

Cambodia Within ASEAN: Twenty-Years in the Making

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Edited by
Robert Hör

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Acknowledgement

The year 2019 marks the 20th year anniversary of Cambodia being the 10th member of ASEAN. The roadmap of Cambodia's accession to this regional grouping has indeed come a long way and even throughout these 20-years, a lot have been spelled out. On one hand, Cambodia gradually gained more recognition on the international arena after decades of isolation due to our prolonged civil war while at the same time, the economy has seen a remarkable growth. On the other, the push and pull factors got Cambodia (and as well the region) caught in the middle of strategic power rivalry in the newly-emerging regional order, which demand ASEAN to play a much greater role. After all these 20 years, Cambodia look forward to ASEAN as a guarantor of regional peace and prosperity as well as a bridge to key partners of the region.

The author wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Konrad-Adeneur-Stiftung (KAS) in Cambodia for their generous research grant and support along the way to have this project realized and making the analysis available for public consumption at large. This paper would also serve to stimulate more strategic dialogue and academic debate as well as providing roadmap for further research on the specified theme. It is also in the hope that this project could partially assist the Cambodian government in pursuing relevant policies and implementing effective reforms on targeted institutions, more so on the balancing diplomacy amidst the dynamics power competition in the region.

The tremendous support from CICP colleagues is worth acknowledging. A personal note of thank goes to Mr. Him Rotha and Ms. Annietha Raj, our research interns, and Dr. Bradley J. Murg, our visiting senior research fellow, for offering a helping hand along the way toward the completion of this project. The appreciation is also extended to Mr. Robert Höer of KAS Cambodia for his insightful feedbacks to strengthen the argument and overall context of this paper. Any unintended mistakes or loopholes though still rest at the responsibility of the author herself.

The opinions and findings expressed herein are those of the author and does not necessarily reflect one's affiliation or the funding institution. The views elaborated do not represent the official policies of any organizations or governments.

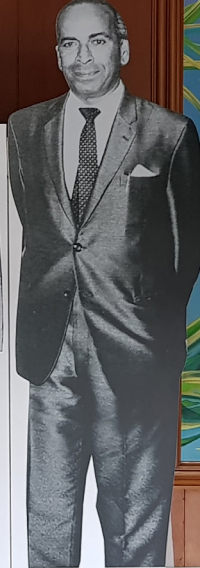
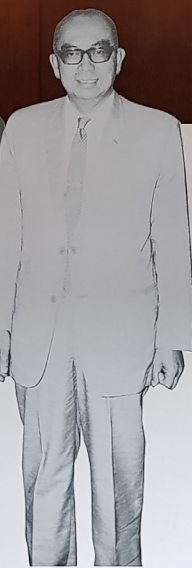
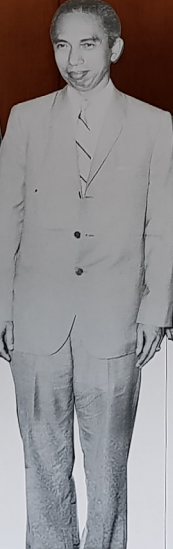
"ASEAN... could marshal the still untapped potentials of this rich region through more substantial united action"
H.E. Narciso R. Ramos (Philippines)

"... (An ASEAN) vision was not wishful thinking, if the countries of the region effectively cooperated with each other"
H.E. Adam Malik (Indonesia)

"The goal of ASEAN, then, is to create, not to destroy."
H.E. Thanat Khoman (Thailand)

"We the nations and peoples of Southeast Asia must get together and form... a new perspective and... framework for our region."
H.E. Tun Abdul Razak (Malaysia)

"If ASEAN would succeed, then its members would have to marry national... and regional thinking."
H.E. S. Rajaratnam (Singapore)



H.E. Narciso R. Ramos (Philippines)

H.E. Adam Malik (Indonesia)

H.E. Thanat Khoman (Thailand)

H.E. Tun Abdul Razak (Malaysia)

H.E. S. Rajaratnam (Singapore)

The Founding Fathers of ASEAN

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1. Introduction: The ASEAN Overview

2017 marked a historical occasion when the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (henceforth ASEAN) turned half-a-century old. Many dialogue events were organized across Southeast Asia and beyond to commemorate ASEAN's 50th years anniversary so as to remember the 'spirit' that led to the formation of ASEAN in safeguarding the region from ideological sphere of influence, in transforming this region from conflicted arena of insecurity and economic disadvantage, into a new potential region of aston-

ishing prosperity, greater political stability, and more so as part of the larger 'Asian Miracle' of which the external partners are eyeing to play some major roles. 50-years of ASEAN was also manifested by various assessment of past performances, enduring challenges, and future prospects as of how ASEAN would be like or would turn into after 50 years of its existence. How can we make ASEAN more relevant in the midst of dynamic and uncertain regional political landscape? As expectation is set high for ASEAN,

more works need to be done to reassure its strategic importance in the global arena and its relevance for all the 10-member states.

Back in 1967, when the 5 founding fathers of ASEAN namely: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand agreed to establish a regional organization, the initial attempt was to shield the region from the growing-spread and spillover effects of communism amidst ideological contestation of the Cold War phenomenon between the US and Soviet Union.¹ Before reaching the substantial product, i.e. ASEAN that we are having today, the intention to have a regional cooperation platform established had undergone several stages – from Asian Relations Conference in 1947 to Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 to Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in 1961 to MAPHILINDO in 1963.² Given the fragile political nature and social instability of some nation states as well as the undissolved problems between neighboring countries in the region, the consecutive efforts toward realizing one regional umbrella did not happen. Countries in Southeast Asia, with the only exception of Thailand, had been under Western colonization for decades-long. Hence, back then, the tendency to struggle for national independence and sovereignty from their respective colonies were more prominent than the idea of regional coalition for the time-being.

Even after the benchmark of ‘colonization’ had vanished, the region was not at ease. Shortly after, the 1960s Cold War’s dilemma kicked in with the evidently-disastrous Vietnam War from 1965 till 1975, followed by the collapse of the South Vietnamese government. The outburst of Vietnam War had a very unfortunate spillover effects on Cambodia’s consecutive political regime changes in the 1970s, included the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge, and its aftermath for a few more decades to come until a complete package of peace and stability came to realize in 1998. It is worth noted that Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (the then Burma), and Vietnam had also been invited to join ASEAN’s formation at the early stage but instead declined for speculative reasons. Burma still suffered from the impact of military coup in 1962 and as General Ne Win claimed, that was to protect Burma’s ‘neutrality policy’. Similarly, Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam³ viewed it as the creation of yet another Western-back initiative and thus, dismissed the ASEAN’s formation. South Vietnam, though, was eager to take part but was overwhelmed with the burden at home endured from the civil war with North Vietnam.⁴

Martin Loffelholz and Danilo A. Arao pointed out an interesting argument that the Cold War between the US and the former USSR had ‘encouraged’ the foundation of ASEAN, while decades later, the end of this global conflict opened the door for the expansion

1 Peter Church, *A short history of Southeast Asia*, 5th edition. (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd, 2009).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Estrella D. Solidum, *The Politics of ASEAN: An Introduction to Southeast Asia Regionalism*. (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003).

of the grouping in the late 1990s.⁵ Brunei, for instance, only became a sovereign state in 1984 and that goes to show how infancy the system of political foundation here in Southeast Asia is. The so-called 'ASEAN Way' is designed in this regard; a trademark illustrating the non-binding partnership cooperation with minimal institutional bureaucracy, marginal supranational composition, and a strong proponent for consensus-building in relations to its decision-making process.⁶

ASEAN's fundamental principles, which was adopted in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, underpin the "mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity for all nations, and as well non-interference in the internal affairs of one another".⁷

2019, on the other hand, is yet another important milestone for Cambodia, marking the 20-years anniversary of Cambodia's accession to ASEAN. 20-years within ASEAN is marked with manifestation of potential economic prosperity, major political and diplomatic momentum, as well as toward further building a coherent regional identity and neighborliness diplomacy. In commemorating this two-decades long of being the

last member states to join ASEAN, this paper aims to trace back the historical scenario in relations to the road of Cambodia's accession to ASEAN, to assess the achievement and progress been accomplished thus far for Cambodia, to examine the setback and shortfall been encountered as well as to explore ways to cope up with the enduring and future challenges. The paper ends by contemplating the prospective proposition of Cambodia within ASEAN vis-à-vis the aspect of the dynamic regional order and the evolving regional architecture as recently been observed.

5 Martin Loffelholz and Danilo A. Arao, *The ASEAN Guide: A Journalist's Handbook to Regional Integration in Southeast Asia*. (Berlin: International Institute for Journalism, 2010).

