



Faculty of Social Sciences

Institute for Development and Peace (INEF)



# Transitions of Cambodia

**War and Peace, 1954 to the present**

*Project Working Paper No. 2*

*Social and Political Fractures after Wars:  
Youth Violence in Cambodia and Guatemala*

**Oliver Hensengerth**

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Contact: [oliverhensengerth@gmail.com](mailto:oliverhensengerth@gmail.com)

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The present study is part of the research project on “Social and Political Fractures after Wars: Youth Violence in Cambodia and Guatemala”. The project is financed by the German Foundation for Peace Research and is located at the Institute for Development and Peace at the University of Duisburg-Essen. The project aims at explaining different levels of youth violence in two post-war societies whose processes of war termination are regarded as successful. However, both societies face serious problems of post-war development that are closely related to the experiences of war and war termination. While Cambodia’s democratisation process is considered more or less as a failure, Guatemala suffers from levels of violence higher than during most of the war. The differences between both countries in levels of violence and mechanisms of violence control are also visible in the incidence of youth violence.

The project aims to explain these differences through the contextualisation of youth violence. Thus the main focus is directed at the societal and political fractures war and war termination cause for youth and their life-worlds. The working hypotheses were related to differences according to a) the levels of social differentiation; b) the relationship between political and economic power; c) normative frameworks; and d) the sequencing of post-war developments (namely between liberalisation and stabilisation). This approach has methodological consequences insofar as different levels of youth violence are what we seek to explain. The perspective of the actors themselves is beyond our approach. After having identified the relevant fractures this would be the task of further research.

The present study elaborates the historical frame for the analysis of post-war youth violence by looking at longitudinal developments as well as fractures caused by war, violence, and the intersections of domestic and external developments in the triple transformation processes under the liberal peace paradigm that was transplanted to Cambodia during the UN peacekeeping mission. Starting with Cambodia at the time of independence from France in 1953/54, the study analyses Cambodia’s social, economic, and political development, its fractures and long-term processes during the successive stages of the war and post-war periods. The study looks at patterns in Cambodia’s development and aims to explain Cambodia’s difficult post-war situation not merely as a backslide into war, but rather as a development that partly continues, partly fractures traditional facets of Cambodia’s social and political development.



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## **Transitions of Cambodia: War and Peace, 1954 to the present**

This study is concerned with the social and economic developments in Cambodia between 1954 and today. For most of its part, the conflict was a political rather than social conflict fought between the elites of various parties and political colour, among them Sihanouk and the republican opposition in the Democratic Party, the right-wing and US leaning military under Lon Nol, the communists, Ranariddh and Hun Sen. The communists were initially nurtured and raised by Vietnam's communists, then developed a nationalist branch under Pol Pot and eventually broke apart in pro and anti-Vietnamese parties after 1978.

The Cambodian crisis started in 1968 when the communists, which Sihanouk had labelled the Khmer Rouge, launched a national campaign. A first nation-wide campaign in 1967, which originated in the Samlot rebellion of the same year, had failed. The 1968 campaign was first a struggle between Sihanouk and the communist opposition that had been entirely driven underground, but developed into a full-scale civil war. Under the influence of the contemporaneous Vietnam War, the domestic conflict became internationalised and, hence, found its legitimisation largely on the basis of the Cold War dichotomy. While the Cold War structured the crisis primarily, historical interests of neighbouring states in the region utilised the conflict in order to achieve old desires towards dominating Cambodia (China versus Thailand versus Vietnam) by supporting appropriate internal parties.

In order to avoid the trappings of culturalist explanations of violence, the author would like to state that violence may be a result of the war, a feature of Cambodia's political culture independent of the war, or simply executions of personal revenge between (former) friends or neighbours. Regional and local disparities need to be taken into account as well, in order to avoid generalisation of the entire Cambodia without reference to differing incidents of violence, the form of violence, the degree of social differentiation, and the recent political history of different regions. For instance, between 1975 and April/May 1978, the Eastern Zone of the Khmer Rouge state was governed by moderate communists, which were friendly towards Vietnam and did not share the ideological zeal of the Khmer Rouge hardliners under Pol Pot. Accordingly, political violence in the form of corvée labour or executions occurred far less than, for instance, in the Central Zone. Also, it should be noted that a number of poorest peasants benefited from the social and economic policies of the Khmer Rouge, which designed the Cambodian economy to become an agrarian subsistence economy based on rice.

This is to say that the Cambodian communists were not a concrete bloc without fissures. In 1978, when the moderates fled to Vietnam to escape Pol Pot's purges, the party broke apart. The escapees returned in 1979 together with the Vietnamese army and ousted Pol Pot's communists. After the civil war had officially ended in 1991, Pol Pot established a base at the Thai border, which proved to be hostile soil for the nominally socialist Heng Samrin/Hun Sen government. This remained the case until 1999, when the last of former Pol Pot allies was

turned over to the government. Pol Pot had died the year before in April 1998. Until then, Cambodia was in effect partitioned between the Western parts of Battambang province under Pol Pot's forces and the rest of the country in command of Hun Sen's government in Phnom Penh. We should therefore keep in mind that for more than twenty years between the early 1970s, when the communists established their first 'liberated areas', up to 1999, different regions in Cambodia were experiencing different contemporaneous developments, ranging from a Pol Pot version of Maoism to a laissez faire economic liberalism, or, indeed, were experiencing a legal vacuum.

It is the purpose of this study to trace the socio-economic conditions for Cambodia's civil war in order to supplement the vast literature that has explored the domestic and international arenas so well. Then, the study proceeds to discuss intersections of war and post-war transformations rather than viewing Cambodia's post-1993 development as a simple backslide into war. We therefore look at concurrences between actors and structure (the triple transformation process of democratisation, market reforms and pacification) as consequence of the failed implementation of the liberal peace paradigm that surrounded the UNTAC mission of 1992-1993. The Sihanouk years between 1954 and 1970 will make the start.

## **1. Pre-war Society: The Sihanouk years, 1954-1970**

### **1.1. Economy and social differentiation**

Between 1954 and 1966, Sihanouk's popularity was widely unchallenged among the rural population, which kept a deferential air towards him and believed that 'the government was out there' (Chandler 1991:88). There were no famines, almost all peasants owned the land they tilled – a difficulty the communists faced (Chandler 1991:108), there was a sufficiency of land to cultivate, towns offered employment. Exports of primary products such as rice, rubber and pepper earned enough foreign exchange, aid from France, the United States and the Sino-Soviet bloc contributed to the erection of hospitals, schools, a deep-water port, and a road between Phnom Penh and the coast. Health care and sanitation improved fast, incidents of malaria and child mortality decreased as did illiteracy (Chandler 1991:89).

The peasantry revered Sihanouk, and most peasants owned some land enough 'for a family farm unit.' However, the penetration of a tax collection system under French rule, and *corvée* labour and usury weighed heavily on the peasants, and money was mostly owed to Chinese and Sino-Khmer moneylenders (Kiernan 1986:xv+323). Commerce was dominated by Chinese and Sino-Khmer, who resided in or near market and port towns (Kalab 1968:523). Even though the farming families who did not own land and earned their livings as tenants and sharecroppers increased from 4 percent to 20 percent between 1950 and 1970, the figures are low, whereby the middle half of the farming population owned roughly half of the cultivated land. Furthermore, landlordism never created a significant social problem, even though Pol Pot stressed this factor (Kiernan 1986:xv). However, while Ebihara (1987) warned against overstating the debt situation of peasants, Kiernan argued that almost all peasants had problems with repaying debts or obtaining credits 'since money was usually lent at 12% interest per month, and credit available from rural shopkeepers (overwhelmingly Chinese and Sino-



Khmer) returned 10 to 20% per month' (Kiernan 1987:xv). Citing three surveys conducted between 1952 and 1966, this affected 75 percent, 50 percent and 67 percent of the peasants respectively (Kiernan 1986:xv). Today, landlessness is measured at different rates depending on the source: Chan Sophal, Tep Saravy and Sarthi Acharya (2001:ii) locate it between 12 and 15 percent after consulting a number of sources for their study; the Economist, quoting World Bank numbers, locates it at 20 percent with a tendency towards a worsening situation as land grabbing of officials and private firms increase and the legal situation for land titles is unclear.<sup>1</sup>

To the detriment of the communist party, this situation did not provide fertile ground for revolution. In 1950, Cambodia's communists were almost exclusively composed of Vietnamese Khmer such as Son Ngoc Minh, Sieu Heng, Tou Samouth, and Chan Samay, who was born in Cochin China, known in Cambodia as Kampuchea Krom. All these men attended a meeting at Hatien close to the Cambodian border with Le Duc Tho and Nguyen Than Son, who was in charge of the Viet Minh's foreign affairs committee in Southern Vietnam (Nam Bo). The aim was to chart a course for Cambodia's revolution under Vietnamese guidance. During the meeting, Son fatalistically noted that in Cambodia, communists were operating in an ideological no man's land: the key ingredients to attract following for a revolution – an exploitative landlord class, a bourgeoisie, and a shortage of land – 'were absent or poorly developed', the peasantry 'autarchic and resistant to outside pressure.' Yet, in the words of Nguyen Than Son, they were 'the most unhappy and numerous class, in the regions furthest from the cities and bodies of water. This social class lives in the blackest of misery. They awake slowly but surely. They constitute the principle force of the Khmer revolution.' While the peasantry was 'diffuse, autarchic, and asleep', an urban proletariat was widely absent since the French focused their economic activities on Vietnam; the small intellectual class was loyal to the republican Democratic Party; and apart from the sangha, there was no communal organisation. It is estimated that forty ethnic Khmer were part of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1950 (Chandler 1991:48-49).

Under French rule, a small middle class emerged in the urban areas consisting of business people and French-educated intellectuals. Soon, the latter found themselves in opposition to the conservatism espoused by the royalty and colonialists alike (Kiernan 1986:18-20). This dispute between the urban intellectual elite and the conservatism of Sihanouk found its manifestation in the attempts by Sihanouk to crush the influence of the Democratic Party.

Social distinctions consisted of three broad classes: an upper class made up of royalty and high government officials; a middle class of white-collar workers, professionals, minor bureaucrats etc.; and a lower class of peasants, workers, and artisans. Ebihara notes that finer distinctions were drawn within these classes, such as the peasants. Distinctions here were according to the prosperity of a family, which depended on the size of paddy owned (Ebihara 1987:20). Nevertheless, material wealth was not the actual determinant of status in the village community. Rather, prestige was owned on the basis of immaterial qualities: age, religiosity, or good character. Connected to this is the importance of religion. The Buddhist pagoda was a

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<sup>1</sup> The Economist 10 March 2007:38; Human Rights Watch 1 August 2006.

‘moral, social and educational center’ and monks seen as living embodiments of morality. The workings of karma had an important influence on individual behaviour with the aim to earn merit: becoming a monk; making donations to the pagoda; attending ritual observances at the pagoda; following Buddhist norms (Ebihara 1987:20-21). Sihanouk’s Sangkum party used the idea of karma in order to achieve compliance from the peasantry. In lockstep with rural admiration for the social and religious benefits the pagoda extended, a link between politics and religion emerged that was able to exercise social control over the peasantry.

In the rural areas, literacy and further education were a service of the local pagodas. While boys entered the monastery and acquired at least basic literacy, women were generally illiterate (Kalab 1968:532-533). Under French rule, the introduction of secular state schools began to eat away the influence of the monasteries in education, a development which extended to other functions such as financial help (banking), medical advice, and architectural assistance (Kalab 1976:67). Under Sihanouk’s rule, the education sector expanded rapidly. By 1970, nearly all Khmers could acquire basic literacy. 11,000 students attended university. This, however, produced social mobility and frustration as more and more segments of the population became better informed, and radical interpretations of Cambodia’s society became frequent (Chandler 1991:122-123). This was also an important factor in the alienation of especially urban youth with the Sihanouk state: only a few educated youth could find qualified employment in the undeveloped economy (see the map below for economic activity). As the urban youth and intellectuals were no longer receptive for traditional hierarchy and the political symbolism of Sihanouk’s kingship, the gap widened between the young educated elite and the Sihanouk state.<sup>2</sup>

Starting in 1963, the situation deteriorated. When Sihanouk stopped reception of US aid in 1963, aid was the equivalent of 16 percent of GNP.<sup>3</sup> To replace the loss of US aid, Sihanouk nationalised banking, foreign trade and the insurance sector under the policy of Buddhist socialism in 1963. This provided the circle around Sihanouk with means of patronage in a crony socialism of state monopolies. By 1966, the economic situation had become desperate, seeing falling foreign investment, rising inflation, and the main export product rice sold to communist troops in Vietnam, which deprived the state of much needed revenue (Isaacs et. al. 1987:85). Shadow economy structures therefore became a challenge to the authority of the government. Chinese and Sino-Khmer merchants in towns and to a lesser degree also peasants profited from the illegal sale of rice and other food to communist insurgents. Those transporting this food and weapons from the shipments to Sihanoukville also made money as did officers of the Cambodian army, who were allowed to skim off 10 percent of military aid channelled through Sihanoukville. Rice exports dropped from 583,700 tons in 1965 to 199,049 tons in 1966.<sup>4</sup>

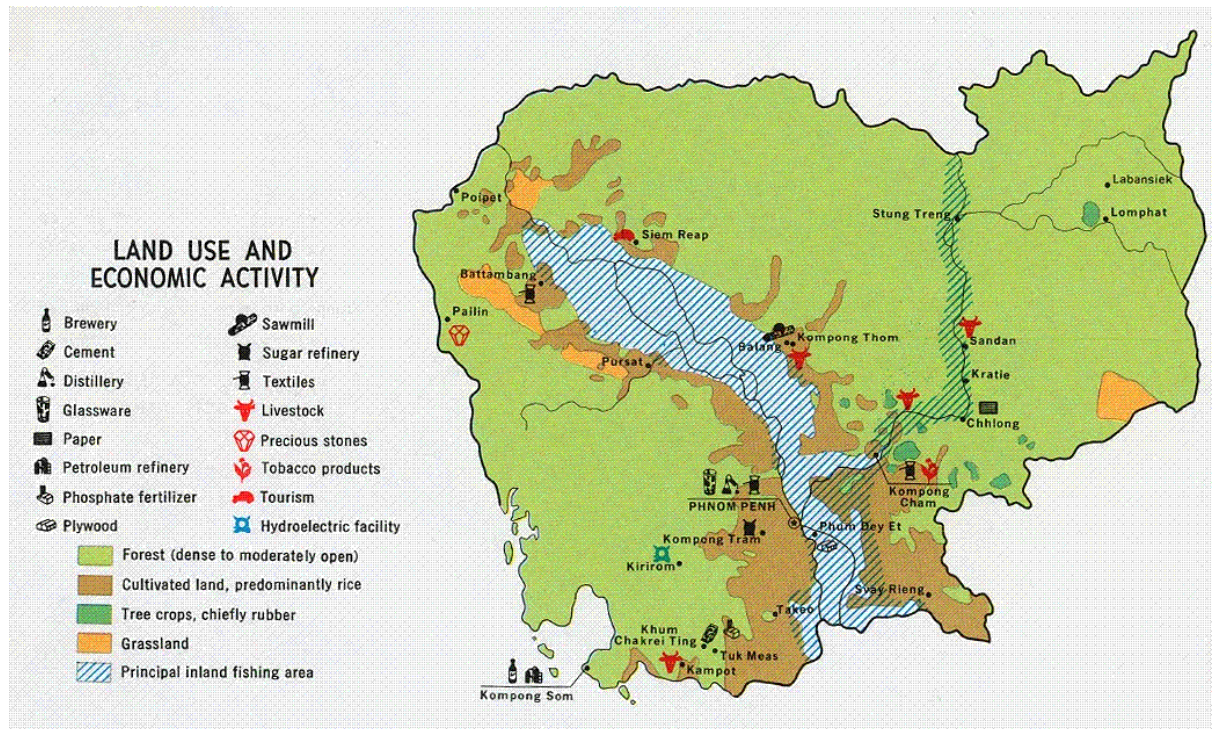
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<sup>2</sup> Kiernan 1986:xiii-xiv and *ibid.*:xiv cited Nepote 1979:784; Chandler 1991:122-123.

<sup>3</sup> Hood and Ablin 1987:xxii; Chandler notes 14 percent for the period 1960-1962, an amount that balanced the Cambodian budget: 131.

<sup>4</sup> Isaacs et. al. 1987:85; Chandler 1991:140+145.

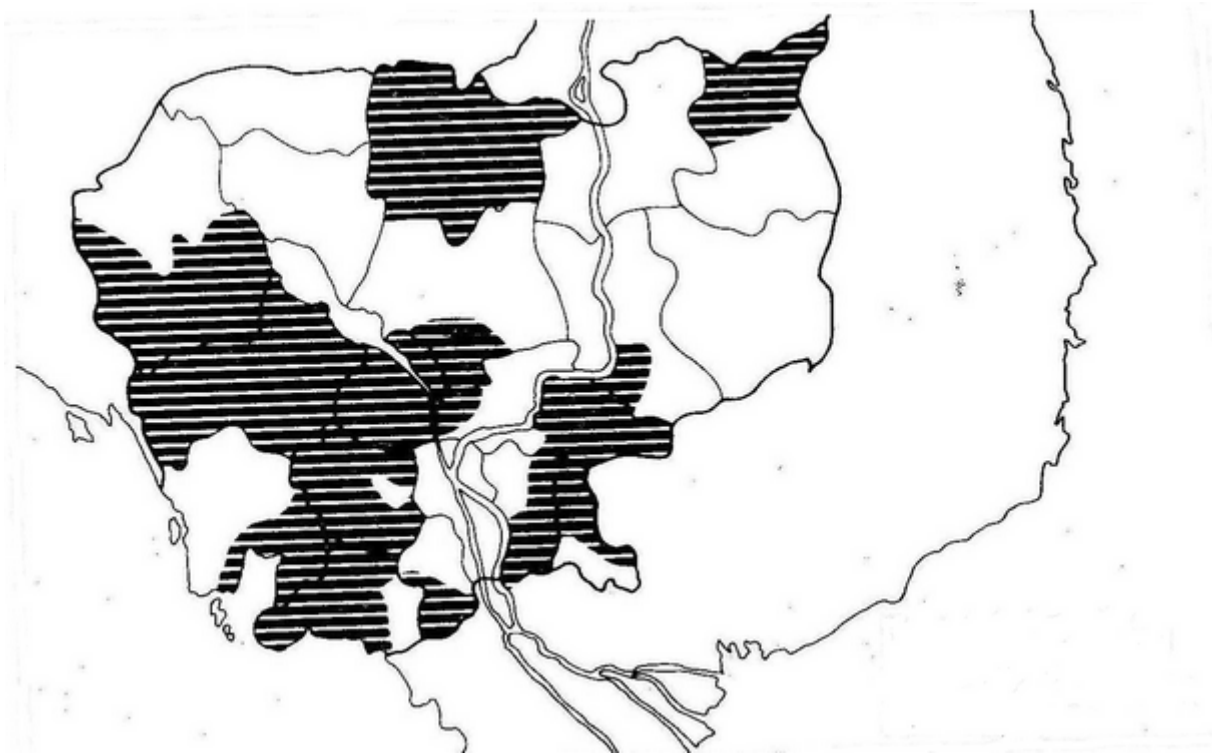
**Map: Land Use and Economic Activity in 1972 (or 1969)**



Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/cambodia\\_land\\_1972.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/cambodia_land_1972.jpg)

Sihanouk was now making enemies on the left and the right: the urban middle class which resented corruption and cronyism, the military due to budget cuts, the civil servants due to absence of bribes to supplement their incomes, high school and university graduates for whom it was harder than before to find acceptable jobs in the deteriorating economy, the commercial classes including the Chinese and Sino-Khmer communities with their links to the capitalist economies in Saigon and Bangkok, and intellectuals some of whom fled to France or joined the communists. Between March and May 1967, revolts erupted in Samlot in Battambang province but spread across the whole country, first affecting the southern provinces of Pursat, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Kampot, and the central province of Kampong Thom. The following map shows areas with communist activity (as of 1955).

**Map: Red or Pink Districts of Kampuchea, 1955**



Source: Map taken from Kiernan, 1987: 163. Original source: 'Red' or 'Pink' Districts of Kampuchea, 1955, in: Norodom Sihanouk, 'Le Communisme au Cambodge,' in: France-Asie, 1958.

Samlot marks the beginning of Cambodia's civil war. The reasons were manifold and the violence, as Kiernan argued, was 'initiated by the authorities' (Kiernan 1986:251), who linked the crushing of the popular discontent to the crushing of leftist activities: communists reacted to increased government repression executed by Prime Minister Lon Nol and authorised by Sihanouk in February 1967; students radicalised against authority (teachers, monks, officials) influenced by the Cultural Revolution in China, which reached its height in June 1967; peasants were infuriated at the government policy of having soldiers forcefully collecting rice from the peasants at one-third of black market prices in order to reverse the illegal selling of rice (in the wake of the campaign, the Chinese middlemen in the illegal selling of rice were arrested); others were angry at the state subsidies peasants received who were resettled there in 1965-1966 in an attempt to give landless peasants and refugees from South Vietnam plots to grow crops; yet others were enraged by land grabbings of local officials and business men to expand cotton fields for a nearby textile company; many cotton farmers then ended up indebted as the cotton harvest of 1966 was poor. The land titles needed to plant the cash crops onto the fields of the traditional subsistence village communities were gained by paying the relevant officials in the Department of Property Licences. To crush the uprising, which was a mix of leftist reaction to increasing government repression and local discontent, the govern-

ment sent eight battalions of soldiers to the area including ‘militia units of enthusiastic vigilantes’ from Battambang.<sup>5</sup> Demonstrations in Phnom Penh in March 1967 by students and monks against the wave of repression against communists met with threats by Sihanouk not to overstretch his goodwill vis-à-vis the left (Kiernan 1986:252).

We can see here the penetration of the capitalist economy (cotton production) into the subsistence village economy, plus the penetration of the power of the central state by way of government executed violence (rice collection) into the formerly insulated village communities. In addition, the link between business and politics is interesting, since, as we shall see, today evictions of peasants and shanty town people from the land they live on or work happen in an alliance between the government administration and firms, among them property developers and logging firms. Today, Prime Minister Hun Sen ensures much of his local support through his contacts to business people, who deliver the goods (roads, hospitals etc.), which he promises to the villagers if they vote for the correct party (i.e. Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP)).

The consequence of Samlot was that during his short tenure in office between 1966 and 1967, Prime Minister Lon Nol became extremely unpopular among the peasantry, which resented the cheap prices the government paid for the rice crop.<sup>6</sup> When the revolt accelerated, villages were destroyed, peasants killed, and many fled to the forest with their wives and children led by their monks from the local pagoda.<sup>7</sup>

While Samlot showed rural discontent and increasing nation-wide organisational capacities of the communists, the urban areas were not calm either. Since the 1950s, students along with the sangha and intellectuals had been among those most critical of Sihanouk. However, since the crushing of the Democratic Party in 1957, students and intellectuals had no political home. In this sense, the student revolts in Siem Reap in February 1963, which escalated around corruption and nepotism in police and government, signalled the end of Sihanouk’s fast eroding urban support. His royal air of unity and morality quickly evaporated in the latter half of the 1960s amidst corruption and cronyism, but he remained popular among the peasantry, who continued to rever him as their king and protector of the sangha, which had considerable moral influence in the villages. The communists used Sihanouk’s popularity among the peasantry to recruit them into their armies against the despised Lon Nol and, by extension, Sihanouk whom the Pol Pot faction within the communist party was set to oust once they would not need him anymore.

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<sup>5</sup> Chandler 1991:164-165; Kiernan 1986:249-268; for the rice problem see Kiernan 1986:251; Hughes 2001:24 cited Frieson 1994:37.

<sup>6</sup> Before he overthrew Sihanouk in 1970, Lon Nol held various governmental positions at different times, among them defense minister and army commander. Towards the end of Sihanouk’s reign, he served twice as prime minister: from October 1966 to May 1967, and again from August 1969 to March 1972. He was president of the Khmer Republic from March 1972 to April 1975, when the Khmer Republic fell to the Khmer Rouge.

<sup>7</sup> Kiernan 1986:257; Chandler 1991:122, 145, 157-167 and Isaacs et. al. 1987:86.

## 1.2. Forms of political governance

The village was the lowest level of administration with a village chief, who was elected by the local community. The next higher levels were the subdistrict, the district, province, and central government. The village chief, his deputy, and two assistants passed on orders and policies from above and turned taxes, statistics and records on marriage, property transactions etc. through to the levels above. The subdistrict chief was a local resident elected by the adult population of the communities in the subdistrict. He had functions similar to that of the village chief but was also a mediator in disputes and also was an intermediary between the local and national administration through his contacts in the district office. The district office was headed by an appointee of the national government.<sup>8</sup> This introduced a barrier between the local residents here and the government out there.

This had consequences for the ways in which conflicts were managed: national law was avoided in favour of informal ways, which employed local leaders as mediators instead (see the section on social cohesion in this chapter). The village was further linked to the national administration through the elected representative in the parliament. Since during Sihanouk's time all candidates fared better as members of the Sangkum (since those who were not were intimidated into relinquishing the candidacy), their election depended on their interest in local issues, such as the construction of a medical centre (Kalab 1968:529). The monastic administration was structured parallel to the secular administration, and often both worked together. For instance, monastic teachers had their nominations countersigned by the governor and the *mekon*, the provincial monastic head, i.e. the religious counterpart of the governor: 'The Cambodian nation is likened to a chariot supported on two wheels, one of which is the State and the other religion; only if both of them turn at the same speed can the chariot advance.'<sup>9</sup> As Kalab notes, 'grass-roots politics were in the hands of the influential monks in the villages' (Kalab 1976:66). Consequently, political 'legitimacy stems mostly from the sangha, which is in turn honoured and protected by the powerholder' (Thion 1987:152).

