



Royal University of Law and Economics

Final Report on

**Cambodia as a Chairmanship of
ASEAN in 2022:
(Challenges and Opportunities)**

Name of Students:

Ms. KUCH PHALLEN

Ms. PREY SOCHEAT

Name of Academic Advisor:

Ms. LY MOUY

International Program

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Cohort 9

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ABSTRACT

The active involvement in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been an important part of Cambodia's foreign policy. Since Cambodia has joined and admitted to be tenth member of ASEAN in 1999, Cambodia has put its effort to be an active and constructive actor for ASEAN community. Even though the country is considered to be a developing country with a low-income economy, the gap in development among ASEAN members does not separate ASEAN member states from one another. Instead, under the motto of ASEAN "One Vision, One Identity, One Community", ASEAN members have gathered together as one and committed to make South East Asia grow in solidarity. In terms of ASEAN motto, ASEAN has established its own rule to provide opportunity to each member of ASEAN to take turns being a chairmanship of ASEAN that is to host the main meeting of ASEAN which is called ASEAN Summit.

Cambodia has served as ASEAN chairmanship for two times already which happened firstly in 2002 and secondly in 2012. The first chairmanship of ASEAN in 2002 was very challenging for Cambodia since it was a new experience for this young country to overcome and struggle. Although Cambodia had never been a chair for ASEAN before, Cambodia had made some accomplishments for ASEAN during the time of its chair. The first experience of being a chair of ASEAN would be taken as a lesson for itself in the preparation to host another chairmanship in the next round. However, when it came to the next round for Cambodia to be a chairmanship of ASEAN in 2012, Cambodia had done a great job which led Cambodia to grow its reputation on the international stage. Throughout the history of being a chairmanship, Cambodia would take a chance to learn from its previous experience as well as the mistakes that it had made during the previous years in order to make it better for the next term of chairmanship in the third time which will happen in 2022. Nobody can predict what the next

chairmanship looks like, but regarding the experiences that Cambodia has met would make the country more mature and tougher in becoming ready to be the chair of ASEAN. The year of 2022 is just around the corner and it would be the year of ASEAN history in which there is a challenge for not only the ASEAN members but also the countries around the world to overcome and solve together. The upcoming year will be an unforgettable year for Cambodia and also be an opportunity for Cambodia to show its leadership in the international community.

For these reasons, this thesis is conducted mainly to discuss and construct knowledge about the challenges and opportunities that Cambodia will face during the year of being a chairmanship in 2022. The thesis is divided into parts: (1) The introduction which consists of Background of ASEAN, scope, research problem, research questions, literature review, and research methodology. (2) Chapter one is written about the history of Cambodia as a chairmanship of ASEAN in 2002 and 2012. (3) Chapter two is written about the challenges that Cambodia would face during its ASEAN chairmanship in 2022. (4) Chapter three is written about the opportunities that Cambodia would have during the ASEAN chairmanship in 2022. (5) The last part comprises a conclusion which summarizes key research findings in response to the research questions. Finally, there is a recommendation section incorporating possible suggestions concerning what Cambodia would do for its preparation for the ASEAN chairmanship in 2022.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	: Association of South East Asian Nations
AEC	: ASEAN Economic Community
APSC	: ASEAN Political and Security Community
ASCC	: ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
FDI	: Foreign Direct Investment
DOC	: Declaration on the Conducts of the Parties of the South China Sea
GMS	: Greater Mekong Sub-region
FACEC	: Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Co-Operation
AHRD	: ASEAN Human Rights Declaration
ARDEVW	: ASEAN Region and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
ARMAC	: ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre
ERW	: Explosive Remnants of War
RCEP	: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RCEP	: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
AMM	: ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting

INTRODUCTION

Background of ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN.¹ This special organization is created in the purpose of making countries in the region become united as one in all visions. The main visions of ASEAN have been established as ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Although, ASEAN consists of many differences between its different members in terms of cultures, religions, regimes, and economic status, ASEAN still plays an important role in keeping every member together as its motto in which ASEAN is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”².

