



**An Asian Barometer Conference on
The State of Democratic Governance in Asia**

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The State of Democratic Governance in Cambodia

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Political evolution Cambodia

Cambodia undergoes a transition from a hierarchical political system that prioritizes stability and control to a more liberal democratic society. Some 80 percent of the population are engaged in the subsistence rural economy, and to a large extent Cambodian social and political structures remain driven by traditional hierarchical patron-client relationships. Such ties rely on inequalities of wealth, status, and power and personalized interactions between the powerful and weak, in contrast to the impersonal guarantees of physical and economic security, such as the rule of law, that underpin liberal democracies. This lends itself to authoritarian forms of power politics antithetical to the principles of deliberative democratic interaction (1).

Besides the strong presence of patronage, Cambodian society is characterized by a very low level of trust among citizens. As results of this survey showed, 92% of the respondents agree that 'you must be very careful in dealing with people'. Relatives are most trusted, followed by neighbors and other people. Another issue greatly effecting people's capacity and knowledge are the low levels of education. During the Khmer Rouge high educated people were eliminated and the education system was abolished. Nowadays, society is still struggling to recover from this deprivation.

Historical political situation

After gaining official Independence from French controlled Indochina in 1954, King Sihanouk abdicated his throne in favor of his father and created the People's Socialist Community Party. His party won every seat of the parliament in the 1955 elections and dominated Cambodian politics for the next 15 years. A small educated minority, divided by pro-Westerners, neutralists and Communist ('Khmer Rouge') are all persecuted. In response, the communists seek refuge in the countryside and started an underground resistance movement (2). In 1970 general Lon Nol and Sihanouk's cousin, anti-Vietnamese and pro-USA, disposed King Sihanouk in a military coup changing the country from a monarchy into a republic. King Sihanouk took residence in Beijing where he set-up a government in-exile nominally head of an united front with his former enemies, the Khmer Rouge. Strengthened by the support of North Vietnamese troops they fought against the regime of Lon Nol and large parts of the country fell to the rebels. Due to the Vietnam war occurring at the same time, the US and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia in an effort to flush out the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops. So besides a civil war, Cambodia also became involved in the Vietnam war. Bombings by the USA of suspected communist base

camps and the fights resulted in the death of several hundred thousand people between 1970-1975. In 1975 the Khmer Rouge defeated Lon Nol, who fled the country.

Immediately after its victory, the Khmer Rouge (CPK¹) ordered the evacuation of all cities, sending the entire urban population into the countryside to work as farmers, as the CPK was trying to reshape society into an autarchy model that Pol Pot had conceived. Remnants of the old society were abolished and religion, particularly Buddhism and Catholicism, was suppressed. Agriculture was collectivized, and the surviving part of the industrial base was abandoned or placed under state control. Cambodia had neither a currency nor a banking system. A new constitution in 1976 declared Democratic Kampuchea as a Communist People's Republic (3). King Sihanouk was imprisoned in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, since he was no longer needed to boost the image of the Khmer Rouge.

During the cruel Pol Pot regime, border clashes with Vietnam increased, resulting in an invasion by Vietnamese troops, who defeated Pol Pot in 1979. His regime was responsible for an estimated death of 1-3 million people out of a population estimated at 7.3 million. Most people were executed or died of starvation and disease.

The Khmer Rouge fled toward the Thai border and took refuge in the jungles and mountains, still persuaded by the Vietnamese army. The Vietnamese installed a new government, ruled by the later called Cambodian's People Party (CPP), led by King Sihanouk and several former Khmer Rouge Officers, including Hun Sen. Vietnam's occupation army controlled the major population centers and most of the countryside until 1989. During this time Cambodia went through a major political turmoil with numerous political parties, government coalitions and foreign powers struggling (China, USA, etc) for dominance. Resistance against the Vietnamese occupation continued just as the fights with the Khmer Rouge. Within this period two other political parties appeared, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, leading the political struggle for Cambodia's independence and Funcinpec formed by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, King Sihanouk's son, in 1981. These two parties provided a political alternative for the Vietnamese supported CPP and the murderous Khmer Rouge.

In 1989 all Vietnamese troops withdraw from Cambodia leaving a power vacuum. Diplomatic efforts to end the civil war resulted in signing of the Paris Peace accords in 1991, whereby all parties agreed to participate in free and fair elections. Following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991 a constitutional monarchy was adopted (4).

¹ Communist Party of Kampuchea

In 1993, King Sihanouk signed a new constitution changing Cambodia into a multiparty liberal democracy in the framework of a constitutional monarchy, limiting his own powers to mainly ceremonial tasks. From this moment onwards, democratic structures were in place. Head of the government and of a multi-party system would be the prime minister. Executive power could be exercised through the government made up by a Council of Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister. Legislative power was vested in both the government and the two chambers of parliament, the National Assembly and the Senate, composed of respectively 123 representatives and 61 members. The judicial branch was set up as to be independent of the government, but in reality turned out to be highly corrupt and serving as a tool of the executive branch

(5). National elections gave citizens the possibility to choose party linked representatives for the National Assembly, serving 5 year terms.

The first national elections took part in May 1993, supervised by the UN. About 90% of eligible voters (4.7 million) participated, despite intimidation of Khmer Rouge forces and campaigns of confiscation, arson, bombing and murder committed by supporters of the CPP. Funcinpec won 45.5% of the votes, followed by 38% for the CPP and 10% for the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party. A coalition was formed of these three parties. However, under threats of senior leaders to separate the eastern provinces of the country, two prime ministers were installed: Norodom Ranariddh (Funcinpec) as first prime minister and Hun Sen (CPP) as second prime minister. In mid-1994, Sam Rainsy lost his position as finance minister for Funcinpec and formed the now called Sam Rainsy Party. A lengthy courting period in which both Funcinpec and CPP attempted to win the trust of the remaining Khmer Rouge followed until 1997 when Hun Sen overthrew Norodom Ranariddh in a military coup. Many of Hun Sen's opponents were murdered. Hun Sen maintained his control over the countryside and administration that was conferred on him under the Vietnamese occupation. Civil war officially ended a year afterwards, with the death of Pol Pot in 1998.

