



ASIA MAIOR

Vol. XXXIV / 2023

Asia in 2023: Navigating the US-China rivalry

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella

A large, intricate, light-colored floral or mandala-like pattern is positioned in the bottom right corner of the cover, partially overlapping the dark green background.

CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRA-EUROPEI “CESARE BONACOSSA” - UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

ASIA MAIOR

The Journal of the Italian think tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989

Vol. XXXIV / 2023

Asia in 2023: Navigating the US-China rivalry

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella

Asia Maior. The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989.

Copyright © 2023 - Viella s.r.l. & Associazione Asia Maior

ISBN 979-12-5469-681-1 (Paper) ISBN 979-12-5469-682-8 (Online)

ISSN 2385-2526 (Paper) ISSN 2612-6680 (Online)

Annual journal - Vol. XXXIV, 2023

This journal is published jointly by the think tank Asia Maior (Associazione Asia Maior) & the CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli Extra-europei «Cesare Bonaccossa», University of Pavia

Asia Maior: The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989 is an open-access journal, whose issues and single articles can be freely downloaded from the think tank webpage: www.asiamaior.org.

The reference year is the one on which the analyses of the volume are focused. Each *Asia Maior* volume is always published in the year following the one indicated on the cover.

Paper version	Italy	€ 50.00	Abroad	€ 65.00
Subscription	abbonamenti@viella.it		www.viella.it	

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief (direttore responsabile):

Michelguglielmo Torri, University of Turin.

Co-editors:

Filippo Boni, The Open University.

Diego Maiorano, The University of Naples «L'Orientale».

Associate editors:

Axel Berkofsky, University of Pavia;

Giulio Pugliese, University of Oxford and European University Institute;

Emanuela Mangiarotti, University of Pavia;

Pierluigi Valsecchi, University of Pavia.

Consulting editors:

Elisabetta Basile, University of Rome «Sapienza»;

Kerry Brown, King's College London;

Peter Brian Ramsay Carey, Oxford University;

Rosa Caroli, University of Venice;

Jaewoo Choo, Kyung Hee University (Seoul, South Korea);

Jamie Seth Davidson, National University of Singapore;

Ritu Dewan, Indian Association for Women Studies;

Laura De Giorgi, University of Venice;

Kevin Hewison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
Lucia Husenicova, University Matej Bel (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia);
David C. Kang, Maria Crutcher Professor of International Relations, University of Southern California;
Rohit Karki, Kathmandu School of Law;
Jeff Kingston, Temple University – Japan Campus;
Mirjam Künkler, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study – Uppsala;
Noemi Lanna, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
James Manor, School of Advanced Studies – University of London;
Aditya Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Mridula Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Parimala Rao, University of Delhi;
Guido Samarani, University of Venice;
Marisa Siddivò, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
Eswaran Sridharan, Institute for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania;
Arun Swamy, University of Guam;
Akio Takahara, University of Tokyo;
Edsel Tupaz, Harvard University alumnus, Ateneo de Manila University and Far Eastern University;
Sten Widmalm, Uppsala University;
Ather Zia, University of Northern Colorado;

Book reviews editors:

Elena Valdameri, ETH Zürich;
Aurelio Insisa, University of Hong Kong;
Luciano Zaccara, Qatar University.

Editorial secretary:

Chiara Benini

Graphic project:

Nicola Mocchi.

Before being published in *Asia Maior*, all articles, whether commissioned or unsolicited, after being first evaluated by the Journal's editors, are then submitted to a double-blind peer review involving up to three anonymous referees. Coherently with the spirit of the double-blind peer review process, *Asia Maior* does not make public the name of the reviewers. However, the reviewers' names – and, if need be, the whole correspondence between the journal's editors and the reviewer/s – can be disclosed to interested institutions, upon a formal request made directly to the Editor in Chief of the journal.

Articles meant for publication should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg.torri@gmail.com), Filippo Boni (filippo.boni@open.ac.uk), Diego Maiorano (dmaiorano@unior.it); book reviews should be sent to Elena Valdameri (elena.valdameri@gess.ethz.ch).



ASSOCIAZIONE ASIA MAIOR

Steering Committee: Filippo Boni, Marzia Casolari, Matteo Fumagalli, Michelguglielmo Torri (President).

Scientific Board: Guido Abbattista (Università di Trieste), Domenico Amirante (Università «Federico II», Napoli), Elisabetta Basile (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Luigi Bonanate (Università di Torino), Claudio Cecchi (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Alessandro Colombo (Università di Milano), Anton Giulio Maria de Robertis (Università di Bari), Thierry Di Costanzo (Université de Strasbourg), Max Guderzo (Università di Siena), Giorgio Milanetti (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Paolo Puddinu (Università di Sassari), Adriano Rossi (Università «L'Orientale», Napoli), Giuseppe Sacco (Università «Roma Tre», Roma), Guido Samarani (Università «Ca' Foscari», Venezia), Filippo Sabetti (McGill University, Montréal), Gianni Vaggi (Università di Pavia).



CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli extra-europei
"Cesare Bonacossa" - Università di Pavia

Steering Committee: Axel Berkofsky, Arturo Colombo, Antonio Morone, Giulia Rossolillo, Gianni Vaggi, Pierluigi Valsecchi (President), Massimo Zaccaria.



