



**THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBODIA**

**UC OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES**

*Volume 1, Issue 1*  
*March 2017*

© The University of Cambodia

Published by The University of Cambodia Press

Copyright © 2017 by The University of Cambodia

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, reprinted, distributed, or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

First published 2017

Printed in the Kingdom of Cambodia

*The University of Cambodia Press is an imprint of The University of Cambodia*

The University of Cambodia

P.O. Box 917

Sleng Roleung, Northbridge Road

Sangkat Toek Thla, Khan Sen Sok

Phnom Penh 12000, Cambodia

Tel: (855-23) 99 32 74

Fax: (855-23) 99 32 84

Website: [www.uc.edu.kh](http://www.uc.edu.kh)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/universityofcambodia](http://www.facebook.com/universityofcambodia)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
<b>The Rise of China: Global Threat or International Peace?</b> <i>Kimkong Heng</i>	<b>1</b>
<b>Students' Perceptions on Cambodia-China Relations toward the South China Sea Conflict</b> <i>Sophal In, Matta Kong, Panha Pich, and Rortha Chum</i>	<b>19</b>
<b>Perceptions of Cambodian University Students on Cambodia's Foreign Policy toward the US and China</b> <i>Kimkong Heng, Sothiary Toch, Chantola Sao, Vathanak Chet, Dararasmey Chan</i>	<b>41</b>
<b>Factors affecting the English language proficiency of students majoring in English at a rural university in Cambodia</b> <i>Sokwin Phon</i>	<b>69</b>
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	
<b>World Order: Reflections on the Characters of Nations and the Course of History</b> <i>Kimkong Heng</i>	<b>93</b>
<b>ABOUT THE UC OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES</b>	<b>99</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of Dr. Michael Minehan, Editor-in-Chief of the UC Occasional Paper Series, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Founder and President of The University of Cambodia, for his great leadership, advice, guidance, and support, without which this Occasional Paper Series would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank the Advisory Board and the Editorial Board, including Chief Review Editors, Editors, Editorial Assistants, and Publication Assistants, of the UC Occasional Paper Series, for their advice, support, input, and direct and indirect contributions to the publication of the first issue of this Occasional Paper Series.

My deep appreciation and special thanks are due to Mr. Travis Mitchell, Director of the Council for Research and Creativity, and Ms. Samantha Smith, Advisor to the President and to the Council for Research and Creativity, for reviewing and editing manuscripts for this work.

Moreover, my gratitude also goes specifically to Dean Keo Chhea, Dean of Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, and Professor Din Merican, Special Assistant to the President of The University of Cambodia on Policy and Strategy and Associate Dean of Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, for their encouragement, efforts and contributions to the publication of the Occasional Paper Series.

Finally, I would like express my thanks to the contributors who have submitted their manuscripts to be considered for publication in the UC Occasional Paper Series, although some of them were not successful. I wish them success in their endeavors to have their papers published in quality journals.

Heng Kimkong  
Lead Editorial Assistant  
UC Occasional Paper Series

## FOREWORD

The publication of the UC Occasional Paper Series is a major initiative by The University of Cambodia to help contribute to the development of a research culture at an institutional level, in particular, and at a national level, in general. The launching of the first issue of this Occasional Paper Series, therefore, marks the beginning of an exciting project aimed at providing a platform for students who have completed or are currently pursuing their Master's or Doctoral degrees at The University of Cambodia or elsewhere, either in Cambodia or overseas, to publish their book reviews, research papers, or critical and analytical discussions which make original contributions to the body of knowledge in the area of their specialization and interests.

The UC Occasional Paper Series, although intended to showcase and publish students' work, is peer-reviewed and has a professional in-house team of editors and reviewers who are committed to high quality standards, ensuring the high quality and consistency of papers published. The Editorial Board of the UC Occasional Paper Series strongly believes that all students have the potential to reach the top of their academic performance and deserve the opportunity and support necessary for them to succeed personally and academically. Thus, the Occasional Paper Series is designed to live up to this proposition.

In this first issue, four articles and a book review were accepted for publication. Three articles were contributed by PhD students at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations (TSS), while another was submitted by a student who has completed his graduate studies overseas. The diversity of the contributions to this publication reflects the diversity and wide range of topics the UC Occasional Paper Series covers.

I would like to congratulate the contributors, reviewers, editors, and those involved in making this publication possible. Let this not only be the beginning of a major institutional project, but a lifelong endeavor to disseminate ideas, stimulate research and debate, enhance research publications, and ultimately instill a reading culture in Cambodia.

Keo Chhea  
Chief Review Editor  
UC Occasional Paper Series

This page intentionally left blank

# **The Rise of China: Global Threat or International Peace?**

**Kimkong Heng**  
**The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

## **Abstract**

This critical review is aimed at examining different justifications for the rise of China and its implications for ASEAN, with particular reference to Cambodia. A careful examination of the literature on the rise of the world's most populous country reveals two distinct prevailing views with regard to the Chinese phenomenon. On the one hand, China's rise is equated to a global threat because, given its more advanced economy and powerful military development, China is more likely to aspire to be a global hegemon and regain its Middle Kingdom status. On the other hand, the rise of China is not considered to be yet a threat, but rather an opportunity for interstate cooperation and global engagement. These two opposing views clearly divide scholars into two camps: realists and liberalists. However, the author supports the latter camp and believes that the rise of China could enhance the sustained growth of bilateral ties between China and Cambodia in particular and China-ASEAN relations in general. Toward the end of this review, major findings are summarized, implications for Sino-ASEAN and Sino-Cambodian relations discussed and areas for further research suggested.

**Keywords:** The rise of China; China-ASEAN relations; China-Cambodian relations

## **I. Introduction**

### **1. Background of the study**

The impact of China's rise on global affairs has been a hot topic for researchers since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In other words, China's rise has attracted global interest particularly since the end of the Cold War (Guo, 2006; Ikenberry, 2008; Kem, 2011; Lynn-Jones, 2000). There are two major schools of thought – realism and liberalism – which try to put forward their own hypotheses regarding the rise of China. For realists, the rise of China is seen as a threat against the rest of the world since, in realist views, states are bound to pursue power, self-interest, and other benefits. Therefore, China is more likely to go to war to extend its influence and dominate other states to fulfill its own interests. In addition, the more

powerful a state is, the more aggressive and dominant it becomes and therefore the more likely conflicts may arise. For liberalists who believe in order, justice, and cooperation within the anarchic international system (Dunne, 2014), however, the rise of China can be translated into global economic development, including a cooperative and harmonious world, and international peace.

These two opposing views have led many researchers to conduct their study in order to dispel the doubt and uncertainty regarding the impact of China's rise (Glaser, 2011). On the one hand, China's rise will bring about intense competition in the global context. China's growing strength will lead it to pursue its interests more assertively, which will in turn lead the United States and other countries to balance against it. As a result, the second Cold War or even a hegemonic war may take place (Glaser, 2011). On the other hand, as the liberalists argue, China's rise in the current international system will enhance interstate cooperation based on the principle of free markets, civil rights, democratic society, and international cooperation between states.

Despite many negative views toward the rise of China, Yee (2010) argues that many of China's neighboring countries, except South Korea, India, and some ASEAN states, are beginning to accept and accommodate China's rise. Brazil, Australia, African states and other natural resource rich countries, for example, welcome China's rise and see it as an opportunity rather than a threat. For industrialized countries like Japan and European Union states, they are desperately in need of the huge Chinese market in order to boost their exports. Politically speaking, according to Yee (2010), some countries are also pleased with the rise of China because there is a balance of power between China and the United States. In other words, with rapid economic expansion, China becomes the only country in Asia and probably the world that could compete with the United States economically in the current unipolar world led by the latter. Kissinger, as cited in Yee (2010), also argues that cooperation between China and the United States can bring about world peace.

Although Yee (2010) sees a more positive than negative impact of China's rise on international affairs, several other researchers take an opposite view. Friedman (2010), for example, states that China's rise cannot guarantee a peaceful future. Instead, based on power transition theory, he argues that powerful states on the rise often fight wars with other major powers. Wars can also be caused by the fact that a rising power feels constrained by the existing superpower and seeks to overturn or balance against it, or the existing superpower



might engage in a preventive war to contain the rising power and preserve its leading position as a hegemon in the international system.

## **2. Purpose statement**

Having examined several studies on the impact of China's rise on global politics and international affairs, it is interesting to investigate the literature on the rise of China in order to clear the doubt about its consequences, either positive or negative or both. Thus, this review is aimed at examining the literature on the rise of China to see whether China's rise is considered a threatening global phenomenon, as postulated by realists, or a welcoming peaceful addition to the international politics, as liberalists believe.

## **3. Research questions**

This critical review seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is the rise of China a security threat to the world or an opportunity for global cooperation?
2. What implications can be drawn for Sino-ASEAN and Sino-Cambodian relations with regard to the rise of China?

## **4. Significance of the study**

This is an extensive literature review which is carried out to examine some heated arguments over the rise of China. This critical review is firstly useful in filling the gap in literature on the mentioned topic with regard to how ASEAN, particularly Cambodia should respond to the phenomenon of China's rise. Secondly, this review hopes to dispel doubts and controversies over the impact of China's rise, in particular, its effects on global security and international peace. This review, thirdly, may encourage other Cambodian researchers and students to conduct empirical research into this popular yet controversial topic to better understand how Cambodia and ASEAN can take advantage of this 21st century Asian phenomenon.

## **5. Scope and limitations of the research**

This review no doubt cannot be flawless. Its scope is limited to the context of China-ASEAN and China-Cambodia relations. It does not attempt to discuss the impact of China's rise on other regional and international contexts. As for the limitations, this paper is not research-

based, meaning that the findings are based on secondary data. Therefore, all findings are extracted from previous research studies, which limits the originality of ideas in this review. The quality and comprehensiveness of the paper is also another issue which should be tolerated and understood because the researcher had limited access to the body of available literature while conducting this review.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **1. The development of China**

Since initiating market reforms in 1978, China has shifted from a centrally planned to a market based economy and has experienced rapid economic and social development. With a population of 1.3 billion, China recently became the second largest economy and is increasingly playing an important and influential role in the global economy. Although China remains a developing country with 98.99 million people still living below the national poverty line of RMB 2,300 per year at the end of 2012 (World Bank, 2015), this country has enjoyed the benefits of dynamic growth for more than two decades. For example, Chinese GDP has experienced high growth rates, with an average annual growth rate of 9.4 percent from 1979 and 2004 (Liu, 2006).

With its high economic annual growth rate which has taken place since the late 1970s, China has transformed itself from a low-income to a middle-income country. And if this trend persists, China is more likely to be on a path to becoming a high-income country (Ye, Zhang, & Zhao, 2015). And the development of China, according to Malesky and London (2014, p. 397), has been more rapid than that of its neighboring countries, namely Japan and Korea, and China's growth is "among the most rapid in modern history". In addition to its status as the world's second largest economy, China is also the world's greatest export economy; therefore, the fact that China has been predicted to be the next great superpower is highly likely (Watson, 2016).

Several key factors, however, are required for China's development (Liu, 2006). First, it is social and political stability, which in turn requires ongoing reforms in economic and political systems. Therefore, China has to create and maintain a peaceful environment set forth in its five principles of peaceful coexistence. Second, China needs to sustain its open door policy which has played crucial roles in attracting FDIs, opening up markets, and promoting

international trade. Third, it is China's integration into the international system. Without such integration, it would be unlikely for China to be able to enjoy its rise at the moment. Moreover, by integrating into the global system, China has improved its economics, human rights, and security.

## **2. Challenges to China's rise**

Since the 1990s, the rise of China has become a popular topic for discussion and debate among researchers in the field of international relations. Given its enormous population, China is struggling with almost everything. China's reliance on coal, for instance, causes serious environmental and health problems. Energy consumption is also a big issue, and China has become the second largest consumer of energy resources in the world, only behind the United States. Thus, the possibility of a global oil crisis is very likely, especially when the Chinese oil consumption per capita increases.

China has also been experiencing a problem with skilled labor. While there is a great demand for skilled labor, there are also surplus laborers, caused by labor migration into the city. This in turn leads to unemployment, lack of social safety, and a source of social instability. In a similar vein, the issue of income disparity is not uncommon. The consumption gap, for example, between rural households and urban households jumped from 227 yaun in 1978 to 5365 yaun in 2000 and 6110 yuan in 2003 (Liu, 2006). Although there has been a lot of discussion on the issue, more actions are needed to tackle such a huge gap in income disparity in China.

Although Beijing has followed a good neighbor policy and built friendly relations with almost all of its neighbors, except Japan whose political system and ideology differ greatly from those of China, the world's most populous country is also troubled by a number of issues within the region (Liu, 2006). One is its relation with Russia. Although the Sino-Russian relations have seen much improvement over the last few decades, both countries are seen to have mistrust and suspicion with one another. In other words, their bilateral relation is purely grounded on their national interest gains and other benefits.

Despite its rapid growth, however, China last year experienced the lowest growth rate (6.9%) for the first time in 25 years. This continued economic slowdown was a result of a continued decline of domestic investment demand and a fall in international market demand. Moreover,

the development of China's economy has also been impeded by the imbalanced income distribution structure, a slow and imperfect reform to the production factor market and capital market, and an mismatch between the economic growth pattern and economic development stages (Slowly, 2016). Furthermore, China's potential growth has continued its downward trend since 2013. This economic slowdown has been impacted by a number of constraining factors, including the slowdown in infrastructure investment, a decline in production output, and resource, energy, and environmental constraints. Nevertheless, despite the decline, China's economic growth rate is still regarded as a high speed, if not rapid one (Ye, Zhang, & Zhao, 2015).

### **3. The threat of China's rise**

Many scholars have examined the potential impact of the rise of China on global security or world order. According to Glaser (2011), who bases his argument on realist views, China's growing strength will lead it to pursue its interests more assertively, which will in turn lead the United States and other countries to balance against it. This phenomenon will eventually generate a parallel to the Cold War stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union, and perhaps even a hegemonic war. Similarly, many Western neo-realist IR scholars have already drawn a dark picture of Eastern Asia regional security with a pessimistic view about the China threat (Ye, 2002). That is why whether China as an emerging or a rising power in the East Asia region and in the world will be a threat to its neighbors and even to the United States within the next few decades, is a big issue that has been widely discussed in the Western IR academic circle and among Western and Japanese political experts.

According to the notion of power structure transformation, when any state becomes wealthier and more powerful, it will inevitably seek greater regional and then world-wide political influence, which will cause a change of the power-structure in the region and in the world. The change of the power structure caused by the rise of a newly established regional and world power usually poses a long-term danger for the security of the region and even for the stability of the world. According to the power structure analysis, China is a threat to the security of the East Asia region and the United States and its main ally in East Asia, Japan. Thus, Asia is likely to see more international conflicts in the near future (Ross, 2015).

For Lemke and Warner (1996), war is most likely when the power of a rising, dissatisfied country becomes equal to that of a dominant state, the US, in this case. Then power parity

provides the opportunity to act for those who are committed to changing the status quo. The phenomenon has been applied to China as a rising power seeking to change the status quo in the East Asia region. Moreover, China's desire to make change to the international status quo can be explained by China's historical memory of past greatness and the desire to regain its Middle Kingdom status; its determination to erase the painful legacy of a century of national humiliation; its desire to recreate the traditional Sino-centric world order as a means of regulating political and economic structures of the world; and its belief that China's external security in the past was primarily assured by a strong state (Swaine; Daly, & Greenwood, 2000).

On another note, given the dramatic increase in its economic development, China, since the 1970s, has begun to modernize its armed forces by, in a large part, importing advanced weapons from overseas. This has led many observers to argue that China will not only seek hegemon in East Asia, particularly its territorial claims over the South China Sea, but it will also assert its influence in the global sphere, which will most likely lead the US to counterbalance against China's assertiveness, and if this situation persists, an hegemonic war would be on the horizon (Lynn-Jones, 2000).

#### **4. China's rise and international peace**

Although many scholars have expressed their pessimistic views of the threat of China's rise on global security, others who belong to the liberalist group positively see China's rise as opportunities for global economic cooperation and international peace. Friedman (1999), for instance, states that a new international system which is globalization, has now clearly replaced the Cold War. Globalization, the integration of markets, finance, and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from a size medium to a size small, enables each of us to reach around the world farther, faster, and cheaper than ever before. It is not just an economic trend, and it is not just some fad. Like all previous international systems, it is directly or indirectly shaping the domestic politics, economic policies, and foreign relations of virtually every country. Even though this view seems to be at least slightly alarmist, most people would agree that globalization has directly or indirectly re-shaped the foreign relations of almost every country big or small, including the United States, an established power, and China, a rising power.

Unlike Germany in the late 19th and early 20th century or Japan in the period between the two world wars, according to Ye (2002), China as a rising power prefers to merge into the international cooperative regimes like WTO or IMF and tries its best to cooperate with the established powers and follow the international norms and rules. In the traditional international system dominated by power politics, the level of integration and interdependence was very low because there were no efficient international organizations such as WTO, IMF, World Bank, etc., nor was there any orientation towards cooperation for both the established or the rising powers.

Furthermore, the globalization process has also improved the deepening of mutual influence of the economies in various countries, and China is no exception. In other words, China has adjusted its attitude toward the world economic system from self-reliance to cooperation. China has already become a member of the IMF, the World Bank, and other international economic institutions and has been very active in those institutions that it once condemned as tools of capitalist imperialism. The cooperative and integrative nature of the Chinese government clearly shows that China has the willingness to integrate itself into the world market system and catch up with the quick pace of globalization (Ye, 2002). Put another way, China has not only shifted its attitude towards the world market from self-reliance to cooperation but also has been taking a more active role in those international economic regimes.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **1. Research instrument**

This is a critical literature review which is aimed at investigating different views regarding the impact of the rise of China. Since this research is based on an extensive literature review, content or document analysis is used as the basis for the research design for this study. Thus, no questionnaire or interview has been used to collect primary data to answer the research questions, that is, the findings of this study are solely based on previous research findings and the analytical skills of the author.

#### **2. Data collection and analysis**

Since this is not a research-based paper, secondary data are collected through the extensive critical literature review. All relevant secondary data (i.e. books, journals, government

publications, magazines, periodicals, records, etc.) have been located and examined to seek answers to the research questions. After identifying all relevant data, the writer has examined and read each document to develop central themes relevant to the topic. The writer then presents the findings and discussions based on the available sources in the literature. Finally, a conclusion is drawn, followed by recommendations and suggestions for further research.

#### **IV. Findings and Discussion**

Having conducted the critical literature review on arguments for and against the rise of China, three major themes are in order. First, the rise of China is a threat. Second, the rise of China can promote international cooperation, and third, China's rise is not a global threat. What follows are the presentation and discussion of major findings derived from the review of literature, with support and references to a number of relevant research studies.

##### **1. China's rise is a threat**

A number of scholars have asserted that the rise of China is equivalent to the threat of the global world order. In other words, China's rise will threaten global security as China seeks to dominate the world or become a hegemon. The literature review reveals that most Western scholars and some Japanese ones tend to have pessimistic views regarding the rise of China. They base their arguments on the realist view by claiming that a hegemonic war is more likely as China rises to balance power with the US. In other words, the change of the power structure caused by the burgeoning of a newly rising regional and world power usually poses a long-term danger for the security of the region and even for the stability of the world (Ye, 2002).

Another researcher who supports this idealist concept is Robert Art. Art (2010) observes that there will be political and economic conflicts and friction between the United States and China as China's economic and military power in East Asia and its global economic and political reach continue to expand. Clearly, there will also be some arms racing between China and the United States as each country attempts to gain advantage over the other and as the United States responds to contain China's growing power. Art further explains that dominant powers have not readily given up their position of number one to rising challengers, and rising challengers have always demanded the fruits to which they believe their growing power entitles them. There is no reason to expect that things will be different in this regard

with China and the United States. Thus, they will not be able to avoid a certain level of problematic relations and political friction over the next several decades.

According to Economy (2005), China's diplomatic offensive in Southeast Asia has raised questions in the US and throughout Asia concerning the nature of China's rise and its implications. Advocates of a China threat scenario have long argued that China desires regional hegemony and that US–China relations in this regard are a zero sum game. Comparisons are made between the rise of China and that of Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan: China's rise will necessarily be highly disruptive to US preeminence in the global system, stability in Asia, and the international system. There are also views of the return of the glory days of the Middle Kingdom, China, using its economic power to re-establish an empire reaching out throughout most of Asia and transforming its neighbors into little more than subordinate states.