For upcoming second national elections in 1998 an alliance was formed between the opposition parties SRP and a tattered Funcinpec. This prevented the outcome of a two-third majority for CPP², which was required to govern alone. Campaigns of the opposition for democracy escalated and caused mass demonstrations leading to riots, fights and repression. King Sihanouk eventually negotiated a settlement in which a weak Funcinpec agreed to govern with the dominant CPP. Hun Sen became Prime Minister.

² Results National Elections 1998; CPP 64 of 122 seats (52%), Funcinpec 43 seats (35%) and SRP 15 seats (13%).

The National Election Committee was established to oversee the elections, having full authority and responsibility in planning, organizing and managing elections nation wide. COMFREL and COFFEL, both well-respected electoral monitoring NGOs, provided additional observation and are still active in lobbying for free and fair elections through advocacy, monitoring, media access and voter education. All three institutions continued their roles during future elections.

In 2001, Cambodia's Decentralization and De-concentration reform process commenced in partnership with both the donor community and civil society. Laws relating to local governance, commune administration, management, and elections were enacted, to integrate management at provincial/municipal and district levels and consolidate and deepening decentralization at the commune level. At stake was political control over the rural areas.

In February 2002, the first commune council elections were held in which 1,621 councils were elected, taking responsibilities for local governance and local development. This represented a significant step towards establishing democracy in Cambodia by providing Cambodians greater opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. The councils started to develop capacity in managing administrative tasks, planning and implementing development projects, and establishing local commune regulations.

National elections in 2003, though still far from perfect, were less violent than earlier polls (4). 23 parties were registered on the voting list, but the real competition was taking place between CPP, Funcinpec and SRP³. Other parties hardly managed to get more than one percent of the total votes.

Unequal distribution of information was alleged by opposition parties to have benefited CPP supporters at registration and polling, contributing to conflict between parties (6). Hun Sen once again emerged victorious. The balance of power shifted, as the CPP consolidated their grip on power (47.3%) and SRP (21.9%) overhauled Funcinpec (20.8%) as the second party. However, one-year during negotiations for a tri-party coalition resulted in a government made up by CPP and Funcinpec.

An opinion poll carried out just before the elections showed that almost half of the Cambodian electorate thought that the upcoming 2003 elections would not be free and fair, although they did expect less election problems compared to 1998, which was confirmed after the elections. Voter coercion was still present and vote buying widespread. Voters viewed their vote primarily as

³ Number of effective parties was 3.1 (L-T measure).

currency for political patronage. Major reason to vote for a party was patronage oriented (material resources provided) or pressure of leaders to keep peace and support the chief (7).

Commune elections held in 2007 went relatively smoothly. Results of an opinion poll in 2007 showed that Cambodians have slightly more confidence in the national government (82%) compared to local government (73%). Main reason to favor a party during commune elections were promises to build infrastructure and improve living conditions of the village (8).

Decentralization has enabled the establishment of local democratic institutions, but democratic politics are yet to develop locally. Individuals are still unable to speak their minds freely, and political discussions rarely occur openly. Although this is due more to prevailing social norms than to open political suppression, it hampers the development of a vibrant political democracy at the local level. (9).

Current political situation

Several recent developments and malpractices, all favorable for the CPP, are increasing the chance for them to win the 2008 elections as well as gaining majority in the government, thus enabling to rule the country without the necessity to form a coalition.

In early 2006, the CPP further consolidated its hold on power by successfully passing through parliament an amendment to the constitution that will allow for a 50% plus one majority in the National Assembly to form a government (instead of the two-thirds majority), thereby reducing its future reliance on Funcinpec or another coalition partner (ref ???).

In addition, the power of Funcinpec deteriorated the last few years due to internal changes. President of the party, Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted by some members in 2006 and formed a new political party called the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP). Splitting up of Funcinpec resulted in a huge loss of popularity reflected in the commune council elections. While Funcinpec won 22% of the votes in the 2002 elections, the two fractions received only 13.4% of the votes in the 2007 commune elections, with 5.3% for Funcinpec and 8.1% for NRP (10). Besides the CPP, probably at least 3 or 4 other parties will compete for the seats in the 2008 elections, thereby reducing the chance of one party obtaining enough seats to create a serious threat for the ruling party.

Another development seen in the past few months is that many party members of SRP and Funcinpec defected to the CPP, after Hun Sen offered them well paid government advisory positions. He also uses political motivated criminal charges against opposition party officials to weaken political rivals.

The ruling party uses public funds for their campaigns and distribution of gifts to party members, prevent media access of the opposition and access to the countryside for campaigns of the opposition. When the government finances new infrastructure such as roads and schools, it is presented as an effort of the CPP and not of the government, thus promoting their own party and misleading citizens. Since non-ruling parties lack these powers and financial means or refuse to participate in vote buying, they are hindered in equally promotion of their party. Besides the undermining effect for fair elections, it is also a daunting development in view of the concept of democracy for citizens. Instead of voting for ideas, they vote for gifts.

Citizens perceptions of democracy

Cambodians have little connection to their government and continue to have limited notions about what a democracy offered them and how it should function. In addition people are much more occupied with ensuring basic necessities than government issues. Since there is a general sense of not being able to control or make a difference anyway (7). Hopefully the implementation of commune councils will increase citizens participation and awareness.

