrastructure development, ensuring that expressway construction and operations minimize ecological impacts while supporting Cambodia's climate and biodiversity goals.

4. Conclusion

CPEC demonstrates that large-scale expressway development in developing countries can be successful through the integrated national and regional planning, adoption of advanced technology and digital monitoring tools, effective PPP frameworks distributed risk and ensure financial sustainability, continuous capacity-building programs for local workforce, and Strong stakeholder engagement and adherence to environmental and social safeguards. Cambodia's experience, with the Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville Expressway, provides a replicable model for secondary corridors and emerging economies seeking to modernize infrastructure while maximizing socio-economic benefits.

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The Process of Managing TVET Institutions: A Case Study of Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo

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Abstract

This study examined the processes of managing TVET institutions in Cambodia, focusing on the management process of Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo. It purposely determined the systems theory, transformational leadership, and HRM principles. The research investigated how planning, organization, leadership, and HR strategies influenced the training outcomes and graduate employability. By employing a mixed methods-research, the quantitative surveys were conducted with 250 participants, while qualitative data were collected through 15 interviews and 4 focus group discussions. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, SWOT analysis, and thematic coding. The Institute demonstrated strong infrastructure, effective leadership, and strategic planning. SWOT analysis revealed internal strengths in facilities, stakeholder trust, and government support; weakness in HR management and student services; opportunities in the policy backing and industry collaboration; and threats from technological change and regional competition. The systematic management processes, visionary leadership, and robust HRM were critical for the institutional performance, which enhanced the leadership capacity, strengthened the HRM practices, expanded industry partnerships, improved student support, and promoted financial sustainability. The contributions of this study theoretically validated systems theory and transformational leadership in the TVET context, empirically provided Cambodian case-based evidence, and practically offered actionable strategies for policymakers and TVET practitioners.

Key words: *Technology, vocational education, training, management process, systems theory*

1. Introduction

TVET played a role in developing human capital, promoting employability, and addressing skill gaps in emerging economies. TVET systems were useful for sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and poverty reduction (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020). In Cambodia, TVET formed a cornerstone of the national development, aligning with the rectangular strategy for growth, employment, equity and efficiency, and National TVET Policy (MLVT, 2017). These initiatives emphasized the strategic role of the

vocational skills in economic diversification, industrialization, and workforce readiness. Cambodia's TVET system underwent the substantial reform, such as upgrading technical institutes, introducing competency-based curricula, and fostering the private sector partnerships.

However, there were challenges such as uneven institutional capacity, limited the HR development, insufficient industry linkages, and disparities between urban and provincial institutes persist (Chan & Hiep, 2021). The Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo exemplified these challenges and reforms, offering multi-disciplinary programs in engineering, IT, and applied sciences for the students in Takeo Province. Despite significant investment in infrastructure and policy support, Cambodian TVET institutions faced management challenges, undermining their effectiveness. These included HR capacity, leadership practice, industry linkage, and resource mobilization. Human resource capacity limited the qualified instructors and administrative staff hindered curriculum delivery and institutional governance. On the other hand, leadership practices that concerned with insufficient transformational leadership reduced the innovation and stakeholder engagement. The industry linkages were about the weak connections with employers affected graduate employability and curriculum relevance. Resource Mobilization referred to the dependence on government funding and limited financial sustainability restricts institutional growth.

Understanding of these challenges required an in-depth examination of the management processes, leadership practices, and HRM strategies within the Cambodian context. This study aimed at analyze strengths and weaknesses of RPITST's management processes, examining the role of leadership and HRM practices in institutional performance, and identifying opportunities and threats that shaped the Institute's development within Cambodia's TVET landscape. The study provided policy, institute, and academic significance. Policy significance offered the insights to MLVT and other stakeholders for strengthening provincial TVET management and aligning programs with the labor market needs. Furthermore, the institutional significance assists the administrators and leaders at the RPITST to improve HRM, leadership, and strategic planning. Academic significance mainly contributed to literature on systems theory and transformational leadership in TVET, particularly in the Southeast Asian context.

With the theoretical framework, this study integrated three key theoretical perspectives, such as system theory, transformational leadership theory, and human resource management principles. With the systems theory confirmed by Bertalanffy (1968), institutions were considered open systems interacting with the internal subsystems (HR, curriculum, infrastructure) and external environments (government, industry, community). Bass and Riggio (2006)

defined transformational leadership theory as leadership that inspired vision, innovation, and motivation were critical for the institutional adaptation and effectiveness. With the studied by Armstrong and Taylor (2020), the HRM principles were about the effective HRM practices – including recruitment, professional development, and performance appraisal—ensured institutional sustainability and quality delivery.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Perspectives of TVET Management in Education

Management in education was the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources to achieve the institutional objectives (Robbins & Coulter, 2018). In the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), management encompassed curriculum planning, resource management, organization leadership, and quality assurance. Curriculum planning concerned with designing competency-based programs aligned with labor market requirements. Resource management allocated and maintained physical, human, and financial resources. Organizational leadership was about facilitating decision-making, motivating the institutional staff, and engaging the stakeholders. Quality assurance played a role in monitoring teaching and learning processes to maintain institutional standards. In brief, effective management ensured that institutional objectives were aligned with the national development goals and labor market needs, thereby enhancing graduate employability (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020).

Planning in TVET involved developing short-term and long-term strategies that addressed infrastructure, curriculum, faculty development, and student services. Mintzberg (1994) argued that strategic planning should be flexible, responsive to environmental changes, and participatory. In Cambodian TVET institutions, planning was influenced by national policies like National TVET Policy 2017–2025 (MLVT, 2017). Effective organizational structure ensured clarity in roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines. Also, leadership played a critical role in motivating staff, fostering innovation and implementing the strategic initiatives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership in TVET institutions positively correlated with institutional performance and graduate employability (Srisuwan, 2019; Nguyen, 2018).

