LAWRENCE FINSEN

8. THE ELECTION FACEBOOK (ALMOST) WON

The Cambodian National Assembly Election of 2013

The events surrounding the 2013 election in Cambodia are pretty much what would have been expected by observers familiar with the political scene in Cambodia in the last two decades: a National Assembly election fraught with charges of irregularities, followed by a long period of negotiation and demonstrations during which the dispute between the ruling party and the opposition was not resolved, even intensifying and breaking into violent conflict at times. By the end, the ruling party's hold on power, though challenged, remained in place. In this fifth National Assembly election since the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991 brought to a close two decades of civil war, genocide and foreign occupation, things seemed in many respects normal. After all, the ruling party – the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) – did not actually win the 1993 election, and though it had achieved majorities in 1998 and 2003, it did not acquire the supermajority needed to form a government. It had succeeded in maintaining its powerful position in all these cases nonetheless, and its strong-arm tactics in doing so have not varied a lot.

Yet, there is also something different about the most recent political campaign and the subsequent maneuvering that raises the question whether the Cambodian political scene has changed in a way that will make a difference in the longer term. That change is arguably due primarily to two interconnected factors: the very young age of the population, and the use of new and social media. In this chapter, I explore the role that new/social media has been playing in recent Cambodian politics.

To get a taste of the role of social media in this election, let's consider one event. On July 19, 2013, a crowd of 100,000 enthusiastic supporters greeted opposition leader Sam Rainsy[1] when he returned from years of self-imposed exile just nine days before the election (Seiff & Cheang Sokha 2013). The mainstream media – all of the television stations, most of the radio stations, and the Khmer language newspapers – treated it as a nonevent, covering it minimally or not at all. Regarding this lack of coverage two *Phnom Penh Post*[2] reporters wrote "The television channels – all of them dominated by the government ties – showed no footage of the rally, while other media downplayed it." Yet a large number of people were mobilized to greet Sam Rainsy at Pochentong Airport and parade victoriously through the streets of Phnom Penh to Freedom Park. How was this mobilization possible with a media that would clearly not help the opposition deliver its message to the public? In one way the answer is simple: it was Facebook.

I. Epstein (ed.), The Whole World is Texting, 161-195.

Sam Rainsy's triumphant return to Cambodia is but one of many incidents that exemplify the transformation of Cambodian politics thanks to new media and a young population eager to use it. When the election was held last year, more than 52% of Cambodians were under the age of 25 (CIA 2013). The eligible pool of voters was the youngest it had been in Cambodian history, with 3.5 million voters between the ages of 18 and 30 and 1.5 million of those young people eligible to vote for the first time (Ponniah 2013a). Unsurprisingly, this young population was experiencing newfound access and interest in the use of social media. In a context in which government (and therefore the majority party) tightly controls traditional media, a newfound power of dissenting voices to disseminate their message, to organize and mobilize actions, to train and empower others in the uses of new media, and ultimately to challenge the entrenched ruling party's domination has emerged. Facebook is currently at the heart of the explanation of how those many examples came to be, but the story of that change is more complex and is changing already, and for a number of reasons its prospects to alter Cambodian political life are uncertain.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Cambodia secured its independence from nearly a century of French colonial rule in 1953, with Norodom Sihanouk leading the country, sometimes as head of state and sometimes as head of government. In 1970 a coup led by Prime Minister Lon Nol displaced Sihanouk (who was at the time head of state, with the title 'Prince'). Civil war ensued in which the communists, who Sihanouk dubbed the "Khmer Rouge" (but who actually called themselves the Communist Party of Kampuchea – CPK), succeeded in taking control of the country in 1975. From April 17, 1975, when the Khmer Rouge forces marched into Phnom Penh, until January 7, 1979, the country was isolated from much of the world, its people virtually imprisoned, money and banks eliminated, markets abolished, schools and professional institutions closed, religion banned. In their place was an agrarian revolution that forced people from the cities to the countryside to collective agricultural work, separating families and making "angkar" – "the organization" – the center of life. Anything foreign was rejected, despite most of the top leadership having themselves received higher education in France, and those who were tainted – the educated, those who spoke foreign language, artists, professionals, anyone who wore eyeglasses – were suspect and in danger. Many who were suspect in these or other ways were murdered outright. Additionally, certain portions of the population – such as the Cham Muslim community, people of Vietnamese or Chinese ethnicity, and the Buddhist monastic community – were singled out as targets for genocide. After less than four years of this reign of terror, close to 2 million people, roughly a quarter of the population, had perished – from malnutrition, starvation, disease, or outright murder.[3]

Cambodian political life has been dominated in the decades since the overturning of the Khmer Rouge regime by the CPP, with self-described "strong man" Hun Sen consolidating power as Prime Minister with repeated success in

maintaining a hold on control of the government through and sometimes in spite of elections. Hun Sen was himself a Khmer Rouge military officer (a Deputy Regional Commander) when he defected to Vietnam in 1977, as did Chea Sim and Heng Samrin. With Vietnam's encouragement, they formed a military force of defectors and local ethnic Cambodians that assisted the Vietnamese army when the latter invaded Cambodia on Christmas day, 1978, driving the Khmer Rouge from Phnom Penh to the jungle, from which the latter waged guerrilla war for the next two decades (Gottesman 2003, pp. 32-34; Mehta & Mehta 2013).

The invading forces succeeded quickly, taking control of Phnom Penh after only two weeks. "Democratic Kampuchea" (DK), as the Khmer Rouge had referred to the state, was now replaced by the "People's Republic of Kampuchea" (PRK). Vietnam maintained a military presence and oversight of PRK administrations for the next decade. Less than 30 years after securing its independence from French colonial rule, Cambodia was once again dominated by a foreign power. Throughout the 1980s the PRK was led by former Khmer Rouge military commanders, including Heng Samrin, Chea Sim and Hun Sen, or others, such as Pen Sovan, Say Phoutang and Bou Thang, who had split from the Khmer Rouge years earlier and remained in Vietnam (or Thailand in Say Phoutang's case) until the Khmer Rouge was ousted. Hun Sen was appointed Foreign Minister in 1980, Deputy Prime Minister in 1981 and became Prime Minister at the age of 32 in late 1984 (Gottesman 2005, p. 204; Chandler 2008, p. 277; Mehta & Mehta 2013).

Despite the quick success of the Vietnamese invasion, the Khmer Rouge remained a powerful player in Cambodia for some time. After the invasion, with Pol Pot leading the Khmer Rouge from the northwest jungles, larger geopolitical forces quickly came to the foreground. Evan Gottesman argues that the Cambodia conflict became a proxy for the cold war, pitting Vietnam and the Soviet Bloc against Thailand, China, the United States, and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (p. 42).

The Khmer Rouge found financial and diplomatic support throughout the 1980s. Both China and the United States refused to recognize the Vietnam-occupied government in Phnom Penh, insisting that Cambodia's seat at the U.N. be held by the Khmer Rouge representatives of a "government in exile" rather than the PRK. Two years following Vietnam's withdrawal of military troops in 1989, the Cambodian government, now calling itself the "State of Cambodia" (SOC), was able to reach a multination accord – the "Paris Peace Agreements" – setting the stage for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to lay the foundation for a nationwide election in 1993. David Chandler points out that the reduction of aid to Vietnam following collapse of the Soviet Union and the growing self-sufficiency of the PRK/SOC administration encouraged the 1989 Vietnamese withdrawal, which in turn paved the way for the breakthrough that finally led to the election, as the U.S. and China would now withdraw their support of the Khmer Rouge as representative of Cambodia in the U.N. (Chandler 2013, pp. 281-286). The Khmer Rouge boycotted the election, and many of their followers continued to battle the new government for a few more years, but they ceased to be a factor after thousands defected (with hundreds of their soldiers being

absorbed into the national army). The Khmer Rouge's complete demise seemed punctuated by Pol Pot's death while under house arrest after being tried by the Khmer Rouge itself for assassination of Son Sen and his entire family (Chandler 2008, pp. 289-90).

Nonetheless, the legacy of the Khmer Rouge period's devastation remains in many ways, and Cambodia has struggled to lift itself from the deep wounds inflicted. Justice for the victims has been long delayed, but in 2003 a treaty between the United Nations and Cambodia established the framework for a tribunal in which surviving senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge could be tried in Cambodian courts under a novel hybrid model that includes international participation and standards, as well as civil parties' participation and the possibility of "moral reparations."[4] The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) is currently in the second phase of its second trial, trying Nuon Chea (former Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party) and Khieu Samphan (former Head of State) for crimes against humanity, genocide and grave breaches of the Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as a number of charges within Cambodian law. Two other defendants were originally charged as well – Ieng Thiritt and Ieng Sary – but Thiritt was determined to be incompetent to stand trial due to dementia, and Sary died during the first phase of the trial. Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan were both found guilty in the first phase of case 2 and given life sentences (there is no death penalty in Cambodia), while Kaing Guek Eav (also known as "Duch") was found guilty in the first trial and is now serving a life sentence (ECCC). Two additional cases with at least five defendants are being investigated for possible prosecution.