6 Jurgen Haacke, *ASEAN's diplomatic culture: Origins, developments, and prospects*. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

7 ASEAN, Overview. <https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/overview/>

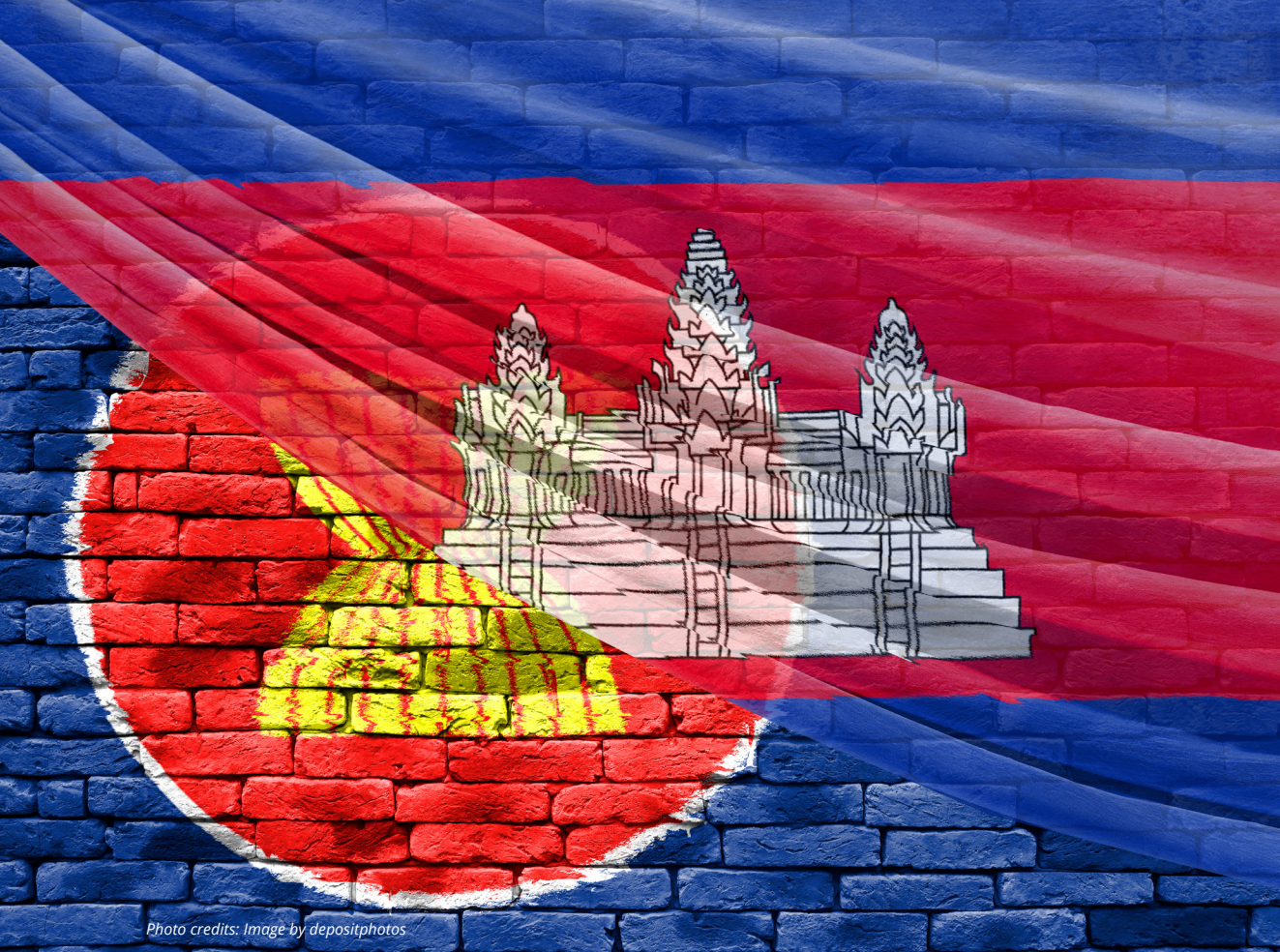


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2. Cambodia before ASEAN-10: The Historical Narrative

In April 1999, Cambodia eventually got admitted to be the 10th member of ASEAN, following the deferral in 1997 due to internal political crisis and after years of being this regional grouping's observer. However, there had been several engagements between ASEAN and Cambodia in relations to the country's political consequences way before that. Since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 till becoming a member of this

organization in 1999, many incidents had occurred in Cambodia that led to several regime changes; ASEAN did not turn a blind eye on Cambodia's affairs.

When ASEAN was formally established in 1967, just as many other regions across the globe, Southeast Asia and particularly, Cambodia, was also at the edge of the repercussion of the Cold War. Despite the

uncertainty and instability of Cambodia's political climate, the then Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Adam Malik, was still insisted to extend the invitation to Prince Sihanouk for Cambodia to be part of ASEAN since the early stage. However, as the Head of State of Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk stood firmly on the principle of neutrality and non-alliance to avoid being trapped in the Vietnam War, though, he proclaimed to remain "friend of ASEAN".⁸ The situation in Cambodia got worsened when General Lon Nol and Prince Sirik Matak staged a coup d'état to overthrow Prince Sihanouk in March 1970; Cambodia for the first time in history became a Republic.⁹ The new Republican regime however was not recognized by ASEAN leaders as the legitimate government of Cambodia and Prince Sihanouk widely gained support in the region.¹⁰ Cambodia under the pro US military led Khmer Republic regime gradually witnessed the major division in the country which led to a civil war. With the US' withdrawal from the region, Lon Nol's government failed desperately, and Cambodia fell into the atrocity regime of the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. This genocidal regime was also known to isolate the country from the rest of the world, including ASEAN, ex-

cept China and several other communist countries.¹¹

The relations between Cambodia and ASEAN was cut off until the controversial intervention of the Vietnamese troops and the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea (UFNSK) in 1979. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, alongside with China and the US, ASEAN condemned Vietnam for invading Cambodia's sovereignty. Days after the presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, ASEAN issued a joint statement¹² in the occasion of the special ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting. That statement posted that ASEAN viewed the armed conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia as "the armed intervention against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kampuchea (Cambodia)". ASEAN also called for the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia's territory. A new political regime known as the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was established in Phnom Penh, with the help of the Vietnamese.¹³ However, there were also other movements along the Cambodia-Thai border, namely: FUNCINPEC of Prince Sihanouk, KPNLF of Son Sann,

8 Din Merican, Cambodia's engagement with ASEAN: Lesson learned for Timor-Leste. (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 2007), <http://www.cicp.org.kh/userfiles/file/Working%20Paper/CICP%20working%20paper%2014-%20Cambodia's%20Engagement%20in%20ASEAN%20by%20Din%20Merican.pdf>

9 Path Kosal, "Introduction: Cambodia's political history and foreign relations," in Deth Sok Udom, Sun Suon & Serkan Bulut (Ed.) Cambodia's foreign relations in regional and global contexts (Phnom Penh: Korad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017), 13.

10 See footnote number 9.

11 Ibid.

12 "Joint Statement The Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting On The Current Political Development In The Southeast Asia Region Bangkok, 12 January 1979," last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_post=joint-statement-the-special-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-on-the-current-political-development-in-the-southeast-asia-region-bangkok-12-january-1979

13 James Brook, "Why did Vietnam overthrow the Khmer Rouge in 1978?," Khmer Times, August 7, 2014, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50673/why-did-vietnam-overthrow-the-khmer-rouge-in-1978/>

and the Khmer Rouge faction.¹⁴ These three movements merged together officially in 1982 under the name of “Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK)”.¹⁵ This coalition ‘faction’ was formed under the assistance of ASEAN countries for months, and held the Cambodia’s seat in the United Nations General Assembly.¹⁶

There were occasional clashes between the PRK government and the CGDK coalition until the late 1980s that the negotiation between these two parties occurred. The negotiation was held under the benchmark of ASEAN in 1988 known as Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM), which was the initial attempt to restore peace and stability in Cambodia. The meeting was evolved to the third round, when Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, suggested to form the Supreme National Council (SNC) of Cambodia in order to settle the power-sharing mechanism, and brought about the peace process to another level.¹⁷ Under the international pressure, Vietnam began to withdraw its troops from Cambodia in 1989. Two years later, the Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreement or

Paris Peace Agreement¹⁸ in 1991 was signed by 19 signatories, which led to the formation of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (known as UNTAC) to operate the peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission. In 1993, the general election was conducted in Cambodia despite Khmer Rouge boycotted. To resolve the political deadlock after the election, the new government was formed under 2 Prime Ministership, Prince Norodom Rannariddh of FUNCINPEC as the first Prime Minister, and Samdech Hun Sen as the second; ASEAN recognized the UN-sponsored election.¹⁹

Although the political environment in Cambodia was rather uncertain, Cambodia was invited to various ASEAN Ministerial Meetings.²⁰ Cambodia signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in 1995 and became this organization’s observer in that year as well. In May 1997, ASEAN Foreign Ministers announced in Kuala Lumpur that Cambodia alongside with Laos and Myanmar would become ASEAN member in July that year.²¹ However, the clash broke out

14 Michael Vickery, Cambodia: A political Survey, 14-15. <http://michaelvickery.org/vickery2007cambodia.pdf>

15 Ang Cheng Guan, “The struggle for recognition of the CGDK,” Singapore, ASEAN and the Cambodian conflict 1978-1991, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), <http://m.en.freshnewsasia.com/index.php/en/localnews/14250-2019-06-07-08-46-26.html>

16 Ibid.

17 Sam Ath Sambath Sreysour & Dr. Oum Sothea, “Cambodia in the ASEAN context,” in Deth Sok Udom, Sun Suon & Serkan Bulut (Ed.) Cambodia’s foreign relations in regional and global contexts (Phnom Penh: Korad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017), 315.