Quality assurance and continuous improvement significantly influenced education. For this case, education needed to strengthen, improve, and assure the quality. Quality assurance in TVET focused on evaluating the programs, teaching methods, and learning outcomes. In addition to this, continuous assessment of curricula and instructional methods ensured that the graduates met the industry requirements (UNESCO, 2015). Mechanisms such as performance appraisal, student feedback, and accreditation were essential to maintaining institutional credibility and effectiveness. TVET played a role to

equip individuals with the practical skills for specific occupations that encompassed technical, industrial, and service-oriented sectors (UNESCO, 2015), enhanced economic competitiveness by producing a skilled workforce, and promoted equity by increasing access to skills education in urban and rural regions (MLVT, 2017). TVET High alignment with the labor demand (Nguyen, 2018), mixed the employability outcomes (Manasan, 2020), and gaps in industry linkages (Chan & Hiep, 2021).

2.2 Systems and Transformational Leadership

With the studies by Bertalanffy (1968), educational institutions operated as the open systems interacting continuously with their internal and external environments. For this situation, TVET institutions can be conceptualized as the multi-layered systems consisting of interconnected subsystems, including curriculum, faculty, human resources, infrastructure, student services, and administrative governance. In the Cambodian context, TVET institutions met specific subsystem challenges, including a shortage of qualified instructors, limited administrative capacity, and inconsistent professional development, weaken the HR subsystem. Transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Bass and Riggio (2006), emphasizes leaders' ability to inspire, motivate, and facilitate innovation within the organizations. In the TVET context, transformational leadership played a central role in aligning the institutional goals with labor market needs, modernizing curricula, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Transformational leadership significantly impacted TVET with three key domains, including curriculum modernization, faculty development, and student services – improving the institutional responsiveness and promoting curriculum reforms that enhance student outcomes (Srisuwan, 2019). In this case, leaders who prioritize participatory decision-making and innovation strengthened alignment with the industry needs and fostered the graduate employability (Nguyen, 2018). HRM was central to the sustainability and effectiveness of the TVET institutions. HRM encompassed the recruitment, development, motivation, and retention of qualified staff (Armstrong & Taylor (2020). HRM practices and professional development programs were limited or ad-hoc (Chan & Hiep, 2021). Transformational leadership in vocational institutions associated with participatory decision-making, faculty empowerment, and curriculum reform – improving both student learning outcomes and institutional efficiency (Srisuwan, 2019).

TVET operated within a decentralized governance framework, creating HRM and coordination challenges (Manasan, 2020). While local autonomy enabled context-specific decision-making, inconsistent HR policies, and leadership capacity gaps undermined program quality. With the quality assurance, inconsistent monitoring and evaluation systems reduced program quality and

accountability (ADB, 2019; Chan & Hiep, 2021). Empirical evidence from ASEAN TVET systems demonstrates that well-implemented HRM correlates positively with graduate employability, student satisfaction, and institutional innovation (Nguyen, 2018; Manasan, 2020). In Cambodia, strengthening HRM through formalized recruitment, continuous professional development, and transparent appraisal systems can enhance institutional effectiveness, faculty engagement, and labor market alignment. According to the results confirmed by ADB (2019), institutional strengths, weakness, opportunities, and treats must be leveraged, addressed, exploited, and mitigated for the improved performance.

2.3 Insights of TVET Practice and Management

TVET systems provided valuable lessons for institutions to examine the successful practices and challenges across the region with the identified strategies – enhancing institutional management, leadership, human resource practices, and industry engagement (Chan & Hiep, 2021; Nguyen, 2018). Transformational Leadership provided a strong example of impact on the institutional effectiveness (Srisuwan, 2019). TVET system illustrated both opportunities and challenges by decentralized governance (Manasan, 2020). HRM Systems standardized the recruitment, professional development, and appraisal practices to improve staff motivation, teaching quality, and institutional performance. TVET institutions operated as open systems, such as curriculum design, faculty, HR, infrastructure, and student services (Bertalanffy, 1968). Applying systems theory allowed administrators and policymakers to adopt a holistic perspective. This perspective justified the integration of planning, leadership, and HRM strategies to enhance overall institutional performance.

Transformational leadership provided the human-centered mechanism for aligning subsystems with institutional goals – inspiring faculty engagement, fostering innovation, and improving institutional responsiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Empirical evidence increasingly supported the importance of transformational leadership – driving curriculum modernization and industry alignment (Nguyen, 2018) and improving institutional responsiveness and innovation (Srisuwan, 2019). HRM practices served as the operational backbone of TVET institutions, ensuring that qualified staff were recruited, continuously developed, and effectively appraised (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Continuous professional development provided structured training to enhance teaching skills and adapt to evolving technical requirements. Faculty and administrators reported appraisals, limited training, and challenges in attracting specialized instructors (Chan & Hiep, 2021).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods case study design to examine the

management processes of Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo in depth. Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews/FGDs were combined to triangulate data and ensure reliability (Yin, 2018). Quantitative surveys was used to measure perceptions of management effectiveness, HRM practices, leadership impact, and student outcomes. However, qualitative interviews and FGDs were employed to explored administrators' and faculty experiences in planning, leadership, and HRM implementation. Study population included administrators, faculty, students, and graduates. A total sample of 250 participants was used to ensure representativeness.

Category	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Sampling Method
Administrators	15	15	Purposive
Faculty	45	30	Purposive
Students/Graduates	400	205	Stratified random sampling

For data collection methods, this study employed primary and secondary data. Primary data included surveys (5-point Likert scale measuring perceptions of infrastructure, leadership, HRM, and student), semi-structured interviews (Conducted with 15 administrators), and focus group discussions (Four sessions with faculty and students). On the other hand, secondary data included institutional reports (strategic plans, HR records), MLVT policy documents, and previous research on Cambodian TVET and regional best practices.

This study analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to examine the mean, SD and percentage, SWOT, and correlation. Descriptive statistics analysis was employed to analyze Mean, SD, and Percentage. SWOT analysis also used for institutional strengths or weaknesses and opportunities or threats. In addition to this, correlation analysis tested relationships between leadership, HRM, and student outcomes. Thematic coding of interviews and FGDs were the analytical approaches for analyzing leadership, HRM, planning, and industry linkage themes. Triangulation ensured credibility.

By focusing ethical Considerations, it provided voluntary participation with informed consent. Confidentiality maintained and data anonymized. Greatly, Institutional approval obtained from the Polytechnic Institute.