THE ELECTION OF 2013

On July 28, 2013, Cambodia held its election for the National Assembly, the fifth such "mandate" since the Paris Peace Agreements created the conditions for establishing a "multiparty parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy" (Women's Media Center of Cambodia 2013). Elections for National Assembly, which, along with the Senate comprises the Parliament, are held every five years. Other elections are held at varying intervals, but not at the same time as the National Assembly election. The CPP, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen, has succeeded in maintaining power throughout this period, winning by increasingly large margins in the National Assembly (and even greater margins in local, commune-level elections) throughout the first decade of this century. In the first three elections, the results did not favor the CPP with clear victories. In 1993, the CPP received fewer votes than the royalist party FUNCINPEC,[5] but Hun Sen refused to relinquish power, leading to a stalemate and eventual resolution with shared power and two prime ministers. The CPP managed to outmaneuver FUNCINPEC and maintained control over provincial governorships, defense, the national police, and the civil service (Chandler 2008, p. 289). In 1997 violence instigated by the CPP set the context for the next election. A grenade attack on a peaceful demonstration of Sam Rainsy supporters killed more than twenty, while more than a hundred FUNCINPEC officials and supporters died in what Chandler

describes as a "preemptive coup." In 1998 and 2003, the CPP did receive a majority of the votes, but not the two-thirds required to form a government. Despite the preemptive coup, the 1998 elections themselves were "free and fair" according to local and foreign observers, but the opposition parties had no access to electronic media and were not allowed to campaign in the countryside. The elections were followed by periods of struggle, out of which coalition governments were forged between CPP and FUNCINPEC (Chandler 2008, pp. 290-291). Before the 2008 election a constitutional amendment reduced the necessary result to 50% plus one, enabling the CPP to form a government without a coalition partner. As a result, heading into the election of 2013 the CPP held 90 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly.

But the results in 2013 seemingly reversed the trend of the CPP's ever-tighter grip on power, with a surprisingly strong showing from the newly formed opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). The CNRP is a coalition formed by two opposition groups, the Sam Rainsy Party and the Human Rights Party, which held 26 and three seats, respectively, following the 2008 election. Official results of the 2013 election gave 68 seats to the CPP and 55 to the CNRP (Sokchea & Seiff 2013, p. 1), a stunning outcome that signaled that despite continually increasing its grip on power, the CPP's dominance could still face a strong challenge. Indeed, that official result may not have reflected the actual strength of the opposition, which maintains that, but for widespread irregularities in the conduct and oversight of the election process, they would have actually won the election.

That strong showing at the polls needs to be considered in light of a series of significant events both prior to and after the election, including pre-election maneuvering, large turnouts for pre-election rallies and post-election demonstrations, continuing pressure to address alleged irregularities in the election process, and mobilization to address a variety of social issues. The opposition struggle included a 10-month boycott of the Assembly by all 55 opposition members-elect, a string of mass demonstrations, and a social media battle. Resolution came suddenly after an entire year passed with negotiations that started and stopped many times. Along the way, the opposition increased the pressure with more frequent demonstrations that included those with any number of grievances against the government, tapping into a growing agitation to address a broader set of social issues, such as minimum wage demands of garment and other workers, land rights, and attitudes toward Vietnam. At the same time, the government responded to demonstrations in increasingly repressive ways.

Given Cambodia's recent history, that an election had not resulted in an outcome accepted by all parties at the time its official results were announced is not remarkable. Despite the admonition in the Election Law that the National Election Committee (NEC) is to carry out its work in a neutral and impartial way, those overseeing the elections are perceived as being no more independent of ruling party control than are the judiciary or the mainstream media. For one thing, the manner of appointment makes independence problematic: members are nominated by the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet) and approved by a majority of

the National Assembly, both controlled by the ruling party (Kingdom of Cambodia 2013). Critics maintain that the composition of the committee reflects that lack of independence. For example, the current Chairperson, Im Suosdey, rose to his current position from the central committee of the CPP's youth wing, the Youth Association of Cambodia, before being appointed to the NEC (Lewis 2013). Thus, even with the odds stacked against them, the newfound success of the CNRP at the polls, along with its ability to maintain pressure and momentum for months of protests represents a noteworthy change. Undoubtedly, one important element in explaining the success of the CNRP is the presence and use of new media to challenge the state control of mainstream media: the television, radio and print sources from which most Cambodians receive most of their information. Without new media – especially Facebook and YouTube – it is doubtful that the opposition would have been able to achieve the results they did in the election or to mobilize the support they did in its aftermath in a continuing movement to address election irregularities and the stalemate about governance that continued for a year after the election.

PREELECTION MANEUVERING

The Cambodian National Rescue Party was created in 2012, when meetings between Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha, leaders of the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) and the Human Rights Party (HRP), finally resulted in declaration of their intention to merge the two parties and strengthen the opposition. Interestingly, the merging of the parties led to one of the maneuvers used by the CPP against the opposition. In early June, 2013 (less than two months before the election), all 27 CNRP members (24 from SRP, 3 from HRP), as well as 2 more from the disbanded Norodom Ranariddh Party were expelled from the National Assembly, stripped of their salaries and their immunity from prosecution as Assembly members. The ground of the expulsion according to the permanent committee of the National Assembly was their "simultaneously holding membership in two parties," presumably prohibited by the election law, which allows for election of parties' representatives proportional to the vote, not simply individuals (Phorn Bopha & Meyn 2013). Discussions of both the interpretation of the election law as well as the subsequent question whether the removal undermined the constitutional legitimacy of the Assembly (for no longer containing the requisite 120 members) seemed rather strained in their logic. But the aim of the expulsion was clearly to weaken the growing threat of the opposition just prior to the election. Loss of parliamentary immunity posed a serious threat to opposition members speaking openly in criticism of their opponents while seeking re-election in a context in which free speech is not well protected.

Another important event in the pre-election context has already been mentioned: Sam Rainsy's return to Cambodia. In addition to being an example of the ability to mobilize large numbers of people to act despite lacking access to mainstream media, Rainsy's return on July 19 also exemplifies the opposition's commitment to maintaining control of their messages through social media rather than reliance on

the mainstream media. Rainsy had been in self-imposed exile since late 2009, when, as a member of the National Assembly and leader of the Sam Rainsy Party he led a demonstration at the Vietnamese border at Svay Rieng involving speeches and moving border markers in a symbolic gesture, which led to his being tried in absentia for destruction of property and racial incitement; later in 2010 new charges led to a second trial for disinformation and falsifying public documents (Meas Sokchea & O'Toole 2010). He remained in Europe to avoid the sentences (which combined came to 11 years plus fines) until 2013. King Norodom Sihamoni, who became King in 2004 when his father Norodom Sihanouk retired, could grant a pardon, but only with an initial recommendation from the Prime Minister. Negotiations with Hun Sen had not resulted in an agreement on terms for Rainsy's return before the election. On July 5, 23 days before the election, Rainsy announced he intended to return even without a pardon, despite facing possible imprisonment. In a video that was "widely disseminated on social media" (first released on Facebook), Rainsy went further, saying: "I agree to sacrifice my life for national homeland, daring to die myself to rescue the nation from catastrophe." The *Phnom Penh Post* reporters mention that Rainsy refused their request for an interview at the time, indicating that he would have nothing to add that he had not already made clear on Facebook (Boyle & Meas 2013, p. 1).

AFTER THE ELECTION – A YEAR IN LIMBO

The results were not declared official until September, but the preliminary count had 68 seats for the CPP, 55 for the CNRP, and none for any other party. The opposition made its view clear immediately: the vote was rigged and the new government would be illegitimate. While there was less violence reported than in previous elections, observers suggested that things may have been worse in other respects, with the top issues raised right away including inaccurate voter lists (as many as a million people were alleged to have been left off the lists, according to one source), ghost voters assuming the identity of others by obtaining a temporary identity certificate supplied by the NEC (apparently as many as 100,000 of these were issued in Battambang alone); and fears of double voting (as video evidence went viral that the "indelible" ink in which voters had to dip their fingers was too easy to remove) (PP Staff 2013; Sen David 2013). Complaints lodged with the NEC were investigated and ultimately dismissed as either lacking a basis or insufficient to have changed the outcome of the election (NEC 2013). Rejecting the NEC's objectivity, the CNRP called for an investigation of the irregularities to be conducted with UN oversight, as well as local and international NGO participation. Official results, unchanged from the preliminary figures, were announced by the NEC on September 9 (Ponniah 2013c).

The next 11 months saw the longest political deadlock in modern Cambodian history, with a resolution only being reached almost a year after the election. The year was punctuated by mass demonstrations in Phnom Penh as well as other cities and negotiations that seemed to be reaching closure, only to have one party or the

other withdraw. Sam Rainsy took the CNRP case to other nations to withhold recognition of the government, but found little help there.

Social media continued to play a role, as it had already been doing in the campaign, with videos of alleged violations of voting rules going viral on Facebook and Twitter as early as election day (Woodside 2013a). In August, the CNRP held only two rallies, but announced plans for a peaceful but very large rally to last three days in September. In the meantime, King Sihamoni called on members-elect to a swearing-in ceremony on September 23, refusing opposition requests for delay to await the outcome of negotiations. True to their threat, all 55 CNRP members boycotted the swearing-in ceremony, instead holding a ceremony of their own at Angkor Wat, a location chosen for its powerful symbolic connotation of a glorious Cambodian tradition.

The government initially reacted to the mass demonstrations with concern, setting up barricades all around Phnom Penh to control the flow of demonstrators coming from the provinces. On September 16, the first day of the three-day rally, thousands gathered at Freedom Park, an area in Phnom Penh designated for public gathering and free speech. Later in the evening, angry workers, tired of waiting for hours at an overpass, pushed barriers aside so they could get home; the situation escalated and shots were fired. By the end of the melee, police had shot dead one man, injured 10 (four with gunshot wounds), and six had been arrested (May Titthara & Woodside 2013).

In October when the next major CNRP rally was planned, the government exercised more restraint, with a much smaller police presence and very few barriers around the city. Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha led many thousands in peaceful protest at Freedom Park, followed by a march to the UN office to deliver petitions for investigation of the election (with millions of Cambodians' thumbprints affixed attesting to the fact that they voted opposition) (May Titthara et al. 2013).