18 “Paris Peace Agreement,” last modified 1991, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KH_911023_FrameworkComprehensivePoliticalSettlementCambodia.pdf

19 Kao Kim Hourn & Norbert von Hofmann, National elections: Cambodia’s Experiences and Expectations (Phnom Penh: CICP, 1998)

20 Kao Kim Hourn, “Cambodia in ASEAN: Lessons learned and continuing challenges,” in Kao Kim Hourn & Jeffery A. Kaplan (Ed.) Cambodia’s future in ASEAN: Dynamo or Dynamite, (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1998).

21 “Joint Statement of the Special Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers on Cambodia Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 10 July 1997,” last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_post=joint-statement-of-the-special-meeting-of-the-asean-foreign-ministers-on-cambodia-kuala-

between the loyalist force of Samdech Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Rannariddh, and consequently led to the postpone of ASEAN membership.²² ASEAN responded to the street battle by establishing ASEAN Troika, which consisted of three ASEAN member states: namely Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines in an attempt to contribute to the “peace process” in Cambodia after July 1997 event.²³ After the political reform in Cambodia and the return of Prince Rannariddh in 1998, Cambodia was backed by Laos and Vietnam to be admitted as a member of ASEAN.²⁴ Until April 1999, Cambodia was approved to be an ASEAN member state in Hanoi, making ASEAN to become ASEAN-10.²⁵

After the accession to ASEAN succeeded, many recognized the political institutions Cambodia has worked hard to build to enhance the political stability. By 1999, Cambodia had a new Senate, Constitutional Council, and an active parliamentary opposition party. Relations with Vietnam and Thailand were better than they were before. George Edgar, the British Ambassador at the time, recognized that the government was now more capable to focus on economic and de-

velopment issues.²⁶

Whilst the political infrastructure of Cambodia has greatly changed, the 1991 Paris Accords’ 5 annexes are still important to this country’s development.²⁷ Falling under ASEAN’s principle as well, neutrality and unity are the key focuses. It is argued that ASEAN members have a continuing obligation to ensure that the Paris Agreements remain the framework for Cambodia’s political future. In the early 1990s, ASEAN’s policy of engagement with Cambodia was aimed at re-establishing political order and democracy on the basis of the 1991 Paris Agreement and 1993 Cambodian Constitution so that Cambodia would be admitted as a member.²⁸

Overall the expectations from the Paris Agreement and ASEAN membership has been that Cambodia should organize credible elections, stabilize political engagement, improve member relationships, utilize their UN seat, and capitalize on investments.²⁹ Over the 20 years of ASEAN membership, Cambodia has portrayed significant dedication towards continuous engagement in

lumpur-malaysia-10-july-1997

22 Ibid.

23 Kao Kim Hourn, “Cambodia in ASEAN: Lessons learned and continuing challenges,” In Kao Kim Hourn & Jeffery A. Kaplan (Ed.) *Cambodia’s future in ASEAN: Dynamo or Dynamite* (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1998).

24 Ibid.

25 “Statement by the Secretary-General of ASEAN Welcoming the Kingdom of Cambodia as the Tenth Member State of ASEAN 30 April 1999,” last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_post=statement-by-the-secretary-general-of-asean-welcoming-the-kingdom-of-cambodia-as-the-tenth-member-state-of-asean-30-april-1999-asean-secretariat

26 Tony Kevin, “Cambodia and Southeast Asia,” The CICP Distinguished Lecture Series Report, (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1999).

27 McCormick Eileen, “Paris Peace Accords Are Still Important for Cambodia,” *Khmer Times*, 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/524681/paris-peace-accords-are-still-important-for-cambodia/>.

28 Carlyle Thayer, “Cambodia and Regional Stability: ASEAN And Constructive Engagement,” The CICP Distinguished Lecture Series Report, Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1998).

29 Kao Kim Hourn, “Cambodia-From Crisis to Promise: Building the Future,” The Conference Working Paper Series, (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1998).

regional affairs in order to safeguard the national interests and concur to the expectations from other member states.³⁰ Despite some territorial disputes and historical conflicts afflicting the development, Cambodia has proved to be a worthy adversary of ASEAN and has taken the opportunities that ASEAN provides to improve their political, economic and socio-cultural frameworks.

30 Ibid.



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3. Cambodia after 20-years in ASEAN: Achievements and Opportunities

The establishment of ASEAN illustrated the collective will of the nation states that bind together in friendship and cooperation through joint efforts and sacrifices. Now after 20 years of being part of ASEAN, Cambodia has seen remarkable opportunities and achievements despite being the last one

to join this regional grouping. Since 1999, Cambodia has benefited enormously from the investment inflow and trade between intra-ASEAN countries as well as from ASEAN's external partners. ASEAN's model of political security has provided the framework

to build upon foreign policy and regional stability based on mutual respect and non interference. The ever increasing regional connectivity has boosted even more physical connection that further enhance trade facility as well as socio-cultural community and ASEAN identity as a whole. This section will highlight the opportunities ASEAN has provided for Cambodia since 1999 and the outcomes within economic, political security, and socio-cultural prospects.

Economic Potential

After the win-win policy of political integration in 1998 and eventually getting admitted into ASEAN, Cambodia's economy is one of the fastest growing economies, unmatched by any other post conflict society.³¹ Cambodia continues to endeavor to deepen the regional economic integration, to enlarge the market scope and the economic of scale, contributing to minimize the economic barriers across the region.³²

Whilst Cambodia's membership in ASEAN has provided numerous prospects, it is important to view how Cambodia's economic status was handled before 1999. Between 1993-1996, Cambodia achieved a macro-economic stability and a steady GDP growth rate of around 7% annually, with a per capita

income rose from USD150 to USD300.³³ During that period, Cambodia steadily improved its economic opportunities, despite the political uncertainty which led to an internal clash of 1997 incident between the two coalition governments. Consequently, Cambodia struggled an economic slowdown from 7% growth rate in 1996 to 2% growth in 1997; this is attributed to several factors including the depreciation of the Riel, dollarized economic activities, inflation, among others.³⁴ However, with thorough fiscal management procedure, the country was able to keep close to targets. The government then addressed the need to strengthen ASEAN regional economic cooperation, domestic economic environment as well as institutional reforms. Cambodia's participation in ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) further enlarged the country's trade volume and intra-regional trade flow. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint allowed for the freer mobility of trade flow, and the facilitation of investment in goods and services through the harmonization and standardization of regional trade policies.³⁵

The early accession of Cambodia to ASEAN saw the increase in trade volume within the region from USD 620 million (export from Cambodia amounted to less than USD 100

31 United Nations Development Programme, About Cambodia. UNDP In Cambodia, last modified 2019, <http://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

32 Siow Yue Chia, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Integration: Developments and Challenges. Asian Economic Policy Review 6 (1), (2011), 43-63.

33 Aun Porn Moniroth, "Cambodia And the ASEAN Free Trade Area". In Cambodia's Future In ASEAN: Dynamo or Dynamite. Phnom Penh: CICP. Kao Kim Hourn, "Cambodia-From Crisis to Promise: Building the Future," The Conference Working Paper Series, (Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 1998).

