

ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KHMER REPUBLIC 1970-1975, AND THE KHMER ROUGE REVOLUTION

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By

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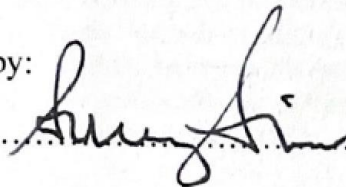
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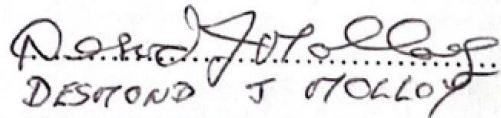
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Project Report Approved by:

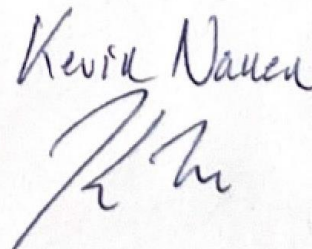


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ABSTRACT

Locked in the middle of the Cold War, Cambodia a gentle kingdom, which had just realized her freedom from a ninety-year-colonized era in less than two decades, accidentally fell into the superpowers' balancing power competition. The pro U.S.-coup which happened in Phnom Penh on March 18, 1970, had changed Cambodia's neutrality stance in its foreign policy in general, and specifically, in light of the Vietnam War. Spawned from the coup, the Republic substituted the Kingdom Government, as did Lon Nol substitute Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

Lon Nol's Khmer Republic worked together with the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam Government) with support from the U.S. to fight the communists, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam Government), the Viet Cong and the CPK. Prince Sihanouk was a late comer who joined the communist after he was deposed by Lon Nol and he contributed just enough power to the communist to allow them to defeat the common enemy, the Khmer Republic.

Ineffectiveness, corruption, and entanglement in internal power struggles were characteristics of the new Government in Phnom Penh. This resulted in its inability in making a sound allocation of American technical assistance and it contributed greatly to incapacity in the war effort against the communists. Besides, American commitment in the war effort was somewhat tentative, in that the U.S. commitment to the regional war was already diminished through its Vietnamization Policy. Through the Paris Peace Accords in January 27, 1973, Nixon realized his promise by repatriating more than half a million American troops and declaring "Peace with honor" in the Vietnam War. The event encouraged the American Congress to put an ultimatum to Nixon's government to withdraw its direct military support "in, over or from the shores of Cambodia or Laos" on August 15, 1973.

The U.S. drawdown led to the final battleground for the Republic, abandoned its ally, solitary, poor and vulnerable, in a one-on-one civil war with the CPK, the government collapsed and the communists acceded to power on April 17, 1975. Wasting no time, the CPK implemented its radicalized great revolution and millions of lives were lost as a result of its experiment with a utopian classless society.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligent Agency
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam Government)
GRUNK	Gouvernement royal d'union nationale du Kampuchéa (in French)
KNAF	Khmer National Arm Force (Khmer Republic Army)
KPRP	Khmer People's Revolutionary Party
KR	Khmer Rouge (Khmer Communist Insurgency)
NLF	National Liberation Front (Viet Cong)
NUFK	National Unite Front of Kampuchea
NVA	North Vietnam Army
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PRC	People's Republic of China
RGNUK	Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea
RVN	Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam Government)
UN	United Nations
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VC	The Viet Cong (Communist insurgent in South Vietnam)
WPV	Workers' Party of Vietnam

Chapter I.

INTRODUCTION

1. Research Background

On March 18, 1970, Prince Norodom Sihanouk was removed as head of state of Cambodia. On October 9, 1970, the Khmer Republic was officially proclaimed (Ros, 2017).¹ This event is most often assumed, including by scholars and researchers, as a pro-American coup which ended two-millennia of monarchy in Cambodia. It is blamed for being the major reason why the Khmer Rouge could seize power and was able to implement its revolution; a communist revolution that claimed the lives of up to two million people in just three years eight months and twenty days (BBC, 2021).²

Ineffective government, corruption and depleted economy were seen by scholars and researchers as the catalyst in plunging this new regime to its demise in April 17, 1975.

From a global perspective, in a bi-polar world order where two great powers competed for hegemony, the establishment of the Khmer Republic was just a mistake of great power politics. The world was split, one pole gravitated towards the communist ideology of the USSR and another towards the U.S.'s capitalist 'free world'. These two great powers were once, briefly, allied victors of World War II. But as the new world order evolved, the two most dominant ideologies saw each other as enemies engaged in a zero-sum game, where the total loss of one

¹ Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017.

² BBC, Khmer Rouge: Cambodia's years of brutality. Access date 21 April 2021. [Khmer Rouge: Cambodia's years of brutality - BBC News](#)

party equals the total gain of the other. This theory prevailed throughout the Cold War era from 1947 to 1991, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Khmer Republic was a tiny actor sandwiched in this chess board between two superpowers.

What made the Cold War remarkable was that in this war the two competing powers did not enter into direct combat, but instead fought proxy wars in which all players, being state actors and movement groups, got support to fight on behalf of the Soviet Union or the U.S. In Southeast Asia, U.S foreign policy was guided by the Domino Theory which postulated that the fall of the South Vietnamese regime would lead to a chain reaction causing, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and finally the whole of Southeast Asia to fall under communist rule. The U.S entered into direct combat for the first time against the Vietnamese Communists in 1965 and gradually intensified the war that spread into Laotian and Cambodian territories. This was also the first time that the tiny Cambodian communist faction, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) began to gain support from the communist camp, including North Vietnam.

The coup, plotted by Marshal Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak in Cambodia on March 18, 1970, helped the U.S. war efforts in Vietnam. For the U.S. it was a means to an end in itself by way of ending Cambodia's neutrality and gaining legitimate authorization by the new government to intervene militarily in Cambodia, with the aim of defeating North Vietnam. The result was a communist revolution in Cambodia leading to the collapse of the Lon Nol regime. The leader of the revolution, Pol Pot, mentioned in 1978 (after the Khmer Rouge victory) that the CPK sensed the coup beforehand and had been waiting for this game-changing event with military tactics and public propaganda (Kiernan, 2004).³

³ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press, 2004. P286.

2. Research Problems

The pro-American coup which happened in Cambodia on March 18, 1970 changed the Kingdom of Cambodia both in terms of its domestic politics and its foreign policy stance. The event was a milestone in Cambodian history which is frequently blamed as having a direct impact in bringing about the Khmer Rouge Revolution, the revolution which characterized by genocide. Finally, the two thousand-years history of Cambodia was rewritten from year zero.

3. Research Objectives

Project report aims to examine the causal relationship between the coup in March 1970 and the accession of the Khmer Rouge to power in April 17th 1975. In this time there was a complete shift of Cambodian Neutral Foreign Policy prior to the Vietnam War to Pro-American policy right after the coup in Phnom Penh. The U.S played a major role and the depth of its involvement had an impact on the new government, both militarily and diplomatically (Chandler, 1999).⁴

Facing uncertainty regarding the geopolitical maneuvers between the U.S and the USSR, the new Republic Regime had no time to put in place a sound political entity and good governance in the already vulnerable state. The result was state weakness within the new government, ranging from internal factors like corruption and misallocation of the U.S. support, from finance to military technical assistance.

Prince Sihanouk, former king and head of state, played a unique role during this time. He brought unique advantages to the Khmer Rouge, both through attracting local support from the

⁴ Davin P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkorm Books, 1999. P.211. The U.S. military assistance to Cambodia grew from discreet support totaling less than \$20 million to a congressionally funded package of over \$180 million by January 1971.

royalists and rural population to the fighting and in gaining legitimacy for it abroad. This research aims to elucidate his individual role as a diplomate liaising with various leaders, as prince among his subjects, and finally as the leader of the coalition government with the Khmer Rouge group and its communist allies.

4. Research Significance

The project report will reveal scientifically and objectively its findings from several fronts. First and foremost, the justification of the March-18th Coup as the independent variable to the April-17th Khmer Rouge Revolution as the dependent variable which was the direct product of the coup. If this case is valid, there is involvement of key actors during the period who are architects of this tragic event which led to the loss of millions of the Khmer People. Those actors are the U.S., the People Republic of China, the U.S President Richard Nixon, the U.S Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Chairman Mao Zedong, Premier Zou Enlai, Prince Sihanouk, Pol Pot and his high-level cadres. The research will contribute to an understanding of how the Khmer Rouge came to power, and the role those international actors played in affecting the internal dynamics of Cambodian politics. The research has implications for understanding what makes a successful insurgency as well as the key aspects of communist propaganda and military strategy, in addition to the importance legitimacy in providing for state stability. The research may also contribute to the healing, both mental and emotional, of the Cambodian victims who lived and suffered during the period, so that they can move on with life free of doubts.

5. Research scope, assumption, and limitation

The project report examines only within the timeframe between, March 18, 1970 until April 17, 1975, typically during the five-year period of the Khmer Republic Era. The events happened during the period will be subjected to the study including international actors, selected States and Non-state actors which were viewed as relevant.

The central question asks about the role of the Khmer Republic it played in the accession of the Khmer Rouge. To find out, the study formulates three assumptions intend to direct the research process and those assumptions are: 1. the role of the U.S., especially its bombardment impact, 2. The role of Prince Sihanouk undoubtedly the most popular individual actors and his alliance with the Khmer Rouge, and 3. The role of the Khmer Republic in its own demise.

The data, statistics, and historical records, are all selected from various sources for the purpose of discussing and analyzing. However, to understand the dynamics during the five-year scope, the study may go back further intime to capture the whole picture before the event happened. As such, there are perhaps limitations on this study which could limit the analyzing boundary.

6. Research Question and hypotheses

What was the role of the Khmer Republic regime, between coming to power in 1970 and its demise in 1975, in relation to the success of the Khmer Rouge?

Hypothesis: Three dynamics explain the collapse of the Khmer Republic and the beginning of the Khmer Rouge revolution.

- 1- *The communist movements, in Cambodian territory, became uncontrollable as a result support for the communist that resulted from the build-up of resentment by the leftists and also the mass of the rural population affected by the U.S. bombings.*

- 2- *The alignment of Prince Sihanouk added enormous value to the popularity of the Khmer Rouge.*
- 3- *The inability of the Khmer Republic government to effectively govern the country.*

7. Conceptual Framework

The framework is structured into a level of analysis approach. There are 3 levels of analysis: the international level, regional level, and the state level (the level of individual leaders). The research begins with an overall view of the international system, and then scales down to the regional, and state level. The international system (the Cold-War world order) during the period is viewed as the big picture by which the state level is shaped. Therefore, states behave a certain way in responding to characteristics of the international system, change in the international system will cause change in state behavior. As a result, we need a multi-level of analysis approach to explain these multi-level dynamics.

To answer the main question, behavior at state and individual level is critical importance in drawing a causal relationship between assumed variables. The study views the Khmer Republic Regime as the independent variable which led to the victory of the Khmer Rouge five years later, and this victory is the dependent variable.

8. Definition of Terms

Hegemony (Carla Norrlof, 2015)⁵

⁵ Carla Norrlof, Oxford University Press, 2015.
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0122.xml>

refers to the ability of an actor with overwhelming capability to shape the international system through both coercive and non-coercive means.

Zero-sum game (Oxford University Press, 2018)⁶

is a mathematical representation in game theory and economic theory of a situation which involves two sides, where the result is an advantage for one side and an equivalent loss for the other.

Proxy war (Osmanczyk, Jan Edmund, 2002)⁷

is an armed conflict between two states or non-state actors, one or both of which act at the instigation or on behalf of other parties (larger powers) that are not directly involved in the hostilities.

Supreme Committee (Chantrabot Ros, 2017)⁸

The last government body of the Khmer Republic, which was created during a tense situation in the absence of Lon Nol and was tasked to wait for the return of Prince Sihanouk, and was meant to transfer power to him.

Cold War (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023)⁹

was a period, developed after WW2 in between 1947-1991, of geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies, the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc.

⁶ Oxford University Press, A Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations (4 ed.). 2018.

⁷ Osmanczyk, Jan Edmund, Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements. Abingdon: Routledge Books. P. 1869. ISBN 978-0415939201.

⁸ Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017.

⁹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War/Toward-a-new-world-order>

Vietnamization policy (History.com Editors, 2019)¹⁰

The policy aimed to train the Vietnamese troops of South Vietnam Government to fight their own war with the Vietnamese communists so that the U.S troops could withdraw without humiliation.

Domino Theory (History.com Editors, 2022)¹¹

The theoretical justification for U.S. military intervention in Vietnam, which stated that if one country fell under the influence of Communism, the surrounding countries would inevitably follow like a row of dominos. The aim was to prevent Communist domination of South-East Asia during the Cold War period.

Détente (History.com Editors, 2023)¹²

The French for ‘relaxation’, refers to a period, during the Cold War, of relaxation from strained relations between potentially hostile countries (The U.S., Soviet Union, and China) in order to preserve peace, through verbal communication and other means of diplomacy.

Revolution (Jeff Goodwin, 2015)¹³

a revolution is a fundamental and relatively sudden change in political power and political organization which occurs when the population revolts against the government, typically due to perceived oppression or political incompetence.

¹⁰ History.com Editors, Vietnamization. A&E Television Network, 2019.
<https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnamization>

¹¹ History.com Editors, Domino Theory. A&E Television Networks, 2022.
<https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/domino-theory>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jeff Goodwin, Revolutions and Regime Change. Chapter Title: Revolutions and Revolution

Movements. Publication date: July 2015.

Chapter II.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Unlike the period of the Khmer Rouge or the Democratic Kampuchea which has attracted substantial attention from academic researchers and scholars, the Khmer Republic which was the preceding government, had drawn less interest among academic professionals and the like. It becomes evident, in research process, that finding reliable and relevant sources during the Republic period had become more difficult than finding the authentic sources during the Khmer Rouge period.

Fortunately, the literature review found that there are some researchers who have a unique interest in finding out more about Cambodian politics in the period during the early 1970s, the period during which Khmer Republic government existed. Those politicians and/or academic researchers who covered the period, produced outputs which include book chapters, journal articles, and complete academic records, such as Dr. Ros Chantrabot's research article.

1. The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975.

In Dr. Ros Chantrabot's "**The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975**", he provided substantial information from the beginning of the coup in March 18, 1970 until the Republic's demise. However, in his book, he admitted that, he spent more time developing an account of the first two years of the Republic than the last three years. Perhaps, the outcome of his book was drawn in large part from his 1973's doctoral research, at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, in Paris. During the period he was a member of the drafting committee for the

constitution of the Republic, and was also a member of the Special Coordinating Committee of National Defense led by Lon Non, younger brother of General Lon Nol (Ros, 2017).¹⁴

The Khmer Republic began by observing the coup which ousted Prince Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Nyum and substituted it with the new United States-like regime of the Republic government. The origins of the problem, as argued by the author, resulted from Prince Sihanouk turning a blind eye to the Vietnamese Communists setting-up camps on the Cambodian eastern border in the mid-1960s (Ros, 2017).¹⁵ After the war in Vietnam raged beyond what the prince could control, in 1968, Prince Sihanouk signified to the U.S to bomb the communist camps on Cambodian territory 'as long as this was done in sparsely populated areas' (Ros, 2017).¹⁶ But it was already out of his hands. Everything had been agreed behind his back between his far-right subordinates, masterminded by Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak. The CIA may have pulled the strings (Ros, 2017).¹⁷

According to Chantrabot, there are three men who played prominent role in deposing Prince Sihanouk and they were called the "March 18 men". Besides Lon Nol and Prince Sirik Matak, In Tam, President of the National Assembly was the man who announced Prince Sihanouk's deposition on behalf of the National Assembly (Ros, 2017).¹⁸ Furthermore, according to the author, there was a fourth man who acted behind the scenes and later played a role as the Republic's commander, general Lon Non, younger brother of Lon Nol, the President of the Republic. Lon Non became the fourth powerful man who worked up-stream to the top and entered the sphere of competition for power. Later, in the September 1972 general election, besides Lon Nol, the President and then Marshal President, the three top men had created their

¹⁴ Chantrabot Ros, *The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017.

¹⁵ Ibid, P. XV.

¹⁶ Ibid, P. XV.

¹⁷ Ibid, P 35.

¹⁸ Ibid, P 41.

own political parties. The Social Republican Party was headed by Lon Non. Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak founded the Republican Party, and In Tam led the Democratic party. They each formulated their political manifestoes (Ros, 2017).¹⁹ The three parties shared a long list of aspirations including strengthening national awareness, fighting against corruption, solving social problems, curbing price increases, raising people's standard of living, implementing a new economic policy, reforming public administration, increasing military force capacity; and in foreign policy they upheld a policy of neutrality and non-intervention (Ros, 2017).²⁰ The author came to realize that the interests of each party's leader were prioritized over the interests of the people and nation. Power struggles dominated the level of leadership in the Khmer Republic. Chantrobot went further, saying that because of the follies of the country's leaders, they actively contributed to its demise.

Lon Non struggled in the first two years of the Republic to relegate the role of Prince Sirik Matak who was a Republican with royal origins. His efforts were successful when the Republican Party and the Democratic party withdrew from taking part in the September 1972 Election (Ros, 2017).²¹

There were eight governments and one Supreme Committee created during the era of the Republic and each one barely survived a matter of months. New governments popped up overnight by just changing policies on defense, economics and finance, social measures, youth and education, and the like. Each government came as easily as they disappeared. And each was characterized by updated policies in response to more severe economic and social problems which were exacerbated as a result of the crisis of the civil war. In the midst of a depleted economy, political cronies who exploited networks of merchants, especially Chinese or so-

¹⁹ Ibid, P 84.

²⁰ Ibid, P 84.

²¹ Ibid, P 85.

called Chinese businesses, took advantage of the situation. They systematically stocked staple goods causing price inflation on the market and sold them for profit. The writer called this shareholding structure between Republic officials and businessmen: “A class of nouveaux riches that emerged and prospered during the five years of the Republic” at the expense of the majority of the population, mainly farmers and public servants (Ros, 2017).²²

Corruption rampaged through the Republic on all fronts. For example, military commanders sold weapons, provided by U.S. aid, to the enemy at knock-down prices. Phantom soldiers funded by the U.S. made army leaders rich. As the civil war raged, refugees fled into the city. Phnom Penh had the infrastructure to accommodate a population of 650,000 in March 1970, but the population rose to 3 million in early 1975 (Ros, 2017).²³ The U.S. started to import rice for the consumption of the city’s population in 1972, and would remain a rice provider until the end of the Republic (Ros, 2017).²⁴

After the Paris Peace Accords had been signed to end the Vietnam War in January 1973, intergovernmental organizations such as the U.N. started to develop a global resolution for the Cambodian conflict (Ros, 2017).²⁵ The U.S. and China worked together to broker a peace settlement for Cambodia. The Republic government in Phnom Penh also agreed to look for a cease fire, or at least any kind of compromise. On the communist factions, Prince Sihanouk seemed to offer a glimpse of hope regarding his position on a potential peaceful mechanism at the final stage (Ros, 2017).²⁶ The CPK group, who actually took the lead at the state level and engaged in warfare, firmly rejected a resolution of any kind. Because they had a tight grip on

²² Ibid, P 122-123.