The role of protector of the sangha was performed by Sihanouk until his deposition in 1970. This role was an important part in the adoration of Sihanouk particularly by the rural population, a fact which outlasted the Khmer Rouge cataclysm. The eclipse of the political power of the sangha during 1975-1978/79 and the reinstating of monks into positions of power and prestige after 1979 bears significance for the continued adoration of Buddhism and the influence monks had among the population. Thus it seems the post-1979 government seized on the continued importance of religion in people's lives and sought political legitimacy by returning the sangha to position of influence – albeit under the control of the new socialist government headed by Heng Samrin.

As a constitutional monarch, Sihanouk was 'the paramount symbol of unity' with 'his actions mainly directed to ritual observance of an elaborate religious protection of the kingdom' (Thion 1987:153). So he abdicated in 1955, made his father king, and assumed the title of Prince. In preparation for the elections to be held in 1955, he formed his own party, the Sang-

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<sup>8</sup> Ebihara 1987:19; Kalab 1968:529-530.

<sup>9</sup> Kalab 1968:532; Kalab 1976:65-66.

kum Reastr Niyum (People's Socialist Community, short Sangkum). With it he defeated all parties, which opposed him: Son Ngoc Thanh's left-wing Khmer Independence Party, the Democratic Party with its urban intellectual following, and the Pracheachon Party. The Pracheachon Party was a legal political party formed by the harassed communists but was eclipsed in the 1958 elections. The Sangkum won all seats for the National Assembly in the 1955 elections, and Sihanouk became prime minister. The strength of the Democratic Party in the political system between 1946 until the 1955 elections for a while carried the hope of a democratic system independent of systems of patronage and elite politics. Its support was not dependent on traditional relations of patronage, but their supporters from Phnom Penh down to the village level were joined by 'literacy, shared excitements, and the notion of a new, imagined community.' The party attacked nepotism and corruption and in the 1940s clashed with the French owing to demands for full independence (Chandler 1991:38). The death of the Democratic Party also marked the death of hopes for a liberal, pluralist democracy in Cambodia. As Thion argued: 'The French parliamentary tradition [...] had no chance to graft itself onto the Khmer body politic except for a short period in 1955 with the rise of the Democrat party, which was aborted when Sihanouk stepped down' (Thion 1987:154). The consequence of this is that among the urban elite, which perceived the legitimacy of rule to materialise from democratic elections rather than from the cosmology of Buddhist kingship, Sihanouk had no solid support base.

The reasons for this is that the run up to the 1955 elections came to mark the Sihanouk years until 1970: politically motivated killings, intimidation, arrests without trials, censorship and absolute control over the media and the security forces 'to cow people into inaction' (Chandler 1991:81-84, 90-98). The Sangkum, a conservative amalgamate with a few left-wing politicians to balance against the right, espoused a conservative version of Buddhism, which explained social inequalities through the workings of karma. It requested the poor to be obedient in order to gain better karma for the next life (Thion 1987:151+152).

The start of the Sangkum government was relatively efficient with the traditional factionalism muted. The economic programme included infrastructure projects financed through international aid: a new airport for Phnom Penh funded by France, a road between Phnom Penh and the sea funded by the United States, and increased expenditures for education (Chandler 1991:86). In March 1956, Sihanouk introduced a policy of Khmer socialism, later changed to Buddhist socialism. The idea behind this was to

"perpetuate the status quo ... based on an idealistic reading of Cambodia's social relations. To make it work, Sihanouk counted on the deference of ordinary people and the good will of more fortunate Khmers. The system involved state intervention in many areas of life, while agriculture and commerce remained in private hands, expanding educational facilities, and hoping for the best (Chandler 1991:87)."

To do this, Sihanouk had to balance between the political right and left in order to emerge victorious over both, hence creating unity beyond everyday political factionalism. In a way, this approach to domestic policy was mirrored by his non-aligned foreign policy. From the mid-1950s on, Sihanouk sought good relations with China, North Vietnam and the United States. Sihanouk, however, remained suspicious of US intentions in Cambodia. Military co-

operation with the United States provided Washington with influence on Cambodian politics through the right-wing officers in the Cambodian army led by Lon Nol, Sihanouk's former ally in the 'Croisade Royale pour L'Indépendance.' In 1963, Sihanouk stopped reception of US aid and broke off relations in 1965. In 1965, he allowed the North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong to set up bases on Cambodian territory. Since 1964, China and the Soviet Union had been allowed to use the port of Sihanoukville for military shipments to Vietnam. While both China and North Vietnam were thus prevented to support Cambodia's communists, the Cambodian elite benefited highly from this by pocketing money particularly from China, which bought rice from the Cambodian government at extravagant prices (Hood and Ablin 1987).

In 1967, the year of the Samlot rebellion, Sihanouk turned back to the United States indicating that he would not oppose US and South Vietnamese air and ground strikes against the Vietnamese communist troops in Eastern Cambodia, from where the Cambodian communists began a national insurgency in January 1968. Thus began the Operation Menu in March 1969 (the so-called 'secret bombing' of Cambodian territory), which was to last until May 1970.

In June 1969, full diplomatic relations between the United States and Cambodia were restored. This turn to the United States had three reasons: one was the Cultural Revolution in China, which radicalised China's foreign policy in support of the Khmer Rouge; another was the strong North Vietnamese presence in Eastern Cambodia, which threatened to destabilise Cambodia politically and economically; a third was that the losses of US aid were being felt overwhelmingly in the national budget. In addition, with the political left now underground and the national campaign of Cambodia's communists, Sihanouk brought Lon Nol, who had long since demanded the withdrawal of Vietnamese communist troops from Cambodia, back into the government, first as defence minister in 1968, and as prime minister in 1969 to head the Government of National Salvation.

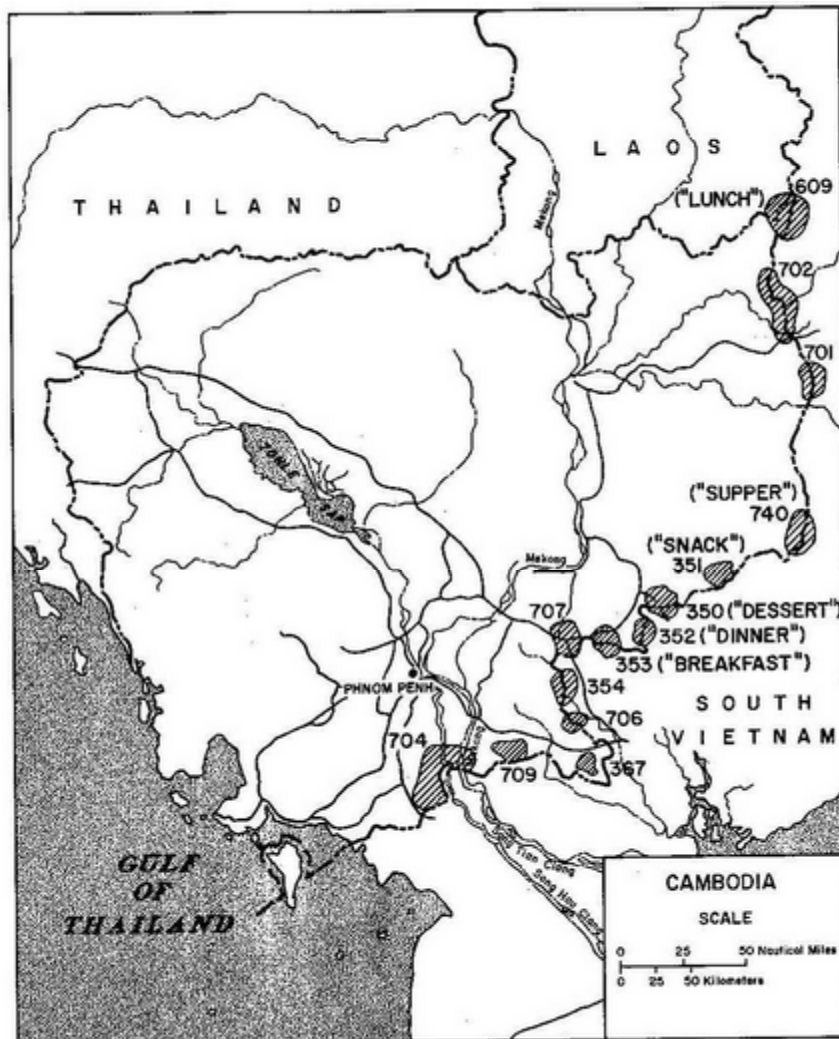
Thus, while desperately trying not to ally himself to either quarter in the Cold War domestically and internationally, Sihanouk was squeezed internally from two diametrically opposed sides: by the left and the conservative and US-backed Prime Minister Lon Nol. Since the left opposition had been entirely driven underground after Sihanouk's turn to the right and the arrest of the leftist leaders in the counter government<sup>10</sup>, Sihanouk had no means anymore to manoeuvre between them and the political right.

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<sup>10</sup> Sihanouk had formed a 'counter government', a form of shadow cabinet, which included his own followers and leading leftist politicians. The aim was to restrain Lon Nol, who had become prime minister after the elections to the National Assembly in September 1966, which saw a conservative majority. Lon Nol resigned in April 1967, and Sihanouk replaced him with the centrist Son Sann.



**Map: U.S. Airstrikes in the Menu Series**



SOURCE: HENRY KISSINGER, WHITE HOUSE YEARS  
(BOSTON: LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY, 1979), p. 248.  
USED BY PERMISSION.

Source: Etcheson, 1984: 102.

### 1.3. Social cohesion

This was the situation at the end of Sihanouk's reign: in the urban areas, a republican and to some extent also left-leaning urban youth combined with republican and left-wing intellectuals in strong anti-Sihanouk sentiments; a business elite which suffered under the deteriorating economic situation after Sihanouk's break with the United States in 1963; a right-wing army attached to Lon Nol was looking to the United States for support and detested Sihanouk's non-aligned foreign policy and time-to-time cooperation with urban leftist before they were completely driven underground in the aftermath of Samlot and joined their communist compatriots in the countryside.

In the rural areas, communists radicalised under Pol Pot's growing influence in the communist party; the peasantry, hostile to Lon Nol, revered Sihanouk as protector of the poor and

thought to find relieve in the communists' appeal for better times while escaping Lon Nol's army into the areas under influence of the communists.

By 1970, Sihanouk had lost the grip over the various urban political factions. The communists, driven underground, were beyond his control. When Lon Nol deposed him, the situation deteriorated fast. People were constantly on the move to escape US bombing of the eastern parts bordering Vietnam and Lon Nol's army, or the radical policies of the Khmer Rouge in their 'liberated areas' (for the areas held by the Khmer Rouge during the Lon Nol regime see the maps below on the military situation in the 1970s). Villages were abandoned by fleeing peasants, other villages experienced influx of refugees, and towns were evacuated by the Khmer Rouge ostensibly to save the population from US carpet bombing. The country was up in arms in a full scale civil war.

But what was destroyed in terms of social capital? How did the Sihanouk state look like from the perspective of social cohesion? Looking at the village, social cohesion was strong. This was due to the fact that '[t]raditionally, the economic well-being of individuals in a small community depends less on impersonal market relations than upon personal relations of status and trust within the village' (Hughes 2001:1). Kalab describes the village 'as a social unit, as the residents saw it – groups of houses supporting particular monasteries' (Kalab 1968:523). A community was thus formed by a number of households or hamlets supporting a particular monastery. The hamlets stayed in touch with the monks by electing a representative, the *achar*, a lay Buddhist who knew the Pali formulae, details of ceremonies, and who could be 'trusted with money.' This community could overlap with the administrative boundary of the village (Kalab 1976:64). Here we see the close connection between monks of the local pagoda and the village community, which gives importance to the above-mentioned fact that during the Samlot rebellion, peasants fled to the jungle led by their monks (Kiernan 1986:257). Support of the pagodas consisted of larger donations (often by invited outsiders), alms, or payments for services such as teaching. Some teachers also demanded bribes, a situation which Roeske noted for education in rural areas of Cambodia today (Roeske 2002:7). It is also possible to conclude from a report by Collins on today's village conflict management that by offering religious as well as non-religious services, the pagoda always exercised restraining influence on those disputing by reference to Buddhist ideals of peaceful conflict management. It therefore appears that villagers in conflict were influenced both by the religious authority of the monks in the pagoda and the secular authority of the village leader to avoid the dispute from escalating into violence.<sup>11</sup>

The village was also a social unit as it consisted of trusted kinsmen, friends and neighbours, which contrasted 'our village' to 'others.' An important factor in this was the election of the village and subdistrict leader from within the local communities, a factor that changed under Khmer Rouge rule when the local level administrations were staffed with political appointees. Within the family, strong emotional bonds and feelings of loyalty and mutual obligations existed between parents and children and ideally also between siblings – personal likes and dislikes included (Ebihara 1987: 19-20).

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<sup>11</sup> Hughes 2001:9-10 and *ibid.*:9 cited Collins, no year:6.

A survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime and director of a human rights NGO based in Phnom Penh corroborated the strong social cohesion in the countryside under Sihanouk:

“before the war in the traditional culture, boys had to be monks for 2-3 months to honour their parents. During their monkhood, they were not allowed to wear shoes, contact females, only look on the way straight ahead but not what’s left and right of the way, they were not allowed to speak during dinner, not to leave the pagoda at night after 4pm. This was in the rural areas, not in Phnom Penh.”<sup>12</sup>

This was at the same time a mechanism of social control and social integration of young males.

Political governance produced social cohesion, too. The election of village and subdistrict leaders from within the local community, who then represented this community vis-à-vis the government administration starting with the appointed district leader, had repercussions for conflict management within the village community. Whenever possible, conflicts tended to be solved within the community rather than by recourse to higher echelons of national law, since the government was somewhere ‘out there’ and therefore outside the village community (Ebihara 1971:366). Describing pre-war life in a Cambodian village, Chandler argues that ‘[q]uarrels within a village or among neighbours were settled by conciliation rather than by law, and they often smouldered on for years’ (Chandler 1993:104). Conflicts then were managed by the chosen village leaders of good character, and through informal ways to control conflict and potential violence flowing from it through gossip and ostracism, which ‘do more to keep people in line than recourse to police or law courts’ (Ebihara 1971:370).

Economic activity produced social cohesion, too. Most peasants were ‘small landowners-cum-cultivators’, and rice was the basis of the village economy, primarily for own consumption (Ebihara 1987:17). Individual households also had fruit and palm trees and kitchen gardens, caught fish in the paddy fields or produced material goods such as baskets and mats. Means of production such as land, draft animals, or ploughs, were owned individually, and land could be owned by men and women and inherited to sons and daughters. ‘Historically, land tenancy in peasant societies has been a means for making optimal use of different factors of production; at the same time it is a method by which those who do not possess land are able to access it for a price. Both leasing-in and leasing-out land have been practices that have existed for a long time’ (Chan Sophal/ Tep Saravy/ Sarthi Acharya 2001:46). Traditionally, all land was owned by the sovereign. In practice, land use followed ‘acquisition by the plough whereby a prospective user of land acquired what s/he needed for subsistence without stifling the collective rights of the community.’ Tenancy occurred between villagers. For instance, those without land could work a field for half the crop or have a kinsman work the land the owner had inherited in another village. Cultivation was generally the responsibility of adults and adolescent family members, but cooperative work groups (*provas dei*) could form spontaneously on a reciprocal basis to help during busy seasons.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Interview in Phnom Penh, 4 June 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Kalab 1968:522; Ebihara 1987:17-18; Chan Sophal/ Tep Saravy/ Sarthi Acharya 2001:1.

However, beyond this seeming self-sufficiency, the village economy was also drawn into the national market economy. Money was needed to buy food or household items, pay debts and taxes or donate to the pagoda, for weddings, funerals and other rituals. Poorer peasants sold their labour for cash income. Pigs and chickens were raised, palm sugar produced, all for sale. Surplus produce from trees and gardens, cooked food, coolie labour and work as pedicab drivers all produced additional income either temporary or permanently (Ebihara 1987:18-19). In the village studied by Kalab, residents included teachers, smiths, construction workers, tailors and other professions, and some peasants followed additional professions as hairdressers or dentists in Phnom Penh (Kalab 1968:527). Village-exogamous marriages spread kin networks to other communities and into Phnom Penh (Ebihara 1987:20). The increase of these extra-village linkages through resettlements and flights has increased the possibility of attracting sources for conflict management or livelihood support from outside the village community, thus exposing the village to the challenges of the outside world (more details in the course of this study).

Two central features characterised rural Cambodia: first, access to social capital and networks to persons of prestige were essential to define one's own status and ensure integration into the village community and economic well-being. Second, community organisation above the level of the family was weak insofar as no thoroughly controlled levels of governance existed from the central to the village level, and leadership in the community (village chief, commune chief) was provided by persons of prestige, religious leadership by monks and the achar – in short: by person who gained their reputation from catering to the needs of the community they lived in. It was not before the Khmer Rouge advance in the rural areas after 1970 that the divide between village community and the state bureaucracy was broken down by installing a system of party-appointed leaders from the villages through the levels of government up to the central level, which was in turn controlled from the central level down to the village level (UNICEF 1996:38-39).

Social cohesion in the rural areas was disrupted when the Vietnam conflict spilled over into Cambodia and villages saw the 'intrusion' of sometimes large numbers of refugees. As we shall see, the situation disrupted traditional networks of patronage and after 1991 made it difficult for returnees or people who came to settle in other villages than those of their origin to become incorporated in existing networks in the village they were going to live in.

#### **1.4. Summary: Violence and Legitimacy of Rule**

A superficial reading could lead to the conclusion that in the late 1960s, war-time violence spread into peaceful Cambodia. However, state executed violence was frequent as manifest in a number of aspects: first, in the imposition corvée labour or the extortion of land surrounding a corrupt regime and crony economy. Second, selective political violence against left-wing politicians whenever Sihanouk did not need them in order to balance the political right behind Lon Nol. Samlot was a response to both aspects, combining peasants' reactions to the threat to their livelihoods and the communists' answer to their being harassed. The arrival of the Vietnam War in Cambodia put an international layer on top of these domestic processes and intensified them.

Sihanouk gained his legitimacy from controlling all three of these processes: his monarchical aura in the rural areas kept the peasants in check, his ability to balance the left and right in the urban areas was maintained by his control over the security apparatus, which enabled him to unleash timely and focussed violence on his opponents, and a non-aligned foreign policy on the international level kept Cambodia out of the Vietnam War during the first years as it balanced the regional contenders China and Vietnam and at times also placated the United States. Yet, when control slipped on all three accounts, Sihanouk lost his grip on power. The continuity and unity of Cambodia promised by the Cambodian kingship lost its attraction at least in the urban areas, where social differentiation produced a population, which became more diversified in its political leanings. At the same time, the Vietnam War started to disrupt the relatively homogenous village life.

## **2. War and Peace: Political and Social Changes**

### **2.1. Lon Nol's Khmer Republic (1970-1975)**

#### **2.1.1. Economy and social organisation**

In March 1970, with Sihanouk on state visits to Europe, the Soviet Union and China, a crowd attacked the North Vietnamese embassy in an outburst of anti-communist sentiment. The attack had the blessings of the authorities and constituted a part in Sihanouk's delicate balancing act between the United States and communist countries. Originally an event probably arranged for by Sihanouk to exert pressure on China and the USSR to urge a withdrawal of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces, it was seized upon by the anti-communist Lon Nol and took on a dimension, which Sihanouk might not have conceived of (Time Magazine 1970). The crowd sacked the embassy, and a plan was found outlining an occupation plan for Cambodia. Increasing tension between the pro and anti-Sihanouk factions in the government during March led to the army marching up in the capital. Backed by the CIA, Lon Nol, who had long since been set to remove Sihanouk from government, moved to depose him. The conservative National Assembly held a vote of confidence against Sihanouk, and Lon Nol became head of state based on an emergency on 18 March 1970. The monarchy was abolished in November 1970 and the Republic was erected.

Lon Nol's coup, helped by the army and legally backed by the National Assembly, 'created a gap between politics, concentrated in the towns, and kingship, abolished by law but still a central point of reference for most of the peasantry. Republican politics, without a democratic tradition to lean on, could not fare much better and was very soon heading back to the old pattern of squabbling petty leaders.' With the unifying monarchy gone and the sangha divided in its political leaning, Lon Nol was unable to give his government an air of Cambodian unity (Thion 1987:154-155).

The Khmer Republic was greeted with enthusiasm in the cities by students, business people, and the US-leaning and US-dependent military. The rural population continued to view Sihanouk as god-king and protector of the poor, and rioting broke out in several provinces (Shaw-

cross 1979:126-127). The events that followed Lon Nol's coup in March 1970 disrupted 'all conditions for demographic and socioeconomic development' (Ea 1987:3). The domestic and international war, which was unleashed onto Cambodia after 1970, resulted in the closure of half of the schools by November 1970, destruction of infrastructure and a fleeing population that overcrowded Phnom Penh. Commodity prices doubled in the first war year. Official unemployment rose from twenty to thirty percent. Rubber exports, which constituted half of the export earnings in 1969, ceased after April 1970. By November 1970 the five largest rubber plantations had stopped working and did not function again during the entire war. Rice output dropped from 3.8 million tons in 1969 to 2.7 in 1970. By 1971, Cambodia was importing rice. US military and non-military aid could only partially offset budget and trade deficits. Elections in 1972 were rigged and constant cabinet reshuffles made the weakness of the government visible. In effect, '[t]o a large degree, the country was run by Lon Nol, his brother, several of their cohorts, and the American embassy' (Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxvi-xxvii).

"This was a major turning point in Cambodian history. Not only was Sihanouk deposed, but the Sihanouk state was destroyed. The careful balance among internal interests which Sihanouk had maintained for more than fifteen years gave way to a civil war between Cambodians who had vastly different plans for their country. At the same time, the exclusion of international rivalries was replaced by the intense involvement of other countries which pursued their goals using Cambodian lives (Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxiv)."

The destruction of the Sihanouk state affected both the top levels and lower levels of the patronage pyramid. On top, Lon Nol instituted an exchange of personnel loyal to him, not to Sihanouk. At the bottom, the Khmer Rouge reorganised village society in the liberated areas along their revolutionary lines. In the beginning, the Khmer Rouge recruited support of all sympathetic elements and thus acted according to the heterogeneous nature of the resistance, called Front Uni Nationale du Kampuchea (FUNK).<sup>14</sup> Intellectuals, who had fled from the cities during the late 1960s under the repressive Sihanouk, were welcome as was the Buddhist clergy as long as they were sympathetic towards the goal of the Khmer Rouge. The perceptions of this goal did not necessarily include communist convictions, but detestation of the Lon Nol regime and US support for it. FUNK rather had the outlook of an anti-imperialist united front using all nationalist elements whether communist or not to fight the immediate enemy (Thion 1972:11).

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<sup>14</sup> After his overthrow, Sihanouk took refuge in China, which refused to recognise Lon Nol's new state. From China, Sihanouk organised the resistance against the new government together with his militarily well organised former adversaries, the communists. The new resistance was called Gouvernement Royal d'Union Nationale du Kampuchea (GRUNK) with Sihanouk as prime minister. Khieu Samphan was deputy prime minister, minister of defence and commander in chief, while the military operations were directed by Pol Pot. GRUNK's military arm was the Front Uni Nationale du Kampuchea (FUNK). Both included the communists as strongest group. It should be noted, however, that Sihanouk had no control over the Khmer Rouge whatsoever and the relationship remained a short-lived marriage of necessity. In effect, the FUNK troops almost entirely consisted of communist groups. The GRUNK was recognised by China as legitimate government after Beijing and Hanoi had both attempted to convince Lon Nol of a continued use of Cambodian territory by communist forces against South Vietnam (Hood/ Ablin 1987).

Beginning in 1970 with the advance of North Vietnamese troops from the east, the old elite made up of teachers, village officials and merchants fled their villages.<sup>15</sup> Being the strongest force in FUNK and by 1973 halted from victory against Lon Nol mainly by lack of supply from indignant North Vietnam towards which the Khmer Rouge leadership acted increasingly hostile (in addition, the Soviet Union maintained relations with Lon Nol until 1975), the Khmer Rouge moved to rid FUNK and GRUNK of Sihanoukists in 1973 and expelled the remaining Vietnamese communist troops and advisors from the areas the Khmer Rouge controlled. Sihanouk, originally used to recruit among the peasantry, was now being discredited and used to radicalise the insurgency. With the Pol Pot faction on the rise against the pro-Vietnamese faction, purges were carried out.

In 1973, the communists carried out a Democratic Revolution in areas under their control (see maps below) with varying degrees according to which faction had the upper hand in the respective region. Thus, they abandoned the broad-based anti-imperialist front and moved to wipe out economic classes which were ‘antagonistic to the revolution’: they ‘abolished private landownership, confiscated private property, outlawed trade, demonetized the economy, collectivized dining, separated children from parents, disallowed religious practices and holidays, prohibited jewelry and colorful dress, imposed harsh communal work schedules, and uprooted and relocated some villages. [...] complaints or transgressions could bring death’.<sup>16</sup> The communists then set out to change the local rural administrations on district, subdistrict and village levels from persons of respect earned by traditional means, as described by Ebihara and Kalab, or economic influence, to persons of political reliability. The old patronage strings were then replaced by a party structure that employed often local officials but made sure that they had the correct political colouring. Private ownership of land and means of production were abolished (Kiernan 1986:317-318, 321, 369).