4. Results and Findings

2.2 Strength and Weakness of TVET Management and Practice

Table 4.1 indicated the key elements of TVET management, addressing the industrial and technical skills, technology and service sector, multi-sector skills, and engineering/IT and applied science. TVET equipped individuals with practical skills for specific occupations, and its scope encompassed technical, industrial, and service-oriented sectors. This meant TVET

institutions can be conceptualized as multi-layered systems consisting of interconnected subsystems such as curriculum, faculty, human resources, infrastructure, student services, and administrative governance.

Table 4.1 Key elements of TVET Management Process

TVET Focus	Key Features	Relevance to Labor Market
Industrial & technical skills	Competency-based training Strong industry partnerships	High alignment with labor demand
Technology & service sectors	Transformational leadership Curriculum innovation	Improved institutional performance
Multi-sector skills	Decentralized governance HR challenges	Mixed employability outcomes
Engineering/IT Applied sciences	TVET reforms, HR capacity	Moderate alignment Gaps in industry linkages

Table 4.2 highlighted the best practice of the HR management in the TVET institution. HR management was prioritized with recruitment, professional development, and performance appraisal – strengthening alignment with industry needs. HRM deficiencies was crucial for enhancing institutional performance and aligning TVET with labor market demands.

Table 4.2 Best practices of HRM in the TVET institutions

HRM Practice	Best Practice	Importance
Recruitment	Merit-based selection, transparent hiring	Ensures qualified personnel fill critical teaching and administrative roles
Professional Development	Structured, continuous training programs	Enhances teaching quality, faculty motivation, and adaptation to new technologies
Performance Appraisal	Regular, transparent evaluations	Aligns staff performance with institutional objectives and incentivizes excellence

Recruitment partially adheres to merit principles; gaps exist in attracting qualified instructors for specialized programs. Faculty expressed need for structured continuous development programs to maintain teaching quality.

Appraisal processes are irregular and partially transparent, limiting staff motivation and accountability.

Table 4.3 Implications of HR practices for TVET Institution

HR Practice	Current Status	Implications
Recruitment	Partially merit-based	Difficulty attracting skilled instructors; gaps in specialized programs
Professional Development	Limited and ad hoc	Teaching quality and curriculum delivery are inconsistent
Performance Appraisal	Irregular and opaque	Staff motivation and accountability are reduced; institutional innovation is limited

Table 4.3 stated the implications of HR practice for the TVET institution. Transformational leadership facilitated innovative teaching, competency-based training, and continuous adaptation to industry trends. These practices offered lessons for Cambodian TVET institutions seeking stronger employer alignment. These approaches improved both student learning outcomes and institutional efficiency. However, the leadership style significantly influenced both organizational performance and graduate readiness for workforce. This experience underscored the importance of leadership systems for achieving sustainable TVET outcomes. HRM practices significantly influenced TVET performance. HRM through formalized recruitment, continuous professional development, and transparent appraisal systems can enhance institutional effectiveness, faculty engagement, and labor market alignment. Furthermore, HR practices were not isolated interventions but part of a holistic approach to improving institutional performance and student outcomes.

Table 4.4 SWOT analysis for Cambodian TVET Management

Category	Findings
Strengths	Modern infrastructure, government support, stakeholder trust
Weaknesses	Limited HR capacity, weak student support, inconsistent HRM
Opportunities	Policy support, labor market demand, international collaboration
Threats	Technological change, financial sustainability, regional competition

Table 4.4 highlighted the SWOT Analysis of TVET Management. Synthesis of empirical studies and institutional reports informed a SWOT analysis for

Cambodian TVET. SWOT framework highlighted institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 4.5 Perceptions of Institutional Management

Domains	Mean Score (1–5)	Interpretation
Infrastructure	4.2	High satisfaction
Learning Environment	4.0	Positive
HR Capacity	3.2	Moderate concerns
Student Support Services	3.0	Needs improvement

Table 4.5 indicated the perceptions of institutional management. By managing TVET institution, it focused on domains, including infrastructure, learning environment, HR capacity, and student support services. With the correlation Analysis, leadership effectiveness correlated positively with student satisfaction ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$). HRM practices correlated positively with graduate employment ($r = 0.56, p < 0.05$). These correlations indicated that leadership and HRM significantly influenced institutional performance.

5. Discussion

5.1 Effectiveness of HR Managing in TVET Institution

Leadership is effective for participatory decision-making and vision-driven leadership were appreciated. However, it is about the challenges, including limited staff capacity to implement strategic initiatives fully. With the HRM practices, faculty indicates the lack of structured professional development programs. Performance appraisal is irregular and partially transparent. Likely, industry linkages concern about the students who requested internships and industry projects to gain practical experience. Faculty further recommended formal agreements with local industries to improve employability.

SWOT analysis plays to address the strength, weakness, opportunities, and treat of managing the TVET institution. Strengths of TVET manages infrastructure, government support, stakeholder trust. Weaknesses also highlights the HR capacity, student support, and management inefficiencies. In addition to this, opportunities focus on the policy support, labor demand, and international partnerships. Threats is about technological change, financial sustainability, and regional competition. In brief, TVET management sheds a light of insight, such as management processes, effective leadership, and HRM practices that directly impact the TVET outcomes, aligning with systems theory and transformational leadership principles.

5.2 Alignment of TVET Systems and HR Management

Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Takeo operates as an open system, consistent with Bertalanffy's Systems Theory (1968). Subsystems, such as

curriculum, HR, infrastructure, and leadership interacted dynamically with external environment, including government policies, labor market demands, and industry partners. With the TVET management and practice, internal subsystem strengths concerned with the robust infrastructure, competent administrators, and supportive policies contributed positively to institutional performance. On the other hand, internal subsystem weakness highlights limited HR capacity, inconsistent faculty development, and weak student support services constrain the system's effectiveness. By aligning the TVET system and HR management, weakness in one subsystem can reduce overall institutional performance. In this study, HRM gaps and insufficient industry linkages are observed to directly affect graduate employability and student satisfaction.

