

Cambodia

Rice

Since its independence from France in 1953, Cambodia has had a series of authoritarian regimes. The first one was the traditional Cambodian monarchy. King Norodom Sihanouk abdicated the throne in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit, in 1955, with the argument that Sihanouk would better be able to concentrate on politics if he was not the King (Corfield, 51). Sihanouk was in charge of a group of parties known as the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (the Popular Socialist Community), one component of which was the National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK). Though Sihanouk was not the ruling monarch, he was the controlling figure in Cambodian politics until 1970. In 1960, King Norodom Suramarit died, and was replaced on the throne by his wife, Queen Kossamak. However, real political power remained in the hands of Sihanouk, who consolidated this power by holding a vote to choose the new Head of State (which he won in an overwhelming majority) (Corfield, 56). During this period, there were Prime Ministers, but they were controlled by Sihanouk, who was still the head of state.

In 1970, due in part to Sihanouk's inability to deal with the United States' bombing of Cambodia as part of the Vietnam War, a coup led by Prime Minister Lon Nol and Prince Sirik Matak ousted him from office. This is a SOLS change. Cheng Heng, the President of the National Assembly, was initially appointed head of state by the coup's perpetrators (and was in office from March 18, 1970 to March 10, 1972). However, Lon Nol, with his military backing, was the true leader of the government at that time. Lon Nol assumed the position of head of state in 1972 (after "elections"), and held the office until 1975. His major support base was initially the military, but after the 1972 elections, he created the Socio-Republican Party (also known as the Social-Democratic Party or SDP). During the 1971-1975 period, Geddes codes Cambodia as being a personalist system.

Throughout the early 1970s, Lon Nol had to deal with continuous agitation by Sihanouk's government-in-exile (known as the Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea, or GRUNK). GRUNK allied with the Cambodian Communists and formed the group that would eventually become known as the Khmer Rouge. After several years of fighting, during which Sihanouk's supporters gradually faded into the background, the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh and declared a new Communist government for Cambodia in April, 1975. This is a SOLS change. The leader of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot, became the head of state, and ruled over Cambodia (now a single-party state under the Khmer Rouge) until 1979. In those four years, it is estimated that over one million people died from a combination of executions and poor living conditions (Corfield, 93).

The Khmer Rouge's Cambodia (which they called Democratic Kampuchea) clashed with Vietnam over border and ideological differences (the Kampuchean Communist Party, the official party of the Khmer Rouge, was very anti-Vietnamese) (United States Department of State, 2010). In late 1978, Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia, and succeeded in taking Phnom Penh in January 1979. They installed a new government, under the control of Heng Samrin, a member of the communist Cambodian People's Party (PRPK), and declared the creation of the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea. This is a

SOLS change. Though Cambodia is not coded as being non-independent during this time, the Vietnamese kept a large military presence in Cambodia, and many of the officials in the new DRK government were Cambodians who had defected to Vietnam in the 1950s (Chandler, 277). In 1985, the Prime Minister became Hun Sen, also a member of the PRPK. This is not a SOLS change. Vietnam withdrew the last of its troops from Cambodia in 1990. In 1991, the PRPK becomes the KPK (Cahoon, 2010).

Geddes codes Cambodia as a single-party state from 1976 to the present. This is due to the fact that when democratic elections were finally held, in 1993, the ruling KPK basically refused to give up power. The victory in the elections went to FUNCINPEC, a royalist party founded by Sihanouk in 1981. In 1993, it was led by Sihanouk's son, Norodom Ranariddh. Though Ranariddh became Prime Minister after the elections, Hun Sen convinced him to form a coalition government with the KPK, and assumed the position of Second Prime Minister. This meant that the KPK remained the dominating government party. Although Ranariddh was not a member of the KPK, due to the fact that Cambodia is coded as a single party state under the KPK throughout this period, we have not coded this transition as a SOLS change.

Hun Sen, apparently, never accepted the idea that FUNCINPEC had won the 1993 elections, and as he became an increasingly marginalized member of the coalition, he decided to take charge once again (Corfield, 121). In 1997, he accused the FUNCINPEC leadership of illegally importing arms to supply its military intelligence unit, and staged a coup (Corfield, 121). As Hun Sen and the KPK were never completely out of power, we have not coded this as a SOLS change.

References

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