34 Ibid.

35 ASEAN, "ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint," (Jakarta: The ASEAN Secretariat, 2008), 16.

million in value) to USD 6.6 billion in 2017 (with the value of USD 1.1 billion of export). The volume of Cambodia's overall trade also keep increasing over the years, from USD 2.7 billion to approximately USD 25 billion in 2017.³⁶ The key export is garment manufacturing products, accounted for almost 70% of the total export in 2016, while the main import product is textile (to be used for the garment industry).³⁷ Within the region, Cambodia has exported mainly the agricultural products,³⁸ while the main import from ASEAN countries are fertilizer, chemicals, vehicles and textile.³⁹ Cambodia has also since then been seen as an investment friendly environment due to the geographical advantage, the extension of partnership to regional and international cooperation, including being an ASEAN member in 1999 and the World Trade Organization in 2004 respectively, as well as many other bilateral agreements with other countries.⁴⁰ According to the World Bank (2019), the Foreign Di-

rect Investment (FDI) in Cambodia constantly increase from USD 118 million in 2000 to about USD 2.7 billion in 2017.⁴¹ Countries from Asia (namely China, Japan, South Korea) as well as ASEAN countries (such as Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam) have had the most FDI inflow to Cambodia, though there is a significant number of investment from the US and the EU countries as well.⁴²

Whilst FDI has been the main source of Cambodia's market expansion, the regional organization has also given Cambodia potential access to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which account for 30% of the world's GDP and one-fourth of global export; this framework holds huge opportunities for Cambodia as an ASEAN member.⁴³

The main sectors of investment in Cambodia are garment, infrastructure, and services.⁴⁴ Traditionally, garment and footwear has dominated the FDI trend in Cambodia since it was introduced by Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan.⁴⁵ In 2017, the garment industry

36 Ministry of Commerce. (2017, March 28). Value of Exports and Imports (USD) IN 2000. <https://www.moc.gov.kh/Portals/0/Docs/TradeInfo/TS01%20Value%20of%20Exports%20and%20Imports%20in%202000-20170328133355133.pdf>

37 World Trade Organization [WTO], Trade policy review on Cambodia, last modified 2017, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tp_r_e/s364_e.pdf

38 World Bank, Cambodia Product exports and imports By Country and Region 2016, last modified 2016, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/KHM/Year/2016/TradeFlow/EXPIMP/Partner/all/Product/Total>

39 Leng Thearith, "Cambodia Benefits Economically from ASEAN," Khmer Times, 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50599089/cambodia-benefits-economically-from-asean/>.

40 United Nations Development Programme, Competitiveness and linkages in Cambodia's manufacturing sector, last modified 2014, <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/dam/cambodia/docs/PovRed/Competitiveness%20and%20Linkages%20in%20Cambodia%E2%80%99s%20Manufacturing%20Sector.pdf>

41 World Bank, Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$), last modified 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?locations=KH>

42 World Trade Organization [WTO], Trade policy review on Cambodia, last modified 2017, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tp_r_e/s364_e.pdf

43 See footnote number 40.

44 ASEAN, "ASEAN Investment Report 2018: Foreign direct investment and the digital economy in ASEAN," (Jakarta: The ASEAN Secretariat, 2018), <https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/ASEAN-Investment-Report-2018-for-Website.pdf>

45 Yoko Asuyama and Seiha Neou, How has the Cambodian garment industry evolved?, last modified 2012, http://www.ide.go.jp/library/English/Publish/Download/Report/2011/pdf/410_ch3.pdf

was mostly owned by Chinese companies, however, the number of non-garment industries, like beverages, construction companies, and pharmaceutical companies are also increasing, with the investment inflow from ASEAN countries, e.g. Vinamilk from Vietnam, Kampot Cement from Thailand, and many other joint ventures.⁴⁶ Another investment scope is in services, particularly the banking sector of which intra-ASEAN banks such as Vietcom Bank of Vietnam, Kasikornbank and SCB of Thailand, as well as mobile banking like Malaysia's PayAIZ and Maybank, among others, are widely present in Cambodia's financial market.⁴⁷ Apart from that, real estate and other infrastructure investment also attract the investors from ASEAN countries and beyond as well.

Trade has not been the only source of Cambodia's economic development, but also the prospect of free movement of labor. ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has facilitated labor movement within the region and has encouraged Human Resource Development (HRD) initiatives aimed at developing competencies and qualifications in the labor force.⁴⁸ In return, these skilled labor, jobs, and developing markets are being reinvested in Cambodia's local economy. However, looking at Cambodia's element of HRD, higher education, technical and vocational

trainings seem to be neglected.⁴⁹ During the Khmer Rouge regime, higher education was completely abolished. At present, there are 105 higher education institutions,⁵⁰ although much-needed resources and the quality assurance of those institutions remain limited. Investing in this area will certainly fill in the gap of HRD in the future; otherwise the mismatch between the quality of education and the much-needed skills in the workforce will remain to be a key challenge.

Whilst this component of AEC's vision is optimistic, ASEAN has also recognized the disparity gap between the 10 member countries. In order for Cambodia to maximize the benefits of ASEAN integration, there ought to be a more constructive policy dialogue on the development divide and the hindering issue toward regional economic integration. Despite the challenges presented by developing an economic community, Cambodia's openness to foreign investment and support from ASEAN has enabled their economic development to soar. For the past 20 years since Cambodia's accession to ASEAN, it is evidenced that Cambodia continues to improve their trade relations with neighboring countries and beyond which contribute to the attainment of 7% growth rate annually as well as strengthening the capacity of its national economic power.

⁴⁶ See footnote number 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Sowath Rana and Alexandre Ardichvili, "Cambodia And the ASEAN Economic Community: Opportunities, Challenges, And Implications for Human Resource Development," *Reconsidering Development* 3 (1), (2014), 39-53.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Khieng Sothy, Srinivasa Madhur and Chhem Rethy, eds., "Cambodia Education 2015: Employment and Empowerment," (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Development Resource Institute, 2015), <https://cdri.org.kh/wp-content/uploads/FP2-edu2015-e.pdf>

Political Security Aspect

As a small country, Cambodia has no interest to be at odds with the superpowers, its neighbors, and/or western countries.⁵¹ Thus, Cambodia's ascension to ASEAN has provided a great tie of friendship and dialogue platform to enhance Cambodia's political security and outward stability. It has also provided protection against foreign invasion, interference and support Cambodia's independence and sovereignty. ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) sets clear principles between member states to comply with. After Cambodia's traumatic past, the people have worked hard to define a new age of the country's peaceful environment and development agenda. ASEAN's Political Security Blueprint outlines key cooperation in political development across the region, provides framework for strategic infrastructure development, promotes the protection of human rights, and more. This Blueprint has served as a crucial catalyst to offset risks and uncertainties.⁵² Nevertheless, on the political-security front, ASEAN officials said it only scored 12 percent while they scored up to 92 percent for economic community and 82 percent for socio-cultural, according to the so-called scorecards

that ASEAN had developed back in 2014.⁵³ The shortfall has remained a hindering issue given the differences in political structure, democracy, quasi-democracy and authoritarian governments, of which dialogue has become more sensitive.⁵⁴

Cambodia has benefited immensely from ASEAN's cooperation agenda, its extensive partnership and continuous engagement prospects of which Cambodia has tried hard to restore after a long period of isolation from the international community during the Khmer Rouge period onward till UN operation mission to the country in 1991. Cambodia's incorporation into the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) has ensured the direction and sharpen its focus to narrowing down the development gap. The key priority areas of the IAI include infrastructure, HRD, information and communications technology (ICT), capacity-building for regional economic integration, poverty reduction, and improvement in the quality of life.⁵⁵

ASEAN Political-Security Community (ASPC) Vision 2025 aspires for a unified, inclusive, and resilient community where the ASEAN people shall live in a peaceful, harmonious and secure environment, embrace the values of tolerance and moderation as well as

51 Kingdom of Cambodia Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, "CAMBODIA Stability And Development First," (Phnom Penh, 2018).

52 Desk, RepASEAN. 2019. "After 20 Years, Cambodia Has Reaped Benefits From ASEAN". Reporting ASEAN - News Around ASEAN Regionalism. <http://www.aseannews.net/20-years-cambodia-reaped-benefits-asean/>.

53 Theara Khoun, "Asean Political, Security Issues Impeding Integration," Voice of America, 2014, <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/asean-political-security-issues-impeding-integration/1947710.html>.

54 Ibid

55 Sowath Rana and Alexandre Ardichvili, "Cambodia And the ASEAN Economic Community: Opportunities, Challenges, And Implications for Human Resource Development," *Reconsidering Development* 3 (1), (2014), 39-53.

upholding the ASEAN fundamental principles, shared values and norms.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, territorial dispute and hard security issues remain to be the critical challenge disrupting this opportunity of cooperation; points of controversy on cross-cutting issues such as the South China Sea, the Mekong, and economic domination. More recently, Cambodia-Thailand dispute in 2008 and 2011 over Preah Vihear case, have seen major disappointment of the limited role that ASEAN possess in resolving hardline cases of member countries, given the lingering principle of non-interference. Cambodia favored ASEAN's intervention, while Thailand opted for bilateral negotiation.⁵⁷

Socio-Cultural Engagement

ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint aspires to ensure members the commitment to the quality of life of its people through people-centered cooperative activities such as education, health, connectivity, employment, poverty, and more.⁵⁸ ASEAN puts high emphasis on the divergent of its member states' politic, economic, social, and cultural aspects. Hence, the ASCC Blueprint 2025 obliges to have a committed, participatory, and socially responsible community for the benefit of the ASEAN people

as a whole.⁵⁹ The ever-increasing cooperative effort in bilateral and multilateral settings in the form of collaborative research, joint conference, institutional exchange, cultural programmes as such goes to show that the dialogue mechanism on the socio-cultural community is in full swing. Alongside with the annual ASEAN Summits, private and public policy research institutions have continued to engage with the government to share insights and recommendations across ASEAN region; multistakeholder approach has been strongly embraced in ASEAN fundamental principle.