5.3 Effects of Transformational Leadership on TVET Institution

Transformational leadership is emerged as a critical factor that influences the institutional performance. Administrator has a role to demonstrate the vision-driven and participatory leadership, consistent with Bass and Riggio's (2006) model, fostering stakeholder engagement and motivating faculty. In this case, curriculum development is important for leaders encourages the integration of industry-relevant skills. Faculty motivation, however, helps construct the participatory decision-making and recognition of achievements to improve staff engagement. Student services sheds a light with leadership initiatives that influence development of student support programs. Transformational leadership significantly enhances institutional innovation, program relevance, and graduate outcomes (Nguyen, 2018; Srisuwan, 2019) – reflecting similar patterns, though HR and industry integration remain areas for improvement and sustainability (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Strengthening HRM through formalized recruitment, training, and appraisal systems is essential to align staff performance with institutional objectives. This aligns with practices observed in Vietnamese and Philippine TVET institutions, where HRM reforms improved teaching quality and graduate employability (Nguyen, 2018; Manasan, 2020). Government support through the National TVET Policy 2017–2025 provides resources and policy backing for institutional growth. Labor market demand for skilled technical workers encourages the curriculum alignment with the industry needs. International collaboration (e.g., donor-funded projects, ASEAN networks) offers the potential for capacity building. Rapid technological advancements require continuous curriculum updates and staff training. Financial sustainability remains uncertain due to reliance on the government funding. Regional competition from other ASEAN TVET institutes may challenge student enrollment and graduate placement.

4. Conclusion

The study confirmed relevance of systems theory, institutional subsystems interacted, and weaknesses in HR and student support that reduced overall performance. Transformation leadership is critical for vision implementation, stakeholder engagement, and institutional innovation. HR management, such as particularly merit-based recruitment, continuous professional development, and structured performance appraisal, was essential for sustainability and graduate employability. Strengthening leadership capacity provided training in transformational leadership, strategic planning, and participatory decision-making. Enhancing HRM Practices provided implementation of structured recruitment, professional development, and performance appraisal. Industry Linkages established the formal partnerships, internships, and apprenticeship programs with the local and regional industries. Student support services expanded Career counseling, soft-skills training, and mentoring programs. Promote Financial Sustainability: Explore alternative funding, including donor programs, tuition models, and income-generating projects.

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The Effects of Multi-Party Conditions on Cambodian Politic Challenges

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Abstract

This paper explored the multi-party conditions in Cambodian politics, focusing on the effects of multi-party situations that influenced the Cambodian politic challenges, Cambodia's liberal, and multi-party democracy from 2013 to 2023. Since the adoption of democracy in 1993, Cambodia maintained the framework of a multi-party system, and the political dominance of Cambodian People's Party (CPP) raised questions about the strength of democratic competition. The analysis highlighted key effects of multi-party on Cambodian politic challenges, including the solution for the Cambodia's multi-party systems, political rights, electoral regularities, and human rights. Political parties emerged, reflecting continued demand for pluralism. Cambodian Economics needed to develop under CPP leadership, with the balance between stability and democratic freedoms. International perspectives remain divided; China and Russia recognize its elections as legitimate. The findings revealed that Cambodia's democracy caught between maintaining constitutional principles of multi-party participation and the reality of a dominant-party system.

Key words: *Multi-party system; dominant-party; democracy; human rights; politic challenge*

1. Introduction

Cambodia is known for its liberal, multi-party democratic political system and its notable effects of multi-party on politic challenges. With the liberal and challenges, multi-party politics in Cambodia met in the way the country developed and its political system from 2013 to 2023. In Cambodia, political development was adopted in democracy in 1993 after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime and the end of the civil war. The first elections marked the beginning of a liberal, multi-party-political system, but political competition at that time was unstable (Carothers, T 2015). The political dominance of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) is evident in Cambodia's multi-party system, with the CPP being the most influential party. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won several elections, increasing its political influence (Un, K. 2019). In 2013, the CPP faced a major challenge when the opposition

party, such as Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) gained significant popular support. With this condition, the Cambodia's multi-party system was increasingly competitive. This posed a major challenge to the multi-party system in Cambodia, and the CPP exercised control over all parliaments and the government in Cambodia. (Freedom House, 2018).

New parties emerged with the aim of strengthening the multi-party system in Cambodia. Some of these parties were satellite parties of Cambodian People's Party, and the emergence of new parties presented a competitive political landscape to masses 419 Cambodia (Freedom House, 2018). The integration of political and economic issues under the leadership of the CPP led to significant economic development, and the CPP focused on the economic development for the benefit of the country (Un, K2019). This development led to economic growth, but it also increased pressure on the political system to maintain stability. One of the major challenges to the multi-party system in Cambodia is increase in the political system. International organizations such as Amnesty International argued that the tightening of the law increased political stability. (Amnesty International, 2020).

The extent of multipartyism is a challenge and suggests that multipartyism in Cambodia can develop through political change and public support. In 2023, communes across the country showed an increase in the number of voters for new parties, marking a significant shift in the Cambodian political system. (National Election Committee [NEC], 2023). The multiparty system in Cambodia was challenged, such as political control. However, this political development also met the rise of new parties seeking to strengthen the political system.

2. Conceptual Framework of Literature

2.1 The democratic Process in Cambodia

Democracy was the participation of all political groups to maintain the well-being of the country. Cambodia implemented a democratic system since 1993 through free, multi-party elections. However, this system faced challenges in the process of discussing the multi-party issues in the democratic process in Cambodia. Cambodia had a system of government dominated by Cambodian People's Party, which led the country for more than three decades. Civil society reported that media outlets expressed views contrary to government closed down. (Freedom House, 2018). The democracy in Cambodia can also be attributed to the work of the multi-party systems. Party leader, Kem Sokha, acted in a manner that was in conflict with foreign interests (Un, K 2019). This case stifled political competition.

Political competition in Cambodia also faced challenges for public funding various political parties. Public funding was often used through the control (Transparency International, 2020). The multi-party was significant due to

the human rights and political rights. The politicians and human rights were challenged in democratic system (Amnesty International, 2020). This raised the international concerns about the human rights situation in Cambodia. Electoral legislative council was about the body responsible for conducting elections can be considered a CPP-controlled entity (NEC, 2023). This legislative council should be empowered and independent to hold elections in Cambodia accountable.

