

Cambodia

Vanderbilt

Following its independence from France, Cambodia was ruled by King Norodom Sihanouk. Sihanouk, who actually had been installed by the French under French colonial rule, had successfully negotiated full independence in 1953, taking full control of the country. Because of Cambodia's colonial status the independence was not coded as a SOLS change (Library of Congress 2010).

In the mid 60's the pressures on were rising and Sihanouk was beginning to lose his grip on country. The troubles culminated in a successful coup by General Lon Nol on March 18, 1970, when Sihanouk was visiting Moscow (Library of Congress 2010). This coup was coded as a SOLS change because, according to Geddes, the regime is coded as personalist under Lon Nol, meaning that the source of leader support is now the clique of Lon Nol rather than members of the court. The 1970 coup was part of the wider violent struggles in the region and not before long the country was engulfed in internationalized civil war, in which the US began supporting Nol's regime versus the communist Khmer Rouge. Under Sihanouk the Khmer Rouge had few international allies, but the US stepping in led North Vietnam to increase their support as well (Library of Congress 2010). By 1975, the Khmer Rouge had emerged victoriously from their struggle; Nol resigned and fled the country and the Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Pol Pot assumed control of the capital and the country in April 1 1975 (Library of Congress 2010). Pol Pot establishes a single-party regime under the Khmer Rouge. This is a SOLS change.

The Khmer Rouge did not have much international support before taking control of the country and its belligerence afterwards led it to clash with former "ally" Vietnam. Following several violent clashes Vietnam invaded Cambodia and following several days of fighting it took Phnom Penh and installed a new Cambodian government on January 7, 1979. Cambodia retained independence but Vietnam installed Heng Samrin of the PRPK— People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea— as leader. The PRPK was a Communist, pro-Vietnamese party (Library of Congress 2010). This is a SOLS change.

The regime that was originally installed by Vietnam has remained solidly in place ever since. The PKRP was renamed Cambodian People's Party (KPK) in 1991. Even though the KPK lost in the 1993 elections to the royalist party FUNCINPEC (founded by Sihanouk in 1981) and Norodom Ranariddh became prime minister, electoral rules required it to be in the coalition as a minor party. In fact, Hun Sen became second prime Minister and the KPK remained the dominating party. So, be it as minor or major party the KPK has effectively ruled the country, and Geddes consequently codes Cambodia as a single party regime. No further SOLS changes were coded (McCargo 2005).

References:

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