

Cambodia's Foreign Policy Leadership

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Abstract:- With steady global changes, Cambodia's foreign policy plays an important role in shaping its international relations and national development. The policy may even bring as much as benefits and disadvantage due to, a great extent, the incumbent leader who shapes it. This paper discusses the Cambodia's foreign policy leadership which has been significantly shaped by the Premier Hun Sen. In this regard, the paper argues that Cambodia's foreign policy is fundamental to its neutrality with a well-crafted strategy which is conducive to its leadership logics of flexible approach showcasing in both domestic and international aspects. The strategy is well-developed to cope with the global change in the course of maximizing the Cambodia's core interests, at any given times and chances. However, some drawbacks in policy implementation are found and discussed either, in which are worth considering in the direction and decision making in policy implementation.

Keywords:- Cambodia, foreign policy and policy leadership.

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy plays a crucial role in national interests for every country across the world. It can bring about both peace, stability and even conflict for some nations, depending on the leadership of the government incumbent who shape foreign policy implementation and strategy. A large account of global history has proved that some countries have been successful in their foreign policy implementation whereas the others have undergone a failure, particularly the countries vulnerable to geopolitical conflict and power politics. There was no exception for Cambodia, a small country of the Southeast Asian region.

After gaining full independence from France, Cambodia had enjoyed only a short period of its development. Then it experienced remarkable internal conflicts and political instability in both the Sihanouk's regime and the successive governments. This belief has been justified to a lack of sensible foreign policy leadership and effective governments. As a result, the country fell into war and became a proxy battlefield of other powers. This had long hampered Cambodia from development until the Paris Peace accord in 1991. However, the country spontaneously had no total peace until 1998 but at least the United Nations-supported election in 1993 marked new era for Cambodia to reform as a democratic state. It was also worth noting that the development had started while at the same time the foreign policy was reformulated and cope with the global economic trend and dynamics. This has, to a great extent, been justified by the role of leadership's

government incumbents in foreign policy implementation in harnessing national interests, which mostly led by the Premier Hun Sen¹. In spite of facing some challenges fuelled by the sometime domestic political stalemates, social problems and global geopolitical conflict, the Cambodia has been successful in implementing foreign policy to complement the country's development. This has posed a question to what styles of leadership the government incumbent has adopted.

This paper is outlined in several sections. However, the main discussions will focus on the Cambodia's foreign policy leadership which has been shaped by the government incumbent. It argues that holding its flexible approach sought to maximise national core interests, Cambodia's foreign policy strategy has so far greatly contributed to the country development despite of having some shortcomings in implementation process. Moreover, the paper discusses the factors encouraging for policy formulation and implementation, which conforms and places on the necessary national interests.

II. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF POLICY LEADERSHIP

The term "leadership" is derived from the Old Norse, laed, meaning "to determine the course of a ship. Sims, Farajb, and Yunc defined leadership as influence or the ability to influence the behavior and thoughts of others [1]. This definition is articulated by Hassall, who argued that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of people. Hassall further argued that leadership is a process not only of 'holding office' or being in a 'position', but also involves influence which is preferably exerted through rationale choice. He emphasizes that leadership occurs within a group context: no leadership without followership. He further emphasizes that leadership also involves goal attainment which balances "relationships" and "tasks" [2]. This definition also supports Hart and Uhr and Spillane, who define leadership as a particular set of activities and interactions that people in position and power engage in. Hart and Uhr explain that leadership involves balancing the responsibilities of rule with the accountabilities of office [3], while Spillane argues that leadership involves an array of engagement of individuals with different tools and structures [4].

¹ The government of Cambodia was shared by two parties from 1993 to 1997 whose Prime Norodom Rannaridh and Hun Sen were the Prime Minister. However, from 1997 on the government has been led by Cambodian People's Party whose only Hun Sen has been leading the country.

With respect to policy, the term “policy” is derived from the Greek *polis*, which means “city or state”, because in the ancient Greece the authority is based in the city. Cunningham states that policy is rather like the elephant – you recognize it when you see it but cannot define it. However, Baehler do define policy. They state that policy is a course of action taken by each individual government using its different powers and authorities to shape the world around it. Baehler notes that policy is a stance or attitude toward a set of related issues [5].