²³ Ibid, P 120.

²⁴ Ibid, P 121, 127-133

²⁵ Ibid, P 141.

²⁶ Ibid, P 149-150.

the situation in the battle- field, they looked for the right time to capture the city and finish off the diminished and isolated Republic after the departure of the American troops (Ros, 2017).²⁷

At the final stage of the Republic, aside from his previous role to draw support at international level for the communist legitimacy abroad, Prince Sihanouk's role was diminished and his voice was not heard after that. Perhaps the Prince was aware of his pending fate. He did mention that the CPK would spit him out just like a cherry seed after they used him. Finally, the CPC seemed to find a way to align their interest with the CPK and made clear this painful truth to the Prince by ignoring him for the whole period of Democratic Kampuchea. During this period, he was later put under Royal Palace arrest with his family, and some of his children, grandchildren, and relatives were also victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide, exactly the same as ordinary Cambodian citizens and the ethnic minorities.

Chantrabot goes into detail regarding the internal power struggle among the leaders selected by the new government. He blamed this mainly on the mismanagement of the new Republic. The government suffered heavily from its own political cronies who put individual interests above national interests. Ineffective management of the national budget, corruption, weakness of military strategy, and excessive dependence on U.S. aid, all contributed to its downfall. Besides, the author considered that Prince Sihanouk had "complacently let himself be manipulated, consumed with the satisfaction of seeing how important his persona remained in

²⁷ Ibid, P 145-151. According to the Author, the unnatural alliance between communists and Prince Sihanouk's supporter, royalists and nationalists was so inconceivable. The Prince admitted that there were internal disagreements in his coalition. Besides the role as Head of State and President of the Royal Government of the National United Front of Kampuchea (RGNUK), the Prince soon realized that his role was limited, that he did not have the latitude of making decisions, and that he actually had to do as he was told. He made it clear in his comments of September and October 1973, "As for Mr. Ieng Sary and the other Cambodian communists, I cannot naively congratulate myself because, until further notice, they consider me Cambodia's legal head of state. This constitutes a necessity for the Khmer Rouge who would otherwise simply be rebels opposing Lon Nol. I know very well that, after the liberation of Phnom Penh, the communist will no longer need the legitimacy of Sihanouk to impose their authority at state level". He even went further that the CPK did not agree to his request of moving the RGNUK from Beijing to settle in Cambodia—while there was no American's bombardment any more.

the eyes of the superpowers, of confirming the myth of his giant/genius persona in foreign affairs and as the Cambodian people's representative" (Ros, 2017).²⁸ The Prince finally proved that this "charm" was actually working by changing the stance of international recognition toward the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (RGNUK). Because of the evolved global resolution in the international arena, it directly resulted in deprivation of supports to the Republic. Finally, with the defensive war to repel the Khmer Rouge's offensive, came the demise of the Republic regime, and the tragic genocide began.

The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from the "Khmer Republic, 1970-1975" was that it was a narrative thesis, that was internally focused on the national and individual level. The author not only lived through the period, but also played prominent role in the Republic Government. Thus, he had access to substantial national records related to the historical and political background. He also tried to draw lessons learnt and shed light on leaders' characteristics from his personal experience. For example, he came to understand that leaders ought to be firm and vigilant, not overwhelmed by wealth, power, and pride. Also, in their role as political leaders, they could potentially lead their country and people away from, or into, good or evil. At the end, both Prince Sihanouk as well as his former General failed in their statesmanship in leading the country away from the superpower's ambition. The author mentioned that the Republic was destined to destroy itself, for many internal reasons, even before it fell. The U.S. B52 bombardment did make things worse for the Republic and Prince Sihanouk's alignment with the CPK did add substantial value to the communist group. These two external factors brought together those royalists, communists and ordinary victims, who survived the bombings but were neither communists nor royalists, and motivated them to join hands with the communists in the war effort for liberation.

²⁸ Ibid, P 142.

However, the author did not draw any direct relationship that the Khmer Republic directly led to the demise in its self from all levels. Likewise, he did not conclude that this important milestone offers direct link to the possibility of the Khmer Rouge revolution. Perhaps the author's intention was to write an observation, not an experiment to test causality between the Republic and Khmer Rouge revolution, of historical background rather than an effort to identify causal relationships.

2. [Insurgency: The Cambodia Civil War, 1970-1975.](#)

A Master Thesis by CW5 Jesse W. Lee's **"Insurgency: The Cambodian Civil War, 1970-1975."** School of Advanced Military Studies. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS. 2019.

Lee's monograph, addresses the variables considered significant to the CPK's success and the Khmer Republic's demise. He set out three hypotheses to direct his research. First, the cross-border incursions by the U.S. and the South Vietnamese military, and the U.S. bombing campaign in Cambodia, contributed to the Khmer Rouge's rapid increase in troop strength between 1970-1975. Second, the economic crisis caused by the Cambodian government's abuse of the rice and rubber crop prices was critical in inciting the rural agrarian population and driving them into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Third, political and military assistance from the DRV was instrumental in the Khmer Rouge's ability to achieve its strategic objectives of overthrowing the incumbent Prime Minister and installing their government (Lee, 2019).²⁹

In a nutshell, Lee looked at three dimensions which could be classified into both external and internal factors. There were, the role of the U.S. and South Vietnam, the Republic's

²⁹ CW5 Jesse W. Lee US Army, *Insurgency: The Cambodia Civil War, 1970-1975*. School of Advanced Military Studies US Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS 2019. P5.

mismanagement of the economy and its strategic position vis-a-vis its own peasantry, and that the DRV's political and military support to the Khmer Rouge also played a role to some extent, especially during the early stages of the insurgency before 1973 (Lee, 2019).³⁰

Lee's research approach utilized case study methodology. He provided a framework for evaluation and analysis in subsections which focused on individual contributing factors. These factors ranged from: the U.S. bombing campaign, cross-border ground operations by U.S. and South Vietnam, foreign assistance, the Cambodian economy, regime strategies, the CPK, the Khmer Republic, and the proliferation of the Khmer Rouge.

The writer concluded his findings by drawing the relationship of these variables to support or reject his hypotheses. He concluded that the first hypothesis was shown to be true -- that the cross-border incursion of the U.S. and South Vietnamese military and the U.S. bombing campaign in Cambodia contributed to the Khmer Rouge's rapid increase in troop strength in between 1970-1975. Numerous accounts supported that the incursion campaign into Cambodian territory did force the communists westward and at the same time affected the livelihood of the rural populace. These farmers played an essential role in the proliferation of the Khmer Rouge (Lee, 2019).³¹

The second hypothesis was also supported by the findings that the economic crisis which was caused by the Khmer Republic's abuse of the rice and rubber crop prices, was vital internal factor which incited the rural agrarian population, driving them into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. The writer argued that economic crisis before and during the Republic led to mass starvation and displacement of millions of citizens... while the Khmer Rouge centered their recruitment strategy on these peasants. Therefore, a strong economy would have eliminated the

³⁰ Ibid, P7-12.

³¹ Ibid, P34.

need for these farmers to look elsewhere for food to feed their families, and as a result, would have hurt the Khmer Rouge recruitment (Lee, 2019).³²

The third and final hypothesis was an external factor. The research looked at political and military assistance from the DRV as instrumental in the Khmer Rouge's ability to achieve its strategic objective of overthrowing the incumbent Prime Minister and installing a new government. The findings showed that this variable had an intermediate level of impact on the outcome of the Khmer Rouge victory. The writer argued that without the DRV force, military training, and economic backing, the Khmer Rouge would have had build-up their forces over a long period of time and wouldn't have matched Lon Nol's KNAF. Finally, the findings suggested that there were contributing factors such as Sihanouk's influence, which motivated the peasant population and allowed the Khmer Rouge to rapidly increase their numerical strength. However, it was unlikely that the impact from this was enough to gain the momentum needed for a successful insurgency (Lee, 2019).³³

In concluding the discussion of this forty-page monograph in the form of a case study, we have to admit to its limitations. Further research would be useful in determining: I. Prince Sihanouk's role in the civil war, not only at the national level, but also the international legitimacy he brought to his coalition government with the CPK; II. The Republic's internal power vacuum caused by the frequent rotation amongst the elites of transitional governments, as selected by Lon Nol. The research also ignored the U.S. role in diplomatic efforts, during the second-half of the Republic, in trying to obtain a peace settlement for the Cambodian civil war which was similar to the Peace Accords with North Vietnam. There seemed to be a certain pressure on Lon Nol to change his position toward the war, especially from international counterparts such as the U.S. Congress. At a later stage, the Republic offered an unconditional

³² Ibid, P34.

³³ Ibid, P35-37.

agreement to find a peace settlement with the communists brokered by Sino-U.S. joint effort. This Sino-U.S. reproachment was fueled by the Sino-Soviet split. This international level of analysis, the big picture, was also very important in determining the motive of the superpowers which played crucial roles in the Cambodian civil war, which was their proxy war.

3. How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975.

Ben Kiernan's "**How Pol Pot Came to Power**", was the result of five-years of research on tracing the origin of the Khmer Communists until the fall of Lon Nol's Khmer Republic Government in April 1975 (Kiernan, 2004).³⁴ He began by looking back in time to the colonial era which was the cause of an armed nationalist movement for independence from the French. In Kiernan's term, "The communist path to power took a nationalist route." The writer mentioned that the communists institutionalized their movement in 1951 through the creation of a specific communist party for Cambodia. The Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), sponsored by the Vietnamese communists, was perhaps the first of its kind to be institutionalized while Pol Pot was still in Paris (Kiernan, 2004).³⁵

Kiernan subdivided his observation record into eight chapters, beginning from the first-half of twentieth century Cambodia politics, when Cambodia was under French colonial rule until the Khmer Rouge Victory in 1975. In this sense, we can assume that his objective was in trying to shed light on the evolution of the origin of the communist movement along its journey to

³⁴ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press, 2004. Ben Kiernan is a Professor of History at Yale University and founding director of Yale's Cambodian Genocide Program and Genocide Studies Program (www.yale.edu/gsp).

³⁵ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press, 2004. Pxx.

victory. Only in the eighth chapter, the final chapter, does he focus extensively on the period between 1970-1975; a chapter entitled, “Contending Communisms: The Second Civil War.”

In the final chapter, Kiernan gives close attention to the event happening in Cambodia. He interviewed a wide range of peasants, former communist cadres, Khmer Republic’s civil servants, and also a number of refugees, gaining useful first-hand accounts. He mentioned that Pol Pot sensed the coup beforehand, and in effect, counting on the fact that a deposed Sihanouk would be won over to the CPK side in spite of its hostility to him. In light of the continuing support for the prince on the part of Hanoi, as well as Beijing, Pol Pot knew to keep that door open (Kiernan, 2004).³⁶ The coup did happen in March 18, 1970 and Sihanouk claimed that the CIA masterminded it. However, in Henry Kissinger’s words “it took us completely by surprise” (Kiernan, 2004).³⁷

There was in fact no evidence of CIA involvement, but Kiernan provided an intimate account from Samuel R. Thornton who worked as an intelligence specialist at the U.S. Navy command in Saigon from May 1968 to May 1969. Thornton told a journalist, Seymour Hersh, that he had gained intimate knowledge of the coup as early as late 1968. He went on to mention that Lon Nol had approached U.S. military intelligence for a commitment to provide him with military, political and economic support after his proposed overthrow of Sihanouk. It was claimed that the U.S. even proposed to go further by infiltrating special forces-trained Khmer Kampuchea Krom (KKK) into Kampuchea armed forces and also to insert a U.S.-trained assassination team disguised as Viet Cong insurgents into Phnom Penh to kill Prince Sihanouk “as a pretext for revolution”. It is further claimed that proposal code-named “Sunshine Park”, was approved by

³⁶ Ibid, P297.

³⁷ Ibid, P300.

the highest level of government in Washington in February or March 1969. Prince Sirik Matak agreed but Lon Nol rejected (Kiernan, 2004).³⁸

The writer began his research at length following the coup. Described by Nixon as a necessary extension of the Vietnam War, Kiernan termed the joint operation between U.S.-South Vietnam full scale attack on April 29th into Cambodian territory as “an invasion” (Kiernan, 2004).³⁹ During that timeline, according to the writer, Cambodia entered the Vietnam War. The aftermath of the full-scale attack and series of later attacks, including B-52 bombings, produced positive reactions for the communists. Besides destroying a number of CPK regular units, the U.S bombings produced widespread loss of civilian life and property, driving a large number of new recruits into the revolutionary ranks; recruits who were often motivated as much by a desire for revenge as by positive political or social goals (Kiernan, 2004).⁴⁰

What Pol Pot had sensed about the coup and winning the monarchy into his hands was realised. Early in 1973, just three years after entering a coalition with the Prince, the CPK obtained enough power not only to fight the war with the Republic, but was able to intensify the campaign to drive the Vietnamese communists out of the country (Kiernan, 2004).⁴¹ According to the writer, the Vietnamese Communists had been insisting on a joint-fight with the CPK for the war in Cambodia, but the CPK leaders rejected this. By mid-1973 the number of Vietnamese communists deployed in Kampuchea had fallen to three thousand troops and two thousand political cadres. (A further twenty-seven thousand Vietnamese, stationed along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the North-East, did not take part in the war against Lon Nol.) The various

³⁸ Ibid, P301.

³⁹ Ibid, P304.

⁴⁰ Ibid, P390.

⁴¹ Ibid, P357.

Khmer Communist forces, on the other hand, then numbered more than two hundred thousand, including 175 battalions (Kiernan, 2004).⁴²

Kiernan provided substantial accounts regarding CPK competing factions among its members in various regions. Within the communists, the factions were: the Royalist group or the so-called Khmer Rumdos who supported Sihanouk, Hanoi-trained cadres or the so-called Khmer Vietminh who came from Vietnam and underwent trainings there, and the Paris Group or Pol Pot group who called themselves Khmer Deum and the one with power in hands. The Royalists and the Hanoi-trained cadres were later purged without any public intra-Party debate or discussion. Most of these executions were not even known to second-rank Party members (Kiernan, 2004).⁴³

The CPK group began to do trial of its revolutionary ideology in their liberated zones as early as May 1973, since before the U.S. withdrawal in mid-August. They established the “cooperatives” and abolished private ownership in war time; there were different revolutionary intensities among liberated zones. According to the writer, mutual-aid teams which were “loose cooperatives” were introduced since 1972. Land remained privately own and families among the team could divide up their productions. In 1973 the CPK decided to move on to the so-called “higher-stage cooperative” when everything was collectivized and communal eating was instituted. Rice was stored in collective warehouses (Kiernan, 2004).⁴⁴

In Kiernan’s account in his research book “How Pol Pot Came to Power”, he looked at a number of dimensions which assumed to have an understanding of the total victory of the CPK. He observed the invasion of U.S-South Vietnam on Cambodia right after the coup and later, the precipitated B-52 bombing campaigns. The campaigns assumed to delay the CPK to power

⁴² Ibid, P358.

⁴³ Ibid, P392.

⁴⁴ Ibid, P369-370.

but it produced side-effects through the number of casualties...civilians, animals, and private properties. These side-effects, after the coup, produced at least two positive results for the CPK—winning over Prince Sihanouk and his royalists...together with the victims of the bombardments who were neither royalists nor communists. The research also raised the weakness of the Republic and its U.S. ally in well managing the government and the U.S. technical assistance, which allowed corruption to prosper and hurt the war effort with the communists. The major part of Kiernan's book looks in depth at the communist evolution and its ultimate objective, the total revolution, rather than to capture one short period of the Khmer Republic. He looked in detail at the communist cells while it was still an independence movement and went up-stream to substantially observe the top leaders of the CPK, especially the Paris Group. He did a number of primary surveys from various groups of people who had lived and survived the purge after the Khmer Rouge era.

In his conclusion, he drew the line that the French domination and intransigence in the 1940s and 1950s had provoked the development of the Khmer communist movement from a nationalist one. The American intervention and bombardment contributed significantly to the movement's extremist metamorphosis in the 1970s. Furthermore, he concluded that if the CPK had accepted the cease fire, which they believed to counter their revolutionary objectives and would lead to their collapse, there would have been a left-wing-dominated coalition government. (This did happen in Laos in 1973-1975). (Kiernan, 2004).⁴⁵

As the purpose of literature review is to identify the research gaps from various authors and writers so that it leads to another significant research study. The result from this literature review, the significant gaps which are worth further observed perhaps: First and foremost, the complexity of an uneasy relations within the coalition government between Prince Sihanouk

⁴⁵ Ibid, P392.

and the Khmer Rouge leaders, brokered under the North Vietnamese and mainly the Chinese, was not studied. The assumption was that if this is clearly understood between the two, Prince Sihanouk's role as head of coalition government would not have been relegated at the most important final stage which determined the fate of Phnom Penh Government as well as its innocent populace. And finally, CPK might not have been able to implement its total revolution and millions of lives might have been spared. Moreover, civil war in Cambodia was a proxy war, so the role of superpowers like the U.S., USSR, and regional power such as China and its regional standpoint toward Cambodia in specific, would need to be assessed internationally from the perspective of a Cold War lens.

Chapter III.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The research is designed in an exploratory characteristic by developing three hypotheses and a central question with the aim to better understand the problem. The central question of the study is characterized by cause-and-effect relationship, which means to answer the question, the study needs to dedicate to find ways to validate or invalidate hypotheses which were already predefined.

The first hypothesis unleashed the assumption that the communist movements became uncontrollable resulted from the U.S. bombardment intensified after the coup, and it changes the scope of the war in VN to become a regional war. Numerous evidences and statistics on the U.S. bombardment records and the communist movements will be analyzed during the process. The second hypothesis set out to find the roles, in different levels, contributed by Prince Sihanouk to his newly created coalition government with the Khmer Rouge. To study the above two hypotheses, the research looks far beyond the boundary of Cambodia and Vietnam to the dynamics of U.S. involvement and its intention toward the so-called second Indo-China war.

The third hypothesis tries to capture internal factors within the Khmer Republic governance. The governance which is far from good when it comes to corruption, economic stability, and tactical warfare with the communist front...etc.,

At the end stage of the study, the project report aims to draw the line, at best as possible, whether or not the relationship is causal, to verify the central question.