Political competition in Cambodia continued to involve the international community to maintain peace and human rights. International community and the United Nations consistently supported the progress and human rights in Cambodia (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The multiple and unique challenges facing Cambodia in its democratic process were important for advancing the progress and human rights. Political parties must be independent and receive support from the international community to ensure equality and democratic rights for the Cambodian people.

2.2 Consequences of Implementing Democracy in Cambodia

One of the consequences of implementing democracy in Cambodia was the disagreement of political views. Cambodia was still considered a country that implemented the liberal, multi-party democracy, even though the National Assembly in previous term had a single party. This also explained by senior officials of the Cambodian People's Party after some circles suggested that Cambodia no longer had a multi-party system because the National Assembly was controlled by a single party. According to the official report on the preliminary results of the election issued on the July 29, 2018, all seats in the National Assembly fell to the Cambodian People's Party, with Samdech Hun Sen as the party leader, receiving an overwhelming majority of votes. Other parties that competed in the election did not receive any seats. Therefore, in the past term, the 6th and 7th terms, in particular, the National Assembly of Cambodia was led by a single party, while Article 51 of Constitution stated that Cambodia implements liberal, multi-party democracy.

There were different interpretations of the above question, with Chheang Vun, a senior official in the Cambodian People's Party who was elected to the parliament. Chheang Vun answered without hesitation that "even if there was only one party in the National Assembly, the National Assembly can still function and a new government can still be formed legally." In an interview with the press, he emphasized that "there is no content of any law, no word that says the National Assembly cannot function when one party wins the election alone." (thmeythmey.com 2018). Chheang Vun mentioned the term "multi-party", stating that "multi-party" referred to a regime with parties, and parties competed in the election. Multi-party did not mean that there were many parties in the National Assembly. For Chheang Vun, criticism of the

election from various circles, including some international communities, seemed normal. He claimed that Cambodia is not concerned about such criticism, but what Cambodia should be concerned about was the lives of its citizens. He finally stated “The word ‘one-party rule’ is all they say. It’s not just today. It’s even worse. But the National Assembly of Cambodia is still functioning, democracy is still alive, and we will continue to strive to serve the will of the people.” (thmeythmey.com. 2018).

At the same time, Sok Sam Oeun, a famous lawyer in Cambodia, did not say definitively whether Cambodia was still a liberal, multi-party democracy or not, leaving this matter to the competent institutions to clarify. However, he spoke in two ways about the word “multi-party” by saying “If interpreted broadly, Cambodia is still a liberal, multi-party democracy, but if interpreted narrowly, it may not be.” The lawyer explained broadly, “If multi-party refers only to organizing many parties to participate in the election.” Therefore, Cambodia was still a multi-party country, because during the election, up to 20 parties participated. However, if multi-party referred to having many parties in the National Assembly, then Cambodia was no longer called multi-party. This interpretation was only for the Constitutional Council to interpret and provided opinions (thmeythmey.com. 2018).

Chhim Phalvarun, a spokesperson for Cambodian People’s Party and a doctor of constitutional law, stated that “multi-party” referred to a political and social regime that allowed for multiple parties. Multi-party was a political and social regime where the people can express different opinions and views, not just in National Assembly. He added that “in the past, when the National Assembly made laws, they could express their opinions outside the National Assembly! That is a multi-party liberal democracy” (thmeythmey.com. 2018). In the previous Senate elections, the Cambodian People’s Party won outright, as was the case in the 2018 National Assembly elections. The only difference was that the Senate had 2 out of 62 members from FUNCINPEC party. But those two members were not elected but were appointed by the National Assembly. The other two members were appointed by the King, and the rest were all from the Cambodian People’s Party.

Since the first election in 1993, the 2018 election was the first time that the Cambodian National Assembly led by a single party. However, before 1993, it was not the first time that the Cambodian National Assembly had a single party. During the socialist era in 1955, the Cambodian National Assembly was also led by a single party. At that time, the Socialist Party of King Norodom Sihanouk received more than 80 percent of the vote and controlled National Assembly (thmeythmey.com. 2018). Im Chhunlim, President of the Constitutional Council, emphasized that “multi-party liberal democracy” was the foundation of Cambodia’s modern political order. With Royal Ceremony

to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia on the morning of October 6, 2023 at the Koh Pich Palace, Cambodia adhered to a multi-party liberal democracy. Cambodia achieved new steps of progress through implementation of constitutional principles, such as The Khmer people were the masters of the nation's destiny. All power belonged to people and was exercised through National Assembly, Senate, Royal Government, and the Judiciary. There was a principle of mutual balance, namely the National Assembly gave confidence to form the Royal Government. At the same time, the National Assembly cannot be dissolved before the end of its term, except in the case of the Royal Government being overthrown twice in 12 months (AKP, NEWS. 2023).

2.3 Operation of Democracy in Cambodia

Cambodia operated a multi-party electoral system, maintaining multi-party diversity, a space for political freedom and ensuring the preservation of electoral participation. With liberal, multi-party democratic politics was taken root in Cambodia's political culture and evolved in stages. National power was devolved to sub-national levels to promote and promote development in a sub-national democratic manner, based on the fundamental principles of respect for human rights and liberal, multi-party democracy. Parliamentary democracy was based on the spirit of broad political alliances, which were procedures for determining the leadership of National Assembly, the quorum for the National Assembly session, and the granting of trust to form a new government for the purpose of creating a culture of dialogue between political partners. For this case, Im Chunlim said “A good partnership alliance and a culture of dialogue are not consistent, depending on the nature of extreme politics, leading to a deadlock in the process of organizing the government and social instability after each election for the term of office.” (AKP, NEWS. 2023). National Election Committee was reformed to level of a constitutional institution. A step to strengthen the order of political parties by defining red lines regarding the obligations required of each political party to respect the constitution and the law. As a preparation to strengthen the spirit of patriotism was defined with the qualifications to have Khmer nationality by birth only for position of the top leader of national constitutional institution. As a way to fill the gaps in the constitutional procedures to ensure that the top national institutions, especially the executive power, had a smooth and sustainable process (AKP, NEWS. 2023).