## **2. China's rise promotes cooperation**

Despite pessimistic views from many Western scholars who see China's rise as a global threat, there is a possibility of economic cooperation associated with the rise of China. This view is held by many researchers who assert that China, unlike Germany or Japan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is adopting principles of peaceful coexistence. As a result, the rise of China means global cooperation in terms of economy, security, technology and other sectors. For example, although China has emerged to be both an economic superpower and a leader of Western markets, this Chinese economic dominance has not been found to have a detrimental effect on ASEAN's GDP growth rate; conversely, it has benefited ASEAN exports and GDP advancement (Napoli, 2014).

China's rise does not have to be as aggressive and dangerous as the standard realist argument suggests because the structural forces driving major powers into conflict will be relatively weak. The outcome of China's rise will depend less on the pressures generated by the international system than on how well U.S. and Chinese leaders manage the situation. Conflict is not predetermined, and if the United States can adjust to the new international conditions, making some uncomfortable concessions and not exaggerating the dangers, a major clash might well be avoided (Glaser, 2011). In addition, current international conditions should enable both the United States and China to protect their vital interests without posing large threats to each other. The presence of nuclear weapons will also make it relatively easy



for major powers to maintain highly effective deterrent forces. Even if Chinese power were to greatly exceed U.S. power sometime in the future, the United States would still be able to maintain nuclear forces that could survive any Chinese attack and threaten massive damage in retaliation. Moreover, large-scale conventional attacks by China against the U.S. homeland are virtually impossible because the United States and China are separated by the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, which makes it difficult for China to attack the US if it intends to (Glaser, 2011).

Ye (2002) also sees a positive aspect in the rise of China. Ye states that the official acceptance of the inevitable trend of globalization and the willingness of moving along in harmony with globalization indicates that Chinese elites are keenly aware of the relative weakness of China's power and the absolute necessity of cooperating with other countries in the international systems formed by the force of globalization. Similarly, according to Ding (2008), China's foreign policy is based on four main pillars: a commitment to multilateralism underpinned by the central role of the UN as the guarantor of global security; a commitment to consultation and dialogue rather than force as a means of settling disputes; a commitment to global economic development with the developed world taking a greater share of the responsibility for promoting growth elsewhere; and a spirit of inclusiveness for all societies and cultures to coexist as equal stakeholders in the global order. Therefore, China values a democratic international order rather than the unipolar hegemony, and China has utmost respect for state sovereignty rather than imposing values and policies on other countries. This eliminates the possibility of the hegemonic war but promotes economic and bilateral cooperation.

Moreover, the Chinese leadership is using trade and investment as a means of obtaining security objectives by establishing a Sino-centric regional economic order. But this attempt to place China at the center of the region is more a consequence of conforming than of confronting, and results from the changing ideational basis of Chinese foreign policy and the increasing acceptance of 'neoliberalism's core belief that economic interdependence creates common interest and lessens the probability of conflict' (Yunling, 2004).

### **3. China's rise is not a threat**

Having examined the vast literature on the rise of China, a conclusion can be drawn. That is, the rise of China will promote global economic cooperation rather than an international or regional threat. Many scholars have supported this optimistic view. Breslin (2009), for example, believes that China will be a more responsible regional actor, that is, China is working not just to stabilize its own economy for its own sake, but also to stabilize the regional economy as a whole. Moreover, China is becoming increasingly important for the region as a source of finance and, if the Chinese economy recovers as planned, should become an even more significant market in its own right for regional producers. Breslin (2009) also concludes that China's regional influence might indeed be predicated on the strategic use of trade and investment strategies and promoting diplomatic/economic initiatives at bilateral and multilateral levels.

In a parallel manner, Kem (2011) also sees China's rise positively. Kem believes that the rise of China, with its five principles of peaceful coexistence and win-win policy, will promote cooperation in the region, particularly with ASEAN. China has enhanced mutual trust with ASEAN members by actively participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and has reached agreements of concrete substance through multilateral dialogue and cooperation. China is the first non-ASEAN country to formally join in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and has even played a positional role in maintaining stability. All of these have served to create favorable conditions for maintaining stability in Southeast Asia (Kem, 2011). Despite China's increasing economic and military power, likewise, Goldstein (2000), having considered China's actual economic and military capabilities, argues that China's rising power would not threaten the international system for the time being.

Moreover, although it is unlikely that China will be able to assume a leadership role in promoting good governance in the very near future, and even though the region undoubtedly recognizes the limitations of China as a leader on such issues, China's role as a contributor to transnational problems dictates its presence at the table. To the extent that China is reforming its own practices and increasingly behaving in a responsible manner both domestically and internationally, the opportunity for China to assume a leadership role will increase exponentially. China's efforts to assuage the fears of its neighbors by adopting a foreign policy approach that is active, non-threatening, and generally aligned with the economic and security interests of the region is also clearly making headway (Economy, 2005).

The rise of China, therefore, does not have to trigger a complete hegemonic transition. The U.S.-Chinese power transition can be very different from those of the past because China faces an international order that is fundamentally different from those that past rising states confronted. China does not just face the United States; it faces a Western-centered system that is open, integrated, and rule-based, with wide and deep political foundations. The nuclear revolution, meanwhile, has made war among great powers unlikely – eliminating the major tool that rising powers have used to overturn international systems defended by declining hegemonic states. Today's Western order, in short, is hard to overturn and easy to join (Ikenberry, 2008).

## **V. Conclusion**

### **1. Summary of the main findings**

The literature review has revealed the two main arguments regarding the rise of China. On the one hand, researchers and scholars who belong to the realist camp argue that the rise of China will lead to a hegemonic war or China will pose a threat to the whole world. This belief is based on the realist view which puts much emphasis on the concept of balance of power and power transition theory. In other words, China's rise will trigger a new world order in which the US and China are the major actors. Thus, the two superpowers would be involved in hegemonic competition, which will possibly lead to a major war or conflict for hegemony in the international system, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

On the other hand, those who belong to the liberalist camp argue that the rise of China will enhance global economic cooperation, bilateral relations and international peace. They also raise the term 'globalization' to support their point of view, meaning that, in the age of globalization, states seek for cooperation rather than disagreement or war. Moreover, with the presence of the international organizations such as the United Nations, a full-scale war is less likely because states would try their best to maintain peace in order to benefit from it. Simply put, such liberalist scholars see opportunities that states are more likely to cooperate to survive and prosper rather than conflict or war which eventually would cause destruction to states' wellbeing.

The findings also show that many scholars are in support of the liberalist camp despite heated arguments regarding the threat caused by China rising. This trend is understandable,

considering several crucial factors such as the state interdependence, international trade, mutual interests, global security and other important issues. The advent of the Internet and high technology, together with the presence of nuclear weapons, has also contributed to the deterrence of war, particularly the hegemonic war because such an extensive war would be synonymous to the destruction of human beings or simply the end of the world.

## **2. Implications for Sino-ASEAN relations**

The rise of China shall have several implications for Sino-ASEAN relations. First, as China is one of the largest ASEAN export markets, ASEAN apparently needs to play a careful and proactive role in dealing with the world's second economic superpower. To this end, instead of competing with China, ASEAN should take advantage of this Chinese phenomenon and continue to enhance its economic development through free trade agreements and other economic and strategic cooperation such as China's One Belt, One Road initiative, China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreements, and a China-led East Asian Community.

Second, given its geopolitical proximity to China, ASEAN should foster and improve its foreign policy relations with China to ensure its regional security and avoid unforeseen conflicts which may arise from growing regional tensions on the issue of South China Sea as well as other territorial claims to the same stretch of water or land between China and several ASEAN member states. Good China-ASEAN relations would also place ASEAN in a good position to exercise its strategic balancing between China and the United States. However, such a balancing act should be conducted with great care and caution to guarantee that ASEAN would not fall under too much influence from China, which will definitely enrage America, another good friend of ASEAN.

Third, in addition to strengthening itself, maintaining its unity, and safeguarding its centrality, ASEAN needs to focus on building its own community and seek acceptable and practical alternatives to bilateral and regional dispute settlements (Heng, 2013). Unless issues surrounding border disputes among ASEAN member nations and disputes in the South China Sea are resolved, peace, stability, and development within the region are still at stake. Thus, not only does ASEAN need to be inward-looking in terms of maintaining and enhancing its unity, stability and cooperation in the regional group, but it also need be outward-looking in order to further strengthen its good relations with its dialogue partners, regional powers and

other countries within and beyond Asia. In so doing, ASEAN could send a message to China that Beijing is one of ASEAN's most important partners in their various bilateral and multilateral agreements and partnership. Meanwhile, another message is also conveyed to China that ASEAN cannot afford to be too reliant on its Chinese counterpart although it now needs this great Asian power to accelerate its economic, social and cultural development.

### **3. Implications for Sino-Cambodian relations**

As Cambodia and China have been engaged in a long history of bilateral relations, Cambodia would definitely benefit from the phenomenon of China's rise. Therefore, Cambodia should try to maintain and enhance its relations with China, and it should play its role in ASEAN carefully and tactically, particularly with regard to the South China Sea conflict. Cambodia should also demonstrate to the Chinese government that it will continue to support China's one policy, and that Phnom Penh is a long-time supporter of China on the international stage, as seen twice in the ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh and Vientiane when Cambodia blocked a joint communiqué with reference to China's growing assertiveness and militarization in the South China Sea (Millar, 2016). Moreover, Cambodia should continue to open its door for Chinese investment as well as strengthen its trade with China at all levels to reap as maximum benefits as possible from Chinese initiatives such as the Maritime Silk Road. Both governments should be constantly involved in dialogues and discussions to better understand one another and work collaboratively for the interests of both states.

Nevertheless, Cambodia has to establish a strategic alignment with China, instead of adopting a full bandwagoning strategy with this rising power. To this end, several alternatives are feasible, as suggested by Cheunboran (2015). Firstly, Cambodia needs to strengthen its bilateral relations with other major powers who are China's competitors such as India, Japan, Russia, and the United States, although this approach would put Phnom Penh in an uneasy position packed with challenges and obstacles. Secondly, Cambodia should improve its bilateral and multilateral relations with its ASEAN counterparts by playing a more proactive role in this regional grouping and abiding by the ASEAN Way to promote ASEAN centrality. Thirdly, Cambodia ought to pursue an omnidirectional foreign policy by forming a good partnership with other states within the region and beyond for the sake of its social, economic, and cultural advancement. More importantly, Cambodia should carefully and strategically maintain a balance between China and ASEAN, particularly its closest neighbors, Thailand

and Vietnam, to ensure its national security (Leng, 2014), bilateral trade deals, and other important interstate agreements between Cambodia and its old friends and enemies.

#### **4. Implications for further research**

Due to the fact that this paper is a review, not an empirical study, it is vitally important that further research-based studies be conducted to better understand the controversy surrounding the issue of China rising. Future research should employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from various sources so that a good conclusion can be drawn and implications can be made in reference to the rise of China. Future empirical studies should also consider a variety of views from different scholars and researchers regardless of their nationalities and stances. Most importantly, they should take the current world situation, particularly new global trends arising from the rise of China, into account so that a more accurate interpretation of this controversial topic could be made and reported.

#### **The Author**

Kimkong HENG is an Assistant Dean for the School of Graduate Studies, The University of Cambodia. He has also been an English lecturer for almost ten years. He earned his MA in TESOL from the Institute of Foreign Languages (RUPP, Cambodia) and from the University of Canberra (Australia) with High Distinction in 2011 and 2014, respectively. His areas of interest include language teaching methodology, teacher education, teacher research capacity building, and now foreign policy. He can be reached at [kimkongheng@gmail.com](mailto:kimkongheng@gmail.com).

## References

- Art, R. J. (2010). The United States and the rise of China: Implications for the long haul. *Political Science Quarterly*, 125(3), 359-391.
- Breslin, S. (2009). Understanding China's regional rise: Interpretations, identities and implications. *International Affairs*, 85(4), 817-835.
- Cheunboran, C. (2015, July 08). *Cambodia's strategic China alignment*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/cambodias-strategic-china-alignment/>
- Ding, S. (2008). To build a "Harmonious World": China's soft power wielding in the global south. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 13(2), 193-213.
- Dunne, T. (2014). Liberalism. In J. Baylis, S. Smith, & P. Owens (Eds.), *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 113 – 125). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Economy, E. (2005). China's rise in Southeast Asia: Implications for the United States. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(44), 409-425.
- Friedman, E. (2010). Power transition theory: A challenge to the peaceful rise of world power China. In H. S. Yee (Ed.), *China's rise: Threat or opportunity?* London: Routledge.
- Glaser, C. (2011). Will China's rise lead to war? *Foreign Affairs*, 90(2), 80-91.
- Goldstein, A. (2000). Great expectations: Interpreting China's arrival. In M. E. Brown, O. R. Coté, S. M. Lynn-Jones, & S. E. Miller (Eds.), *The rise of China: An international security reader* (pp. 3-40). Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Guo, S. (Ed.). (2006). *China's peaceful rise in the 21st century: Domestic and international conditions*. London: Ashgate Publishing.
- Heng, S. (2013). *ASEAN: Between China and America*. Retrieved from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/12/asean-between-china-and-america/>
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2008). The rise of China and the future of the West: Can the liberal system survive. *Foreign Affairs*, 87(1), 23-37.
- Kem, S. (2011). Chinese harmonious world policy and its implications on Southeast Asia. *Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace Working Paper*, N° 43.
- Lemke, D., & Werner, S. (1996). Power parity, commitment to change, and war. *International Studies Quarterly*, 40(2), 235-260.
- Leng, T. (2014, June 05). *Cambodia's betwixt and between foreign policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/06/05/cambodias-betwixt-and-between-foreign-policy/>

- Liu, G. (2006). The dialectic relationship between peaceful development and China's deep reform. In S. Guo (Ed.), *China's peaceful rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Domestic and international conditions* (pp. 17-38). London: Ashgate
- Lynn-Jones, S. M. (2000). Preface. In M. E. Brown, O. R. Coté, S. M. Lynn-Jones, & S. E. Miller (Eds.), *The rise of China: An international security reader* (pp. vi-xxvii). Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Malesky, E., & London, J. (2014). The political economy of development in China and Vietnam. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17, 395-419. doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-041811-150032
- Millar, P. (2016, September 1). *Cambodia caught between China and US amid superpower showdown*. Retrieved from <http://sea-globe.com/cambodia-in-the-middle/>
- Napoli, C. (2014). China's economic rise: Implications for ASEAN trade flows. *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies (JSEAE)*, 31(3), 345-360.
- Ross, R. S. (2015). *East Asia in transition: Toward a new regional order*. New York: Routledge.
- Slowly, S. A. (2016). A review of China's economy in 2015. In Center for Macroeconomic Research of Xiamen University's *China's Macroeconomic Outlook* (pp. 1-24). Singapore: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-981-10-2068-1\_1
- Swaine, M. D., Daly, S. A., & Greenwood, P. W. (2000). *Interpreting China's grand strategy: Past, present, and future*. California: Rand Corporation.
- Watson, A. C. (2016). *Patterns of growth and the economic development of China* (Master's thesis). The City University of New York. New York: The United States.
- World Bank. (2015). *China's overview*. Retrieved on February 12, 2016 from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>
- Ye, J. (2002). Will China be a threat to its neighbors and the world in the twenty first century? *Ritsumeikan University Annual Review of International Studies*, 57.
- Ye, Z., & Zhang, H., & Zhao, L. (2015). The current situation and future challenges of China's economy. *Globalization and Development Volume III: In search of a new development paradigm*, 3, 53.
- Yee, H. S. (Ed.). (2010). *China's rise: Threat or opportunity?* New York: Routledge.
- Yunling, T. S. Z. (2004). China's regional strategy. *World Economics and Politics*, 6, 001.



# **Students' Perceptions on Cambodia-China Relations toward the South China Sea Conflict**

**Sophal In, Matta Kong, Panha Pich, and Rortha Chum**  
**The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

## **Abstract**

Even though Western scholars view Cambodia-China relations regarding the South China Sea dispute negatively, Cambodian perceptions are relatively more supportive. This divergence of views in academia raises the question of how the Cambodian public generally perceives Cambodia's current relations with China. Given that most Cambodian academics are positive concerning this topic, it is assumed that the Cambodian public would be supportive of the current relations. Therefore, this study aims to prove this perception by studying the attitudes of students in The University of Cambodia, specifically on how they perceive Cambodia's current relations with China in the context of the South China Sea dispute. Using a quantitative approach, questionnaires were employed to measure the students' perceptions towards five dimensions of the Cambodia-China relations. These include economy, trade, conflict management, geopolitics, foreign policy, and benefits for Cambodia. Data was collected and analyzed from 11 classes and 292 participants. The analysis involved steps such as data cleaning, determining the reliability of responses, and descriptive statistical analysis. The results from the analysis confirms the view that Cambodians are generally supportive of Cambodia's current relations, and do not view Cambodia's actions as contradicting or harming ASEAN. However, they have expressed reservations on China's contributions to democracy, and are wary of Cambodia's aid dependency. On the other hand, the perceptions observed reflect the need for a balanced and pragmatic approach to foreign policy. Furthermore, Cambodians believe that all relations require mutual reciprocity between Cambodia and all nations.

**Keywords:** Cambodia-China relations; South China Sea conflict; Cambodia's foreign policy

## **I. Introduction**

Cambodia's diplomatic relations with China can be traced back to the Angkor period when Chinese diplomat Zhou Daguan visited and recorded his stay in Cambodia (Long, 2009); however, modern diplomatic relations are seen by various experts to have started during the

1950s by Prince Sihanouk and gained new momentum during 1997 (see Radio Free Asia (RFA), 2016; Thayer, 2013; Chheang, 2009). The year 1997 was also the turning point in Cambodia's relations with China, and since then Cambodia has received immense support from the latter (RFA, 2016; Thayer, 2013; Chheang, 2009;). However, this relationship with China has come under scrutiny by various experts in light of the South China Sea dispute. One important event that led to such attention was an ASEAN meeting chaired by Cambodia that failed to produce a joint communiqué for the first time in the ASEAN summit's history (Phoak, 2014; RFA, 2016). This outcome has led some experts (Ciorciari, 2013; Thayer, 2013) to believe that Cambodia is heavily influenced by China, and that this relationship is harmful for both Cambodia and ASEAN.

Concerns about China's relations with Cambodia have been reported by other experts who state that Cambodia has become China's proxy, and that Chinese investments spark unrest (Sok, 2014). However, Cambodian experts believe the relations with China were borne out of necessity (Long, 2009; Chheang, 2009). According to Chheang (2009), China's aid was unconditional, making it more favorable than Western aid. China's diplomacy was also considered as a polite diplomacy, borne out of necessity, and not a result of Cambodia's geopolitical calculations (Long, 2009). Phoak (2014) also noted that China's aid definitely helps the government but has not won the confidence of the Cambodian people, nor does it promote democracy, human rights, and other governance issues. He pointed out how China could help gain more trust from the Cambodian people.

Concerning how Cambodia's relations with China affects ASEAN, Sutter (2013) stated that China used Cambodia to prevent the South China Sea dispute from being discussed in ASEAN and exploited ASEAN's division. Former ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong also perceived Cambodia as China's client state, and stated that Cambodia will continue to stay in ASEAN because China wants it to (as cited in Wai, 2016). However, Ciorciari (2013) and Thayer (2013) see that Cambodia may act like China's client but it is not powerless. Both believed Cambodia could use its geographic location at the heart of Southeast Asia to leverage against China. However, another analyst Mertha was reported as saying that Prime Minister Hun Sen is smart and could withdraw from China's influence if he needed to (RFA, 2016). Thus, Cambodia is seen as uncooperative and selfish by the foreign academics and media. Yet again, Cambodian intellectuals do not agree with the criticism. Var (2015) and Leng (2014) supported Cambodia's position with China. Var (2015) stated that by upholding

neutrality on the South China Sea issue, Cambodia is serving the interests of ASEAN. Leng (2014) supported Cambodia's stance in the conflict and said that balancing between China and ASEAN as a whole was the wisest decision. Phoak (2015), however, criticized the blaming of Cambodia and stated that blaming Cambodia was not the solution and doubted the results would have differed should another country have dealt with the matter.

