

More Than Meets the Eye Behind Cambodia's Growing Unrest

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The Cambodian people undoubtedly face a tyrannical regime, but US-backed opposition will bring nation only deeper into despair and destitution.

Protests growing in both Thailand and neighboring Cambodia may at first look very similar. Both are against supposedly "elected governments," but both nations are clearly run by illegitimate dictatorships. Both nations have streets filled with growing numbers of dissatisfied people who are increasingly putting pressure on their respective regimes, lead by one or several opposition parties. And both seek reformed elections.

However, one is heavily backed by the United States' faux-democracy promoters and offers only further despair and destitution, while the other is heavily opposed by the US and other Western interests, but if successful will restore order to a nation hindered by political instability for years.

Cambodia's Dictator-for-Life: Hun Sen



Image: Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra & Cambodia's Hun Sen – two despots with deplorable human rights records coddled by the West for their shameless selling-out of their respective nations to the Fortune 500.

The Cambodian people have lived under the tyrannical rule of dictator-for-life Hun Sen for several decades. His "People's Power Party" has seen uninterrupted rule for over a quarter of a century. In 1997, when last Hun Sen lost an election, he [butchered and exiled his opposition](#) in a bloody military coup.

Those who failed to flee, according to Human Rights Watch, [were brutally tortured and](#)

[murdered](#). Since then, he has presided over a tragically failed state, the victim of the Khmer Rouge, [of whom Hun Sen was a participating member](#), and since then squatted upon by his regime and a large collection of foreign backers.

He is by far one of the most detestable politicians alive on Earth, yet his utility to the West has provided him so far an international media blackhole in which his crimes and atrocities have been hidden for decades.

This can be explained by the literal selling-out of Cambodia from under the feet of its own people, by Hun Sen to foreign corporate-financier interests.

In the Guardian's 2008 article titled, "[Country for sale](#)," it is reported that:

Almost half of Cambodia has been sold to foreign speculators in the past 18 months – and hundreds of thousands who fled the Khmer Rouge are homeless once more.

The Guardian further elaborated:

Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) have, in effect, put the country up for sale. Crucially, they permit investors to form 100% foreign-owned companies in Cambodia that can buy land and real estate outright – or at least on 99-year plus 99-year leases. No other country in the world countenances such a deal. Even in Thailand and Vietnam, where similar land speculation and profiteering are under way, foreigners can be only minority shareholders.

Today, the Cambodian military is literally being [sold off to foreign interests](#) now possessing wide swaths of land as mercenary forces to crush any local opposition.

Surely displacing millions, and selling land out from under people is criminal, and an affront to humanity. But strangely enough, this story goes largely unreported, the UN remains eerily silent, and in fact, the United States, as of 2010 has begun training many of the most notorious land-grabbing military units involved in this ongoing atrocity. Indeed, [Operation Angkor Sentinel](#) kicked off in July 2010 as US Army troops trained with the local Cambodian troops. The United States [shamelessly defended](#) the exercises claiming that:

"Our military relationship is about ... working toward effective defence reform, toward encouraging the kind of civil-military relationship that is essential to any healthy political system."

While the US' training of Cambodian troops in and of itself does not directly indicate a conspiracy, it positions the US military well for any current or future operations that may be undertaken in support of the [US-backed regime in neighboring Thailand](#). And of course, there is Hun Sen's stalwart support of the US-backed regime in Thailand, namely the regime of Thaksin Shinawatra.

Back-to-back failed insurrections by Thaksin in 2009 and 2010, after a military coup that ousted Thaksin from power in 2006, saw many of his political allies flee to neighboring Cambodia.

In addition to harboring members of Thaksin's political machine, Hun Sen went as far as appointing Thaksin himself [as a "government adviser on the economy,"](#) in an attempt to bolster his lack of legitimacy.

Amongst those who fled to Cambodia after the 2009-2010 violence was Jakrapob Penkair, a leader of Thaksin's so-called "red shirt" mob. In an Asia Times report titled, "[Plots seen in Thaksin's Cambodia gambit,](#)" it was stated that:

Before going into exile, Jakrapob told this correspondent that the UDD had clandestinely moved small arms from Cambodia to Thaksin's supporters in Thailand's northeastern region, where the exiled premier's popularity runs strongest. He told other news agencies that the UDD was willing to launch an "armed struggle" to achieve its goals, which included the toppling of the government and restoration of Thaksin's power.