Regarding the composition of the government, most people perceive the CPP as being the government and thus the executive branch. Few Cambodians have any understanding of what National Assembly members do beyond delivering resources to their constituents. The roles of making laws, questioning ministers or choosing the Prime Minister are almost unknown. (7). Two third of the Cambodians belief that the judicial system is corrupt (11). Corruption and political influence greatly reduce the judicial independence (10).

Most Cambodians agree that elections are an acceptable way to voice dissent, but the electorate is still relatively ignorant in what elections can do. An opinion poll carried out in 2003 showed that Cambodians knew the parties having representatives in the National Assembly, but were unaware of differences between parties. Only a small minority could name one of more of their Assembly representatives (7. According to a recent opinion poll, 97% of the eligible voters said they were likely or somewhat likely to vote for upcoming national elections in July 2008. A major threat towards free and fair elections are vote buying and coercion, which is widely excepted and considered normal, influencing the perceptions of Cambodians toward the concept and meaning of democracy (12). Due to this enduring practice many rural people are reluctant to vote for a party which is not offering them something in return.

Satisfaction with the government and National Assembly appears to be largely the general rising tide of economic and infrastructure development. People who have some understanding of democracy are most likely to equate it with political freedom, economic benefits and peace/stability (7). However, it is shocking that results of this survey showed that 45.3% of the respondents was unable to give any meaning of democracy. People tended to associate democracy with freedom, power belong to the people and economic and social rights. Democracy is also not seen as capable to reduce poverty (12).

Conclusion:

- current system far from real democracy, more authoritarian regime; long term leadership Hun Sen, hierarchical, patronage system.
- commune councils bring government and democracy more towards citizens.
- perception people regarding democracy determined by need for economic grow and improvement livelihood. In contrast with other Asian countries, Cambodia seems to be silent as long as people have the impression that the country is doing better than in the past and is heading in the right direction. Fear that unrest may lead to problems for the country, probably prevent people to be actively involved or give their opinions on the way in which the country is ruled.
- Western concept of democracy differs from Cambodian concept.

Socio-Political Profile

Economy

Public perceptions of economic improvements and development clearly translate into positive impressions of the government's performance (7). In general people feel that Cambodia is heading in the right direction, mainly through improvements in infrastructure. However, due to the latest high inflation rates (18.5%) and global rice crisis, people are afraid that high prices of goods and electricity as well as corruption and poverty will temper future growth of Cambodia (12).

The GDP of Cambodia is one of the lowest among Asian countries, although over recent years the

GDP has shown continuous growth with real growth rates of 10.0% in 2004, 13.5% in 2005 and 10.0% in 2006. After achieving full peace in 1999, even though the regional and world's economy faced major challenges, coupled with some of the negative consequences of natural disasters in the country, Cambodia's economy gained momentum and dynamism by growing on average 9.4% per annum during 2000-2006. The most distinctive change, found in a comparison between real GDP composition in 1999 and in 2005, is that the share held by agriculture dropped while the industry sector grew, especially garment factoring and construction. The service sector is slowly increasing its share as well, mainly due to the tourist sector (13). The narrow base of growth remains a concern, although Cambodia has made efforts to diversify its economy through development of small and medium enterprises. Despite economic growth reducing poverty by 10%-15% (14), the income gap is widening as reflected in a Gini coefficient of 42 in 2008.

In the region as a whole only Mongolia has a GDP below that of Cambodia, whilst their income inequality is less. Japan has the lowest income gap and Malaysia the highest. From Cambodia's neighboring countries Vietnam is scoring better on GDP and has a more equal income distribution compared to Cambodia. Regarding Thailand it is interesting to see that their GDP is three times as high as Vietnam and leads to higher income inequalities similar to the level in Cambodia.

Table ..:Socio-Political Profile Cambodia.

GDP per capita (PPP) in 2006	2533,71
Gini Co- Efficient in 2008	42
Number of effective parties (based on last national election)	3,10
Freedom House Political Right Score in 2007	6
Freedom House Civil Liberty Score in 2007	5
WBGi* Rule of Law indicator in 2006	-1,11
WBGi Government Effectiveness indicator in 2006	-1,01
WBGi Voice and accountability Indicator in 2006	-0,98
WBGi Control of corruption Indicator in 2006	-1,19

* World Bank Governance Indicators

Political profile according to international standards

The Freedom House clearly shows that Cambodia is not a free country regarding political rights and civil liberty. A score of 7 equals no freedom and a score of 1 equals total freedom (??? See comment D2). Best scores were achieved during the UNTAC period in 1993-1994 (respectively 4 and 5), after which it varied between 7 or 6 for political rights and 6 or 5 for civil rights. Political

rights are almost absent in the electoral process and functioning of the government, whilst the situation for political pluralism and participation is somewhat better. However, the ability of the state to provide non-partisan opportunities for political participation to all voters equally, thus undermining the CPP's organisational advantage, is still lacking (6).

Civil liberty is affected by a low score for the rule of law. Freedom of expression, association and personal rights are allowed to a certain level. The World Bank Governance Indicators (WBGI) confirm the problems of abiding the law in Cambodia and poor civil liberty. In addition the negative score for corruption indicates that public power is used for private gains and that the state is at risk of being captured by elites. Government effectiveness, taking into account quality of public and civil services is low and sensitive for political pressure, just as policy formulation and implementation.

Lack of public services is linked to difficulties in collecting revenues by the government. Main income sources for the government include international aid, business tax, tax on salaries and import duties. International aid even exceeds the government's entire annual tax revenue. Due to corruption up to 75% of business tax is never received by the government. Taxes on salary are paid, but only a minority of Cambodians have a formal job. However, a big change lays ahead in future through a boom in revenues of natural resources. Recently large oil fields in offshore waters of Cambodia have been discovered. Once extracting of oil and gas has begun the government can expect high revenues, which could double the total national budget.