Throughout autumn, the CNRP held occasional rallies and marches; in early December, having made little progress in achieving their demand for a new election and an investigation, they raised the heat by declaring a strategy of daily demonstrations in Freedom Park. By mid-December the daily demonstrations attracted thousands. In the same period, the CNRP was not the only group protesting in Phnom Penh – striking garment workers and land rights activists, for example, were bringing their cases to the public eye.[6] Often these demonstrations received a much more violent response from the government, which was employing not only military and police to control demonstrations, but also a notorious group of "security guards" who were used in the front line to disperse crowds and crack heads (May Titthara 2013). The Daun Penh security guards (named after a district in central Phnom Penh) are easily identified in videos by their dark clothing, motorcycle helmets and batons. The government had responded to garment workers' wage protests by authorizing a raise to $95, far short of the $160 demanded. The CNRP invited them and others disaffected with the government to join their protests, and by late December the protests were drawing large turnouts, reaching a crowd of either 100,000 or 500,000, depending on whose estimate you consult (Meas Sokchea & Pye 2013). Things were getting tense for

the government, which initiated a crackdown. On January 2 and 3, demonstrating strikers at one of the garment factories were met with a strong response, resulting in five deaths and scores of injuries among demonstrators.[7] Twenty-three demonstrators were arrested, removed to a secret location and held incommunicado for a week, then detained for five months until their trial in June. Within a few days of the demonstration, the government banned all demonstrations in Phnom Penh. Nonetheless, various groups defied the ban throughout January, leading again to violent crackdowns, usually by the Daun Penh security guards, who by now had gained a reputation for their ruthlessness. One of the many videos exhibiting the brutality (visited upon demonstrators as well as journalists and NGO workers there to observe and assist) that went viral showed Daun Penh District Deputy Governor Sok Penh Vuth bashing a man with his bullhorn (Khouth Sophak Chakrya 2014a).

By early March the ban on demonstrations in Phnom Penh had been lifted, but Freedom Park remained off limits. In April, Assemblywoman-elect Mu Sochua started a campaign to re-open Freedom Park, appearing there each morning and trying to exercise her right to speech. She repeated the exercise daily, and was removed or barred from entering equally frequently. One day, after being refused entrance, she walked around the city to various sites, including Independence Monument and Prime Minister Hun Sen's house, making speeches. Her efforts attracted a following of young CNRP supporters, whose videos and photographs showed this courageous woman standing firm or sitting down and giving lessons on such things as the law protecting the right of free speech or the plight of garment workers. Usually, she can be seen being jostled, strong-armed, or carried away from the park, but the security guards raised the ante in late April when they attacked the group, injuring 10 (but not Sochua herself), including three journalists. Within a few days, Freedom Park was shut down more tightly, with razor wire reinforcing the barriers at all the entrances.

By June, the 23 defendants arrested at the garment factory demonstrations on January 2 and 3 had been tried, convicted and released with suspended sentences.[8] Some of those charged in the September 16 melee at the overpass received even better outcomes when their trial was held in February, with three released without charge, two given suspended sentences, while the last one retained a prison sentence of a year, reduced from three. Rights groups had questioned whether there was any evidence that they bore any connection to the incident, and none of the 30 police testifying for the prosecution could identify any of them (Khouth Sophak Chakrya 2014b).

In July, Mu Sochua announced she would be joined by a number of the other CNRP lawmakers-elect in her fight to re-open Freedom Park. On July 15, she and three other lawmakers, along with about 200 supporters placed a "Free the Freedom Park" banner on the razor wire blocking the entrance. Security guards removed it and started pushing and hitting demonstrators with their batons to force them to disperse. For the first time, demonstrators fought back. Until that point they had always been disciplined in their non-violent activism. The guards seemed unprepared for such an eventuality[9] and were easily separated, resulting in demonstrators circling and attacking them individually. Nearly 40 guards required

hospitalization; three were seriously injured. Police arrested all of the lawmakers-elect present, as well as two more who were not present, though none of them had had any part in the violence. Within a few days, a number of other leaders from the CNRP were also questioned, or arrested and detained. After spending the night in jail, Sochua and the other lawmakers were released, but three CNRP youth leaders were held for investigation until August 22, when they were finally granted bail (Khy Sovuthy & Blomberg 2014). Despite the releases, charges of insurrection and inciting violence (with potential sentences of up to 30 years) are still pending for 16 people, including the lawmakers.

Sam Rainsy, at the time traveling outside Cambodia,[10] altered his plans and returned on July 19, one year to the day after he had first returned from exile. He and Hun Sen resumed negotiations in person, and by July 22 they announced an end to the deadlock. The boycotting members of parliament would take their places in the Assembly[11]; the constitution would be amended to make the NEC an independent body of nine members, four from the ruling party and four from the opposition, with each elected by majority vote of the Assembly, as well as one independent member to be agreed upon by both parties. Within a week they agreed upon a candidate for the independent position, Pung Chhiv Kek, 71-year old founder and president of LICADHO, who had been instrumental in arranging negotiations between Hun Sen and King Norodom Sihanouk before the Paris Peace Agreements of 1991. She agreed to the appointment conditional on a number of guarantees of the NEC's independence.[12] Despite having been ineligible to run in the election, Sam Rainsy was given an Assembly position (representing Kompong Cham); in turn, Kuoy Bunroeun, the CNRP member who stood for election to the post Rainsy now holds, will be one of the CNRP members of the NEC.[13] A number of other conditions were agreed upon, some requiring legislative action once the new members were sworn in. Immediate reaction from CNRP supporters was mixed, as some were disappointed that their leaders had appeared to back down, securing much less than they felt they had been led to expect. CNRP leaders, for their part, asked for patience, as reforms and other details develop in the coming weeks and months (Seiff 2014).

THE CAMPAIGN ISSUES

Among the main accomplishments touted by the CPP are the period of political stability and economic growth Cambodia has enjoyed under its leadership (Women's Media Center of Cambodia 2013, pp. 8-9). Since the demise of the Khmer Rouge, the country has enjoyed a period of peace it had not known for many decades. The World Bank reports that it has also enjoyed consistent economic growth over the last decade, with average annual GDP increases of around 8%, and has succeeded in meeting the Millenium Development Goal of reducing its poverty rate by half – from 6.9 million or 54% in 2004 to 3 million or 20.5% in 2011 (World Bank 2014).

Thus, under the CPP, there has been considerable progress economically. Nonetheless, that claim may not be as compelling a message to the electorate as it

seems it should be at first sight. While the number living below the poverty line has decreased, many Cambodians remain economically vulnerable, with almost twice as many (8.1 million, or 55% of the population) living in "near poverty"[14] in 2011 as there were in 2004 (World Bank 2014). With three out of every four Cambodians either living below the poverty line or finding themselves uncomfortably close to it, many Cambodians have not yet enjoyed the benefits of the improving economy.

The other major claim the CPP has made concerns its ability to maintain peace and security for Cambodia. Sometimes the security argument seems to be as much of a threat as a prediction about who would be better at maintaining peace, as when Hun Sen made comments in April 2013 suggesting that electing the CNRP would sink the country into war (civil or otherwise). In that context, he not only mentioned the risk of more hostile relations with Vietnam, but also concern about the response of current government officials to electing a CNRP-led government, given Sam Rainsy's statement that the CNRP would bring some unnamed officials to justice for their role in the Khmer Rouge period. In his remarks, Hun Sen seemed to be suggesting that those government officials, himself included, would fight rather than be arrested (Vandenbrink 2013). But the larger issue is whether the youthful electorate, many of whom have no personal memory of the recent violent history, would find the CPP's claim as persuasive as it has been to their parents' generation.[15] The CNRP banked on the opposite message – appealing to the desire for change.

Whether or not the CPP's messages were persuasive to Cambodian youth and the economically vulnerable, Cambodia does face quite serious problems, a number of which congregate around issues of human rights and corruption, and these were focal points for the opposition campaign.

In 2013 Transparency International scored Cambodia 20/100 in its Corruption Perceptions Index (lower scores indicate perception of more corruption), which puts it at 160th of 177 countries ranked (Transparency International 2013). Harold Kerbo and Craig Etcheson each argue that corruption is the source of many of Cambodia's most serious problems (Kerbo 2011; Etcheson 2005). Etcheson, in discussing Cambodia's "culture of impunity," in which the "strong can do what they will and the weak will suffer what they must," points to the fact that "it is the norm in Cambodia that a poor person might be brought before the court to answer for a murder committed in passion, in greed, or in desperation, but it is rare that a rich or powerful person will suffer consequences for a similar crime, whether it is motivated by passion or greed or by politics." It is indicative of that culture of impunity, he says, that no one was ever held responsible for the 1997 murders of Sam Rainsy supporters or FUNCINPEC officials mentioned above (pp. 167-169). One might easily add to the evidence he offers the fact that no security guard or police officer was investigated, much less charged for their violent suppression of demonstrators in any of the events I have described here (and in many other cases).

Harold Kerbo points out that corruption is not limited to a small elite preying on the masses, but permeates Cambodian society, creating a vicious cycle in which replenishment of human and physical capital is difficult. For example, the health

care system is dysfunctional, with only 40% of money spent by the government for health care actually going to help patients: the rest is siphoned off in various ways – bribes to doctors, medicine and equipment that had been donated by NGOs resold for a profit; at a higher level, siphoning take such forms as bribes to make contracts and funding of salaries of nonexistent employees.[16] For many Cambodians, access to health care and economic insecurity are intertwined. Rural people whose living depends on agriculture may sink into more dire poverty if a family member becomes ill, as treatment will often be withheld without payment of a bribe. Needing medical treatment is one of the major causes of loss of assets in Cambodia, as many have to sell their cattle or their land to raise funds for treatment (Rainsy 2013; Kerbo 2011).

It would be bad enough, Kerbo argues, if the corruption affected only those in such dire situations. But given the economic vulnerability of the population (with 73% living on less than $2.30/day), even those who have steady incomes find themselves earning wages (with minimums set by government) that are insufficient for a decent standard of living. Consequently, government officials, teachers, police, people in a position to hire,[17] prosecutors and judges,[18] and others who can do so seek additional sources of income, and many come to expect such extraordinary payments – bribes – as a condition of performing their ordinary functions (Kerbo 2011).