The kingdom of Cambodia is the tenth member of ASEAN. Cambodia joined ASEAN on 30 April 1999.³ Back in history, before being admitted as ASEAN member, Cambodia had many incidents which led to regime changes. After the political reform in 1998, Cambodia was backed by Vietnam and Laos to be admitted as a member of ASEAN. Although Cambodia is recognized as a low-income country in the region, Cambodia has been expected to benefit more from the cooperation with international countries.⁴ Throughout the official announcement of

¹ Lindsay Maizland and Eleanor Albert, “What Is ASEAN?,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 24, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-asean>.

² Sisingamangaraja Jalan, “ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN),” NTI, March 26, 2019, <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

ASEAN to become the 10th member, Cambodia has gradually reinforced itself from a low developing country to a medium developing country in the near future. Moreover, ASEAN has been a key factor to strengthen Cambodia's economic growth. Cambodia has also since then been seen as an investment-friendly environment due to the geographical advantage, the extension of partnership to regional and international cooperation, including being an ASEAN member in 1999 and the World Trade Organization in 2004 respectively, as well as many other bilateral agreements with other countries. According to the World Bank (2019), the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Cambodia constantly increased from USD 118 million in 2000 to about USD 2.7 billion in 2017.⁵

Last but not least, Cambodia, a small country in the region, will be ready to be responsible for its role in ASEAN as well as to overcome any challenges in the upcoming events in the future.

Statement of Problem

The Kingdom of Cambodia had successfully been ASEAN chair for two times already. The chairmanship itself had brought both advantages and disadvantages for Cambodia in the history. Actually, during the time of 2002 and 2012 when it was the time to host ASEAN chairmanship, Cambodia, which was a poor country in ASEAN had been through a tough time in which Cambodia had to struggle with many issues to reach ASEAN vision.

It cannot be denied that when it comes to the Cambodia ASEAN chairman in 2022, Cambodia will face many serious challenges but at the same time there will be opportunities for Cambodia as well.

This research paper is conducted to state challenges and opportunities that Cambodia as a chairmanship in 2022 will encounter.

⁵ Pich Charadine, "*Cambodia Within ASEAN: Twenty-Years in the Making*" (Phnom Penh: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020), 16.

Research Question

- The main research question that the paper focuses on is:

“What are the Challenges and opportunities for Cambodia to be the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2022?”

- The paper will also be focusing on the bellowing sub-research question:

“What strategies should Cambodia prepare for ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022?” or

“How should Cambodia prepare for ASEAN chairmanship in 2022?”

Research Objective

This research paper aims to analyze and understand Cambodia's role as an ASEAN chair for twice, the first time in 2002 and the second time in 2012. As well as to acknowledge and learn from the past experience how Cambodia has faced challenges and the outcome of the ASEAN Summit. Essentially, to know how Cambodia will be Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2022: the challenges Cambodia will face, and what the opportunities will Cambodia get from it, and what should Cambodia get ready for a Strategies for the event.

Research Methodology

Based on the aim and objectives of research, qualitative research design is applied for this type of research. Qualitative research is generally defined as non-numerical and descriptive which is used to investigate any phenomenon in societies in order to get detailed information from participants (Crossman, 2020). Moreover, collected data are mostly formed in words and sentences.

In this research, the method that is used to gather information is secondary data collection such as data collecting through sources such as journals, books, and previous studies which have been already published by the others. Moreover, some information is also retrieved from social media, websites along with other Internet sources.

Literature Review

According to literature reviews, there are several journals, research papers, articles, which discuss the chairmanship of ASEAN. In this sense, the literature review refers to the sources that are reliable and trustworthy which are written by the professional authors or scholars. However, regarding the topic of Cambodia as ASEAN Chairmanship, there are some previous researches that are not entirely focused on the topic but are pertinent to the field.

First of all, there is an article ‘Thirty-Seventh ASEAN Summit: Expectations and Challenges’ written by S D Pradhan who has served as chairman of India's Joint Intelligence Committee. He has also been the country's deputy national security adviser and a chairman of the Task Force on Intelligence Mechanism (2008-2010).⁶ In his article, he had written about the challenges and expectations that had happened in the time of Vietnam as ASEAN Chair in 2020. Moreover, he also mentioned about the 37th summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and related meetings slated to be held via video link from 12th to 15th of November in 2020. Secondly, there is another article which is ‘Challenges and Priorities for Cambodian Chairmanship in ASEAN 2022’ written by the Embassy of Republic of Indonesia in Phnom Penh of Cambodia.⁷ It had examined about priorities and challenges that Cambodia is going to face as ASEAN Chair in 2022. Additionally, it had also presented useful information on the focus of the Cambodian Chairmanship in ASEAN 2022 to strengthen the identity of the ASEAN Community.