Taiwan and Japan are doing well regarding political rights and civil liberty. Other Asian countries are struggling much more with these issues. Cambodia's scores are amongst the highest and close to those of China and Vietnam. Regarding the rule of law, Cambodia received the lowest score although half the Asian countries have a negative score. The Philippines, Indonesia and Mongolia seem to do well in civil liberty, but they have negative scores on abiding the rule of law, implying that other components of civil liberty are strongly present and compensate for this requirement. Participation in selecting the government, free media and freedom of expression are strongly limited in China, Vietnam and Cambodia. Japan, Korea and Taiwan give more space to freedom of expression and are more accountable. Effectiveness of the Cambodian government is by far the lowest of all Asian countries, just as control of corruption. The situation in Vietnam and especially Thailand is better than in Cambodia.

Methodology

Survey design

The study had to be national representative for the Cambodian population in voting age of 18 years and older. Taking data quality into account, a sample size of 1000 respondents was considered sufficient. Assuming a simple random sampling design with a 95% confidence interval, the maximum error margin of the sample is $\pm 3.1\%$. However, somewhat higher error margins might be present, because the sampling design was not simple but multi-stage; the associated design effect is not readily measurable through established statistical software. The New Villages Database 2006-2007 of the National Institute of Statistics was used as sampling frame for the survey.

Cambodia is divided into provinces and municipalities. Each province is divided in districts and each district into communes, which are made up by a number of villages. Municipalities are divided in sections and each section into quarters.

For this study a multi-stage stratified sampling selection was performed. Strata were defined by dividing Cambodia into five geographical zones; Phnom Penh, Plain Region, Tonle Sap Region, Coastal Region and Plateau and Mountain Region. Subsequently the Neyman allocation was used to allocate a sample size to each stratum (see Annex 1).

At first communes were selected using Simple Random Sampling without Replacement. Consequently the same technique was used to select two villages per commune. Within each village 4 households were sampled using Linear Systematic Sampling with Equal Probability. When the enumerators entered a selected village, a map was drawn showing all households of the village. Pulling out one of five bank notes with a last digit between 1 and 5 determined the first household to be visited. The second, third and fourth households were chosen by adding an interval of 10 households for a village with 50 or less households and an interval of 20 households for a village with more than 50 households. All persons in the households of 18 years and above were listed in a Kish Grid. The Kish Grid showed which person had to be interviewed.

Survey implementation

The questionnaire of the Asian Barometer was used and certain questions were removed⁴ due to political sensitivity and length of the interview. The questions were literally translated to Khmer without modifications. It was anticipated that several questions would be too difficult for the respondents to understand. When the respondent did not understand the question, the enumerator could repeat the question two times more.

The survey was carried out by five teams, each team consisting of 4 enumerators and 1 supervisor. During a two day training of enumerators the instrument was finalized. After the two days training, the instrument was piloted with 50 respondents and Khmer wording was adjusted where necessary.

Fieldwork was performed from 19th of April 2008 until the 4th of May 2008. Length of the questionnaire created some concern during the pilot phase. Initially interviews took over 1.5 hours and even up to two hours, but during the process this was reduced to 1-1.5 hours.

Due to political sensitivity and the upcoming national elections in July 2008, the teams sometimes encountered problems in villages to receive permission for the survey. However, the teams always managed to resolve the issues and conduct the interviews.

Overall response rate was 69% and in 33 cases the interview was stopped before the final question was asked. Those respondents were replaced, resulting in 1000 completed interviews. 19% of the respondents sometimes felt impatient during the interview and the enumerators had the impression that one third of the respondents was not willing to cooperate. According to the enumerators, slightly more than half of the respondents were sincere in answering sensitive questions and 88% of the respondents had difficulties in answering to some questions. These last two observations greatly affected the interpretation of the results. As widely known, social desirability plays a major factor during interviews in Cambodia and when combined with sensitive questions, this effect might be even stronger. Additionally, most respondents did not understand all the questions, but were reluctant to admit this to the enumerator, so they gave any answer to satisfy the enumerator. Both factors reduced the reliability of the data. It should also be kept in mind that the short period towards the next elections might induce an even greater bias.

⁴ Questions missing and relevant for this report, thus preventing certain analyses were q38, q39a, q40, q41, q43, q49 (forgotten in khmer questionnaire), q50, q54, q57, q109 (wrong khmer translation).

Results

Rule of law

According to table 1 respondents expressed some confidence in the independence of their judicial system, corresponding to other Asian countries. However, the result for Cambodia is questionable, since the courts are controlled by the executive branch of the government and well-known for their corruption. A recent event which may have a positive impact on the perception of functioning of the court is the start of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Initiated in 1996 and officially started after adaptation of the internal rules in July 2007, this court merging Cambodian Law and international standards, will prosecute former high ranked Khmer Rouge members (10. 71% of the citizens is aware of these trials (12).

Table 1: Evaluation of Law-Abiding Government in Cambodia (n=1000).

Our current courts always punish the guilty even if they are high-ranking officials.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/CC /DA	Total
Percent	46,0	19,4	8,7	20,4	5,5	100,0
How often do national government officials abide by the law?	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	DU/CC /DA	Total
Percent	10,3	28,6	32,7	12,6	15,8	100,0

Results of the question if government officials abide the law seemed realistic in showing that most citizens do not believe that government officials abide the law. It should be noticed that 16% of the respondents did not give responded on this question. Looking at the other Asian countries, only Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong have a positive view about government officials abiding the law.

Corruption

Table 2: Perception of Political Corruption at National and Local Levels in Cambodia (n=1000).