Various studies on policy leadership in the form of development policy and leadership styles have been conducted. Much work has emphasizes the effect of policy and leadership on national development. Baehler’s pioneering work find that policy arises from behavior and intention of individuals. Baehler argue that policy is relative to means and ends, actions and results. The policy can be formal and de facto, and it can be strategic, operational and responsive. They both conclude that public policy is composed of three key components: role, a specific instrument, and result. Their finding is underpinned by Sapru, who indicates that public policy involves some forms of overt government action to deal with a specific issue. However, according to him, public policy also involves a decision by public officials not to take action on certain issues. He notes that public policy has a legally coercive quality which people accept as legitimate [6].

With regard to leadership, Sims with others finds that different styles of leadership are categorized into typologies: directive, empowering, charismatic and aversive. This argument is underpinned by the fact that over the years, one of the most useful theories or concepts that one might choose as a fundamental framework for a particular situation is the contingency theory of leadership also known as a “situational” view of leadership in implementing policy [7]. This argument is supported by Spillane, who argues that a specific sort of leadership is likely to be more effective in a specific situation because a particular situation defines leadership practice in interaction with leaders and followers [8]. Sims suggests that any leaders can develop their own personal paradigm of situational leadership that applies to their own situation, and whether it should be directive, empowering, transformational or aversive, “does depend upon circumstances”.

III. CAMBODIA: FROM 1953 TO PRESENT

Cambodia experienced a vast of internal conflicts, civil wars and political instability after gaining independence in 1953. King Norodom Sihanouk ruled Cambodia until 1970. In 1966 to 1969, South Vietnamese and American forces increased frequent small raids across the Cambodian border even though there were protests by the Cambodian government [9] [10] [11]. The situation led the country to internal conflict and ignorance for socio-economic development. In 1970, Sihanouk was overthrown by a coup while he was on mission overseas for diplomatic relations with the USSR and then Lon Nol seized power. The Paris Agreement in January 1973, which finished the Vietnam War, proposed on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Cambodia but massive B-52 and F-111 bombings of Cambodia still

continued despite the ceasefire [12]. According to a study by a historian, the US bombing of Cambodia between 1969-1973 killed 50,000 to 150,000 people [13].

Following the Lon Nol’s regime, from 1975 to 1979 there was an estimate of 1.7 million of Cambodia’s seven million people being killed through disease, overwork, starvation and execution under the Khmer Rouge regime of Democratic Kampuchea². The primary reason is demonstrated by an attempt to revolutionize Cambodian society into one without class or ethnic differences. She further explains that the people living in urban areas were forced to leave and settle at the rural parts of the country to carry out overloaded labor, particularly for farming work. This made millions of Cambodian population homeless by the war [14].

The collapse of Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 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). The Vietnamese did not return home and they remained to ensure the state was reconstructed according their preference and to persuade the remnants of Khmer Rouge and other opposed forces from retake control [15]. Hun Sen was the Foreign Minister of the PRK and SOC in 1979. In 1985, he was also made the Chairman of the Council of Minister and Prime Minister until 1990. The government seemed not ready for the development and tended to come along socialist lines with a strong centralist emphasis. Blunt & Turner point out that autocracy characterized government and there was no place for democracy in Cambodia in that time.

However, the civil war between 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 supported by the Soviet Union, but claimed CGDK as the legitimate government of Cambodia until 1992 [16] [17]. By the time the Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia in 1989 there was relative stability in most of the countries but the country still remained a post-conflict state rather than developmental state [18].

The 1991 Paris Accords established the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which led to the elections in 1993, where a power-sharing arrangement was made for a two-headed administration led by Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Rannaridh. The Paris Peace Conference brought together representatives of 18 countries, the four Cambodian parties (KPLF, FUNCINPEC, KR and CPP) and the UN Secretary-General in an effort to negotiate the withdrawal of the remaining Vietnamese occupation troops and self-

² 1.7 million Death was Ben Kiernan’s estimate (Kiernan, 1994: 193; Kiernan, 1996: 458; Kiernan, 2003). Craig Etcheson’s estimate was between 2.2 and 2.5 million deaths (Etcheson, 2000: 171). The Khmer Rouge regime was supported by China during that time.

determination for the Cambodian people. The US helped negotiate a Security Council agreement for the UN-managed peace process that was formally adopted by the General Assembly.