viella

libreria editrice

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

fax 06 85 35 39 60

www.viella.it

CONTENTS

IX *Foreword*

- 1 SILVIA MENEGAZZI, *China in 2023: Stimulating Economic Recovery along with Patriotic Education*
- 23 GIULIA SCIORATI, *China in 2023: A «Global-Security-Attentive» Foreign Policy*
- 39 MARCO MILANI & ANTONIO FIORI, *Korean peninsula 2023: A year of rising tensions and political polarization*
- 65 GIULIO PUGLIESE & MARCO ZAPPA, *Japan 2023: Still walking in Abe Shinzō's footsteps*
- 125 THAN KIŪ, *Hong Kong 2023: The new Chinese province*
- 145 AURELIO INSISA, *Taiwan 2023 and the 2024 Elections: A DPP partial victory after a contested electoral campaign*
- 167 MIGUEL ENRICO G. AYSON & LARA GIANINA S. REYES, *The Philippines 2022-2023: A turbulent start for the New Era of Marcos leadership*
- 187 EMANUELA MANGIAROTTI, *Malaysia 2023: A reform agenda overshadowed by identity politics*
- 203 RICHARD QUANG-ANH TRAN, *Vietnam 2020-2023: Covid Pandemic Recovery, Unprecedented Leadership Turnover, and Continued Multilateralism*
- 217 CAROLINE BENNETT, *Cambodia 2022-2023: Securing dynastic autocracy*
- 235 MATTEO FUMAGALLI, *Myanmar 2023: New conflicts and coalitions reshape war narrative, challenging an embattled junta*
- 259 DIEGO MAIORANO & RAGHAW KHATTRI, *India 2023: Towards the general elections amid rising social tension*
- 301 IAN HALL, *India 2023: Tactical wins and strategic setbacks in foreign policy?*
- 323 MATTEO MIELE, *Nepal 2020-2023: From the Institutional Crisis to New Political Paths*
- 339 DIEGO ABENANTE, *Sri Lanka 2023: Wickremesinghe's first six months between economic recovery and political uncertainty*
- 353 MARCO CORSI, *Pakistan 2023: Multiple crises in the lead-up to the general elections*
- 375 FILIPPO BONI, *Afghanistan 2023: Taliban governance and international isolation*
- 389 GIORGIA PERLETTA, *Iran 2023: Intensified Focus on the Eastward Strategy and Ongoing Fractures in State-Society Relations*
- Special articles*
- 407 ENRICO FARDELLA, *When history rhymes: China's relations with Russia and the war in Ukraine*
- 433 DAVID SCOTT, *The return of the 'Indo-Pacific'*
- 451 *Reviews*
- 479 *Appendix*

CAMBODIA 2022-2023: SECURING DYNASTIC AUTOCRACY

Caroline Bennett

University of Sussex
caroline.bennett@sussex.ac.uk

2023 was an historic year for Cambodia. Following elections widely deemed not to be fair and free, Prime Minister Hun Sen handed over power to his son Hun Manet. In doing so, he ended his 38-year premiership, and secured the transformation of Cambodia into a dynastic autocracy. The transformation was enabled by a variety of factors. The country started to recover from the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with tourism and exports starting to grow again, enabling the ruling party to reaffirm their position by securing the economy. Domestically, human rights continued to be rolled back, particularly for the political opposition, with a series of mass trials, threats of violence, and the creation of new legislation further narrowing control of the nation to the ruling party. Regionally, Cambodia's chairmanship of ASEAN, which ended in 2022, and hosting of the Southeast Asian Games in 2023, secured the country's place as an important political actor. While Hun Sen continued to switch allegiance between China and the US, the initial months of Hun Manet's rule have seen him secure relationships with both, as well as Vietnam. As we move on in 2024, what Hun Manet's rule will mean for Cambodia remains uncertain, but it looks likely that he will follow in the pattern already set, solidifying the dynastic autocracy of the CPP through trade, investments (social and economic) and legislation.

KEYWORDS – CAMBODIA; AUTHORITARIANISM; DYNASTY; HUMAN RIGHTS; ASEAN; CHINA; US; VIETNAM; TRADE; ECCG.

1. Introduction

The years between 2022 and 2023 were historic for Cambodia. The handing over of power from Prime Minister Hun Sen to his son Hun Manet saw a new era in Cambodian politics, marking the long-coming transformation from illiberal democracy to dynastic autocracy.

This transformation has been made possible through a variety of mechanisms. On a positive note, the economy started to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there were some positive demographic developments related to that. After a substantial dropoff in 2020 and 2021 (related to pandemic shutdowns), education levels were once again rising. In 2021-2022, the median number of years of schooling for women was 3.8 years (up from 1.1 years in 2000), and 4.8 for men (up from 2.5) [NIS 2023b: 12], and by 2022 the literacy rate for Cambodia had risen

to 84% of adult men [CEIC Data 2023a], and 79% of adult women [CEIC Data 2023b]. The significant increase won the country a Literacy Award from the World Literacy Foundation [Reuy 2023, 5 April]. Health likewise showed improvement. COVID-19 remained contained (since the beginning of the pandemic, Cambodia has reported 138,978 infections and 3,056 deaths from COVID-19 [World Health Organization 2023]), and its vaccination programme has been widespread, with over 80% of the population fully vaccinated by the end of 2023. Meanwhile, life expectancy rose, and infant mortality dropped [NIS 2023a].

On the political front, things were not so positive, with concerns remaining about democracy and human rights in the Kingdom: both aspects central to maintaining the ruling party's position and enabling the political transformation. International relations remained balanced primarily between China and the US, but, in the review period, Cambodia asserted its political competency regionally as well. The successes noted above have contributed to the perceived efficacy and legitimacy of the CPP, while the further roll back of democracy and human rights have ensured a lack of political opposition. It remains too early to ascertain categorically what Hun Manet's rule will mean for Cambodia, however, it seems likely that he will continue to enjoy the benefits provided by the dynastic autocracy while also looking at other avenues than his father to secure the rule of his party.

2. Domestic affairs: elections and the securing of a dynastic autocracy

2.1. Commune and a general election

Following the general election (on July 23), on 22 August 2023, after 38 years in power, Hun Sen handed over the premiership to his son, Hun Manet. The move, which happened with little protest or objection, ended the rule of Asia's longest-standing «elected» leader, and completed the transformation of Cambodia to a dynastic autocracy. This had been long coming, with senior CPP officials moving their children and other family members into positions of authority over the last few years, and Hun Sen declaring that Hun Manet could be the next Prime Minister back in 2018. Although stepping down as leader, Hun Sen gave himself the position of President of the Cambodian People's Party and remains central to decision-making and control. In early 2024, he was «unanimously voted» as President of the Senate, with two former senior CPP advisors voted in as vice-presidents [Nitta 2024]. As political scientist Sophal Ear has commented, he remains just behind the scenes, in a position where he could step back into power should he decide [CNA 2023].

Commune elections, which take place the year before general elections, are usually seen as indicators of the general election result. In 2022, the CPP won 74% of the popular vote, and thousands of official positions.

The Candlelight party – a reformed faction of the Cambodian National Rescue Party that had been dissolved in 2017 – won 22% of the vote and looked set to have similar results in the general election.