	National Government	Local Government
Hardly anyone is involved	1,1	6,5
Not a lot of officials are involved	25,1	42,0
Most officials are corrupt	34,8	32,0
Almost everyone is corrupt	16,6	13,5

CC/DA	22,4	6,0
Total	100,0	100,0

As shown in Table 2 the local government is perceived as less corrupt compared to the national government. Respondents also felt more reluctant in answering the question for the national government. Respondents have a tendency to judge corruption more profound when interested in politics, especially regarding local government. Corruption not only concerns the government but penetrates the whole society. Two factor contributing are the traditional patronage systems and low wages of government jobs. Therefore, when a person does have certain (decision-making) power, the person expects to receive some money or a gift to exercise this power for someone else's benefits.

The impression that corruption is widespread is confirmed by results of Transparency International, ranking Cambodia on position 162 out of 180 countries. Corruption levels of other Asian countries measured by ASB survey, show that only Taiwan, Mongolia and the Philippines are more corrupt. However, this is not conform their rankings of respectively 34, 99 and 131 in the Corruption Perception Index (15).

Table 3: Perception of Controlling Corruption in Cambodia (n=1000).

In your opinion, is the government working to crackdown corruption and root out bribes?	It is doing its best	It is doing something	It is not doing much	It is doing nothing	DU/CC/DA	Total
Percent	7.7	47.3	28.2	9.9	6.9	100.0

Just as in Cambodia, most other Asian citizens believe that their governments are trying to beat corruption (see Table 3). One of the efforts in Cambodia concerns a legislative reform proposed in the Anti-Corruption Law, making corruption a criminal offense. During the 90's an attempt to pass the law was already made. Several revisions have still not lead to acceptance of the law (10). Genuine willingness seems to be absent.

Competition

Perceptions of having a real choice between parties during the elections vary among Asian citizens. Cambodians seem quite positive similar to Indonesia and Vietnam (see Table 4). However, having a real choice in Cambodia is disputable. Although 23 parties were registered during the latest elections in 2003, only 3 of them had a real change to win enough votes to gain seats in the National Assembly. The elections in 2008 show an even more worrisome picture as discussed in Chapter II.

Results of an opinion poll in 2003 showed that only one quarter of Cambodians thought that voting in the national elections would make a difference (7).

Table 4: Quality of Electoral Choice and Equality in Access to Media in Cambodia (n=1000).

How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates?	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	33.6	37.2	10.5	10.6	8.1	100.0
Political parties or candidates in our country have equal access to the mass media during the election period.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	47.5	26.1	6.9	10.2	9.3	100.0

A high proportions of Cambodians think that political parties and candidates have equal access to media during the election period. This finding is not in agreement with reality. Radio and television stations are far from acting independent and remain under strict control of the ruling party. From the 7 television stations, one is owned by the government and the ruling party used 85% of the broadcasting time in 2007, focusing on party activities instead of government administration.

Two out of 22 radio stations belong to the government as well. Although the other stations are private they still remain under tight control of the ruling party. Unlike before, non-ruling parties were allowed radio broadcasting time in 2007 at some private radio stations (16). Even though some radio stations broadcast critical views on the government, they can only be received in certain areas of Cambodia.

Participation

Half of the Cambodians is interested in politics, although only 9.5% of them frequently discuss politics (see Table 5a). This results are similar to those of an opinion poll of 2003, showing that Cambodians have a moderate interest in politics and discuss it rarely (7). Obviously there is a discrepancy between being interested in politics and discussing politics. Citizens of Vietnam, Japan and Thailand show a greater interest in politics, but overall there is no clear tendency among Asian countries to be interested in politics.

Table 5a: Level of Political Interest (n=1000).

How interested would you say you are in politics?	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	CC/DA	Total
Percent	15.1	42.7	24.3	17.5	0.4	100.0

A surprisingly high number of respondents consider themselves capable of joining politics, which contradicts the results of the question whether politics are too complex to be understood (see Table 5b). However, this issue can be explained by the fact that respondents most probably perceived the first question not as 'ability' but 'right' to participate in politics. So they feel to have the right to join politics, although politics are complicated. A high number of respondents gave no answer regarding the complexity of politics.

Table 5b: Level of Political Efficacy (n=1000).

I think I have the ability to participate in politics.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	36.5	31.0	7.2	13.5	11.8	100.0
Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	10.0	7.1	26.9	31.5	24.5	100.0

Compared to other Asian countries inhabitants of Thailand are most convinced of their ability to participate in politics, followed by Cambodia and Mongolia. In all other Asian countries 38% or less of the citizens believe they are able to join politics. Citizens of Thailand judge politics as most complex. Cambodia is somewhere in the middle, but when taking into account the high percentage of don't know, the picture will change.

Table 5c: Demographic Background and Political Efficacy.

Political Efficacy	Gender		Education			
	Male	Female	No education	Primary school	Secondary school	University or above
I think I have the ability to participate in politics.	76,4	76,7	69,1	78,3	78,4	64,0
Total N	457	425	110	450	275	26
People who think politics and government are not too complex to really understand what is going	26,4	18,1	26,4	22,3	20,5	24,0

on.						
Total N	n=413	n=342	n=87	n=376	n=249	n=25
People who think they can participate and understand politics.	16,0	9,7	10,9	12,6	14,0	15,4
Total N	n=476	n=452	n=119	n=475	n=285	n=26

Gender as well as education has impact on people’s perception on participation and complexity of politics. People without education and high educated people feel less capable of joining politics compared to average educated persons. The sub samples of not and high educated groups are quit small, but it can be assumed that people with no formal education are aware of their lack of knowledge, thus preventing them from participating in politics. On the other hand, high educated people may have a more realistic view on their ability to join politics, resulting in a more modest response.

Men are obviously more confident in understanding politics than women, but level of education does not affect the perception of respondents. **This is quit remarkable and might show the lack of attention given to governance and democracy in school curriculums after the Khmer Rouge period ???.**

When both questions are combined a small number of respondents understand politics and feel capable of joining. Men are more positive compared to women. Interestingly this combination shows a positive relation between education and political efficacy.