Following the 1993 election, Cambodia's foreign policy was reformulated in a primary intention of ensuring and maintaining core national interest. It was also framed by an overarching strategy and leadership to adjust to international trend and agenda. Despite of the internal war and conflict ending till 1998, Cambodia had survived and managed to have national election again in 1998 and the international community again provided aids after a short-termed cut after the 1997 clash. From then, the comprehensive political settlement of Cambodia was realized and the country had more opportunities to engage in diplomatic and trade diversification by joining ASEAN in 1999 and World Trade Organizations (WTOs) in 2004 [19]. Later, more or less Cambodia has renormalized and strengthened its relations with other countries in order to cope with international political and economic trends. Over the last ten years, Cambodia has averaged the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of around 6 to 7 percent in terms of economic growth [20].

In late 2017, there was a political issues happening. The main opposition party, Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) was dissolved due to being allegedly charged of conspiracy to topple the government. At the same time there had been continual crackdowns on the opposition groups. Kem Sokha, CNRP's president was imprisoned and other party's officials 118 were banned not to get involved in politics for five year. Closure of some NGOs and media outlets, which were believed as opposition party affiliated actors by the government, also came altogether. This had led to a ramp ups criticisms from the Western partners, particularly the country's largest exporters United States (US) and European Union (EU). Then, the aids for election were cut. In addition to the funding withdrawal for the July 2018 election and other assistance, the US placed the visa restrictions on main Cambodia's senior officials [21]. EU also called on the release of the political detainees and considered reviewing the quota-free trade agreement with Cambodia immediately after the opposition dissolution. The agreement was agreed that Cambodia can export to EU in the framework of 'Everything But Arms' (EBA). Fortunately, the EBA was not suspended and EU will continue to buy Cambodia's products with quota free. Most importantly, the two Asian powers China and Japan still announced to support Cambodia. While China provided more assistance and project loans with several lucrative deals, Japan donated ballot boxes worth of more than USD\$7 million coupled with other infrastructure project aids following the dissolution of CNRP [22]. This is no doubt that the election on the 29th July 2018 is unstopable.

IV. RELEVANT LITERATURE: ISSUES OF CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

To have a wider understanding of the contemporary Cambodia's foreign policy leadership, digging in some literature of issues on the policy should have not been overlooked. There is a number of study into Cambodian

foreign policy after the French colony. Most study capture some important issues of Cambodia's foreign policy, particularly regarding the relations the country had with other nations, especially its neighbors and great powers. Among the scholars, Leifer was a prominent writer of Cambodia's politics and foreign policy in that moment. The danger and aggression of the Vietminh was significant even though the Cambodia's geographical location was less important than those of Laos and South Vietnam [23]. This might be a justification which push Cambodia looking for other great power's support for survival. This was similar to what Leifer explained that merely this attitude that could protect the country's territory and sovereignty [24].

Then Cambodia, inspired by the India's example in foreign policy, had adopted the principle of *neutrality* to search and guarantee the security for the nation [25]. The neutralization consequently prevented Cambodia from entering the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) membership [26]. It is worth noting that Prince Sihanouk in that moment was the architect of Cambodia's foreign policy and the country's most powerful politician [27] [28]. He was believed the one who hold power in the government and directed the country's economic development, in which centered on the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum*³ [29] [30]. However, Cambodia concerned its westerly neighbor, Thailand when it later improved relations with communist-supported countries, in which North Vietnam was included.

A study into the Cambodia's foreign policy indicates that, despite of sharing common characteristics in terms of culture and norms, the country had long troubled relations with her neighbors [31]. Gordon asserts that the analysis of the meaning of Cambodia's foreign policy in his study illustrates the troubled background with particular country, Thailand or Vietnam⁴. This undoubtedly raises a question on the history which is considered the significant matter causing this troubled relations.