To get a feel for how this problem is woven into the everyday life of Cambodians, consider public education. Students in presumably free public schools may be asked either to pay for such things as "private tutoring" (extra lessons offered after school where information crucial for examinations but withheld from the ordinary lessons is taught), registration and enrollment in school, the school's water and energy costs, parking bicycles, and attendance booklets. In addition to needing to pay to access education, they may also be able to purchase the marks of educational achievement without actually having to learn. For example, they may be able to purchase passing or higher grades, questions for an upcoming exam, the right to cheat on an exam, or the ability to skip a grade. Teachers have apparently learned that collecting such fees on a daily basis from students' pocket money rather than monthly or at other longer intervals is more lucrative, and so children are asked for money regularly (Dawson 2011). Kerbo reports from interviews he did in villages that a family with three school-age children spent around 10% of their daily income to send the children to school (Kerbo 2011, p. 50).

One aspect of the corruption in the educational system in Cambodia relates to high stakes exams. The Education Ministry has been increasing its efforts to eliminate the influence of cheating and bribery on the national grade 12 exam. A lot rests on success in that exam, as scores determine eligibility for admission to university. In 2014 the Ministry enlisted the help of the government's Anti-Corruption Unit to help prevent students from bringing notes and smart phones into the 154 exam locations. Newspaper reports showed photos of anti-corruption unit officers patting down students as they entered. The Ministry reported success, but reports of students entering and leaving print shops near exam centers with cheat sheets prior to the exams led to some skepticism. Defenders of the crackdown

pointed out that students purchasing cheat sheets risked buying useless fakes. One mother was interviewed about the experience:

> … a 55-year-old mother who would only give her name as Thy waited for her son to emerge from the exam. Ms. Thy said that her son had taken a different approach to the exam and, rather than risk trying to carry in the potentially useless "answers" being sold on the outside, would wait and attempt to buy some on the inside. "It will be best if he can get the answers to copy from a teacher," she said. (Sek Odem 2014)

That there would be teachers and exam monitors willing to turn the other way or positively assist students in cheating, or mothers who speak about which strategy is best, indicates that the behavior is not simply the result of failure to provide adequate monitoring. The problem is more deeply embedded within a system that does not pay adequate salaries to teachers and school administrators, nor budget enough for schools, and it seems unlikely that it can be fixed without substantial improvement in both taxation and compensation for public workers, among other things. Currently, the minimum salary for teachers in Cambodian public schools is $100 per month, and two out of three teachers take second jobs (such as offering private tutoring) to earn enough for their families. The Cambodian Independent Teachers Association (CITA) maintains that the minimum monthly salary for teachers should be $250. CITA also provided survey evidence that most teachers would relinquish their second jobs if compensated at that level, and organized "piecemeal strikes" for higher wages in 2014, at the same time that agitation for improvement of the minimum wage of garment workers and others was occurring (Wilkins & Sek 2014).

Corruption within the education system is hierarchical, with teachers also required to pay "facilitation fees" to principals, who must in turn pay higher level education authorities, and so on up the food chain. With teachers collecting fees daily, a culture which accustoms people to bribes is established at a young age. That experience within the educational context is, of course, not separate from the rest of life for Cambodians. Such an extensive and embedded culture of corruption leads some observers, such as Walter Dawson (2011), to wonder how easy it will be to bring real rather than just cosmetic reform to the education system.

Sam Rainsy, recognizing the centrality of corruption in the plethora of problems facing Cambodia, put overcoming corruption at the center of the platform he articulated for a change in leadership. He argues that the anti-corruption law enacted in 2010 has serious flaws, such as not requiring financial disclosure for spouses and relatives of government officials, in whose names illicit assets are often placed (Rainsy 2013, p. 181). A number of items on the CNRP campaign platform seem designed to attack the incentives to corruption – such as making health care for poor Cambodians free, raising minimum wages for workers and civil servants, and guaranteeing equal access to education and employment (Women's Media Center of Cambodia 2013). One major point of contention concerned minimum wages for garment workers. The garment industry represents Cambodia's major export and employs nearly half a million people, mostly young

women, many of whom travel from the countryside to urban centers to find work (Derks 2008). The government raised the minimum wage from $61 to $80 in May of 2013 and was not promising further raises (until it announced a $15 raise at the end of December 2013); one of the CNRP's campaign promises was to double it to $160 per month.

Judicial reform is an issue of great importance. In his 2013 autobiography, Sam Rainsy pointed to many problems in the justice system: "The judiciary, rather than being a series of independent institutions, is simply a part of Hun Sen's patronage network;" "Testimony from a single government official or police officer is usually enough to convict a defendant;" "Courts are starved of resources as a matter of policy … The corruption among judges that this breeds deprives the poor of access to the law;" "Police refuse to execute court rulings with which they disagree, or, more often, because there is no cash incentive;" and "Defense rights are poorly understood and seldom implemented" are among the problems he enumerated (pp. 113-117).

One of the hoped-for outcomes of the ECCC trials is that Cambodians would see a better model of justice in action,[19] and that the training received by those participating[20] would have a positive effect on the judiciary. Whether those outcomes are likely is hard to predict, but the process has been quite slow, with only three defendants tried and convicted after a number of years and hundreds of millions of dollars spent. While not long by the standards of such complex cases involving international law and crimes that encompass a wide range of events – the closing order (indictment) for the first phase of case 2 is itself over 400 pages long – it will be a long slow process to obtain such benefits from the tribunals. There has been a concerted effort to use the trials as educational tools, with the ECCC sponsoring significant outreach, bringing many people to witness the trial proceedings,[21] and provision of an excellent website that models transparency well, making public all the legal documents (in Khmer, English and French), updates about schedules, who the players are, and much more (ECCC).

While the ECCC and its impact has not been at the forefront of political debates in the campaign period, it obviously relates to larger questions of how Cambodia can move toward a more independent judicial system. Rainsy is not optimistic about the ECCC's ability to remain independent of Cambodian political manipulation, writing that, if he were Prime Minister he would "ask the UN to transfer the Khmer Rouge tribunal outside Cambodia to put an end to the farcical process that serves mainly to hide connections between the Khmer Rouge and the current regime" (Rainsy 2013, p. 181). There is certainly evidence that attempts to interfere have been made. For example, Hun Sen is quoted as telling UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that "Case 003 will not be allowed … [t]he court will try the four senior leaders successfully and then finish with Case 002" (Open Society 2012),[22] and there have also been a number of crises caused by failure of the Cambodian government to provide promised financial resources. Its failure pay the national staff on a number of occasions for months at a time led to delays when staff went on strike (Minegar 2013). Nevertheless, whether the current regime's

resistance to extending the scope of the court has made any impact on the current cases, and how moving the trials out of the country would help is not obvious.

THE VIETNAM QUESTION

Another important theme surrounding the 2013 election concerns attitudes toward Vietnam. The opposition clearly intended to link the CPP with a pro-Vietnam attitude, leading to charges that the opposition's populist appeal on Vietnam employs dangerous racist rhetoric. This is not a new issue for Sam Rainsy, as one of the charges made against him in 2009 when he made the symbolic relocation of the boundary marker at the Cambodian-Vietnam border was racial incitement, and the claim that he and other opposition figures were playing a "race card" continues to alienate some who might otherwise be more sympathetic to the opposition (Ou Virak 2013).

The issue was used in the post-election maneuvering, as the CNRP appeared to have adopted a strategy of reminding the public of the current governing party's cozy relations with Vietnam at every opportunity, at the same time that a fairly consistent theme of vilifying the Vietnamese (especially in the social media postings of opposition supporters), whether for being party to vote-rigging, or for their alleged theft of Cambodian territory, and sometimes more broadly as exhibiting a colonial or master-slave relation, or even for aiming at the destruction of Cambodian culture. This complex issue needs a bit of historical context.

David Chandler argued that Cambodia's position between Thailand and Vietnam has been a significant factor in Cambodian politics for more than two hundred years, with Cambodia alternatively forced by one or the other more powerful neighbor to prefer its patronage. That long history reached a low point in the early 19th century when there was a decade-long period of Vietnamese occupation, with a puppet government installed (2008). Against that historical backdrop, the 1978 Vietnamese invasion was viewed as more of a mixed blessing than one might think at first blush – certainly it liberated Cambodians from the ruthless Khmer Rouge regime and, over the next decade established a more open and free society than Cambodians had seen since 1975. But that openness did not come all at once, and Vietnam's ulterior motives were not entirely trusted, especially as the new government retained many reminders of the communist regime that had been ousted. The regime in place in the 1980s may have had Cambodians in office, but the extent to which it was a "puppet" of Vietnam was surely a question in the minds of many (Gottesman 2003).

Whether the Vietnamese government was able to manipulate the PRK administrations throughout the 1980s did not exhaust the fears of many Cambodians. In the context of discussing the PRK years, Evan Gottesman described the climate that existed in the early 1980s in this way:

> The anti-Vietnamese rhetoric that the Lon Nol and Khmer Rouge regimes had disseminated throughout the 1970s, the unremitting anti-Vietnamese propaganda coming from the resistance, and the semi-mythical stories of Vietnamese atrocities from the nineteenth century inspired a nationalistic,

> racist opposition to the Vietnamese occupation. The charges, expressed openly in the border camps and whispered inside Cambodia, were endless: the *yuon* were colonizing Cambodia; the *yuon* were taking Cambodian rice and starving the Khmers; more than a million *yuon* were in Cambodia, with more to come; the *yuon* were committing a "genocide" against the Khmers, forcing Khmers to speak their language, even taking Khmer orphans back to Vietnam to turn them into *yuon* spies. Most Cambodians, resentful of the occupation but unable to separate truth from myth, inferred from these accusations a larger conspiracy to absorb and destroy Cambodia and its people. (p. 138)

These deep suspicions about Vietnam and the Vietnamese people residing in Cambodia did not end with the departure of the Vietnamese in 1989. Indeed, writers today who discuss the Cambodian-Vietnamese relation are almost assured of receiving comments that reflect a very similar sentiment in online forums. Some are rather mild and make an effort to engage in reasonable discussion, such as this example responding to an *Al Jazeera* article reporting on the anti-Vietnamese attitudes of the opposition:

> Till Cambodia becomes a country like Laos…which is run almost by Vietnamese then you will understand that CNRP president's statement is right. I am a Cambodian and where I live there are Vietnamese as well. Normally, we live peacefully together. However, we hate the policy of [the] Vietnamese government toward Cambodia. We don't like the way that [the] current regime of Cambodia [is] treating their people and offer[ing] good opportunity for Vietnamese to exploit everything. We feel like the Cambodia-Vietnam relation is slave-master (or modern colonization by Vietnam). (Wallace & Neou Vannarin 2013)

In other cases, authors receive less reasonable responses, peppered with personal abuse or threats, as one author did for making a case against the arguments that the island of Phu Quoc (or Koh Tral in Khmer) belongs to Cambodia (see comments at the end of Khmerization 2014, which reprints Mudrick 2014 with their reponse). Such attitudes were easily exploited as the opposition stirred up anti-CPP feeling among Cambodians in the election campaigns in the 1990s, sometimes with deadly results for ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia when the rhetoric led to riots and killings (Meyers 2002). Similar anti-Vietnamese rhetoric has been used in the political maneuvering in the most recent election, again resulting in violence against ethnic Vietnamese (Hul Reaksmey & Wallace 2014).