However, in direct parallel to the 2018 elections, the run up to the 2023 elections saw a plethora of actions taken to restrict democratic freedoms and political opposition, to ensure the CPP's continuing reign. In February, the Voice of Democracy [VoD] – the only independent media outlet remaining in Cambodia – was shut down. This followed the removal of licenses from the Bayon Times, Khmercovertv, and Cambodia Today in March 2022, after they published stories about government corruption [Freedom House 2023]. In May 2023, two months before the elections, the Candlelight party – the only viable opposition party – was banned from participating for allegedly not having the correct paperwork. This left the CPP as the only viable party. In addition to preventing the party from running, threats of violence, imprisonment, and even death, were made against opposition lawmakers and activists, and moves to limit them extended to threatening diplomatic allies offering the opposition space: in January 2023, Hun Sen stated that if Malaysia was to allow Sam Rainsey to visit, «the two governments can't work together» [Benar News 2023, 6 January]. As well as these moves, several laws were rushed in, furthering controls on the voting population and aiming to control future results. For example, those spoiling papers were threatened with legal action (and indeed, on election day (July 23), two people were arrested for this). Even before the election took place, Hun Sen announced he would pass over the leadership to his son Hun Manet, leaving the world in no doubt of the result of the election.

As the elections came closer, numerous international bodies, including Human Rights Watch [2023] and ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights [2023], raised concerns about the process. This followed a pattern of increasing international unease about politics and freedom in the Kingdom. In February 2023, the Democracy Index from the Economist Intelligence gave Cambodia a score of 0.00 for electoral process and pluralism [EIU 2022] and, after he posted a video threatening violence to the opposition, the oversight board of Facebook recommended a suspension of Hun Sen's accounts [Peck and Cheang 2023, 29 June]. After the voting ended, stories abounded of coercion, electoral fraud, intimidation, and corruption, and the international community largely denounced the election as undemocratic and unfair. While only the US made a formal statement, international dissatisfaction was noticeable. The CPP dismissed this, and as proof of the validity of the elections, cited high voter turnout (84%), the presence of international observers, and the fact that 18 registered parties participated. Many of the observers were allies of the Cambodian government, and while there were 18 parties registered, commentators noted that 17 of these did not have enough support to pose a viable threat to the CPP [Ear 2023].

That said, unlike in 2018 (when the CPP won all 125 seats in the National Assembly), at this election 5 seats were conceded to FUNCINPEC: the only other party that has existed since the 1993 elections overseen by the UN. Beyond providing a legitimating example of alternative voting, with the banning and dismantling of the latest opposition party, this concession towards democracy will have little effect. The Cambodian population appears exhausted by the whole process. The elections and the handover of power to Hun Manet occurred with no public protest, and, seemingly tired of the ongoing onslaught against them, in the months before the elections, a number of high-profile opposition lawmakers defected to the ruling party [Kelliher & Ouch 2023, 2 July]. The CPP is set to rule with little or no opposition for at least the foreseeable future.

2.2. *Hun Manet's rule: his father's son?*

Prior to coming to power, opinions were divided on what Hun Manet's rule would bring. Some commentators were hopeful that his age (46), and western education (an undergraduate degree from West Point Academy and a PhD from the University of Bristol in the UK), would bring a more liberal and reformist approach to leadership. Indeed, in his early months, as well as making visits to key foreign allies (including China, the US, and Vietnam), he has promised to improve education and the economy, and made some promising appointments to senior political roles, including Un Kheang to the role of Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) – a professor of political science who has published books criticising Cambodia's move towards authoritarianism and its dependence/close ties with China.

Other commentators, however, have noted that Hun Manet had never publicly opposed his father or his father's violent rule, and had enjoyed the benefits the consolidation of power has brought to the family [Baldwin 2023, 20 July]. While the actions mentioned above appear promising, there have also been indications of an approach similar to his father's. In the weeks shortly after his appointment, he swelled the ranks of official advisors and ministerial posts, appointing over 1,400 secretaries and undersecretaries - more than double the number of his father's previous mandate [Strangio 2023, 24 August]. Many of the new appointments are alleged to be relations of senior CPP members, and over 170 of the appointees are personal advisors and assistants to the PM [Strangio 2023, 24 August]. In another move paralleling his father's rule, on 1 January 2024, Hun Manet announced a new national holiday – «Peace Day in Cambodia», to be held on 29 December from this year on. The date, which had previously been labelled as «Win-Win Policy Day», marks the end of fighting between the Cambodian government and the Khmer Rouge forces in 1998, brought about by Hun Sen's Win-Win policy. The designation of this date follows the inauguration of the Win-Win monument in 2018, and the designation of 7 January

as «Victory over Genocide Day», a national holiday, in 2023. While creating this new holiday, Hun Manet called for research and collation of Win-Win policy documents, and their dissemination as part of Cambodian students' education «so that they appreciate the issue better» [Va 2024, 4 January].

The mobilisation of the Cambodian genocide to legitimate and secure the CPP's rule follows a pattern set by the CPP over the decades. Critics have labelled the new holiday as Peace Day «for the Hun family», noting that not only were the Paris Peace Accords more critical to the establishment of peace, but also that Hun Manet's decisions extended Hun Sen's long-standing rhetoric of the CPP, and Hun Sen in particular, being saviours of Cambodia [Va 2024, 4 January]. Indeed, Hun Sen, and now, it seems, Hun Manet, have, over the years, created national memorials and holidays reifying this rhetoric, establishing it within the national annual calendar and as a state-founding myth. Continuing this trend puts Hun Manet firmly into the CPP and Hun Sen's mode of leadership, affirming the political maneuvers which made the transformation to autocracy, and now, a dynasty, possible.

2.3. *The closure of the ECCC, the Cambodian judiciary, and human rights*

In September 2022 the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) – the UN-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal – ended its judicial proceedings with its finding on the appeal of Khieu Samphan for case 002. In this final case, the court upheld the 2018 conviction of genocide and crimes against humanity committed during the Khmer Rouge's rule from 1975 to 1979. While it has been heralded for its innovative hybridity and extensive outreach programme, the legacy of the court is somewhat mixed. Only 3 people were convicted during its 16-year activities (Kaing Guek Eav, Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan), and it was criticized throughout for lack of impartiality, government interference, and corruption. Its limited remit (of both time frame and personnel) came under scrutiny, as did the cost and the overall relevance to the Cambodian population. While some Cambodian officials state that it has improved the Cambodian judiciary overall, the evidence seems to indicate the opposite. In fact, while the court ran, human rights continued to be rolled back, impunity for the elite continued, and the ruling party's hold on Cambodia became stronger. If anything, the courts shielded the CPP and the judiciary from taking action to reform by providing a smoke screen of apparent judicial responsibility.