The report went on to describe possible scenarios for an increasingly militarized attempt by Thaksin to eliminate his enemies, a cue assuredly taken from Hun Sen's bloody exploits.

But now the cozy relationship between Hun Sen and the West appears to be changing. Growing protests on the streets of Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh are starting to poke holes of light into the darkness Hun Sen's decades' spanning crime spree enjoyed. The Western media is still granting his regime an undeserved benefit of the doubt, despite the opposition's overwhelming backing by the West. This may indicate current protests are punitive and not designed to unseat him, quite yet.

Cambodia's US-Backed Opposition

Like all of America's proxy "strongmen," there are occasionally instances where they are "too strong" and independent to be of much utility to the West. Guiding these regimes back into line with Western interests (or if all else fails, overthrowing them) is the job of US-funded "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) posing as human rights organizations, independent media fronts, or pro-democracy advocates. In reality, these "NGOs" are none of these. They are simply echo chambers and funding conduits for Western interests to manifest themselves within a targeted nation.



Image: A visual representation of the National Endowment for Democracy's corporate-financier ties found across their Board of Directors. [Far from "human rights advocates,"](#) they are instead simply leveraging such issues to disguise what is in reality corporate-financier hegemonic expansion.

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The primary source of funding comes from the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The progressive-sounding organization [is in fact chaired by a consortium of pro-war, big business, corporate-financier interests.](#) They simply use "democracy promotion" as a guise behind which they couch their true agenda - "free trade" and "economic liberalization" which are just euphemisms for the wholesale exploitation and domination of markets, people, society, and government - in other words [the modern equivalent of imperialism.](#)



.Image: Cambodia's opposition leader, US-backed Sam Rainsy. Whether he or Hun Sen loses, US corporate-financier interests ultimately win.

In Cambodia, opposition leader Sam Rainsy has been a regular visitor and collaborator with the US NED and its various subsidiaries. He [was a participant in NED's "World Movement for Democracy" \(WMD\) Second Assembly](#) in 2000 and again [in 2010 for the Sixth Assembly](#). His opposition movement, and current protests in the streets are receiving support from NED-funded "human rights" advocates like the [Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee](#) and the [Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#).

Cambodia Daily's 2002 article, "[Role of US Political Group Stirs Controversy](#)," would detail further the meddling nature of US-funded NGO's in Cambodia on behalf of Mr. Rainsy's political front.

In NED's November 2011 post titled, "[New Strategies for Democracy Promotion](#)" regarding the "Meeting of the Alliance of Democrats," NED president Carl Gershman stated:

I'll never forget when Sam Rainsy visited NED last February, soon after the fall of Mubarak. There was a distinct gleam in his eyes when he said, "They showed that it can be done." Indeed, they did, and the Arab Spring will inspire others in regions far from the Middle East never to give up hope.

Of course, the so-called "Arab Spring" was revealed by the New York Times itself as a US-funded region-wide regime change operation couched behind fictitious "grassroots uprisings." In its 2011 article titled, "[U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings](#)," it stated:

The money spent on these programs was minute compared with efforts led by the Pentagon. But as American officials and others look back at the uprisings of the Arab Spring, they are seeing that the United States' democracy-building campaigns played a bigger role in fomenting protests than was previously known, with key leaders of the movements having been trained by the Americans in campaigning, organizing through new media tools and monitoring elections.

A number of the groups and individuals directly involved in the revolts and reforms sweeping the region, including the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and grass-roots activists like Entsar Qadhi, a youth leader in Yemen, received training and financing from groups like the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House, a nonprofit human rights organization based in Washington, according to interviews in recent weeks and American diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks.

The work of these groups often provoked tensions between the United States and many Middle Eastern leaders, who frequently complained that their leadership was being undermined, according to the cables.