Yet, despite the controversy surrounding Cambodia's position with China regarding the South China Sea conflict, there are signs that the Cambodia-China relations have not made the situation worse. The conflict was once seen as a potential flashpoint by analysts (Thayer, 2009); however, Weissman noted that the handling of the South China Sea conflict serves as an example of successful conflict prevention (Weissmann, 2010). Among the factors, what he attributed to this success was building personal relationships with ASEAN leaders and China accepting the ASEAN Way. Despite this optimistic view, Kosandi (2014) challenged this view and stated that ASEAN's success was minor and insufficient, although he did note that the dispute did not affect economic cooperation between ASEAN and China.

Therefore, it can be seen that opinions are divided regarding Cambodia's relations with the China in the context of the South China Sea. Cambodia's relations with China are seen as both positive and negative to the country itself and to ASEAN. Opinions also diverge on whether Cambodia's position is self-serving or whether it also serves the interests of ASEAN too. This divergence of ideas between foreign academics and Cambodian academics reveals a lot about the perspective of academics and the media, but do not reveal the opinions of Cambodian people. All the literature mentioned focuses on the macro-level of analysis, and does not analyze the individual level. Thus, this study attempts to fill this knowledge gap and explore how Cambodians view the current relationship between Cambodia and China in the context of the South China Sea. It intends to explore how Cambodians perceive China's influence, Cambodia's relationship with China compared to ASEAN, and Cambodia's foreign policy choices. Through this study, the effects of Cambodia-China relations can be quantified and evaluated. It also aims to provide a quantitative analysis at the individual level of international relations (IR). The main question this study intends to answer how the relationship between Cambodia and China affects ASEAN in the South China Sea dispute. It seeks to test if Cambodians see the relationship between Cambodia and China as not only beneficial to Cambodia, but also beneficial to ASEAN.

## **II. Research Methodology**

In this chapter, the methods employed to conduct the research will be shown. This chapter will include the method for data gathering procedure, population, sample size, sample sampling technique, research tool, and statistical analysis. This study uses primary data to answer the research questions.

### **1. Data gathering procedure**

This study used a quantitative approach and was also a cross-sectional study covering the focus group. The research tool to gather data was a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand the perception of University of Cambodia students on “Cambodia and China relations toward the South China Sea dispute”, and the questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one surveys demographic information and part two comprises statements under different categories such as economy/trade, conflict management, foreign policy, geopolitics and benefits Cambodia receives in the context of the South China Sea dispute.

The questionnaire was designed based on the available literature reviewed and the research questions formulated. After the first draft was completed, two professors were sought for their feedback. One professor was an expert in research methodology, and another was an expert in International Relations. Based on the feedback, the first draft underwent revision and a second draft was formulated. This second draft was checked by peers to ensure clarity of information. Feedback from the peers led to another round of revisions. The third revision was piloted with 10 Master degree students from Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, and minor typing errors were corrected. The next revision was checked again by peers before being finalized. Once the final version was created, another round of test surveys was done on 10 students. The data from these 10 students were used to test the SPSS analysis. When the SPSS analysis was found to be sound and applicable, real data collection was conducted.

A total of 316 students were surveyed. These students came from 11 different class sessions selected at random. The researchers requested permission and assistance from the class lecturers at The University of Cambodia. The class lecturers devoted some time for conducting the survey and collected the survey for the researcher at the end of the class. The

language used in the survey was in English and Khmer to ensure that all students fully understood the statements. After the survey was administered, the number of surveys returned for analysis was 292, equalling 92% of the desired population sample. After the surveys were collected, data was entered and analysed using SPSS 23 software.

### ***1.1. Population***

The University of Cambodia (UC) is one of the universities in Cambodia that provides courses in International Relations. According to the Office for Student Academic Affairs in term three, the total amount of students in the university is 1495. This number comprises undergraduate and postgraduate students and does not include students studying other programs provided by UC such as its Center for English Studies in term three. For this reason, the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students serves as the population size of the study.

### ***1.2. Sample size***

The total population of this study was one thousand and four hundred and ninety five (1495) students. However, a sample from that population was selected in order to ensure practicality. In order to meet the demands of practicality and reliability, the population sample needed to fulfil had a 95% level of confidence and 5% error margin. Based on these criteria, the sample size formula employed was calculated as below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne} \cdot 2 = \frac{1495}{1 + (1495)(0.05)} \cdot 2 = \frac{1495}{1 + 3.73} = \frac{1495}{4.73} = 316$$

N= total population; n=sample size; e=error

Therefore, based on the calculation, the sample size of this study is 316 students.

### ***1.3. Sample sampling techniques***

The sample sampling techniques (SST) was used to select the respondents in this study. As of the time of the study, there were nine weekday classes and six weekend classes for undergraduate and graduate students. Out of these classes, 11 were conveniently selected for

the survey, and the total students surveyed equalled 316. However, the research was able to obtain 292 responses from students for analysis.

#### ***1.4. Questionnaire design***

The questionnaire was designed into two parts. The first part covered demographical information in order to provide some background about the respondents. The second part covered the theme of the research and was divided into five subsections.

In the first part, demographic information included sex, age, marital status, occupation, birth of place, religion, monthly income, studying time, and study major. Each item either provided a range of choices for students to choose from, or had a blank for students to fill in.

In the second part, statements were categorized into different categories in the following order: economic/trade, conflict management, geopolitics, foreign policy, and benefits of Cambodia in the context of the South China Sea dispute. A Likert scale measurement was provided to respondents, so they could evaluate their opinions on the statements provided in the survey. The measurements ranged from 1 to 5, of which 1 equalled strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree.

In total, there were forty eight items used to explore students' perceptions on Cambodia's relations with China. These forty eight items were grouped into different subsections. Subsection A, covering economics/trade had 13 items. Subsection B, which covered conflict management, had eleven items. Subsection C, which was related to geopolitics, had six items. Subsection D, which covered perception on foreign policy had seven items. As for Subsection E, this section covered benefits Cambodia received and had eleven items

#### ***1.5. Statistical analysis of data***

To analyse the data, descriptive statistics was used. The percentage of frequencies, and the mean values were calculated. The software used to operate all these calculations was SPSS version 23.0. A Cronbach's alpha test was also done on the data to ensure reliability of the data. The overall score on the Cronbach's alpha test was 0.83. This makes the questionnaire answers reliable on more than 80% of the sample.

### III. Findings and Discussion

#### 1. Demographic information

##### 1.1. Gender and age range

The number of male students (55%) slightly exceeds that of female students (45%). However, this may be a result of available students at the time of the study, and does not affect the representativeness of the sample population. An overwhelming number of respondents are aged 18 to 24 (see Table 1 below). As the age range progresses, the number of students decrease. This age composition is reflective of university studies, where a majority of students are young adults.

Table 1: *Gender and age range of the respondents*

Categories	Features	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	155	55
	Female	127	45
Age	18 – 24	229	78.4
	25 – 31	42	14.4
	32 – 38	7	2.4
	39 – 44	3	1.0
	45 and above	1	0.3

##### 1.2. Education

A significant number of students are undergraduate students, and the number decreases as the level of education progresses. In fact, graduate students comprise less than 15% of the sample population (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Educational background of the respondents*

Educational Background	Percentage
Bachelor's	85.6
Master's	11.3
PhD	2.1

### ***1.3. General findings***

In general students are neutral regarding Cambodia's current relations with China. However, a majority agree that the current relationship with China is beneficial, while many disagreed that the current relationship is helpful to conflict management in the South China Sea dispute. Respondents were neutral on issues such as economy/trade, geopolitics, and foreign policy. A study of each sector reveals that the students views of Cambodia's relationship with China is generally positive, and that view can vary according to gender, and educational background

## **2. Analysis by sector**

### ***2.1. Perceptions on economy/trade***

Regarding the perceptions of students on economy and trade, students have a positive view in general. They believe the current relations can increase trade with China and will not decrease trade with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. They agree that Cambodia needs investment from China. While neutral on several issues, after separating the neutral responses, students expressed agreement and strong agreement on issues such as boosting economic growth in Southeast Asia, strengthening trade cooperation among ASEAN members, not affecting Cambodia's trade with EU, and needing investment with China. The negative comments from students include lost investment opportunities with the conflicting parties in ASEAN, the US, and Japan. They also see that ASEAN and China may use their economic aid to influence Cambodia.

### ***2.2. Perceptions on conflict management***

Regarding conflict management in the South China Sea dispute, students see the relationship with China as having a negative effect. However, they do not believe that Cambodia's relationship with China will lead to an armed conflict in the region. Yet they do not see the relationship as bringing peace and stability either. They disagree that Cambodia's relations with China will bring a win-win solution to the conflicting parties, minimize the dispute, prevent future wars, enable Cambodia to play as mediator, and use the relations as a model for conflict resolution. They also see a threat in China's rise. They believe the rise will affect conflict resolution mechanisms in the dispute, and can cause internal conflict in ASEAN. However, while most are neutral regarding US involvement in the South China Sea Conflict,



students who agree and strongly agree on conflict management believe the dispute can be resolved without US involvement.

### ***2.3. Perceptions on geopolitics***

Regarding geopolitics, Cambodian students see the importance of geography in the current situation. They believe Cambodia's location at the center of Southeast Asia is the reason China has relations with Cambodia. Furthermore, this convenient location makes Cambodia important for trade in ASEAN, and links the countries together. They believe both China and ASEAN respect Cambodia's right to making political decisions within the country. They also believe Cambodia must have good relations with both China and ASEAN.

### ***2.4. Perceptions on foreign policy***

Cambodian students are supportive of Cambodia's neutral stance regarding the South China Sea dispute, and believe this stance is consistent with ASEAN's norms. They do not believe this position will lead it to expulsion from ASEAN. However, they are neutral on whether Cambodia's relationship with China can strengthen cooperation with the ASEAN community. Even when splitting the opinions between those who either agreed/strongly agreed against those who disagreed/strongly disagreed, the opinions were almost evenly split at 26.45 and 24.6% respectively. They think that this stance may affect Cambodia's relations with Vietnam, and may lead to political and diplomatic pressure. Yet they also believe that Cambodia must have good relations with each other to strengthen their bond.

### ***2.5. Perceptions on benefits for Cambodia***

According to Cambodian students, Cambodia receives benefits from her relationship with China in terms of infrastructure development, human resources development, military capability, the number of exports to China, receiving more unconditional aid, and low interest loans. They are neutral regarding whether China's aid can shield Cambodia against Western pressure, with those on both sides of the spectrum almost evenly split. Those who strongly agreed/agreed consisted of 29.6% while those who disagreed/strongly disagreed consisted of 28.5%. The students were also neutral concerning whether China's aid improves good governance. However, by cancelling neutral responses, it was found that more Cambodian students agreed China helps improve good governance. Regarding democracy, Cambodian students were neutral but cancelling neutral responses reveal that more students agreed that

Cambodia's relations with China affects democracy. As for negative responses, Cambodian students believe that Cambodia is too dependent on aid from China.

### **3. Analysis by gender**

To measure whether there was a difference between the responses of males and females, an independent T-test was run and all items except 3 can be assumed to have equal variances. This allows for a good comparison between male and female respondents. In general, males agreed more than females regarding Cambodia's relationship in general. However, female respondents were more likely to view Cambodia's relations with China as affecting trade with other ASEAN countries, harming the free flow of goods in the region, and impacting trade with the EU. However, they also viewed the relations as a cause for boosting economic growth in the region, inducing other ASEAN nations, the US, and Japan to invest in Cambodia. More female respondents believed that Cambodia needed investment from ASEAN and that ASEAN could use economic aid to influence Cambodia.

Female respondents were also more positive than their counterparts regarding conflict management. More of them agreed that Cambodia's relations with China could pacify and stabilize the region, minimize the dispute, and prevent wars. Their views on foreign policy were consistent with this stance as more of them believed Cambodia's current relations with China could strengthen cooperation in ASEAN. Furthermore, they were more likely to report that Cambodia's relations with China could help protect Cambodia from Western pressure, and also believed China could help improve good governance.

In short, both genders have similar views. However, female respondents saw more opportunities in trade, and conflict resolution than their male counterparts. Apart from trade/economy and conflict resolution, males held more positive views about all other factors such as geopolitics, foreign affairs, and benefits. This divergence of view on trade/economy and conflict resolution is a pattern that may require an in-depth study on how women differ from men in terms of foreign policy affairs.

## **IV. Conclusion**

In general Cambodians have a positive view of Cambodia's relations with China, and Cambodia's neutral stance. However, they hold some reservations regarding China's

contribution towards democracy, and Cambodia's aid dependence. They also view that the relationship with China may affect trade with the US and Japan, and may even harm relations with neighboring countries. This may imply that Cambodian students prefer a balanced and pragmatic approach to foreign policy. They also perceive Cambodia as susceptible to outside influence, and believe all relationships require reciprocity. In other words, this paper proves the hypothesis that a section of the Cambodian population support Cambodia's stance and even see this stance as consistent with ASEAN norms.

The implication for this study is that Cambodians hold a pragmatic view regarding foreign affairs. They see all relations have benefits and drawbacks. For this reason, they view maintain good relations with the US, Japan, the EU, and ASEAN as equally important. They are also aware of the potential influence exerted by all countries who have a relationship with Cambodia. With everything being equal, all nations will try to induce Cambodia to acting in favor of their respective interests through aid. This reciprocal relationship seems to be viewed as a part of international relations, and the pursuit of national interests is normal. This attitude could explain why respondents acknowledged both the benefits and cost of aid dependence. It also explains why respondents are concerned about China's rise, but also believes the South China Sea dispute can be resolved without US involvement.

Further research is recommended regarding the differing gender-based attitudes towards foreign policy. This kind of research will provide a truly unique perspective in IR, and may provide useful insights on the individual level of analysis of IR such as how gender differences can reflect differing views in current issues such as ASEAN and the South China Sea dispute. It also provides a framework to examine the current norms, which were created in a male-dominated world. Such a study may provide useful insights on how to manage current problems differently.

In short, the study shows that a sample of Cambodians holds a nuanced view of foreign relations, and the views of academics do not necessarily represent the views of the general populace. However, the validity of expert views versus the views of the population regarding international relations deserves another study, and is not the focus of this study. The focus of this study is how the public views the current relations, and based on the views of the respondents compared to the view of experts, it can be seen that the public is perceptive of the current relations, and understanding their views on IR issues is well-deserved.

## **Acknowledgements**

This paper may be the result of the whole team, but this paper would not have been possible without the contributions of Professor Din Merican and Professor Sieng Sokha, who provided invaluable feedback through all the stages of completing this paper. We would also like to thank our peers, particularly Mr. Heng Kimkong, for the constant feedback that has allowed this paper to evolve into its final form.

## **The Authors**

Sopha IN is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations. Sopha has extensive experience in language assessment, instructional leadership, and TESOL. He is a lecturer, teacher trainer, and English instructor. Currently, he works at the American Education Center and Paññāsāstra International School. He can be reached at [sopha\\_in81@yahoo.com](mailto:sopha_in81@yahoo.com).

Matta KONG is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations. He currently teaches English at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. He can be reached at [kongmatta2017@gmail.com](mailto:kongmatta2017@gmail.com).

Panha PICH is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations. He is the Clinical Supervisor for Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Cambodia. He has extensive experience in psychology. He can be reached at [pichpanha@tpocambodia.org](mailto:pichpanha@tpocambodia.org).

Rortha CHUM is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations. He is a Vice Chief Human Resource Officer at the Personnel Department for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. He can be reached at [chum\\_rortha@yahoo.com](mailto:chum_rortha@yahoo.com).

## References

- Chheang, V. (2009). *Cambodia: Between China and Japan*. Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace.
- Ciorciari, J. D. (2013). *China and Cambodia: Patron and client?* IPC Working Paper Series No 121. Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. University of Michigan.
- Kosandi, M. (2014). Conflicts in the South China Sea and China-ASEAN economic interdependence: A challenge to cooperation. *ASEAN-Canada Research Partnership Working Paper Series: Working Paper No. 7*. Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- Leng, T. (2014, June 5). *Cambodia's betwixt and between foreign policy*. Retrieved September 13, 2016, from East Asia Forum: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/06/05/cambodias-betwixt-and-between-foreign-policy/>
- Long, K. (2009). *Sino-Cambodia relations*. Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace.
- Phoak, K. (2014, October 7). *Cambodia-China relations: Overcoming the trust deficit*. Retrieved September 12, 2016, from <http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/cambodia-china-relations-overcoming-the-trust-deficit/>
- Phoak, K. (2015, April 3). *Don't blame Cambodia for ASEAN inaction on South China Sea*. Retrieved September 13, 2016, from East Asia Forum: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/04/03/dont-blame-cambodia-for-asean-inaction-on-south-china-sea/>
- Radio Free Asia. (2016). *Cambodia-China: Timeline: A brief history of bilateral relations*. Retrieved August 25, 2016 from <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/chinacambodia/timeline.html>
- Sok, K. (2014, September 12). *Experts see cause for concern in Cambodia-China relationship*. Retrieved August 29, 2016, from Voice of America Cambodia <http://www.voacambodia.com/a/experts-see-cause-for-concern-in-cambodia-china-relationship/2447668.html>
- Sutter, R. (2013). *China-Southeast Asia relations: China gains and advances in South China Sea. Comparative Connections*.
- Thayer, C. A. (2009). *Background briefing: Vietnam and the South China Sea*. Thayer Consultancy.
- Thayer, C. A. (2013). *China's relations with Laos and Cambodia*. In J. H. Bae, & J. H. Ku, *China's internal and external relations and lessons for Korea and Asia* (pp.189-247). Seoul: Korean Institute for National Unification.
- Var, V. (2015, June 20). *Cambodia looks for middle ground in the South China Sea*. Retrieved September 13, 2016, from East Asia Forum:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/06/20/cambodia-looks-for-middle-ground-in-the-south-china-sea/>

Wai, A. (2016, July 28). *How should ASEAN deal with Cambodia*. Retrieved September 2016, 2016 from <http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/how-should-asean-deal-cambodia>

Weissmann, M. (2010). The South China Sea conflict and Sino-ASEAN relations: A study in conflict prevention and peace building. *ASEAN Perspective*, 35-69.

Appendix A

កម្រងសំណួរ

Questionnaire

ទស្សន ស្តីពីទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងកម្ពុជា និងចិន ចំពោះជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង

Perception on Cambodia-China Relations toward the South China Sea Dispute

ការណែនាំ: ការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះដើម្បីសិក្សាស្វែងយល់អំពី "ការយល់ឃើញរបស់និស្សិតនៃសកលវិទ្យាល័យកម្ពុជាលើទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងប្រទេសចិនចំពោះបញ្ហាជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង" ។ សូមលោក លោកស្រី អ្នកនាង កញ្ញា បំពេញនូវកម្រងសំណួរដែលមានដូចខាងក្រោម ហើយរាល់ព័ត៌មានទាំងឡាយរបស់លោកអ្នកនឹងត្រូវរក្សាការសំងាត់ ។ នៅពេលអ្នកបានបំពេញកម្រងសំណួរនេះចប់ សូមបញ្ជូនកម្រងសំណួរនេះត្រឡប់ទៅលោក គង់ មេត្តា ។ ប្រសិនបើអ្នកមានសំណួរ សូមមេត្តាទាក់ទងគាត់តាមលេខទូរស័ព្ទ ០៦៩ ៣៩១ ៣១៦ ឬក៏តាមរយៈអ៊ីម៉ែល [kongmatta2017@gmail.com](mailto:kongmatta2017@gmail.com). សូមអរគុណ។

ផ្នែកទី១ (Part I): ប្រជាសាស្ត្រ (Demography)

ភេទ (Sex): ប្រុស (Male):  ស្រី (Female):

អាយុ (Age): .....

ស្ថានភាពគ្រួសារ (Marital status): នៅលីវ (Single)  រៀបការ (Married)

លែងលះ (Divorced)  ពោះម៉ាយ ឬ មេម៉ាយ (Widow/Widower)

ផ្សេងៗ (Other)  .....

កម្រិតវប្បធម៌ (Educational background) :បរិញ្ញាបត្រ (Bachelor)

បរិញ្ញាបត្រជាន់ខ្ពស់ (Master)  បណ្ឌិត (Ph.D.)

មុខរបរ (Occupation): ការងារពេញម៉ោង (Full time job) ការងារក្រៅម៉ោង (Part Time job)

ទីកន្លែងកំណើត (Place of Birth) : .....