Some opinions, especially from the United States and the West, criticized that “multi-party liberal democracy in Cambodia is going backwards.” However, Cambodia firmly adhered to the principle of multi-party liberal democracy. Democracy meant a country with a democratic government, a country or administration that used people as a majority in choosing its representatives

to decide the affairs of the country. Liberal meant having full power, being able to do whatever they want but under the law. “Multiple” meant having many, in this sense, many was more than “two.” Therefore, “multi-party liberal democracy” was a principle in which the people had full power to choose their representatives from among many political parties to lead the country’s affairs.

Cambodia held the 2018 general election on July 29, 2018 to choose its representatives. Preliminary results from the National Election Commission (NEC) showed that 20 political parties competed for the election and that 82.89% of the 8,380,217 registered voters cast their ballots to elect their preferred leader. These two indicators clearly demonstrated that the country firmly adhered to the principles of liberal, multi-party democracy. The NEC stated that “more than 500 international observers from over 70 countries. International institutions included European Community, ASEAN countries, International Conference of Asian Political Parties, the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, and European Council on International Relations, inviting to witness the preparation of Cambodia’s elections and unanimously assessed that Cambodia organized elections in a neutral, free, fair, and democratic manner, which was better than elections in other democratic countries around the world, especially better than Western countries and the United States, where only 55.70% of the population voted in 2016. This led to the conclusion that the information the United States received information (freshnewsasia.com. 2018). Each statement stated that “the elections in Cambodia were organized in a free, fair, secure, orderly and free from violence, and there was consensus among observers from political parties in Cambodia, approximately 90,000, and another 80,000 from national associations and organizations.”

Cambodia not only implemented principle of liberal, multi-party democracy well, but also strengthened it. In 2013, only 69.61% of the population voted, compared to 82.89% in 2018, and the number of political parties increased from 8 in 2013 to 20 in 2018. In 2018, the election was conducted smoothly, peacefully, securely, and safely in accordance with the principles of liberal, multi-party democracy, in accordance with the Constitution, the Law on the Election of Representatives, the Regulations and Procedures for the Election of Representatives, the 6th Legislature, and other legal standards related to elections in Cambodia (Freshnewsasia.com. 2018). With Cambodia’s liberal, multi-party democracy regressing was politically motivated and belittled the will of the 6,946,164 Cambodian people who spent their valuable time voting for preferred leaders. Cambodia consistently adhered to and strengthened the principles of liberal, multi-party democracy, which reflected in neutral, free, fair, and elections in a democratic manner that was peaceful, secure, orderly,

and free from violence. Cambodia can progress further in the democratic process without turning back, so that Cambodia can maintain peace, long-term stability, and sustainable development, especially so that its own citizens can live in harmony and peace (Freshnewsasia.com. 2018).

3. Critical Arguments

3.1 Perspectives on Liberal, Multi-party Democracy in Cambodia

The National Senate of Cambodia considers the amendment to the electoral law to promote the values of liberal, multi-party democracy enshrined in the Constitution as the supreme law of the nation. At a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee chaired by Samdech Say Chhum, President of the Senate, on June 28, 2023, Senate Spokesperson Mam Bunneang said, “This law is to strengthen the responsibility of political leaders who are elected through democratic, liberal, multi-party elections at both the national and sub-national levels, which requires reforming the right to stand for election.” In this sense, citizens who intend to vote must have a high responsibility to motherland and people, starting from consistently exercising their right to vote by going to the polls, which is the main duty of good citizens with high responsibility in a democratic society. The constitutional amendment also stipulates that any person who act to affect the right to vote or citizens, as well as acted to affect or damage the electoral process, shall face temporary revocation of the right to stand for election or a ban on participating in the election. The Senate Standing Committee thoroughly review and discuss the draft law, and find it to be in accordance with the law and the constitution, and decide to include the draft law in the agenda of the 10th session of the Senate, 4th term, on June 29, 2023 (Freshnewsasia.com. 2018).

On the 70th anniversary of Cambodia’s independence from France in 1953, Prime Minister Hun Sen stated that “the government committed to protecting peace, national independence, and liberal, multi-party democracy with the respect for human rights.” (SEM, C. 2023) The Prime Minister stated in the presence of His Majesty the King and other leaders that Cambodia will unite as one to continue to protect its independence, territorial sovereignty, peace, the King, and the Constitution. The government continues to implement democracy and respect human rights. Hun Manet stated that there is a number of the principles. Cambodia, first, is needed to protect peace, independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and all achievements of national society to be sustainable. Second, Cambodia build the Kingdom of Cambodia as a democratic, free, multi-party, progressive, and strong state based on law, with a sustainable and equitable economic growth, and where the people have a prosperous life, live in harmony, with honor, dignity, and respect for human rights.

King Norodom Sihamoni said at the ceremony that “Cambodia is united as one nation under the umbrella of the Constitution and the laws of the state to participate in the defense and development of the homeland in all fields.” He added “In the past period, the Cambodian homeland and our people have undergone a new and admirable transformation.” The correct policies in implementing the good path and the noble political legacy that expects peace, solidarity, national unity, and national prestige, renown on the international stage. Cambodia enjoys and reaps positive results that stems from the strength of building and defends the nation and homeland with the harmony of its compatriots (SEM, C. 2023). The demand for and protection of true national independence depends on spirit of unity and national unity. By maintaining peace and respect for democracy in Cambodia, the Royal Government should provide a peace that is fair and non-discriminatory to the people, then it is a real and complete peace. By ensuring that peace is a complete peace, a peace that is fair for general public, without discrimination. With the democracy and free, the multi-party democracy in Cambodia seems to be complete from participating in July 2023 elections. This shows the right to freedom of political activity, which is in line with the principles of democracy (SEM, C. 2023).