The so-called "ASEAN Way" refers to a distinctive mode of interaction marked by mutual consensus, non-adversarial bargaining, and preference for non-binding approaches to dispute settlement in the region.⁶⁰ ASEAN presents itself as an organization transcendent of nationalism and the promotion of regionalism through closely-tie trade liberalization, trade facilitation and political cooperation. The engagement is built upon further cooperation across all the 3 pillars of ASEAN Communities in order to create a consolidated unity in diversity and enhance a deeper mutual understanding among all member countries.⁶¹ Cambodia's opportunity resides in the empowerment of people

56 ASEAN. 2016. "ASEAN POLITICAL-SECURITY COMMUNITY (APSC)". ASEAN.

57 RepASEAN Desk, "After 20 Years, Cambodia Has Reaped Benefits From ASEAN". Reporting ASEAN - News Around ASEAN Regionalism, 2019, <http://www.aseannews.net/20-years-cambodia-reaped-benefits-asean/>.

58 "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community," last modified 2017, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/7d.-May-2017-Factsheet-on-ASCC.pdf>

59 Ibid

60 Amitav Acharya, "The Evolution And Limitation Of ASEAN Identity". Building ASEAN Community: Political-Security And Socio-Cultural Reflections. Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia.

61 ASEAN Secretariat. 2004, Association of South East Asian Nations. Retrieved from Association of Southeast Asian Nations: <http://www.asean.org/storage/images/archive/VAP-10th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf>

and strengthening of the institutional capacity. Youth participation in the ASEAN's Youth Leaders Association and ASEANReady, aim to build capacity, knowledge awareness, and technical skills to become the future leaders of this outward-looking community.⁶² Since its accession in 1999 (and even before that while holding the observer status), Cambodia has engaged in numerous conferences and programs on the prospect of ASEAN engagement.

Across the ASEAN Community, the proportion of urban population living in slums went from 40% in 2000 to 31% in 2012, the proportion of women representation in parliament went from 12% in 2000 to 18.5% in 2012, and primary school enrolment went from 92% in 1999 to 94% in 2012.⁶³

The cohesive relationship between each member state also provide ample regional connectivity for the ASEAN citizen. Tourism plays a strategic importance on social development, cultural diversity, and economic diversification across the region. The ASEAN Tourism Agreement is the pursuit of improvement of the quality of life, regional peace and prosperity.⁶⁴ The Agreement sets out guidelines to cooperate and to facilitate the Visa free travel within ASEAN, which allow for a more integrated network of tour-

ism sector and travel services between member states while also further enhance the socio-cultural diversity and business advantage all at once.⁶⁵ Recently, Cambodia ranked 3rd in ASEAN for the tourist growth rate, just behind Vietnam and Indonesia, with 6.2 million visitors in 2018.⁶⁶ Cambodia's Minister of Tourism, Thong Khon, recognizes this importance and has called for the establishment of a National Tourism Institute, a Tourism University, a Tourism Vocational Training School and other vocational training programmes with the use of ASEAN curriculums on-site.⁶⁷ Cambodia has already made significant progress to adapt to the increase in tourism sector and the ASEAN Tourism Agreement; as of 2018, 40% of the tourism industry staff has been qualified by ASEAN standards and Cambodia aims to increase this number to 50% in 2019.⁶⁸ In addition to the travel facilitation that Cambodia and other member states have benefited from the regional connectivity, the unity of ASEAN identity has proven as a strong magnet for the region to realize as a single tourist destination.⁶⁹ The uniqueness and individualistic character of each member state have attracted numerous international tourists to travel from one coun-

62 See for example, ASEAN, "ASEAN youth leaders learn to solve regional issues through technology", April 04, 2019, <https://asean.org/asean-youth-leaders-learn-solve-regional-issues-technology/>

63 ASEAN, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2016).

64 "ASEAN Tourism Agreement," last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-tourism-agreement.

65 ASEAN, ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025, (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2015), <https://www.asean.org/storage/2012/05/ATSP-2016-2025.pdf>.

66 Chea Vannak, "Cambodia 3rd in ASEAN for Tourist Growth," Khmer Times, 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/570963/cambodia-3rd-in-asean-for-tourist-growth/>.

67 The Phnom Penh Post, "Cambodia Urges Tourism Training On Par With ASEAN," The Phnom Penh Post, 2019, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/cambodia-urges-tourism-training-par-asean>.

68 Ibid

69 See footnote number 36.

try to another. Overall, the mechanism of intra-ASEAN travel and beyond has awarded Cambodia an immense connection to the ASEAN socio-cultural community and further engage in the international community at large.

On the education sector, Cambodia has to rehabilitate and reconstruct the entire system's infrastructure that was previously destroyed during civil war and especially during the Khmer Rouge regime. The government recognized that rebuilding the human capital will supply the skills needed in achieving their socio-economic goals. Cambodia has made significant improvements to their educational system since 1999, though, Cambodia ranks 136 out of 187 countries in the Education index of the United Nations Human Development Report.⁷⁰ Other ASEAN member states are ranked dispersedly across the Education Index. With Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei scoring at the higher-end, fostering collaboration and exchanges would not only be beneficial for those that score a lower rank in the Index, but would certainly elevate the overall rank of ASEAN's educational standing. In the ASEAN's 2013 Education Report, the improvement of student to teacher ratios and school life expectancy were sparse.⁷¹

Cambodian government has put high emphasis on the development of the education

system and standard, however, the dropout rates remain high in the secondary education due to a relatively high employment demand for factory workers especially in the rural areas.⁷² The utilization of ASCC educational programs would be of great advantage to Cambodia's young population for future workforce. Additionally, the employment of young graduate is still constrained by the limitation of industrial diversity. ASEAN's initiative for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Skills For Inclusive Future of Work have served as an important frameworks to build upon in light of this shortfall. ILO and the Korea Partnership Programme in the Asia and Pacific have been working on the implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) since 2014 to prepare for a free flow of skilled labor in the region under the framework of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQR). In 2016, the program further explored new perspectives to help CLM (i.e. Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar) countries in coping up with the future skills challenges through the facilitation of regional knowledge-sharing on the future direction of skills as well as TVET strategies for inclusive future of work. A small pilot project on the employability of low-skilled workers will also be launched amidst high risk faced with the new phase of industrialization, automation, and computerization as well as e-commerce.⁷³ The

70 UNHDR, "Education Index: Human Development Reports," last modified 2019, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/education-index>.

71 ASEAN, "ASEAN State of Education Report," (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2013).

72 Sheith Khidhir, 2019. "Cambodia's Failing Education System," The ASEAN Post, 2019, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/cambodias-failing-education-system>.

73 International Labour Organization, "Promoting ASEAN Initiatives in TVET and Skills for Inclusive Future of Work," 2018, https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_630110/lang-en/index.htm.

program has achieved notable outcomes; TVET itself has been widely stimulated in Cambodia. The program has achieved notable outcomes; TVET itself has been widely stimulated in Cambodia.

ASEAN has also established the ASEAN University Network (AUN), focusing on collaborative research, promoting joint degree programs, encouraging scholarly and youth exchanges across the region.⁷⁴ In Cambodia, the Royal University of Phnom Penh and Royal University of Law and Economics are the members of AUN.⁷⁵

Apart from education, the Khmer Rouge also decimated the medical infrastructure. Trained medical professionals were targeted during the regime, resulted in a drastic loss of medical expertise. Cambodia's Health Strategic Plan 2016-2020 recognized that AEC implementation of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement has facilitated the mobility of health workers. The recognition of this improvement encouraged them to include regional and global health development agenda under the framework of AEC and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁷⁶

The health policy goal has been to improve health outcome and increase financial risk

protection across the population.⁷⁷ Despite this regional cooperation, some 47% of the population do not have adequate access to health care services, with the nearest public health clinic to villages being an average of 3km away.⁷⁸ As such, diseases, infections and deficiencies have been widespread and it remains to be a core problem putting heavy burden on the lower socio-economic demography. Donor funding and humanitarian assistance have accounted for only 14% of medical costs, though, this will continue to be a huge gap due to the disproportionate cost incurred.⁷⁹ In November 2018, ASEAN Health Ministers recognized this deficit and renewed their commitment toward member states' deficiencies. Professor Eng Huot, Cambodia's Secretary of State for Health, and the current Chair of the ASEAN Health Ministers, fully supported the regional participation in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and the implementation of national and regional activities toward the achievement of GHSA 2024 Framework.⁸⁰ Cambodia's work adapting ASEAN's strategic health framework has greatly improved the medical status of Cambodia from 1999 on.