2. Data Collection

The study is based on secondary desk research. Resources have been collected from the libraries, electronic reports, journal articles, books' chapters, and related books. Declassified intelligence report during the war and scholarly research on Cambodian history have been reviewed as basis of analysis. Furthermore, records from key figure's interview and supplementary sources, from newspapers, have been collected from reliable media sources such as BBC, CNN, the nytimes.com, history.state.gov and the like.

3. Data Analysis

The data is arranged into level of analysis approach by looking from the global level, the big picture, down to the state, and the individual level (Stephen, Rosie, and Christian).⁴⁶ Therefore, the analysis is begun from a top-down level, likewise, theoretical framework in each level is also employed following this approach accordingly.

The research employs two forms of textual analysis, discourse analysis and content analysis (Sandra and Oliver, 2012).⁴⁷ Qualitative analysis on those data and records collected above contain different categories of information and as a result infer diverse meanings for different context, which concerned with (its source, message, channel, intended audience, connection to other texts and events), as well as the broader relations of power and authority which shape that context (Sandra and Oliver, 2012).⁴⁸ That therefore to validate those different textual data

⁴⁶ Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Waters, and Christian Scheinpflug, LibreTexts, Social Sciences. [https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/International_Sociology/Book%3A_International_Relations_\(McGlinchey\)/03%3A_One_World_Many_Actors/3.01%3A_Levels_of_Analysis#:~:text=IR%20generally%20distinguishes%20between%20three,we%20are%20most%20interested%20in.](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/International_Sociology/Book%3A_International_Relations_(McGlinchey)/03%3A_One_World_Many_Actors/3.01%3A_Levels_of_Analysis#:~:text=IR%20generally%20distinguishes%20between%20three,we%20are%20most%20interested%20in.)

⁴⁷ Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills. Oxford University Press, 2012. P309.

⁴⁸ Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills. Oxford University Press, 2012. P 309-310.

sheets and capture valid understandings for the basis of analysis, this research study will need to look at a multifaceted angles, for examples: motives and purposes in textual context, basis of beliefs, values, or ideology that give meaning to their actions; and that to understand political behavior, we must know about the meaning that leaders attach to what they are doing (Sandra and Oliver, 2012).⁴⁹

The content begins with the discussion of the international system which is characterized by Cold-War Competition, between the U.S. and the USSR, in a new world order using bi-polar theory of balancing power to explain the phenomenon. Ideological conflict between, capitalism against communism was on the rise and it spilled to other parts of the world. Regional level in Indochina, The Vietnam War was regionalized by the proxy support from superpowers and Cambodia was also a victim of this proxy war. Domino Theory will be explained to capture the motive of support from superpowers.

⁴⁹ Ibid, P 310-311.

Chapter IV.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

1. The Cold War's bipolar-world order and the balance-of-power theory.

The international system which developed after WWII had two major power poles, one centered around the U.S. and the other around the USSR. The U.S. took the lead of the Western Bloc, including among others: Canada, The Western European states, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. The USSR led the Eastern Bloc, including among others, communist states in: Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia.

The Cold War resulted from World War II during which the U.S. and the USSR were allies, but gradually slid into hostility after the war ended. There are five explanations which describe this ascending into hostility between the two great powers, the U.S. and the USSR: (1) the historical record, (2) national objectives, (3) opposed ideologies, (4) the personalities of the decision makers of the postwar world, and (5) the differing perceptions of the international environment (S. Papp, 2002).⁵⁰

Historically, the relations between Washington and Moscow before World War II were coolly formal at best and openly hostile at worst. In the Kremlin, memories of the U.S. intervention in Russia in 1918 bore out the Marxist-Leninist prediction that capitalist states would seek to destroy Bolshevism. This, until the United State recognized Bolshevik regime in 1933. In the early 1920s and the 1930s Washington had had kind of red scare regarding international communism. Soviet unwillingness to repay czarist debts to external creditors added an extra

⁵⁰ Daniel S. Papp, Contemporary International Relations: frameworks for understanding. United States: Addison Wesley Longman Inc. 2002. P172-173.

dimension to U.S. – Soviet animosity. This record of mistrust continued until World War II drove the two countries into an alliance of convenience. However, the record of U.S.—Soviet cooperation during World War II was scarred by mistrust. Consequently, at war’s end, mutual mistrust and suspicion remained (S. Papp, 2002).⁵¹

National objectives, or rather opposed perceptions of national objectives, played an integral role in undermining the U.S.—Soviet relations. Regardless of whether or not the USSR government established in its own image possessed an expansionistic character, the U.S. policy makers interpreted Soviet action as offensive in its character, especially toward Eastern Europe. The USSR on the other hand, viewed the argument of free trade and free election from the U.S., as an expansionistic political-economic system, undermining Marxism-Leninism ideology (S. Papp, 2002).⁵²

The opposed ideologies, in between the Soviet style of Marxism and Leninism versus the American style democracy viewed each other differently. The U.S. viewed the USSR as expansionistic, atheistic, militaristic form of social organization which presented a threat to the West. Conversely, to the USSR’s communist ideology viewed Western democracy as a threat to its survival. Advocates of the view that different ideological outlooks caused the Cold War therefore maintained that Soviet communism defined the U.S. as enemy, and the U.S. had no choice but to respond (S. Papp, 2002).⁵³

In addition, the personalities of the leaders also contributed to the slide into Cold War hostility. Stalin and Franklin Roosevelt who cooperated with each other during World War II viewed each other with cautious and mutual respect. While Franklin was no longer around to help his successor Harry Truman to shape the post war world with the Soviet counterpart after the war

⁵¹ Ibid, P 172.

⁵² Ibid, P 172.

⁵³ Ibid, P 172.

ended, the new U.S president personality versus Stalin style was far from mutual understanding (S. Papp, 2002).⁵⁴

After WWII, Bi-polar international system guided the two great powers to gradually confront each other and perceptually viewing each other as enemy. Both sides chose selectively from among historical record, real and imagined objectives, ideological perceptions, and interpreted following their personal biases to arrive at an image of one another as malevolent and evil. Partly, both sides had ample evidence to prove the worst intentions of the other and the development of the international system proved the Cold War was inevitable (S. Papp, 2002).⁵⁵

The U.S. and USSR competed during the Cold War over spheres of influence to promote their national interests which can be translated into power and principles. This power accumulated overtime by means ranging from military tactics and ideological warfare that the U.S. and the Soviet Union tried to expand their values and related ideologies of liberalism and communism. The U.S. also supported newly independent authoritarian states of the Third World as long as they were anti-communists and Vietnam was an example. After the Vietnamese had won their war for independence in 1954, the U.S. supported South Vietnam government of Ngo Dinh Diem characterized by highly authoritarian style. That foreign policy approach was called the “ABC” Approach which translates into “Anything but Communist” and meant that the U.S. supports any state and political opposition that is anti-communist (Jentleson, 2000).⁵⁶

The two great powers viewing each other as adversary, engaged in a zero-sum game. Game theory explains that this engagement can be explained as the loss of one party is equal to the gain by another party. To explain the motive of both great powers, we can apply the Balance

⁵⁴ Ibid, P 172.

⁵⁵ Ibid, P 173.

⁵⁶ Bruce W. Jentleson, American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of choice in the 21st Century. United State: Norton & Company Inc.,2000. P113-114.

of Power Theory. This theory of Realism explains that the world system is not static, there is a time that the dominant players possess an approximately equal distribution of power, as when a balance of power exists between the United States and the Soviet Union (Viotti & Kauppi, 1999).⁵⁷ According to the realist approach which focuses on the state and the concern with national security issues, the concept of balance of power has played a major role in stabilizing the international system during the Cold War. Theorists, scholars and statemen, were having the view that the absence of a balance of power in the system could lead to war. As one dominant player or a dominated group in the system could potentially take the opportunity to seize power and become a hegemon. Therefore, in a bipolar world, balance of power is of utmost important which can be an instrument to keep one side from having enough power to dominate others (Sens, 2020).⁵⁸

According to Allenssens, from a realist perspective, there are two approaches which can be used to maintain the balance of power. The first approach, is to increase one's own power relative to others as pursued by the U.S. and the USSR throughout the Cold War. Relative power can be translated into military might which included during the Cold War the number of nuclear warheads and conventional weapons and economic and technological advancements. The second approach is to combine power with other players in the system which can be states and or intergovernmental organizations—as has been established by the U.S. that created the collective defense alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the USSR that created the Warsaw Pact (Sens, 2020).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond*. United States: Allyn & Bacon, 1999. P85.

⁵⁸ Allen Sens, two approaches to maintain the balance of power. The University of British Columbia. Access date June 1, 2020. [Balance of Power - YouTube](#)

⁵⁹ Ibid.

2. The Vietnam War

May 1954 was marked by the humiliating defeat of the French colonial power at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam. The defeat solidified the end of French rule in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (History.com, 2020).⁶⁰ The Geneva Accords in July 1954 split North and South Vietnam in between the 17th parallel as the dividing line—with a promise that there will be a democratic election within two years aiming to unify the whole Vietnam...but this never happened (History.com, 2021).⁶¹

The north-south split marked the continuing struggle of the Viet Minh under the support from its communist allies aimed to unify the country to become communist, while on the other side the U.S. began to substitute the French's role in fighting the war, a war in which the U.S. endeavored to prevent a unification of Vietnam under communist rule and contain the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, especially in the neighboring countries, Cambodia and Laos.

The U.S. began tactical support to the Vietnamese government in the South which was then led by a Catholic nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem. By December 1960, The National Liberation Front (NLF) or the Viet Cong (VC), the communists in the south was formed along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, established as a main supply route a year earlier (History.com, 2021).⁶² In the region of Southeast Asia, the U.S believed that there would be a chain reaction if South Vietnam Government fell to the communists—then Laos and Cambodia would also fall and finally the communists would engulf the whole region. The involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam War after the Geneva Conference was predicated by this belief in the “Domino Theory”. The U.S. policy makers believed that nations in general, and specifically newly independent nations in Southeast Asia, were potentially falling into communism like a perfectly aligned row of

⁶⁰ History.com Editors. Access date October 15, 2020. www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war.com.

⁶¹ History.com Editors. A&E Television Networks. Accessed date June 20, 2021. [Geneva Conference to resolve problems in Asia begins - HISTORY](#).

⁶² Ibid.

dominos (History.com, 2021).⁶³ This Cold War Theory in a bipolar world order directed the U.S foreign policy to view communist ideology as the biggest threat to American's core values. The war in Vietnam became a laboratory in which the U.S. could demonstrate American credibility to its global allies and adversaries alike—this was explicitly mentioned by President Johnson after the final decision to send American troops to Vietnam in 1965, quoted “Around the globe, from Berlin to Thailand, are people whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of American commitment and in the value of America's word” (Jentleson, 2000).⁶⁴

From the U.S side, no declaration of war had ever been passed for the military action in Vietnam. Both U.S. Presidents, Johnson and Nixon, justified their action on the basis of the August 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution, authorizing the U.S-President to take any measures he believed were necessary to retaliate and to promote the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia (History.state.gov, 2020).⁶⁵ By November 1964, the Soviet Politburo increased its support to North Vietnam, sending aircraft, artillery, ammunition, small arms, radar, air defense systems, food and medical suppliers. Meanwhile, People's Republic of China (PRC) sent several military engineering units to North Vietnam to assist in building critical defense infrastructure (History.state.gov, 2020).⁶⁶

The first U.S. combat troops arrived in Vietnam in March 1965 (History.state.gov, 2020)⁶⁷, which marked the direct intervention and the beginning of the U.S. hot war's timeline in

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: the dynamics of choice in the 21st century*. New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2000. P141.

⁶⁵ History.state.gov. Accessed date October 15, 2020. [Milestones: 1961–1968 - Office of the Historian \(state.gov\)](#)

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Vietnam. In June 1965, Diem's government characterized by authoritarian and corrupt bureaucracy was toppled by military coup backed by the U.S. General Nguyen Van Thieu of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Governmental Military (ARVN) became president of South Vietnam. By 1966 U.S. troops deployed and stationed in Vietnam rose to 400,000 and increased to 500,000 in 1967 which marked the highest level of commitment by the U.S. in the war (History.com, 2020).⁶⁸ Several ground operations combined with airfield attacks followed, including the bombing of Haiphong Harbor and North Vietnamese airfields in February 1967, and battles at Hue and Saigon from February-March 1968 to clear the Viet Cong guerillas from the city.

Fueled by the Tet Offensive in January 1968 by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Armies, a series of attacks by communists were carried out in more than 100 cities and outposts across South Vietnam, including Hue and Saigon, and the U.S. Embassy in Saigon was invaded (History.com, 2020).⁶⁹ The U.S. responded with the terrible massacre at Mai Lai on March 16, 1968. There were 500 Vietnamese civilians were murdered by the U.S. forces during U.S. search-and-destroy operations. This marked the tipping point of the U.S. foreign policy in the war. Later that year because of domestic backlash to the war, President Johnson announced that he will not run for reelection. Richard Nixon was the successor of Johnson and became the 37th President of the United States. President Nixon came to power with a promise to repositioning of America in light of the uncertainties of the war, thereby restoring "Law and

⁶⁸ History.com Editors. A& E Television Networks. Vietnam War Timeline. Accessed date October 4, 2020. <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-timeline>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Order” and to end the draft of the American young men who risked their lives on foreign soil (History.com, 2020).⁷⁰

3. Nixon, Kissinger and Vietnamization policy.

The war continued and resentment began to accumulate among the U.S. population, especially among university students. Men were dying each day without knowing what cause they were fighting for on foreign soil. This sentiment impacted on the general U.S. public and they began to question the national policy toward the war through riots up until the Kent State University incident, which left four students dead and nine injured on May 04, 1970. President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, believed that they had the answer to the problem from their very first day in office. Vietnamization Policy was designed to substitute the American presence which had begun five years earlier, launched by Nixon’s predecessors. The policy was developed by Nixon and Kissinger to bring peace with honor (History.com, 2020).⁷¹

Coming into office in January 1969, the Nixon administration had inherited the burden by which more than half a million American troops were dispatched into the war and some 31,000 American lives had been lost (History.com, 2020).⁷² On the one hand, the enemy forces, North Vietnamese troops and its Viet Cong guerrilla allies, had absorbed quite tremendous punishment but seemed to show no sign of giving up hope to reunite their motherland. And on the other hand, the U.S. side under the new administration, besides facing public pressure to

⁷⁰ History.com editors. Vietnamization. Accessed October 11,2020.
<https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnamization>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

remove its troops from the war immediately, needed to design an exit strategy that would keep the American value and pride intact.

The first thing for Nixon to do was to implement the gradual phased withdrawal, aiming to disengage the American troops from the war without sending messages to the enemy that could signify tactical weakness in its commitment to the U.S. supported government of South Vietnam. At the same time, they needed to show no sign of abandoning South Vietnam which would be contrary to American universal values in protecting free-world countries from the expansionistic behavior of the global communism. This policy was announced by the President to the American people in a nationally televised speech on November 3, 1969, as the “Vietnamization strategy” (History.com, 2020).⁷³ Vietnamization aimed to train and equip Vietnamese troops in the South to fight their own war for their own territory and protect their freedom and uphold democratic values. The strategy also featured programs to build up the government capability to exercise its own power of control by ways of expanding its political basis in rural areas and implement social reforms and economic developments initiatives (History.com, 2020).⁷⁴

To do that the new policy was put in place following a proposal from the Joint Chiefs to bomb North Vietnamese sanctuaries in a jungle covered area of neutral Cambodia—a proposal President Johnson had repeatedly rejected for fear of widening the war. Nixon signed off on it on March 18, 1970 (Ward & Burns, 2018).⁷⁵ The first operation labeled ‘Breakfast’ involved sixty B-52s bombers which dropped more than thirteen hundred tons of ordnance on a single sanctuary. The bombing would go on for fourteen months—an average of 100 sorties a month through the summer, several hundred a month after that—dropping well over 100,000 tons of

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *The Vietnam War: an intimate history*. New York: Knopf, 2018.

bombs on other jungle targets named ‘Lunch, Snack, Dinner, and Dessert’ (Ward & Burns, 2018).⁷⁶

The rationale behind this tactical strategy was hinted directly that the U.S intention was to compel the enemy to come to the negotiation table in Paris. The U.S. even signaled a *quid pro quo* to Moscow about their interest in beginning Strategic Arm Limitation Talks (SALT) in exchange for Moscow persuading Hanoi to soften their demands for a settlement (Ward & Burns, 2018).⁷⁷ This SALT-I aimed on limiting both, the United States and the Soviet Union, on Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defensive systems and strategic nuclear offensive systems.

Coming into office with an obsession against communism, Nixon had a reputation as a fierce anti-communist and this personal projection could be used to his advantage when it came to a deterring strategy with Hanoi. Bob Haldeman who was then Chief of Staff at the White House briefly explained Nixon’s perspective following the ‘Madman Theory’, “They’ll believe any threat of force Nixon makes because it’s Nixon. We’ll just slip the word to them (Communist in Hanoi) that ‘for God’s sake, we can’t restrain him when he’s angry and he has his hand on the nuclear button” (Ward & Burns, 2018).⁷⁸

According to Ward and Burns, by May 1969, the public learned about the illegal secret bombing in Cambodia. Richard Nixon needed to act fast to bring a swift end to the war that had destroyed his predecessor. Further than that, during the course of the heavy bombardments, Henry Kissinger had formulated a “two-tiered” approach to the talks in Paris: while Washington and Hanoi worked out the detail of a mutual withdrawal of “external forces”, — allied and North Vietnamese—from the South, Saigon and the NLF (the Viet Cong) could negotiate a settlement to the civil war between themselves. (If those negotiations failed, at least

⁷⁶ Ibid, 490.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 485.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 485.

the Americans could come home) (Ward & Burns, 2018).⁷⁹ The assumption would imply that, by that time, the American interest would no longer rest on the survival of South Vietnam anymore and it was against the predominant Domino Theory which directed the U.S policy to protect South Vietnam, at any cost so far. Besides, what was left of significance for the U.S was its global reputation which played a significant role for the United States' credibility and steadiness on accountability over American promises to the free-world countries.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 509.