In the campaign for the 2013 election, this strategy was manifested in charges that the CPP was stacking the deck by allowing many illegal Vietnamese immigrants to both remain in the country and enroll as registered voters, at the same time that thousands of Cambodians, especially those likely to support the opposition, were not finding their names on the registration rolls. The claim that ineligible Vietnamese were helping the CPP steal the election was not a new charge. Similar claims had been made, for example, in the 1998 election. The CPP response has remained consistent, pointing out the process for challenging

suspected illegitimate registrations, and that those making the charges had to be careful to present evidence that the people in question were not entitled to vote rather than simply attacking legal immigrants who were less fluent in Khmer (Khuy 1998).[23]

But even after the 2013 election, the Vietnam question resurfaced numerous times in other contexts. One example concerns the question of borders and claims to territory currently within Vietnam. A sizable number of ethnic Khmer, the "Khmer Krom," live in southern Vietnam, where their religious and political freedoms have been restricted. Immigrating Khmer Krom have been welcomed by the CPP-led government, but their protests against Vietnam have not always been tolerated as well as when they were perceived to threaten relations between the countries (Human Rights Watch 2009a). In 2014, as the election conflict dragged on, the territorial issue was again raised by the Cambodian Khmer Krom community, demanding that Vietnam return Cambodian territory. The opposition has been supportive of their concern, with the CNRP posting information about the issue and protests on their social media – for example, Sam Rainsy's Facebook page kept the issue alive for many days, with the story given prominence. Protesters from the Khmer Krom community in Cambodia as well as the Federation of Cambodian Intellectuals and Students gathered outside the Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh for a number of days in July, 2014. When the Vietnamese embassy spokesperson, Trung Van Thong, stated that the territory in question was never Cambodian in the first place (rather than having been given to Vietnam by France in 1949, as the protesters maintain), demonstrators demanded an apology and acknowledgement of Cambodia's claim to the territory. Marchers carrying banners with messages such as "Kampuchea Krom is Khmer's Homeland" tried to deliver petitions, but were blocked from getting near the Vietnamese embassy. The Phnom Penh government finally agreed to accept the petitions, promising to give them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deliver to the Vietnamese embassy, bringing demonstrations to an end at just about the same time that the CNRP and CPP appeared to be arriving at a settlement of the year-long stand-off (Khouth Sophak Chatrya & Peck Sotheary 2014).

But beyond such issues as voting or borders, the current election rhetoric continues to raise concerns among critics about inciting anti-Vietnamese racism. A number of comments from CNRP leaders, including Kem Sokha and Sam Rainsy, were claimed to be aimed at stirring up anti-Vietnamese feeling.

Kem Sokha, Vice President of the CNRP, has gotten into hot water on a number of occasions for such comments. In some cases he has apparently spoken of Vietnamese conspiracies, as when audio recordings of comments attributed to him and released by the government charged that the well-known S-21, or Tuol Sleng, was not actually a prison that had been the site of the torture and murder of thousands of people during the Khmer Rouge regime, but a myth staged by the Vietnamese. The charge that Tuol Sleng was a Vietnamese fabrication is based on a kernel of truth. Seeing the propaganda value of the site in justifying the invasion, they moved quickly after successfully routing the Khmer Rouge from Phnom Penh to turn Tuol Sleng – a school that had been used as a prison – into a museum to

show the world the extent of the Khmer Rouge's crimes. Tuol Sleng, from which only a small number of people survived, is one of the very powerful symbols of the terror wrought by the Khmer Rouge. The government's release of the recordings was clearly part of a strategy to focus negative publicity on Sokha,[24] and clearly had some effect. One of the survivors of the prison, Chum Mey, sued Sokha for defamation, keeping the issue alive for some time.[25]

In another case, Sokha stated that the Vietnamese were behind the collapse of the Koh Pich bridge in Phnom Penh during the water festival in 2010, (the collapse had been caused by a tragic stampede that resulted in more than 300 deaths). When asked to clarify, he is reported to have said: "I did not accuse [Vietnam] completely. I just thought about the history. I guess I did not say it was the [definitive] truth …. I wanted to say that one country wants to eliminate the race of another country [and] they eliminate through traditions, the same as in Kampuchea Krom" (Meas Sokchea & Ponniah 2014). While one may have been able to dismiss the comments about Tuol Sleng as manipulated for political purposes by the CPP (as Sokha disputes the authenticity of the tapes they released), it's harder to dismiss the evidence of Sokha's appeal to popular anti-Vietnamese sentiments in this case.

Sam Rainsy maintains that concern about Vietnam is a perfectly legitimate part of his platform, and that he does not advocate prejudice or violence. Rather, he points to concerns about the location of the borders, and about the presence of foreign economic interests in the development of economic land concessions that have driven many people from their land and become one of Cambodia's major human rights problems. Nonetheless, the way these concerns are expressed clearly involves a nationalist, populist appeal. That point is driven home by continued insistence, for example, on using the term 'yuon,' which has been used in CNRP speeches by Rainsy and others, and is freely used in social media postings by many supporters. Critics claim the term is a pejorative way of referring to Vietnamese people, though those using it dispute that claim, maintaining that it is simply a traditional Khmer term for Vietnamese. Rainsy defended his use of 'yuon,' saying that while it is not a "politically correct" term, it is not racist (Chen & Meyn 2013). Whether or not that is accurate, that many do find it offensive might have been sufficient argument for refraining from its inflammatory use.

CONTROL OF MEDIA

Amid all the reporting about the results after election day, a small article in the *Phnom Penh Post* might have gone unnoticed. It reported on how the Khmer language media, print and online, had reported the results. Interestingly, the Khmer language reports barely mentioned or downplayed the strong showing of the opposition, despite its historic dimensions (Mom Kunthear 2013). Another striking example was provided by the lack of coverage of the ouster of the opposition members just a month before the election. In an analysis of the Khmer language media's coverage of that event, White and Khouth noted that only two of eight major media outlets made any mention of the expulsion at all, and those two

covered it only briefly, omitting mention of opposition arguments that the move was unconstitutional (White & Khouth 2013).

Such distortion is not really surprising, as domination of media by the ruling party has been an important factor in the CPP's ability to maintain power through many elections, and the import of the recent CNRP showing in the election can only be understood against the background of that control and influence of the media. In 2013 Cambodia was ranked 143rd out of 179 countries in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index. In a joint publication, Reporters Without Borders and the Cambodian Center for Independent Media reported that Government control of media lay at the core of the low ranking. In 2012, all 11 TV stations in Cambodia were either entirely owned by the government or by government in conjunction with CPP-allied private parties. Of the 30 regularly published newspapers, many are at least partly owned by a government party and "are used as platforms for spreading propaganda and discrediting the opposition." The report identifies not only the centralized ownership as a significant problem, but also the need of television stations, the single most popular source of election information for Cambodians, to vet news programs with the government prior to broadcast. Radio stations, on the other hand, while being heavily regulated, apparently provide somewhat greater access to opposition voices in Cambodia than TV does (RWB & CCIM 2013).

The importance of media access in the Cambodian context has been noted in detail in previous elections. As mentioned above, the opposition was restricted from access to electronic media in the 1998 election. In previous elections a number of groups like the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) and the United Nations Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have monitored coverage, while others have made attempts to help improve access, such as the United Nations Development Program's "Equity Access Programme" in 2003, which assigned airtime to registered parties based on their popular support and other factors (Hughes & Kim 2004).

The domination of the media by the ruling party is also noted by COMFREL in their analysis of the conduct of the 2013 election. COMFREL monitored the behavior of the media during the period before the election, considering how often candidates were mentioned, their platforms explored, and the extent to which coverage was biased. The privately held media, for example Bayon TV and Cambodian Television Network (CTN) – which have the most extensive audience nationwide – offered coverage that was the most disproportionate, with the CPP dominating 88% of Bayon TV's election coverage and 76% of CTN's. The greater disparity is not surprising: Bayon TV is owned and managed by Prime Minister Hun Sen's daughter, Hun Mana, while CTN is one of the many holdings of Kith Meng, Chairman of Royal Group (Cambodia's largest conglomerate), President of the Chamber of Commerce and reputed to be an advisor to Hun Sen. COMFREL also points out that when coverage was provided to opposition figures it rarely included discussion of their platforms or policy proposals (COMFREL 2013).

The National Election Committee has come in for much criticism by the opposition in relation to this election, with both its makeup and conduct as one of

the issues the contending parties have disagreed about. A number of NEC regulations concern equal media access in election campaigns. For example, during the official campaign period (the month prior to the election), NEC regulations require provision of airtime to all parties on an equal basis. However, COMFREL points out that no legislation has ever been passed to enforce the NEC's regulations, leaving them as guidelines that are easily ignored. In the one case during the 2013 campaign in which the NEC requested that the Ministry of Information respond to violations by temporarily shutting down a radio station two days prior to the election, the Ministry failed to do so (COMFREL 2013).