The Republican and Democratic institutes are loosely affiliated with the Republican and Democratic Parties. They were created by Congress and are financed through the National Endowment for Democracy, which was set up in 1983 to channel grants for promoting democracy in developing nations. The National Endowment receives about \$100 million annually from Congress. Freedom House also gets the bulk of its money from the American government, mainly from the State Department.

Clearly, Cambodia's Sam Rainsy imagines himself riding back into power upon a wave of US-funded sedition. A look at the despotic regimes installed in the wake of the US-backed "Arab Spring" not only reveals the disingenuous nature of America's "democracy promotion" worldwide, but is a cautionary tale to opposition movements in other nations who seek to fight real oppression with cash and leaders supplied by the disingenuous US National Endowment for Democracy.

Cambodians Must Purge US-Backed Elements From Opposition To Truly Take Back Nation

Thailand has never been colonized by a Western nation and possess many strong, independent, indigenous institutions which are contributing to [their fight against the Wall Street-backed regime of Thaksin Shinawatra](#). Cambodia on the other hand was under French colonial rule before being utterly destroyed by the US-backed genocidal Khmer Rouge. Millions would perish, the concept of property abolished, and ancient Khmer institutions decimated and scattered.

Today, there is little left the Cambodian people can call independent institutions with which to fight Hun Sen. In this void, the US has created its faux-NGOs. This will ensure that no matter how many people join the fight, in the end it will be US-dominated institutions bent to the will of the corporate-financier interests that created them, that prevail.

The exploitation at the hands of Hun Sen will simply continue, or even expand under another Western puppet, and the Cambodian people will only have further entombed their national sovereignty.

Before they continue with their genuine struggle against the tyranny of Hun Sen, they must either co-opt and sever the foreign links of the US-backed institutions currently leading and supporting protests, or they must expose and purge these institutions before creating truly free and independent institutions with which to carry on their struggle. A "non-governmental organization" funded by the US is not truly "non-governmental." It is merely a US government organization - and ultimately holds US interests at heart - not those of the

Cambodian people.

Cambodia's Struggle in a Thai Context

For Thais watching Cambodians struggle against Hun Sen, there are several factors that must be considered.

Hun Sen's so-far unswerving complicity with Western interests has clearly taken a turn for the worse. Was it simply his neglect of Western directives in exchange for a closer relationship with China that tipped off this latest round of US-backed destabilization? Or was Hun Sen asked to cross a line in support of US-backed Thaksin Shinawatra he was unwilling to cross? If calm is quickly restored to the streets of Phnom Penh, the West may have succeeded in coaxing him across - and in that case Thailand must brace for a counter stroke on Thaksin's behalf that may have covert Cambodian military muscle behind it.

The danger of allowing foreign-funded NGOs into your opposition should also be noted by Thais. Thaksin Shinawatra's regime has so far enjoyed the exclusive benefit of US NED's support with [pro-regime propagandist Prachatai receiving millions of baht a year from Washington](#) to carry out its seditious work, and with [Thaksin Shinwatra's "red shirt" leaders being welcomed by NED in Washington DC](#) just ahead of general elections in 2011.



Image: It appears that Thailand's anti-regime protesters know exactly who they are dealing with. While it is easier in speeches and sound bites to describe Thaksin Shinawatra and his hereditary dictatorship as the central source of Thailand's problems, it is well understood among protesters that a vast network of foreign-funded NGOs are propping up the Shinawatra regime. Freedom House, for instance, [lists as a trustee Kenneth Adelman](#), who concurrently served [as Thaksin's lobbyist](#). Pro-

regime news website [Prachatai, is directly funded by US State Department NGOs](#) such as [the National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#). You will not see the above phrase painted across police barriers in Cambodia, as the current protests are led by these very US-funded NGOs.

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The success and uniquely positive attributes of the current Thai protests are [their true grassroots, indigenous nature](#). The scorn they receive from across the Western press is an indictment of their independence from Wall Street and London and the fact that protesters are truly pursuing what is in their and their nation's best interests, not the interests of the Fortune 500. This is a strength that should be jealously protected and enhanced. To understand the value of independent national institutions, one only needs look to Cambodia and the hopeless nature of their struggle, where foreign interests will prevail overall regardless of whether protesters or Hun Sen's regime win in the streets.

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