Chapter V.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

1. The aftermath of a coup: The Khmer Republic

March 18, 1970 marked the turning point of Khmer politics from all dimensions and things were never the same again. The timeline was viewed by the public as the U.S-orchestrated Coup, which was characterized by the bloodless seizure of power from Prince Sihanouk while he was visiting Moscow. On Wednesday, 18th at 1:30 pm, the National Assembly, surrounded by military troops and tanks, unanimously voted behind closed doors to depose Prince Sihanouk as head of state (Ros, 2017).⁸⁰

Among intellectuals, teachers and young people, this coup resembled the popular emotional uprising of the French Revolution in 1789, that embraced the republican system and a new government that was to be characterized by an era of freedom, justice, democracy and prosperity. The new system was to be the successor to the so-called feudal monarchy that had oppressed the Khmer people for thousands of years (Ros, 2017).⁸¹ Later on, in the not-too-distant future, neither the successor, Lon Nol, nor the predecessor, the deposed prince, could sense what was yet to come, and like it or not, the Khmer people were to pay the bitter price at an unimaginable cost as a result of the application of this zero-sum game.

From the observers' perspective, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) may have pulled the strings (Ros, 2017).⁸² Strategically, under the new government in Phnom Penh, the U.S. was capable of exercising its attacks on the Viet Cong intensively from several fronts, they

⁸⁰ Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P 34.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

being sandwiched between Cambodia from the East and Vietnam from the South. The result of these attacks turned out negatively for the Republic and its American ally. The impact produced at least two unfavorable effects. On the one hand the Viet Cong who suffered from the attacks penetrated further down into Cambodian territory and on the other hand, more Cambodian civilians and their properties, including farm animals, were among the most heavily hit by these full-scale attacks. Unfortunately, these suffering peasants were to become potential enemy of their new government and no one imagined that they could offer such added value to the communists in the approaching war with the Republic. With the support of the mass of the peasants, the Communists were bound to win decisively.

The emergence of Lon Nol's Republican government in the middle of Vietnam War shifted Cambodia's national strategy from somewhat neutral foreign policy to pro-U.S. policy; a major shift in policy in fighting the war against the communists in its own backyard. The Coup could be perceived to offer tacit authorization, from the new Phnom Penh government, to extend the war zone from Vietnam into Cambodia territory. This marked, from the public perspective, the beginning of the regional scope of the war.

From the very first day after capturing power, Lon Nol who took the lead on rebuilding the government polity, personally obsessed with Angkorian pride and adhered to superstitions of various kinds. Chandler (1991) referred to this, "Lon Nol and Pol Pot shared a strong sense of their ancestor's pride of Angkorean era" (Kiernan, 2004).⁸³ Lon Nol attempted to construct the Cambodian nation-state and Buddhism was the force that bound all Cambodians. The ideology drew on the glorious pasts of the Khmer nation with the belief to reunite the Khmer people living in Thailand-Khmer Leu (upper Khmer) and South Vietnam, known as Khmer Krom (M.

⁸³ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press. 2004. Kiernan quoted Chandler's source.

Ayres, 2000).⁸⁴ The new government was viewed as having inherited fragile legacies from its previous government. Besides external factors which are the root cause of its demise, the government itself was to blame for its weaknesses—that could be traced back from several fronts. Weaknesses were ranging from the poor condition of the economy, military weakness in consolidation of power and inefficient bureaucracy which was contaminated with corruption (Ros, 2017).⁸⁵

Cambodia economy under prince Sihanouk was already in a poor condition in 1969. Lon Nol's government coming to power in 1970 added more pressure to the deterioration of the economy. In 1970, Cambodia had a \$15 million-dollar deficit, as exports accounted for \$39 million and imports cost \$54 million. Majority of export commodities were rice, rubber and agricultural products, to Asian countries (Nuon, 2005).⁸⁶ By the end of 1970 the consumer price index increased to 200% compared to the previous year and the unemployment rate rose from 20% to 40%. The total rice production dropped from 3.8 million tons the previous year to 2.7 million ton in 1970. The country that usually exported rice now started to import it back in 1971 (Nuon, 2005).⁸⁷ In the aftermath of the coup, the war against the communists began to take shape. Besides other fields, the war impacted directly to farmers and the agriculture sector as a whole. More and more people who were impacted by the war began to move away from their daily routine and abandoned their farm-lands, including fields which were already planted and not yet harvested.

⁸⁴ Davin M. Ayres, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Lon Nol and the Republic: The Declining state*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

⁸⁵ Chantrabot Ros, *The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P119-133.

⁸⁶ Sothimon Nuon, *U.S. War in Cambodia: Lon Nol and the Khmer Rouge 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh 2005. P79.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

In April 14, 1970, less than one month after the coup, Lon Nol demanded military aid from international friends, including the U.S. Among them were Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand which offered helping hands by providing different aid to the newly established Republic. The Canberra government was among those to respond immediately by providing A\$ 0.50 million in special aid in June 1970, beyond its previous aid which had been A\$ 0.60 million; and by September Australian government also offered another A\$2.00 million. This close ally of the United State also offered training facilities for Cambodian troops in Australia and provided military aid ranging from communication devices to machine guns to Lon Nol's Republic. Gunn (1991) mentioned that, the Economy under the Khmer Republic was an aid dependent economy (C. Gunn, 1991).⁸⁸ Agricultural crops, the mainstay of the economy, yielded a steep downturn from 1970 till 1974.

*Illustrated in table below: Agricultural Production in hundreds of thousands of metric tons, 1968—1974 (Chhair & Ung, 2013).*⁸⁹

Crop	Crop Year					
	1968/69	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74
Rice	2,503	3,814	2,732	2,138	953	762
Rubber	51	52	13	1	15	12
Corn	117	137	121	80	73	-
Palm sugar	-	34	23	-	-	-

⁸⁸ Lee C. Gunn, *Cambodia watching Down Under*. Bangkok, 1991. Cited by Sothimon Nuon. P.78.

⁸⁹ Sokty Chhair and Luyna Ung, "Economic History of Industrialization in Cambodia" (WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/134, Helsinki, 2013) accessed 15 December 2020.

www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/WP2013-134.pdf

By the date of the announcement of the Republic in October 9, 1970, the communist forces occupied half of Cambodia's territory. The Khmer Rouges rapidly built up their forces with the aim of eventually replacing their Vietnamese allies, and conducting their own war (Kamm, 1998).⁹⁰ They purposefully projected a more disciplined behavior to the public than government forces, e.g.—they were noted for leaving money on farms for the produce that they collected. On the other side, the republican soldiers in Phnom Penh seemed to enjoy lives in restaurants and bars. Remarkably, generals, who were able to put “phantom soldiers” into payroll list and pocket surplus money from American aid, were more busy buying new cars and building new villas than spending time thinking of military tactics in fighting the war (Kamm, 1998).⁹¹ By 1973, American aid in flux exceeded \$200 million a year for military and civilian purposes (Kamm, 1998).⁹² The overspending by high ranking officials was even attributed by some economists as the driving force which maintained economic stability inside the city center during that period. Prince Sirik Matak called this American help generous while the government used it for the benefit of their own individuals and a small group of political cronies centered around Lon Nol and his brother General Lon Non.

The exaggerated ghost soldiers resulted in American resentment. American diplomats demanded a head count of the army that the United States was subsidizing, and the number was reduced from the Cambodian claim of 200,000 troops to a maximum of 150,000. The actual number of soldiers fighting in the war, according to other researchers, was below 150,000 (Kamm, 1998).⁹³ If this is the case, it has direct link to the fall of the regime to the communist opponents who were approximately 200,000 strong in the final years of the war

13. ⁹⁰ Henry Kamm, *Cambodia: report from a stricken land*. New York: arcade publishing, 1998, 2001. P.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.122

⁹² Ibid, p. 128

⁹³ Ibid, P123

(Wilsoncenter.org, 2015).⁹⁴ There was even evidence of the fact that the Khmer Republic commanders were known to sell the U.S. military aid to the enemy at cheap price, several times less than the U.S. cost. Prince Sihanouk told in an interview that the Khmer Rouge would get new weapons as soon as the American aid arrived to the republican regime (Norodom & Burchett, 1973).⁹⁵

There was an imbalance between antagonist groups, the Khmer Rouge troops who had far more capacity and commitment than the so called “24-hour soldiers” of the Republic who were students, teachers, intellectuals and most of its new recruits were farmers who were overwhelmed by the ideals of freedom and liberty of the new Republic (Ros, 2017).⁹⁶ Lon Nol’s troop did not undergo a proper training at professional training grounds besides eight-day training at various centers after which they were sent to Kombol shooting range located 20 km west of the city where they learn to shoot real weapons (Nuon, 2005).⁹⁷ However, a more serious and better training program lasting two to three months was soon put in place. In addition, numerous units were sent to South Vietnam for additional training and to learn the use of equipment provided by the U.S. military (Ros, 2017).⁹⁸

At a later stage, According to Chandler’s account, the “ammunition costs” for the Republic were estimated in Washington at approximately \$1 million per day (Chandler, 1999).⁹⁹ In September 1973 Ambassador Swank ended his tour of duty and mentioned in his press

⁹⁴ April 02, 1974 Conversation with Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Delegation of the National United Front and the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia. 2015. Access date June 1, 2020. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/122045>

⁹⁵ Sihanouk Norodom and Wilfred Burchett. *May War with the CIA: Cambodia’s Fight for Survival*. Pantheon Books. January 1, 1973.

⁹⁶ Chantrabot Ros, *The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P96.

⁹⁷ Sothimon Nuon, *U.S. War in Cambodia: Lon Nol and the Khmer Rouge 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh 2005. P93.

⁹⁸ Chantrabot Ros, *The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P97.

⁹⁹ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkwood Books, 1999. P229.

conference, noting that the war was “losing more and more of its point and had less and less meaning for any of the parties concerned” (Chandler, 1999).¹⁰⁰

2. The Republic Governments in transition

*Remark on the source of the Khmer Republic’s Governments (Ros, 2017).¹⁰¹

1. 1969: Lon Nol “Rescue Government” composition

- **Lon Nol:** President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of National Defense
- **Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak:** First Vice President of the Council of Ministers in charge of Interior, Security, Education and Religious Affairs
- **Ung Hong Sath:** Second Vice President of the Council of Ministers
- **Op Kim Ang:** Third Vice President of the Council of Ministers in charge of Commerce and Finance

Before the Khmer Republic was formally established the Lon Nol led government was labelled the “Rescue Government”. This government was specifically proposed by Prince Norodom

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, P229.

¹⁰¹ Due to limited formal reliability on resources on the Republic government structure, this part is depended heavily on Dr. Ros Chantrabot’s book “The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975.” He who not only had lived through the Khmer Republic but also had worked among high-ranking officials at that specific period of time, as a drafting member of the constitution of the Republic and also member of the Special Coordinating Committee of National Defence led by Lon Non, younger brother of General Lon Nol later on becomes President of the Khmer Republic.

Sihanouk in August 14, 1969, in his capacity as head of state, to then General Lon Nol aiming to replace the previous so-called “Government of Last Resort”. That was the Penn Nouth government that was set up a year earlier mainly to tackle economic crisis that showed no sign of recovery (Ros, 2017).¹⁰²

2. May 3, 1971 – March 12, 1972: Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak Government

- Cheng Heng: Head of State
- Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak: Deputy President of Council of Ministers and Minister of National Defense
- In Tam: First Vice President of the Council of Ministers in charge of Interior
- Sok Change: Second Vice President of the Council of Ministers in charge of Finance

This government lasted for less than one year and it is still one of the longest of its kind in the Republic period. We can conclude that this is the first government under the Republic and the first battle ground between Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak groups versus In Tam groups and there were seen replacements of ministers. Finally, In Tam himself with the capacity of First Vice President of the Council of Ministers in charge of Interior was also replaced by a member of Sirik Matak’s team. Economy was the pretext behind the motivation for reshuffle and this time was the early year of the Republic when the impacts from the war started to be absorbed. There were commodity price increases and the main crop yields started to decline steeply.

¹⁰² Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017.P201.

3. March 20, 1972 – October 14, 1972: Son Ngoc Thanh Government

- Lon Nol: Head of State and the President
- Son Ngoc Thanh: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affair

This government lasted around six months. There we'd seen the step down of Cheng Heng who was the head of state (Ros, 2017).¹⁰³ And in response, Lon Nol who was the President dissolved the Constituent Assembly. Following the law, Sirik Matak's cabinet also resigned on March 12, 1972. On March 20, Lon Nol named Son Ngoc Thanh* Prime Minister and asked him to form the government. For Son Ngoc Thanh's Government Program, in the domestic policy, we can see the commitment to reorganization of the armed forces so that they would become more effective in order to be victorious. While foreign policy would remain unchanged, it always respected national sovereignty, neutrality, territorial integrity and reciprocity principles (Ros, 2017).¹⁰⁴

* Son Ngoc Thanh was born on December 7, 1908 in Travinh province, South Vietnam (then Cochinchina known as Kampuchea Krom). Thanh was an early graduate from Paris who came back to Phnom Penh and worked as a librarian at Buddhist Institute in 1933. In 1936, Thanh and his associates –Sim Var and Pach Chhoeun, founded the first Cambodian-language newspaper (Nagarvatta or Angkor Wat). The newspaper together with the Buddhist Institute later encouraged discussion about colonialism and nationalism.

In early 1942 after the Japanese established a military presence in Indochina, Thanh and his associates were among the early campaigners to press the French for the independence of Cambodia. Thanh became Prime Minister just two months before the Japanese Empire

¹⁰³ Ibid, P206.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, P208.

surrendered in WWII in August 1945. In September the same year the French came back and in October, they arrested the Prime Minister. They accused him of being a traitor and put him under house arrest in the French provincial city of Poitiers, where he completed his law degree.

In 1951 Son Ngoc Thanh was allowed by the French to return home and he was welcomed by a huge crowd of more than 100,000 people. Instead of joining the democratic party-dominated government, he published a newspaper called Khmer Krauk (Cambodia Awake). The French banned the publication of this paper a month later in February 1952.

In March 1952, Thanh left Phnom Penh to join the maquis in the forest of Siem Reap and declared a commitment to immediate independence. For the next twenty years, he moved between Cambodia and South Vietnam commanding his Khmer Serei (Free Cambodian) guerrillas.

Finally, in July 1970 he returned to Cambodian politics, soon after Prince Sihanouk was ousted by Lon Nol's Coup. He was appointed Prime minister in 1972 by Lon Nol, before the fall of the Khmer Republic. The former Prime Minister returned to Vietnam and spent the rest of his retirement there until he died on August 1977 (Chronology of Cambodian History, 2020).¹⁰⁵

4. October 17, 1972 – April 17, 1973: Hang Thun Hak Government

- Lon Nol: President
- Hang Thun Hak: Prime Minister

Hang Thun Hak's Government lasted around six months. In the new government program, we saw a special provision. I- Special Policy: declaring that the country is undergoing hardship

¹⁰⁵ Chronology of Cambodian History. Son Ngoc Thanh. Accessed date December 1, 2020. [Son Ngoc Thanh \(tripod.com\)](http://SonNgocThanh.tripod.com)

due to a war of aggression by North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese communist forces that violated the people's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and policy of neutrality and peace. This provision also claimed the violation of international laws and the 1954 Geneva Conventions. In the final paragraph, the provision stated that there was a need to focus all efforts in fighting the war to free the country and people in order to regain liberty and safety on the one hand, and on the other hand, to quickly implement the program to rebuild the nation. We can see in II-General policy, Point5, the government did not forget to strengthen the national identity, by contributing to spreading knowledge of Khmer-Mon culture which is the basis of Khmer culture, to the world (Ros, 2017).¹⁰⁶

5. May 15 – October 22, 1973: The first In Tam Government

- Lon Nol: President
- Cheng Heng, In Tam and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak: Vice President and member of the High Political Council who appointed the Prime Minister (Ros, 2017).¹⁰⁷
- In Tam: Prime Minister

This government lasted more or less five months and Lon Nol no longer addressed the government program in public. We saw a three-party government which resulted from a newly established-- High Political Council headed by Lon Nol, Cheng Heng, In Tam and Prince Sirik

¹⁰⁶ Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P213.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. P213. High Political Council appointed a new cabinet and hold all decision-making powers in the government.

Matak. The Council was in charge of all decision-making powers and appointed In Tam as Prime Minister. I-Domestic Policy was adjusted to reflect the following provisions:

- A. In addressing national Unity and concord issues, a new department was created to handle negotiation and peace issues with the aim to promote reconciliation and national concord and to restore peace in the country.
- B. Economic and financial issues: Mainly restructure the executive levels of Finance Ministry to effectively collect revenues and control expenses, and to obtain sufficient fiscal resources to solve economic problems generated by the state of war.
- C. Social Problems: arrange to have a just society, provide aid and assistance to refugees and support those victims fleeing from North Vietnamese and Vietcong violence.
- D. Youth Problem: design program to support those students and parents who migrated from provinces which affected by the war.
- E. Khmer Republic Defense Issues: reiterated the efforts to mobilize sufficient resources and equipped the troops to improve their gears and uniforms.

At this point in time the international situation evolved into a priority on breaking off the deadlock when, on January 27, 1973, the United States and North Vietnam signed an agreement in Paris to end the Vietnam War (Kamm, 2001).¹⁰⁸ Both undertook to end military action in Cambodia. American forces withdrew from South Vietnam, and the U.S. Air Force halted bombing in Cambodia. But this did not happen until June 30, 1973, when the American Congress ordered bombing to halt by August 15th (Kamm, 2001).¹⁰⁹ The Khmer Republic's hope to bring about peace to the country and people deteriorated while Nixon's intention of

¹⁰⁸ Henry Kamm, *Cambodia: report from a stricken land*. New York: arcade publishing, 1998, 2001. P14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

repatriating U.S. troops facilitated by a policy of Vietnamization, effective since 1969 came close to an end.

6. October 22, 1973 – December 7, 1973: The Second In Tam Government

- Lon Nol: President
- In Tam: Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Cults and General Mobilization
- Hang Thun Hak: First Deputy Prime Minister in charge of relations with Parliament and the Coordination of Negotiations and Peace, Culture and Social Welfare department
- Op Kim Ang: Second Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the Public Works Department and the Coordination of the Community Development; Labor; Social Welfare; Post, Telegraph and Telecommunications; and Tourism departments
- General Thappana Nginn: Third Vice Prime Minister in charge of National Defense and Coordination of the Information, Public Health, Veterans and Disabled Affairs departments

This second government of the post peace settlement (between the U.S. and North Vietnam communists) lasted less than two months. October 14, 1973, In Tam tendered his resignation but Lon Nol refused with the hope that there will be an uphill support from the U.N. General Assembly which was expected to vote in favor or against the seat for the Republic at the U.N. by December 5, 1973.