Control of the media is not only exerted over the stations and newspapers corporately, but is also applied directly over individual journalists, who have been subjected to intimidation if they step out of line. There have been a number of prominent cases in which legal retribution has been used to discipline dissenting voices. Sometimes the intimidation comes in the form of using vague defamation or disinformation laws, such as when Hang Chakra, editor of the daily *Khmer Machas Srok* was sentenced in 2009 to a year in prison for publishing allegedly defamatory articles that accused the Deputy Prime Minister of corruption. Another prominent example concerns Mam Sonando, owner of Beehive radio and an outspoken critic of the government, who was sentenced to 20 years in 2012 for allegedly assisting a secessionist movement in Kratie province. Critics note that his arrest came shortly after he had aired a news report about a complaint lodged in the International Criminal Court that accused the government of crimes against humanity. After appeal, his sentence was reduced to five years – eight months served and the remainder suspended, leading to his release (RWB & CCIM 2013).

There have also been a number of cases, especially in the environmental area, where reporters critical of officials and companies have met with outright violence. In one case, Heng Serei Oudom, an environmental reporter for the *VorakchunKhmer Daily* who had written articles implicating a local police official in illegal logging activities, was found dead in the trunk of his car. In another case, Vichey Anon, a Radio Free Asia journalist, reported on the arrest of another journalist named Trang Try, who had reported on illegal logging. Vichey was later found unconscious by the side of the road, and remains in a coma. And in a recent case in Phnom Penh, Voice of Democracy (VOD) reporter Lay Samean was beaten by security guards while trying to photograph their crackdown on a peaceful march by CNRP supporters prior to the May, 2014 commune elections (CCIM 2014).

When not able to directly influence or control media, the government has resorted to controlling access to certain kinds of sources. At the end of June, 2013, a prohibition of local rebroadcast of any Khmer-language programs from foreign sources for the official campaign period was issued by the Ministry of Information. The Ministry explained the 31-day ban as an effort to ensure media neutrality and to enforce an NEC regulation that prohibited foreigners from campaigning for or against any parties. Tep Nytha, spokesperson for the NEC, explained the ban, noting that use of foreign-sourced broadcasts about the election creates an "imbalance" because they "broadcast only negative points about the government." On Friday evening, June 28, the ban was made public, resulting in programs from

Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and Radio France International being taken off the air by such local stations as Beehive Radio and the Women's Media Center. There was an immediate outcry from many quarters, including the United States government, which appealed directly to the Cambodian government, as well as issuing a public condemnation of the threat to freedom of the press and expression in Cambodia. By Saturday night, the Ministry of Information reversed course and withdraw the ban. The reversal did not, however, include another less publicized ban that had been made a few days earlier on all broadcasts from foreign-sourced surveys relating to the election in the five days prior to the election and all election-related broadcasts in the 24 hours prior to the election (Khy & Crothers 2013; May & Seiff 2013).

Opposition parties and critics of the government have tried to obtain licenses for television and radio stations for many years, with limited success. They are given reasons such as lack of available frequencies, but in 1998, the United Nations Special Representative for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, observed that Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Rinariddh (who had been co-prime ministers until Hun Sen took solo control after the coup in 1997) had "colluded in blocking media access to other parties" (Grainger 1998; Mom Kunthear 2014). Opposition parties continue to try,[26] but with the opening of alternatives made possible by the explosion of internet access and social media in Cambodia, they have also found new ways to reach people.

THE INTERNET EXPLOSION IN CAMBODIA

Access to the Internet has become available and rapidly expanded in quite a short time in Cambodia. According to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, of a 2010 population of approximately 14 million, 320,190 people were using the Internet, equaling an "Internet penetration rate" (IPR) of approximately 2%. By 2011, this had grown to 1.68 million users (an IPR of 11%), which rose again in each successive year by more than a million users. In mid-2014, there were an estimated 3.8 million Internet Cambodian users, a remarkable rise from 2% to 25% of the population using the Internet in just a few years (Ben Sokhean 2014).

The explosion has likely resulted from rapid expansion of mobile access. Inexpensive mobile phones with data plans are widely available in Cambodia, with adequate reception in many (though not all) places in the country. While there are less than a half million landlines in a country of over 15 million people, there are currently over 20 million mobile phones. Even a casual observer visiting Cambodia over the last few years would likely notice the rapid change. In annual visits since 2009, I began noticing an increase in use of "smart" phones by Cambodians in the last few years, while the availability of free wi-fi hotspots was also increasing – so much so that the number of Internet cafés in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh was decreasing, though this may have also been the result of the threat of government closings allegedly due to school children spending too much time playing games (Chak Sopheap 2013). In 2014 I observed many construction workers and tuk tuk drivers using phones capable of connecting to the Internet, noticeably more than I

observed in previous years. When, during the same visit I had an opportunity to speak with a group of approximately 150 10th grade students in Phnom Penh, I asked them to raise their hands if they use Facebook. My question was greeted with laughter, and I was quickly informed by a few close to me that they did not need to show their hands because they were confident that every single one of them had Facebook accounts.

Evidence of the prevalence of devices to capture digital footage is easy to find in a myriad of videos of demonstrations and rallies posted to YouTube: looking at such videos one quickly notices the recurring theme of people filming the events on their phones and tablets. (For a particularly good example culled from hundreds that could be given, see the YouTube video of a demonstration at the Vietnamese Embassy on July 8, 2014, http://youtu.be/n59XlQCxP8U.) The citizen journalists far outnumber the official press, with people rushing to capture anything happening at a rally or demonstration.

NEW MEDIA VOICES

The internet explosion in Cambodia has given rise to many different voices. YouTube and Facebook were the two most important communication venues during the political upheaval of the last year. Twitter is beginning to have a presence, but probably played a lesser role up to this point. While YouTube is being used to document events (rallies, speeches, interviews, demonstrations, violent acts against demonstrators and the like), Facebook seems to be the single most important access point for people to spread political messages, as it provides a stable location for people to find information and post reactions. Major opposition figures – Sam Rainsy, Kem Sokha, and Mu Sochua, for example – have all maintained active Facebook pages in which they broadcast messages about their viewpoints and events, as well as requests for action. Aware of its multiple audiences, Rainsy's page broadcasts many messages in both Khmer and English, and occasionally adds French. It also includes a "Summary of the Main News of the Day," a video that takes the form of a traditional television newscast: a newscaster sits before the camera, a statue of Buddha and flowers the only adornment, reading (in Khmer) scripts that are also available as written postings on Rainsy's Facebook page. That there would be such broadcasts that mimic old-fashioned television news programs on the web might seem odd at first, but given that the CNRP request for a television license had been turned down repeatedly, it has taken to the "air" on the Internet instead. In addition to Rainsy's broadcasts, there is also "CNRP TV," which describes itself as "established by a group of people who support the National Rescue Party" (apparently from the Cambodian diaspora in the United States) that includes digital programming they categorize as "TV Programs," "Discussion" and "Talk Shows." The "TV Programs" are also organized as newscasts. There is also CNRP Radio – all of these are accessible from multiple sites, including their webpage, their Facebook page, and YouTube.

Another opposition leader who has a significant online presence is Mu Sochua, first elected (as a CPP party member) to the Assembly in 1998. She served as

Minister of Women's and Veterans' Affairs until 2004, when she declined reappointment to the Ministry to join the Sam Rainsy Party, and now serves on the Executive Committee of the CNRP and as their Public Affairs Chief. Well known for her advocacy for human rights, nonviolence, and women, she emerged as a highly visible figure in the campaign, especially thanks to her courageous nonviolent activism to reopen Freedom Park. Often jostled by the Daun Penh Security guards at Freedom Park, she did not allow them to provoke her or to push her out, with a small army of citizen journalists following her and posting the events (see, for example the videos posted on I Love Cambodia Hot News II's Facebook page for April 1 and 2, 2014). Her grass-roots approach continues in her use of social media, where she is more likely to be depicted talking and listening to ordinary Cambodians, such as victims of land grabs whose attempts to petition the government fall on deaf ears, than being photographed with other politicians or in ceremonial contexts. The very active Facebook page she maintains creates the impression of a hands-on approach, often responding personally to comments – one response to a comment questioning her conversations with ordinary Cambodians is interesting for the frank statement about the state of media access: "this is how lawmakers with no access to state media take the Constitution to the people." Her postings are usually written in both Khmer and English. She also maintains an active blog, "Mu Sochua: MP and Human Rights Advocate," that lays out her positions on such things as women in politics, human trafficking, poverty and land rights.

Clearly opposition parties and leaders have recognized the potential value of the new media. Up to this point, the same cannot be said about the ruling Cambodian People's Party or most of its top figures. The CPP itself has a Facebook page, but it has very few "likes" (4,346) and very infrequent posts (the most recent on their timeline when I checked in July, 2014 had been posted eleven months previously), compared to the CNRP's 159,500 "likes" and numerous daily updates. In addition to Facebook, each has its own website: the CNRP maintains an active webpage with frequently updated content and prominent links to its Facebook page as well as a related YouTube channel which offers videos of current events, while the CPP webpage is sometimes difficult to access[27] with infrequent updating, and there are considerably fewer CPP-sponsored YouTube videos, mostly with songs.