សាសនា (Religion): ព្រះពុទ្ធ (Buddhist) អ៊ីស្លាម (Muslim)

គ្រិស្តសាសនា (Christian)  ផ្សេងៗ (Others):.....

ប្រាក់ចំណូលប្រចាំខែ (Monthly Income): .....

ពេលសិក្សា (Studying time): ថ្ងៃធម្មតា (Week days) ចុងសប្តាហ៍ (Weekend)

មុខវិជ្ជា (Major): .....

**ផ្នែកទី២ (Part II) . កម្រងប្រយោគ (Statements)**

សូមអានកម្រងប្រយោគខាងក្រោមនេះ តើអ្នកយល់ស្រប ឬមិនយល់ស្របនឹងប្រយោគទាំងអស់នេះ កម្រិតណា? សូមគូសរង្វង់លើកម្រិតមាត្រដ្ឋានពី លេខ ១ ដល់ លេខ ៥ ដែល ៖

១= មិនយល់ស្របខ្លាំងណាស់ ២=មិនយល់ស្រប ៣=អព្យាក្រឹត ៤=យល់ស្រប

៥=យល់ស្របខ្លាំងណាស់ (Please read statements below, how much do you agree with the statements below? Circle the number that best fits your idea)

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

<b>A. Perception on Economy/Trade</b>						
1.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជានិងចិនអាចបង្កើនពាណិជ្ជកម្មកម្ពុជាជាមួយនិងប្រទេសចិន Cambodia-China relations can increase Cambodia's trade with China	1	2	3	4	5
2.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចកាត់បន្ថយពាណិជ្ជកម្មជាមួយប្រទេសសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ដូចជាប្រទេសវៀតណាម ហ្វីលីពីន ម៉ាឡេស៊ី និងប្រទេសប្រ៊ុយណេ។ Cambodia-China relations can decrease Cambodia's trade with ASEAN countries such as: Vietnam, Philippine, Malaysia, and Brunei	1	2	3	4	5
3.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងប្រទេសចិនអាចបង្កើនសេដ្ឋកិច្ចនៅអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia-China relations can boost economic growth in Southeast Asia	1	2	3	4	5
4.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចប៉ះពាល់លំហូរទំនិញដោយសេរីនៅក្នុងតំបន់សមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia-China relations can harm free flow of goods in ASEAN	1	2	3	4	5
5.	ការកើនឡើងសេដ្ឋកិច្ចរបស់ប្រទេសចិនអាចជួយពង្រឹងកិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការពាណិជ្ជកម្មក្នុងចំណោមសមាជិកនៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ China's economic rise can strengthen the trade cooperation among ASEAN members	1	2	3	4	5
6.	ភាគីទំនាស់ទាំងបួននៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ (វៀតណាម ហ្វីលីពីន ឥណ្ឌូនេស៊ី និង ប្រ៊ុយណេ) ចង់វិនិយោគនៅកម្ពុជាដោយសារតែប្រទេសកម្ពុជាមានទំនាក់ទំនងល្អជាមួយប្រទេសចិន Four ASEAN conflicting parties (Vietnam, Philippine, Indonesia and Brunei) in South China Sea will want to invest in Cambodia because of Cambodia-China relation	1	2	3	4	5
7.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិននឹងធ្វើឲ្យប៉ះពាល់ទៅលើពាណិជ្ជកម្មរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងសហគមន៍អឺរ៉ុប Cambodia-China relation will give	1	2	3	4	5



	the negative impact on Cambodia-EU trade					
8.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិននឹងផ្តល់ឱកាសដល់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកដើម្បីធ្វើវិនិយោគនៅកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation will give opportunity for United States to invest in Cambodia	1	2	3	4	5
9.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិននឹងផ្តល់ឱកាសដល់ប្រទេសជប៉ុនដើម្បីធ្វើវិនិយោគនៅកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation will give opportunity for Japan to invest in Cambodia	1	2	3	4	5
10.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាត្រូវការវិនិយោគទុនពីប្រទេសចិន Cambodia needs investment from China	1	2	3	4	5
11.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាត្រូវការវិនិយោគទុនពីប្រទេសនៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia needs investment from other ASEAN nations	1	2	3	4	5
12.	ប្រទេសជាសមាជិកនៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ផ្សេងទៀតប្រើប្រាស់ជំនួយសេដ្ឋកិច្ចក្នុងការបញ្ចុះបញ្ចូលកម្ពុជាដើម្បីសម្រេចគោលបំណងរបស់ខ្លួន Other ASEAN countries use its economic aid to persuade Cambodia to follow its goals	1	2	3	4	5
13.	ប្រទេសចិនប្រើប្រាស់ជំនួយសេដ្ឋកិច្ចរបស់ខ្លួនក្នុងការបញ្ចុះបញ្ចូលកម្ពុជាដើម្បីសម្រេចគោលបំណងរបស់ខ្លួន China uses its economic aid to persuade Cambodia follow its goal	1	2	3	4	5

**B. Perception on Conflict Management**

14.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចនាំឱ្យមានទំនាស់ប្រដាប់អាវុធនៅក្នុងទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China relation can lead to armed conflict in South China Sea	1	2	3	4	5
15.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចនាំមកនូវសន្តិភាព និងស្ថេរភាពនៅក្នុងតំបន់ក្នុងទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China relation can bring peace and stability in region on the South China Sea dispute	1	2	3	4	5
16.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចនាំមកនូវដំណោះស្រាយឈ្នះៗចំពោះសមាជិកនៃទំនាស់របស់សមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ក្នុងជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China relation can bring a win-win solution to the disputing members in ASEAN on South China Sea	1	2	3	4	5
17.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចបន្ថយទំនាស់នៅតំបន់ទាក់ទងនឹងទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China relations can minimize the dispute in the region regarding to the South China Sea conflict	1	2	3	4	5
18.	ទំនាក់ទំនងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចទប់ស្កាត់មិនអោយមានសង្គ្រាម	1	2	3	4	5

	នៅតំបន់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូងនៅពេលអនាគត Cambodia-China relations can prevent future wars in the South China Sea					
19.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាអាចដើរតួនាទីជាអ្នកសម្របសម្រួលក្នុងការដោះស្រាយទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia can play as a mediator to solve the South China Sea dispute	1	2	3	4	5
20.	សេដ្ឋកិច្ច និងកិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចជាគំរូមួយក្នុងការដោះស្រាយទំនាស់នៅក្នុងទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China economic and cooperation can be a model for conflict resolution in the South China Sea	1	2	3	4	5
21.	ការងើបឡើងនៃប្រទេសចិនអាចគំរាមគំហែងសន្តិសុខក្នុងតំបន់ទាក់ទងទៅនឹងទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង The rise of China can threaten security in the region on South China Sea dispute	1	2	3	4	5
22.	ការកើនឡើងនៃសេដ្ឋកិច្ចរបស់ប្រទេសចិនអាចមានឥទ្ធិពលក្នុងការអនុវត្តន៍យន្តការដោះស្រាយទំនាស់ក្នុងជំលោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង China's economic rise may affect the implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms in the South China Sea	1	2	3	4	5
23.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចបណ្តាលឲ្យមានទំនាស់ផ្ទៃក្នុងនៃសមាជិករបស់សមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia-China relations can cause internal dispute among ASEAN members	1	2	3	4	5
24.	ការដោះស្រាយទំនាស់ចំពោះជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូងអាចដោះស្រាយបានដរាបណាគ្មានការចូលរួមពីសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក The South China Sea conflict can be resolved without US involvement	1	2	3	4	5

<b>C. Perception on Geopolitics</b>						
25.	ប្រទេសចិនជ្រើសរើសប្រទេសកម្ពុជាជាដៃគូពីព្រោះតែប្រទេសកម្ពុជាស្ថិតនៅចំកណ្តាលនៃតំបន់អាស៊ីភាគខាងកើត China chooses Cambodia as partnership because it is located at the center of Southeast Asia	1	2	3	4	5
26.	ទីតាំងភូមិសាស្ត្ររបស់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាគឺមានសារៈសំខាន់សម្រាប់ពាណិជ្ជកម្មកម្ពុជារបស់សមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍នៅក្នុងតំបន់ Cambodia's location is important for ASEAN trade in the region	1	2	3	4	5
27.	ទីតាំងភូមិសាស្ត្ររបស់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា គឺមានសារៈសំខាន់ក្នុងការផ្សារភ្ជាប់ទៅនឹងប្រទេសក្នុងតំបន់អាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia's location is important to link Southeast Asia countries in the region	1	2	3	4	5
28.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាត្រូវការទំនាក់ទំនងល្អជាមួយនឹងប្រទេសជាសមាជិកដទៃទៀតនៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ Cambodia needs good relations with other ASEAN members	1	2	3	4	5

29.	ប្រទេសចិនគោរពសិទ្ធិរបស់រដ្ឋាភិបាលកម្ពុជាក្នុងការសម្រេចចិត្តលើទិសដៅនយោបាយរបស់ខ្លួន China respects the Cambodian government's right to decide on the country's political destiny	1	2	3	4	5
30.	ប្រទេសជាសមាជិកនៃសមាគមន៍ប្រជាជាតិអាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍គោរពសិទ្ធិរបស់រដ្ឋាភិបាលកម្ពុជាក្នុងការសម្រេចចិត្តលើទិសដៅនយោបាយរបស់ខ្លួន ASEAN respects the Cambodian government's right to decide on the country's political destiny	1	2	3	4	5

**D. Perception on Foreign Policy**

31.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចពង្រឹងកិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការជាមួយសហគមន៍អាស៊ាន Cambodia-China relations can strengthen cooperation within ASEAN community	1	2	3	4	5
32.	ជំហរអព្យាក្រឹតរបស់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាលើបញ្ហាទំនាស់សមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូងគឺឈរលើធម្មនុញ្ញ និងក្រមរបស់សមាគមន៍អាស៊ាន Cambodia's neutral position on the South China Seas dispute is consistent with ASEAN's norms and constitution	1	2	3	4	5
33.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនត្រូវតែមានទំនាក់ទំនងល្អជាមួយគ្នាទៅវិញទៅមកដើម្បីពង្រឹងការទូត គោលនយោបាយការបរទេស និងកិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការអន្តរជាតិ Cambodia and China must have good relations with each other in order to strengthen their diplomacy, foreign policy and international cooperation.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចធ្វើឲ្យបែកបាក់ចំណងមិត្តភាពរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងវៀតណាមទាក់ទងទៅនឹងជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-China relations can break down Cambodia's friendship with Vietnam on the South China Sea dispute	1	2	3	4	5
35.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចបណ្តាលឲ្យមានសំពាធនយោបាយ និងការទូតពីប្រទេសវៀតណាមចំពោះជំហររបស់កម្ពុជាទាក់ទងជម្លោះសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូង Cambodia-Cambodia-China relations can result in political and diplomatic pressures from Vietnam because of the South China Sea dispute	1	2	3	4	5
36.	ជំហរអព្យាក្រឹតរបស់កម្ពុជាចំពោះបញ្ហាសមុទ្រចិនខាងត្បូងគឺជាជំរើសមួយដ៏ត្រឹមត្រូវសម្រាប់កម្ពុជា Cambodia's neutral stance towards South China Sea dispute is the right choice	1	2	3	4	5
37.	ប្រទេសសមាជិកអាស៊ានផ្សេងទៀតនឹងចង់ឲ្យកម្ពុជាចាកចេញពីសមាគមន៍នេះដោយសារតែកម្ពុជាមានទំនាក់ទំនងល្អរបស់កម្ពុជាជាមួយចិន Other ASEAN members will want Cambodia to leave ASEAN because of Cambodia's good relations with China	1	2	3	4	5

<b>E. Perception on Benefit of Cambodia</b>						
38.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និង ចិនគឺជួយឲ្យប្រទេសកម្ពុជាអភិវឌ្ឍន៍លើ ហេដ្ឋារចនាសម្ព័ន្ធរបស់ប្រទេសដូចជា ការកសាងវារីអគ្គិសនី ការសាងផ្លូវថ្នល់ និងស្ពានជាដើម Cambodia-China relations can make Cambodia able to improve infrastructure development such hydroelectricity, roads, bridges.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចបង្កើនជំនួយបន្ថែមទៀតពីប្រទេស ចិនក្នុងការបណ្តុះបណ្តាលធនធានមនុស្សរបស់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation can increase China's aid for human resources in Cambodia	1	2	3	4	5
40.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចជួយពង្រឹងសមត្ថភាព និងជំនាញ ផ្នែកយោធាដល់កងទ័ពកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation can strengthen Cambodia's military capability and competency	1	2	3	4	5
41.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនជួយកម្ពុជាក្នុងការកាត់បន្ថយសំពាធនយោបាយ និងបញ្ហាសិទ្ធិមនុស្សពីប្រទេសលោកខាងលិច Cambodia-China relation help Cambodia from Western's political and human right pressure	1	2	3	4	5
42.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចពង្រឹងអភិបាលកិច្ចល្អដល់ ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation can improve good governance in Cambodia	1	2	3	4	5
43.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចបង្កើនការនាំចេញផលិតផលពី ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាទៅប្រទេសចិន Cambodia-China relation can increase Cambodia's export to China	1	2	3	4	5
44.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចជួយបង្កើនជំនួយបន្ថែមទៀតពី ប្រទេសចិនដោយគ្មានលក្ខខណ្ឌ Cambodia-China relation can improve China's aid to Cambodia without conditions	1	2	3	4	5
45.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចកាត់បន្ថយលទ្ធិប្រជាធិបតេយ្យ នៅកម្ពុជា Cambodia-China relation decrease democracy in Cambodia	1	2	3	4	5
46.	ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិនអាចជួយបង្កើនប្រាក់កម្ចីពីប្រទេសចិន ដោយអត្រាការប្រាក់ទាប Cambodia-China relation can increase loan from China with low interest	1	2	3	4	5
47.	ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាពឹងផ្អែកច្រើនណាស់ទៅលើជំនួយ និងប្រាក់កម្ចីពី ប្រទេសចិន ច្រើនពេក Cambodia depends too much on China's aid and loan	1	2	3	4	5
48.	សម្ព័ន្ធភាពផ្នែកនយោបាយ និងទំនាក់ទំនងការទូតរវាងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា និងចិន គឺអាចមានផលប៉ះពាល់ដល់កម្ពុជាក្នុងការអនុវត្តន៍គោលការណ៍លទ្ធិប្រជាធិបតេយ្យនៅកម្ពុជារយៈពេលយូរអង្វែង Cambodia-China on political alliance	1	2	3	4	5

	and diplomacy is harmful in implementation of democracy principles in Cambodia in the long term					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

មតិយោបល់ (Comment)

.....

.....

.....

សូមអរគុណ (Thank you).

This page intentionally left blank

# **Perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China**

**Heng Kimkong, Toch Sothiary, Sao Chantola, Chet Vathanak, Chan Dararasmeay  
The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

## **Abstract**

Cambodia's foreign policy options after 1993 have been a subject of heated discussion amongst researchers, politicians, teachers, students, and the general public. Research has also shown that Cambodian foreign policy has been swaying from side to side, with China tending to carry greater weight on Cambodia's foreign policy continuum. Accordingly, this study explores the perception of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy towards the United States and China. Using quantitative research design, 500 university students in Cambodia were randomly selected to participate in a three-page questionnaire survey designed to explore their perspectives on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China. Descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS 23.0 shows that despite the massive flow of China's unconditional (no strings attached) aid to Cambodia, a large majority of the Cambodian students surveyed feel positive toward the presence of the US and wish to see Cambodia having better foreign policy relations with this Western superpower in the future. Moreover, it was found that although Cambodian university students have a relatively low to moderate understanding of Cambodia's foreign policy, almost all of them acknowledge the necessity that Cambodia should take a flexible route with regard to her foreign policy choices in order to reap the most benefits. This study helps to fill the gap in literature on Cambodia's foreign policy. In addition, this study has implications specifically for classroom teachers, curriculum developers, researchers, and policy makers whose work involves Cambodian foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Cambodia's foreign policy; Foreign policy toward the US and China

## **I. Introduction**

There has recently been a lot of discussion in relation to the influence of the superpowers, particularly the US and China, on Cambodian foreign policy. Different views amongst scholars, researchers and policy makers on Cambodian foreign policy relations toward the US and China are not uncommon. This has led to questioning by the Cambodian public as to

which option – the US or China – will be more beneficial for Cambodia in terms of contribution to Cambodian national interests.

Many scholars argue that more linkage with the US significantly impacts on the development of good governance in respect of human rights and democracy in the country. This linkage was after the Cambodian political reform in 1993. Many US-funded projects have been implemented by many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and government agencies on healthcare, education, democracy and good governance. The US has continued its relations with Cambodia up to now by providing aid to these sectors. For instance, US foreign assistance in these sectors was \$77.6 million USD dollars in 2014 (US Department of States, 2016).

However, some view the Cambodia-China relations as having a more positive and optimistic impact on Cambodian development. This can be demonstrated by the fact that most foreign direct investments (FDI) and capital investment in the country are owned by the Chinese. Moreover, as a non-traditional donor, China has been the largest donor providing loans to Cambodia and has significantly contributed to development areas such as infrastructure, transportation, energy, and government related activities over the past ten years (Ek & Sok, 2008). The gradually-increasing amount of Chinese financing assistance to Cambodia has been particularly notable. From 1997 to 2001, China provided Cambodia with US\$40 million in aid, more than US\$200 million in loans and at least US\$3 million for military support (Long, 2009). Recently, China announced grant aid of about \$USD 600 million dollars for three years from 2016 to 2018 (Sok, 2016). Even though Western donors have provided Cambodia with substantial amount of aid, Chinese aid has been given to Cambodia without any conditions, best known as “no-strings-attached” aid (Long, 2009).

However, some Cambodians with expertise in Cambodia's foreign policy-related subjects and who are also assumed to be foreign policy experts and political office holders, provide different perceptions regarding Cambodia's foreign policy relations toward the US and China.

They contend that Cambodia should act in a rational way in terms of its international relations and should have a balanced strategic relationship towards the US and China. In addition, they believe that the balancing of Cambodian relations with the US and China is highly important because these two superpowers could definitely contribute to the socio-economic



development of Cambodia. These distinct views on Cambodia's foreign policy relations with the two superpowers have caused heated controversy among the public in general and Cambodian university students in particular.

The views of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy relations with the US and China have never been more uncertain. Such uncertainties have been reinforced by a wide range of geopolitical issues in the Southeast Asia region that are derived from the competition for regional power and influence between the US and China. For example, the stance of Cambodia on the South China Sea dispute has led many Cambodian college students to become skeptical about whether or not Cambodia's pro-Chinese position could bring more or less national interests to the kingdom.

This question also raises another about the extent to which Cambodian university students understand Cambodia's foreign policy relations with the superpowers, particularly the US and China. This present analysis, which employed a cross-sectional study using survey methodology, was therefore initiated not only to seek answers to the question above but to explore the perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China. The views of university students on foreign policy, either in a positive or negative sense, are crucial for a better understanding of political dynamics in Cambodia. The empirical findings of this survey will provide an insightful notion and a milestone for Cambodian policy makers in both the foreign policy and education sectors to reconsider Cambodia's foreign policy maneuver and to incorporate Cambodia's foreign policy studies into higher education curriculums.

## **1. Research objectives**

The following are the objectives of the present research:

1. To discover the understanding of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China;
2. To explore the perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China;
3. To investigate the different views of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy relations with the US and China.

## **2. Research questions**

This research attempts to answer the following key research questions:

1. To what extent do Cambodian university students understand Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China?
2. What are the perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China?
3. What are the different views of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy relations with the US and China?

## **II. Literature Review**

### **1. The principles of Cambodia's foreign policy**

Cambodia is situated in Indochina – the region rocked by war after the French colonization came to an end. After gaining independence from France in 1953, Cambodia was in a position to align herself with neither capitalist nor communist regimes. Two major rivals, the US and China wanted to dominate Cambodia and place this country under the sphere of their political influence. With a view to attaining peace and enhancing the national interests, Cambodia had to adopt an overarching policy to balance herself between the West and the East. Cambodia's position on this continuum has significantly impacted on Cambodia's development today.