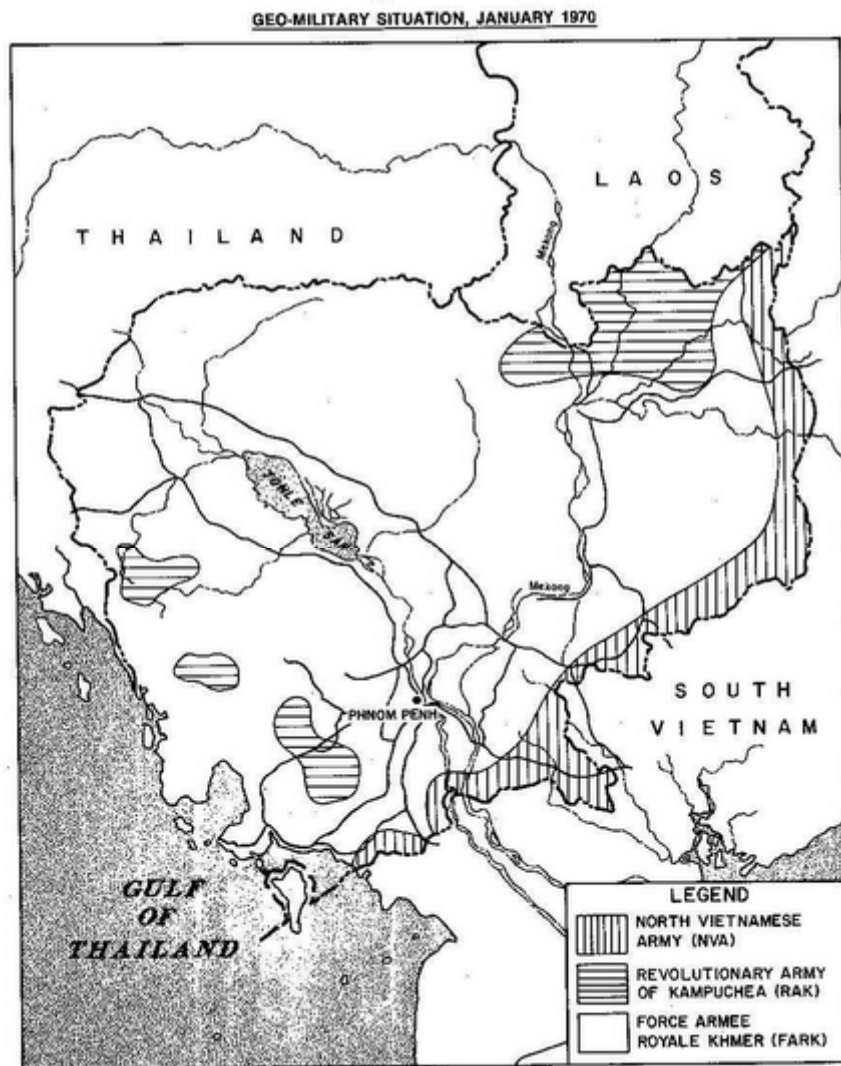
The following series of maps shows the areas under communist and government control throughout the Lon Nol regime.

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<sup>15</sup> Kiernan 1986:317 cited Brown 1972:133.

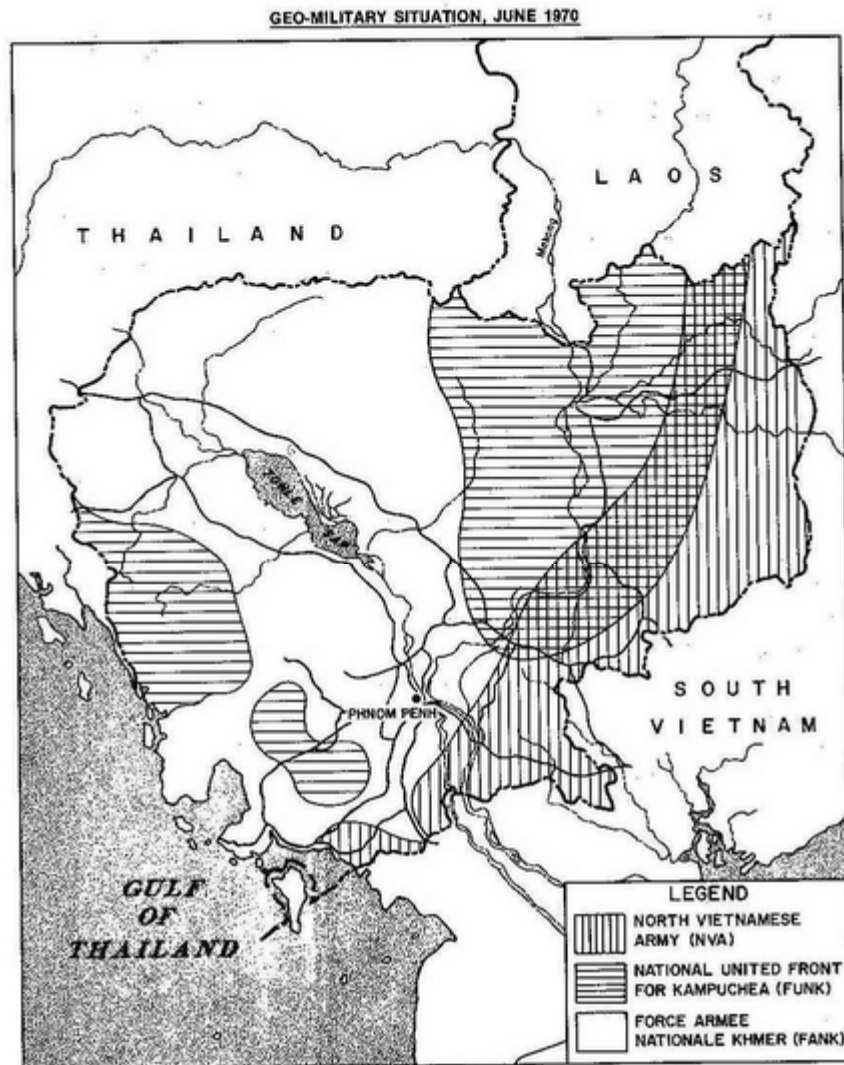
<sup>16</sup> Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxix-xxx; Ebihara 1987.

## Maps: Geo-Military Situations

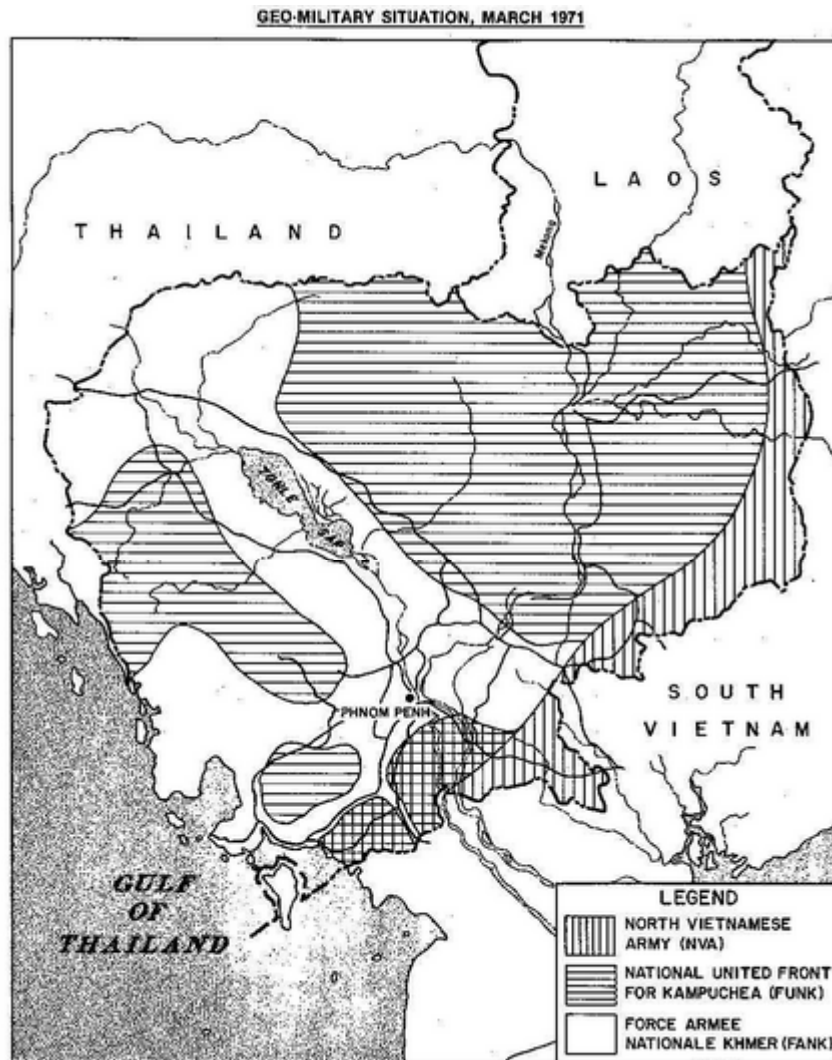


Source: Etcheson, 1984: 104.

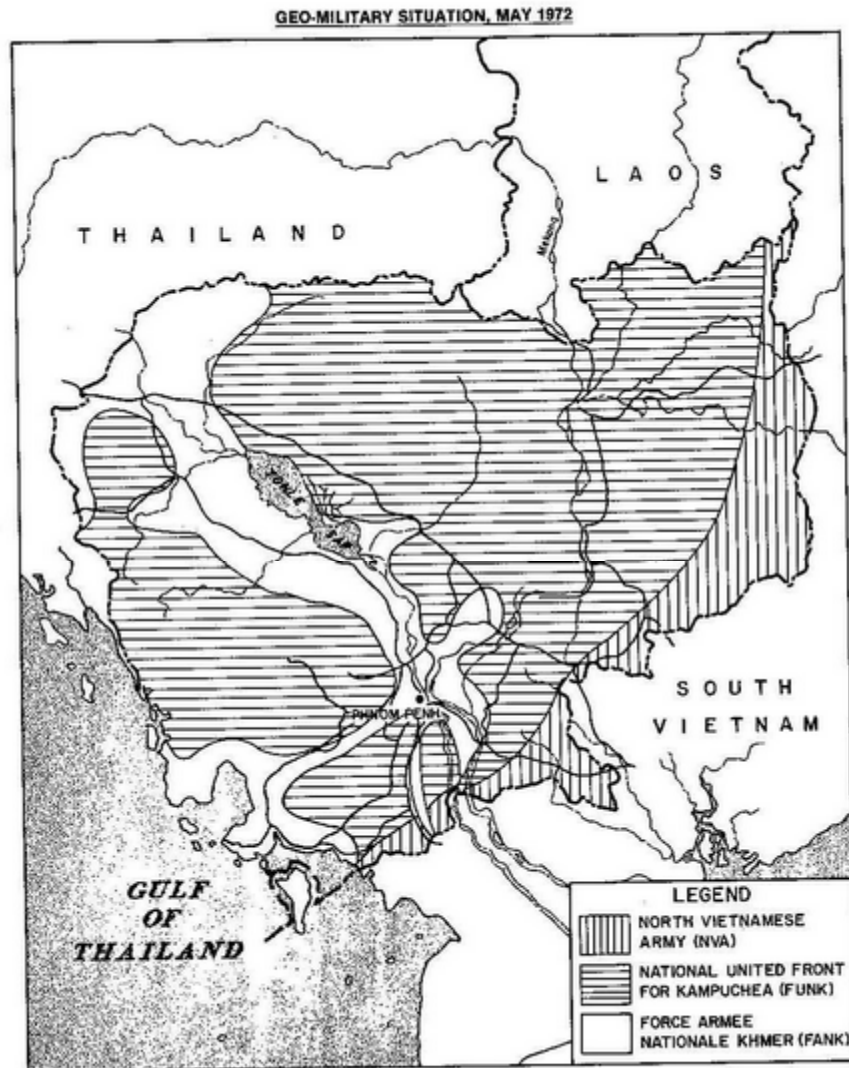




Source: Etcheson, 1984: 105.



Source: Etcheson, 1984: 112.

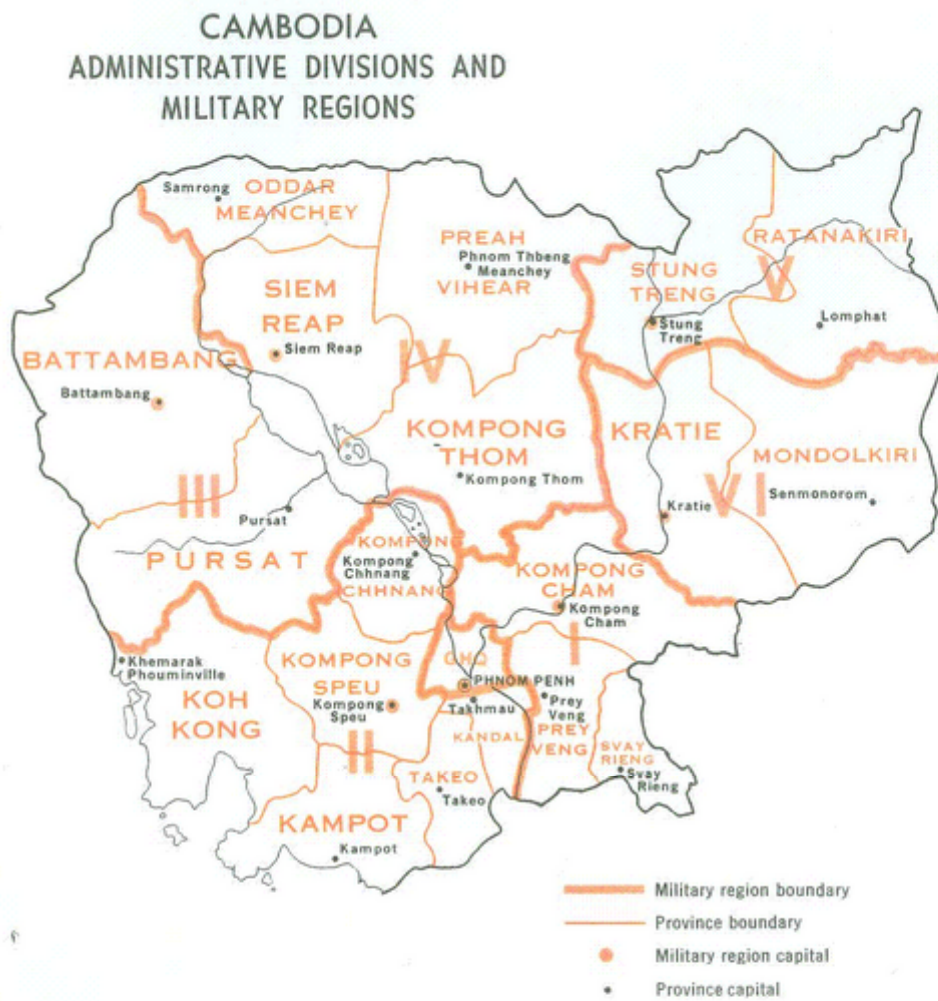


Source: Etcheson, 1984: 116.

The Democratic Revolution was not implemented equally throughout the zones under communist control, however. Kiernan gives an inside account of the regional variation, with which the Democratic Revolution was carried out between 1973 and 1975. Having established branches in a number of areas, variation depended on a number of factors, most importantly the influence of those cadres who had returned from Hanoi and their reluctance to rush collectivisation up to communal dining. Being aware of regional variations even within the

zones, it can be said with the precaution of overgeneralisation that the influence of the Pol Pot faction was greatest over the Northern and the South-western Zones (Kiernan 1986:338-346, 363. The zones were the military regions between 1970 and 1975 and between 1975 and 1979 replaced the provinces as administrative level). As a consequence, mutual aid teams were developed into higher-stage cooperatives and communal dining was introduced. Hanoi-trained cadres were executed, even though some retained military positions in the Northern Zone. They were totally eclipsed in the South-western Zone. Poor peasants were put in charge of villages, thus giving the poorest new opportunities. In the South-western Zone, Buddhist activity was quelled and Islam forbidden, monks drafted, village and subdistrict chiefs appointed by CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) district committees. Non-compliant people were killed. Food shortages owing to collectivisation provoked a rebellion of peasants against the CPK policies and cadres were assassinated by angry peasants, forcing the CPK to reintroduced private eating. Women and 16-year olds were recruited into the army (Kiernan 1986:371-380). In Special Zone 25, which was part of the Eastern Zone until 1971, cooperatives were established 'in a non-coercive manner.' Monks were not drafted, communal eating not introduced. But in five districts, the Democratic Revolution was carried out, a land reform was forced through, and Mosques were closed (Kiernan 1986:380-384). In the Eastern Zone, where many cadres were married to Vietnamese women, mutual aid teams 'remained the norm' as did cooperation and economic relations with Vietnam. The exception was Memut district in Region 21, where cooperatives were established, communal eating was introduced and Vietnam denounced as revisionist due to its peace agreement with the United States and opposition to the introduction of cooperatives (Kiernan 1986:386-389).

**Map: Administrative Regions in 1970**



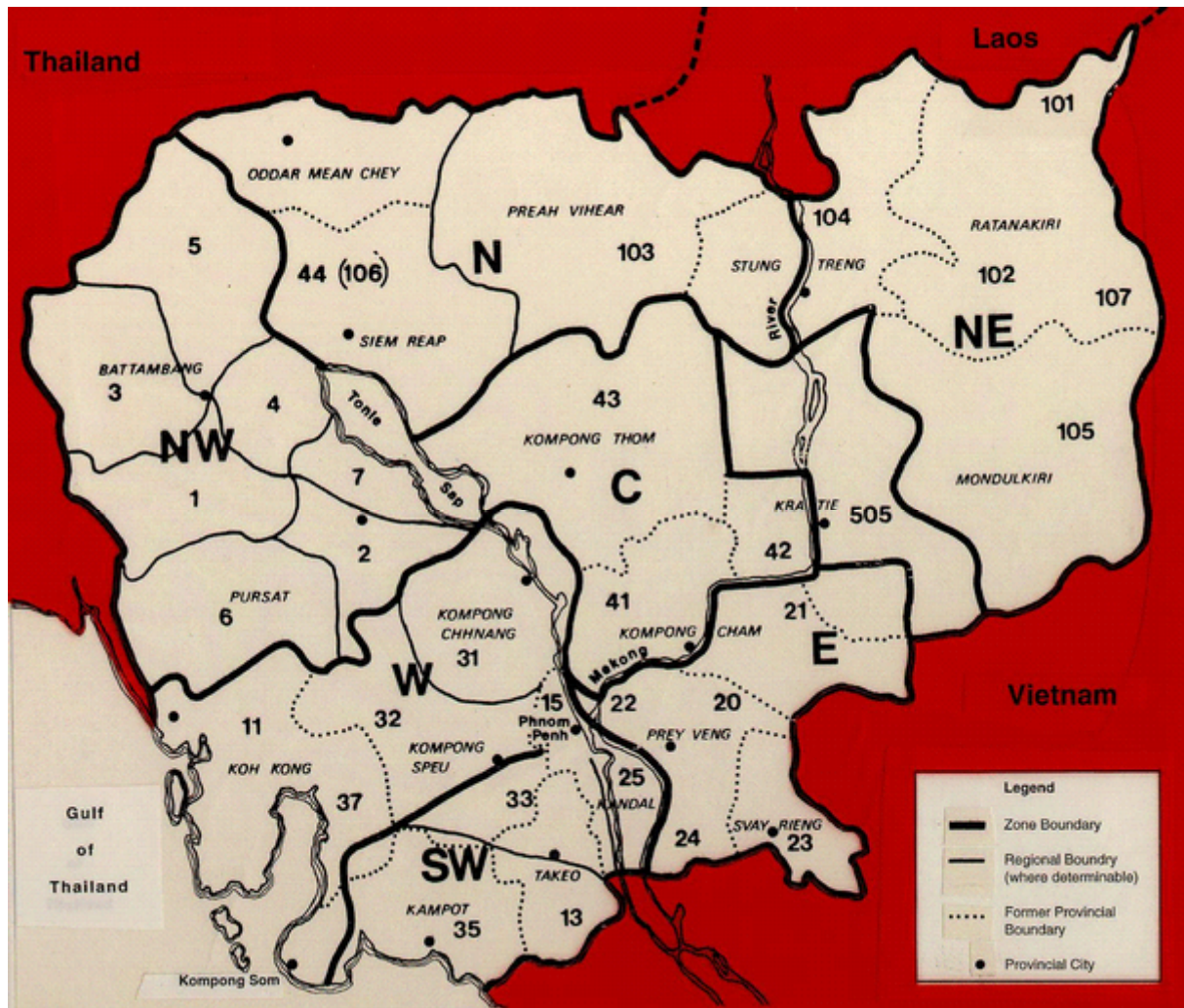
13 5-70

G & M Division  
4 JUL 1970  
Library of Congress

G 8011  
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1970  
.U5



**Map: Democratic Kampuchea**



Source: Cambodian Genocide Program, Yale University, <http://www.yale.edu/cgp/maps/bigmap02.gif>.

When US bombing resumed in January 1973 after a short halt after the Geneva agreements, Cambodians started to flee the areas controlled by the communists and flooded into the urban areas, particularly Phnom Penh. The destruction of the bombing was such that Cambodian peasants commented US bombing as more memorable than the Khmer Rouge period of 1975-1979 that was to follow. Essentially, it alienated the population from the Khmer Republic: wedding parties were hit along with funerals, rice fields, water buffaloes, villages, hospitals, and monasteries.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the countryside was radicalised against the Khmer Republic (Kiernan 1986:xii, 349-357); it helped Pol Pot to emerge victorious over moderate communist factions (Kiernan 1986:xii); and it provoked the conviction in the FUNK resistance that 'their urban compatriots were quite willing to see the entire countryside destroyed and plastered over with concrete as long as they could enjoy a parasitical existence as U.S. clients. It is cer-

<sup>17</sup> Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxviii; Ebihara 1987:21-22.

tain that FUNK policy became much harsher after the bombing' (Vickery 1976:27). Yet, in addition, while Cambodians fled US bombs from January 1973, they started to flee from the areas in which the Khmer Rouge carried out the Democratic Revolution from the latter part of 1973 (Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxx). When the Khmer Republic was defeated, there were between 500,000 and 1 million people killed, 3.4 million refugees, and the population in Phnom Penh had risen from 600,000 people in 1969 to 3 million. 1,100 out of 1,400 rice mills were destroyed. 75 percent of draft animals were killed (Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxxi).

### 2.1.2. Politics

Having ousted Sihanouk, Lon Nol demanded the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from Cambodian soil and closed the ports for Soviet and Chinese supply shipments to Vietnam. North Vietnam, with the exiled Cambodian communists returning to Cambodia, now fully supported the Khmer Rouge and moved against Lon Nol's army, the Forces Armées Nationales Khmères, which was set to drive the North Vietnamese army out of Eastern Cambodia.

The United States started an incursion into Cambodia of two months from 30 April 1970 including South Vietnamese troops to destroy Vietnamese communist bases in Cambodia and save Lon Nol. The incursion was aided by heavy US bombing in the Operation Freedom Deal between 19 May 1970 and 15 August 1973. The result was that, owing to the two-month incursion, North Vietnamese troops were driven into the centre of Cambodia, which greatly helped the Cambodian insurgency: 'Shielded from the Lon Nol army by experienced Vietnamese troops' the Khmer Rouge reorganised themselves and recruited among the Sihanouk-loyal peasantry with the help of tape recordings of Sihanouk's call to arms. Their forces numbered 40,000 in 1973, when Vietnamese forces withdrew at the end of the Vietnam War.<sup>18</sup>

The operation Chenla II in the second half of 1971 meant to be a major offensive against the FUNK forces, proved a disaster for Lon Nol and showed his inability to act against the guerrilla strategy, which the well organised Khmer Rouge forces employed as copy from China's communist guerrilla in the Chinese civil war. Rural bases were created, from which they advanced to and surrounded the cities. The defeat of Chenla II also discredited the government. Its support base, such as students who had welcomed the republic, crumbled and the enthusiasm surrounding the ouster of the inefficient and corrupt Sihanouk quickly vanished. Accusations were manifold: governmental authoritarianism, inefficiency and corruption ('Sihanoukism without Sihanouk'); military officers created ghost soldiers or did not report deaths and desertions to pocket the salaries, kept food rations for themselves while the ordinary soldier was starving and did not receive salaries; officers sold gas, arms, medicine, ammunition, and equipment on the black market and often to communist troops (a large portion of arms and ammunition used by the Khmer Rouge were bought from the military of the Khmer Republic).<sup>19</sup> According to the Red Cross, the habit of army officers to create ghost soldiers contin-

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<sup>18</sup> Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxv-xxvi; Chandler 1991:201; Thion 1987:155.

<sup>19</sup> Shawcross 1979:313-315; Chandler 1991:205.

ued in the post-1993 Royal Cambodian Armed Forces ‘in order to meet unit quotas and attract supplies that can be traded on the black market’ (International Committee of the Red Cross 1999:27n31).