Vertical accountability

One of the most important tools of vertical accountability are elections. Most Cambodians as well as other Asian citizens feel they have the power to overthrow a government when they are not satisfied with their function (see Table 6). Reality might show a different picture, because it seems very unlikely that discontent Cambodians will exercise enough power to realize preliminary elections. Fear for chaos, memories of the past and a deterioration of economic growth are some of the constraints withholding citizens to change a government.

Table 6: Vertical Accountability (n=1000).

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/C C/DA	Total
People have the power to change a government they don’t like	55.0	24.3	6.3	9.5	4.9	100.0

Between elections, the people have no way of holding the government responsible for its actions.	19.4	19.8	9.1	10.0	41.7	100.0
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How often do government officials withhold important information from the public view?	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	5.4	14.8	31.5	25.8	22.5	100.0

Fewer Asians, though still a majority, feel they can hold the government responsible between elections. An outstanding 41.7% of Cambodians did not understand the question or could not choose a response. As mentioned earlier, citizens are not very familiar with the concepts of democracy.

Besides corruption, another major concern for young democracies is lack of transparency, a prerequisite for effective accountability. Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam are very modest in their suspicion of the government withholding information from the public compared to other Asian countries. In Cambodia this finding is misleading, since citizens and media have very little access to information, with almost all government documents being classified as secret. A draft Law on Access of Information, producing a clear policy framework, went to the government for approval in 2007, but nothing has been heard since (10). Another issue is the lack of awareness among people that they have a right to know what the government is actually doing.

Horizontal accountability

The picture of horizontal accountability is not very encouraging in Asian countries. In Cambodia almost half of the respondents think the legal system can not hold the government responsible when breaking the law (see Table 7). Respondents perceived the ‘legal system’ as the law in general and not as the court system or police as such. As mentioned earlier the judiciary is highly corrupt and controlled by the government, since most judges and prosecutors are party members of the ruling party. Powerful politicians use the judiciary in order to achieve their political goals and gain domination over other parties or politicians (10).

Table 7: Horizontal Accountability (n=1000).

When the government breaks the laws, there is nothing the legal system can do.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	26.9	15.2	10.7	33.0	14.2	100.0

To what extent is the legislature capable of keeping the government in check?	Very capable	Capable	Not capable	Not at all capable	DU/C C/DA	Total
Percent	23.3	33.7	7.9	3.7	31.4	100.0

Over half of the respondents think that the legislature is strong enough to act as an independent control organ of the government, which does not corresponds with the current functioning of the parliament. The government is controlling the legislature (ref??). As shown, many respondents did not understand the question or could not choose an answer, which could be related to a lack of understanding about the function of different institutions within a democracy. Findings of this question might therefore be unreliable.

Freedom

Despite a better ranking on the Press Freedom Index changing from 108 in 2006 to 85 in 2007, freedom of information continues to be threatened in the form of complaints filed to the court, confiscation of materials and psychological intimidation. Human right defenders, journalists and opposition candidates are all at risk of receiving death treats or being arrested (16). The Information Ministry regularly issues and enforces bans on newspapers for reporting on sensitive issues like corruption, land grabbing and criticisms of public officials (17). For example, the publication of a report on deforestation by Global Witness in 2007 provoked a raft of incidents including the temporary closure of a newspaper. Several journalists and a radio reporter were harassed (16). A new launched magazine in 2007, Free Press Magazine was seized and banned for allegedly carrying anti-monarchy content and challenging the king's inviolable status. (18). The right to freedom of assembly decreased significantly in 2007 compared to previous years. Only protests not affecting the image of the government or not related to sensitive issues were permitted (10).

Table 8: Evaluation of Freedom under Current Regime (n=1000).

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DU/C C/DA	Total
People are free to speak without fear.	42.9	22.2	16.5	17.3	1.1	100.0
People can join any organization without fear.	58.7	24.2	8.6	5.3	3.2	100.0

Joining any organization without fear is possible in Cambodia and the state seldom inhibits membership in associations. Development of civil society has been strongly backed up by international donors. Civic, business, and cultural organizations operate with relative freedom and comment publicly on government policy. However, state-sponsored intimidation and attacks still occur, particularly on civil society organizations active in the political sphere such as labor unions (1). The high number of associations do not guarantee an increase in viability of democracy, since there are only a few established channels for government-civic dialogue. Although membership of civil society organizations (CSO) is high in Cambodia (76%), the motivation to join an organization is more practical than ideological. Most citizens are passive member of an organization, just to receive certain benefits in terms of money or commodities. This corresponds with the kind of CSO's being present (18). Another note concerns the origin of civil society organizations, mostly funded by NGO's providing money to support the organization. People are not inclined to organize themselves around their political beliefs and interests without outside support. Compared to other Asian countries Singapore appears to be most restricted in freedom of speech and association.

Equality

According to the opinion of Cambodians everyone is treated equally by the government (see Table 9a). This picture is not realistic. For instance access to justice is affected by a multitude of factors, the most important key areas being failure to provide defendants with high quality legal representation, high costs of filing complaints and informal justice (10). In general, those people in power are able to ignore the law and do whatever they please. **Ethnic minorities?? Land evictions and concessions.**

Table 9a: Social Status and Equal Treatment.

	Social status using ten-point scale for respondents to place family.						
Everyone is treated equally by the government.	Very high (9~10)	Quite high (7~8)	Middle (5~6)	Quite low (3~4)	Very low (1~2)	CC/D A	Total
Agree	0.8	6.5	32.2	19.0	7.4	0.0	659 (65.9%)
Disagree	0.1	2.9	14.1	11.9	3.8	0.0	328 (32.8%)

DU/CC/DA	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.1	13 (1.3%)
Total	9 (0.9%)	94 (9.4%)	470 (47.0%)	312 (31.2%)	114 (11.4%)	1 (0.1%)	1000 (100%)

When looking at different self-rated social groups, respondents with a low social status tend to disagree more often than respondents with a high social status. The self-rated social status is a subjective measure and does not have a linear relationship with household income. When comparing self-rated social status with income, 21% of the respondents with a household income of more than \$1250 per month rate themselves as having a low social status, while 60% consider themselves as average and only 19% acknowledges to be in the upper part of the social ladder.