The 2022 corruption index published by Transparency International placed Cambodia 150th out of 180 countries, the lowest-ranked country in ASEAN except Myanmar, and the third lowest in the Asia-Pacific region [Transparency International 2023]. This was, however, an improvement on the previous year (23/100), and, overall, there have been slight improvements in the five years between 2018 and 2023, with Cambodia's score rising from 20/100 to 24. In their report, Transparency International noted that

there has been progress made in dealing with small-scale corruption and, indeed, the problem lies, as ever, at the elite level of officials and wealthy individuals across Cambodia. A report on human trafficking published by the US State Department [2023] downgraded Cambodia from second to third tier, stating that while the government had arrested, prosecuted, and convicted some smugglers, «endemic corruption continued to impede overall law enforcement operations, holding traffickers accountable, and victim service provision» [154]. They noted, in particular, that credible reports of officials involved were not investigated, thereby failing to protect victims in the country or overseas [154]. These were not the only workers whose rights were infringed upon. For example, in August 2022, workers at Naga World, an integrated casino-hotel in Phnom Penh, were arrested after striking, and women who participated in the strike reported being assaulted by the police [Freedom House 2023]. Meanwhile, union leader Chhim Sithar was arrested while striking in January 2022, re-arrested in November, and remains in custody to date.

In the move towards entrenching the CPP's autocracy, political opposition and democratic freedoms saw the brunt of human rights violations. A series of mass trials of opposition lawmakers took place across 2022. In March, 19 members of the CNRP were sentenced to between five and twenty years for charges including incitement and conspiracy. In September, another mass trial began, this one for conspiracy to commit treason [Strangio 2022, 16 September]. In October, Sam Rainsey, although in self-imposed exile in France, was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly planning to cede Cambodia to a foreign power. In March 2023, Kem Sokha, deputy leader of the former Cambodian National Rescue Party, who had been arrested in 2017 under accusations of treason, was sentenced to 27 years imprisonment and a lifetime ban on political participation. In January 2023, 122 opposition members were charged for various offenses. In total, over 150 opposition lawmakers have been charged and/or imprisoned, since 2021. While many were hopeful that Hun Manet's accession to power would see a reduction of such acts, this has not been the case. October 2023 saw Candlelight party leader Thack Setha imprisoned for posting criticism of Hun Sen on social media, and other opposition lawmakers given prison sentences and banned from political participation for five years, making them ineligible for the next elections. Due to ongoing concerns, in October 2023, the UN decided to extend the remit of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation on Human Rights in Cambodia [UN 2023].

Meanwhile, further legislation was passed putting increasing control into the hands of the ruling party. This included a law allowing a Prime Minister to be appointed without parliamentary approval (passed in August 2022, and largely thought to be in preparation for the handover of power from Hun Sen to Hun Manet). At the same time, press freedom was reduced: in 2023 Cambodia was ranked 147th out of 180 in the World Press

Freedom Index and 142nd in 2022 [Reporters without Borders 2024] - a marked reduction from 2017, when it was ranked 132nd. All in all, human rights protections remained poor and continued to be attacked, aiding the political transformation, and further entrenching the dynastic rule of the CPP by making criticism and critique all but impossible.

3. The economy and foreign relations: regional assertion, global pragmatism

One of the areas that has helped maintain the ruling party's position over the decades has been steady economic growth and security. Under their rule poverty levels were declining year by year, and, pre-pandemic, Cambodia had been well on its way to achieving middle income status. The loss of jobs and income caused by the pandemic, however, slowed this, and its primary industries: agriculture (particularly rice exports), the garment industry, and tourism, suffered substantially in 2020 and 2021. In addition, global interest rates, China's zero COVID policy (limiting tourism), and other geopolitical events such as the Russia-Ukraine war, have limited its recovery and growth.

However, in the last two years, Cambodia's economy has slowly been recovering. By the end of 2022, economic growth had risen to 5.2% (from 3% in 2021), and while this was still significantly lower than its pre-pandemic level of 7% in 2019 [International Monetary Fund 2023], the poverty rate in 2022 had reached 16.6%, a substantial decrease from its 2014 level of 36.7% [UNDP 2023: 15]. Child poverty has also more than halved, from 42.7% in 2014, to 20.5% in 2021/2022 [UNDP 2023: 15]. The story, is, however, variable: in the province of Preah Vihear and Stung Treng the poverty level in 2022 was 34.6%. The new Prime Minister has focused on the recovering economy, announcing that Cambodia aims to become a country of upper middle income by 2030, and high income by 2050. Although commentators are mixed on whether this is possible, Cambodia's post-pandemic recovery is looking promising, and if the 2030 target seems feasible over the next year or two, it will certainly strengthen the ruling party's claim to economic success, bolstering their rule.

Manufacturing for exports was the first industry to begin recovery, although the levels remained lower than hoped, primarily due to global interest rates and the cost-of-living crisis across the globe. While there was an initial upsurge in 2022, the Asian Development Bank reported that export of garments, footwear, and travel items had declined by 18.6% in the first half of 2023 compared to 2022. To overcome this shrinkage, the government reportedly had to tap into its savings to deal with a US\$ 412 million deficit [Suy 2023, 14 December]. Despite this, export of garments, footwear, and travel items still made up over 60% of Cambodia's exported goods, equalling 10% of the nation's total income [Medina 2023, 4 October]. Other industries, however, including automotive, solar panels, furniture and, unu-

sually, bicycle exports (in 2022 Cambodia became one of the world's top five bicycle exporters), rose [ADB 2023].

Following a catastrophic year for tourism in 2021 (with only 196,495 people, the lowest recorded figures of tourists since 1994), in March 2022 Cambodia eased many of its COVID-related requirements (including the requirement for proof of a negative PCR test) and reintroduced the «Visa on Arrival» service that had been suspended in 2020 [Ministry of Health 2022, 17 March]. Perhaps in part because of this, 2022 showed a significant increase in tourist numbers, with 2,276,626 international visitors arriving. Numbers rose again in 2023: by September, over 3 million visitors had arrived from overseas [Ministry of Tourism 2023]. There is still some way to go, however, before tourism reaches the pre-pandemic levels of the 6,610,592 international visitors seen in 2019 [Ministry of Tourism 2022]. While China's zero-COVID policy has limited tourists from there, visitors from other parts of Asia are once again topping the numbers of visitors to Cambodia, with the highest numbers in 2023 coming from Thailand and Vietnam [Ministry of Tourism 2023].