Cambodia's foreign policy generally lies on the principle of neutrality and non-alignment. Such a neutral policy was successfully implemented during Sihanouk's short-lived regime in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the policy faced a fiasco because of Prince Sihanouk's irrational decision to align with the North Vietnamese (Gordon, 1965; Leifer, 1967), leading to the demise of his regime and the intervening years of war until the late 1990s. Although the policy failed, its theory and successes are still widely recognized and considered to be conducive to the changes that took place in the regional and international political and economic systems after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, Cambodia has adopted this policy again, as can be reflected in the new Cambodian constitution promulgated in 1993. The formation of this policy is based upon three domains of policy work: strategic, operational and responsive.

In this regard, a number of studies into Cambodia's foreign policy were conducted. In his study, Smith (1965) analyses the complexities of the relations with global powers Cambodia had to deal with. He asserts that Prince Sihanouk adopted a neutral foreign policy to cope with security dilemmas that were caused by the confrontation of the superpowers. In that time, the neutrality of foreign policy was the fundamental footprint for security and war prevention (Gordon, 1965).

Similarly, Leifer (1967) provides an analytical study of Cambodia's foreign policy when Prince Sihanouk's government struggled with national security. This study demonstrates how foreign policy leadership prevented the country from wars, and the policy of neutrality was rational during that time, even although the strategies of Prince Sihanouk were not based on the holding principles of the policy. This was due to the fact that while Sihanouk proclaimed the neutrality Cambodia, he at the same time had contact with the communists in Vietnam. This had drawn Cambodia into the battlefield of the Vietnam War. With reference to this issue, Pilch (1998) further argues and explains that the main justification of Cambodian foreign policy at that time was the preservation of integrity and independence of the Cambodian nation, in the face of the hostility of its neighbors, much larger in size, and the confrontation between world powers in the region.

Another study by Brown and Zasloff (1998) in search of peace during the Vietnamese military occupation in Cambodia shows that most of the goals which had been achieved were greatly influenced by larger superpowers and international institutions. Despite little emphasis on Cambodian foreign policy, the study highlights a milestone of Cambodia's relations with other larger countries, particularly the US and other regional superpowers which led to the establishment of Paris Peace Agreement in 1991.

In a qualitative study into Cambodia's foreign policy and ASEAN, Kao (2002) provides an analytical discussion of the efforts made by the Cambodia's government to achieve regional integration. In the study, he envisions that Cambodia will benefit from this integration in terms of foreign policy and socio-economic development. He further underscored that Cambodia can even diversify trade opportunities and bilateral relations with other regional and global powers to limit the threats from foreign invasion (Kao, 2002).

Cambodia's neutral foreign policy, therefore, has been formulated to cope with both national and international trends. Cambodia has placed the highest importance on the development of sustainable peace and stability in the country as well as the political and economic integration into the regional and international communities.

## **2. Cambodian relations with the US**

Cambodian relations with the US can be traced back to Prince Sihanouk's regime. In the year before the Second World War, Cambodia's presence was insignificant; however, this changed, as the Cold War pressured Cambodia to cope with the competition between the superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. There was at that time no American diplomatic presence in the kingdom, although representatives from the consulate in Saigon sometimes traveled to Cambodia for field reports. When the U.S established diplomatic recognition of Cambodia in 1950, it did so not so much to contest French colonialism, but rather to protect Southeast Asia and its own interests from communist expansion (Clymer, 2013).

The Cambodian-American relations were often faced with trouble as Sihanouk was forced to join the battle against communism, but he made an effort to keep his country out of the Cold War (Clymer, 2004). Sihanouk then decided to break diplomatic relations with the US in 1965 (Lum, 2009). However, diplomatic relations with the US were later restored in 1969, after which time the US conducted a four-year, sustained and large scale bombing campaign in Cambodia which was aimed at destroying North Vietnamese troops in the country (Lum, 2009).

In 1970, Sihanouk was overthrown by a coup while he was on a mission overseas for diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. General Lon Nol with his associate, Sirik Matak, then seized power in Cambodia (Chandler, 1991). The Paris Agreement in January 1973, which ended the Vietnam War, proposed the withdrawal of foreign troops from Cambodia but massive B-52 and F-111 bombings of Cambodia still continued despite the ceasefire (Birds, 2012). The US bombing of Cambodia between 1969 and 1973, according to Kiernan (1989), killed between 50,000 and 150,000 people.

Cambodia was then fully committed as a client state of the US who was the largest financing source for Cambodian military support of Lon Nol's government. The US used Cambodian

armed forces to counter the communist Vietnamese troops (Omar, 2016). This was partly regarded as America's anti-communist containment policy in the Southeast Asian region (Chew, 2009). However, it is worth noting that after the coup, Sihanouk had reluctantly formed an alliance with the Cambodian communist party, which later transformed itself into the Khmer Rouge. This resulted in civil war between the two groups in the country, culminating in the defeat of Lon Nol on 17 April 1975 by the Khmer Rouge (Lum, 2009). During the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia adopted an isolationist foreign policy and cut itself off from the rest of the world, except China and a few other countries (Kao, 2002). Thus, Cambodia under Pol Pot leadership had no relations with the US.

Following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, power was replaced by the Vietnamese-supported government, called the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), which was later changed to the State of Cambodia (SOC). Despite conquering most parts of the country, the new government could not have even nominal control over the whole territory of Cambodia until the Khmer Rouge forces were driven out to the northwest provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap and Oddar Meanchey (Slocomb, 2003). However, the civil war between the Khmer Rouge forces and the government still continued. The Khmer Rouge forces based along the Thai border allied with two smaller non-communist parties and called themselves the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). The US and other nations did not recognize the government dominated by Vietnam, which was in turn supported by the Soviet Union, but claimed that the CGDK was the legitimate government of Cambodia until 1992 (Kiernan, 1999; Picken, 2011).

After the 1993 election, the relations between the US and Cambodia had been gradually renormalized. The US policy toward Cambodia focused on communism resistance, human rights, and democratic governance (Lum, 2009). However, failing to promote human rights and democratic governance has been a constant source of friction in relations between the US and Cambodia. It is worth noting that the US-Cambodia relations were improved by the political stability in 2006 and the US interests in working with Cambodia to counter the spread of terrorism narratives and China's growing economic influence in the region.

As part of the US policy towards Asia, the Obama administration recently tried to reestablish good relations with Cambodia. The US high-level officials including President Barack

Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Secretary of Defense, and First Lady Michelle Obama visited Cambodia, in part, to strengthen America's relations with Cambodia. More importantly, the US government supported the Cambodian military through naval port visits, joint exercises and military assistance. In addition, the US is the largest foreign market for Cambodian goods, accounting for about half of the country's garment exports. In fact, the garment sector accounts for 80 percent of Cambodia's exports, most of which go to the US and Europe (Millar, 2016). Cambodia is also the fifth-largest recipient of US foreign aid in Southeast Asia (Cheunboran, 2015b). According to the US state department, the US provided Cambodia with more than US\$77.6 million in aid for programs in health, education, governance, and economic growth in 2014 – just over a tenth of what China pledged to Cambodia in the same year (Millar, 2016).

It has been obvious that the relations between Cambodia and the US have often been stressful. This is due to the fact that the latter usually put much pressure on the former to align with its policy and interests. During the Cold War, for example, the US tried to place Cambodia under its influence and forced it to join a fierce battle to counter communist insurgencies in the region. However, the US interest to engage with Cambodia after the political reform in 1993 has changed. Not only has the US provided much aid to Cambodia for socio-economic development in specific sectors such as education, health, human rights and democratic governance, but it is also the main foreign market for Cambodian garment and textiles. The US, through its aid and assistance, wishes to promote human rights and good governance and to counter China's growing influence in Cambodia (Lum, 2009).

### **3. Cambodian relations with China**

Cambodia has historically enjoyed friendly relations with China. Cambodia-China ties were significantly strengthened after Cambodia gained independence from France in 1953, due to the fact that Prince Sihanouk recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1958 and supported the PRC's campaign at the United Nations to remove the Republic of China (i.e. Taiwan) from having a seat in the UN (Phou, n.d ). Most importantly, Sihanouk had a good relationship with Chinese leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. The relationship blossomed when Sihanouk engaged and entertained the Chinese ambitions in Southeast Asia as a counterbalance to the Cold War being extended by

the Soviet Union and the United States in Indochina (Hunt, 2011). Thus, China not only supported Pol Pot but also kept a good relationship with the exiled Prince Sihanouk and showed its commitment to the reconciliation of Cambodia through the establishment of a four-party government (Gottesman, 2003) but had no relations with the Vietnamese-supported government (Brown & Zasloff, 1998).

Toward the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relations between Cambodia and China were further improved. After the Cambodian political crisis in 1997, for instance, China became Cambodia's closest ally and provided the most financial assistance for Cambodia's economic development, overtaking Western donors (Ek & Sok, 2008). Chinese aid to Cambodia has been steadily increasing over a decade, with President Xi Jinping pledging between US\$500 million and US\$700 million annually – a significant increase from less than \$100m in 2007 (Millar, 2016). By way of this enormous financial assistance, China has in return gained Cambodia's full support and loyalty to many international issues, particularly the issue concerning the South China Sea dispute. Moreover, China in 2014 became Cambodia's largest foreign investor, reportedly worth US\$10 billion and development assistance totaling over US\$3 billion (Cheunboran, 2015a). In this respect, China has been seen as a more trustful friend of Cambodia than the US in terms of development assistance, security, and sovereignty.

According to Millar (2016), Chinese economic aid is a combination of grants and loans which are aimed at supporting projects in agriculture, mining, garment production and the energy sector as well as roads and bridges across the country. Most Chinese giant state corporations have invested billions of dollars in dams, oilfields, highways, textile operations, and mines, and it is the low-profile, family-owned Chinese firms which have come to dominate the Cambodian investment landscape (Hutt, 2016). Even though there are some criticisms about the fact that Cambodian investment is largely controlled by Chinese investors, China's money and infrastructure development have significantly contributed to the economic advancement in Cambodia (Phal, 2016). Most currently, during the Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Cambodia, a total of 31 cooperation documents were signed to deepen the traditional friendship between the two countries. Both countries then promised to work harder to further enhance their bilateral ties and strengthen their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership (Xinhua, 2016).

To sum up, the relations between Cambodia and China have become mutually satisfactory. China in this respect has provided Cambodia with the most financial assistance in the form of loans, aid and foreign direct investment, the amount of which surpasses those of Western donors, particularly investment by the United States. Cambodia in return has tacitly and consistently supported China on the international stage, a move China very much appreciates. This act of reciprocity will continue to exist for some time to come as long as China adheres to its non-interference principle, leaving Cambodia's internal affairs intact, and while Cambodia remains China's faithful friend and reliable partner.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **1. Research participants and settings**

The participants in this study are 500 university students who are pursuing their higher education in Phnom Penh city, Cambodia. The students were randomly selected to participate in questionnaire surveys designed to explore their perspectives on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the United States and China. It should be noted that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and anonymous, and all participants were well informed in advance about the purpose of the study and the nature of their free participation before they decided to participate in the survey.

#### **2. Research instruments**

This study employs a quantitative research design (Creswell, 2013) which relies entirely on questionnaire surveys to collect data to answer the research questions. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) comprises 26 multiple choice questions with some 5-point Likert scale responses and is divided into four main parts, including (1) participants' demographic data, (2) their understanding of Cambodia's foreign policy, (3) their perception on the presence of the US in Cambodia, and (4) their perception on the Chinese presence in Cambodia. Besides the questionnaires, content analysis was also used in the study to better understand Cambodian relations with the US and China and to explore related literature on the subject under investigation.



### **3. Data collection and analysis**

To improve the quality and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a group of students at the University of Cambodia to check whether the questionnaire questions could be easily understood to avoid possible misinterpretations of the questions. After the questionnaire had been edited and finalized, with comments received from the pilot study, 500 questionnaires were randomly administered to university students who are taking their undergraduate and graduate studies at universities in Phnom Penh. 484 questionnaires were returned, a good 96.8% response rate. The data from the questionnaires received were then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 23.0). The study uses descriptive statistics to seek answers for the research questions.

### **4. Research ethics**

All the participants in this study were well-informed of their anonymity in the study and in the research report. Moreover, prior to their participation in the survey, they were ensured that, under any circumstances, their participation in the study would not cause any negative consequences to them or to their study.

## **IV. Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Cambodian university students' understanding of Cambodia's foreign policy**

Four hundred and eighty-four Cambodian university students responded to the questionnaire, a near 100 per cent response rate (96.8%). The profile of the participants in this research can be found in Table 1.

When asked how much they knew about Cambodia's foreign policy, 33.1 per cent answered that their knowledge of Cambodian foreign policy was between 0 to 20 per cent, while 32.4 per cent identified themselves as being 21 to 40 per cent knowledgeable about Cambodia's foreign policy. Moreover, 24.9 per cent selected between 41 to 60 per cent as their knowledge base of Cambodian foreign policy, whereas only a small percentage of respondents (8.1%) claiming to know more than 60 per cent about Cambodia's foreign policy.

Table 1: *Participant profiles* (n = 484)

<b>Features</b>	<b>Profiles (%)</b>
Gender	Female (52.1); Male (47.9)
Age	16-20 (22.1); 21-25 (64.3); 26-30 (10.1); 31-35 (1.9); 36 and above (1)
Level of education	Associate degree (5.4) Bachelor's degree (80.8) Master's degree (10.3) Doctoral degree (2.1) Missing (1.4)
Year of study	Year 1 (15.7) Year 2 (30.2) Year 3 (27.5) Year 4 (25.8) Missing (0.8)
Employment	Yes (49.4) No (36.6) Missing (14)
Ever taken courses on Cambodia's foreign policy	Yes (40.3) No (56.6) Missing (3.1)
Major of study	Arts and education (30.8) Business-related (28.5) International Relations (15.7) Social sciences (14.9) Science and engineering (7.4) Missing (2.7)

In a similar question, the university student participants were asked about their knowledge of Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China and whether they think foreign policy is important for Cambodia. Their responses are shown in Table 2.

In addition, when asked whether Cambodian foreign policy plays an important role for national development, 24.1 per cent strongly agreed and a further 44.9 per cent agreed, while 21.4 chose neutral. When asked whether Cambodian foreign policy helps improve Cambodia's economic development, 49.3 per cent agreed and 29.6 strongly agreed. Only 3.9 per cent disagreed and one per cent strongly disagreed, which is unsurprising. The university

students surveyed also see the significance of Cambodian foreign policy relations with other superpowers such as the US and China as ensuring Cambodian security; 37.3% of them agreed and 16.2% strongly agreed. However, a relatively high percentage of students (35.3%) were neutral on this proposition, while 10.2 per cent disagreed.

Table 2: *Cambodian university students’ knowledge of Cambodia’s foreign policy toward the US and China* (n = 484)

Features	Responses (%)
Importance of foreign policy for Cambodia	Very important (40.7) Important (50.9) Not important (2.5) Do not know (4.6)
Knowledge of Cambodia’s foreign policy toward the US and China	0-20 per cent (30.2) 21-40 per cent (31.5) 41-60 per cent ( 25) More than 60 per cent (12.1)

An interesting finding regards the neutrality and flexibility of Cambodia’s foreign policy. 39.6 per cent agreed and 27.4 per cent strongly agreed that Cambodian foreign policy should be neutral, while at the same time a large number of students (35.8% agreed and 35.3% strongly agreed) believed that Cambodian foreign policy should be flexible. This is interesting since the majority of university students wish their country to have either neutral or flexible foreign policy. This view is supported by Leng’s (2016) analysis of a small state diplomacy. Small states need to use a variety of strategies which could range from economic pragmatism, limited bandwagoning, binding engagement and soft-balancing.

**2. The US and China: Which one is for Cambodia?**

Two key survey questions sought to explore the different views of Cambodian university students on Cambodia’s foreign policy toward the US and China. In the first question, when asked which country between the US and China now has closer relations with Cambodia, a high 81.7 per cent chose China; while the US stood at only 18.3 per cent. Conversely, in the second question, when asked which country they want Cambodia to have closer relations with in the future, a large majority of respondents preferred the US (72.6%) to China (27.4%). This finding is of interest, considering the respondents’ awareness of China’s financial contribution

to the development of Cambodia and the long-term nature of Sino-Cambodian relations, discussed in subsequent sections. The pie charts below clearly illustrate the distinction.

Between the US and China which country does Cambodia now have closer relations with?

Which country do you want Cambodia to have closer relations with in the future?

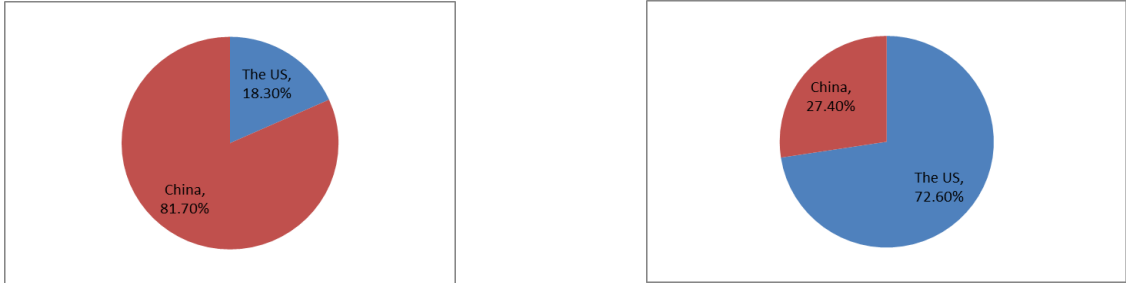


Figure 1: Cambodian university students’ views on the US and China

Nevertheless, when asked to compare the benefits of the US aid and Chinese aid to Cambodia, 36.8 per cent and 8.1 per cent agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, with the statement that the US aid provides greater long-term benefits for Cambodia than the Chinese aid. 36.2 per cent voiced no opinion by choosing neutral, while 16 per cent disagreed and 2.9 strongly disagreed. The result tends to show Cambodian university students’ hopes and aspirations for the future by looking up to the US whose democracy, human rights, and freedom, arguably, prevail.

**3. Cambodian university students’ perceptions on the presence of the US in Cambodia**

Data from the 484 questionnaires reveal mixed results with regard to the American presence in Cambodia. When asked about the US presence (people, businesses, investments, etc.) in Cambodia, 51.5 per cent of the respondents believed it is positive, while only 11.1 per cent thought the US presence is negative. 29.5 per cent did not decide and stayed neutral with this proposition. As for their overall satisfaction with benefits the US has provided to Cambodia, 42.9 per cent and 12.6 per cent felt satisfied and very satisfied, respectively. This high proportion is in line with the results presented earlier, which confirms Cambodian university students’ positivity toward the US.

However, in spite of their positive attitude toward the US, the result reflects the student respondents’ realistic assessment of the contribution the US has to offer for the development in Cambodia, with 44 per cent believing that the US has moderate contribution to the general

development of Cambodia and 25.8 per cent thinking that the US makes little contribution. A small number of respondents (6.7%) voiced no opinion, selecting a ‘Do not know’ option, while 20 per cent decided that the US makes a lot of contribution to Cambodia’s national development. Meanwhile, a small 3.5 per cent disregarded the American contribution to Cambodia, choosing ‘No contribution’ option.

The last US-related question is about the motive behind the US foreign policy with Cambodia. 9.6 per cent strongly agreed and a further 32.4 per cent agreed that the US keeps their relations with Cambodia only for their own interests. However, 21.5 per cent disagreed and 2.9 per cent strongly disagreed with the same statement, while 33.2 per cent, a relatively high percentage, stayed neutral on this matter.

**4. Cambodian university students’ perceptions on the presence of China in Cambodia**

A similar set of questions on the Chinese presence in Cambodia were also given to the respondents. Data analysis reveals a mixture of expected and unexpected results. 49.6 per cent, a relatively unexpected result compared to a rather negative yet popular myth about China, believed that the Chinese presence (people, businesses, investments, etc.) in Cambodia is positive, while only 17.2 per cent thought that the Chinese presence is negative. Also, when asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with benefits China has provided to Cambodia, 35.2 per cent of the 484 respondents were satisfied, whereas 16.1 per cent were dissatisfied (see Table 3).