7. December 26, 1973 – June 16, 1974: The first Long Boret Government

- Lon Nol: President
- Long Boret: Prime Minister
- Op Kim Ang: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works
- General Thappana Nginn: Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, Veterans and Disable Affairs

December 13, 1973, Long Boret was summoned by Lon Nol from the UN headquarters in New York, following the acceptance of In Tam's second resignation proposal on December 7, 1973. The resignation happened just two days after tight-margin votes at the UN General Assembly with determining the legitimate seat of the Republic, or the communists headed by Prince Sihanouk. The Republic won the U.N. legitimate seat with results of 53 voted agree, 50 voted against and 21 abstaining.

Four main provisions were put in place by The First Long Boret Government.

- A. Policies and Defense: reiterate the previous peace terms and asked for immediate implementation by all parties of Article 20 of the Paris Peace Accord of Jan. 27, 1973 [which put an end to the U.S.-Vietnam War]. And the withdrawal of all foreign troops along with their weaponry and ammunitions so that the Khmer people can solve its own problems without foreign interference or outside pressure. The government also agreed to an immediate ceasefire among all parties involved and to meet with the Cambodians on the other side of the conflict, at a location to be agreed by all parties, in order to negotiate to end the hostilities and achieve national reconciliation. At the same time the government will work at better managing territories liberated from

enemy control, which will be include destroying enemy infrastructures and restoring public administration powers.

- B. Economic, Financial and Social Measures: inflation was the dominant theme which in turn caused price increases and reduce purchasing power. This was mainly because of budget deficit due to the need to support war efforts. The government would increase wages for all government employees both civilians and military; the government would also discharge 50,000 tons of rice which was in storage facilities or on the way to the Khmer Republic and made available so that every citizen can obtain in its sufficient quantity and at affordable price. An emergency program for the production of agriculture and animal husbandry in order to feed the basic needs of the population would also be considered. Besides, there were several factors which were under review aiming to restore the poorly-shaped economy, such as import policy, budget policy, taxation system reorganization, corruption policy, refugee assistance.
- C. Youth and Education: pay special attention to School material and book publishing policies.
- D. Foreign Policy: the government would follow the previous government's foreign policy direction. By committing to upholding independence, neutrality, peace and justice based on reciprocity regardless of ideology or government system. Finally, the government wished to stress full support to international law and the notion of regional cooperation.

8. June 16, 1974 – March 21, 1975: The second Long Boret Government

- Lon Nol: President

- Long Boret: Prime Minister
- Pan Sothi: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education
- General Thappana Nginn: Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense

Not much was resolved during The First Long Boret Government. Furthermore, strikes and demonstrations continued. There was an incident at a student demonstration demanding academic reform on June 4, 1973, when Education Minister Keo Sang Kim and his Deputy Thach Chea were taken hostage by students. They were shot by a lone gunman who had infiltrated the demonstration (The New York Time Archives, 2021).¹¹⁰ However the Phnom Penh Government denounced the students and held them accountable.

As a result of this tragedy, The Second Long Boret Government was formed following the resignations of four cabinet ministers and two undersecretaries (The New York Times Archives, 2021).¹¹¹

9. March 21, 1975 – April 12, 1975: The third Long Boret Government

- Lon Nol: President
- Long Boret: Prime Minister
- Hang Thun Hak: Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Political Affairs and Special Missions

¹¹⁰ The New York Times Archives. Cambodia Slaying Linked to Gunman. January 6, 2021. [CAMBODIA SLAYING LINKED TO GUNMAN - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/1975/01/06/cambodia-slaying-linked-to-gunman.html)

¹¹¹ Ibid.

- General Sak Sutsakhan: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense
- Pan Sothi: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Relations with Parliament

This is the last government of its kind during the Republic Regime which lasted less than one month and followed by the departure of Lon Nol on April 1, 1975.

Under the law number 139/75-PRK issued on March 21, 1975, there were two Articles stipulated into four groups as below

- Group I: General Mobilization Policy
- Group II: Defense and Justice
- Group III: Social Cultural and Youth Affairs
- Group IV: Finance, Planning, Production and Supplies

All the ministries were arranged into these four groups and Lieutenant-General Sak Sutsakhan held concurrently the positions of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense in addition to his position of Chief of staff of the Khmer National Arm Forces.

10. April 12, 1975 – April 17, 1975: The Supreme Committee

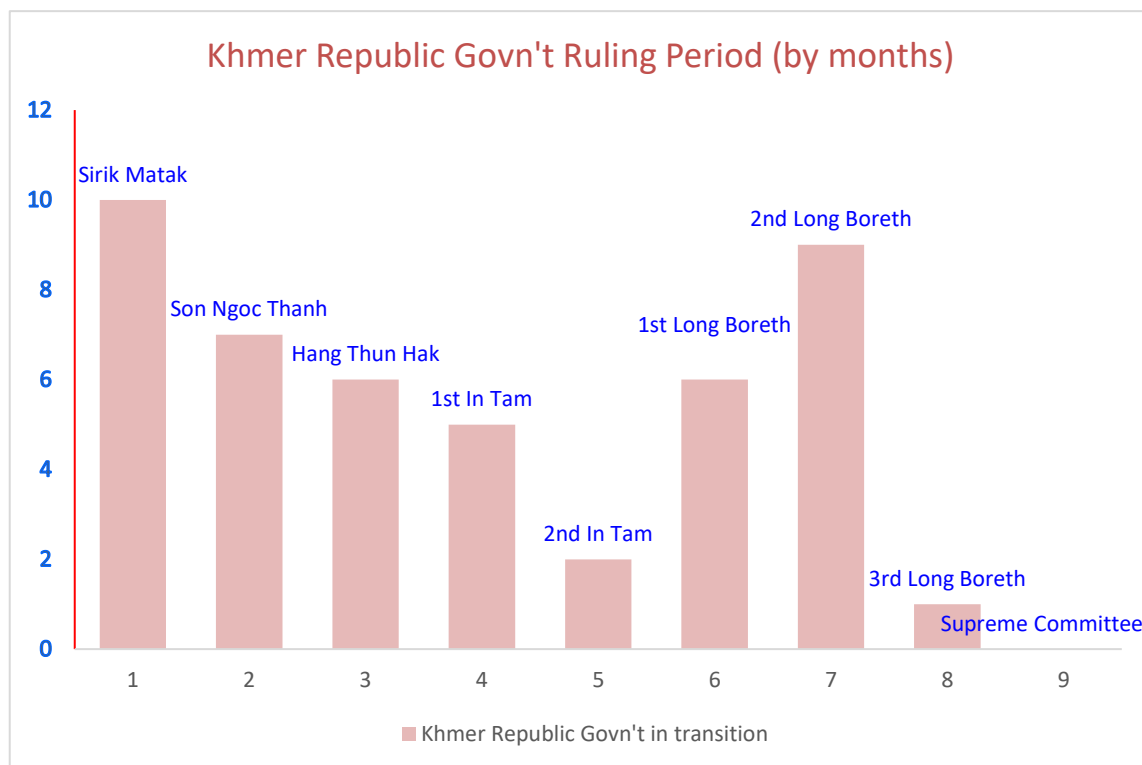
The Supreme Committee was created during a tense situation in the absence of Lon Nol and on the final day that the U.S. Embassy staffs and their families were evacuated from Phnom Penh by helicopters. This Committee was tasked to wait for the return of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and was meant to transfer power to him. The committee consisted of seven members:

- General Sak Sutsakhan: President

- Long Boret
- Hang Thun Hak
- Op Kim Ang
- General Thong Van Phan Moeung
- General Ear Chhong: Airforce chief of staff
- Admiral Vong Sarindy: Navy chief of staff

Note on the Khmer Republic Government: There are only supreme leaders (Head of states, President, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers) were listed in these governments in transition. Detail about each government's executives (state ministers, ministers, secretary of state) and parliamentarian members of the Republic can be found by referring to the reference

Figure 1: The Khmer Republic Government in transition (Ros, 2017).¹¹²



¹¹² Chantrabot Ros, "The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975.". Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P201-232.

The Khmer Republic Government in Transition			
No.	Period (year)	Republic's Governments	Ruling period (Month)
1	May 1971-Mar 1972	Sirik Matak Govn't	10
2	Mar-Oct, 1972	Son Ngoc Thanh Govn't	7
3	Oct 1972-Apr 1973	Hang Thun Hak Govn't	6
4	May-Oct, 1973	First In Tam Govn't	5
5	Oct-Dec, 1973	Second In Tam Govn't	2
6	Dec 1973-Jun 1974	First Long Boreth Gvon't	6
7	Jun 1974-Mar 1975	Second Long Boreth Govn't	9
8	Mar-Apr, 1975	Third Long Boreth Govn't	1
9	12-17, Apr 1975	The Supreme Committee	5 days

3. The republic and opponents, national and individual actors.

The dynamic of the war can be projected from different angles and we have to accept the fact that there were wars within war during the Khmer Republic Era. The big picture would be the Cold War which was being fought coldly between the United States and the USSR for more than four decades and during the course, this global war spawned into proxy wars around the globe. The Vietnam War was one among them. In 1963, Prince Sihanouk cut off American aid with a rationale that the wars in Vietnam and Laos will engulf Cambodia as American intensified involvement. As a result, in 1965, the prince broke-off diplomatic relations with the United States as American troops entered the war in Vietnam (Kamm, 2001).¹¹³

In between 1965-1970, before Lon Nol's coup, Prince Sihanouk was still the head of state and played a crucial role in determining Cambodian foreign policy. The policy directing Cambodia's international relations was somewhat neutral and gradually tilted to the communist

¹¹³ Henry Kamm, Cambodia: report from a stricken land. New York: arcade publishing, 1998, 2001. P12.

groups, especially the Vietcong who are fighting the war at their sanctuaries inside Cambodian territory. Perhaps because of the anticipation that the communists will win the war, Prince Sihanouk began to reluctantly tolerate the incursions, but urged the communists to limit their implantation. He also yielded to demands that international communist military aid to Vietnam be received in the port of Sihanoukville and transported across Cambodia to the sanctuaries (Kamm, 2001).¹¹⁴

In 1969, Prince Sihanouk resumed diplomatic relations with the United States. Concerned over the mounting Vietnamese Communist presence, he hoped to play the United State against the rising incursion of the sanctuaries which was already far beyond what he could control. And there, in the same year, we saw the beginning of secret bombing of the sanctuaries by the United States... an event that marked as the milestone of the discreet and informal spillover of the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk offered a ‘green light’ to the United States for this incursion, aiming to contain communist movement inside his country and to protect Cambodia’s neutrality and territorial integrity as regards the Vietnam War. Furthermore in light of maintenance of his popularity amongst the people, the Prince had the flexibility to occasionally change his strategic stance, depending on the evolution of the neighbor’s war. According to a Magazine interviewed by Debra Weiner after the fall of Khmer Rouge published May 01, 1987, Prince Sihanouk, who was then the head of the Coalition Government with the Khmer Rouge, justified his stance thus,

“I did not switch, never! One day you saw me against the Americans and pro-North Vietnam, and another day, against Vietnam and friendly to the U.S.A. But I did not switch. The other nations, they changed their policy. In the Seventies, I supported the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese because I believed they were defending a just cause, leading a just struggle

¹¹⁴ Ibid, P12.

for the freedom of Vietnam. And I fought the Americans because I could not accept their illegal intervention in the internal affairs of my country. We were independent and we became a satellite of the U.S.A. Now the Americans are very respectful vis-à-vis the independence of my country and the Vietnamese have become colonialists in Cambodia. So, I fought the U.S. when the Americans were the imperialists in Indochina. And now I fight Vietnam” (Weiner, 1987).¹¹⁵

March 23, 1970, Prince Sihanouk’s National United Front of Kampuchea (Renaksey Ruop Ruom Cheat Kampuchea, in English, NUFK) was broadcasted over Beijing Radio calling for general uprising against Lon Nol. This is just five days from the coup which deposed him as head of state, Prince Sihanouk then turned to the ‘Red Side’, or at worst, fall off his tight rope into the hands of the former enemy as he had named the Khmer Rouge. In realpolitik, at the end of the day, the enemy of your enemy is your friend, and a balance of power strategy began. According to Ben Kiernan, Sihanouk flew from Moscow and arrived Beijing on March 19. On 21 March, he met with Zhou Enlai who had already met with Pol Pot who was then not popular enough to mention his name to the Prince. Zhou managed to convince Prince Sihanouk about the so-called Pol Pot’s idea of “Offensive Position” toward the war with Lon Nol with the view that victory would be achieved only by constant force of arms and not by a political settlement. And only then would an opportunity for the leftist forces to take up arm and open their military offensive be created. Kiernan also mentioned that, on the same day, Pham Van Dong, the then Prime Minister of North Vietnam arrived there and also shared his views with the prince before he decided to launch the program of NUFK (Kiernan, 2004).¹¹⁶

As early as March 21, Hanoi Radio was broadcasting the recent coup in Cambodia as the act of an ‘American plot’ by subverting the independence and sovereignty of Cambodia and

¹¹⁵ Debra Weiner, Playboy Interview: Norodom Sihanouk. Published May 01, 1987. P14. Accessed date June 1, 2021. [Layout 1 \(sihanouk-archives-inachevees.org\)](http://sihanouk-archives-inachevees.org)

¹¹⁶ Ben Kiernan, How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975. Yale University Press, 2004. P298.

followed by a similar statement by Albania the next day; and North Korea followed suit on March 24. Beijing and Hanoi's governments announced full support to the program of the NUFK just days after the broadcast on March 23. What we understood by then was that the coup had changed the context of the war in Indochina in general and shifted the original playing field to the war in Cambodia in specific. The position of the new government in Cambodia became clearer in that it was on the opposite side against its former leader, Prince Sihanouk... who had already turned 'Red'. The coup had drawn Prince Sihanouk into the communist camp and it was probably one of the bitter mistakes made by Lon Nol and his American friends throughout the war in Cambodia. With the new play maker added to the field of which the communists held advantage, this changed the pattern of conflict and the alignment of powers. The alignment of Prince Sihanouk with the CPK is one of the three dynamics explaining the collapse of the Khmer Republic. The coalition plays a positive role in plunging the short-lived republic regime to its end in just around five years. By then we could categorize the opposing groups of countries and individuals as leading figures in policy formulation toward the war as follow:

The Communist Camps consisted of Khmer Rouge with direct supports from People Republic of China (PRC); Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Viet Cong (NLF), its communist ally in the south; Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and states from the Eastern bloc. Opposing groups drawn from '**the Free World Countries**' were the Khmer Republic Regime, with supports from Republic of Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore which were taking the lead from the United States and its Western allies.

The individual leading figures are those from the communist camps, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong, Huynh Tan Phat, Prince Sihanouk, Pol Pot. Whereas the leading figures from the free world camp are Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Nguyen Van Thieu, Lon Nol, Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak.

The USSR was not listed in this competing group, not because it did not support the Communists, but because it played an indirect role in the war in Cambodia. After Paris Peace Accord in early 1973, the Vietnamese communists, who had the USSR as the long-standing supporter, moved out of the Cambodian battle field. Besides, one important event worth noticing was the U.S. and the USSR rapprochement which marked the U.S.-Soviet Détente and led to the signing of a charter-like document (SALT I) by Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at their 1972 summit in May. Underlying this recognition was an important shift in nuclear deterrence doctrine (power). Coming out of Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 which came close to the brink of nuclear war, both sides came to realize the common interest in nuclear arm control (Jentleson, 2000).¹¹⁷ The logic was to be depicted that when it came to Nuclear War, destruction was assured to be mutual following the theory of “mutual assured destruction, MAD” which implies that no party is safe in using nuclear weapon to destroy the opponent as the second strike also possesses enough destroying capability. The rapprochement led to the breakthrough of the cold war stalemate throughout the 1970s. And it also played the role as the driving force to the achievement of Paris Peace Accords signed by the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong, in January 27, 1973 (History.com, 2021).¹¹⁸ Sooner rather than later, this Paris Peace Agreement also determined the fate of the newly established government in Phnom Penh.

¹¹⁷ Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: the dynamics of choice in the 21st century*. New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2000. P148.

¹¹⁸ History.com Editors. Paris Peace Accords signed. Access Date June 13 2021. [Paris Peace Accords signed - HISTORY](#)

Chapter VI.

PRINCE SIHANOUK'S EXILE GOVERNMENT

1. The Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea, RGNUK (French acronym GRUNK)

March 23rd 1970, just days after the coup and having had long nights of restless sleep, the deposed prince declared war with the new government in Phnom Penh, through a radio broadcast from Beijing. Quoting, “The liberty, democracy, prosperity, unity and national union which our people enjoyed not long ago have all been destroyed, reduced to nothing.” Prince Sihanouk proposed a National Union Government, a National Liberation Army, and a National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) (Chandler, 1999).¹¹⁹ Perhaps the motive behind this decision can be traced back from his previous days’ discussions with his potential allies and supporters who guaranteed longstanding supports. According to Chou Enlai’s term implied to the prince, “long and protracted, sometimes can be discouraged”, but what the prince needs is his will to move forward regardless of what was going to happen. The second most influential person to the prince was Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of North Vietnam, who was admired for his patriotic will in fighting for liberty of his people and nation. During the past years in the middle of the Vietnam War, when he was in power, Prince Sihanouk had turned a blind eye in the accommodation of the sanctuaries and supplied lines for the communist fighters (Kamm, 1998).¹²⁰ For this vague neutrality, the prince was criticized by the United States as leaning

¹¹⁹ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkwood Books, 1999. P200-201.

¹²⁰ Henry Kamm, *Cambodia: report from a stricken land*. New York: arcade publishing, 1998, 2001. P 12.

toward the left and perhaps this was the catalyst behind the so-called pro-US coup which cost him so dearly.

The March 23rd announcement from Beijing serving as a prelude to the coalition between the Royalist and the CPK, which was materialized and became the Royal Government of The National Union of Kampuchea (RGNUK) on May 5th 1970. This exile government had two locations, one in Beijing with Prince Sihanouk serving as head of state and Penn Nouth with a Prime Minister position. The other location was inside the Cambodia Jungle led by Khieu Samphan, Hou Yuon, and Hu Nim (Nuon, 2005).¹²¹ From this time forward, through strategic alliance, both the royalist and the communist worked together toward one end—to liberate Cambodia from common enemy the Khmer Republic characterized by pro-U.S. imperialist. According to David Chandler, Prince Father's voice was broadcasted from Beijing, and the CPK groups spread the voice via radios from one area to another...etc., the voice called on his children ...to engage in guerrilla warfare in the jungle against the enemies (Chandler, 1999).¹²²

The impact of this joint alliance was far more productive than either Sihanouk or the CPK had anticipated. From the beginning of the year until the end of 1970, the CPK army increased from 4,000 to 12,000 in a very short time (Kiernan, 1993).¹²³ Ablin (1990) mentioned that in 1971 the communist fighters had 18,000 in number that grew to 35,000 in 1972 and then reached 40,000 in 1973 (Ablin, 1990).¹²⁴ However, according to Kiernan's account of the bombardments (listed in table below), the CPK strength reached 200,000 in 1972 and increased

¹²¹ Sothimon, Nuon, *U.S War in Cambodia: Lon Nol and the Khmer Rouge 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh, 2005. P65.