According to Smith, during the post-independence Cambodia faced a decision dilemma whether she had to follow the US or China and Soviet Union to maintain peace and stability for the country. In his study, Smith analyses the complexities of the relations with global powers Cambodia had to cope with. Furthermore, he believed that Cambodia had to be cautious to its aggressive neighbours, Thailand and Vietnams. Therefore, the foreign policy's neutrality was the fundamental footprint for security and war prevention [32]. In this regard, Leifer, to a lesser extent, seemed not convinced with the notion holding in Smith's book that explained that Thailand and Vietnams were the major threat to Cambodia's territory and sovereignty. Leifer argued that Sihanouk could find other ways but he reconstructed the rationale of Cambodia's foreign policy which was shaped by his

³ The People's Socialist Community which led by Prince Sihanouk and held all seats in the Cambodian National Assembly during that time.

⁴ In the course of the expansion southward the Thais began to encroach Kampuchea in the thirteen century when the Vietnameses started in the seventeenth century.

leadership and play-off tactics [33] [34] when the internal criticism of younger educateds and press on Sihanouk emerged⁵. The good relations with the United States and China while they were exerting their influences in Indochina was worthy [35] [36] [37] [38] even though Thailand and South Vietnam continually hindered the US's rapprochement and understanding with Cambodia [39](Bearoy, 1966). Unavoidably, Cambodia still fell into wars because of irrational decision of Prince Sihanouk in aligning with communist blocs, which was not holding the principle of policy [40] [41] [42] [43]. This had wronged Cambodia becoming an intensive battlefield and ultimately escalated the infiltration and success of the Khmer Rouge [44] [45]. All of these might be true because neutrality might be possibly a guarantee to the country security and stability.

Several studies were later conducted by other scholars. More than the concern over territory invasion from its neighbours, Pilch points out that the main issue of Cambodian foreign policy is 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 world powers confrontation in the regions [46]. This is a fundamental principle of Cambodian foreign policy. This might be a right conclusion because Cambodia during the 1950s-60s was likely in peril to political hegemony of its aggressive neighbours [47]. This argument was consistent with Porter's analysis provided that Cambodia's foreign policy in that moment was vulnerable to external penetration and loss of self-determination [48].

A study into the process in search of peace during the Vietnamese military occupation in Cambodia shows that the reached goal was greatly influenced by larger super powers and international institutions. Despite of not much emphasising 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 forced to have peace agreement [49]. Concerning this, Frost points out that the conflict had been deep-seated and had involved suspicion, hostility and confrontation on a number of levels among Khmer parties and international counterparts, the negotiation and settlement were comprehensively developed on the principle of accord [50].

V. DISCUSSION: FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP IN NEW CAMBODIA

The Premier uses the Cambodian new constitution as a policy implementation instrument to achieve the policy objective. The policy is justified by the constitution since the principle of neutrality was embedded in the constitution. Six principles as stipulated in the constitution: (i) a policy of permanent neutrality and non-alignment (ii) a policy of

peaceful co-existence (iii) not invade any country, nor interfere in any other country's internal affairs (iv) not join in any military alliance or military pact which is incompatible with its policy of neutrality (v) not permit any foreign military base on its territory and shall not have its own military base abroad, except within the framework of a United Nations request (vi) it reserves the right to receive foreign assistance in military equipment, armaments, ammunition, in training of its armed forces, and other assistance for self-defense, to maintain public order and security within its territory. These examples show a clear chain of accountability for the success of the policy implementation, leading to the Premier.

Cambodia's neutral foreign policy was successfully implemented during Sihanouk's regime in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the policy faced a fiasco because of Prince Sihanouk's decision to align with the North Vietnamese, leading to the demise of his regime and the intervening years of war until the late 1990s. This is similar to what Gordon and Smith discuss in their study, as mentioned in the previous section [51]. Although the policy failed, its theory and successes are still widely recognized and considered to be conducive to the change in the regional and international political and economic systems after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, Cambodia has adopted this policy again. The making of such policy also reflected in the new Cambodian constitution promulgated on 24 September 1993 as mentioned early. The formation of this policy is based upon three domains of policy work: strategic, operational and responsive. This policy work triangle shapes the incumbent Cambodian Premier Hun Sen's role and action as discussed below.