Table 3: *Cambodian university students’ perceptions on the presence of China in Cambodia* (n = 484)

Statements	Responses (%)
Chinese presence in Cambodia	Very positive (7.9) Positive (49.6) Do not know (22.8) Negative (17.2) Very negative (2.5)
Benefits China has provided to Cambodia	Very satisfied (3.4) Satisfied (35.2) Neutral (41.9) Dissatisfied (16.1) Very dissatisfied (3.4)
Chinese contribution to Cambodian development	A lot (30.3) Moderate (45.2)

	Do not know (4.8) A little (18.8) Not at all (0.8)
China keeps their relations with Cambodia only for their own interests	Strongly agree (18.4) Agree (45) Neutral (27.8) Disagree (7.7) Strongly agree (1)
Impact of China’s rise on Cambodia	Very positive (5) Positive (32.1) Do not know (35.2) Negative (23.3) Very negative (4.4)

With regard to the Chinese contribution to the development of Cambodia, unlike the findings on the US contribution, a large number of Cambodian university students acknowledged China’s substantial contribution to the development in Cambodia, as seen in recent years. As Table 3 shows, 45.2 per cent, an equivalent of 218 respondents, believed that China has moderately contributed to Cambodia’s national development, and 30.3 per cent accepted that China has greatly contributed to the development in Cambodia. When asked whether they agree or disagree with the proposition that China keeps their relations with Cambodia only for their own interests, surprisingly, 45 per cent agreed and 18.4 strongly agreed, with only 8.7 per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, for a question on the impact of China’s rise on Cambodia, university students’ perceptions are divided. 32.1 per cent thought that the rise of China is positive for Cambodia; whereas 23.3 per cent had a negative attitude toward the rising power of China (see Table 3 above, for details).

**5. Students’ general perceptions of Cambodian relations with the US and China**

This section is related to students’ general knowledge and understanding of Cambodian relations with the US and China. One of the questions asked relates to the US and Chinese investment. Data analysis reveals students’ adequate understanding of the investment phenomenon, with 43.6 per cent believing that most investments in Cambodia do not belong to the US companies, while 23.3 per cent and a higher 48.8 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that China has the most foreign investment in Cambodia. On another note, a total of 58.6 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the US aid to Cambodia focuses on governance, democracy and human rights; only about 10 per cent disagreed or strongly

disagreed, and about 31 per cent selected 'neutral'. In addition, approximately 52% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that Chinese aid and loans are important for Cambodia's economic development, while about 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.

With reference to Cambodian security issues, about 35 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the US plays an important role in ensuring regional security where Cambodia is located. However, 42.8 per cent chose neutral, 19.4 per cent disagreed, and 2.5 per cent strongly disagreed. When asked the same question about the role of China in securing regional security, 27.2 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that China plays a crucial role in maintaining regional security where Cambodia is situated. A high 45.4 per cent decided to be neutral on this matter, and about 25% disregarded the Chinese role in ensuring security in the region. This finding contradicts a view by Hutt (2016), who claimed that China is the prime guarantor of Cambodia's regional security.

The last but very interesting question is about the foreign policy relations that the two superpowers have with Cambodia. In this part, student respondents were asked to decide on a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, whether the US is the most trusted friend of Cambodia in terms of foreign policy relations or whether China is the most dependable friend on the same matter. As for the result, 29.9 per cent agreed and 7.7 per cent strongly agreed that the US is Cambodia's most trusted friend with regard to foreign policy relations. 39.9 per cent voiced their neutral opinion, while about 22 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For the Chinese part, a similar result is found. 29.4 per cent agreed and 9.4 per cent strongly agreed that China is Cambodia's most trusted friend in terms of foreign policy relations. While 36 per cent decided 'neutral', about 25 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that China is the most trusted friend for Cambodia's foreign policy maneuver.

Finally, an analytical look at the overall findings of this research yields a number of key findings. Firstly, this analysis finds that Cambodian university students have a low to moderate understanding of Cambodia's foreign policy, although 58.4 per cent have never taken any course related to Cambodian foreign policy. Such an understanding may develop from their frequent exposure to the social media, particularly Facebook, which has gained great popularity in the last few years. Secondly, albeit their acknowledgement and understanding that Cambodia now has closer foreign relations with China, the majority of the students surveyed aspire to see Cambodia become more democratic, have a better human

rights record, and promote freedom in all walks of life. Thirdly, half of the respondents think positively about the US or the Chinese presence in Cambodia. This finding is significant because, contrary to the general myth about China's exploitation of Cambodia's natural resources, respondents look on the bright side and see the significant contribution China and the US have to offer to Cambodia. To put this another way, the US and China are complementary in terms of their contribution to Cambodia's national development. While the US might strive to promote democracy, human rights, and good governance in Cambodia, the Chinese help with economic development, infrastructure, and foreign direct investment.

## **V. Conclusion**

The study aims to discover the different perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy relations towards the US and China. The study employed a cross-sectional study using survey questionnaires delivered to 484 randomly-selected students from different universities in Phnom Penh. The student respondents come from different levels and backgrounds of study ranging from associate to doctoral degrees. Respondents' majors of study include business-related courses, social sciences, sciences and engineering, international relations and arts and education. The research addressed three main questions, one of which is about the perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy relations toward the U.S. and China.

### **1. Summary of key research findings**

According to the findings, Cambodian university students have between low to moderate understandings of Cambodia's foreign policy relations toward the US and China. Among the proportion of all 484 surveyed students, only 25 per cent selected an option illustrating that their knowledge of Cambodian foreign policy toward the US and China is between 41 to 60 per cent, and a small number of respondents (12.1%) answered they know more than 60 per cent about Cambodia's foreign policy toward these two superpowers.

With reference to current foreign policy relations, a very high number of respondents (81.7%) responded that Cambodia is closer to China than the United States. On the contrary, a large proportion of students (72.6%) prefer the US to China when it comes to Cambodian foreign policy maneuvers in the future. Nonetheless, only 36.8 per cent and 8.1 per cent agreed and



strongly agreed, respectively, with the statement that US aid provides greater long-term benefits for Cambodia than the Chinese aid.

Another key research finding is related to students' perspectives on the US or the Chinese presence in Cambodia. It is particularly interesting to find out that more than 50% of Cambodian university students hold optimistic views about the presence of the two great powers in Cambodia. This positive attitude is likely to signal the advent of a more open-minded generation of Cambodians who would seem to be less self-absorbed and unprejudiced. However, they would become a more pragmatic generation of Cambodian people who are able to face challenges, overcome problems and live with others in a globalized world.

## **2. Implications for classroom teachers and curriculum developers**

Based on the key findings, it is recommended that classroom teachers, regardless of the courses they teach, introduce their students to lessons on Cambodia's foreign policy to raise their awareness of the subject and enhance their understanding of how Cambodia adopts its policy when dealing with its neighbors, regional groups and great powers. Class discussions, presentations or debates on Cambodia's foreign policy options and maneuvers should be allowed, if not encouraged, so that Cambodian university students can be seen to be confident and competent in explaining and defending the country's choices and decisions to balance, align, or bandwagon with any country or group.

For curriculum developers, they may consider adding a course on Cambodia's foreign policy to their curriculum or require students to take such a course so that the students would gain a better insight into the issue and become more competent graduates who can discuss and express their ideas about Cambodia's foreign policy and other related topics confidently and succinctly. With a sound curriculum which incorporates the course on Cambodia's foreign policy, Cambodian university students would become more knowledgeable about the said subject.

## **2. Limitations and implications for further research**

This research is undoubtedly not flawless. For example, it examines only the perceptions of university students in Phnom Penh, leaving out perspectives from students studying in

universities outside the capital city. Its methodology also lacks rigor because data was drawn from only one methodology – the questionnaire survey. More authoritative research should include other data collection methods, such as interviews and observations, to gain more in-depth data and to cross check or triangulate the validity of the data collected. Moreover, the scope of the research is limited to the perceptions of students only, which somehow marginalize the importance of diversity of opinions from other potential research participants such as teachers, policy makers, government officials, and/or members of the public.

Implications for further research are therefore obvious. Future researchers who are interested in Cambodia's foreign policy should strive to collect and include data from a variety of sources and methods. Using in-depth interviews or observations to gather data from students, teachers, scholars, or other interest groups might be good alternatives. Likewise, studies employing a mixed methodology research design would provide better cross-sectional analysis, while other forms of research into Cambodia's foreign policy toward other countries aside from the US and China also deserve more scholarly attention and consideration from future researchers.

### **The Authors**

Kimkong HENG is an Assistant Dean for the School of Graduate Studies, The University of Cambodia. He has also been an English lecturer for almost ten years. He earned his MA in TESOL from the Institute of Foreign Languages (RUPP, Cambodia) and from the University of Canberra (Australia) with High Distinction in 2011 and 2014, respectively. His areas of interest include language teaching methodology, teacher education, teacher research capacity building, and now foreign policy. He can be reached at [kimkongheng@gmail.com](mailto:kimkongheng@gmail.com).

Sothiary TOCH is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, The University of Cambodia. He has extensive experience in research and development projects with both local and international NGOs. He is a researcher and assistant to the Secretariat of Academicians of the Royal Academy of Cambodia. His areas of research interest are development policy in developing countries, climate change policy and foreign policy. He can be reached at [sothiary@gmail.com](mailto:sothiary@gmail.com).

Chantola SAO is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, The University of Cambodia. He is an assistant at the Council for the Development of Cambodia and a lecturer of English at the University of Cambodia. He has worked as a Japanese speaking tour guide and an interpreter for almost 11 years. He can be reached at [saochantola1@yahoo.com](mailto:saochantola1@yahoo.com).

Vathanak CHET is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, The University of Cambodia. He holds two master's degrees. One in Business Administration from Pannasastra University of Cambodia and another in Public Administration from the Royal University of Law and Economics. He is a Deputy Director of Passport Department in the Ministry of Interior. He is also a lecturer of Economics and Management and Leadership at Royal University of Law and Economics, and the Police Academy of Cambodia. He can be reached at [chetvathanak@gmail.com](mailto:chetvathanak@gmail.com).

Dararasmey CHAN is a PhD student of International Relations at the Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, The University of Cambodia. He is a Royal Prosecutor at the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Cambodia and a lecturer of Law, Public Administration, and Business and Economic Sciences. He also has extensive experience in legal affairs, judicial profession, leadership, human resource management, business management, and political sciences. He can be reached at [dararasmey@yahoo.com](mailto:dararasmey@yahoo.com).

## References

- Bird, A. (2012). *US foreign policy on transitional justice: Case studies on Cambodia, Liberia and Colombia* (Doctoral dissertation). The London School of Economics and Political Science. London: United Kingdom.
- Brown, M., & Zasloff, J. J. (1998). *Cambodia confounds the peacemakers, 1979-1998*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Ek, C., & Sok, H. (2008). *Aid effectiveness in Cambodia*. Wolfensohn Center for Development Working Papers. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Cheunboran, C. (2015a, July 08). *Cambodia's strategic China alignment*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/cambodias-strategic-china-alignment/>
- Cheunboran, C. (2015b, August 11). *As Cambodia approaches China over the US, it should remember Machiavelli's lessons*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/as-cambodia-approaches-china-over-the-us-it-should-remember-machiavellis-lessons/>
- Chandler, D. P. (1991). *The tragedy of Cambodian history: War, politics and revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Chew, E. (2009). *U.S foreign policy and the Southeast Asia: From manifest destiny to shared destiny*. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Working Paper No. 185. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.
- Clymer, K. (2004). *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969: From curiosity to confrontation*. New York: Routledge.
- Clymer, K. (2013). *The United States and Cambodia, 1969-2000: A troubled relationship*. New York: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Gordon, B. K.. (1965). Cambodia: Where foreign policy counts. *Asian Survey*, 5(9), 433–448. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2642493>.
- Gottesman, E. (2004). *Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: Inside the politics of nation building*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Hunt, L. (2011, February 10). *China's relations in the Asia-Pacific: Cambodia*. Retrieve from <http://thediplomat.com/2011/02/cambodia/>
- Hutt, D. (2016, September 1). *How China came to dominate Cambodia*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/how-china-came-to-dominate-cambodia/>
- Kao, K. H. (2002). *Cambodia's foreign policy and ASEAN: From nonalignment to engagement*. Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace.

- Kiernan, B. (1994). *The Cambodian genocide: Issues and responses* In G. Andreopoulos (Ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and historical dimensions*: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Long, K. (2009). *Sino-Cambodia relations*. Phnom Penh: Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace.
- Leifer, M. (1967). *Cambodia: The search for security*. Connecticut: Praeger.
- Leng, T. (2016). Small state diplomacy: Cambodia's foreign policy towards Vietnam. *The Pacific Review*, 1-20. doi: 10.1080/09512748.2016.1239128
- Lum, T. (2009, April). *Cambodia: Background and US relations*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service.
- Marks, P. (2000). *China's Cambodia strategy*. *Parameters*, 30(3), 92-108.
- Millar, P. (2016, September 1). *Cambodia caught between China and US amid superpower showdown*. Retrieved from <http://sea-globe.com/cambodia-in-the-middle/>
- Omar, O. (2016, May 24). *An analysis of U.S. policy towards Cambodia between 1969-1973*. Retrieved from <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/05/24/an-analysis-of-u-s-policy-towards-cambodia-between-1969-1973/>
- Phal, S. (2016 , October 13). *China, the biggest investor in Cambodia*. Retrieved from <http://www.akp.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/wp-post-to-pdf-cache/1/china-the-biggest-investor-in-cambodia.pdf>
- Phou, S. (n.d). *Cambodia-China relation: Past, present and future*. Institute of International Management and Business Administration, National Cheng Kung University. Retrieved from <http://www.ncku.edu.tw/cseas/98CSEAS/report%20SEA/CAM/cam11%20phou%20ambath.pdf>
- Pilch, I. (1988). *Prospects for the neutralisation of Kampuchea* (No. 43). Center for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations, Griffith University.
- Slocomb, M. (2003). *The People's Republic of Kampuchea, 1979-1989: The revolution after Pol Pot*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Sok, K. (2016, July 15). *China gives \$600m to Cambodia in exchange for international support*. Retrieved from <http://www.voacambodia.com/a/china-gives-600-million-to-cambodia-in-exchange-for-international-support/3419875.html>
- Smith, R. M. (1965). *Cambodia's foreign policy*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- US Department of States (2016, February 2). *US relations with Cambodia*. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2732.htm>
- Var, V. (2015, May 20). *Cambodia: Between China and the United States*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/cambodia-between-china-and-the-united-states/>

Xinhua. (2016, October 15). Highlights of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Cambodia.  
Retrieved from [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/15/c\\_135756590.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/15/c_135756590.htm)

## Appendix A

### Student Survey Questionnaire

**Topic:** Perceptions of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China

Dear participant:

We are postgraduate students of Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations, University of Cambodia. We are conducting a survey to explore the perception of Cambodian university students on Cambodia's foreign policy toward the US and China. In this survey, we are trying to understand how university students feel about Cambodia's foreign policy relations towards the US and China. This questionnaire would take approximately 20 minutes. We would like to assure you that all information obtained will be used for research purposes only and no part of your identity will be revealed in the research report. In other words, participation in this survey is voluntary and it will not affect your academic performance. Should you have any questions about this survey, feel free to contact Mr. Toch Sothiary at 077 659 633 or [sothiary@gmail.com](mailto:sothiary@gmail.com) or Mr. Heng Kimkong at 017 717236 or [kimkongheng@gmail.com](mailto:kimkongheng@gmail.com).

**Instructions:** Please tick (✓) or write down an appropriate answer.

#### PART 1: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. What is your gender?  
 Male       Female
2. What is your age?  
 16 – 20       21 – 25       26 – 30       31 – 35       36 and above
3. What is your education?  
 Associate degree       Bachelor's degree       Master's degree       PhD degree
4. What year are you in?  
 1       2       3       4
5. Do you have a job?  
 Yes       No
6. Have you taken any courses that allow you to understand/learn Cambodian foreign policy?  
 Yes       No
7. What is your major at school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### PART 2: UNDERSTANDING OF CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

8. How much do you know about Cambodia's foreign policy?  
 0% - 20%       21% - 40%       41% -60%       More than 60%
9. Is foreign policy important for Cambodia?  
 Not important       Important       Very important       Don't know

10. Between China and the US which country does Cambodia have a closer relation with now?

- China                       US

11. Which country do you want Cambodia to have a closer relation with in the future?

- China                       US

12. Cambodia should have a balanced (*equal*) foreign policy toward the US and China.

- Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

13. How much do you know about Cambodian foreign policy toward the US and China?

- 0% - 20%    21% - 40%    41% -60%    More than 60%

14. How do you agree/disagree with the statements below?

- (1. *Strongly disagree*   2. *Disagree*   3. *Neutral*   4. *Agree*   5. *Strongly agree*)

<b>Please tick (✓) one.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
a. Cambodian foreign policy plays an important role for national development.					
b. Cambodian foreign policy helps improve Cambodia's economic development.					
c. Cambodian foreign policy relation to other superpower countries such as the US and China can ensure Cambodia security.					
d. Cambodian foreign policy should be <u>neutral</u> (អព្យជ្ជិត)					
e. Cambodian foreign policy should be <u>flexible</u> (បត់បែន) to give Cambodia the most benefits.					

**PART 3: PERCEPTION ON THE PRESENCE OF THE US IN CAMBODIA**

15. How is the US presence (*US investments, businesses, or people*) in Cambodia?

- Very negative    Negative    Don't know    Positive    Very positive

16. How satisfied (*happy*) are you about the benefits the US has provided to Cambodia?

- Very dissatisfied    Dissatisfied    Neutral    Satisfied    Very satisfied

17. How much does the US contribute (*help*) to the development of Cambodia?

- Not at all    A little    Moderate (50%)    A lot    Don't know

18. The US keeps their relations with Cambodia only for their own interests or benefits.

- Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

19. The US aid to Cambodia provides greater long-term benefits than the Chinese aid.

- Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

20. How do you agree/disagree with the statements below?

- (1. *Strongly disagree*   2. *Disagree*   3. *Neutral*   4. *Agree*   5. *Strongly agree*)

<b>Please tick (✓) one.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
a. Most investment in Cambodia belongs to the US companies.					
b. The US aid focuses on governance, democracy and human rights.					
c. The US is the only one country that provides the most aid to Cambodia after 1993.					
d. The US plays an important role in ensuring regional security where the Cambodia locates.					
e. The US is the most trusted friend of Cambodia in terms of					



foreign policy relations.					
---------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

**PART 4: PERCEPTION ON THE PRESENCE OF CHINA IN CAMBODIA**

21. How is the Chinese presence (*Chinese investments, businesses, or people*) in Cambodia?  
 Very negative     Negative     Don't know     Positive     Very positive
22. How satisfied (*happy*) are you about the benefits China has provided to Cambodia?  
 Very dissatisfied     Dissatisfied     Neutral     Satisfied     Very satisfied
23. How much does China contribute (*help*) to the development of Cambodia?  
 Not at all     A little     Moderate (50%)     A lot     Don't know
24. China keeps their relations with Cambodia only for their own interests or benefits.  
 Strongly disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly agree
25. What effect do you think China as a rising power will have on Cambodia?  
 Very negative     Negative     Don't know     Positive     Very positive
26. How do you agree/disagree with the statements below?  
 (1. *Strongly disagree*    2. *Disagree*    3. *Neutral*    4. *Agree*    5. *Strongly agree*)

<b>Please tick (✓) one.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
a. China has the most foreign investment in Cambodia.					
b. China is the only financing source for infrastructure development of Cambodia.					
c. The Chinese loans to Cambodia are important for Cambodia's economic development.					
d. China plays an important role in ensuring regional security where the Cambodia locates.					
e. China is the most trusted friend of Cambodia for long time in terms of foreign policy relations.					

This is the end of the survey.  
 Thanks for your participation.

---

**Note:** Should you wish to read the findings of this research, please leave your contact details below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (required)

This page intentionally left blank

# **Factors affecting the English language proficiency of students majoring in English at a rural university in Cambodia**

**Sokwin Phon**

**University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia**

## **Abstract**

While a demand of the English language at the tertiary level in Cambodia is growing, the levels of students' English language proficiency are found to be different from one student to another. Students from poor families are believed to possess lower English language knowledge and skills than those from the rich. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and (i) their socioeconomic status (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The data were collected via a set of questionnaires adapted from the general theory of language learning of Spolsky's (1989) model. Fifteen undergraduate students, majoring in English language at a rural public university in Cambodia were the study sample. Spearman's correlation was used as an analysis tool to determine if there was any significant relationship among the variables. The findings indicated that students' motivation and learning attitude had a strong correlation with students' English language proficiency level compared to other variables. These findings emphasize the importance of motivation in English language education.