¹²² David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999. P201.

¹²³ Ben Kiernan, *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia*, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies. New Haven, USA 1993, P34.

¹²⁴ David A. Ablin, *The Cambodian Agony*. Routledge, October 1990.

to 220,000 in 1973 (Kiernan, 1989).¹²⁵ This data seems to align with what had been discuss among CPK supreme leaders and the Chinese Premiers on the status of civil war in Cambodia on April 1974. In discussions with Mao and Zhou Enlai, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Sihanouk had said, “the CPK regular forces, local troops and people’s militia add up to about 200 thousand strong” (Wilsoncenter.org, 2015).¹²⁶

Of course, the number can vary from researchers to researchers but whatever, this statistic plays a crucial role in explaining the value that Prince Sihanouk’s coalition government brought to his former foe, the CPK. The CPK, who were in charge of the tactical arrangements in the interior, from propaganda to military arrangement, had directly taken control of the day-to-day management and had real power to steer the RGNUK’s direction (Chandler, 1999).¹²⁷

After the alliance was announced, another external factor that also had direct impact in encouraging large numbers to join the CPK was the carpet bombing. Even though the U.S. admitted that it had launched secret air attacks on the Vietnamese Communists inside Cambodian territory in 1969...that it was a necessary..., the carpet bombing was referring to the massive attacks using B-52 bombs between, April 1970 until mid-August 1973 during the period of the Khmer Republic. The U.S operations were named from ‘Breakfast to Supper’, produced positive response to the exile government, the RGNUK. Besides encouraging

¹²⁵ Ben Kiernan, (1989). "The American Bombardment of Kampuchea, 1969-1973," Vietnam Generation: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 3.P6. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol1/iss1/3>.

¹²⁶ Wilson Center (2015). “Conversation with Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Delegation of the National United Front and the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia, 2 April 1974”. Digital Archive: International History Declassified. Available at [122045.pdf \(wilsoncenter.org\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/122045.pdf)

¹²⁷ David P. Chandler, The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945. Chiang Mai, Silkwood Books, 1999. P206-207.

members of the royalist camp to join the crusade for liberation announced by Sihanouk, there were members who were neither royalists nor communists who also flooded to join the CPK as they were simply the victim of this B-52 carpet bombing. According to researchers, the U.S full-scale bombing produced two catastrophes which later brought an end to itself in fighting the war with communists in Vietnam, and Indochina in general.

First, it pushed the communists from adjacent Vietnam-Khmer border deep down and extended the fighting zone westward toward Cambodian territory bringing them into greater contact with Khmer Rouge, and increased the war dimension and its complexity even further.

Second, the U.S air bombs drove ordinary Cambodians into the arms of the Khmer Rouge (Owen & Kiernan, 2006).¹²⁸ These two catastrophes, the U.S. B-52 bombardment and the alignment of Prince Sihanouk with the CPK, were two out of three research hypotheses which form the foundation of this research proposal.

¹²⁸ Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, Bombs Over Cambodia. October 2006. Access date April 1, 2021. [walrus_cambodiabombing_oct06.pdf\(yale.edu\)](http://walrus.cambodiabombing_oct06.pdf(yale.edu)).

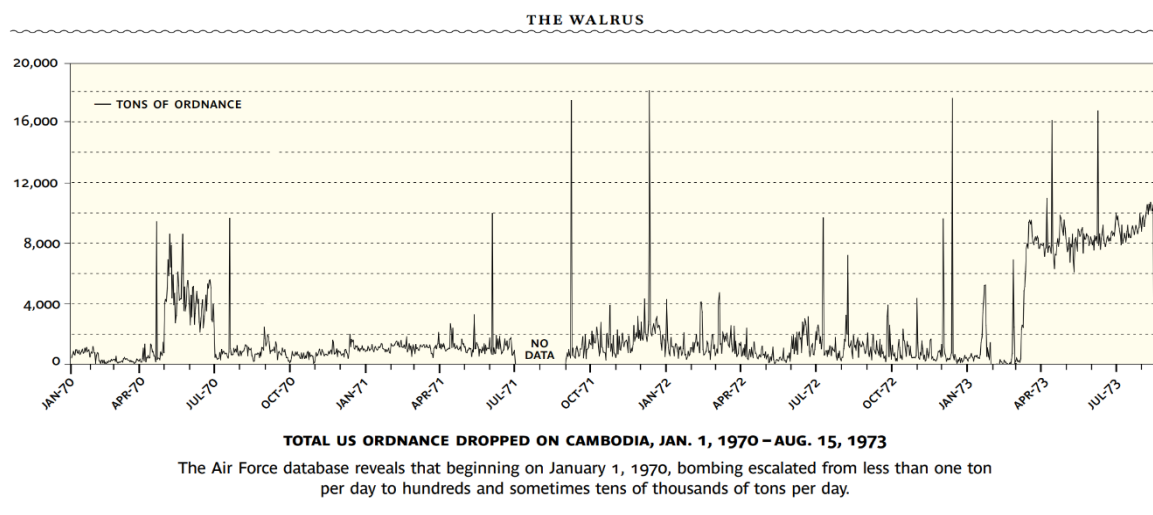
Figure 2: Relation of U.S. bombing and CPK armed forces growth 1969-1973 (Kiernan, 1989).¹²⁹

**Table 1. KAMPUCHEA
US Bombing AND CPK ARMED FORCES GROWTH, 1969-1973**

YEAR	BOMBING SORTIES	BOMBING TONNAGE	CPK ARMED STRENGTH
1969	3,600 ^a	108,000 ^b	1,000
1970	8,000 ^c	c.121,000	75,000
1971	61,000 ^d	in both years	150,000
1972	25,000 ^d	53,000	200,000
1973	c.130,000(?)	257,000	(June) c.220,000 ^g
	<u>c.227,000(?)</u>	<u>539,129</u>	

a) to March 1970 b) to May 1970 (B-52s only) c) July 1970 to Feb. 1971 d)US and Saigon sorties

Figure 3: Total U.S. ordnance dropped on Cambodia: Jan 1, 1970 – Aug 15, 1973 (Owen & Kiernan, 2006).¹³⁰



¹²⁹ Kiernan, Ben (1989) "The American Bombardment of Kampuchea, 1969-1973," *Vietnam Generation*: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 3. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol1/iss1/3.P.32>.

¹³⁰ Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan (2006), *History: Bombs Over Cambodia*. Accessed date 14 Jun 2021. Access at: walrus.cambodiabombing_oct06.pdf (yale.edu)

In the late 1972, besides all the supports given by their communist allies in the earlier year, ranging from tactical training in Hanoi to on field support in waging guerrilla war against the U.S., CPK, under the umbrella of the RGNUK, started gradually gaining control over their own war, independent of the North Vietnamese fighters. By this time there were only one quarter of North Vietnamese divisions fighting in the occupied border area in Kampong Cham. While three quarters of the fighting divisions had already withdrawn to Vietnam (Chandler, 1999).¹³¹ Even though the CPK had the intention to nationalize the war in Cambodia since soon after the coup, it was unable to do so until a tentative cease-fire agreement was reached October 1972 between Washington and Hanoi. By then Kissinger proclaimed “peace was at hand.” Paris Peace Accords were signed formally on January 27, 1973, between four parties, the United States, South Vietnam, Viet Cong, and North Vietnam, under the name “An Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam” (Paris Peace Talks and the Release of POWs, 2021).¹³²

Each party to the accords had their commitments to follow. The U.S. promised to withdraw American troops and advisors (totaling about 23,700) and dismantle all military bases within 60 days, while the North Vietnamese agreed to release all U.S. and other prisoners of war (POWs) and limit their movement within the 17th parallel. Both sides also agreed to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia and prohibition of bases in, and troops movements through, these countries. The final resolution of the agreement was the eventual reunification of Vietnam through peaceful means with a promise to establish an

¹³¹ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999. P226.

¹³² Paris Peace Talks and the Release of POWs. Article: Return with Honor. Access date January 1, 2021. [Paris Peace Talks and the Release of POWs](#) | [American Experience](#) | [Official Site](#) | [PBS](#)

international control commission made up of Canadians, Hungarians, Poles, and Indonesians, with 1,160 inspectors to supervise the agreement (History.com, 2021).¹³³

2. The U.S role and China's strategic support

During the Cold War the U.S. and the USSR had used their great power politics to leverage between one another in balancing power. 1972 was a détente year during which the U.S. reapproached both China and the USSR at the same time. The U.S used the Sino-Soviet split as the leverage in the strategy of great-power politics (Jentleson, 2000).¹³⁴

China and Soviet were long-standing supporters for the Vietnamese and Cambodian communists during the Vietnam war, including the Khmer Rouge (KR), the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and the Viet Cong (VC). Likewise, the U.S. supported South Vietnam government and Khmer Republic's Khmer National Arm Force (KNAF) to fight with the communists. The U.S had already made the commitment to end the lengthy and most expensive war in its history—the Vietnam War. President Nixon and his National Security Advisor, later Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger came to office in early 1969 with the realpolitik instrument in hand, which was to implement the Vietnamization Policy. The two most important men who profoundly shaped American foreign policy during the period promised to bring home the American troops and to announce peace with honor (History.com, 2021).¹³⁵ The fate of South Vietnam was intertwined with the new Phnom Penh Government since the beginning when they heavily relied on the same U.S. support. In the early 1970s the U.S.'s war in Vietnam was

¹³³ History.com Editors. Paris Peace Accords signed. 1973, January 27. A&E Television Networks. Accessed date June 17, 2021. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/paris-peace-accords-signed>,

¹³⁴ Bruce W. Jentleson, American Foreign Policy: the dynamics of choice in the 21st century. New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2000.P. 155.

¹³⁵ History.com Editors. Vietnamization. A&E Television Networks. Access date June 17, 2021. <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnamization>

already reaching the final stage, but what remained to be seen was the strategy to encourage the communists to soften their negotiation stance.

The Sino-Soviet border conflict which broke out in the early 1969 was the driving force behind Sino-American rapprochement and contributed to the combined approach to find a peaceful settlement for Cambodia, which was similar to those coined between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho in ending the Vietnam War. By the time the Paris Peace Accords was signed, Zhou Enlai and Kissinger already speculated ways forward to engage the team leader of the RGNUK Prince Sihanouk to this joint-effort. Both U.S and China came to realize the aligned interest in keeping southeast Asia a peaceful and neutral space rather than enter into a Soviet Asian security system, and, in this case, Cambodia should be the trial country.

From Zhou's side, since the coalition between the Khmer Rouge and Prince Sihanouk was established, China had invested large amounts, both political prestige and hard cash, in promoting Sihanouk's legitimacy as the head of Cambodia in the international arena. Ten million USD went to the RGNUK each year – half for Sihanouk's government in Beijing, and half smuggled down the Ho Chi Minh trail into the Cambodian interior for the Khmer Rouge to buy weapons (Connolly, 2010).¹³⁶ Furthermore, in February 1972 during the visit of Nixon and Kissinger to Beijing, Zhou had outlined his belief that in post-war Indochina, if power reverted to Prince Sihanouk, then the North Vietnamese will surely withdraw (Connolly, 2010).¹³⁷ In July 1973, Sihanouk made three demands which constituted, in his view, the only solution to the Cambodia problem:

- First, complete and final cessation of all military (air and other) interventions by the U.S.A., its satellites in Bangkok and Saigon and other hostile countries.

¹³⁶ Chris A. Connolly, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 2010. Kissinger, China, Congress, and the Lost Chance for Cambodia. P208.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

- Second, complete elimination of the traitorous, illegal, anti-national, anti-popular, fascist, and utterly corrupt “Khmer Republic.”
- Thirds, total, unconditional and irreversible withdrawal of all the U.S. and pro-U.S. military personnel and all non-Cambodian personnel serving U.S. imperialist-neo-colonialism from Khmer territory” (Wire Story – Text of Sihanouk Speech at Banquet Given by Chou En-Lai, 1973).¹³⁸

From Kissinger’s side, a direct negotiation with Sihanouk was not part of his plan. Direct negotiation with any of the Khmer Rouge leaders would cause a collapse of American morale credibility in front of the Khmer Republic and would generally raise the question of the U.S morale credibility for its stance against the strengthening of communism around the world. However, according to Kissinger himself, the window of opportunity seemed to shrink while the U.S Congress would cut-off all funds for military operations in Indochina. This would result in a waste of U.S.’s tactical arrangement in spending approximately one million dollars per day for the ammunition, just to buy time for negotiation and to extent the final breath of the Khmer Republic (Chandler, 1999).¹³⁹

The Sino-American approach to Cambodia’s peace settlement became a dilemma. While China’s Zhou Enlai had Prince Sihanouk and the CPK group in their sphere of influence, the U.S.’s Kissinger had Lon Nol government which depended heavily on American support. Things came out that Prince Sihanouk played the central role in Cambodia’s peace settlement at a later stage. Sihanouk, from the beginning, did not agree to negotiate with the so-called ‘puppet and traitorous’ Lon Nol regime, and instead demanded of the U.S. to stop giving military aid and air protection to the regime. On 31 May 1973, by a majority of 69 to 19, the

¹³⁸ “Wire story -- Text of Sihanouk Speech at Banquet Given by Chou En-Lai,” 9 July 1973.

¹³⁹ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999. P 229.

U.S. Senate had approved the amendment offered by Thomas Eagleton (D-Miss.), a measure far stricter than that which had been approved by the House of Representatives two weeks earlier. Senator Eagleton's measure proposed to cut-off all funds "heretofore" used to support military action "in, over or from the shores of Cambodia or Laos" (The Times, 1973).¹⁴⁰

Kissinger, as an experienced diplomat, seemed to have the correct sense of prediction on what was about to happen which determined the fall of his pro-U.S. Republic and finally undermined the American's interests in Southeast Asia. He then changed his position and committed to meet with Sihanouk during his planned visit to Beijing in early August (Connolly, 2010).¹⁴¹ Before the meeting took place, it had already ended. The U.S. State Department issued denials that Kissinger would be meeting with Sihanouk, the communist leader. This was-- in a response to a newspaper report explicitly linking Kissinger's planned visit to Beijing in August with a negotiated settlement in Phnom Penh (Connolly, 2010).¹⁴²

In early July Sihanouk spoke in Beijing, as defiant as ever, "Neither Moscow nor Peking nor Paris have the right to settle our fate in secret" (Connolly, 2010).¹⁴³ It was not without legitimacy as the leader of the coalition government with the CPK that, Prince Sihanouk rejected the proposed peace settlement for Cambodia Civil War which was brokered by Sino-U.S. joined effort. However, the U.S., under pressure from public sentiment, had the intention to withdraw American troops and this objective could only be materialized in the early 1973 through Paris Peace Accords with North Vietnam. The RGNUK saw this window of opportunity and had the sound judgement on political expediency. In July, at the CPK Central Committee meeting, Pol Pot also declared that there would be absolutely no negotiation and

¹⁴⁰ "U.S. Senate cuts off White House funds for continuation of bombing in Cambodia and Laos," The Times, 31 May 1973.

¹⁴¹ Chris A. Connolly, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 2010. Kissinger, China, Congress, and the Lost Chance for Cambodia. P221

¹⁴² Ibid, P222.

¹⁴³ Ibid, P223

this seemed to support Sihanouk's stance. Perhaps, a three-month trip in early 1973 to the liberated zone led to the decision. In David Chandler's description, Sihanouk, his wife, and Ieng Sary, slipped away from southern China to tour the liberated zones of Cambodia with a journey of three-thousand kilometers. They were accompanied by 150 Vietnamese who took care of them, including mobile medical support. Soviet Jeeps were the means for transportation down the Ho Chi Minh trail. At the Cambodia frontier they were met by Hu Nim and Son Sen. Two days later they were joined by Khieu Samphan and Saloth Sar, "Chief of the Army," and later joined by Hou Youn and Khieu Ponnary. After a fifteen-day trip, the prince's convoy reached Phnom Koulen north of Angkor. They celebrated the third-year anniversary of the foundation of The Front a few days later (Chandler, 1999).¹⁴⁴ The Prince's journey ended with film footages and photo albums of the liberated zones and Sihanouk came back with a song he composed (moderato) entitled "Thank You, Ho Chi Minh Trail." One of Sihanouk aides later described that the trip as being intended by the Vietnamese and Chinese to provide Sihanouk more legitimacy than the CPK was willing to bestow (Chandler, 1999).¹⁴⁵ By then the RGNUK international legitimacy was recognized by more than thirty countries.

¹⁴⁴ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999. P 227.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, P227.

Chapter VII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

1. The final stage: the all-out war in 1973-1975

By 1973, the U.S. Defense Department estimated that Lon Nol Government controlled 60 percent of Cambodia's population but only a quarter of its territory (Chandler, 1999).¹⁴⁶ By then the areas along the Mekong and the northwestern zone were still under the Khmer Republic. At this stage, Khmer Rouge controlled areas were mainly countryside and it was believed to have plans to capture the city by the end of 1973, after the end of U.S.'s military support. In 1973 until the withdrawal of the U.S. air support in mid-August, U.S. declassified reports on the U.S. Bomb Damage Assessments in Eastern Kampuchea, illustrate the effectiveness of the strikes against the communists with more than six thousand casualties, killed and wounded [illustrate in table below]. Based on these assessments of each operation, B-52 bombardment, was a devastating weapon against massed forces, and that CPK and NVA units suffered enormous casualties from it (Kiernan, 1989).¹⁴⁷ The B-52 carpet bombing reaching its highest level of 3,600 tons per day on April 2 and 3, and because of this final stage bombardment, it postponed the revolutionary victory for a crucial two years (Kiernan, 1989).¹⁴⁸

Besides killing communist insurgencies, the killing birds (B-52), as named by villagers, also had diverse effects on civilians. Casualty's numbers vary between different sources. From the historical division of the U.S. Department of Defense, more than 11,000 Khmers were killed

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, P229.