3.2 Multi-party Democracy in Cambodia

The government’s commitment to respecting human rights and democratic principles is commendable. By addressing the human rights and democratic practices, particularly in relation to the political rights, there are challenges in competing with the political parties and political activists. Attention to human rights and democracy in the country should be open and free, as well as the adjustment of the electoral system to ensure that it is trusted by the people (SEM, C. 2023). However, Minister of Justice Keut Rith clarified that “the 10th Amendment to the Cambodian Constitution does not affect the liberal, multi-party democratic system and constitutional monarchy.” The Ministry of Justice held a plenary session of the National Assembly on the morning of July 28, 2022, discussing and approving the draft Constitution on the request to amend Article 19 (one), Article 89, Article 98, Article 102, Article 119 (one), and Article 125 of the Constitution, and Article 3 and Article 4 of the Constitutional Law, including four agenda items.

In response to statements by some civil society organizations, which are consistent with political analysts, the 10th Amendment to the Cambodian Constitution has affected the liberal, multi-party democratic system and constitutional monarchy by reducing the power of the National Assembly. Some statements are just additional voices, which are the words of some analysts and politicians or political parties. The 10th Amendment to the Constitution not only does not affect the liberal, multi-party democratic

system and the parliamentary constitutional monarchy, but also makes a significant contribution to promoting the liberal, multi-party democratic system in which the people own power, and makes the liberal, multi-party democratic system and parliamentary regime function smoothly and without obstruction. The 10th Amendment is to fill the gaps in the Constitution and ensure that state institutions, especially the executive branch, have the main mission of leading the general affairs of the state, and that their work is carried out smoothly, without any interruptions, and sustainably in all circumstances, in order to fulfill their mission of serving the best interests of the nation and the people of Cambodia (Freshnewsasia.com. 2022)

The draft Constitution on the request to amend Article 19 (one), Article 89, Article 98 (new), Article 102 (new), Article 119 (one), and Article 125 (new) of the Constitution, and Article 3 (new) and Article 4 (new) of the Constitution, was reviewed and approved by the Cabinet on July 8, 2022. The Cabinet stated that this draft law has two main objectives, such as (1) ensure that the supreme institution of the nation, especially the executive branch, whose main mission is to lead the general affairs of the state, has a smooth and sustainable process in all circumstances, and (2) ensure the protection and maintenance of peace, social security, public order, and political stability of the country at all times to be the foundation for the development of country in all sectors and well-being of Cambodian people (Freshnewsasia.com. 2022). On July 13, 2022, the Constitutional Council held a meeting to review the draft law on amending certain articles that do not affect the democratic, liberal, multi-party system and the constitutional monarchy. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, which was promulgated on September 24, 1993, has been amended 10 times. The amendments aim to ensure national sustainability as well as to ensure the supreme interests of the nation and the Cambodian people. The draft constitutional law on amending the eight articles of the Constitution and the Constitutional Law has the following detailed content⁴⁵⁷ (Freshnewsasia.com. 2022).

Article 19 New (Two): The King appoints the Prime Minister and appoints the Council of Ministers in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 119 New (Two). Article 89 New: At the request of at least one-tenth of the members, the National Assembly may invite one or more members of the Royal Government, accompanied by eminent experts in a particular field, to brief the National Assembly on matters of particular importance. Article 98 New (One): The National Assembly may dismiss a member of the Royal Government or remove the Royal Government from office by passing a motion of censure by an absolute majority of the total number of members of the National Assembly. In the event that the Royal Government is dismissed by the National Assembly, the Royal Government to be removed from office

shall only have the responsibility of leading the day-to-day affairs of the Royal Government until a new Royal Government takes office.

3.3 Principles of Multi-party Democracy in Cambodia

A motion of censure of Royal Government shall be submitted to the National Assembly by one-third of the total number of members of National Assembly before the National Assembly may discuss it. Based on article 102 New (One), the term of office of the Senate is limited to six years and shall expire when the new Senate takes office. In times of war or other special circumstances that make it impossible to hold elections, the Senate may, at the request of the King, extend its term once for one year. The extension of the term of the Senate shall be decided by the consent of at least two-thirds of the total number of members of the Senate. In the circumstances as described above, the Senate shall meet every day in succession. The Senate shall have the rights to decide to end the above special circumstances whenever the circumstances permit. However, the decision to end the special circumstances in which the country is in a state of emergency shall be decided jointly by the Senate and the National Assembly in a session of the National Assembly and the Senate, except for the implementation of Article 86 of the Constitution.

If the Senate cannot meet for necessary reasons, such as when a foreign force invades the territory, declaration of emergency shall automatically continue. Upon the proposal of the party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, the King shall appoint a member of the elite as Prime Minister to form the Royal Government (Article 119 New (Two)). The proposal of the party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly shall be copied to the President of the National Assembly. The person to be appointed as Prime Minister must be a representative of Cambodian nationality who is the only one elected from the party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly. The person to be appointed must bring his colleagues who are representatives of the people or members of the party represented in the National Assembly who are assigned to hold various positions in the Royal Government to seek the confidence of the National Assembly. This vote of confidence must be held on the list of the entire Cabinet. Once the National Assembly has voted in favor of the vote of confidence, the King shall issue a Royal Decree appointing the entire Cabinet.

Before taking office, the Cabinet shall take the oath of office as set out in Appendix 6. At the end of each term of the National Assembly, the outgoing Royal Government shall only be responsible for day-to-day operations until a new Royal Government takes office. In the event of the Prime Minister's temporary absence, the Prime Minister shall appoint a Deputy Prime Minister to act as Acting Prime Minister to assume the duties of temporarily leading the Cabinet (Article 125 New (a)). If the position of Prime Minister becomes

permanently vacant due to, for example, the resignation or death of the Prime Minister, a new Cabinet shall be appointed immediately under the conditions stipulated in Constitution. The President of National Assembly shall convene National Assembly immediately and take other necessary measures promptly within 7 days after receiving a request from the party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly. In the event of position of Prime Minister becoming permanently vacant due to the resignation of the Cabinet, the outgoing Cabinet, under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister who has been appointed as the Acting Prime Minister, shall only be responsible for leading the day-to-day work until a new Cabinet takes office.