The Paris Peace Agreements of January 1973 did not see an agreement on Cambodia since the Khmer Rouge refused to negotiate given their perceived immediate victory against Lon Nol. So after a short stop of bombing activities after the Paris agreements, the United States restarted bombing Cambodia for a period of eight months until 15 August 1973. By then, according to Shawcross, the United States had dropped 539,129 tons of bombs on the countryside since the start of Operation Menu in 1969. In comparison: 160,000 tons were dropped on Japan during World War II (Shawcross 1979:297). By 1974, US aid exceeded the Cambodian budget of 1969. Only two percent of national income was from domestic sources. Rice output was at one quarter of pre-war levels. Prices were up by 5000 percent. The United States had provided Lon Nol with 1.18 billion US Dollar in military aid and 503 million US Dollar in humanitarian aid. 7 billion US Dollar had been spent bombing the country (Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxxi).

## **2.2. Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)**

### **2.2.1. Economy and social organisation**

In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh and forced the population into the countryside. The new state was called Democratic Kampuchea. On 5 January 1976, Sihanouk was made head of state, but quickly came to blows with the Khmer Rouge. He was replaced by Ieng Sary on 4 April 1976 and returned into Chinese exile.

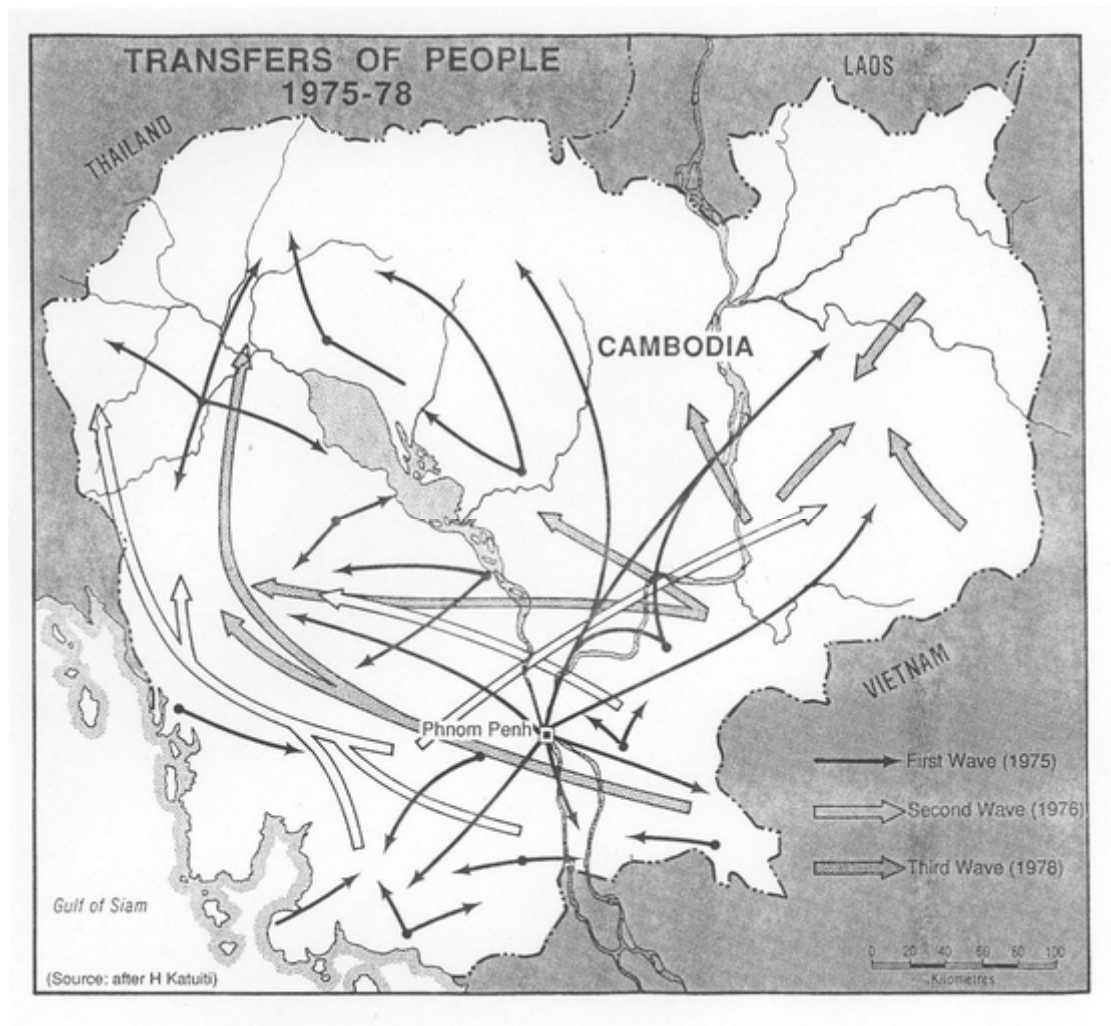
Socially, Cambodia’s population was divided into ‘base people’ or ‘old people’, and ‘new people.’ Base people were ideologically reliable people: poor and lower-middle peasants who had lived in communist-controlled areas before 1975. New people were those ‘liberated’ after 1975. They were generally politically suspect and put away in labour camps or were executed: residents of urban areas (intellectuals, professionals, ethnic Chinese, Buddhist clergy), plus peasants who had fled the war into urban areas and since then were considered ideologically contaminated (Ebihara 1987:24-25). Classification additionally occurred according to class background (lower and lower-middle peasants, middle and upper class background etc.) and membership in collectives (full rights, candidates, depositees). These classifications replaced the position of an individual within the community based on good character.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic minorities were subjected to Khmerisation, especially the Muslim Cham. Until then, the Buddhist pagoda and the sangha had functioned as ‘moral, social, and educational center for villagers’ and had been a place for religious and social activity (Ebihara 1987:21+33). Now, the basic social institutions, the family, the village and the pagoda were abolished and the traditional informal cooperative work teams institutionalised (Ebihara 1987:23).

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<sup>20</sup> Ebihara 1987:25+32 and 25 cited Heder 1980b:6.



**Map: Population Movements 1975-1978**



Source: Chandler, 1991: 248.

It was this destruction of traditional values and social relations as points of reference which gave people '[f]eelings of powerlessness. [...] Beyond the shelter of the community, within which the individual operates with assurance to build up the necessary assets for survival, and in the face of powerful alien forces such as militarisation or refugee camp bureaucracy, villagers find it more difficult to plan strategies for survival' (Hughes 2001:21). The most severe disruption of village life accordingly did not occur through mere violence, but through the destruction of trust among the villagers. As Meas Nee described, the only respected member of the traditional village hierarchy that was to survive in one village was the achar, the pious layman, since he was a loyal Khmer Rouge follower. Consequently, '[w]hen even an achar could be a killer, the people did not know who to trust'.<sup>21</sup> It is against this background that Thion argues that in the highly collectivised society of Democratic Kampuchea, belonging to

<sup>21</sup> Hughes 2001:21-22 cited Meas Nee 1995:21.

a patron-client string of party fraction, clan etc. was critical for survival (Thion 1987:160-161). This situation referred importance to traditional forms of social relations while mistrust against the authorities spread in a state which was to do away with traditional forms of social cohesion. The downside of this, however, was that it could mean death for clients whose patrons were purged. This was the case with the purges in the Eastern Zone in 1978, when not only the party chain of the zone was removed, but also a large portion of the local population for perceived lack of trust towards the new command (Thion 1987:160-161).

However, at least until 1977/78, when Pol Pot won the inner party struggle, the radical policies were carried out with differing zeal in the administrative areas and also with local variation depending on ecological settings and interpretation of policies by local cadres, leading to differences in work requirements or food supplies (Ebihara 1987:23-24). This mirrors the period of the Democratic Revolution between 1973 and 1975. This was also true for education, as the Khmer Rouge intended to do away with the education of the old regime, but not with 'education per se.' Rather, education was subjected to the ideological goals of the communist party, and teaching staff was recruited from the 'old people' instead of professional teachers (Ayres 1999:210+214). Without trying to diminish the brutality of the regime, Ayres warns against a 'discourse of destruction' and quotes from Vickery's book *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, in which the latter argued that Khmer Rouge atrocities 'occurred at some place at some time, but not everywhere all the time'.<sup>22</sup>

Administratively, there were seven zones (*phumipeak*) plus an autonomous zone in Kampong Som (Sihanoukville) and a Special Zone in Kratie. The zones were divided into regions or sectors (*damban*) to replace the system of provinces: the Eastern Zone, the South-western Zone, the Western Zone, the North-western Zone, the North-eastern Zone, the Northern Zone and the Central Zone. The policies found modest application in the North-eastern, South-western and Eastern Zone, which all had seen a comparably long CPK influence, and the situation was also tolerable in the Western and Central zones. The Eastern zone was until 1978 administered by Vietnam-friendly cadres, who then were purged in inner-party struggles and fled to Vietnam only to return in 1979. The Khmer Rouge policies were particularly harsh in the North and North-western zones, where the former Phnom Penh residents (the 'new people') were resettled. Below the zones, the old system of districts (*srok*), subdistricts or communes (*khum*), and villages (*phum*) was retained, each however chaired by a committee, ultimately reaching up to the CPK's Central Committee.<sup>23</sup>

Egalitarian Democratic Kampuchea also had its elite. On top of society lived the communist party cadres and the armed forces. Education and health were poor as the Khmer Rouge executed teachers and physicians as they belonged to the 'new people.' The goal of education in Democratic Kampuchea was ideological indoctrination including basic maths and reading to force new values upon children and divert them away from the traditional values of the elders, who were attached to the family, the village and the pagoda. Health care suffered the same fate as education: physicians were executed or prohibited from carrying out their profession.

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<sup>22</sup> Ayres 1999:207 cited Vickery 1984:50.

<sup>23</sup> Ayres 2000:109; Ebihara 1987:23-25; Chandler 2008:258-259.

Still the elites of party and armed forces probably had access to Western medical care, while many others, in particular, the new people, had to rely on more or less effective natural remedies or bartered their food portions for basic drugs. If there were any hopes that a communist egalitarian regime would wipe out the corruption and nepotism of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol years, they were soon destroyed. It rather seems that one patron-client system attached to the Lon Nol government was replaced with another attached to the Pol Pot administration. For instance, as Thion describes, Pol Pot put his nephews and nieces in career paths in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee. The ministry was run by Pol Pot's brother-in-law; the Central Committee was controlled by himself. Two of Ieng Sary's daughters were cared well for, too: the oldest was appointed director of the former Calmette hospital, the second director of the Pasteur Institute. This elite 'enjoyed privileges in lodging, food allowances, and even some luxuries.' Power lay in the 'control of food and other basic necessities', thus putting the elite 'not only in control of other people's material needs, but they could enjoy private banquets with the best food, servants, and so on.' This opened the way to corruption with food as most valued currency (Thion 1987:158-160) and enabled the elite to exercise social control through the control of food supplies.

Economically, the cooperative was the basic unit of Cambodian life. Self-reliance after decades of economic dependence from France and the United States was the superseding principle. Again, regional variation occurred along the factors degree of collectivisation, ecological settings, and implementation of central directives by local cadres. The communist party's main goal was to institute an agrarian subsistence economy based on rice: in a chauvinistic appeal to the greatness of Khmer civilisation, the greatness of the Angkor civilisation based on refined irrigation systems as the basis of economic prowess was to be re-achieved. Accordingly, the communist party ordered the construction of nationwide irrigation systems in order to decrease the dependency of the rice harvest on seasonal rain. Rice production improved between 1975 and 1978, but 'exporting and stockpiling meant that less was distributed to the people at the end of this period than at the beginning'.<sup>24</sup> Surplus agricultural produce was harvested in ever higher forms of collectivisation up to the subdistrict level, and extracted through strict social control down to the local level. Collectivisation abolished the individually owned means of production (Ebihara 1987:24, 26, 27, 28). This was designed to destruct traditional family and clan bonds and the family as basic social, economic and political unit with the aim to create an egalitarian society without the need of traditional ties between family and kinsmen to organise life in Cambodia (Ebihara 1987:29-31). Economic policies, first introduced in the communist base areas in the first half of the 1970s, were now extended throughout the country: the currency was abolished, trade and commerce only possible through barter (mostly rice and remaining personal property). Foreign trade became strictly controlled. Given the hostility towards Vietnam, China became the main ally, but trade also happened with France, Britain and the United States through Hong Kong (Hood/ Ablin 1987).

Underpinning this economic self-reliance was an education system that was to teach literacy, technology and ideology. A *Four-Year Plan to build Socialism in all Fields, 1977-1980* was outlined for education to teach the following subjects: reading and writing; arithmetic; geog-

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<sup>24</sup> Hood/ Ablin 1987:xxxvii; Ebihara 1987:25-26+33.

raphy of Cambodia; natural science, physics, and chemistry; history of the revolution; and the party's politics and organisation. The plan, however, was a fabrication of the party centre around Pol Pot without consultation of the Vietnam-wing or the rank and file. Accordingly, the plan was rejected and no national education plan could take hold in Cambodia. Education, therefore, was scattered and found different application in different geographical regions depending on the relationships between regional, district, subdistrict and village leaders, between regional leaders and the Pol Pot part centre, the pre-revolutionary conditions in the region, agricultural fertility, and population. Education was further subjected to combating the perceived threat posed by Vietnam against the new regime, which also included purging the party of its Vietnam-friendly wing. The result was that of the schools that functioned prior to the outbreak of hostilities with Vietnam, in 1978 there were hardly any schools in operation. When the Khmer Rouge were ousted in 1979, they established control over large areas of the provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Kampong, and the northern parts of Battambang [including today's Pailin province] and Siem Reap. In these areas, they continued to apply their ideas of education (Ayres 1999:212-213, 217-218).

Politically, therefore, the result of the Khmer Rouge social policies was the penetration of state authority to the village level through direct political control of the village chiefs by simultaneously eclipsing the moral and political authority of the pagodas and the cosmology of the Buddhist kingship, to which the pagodas were linked and received their authority. Socially, traditional family ties were replaced by ideologically sanctioned relationships, which included the separation of children from their parents and a general spread of distrust in people-to-people relationships. Violence control and conflict resolution were subjected to ideological principles and happened along ideological lines through which alleged and real enemies of the new social order could be identified, singled out, and punished. The practical mechanisms of violence control and conflict resolution were then ideological indoctrination in conjunction with self-criticism sessions and collectivisations, control over food supplies, and new patronage networks of the Khmer Rouge elite to replace the old networks as far as they still existed in the war-torn areas in 1975. Punishment was then exercised through social pressure and control in self-criticism sessions and collectives, and the threat of exclusion from food supplies and purges of unwelcome patrons, i.e. the threat of exclusion from the necessities of life.

### **2.2.2. Politics**

Internationally, after short-lived rapprochements between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam, the former acted increasingly anti-Vietnamese as relations between China and Vietnam broke down and the anti-Vietnamese Pol Pot faction prevailed in party struggles against the pro-Vietnamese faction in 1978. After April 1975, Cambodian troops occupied territory claimed by both Vietnam and Cambodia. Vietnam counterattacked after having defeated South Vietnam in the same year. Then, Phnom Penh and Hanoi sat down for border talks on the Brévié line of 1939 and based on an agreement between North Vietnam, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and Sihanouk in 1967. The talks broke down, how-

ever, and military actions resumed in January 1977. In early 1978, China tried to negotiate a settlement between Phnom Penh and Hanoi. At the same time, however, relations between Vietnam and China deteriorated quickly and broke completely after the friendship treaty between Vietnam and the USSR in November 1978: Vietnam, seeing increased Chinese support for the Khmer Rouge in the form of arms, aid and advisors as potentially destabilising its national security, and regarding the US-China rapprochement with suspicion, turned to the Soviet Union. While ethnic Vietnamese fled Cambodia, ethnic Chinese fled Vietnam. Vietnam, considering the military manoeuvres of the Khmer Rouge at the common border a severe security threat, invaded Cambodia in December 1978 and in January 1979 proclaimed the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) with Heng Samrin as prime minister and today's Prime Minister Hun Sen as foreign minister on top of the new state.

Before, the exiled Cambodian communists in Vietnam had formed the Kampuchean National Front for National Salvation. Their leaders returned to Cambodia with the invasion and formed the new government (Taufmann 1992:8-9). The Khmer Rouge leadership fled to the Thai border. With assistance by Thailand, which saw the Vietnamese nearing its territory with suspicion, the deposed Khmer Rouge were able to reorganise and start an insurgency against the new government.

## **2.3. The People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1991): (Re)constructing government, economy and society in the midst of crisis**

### **2.3.1. Economy and social organisation**

While portions of the poor peasantry had socially and economically advanced under Pol Pot, the Vietnamese invasion was not unwelcome among those, who belonged to the 'new people.' The new leadership moved to restore traditional family relations, reopened schools and put an end to the extreme collectivisation of social and economic life, however without aiming at reconstructing the society of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol years. To further strengthen and legitimising the post-1979 government, a National Assembly was elected in 1981 with the candidates strongly controlled by the government. The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) was re-founded, aiming at creating a control mechanism from the central government down to the village level.

After 1979, socio-economic differentiation re-emerged: government officials, traders, urban professionals, whether new or pre-1975, resurfaced on top of society. Within the peasantry, differentiation occurred again, dividing poorer and richer peasants with an 'upper stratum of peasantry' many of which had been middle or prosperous in the old society.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, the old vertical relations of patronage and clientelism re-emerged surrounding a new group of politicians: the Kampuchean National Front for National Salvation included several non-communists, and members of the Buddhist clergy were put in high positions. The link between the political and the Buddhist elite is an important one, because, as

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<sup>25</sup> Ebihara 1987:40-41 cited Heder 1980a:104, 107, 108-109.

Kent emphasised, ‘Buddhism was and remains a source of both legitimacy and power for leaders. In Cambodia, power is still conceived of as dwelling in the Buddhist pagodas, and access to such power is a necessary component of political survival’ (Kent 2006:350, also 353-354). Human rights NGO staff interviewed by the author in Cambodia complained however that the utilisation of Buddhism for political legitimation has recreated the functional aspects of Buddhism (monastic institutions), but not morality.<sup>26</sup>

Having experienced the expel of the Khmer Rouge as act of liberation, refugee communists and Buddhist clergy jointly moved to establish control over Cambodia. From this decision derived the political links between CPP and Buddhist clergy of the Mohanikay order, to which the majority of Cambodian Buddhists belong (the smaller branch of Cambodian Buddhism, the Dhammayuth order, is associated with the monarchy<sup>27</sup>). It can thus be argued that Buddhism again became associated with the ruling elites and a function of post-1979 governance.<sup>28</sup>

After 1979, people were on the move again: they left the communes, which the new state rolled back to smaller entities or indeed private cultivation, to search for relatives or to return to their native villages; people of bourgeois background made their way abroad; poor peasants had no food; others left to escape fighting between the new government and the Khmer Rouge. The latter pursued a scorched earth policy and either killed captured people or forced them to come along on their way to the Thai border. ‘Family and kin networks were reestablished as best as possible, given the losses suffered during the ravages both before and after 1975.’<sup>29</sup> Acharya estimates that during the Khmer Rouge period, 35-40 percent of the population were uprooted. In addition, during the entire time of the war from 1970 to 1992, 400,000-600,000 people left Cambodia, including the 350,000-370,000 refugees, which took refuge in the camps along the Thai border after 1979 (Acharya 2003:3-4). The economy was near collapse. A major international aid campaign was set in motion to prevent starvation of the population. Only a small amount of rice could be harvested in 1979; fish was largely absent due to

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<sup>26</sup> Interview in Phnom Penh, 4 June 2007 and interview in Battambang, 20 July 2007.

<sup>27</sup> The two branches of Cambodian Buddhism were unified in 1981 and headed by Tep Vong. The two orders were separated again in 1991, with Tep Vong as patriarch of the Mohanikay. Bou Kry was made head of the Dhammayuth order. In 2007, Tep Vong was appointed Great Supreme Patriarch, placing him above Bou Kry.

<sup>28</sup> It is in the light of this post-1979 connection of politics and Buddhism that the Great Supreme Patriarch, Tep Vong, in 2007 ordered to defrock the Khmer Krom Monk Tim Sakhorn for allegedly harming relations between Cambodia and Vietnam (Yun 2 July 2007:1-2 and 3 July 2007:1-2). Khmer Krom monks, originating from Kampuchea Krom, a formerly Cambodian territory which now makes up Southern Vietnam, are critical of the government for not caring sufficiently about the fate of the Khmer minority in Vietnam. Only one week before, on 24 June 2007, Phnom Penh’s Supreme Patriarch Noun Nget announced a decree which would prohibit monks to participate in political demonstrations for peace arguing that Cambodia is at peace already. The decree was signed by the Minister of Cults and Religions, Khun Haing. Noun Nget was defrocked during the Khmer Rouge, but joined the monkhood again after 1979. This mirrors earlier calls by the same patriarch for monks not to vote and remain apolitical (Sam Rith/ Charles McDermid 29 June-12 July 2007:1+11).

<sup>29</sup> Ebihara 1987:38, 39+35; Ea 1987:8+10; Charny 1987:244; International Committee of the Red Cross 1999:6+24; Acharya 2003:3-4.

the wide unavailability of nets and boats to exploit the Tonle Sap. After 1980, food production went back to subsistence levels and threats of famine ceased by 1981.<sup>30</sup>

Ebihara described the social, cultural and economic policies of the People's Republic of Kampuchea as a 'synthesis' of pre-1975 and socialist elements resulting in a 'semisocialist economy.' This was benefited by the allegiance of the majority of people to traditional cultural elements such as Buddhism and family ties, which the Khmer Rouge policies did not have enough time to root out, neither in their pre-1975 base areas, nor in the whole country between 1975 and 1978/79; the village again became the basic territorial and socio-political unit (Ebihara 1987:35+36). Within an unstable situation – fighting continued on the ground – the government rebuilt destroyed villages while other communities, which had experienced disruption due to influx of refugees, relocations, killings and collectivisation, were able to stabilise. The new leadership restored basic health care and the education system. While the collectivisation was not utterly abandoned, it was rolled back to lower levels and was less strictly handled with local variation. In addition, the mobile work teams were abolished. Private cultivation was allowed and open markets were re-established to sell farming surplus. Money was re-introduced (Ebihara 1987:35-38).

The informal cooperative work groups again became the customary form of cooperation in the villages. Also, there was a tendency again to choose village leaders according to traditional virtues rather than ideological background, but at the same time, the KPRP structure was established which eventually turned village leaders into political appointees: 'persons of "good character," who had some economic and/or educational status in the old society and who displayed intelligence, charisma and/or nonantagonistic forcefulness.'<sup>31</sup> They functioned as 'hinges' or 'brokers' 'between the local community and the larger political system, between "us" and "them"'.<sup>32</sup> However, while in the old society village and subdistrict officials were seen by villagers as belonging to 'us', they may now be considered as belonging to 'them'.<sup>33</sup>

The watering down of the barriers between 'us' and 'them' was aided by turning village leaders into political appointees, thus cooptating them, wherever the post-1979 government was able to exercise influence. In the sense that political attitudes were crucial in whether or not a person was to become village chief, this policy can be regarded as continuation of the Khmer Rouge policy of choosing party affiliation over skills. In addition, this policy continued the Khmer Rouge instituted policy of choosing the village leaders from above. Thus the village level was opened to political competition between elite factions and discrimination of political opponents.

Consequently, the village chief has become part of the national administration. However, as Conway wrote, 'he is, unlike Commune [i.e. subdistrict], District or Provincial Officials, resident among his constituents. While a village chief may desire to extract as much as possible

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<sup>30</sup> Ea 1987:8; Ebihara 1987:36; Charny 1987:244-245+247-248; Hood/ Ablin 1987:li.

<sup>31</sup> Ebihara 1987:40 cited Heder 1980a:96+97.

<sup>32</sup> Ebihara 1987:40 cited Wolf 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Ebihara 1987:40 cited Heder 1980a:109+107.

from villagers, often driven by demands from higher officials, this desire has to be balanced by a fear of reprisals'.<sup>34</sup>

In economic terms, some exports resumed, mainly to Soviet bloc countries given the international isolation of Cambodia after 1979. These included rubber, kapok, cotton, and fish. In 1987, average per capita income was less than 100 US Dollar per year. A basic health care system with hospitals, medical centres and a medical school in Phnom Penh was established. Education with elementary (1.5 million children), middle (60.000) and high schools (4.000) came into operation as well as traditional forms of art such as theatre and dance (used partly for propaganda purposes) (Ebihara 1987:39; Hood/ Ablin 1987:li-lii). Religious activity surfaced again. Around 70,000 of 100,000 Buddhist bonzes of pre-1975 Cambodia are believed to have died. Ordainment started quickly, but was open to people above the age of 50 only, plus Buddhist bonzes had to propagate the official party line and were kept under party control to prevent Buddhism from becoming a challenge to the state. Nevertheless, the resurgence of religious life showed the importance of the local pagoda for social cohesion and its post-1979 significance in 'offering social and psychological support to a people who have undergone years of extreme stress'.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the socialist outlook of Cambodia differed markedly from other socialist countries, and therefore, 'the Soviet Union does not define Cambodia [...] as a state progressing toward socialism.' The KPRP became reorganised down to the local level. Between 1979 and 1985, it grew from 66 to 7,500 members (Hood/ Ablin 1987:lii-liii). To date (2008) this has provided the leadership under Prime Minister Hun Sen with a considerable local support base and patron-client relations by monopolising control over local authorities, as opposed to Sihanouk's Front Uni Nationale pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif (FUNCINPEC) and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), which are refused access to media resources in order to broadcast their messages to the countryside, which constitutes 85 percent of Cambodia's population.<sup>36</sup>

The party structure remained intact during UNTAC and was one factor which enabled Hun Sen, who became Prime Minister 1985, to hold on to power to the present day. For instance, in the first local elections after UNTAC, held in 2002, the CPP won all but 23 of the 1621 communes. The outcome of the second local elections, held in April 2007, showed a similar result: the CPP won 1592 of the 1621 communes. This owes a great deal to a strategy known as 'going down to the base', a 1980s policy of bringing socialist propaganda to the rural heartlands and fight the guerrilla opposition. Today, this strategy is used to cultivate patronage networks to ensure the CPP's electoral victory in Cambodia's rural areas (Un 2005:221). In addition, a money politics style of patronage networks is sustained by requiring government bureaucracies to pay into party coffers for election campaigns, known as the 'black box.' This has led to an increase in corruption as government officials have to divide their income through corruption into three parts: themselves, superiors, and the black box. The former governor of Phnom Penh, Chea Sophara, allegedly had to pay 20,000 US Dollar to the CPP every month so that Hun Sen could build schools and buy rice to distribute to peasants (Un

<sup>34</sup> Hughes 2001:18 cited Conway 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Ebihara 1987:42-43; Hood/ Ablin 1987:lii-liii.