A. Incentive Factors for Policy Making

The end of the Cold War was a good starting point for Cambodia to move toward a peace settlement [52]. All Cambodian political factions signed a Paris Peace Agreement, leading to the 1993 UN-sponsored general elections followed by the creation of the new Cambodian constitution to transform Cambodia to a multi-party liberal democratic country and to integrate the country into the region and the world. To facilitate this integration process, Cambodia needs a policy conducive to and consistent with the regional and international political and economic changes to cope with the increasing trade liberalization and globalization, and especially, to attain peace for the country and the region. This development has motivated the Cambodian Premier to reshape and refine the neutral foreign policy program, which has since transformed Cambodia into a neutral nation again. The policy was also specifically designed to absorb foreign aid assistance for the Cambodian national reconstruction and development. Now the country has received more than US\$ 1 billion in aid each year from donor countries. Amongst them the US, China, Japan and the EU would be considered the most important donors. This illustrates that such foreign policy is a result of the regional and international new trend of development and the need for aid for national reconstruction and development course [53].

The policy has been formulated to cope with both national and international changes. The Cambodian people

⁵ 1969 was believed a period of watershed when there was a huge presence of 30,000 to 50,000 Vietminh forces, unsatisfied economic performance and corrupt government in Cambodia and the Sihanouk's internal control was no longer to be taken for granted (Gordon,1970; Henderson & Pike, 1971; Kirk, 1971 and Young, 1970).

have placed the highest importance on sustainable peace and stability in the country, and political and economic integration into the regional and international communities. A notable point in case was that 90 percent of the Cambodian population went to the 1993 UN-sponsored election to vote for a leader, who could maintain peace, and transform the country into a member of regional and international communities⁶. The UN also shared the feeling of the Cambodian public, and wanted to bring peace to the ASEAN region. The UN had spent a great deal of money and made great efforts towards the Cambodian peace settlement, leading to the signing of the Paris Peace Accord. This shows that the needs of the Cambodian people and the international communities have led to this policy choice.

B. Leadership on Policy Implementation

For the last 30 years, the idea of national political and administrative leadership has been bound up with the performance of the incumbent Premier Hun Sen. He possesses various types of leadership characteristics in leading and managing the policy implementation, based on a particular situation. To mention a few, the Premier has empowered the Foreign Ministers to decide upon foreign policy issues and strategies because this policy, to a great extent, is a product of the Foreign Minister's advice. It is worth noting that the Minister would be the Premier's senior adviser and considered the Premier's most trusted associate. However, when the border dispute with Thailand began to deteriorate in 2008, the Premier directed the policy to respond to the Thai counterpart. All the decisions and reactions related to the dispute had to be put through to the foreign minister⁷ for consideration. This leadership characteristic also reflected in the case of Khmer Rouge with China. These illustrations show that the Premier employs situational leadership because he has chosen his leadership styles based on the climate of current politics, domestically and internationally.

At national level Cambodia's foreign policy is guided by the leader incumbent with strategic settings in both direction and decision making by using outcome-based approach. The Foreign Minister is the most single important focal point for the policy implementation. The Minister's role and tasks have been defined by the Premier. The Minister is the sole person who represents the Premier at the United Nations as well as, most of the time at any regional meeting. There has been regular assessment of the policy implementation. The policy output is evaluated on a year by year basis. There have been several stocktaking conferences chaired by the Premier. These conferences highlight strengths and weaknesses of the policy implementation and set future strategic direction for further actions. The Minister regularly submits assessment reports to the Premier within the time frame, set forth by the Premier, which is useful for the policy and resource allocation for policy making. The Prime Minister, who frames the policy mandates, makes further recommendation for the policy

implementation. This shows the Premier's recognition of the complexity of output and outcome relationship in policy implementation, and also shows the nature of the relationship between policy maker and policy implementer. In this regard, the policy implementation strategy is essentially influenced by the guidance and leadership of the Prime Minister whose critical roles are to judge and make the mandate to improve policy implementation. This implies to the leadership's definition which indicates that leadership is the ability to influence behavior and thoughts of others. It is also similar to what Hart and Uhr as well as Spillance mentioned in the theory that leadership is a particular set of activities and interactions that people in the position and power engage in them.