¹⁴⁷ Ben Kiernan, (1989), "The American Bombardment of Kampuchea, 1969-1973," Vietnam Generation: Vol. 1: No. 1 , Article 3. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol1/iss1/3>. P32.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, P32.

by U.S. bombings. From Ben Kiernan this seems a serious underestimation, perhaps because of the difficulty and fabrication involved in the monitoring of casualties in areas distant from the Vietnamese border. The evidence of survivors from many parts of Kampuchea suggests at least tens of thousands, probably in the range of 50,000 to 150,000 deaths, resulted from the U.S. bombing campaigns in Kampuchea from 1969 to 1973 (Kiernan, 1989).¹⁴⁹

The Paris Peace Accords between Hanoi and Washington in January 1973 signaled the end of direct American involvement in Vietnam and implied to the Khmer Republic that military support will soon be over and, like it or not, Phnom Penh government will have to accept the same fate as their ally in South Vietnam. Therefore, in the meantime, they need to learn to fight alone with the communists in the battle fields for the final stage and that was an uneasy lesson for the Republic. Soon after the success of operation Chenla I, the communists managed to close the way from Phnom Penh to Kampong Thom along national road number six and used as a main supply route. The Republic's Operation Chenla II was launched in August 1971, aiming to open the way and cut-off the supply route. By December, the operation suffered heavy defeat from communist attacks, more than three thousand of Lon Nol's best-trained soldiers were killed. Chenla II was believed to be the last major offensive mounted by the Khmer Republic (Chandler, 1999).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, P32

¹⁵⁰ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1999. P.213-214. Chenla II was launched by Lon Non in August 1971, aimed to open the road between Phnom Penh and Kampong Thom and cut off supplies to Vietnamese communists in Vietnam. In December it suffered a major defeat from the communist attacks, there were more than three thousand of the marshal's best-trained troops were killed and thousands more wounded.

Figure 4: U.S. Bomb damage assessments on Air Strikes against communists in Eastern Kampuchea, 1973.

Table 3.
Declassified US Bomb Damage Assessments:
Effective Air Strikes Against Communist Troops in Eastern Kumpuchea, 1973

DATE OF STRIKE	PLACE	ZONE	Killed	Wounded	CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, DAMAGE
3/23/73 4/26/73	Kampot Memut	SW E	30 dead or seriously wounded 100 VC and KI	150	"Very many houses of Cambodian people" were destroyed in the B-52 strike, including "the western half" of MI Satum village "completely destroyed."
4/29/73 4/30/73	Memut Kompong Cham	E E	70 VC 40 VC 60 KI	200 35 KI	
4/73 5/73	Takeo Neak	SW E	1000 2000		
6/13/73	Luong Phnom Penh	SW	c.1000		
7/22/73	Komchay Meas	E	37 NVA 30 KI		"No civilian damages...reported."
8/5/73 8/6/73	Rattanakiri Romeas Hek	NE E	105 KI 100	100 30	
8/7/73	Kompong Trach	E	425	500 "seriously"	"Dead civilians were buried in the vicinity...500 meters northeast of Phum Sos Dong."
8/8/73 10/8/73	Rattanakiri Romeas Hek	NE E	5 VC 113 KI	30 KI	"2000 Cambodian nationals crossed the Cambodia/Vietnam border for refuge" from the bombing.
8/12/73	Svay Rieng	E	25 NVA	over 30 Vietnamese and Khmers	
8/11/73 8/12/73	Takeo Tbaung Khmum	SW E	c.300 KI 50	killed or wounded 70 "seriously"	Those killed and wounded included "Cambodian civilians" (exact number
8/15/73	Andaung Pich	NE	40 NVA		
Totals:			c.5,400	c.1,300	Unknown

Sources: US CIA and Department of the Army, documents declassified 19 February and 7 April 1987.

Refugees from provinces who were impacted by the civil war had streamed into Phnom Penh and other provincial capitals. This event was marked by the U.S. dropping enormous amounts of ammunitions in a final effort to compel the communist to consider peaceful negotiation. The

CIA Chief Strategy Analyst in Saigon, Frank Snepp, had described the ensuing massive bombardment of Kampuchea as “the center-piece of the Administration cease-fire strategy” (Kiernan, 2004).¹⁵¹ These majority population influx cities had put a burden on food supply. Following the Congress stipulated end date in mid-August 1973, the U.S. stopped air support to fight the communists. Besides, basic supplies, such as: rice, petroleum, and ammunition that were provided to the Phnom Penh government through the Mekong River. The Mekong River served as the main route to feed the growing demand of Phnom Penh which was bloated with refugees. The U.S. in the 1974 fiscal year provided Cambodia with some \$400 million in military assistance, another \$180 million in food stuffs, mainly rice, and \$95 million in other forms of economic aid, much of it for refugee relief. A major question was whether or not the American Congress would vote favorably on maintaining the same level of aid going forward (Kirk, 1975).¹⁵²

The CPK combat tactics were to cut-off supply lines into the city center. They managed to purchase floating mines from China with their rubber income, and that was the end of the Mekong Convoys from South Vietnam in early 1975. From Chantrabot’s account, if the Republican’s army had been able to fight until the rainy season in the early June, the assaults from the CPK could have been stopped. While there was still a great deal of equipment and well-gearred troops under the Republic’s command, the armed forces had been left to themselves during the first three months of 1975. Coordination between government leaders and military had been nonexistent. The Republic’s political leaders had but one thought in

¹⁵¹ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press, 2004. P349.

¹⁵² Donald Kirk, *Cambodia 1974: Government on Trial*. University of California Press. Jan, 1975. P60.

mind: to negotiate, and in this, they were supported by the U.S. and by country members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Ros, 2017).¹⁵³

Unfortunately, in the midst of battle with only one-side taking an offensive stance, military action had become a possible alternative to diplomacy. According to Zartman's "Ripeness Theory" on conflict resolution, the success of mediation is tied to the perception and creation of a ripe moment in the conflict—either when the parties are locked in a mutual, hurting stalemate marked by a recent or impending catastrophe; ...or when the 'ups' and 'downs' start to shift their relative power positions. The Ripeness Moment can be realized only after both parties reaching a point of 'mutually hurting stalemate', a situation where they can no longer escalate their way to victory and the sunk costs plus the countering efforts of the other side make for a costly deadlock (Amer, 2007).¹⁵⁴ However, that was not anywhere near the situation experienced by the CPK at the final stage of their revolutionary war to liberate Phnom Penh.

By end of February 1975, the U.S. was forced to airlift food supplies to feed the locked-down city. Surrounded by the communists on all fronts, the city needed one thousand metric tons of rice per day to feed the total number of 3 million people from a total population of approximately 7 million. By February and March, the U.S. could only supply less than half the amount demanded. Commodity prices rose astronomically and at the end, rice was unavailable to most of the population. Children were among the hardest-hit and thousands of them were starved to deaths (Chandler, 1999).¹⁵⁵ In Elizabeth Becker's "When the War Was Over", she provided emotional account of the refugees that either chose to stay in forced collectivization under the communist liberated zones, or risked starving to death in the city following the

¹⁵³ Chantrabot Ros, *The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975*. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P 149.

¹⁵⁴ Ramses Amer, (2007), *the resolution of Cambodian Conflict: Assessing the Explanatory Value of Zartman's 'Ripeness Theory'*. P731.

¹⁵⁵ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. Chiang Mai, Silksworm Books, 1999. P233.

ineffective governance which was characterized by corruption. And that seemed a decisive point at the end.

2. The end of the Republic and the beginning of the Revolution

In less than two years into his second term, after a landslide victory, Republican President Richard Nixon was forced out of office by Watergate Scandal in August 1974. The Key players of American politics had then changed. So had Lon Nol's stance on unconditional negotiation with the RGNUK, to avoid humiliating defeat. The Khmer Republic's seat having barely survived a credential vote at the United Nations in November 1974 (Chandler, 1999).¹⁵⁶ A Cambodian diplomat made the desperation clear after the U.N. vote, saying: "we made it through another year". The question, as usual, was how many more years, for the Republic's seat at U.N., tipped the other way to the RGNUK (Kirk, 1975).¹⁵⁷

Perhaps American had pressed Lon Nol in order to change the complexity of the civil war and possible settlement. As Sihanouk already sent his message to the U.S. that Lon Nol was "a right-wing traitor". Sihanouk made it clear in a Swedish television interview on January 6, 1975; "The only way to resolve the political problem in Cambodia through reconciliation is by terminating the illegal government of Phnom Penh whose members could join the United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK). We could expand the government by including some right-wing representatives, except for the right-wing traitors" (Ros, 2017).¹⁵⁸

Before the fall of the Republic, some light was shed on the possibility of a peaceful solution (especially among the politicians in Phnom Penh as well as in Washington). Lon Nol agreed to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, P232.

¹⁵⁷ Donald Kirk, Cambodia 1974: Government on Trial. University of California Press. Jan, 1975. P 60.

¹⁵⁸ Chantrabot Ros, The Khmer Republic, 1970-1975. Phnom Penh: CamEd Business School, 2017. P

leave the country on April 1st with one million dollars from the U.S., following the demand of U.S. Senators and ASEAN countries (Ros, 2017).¹⁵⁹ The third Long Boret Government which had come into being on March 21st with Lon Nol as President was dissolved, substituted by The Supreme Committee on April 12th with General Sak Sutsakhan as President. The committee was set up in the wait for the return of Prince Sihanouk and it was meant to transfer powers to him.

On April 11, 1975, the day before the Supreme Committee was created, perhaps the U.S. and Prince Sihanouk came to agreement regarding his return to Cambodia. The White House sent him the following message: “The United State Government supports all projects and initiatives meeting Cambodian people’s aspirations; it is convinced that only Prince Sihanouk can obtain Cambodian people’s unanimous vote” (Ros, 2017).¹⁶⁰ According to Chantrabot, the U.S. recommended that Prince Sihanouk and his family return to Phnom Penh with support from the Chinese government that would handle transport; and in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian authorities would formally guarantee the Prince’s safety. The U.S. government would do everything in its power to transfer to Sihanouk and his supporters the country’s leadership based in Phnom Penh. Once the leadership transfer would be done, the U.S. would use all its influence to have the Prince’s political demands met. It was mentioned that all the detailed arrangements for the heroic welcome of Prince Sihanouk would be done by seven prominent individuals (with absence of Lon Nol) from the supreme committee and would only hold power until Prince Sihanouk’s return (Ros, 2017).¹⁶¹

An unfortunate event happened in Beijing the day after, on April 12. John Holdridge, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S Embassy in Beijing was informed by the Chinese government that

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, P149.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, P150.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, P150.

China was no longer in a position to accept the handover of power to Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia as previously considered. This happened following the request from Ieng Sary to relegate Prince Sihanouk to a minor role, and maybe offered much more collaboration between the CPK and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for their policy after victory (Ros, 2017).¹⁶² Kirk (1975), illustrated that: “the conflict between Sihanouk in Peking and the forces of Khieu Samphan in Cambodia actually was much deeper than such conciliatory words might have indicated” (Kirk, 1975).¹⁶³ By then the fate of Cambodia and its people neither depended on the distant superpower like the U.S. nor Prince Father in Beijing, but depended solely on the CPK’s armed comrades in maquis forest who risked their lives to fight for their just cause. The cause to liberate Cambodia to become an equal society, which was characterized by unrealistic utopian ideas coined by a tiny extremist group which Cambodians barely knew.

The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh began immediate evacuation of its staff the same day after the news from its Embassy in Beijing. President Gerald Ford declared the situation in Cambodia “a vast human tragedy” and that “it may soon be too late” to come to the aid of the government in Phnom Penh (Le Monde, 1975).¹⁶⁴ Sihanouk’s role as the Head of State of the RGNUK had by then been relegated to become insignificant during a short period at the final stage. It became a reality in January 1976, which was less than one year after the victory of the Khmer Rouge over the Republic, that CPK appointed Khieu Samphan to replace Sihanouk as Head of State of the Democratic Kampuchea (Kiernan, 1989).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid, P151.

¹⁶³ Donald Kirk, Cambodia 1974: Government on Trial. Asian Survey, 15, 53-60. 1975.

¹⁶⁴ Le Monde, April 12, 1975.

¹⁶⁵ Ben Kiernan, (1989), "The American Bombardment of Kampuchea, 1969-1973," Vietnam Generation: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 3. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol1/iss1/3>. P.25.

The policy the CPK implemented in the interior was already shifted toward revolutionary ideology and could be traced back to 1973 in the liberated zone. The revolutionary ideology which viewed feudalists, imperialists, capitalists, and also monarchists as elite groups which were the class enemies. In February 1974, according to a refugee who managed to flee the Northern Zone under Ke Pauk mentioned that: “in April of 1973, they stopped talking about Sihanouk...they said that he was “not the only man,” that he was “no good now,” and that “we do not need him any more” ...if you still use his name and support Sihanouk, then you will be sent away, and you will never return... (we were told to) “support Khieu Samphan and no others” (Kiernan, 1989).¹⁶⁶

Perhaps when close to the all-out victory, the top few leaders of the CPK such as Iang Sary, Khieu Samphan, and especially Pol Pot—who got access to international supporters, came into agreement that patrimonial government may not be the option to achieve the self-reliant type of government that they yearned for. This far-left extreme faction still remembered well enough during the Sangkum Era when Sihanouk held absolute power and accepted no opposing views...that was the reason they were forced to go to the forest. Furthermore, a former leader of the CPK (Tou Samouth or Achar Sok) was believed to be killed in the early 1960s by direct order from Sihanouk’s government. Therefore, monarchy type of government was not something new to the communists and government of this type was nothing different from the capitalist and the imperialist types which was characterized by oppression. Unlike the monarchy, the CPK leaders are all from the peasant class and they believed for the most part, if not all, in Marxist theory since the time they underwent academic education in Paris. Noticeably, Khieu Samphan’s 1959 doctoral dissertation, “Cambodia’s Economy and Industrial Development,” argued that the kind of work done in Cambodia’s cities by

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, P25.

bureaucrats, merchants and bankers was “unproductive” (Mackey, 2021).¹⁶⁷ He went on describing the exploitation cycle between the core and the periphery like a spider’s web. That the working class or the proletariat was representing prey which cannot escape the designed spider’s web created by the core—the bourgeoisie class who, in Marxist’s dependency theory, the capitalist class who own most of society’s wealth and means of production. Khieu Samphan was Cambodia’s nominal Head of State when the Khmer Rouge implemented social revolution. In Goodwin (2015), social revolution entails not only mass mobilization and regime change but also more or less rapid and fundamental social, economic, and/or cultural change during or soon after the struggle for state power—social revolution in this sense is also called “great” revolution (Goodwin, 2015).¹⁶⁸

Therefore, on the very first day of the victory we saw Khieu Samphan’s theory implemented by radically transforming the whole country’s society and economy into a complete agrarian economy. Mass mobilization of millions of city dwellers to go to the countryside to work in the fields and abolishing free market and means of exchange. This practice answered directly Samphan’s dissertation rationale—the greater the reduction in numbers of individuals concerned with general social organizations, the greater the numbers who can contribute to production and the faster the enrichment of the nation (Mackey, 2021).¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Robert Mackey, The Economist Behind the Khmer Rouge. Access date June 1, 2021. [The Economist Behind the Khmer Rouge.pdf \(cchrcambodia.org\)](https://cchrcambodia.org/The_Economist_Behind_the_Khmer_Rouge.pdf)

¹⁶⁸ Jeff Goodwin, Revolutions and Regime Change. Chapter Title: Revolutions and Revolution Movements. Publication date: July 2015.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Mackey, The Economist Behind the Khmer Rouge. Access date June 1, 2021. [The Economist Behind the Khmer Rouge.pdf \(cchrcambodia.org\)](https://cchrcambodia.org/The_Economist_Behind_the_Khmer_Rouge.pdf)

Chapter VIII.

CONCLUSION

It would be an exaggeration to claim comprehensive answers from this level of analysis in describing the role of the Khmer Republic in the accession of the Khmer Rouge to power. One would need to look at a multi-level perspective, ranging from global and regional to state and individual level, in order to have an in-depth understanding of the context before one can conclude. This is exactly how this research design has been structured, from the beginning, in its analytical framework to be able to capture the dynamics of the geopolitical context during the Khmer Republic Era.

From global and regional contexts, the Cold War spawned into the Vietnam War, directing Superpowers to confront each other to protect their own sphere of influence. Plus, the belief in the Domino Theory motivated the U.S. to enter the war in Vietnam and support the Khmer Republic to fight communists. Combined operations between U.S-South Vietnam and KNAF, on the one hand, may contain and delay the communist mobilization. But on the other hand, considering the side effects the massive bombardments by B-52 had on civilians, especially farmers, did tilt the power in favor of the CPK and as a result it provided fertile ground for influx of new recruits in a short period of time. A remarkable growth of troop's strength from less than ten thousand to more than two hundred thousand during the Republic Era did prove the direct relationship between the U.S operations and the CPK's strength growth...and it proved one of the hypotheses.

Through observation, the coup turned out to be the result of the secret alignment between the U.S.'s CIA and Khmer national elites headed by Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak. The aftermath of the event tilted the power from Prince Sihanouk's vague neutrality policy to

favor the U.S. war effort in VN. However, the event encouraged Prince Sihanouk to join alliance with his former foe, the Khmer Rouge. Viewed as a God-like persona monarch, Prince Sihanouk could claim his popularity through Beijing radio calling on his children to join the war against the imperialist and its Khmer Republic puppet. The Khmer Rouge enjoyed the value-added coalition through RGNUK at two levels; one of which was the national level the ability to attract a flood of recruits from the royalists and nationalist camps, and the victims who were having pure motive for revenge. Another point was the Prince's contribution in the international diplomatic efforts to bring about legitimacy to his hybrid government-in-exile. This proved to be effective at a later stage, through the multilateral mechanism from the UN's General Assembly to find a peace settlement among Cambodia civil war factions. Even though the value brought about by Prince Sihanouk as an individual was substantial and had multi-level benefits, it was somewhat less significance if we have to weight it one-on-one with the significance at state level, such as the U.S. carpet bombardment over Cambodia. Therefore, one can neither verify nor reject the hypothesis of this individual level in its contribution to the accession of the Khmer Rouge, but it is assumed to have played a part as catalyst in speeding up the positive reaction to the Khmer Rouge.