<sup>36</sup> Un 2005:213-214; Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2003:4.



2005:227). Ledgerwood argues that the money style of networks of patronage has not yet extended to the countryside, but that it is still of a more traditional outlook:

“This is how everything works in Cambodia. In a rural setting it is the clients who gives [sic] small gifts or labour while the village chief or other big guy will provide protection and assistance in an emergency. In Phnom Penh this relationship has become distorted because patron client relations have become almost entirely monetised. The little guys in the Khsae have to pass up money and what they give is supposed to be redistributed and sent back down. That’s why before elections the government gives goods away. They are proving that what goes up is being redistributed. In the city however, its about lust for power, and to switch it back is problematic (Interview with Judy Ledgerwood in Gender and Development for Cambodia 2003:Part Two).”

On 1 May 1989, a new constitution instituted economic reforms towards a market-oriented system, in the context of which private ownership was formally endorsed and Buddhism made the state religion. Around 90 percent of the solidarity groups for collective farming were disbanded. Transportation, health care, education and most state markets became partially privatised.

### **2.3.2. Politics**

Internationally, Cambodia along with Vietnam was isolated: aid to Vietnam was cancelled, the invasion condemned, and the Khmer Rouge considered the legitimate government of Cambodia. They retained Cambodia’s seat in the United Nations. Despite the initial chaos and an economy in crisis, most of the aid that was channelled into Cambodia was targeted for those, which had taken refuge along the Thai border; Western aid in Cambodia itself was meant to relief Cambodia, not help develop it: the United States and Thailand, having the greatest influence on disbursement of aid, aimed at not supporting or legitimising the new government. An estimate of 50 US Dollar was spent on each Cambodian in the interior, 440 US Dollar in the border regions and 1,120 US Dollar in the Thai refugee camps.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, for political reasons, the ‘population of the PRK was [...] kept isolated from the wider world once the massive emergency operation of 1979-1982 was over’ (UNICEF 1996:15).

To further delegitimise the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was formed in July 1982 to replace Democratic Kampuchea as internationally recognised government of Cambodia. The CGDK consisted of three different political groupings: Sihanouk and his newly founded royalist party Front Uni Nationale pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif with its military arm Armée Nationale Sihanoukienne (ANS); the communist Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) as successor of the Khmer Rouge’s CPK; and the republican Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF) led by Son Sann with its military arm Khmer People’s National Liberation Armed Forces or Khmer People’s National Liberation Army (KPNLAF).

Sihanouk, still the symbol of Cambodian unity, became president of the CGDK, Son Sann prime minister and Khieu Samphan vice-president in charge of foreign affairs. The CGDK

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<sup>37</sup> Hood/ Ablin 1987:xlvi cited Shawcross 1984:393.

was recognised as legitimate government by the UN, ASEAN, China, and the United States; the government took the seat at the United Nations. On the other side of the CGDK and the international supporters stood Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and the KPRP government. Thailand was an important channel to fund the resistance groups. Serge Thion, writing in 1987, said that ‘nowadays the Khmer resistance groups, the Khmer Rouge included, are under complete control of the Thai military’ (Thion 1987:151).

This formation remained essentially in place until 1991. Although the United States provided direct support for KPNLF and FUNCINPEC/ANS, this indirectly benefited the Khmer Rouge as it bolstered the CGDK as a whole. While Pol Pot’s communists had support among the poor peasantry, FUNCINPEC had a large peasant following itself owing to Sihanouk’s traditional royalist appeal among the peasantry. The followers of the KPNLF were made up of republicans who had fled the Khmer Rouge. Thus the diverse coalition government was united only in its aim to get rid of the Vietnamese-installed government. Apart from that, they continued fighting each other. When the domestic military situation jammed in the mid-1980s and a victory of either side was not in sight, a solution became possible. At the same time, Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and *glasnost* led to a cut in ideological and material backing of Vietnam and its Cambodian occupation as Gorbachev aimed at rapprochement with China.

Consequently, facing an economic crisis and being unable to support its presence in Cambodia on its own, Vietnam announced to withdraw from Cambodia. In 1989, as a sign of cooperation, the KPRP renamed the People’s Republic of Kampuchea politically neutral the State of Cambodia (SOC). In 1991, the KPRP was renamed Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). After a series of setbacks all parties signed the UN negotiated Peace Accords at the Paris conference from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1991, which formed the basis for the UN peacekeeping mission UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia). Shortly before the Paris Conference, a Supreme National Council (SNC) was formed to represent Cambodia’s sovereignty during the UN mission. The SNC consisted of representatives of both governments, the CPP and the exile-based CGDK. Sihanouk was appointed president. According to the regulations in the Paris Peace Accords, the SNC, through a transfer of the prime governmental authority to UNTAC, legitimises UNTAC’s operation and itself retains a largely representative role and integrating function.

### **2.3.3. Changes and continuities through times of war and violence**

The post-1979 period saw the reconstruction of social ties and economic activity in the areas under the control of the Phnom Penh government. At the same time, the KPRP re-introduced a system of social control, which saw the penetration of party organisation all the way down to the village level, which again became the basic territorial and socio-political unit. This system of control provided the basis for the CPP’s control of the local level of government during and after UNTAC. Therefore, the KPRP leaders, many of them former Khmer Rouge, kept the ideal of socialist party organisation alive and within the offices of the new state reconstructed patronage networks while rolling back collectivisation of the Pol Pot state. These networks included both the new KPRP elite as well as members of the old elite in the form of loyal Buddhists, on top of them Tep Vong, a Hun Sen loyalist, who had testified against the Khmer Rouge in the 1979 trial. Given the continuity of the political and religious elite in the

post-1979 and post-1993 political systems and the functional links between the political and Buddhist leadership until 1975 and after 1979, it is significant to note that during his time as leader of the united sangha, Tep Vong argued that forms of political violence may be condoned by Buddhism (Harris 2001:93). This is to say that, similar to the Sihanouk state, Buddhism functioned again as legitimising factor for the political powerholders, yet this time not in the form of the Buddhist kingship, but in the form of a ‘semisocialist’ (Ebihara 1987:35-36) programme.

At the same time, the violent political contest continued, pitting the various parties against each other, including the continuation of a violent anti-Vietnamese sentiment, which until today is present in the political pronouncements of Sam Rainsy. As a consequence, the Pol Pot era and the Vietnamese-installed government provided the basis for long-lasting fears and threat perceptions among sections of the Cambodian population against each other and outside nations, and according political alignments.

As we shall see, UNTAC did not manage to bridge these fissures within the Cambodian populace, partly because it did not intend to do so in the first place but aimed at removing the international dimension from the conflict and pacify the region in the process. The KPRP/CPP patronage structure and control over the central ministries including the security forces remained untouched.

## **2.4. The Paris Peace Agreements and UNTAC: Content and Implementation**

### **2.4.1. Repatriation and rehabilitation**

One of UNTAC’s tasks was to repatriate and resettle between 350,000 and 370,000 refugees from the camps at the Thai border and resettle around 170,000 refugees within Cambodia. Repatriation was seen as precondition for Cambodia’s reconstruction and national reconciliation, for the ‘rehabilitation of the country’s human and physical infrastructure’ as basis for economic reconstruction (Heininger 1994:47). Mining areas and an insufficient transport network were seen as greatest impediments to the task of repatriation (Heininger 1994:48).

According to Heininger, a number of problems prevented the successful completion of the repatriation mandate. In order to ease reintegration of the refugees, UNTAC planned to supply them with a house frame, tools, mosquito nets, water buckets, and food for twelve months supplied through the World Food Programme until the resettled population could grow their own food on their newly allocated land (2ha for an average family of 4.4 persons). However, there was not sufficient supply of land: first, mining was more serious than thought; second, arable land was in short supply; third, land with previous titles was too expensive to buy; fourth, 80 percent of refugees asked to be resettled in the four provinces along the Thai border. Only 60 percent of these refugees had lived in these provinces before. These provinces, in addition, were strongholds of the civil war parties opposing the Phnom Penh government after 1979 and therefore had the greatest density of landmines.<sup>38</sup> UNICEF reported that ‘approx-

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<sup>38</sup> Heininger 1994:50-51 and *ibid.*:51 cited Kamm 1992:Section 1: 22.

imately 76 per cent of the returnees opted to settle in the four Northwestern provinces, with 60 per cent coming to the provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. This rapid population increase of over 22 percent for each of these 2 provinces has placed a considerable burden on the resources of the farming communities where the returnees have been resettled. It has also added pressure to already strained government health, water and sanitation services' (UNICEF 1996:21).

The allocation of land and other aids to the resettled population incited resentments among the original population against the refugees, which returned to Cambodia from one of the eight refugee camps and often found themselves in a better position regarding international help as opposed to the local population.<sup>39</sup> This also meant a mix of regional subcultures in Cambodia, which became mixed when people had first started to flee their areas of origin to settle somewhere else. These also produced resentments owing to different mentalities and perceptions influenced by mutual prejudices.<sup>40</sup> Another difficult problem for the returnees was the resettlement in villages, sometimes their former ones, but especially new ones where no support of remaining family members could be expected. A report on returnees in Battambang province describes how returning refugees without wielding own prestige found it difficult to have access to social capital and establish networks to persons of reputation in the village in order to become integrated into the community and gain access to cooperative work teams (*provas dei*). They were therefore likely to be excluded from village life and often had to live hand-to-mouth, unable to participate in the exchange of goods or line up for support channelled through development assistance. A problem in this was that returnees lacked patronage links either because kin ties were cut during the upheavals of the civil war, or because in new villages they did not have anyone to support them. Missing thus status and the opportunity to attach themselves to persons of status, returnees often were no longer integrated into the community through traditional patterns of patronage. For them, links to persons outside the village became crucial to maintain or enhance their standards of living, thus opening the village conflict management to outside influences. In addition, on return to their native village, demobilised soldiers and refugees found it difficult to integrate due to changes in attitude or a loss of farming skills. 'The difficulties of coping with individuals socialised to the life of a jungle base, within the confines of a village, is a likely source of conflict. The different resources and norms that these individuals bring into the village with them, and their relative detachment from the informal structure of village control, may render village-based conflict management customs less effective in dealing with these relative outsiders. The investment in symbolic capital which is the basis of village community relationships may not be valued by these individuals, either because they are accustomed to living in military communities which operate according to quite different norms, or because they have other resources, such as weapons, which make investment in intangible assets unnecessary.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Heininger 1994:51 cited Kamm 1992: Section 1: 22.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with a human rights NGO director in Phnom Penh, 1 June 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Hughes 2001:22; *ibid.*:11-12 cited Davenport/ Healy/ Malone 1995:67; Hughes 2001:19 cited Vijghen 1996:16.

In relation to the problems of patronage and resettlement, UNICEF reported that village communities tended to move together if possible, keeping the same leader and the same identity when 'forced to join other villages in a camp for displaced persons.' UNICEF observed the same pattern of groups, which returned from the Thai refugee camps. These groups, when able to, kept their leaders and 'tended to remain outside the existing CPP network', which they found in the communities in which they resettled (UNICEF 1996:39).

#### **2.4.2. Civil administration, police and military**

UNTAC's civil administration part listed three levels of cooperation between the UN and Cambodian authorities:

first, 'direct control' through the Special Representative Yasushi Akashi over the ministries of foreign affairs, national defence, finance, public security and information 'to ensure strict neutrality' (Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Annex 1, Section B, paragraph 1; Report of the Secretary-General 1992:paragraph 94);

second, 'optional control' over the areas of 'public health, education, agriculture, maritime and riverine fisheries, communications and post, energy production and distribution, navigable waters and public transport, tourism and historical monuments, mines and general administration' (Second Progress Report 1992:paragraph 38) in accordance with the Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Annex 1, Section B, paragraph 2. This provision concerned the control over all facilities and institutions that could influence the election outcome: see Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Annex 1, Section B, paragraph 3;

third, 'general supervision' over all remaining areas (Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Annex 1, Section B, paragraph 3).

UNTAC's core problem was its failure to gain control of the administration of the State of Cambodia including the security apparatus and key ministries as it was planned in the Paris agreements. Consequently, Hun Sen and the security forces under his control were able to retain a scope of action sufficient to refuse cooperation with the UN troops and ensure their political survival post UNTAC. It was this exclusive access to the resources of power which enabled the CPP to maintain the strongest position during and after UNTAC despite its loss of the elections in 1993. Instrumental in this political feature are three characteristics of Cambodia's political culture: an 'elite authoritarianism, narrow vested interests, and deeply entrenched systems of patronage and clientelism' in a pyramid structure, which is kept in shape through the role of 'patronage and clientelism in government and in personal relations, and the distribution of power based on rewards for loyalty' between the politicians on top and the support base on the lower echelons of the patronage pyramid (Roberts 2002:520+525).

The police component established a Civilian Police (CIVPOL), an unarmed UN police force. Its task was 'to supervise or control the local police in order to ensure that law and order are maintained effectively and impartially, and that human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully protected. [...] Their activities will focus upon the activities of the local police functioning out of the existing or established police posts or stations' (Report of the Secretary-General 1992:paragraph 124; Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia

Conflict, Annex 1, Section B, paragraph 5b). Accordingly, CIVPOL was supposed to acquaint Cambodian police with human rights, basic freedoms, as well as certain procedures of police investigation (Report of the Secretary-General 1992:paragraph 126/127).

The military component was to supervise the pacification of Cambodia, including demobilisation and disarmament of the civil war parties (Report of the Secretary-General, 1992: paragraph 54), and help with release of prisoners of war and repatriation of refugees. As politically sensitive undertaking, a Mixed Military Working Group was staffed with representatives of all civil war parties.<sup>42</sup> However, the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to disarm 70 percent of their soldiers, canton the remaining 30 percent, give up secret weapons storage, plus their withdrawal from the Supreme National Council in April 1993, were serious set backs for UNTAC. In addition, the Khmer Rouge attempted to expand control over countryside areas. Overall, of the 155,000 combatants, UNTAC managed to demobilise 36,000 combatants between the Paris agreements in 1991 and May 1993 (Escola de cultura de pau 2006). The Royal Government of Cambodia notes different numbers, however: Given the non-cooperation of the Khmer Rouge, until May 1993, about 50,000 of the planned 140,000 soldiers were demobilised from the three factions cooperating with UNTAC (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5). There were no coordinated efforts, as each army pursued its own demobilisation plan. The State of Cambodia provided three months of salary and transportation to the soldiers' 'district of their choice. Once there, district officials were supposed to monitor and support their reintegration, but this does not appear to have happened' (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5).

Reintegration programmes did not follow the demobilisation programmes: short-term business and literacy skills were carried out by ILO and UNESCO while soldiers were in cantonment, and follow-up programmes by ILO had limited impact partly owing to the fact that 'demobilized soldiers proved difficult to work with' (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5).

Prum Sam Ol notes that social capital and relations to persons of repute was critical of whether the soldier could demobilise successfully or not:

"The key distinction was whether the soldier was from their village or not. If he was, then there was no problem with him coming back because this was his home and he had relatives to take care of him. Even if he had no land, he could work for other families who knew his family. However, soldiers from other villages should not come because there was no land and no jobs and they would have no one to depend on."<sup>43</sup>

CIVPOL and the military component are the most unsuccessful parts of UNTAC, due to insufficient qualifications in the areas of language skills, differences in knowledge on human rights within the national contingents of UNTAC, understaffing, and insufficient equipment. This impacted negatively on the security of returnees, pursuit of human rights violations, or control of local police forces (Heininger 1994:79). A further problem was a lack of means of

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<sup>42</sup> Report of the Secretary-General 1992:paragraph 55/56; Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Annex 2, Art. X-XII.

<sup>43</sup> Hughes 2001:12 cited Prum Sam Ol/ Peng Chiew Meng/ Elizabeth Uphoff Cato 1996:25.

integration for demobilised soldiers, which partly led to the formation of marauding gangs (Lulei/ Weidemann 1998:364).

Continued recruitment of soldiers after 1993 made continued demobilisation efforts necessary. Between 1996 and 1999, the government carried out a Reduction in Force Exercise to demobilise 40,000 soldiers until December 1998, flanked by a Veterans Assistance Program. The overall aim was to save 25.44 million US Dollar, transfer them to the social sectors, and 'improve the functioning of the security apparatus through increased discipline and motivation. A professionalization of the RCAF [Royal Cambodian Armed Forces] will take place and be reflected, inter alia, by the provision that all RCAF soldiers should be full-time' (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:2).

To do so, vulnerable or unreliable groups made up the crucial portion of those to be demobilised, indicating that the RCAF after 1993 was a reservoir for all sorts of people whether fit for the army or not (perhaps this mirrors government policy until 1995, that all university graduates were guaranteed a job in the state bureaucracy: UNICEF, 1996: 22). The demobilised consisted of 4000 disabled, 3000 chronically ill, 1250 aged, 1750 widows, 800 female soldiers, 6000 Khmer Rouge defectors (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:2+8). A survey of these groups shows that 54 percent of them had no house, 49 percent no assets, 59 percent no livestock, 66 percent had no land, 15 percent were separated, widowed or divorced, 57 percent had a deceased father, 52 percent had primary or less education, 53 percent had no economic experience, 37 percent had no marketable skills, 11 percent had poor health (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:8-9). Based on an average household size of 5.5 persons, the programme implied the resettlement of 220.000 people. The Veterans Assistance Program was meant to carry the social costs: a 'monetised departure allowance' of 898 US Dollar to be paid in two instalments: at departure and three months after; services to vulnerable groups such as medical care and land; vocational training; resettlement and a shareholder scheme for landless civilians (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:2-3). Demobilisation was made difficult by the fact that economic growth during the UNTAC phase was between 4 and 8 percent, but most of it centred in Phnom Penh owing to the service sector catering to UNTAC personnel with 'little impact on the rest of the country'.<sup>44</sup>

So this was the situation which demobilised soldiers had to face: an economic upturn based on Phnom Penh and confined to the service industry; and 85 percent of the population living in the countryside characterised by a lack of infrastructure with roads absent or in a poor state, lack of services, and lack of security given continued fighting and banditry. Land in this situation 'is the single most important asset – economically, socially and psychologically – but little arable land remains available. What has not been claimed already is unusable due to insecurity or land mines' (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5). The situation was aggravated by competition with those 350,000 to 370,000 people that had been resettled from the refugee camps at the Thai border and the resettlement of the 170,000 internally displaced people during UNTAC (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:9). The report gives further strength to the argument cited above that soldiers lack support networks in the villages they

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<sup>44</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5; UNICEF 1996:25-27.

were resettled in during the demobilisation under UNTAC. For the 1996-1999 programme, the government reported that ‘many veterans lack the social assets that are of central importance to back-up their survival strategy. These assets include [...] a positive and supportive local community and networks of family and relatives’ (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:9).

On 30 April 1999, simultaneously to the stabilisation of the political system between 1998 and 1999 (second election won by the CPP, local power sharing agreement CPP-FUNCINPEC, dissolution of the Khmer Rouge, introduction of the Senat. For details see Chapter 3) demobilisation programmes continued (Keng Menglang 2003:23note22): the year 1999 saw a reduction of the military expenditures to put more funds into the budgets for health, education and rural development. In 2000, the government planned to demobilise 31,500 soldiers within a three-year phase: between May and July 2000, a pilot demobilisation programme was carried out in the four provinces of Kampot, Kampong Thom, Banteay Meanchey and Battambang to demobilise the first 1,500 soldiers in cooperation with the World Bank, the UN World Food Programme and the bilateral donors Japan, Sweden and the Netherlands, who contributed a sum of 2.25 million US Dollars. The pilot programme was followed by a first demobilisation phase between 15 October and 26 December 2001, during which 15,000 soldiers were demobilised in ten provinces under a World Bank loan of 18.4 million US Dollar (the Cambodia Demobilization and Reintegration Project, CDRP): Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kampot, Kampong Cham, Kandal, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, and Steung Treng. The second phase targeting the remaining 15,000 soldiers under the World Bank programme began in March 2002 and was to be concluded in June of the same year. However, the plan was delayed for two years due to a World Bank investigation into misuse of 6.9 million US Dollar for the procurement of motorcycles. The project was subsequently halted and the implicated firms and individuals were barred from further participating in the demobilisation programme.<sup>45</sup> The project was closed on 31 December 2004. In January 2005, the Cambodian government paid back 2.8 million US Dollar to the World Bank.<sup>46</sup> In October 2006, the Vietnamese News Agency reported that ‘Cambodia plans to demobilise 30,000 soldiers, but the plan has not yet been implemented. Donors cut off funds for the project due to accusation of corruption’ (Vietnam News Agency 25 October 2006).

Crucially, civil society was not involved in the demobilisation programmes. Consequently, there was also no discourse forthcoming on military reform, demobilisation and reintegration of excombattants. A problem of the first demobilisation phase was slow disbursement of allowance packages to demobilised soldiers, which was seen as potential threat to military reform (Kao Kim Hourn 2002:1-2). After the Paris agreements of 1991, the Cambodian army was not slimmed down, but instead was enlarged to incorporate the armed factions of the civil war parties with the exception of the Khmer Rouge. A second enlargement took place in 1998

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<sup>45</sup> For a list of individuals and firms barred from the demobilisation programme see World Bank, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank 2004; World Bank 2005; Kao Kim Hourn 2002:1; Working Group for Weapons Reduction 2002:2; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004:1; Escola de cultura de pau 2006; BBC 29 May 2006.



to integrate those Khmer Rouge soldiers, who had defected to Hun Sen (Kao Kim Hourn 2002:1+3). While the Working Group for Weapons Reduction (WGRW), which monitored the first phase of the demobilisation, found no difficulties with the cash disbursement of 946,800 Riels to the soldiers in addition to food, clothing and household items distributed by the World Food Programme, it found that the ex-soldiers had serious doubts about their security and economic prospects: 67 percent of demobilised soldiers believed that weapons and explosives may not be handed in but may be hidden by soldiers; 24 percent were worried about banditry and other criminals who had managed to hide weapons from the current and earlier weapons collection programmes, and they also feared theft from these persons after having received their allowance; 6 percent of soldiers said that they would keep weapons if allowed in order to protect their families and properties as ‘they did not have confidence in the ability of local authorities or security forces to provide adequate security and safety when they return to their communities.’ Interestingly, in an apparent expression of mistrust for state agencies, soldiers ‘called on the police and courts not to set criminals free when arrested, in order to curb violence and promote the rule of law’ (Working Group for Weapons Reduction 2002:4-5). Again, being resettled in their community provided a source of ambiguity: while 75 percent of the soldiers surveyed were happy to be demobilised, 70 percent were worried about how to make a living, and an unspecified number was worried that the community they were going to be resettled in might discriminate them: ‘They feared that other civilians will look down on them after they loose the power they had as soldiers. They requested the government to ensure that demobilized soldiers will be safe in their communities’ (Working Groups for Weapons Reduction 2002:5-6). Once again, concerns about community support along with personal and economic insecurity occupied the minds of demobilised soldiers nine years after the first demobilisation efforts under UNTAC.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from a downsizing of the army, reintegration into society needs to be accompanied by a set of measures, which involve civil society and enhance acceptance in society of former soldiers. Kao Kim Hourn lists a number of points to consider. Among them are:

- » improving relations between civil society and military to better root the army in society and subject it to democratic control by National Assembly and Senate;
- » improving reintegration of former soldiers into local communities through enhanced cooperation between government, donor countries, civil society and local authorities with particular consideration ‘of the most vulnerable group of demobilized soldiers, such as those who are handicapped, chronically ill, women and children’ (Kao Kim Hourn 2002:6);
- » providing training skills for integration into the existing labour market;
- » providing access to information on demobilisation and reintegration measures to secure popular support and trust between population and demobilised soldiers;
- » destroying weapons (Kao Kim Hourn 2002:4-8).

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<sup>47</sup> For administrative details see the evaluation report on the pilot demobilisation programme: General Secretariat of the Council for the Demobilization of Armed Forces, 2001.