74 ASEAN University Network, History and Background, <http://www.aunsec.org/ourhistory.php>

75 ASEAN University Network, AUN Member Universities, <http://www.aunsec.org/aunmemberuniversities.php>

76 Ministry of Health of Cambodia (Department of Planning & Health Information), May 2016. "Health Strategic Plan 2016-2020," [http://hismohcambodia.org/public/fileupload/carousel/HSP3-\(2016-2020\).pdf](http://hismohcambodia.org/public/fileupload/carousel/HSP3-(2016-2020).pdf)

77 Ibid.

78 Council of Development for Cambodia, 2019. "Cambodia's Development Challenges," accessed July 11, 2019, http://www.cdc-crdb.gov.kh/cdc/socio_conomic/cambodia_development.htm.

79 Ibid.

80 ASEAN, "ASEAN Health Ministers Renew Commitment to Fight Communicable and Emerging Infectious Diseases," last modified 2018, <https://asean.org/asean-health-ministers-renew-commitment-fight-communicable-emerging-infectious-diseases/>.



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4. Resentment and Challenges: Room for Rejuvenation?

On the economic front, Cambodia's economy still mainly depends on the labor-intensive and low-skilled labor force, which pose a rather challenging prospect to compete with the global market and be part of the regional supply chain as well as under the framework of ASEAN's free movement of labor. According to the National Employment Agency, there are about 10 million of the population between 15 and 64 years of age, of which only 7% have acquired higher

education while 7.2% have completed high school.⁸¹ Although, there is no comprehensive study assessment on the flow of labor force from ASEAN countries to Cambodia, the statistics above illustrated that the intra-ASEAN inflow workers will primarily take over the competitive job market in Cam-

⁸¹ National Employment Agency, Skills shortages and skills gaps in the Cambodian labour market: Evidence from Employer Survey 2017, (Phnom Penh, 2018), <http://www.nea.gov.kh/images/survey/ESNS%202017--Final--05282018pdf?fbclid=IwAR0m1v9TsG079V8CgHfowhluqaqTJ6Fy6Wk0tpn6Cdm1V8MYdtZCqxBFPHw>

bodia, especially in the technical and skill labored sectors. The garment sector still occupies the highest employment section as of 2016; there were about 740,000 workers in this industry that has since increased to more than 765,000 in 2019.⁸² Another important aspect is that the government should put more efforts on economic diversification rather than depend heavily on the garment manufacturing industry as for now. The diversification itself should also be balanced with the country's competitive advantage and the region's economic of scale.

On the investment front, the Council for Development of Cambodia (CDC) is the “sole and one stop service” body that is in charge of developing and evaluating the investment climate in Cambodia, according to the Article 3 of “Law of the investment of the Kingdom of Cambodia”.⁸³ Although, Cambodia has posited as a friendly-investment atmosphere for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the past few years, a rigid process of bureaucracy and the question over transparency and accountability aspects have raised critical concerns. Cambodia's government sought for institutional reform under the new “Industrial Development Policy (IDP)” in order to enhance the CDC's mandate with regards to the “policy decision-making, designing and implementing plans, and addressing the challenge in the industrial sector”.⁸⁴ Cambo-

dia's government can certainly address the country's challenges by further strengthening and improving its institutional capacity and law enforcement. The government has to comprehensively implement the policies or reforms that have been initiated. For instance, the reform of the CDC should be to enhance this investment evaluation body to have more role than merely a registration entry. This reform would further boost the trust and confidence from both domestic and foreign investors across the region.

Policies that have been set out should be more comprehensively enforced and implemented, whilst dissemination to the public should be more promoted. Evidently, for example, the government responded to the limitation of skill-labored issue by setting up the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training⁸⁵ (TVET) in 2017, which aims to develop the industrial sector and to ensure the “quality, high productivity and better competitiveness” as part of the value supply chain in the region.⁸⁶ There are gaps in this policy, such as low quality of training facilities, and limited budget availability.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, PM Hun Sen has pledged to invest more of the national budget into the vocational education and training, of which around 400,000 people have took part in for

82 Ibid.

83 “Law of the Investment of the Kingdom of Cambodia,” https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/khm_e/WTACKHM3A3_LEG_45.pdf

84 “Cambodia Industrial Development Policy,” http://www.mih.gov.kh/File/UploadedFiles/12_9_2016_4_29_43.pdf

85 “National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017-2025,” http://tvetsdp.ntb.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NTVET-Policy-2017-2025.ENG_.pdf

86 Ibid

87 Asia Development Bank [ADB], ADB Briefs: Cambodia's new Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy, (Manila, 2018), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/401691/adb-brief-089-cambodia-new-tvet-policy.pdf>

the past five years.⁸⁸ The ADB also stressed that the general public awareness of this policy remained low.⁸⁹ Therefore, TVET should be raised as an option for students who are intended to drop out of the secondary school and should also be more promoted in the grassroot community.

Cambodia has recently put higher emphasis on cultivating new market industry in the pursuit of building a digital-economic platform through the creation of new business opportunities via digital payment, online entertainment and e-commerce, of which the tech savvy millennial has increasingly been involved as both the user and the workforce to set up those platforms. The remarkable shift toward digital economy has also enabled investors to benefit more from the business activity vis-à-vis reducing the transaction costs. The Government has laid out 17-point strategy to reduce the cost of doing business in Cambodia, undertaken under the new structural reforms starting from late March 2019, which would expect to save up to USD 400 million a year for the private sector. Other forms of structural adjustment include the development of the country's competitive logistics masterplan in addition to the policy reforms in easing the investment flow and business cost.⁹⁰

88 Sok Chan, "Cambodia committed to vocational education and training: Ministry", Khmer Times, June 18, 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501764/cambodia-committed-to-vocational-education-and-training-ministry/>

89 Asia Development Bank [ADB], ADB Briefs: Cambodia's new Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy, (Manila, 2018)

90 Sim Vireak, "Dynamism of Chinese investment in Cambodia," Asia Times, November 08, 2019, <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/11/opinion/dynamism-of-chinese->

Challenges on the Political Security

In terms of the political security affairs, ASEAN has very limited capacity to step in and resolve the hardline dispute between countries and across the region, due to its non-interference policy. ASEAN as a regional organization failed to intervene in the border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand between 2008 and 2011, over the 4.6 kilometer square surrounding the Preah Vihear temple. The clash broke out in July 2008 after the Thai military occupied a Buddhist pagoda reside in the Cambodian territory.⁹¹ ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC),⁹² which guarantee the respect on "independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity" was violated, and there was no measure to punish Thailand. Cambodia had requested the UN and ASEAN to resolve this conflict with peaceful means.⁹³ According to the Chairman's Statement⁹⁴ during the ASEAN Regional Forum in Singapore, ASEAN expressed their grave concern on the situation around the ancient Hindu temple (the Preah Vihear temple), and urged both countries to peacefully settle down this dispute, how-

investment-in-cambodia/

91 Chheang Vannarith, Cambodia Thailand border dispute, last modified November 16, 2013, <https://vannarithchheang.com/2013/11/16/cambodia-thailand-border-dispute/>

92 "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation," 1976 <https://www.asean.org/uploads/archive/arf/7ARF/Prof-Dment-Programme/Doc-13.pdf>

93 ASEAN to resolve this conflict with peaceful means. According to the Chairman's Statement

94 "Chairman's Statement of the 15th ASEAN Regional Forum Singapore, 24 July 2008," last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_post=chairman-s-statement-of-the-15th-asean-regional-forum-singapore-24-july-2008

ever, there was no clear resolution to this conflict.⁹⁵ In February 2011, the skirmish occurred frequently on the Dangrek Mountain where Preah Vihear temple is located. Cambodia sought for international assistance while Thailand preferred to resolve it bilaterally. Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, sent his foreign minister, Marty Natalegawa to Cambodia and Thailand.⁹⁶ Following the United Nations Security Council meeting, of which both Cambodia's and Thailand's foreign ministers as well as Marty were invited, there was an agreement on the unofficial ceasefire that both Cambodia and Thailand agreed to receive the unarmed observers from Indonesia to monitor this case in the disputed area.⁹⁷ This unofficial ceasefire lasted only until early April 2011 when the clash broke out again that month, until both parties agreed to have another round of Indonesian observers to avoid further clash. Following the request for [re-]interpretation of the 1962 judgment over Preah Vihear case, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered both Cambodia and Thailand's troops to withdraw from the conflict zone, and until 2013, the ICJ interpreted the case judgment, eventually resulted in the

end of the tension.⁹⁸ This conflict posted a question over ASEAN credibility in upholding the principles of TAC. ASEAN has limited capacity to maneuver around the regional tension, even between member states, whose mandate only enable ASEAN to issue [joint] statement of concern and compromises with little to no action on the ground toward the full resolution of the conflict.