Following some vacillations, inflation was eased to 2.9% by December 2022 due to the stabilization of energy and food prices [World Bank 2023]. Minimum wage for garment and textile workers was increased to US\$ 200pcm, up from US\$ 194 pcm in 2022 [Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training 2024]. Despite this, microfinance continues to be a problem for much of the population. Almost 3 million people are in debt due to microfinance loans. Numerous studies have found that rather than bolstering small businesses and local communities, microfinance often leads to inescapable cycles of debt. The result in Cambodia has been forced land sales, the removal of children from school so they can go to work, and a rise in the number of deaths by suicide [Brook 2023, 11 November]. As a result, in 2023, the four companies that control the majority of the Cambodian market were put under review, and an investigation was opened by the International Finance Corp's watchdog [Brook 2023, 11 November]. The financial position within the country is part of a wider trend that maintains Cambodia's elite and enables them to continue their rule with impunity. While Hun Manet has made a statement to address corruption within public administration, there has been no statement regarding either micro-finance or inequality overall. Indeed, in a statement on the launch of the Cambodian Financial Technology Development Policy 2023-2028, the PM encouraged banks to increase loans to micro, small, and medium size businesses, and urged the National Bank to ease some regulations on banks and microfinance providers [Hun 2023].

3.1. *China-US-Vietnam relations and trade*

Hun Sen was always a political pragmatist, and as such, Cambodia has long shifted between China and the US, aligning with each as deemed most

useful at the time. As Pich and Aun state in their assessment of Cambodian foreign relations, «the principles of non-interference, permanent neutrality, non-alignment, peaceful coexistence with neighbours, territorial integrity and national sovereignty, as enshrined in Article 53 of Cambodian constitution, continue to serve as a roadmap for Cambodia’s foreign policy direction» [Pich & Aun 2023]. In 2022, attention was directed towards the US, while in 2023 it swung back to China. These moves most likely related to the ASEAN chair in 2022, and the Cambodian general elections in 2023. This political pragmatism was no doubt part of what has ensured the ongoing leadership of the CPP, with the Hun family at the helm. Because both China and the US view Cambodia as strategically important [Kin 2023], over the decades it has become clear that few, if any, actions of the CPP will threaten these foreign alliances in the long-term. As such, these states have both, inadvertently (or not), supported the solidification of dynastic rule by the CPP.

Despite identifying several barriers to trade (including high levels of corruption, lack of transparency in customs and excise, irregularities in government procurement policy, lax counterfeit laws, and foreign investment barriers [United States Trade Representative 2023: 53-55]), the US was Cambodia’s largest trading partner during the review period. There had been some tension between the two states following the 2018 elections, but by 2022 the relationship was back on firm ground, with the US Department of State [2022] declaring that «our two peoples share an enduring friendship». In 2022, US\$ 446 million worth of US goods were imported into Cambodia, a 7.3% increase from 2021. Meanwhile, Cambodia exported US\$ 12.2 billion of goods to the US, an almost 40% increase on the previous year, and Cambodia’s FDI in the US was US\$ 8 million [United States Trade Representative 2023]. In August 2023, the Cambodian government requested that the US Generalized System of Preferences, which had ended in 2020, be renewed, to allow Cambodian products to be exported duty-free to the US [Rim 2023]. This was still under consideration as we went to press.

As well as being the largest trading partner, in the financial year of 2022¹ the US allocated US\$ 100.5 billion aid to Cambodia [Lum 2022]. Although following the July 2023 elections relations cooled, with the US withholding US\$ 18 million in aid to the country, following a meeting of Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Manet and US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland at the UN General Assembly on 22 September, by October this aid was restored. A spokesperson from USAID stated that this reinstatement was «part of our commitment to helping advance a brighter and healthier future for the people of Cambodia in a more prosperous, democratic, and independent country where all voices are heard» [Meyn & Noy 2023, 3 October].

1. In Cambodia the financial year coincides with the solar year.

Despite this re-asserted alliance, the US is wary of Cambodia's relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). As well as re-declaring their friendship, USAID's statement in October 2023 urged Cambodia not to allow any other country to have control of its territory, «including at Ream naval base» [Meyn & Noy 2023, 3 October]. Before this, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, passed in Congress on 14 March 2022, made possible the suspension of support to Cambodia if harassment and violent suppression of the opposition did not end, but also included a provision enabling aid to Cambodia to be limited if the secretary of state believed the country was not maintaining sovereignty against the PRC [CAA 2022].

These concerns arise from the substantial financial, but also military, investment by the PRC into Cambodia, and assumed political influence related to this. China owned over 40% of Cambodia's foreign debt in 2022 [World Bank 2023], and over two-thirds of the US\$ 2 billion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Cambodia in 2023 came from the PRC. This investment is centred on infrastructure projects such as highways, solar energy, and automotive manufacturing [Dettoni 2023, 11 December]. Of particular note were the inauguration of the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville expressway in October 2022, and Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport in October 2023. Both are part of China's Belts and Roads Initiative, and the airport was the first built under the «build-operate-transfer» model [Cheang and Simith 2023, 16 November]. Its inauguration was seen as positive for Cambodia's economic recovery, as well as a means of strengthening the political and economic ties between the two nations. A second Chinese-funded airport, in Phnom Penh, is due to open in 2024.

The most concerning aspect of China's assistance to the Southeast Asian country for the rest of the geopolitical landscape is regarding the military. In 2023, the Golden Dragon joint military exercise, suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was restarted and attended by over 3,000 military personnel from both nations as well as dignitaries from several ASEAN countries. This followed the beginning of upgrades to Ream naval base, which started in June 2022, funded by China. Rumours abounded as to China's intent with the base. Confirmed plans include a deep-sea port and access for the Chinese military [Hutt 2023, 14 December], however, very little else has been made public. Satellite images taken in 2023 indicated the construction of a new pier similar to one at the People's Liberation Army Support Base in Djibouti, the PRC's only other overseas military base [Sevastopulo 2023, 24 July]. According to Craig Singleton, Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and China Program deputy director, this pier can support any warship in the Chinese arsenal [Narin and Noy 2023, 26 July]. This has raised concerns, particularly for the US. However, both Cambodia and China have repeatedly stated that the improvements are being made to improve Cambodia's capacities, and not as an intended outpost for the PRC.

Despite their close ties, and while some critics have viewed Cambodia as a puppet of China, the People's Republic of China does not appear to interfere with Cambodia's domestic politics. The differing stances over the Russia-Ukraine war indicate that Cambodia remains autonomous, if still intricately entwined with China politically and economically. Rather, China's support seems to have enabled Hun Sen and the CPP to consolidate their control and power – a mutual non-interference policy that benefits both. It is yet to be seen how Hun Manet will manage this relationship, although China was one of the first countries he visited after his appointment to PM.