The list shows that not only demobilised adult soldiers, but also child soldiers did not receive governmental reintegration support according to their needs. According to a brief by the Escola de cultura de pau, a joint programme of the government and UNICEF in 2001 to provide education to child soldiers was announced by UNICEF as failed in 2002 due to a lack of funds (Escola de cultura de pau 2006:2). Continued relative political instability as manifested in politically motivated murders (such as that of trade union leader Chea Vichea in 2004) and the politically motivated prevention of a societal discourse by keeping control of the history curriculum in schools made it difficult if not impossible for demobilised soldiers to acknowledge their past doings publicly for fear of retribution and through that achieve their reintegration. This made the governmental integration efforts more difficult (Barnitz/ Path/ Catalla 2001:4).

### **2.4.3. Elections**

The aim of the elections was to create a constituent assembly. The assembly was to work out a constitution within three months after the elections, adopt it with a two-thirds majority, turn itself into a legislative assembly and elect a government. The new constitution was to enshrine human rights, neutrality, and liberal pluralist democracy (Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Art. 12-14, Art. 23 and Annex 5).

A division line between FUNCINPEC and CPP was the self-identification: whereas FUNCINPEC based its claim to power in its fight against the Vietnamese occupation, the CPP viewed the entire opposition as hostile. Hun Sen believed that the CPP's control over the population through party-building activities combined with attacks against the opposition would automatically bring about election victory (Frieson 1996:184). While the CPP saw the Khmer Rouge as disintegrating force allied to FUNCINPEC, FUNCINPEC viewed as enemy Vietnamese civilians and former soldiers in the country, which it deemed to undermine Cambodian sovereignty. The issue was that FUNCINPEC shared anti-Vietnamese positions with the Khmer Rouge, whose attacks against the Vietnamese minority did not elicit protest in FUNCINPEC (Frieson 1996:184-185).

Military attacks became more frequent the more the election date approached. Nevertheless, UNTAC was able to register about 90 percent of the 4.7 million eligible voters (with the exception of the Khmer Rouge controlled areas: the population residing there also had no possibility to vote: Amer 1995:56). However, during a meeting of the Supreme National Council in April 1993, the UN's special representative stated that the conditions for fair elections were absent. These conditions comprised areas such as a peaceful atmosphere, equal opportunities for all parties to compete in the elections, equal access to state media and other state resources of the State of Cambodia for campaigning (Vorum/ Chhim 1998:421).

The elections from 23-28 May 1993 were relatively peaceful, however. The voter turn-out was around 90 percent, 20 parties competed (of which most could only form under the UN mission) for 120 seats. FUNCINPEC chaired by Sihanouk's son Ranariddh won with 45.5 percent and 58 seats. The CPP under Chea Sim won only 38.2 percent and 51 seats. Son Sann's Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party BLDP, a splinter of KPNLF, won 3.8 percent and 10 seats (Vorum/ Chhim 1998:424-425). The result is the more stunning as the CPP controlled

the largest part of Cambodia. Moreover, the majority of the population lived in its area of influence (Amer 1995:57).

The constituent assembly now had to form a government to replace the State of Cambodia. As no party had the absolute majority, a coalition had to be found all the while the CPP was set to save at least a part of its power. CPP threats to resort to military force would have resulted in a renewed civil war. The CPP also demanded a repetition of elections in at least four provinces, in which FUNCINPEC had won a majority, alleging irregularities. But since UNTAC had labelled the elections as free and fair and did not see repeated elections necessary, the CPP refused to hand over power and declared six provinces bordering Vietnam independent from the central government. This move was also motivated by the fear to become victim of retributions should it hand over power to opposition parties (Vorun/ Chhim 1998 427-428).

During the first session of the constituent assembly on 14 June 1993, Sihanouk was unanimously elected provisional president. He then formed an all-party provisional government. To elicit cooperation from the CPP, the position of co-prime minister was created for Hun Sen, creating a double leadership with Ranariddh. The constituent assembly approved the provisional government on 1 July 1993. This abolished the 1989 State of Cambodia and the 1989 constitution. The new constitution was adopted on 21 September 1993. On 24 September 1993, Sihanouk was elected king by the Council of the Throne. The constitution created the offices of a first and second prime minister to replace the co-prime ministers, thus further dividing power between FUNCINPEC and CPP (Vorun/ Chhim 1998:433). Ranariddh became first, Hun Sen second prime minister.

#### **2.4.4. Consequences of the peace agreements for fractions, continuities, and path dependencies**

Repatriations produced frictions between resettled populations and old inhabitants, problems of support for returnees owing to a lack of family members and their social networks, i.e. a lack of patronage links for resettled people. While exogenous marriage was practiced before the war and politicians campaigned in the rural areas for a seat in the national assembly, the village was now further linked to the outside through support resettled people had to find outside the village. In addition, demobilised soldiers perturbed village life through their different norms, thus making intra-village conflict settlement and social cohesion less consistent.

In addition, the double power structure inside the state institutions through the power sharing between FUNCINPEC and CPP opened the political system to violent competition between the erstwhile winners of the Pol Pot ouster (CPP) and their long-time royalist adversaries of FUNCINPEC. With the CPP holding on to control over the key ministries and the security apparatus, FUNCINPEC had to rely on the CPP abiding by the rules of the democratic game, while at the same time broadening their patron-client networks. The political competition that ensued at the top thus traveled downwards along party patronage lines into the villages, where it met CPP-appointed village chiefs.

It is here that Chap Sotharith, Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace mentioned that today in the villages ‘it is all party politics’, complaining that in some instances, members of opposing parties are not even invited to weddings in their vil-

lage.<sup>48</sup> Hence it can be argued that while these points of cohesion were reconstructed after 1979, their role then experienced a degree of alteration by drawing village administration into the wider state bureaucracy. Political discrimination continues to the present day. When striving through Phnom Penh or the countryside, roadsides are sometimes plastered with party signs of FUNCINPEC, CPP, SRP, and NRP, showing support for the respective party. Inability to work with each other was assigned by interviewees to continued enemy perceptions of political opponents as legacy of the war in combination with attempts to keep the wealth and power acquired through war times by the ruling party after 1979.<sup>49</sup> In December 2004, it was reported that village chiefs ‘have not been selected by the Commune Councils, as provided for in the Law on Commune Administration of 2001. Instead, a formula is under discussion whereby 70 per cent of the chiefs will be appointed by CPP and 30 per cent by FUNCINPEC’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2004:6). The local elections of April 2007 in theory assigned SRP the power to choose their own village leaders to replace CPP village leaders. It is not clear yet, however, if SRP is prepared to exercise this right as it would constitute a severe challenge to the rural CPP strongholds and therefore a direct attack on the position of the CPP (see also Chapter 3.2.2.). In 2006, the elections watchdog COMFREL published a statement criticising the Guideline of the Ministry of Interior on Village Chief Selection Procedure (No 004 of 4 March 2006) ‘that has never been publicly consulted, for comments and inputs from the public, NGOs, and other stakeholders.’ The guideline suggests village chiefs to be selected through a vote of commune councillors, of which there are five to eleven in each commune. COMFREL suspects therefore that the village chief ‘shall not become [a] village representative’ (COMFREL 2006).

This mirrors the political importance conveyed upon village chiefs by the central administration. In 1995, Davenport, Healy and Malone wrote:

“Villages are connected to the administrative structure of the province through the village leader [who] is a political appointee. Often the same man had held this role since 1979. Village leaders tend to have much more land than most other villagers. They have the task of ensuring that village recruits are available for conscription and for public work tasks. They distribute firearms (20 to 30 a village) to those men they trust to protect the village from dangers. They control village land where it is still available for newly married couples, demobilised soldiers and others with special needs or deserving special favours.”<sup>50</sup>

It is significant that the political contest of the first post-UNTAC government was about the influence of CPP and FUNCINPEC on the local level of government, which was (and is) dominated by the CPP and forms the core component of Hun Sen’s ability to remain prime minister through successive election victories – helped financially by his extensive networking skills with the business oligarchy. As we shall see, the one element in eliminating the power struggle between CPP and FUNCINPEC in 1997-1998 was a power sharing agreement for the communes.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview in Phnom Penh, 6 June 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Chap Sotharith, 6 June 2007, and interview with the director of a non-Cambodian NGO in Phnom Penh, 21 May 2007. See also Caroline Hughes and Kim Sedara, 2004

<sup>50</sup> Hughes 2001:17-18 cited Davenport/ Healy/ Malone 1995:65.

Therefore, the control of the village level by the central government remained a key component in the execution of political control. With the assumption of office of the socialist government under Heng Samrin in 1979, Cambodian society was reorganised along patterns of patron client relations under party control. UNTAC enforced this development after 1991, since the transformation processes in politics, economy and society did not take place as planned but instead were adapted to patronage politics from the central to the local level once UNTAC had left. The inability of UNTAC to wean control away from the CPP during the transition period therefore allowed a restauration of traditional social relations, which then fully developed under the CPP-FUNCINPEC coalition.<sup>51</sup> To the present day, the villages are rife with political distrust between adherents of the CPP versus adherents of FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy Party, which can be seen as a direct result and lasting legacy of the war.

This conflict situation was enforced by the problem that the Paris agreements were not primarily designed to introduce democratic reforms and create a social basis for the UNTAC-sponsored transformation process. Rather, the overall goal was to de-escalate the international dimension of the Cambodia conflict. Therefore, the consideration of external goals was put above the domestic crisis, which continued to unfold into new patterns after the externally initiated peace-building process (for instance Roberts 2002:522). As a result, when UNTAC withdrew, the international community left behind a half-hearted attempt of a formal democratic system. This system was characterised by traditional forms of political legitimacy and an elite, which ensured its political survival by occupying material and immaterial resources. Without any further help from outside, it was up to the political elites to adapt the democratic institutions to the political, military, social, economic, cultural and diplomatic realities of Cambodia.<sup>52</sup>

The hot-tempered atmosphere during the first post-war government from 1993 to 1998 was only cooled in 1998, when the political system stabilised in favour of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Consequently, the period after 1998 also saw a reduction in politically motivated violence, especially during elections. Chapter 3 will elaborate on these issues.

## **2.5. Summary: Violence and Legitimacy of Rule**

The break-in of the Vietnam War into Cambodia intensified the violence executed by an authoritarian state in pursuit of its political and social aims: while anti-communist under republican Lon Nol, it was anti-republican under communist Pol Pot. In the former case, state violence was used in order to root out communists. In the latter case, violence was used to root out bourgeois elements. Violence by the communist regime was carried out both against its opponents outside the party and in factional struggles within the party. Executions became commonplace, fear and distrust were consciously spread in order to impose communist party authority over the population, political killings were not rarely a pretext to get rid of a personal fiend. Corvée labour became a means of punishment for alleged or real enemies of the

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<sup>51</sup> Curtis 1998:32 cited Heder 1995:19.

<sup>52</sup> Curtis 1998:32 cited Heder 1995:19.

communist state, and new patronage relationships were established to favour the new elite under Pol Pot.

The regime collapsed when Vietnam intervened. While the intervention stopped Pol Pot's violent excesses, it triggered a civil war that was to last officially until 1991. Unable to seize control of the state's power resources, UNTAC was unable to reconcile the civil war parties and stop political violence. The political set-up that was reached after 1979, the hostility between CPP, FUNCINPEC, and the Khmer Rouge, continued into the UNTAC and post-UNTAC phases. Politically-motivated killings were used in order to maintain the status quo from the CPP's point of view, or to change it from the other's point of view.

The almost permanent movement of people within Cambodia since the 1970s, either as refugees, as relocatees moved by Pol Pot, or as returnees under UNTAC also meant that the homogenous pre-war village life was severely disrupted. Foreign communities had moved into villages with intact networks of patronage. Compensation packages for returnees after the war produced friction between old and new inhabitants. Village life became politicised, with new and old inhabitants, and CPP and FUNCINPEC adherents eying each other suspiciously.

As under Sihanouk, Lon Nol, and Pol Pot rule was secured through control over the security forces and networks of patronage tailor-made for the new regime. The CPP, coming to power in 1979, eradicated Pol Pot's networks and put its own in place with the help of its socialist party organisation, thereby creating the basis for its stay in power until the present day.

### **3. Intersections of Post-war Transformations: Old Parties, New Democracy**

#### **3.1. Old political culture, new government structures: traditional concepts of power and rule meet external demands for democracy and marketisation**

The new constitution re-established the Kingdom of Cambodia, but this time the king's powers were limited:

“vastly different from the old monarchical constitution, according to which the constitution was ‘granted’ by the king, articles 135-138 of the new charter make it clear, that the new constitution and parliament exist before the king and that he is chosen by them (Vickery 1994).”

The provisions of the constitution made it explicit that the king shall ‘reign’ but not ‘govern’ (Art. 7), he is appointed (Art. 10), and succession is decided by the Royal Council of the Throne (Art. 13).<sup>53</sup> The regulation that members of the government must be members of the political parties represented in the national assembly excluded the Khmer Rouge (Frost 1994:88). Art. 157 (previously Art. 138), which stipulates that the king appoints the first and second prime minister, ‘raised serious questions about adherence to democratic majority-rule

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<sup>53</sup> *Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia*. The constitution was amended in 1999. Where articles changed from the original constitution, this is indicated. The Council of the Throne consists of the president of the senate, the president of the national assembly, the prime minister, the supreme monks of the orders of Mohanikay and Thammayut, the first and second vice-president of the senate, and the first and second vice-president of the national assembly.

procedures. The distinction between [...] Ranariddh and [...] Hun Sen proved to be primarily in protocol rather than in power' (Brown/ Zasloff 1998:287)<sup>54</sup>

The particular power sharing structure between FUNCINPEC and CPP

“was meant to maintain in place the two traditional centers of gravity in Cambodian political life – the factional hierarchy and the monarchy – to the detriment of groups pressing for an expansion of the political franchise. This tension between the pressures for democratization generated by the elections and the efforts by the elites in power to contain any direct challenge to the social and political structures on which their authority rests set the trajectory of subsequent political developments in Cambodia (Lizée 1996:83-84).”

The conception of democratic legitimisation through multiparty elections meant a ‘relegation of an elite used to absolutism to a seriously undermined and relatively powerless position in Khmer Politics’ (Roberts 2001:117). Similarly, Lizée notes, that ‘the idea of rooting political power in the concept of popular representation rather than in the complex of factional allegiances that have been traditionally dominated the nation’s political landscape was seen by the factional elites as inherently threatening to their authority’ (Lizée 1996:83). In addition, a highly personalised political style (Curtis 1998:27) centred decision making on a small group of individuals rather than on consultation with larger parts of the administration or party structure.

In this set up, the political elite was eager to control monks, which were ‘absorbed’ into the electorate after 1993 through the provision of universal adult suffrage (Kent 2006:354). The respect monks enjoy among the population made it therefore necessary for politicians to attempt control over them and bathe in their popularity at the same time. As Kent notes about a visit to a pagoda in Takeo province:

“At one rural pagoda I visited in Takeo province, the local people were complaining bitterly that their head monk was having his arm twisted to comply with the wishes of the village chief. The chief had insisted that the pagoda invite the prime minister to officiate at the consecration ceremony for a new building. The head monk and many of his congregation wanted to keep politicians out of the pagoda, but they were afraid of ‘trouble’ and so they gave in. The middle-aged woman who told me about this explained that this would give the village chief an opportunity to win favour with the powerful, and that it would also give the politicians a chance to manipulate the villagers by offering gifts, demonstrating association with their pagoda and monks and possibly also striking fear into those who did not intend to repay the honour with loyalty. Her story portrays the monks as obeying the interests of worldly power-holders. This is a complete inversion of Khmer ideals, according to which world sustenance depends on the righteousness of leaders who both support but also obey dhamma (Kent 2006:354).”

Roberts defines three central characteristics of the political system: first, attempts to create a balance of power between CPP and FUNCINPEC; second, power sharing arrangements

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<sup>54</sup> As Brown and Zasloff (1998:287) mentioned, the International Republican Institute IRI (supported by the US Republican Party) regarded the coalition as undemocratic, since the equal division of power did not reflect the election outcome, and its inclusive character did not allow for a loyal opposition (ibid., note 25).

within the expanded polity (from a one-party system to a multi-party system) amidst demands from outside to slim down the bureaucracy, which would leave loyal followers without positions to generate wealth and status. Hence, '[i]nstead of halving the numbers of CPP representatives to accommodate the FUNCINPEC arrivals, the CPP sought to preserve their positions and their clients who helped keep them there'; third, the high level of development aid, which vanished into the pockets of politicians and businessmen (Roberts 2002:521-522+526-527). Applied to popular elections, patron-client relations imply that

“[t]he defeat of a key party such as the CPP had consequences far beyond its own immediate concerns. The networks that underpin political parties also suffer a loss of patronage, which in turn undermines client support, thus reinforcing the problem of preserving political power for the elites. [...] In essence, the problem can in part be characterised as a lack of institutionalisation of political opposition. When removed from power, rather than facing the victor from the relative stable socio-economic position of a ‘loyal opposition’, a form of economic exile is pursuant (Roberts 2001:117).”

Additionally, informal patron-client relationships penetrated the bureaucracy and the political parties and thereby undermined the formal structure of authority: they were ‘disguised by formal facades in modern institutions’ on the national level and to a probably lesser extent on the local level (Scott 1972:92).

The new polity became characterized by a neo-patrimonialism, which after the effective of FUNCINPEC in the coup of 1997 centred on Hun Sen’s extended family network. Marriage policy ensures that Hun Sen’s influence is stay after his retirement (perhaps through death, given his announcement in early 2007 that he is to stay prime minister until he is 90 years old). What happens, therefore, is a depersonalisation of the patronage pyramid through a familiarisation of the political system (for further details see the Working Paper on youth violence in Cambodia, Chapter 5.1.).

## **3.2. Opposition, political dissent and society**

### **3.2.1. Conflicts in the political system**

Concerning the election outcome, a prevalent feeling among FUNCINPEC members was that their party’s victory at the polls had not resulted in appropriate change of the real power distribution throughout the country (Frost 1994:89). An equal division of the ministerial posts and their double-filling with personnel of CPP and FUNCINPEC presumably reinforced this feeling: ‘The relationship between minister and vice minister and the two under-secretaries of state was inherently political and thus served to preserve a party-based structure, rather than a true coalition or “government of national reconciliation”’ (Curtis 1998:22). Additionally, the administrative structure of the SOC down to the district level remained largely intact. Therefore, the CPP personnel at all levels could retain the SOC system of information, influence, control, and patron-client relationships; as a result, even subordinate CPP staff in ministries and governor administrations was able to outweigh FUNCINPEC ministers and governors,



many of whom could not exercise appropriate control over their portfolios (Curtis 1998:23).<sup>55</sup> Thus, ‘the CPP emerged as dominant in decision making and administration, particularly in the countryside. The bureaucracy, the security service, the army, and the judiciary continued being largely directed by former SOC cadres, loyal to the CPP leadership’ (Brown/ Zasloff 1998:287).<sup>56</sup> The power sharing concept, introduced primarily to defuse the danger of CPP secessionism, therefore led to a ‘disquieting duality in the ranks of the country’s bureaucracy’ (Curtis 1998:16). For both parties the forming of the coalition meant to buy ‘themselves time to prepare for future political and electoral battles’ (Curtis 1998:19).

After the 1998 elections, the political system was changed to adapt to the necessities of the patron-client system. UNTAC’s attempt to undermine this system can be regarded as a second attempt after the introduction of French parliamentarism in the late 1940s with a Democratic Party that was independent of clientelistic networks to win elections. Hun Sen’s bloody coup of 7 July 1997 against Ranarridh, executed with the aim to prevent the absorption of Khmer Rouge soldiers into the ranks of FUNCINPEC and thus the solidification of Ranarridh against Hun Sen, actively thwarted UNTAC’s attempt. In hindsight, therefore, UNTAC involuntarily contributed to a solidifying of patronage within the formal institutions of democracy. This system had to produce more work places for clients than the political system after 1993 could offer. The result was that the one-chamber parliament was expanded to two chambers by adding a senate to the national assembly. This enabled the system to produce more wealth and status for individuals than before (Roberts 2002:532).

This in turn meant that while the international community demanded market reforms along with a slim administration, the state administration became ballooned to enable patrons to reward their clients with positions of status (Kurtenbach 2006). However, the senate was not only meant to give the government space to breathe, but also to end the power struggle between CPP and FUNCINPEC. Through a system of patronage, the CPP controlled the local levels of government while refusing to hold local elections. This put FUNCINPEC at a disadvantage as there were not enough positions to reward local FUNCINPEC supporters with positions (Roberts 2002:527, 532, 529-533). The crisis was settled until May 1999, first with the introduction of the senate, then with a power sharing agreement between CPP and FUNCINPEC in 1999 in relation to local government positions (Roberts 2002:532-533).

Domestically,

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<sup>55</sup> For more details on how the CPP excluded FUNCINPEC personnel from decision making, see *ibid.*, 23-25.

<sup>56</sup> Finance Minister Sam Rainsy was most outspoken on this issue and in December 1993 commented FUNCINPEC’s attempts to adjust reality to the election outcome as ‘dismantling the “corrupt” and “authoritarian” structures inherited from the former regime [...] “at the economic and political level”’ (Frost 1994:89). Administrative changes at the provincial level meant that FUNCINPEC tried ‘to challenge long-established power structures of the CPP’ (Frost 1994:90). This also included the elaborate system of patron-client relations. However, as of 1997 – according to most observers – FUNCINPEC did not make significant inroads into the bureaucracy, which became more and more politicised through the appointment of loyal party members to government posts (which resulted in an overstaffed administration), thus destroying hopes for the establishment of a professional and neutral civil service (Curtis 1998:25). A push for communal elections prior to the 1998 national elections to alter the power structure at the basis was blocked by the CPP and not carried out until February 2002 due to the fact that village authority and patronage systems influence electoral outcomes at the national level (Um 1998:79).

“the concept of a loyal opposition party – in contrast to a revolutionary opposition party – must be broadly accepted by the Cambodian political élites. In the words of one senior Cambodian official, ‘Cambodia today has two laws, the law of the money and the law of the gun. If the leadership cannot buy you, they will shoot you’ (Brown/ McGrew 1995:145).”

Thus, the UN-sponsored multiparty elections ended up not in a liberal, pluralist, multiparty democracy, but in a coalition government of ‘monolithic’ appearance with a castrated national assembly (Curtis 1998:26). Being intolerant vis-à-vis political opposition, the government allocated the legislature a role subservient to the executive. The government leadership initiated important legislation, and the executive dictated most of the assembly’s decisions (Brown/ Zasloff 1998:287).

In contrast to the 1993 elections, the CPP won the second national elections in 1998 and entered into another coalition with FUNCINPEC. Hun Sen became prime minister, Ranariddh spokesman of the national assembly. The first local elections were held in February 2002. Of the 1,621 communes, the CPP did win all except for 23. Local elections had been planned since 1995, but had been blocked by the CPP against the protests of FUNCINPEC, because the local level of government provided the CPP with a country-wide network of patronage. In addition, the Khmer Rouge dissolved, its leaders were imprisoned or they defected to Hun Sen. As a result, four factors contributed to the stabilisation of the political system: the clear victory of the CPP over FUNCINPEC, the power sharing agreement between CPP and FUNCINPEC on the local levels of government, the creation of the senate, and the dissolution of the Khmer Rouge.

The third parliamentary elections in July 2003 were won by the CPP as well. However, it failed to achieve a two-thirds majority in order to rule alone (but to come closer to that goal, in early 2006 the CPP successfully pushed a vote through the National Assembly, which abolished the two-thirds majority to form a government and replaced with a 50 plus 1 majority). This brought FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party, which came second after the CPP, together in a short-lived coalition for a better bargaining position against the CPP. The eventual agreement, however, was by and large one between Ranariddh and Hun Sen, while the Sam Rainsy Party was largely left out of the new arrangement. This led Sam Rainsy to call for a boycott of the new national assembly, which was constituted not before July 2004. Politics then continued largely as usual: in February 2005, Sam Rainsy left Cambodia after the parliament had stripped him of immunity due to defamation charges brought by the ruling coalition. In December 2005, while being in exile in France, Sam Rainsy was convicted for defaming Hun Sen and was sentenced to nine months in prison. A royal pardon by King Sihamoni received him in February 2006, providing for his return to Cambodia. It was only in May 2006 that the Cambodian parliament voted to abolish prison terms for defamation. In October 2006, FUNCINPEC dropped its long-term chairman Ranariddh over corruption charges. In addition, Hun Sen pushed an adultery law through the National Assembly with the aim to rid himself of Ranariddh. Ranariddh, in exile in France, then set about to form his own political party: the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP). The party contested in the commune council elections of April 2007. On 24 April 2007, the National Election Committee published the official results:

Party	Party personnel elected				
	Village Chiefs	First Deputy Chiefs	Second Deputy Chiefs	Commune Council Members	Total
CPP	1,591	1,125	185	5,092	<b>7,993 (61%)</b>
SRP	28	403	963	1,266	<b>2,660 (25%)</b>
FUNCINPEC	2	47	155	70	<b>274 (5%)</b>
NRP	0	46	317	62	<b>425 (8%)</b>
Hang Dara Democratic Movement Party <sup>57</sup>	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

Source: National Election Committee, 2007; number in percent from COMFREL, 2007a: 5+12. No percentage for Hang Dara given.