There is a "Samdech[28] Hun Sen, Cambodian Prime Minister" Facebook page, though he disavows any connection to it. Upon learning of Sam Rainsy's Facebook popularity during the campaign, Hun Sen said he was not interested in a social media popularity contest (Willemyns & Kuch 2014; Vong Sokheng 2013). To the extent that "likes" indicate actual readers,[29] Sam Rainsy's Facebook page is the most popular of any kind (political or otherwise) in Cambodia with over 700,000 likes as of July, 2014. An exception in the ruling party is Khieu Khanarith, Minister of Information, an active poster on Twitter whose following of more than 600 is still significantly smaller than that of such tweeters as Kounila Keo, Ou Rithy, Ou Virak, the Ruom Collective (a group of journalists specializing in "social reportage throughout Southeast Asia") and Hun Sen's Eye (a satirical poster who describes himself as "Social media consultant for misunderstood strongmen

everywhere"). Clearly, social media does not figure significantly in the communication strategy of the ruling party, but does for the opposition.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have also begun to make important use of new media in their campaigns on a variety of issues. One striking example of the power of new media in the hands of CSOs is the interactive map created by the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human rights (LICADHO) that shows in visually intuitive terms the extent of the problem of land concessions. Land concessions (popularly known as 'land grabs') involve lease of "private state land" by the government to private companies for agricultural and other development projects. One problem is that much of the land is already inhabited by individuals who may not be able to prove title to the land,[30] but who have resided on and used it for a long time. Many such people have been evicted, often forcibly, to make way for the land concessions with little or no compensation, leading to one of Cambodia's most severe human rights crises. Human Rights Watch estimated that 85,000 Cambodians were evicted in such land grabs between 1999 and 2009 (Human Rights Watch 2009b). Perhaps the best known case internationally is the Boeung Kak Lake development project in Phnom Penh, which displaced thousands of people from their homes for a private business venture quite near the government's central offices. Thousands were evicted from their homes so the 133-hectare lake could be filled in, but they didn't go quietly. Protests continue to this day, with a number of courageous women (most prominently Yorm Bopha and Tep Vanny) resisting the development and going to prison for their protests. In addition to the continuing protests, activists have created a blog that archives all the published articles and information about the struggle, getting the message about their plight out (http://saveboeungkak.wordpress.com/). Boeung Kak is only the most visible tip of the land grab iceberg, as the LICADHO map demonstrates.

LICADHO's time-lapse map dramatically represents the land rights problem by depicting the increasing area of the country that has been given to private companies in the last 20 years – each additional concession marked in red and accompanied by the "ka-ching" sound of a cash register. LICADHO's powerful tool, available for anyone to use easily, was noted by Voice of America, the *Phnom Penh Post,* and Global Witness, and has helped to communicate the severity of the problem of land grabs to a wider audience (LICADHO 2012).

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), an independent CSO advocating for democracy and human rights in Cambodia, is the most important advocate of new media's potential as a tool in promoting democracy in Cambodia. CNRP Vice President Kem Sokha founded CCHR in 2002, and then left in 2007 to form the Human Rights Party. Ou Virak became President and led CCHR until March, 2014, when he became Chair of the Board of Directors; Chak Sopheap now serves as Executive Director. Under Sokha's leadership CCHR created both Voice of Democracy (VOD) Radio and the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM), which offered training to 21 citizen journalists prior to the election. In 2009 CCHR saw the potential of new media forms and began creating programs and publications to help build the country's capacity, including helping other CSOs learn to use the technology (CCHR 2013). Under Sopheap's leadership, CCHR

continues this strategy by training young activists to use social media for effective human rights advocacy. One example among many such projects CCHR has created is called "Empowering Cloghers," in which female university students from rural backgrounds are trained in online activism to help break down the digital divide that disadvantages both women and rural people. More broadly, CCHR has created both an online portal, "Sithi.org" ('sithi' means rights in Khmer), as well as a physical space at the CCHR headquarters in Phnom Penh ("Sithi Hub") for training and dialogue, with the ultimate goal to "promote the protection of human rights in Cambodia through the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT)." At Sithi Hub activist members can participate in training in technical skills such as creating Khmer Unicode, multimedia training, and online security, as well as sessions attending less to the technical side and more to such topics as effective blog content, video journalism, and using data to enhance storytelling.

In addition to the training sessions, Sithi Hub is available for activists to meet formally or informally in a safe space. One group using Sithi Hub is Politikoffee, whose Facebook page describes it as "a group of young enthusiastic and social media-savvy Cambodians who love sociopolitical and economic discussion. Politikoffee Group believes in "Liberal Democracy" prevailing in Cambodia by enhancing Discussion and Debate based on principles of national interest, solidarity and fraternity" (Politikoffee 2014). They sponsor regular meetings as well as occasional guest speakers at Sithi Hub, discussing such timely topics as likely scenarios to end the political deadlock, nationalism v. patriotism, and the problem of anti-Vietnamese sentiment. Politikoffee's leader is Ou Rithy, whose Twitter postings, blogs and columns on political developments are deservedly gaining a wide following.[31]

The emergence of blogging as an important forum for political conversation and analysis in Cambodia, as one informant told me, is aided by the fact that "everyone knows that many things, especially controversy, do not make it to the mainstream media, and so they must look elsewhere." In addition to Ou Rithy, a vital group of young bloggers (or *cloggers* and *cloghers*, as the terms for male and female Cambodian bloggers have evolved) has gained some notice. Kounila Keo and Chak Sopheap are among the earliest voices: both began blogging as University students in 2007. While Kounila Keo's "Blue Lady Blog" and tweets range from the political to the culinary, Chak Sopheap's have become decidedly oriented to political and human rights issues, as the subtitle she chose for her blog suggests: "Riding the Wave of Change in Cambodia." Ou Virak doesn't blog, but is active on Twitter, pointing his thousands of followers to longer discussions that share his insights about current affairs, such as his Facebook postings, interviews and newspaper articles. His analyses have become an important contribution to the public political conversation in Cambodia today. For example, his August 8, 2013 video interview with the *Phnom Penh Post* provides a thoughtful analysis of the issues that both parties faced in reaching resolution (Ou Virak 2013).

Cambodians are not only taking to social media to discuss their country's future, but are also learning from and contributing to a larger global conversation about

such matters. They are becoming a location to hold international conferences and workshops, such as the 2012 Blogfest Asia Festival in Siem Reap, where 200 bloggers gathered to talk about such things as Internet Freedom (Greenwood 2012). Cambodian social media users are also making their presence felt elsewhere. To take but one of many possible examples, Kounila Keo is not only blogging and training others to use social media in Cambodia, but has participated in media training programs and conferences in the United States, Germany, France, South America and Africa, and gave a TEdx talk in 2012 (Kounila Keo 2014).

In addition to the people like Chak Sopheap, Ou Rithy and Ou Virak, whose passion for change is tempered by their perception of a need for a more sophisticated, reasoned analysis in Cambodia's public political discussion, there are others, like "Khmer Sovannaphumi" (a pseudonym meaning "The Golden Land of Cambodia"), Kheang Sreymom and "I Love Cambodia Hot News"[32] who are using social media to criticize the powerful, post videos, political cartoons, and news items, with more emphasis on outrage and less on detailed analysis. Such postings surely account for much of the impact made by social media in the election. Some have become celebrities in their own right, such as Thy Sovantha, an outspoken teenage girl whose bold anti-government speeches are featured on YouTube and Facebook. Initially, she posted frequently on "I Love Cambodia Hot News," but eventually created her own page, which describes her as a "CNRP supporter." By August, 2014 it boasted over 400,000 followers. But not all has gone smoothly, as her anti-government rhetoric brought her death threats, as well as rumors that she was really a CPP spy (Murray 2014).

There are many more social media sites that have gained followings in Cambodia. Anonymous Cambodia, a group which has hacked government websites, appears to have one with 26,000 followers. There are many others, with the range of interests that are typical elsewhere. Clearly, the alternative media have become deeply entangled in the lives of Cambodians in a short time.

PROSPECTS FOR LONG-TERM CHANGE

In 2012 the government announced that a law would be drafted to address cybercrime. In April, 2014, a draft of that law was obtained by Article 19, a London-based group advocating freedom of expression. They published it on their website along with an analysis of its dangers (Article 19 2014). Criticism of the leaked draft came quickly, with concerns that vague provisions might be used to censor critics of the government. Section 28 especially raised concern, as it would criminalize websites and online postings that are deemed to "hinder the sovereignty and integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia," incite or instigate "anarchism," generate "insecurity, instability and political [in]cohesiveness," slander or undermine the "integrity of any government agencies, ministries" at all levels, or damage moral and cultural values, such as "family values." In addition to the dangerous vagueness in the descriptions of the crimes, critics pointed out that the punishments in the draft law went beyond the levels of punishment for comparable offenses (such as slander) committed offline. One provision seems clearly a

response to the kinds of caricatures one finds on some dissenters' Facebook pages, as it prohibits "drawings, pictorials, or pixilation that [are] deemed to slander or defame human beings or commoners of the state performing activities unbecoming, with animals of any species." The government spokesmen refused to comment on a leaked, and therefore "illegal" document (Ponniah 2014).

Whether the law will pass in its current form is unclear, though drafting controversial laws in secret and then revealing them only when they are close to finalization is not unusual in Cambodia. But if it or something like it is legislated, the question whether the government intends to use it to suppress the kind of speech that led to the strong opposition showing in this election is a serious concern; and even if they do not have such an intention for the near future, the capacity to do so would seem likely to have a chilling effect on dissenting voices.

Many are optimistic that the current experience has altered the terrain in Cambodia. Faine Greenwood sums up that view when she concludes her discussion of the role social media played in the election by saying, "Whatever the outcome of the 2013 Cambodian elections, one thing is clear: an online democracy is here to stay in Cambodia." But she also notices that "some in power in Cambodia are well aware that they will need to get the Internet under control if they wish to maintain dominance in the long-term," a pessimistic note that should not simply be dismissed (Greenwood 2013). Indeed, the government has blocked access to certain blogs, usually for pornography or sexually explicit imagery. Some websites that publish criticism of the government (such as KI-Media, Khmerization and Sacrava) have been blocked from time to time, though the government denies that it ordered the restrictions. In one case access was restored when customers complained to their cell provider, but was then subsequently blocked again, leading to some worry that there could be real challenges to Internet freedom in Cambodia (Chak Sopheap 2013).