Another challenge in relations to the political dilemma is that Cambodia still has limited room to maneuver around the dynamics of increasing power competition and the evolving strategy in the region. The South China Sea dispute has raised critical concern of threatening the regional peace and stability, alongside with the general perception that Cambodia is taking a favorable stance with China at the expense of ASEAN Central-ity and unity. In fact, the South China Sea issue has been there long before, and since being part of ASEAN membership in 1999 onward, Cambodia has involved in many related-meetings including the adoption of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea between all ASEAN member states and China, which was signed during Cambodia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2002, urging for the "freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).⁹⁹ This declaration

95 Chheang Vannarith, Cambodia Thailand border dispute, last modified November 16, 2013, <https://vannarithchheang.com/2013/11/16/cambodia-thailand-border-dispute/>

96 K. Kesavapany, "ASEAN and the Cambodia-Thailand Conflict," East Asia Forum, last modified March 1, 2011, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/03/01/asean-and-the-cambodia-thailand-conflict/>

97 Security Council Report, Thailand/Cambodia, last modified 2012, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/thailandcambodia.php>

98 International Court of Justice, Request for Interpretation of the Judgment of 15 June 1962 in the Case concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand) (Cambodia v. Thailand), <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/151>

99 "Declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea," last modified 2012, https://asean.org/?static_

though is not legally binding, and the discussion has continued until the present day.

In principle, Cambodia is not a directly involved counterpart in the South China Sea dispute, apart from continuously taking part in related events and meetings in the name of ASEAN member states. However, a series of events and Cambodia's official statements as well as the country's positions since its Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2012 has inflicted the tense discussions with regards to the extent of Cambodia's involvement in the dispute itself and its implications toward some of its fellow ASEAN members. There are views, both official and unofficial, in some of the ASEAN countries that China has used its economic leverage to influence Cambodia in exchange for the Kingdom to have been in favor of China's position in the dispute, causing a wave of discontent in ASEAN. When Cambodia was ASEAN Chair in 2012, Vietnam urged the country to address the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Joint Communiqué, while the Philippines demanded to include the tension at Scarborough Shoal – the conflict zone between the Filipino Navy and the Chinese – in the Joint Statement. After having a separate discussion on the sideline,¹⁰⁰ Deputy Prime Minister and the then Foreign Minister of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Hor Namhong rejected those requests and viewed that those issues were the bilateral problems between China

and Vietnam, and China and the Philippines, respectively, which made ASEAN failed to issue the Joint Statement for the first time in its 45 years history. Vietnam's Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh said that he was unsatisfied over the failure of issuing the Joint Statement.¹⁰¹ Through its Department of State, the Philippines accused Cambodia's action as "doing Beijing's bidding",¹⁰² but H.E. Hor Namhong responded that ASEAN was not a court¹⁰³ to judge the South China Sea dispute on the claims.

Both Cambodia and China shared the same belief that the South China Sea conflict should not be "internationalized".¹⁰⁴ Four years later when Laos chaired ASEAN, Cambodia opposed the issue of the Joint Statement in Vientiane that included the judgment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, of which the Philippines filed complaint back in 2013.¹⁰⁵ The court judged in favor of the Philippines and ruled that China has no right based on the historical claim over the "nine-

post=declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea-2

100 Ernest Z. Bower, "China reveals its hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh," Center for Strategic & International Studies, July 20, 2012, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-reveals-its-hand-asean-phnom-penh>

101 Prak Chan Thul and Stuart Grudging, "SE Asia meeting in disarray over sea dispute with China," Reuters, July 13, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-summit/se-asia-meeting-in-disarray-over-sea-dispute-with-china-idUSBRE86C0BD20120713>

102 Ibid.

103 Kong Sothearith, ASEAN reaffirms commitment to resolve South China Sea issue. Voice of America Cambodia, 20 July 2012, <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/asean-reaffirms-commitment-to-resolve-south-china-sea-issue/1441954.html>

104 Yong Sokheng and Shane Worrell, "Hu Pledges Million in Aid," The Phnom Penh Post, April 02, 2012, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/hu-pledges-millions-aid>

105 Permanent Court of Arbitration [PCA], The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China), last modified 2013, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/7/>

dash line” maritime territory.¹⁰⁶ Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen expressed his view during the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) in 2016 that the South China Sea conflict is the dispute between China and the claimant states in ASEAN, not the conflict between ASEAN and China.¹⁰⁷ Cambodia’s Foreign Minister, H.E. Prak Sokhonn denied that the continuous aid and financial assistance inflow from China throughout such a critical/sensitive period has influenced Cambodia’s stance in the South China Sea dispute, while his spokesman claimed that Cambodia did not block ASEAN from citing the Permanent Court of Arbitration’s judgment in the Joint Statement, but the Philippines itself thought that this issue was only between Manila and Beijing.¹⁰⁸

The increasing competition between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China versus the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy has raised concerns that some ASEAN states might have to take side. In this regard, under the Indonesia’s leadership, ASEAN recently adopted its Outlook on the Indo-Pacific clarifying its stance that this regional grouping remains

of its “centrality, inclusiveness, complementarities, a rules-based regional order base upon international law, and the commitment to advancing economic engagement in the region”.¹⁰⁹ Although the Outlook indicates clearly on the regional grouping’s stance of adhering to its own centrality, ASEAN’s collective actions remain to be seen. The most sensitive point is the suspicion over the Chinese military base in Cambodia. There was a series of allegation since the Washington Post published an article in July 2019,¹¹⁰ and the Asia Times flamed it as if Cambodia is at the center of the new Cold War,¹¹¹ however, both China and Cambodia officials have denied this news. Recently, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia, Joseph Felter claimed that Cambodia rejected the U.S.’ aid on renovation of the training building in Ream Naval Base.¹¹² He also posted a concern over the possibility of “foreign military presence”¹¹³ in Cambodia, which in turn, has diluted the already-sour relations between Cambodia and the US for the past few years or so.

¹⁰⁶ PCA, *The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People’s Republic of China)*, last modified 2016, <https://pca-cpa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/07/PH-CN-20160712-Press-Release-No-11-English.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ PRESS OCM, 28 June 2016 the 65th founding anniversary of the Cambodian People’s Party, last modified June 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O61rZRS99FQ&t=2699s>

¹⁰⁸ Ven Rathavong, *Cambodia denies ASEAN ‘Veto’*, Khmer Times, July 28, 2016, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/7617/cambodia-denies-asean-veto/>

¹⁰⁹ “ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific,” last modified June 22, 2019, https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf

¹¹⁰ Jeremy Page, Gordon Lubold and Rob Taylor, “Deal for Naval Outpost in Cambodia Furthers China’s Quest for Military Network,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/secret-deal-for-chinese-naval-outpost-in-cambodia-raises-u-s-fears-of-beijings-ambitions-11563732482>

¹¹¹ David Hutt and Shawn W. Crispin, “Cambodia at the center of the new cold war,” *Asia Times*, November 15, 2019, <https://www.asiatimes.com/2018/11/article/cambodia-at-the-center-of-a-new-cold-war/>

¹¹² Pich Chomrong, “US Stirs More Speculation of Chinese Military Presence,” *Voice of Democracy*, July 2, 2019, <https://en.vodhotnews.com/us-stirs-more-speculation-of-chinese-military-presence/>

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Limitation to the Social-Cultural Community

Although people-to-people connectivity within ASEAN have seen a remarkable increase through various exchange programs, scholarships, as well as tourism industry, the public awareness or the general understanding of ASEAN is still very limited across the region.¹¹⁴ ASEAN is pretty much a Top-Down approach. In other words, although there are hundreds of meetings every year, the norm of procedure and the distinctive level of each dialogue platform are rather complicated to understand, even among some diplomats outside the region, let alone the general public at large. In the past recent years, multistakeholder approach is widely embraced throughout different form of ASEAN dialogue platforms – from Track 1, to Track 1.5, to Track 2 diplomacy. Information and updates about the ASEAN meetings and Statements are widely shared across different channels which keep the interest/relevant parties in the loop. Nevertheless, there has been limited efforts to comprehensively incorporate knowledge about ASEAN at the early stage of formal education, e.g. as part of the textbook curriculum.