Meanwhile, economic and political ties remained close between Cambodia and Vietnam, and Vietnam continued as the third largest trading partner, and one of the top five investors in Cambodia. In 2022, trade between the two nations totalled US\$ 10.7 billion [AP 2023, 11 December], and by October 2023, their bilateral trade had reached US\$ 7.1 billion [Vietnam News Agency 2023, 12 November]. According to a report by the Vietnamese News Agency, in a meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in November 2023, Hun Manet proposed furthering ties between the two nations [Vietnam News Agency 2023, 12 November]. This seems to have paid off: so far in 2024 both tourism and trade from Vietnam to Cambodia have reportedly increased [Hin 2024]. In addition, as part of the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle, Vietnam has invested over US\$ 1.7 billion in 44 projects in the nation. While this agreement aims to strengthen relationships between the nations in general, one of its stated aims is to connect the three economies, to improve overall competitiveness and «close the development gap with other ASEAN members» [Linh 2024].

Despite consolidating the relationships with these three states, the CPP did not sit on its laurels. As well as the free trade agreements coming into force with China and Korea in 2022, so too did the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which Cambodia is signatory to. As a free trade agreement between 15 countries across Asia and the Pacific, representing 30% of the global population and 30% of global GDP, this agreement has created the world's largest free trade agreement area [Zhu, Chen & Yao 2022]. Cambodia also sought to extend relations to other countries, with former Foreign Minister Prak Sokhohn making visits to Morocco and Egypt in March 2023 towards this end [Pich & Aun 2023]. The new PM has continued the path of diversification, making visits to France, Malaysia, and Japan to name but a few. While some have said that the number of leaders welcoming Hun Manet and other CPP officials after the handover of power is a sign of hope and a chance to start afresh, for many it shows that Cambodia's dynastic autocracy is internationally accepted and secure.

3.2. *Regional relations: ASEAN and the Southeast Asian Games*

Cambodia proved itself to be a strong political player in Southeast Asia during 2022 and 2023. In January 2022, Cambodia took over the Chair of

ASEAN for its third turn at the leadership. Numerous challenges faced this role, including dealing with political tensions in Myanmar, tensions related to the South China Sea, tense US-China relations, and the Russia-Ukraine war. Hun Sen's approach was to «prioritize initiatives aimed at strengthening ASEAN community-building and ASEAN unity», emphasizing collective approaches to dealing with issues [Lin 2023: 90]. Cambodia oversaw several key initiatives and the publication of critical statements as part of its stewardship. This included the ASEAN Leaders Vision Statement (setting out aspirations and interests of the ASEAN states), the ASEAN Leaders Statement published on 55th Anniversary of ASEAN (laying out ASEAN's key principles, including community building), advancing ASEAN's interests in the Indo-Pacific, and overseeing the agreement, in-principle, of membership for Timor Leste, as the 11th member of ASEAN, with rights for representatives to observe future meetings. Cambodia oversaw summits with key external relations during its stewardship, including the US, the EU, Canada and India, as well as the 17th East Asia summit. «India and the United States were both granted Comprehensive Strategic Partnership status with ASEAN» [Lin 2023: 96]. In May 2023, the first ever US-ASEAN Special Summit was held in Washington [Gallagher 2022].

One contested aspect of Cambodia's stewardship was relations with the military junta of Myanmar. Despite protests from within Myanmar and beyond, early in his chairmanship Hun Sen travelled to Myanmar and met with Snr. General Min Aung Hlaing [*Radio Free Asia* 2022, 7 January], shortly afterwards inviting him to the upcoming ASEAN summit [*Reuters* 2022, 25 January]. Cambodian foreign minister Prak Sokhonn visited Myanmar twice during the year, and while General Min Aung Hlaing was banned from an October summit, a representative was invited in his stead. The approach caused tension within ASEAN, and while some progress was made in securing humanitarian aid in Myanmar [Lin 2023], such engagement raised criticism of legitimating, and thereby strengthening, the regime [Kumar 2022, 14 January].

Meanwhile the ASEAN stance on the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 received much praise. While chair of ASEAN, Cambodia co-sponsored two UN resolutions: one in March calling for Russia to withdraw from Ukraine [United Nations 2022a], and one in October condemning the annexation of four Ukrainian oblasts [United Nations 2022b]. While Cambodia's role in this took some by surprise (due to its condemnation of former ally Russia and its call to uphold international law), the stance was consistent with Hun Sen's view of sovereignty, which has always supported non-interference. As part of this, Cambodia used the chair's prerogative to invite president Zelensky to speak at an ASEAN forum, ensuring the Ukrainian voice was heard in the region [Lin 2023]. Phnom Penh also oversaw the accession of Ukraine to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in November 2022; the 7th country to accede un-

der Cambodia's chairmanship after Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Oman, Qatar and the UAE [ASEAN Secretariat 2023]. That said, despite Cambodia's open support of Ukraine, in July 2023 Hun Sen issued a firm statement in opposition to distribution of cluster bombs from the US to Ukraine. This was a direct result of Cambodia's own experience of cluster munitions, which continue to maim and kill hundreds of Cambodians to date, more than 40 years after they were laid. Hun Sen openly called on NATO and US allies to prevent the distribution, stating that it would be a tragedy for the Ukrainian people [Son 2023].

In negotiating and overseeing such proceedings, Hun Sen showed that he was more than just an autocratic strongman: rather he proved that he and his party could be astute, forward-thinking political leaders. This was further supported by the (mostly) successful hosting of the 32nd Southeast Asian Games in May 2023. Hosting a mega-event such as an international sports competition not only provides an opportunity to showcase the country, but also the economic, administrative, and infrastructural capacities of the host nation.

The facilities built for the Southeast Asian Games, primarily funded by China, included a 60,000-seater stadium and a multi-purpose sports complex with an Olympic size pool, running track, tennis courts, and accommodation for the athletes. Bringing employment and volunteering roles to almost 7,000 people, the games provided much needed positive news for Cambodia, following the previous few challenging years. Although there were some tensions (the flags from Vietnam, Indonesia, and Myanmar were displayed upside down, for example), and complaints about poor quality facilities, the games were seen as a success, at least in Cambodia. Much like the (mostly) successful leadership of ASEAN, the games provided an opportunity for soft diplomacy; a chance to bolster their international reputation as well as providing regeneration and development opportunities; vital in a year when Cambodia's political reputation, particularly once the elections came about, was at its lowest almost certainly since the 1997 coup in which the CPP took overall control of the country.