Table 9b: Social Status and Basic Needs.

People need basic necessities like food, clothes and shelter.	Social status using ten-point scale for respondents to place family.						
	Very high (9~10)	Quite high (7~8)	Middle (5~6)	Quite low (3~4)	Very low (1~2)	CC/DA	Total
Agree	0.9	8.8	42.5	27.5	10.2	0.0	899 (89.9%)
Disagree	0.0	0.5	4.1	2.9	1.0	0.0	85 (8.5%)
DU/CC/DA	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.2	1.0	16 (1.6%)
Total	9 (0.9%)	94 (9.4%)	470 (47.0%)	312 (31.2%)	114 (11.4%)	1 (0.1%)	1000 (100%)

Several statistics and reports are stating that approximately 30% of the Cambodians have to survive on less than one dollar a day (ref ??). The struggle of people to sustain in their basic needs is also confirmed by the major problems they defined. An overwhelming number of respondents mentioned basic necessities as most important problem of the country. This is partly due to the recently increase in price of food and other staple goods such as rice and fuel. The inflation rate of December 2007 was 10.8% (from which 8.5% was accounted to food price inflation) compared to an inflation of 2.8% in 2006 (IMF).

Responsiveness

Most important problems facing Cambodia according to the respondents in order of importance were lack of basic necessities, corruption, security, land issues and infrastructure (not equal to PACT). 10% of the respondents believe Cambodia does not have any problem. A majority of respondents who identified a problem thinks that the government is capable of solving the

problem within the next five years (see Table 10). Cross tabulation of solving a problem and responsiveness of the government indicates a weak positive link. Government's willingness and ability to address people's concerns depends on institutional factors and the nature of the political party system. Lack of resources, abuse of public funds and predominantly short term planning have a negative impact. Complaints regarding unfair budget allocations over ministries, no transparency in budgets and expenditures as well as under expenditure are frequent.

Table 10: Evaluation of System Responsiveness.

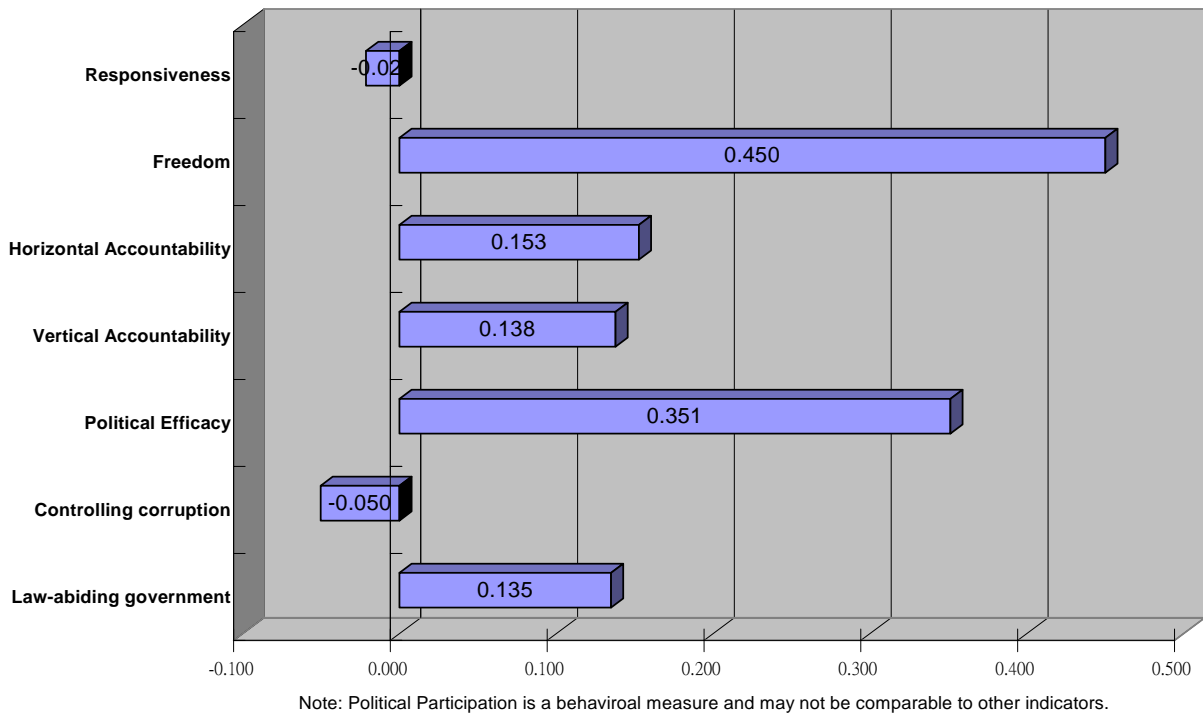
How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?						
How well do you think the government responds to what people want?	Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	NA/CC/D A	Total
Very responsive	3.8	3.6	1.0	0.6	2.1	111 (11.1%)
Largely responsive	5.7	17.7	4.7	3.3	6.8	382 (38.2%)
Not very responsive	4.3	15.6	7.6	8.1	7.8	433 (43.3%)
Not responsive at all	0.1	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.3	57 (5.7%)
DU/CC	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.7	17 (1.7%)
Total	139 (13.9%)	389 (38.8%)	151 (15.1%)	135 (13.5%)	187 (18.7%)	1000 (100%)

In general, Asian citizens are not convinced that the government responds well to their needs, but slightly more than half of them have some trust in the capacity of the government to solve the most important problems of the country. Thus there is more faith in problem solving skills of the government compared to their responsiveness towards citizens.