ASEAN identity is still loosely defined across the region. Cultural diversity and history animosity are the significant elements that influence the people of Southeast Asia and therefore, the sense of belonging as one

common identity is almost not being heard, for the national identity outweighs the collective one. While some countries share similar culture, the perception between people to people are still negatively affected by the historical legacy and the sense of nationalism – the sense of belonging, which indeed influence the regional identification as a whole.¹¹⁵ That is, instead of cherishing one's similarity, each country claims ownership of that particular culture for its origin, hence, deteriorate the collective regional identity that we are striving for one. Whereas for Cambodia, people still have trust issues with the neighboring countries, namely Thailand and Vietnam, due to our historical dilemma. In the case of Cambodia-Thailand border dispute during 2008 and 2011, there were widespread sentiments to even boycotted the Thai products and as well the Thai drama, which was indeed very much popular back then.¹¹⁶ For Vietnam, some use populist politics to stir up anti-Vietnamese rhetoric and spur up the ethnic discrimination across the country.¹¹⁷ These severely affect the ASEAN integration toward a harmonious community that we are aspiring for one.

114 Premalatha Jayaraman, "Awareness lacking within ASEAN", The ASEAN Post, 28 August 2017, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/awareness-lacking-within-asean-0>

115 Amitav Acharya, "The evolution and limitation of ASEAN identity," Building ASEAN Community: Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Reflection, vol. 4, (2017): 25-39, http://www.eria.org/ASEAN_at_50_Vol_4_Full_Report.pdf

116 Nguon Sovan and Mom Kunthea, "Cambodian boycott Thai products," The Phnom Penh Post, July 25, 2008, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodians-boycott-thai-products>

117 David Hutt, "The Truth about Anti-Vietnamese Sentiment in Cambodia", The Diplomat, October 20, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/10/the-truth-about-anti-vietnam-sentiment-in-cambodia/>



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5. Future Dilemmas of Cambodia and ASEAN: The Evolving Regional Security Architecture

The Southeast Asia region is increasingly viewed as a strategic frontier for both political and economic reasons. The region was torn by historical phenomena, included the colonial era and its aftermath as well as the enduring civil wars that lasted for decades, which continue to shape each individual country's political motive and strategy accordingly. The rise of China, the remarka-

ble role of middle powers like Japan, India, South Korea, etc., alongside with the decline presence of the US in the region does indeed pose a critical question of whether this is a major shift in the [existing] regional order. The argument established is that the region is facing the ongoing power shift or the changing of major power politics. The Southeast Asia today have developed a multipolar

system but the transition itself is not without challenge.

Regional scholars, like Eminent Professor Amitav Acharya for example, pointed out that with these great powers engaging in competition and balancing, the region finds itself facing dilemmas in deciding and coordinating how to engage them individually and collectively in different area of issues/interests.¹¹⁸ The situation in Southeast Asia in the 19th century, where European colonial powers compromised with each other and make a grand concert. But such a concert involved, would only make ASEAN centrality a weak concept by sidelining its interest for the sake of major powers' benefits.¹¹⁹ Several scholars see Southeast Asian nations are plagued and being divided through the competition between China and the US in the region. China-led initiatives such as the BRI and AIIB are seen as a setback for the United States with President Trump's uncertainty and seemingly minimal interest in this region.¹²⁰

The South China Sea dispute has posed a huge threat and concern pertaining to the regional peace and security. Expectation is set high for ASEAN to maintain a strong commitment in upholding a rule based or-

der in dealing with the South China Sea dispute. ASEAN has adopted several dialogue mechanisms and approaches to foster exchange so as to abide the dispute settlement in a peaceful mean, which include China's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, ARF, ADMM+, EAS and the Declaration on the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea by both parties. The guiding principles of these key documents charting the agreements directly or indirectly in accordance to the ASEAN Way.¹²¹ Although there are several mechanisms in ASEAN that its member state can look forward in the pursuit of regional peace and stability, a wide range of political-security challenges are left behind to be dealt with. Great power politics play a critical role in Southeast Asia in the midst of several uncertainties surrounding the question of regional rules-based order.

The important role of ASEAN in constructing and managing the regional institutions, however, will not be effectively and efficiently realized without being accompanied by the modification of ASEAN's existing cooperation premises. A revamped ASEAN would establish an essential form of rule-based regional order, underpinned by internationally endorsed rules, norms, and principles that will benefit much deeper collaborations between member countries. Such transformation will benefit the region as an area where disputes are resolved by rules, not by force.

118 Amitav Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia: International Relations of a Region*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

119 Ibid.

120 Phy Sopheada, "Asean May See Divisions Amid Heightened U.S.-China Competition: Analysts," VOA Khmer, 05 July 2018, <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/asean-may-see-divisions-amid-heightened-us-china-competition-analysts/4469135.html>

121 Sampa Kundu, "Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Prospects and Challenges for ASEAN," East Asia Research Programme, January 13, 2017, <http://earp.in/en/regional-security-in-southeast-asia-prospects-and-challenges-for-asean/>

Moreover, to act collectively as a group rather than as individual country is indeed very crucial in the whole restructuring progress. The collective process will help to overcome the differences among the member countries and achieve a balanced state of power relations.

There is also a need to look beyond the traditional mindset of seeing the future of the Asia-Pacific, by solely from the prism of the competition between the United States and China. This mindset may obstruct the strategic thinking of ASEAN nations in realizing their role to establish the rule-based regional order in the Asia-Pacific. Though, ASEAN cannot play the role as “a manager of this regional order” alone. The role of ASEAN will be further enhanced with the constructive design of the institutional arrangements bridging the linkages with and between the major powers, which is expected to allow participation on an equal footing.

As one of the member states of ASEAN, Cambodia has played a fundamental role in proactively engaging and diversifying the country's foreign policy in relations to small state diplomacy.¹²² The Kingdom needs to be more flexible and pragmatic in strengthening its diplomatic maneuverability in the midst of increasing shift of the strategic security landscape and rising intensity of power competition in the region. Cambodia needs to adhere to its core principles of

“neutrality and non-alignment” in conformity to the Article 1 enshrined in the Constitution¹²³ by further pushing for the hedging strategy of its foreign policy. By embracing a tactical balancing and diversification strategy, Cambodia would stand many chances to further boost its economy while at the same time, enhancing the essence of ASEAN unity and Centrality at large. Placing ASEAN at the core would also prevent the internalization of the superpower competition within this region, which has the possibility of escalating to armed conflicts among countries in the regional grouping.

122 Cheang Vannarith, “Cambodia and the diplomacy of small states,” *Khmer Times*, July 07, 2017, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/65572/cambodia-and-the-diplomacy-of-small-states/>

123 “Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia,” 1993, http://cambodia.ohchr.org/~cambodiaohchr/sites/default/files/Constitution_ENG.pdf



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6. Conclusion

After 20-years in ASEAN, Cambodia has gained tremendous economic benefits from both the intra-regional trade flow as well as with ASEAN's external partners, contributing to the attainment of 7 percent economic growth rate annually. Cambodia's engagement in AFTA and RCEP has further expanded the country's trade volume while at the same time, continues to attract more FDI and encourage more investment in HRD to narrow down the disparity gap across the region so as to strengthen the economic competitiveness. More so, being one of the ASE-

AN member states has enabled Cambodia to embrace the principles of TAC as a shield for national sovereignty against foreign interference in light of the ambiguous geopolitical landscape, given the lesson learned from our tragic past. Besides, ASEAN objective is to tie up the 'unity in diversity' value and as such, socio-cultural engagement has played an important role to shape the regional resilience through people-centred cooperation framework. Cambodia hence is part of the larger Community that build

upon the prospects of education, health, tourism, culture, youth empowerment, and social welfare.

Nevertheless, these achievements are not without challenges; Cambodia still struggle for having disadvantages of depending heavily on labor-intensive industry and as well the limitation of skilled labor force. Key reforms have been set forth in the new Industry Development Policy (IDP) and as well with the establishment of TVET; major progress remain to be seen. General understanding and public awareness of ASEAN as a whole will need to be strengthened especially at the early stage of formal education, on top of the ongoing exchange programs and institutional networks. Politically, though, ASEAN itself was of disappointment for failing to resolve/intervene in the Cambodia-Thai border dispute over Preah Vihear temple in 2008 and 2011, consecutively, for firmly abiding to its 'non-interference' principle. Cambodia, on the other hand, has been heavily criticized on the South China Sea issue and was accusing of playing by China's

favor. During ASEAN Chairmanship in 2012, Cambodia as a chair failed to issue a Joint Statement, given that the discussion did not reach a mutual consensus. In principle, Cambodia regards the SCS issue as the bilateral disputes that shall be resolve bilaterally, not the dispute between ASEAN and China as a whole, and thus, should not be "internationalized".

Primary concerns to be dealt with is the question of the dynamics and the evolving regional security architecture of which ASEAN has to maneuver around the implication of the increasing power competition in this particular region of Southeast Asia. Each member state shall abide to the TAC core principle and strengthen ASEAN unity and centrality at best, so as to avoid being at the edge of choosing side with one dominant power over the others and then having to sideline one's interest at the expense of the regional's collective wills. In the current era of strategic uncertainty, are we having a new regional order? What shall be constitute as a "regional order" and who indeed would set this 'order' against the backdrop of the so-called "rules-based regional order"?

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