**Keywords:** English language proficiency levels; socio-economic status; motivation and attitude; learning opportunities

## **I. Introduction**

The changes in the Cambodian political and economic landscapes during the 1990s urged the government to signify English as the second language for academia, communication and trade (Clayton, 2008). The necessity of English language capacity for Cambodians is increasingly obvious due to the integration of Cambodia into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This association, whose official language policy and communication is English, requires Cambodian representatives and delegates to be able to understand and use English (Clayton, 2007). While the expansion of English learning and teaching in Cambodia is swiftly emerging (Clayton, 2007), the enduring constraint of limited financial and human resources has hindered the quality English language teaching (ELT) in

the country (Neau, 2003). In addition, the difficulties in learning English for Cambodian students have become visible and even more for those who reside in the rural areas where the dispersion of ELT resources proves to be insufficient. Poverty is a major obstacle to ELT in Cambodia, where quality English lessons exist in expensive and privately run schools (Channel NewsAsia, 2013). Poor students are demotivated and have minimal access to English education services. It is necessary, therefore, that an investigation needs to be conducted to determine the factors associated with challenges faced by students in rural areas in Cambodia.

## **II. Literature Review**

While “English is learnt and taught in many different contexts and in many class arrangement” (Harmer, 2009, p.12), the reasons of learning English vary significantly to learners of all age groups across the world. Many research findings indicate that there are many factors thwarting students from learning English effectively. Those factors range from class sizes, learning and teaching resources, learning and teaching practices, motivations, and students' education background.

Spolsky's (1989) general model of second language learning model suggested that social contexts play major roles in producing linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes for the learners. It described several factors affecting students' second language learning outcomes. Those factors include students' social contexts, attitudes, motivation, age, personality, capabilities, previous knowledge, and learning opportunities in the form of formal and informal education. Only three main factors ; (i) student's socio-economic status, (ii) student's motivation and attitude and (iii) student's learning opportunities are selected for this study because the researcher would like to understand the relationship between these three factors and students' English proficiency levels at a rural university, Mean Chey University, in the northwestern part of Cambodia.

### **1. Socio-economic context**

Students' social background factors are linked to different levels of students' educational access and outcomes (Crawford, 2014). Students' social background includes their racial origin, family income, family structure, the level of parental education and the level of students' English proficiency. The impact of students' socio-economic and surrounding

environments on students' learning performance have long been discussed. Ross and Wu (1995) made a generalization that once the social status and their family's income are increasing, students tend to progress better in their academic performance. This is highly likely to happen in most developed nations. An increase in students' socio-economic status provided them with better accessibility to lifestyle and health care factors (e.g., nutrition, recreation, learning environment) and social psychological factors such as emotional stability, self-regard, and assertiveness (Olaitan, 2012). Academically, socio-economic factors have a close link to the chances of what kind of schools students are attending. In other words, what and how they are educated in such schools depend on their socio-economic status (Olaitan, 2012).

## **2. Learning attitude and motivation**

Students' learning attitudes and motivations are integral to the success in second language studies (Mat & Yunus, 2014). The term "attitude" refers to "the way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way" (CollinsDictionary, 2015). The learners' attitude toward learning English has a strong impact on their English language academic performance. As argued by Lightbown and Spada (2001), the study of a second language can be fun and enrich learning motivations according to the learners' attitude. This type of learning attitude occurs, for instance, when students feel happy or proud to speak English with native speakers and to see others being able to speak English. Meanwhile, the achievement of second language students depends primarily on their motivation. A teacher notices motivated students by their active participation in class, their strong interest in subject matters, and their efforts (Lightbown & Spada, 2001). As in the field of second language acquisition, second language students not only learn the language for task comprehension and completion, but also for instrumental reasons, employment opportunities, social communication, or academic purposes (Al Rifai, 2010). In most cases, success in learning a second language is consistently associated with their motivation of career choices (Zang & Hu, 2008). In contrast, students without motivation have shorter attention spans, and even sometimes, they do not reflect what they hear. Al Rifai (2010) provided some examples concerning these sorts of students that once they are given in-class or take-home assignments; they work on them in order to pass the grade, not to get the real knowledge or skills from those activities. Some of them may be serious about getting good grades, without being interested in the unit content they are studying.

### **3. Learning opportunities**

In Spolsky's general model of second language learning, students' opportunities to study a second language can be formal and informal (Mitchell & Myles, 2001). Second language students with more access to schools and resources seem to be more successful than those without. Their accessible opportunities to those resources are mainly in the classrooms where academic activities represent the methodology of the syllabus, being designed to meet a variety of students' needs and at the appropriate levels of their existing language proficiency (Mitchell & Myles, 2001). Language teachers are the significant actors to make these happen in the classrooms. Clear guidance, instructions, encouragement and support are paramount for L2 students to deal with their learning problems and reassure them in performing the tasks better (Li, 2009). In addition, teacher-student communication most frequently takes place in the classroom where, meanwhile, the teachers take these opportunities to exert their influences to motivate students, coordinate in-class activities, homework/assignment, and ensure language input quality (Ross & Wu, 1995). Importantly, language-teaching outcomes depend mainly on the use of learning and teaching materials and teaching styles (Harmer, 2007). The Teaching methodology is highly likely to have direct effects on learning behavior and teaching result (Wang, 2013).

The assistance of visual materials in teaching, moreover, can arouse student's eagerness to learn vocabulary and to promote students' opportunities to apply language items to express how they think and how they feel (Nguyen, Warren & Fehring, 2014). Further, different learning styles can be another factor that contributes to the level of academic success in English language classes (Castro & Peck, 2005). The appropriateness of using learning styles leads to a higher level of language proficiency (Mohammadia, Moenikiab, & Zahed-Babelan, 2010). As a result, successful language learners are able to adjust their learning strategies to their own cognition style, learning task, and so on in the classroom (Li, 2009). Negatively, learning opportunities remain academically problematic for rural students; they showed their regrets for lacking chances to learn English from their early age (Canagarajah, 2001).

### **III. Research Methodology**

#### **1. Research design**

This is a quantitative research study which applied correlational research method design to answer the research questions below. According to Howitt and Cramer (2014), correlational research design is used to measure two or more factors to identify or examine whether they are associated and to what extent they are correlated.

#### **2. Research questions**

This study aims at investigating the main factors that affect the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural public university in Cambodia. The study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between socio-economic status and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?
2. Is there any relationship between students' motivation and attitude and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?
3. Is there any relationship between students' learning opportunities and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural university in Cambodia?

#### **3. Context of the study**

Mean Chey University (MCU) is a Cambodian public higher education institution, located in a rural province, Banteay Meanchey, which is known for high rates of youth migration to Thailand for better employment. The majority of MCU students are Cambodian government scholarship awardees, who are selected based on their grades from their National High School Exit Examination.

#### **4. Population and sample**

The target population of this study was Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 students who are enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in English Language at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages at Mean Chey University in Cambodia in the academic year 2015-2016. Fifteen students of

122 were selected as the study sample on a voluntary basis. The selection of sample based on the purposive sampling approach, which is a process of selecting a sample that is believed to represent a given population (Gay, Mills & Airasain, 2011). Due to time constraints and the small-scale nature of the study, however, the study sample size is relatively small, thus limiting the generalizability of its findings.

## **5. Research instrument**

The data were collected through a 5-point Likert-type scale survey questionnaire, which was adapted from Spolsky's (1989) general model of second language learning. Its main design was to discover the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The questionnaire had four main sections (See Appendix A). The first section contained eight questions, asking the participants about their demographic profile such as their name, gender, age, parents' education level, parents' profession and their family economic status. The second, third and fourth sections were designed to uncover the relationship between students' socio-economic status, learning attitudes and motivations and learning opportunities and their level of English proficiency. These three sections asked participants to rate their overall agreement in the form of Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

## **6. Pilot study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the actual data collection in order to uncover any issues related to the feasibility and the usefulness of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Three students from the target group were selected to pretest the survey questionnaire in early November 2015. After pretesting the survey questionnaire, the researcher reworded, changed the meaning and changed the structure of the questionnaire in Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3, for clarity and better understanding.

## **7. Data analysis**

The data obtained from the questionnaire were entered into the Statistical Package for Statistical Sciences (SPSS 21.0) for coding and analysis. The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation. The descriptive statistics analysis



was then used to describe the demographic information of the participants such as the measurement of mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage.

Spearman's rho correlation was used to calculate the relationship between students' levels of English proficiency and (i) their students' socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is a numerical representation of the degree, which is used to indicate the relationship among the variables ranked order in size (Howitt & Cramer, 2014) by indicating whether correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) matches its level of significance. The variation of correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) is between -1.00 and +1.00. When the correlation coefficient is zero, there is no relationship between the two variables. The stronger the correlation coefficient's absolute value, the closer the relationship between two variables (Creswell, 2009).

The following table is the interpretation of the level of correlations between the variables.

Table 1. *Interpreting a correlation coefficient*

<b>Size of the correlation</b>	<b>Coefficient general interpretation</b>
0.8 to 1.0	Very strong relationship
0.6 to 0.8	Strong relationship
0.4 to 0.6	Moderate relationship
0.2 to 0.4	Weak relationship
0.0 to 0.2	Weak or no relationship

Source: Salkind (2014)

#### **IV. Findings**

As indicated in Table 2 on the next page, more than two thirds of the students are from families with their parents' educations being at lower and higher secondary school levels. Almost 50% of their parents are farmers. Approximately, half of them are from the well-to-do families, and around one third of them are from poor families.

Table 2. A summary of the education levels and the occupations of students' parents

Description	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
<b>1. Qualification</b>				
Lower secondary school	<b>5</b>	33.3	<b>10</b>	66.7
Higher secondary school	<b>6</b>	40.0	3	20.0
Bachelor's degree	2	13.3	2	13.3
Master's degree	2	13.3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2. Occupation</b>				
Civil servant	2	13.3	-	-
NGOs	4	26.7	2	13.3
Farmer	7	46.7	7	46.7
Seller/Business person	1	6.7	6	40.0
Other (Deceased)	1	6.7	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3. Family economic status</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>		
Well-off	3	20		
Well-to-do	7	46.7		
Poor	5	33.3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>		

The next sections present the results of Spearman's rho correlation in response to the research questions.

**Question 1. Is there any relationship between socio-economic status and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?**

As can be seen in Table 3, the parents' professions and family environment have a weak or no relationship with students' English language proficiency ( $r_s = -0.026$ ,  $p = 0.928$ ) and ( $r_s = 0.069$ ,  $p = 0.807$ ). However, among the above three sub-questions, the correlation between family income and their learning English language is the strongest, but is still in a weak relationship with students' English language proficiency ( $r_s = 0.207$ ,  $p = 0.459$ ).

Table 3. Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) between students' socio-economic status and their English language proficiency

Description		
Parents' profession vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	-.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.928
Family environment vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.807
Family income vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.459

**Question 2. Is there any relationship between students' motivation and attitude and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?**

Table 4. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) between students' learning attitude and motivation and their English proficiency

Description		
Students' Interest in learning English	Correlation	.611*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016
Importance of English to students	Correlation	.567*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027
Students' need of English in the future	Correlation	.127
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651
Students' confidence in using English	Correlation	.698*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
English for employment opportunities	Correlation	.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.624
English for country development	Correlation	.613*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
Students' attitude towards users of English	Correlation	.211
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.451
Students' activeness in class	Correlation	.824*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Students always submit assignments on time	Correlation	.583*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (N = 15)

Table 4 above shows that the students' activeness in the classroom has the strongest correlation with students' English language proficiency ( $r_s = -0.824$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). Students' interest in learning English, their confidence in using English, and their perspectives towards the importance of English for the country's development share a similar and strong relationship with the English proficiency of the students, with ( $r_s = -0.611$ ,  $p=0.016$ ), ( $r_s = -0.698$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) and ( $r_s = 0.613$ ,  $p=0.015$ ), respectively. Based on the findings, students' attitudes concerning the importance of English to them and their timely assignment submission are moderately correlated with their English proficiency levels ( $r_s = 0.567$ ,  $p=0.027$ ) and ( $r_s = 0.583$ ,  $p=0.023$ ) respectively. However, students' needs of English in the future and students' motivation of English for their employment have a weak or no relationship with their levels of English proficiency. Contrastingly, students' attitudes towards users of English has a better, but still weak, association with their English proficiency levels ( $r_s = 0.211$ ,  $p=0.451$ ). The analysis reveals that students' activeness in the classroom has a huge effect on their English proficiency levels.

**Question 3. *Is there any relationship between students' learning opportunities and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural university in Cambodia?***

Table 5. *Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between students' learning opportunities and their English proficiency*

<b>Description</b>		
Students have sufficient time to learn English	Correlation	.472
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076
Curricular fits students' needs	Correlation	.632*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
Extra-curricular are supportive to students' learning English	Correlation	.585*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
Teaching techniques appropriate to students' ability level.	Correlation	.665**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
Teaching methods encourage students to learn English.	Correlation	.515*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050
Teachers are approachable and supportive.	Correlation	.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.880
Teaching and learning materials are stimulating.	Correlation	-.068
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.811

Teaching and learning materials are updated.	Correlation	.309
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.263
Teaching and learning materials are limited.	Correlation	-.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.583
A language lab functions well.	Correlation	.330
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.230

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (N = 15)

As illustrated in Table 5, a responsive curriculum and appropriate teaching techniques to the students' needs are strongly correlated with the students' English proficiency ( $r_s = 0.632$ ,  $p=0.012$ ) and ( $r_s = 0.665$ ,  $p=0.007$ ), respectively. Sufficient time, supportive extra-curricular activities and motivational teaching methods to students' learning English have a moderate correlation with their proficiency of English ( $r_s = 0.442$ ,  $p=0.046$ ), ( $r_s = 0.585$ ,  $p=0.022$ ), and ( $r_s = 0.515$ ,  $p=0.050$ ), respectively. However, the results of the analysis reveal a weak linkage between teachers' approachability and supportiveness and the students' English proficiency levels. The findings of the study also demonstrate that teaching and learning materials have a weak or no correlation to the levels of students' English language proficiency.

## V. Discussion

### 1. Relationship between students' socio-economic status and their English language proficiency

The findings of the current study reveal that students' socio-economic status, as measured by their parents' education level, family environment and family income, has no significant effect on students' learning English. Similar to a study on "Parental involvement and students' achievement in Cambodia" by Nguon (2012), the family social background had no relationship with students' academic achievement. This study's findings, however, strongly contradict the previous study by Ross and Wu (1995) and Olaitan (2012) which found a strong correlation between students' family background and their academic achievement.

In this regard, there are two possible arguments that help explain why Cambodian students' socio-economic status has no significantly correlation with their English language proficiency. First, in the aftermath of the genocidal regime in Cambodia in 1979, many people have been afraid of starvation. People are actively engaging in earning money to support their

families. A materialistic society has emerged. Either being highly educated or lowly educated, many parents are paying least attention to their children's education. Most students have struggled for their academic survival and achievements by relying on their own efforts and teachers in schools. Many students from the well-off families are seen spending most of their time outside schools gambling and drug abusing. Therefore, the general assumption is that the more wealth they have does not mean the more education their children receive. Second, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has been continuing to provide equitable access with quality education and education opportunities to all kinds of students, particularly to students from disadvantaged and remote areas (MoEYS, 2014). Parents in response to this equity of access to education start relying on the teachers. In this case, teachers in Cambodia and their pedagogy play a crucial role in making positive impacts on students' English language proficiency.

## **2. Relationship between students' motivations and attitudes and their English language proficiency.**

The indication from Table 4 proves that there is a very strong correlation between students' motivation and attitude and their levels of English language proficiency. This indication is parallel with the previous studies conducted by Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) and Al Rifai (2010). One interesting finding is that students' activeness has a tremendous effect on their English language proficiency; it is the strongest positive correlational factor. As mentioned earlier, many Cambodian students, particularly the ones in remote and disadvantaged areas, are making their uttermost efforts for their educational survivals and achievements. The reasons why most Cambodian students learn English variously are owing to the fact that they felt the vitality of English to their personal and country development (Neau, 2003).

As shown on Table 4, however, the need of English for their employment and for their future has weak or even no relationship with students' English language proficiency. This finding is contrary with the study conducted by Al Rifai (2010). This is probably due to the presence and frequency of English language used in the region. As Mean Chey University is located in a province that shares a border with Thailand, the Thai language is relatively used more than English language for business and everyday communication. Many people in this region migrate to Thailand for employment opportunities, which are better paid

than those in Cambodia. Thus, the Thai language is their better choice for their present and future survivals. In addition, due to the geographical location, there are very few companies or organizations mandatorily seeking their employers with high English skills. Therefore, English is not really necessary for the students there.

### **3. Relationship between students' learning opportunities and their English language proficiency**

Among the items pertaining to students' learning opportunities, the present study reveals that there is a strong relationship between students' English language proficiency levels and extra-curricular activities that are responsive to students' needs and is supportive to their learning. The prior study conducted by Harb and El-Shaarawi (2006) shares some similarities with the current study. They argue that once students' learning preference was largely fulfilled; there would be more and more positive impacts on students' learning performance. However, a slight correlation between teaching and learning material and the levels of students' English language proficiency found in this study contrasts with the previous study conducted by Abebe and Davidson (2012).

The present findings are also inconsistent with findings by Ly (2009). As seen in Table 5, the teachers' approachability and supportiveness have a slight correlation to students' English language proficiency levels. In contrast, Li (2009) argued that explicit instructions, clear guidance, inspiration and consistent assistance are integral to second language learners to cope with their academic challenges, and reassure them in doing their tasks better. The communication between teachers and students, which most frequently happens in the classroom settings, provides teachers with more opportunities to exercise their influences to encourage their students and facilitate academically related activities in and outside the class to bolster the quality of language inputs (Ross and Wu, 1995).

Though the findings of this study show that there are some points which are inconsistent with Li's (2009) findings, there are several claims that can explain why teachers' characteristics of being approachable and supportive is slightly correlated to the levels students' English language proficiency. Firstly, in Cambodia, even though teachers are approachable and supportive, they sometimes cannot help students to solve their problems academically. Neau (2003) revealed that a large majority of teachers of English in

Cambodia had limited English proficiency and improper pedagogical trainings to be teachers. He further argued that the provision of English language teaching in Cambodia was severely under-resourced. From his argument, it can be inferred that teachers' support are highly likely to be little if the teachers have limited English skills and academic resources. They cannot help student to master their language learning activities. Secondly, teachers' personal life problems can be another cause that hinders students' trust on them. Their low salaries, for example, lead them to do multiple jobs. As a result, a large number of teachers take advantage of their students by selling handouts and giving fee-paying extra classes to them. Students' respect and trust for the teachers are therefore decreasing, which in some cases leads to hatred. Students may have negative feelings to their teachers and do not see any significance of their teachers' supports.

Furthermore, it is interesting to find in this study that there is a slight correlation between teaching and learning materials and the levels of students' English language proficiency. This opposes to (Harmer, 2007) who states that language teaching outcomes depend mainly on the use of learning and teaching materials and teaching styles. As indicated by Neau (2003), the most seen challenges in learning and teaching English in Cambodia are the resources constraints. In this study's context and setting, students are studying at a rural university. They routinely learn with textbooks and in grammar translation method classes. They may not have chances to expose themselves to a variety of teaching and learning resources. Thus, they cannot see any difference of learning with or without materials.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This study aimed at discovering the relationship between students' English language proficiency levels and the three affecting factors to the language proficiency. Spearman's rho correlation was used in this study to determine the association between students' levels of the English proficiency and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. There are three major findings from the study. First, the correlation between students' learning motivation and attitude and the levels of their English language proficiency was the strongest among the other variables. Second, there was a moderate relationship between students' learning opportunities and their levels of English proficiency. Last, the association between students' socio-economic status and their levels of English proficiency was weak or almost



zero. Therefore, it could be inferred that learners' motivation and attitude has played a crucial role in English language education at Mean Chey University. The findings were similar to many research findings conducted on the significance of motivation in learning second language (Hu, 2011).