As far as it is concerned, the foreign policy evaluation results, which are made based upon the impact and outcome approach, must be delivered to the Premier in a short period of time each year. This explains an outcome hierarchy: immediate to intermediate and long-term outcomes for the implementation of the policy based on the policy logic.

To cope with global changes, economically and politically, Cambodia's foreign policy leadership has employed flexible and situational approaches. Having realized that the People's Republic of China was Khmer Rouge's chief supporter, Hun Sen officially declared the one-China foreign policy while the country was isolated from international community⁸. As a result, China stopped supporting the Khmer Rouge leadership, thereby leading to its complete collapse in 1999. Such an approach has so far greatly impacted Cambodia because the country has harnessed significantly financial advantages from China since then. As China has become the world's second economy, Cambodia, to a great extent, has relied heavily on China's credit loans and grants in the course of infrastructure and economic development. Over the periods, China has provided Cambodia with aid capital of more than US\$ 1 billion⁹. China has been the Cambodia's largest source of foreign aid since 2006 surpassing the US and Japan, which have been long treated as the largest donor countries for Cambodia. In 2007, for instance, China pledged USD 600 million in assistance and then announced USD 256 million in aid for 2009, which was greatly much more than the amount provided by the major Western counterparts- European countries provided a total of USD 213 million, Japan assisted USD 112 million and the U.S. pledge was about only USD 50 million. Last year, China again pledged to provide grant aid around USD 600 million from 2016 to 2018. Moreover, China also helps Cambodia in the military and human resource development both financially and logistically. Following the dissolution of CNRP, with China's top delegation visit to Cambodia early this year, China signed several bilateral agreements with Cambodia, as in time Japan announced to support Cambodia's election on 29th July 2018, including a

⁶ Since then the regular election is held within 5 year-timeframe giving the Cambodian people chance to vote for their leader.

⁷ The Cambodia's foreign minister at that time was Hor Namhong.

⁸ Following the clash between CPP's and Funcinpec's forces in 1997, international community aids to Cambodia were suspended, therefore China took this opportunities to strengthen relation with Cambodia.

⁹ The majority of China's aids are concessional loan with no-string attached.

loan for new airport construction in Siem Reap, a deal to build a highway from Phnom Penh to Sihanouk and the other agreements of the launch of the Southeast Asian nation's first communications satellite and loans for electricity supply and support for agriculture, in which the bilateral trade will reach USD\$ 6 billion by 2020 the ever much larger amount than other bilateral counterparts trading with Cambodia [54]. China also pledged over USD\$100 million of military aid to help modernize Cambodia's military [55]. This clearly shows that the one-China policy strategy has had a strong influence on Cambodian-Chinese relations.

Beside China, Cambodia also justifies its flexible behavior to other parts of the world. To support this, one notable justification is that the Cambodian government allowed the US to annually send its patrol navy to enter the Cambodian water, and had agreed to conduct annual joint military exercise and worked closely with the US in the fight against international terrorism in exchange for U.S. aid assistance and diplomatic support as the Obama administration started its pivot to Asia. There had been a significant increase in Cambodian-American relations and cooperation in military and diplomatic coverages over the periods of that time. The US had provided more than US\$ 800 million in support of Cambodia's development. For the 2012 alone, it granted Cambodia bilateral military aid of six million US dollars. There had been also an exchange of official visits between Cambodian-American top diplomats as shown by the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's official visit in Cambodia in 2010, and the incumbent Foreign Minister's official visit to the U.S. in June 2012. Later, the president of the US and then his wife also visited Cambodia. The strategy has transformed Cambodia into a key nation in the region, and as most nations in the region and the world are strongly influenced by the U.S. foreign policy, this can also help Cambodia to become an important player in international politics as well. This flexible policy implementation has culminated in a great deal advantage on Cambodia's development. To relate this, policy is relative to means, ends, actions and results taken by individual government with different powers and authorities to shape the world around it [56]. It is also worth noting that Hun Sen criticized the US's bombardment to Cambodia's soil during the 1960s and 1970s openly during the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2016 and then advocated for the cancellation of the debts Cambodia owed to the US in that period as the Obama's successor, Trump will take on the White House. Unfortunately, it failed. The continual advocate of cancelling debt has been remained up to the present.