Despite the CPP showing its muscle to opposition politicians, the 2003 elections were relatively peaceful with less intimidation than in 1998. One reason for this is that Hun Sen has noticed that the legitimacy of governments is a precondition for international integration and recognition.<sup>58</sup> Thus, ‘CPP-instituted elements of surveillance, intimidation, and violence that effectively restrict competition by other political parties in rural Cambodia’ coexist with a shift ‘from the use of intimidation and violence to patronage politics in the form of material inducements such as individual gifts and construction projects’ (Un 2005:205). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights lists political killings and intimidations. Among them are the murder of a FUNCINPEC candidate for commune chief and his wife in Kampot on 3 June 2000, in which the then commune chief was implicated; the killing of Sam Rainsy Party members in the provinces of Kampong Cham and Prey Veng; threats at gunpoint against a member of parliament of the Sam Rainsy Party by ‘a person in the uniform of a military officer’ owing to alleged defamation of the Investigation and Intelligence Unit of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces; or the much discussed murder of trade union leader Chea Vichea on 22 January 2004 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2001:10 and 2004:7-9). For the 2007 commune council elections, the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) notes an

“overall reduction in the number of killings, injuries and very serious election irregularities as compared with the 2002 local elections, but is very concerned that such incidents still persist, that requests and warnings by leaders to stop killing are not heeded, and that inadequate investigation and lack of attention to due process foster a climate of impunity (COMFREL 2007a:6).”

Killings declined from eighteen cases in the 2002 commune council elections to nine killings in 2007. Of these nine cases during the preparatory period from 1 October 2006 to 30 April 2007, six SRP activists were killed, 2 CPP activists, and 1 NRP activist. Only the murderer of

<sup>57</sup> The Hang Dara Democratic Movement Party “was founded in May 2002 and is committed to the preservation of the monarchy, thwarting the threat posed by illegal immigrants, getting back all Cambodian land lost to neighboring countries and fighting corruption, said Teng Sokheng, party secretary-general” (Maloy/ Pin, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> UN 2005:211+220; Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006:17.

one of the SRP activists was found (COMFREL 2007a:6note3 and 9, 75-76). Yet, intimidation and lethal as well as non-lethal violence were part of the campaign and electoral process, with the houses of SRP and NRP candidates set on fire in Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Chhnang provinces (SRP) and Pailin (NRP), or police telling an SRP candidate in Pursat province that his land dispute would be set aside if he stopped running for a council seat (all details in COMFREL 2007a:24-25).

Further, ‘serious election-related violations continued to persist and were observed to have escalated after the start of the official campaign period on March 16, 2007. A total of 333 cases of irregularity were observed, mostly in Kampong Chhnang, Koh Kong, Preah Vihear, Kampong Cham, Kampot, Battambang and Ratanakiri, followed by Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and Kandal’ (COMFREL 2007a:6). The reason for this may be a change in political control from the CPP to other parties:

“although CPP took 98% of the commune chief positions, the few gains of the other parties appear to be clearly resented. It is too early to assess if new controlling elected Councilors are facing obstructions, although this is appearing to be the case, but more immediately deaths, attempted killings, other serious crimes, and intimidation have all been reported where local electorates may have been identified to have been disloyal to the CPP. At the time of writing, some CPP officials in those areas are also being replaced due to the poor results (COMFREL 2007a:12).”

At the same time, the political space particularly for the SRP increased vis-à-vis the CPP, partly due to structural changes in the National Election Commission (NEC) (COMFREL 2007a:9). Yet, COMFREL notes a political monopoly in 166 communes, in which the CPP took all the commune council seats, an increase from the the same situation in 148 communes in 2002 (COMFREL 2007a:5, 12).

Simultaneously to the growth in political space, COMFREL notes increased media access for SRP and FUNCINPEC, and a higher number of women councillors (920 women or 8 percent of 11,261 commune councilors in 2002, and 1,662 or 14.64 percent of the 11,353 commune councilors in 2007 are women) (COMFREL 2007a:5, 11-13, 73). 4 percent of commune chief positions are held by women, a gross disparity especially in rural areas, where ‘due to migration and past conflict, women form significantly larger majorities in electorates’ (COMFREL 2007a:12).

On the whole, election victories are ensured mostly by nonviolent means. This is especially important for the cooptation of the rural electorate, which is influenced by the CPP control over television channels or the provisions of wells and other infrastructure. It is thus that the domination of the political system by the CPP rests upon adaptation of patronage politics to the needs of the political system: whereas the 1993 elections were still surrounded by armed attacks between FUNCINPEC and CPP, over time the CPP ‘grew accustomed to opposition parties’ and therefore changed strategies (Un 2005:210-212).

A pattern has evolved as follows: first, the control of the television (newspapers hardly have circulation outside the urban centres) brings the CPP message to the rural electorate. This goes along with the refusal to grant the Sam Rainsy Party radio broadcasting licenses with which it could reach rural voters. In the coup of July 1997, FUNCINPEC’s media networks

were conveniently destroyed. The CPP does not control the newspapers, which are read mostly by the urban electorate, among which there are many critical of the government; second, Hun Sen personally or CPP cadres continue the 1980s policy of ‘going down to the base’, where they talk to village residents about their needs for schools, wells, roads, temples or irrigation systems and ensure that these are being built with money Hun Sen derives from his business contacts (such as the mobile phone provider Mobitel and the oil company Sokimex, which also runs the Angkor complex). These contacts in addition strengthen Hun Sen’s individual support base within and outside the CPP. Thus, the link between CPP and business to deliver projects to the communes ensures a favourable electoral outcome rather than intimidation and political violence. Not voting for the CPP then, has negative consequences with a high ‘risk of exclusion’ if the gifts are refused and may result, for instance, in roads not being fixed.<sup>59</sup>

Voting for the CPP does not always do the trick, however: roadside interviews by the author on a rainy day in the town of Bovel in Battambang province in July 2007 showed angry townspeople, who complained that the government does nothing to repair the almost impassable, muddy and bumpy roads leading to and from the town, even though they vote CPP.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, an active grassroot level and horizontal civil society networks are prevented in favour of a vertical cooptation of the electorate into ‘elite dominated trajectories’.<sup>61</sup> Stability and peaceful elections have hence emerged as source of legitimacy for Hun Sen and the continuation of his rule. Importantly, this is also a function of social cohesion, whereby the state delivers goods through the application of clientelistic networks and under the condition that the clients join the ‘appropriate’ patronage networks.

One important group in these patronage networks are the Pagoda Boys, a group loyal to Hun Sen, which is formally known as *Pagoda Children, Intelligentsia and Student Association*. The Pagoda Boys were employed in the 2003 Thai riots to exacerbate anti-Thai feelings in the preparation of national elections (Hinton 2006:451-452). Instigated demonstrations therefore seem to be an element of political conflict and resemble political practice under Sihanouk and Lon Nol, for instance, when both utilised anti-Vietnamese sentiment in the population to launch and seize on demonstrations against North Vietnam in 1970 prior to the Lon Nol’s coup against Sihanouk in the same year.

### 3.2.2. Society

After the 1993 elections and the withdrawal of UNTAC, social recovery set in slowly given the division of the country in zones controlled by CPP, FUNCINPEC and the Khmer Rouge and the fighting between the factions. Drawing on existing socio-economic data in the mid-1990s, UNICEF argued that the ‘demographic data provide a glaring reflection of the civil and political turmoil of the last 25 years’: given the high birth rate in the early 1980s, children aged below 15 make up 44 percent of the population of 10.2 million (the population estimate of 1993 was 9.3 million). In 1996, the birth rate was estimated at 44 per 1000. Infant mortality

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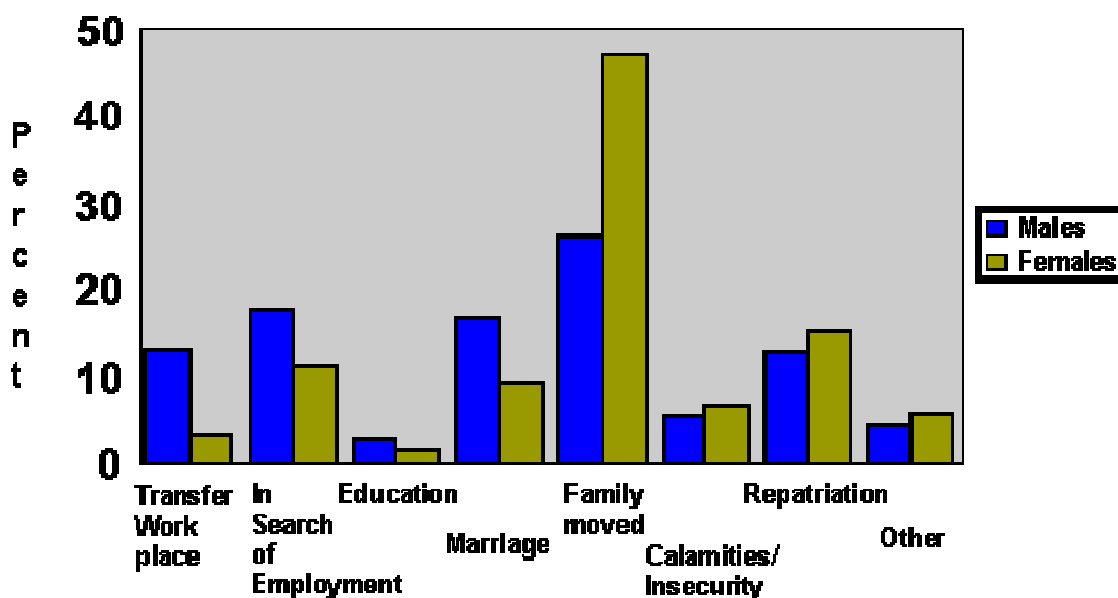
<sup>59</sup> UN 2005:213-228, quotes at 221; Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2003:4.

<sup>60</sup> Interviews in Bovel, 15 July 2007.

<sup>61</sup> UN 2005:223 cited Hughes 2003:126.

was at 115 per 1000 (estimated) compared to 42 per 1000 in the rest of the Asia-Pacific and 236 per 1000 at the end of the 1970s. The under-five mortality rate was at 181/1000, maternal mortality between 650 and 900 per 100,000 live births owing to ‘inadequate diet, poor water and sanitation and low quality medical care, exacerbated by civil war and land mines.’ Live expectancy was estimated at 51 years. One in 236 people had lost one or more limbs.<sup>62</sup> ‘There was considerable rural to urban migration in the years immediately following the 1993 elections, as villagers searched for better employment opportunities in the largely urban private sector generated by the influx of international development assistance’ (UNICEF 1996:20). As for absolute numbers, quoting the Demographic Survey of 1996, Godfrey et. al. say that 8.5 percent of the rural population or a total of ‘634,700 persons had moved from rural areas within the five years prior to the Survey. Of these, 27 percent had moved within the previous 12 months’ (Godfrey et. al. 2001:21). The 1998 Population Census mentions 881,400 persons who had moved from a rural area within the five years prior to the census, whereby 31 percent had moved within the previous twelve months. The surveys thus show a two-year increase of 39 percent for all migrants, and of 59 percent for migrants who had moved within the twelve months before the surveys (Godfrey et. al. 2001:21).

The reasons for migration are as follows:



Source: Source: National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning: 1998 Population Census. <http://statsnis.org/CENSUSES/Census1998/miggraph.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> UNICEF 1996:19-20; Royal Government of Cambodia 1996:5.

The reasons for the high number of migrating people are produced by:

“rapid population growth through the 1980s and 1990s (population has doubled in two decades, meaning that many later entrants in the working age groups would not have land), emergence of active land markets and commercialization of part of the farming activities (implying exchange and/or reallocation of land), and rising aspirations of particularly the younger generation population – largely fuelled by the spread of non-farm activities during the 1990s.”<sup>63</sup>

The following table shows migration numbers within and between provinces:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Province</i>	<i>Number of Migrants</i>	<i>As % of Population</i>	<i>Percentage of Migrants</i>		
				<i>Within same Province</i>	<i>From another Province</i>	<i>From outside Cambodia</i>
	<b>Cambodia</b>	<b>3,597,774</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>5.9</b>
01	Banteay Mean Chey	192,714	33.4	50.5	36.1	13.4
02	Bat Dambang	312,350	39.4	65.9	22.1	12.0
03	Kampong Cham	386,675	24.0	70.4	28.4	1.2
04	Kampong Chhnang	194,731	46.6	78.5	16.7	4.8
05	Kampong Spueu	149,453	25.0	74.6	23.9	1.5
06	Kampong Thum	101,961	17.9	82.5	16.6	0.9
07	Kampot	95,909	18.2	79.1	18.4	2.5
08	Kandal	306,891	28.5	51.8	41.5	6.7
09	Kaoh Kong	76,591	58.0	19.7	75.0	5.3
10	Kracheh	52,868	20.1	53.8	42.8	3.4
11	Mondol Kiri	14,821	45.7	59.8	33.4	6.8
12	Phnom Penh	733,745	73.4	40.6	53.9	5.5

<sup>63</sup> Acharya 2001:5 cited Sok and Acharya 2002.

13	Preah Vihear	24,456	20.5	66.7	31.8	1.5
14	Prey Veang	170,849	18.1	78.6	17.0	4.4
15	Pousat	147,956	41.0	76.0	18.4	5.6
16	Rotanak Kiri	18,956	20.1	49.8	46.3	3.9
17	Siem Reab	188,415	27.1	82.7	14.1	3.2
18	Krong Preah Sihanouk	81,249	52.2	27.5	68.7	3.8
19	Stueng Traeng	15,716	19.4	36.2	58.0	5.8
20	Svay Rieng	164,430	34.4	32.1	57.7	10.2
21	Takaev	115,003	14.6	73.0	19.7	7.3
22	Otdar Mean Chey	26,413	38.7	38.7	42.3	19.0
23	Krong Kaeb	7,887	27.5	9.6	89.1	1.3
24	Krong Pailin	17,735	77.4	19.4	68.5	12.1

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning: 1998 Population Census. <http://statsnis.org/CENSUSES/Census1998/migration.htm>.

Among the migrants, youth (aged 15 to 24 years) constituted 18 percent of the total population and 30 percent of the ‘very recent’ migrant flows in the twelve months prior to the 1998 survey. Young adults (aged 25-29 years) make up less than 8 percent of the total population but 13 percent of migrants. Children under five years (‘presumably moving with their parents’), make up 9 percent of the migrants (Godfrey et. al. 2001:23).

Salaries in the civil service were (and still are) so low that government employees need to supplement their income with other activities. In the first half of the 1990s, teacher salaries were increased from 8 US Dollar to 15 US Dollar a month (UNICEF 1996:22+120). The situation is the same today as teachers (their current salaries are at 45 US Dollars per month) and civil service employees need to supplement their income through corruption, by asking students to pay in order to continue to receive lessons in the second half of the months (which affects students from poor families), or by driving motorcycle taxi.

UNICEF also mentions the overstaffing of the government bureaucracy at all levels of government, which employs an estimate of 290,000 people: ‘the present civil service is not structured to offer career development since clear job descriptions and graded wage scales are



lacking. In the past, most government workers had to add political skills to other factors in order to rise in the system. At all levels most workers lack basic equipment and supplies to perform their duties. The number of civil servants also includes approximately 148,000 personnel of the military and security services. An unusually high proportion (68 per cent) of the Cambodian military is made up of officers. Under the former socialist government, as many people as possible were given government jobs. Up to 1995, all graduates of universities were guaranteed a job in government; this is no longer possible' (UNICEF 1996:22).

Apparently, by 2006 the situation had taken dimensions which led the government in a desperate move to introduce a military service law, which would draw 300,000 people entering the labour market into the military (BBC 25 October 2006). How this can be sustained financially is entirely unclear, however, and did not play any role in the decision-making processes at all.<sup>64</sup> The situation reverberates with the late Sihanouk years when university graduates were unable to find employment commensurate with their education.

UNICEF further reported that 24 percent of households in Phnom Penh and 40 percent of rural households were below the poverty line in 1996: 'With 85 per cent of Cambodia's population living in rural areas, the poverty line calculations show that 90 per cent of Cambodia's poverty is rural' (UNICEF 1996:28-29). To supplement their income, farmers also work as 'labourers, market sellers, small shopkeepers, mechanics and artisans' (UNICEF 1996:31) – a situation that has not changed to the present day. Then as today, in the absence of social benefit systems, poverty makes access to resources difficult if not impossible as the access to the resource itself and its quality is linked to wealth and connection to patronage networks. Conversations in July 2007 with Cambodian university students in Phnom Penh aged 24 whose parents are farmers in Prey Veng province strongly show the difficulty of accessing resources such as education and health care, which often makes it necessary to sell land in order to use the money gained for paying medical expenses. Terrified of expensive hospital fees, some do not dare to go to medical checkups at all. Without sufficient funds available, therefore, neither education nor adequate health care can be obtained in Cambodia 14 years after the withdrawal of UNTAC.<sup>65</sup>

Clientelistic networks also apply to access to land. The prime difficulty here is that land owners and the legal status of land frequently changed due to the civil war and the various regimes:

"Land distribution in the late 1980s was partly a de facto recognition of lands that people already controlled under the *krom samaki* system, though fresh lands were also distributed. The country had just emerged from a decade and a half of different forms of collective and co-operative agriculture, and the concept of private property was not uniformly recognised or practised, by either the populace or the administration. Thus, while lands were distributed and private ownership of plots recognised, no clear demarcation of each plot was officially made. The authorities were plainly not equipped for this, and farmers were not concerned, because all knew their neighbours and boundaries. Also, most farmers and village communities are not very

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with an advisor to the National Assembly, Phnom Penh, 31 May 2007.

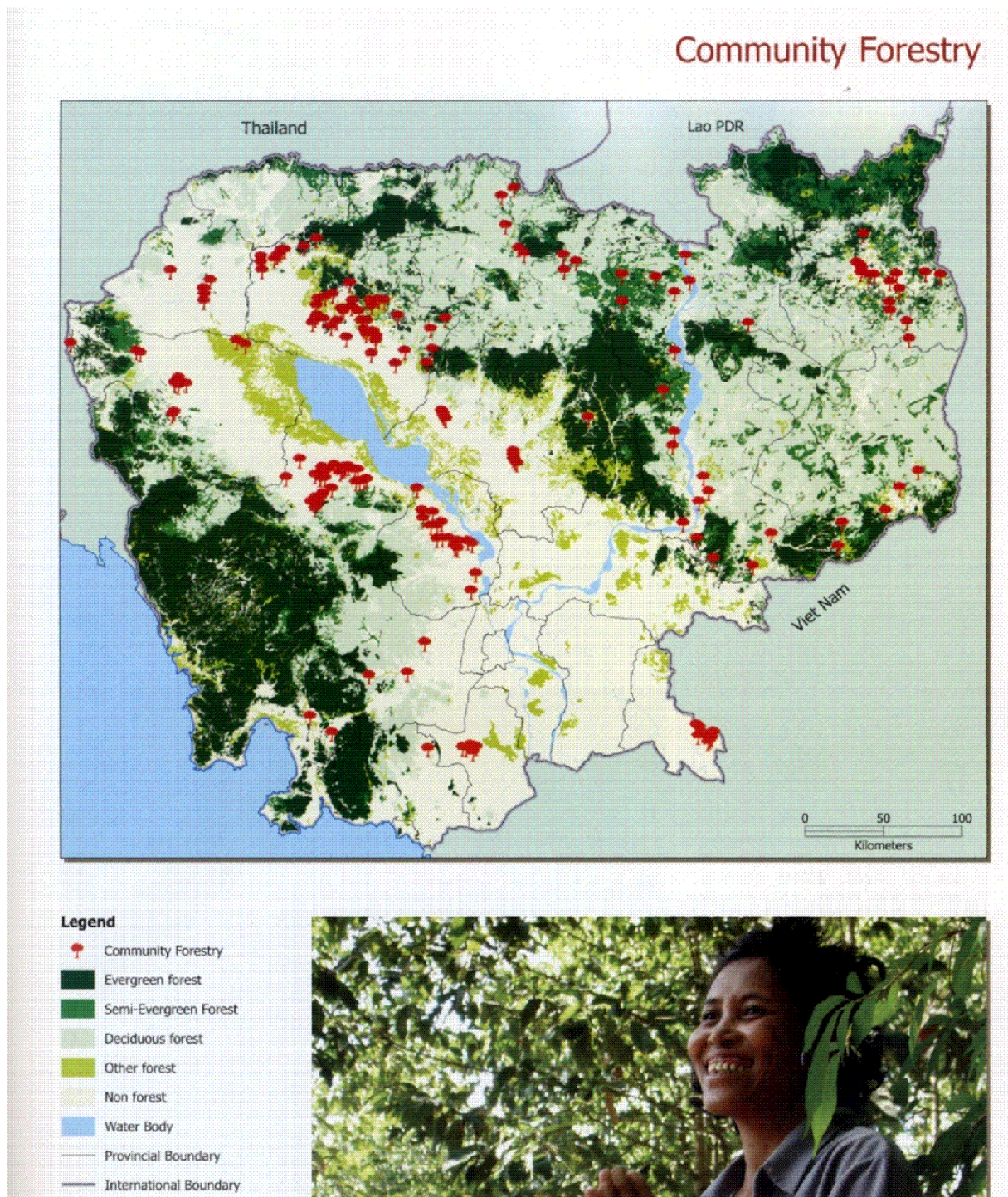
<sup>65</sup> Interviews held in Phnom Penh during July 2007.

literate and were not exposed to legal practices. Hence, they preferred to control their lands through traditional systems and did not care for official papers (Chan Sophal/ Tep Saravy/ Sarthi Acharya 2001:27).”

Consequently, land disputes, land grabbing and unlawful evictions are frequent, using the lawless character that surrounds titles to land. As the traditional means of acquiring land was by using it productively, today a ‘majority of people believe that if they are occupying land without conflict or controversy it is legally theirs, irrespective of whether they formally possess land papers.’ Today, administrative procedures penetrate the village as an applicant for a land title has to submit the application to the commune chief who certifies it and forwards it to the District Office of Land Management, Urban Planning, Construction and Land Titling (Chan Sophal/ Tep Saravy/ Sarthi Acharya 2001:ii+1+27). Non-violent resistance by communities to avoid the grabbing of community forests, fisheries and land by powerful agencies do exist: in December 2003, a demonstration of a national coalition of communities in front of the National Assembly was violently suppressed. In addition, thousands of minority villagers in the North-eastern areas face growing pressure to sell their ancestral lands. High-ranking military officers have confiscated lands from members of ethnic minorities. In Ratanakiri, a military officer and his intermediaries were involved in fraud and forgery of official documents with the aim to buy land from ethnic minorities in Bokeo district. The involved interests include logging concessions, which in the case of Ronteah village in Tumring commune of Sandan district in the province of Kampong Thom were granted to Colexim, GAT and Mieng Ly Heang, all linked to high-ranking government officials; and Tumring Rubber Plantation, which has connections to the Tumring Communal Administrative Police. In 2004, the number of land disputes was three times that of 2003. So far, an inefficient, corrupt and CPP-controlled judiciary has not been able to clarify the situation. Incidents were also reported in the provinces of Pursat and Kampong Chhnang against the planting of eucalyptus trees by Pheapimex which was followed by a grenade attack on the protesting villagers on 13 November 2004; violence and harassment against villagers by soldiers in Snuol district of Kratie province in November and December 2004; or arrests of villagers in Battambang province in late 2004 following villagers’ harvesting of the rice on the land they had occupied since the 1980s but which was taken by soldiers in the late 1990s and sold to new owners.<sup>66</sup>

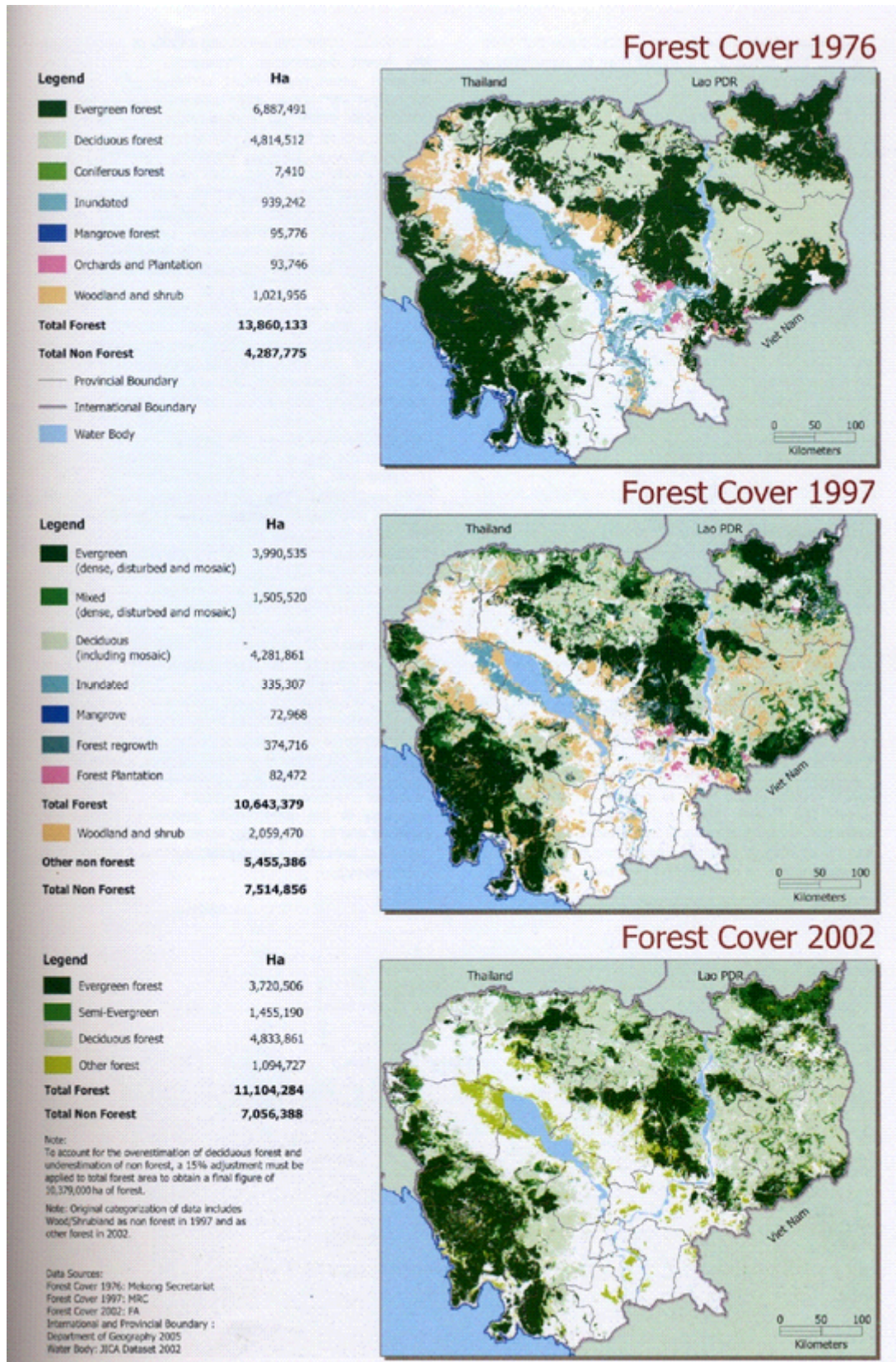
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<sup>66</sup> Keng Menglang 2003:24-25; Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2003:8 and 2006:6+10; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2001:23 and 2004:15-16.