The resignation of the Prime Minister shall be made by means of a letter of resignation to be sent to the King and copied to the President of the National Assembly. In such a case, the outgoing Cabinet shall continue to lead the work of the Royal Government until a new Cabinet takes office. In particular, two articles of the Constitutional Law are. New Article 3 and New Article 4 of the Supplementary Constitutional Law aimed at ensuring the normal functioning of national institutions are amended. With New Article 3 (one), In the event that the procedures of New Article 82 (one) and New Article 119 (two) of the Constitution cannot be achieved, the National Assembly, upon the request of the party with the most seats in the National Assembly, may conduct a package election to elect the President, Vice-President of the National Assembly, as well as the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the National Assembly committees, at the same time as granting confidence to the Royal Government. Based on new Article 4 (one), The preparation of the list of members for the election and granting confidence shall be carried out. The list of members of President and Vice-President of the National Assembly, as well as the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of all specialized committees of the National Assembly shall be prepared and proposed by the political party with the most seats in the National Assembly and shall be sent to the Senate of the National Assembly. The President of the National Assembly shall be elected from among the members of the National Assembly who are Khmer citizens only. Upon the proposal of the political party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, the King shall appoint a person as Prime Minister to form the Royal Government. The person to be appointed as Prime Minister shall be the only representative of Cambodian nationality elected from the political party with the largest number of seats in National Assembly. The person appointed shall prepare various positions in Royal Government and submit a list of all members of the Royal Government to the Senate of the National Assembly.

The Senate of the National Assembly shall immediately and without delay prepare a list of names in a package including President and Vice-Presidents

of the National Assembly, as well as the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of all specialized committees of the National Assembly, as well as the Prime Minister appointed by the King, and all members of the Royal Government, for submission to National Assembly for election. The Senate of the National Assembly shall lead the National Assembly to vote and approve this list immediately. The Senate of National Assembly shall be elected by selecting the oldest member of National Assembly among all members of the National Assembly. In the event that the Senate of the National Assembly is unable to perform his or her duties, the position of Senate of the National Assembly shall be assigned to another member of the National Assembly who is older in the order of succession. After debate in National Assembly, the National Assembly voted unanimously to approve draft constitution on the proposal to amend Article 19 New (One), Article 89, Article 98 New, Article 102 New, Article 119 New (One), and Article 125 New of the Constitution and Article 3 New and Article 4 New of the Constitutional Law by 105 votes in favor out of 106, votes (Freshnewsasia.com. 2022).

3.4 International perspectives on the political landscape in Cambodia

China and Russia issue separate statements of support for the process of Cambodian election. China and Russia said that the election is held in a good and free atmosphere, while the United States expresses the concerns about democratic process and considers the recent Cambodian election to be free and fair. After a day of elections for the 7th term of National Assembly, which closed on July 23, 2023, the major world powers issue their own statements through spokespersons of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of their embassies in Phnom Penh. Starting with the United States, Matthew Miller, spokesman for United States Department of State, issued a statement on the Cambodian election. In the statement, it assessed that the election on July 23, 2023 was free and fair because Cambodian authorities continuously give rights to the media and civil society, reflecting the country's constitution and Cambodia's international obligations. The United States announced visa non-restrictions for the individuals to be democracy.

However, the United States argues its readiness to work with new Cambodian People's Party government as it forms a new government that has the opportunity to improve its international standing, such as restoring genuine multi-party democracy (Kourn, S. 2023). The United States, for the great power of China, expresses its warm congratulations to Cambodia for successfully holding 7th national election and congratulated the Cambodian People's Party for winning the election under the leadership of Samdech Hun Sen. At the press conference, it is stated as a good neighbor and a good friend; China warmly congratulates Cambodia for successfully holding 7th national election in a good atmosphere and congratulates the Cambodian People's

Party for winning the election under the leadership of Samdech Hun Sen. China also wishes Cambodia a smooth parliamentary and new government election. Mao Ning China is willing to work with Cambodia to continue the friendship from generation to generation and accelerate the building of a high-quality, high-level and high-standard China-Cambodia community with a shared future in the new era to better benefit the two peoples (Kourn, S. 2023).

Not unlike China, Anatoly Borovik, the Russian Ambassador to Phnom Penh, claimed that the election campaign in Cambodia is conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. Anatoly Borovik congratulates Cambodia holding democracy, assessing the free and independent elections. He stated that representatives of Central Election Commission of the People's Assembly of Russia, including the Russian Embassy, do not find any violence (Kourn, S. 2023). It was worth noting that the 7th term parliamentary elections concluded on July 23, 2023, with a voter turnout of over 8 million people, or over 84 percent, a high rate compared to 2022 commune and sangkat elections. According to unofficial preliminary results, the Cambodian People's Party won 120 seats and the FUNCINPEC Party won 5 seats, out of 18 political parties competing for seats (Kourn, S. 2023).

Meanwhile, the National Election Commission (NEC) on August 5, 2023, announced the official results of the 7th National Election, calculated in terms of votes. According to the official results table of the 7th National Election, 8,214,430 Cambodians voted in the general election on July 23, 2023, of which 7,774,276 were valid votes and 440,154 were invalid votes. Of all the votes, the Cambodian People's Party received the highest number of votes, up to 6,398,311. The Funcinpec Party came in second with 716,490 votes. The Khmer United National Party received 134,285 votes. The Cambodian Youth Party received 97,412 votes. The Democratic Party received 84,030 votes. Other parties received a small number of votes, (NEC, 2023). This indicates that the national election for the 7th term, held on July 23, 2023, is considered successful, free and fair, with approximately 84.59 percent of the 9 million registered voters voting. The election in Cambodia is the highest voter turnout and the highest number of national and international election observers in the history of Cambodian elections.

4. Conclusion

The trajectory of Cambodia's democratic development reveals both progress and persistent challenges. While the Constitution enshrines the liberal, multi-party democracy, political practices often reflect the CPP's overwhelming dominance, limiting meaningful competition. Nonetheless, the rise of new parties, high voter participation, and constitutional reforms indicate that the multi-party democracy retains a foundation for future growth. International

responses underscore the contested nature of Cambodia's political system – praised by allies for stability and economic progress and serving the political pluralism. Ultimately, Cambodia's democratic future significantly depends on strengthening the institutional independence, ensuring the fair political competition, and upholding the human rights to foster a more inclusive and resilient political system.

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