4. Arts, culture, and international decolonization

One final aspect is worth mentioning in the consideration of 2022 and 2023 for Cambodia's place in the global sphere. In 2022 and 2023, several priceless looted antiquities were returned to the kingdom, including three bronze statues dating back to the Champa Kingdom. The statues had been bought for over US\$ 1.5 million by the National Gallery of Australia in 2011. Looting of ancient treasures has been common in Cambodia since French colonial times, but the insecure years from the 1960s to the 1990s

saw its escalation, and it is thought that, during those decades, over 4,000 statues were stolen and sold abroad [Ford & Worthington 2023, 2 August]. Many of the more valuable ones passed through the hands of international art dealer and collector Douglas Latchford. Looted antiquities sold by him were returned from across the US [Cohen 2022, 9 August] and the National Gallery of Australia [Ford and Worthington 2023, 2 August]. Also, in December 2023, New York's Met Museum agreed to return more than a dozen artefacts thought to be the result of trafficking [Campbell 2023, 16 December].

These returns mark a renewed attention not only to culture and the arts in Cambodia, but to international geopolitical norms inspired by the values of decolonization. The renewal of the arts and the media attention the repatriation of such antiquities potentially herald the beginning of a different kind of regional and international cooperation. What this means for the new dynasty is yet to be seen, but claiming legitimacy through ancient (and sometimes supernatural) continuation was already a rhetoric of Hun Sen and other CPP officials. Given his more contemporary political sensitivity, continuing such repatriations is likely to be looked upon favourably by the new PM. It will also appeal to those in Cambodia (and wider afield) in support of ongoing decolonization and deimperialization, and, as such, may provide a useful means for maintaining, or growing, political legitimacy for the 'new' CPP.

5. Conclusion: a view of what's to come – same same, not different.

2022 and 2023 were significant years for Cambodia, not only in the historical political handover of leadership (marking the completion of political transformation to dynastic autocracy), but also because of its regional competence, economic recovery, and re-establishment of relations with China, the US, Vietnam, and others. As we move on in 2024, the patterns set in the last few years look likely to continue. China and Cambodia consolidated their relationship through the joint launch of the year of people-to-people exchange, aiming to promote tourism and connectivity, while the US affirmed its relationship with Cambodia by means of diplomatic meetings starting at the beginning of the year. Prime Minister Hun Manet blamed foreign media for the collapse of Sihanoukville's development, while despite a statement by the PM in December 2023 affirming the ban of hydro dams on the Mekong, this year, feasibility studies related to two hydropower dam projects on the Mekong River began to be conducted by companies owned by Cambodian tycoon Kith Meng. In January, opposition leader Kem Sokha's appeal was denied, union leader Seng Theary was detained, and Hun Sen, who remains powerful despite handing over the prime ministership to his son, reportedly filed a complaint against human rights ad-

vocate Soeng Senkaruna, demanding US\$ 500,000 in damages. While some were hopeful that Hun Manet's rule would be more liberal and transformative than his father's, his political record during 2023 and the beginning of 2024 suggests that he is set to repeat Hun Sen's patterns and cement the dynastic autocracy of the nation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADB, 2023, *ADB Adjusts 2023 Growth Forecast for Cambodia, Maintains 2024 Outlook*, 20 September.
- AP, 2023, 11 December, 'Cambodia's leader holds talks in neighboring Vietnam on first visit since becoming prime minister'.
- ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, 2023, *Open letter to parliaments on the need to denounce the sham elections in Cambodia*, 20 July.
- ASEAN Secretariat, 2023, *Annual Report 2022-2023: ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth*, Vol. 43.
- Baldwin, Claire, 2023, 'Like strongman, like son? Cambodia's Hun Manet makes political debut', *Reuters*, 20 July.
- Benar News, 2023, 6 January, 'Cambodian opposition leader's brief visit to Malaysia sets off PM Hun Sen'.
- Brook, Jack, 2023, 'Cambodia's microfinance sector hit by predatory lending claims', *Nikkei Asia*, 11 November.
- [CAA 2022] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, P.L. 117-103, Section 7043(b).
- CEIC Data, 2023a, *Cambodia KH: Rate: Adult: % of People Aged 15 and Above*.
- CEIC Data, 2023b, *Cambodia KH: Literacy Rate: Adult Female: % of Females Aged 15 and Above*.
- Campbell, Mathew, 2023, 'New York's Met Museum to Return Looted Antiquities to Cambodia', *Bloomberg*, 16 December.
- Cohen, Luc, 2022, 'U.S. returns to Cambodia 30 antiquities looted from historic sites', *Reuters*, 9 August.
- Cheang, Sopheng, and Heng Sinitth, 2023, 'Cambodia inaugurates new Chinese-funded airport serving popular tourist destination of Angkor Wat', *Associated Press*, 16 November.
- CNA, 2023, '«New blood, new ideas»: New PM Hun Manet a positive change for Cambodia: Observer', *YouTube* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9YPe3gO2iY&ab_channel=CNA).
- Department of State, 2022, *The United States-Cambodia Relationship, Fact Sheet*, 12 November.
- Dettoni, Jacopo, 2023, 'Cambodia carries the strongest FDI momentum into 2024', *FDI Intelligence*, 11 December.
- Ear, Sophal, 2023, 'Cambodia PM Hun Sen will shut down opposition on election day – even if he can no longer threaten voters on Facebook', *The Conversation*, 30 June.
- EIU, 2022, 'Democracy Index'.
- Ford, Mazoe, and Anne Worthington, 2023, 'How statues looted from a Cambodian field wound up in the National Gallery of Australia', *ABC News*, 2 August.