Over the periods, Cambodia has integrated itself, by way of flexible strategy, into the region and the world. Cambodia is a member of ASEAN and has played a vital role in maintaining regional cooperation and peace. In its capacity as the 2012 ASEAN chair, it successfully lobbied North Korea to join the ASEAN regional forum in Cambodia that moment to defuse rising tension in the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, it is also a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The membership in ASEAN and the WTO has made way for Cambodia to improve her economy to the rate of 6.5% to 7% on average for the last 10 years [57]. This pace of economic growth had helped Cambodia to prepare for the ASEAN

Economic Community integration to a great extent. Kao also notes that the integration of Cambodia into ASEAN brings the most benefit to the country in terms economic growth and geo-political interests [58]. In the course of global peace support under the umbrella of the UN, Cambodia has dispatched hundreds of its demining personnel to the some African countries. More specifically, this course had promoted the nation's prestige into an active U.N. member, leading it to be capable in applying for non-permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council for the 2013-2014 mandate. Though it failed, several nations expressed their support for Cambodia's candidacy. These examples illustrate that the Premier's flexible strategy has strong influence on the country's integration into the region and the world alike. However, such a strategy may not always lead to a great success for all fields and all times and there are several shortcomings being evident and perceived to the practices.

C. Pitfalls of the Policy Implementation

Even though the policy is implemented with a well-crafted approach conducive to strategic, flexible and situational logics, some drawbacks cannot be overlooked. In the national context, there have been overlapping roles in policy implementation, which negatively affects the Cambodian development and relationship with some parts of the world. A specific example of this is that the Premier assigned the former Minister in-charge of the Council of Ministers, Sok An, to negotiate with UNESCO to list Cambodia's 9th century Preah Vihear Temple as a world heritage site. The listing of the Temple had caused as yet unresolved border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand. According to Baehler, a poor choice of agency or person can undermine policy objective. In this case, Cambodia must pay the high cost for the Prime Minister's decision because Thailand had not responded to the program in ways the Premier expected. The cost of realizing the program objective had become so extreme. Cambodia significantly increased its national spending on defense along the border in times of economic difficulty in 2008-2009. The program had created problems which were beyond the Cambodian Government's control. This evidence suggested that the selection of Sok An instead of the Foreign Minister affected the way the policy was delivered. The Foreign Minister must have been chosen to cope with this issue and certainly better suited to the task. In this regard, the Premier made a poor decision and made the responsibility of the foreign minister, who was well-experienced in diplomatic issues, unclear.

From the point of view of international context, the principle of policy, at any given time, has not been firmly assured. In this regard, there have been controversies among public and scholars on the Cambodia's foreign policy sway on great powers, particularly the US and China. It tends to take sides between the U.S. and China in terms of both politics and economics as the two major countries have been trying to influence Cambodia for their respective interests in the region. The Prime Minister tends to prefer China to the US for political and economic support since Cambodia-China relation had been strongly strengthened. Instead of joining the international forces to impose sanctions against China's close allies considered to be rogue states such as Burma, North

Korea and Iran, the Premier, instead, had further strengthened the Cambodian relations with these nations. This appeasement policy strategy has, to a great extent, caused the U.S. to show little interest in the Cambodian economic development process. This strategy made issue of Cambodian foreign policy. The U.S. has only become involved with Cambodia in the improvements in democracy, and human rights-two areas in which the two nations hold different views. This involvement sometimes can cause strained relations between the two countries. The U.S. suspended its delivery of military trucks to Cambodia in 2009 because the Premier had repatriated Chinese Uighurs to stand trial in China for an uprising against the Chinese Government. This led the Premier to accept China's offer of its military trucks to replace those of the US.