### **1. Implications and recommendations**

The summation of the study provides readers with a better comprehension about English language learners in the rural areas of Cambodia. It gives them some glimpses of challenges that the students at rural universities face or any difficulties that prevent them from mastering the English language. Moreover, this study may inform other universities in the similar contexts in Cambodia. Therefore, the educational policy makers and curriculum designers should modify ELT policy and curriculum to help rural students learn English more successfully. Specifically, the result of this study would encourage the curriculum designers to pay attention to the actual needs of the students during the curriculum renewal or development process.

The study suggests pupils' parents, teachers, administrators, and educational policy makers seek for more measures to increase students' motivation. From the findings, the importance of English should be visible in their communities. That is, more employment opportunities, which require English language, should be increased in the communities. Students will then be more motivated to learn English.

### **2. Limitations and directions for further research**

There were two major limitations in this study. Firstly, the researcher only discovered the relationship between the three independent variables, namely students' socio-economic status, their motivation and attitude, and their learning opportunities and the dependent variable, the students' levels of the English language proficiency. There should have been more variables included to make it a more holistic study. For instance, English language curriculum, learning and teaching practices and students' external supports should be taken into consideration in future studies. Secondly, the study was only carried out at Mean Chey University, representing a context and setting of rural areas of Cambodia. Therefore, this study is only applicable to the Bachelor's degree of English Language at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Languages at Mean Chey University. The research findings may not be applicable to

other universities in Cambodia, particularly in the capital city where most universities are located. Finally, these research findings cannot be generalized to other contexts and settings outside the scope of Mean Chey University. To help students to better progress in their English language proficiency, there should be more studies concerning the curriculum and instructions of BA in English language at both public and private universities in rural and urban areas in Cambodia. Future research should also include larger samples and involve data triangulation – looking at the phenomenon from various angles, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to show my gratitude to my friends, Mr. Khat Korop, Mr. Heng Kimkong and Miss Khieu Dany for giving me advice to make this study possible. Their insightful comments have immensely contributed to this paper. I also would like to express my grateful thanks to Mean Chey University rector, H.E. Sam Nga, for giving me courage and permission to conduct the research study at the University.

### **The Author**

Sokwin PHON works as a lecturer of English and a vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages at Mean Chey University. He graduated Master of Education Studies from the University of Canberra, Australia. He started his teaching career as a primary school teacher in 1999 and secondary school teacher of English in 2003. He began his work at a higher education level in 2009. He is interested in learning and teaching English language and studying the curriculum that can help students in the rural areas in Cambodia to catch up with the global trend. He can be reached at [sokwinphon@yahoo.com](mailto:sokwinphon@yahoo.com).

## References

- Abebe, T. T., Davidson, L. M., & Biru, F. (2012). The role of instructors in implementing communicative language teaching methodology. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 52-62.
- Al Rifai, N. (2010). Attitude, motivation, and difficulties involved in learning the English language and factors that affect motivation in learning it. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 5216-5227. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.849
- Canagarajah, A., S. (2001). Critical ethnography of a Sri Lankan classroom: ambiguities in student opposition to reproduction through ESOL. In C. N. Candlin and N. Mercer (Ed.), *English language teaching in its social context* (pp. 208-226). London: Routledge
- Channel NewsAsia. (2013, September 22). *Cambodia: Poverty poses challenges to learning English*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1acRQCoQA0>
- Clayton, T. (2006). International languages in education in developing countries: Implications for Cambodia. In J. L. Bianco (Ed.), *Voices from Phnom Penh. Development and language: Global influences & global effects* (pp. 87-101). Melbourne: Language Australia Ltd.
- Clayton, S. (2008). The problem of 'choice' and the construction of the demand for English in Cambodia. *Language policy*, 7(2), 143-164. doi: 10.1007/s10993-008-9084-9.
- Collins. (2014). *Attitude*. Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/attitude>
- Crawford, C. (2014). *Socio-economic differences in university outcomes in the UK: drop-out, degree completion and degree class* (No. W14/31). IFS Working Papers.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Gay, R. L., Mills, E. G., & Airasian, W. P. (2011). *Educational research: competencies for analysis and applications*. New York: Pearson Education International.
- Harb, N., & El-Shaarawi, A. (2006). *Factors affecting student performance*. Munich Personal Archive Paper No. 13621. Retrieved from <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/id/eprint/13621>
- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2014). *Introduction to SPSS in Psychology*. Harlow, Cambridge: Pearson Education Limited.
- Keuk, C. N. (2008). English language variety in Cambodia. *CamTESOL Selected Papers*, 4, 98- 107.

- Li, C. (2009). A research on second language acquisition and college English teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 2(4), 57-60. doi: 10.5539/elt.v2n4p57
- Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (2001). Factors affecting second language learning. In C. N. Candlin and N. Mercer (Ed.), *English language teaching in its social context*, 28-43. London: Routledge
- Mat, C. S., & Yunus, M. (2014). Attitudes and motivation towards learning English among FELDA school Students. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 8(5), 1-8.
- Miller, L. (2011, June 28). *The silk road to Australian drug treatment: WikiLeaks cable*. Retrieved from: <http://www.crikey.com.au/2011/07/28/the-silk-road-to-australian-drug-treatment-wikileaks-cable/>
- Mitchell, R. & Myles, F. (2001). Second language learning: key concepts and issues. In C. N. Candlin and N. Mercer (Ed.), *English language teaching in its social context* (pp. 11-27). London: Routledge.
- MoEYS. (2007). *Prakas No 1435 MoEYS.PK on conditions and the details for licensing higher education institution*. Phnom Penh: MoEYS.
- MoEYS. (2014). *Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. Retrieved from <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/images/moeys/policies-and-strategies/559-en.pdf>
- Mohammadi, M., Moenikia, M., & Zahed-Babelan, A. (2010). The relationship between motivational systems and second language learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 3258-3262. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.498
- Neau, V. (2003). The teaching of foreign languages in Cambodia: A historical perspective. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 16(3), 253-268. doi: 10.1080/07908310308666673
- Nguon, S. (2012). Parental involvement and students' achievement in Cambodia: Focusing on parental resourcing of public schooling. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 213-224.
- Olaitan, A. W. (2012). The effects of background characteristics and school factors on college students' performance and satisfaction. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(8), 251- 257.
- Oroujlou, N., & Vahedi, M. (2011). Motivation, attitude, and language learning. *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 994-1000.
- Ross, C. E., & Wu, C. L. (1995). The links between education and health. *American sociological review*, 719-745.
- Salkind, N. J. (2014). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics* (5th ed.): London: Sage.
- Spolsky, B. (1989). *Conditions for second language learning: Introduction to a general theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Wang, Z. (2013). A study on the reasons for the inefficiency of college English teaching and some tentative countermeasures. *English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 9-18. doi:10.5539/elt.v7n1p9
- Zhang, W., & Hu, G. (2008). Second language learners' attitudes towards English varieties. *Language Awareness*, 17(4), 342-347. doi: 10.2167/la479.0

**Appendix A**  
**Questionnaire**

**Factors affecting the English language proficiency of students majoring in English at a rural university in Cambodia**

Dear students,

I am carrying out a study whose main objective is to establish whether there is a relationship between students' levels of the English proficiency and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The participants are undergraduate students, majoring in English at Mean Chey University. You have been selected as one of the respondents for the study. The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for research purposes. The findings and recommendations from this study are likely to benefit Mean Chey University in areas of teaching and learning English. Please spare some of your valuable time to answer these questions.

YOUR HONESTY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE APPLICABILITY OF  
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS.

Thank you.  
Yours faithfully,

Sokwin Phon  
Vice-dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages  
Mean Chey University

Please tick  or fill in as appropriate.

### Section A: Demographic Profile

Name: \_\_\_\_\_(Optional)

1. Sex:

- Male       Female

2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Year of Study:

- Year 2       Year 3       Year 4

4. What is the highest educational level of your father or male guardian attended?

- Lower secondary school  
 Higher secondary school  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the highest educational level that your mother or female guardian attended?

- Lower secondary school  
 Higher secondary school  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your father's or male guardian's occupation?

- Civil servant  
 NGOs  
 Farmer  
 Seller/Business person  
 Construction/Factory worker  
 Other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your mother's or female guardian's occupation?

- Civil servant  
 NGOs  
 Farmer  
 Seller/Business person  
 Construction/Factory worker

Other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. What do you think about your family economic status

Well-off  Well-to-do  Poor  I don't know

**Section B: Socio economic status**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<b>Statements</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
9a	Your parent profession affects your learning English performance.					
9b	Your family environment affects your learning English performance.					
9c	Your family's income affects your learning performance.					



### Section C: Learning Attitude and Motivation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	You are interested in learning English.					
11	English language is important to you.					
12	You will need English in the future					
13	You are confident in learning and using English.					
14	Knowing English well is better for employment opportunity with high salary					
15	The development of our country is possible mainly by educated people who know English well.					
16	When I hear someone speaks English well, I wish I could speak like him.					
17	You are active in the class activities					
18	You always do homework or assignment and submit them by the due date.					

### Section D: Learning Opportunities

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	You are given enough time to learn English.					
20	English Curricular fit your needs.					
21	There are extracurricular activities that helps students learn and practice English					
22	Teachers of English use a variety of teaching techniques to suit different levels of students.					
23	Teachers of English apply teaching methods that encourage you to use English.					
24	Teachers of English are approachable and supportive.					
25	Teaching and learning materials are stimulating.					
26	Teaching and learning materials are updated.					
27	Teaching and learning material are limited.					
28	There is a language lab that functions well					

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your participation.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **World Order: Reflections on the Characters of Nations and the Course of History**

Henry Kissinger. London: Penguin Books, 2015. Pp. x + 420. ISBN

**Kimkong Heng**  
**The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

*World Order* is expertly written by a man whose name is associated with both global peace and war crimes, Henry Kissinger. The book is carefully crafted to reflect Kissinger's extensive knowledge and experience in American foreign policy, global politics and history. Having received numerous excellent reviews, the book is believed to be the summation of Kissinger's thinking about statecraft, strategy, characters of nations, the course of history, the future of the world, and in particular the world order.

This book comprises nine chapters which are preceded and succeeded by an introduction and a conclusion, respectively. The introduction is aimed at setting the scene by presenting different concepts of world order, including Europe's Westphalian peace, China's harmony under heaven, Islam's realm of war, and America's universal relevance of democratic principles. This section also defines three levels of order: world order, international order, and regional order, each of which is based on two principles – a set of commonly accepted rules and a balance of power.

The first chapter focuses on Europe and its order, the establishment of the Peace of Westphalia and its operations, and the French Revolution and its aftermath. In this part, the history of world order in Europe is analyzed, followed by a series of events (i.e. the Thirty Years' War) that led to the Peace of Westphalia which paved the way for a modern concept of world order. The chapter also examines the course of the French Revolution and its impact on the European balance of power which was maintained by the Westphalian system.

Chapter 2 further elaborates on the European balance of power system and its end. In this chapter, the author pinpoints the ups and downs of the balance of power in Europe by discussing the significant role and dominance of Russia in the region and the restoration of the balance of power in Europe through state negotiations in the Congress of Vienna in 1814. In addition, the author continues to discuss the European balance of power between the World

Wars and after World War II. Clearly, the principles of the balance of power laid down during the Treaty of Westphalia, almost four centuries ago, have deteriorated. As a result, the future of Europe is postulated by the author and a few questions regarding the uncertainty of European balance of power are raised in this chapter.

Having examined Europe and its balance of power system, the book then turns its emphasis to Islamism and the Middle East by looking at the Islamic world order, the Arab Spring and the Syrian war, the Palestinian issues, and the decline of the Arab states. In this section, the author unearths the world of Islamic empire and religion by describing the history of Islam and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Then the author compares the Westphalia system with the Islamic world by stating that stability is the guiding principle of world order in the Westphalia system while purity is the principle of the Islamic world. The Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the decline of the Muslim world are also briefly presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on Iranian-American relations and the approaches to order. In this chapter, the tradition of Iranian statecraft and the Khomeini Revolution are discussed, followed by the issues of nuclear proliferation in Iran. Regarding the Iranian statecraft, Kissinger mentioned that "Iran has perhaps the most coherent sense of nationhood and the most elaborated tradition of national interest-based statecraft." Moreover, Iran's statecraft is based on the Persian Empire's tradition.

Chapter 5 takes a different perspective and deals with Asia and world order from the perspective of major Asian countries such as Japan and India. The author, in this chapter, compares Asian and European concepts of balance of power by stating that the Asian concept of balance of power is the modern version of the Westphalian system of international order; however, unlike Europe's international system of equal sovereignty, Asia's international system is based on the principle of hierarchy, not sovereignty. Toward the end of chapter 5, the writer poses a question about an Asian regional order and highlights the influential role of Indonesia in Southeast Asia in balancing China, the United States, and the Muslim world. Likewise, South Korea and North Korea, engulfed by major world economies, also play crucial roles in balancing power in East Asia.

Chapter 6 primarily concerns China, its role in world order and its partnership with the United States. This chapter underscores the role of China in Asia's international order and world order by taking into account the Chinese concept of "All Under Heaven" and "the Middle Kingdom" which represent China's supreme position throughout history. With the wealth of its economy and the ability to produce desirable goods, China can and will still be able to exert its political, economic, and cultural influence in the regional and global context. Thus, China's views and support are frequently sought in every international forum, making China the only global competitor for the United States in its search for world order. To conclude chapter 6, Kissinger puts forward his perspective on the Sino-American relationship by explaining how Chinese and Americans view each other differently and negatively. He then suggests that the modern balance of power be based on the concept of partnership rather than confrontation or military deployment; by so doing, Chinese and Americans would experience constructive cooperation which could lead to a more peaceful world in the future.

Unlike chapters 5 and 6, which deal with Asia, particularly China, chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to the United States and its concept of world order. Chapter 7, entitled "Acting for all mankind: The United States and its concept of order", discusses America's expanding role on the world stage and examines America's concept of world order from the perspective of three presidents of the United States such as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt. For Theodore Roosevelt, a realist, not only was the United States seen as the greatest power without threatening regional competitors, but it was also in a unique position with this power to decide the destiny of the whole world. Woodrow Wilson, an idealist, however, saw America as the world's conscience. In other words, America's mission was to bring about peace to the world and America's intervention in World War I was not motivated by its quest for power or self-interest, but universal peace and order. Similarly, Franklin Roosevelt, who was also an idealist, placed great emphasis on building international order and peace through trust, respect for international law, friendly relations, tolerance, humanitarianism, and good will.

In chapter 8, the focus is on the America's roles and responsibilities for world order. Kissinger starts this chapter by mentioning that twelve American presidents have endeavored in an unselfish quest for the resolution of conflicts to restore and maintain universal peace and harmony. Since the end of World War II, the United States has been seen as an ambivalent superpower that is unable to decide the nature of its world role, that is, it is caught in an

idealism-realism dilemma. Throughout this chapter, Kissinger elaborates on the historical events, especially the five wars the United States fought after World War II (Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan) in order to present America's ambivalent foreign policy. Kissinger also helps his readers understand America's struggle with the so-called idealism-realism dilemma by recounting how each U.S. president from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush exercised America's global influence, restored national cohesion, and tried to build a world order.

In the final chapter, entitled "Technology, equilibrium, and human consciousness", the author examines world order in the nuclear age, the challenge of nuclear proliferation, the role of technology in world order, and the making of foreign policy in the digital era. Obviously, nuclear weapons have a dramatic impact on international order and the major focus of the foreign policy of any country, particularly the nuclear superpowers, is to ensure the other side will not use its weapons of mass destruction. Thus, the existing major nuclear countries need to closely cooperate with one another to insist on nuclear nonproliferation and the absence of the use of nuclear weapons in any conflict so that world order can be the result. The writer also stresses the significance of cyber technology and human consciousness in shaping relations between states and the international order. In concluding this final chapter, Kissinger states that wisdom and foresight are needed in the technological era, and humane, transcendent, and geopolitical judgment is crucial in establishing global order in the Internet age.

In his conclusion, Kissinger discusses the evolution of international order by citing the impact of two tendencies or imbalances: a redefinition of legitimacy and a significant shift in the balance of power. The first tendency concerns an alteration of values and norms in the international order while the second tendency is related to an inability of states to accommodate a major change in power relations. With these imbalances between power and legitimacy, Kissinger then presents four important dimensions which are missing in the twenty-first century world order, such as the nature of the state, the political and economic organization of the world, the absence of an effective mechanism for the great powers to consult and cooperate, and America's ambivalent world role. Thus, the quest for world order in our time, in the author's words, will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions, and to relate these regional orders to one another. The

domination of a region by one country militarily, finally, even if it brings the appearance of order, could produce a crisis for the rest of the world.

*World Order*, in sum, is not only of significant value to anyone interested in the study of international relations, but it also provides readers with fascinating insights into, just to mention a few, world history, European balance of power systems, America's world role, Asia's international order, disorder in the Middle East, the role of technology in the contemporary world order, and the future of world order itself. This book, therefore, is an indispensable resource for researchers, teachers, and students alike, and is truly a welcome addition to the field of International Relations in general and to anyone's personal bookshelf in particular.

This page intentionally left blank



## ABOUT THE UC OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

### What is the UC Occasional Paper Series?

The *UC Occasional Paper Series* is an interdisciplinary academic journal for graduate students at The University of Cambodia (UC), as well as for graduate students from other universities in Cambodia or overseas. This peer-reviewed Occasional Paper Series is initiated as a platform for students who are pursuing their Master's or Doctoral degrees at The University of Cambodia to publish their research findings, book reviews, or critical discussions on topics which will make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in the area of their specialization.

The *UC Occasional Paper Series* is issued twice a year, at six-month intervals. The first issue appears in March, and the second is published in September of each year. Successful papers are published electronically on The University of Cambodia's website, which is freely accessible to everyone, and a limited edition of each issue is printed and available in UC libraries. This Occasional Paper Series also provides graduate students at The University of Cambodia and elsewhere with excellent opportunities to showcase their work, be it a major class assignment, a term paper, a book review, or a research project, to a much wider audience and to gain valuable experience and confidence in getting their written work published in a high quality journal.

### UC Occasional Paper Series Advisory Board

Dr. Kao Kim Hourn  
Dr. Y Ratana  
Dr. Angus Munro  
H.E. Samraing Kamsan

### UC Occasional Paper Series Editorial Board

#### Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Michael Minehan

#### Chief Review Editors

Dean Keo Chhea  
Prof. Din Merican  
Dr. Chhun Vannak  
Mr. Travis Mitchell  
Ms. Samantha Smith

#### Editors

Dr. Hem Sras  
Dr. Hu Ty  
Dr. Sieng Sokha  
Dr. Suy Sareth  
Mr. An Sopheak

Mr. Bun Sophal  
Ms. Gina Lopez  
Mr. Mauk Peou  
Mr. Nhor Sanhei  
Mr. Pay Chheng How  
Mr. Teav Chhunnan

**Lead Editorial Assistant**

Mr. Heng Kimkong

**Editorial Assistants**

Mr. Seng Vanly  
Mr. Meng Kro

**Publication Assistants**

Mr. Ban Bunheng  
Mr. Tep Reaksmey  
Ms. Chan Sreyroth  
Mr. Kay Chandara  
Mr. Pom Piseth

**Disclaimer**

Every effort has been made to ensure that no inaccurate or misleading data, opinions, or statements appear in the UC Occasional Paper Series. All articles included in the publication are the sole responsibility of the contributing authors who declare in the publication release form that the manuscript and its contents constitute an original work by the authors, except as cited in the references. The views expressed by the authors, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Advisory Board and the Editorial Board of the UC Occasional Paper Series as well as the institution to which the Occasional Paper Series is affiliated.

**Information for prospective contributors**

The *UC Occasional Paper Series* welcomes all manuscript submissions from UC and non-UC graduate students who are interested in publishing their work with The University of Cambodia. All correspondence concerning manuscript submissions for publication in the *UC Occasional Paper Series* shall be sent to [occasionalpapers@uc.edu.kh](mailto:occasionalpapers@uc.edu.kh) or UC Main Campus: Northbridge Road, Sangkat Toek Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 917, Phnom Penh 12000, Cambodia. The University of Cambodia and the *UC Occasional Paper Series* Board reserve the right to publish or not publish any submission entirely at their discretion.

For more details concerning specific guidelines and formatting, please refer to *Submission Guidelines for UC Occasional Paper Series*, which can be downloaded from [http://uc.edu.kh/2016/Submission\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_UC\\_Occasional.pdf](http://uc.edu.kh/2016/Submission_Guidelines_for_UC_Occasional.pdf)