- Freedom House, 2023, 'Cambodia. Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report'.
- Gallagher, Amy, 2022, 'U.S.-ASEAN Summit Focused on Building Ties, Not Countering China', United States Institute of Peace.
- Hin, Pisei, 2024, 'Cambodia-Vietnam trade hits \$1.4B Jan-Feb', *Phnom Penh Post*, 21 March.
- Human Rights Watch, 2023, 3 July, 'Cambodia: Past Vote Irregularities Foreshadow July Election'.
- Hun, Sirivadh, 2023, 'Prime Minister Hun Manet Emphasizes Vital Role of Banking Sector', *EAC News*, 20 December.
- Hutt, David, 2023, 'What's Happening At Cambodia's Ream Naval Base?', *The Diplomat*, 14 December.
- International Monetary Fund, 2023, *IMF Staff Completes 2023 Article IV Mission to Cambodia*, 31 October.
- Kelliher, Fiona, & Ouch Sony, 2023, 'Many Opposition Members Defect to Cambodian Ruling Party Ahead of Election', *Voice of America*, 2 July.
- Kin, Phea, 2021, 24 August, 'Cambodia in between China and US', *Phnom Penh Post*, 24 August.
- Kongnov, Tith, 2023, 'Vietnam, Cambodia sign MoU on repatriation of more remains', *Khmer Times*, 14 December.
- Kumar, P Prem, 2023, 'Malaysia says Hun Sen's Myanmar visit did no good', *Nikkei Asia*, 14 January.
- Lin, Joanne, 2023, 'Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022: Rising above Doubts and Pushing through a Difficult Year', *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 2023, pp. 89-103.
- Linh, Bao, 2024, 'The 13th Meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Cambodia - Laos - Vietnam Development Triangle Area', *Ministry of Planning and Investment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, 1 March.
- Lum, Thomas, 2023, 'Cambodia: Background and U.S. Relations. Congressional Research Services Report', Congressional Research Service, 11 September.
- Medina, Ayman Falak, 2023, 'Cambodia Increases Minimum Wage for Garment, Footwear, Travel Product Sectors for 2024', *ASEAN Briefing*, 4 October.
- Meyn, Colin, & Han Noy, 2023, 'US Reversal on Cambodia Aid Calls Principles into Question, Advocates Say', *Voice of America*, 3 October.
- Ministry of Tourism, 2022, *Tourism Statistics Report December 2022*, Phnom Penh, RCG (https://www.tourismcambodia.com/img/resources/cambodia_tourism_statistics_2022.pdf).
- Ministry of Tourism, 2023, *Tourism Statistics Report September 2023*, Phnom Penh, RCG (<https://seishiron.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CAM092023.pdf>).
- Ministry of Health, 2022, *Press Release no. 098*, 17 March (<https://www.embassyofcambodiadc.org/embassy-updates/pr-no-098-easing-of-entry-requirements-march-17-2022>).
- Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training 2024, 'Prakas 427', 'Prakas 428' (<https://www.mlvt.gov.kh/index.php/en/official-docs/prakas/43-%e1%9c%94%e1%9f%92%e1%9c%9a%e1%9c%80%e1%9c%b6%e1%9c%9f/2005.html>).
- NIS (National Institute of Statistics), 2023a, *Demographic and Health Survey 2021-2022*, Phnom Penh: Royal Government of Cambodia.
- NIS (National Institute of Statistics), 2023b (<https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/en/>).
- Narin, Sun & Han Noy, 2023, 'Cambodian Ream Naval Base Modernized by China Nears Completion: Defense Ministry', *VOA*, 26 July.

- Nitta, Yuji, 2024, 'Cambodia ex-PM Hun Sen Set to Return to Diplomatic Stage', *Nikkei Asia*, 4 April.
- Peck, Grant & Cheang Sopheang, 2023, 'Oversight board recommends Facebook suspend Cambodian premier's account for violent language', *AP*, 29 June.
- Pich, Charadine, & Chhengpor Aun, 2023, 'How Small States Navigate U.S.-China Rivalry: The Case of Cambodia', Southeast Asia in a World of Strategic Competition series, United States Institute of Peace, 19 September.
- Radio Free Asia, 2022, 7 January, 'Cambodian PM Hun Sen meets Myanmar junta chief amid widespread protests'.
- Reporters without Borders, 2024, 'World Press Freedom Index'.
- Reuters, 2022, 25 January, 'Cambodia PM says Myanmar junta welcome at ASEAN if progress made'.
- Reuy, Rann, 2023, 'Education minister accepts 2023 «World Literacy Award»', *The Phnom Penh Post*, 5 April.
- Rim, Sokvy, 2023, 'The West's impact on the future of Cambodia's democracy', *East Asia Forum*, 7 September.
- Samban, Chandra, 2023, 'Ceremonial procession honours service, deaths of 49 repatriated soldiers', *Phnom Penh Post*, 3 April.
- Sevastopulo, Demetri, 2023, 'Chinese base in Cambodia nears completion in challenge to US naval power', *The Financial Times*, 24 July.
- Son, Minea, 2023, 'PM asks US, Ukraine not to use cluster munitions in war', *Khmer Times*, 10 July.
- Strangio, Sebastian, 2022, 'Cambodia Opens Third Mass Trial of Opposition Activists', *The Diplomat*, 16 September.
- Strangio, Sebastian, 2023, 'Hun Manet's Cambodia: An Anatomy of Administrative Bloat', *The Diplomat*, 24 August.
- Suy, Heimkhemra, 2023, 'Cambodia's economy must keep evolving', *East Asia Forum*, 14 December.
- Tram, Van, & Phuoc Tuon, 2022, 'Vietnam returns remains of Cambodian war allies', *VN Express*, 2 December.
- Transparency International, 2023, 'Corruptions Perceptions Index 2022'.
- UNDP, 2023, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)*.
- United Nations, 2022a, *A/RES/ES-11/1* (<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2FES-11%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>).
- United Nations, 2022b, *A/RES/ES-11/4* (<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N22/630/66/PDF/N2263066.pdf?OpenElement>).
- United Nations, 2023, 'Human Rights Council Adopts Two Resolutions, Extends Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia', United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 13 October.
- US Department of State, 2023, 'The United States-Cambodia Relationship, Fact Sheet', Office of the Spokesperson, 12 November.
- US State Department, 2023, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, State Department: Washington DC.
- United States Trade Representative, 2023, '2023 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers'.
- Va, Sopheanut, 2024, 'Win-Win Policy Day Re-Named «Peace Day in Cambodia», Now A National Holiday', *Cambodia News*, 4 January.

Vietnam News Agency, 2023, 12 November, 'Cambodian PM's official visit enhances traditional friendship with Vietnam'.

World Bank, 2023, *The World Bank in Cambodia, Overview*.

World Health Organization, 2023, *COVID-19 in Cambodia*.

Zhu, John, Yaxin Chen & Wijia Yao, 2022, 'The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership: a new mega trade bloc for Asia', *Swiss Re Institute*, 6 July.