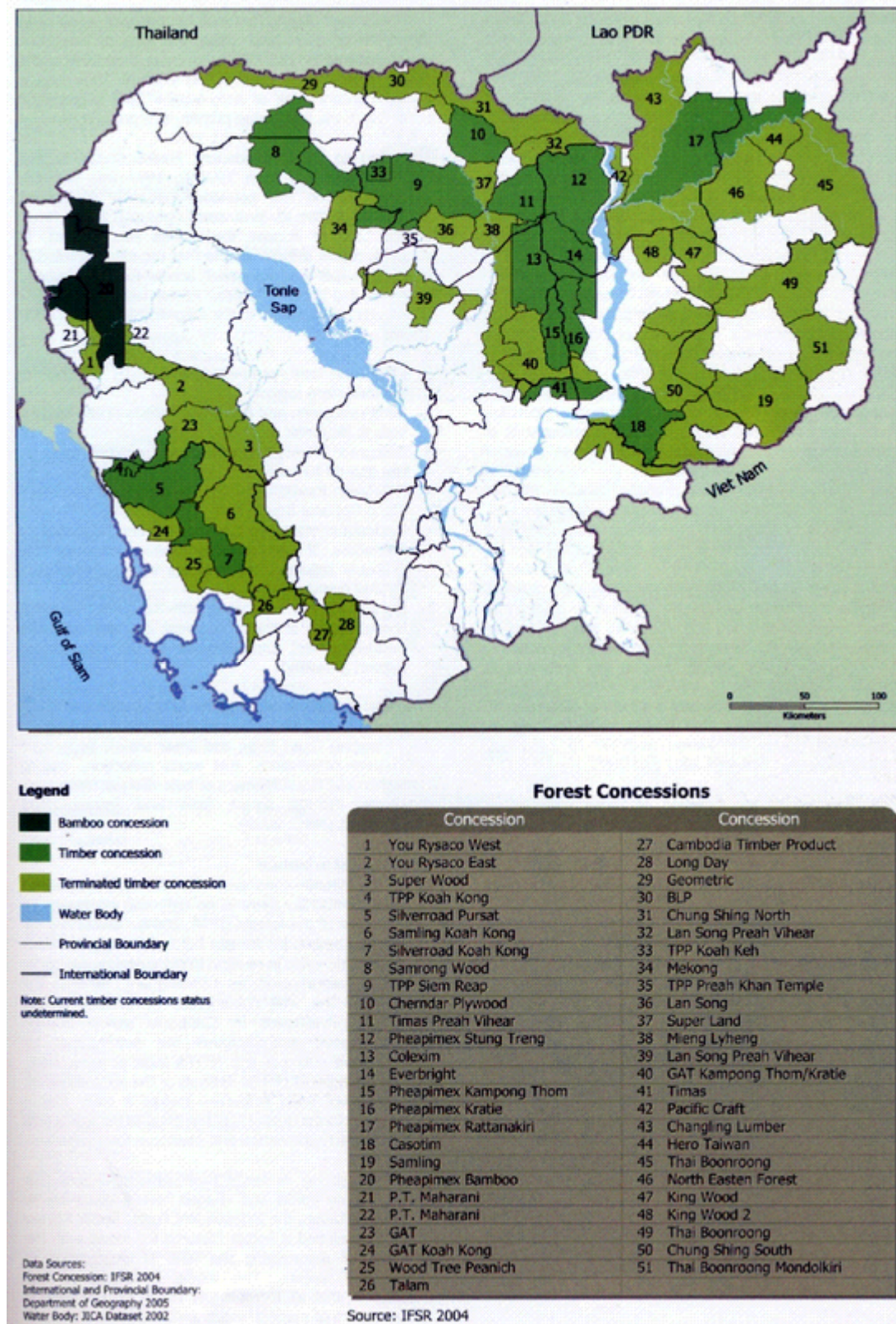
Source: Save Cambodia's Wildlife, 2006: 49.





Source: Save Cambodia's Wildlife, 2006: 43.





Source: Save Cambodia's Wildlife, 2006: 41.

In the mid-1990s, UNICEF reported that the opening of the border to legal as well as illegal trade had depleted much of the forest in the six provinces of Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kandal, Prey Veng, Takeo and Svay Rieng. While the organisation stated that the effects of this are still unclear, the immediately concrete result was that ‘women and children in these provinces now spend more time on collecting and carrying firewood, which is becoming increasingly scarce’ (UNICEF 1996:18). This initial statement by UNICEF on the wholesale exploitation of resources by commercial and political interests without regard for the needs of the poor and vulnerable has now grown into an all out war between the Cambodian government and the British NGO Global Witness. Forced to close down its Cambodia office in 2005, Global Witness again published a report in June 2007, entitled *Cambodia’s Family Trees*, which links the government to illegal logging, calling it a ‘cleptocratic elite’ (Global Witness 2007). Deeply despised by Hun Sen, the prime minister ordered to confiscate all hard copies of the report.

Consequently, national law and judiciary are seen by the poor as catering to the rich, due to the ‘direct or indirect involvement of or inaction by the police in many of the reported cases. [...] corruption is widespread in the judicial system; perpetrators can buy justice, and police and court officials often broker deals between victims and perpetrators while keeping for themselves a share of the compensation. [...] judicial independence [...] is threatened mainly by direct and indirect interference by the executive and powerful private entities [...] and] by the affiliation of judges and prosecutors with political parties’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2001:11-12 and 2004:7-8). In 2003, Hun Sen’s nephew Nhim Sophea was acquitted from charges of voluntary manslaughter, confirming to the population that the rich and powerful can evade punishment when they belong to protective social networks, or *khsae*.<sup>67</sup> In the case of a village in Kampong Speu province, soldiers started fencing acres. Complaints of the village chief to the provincial court ended up in the court saying that it ‘could do nothing to help’:

“land, having hitherto been almost worthless, is now a fast-appreciating asset. Almost any Cambodian with a bit of spare cash is taking a speculating punt, snapping up a chunk of land in the hope of easy profits. Small farmers, and poor people living in shacks in the towns and cities, usually have no proof that they own their land or homes. This makes it easy for the speculators – often politicians, civil servants or army brass – to work the corrupt legal system to take the ground from under their feet (The Economist 10 March 2007:38).”

As a result, ‘the ill-educated are usually defeated by the well-connected rich in any legal battle’ (The Economist 10 March 2007:38). According to the UN Commission on Human Rights, human rights violations over the last decade ‘have often not been carried out at the direct behest of key power holders, but [...] they have been condoned to maintain vested interest’, ensuring impunity for the armed forces and police. This includes attacks on members of the judiciary (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2004:8). A summary of proceedings of negotiations between residents of the small island of Koh Pich at Sangkat Tonle Bassac in Phnom Penh and the Deputy Governor of Phnom Penh, Pa Socheat-

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<sup>67</sup> Kent 2006:348; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2004:10.

vong, shows the struggle between residents facing evictions and the business interests of the municipal authorities. The local authorities leased the island to Overseas Cambodian Investment, a parent company of Canadia Bank, in order to turn it into a satellite city complete with tourism areas, a hospital, a shopping mall, villas, flats, hotels, schools, offices and a 222-meter high observation tower. In 2004, local officials and 7NG Company started to evict residents from their land. Residents, helped by the USAID-funded Public Interest Legal Advocacy Project (PILAP), took the matter to the municipal court. PILAP, according to its report on the issue, was able to extract a reasonable compensation package amidst attempts by the authorities to influence the court's decision, to intimidate the island's residents, mostly farmers, compensate them with 2 US Dollar per square metre, and resettle them outside the city away from their farmland.<sup>68</sup>

The pressure of sometimes uncontrolled market forces, which we already saw in Chapter 1 with the intrusion of a cash crop economy into subsistence villages under Sihanouk is further increased, either in a legal fashion of genuine well-intended government poverty reduction plans, or illegal and uncontrolled driven by corruption. With increased capitalist penetration of the village, Krishnamurthy in his 1999 study of two villages notes that the already mentioned informal cooperative work groups (*provas dei*) are now 'giving way to new networks based on rigid reciprocity and the need to earn cash income.' Although the willingness to help prevailed, as can be seen in the revival of the cooperative work groups, the decline of the informal cooperation networks is owing to 'the emergence of a cash economy, the desire to acquire wealth and to the pressures of making a living that force people to worry about their own problems and needs first'.<sup>69</sup> As Hughes argues, the capitalist penetration of villages is the declared aim of the government in order to develop local economies and reduce poverty. This is likely to challenge the immaterial social and cultural capital invested in by village authorities to determine their status and repute within villages: 'material capital becomes more important' and 'previously free resources' such as forests and ponds and speculation on the price of land may increase inequalities and change intra-village relationships, definitions of status and relations between the village and the higher levels of government. This then also impacts on the conflict management capacities of the traditional village authorities: village leader and monks: 'The impersonality of capitalist relations contrasts with the highly personal nature of a social control achieved through the valorisation of particular conceptions of a "good name." In the money economy, symbolic capital loses its power, and consequently the restraints on behaviour associated with investment in symbolic capital lose force also' (Hughes 2001:23+24). As a result, the 'social give-and-take, determined by traditional conceptions of obligation and good will, are replaced by the inflexibility of codified laws backed by impersonal force'.<sup>70</sup>

Hughes also notes that in addition to the monetisation of relationships in the village, there are attempts to revive Buddhist ideals in social relations: a 'reputation for living in accordance with Buddhist values and practices is likely to contribute to an individual's store of symbolic

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<sup>68</sup> Rasmei Kampuchea Daily 21 October 2005; People's Daily 13 January 2006; USAID November 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Hughes 2001:22 cited Krishnamurthy 1999:62.

<sup>70</sup> Hughes 2001:23 cited Wolf 1971:283.

capital in the village. This appears to be important in identifying potential conflict managers from among the village population' – while, however, villagers may also choose a person for their strength. 'The different kinds of qualities that are respected in different kinds of people are important for determining how relationships between people contribute to strategies for pursuing and managing conflict' (Hughes 2001:13-14). And further: the 'drive to bring Buddhist texts into everyday use represents an attempt to bring the norms of the pagoda into the secular life of the village, and by doing so, to alter the understandings of villagers of appropriate values and behaviour. The emphasis on the peaceful aspects of Buddhist teachings encourages villagers to give greater respect to these norms, and less respect to individuals who use violence or threats' (Hughes 2001:15).

Overall, social integration has remained low, as political participation has been kept low within Hughes's above-mentioned 'elite dominated trajectories.' Civic self-organisation in labour unions, human rights organisations and other NGOs has limited influence and a public voice on the national level through strikes and rallies in the cities, where opposition to Hun Sen accumulates; but civic self-organisation is often absent in the rural areas. It thus happens that subsistence rice farmers, who make up around 80 percent of Cambodia's population, remain poorly represented (Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006:6). This fact is favourable for the election outcomes of the CPP given the differences in voting behaviour among the urban and rural electorates (Un 2005:212-217). Access to welfare (such as health care, disability services, old age support) and access to education are 'segmented in terms of territory and social stratum' with many elderly of 55 and older relying on their children for a living. Government spending in the social sector is tiny and dependent on the donor community while spending on the defence and interior is ample: in 2003, donors provided 35 million US Dollar for budget support, more than 50 percent of which was used to cover salaries for the armed forces. International assistance covered 52 percent of the budget of all basic public services in 2002 and 50 percent in 2004 (Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006:6+10-11+14).

#### **4. Conclusion and Summary: Legitimacy of Violence and Legitimacy of Rule**

When glowing through Cambodia's history since 1954, recurring forms of violence can be observed, which can be attributed to different actors in order to judge when violence was used, how and why:

The first feature is violence executed by the government: violence here was used in a controlled manner and used in instances when political opposition had to be crushed or intimidated. The public beating of Democratic Party members outside the Palace compounds in 1957 is one example of this. On the local level, intimidation of Pracheachon and Democratic Party candidates to relinquish their candidacy is another example. This also served as a warning against students and intellectuals, who were the support base of the Democratic Party and frequently demonstrated against the corruption and nepotism of Sihanouk's regime. The resources for this consisted in the control over the security forces: the Palace Guard, police,



secret service, and army. The army leadership around Lon Nol was especially influential as it was seen and saw itself as guarantor of the security of the newly independent Cambodia and therefore enjoyed a high standing and high funding, particularly through US aid.

Violence here was carried out under the rationale of saving the state from its enemies as defined by both Sihanouk and the army leadership. These included public humiliation and intimidation, such as those of Democratic Party members, politically motivated killings, arrests without trials, censorship of alleged or real leftist newspapers, and absolute control over the media and the security forces ‘to cow people into inaction’ (Chandler 1991:81-84, 90-98). Violence was used to crush the communist resistance in the countryside and provoked the rationale for more violence by the targets (real or alleged communists, peasants, and urban escapees) against government forces.

The formal political legitimacy for these actions stemmed from the electorate, which gave the Sangkum control over the National Assembly and Sihanouk and Lon Nol the formal legitimacy to deploy armed forces when deemed necessary. Actual legitimacy however resulted from access to relevant resources: government positions gained through political reliability and clan networks rather than technocratic competence, and economic resources controlled through clientelistic networks (cronyism) of the political elite.

Mob violence is also an issue to receive legitimacy for actions. The crowd attacking the North Vietnamese embassy in 1970 was first orchestrated by Sihanouk, but then seized on by Lon Nol. Mob violence instigated by the authorities is also an issue in today’s Cambodia. In 2004, the UN Commission on Human Rights reported the killing of 26 persons by mobs in 2004 while the Director-General of the National Police reported 30 killings. ‘In a number of cases, law enforcement officials have instigated crowds to attack individuals suspected of theft or robbery’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2004:8 and 2001:11).

Under Hun Sen, state violence served to preserve CPP dominance in the post-UNTAC polity. Apart from political killings, mob violence is again a feature of this: Hun Sen employs youth associations loyal to him, among which the most prominent are the aforementioned Pagoda Boys. Access to resources is controlled through a patronage network, which centers on Hun Sen’s extended family. Ultimately, this results in the unity of economic and political power, which allows for the control over a large portion especially of the rural population, as political and economic patronage strings link persons of political and economic power, with Hun Sen and the business elite on top, linked in a network of mutual give and take.

The first attempt at the establishment of a parliamentary democracy modelled on the French tradition failed when Sihanouk wiped out the Democratic Party in the aftermath of the 1955 elections and established himself as paramount ruler and divine figure. With every new system of government, a set of patrons controlled resources within a changed economic environment. As Thion described the changes from Sihanouk to Lon Nol, he argued that: ‘contending politicians appeared typically as patrons commanding a more or less important retinue of clients whom they had to pay off with gifts and posts. They had to control resources and redistribute wealth as a means of keeping and enlarging their crowd of clients. These resources could come from illegal business through Chinese middlemen, gross corruption or

foreign help. The pattern [of the Lon Nol years] did not look very different from that of the old days; only the economic opportunities and environment had changed' (Thion 1987:154). The same pattern was laid bare in the conflict between FUNCINPEC and CPP over the allocation of local government posts and the creation of a senate as second chamber of the parliament after the second election in 1998. The difference was that the political actors, the international environment with its politicised aid and military supplies, and the domestic institutional set up had changed. The international dimension is of particular importance given the reliance of the Cambodian army of various regimes on outside military aid. This shifted in times from the United States to China, (North) Vietnam and the Soviet Union, while aid was channelled to the preferred Cambodian political party or resistance group.

Violence was a means to push through the authority of a single person (Sihanouk, Pol Pot, Hun Sen) or a particular party attached to a particular mode of governance (the Sangkum, the communist party, the KPRP, or the CPP). Violence was carried out through complete control over the security apparatus of police and army with the aim to quell resistance, legal as well as illegal opposition, and to scare official parliamentary candidates into silence.

The second feature is violence executed by communist revolutionaries who had been driven underground in the 1960s, depriving them of legal ways for political participation. Overall it can be seen as a reaction to increased suppression by Sihanouk and Lon Nol, particularly since the Samlot rebellion of 1967. In the 1970s, with the Pol Pot faction on the ascendance, this combined with two elements: anti-Vietnamese feelings and an increased nationalism coupled with the idea of self-reliance, which were probed in the Democratic Revolution carried out after 1973 in the areas taken from Lon Nol's Khmer Republic. The ideological rationale came from class analysis, which saw Cambodia as feudal and semi-colonial country. The support base were mainly poor peasants, which were given land and positions of responsibility in parts of the zones of influence established in the countryside between 1970 and 1975. This latter action replaced the old system of village administration with persons of political reliability instead of repute and Buddhist knowledge (Kiernan 1986:317-318). After 1975, this was channelled into state policies of Democratic Kampuchea.

Revolutionary violence took on a multitude of forms: it was used to kill old rivals and settle private feuds, that is, revolutionary violence was a pretext to get rid of people of personal dislikes, such as neighbours. Revolutionary violence was further used to dispose of political enemies. These were intra-party rivals, recalcitrant peasants refusing collectivisation, village chiefs and local government officials, Vietnamese communist troops and advisors, returning Khmer communists trained in Vietnam, or members of the Vietnamese minority. Anti-Vietnamese feelings were stirred or used to achieve political goals. Kiernan notes that anti-Vietnamese feelings had been stirred by Lon Nol in his position both as army commander and prime minister since the late 1960s. Coercion, intimidation, and assassination (Kiernan 1986:322) were thus employed to carry out the revolution.

Conflict regulation was often based on informal networks rather than on official ways through the judiciary. On the village level during Sihanouk times, conflict and violence were controlled by social integration of children (mostly young boys) through the local pagoda. A link between politics (Sihanouk as the protector of the sangha and the poor) and village support

for the religious and non-religious services of monks exercised control over political opinions among the peasantry until Sihanouk lost his unifying grip on politics in 1967, when the Samlot rebellion spread through Cambodia, partly stirred by communists, partly a reaction to the capitalist penetration of the subsistence village economy, partly a reaction to increased governmental suppression.

Conflict management in the village was through three trajectories: the secular authority of the village chief (which could link up to the formal procedures of national law), the religious authority of the pagoda, and community pressure of gossip and ostracism. Today, the village chief still occupies the prime role in settling disputes. Cases are referred to law courts only when it is deemed necessary given the gravity of a particular case. Other than that, residents prefer the informal mediation of a conflict by the village chief. In some cases, monks are sought to give advice. The reason for this is mostly mistrust towards the state and its authorities, which came to increasingly penetrate formerly self-sufficient villages.

On a larger basis, the judiciary is regarded as a tool in the hands of the political elite. Corrupt judges are seen to preserve the privileges of the rich against the poor in cases of land conflicts, or alternatively the power of Hun Sen by fabricating indictments against political opponents. The defamation law had long been used for the latter purpose and regularly led Sam Rainsy and Ranariddh to leave the country to escape judicial proceedings. The passing of the adultery law is a case, in which Hun Sen used the National Assembly as legislature to terminate political activities of Ranariddh, given that the adultery law enabled Hun Sen – if not him personally – to file a suit against Ranariddh for having committed adultery.

So on surface, not much has changed in Cambodia since 1954: corruption and patronage kept material and immaterial resources in the hands of a small elite – under Sihanouk, Lon Nol, Pol Pot, Heng Samrin and Hun Sen; the health system was never expanded into remote areas; political activism was tightly controlled since Sihanouk times; the security forces served the goals of a small political elite; censorship and politically motivated murders kept oppositions at bay; National Assembly members were threatened into acquiescence or had to flee the country. Systems of patronage and nepotism were employed even during the Pol Pot years catering to the political needs of the new leadership, then changed to cater to Heng Samrin and Hun Sen's regime, and after 1993 were reorganised within the democratic institutions of the post-UNTAC period to ensure the survival of Hun Sen's political authority. Violence orchestrated by the government using strict control over the security forces as source of authority accompanied all political regimes from the early days of Sihanouk to today's Hun Sen government. For the clients, then, systems of patronage served social needs within a 'loosely structured' society in which political integration was largely absent since the 'presence of the state was far from being felt everywhere' (Thion 1987:163). To some extent, the lack of a country-wide education and health system has retained the pattern of the distant state and opens the way for corruption in both systems when teachers and physicians ask for money in order to provide services in rural (but also urban) areas.

During the Sihanouk years, without idealising the situation, it can be said that overall a combination of religious and clan-based networks kept social cohesion in the village strong. These relationships were both vertical and horizontal. For instance, they were vertical between

monks and the villagers or between the village leaders and the villagers; they were horizontal through the cooperative work teams. Community mechanisms of social control were employed to prevent or manage conflicts. The pagoda exercised social control through the cosmology of Theravada Buddhism and by offering services to the community, while the village leader represented the secular authorities of the state and referred conflicts up the administrative ladder when necessary. Over all of this presided the king, performing his role as protector of the poor and of the sangha.

In the cities, especially in Phnom Penh, Sihanouk's influence eroded amidst the beginnings of globalisation via France. The cosmology of Sihanouk's reign was rejected by intellectuals and students. Policies such as Buddhist socialism did not help them finding employment commensurate with their education. Consequently, urban and rural areas had different points of identification and pursued different ideas of political legitimacy. Phnom Penh today is still the centre of student opposition to Prime Minister Hun Sen, while he controls the rural areas. In that sense, we can observe a continuity of urban opposition to authoritarian rule and at the same time control over the rural majority areas by the governing party within a system of formal democracy.

### **Epilogue: Youth Violence in Post-war Cambodia**

As the study suggests, the political space in Cambodia since 1993 is occupied by contending patronage networks affiliated with the political parties, of which the CPP is dominant: it holds control of most communes, has more space to manoeuvre for the formation of future governments since the abolishment of the two-thirds majority necessary for the formation of a government, and it controls the security forces.

With no lobby of their own, youth are caught in this political space as both victims and perpetrators of violence: as instruments and extensions of political parties, active executioners of violent acts on their own account, actively sought after victims or simple casualties of a political, social and economic development, which provides education, employment and health care for those in advantageous networks of patronage, but casts away those in less influential patronage networks. The disinterestedness of (male) youth in elections is a symptom of the disenfranchisement of youth from the political process and a reaction to the neglect of their group by political decision makers.

Post-war Cambodia has seen different life worlds for youth, depending on whether they lived in the capital, areas of less war activity or areas with major war activity. These life worlds were created through the externally induced triple transformation process of post-war pacification, democratisation and economic liberalisation. This process met domestic settings of political tradition, conflict settlement, economic activity, and social cohesion and integration. We have thus a dual and at the same time dualistic process of external and internal dynamics, which produced an area of conflict between tradition and modernity, political contests and economic and social upheaval, in which youth are often overlooked by the political players and in which they henceforth struggle to find a niche for themselves.

In the post-war context, youth violence can be seen as a response and consequence of three developments: rapid social change (urbanisation, migration, globalisation, change in agrarian

property and land use structures), war and war-related violence (disruption of traditional family networks, a culture of distrust and fear, destruction of social and economic infrastructure fundamental for children and youth development - mostly education and health), and the triple transformation process, during which Cambodia saw an authoritarian reconstruction of politics and society under CPP dominance, international pressure for democratisation, and a survival of war economy structures.

In this social reality of post-war life worlds, gangs are formed or youth join gangs as surrogate family when the actual family is decimated or disrupted through flight and intra-familial violence. Yet, youth groups are also formed by political parties for regime support or as a challenge to it. Youth violence is therefore executed by youth, whereby the rich are protected from prosecution by influential patronage networks into the CPP; and youth violence is generated by political parties for peaceful protests or to escalate conflicts in their favour.

Importantly, therefore, youth violence is often controlled at the political level. The political system has the ability to exacerbate youth violence, or to reduce it depending on the political agenda. The second Cambodia study will discuss these issues in detail.

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Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) Geibel-  
straße 41 D - 47057 Duisburg Telefon +49 (203) 379 4420  
Fax +49 (203) 379 4425 E-Mail: [inef-sek@inef.uni-due.de](mailto:inef-sek@inef.uni-due.de)  
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