The third and final assumption was the role of the Khmer Republic in relation to its own demise and the Khmer Rouge victory. An effective government was the necessary contribution of the new regime in providing well managed national budget, economic stability, and a firm military grip on the war effort against the Khmer Rouge. Widespread corruption and collusion amongst Republic's elite groups with businessmen to exploit the situation did make things worse and therefore the government bureaucracy was no longer able to serve its function in exercising control of executive power. Over the period of five years the Khmer Republic had received a total of \$1.85 billion in U.S. military and economic aid, almost exactly one million dollars per day. While the cost to the U.S. of the air bombardment of Kampuchea was another

\$7 billion (Kiernan, 2004).¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, with this enormous amount poured down from the U.S., Lon Nol's Republic was still unable to maintain leadership initiative in its civil war with Khmer Rouge. There is compelling evidence that supports the hypothesis that the Khmer Republic was one of the main contributors to its own demise. This proved to be a fact at the end, after the U.S. troops left, in a one-on-one all-out war with the communists, as it collapsed in the afternoon on April 17, 1975.

As a graduate student fulfilling the academic requirement, I have to admit the limitation of this research and its negligence of several elements that I have assumed as less important but interrelated to the causal relationship which offered a fertile ground for Khmer Rouge opportunity to seize power. The gaps that are perhaps significant for further research include investigation of the complexity of the alliance between prince Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge. As final stage of the war, we have seen Sino-U.S. diplomatic effort was put in place for a peace settlement resembling Vietnam's Paris Peace Accords, but it failed as Prince Sihanouk's role as head of the RGNUK was suddenly relegated. If some kind of peace settlement had been reached between the Khmer Rouge and the Khmer Republic, the total revolution would not have been implemented and a quarter of the population could have been saved from death. A further gap worth research is the role of DRV in its political and military support to the CPK, especially, during the first-half of the Khmer Republic era. We observed substantial support during this period from the NVA to the CPK troops and the remnants of support can be traced back to operations Chenla I and Chenla II when both Vietnamese and Cambodian communists worked together to defeat the Republic's KNAF.

¹⁷⁰ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*. Yale University Press, 2004. P413.

Even though, the role of the U.S.S.R. was indirect in Khmer Republic era, it was not totally passive. It played significant role in supporting the Vietnamese communists during the Vietnam War and became a longstanding supporter to the DRV even after the war ended in 1975. Therefore, the Superpower's role should never be underestimated if one tries to capture an in-depth understanding of the geopolitical dynamics in the 1970s.

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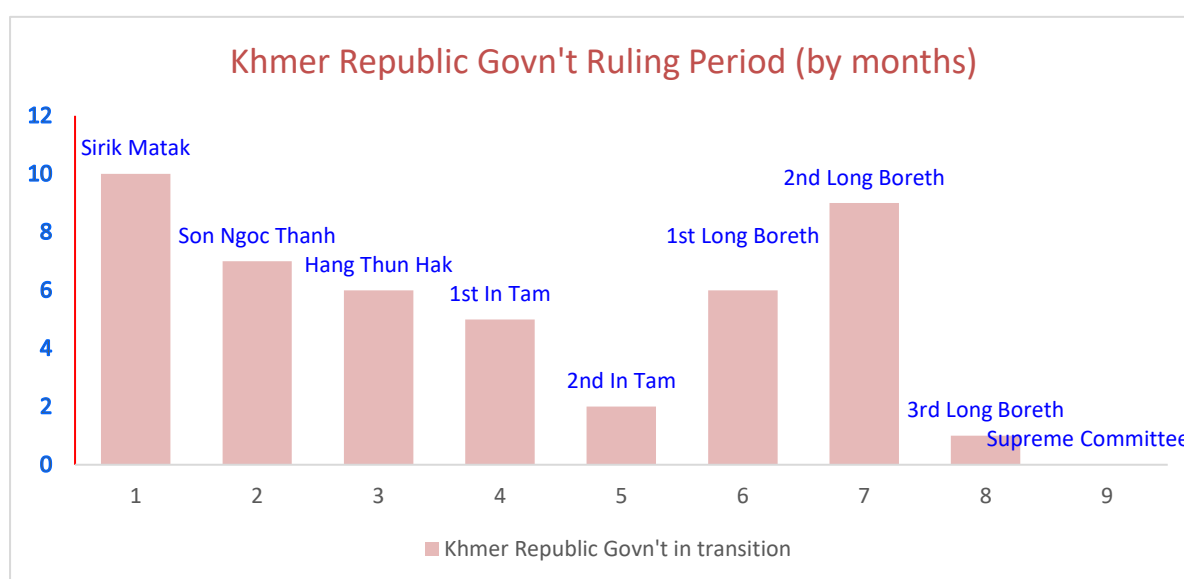
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Khmer Republic Governments in transition



The Khmer Republic Government in Transition			
No.	Period (year)	Republic's Governments	Ruling period (Month)
1	May 1971-Mar 1972	Sirik Matak Govn't	10
2	Mar-Oct, 1972	Son Ngoc Thanh Govn't	7
3	Oct 1972-Apr 1973	Hang Thun Hak Govn't	6
4	May-Oct, 1973	First In Tam Govn't	5
5	Oct-Dec, 1973	Second In Tam Govn't	2
6	Dec 1973-Jun 1974	First Long Boreth Gvon't	6
7	Jun 1974-Mar 1975	Second Long Boreth Govn't	9
8	Mar-Apr, 1975	Third Long Boreth Govn't	1
9	12-17, Apr 1975	The Supreme Committee	5 days

Figure 2: Relation of U.S. bombing and CPK armed forces growth 1969-1973

US Bombing and CPK Armed Forces Growth, 1969-1973

YEAR	BOMBING SORTIES	BOMBING TONNAGE	CPK ARMED STRENGTH
1969	3,600 ^a	108,000 ^b	1,000
1970	8,000 ^c	c.121,000	75,000
1971	61,000 ^d	in both years	150,000
1972	25,000 ^d	53,000	200,000
1973	c.130,000(?)	257,000	(June) c.220,000 ^g
	<u>c.227,000(?)</u>	<u>539,129</u>	

a) to March 1970 b) to May 1970 (B-52s only) c) July 1970 to Feb. 1971 d)US and Saigon sorties

Figure 3: Total U.S. ordnance dropped on Cambodia, Jan 1, 1970– Aug. 15, 1973

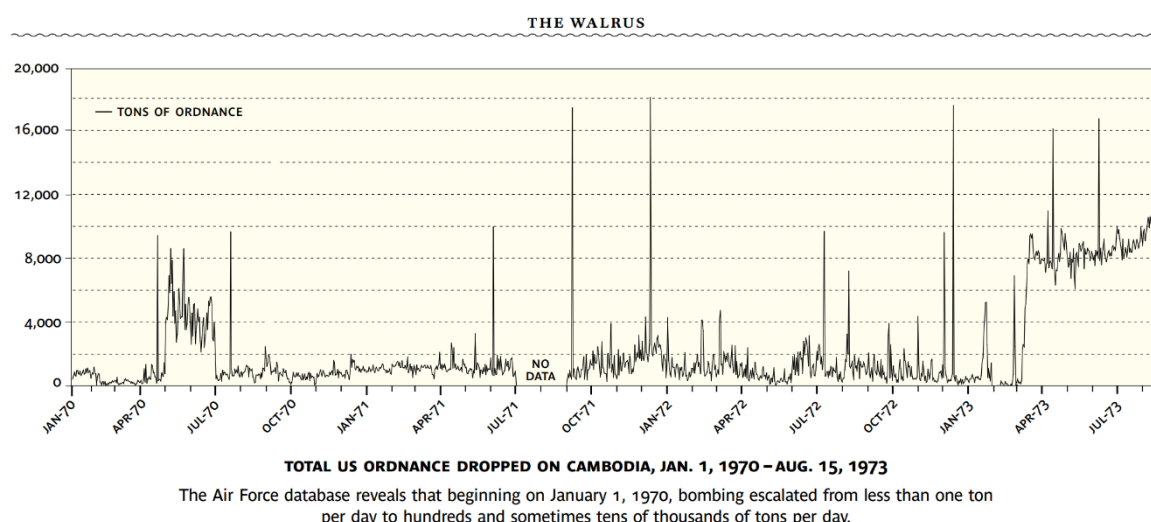


Figure 4: U.S. Bomb damage assessments on Air Strikes against communists in Eastern Kampuchea, 1973.

**DECLASSIFIED US BOMB DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS:
EFFECTIVE AIR STRIKES AGAINST COMMUNIST TROOPS IN EASTERN KAMPUCHEA, 1973**

DATE of STRIKE	PLACE	ZONE	Killed	Wounded	CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, DAMAGE
3/23/73	Kampot	SW	30 dead or seriously wounded		"Very many houses of Cambodian people" were destroyed in the B-52 strike, including "the western half" of Mi Satum village "completely destroyed."
4/26/73	Memut	E	100 VC and KI	150	
4/29/73	Memut	E	70 VC	200	
4/30/73	Kompong Cham	E	40 VC 60 KI	35 KI	
4/73	Takeo	SW	1000		"No civilian damages...reported."
5/73	Neak Luong	E	2000		
6/13/73	Phnom Penh	SW	c.1000		
7/22/73	Komchay Meas	E	37 NVA 30 KI		
8/5/73	Rattanakiri	NE	105 KI	100	"Dead civilians were buried in the vicinity...500 meters northeast of Phum Sos Dong."
8/6/73	Romeas Hek	E	100	30	
8/7/73	Kompong Trach	E	425	500 "seriously"	
8/8/73	Rattanakiri	NE	5 VC		
10/8/73	Romeas Hek	E	113 KI	30 KI	"2000 Cambodian nationals crossed the Cambodia/Vietnam border for refuge" from the bombing. Those killed and wounded included "Cambodian civilians" (exact number
8/12/73	Svay Rieng	E	25 NVA	over 30 Vietnamese and Khmers	
8/11/73	Takeo	SW	c.300 KI	killed or wounded	
8/12/73	Tbaung Khmum	E	50	70 "seriously"	
8/15/73	Andaung Pich	NE	40 NVA		
Totals:			c.5,400	c.1,300	Unknown

Sources: US CIA and Department of the Army, documents declassified 19 February and 7 April 1987.

Figure 5: U.S. bombs over Cambodia 1965-1973

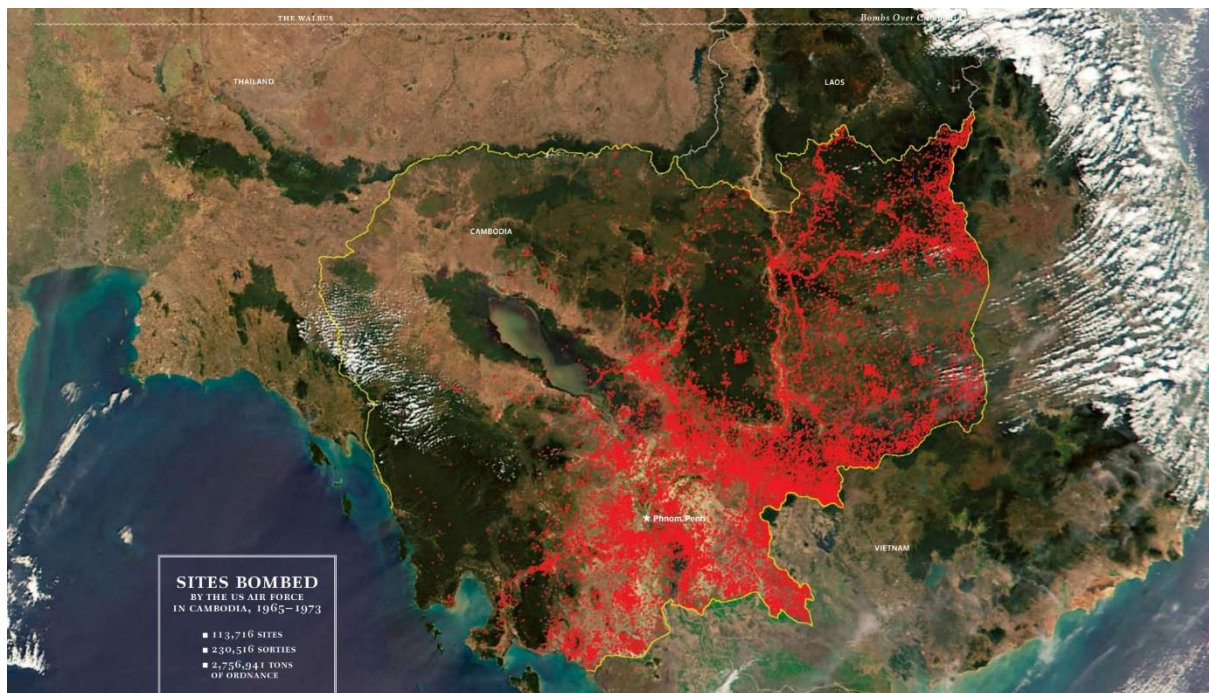
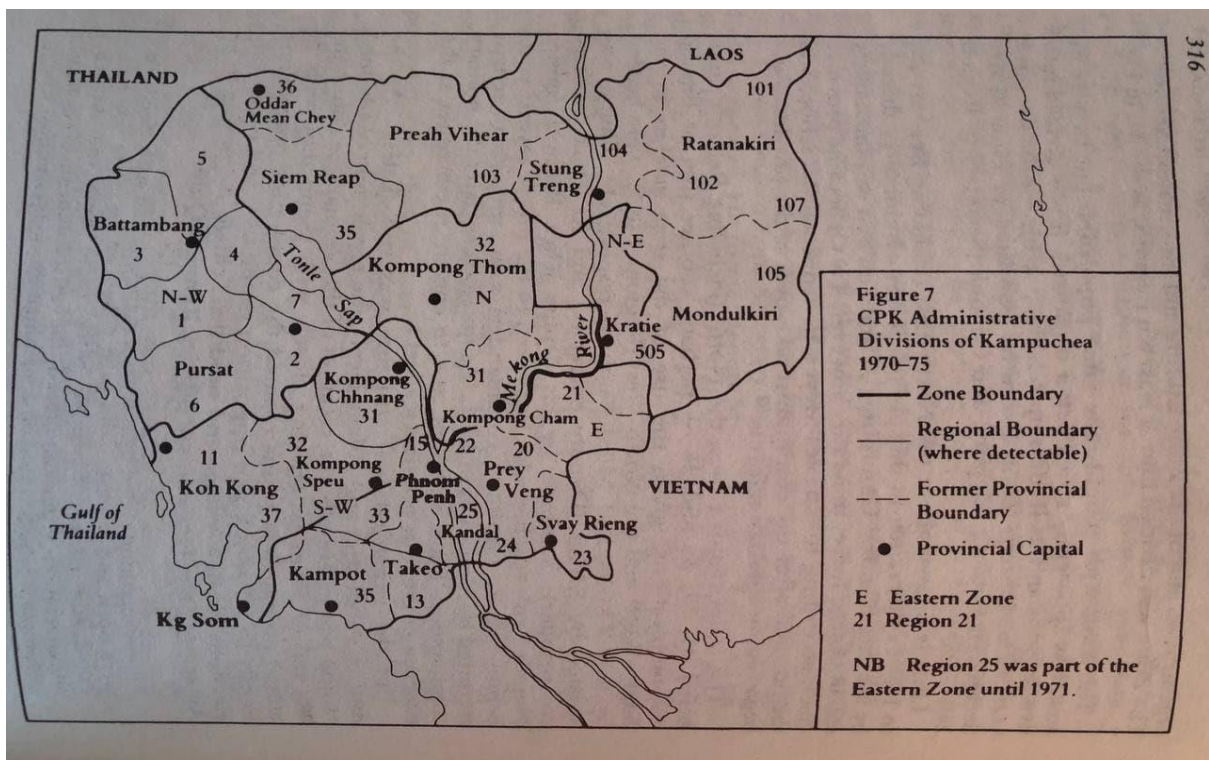


Figure 6: CPK Administrative Division of Kampuchea 1970-1975



APPENDIX 2: TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS BETWEEN 1970-1975

1970

- March 18 pro-U.S. coup in Phnom Penh ousted Prince Sihanouk as Head of State.
- March 23 Sihanouk declared National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) from Beijing
- April 28 the U.S launched ground troops attack to communists inside Cambodia Territory; marked the spilled over war in VN to Cambodia.
- May 05 Sihanouk announced the Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea (RGNUK); French Acronym (GRUNK)
- May 25 Sihanouk visited Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in Hanoi
- August Lon Nol launched Operation Chenla I
- October Communist forces occupied half of Cambodia's territory

1971

- February 08 Lon Nol suffered a stroke and went to Honolulu for treatment.
- July 08 Lon Nol promoted Marshal by Parliament
- July 21 Lon Nol Launched Operation Chenla II
- November a draft of the Republic's constitution was completed, but not yet ratified by National Assembly.

1972

- February 21 Nixon and Kissinger visited People's Republic of China (PRC)
- May 22 Nixon visited Moscow for a week-long historic summit

- May 26 Strategic Arm Limitation Talks (SALT I) was signed, by President Nixon and General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Leonid Brezhnev, in Moscow
- September 03 In the national Election in Cambodia, Lon Nol and Lon Non's Socio-Republican Party wins all the seats in parliament
- November 07 Richard Nixon win a landslide victory in his second term as President

1973

- January 27 the U.S. sign Paris Peace Accords with North Vietnam
- February Sihanouk and his wife slipped into forest to visit liberated zones with CPK leaders
- May the CPK began collectivization of property and communal eating in liberated Southwest Zone
- August 06 Sihanouk visited Pyongyang after a trip to eastern Europe.
- August 15 the U.S. Congress forced Nixon to stop air support to the Khmer Republic
- November 09 Sihanouk announced the formal transfer of the center of his government from Peking to Cambodia and elevation of Khieu Samphan from Deputy to acting Prime Minister

1974

- April 02 Khieu Samphan visited Peking, according to his conversation with Chairman Mao, Zhou Enlai, Ieng Sary and Sihanouk, the CPK regular forces, local troops and people's militia add up to about 200 thousand strong.
- May Parliament votes a law declaring the nation in danger
- July 09 Lon Nol asks again to open negotiation with Prince Sihanouk and his Khmer Rouge allies but it would keep on being rejected

- August 09 Nixon resigned following Watergate Scandal
- August 09 Gerald Ford vice President began office as President upon resignation of Nixon
- November UN General Assembly votes that countries should urge opposing parties in the Cambodia conflict to open negotiations, and that no measure should be taken until further development

1975

- April 01 Lon Nol flew out of Cambodia expected for a new peaceful settlement with Sihanouk coalition government (RGNUC)
- April 12 The Supreme Committee was created in the wait for Prince Sihanouk to take power
- April 12 The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh evacuated its staffs and small number of foreigners and Cambodians. A few hours earlier, the U.S. had failed in its attempt to bring Sihanouk back to Cambodia so he could head the country.
- April 17 Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh and started to herd the population out of Phnom Penh. Lon Non and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak refused to leave would soon be executed by the Khmer Rouge.