As China has treated Cambodia as its close ally and provided the most aids to the country, Cambodia sometimes shows its intention and commitment to improve tie with Washington. For instance, the Premier had shown his support of fighting and preventing the harboring of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Cambodia. Likewise, he also showed the interest in joining the US-initiated Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)¹⁰ by softly criticizing over the exclusion of some ASEAN states including Cambodia. This illustrates that both the Cambodian-U.S. relations and the Cambodian-Chinese relations are not in balance, contrary to the principle of neutrality. However, the relations of Cambodia with the US and China have been significantly shaped by Cambodia's internal politics. For instance, when the government dissolved CNRP being allegedly charged of establishing conspiracy to topple the government, Cambodia's ties to the US and Western counterparts deteriorated but blossomed with China. The US and EU cut aids for the election in July 2018 and placed some restriction and sanctions on Visa and Cambodia's top officials while China publicly claimed to support Cambodia. Most interestingly, the US's closest ally Japan also continued to fund the election.

More or less at regional level Cambodia's foreign policy balance has seen unsteady on a number of occasions. A good point in case is that on South China Sea dispute Cambodia appeared to take side with China because it always appealed to other ASEAN claimant states to solve the problems with China. However, Cambodia also tends to pacify Vietnam. It was evident when the Premier Hun Sen's visit to Vietnam in 2013. Addressing in Vietnamese, the Premier reiterated the Vietnamese contribution to the 1979 liberation of Cambodia from the genocide [59]. Moreover, between China and Japan when the country already upgraded its relation with the former to that of *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* in 2008, it later in 2013 improved the tie with the latter to that of *Strategic Partnership*. This caused Beijing very upset. This continuum still continues, which clearly show the unsteady stance of Cambodia's foreign policy.

With these illustrations, therefore what has caused the Premier to adopt and apply this policy initiative? There might

¹⁰ The US withdrew from TPP after Trump became the US's president in the 2016 election.

be some justifications holding in the Cambodia's foreign policy sway in that, at any flexible and situational cost. With this regard, the national core interests might possibly be the prize the government desires for in engaging with powers no matter how. Pragmatically, the Premier is the one who has learned and experienced how Cambodia had suffered from power politics to an extent, particularly during the Cold War. Therefore, play-off tactics within great powers can possibly be a rational option to maximize and accumulate core interests.

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the paper overall discusses the Cambodia's foreign policy leadership which has been greatly shaped by the Premier Hun Sen. Cambodian incumbent leader has still adopted the flexible approach to rationalize the core national interest. This strategy and approach have set as fundamental principle to deal with the regional and international political and economic system. This policy was successfully implemented during the Prince Sihanouk's government after the French colony but the policy failed due to the hypersensitive decision of Sihanouk to connect with the North Vietnam and communist bloc. This principle of the policy is still widely recognized and developed based on three domains: strategic, operational and responsive.

The approach has shaped the Cambodian government's role and leadership in regarding with core national interest and development. The paper explains that Cambodia's foreign policy implementation has been pragmatically guided by the incumbent leader Hun Sen with strategic setting in both direction and decision making. More or less the paper also argues that a well-crafted approach of policy leadership is conducive to flexible logics proceeding in domestic, regional and international aspects to cope with global trends and maximize core national interests. This implementation strategy is always applicable, at any given time, to balance Cambodia's relations with other countries, particularly great powers.

However, there are also some pitfalls falling into the corner of the implementation. As mentioned above, the choice of Sok An, then Council Minister, in the case of the Preah Vihear Temple and the tendency towards China are considered disadvantage. The Premier's decision on these issues were understandable but these cases are not crucial in the present and future contexts. What matters for the policy design and implementation is not the Temple case and the preference for China over the US or other countries but how to manage the policy implementation and its outcomes or impacts. The continued success of the policy implementation rests on the Premier's effective and pragmatic leadership. The nature of the Premier's policy leadership reflects the present and future direction. In any given time and opportunity the policy is simple but robust and tested through experience to make sure the higher prize is retained.

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