Summary quality assessment

The quality of democracy in Cambodia appears to be acceptable, since most indicators of governance have a positive score, except for responsiveness and corruption (see Figure 1). Strongest points of the current regime are freedom and political efficacy. However, in the previous chapter it was shown that not all findings of individual questions seem to be reliable. Summary scores will not reduce this reliability, so the results should be interpreted with caution. No information is available for the indicators of competition, electoral participation, political interest and equality since the questions were left out of the survey.

Figure 1: Summary of Quality Assessment.



Quality of governance and regime legitimacy

Satisfaction democracy

- negative correlation vertical accountability, but not significant
- law abiding government and no corruption major impact, followed by responsiveness and country’s economic condition
- compared to other Asian countries (study Yu-Han Chu), except participation all other correlations are positive and significant with controlling corruption and responsiveness as major threat for dissatisfaction with democracy. Cambodian results more or less correspond with these findings.

Support Democracy

- no strong correlations, only responsiveness and personal economic condition seem to play a role.
- other Asian countries all correlations are significant and positive (study Yu-Han Chu), supporting the view that perceived properties of democracy do influence the support for democracy.

Authoritarianism

- mostly negative correlations, except for personal economic condition. When livelihood of individuals is perceived as satisfactory, people are inclined to prefer democracy over an authoritarian regime.
- Respondents are less likely to detach from an authoritarian regime when countries economic condition is bad, political efficacy is low, corruption is high and freedom is suppressed (how to explain??). Detachment of authoritarian regime only possible when people have the impression that the political and economical situation is getting worse, so a change of regime is needed to prevent further deterioration.

Best for the country

- law abiding government , controlling corruption, freedom and responsiveness are enforcing the choice of the current regime above other possibilities. Country's economic condition plays a less important, but also significant role

Table 12: Quality of Democratic Governance and Regime Legitimacy.

	Satisfaction with Democracy	Support for Democracy	Detachment from Authoritarianism	Best for Our Country
Rule of Law				
Law-abiding government	0.31**	0.025	-0.10**	0.23**
Controlling corruption	0.31**	0.04	-0.14**	0.22**
Competition	-	-	-	-
Participation				
Electoral participation	-	-	-	-
Political Interest	-	-	-	-
Political efficacy	0.02	0.04	-0.22	-0.01
Vertical Accountability	-0.35	0.02	-0.04	0.03
Horizontal Accountability	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.03
Freedom	0.16**	-0.2	-0.14**	0.20**
Equality	-	-	-	-
Responsiveness	0.30**	0.08**	-0.08**	0.27**
Country's Economic Condition	0.235**	0.043	-0.72*	0.127**
Personal Economic Condition	0.108**	0.065*	0.120**	0.032

Legitimacy democracy, political goods versus materialist goods

Corruption and responsiveness are very important for consolidation of democracy, but unfortunately lacking in the Cambodian regime as shown in figure 1. Two other political goods, freedom and responsiveness are important to support democracy and are also the strongest positive governance indicators of the current regime, showing that Cambodia is heading towards the right direction.

In Cambodia performance of the government is strongly correlated with the economic situation of the country and well-being of individuals. It can not be said whether political goods are more or less important compared to materialism for regime legitimacy.

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Annex

Annex 1 Sample design by strata and province with number of households.

Region/Province	Frame			Sample Allocation			
	Urban	Rural	Total	Allocated	PSUs ⁵	SSUs	TSUS& FSUs
Cambodia	393,438	2,160,862	2,554,300	1,000	125	250	1,000
Phnom Penh	171,301	12,718	184,019	72	9	18	72
Plains Region	66,271	1,042,337	1,108,608	434	54	108	432
Kampong Cham	18,090	341,660	359,750	140.8	18	36	144
Kandal	35,806	203,030	238,836	93.5	12	24	96
Prey Veang	6,760	219,675	226,435	88.6	11	22	88
Svay Rieng	3,438	107,988	111,426	43.6	5	10	40
Takaev	2,177	169,984	172,161	67.4	8	16	64
Tonle Sap Region	101,783	704,446	806,229	316	39	78	312
Banteay Mean Chey	32,286	100,374	132,660	51.9	6	12	48
Bat Dambang	23,857	161,808	185,665	72.7	9	18	72
Kampong Chhnang	7,363	85,446	92,809	36.3	4	8	32
Kampong Thum	6,135	119,336	125,471	49.1	6	12	48
Krong Pailin	2,480	10,057	12,537	4.9	1	2	8
Otdar Mean Chey	3,274	32,141	35,415	13.9	2	4	16
Pousat	5,334	70,190	75,524	29.6	4	8	32
Siem Reab	21,054	125,094	146,148	57.2	7	14	56
Coastal Region	30,054	149,458	179,512	70	9	18	72
Kampot	8,671	106,090	114,761	44.9	6	12	48
Kaoh Kong	6,859	19,329	26,188	10.3	1	2	8
Krong Kaeb	905	5,964	6,869	2.7	0	0	0
Krong Preah Sihanouk	13,619	18,075	31,694	12.4	2	4	16
Plateau and Mountain Region	24,029	251,903	275,932	108	14	28	112
Kampong Spueu	9,397	126,436	135,833	53.2	7	14	56
Kratie	6,831	50,356	57,187	22.4	3	6	24
Mondol Kiri	811	9,442	10,253	4.0	1	2	8
Preah Vihear	1,760	27,308	29,068	11.4	1	2	8
Rotanak Kiri	2,522	22,349	24,871	9.7	1	2	8
Stueng Traeng	2,708	16,012	18,720	7.3	1	2	8

⁵ PSU=primary sampling unit, SSU=secondary sampling unit, TSU=tertiary sampling unit, FSU=fourth sampling unit.