One important consideration in thinking this through is the history of the CPP and their willingness to take ruthless measures to maintain their hold on power. That they are debating a draft of a Cybercrime law, rather than how to assure a peaceful transition of power, or whether there should be term limits for Prime Ministers,[33] suggests that the party's view of the importance of having mechanisms in place for a peaceful transition of power has not changed. A vague cybercrime law might well be considered a useful tool to have before the next election. One would look for more concrete evidence that intentions had changed before concluding that they will let loose their grip on power too readily.

On the other side, though the widespread use of the Internet in Cambodia is still a very recent phenomenon, it seems clear that it has become an important part of everyday life to many who are therefore not likely to relinquish it easily. Perhaps its use has already become so important in Cambodian life that turning back the clock and blocking access to sites like Facebook is not a realistic option. For one thing, the taste for democracy in Cambodia may have been strengthened by this experience, with a generation of young people (who now make up more than half the population) who are tweeting and posting on Facebook not just to update each other on their status (though they do this too), but also engaging in serious

discussion of the direction their nation should take, thinking that their contribution to that dialogue might actually mean something. For another thing, a young, tech-savvy generation that is training itself to use these tools for effective activism would surely try to remain one step ahead of the government in finding ways around any such measures.[34]

And, one must not forget that, though a minority within the government, the opposition that is now sitting alongside the ruling party in the National Assembly owes its stronger voice today to their embrace of the new media. Surely they will not stand idly by and watch that democratic tool eliminated. The question is whether their increased position is sufficient to enable them to block the ruling party in such an eventuality. Additionally, the power of the new media extends beyond the opposition, to include the ruling power (potentially), and also civil society organizations (CSOs) and those who are skeptical of both the entrenched power and the opposition; all of these people have a stake in defending it. For all these reasons, resistance to using a tool like the draft Cybercrime law to suppress dissenting voices would likely be quite strong.

At this point, we don't know whether Cambodian politics is changed for the long term by the experience that new and social media has provided in the last year. In the election of 2013, new media's presence and promise was felt in Cambodia. Its main contributions include helping the opposition articulate its message in detail to a broad audience without censorship, enabling them to get their supporters out to vote and assisting in monitoring the election. Mobilizing large numbers of demonstrators would have been much more difficult or impossible without it. And when the opposition took to the streets, the government's attempts at suppression became clear through the activism of many who courageously broadcast the evidence for the whole world to see. But whether the longer-term result is reform and further democratization, or a continuation of the old tactics to hold onto the power that a small elite currently enjoys, the election of 2013 showed that new media has become a significant player in that struggle.

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NOTES

1. In Cambodia, names of people are presented in reverse order from that used in western countries – family name first, followed by individual name. But when referring to people by just one name, writers customarily use the individual name rather than the family name. I will follow those customs here.
2. The *Phnom Penh Post* publishes both English and Khmer language editions. Throughout, when I refer to this newspaper, I am referring to the English language edition.
3. Estimates vary considerably, but scholars such as Ben Kiernan and David Chandler estimate the minimum number of dead under the Khmer Rouge as 1.7 million. See Chandler (2008) and Kiernan (2004).
4. Moral Reparations granted in the first case included wide publication of video apology by the defendant; in the first phase of case 2, reparations were expanded to include memorials to be built and other educational efforts. Moral reparations do not allow for individual financial reparations.
5. FUNCINPEC stands for "Front Nationale Uni Pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopertif." See FUNCINPEC website at http://funcinpec.free.fr/
6. See the discussion of garment wages and land grabs later in "Campaign Issues" section for background on the issues being contested in these demonstrations.
7. Accounts differ about how the violence began – some accounts accuse demonstrators of hurling stones, while others do not.
8. It seems that the tactic of reducing sentences to time served and the remainder suspended is used frequently by the Cambodian judiciary. The suspended sentences allow the government to "save face" while releasing defendants the public believes to have been unjustly charged, thus averting a volatile situation and blunting international criticism. See Butt Reaksmey Kongkea et al. (2014).
9. Indeed, Long Dimanche, spokesperson for the city of Phnom Penh, had said on an earlier occasion that they were untrained, confirming the speculation of observers that they were just thugs hired to deal with demonstrators so the police could remain innocent of the violent suppression.

10. Rainsy made numerous trips abroad during the past year, either to raise funds or to gather support for the cause in other countries, leading to criticisms that his absence may have led to a more protracted deadlock.
11. They did so on August 5.
12. As the legislation creating the new NEC was being finalized in March 2015, Kek declined the post as leader of the NEC.
13. A leak revealed the CNRP choices for the NEC, which included Kem Sokha's daughter, Kem Monovithya, leading to questions about nepotism, a familiar problem in Cambodian politics.
14. According to the World Bank, those in "near poverty" live on less than $2.30 per day, while those living below the "national poverty line" live on less than $1.25 per day.
15. There has apparently also not been much education about it in schools. One of the hoped for outcomes of the ECCC – the "Khmer Rouge Tribunal" – is for a more widespread awareness and memorialization.
16. In that case, the corruption made international headlines, when the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis threatened to withdraw funding entirely in Cambodia in 2013 when large "commissions" to officials at the National Center for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control for making contracts for mosquito nets were uncovered; it threatened to withdraw more than $100 million in funding if the bribes were not repaid, and it later ended its relation with MediCam, an umbrella organization of health NGOs which was implicated in the Global Fund investigation for charging NGOs for salaries for positions that did not exist, because they refused to accept reforms aimed at cleaning up their practices (Ford 2013; Peter 2014).
17. Many jobs or promotions come with a price-tag – a substantial commission for which a person may have to obtain a loan to pay (Kerbo 2011, p. 162).
18. Nil Nonn, a local Judge in Battambang, is paraphrased by a Frontline interviewer as saying that "he took money from the people who appeared before his court, but only after their trials were over. He said there was no other way to survive on his salary of $30 a month" (Pike 2009). Nonn later became president of the trial chamber of the ECCC.
19. That is one of the reasons that the decision to hold the trial in Cambodia rather than in another country seemed especially appropriate.
20. There are hundreds of Cambodians on the staff, as well as a structure that includes both Cambodian and international lawyers and judges at all levels from initial investigation to final appeals court.
21. On the two occasions I have had opportunity to attend, the gallery (which seats almost 500) was nearly full with large groups of Cambodian teachers.
22. The conflict about whether cases 3 and 4 should proceed led ultimately to the resignation of the International Co-Investigating Judge, Laurence Kasper-Ansermet, who was being stonewalled by the National Co-Investigating Judge, You Bunleng, as well as the Cambodian government, which refused to make his appointment as Co-investigating Judge official (before his predecessor's resignation, he had been a reserve Co-Investigating Judge, presumably making the appointment automatic).
23. It appears that the concern that legitimate Vietnamese voters might be blocked from voting by the frenzy to prevent illegitimate votes is one that should have been taken seriously. See Ponniah (2013b).
24. At about the same time a woman named Keo Sophannary came forward to sue Sokha, claiming to have been his mistress and having adopted two children with him. The government's Press and Quick Reaction Unit posted an interview with her on its website, raising concerns that a government agency was engaging in partisan politics as an arm of the CPP rather than being used only for its official business (White & Vong Sokheng 2013).
25. Chum Mey is a fairly prominent figure, a constant presence at Tuol Sleng, where he and another survivor, Bou Meng, talk with visitors and sell their memoirs. They are president and vice president, respectively, of the Victims Association of Democratic Kampuchea. Chum Mey was featured in press interviews about finally putting former senior Khmer Rouge leaders on trial, and was also a witness in the first trial of Kaing Guek Eav (also known as "Duch"), commandant of the

prison who received a life sentence in 2010. Through a spokesperson, Kem Sokha denied having made the statements in the recordings (Kuch 2013).

26. A CNRP television license was one of the items being negotiated for in resolving the recent deadlock; it appears that agreement was reached that a privately owned station (not directly owned by the party) sympathetic to the CNRP would be permitted. Whether that part of the agreement is fulfilled remains to be seen.
27. When I tried to access the website on July 26, 2014, the Khmer page was not available, while the English page appeared to have been hijacked by a diet program; in August, the Khmer page was back up.
28. Samdech (សម្តេច) is an honorific title bestowed infrequently on people at the highest rank, and is perhaps translatable as "Excellency." Currently, only a small number hold this title, including Hun Sen, Chea Sim (President of the Senate), and Heng Samrin (President of the National Assembly).
29. A problematic inference, given that there are artificial ways to inflate "likes." See Teytelman (2014).
30. Land titles are a complex issue in Cambodia – after the eradication of private ownership under the Khmer Rouge, everything had to be reestablished. A window of opportunity to apply for titles was given, but many people did not do so (undoubtedly for a variety of reasons including illiteracy, inability to pay the fees, lack of trust of the government). Whether the title amounts to much given the politicized nature of the judiciary is yet another question Cambodians must have asked themselves when considering whether to obtain title. A program established by Hun Sen in response to criticism sent out young people to assist in surveying and titling, but critics maintained it was not transparent and open to abuses (Human Rights Watch 2013).
31. For an example of his work, see Ou Rithy (2014) for his insightful discussion of the election impasse one month before its resolution.
32. There are a number of different Facebook pages with similar names: "I Love Cambodia Hot News" and "I Love Cambodia Hot News II" each boasts hundreds of thousands of followers, while "I Love Cambodia Hot News III" appears to be a much more recent addition. All have similar (though not the same) content.
33. In a 2010 speech, Hun Sen is reported to have said: "Please do not try to limit the mandate of premiership. You want the mandate limited because you are worrying you will lose to me" (Vrieze & Phann Ana 2012).
34. Whether they would outrun a repressive government intent on reasserting its control of the information flow is less clear, though. As James Kyle points out, it can call on the assistance of others with greater resources to do so, as it apparently did in obtaining FBI assistance in identifying suspects from Anonymous who had hacked government websites (see Kyle 2014).