⁶ SD Pradhan, “Thirty-Seventh ASEAN Summit: Expectations and Challenges,” The Times of India, November 12, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/ChanakyaCode/thirty-seventh-asean-summit-expectations-and-challenges/>.

⁷ KBRI, “Challenges and Priorities for Cambodian Chairmanship in ASEAN 2022,” The Embassy of Republic of Indonesia in Phnom Penh of Cambodia, June 10, 2021, <https://kemlu.go.id/phnompenh/en/news/13736/challenges-and-priorities-for-cambodian-chairmanship-in-asean-2022>.

Throughout the previous articles that we have mentioned earlier are all related to ASEAN and especially ASEAN chairmanship. All of each, is related to the area that we are going to investigate. However, our thesis will be further discussed about the ASEAN chairmanship but in the time of Cambodia in 2022, in which the information will be updated on the previous research. Finally, the thesis is aimed to examine the challenges and opportunities of Cambodia as ASEAN chairmanship in 2022.

CHAPTER 1: CAMBODIA HISTORICAL AS AN ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP

The Kingdom of Cambodia became a member of ASEAN in the late 1990s after the establishment of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) following the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1997.⁸ Although the Kingdom of Cambodia is the youngest member among the members of ASEAN, Cambodia has participated actively in ASEAN community. Since the year of 1999, the year we attended the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, we were given opportunities to role as a chairmanship of ASEAN who was being as spokesperson for the ten members in regional organization, being 'chief executive' in chairing and facilitating official meetings and task forces, and tabling new initiatives and programmed to advance regional cooperation.⁹

The Chairmanship of ASEAN shall rotate annually based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.¹⁰ A Member State assuming the Chairmanship shall chair the ASEAN Summit and related summits, the ASEAN Coordinating Council, the three ASEAN Community Councils, relevant ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies and senior officials, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives – Article 31 of the ASEAN Charter. In each chairmanship, ASEAN member who hosts the ASEAN chair has to hold ASEAN summit which is the highest policy-making body in ASEAN comprising the Heads of State or Government of ASEAN Member States.¹¹ The first ASEAN summit was held in Bali, Indonesia on 23-24 February 1976 which successfully signed “The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of Southeast Asia’ by members of ASEAN in the purpose of developing fruitful relations and mutually

⁸ *Supra* note 5.

⁹ “ASEAN Summit,” Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://asean.org/about-us/asean-summit/>.

¹⁰ “ASEAN Chair,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, accessed June 10, 2021, [ASEAN Chair - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation \(mfaic.gov.kh\)](https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/ASEAN-Chair-Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-and-International-Cooperation)

¹¹ “Cambodia Chairmanship,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/Page/2021-04-01-Cambodia-s-Chairmanship>.

beneficial cooperation.¹² After the adoption of ASEAN Charter in 2008, the ASEAN Summit Meetings shall be held twice annually at a time to be determined by the Chair of the ASEAN Summit in consultation with other ASEAN Member States, to be hosted by the ASEAN Member State holding the ASEAN Chairmanship. The meetings shall be convened by ASEAN members and ASEAN external partners which accordingly conducted firstly in April or May and secondly conducted in October or November of the year. However, Cambodia was responsible for being ASEAN Chairmanship for two times already, which firstly was in 2002 and the another one was in 2012.¹³

1.1. Cambodia as an ASEAN Chairmanship in 2002

During its first chairmanship, Cambodia had conducted the ASEAN Summit for the first time on 4th November 2002, located in Phnom Penh. It was the 8th ASEAN summit following the 6th ASEAN+3 Summit and a separate of China and ASEAN which was organized by Cambodia Institute for Coordination and Peace after the 7th ASEAN Summit which is Three ASEAN + 1 Summits in Brunei Darussalam on th6 November 2001.¹⁴

Although Cambodia had just experienced being a chair of ASEAN for the first time after it had been admitted to be a member of ASEAN in 1999, Cambodia had attempted to put its effort to make ASEAN grow and reach the goal in terms of economic and political development.

Throughout the chair of ASEAN, Cambodia had prepared an agenda for the ASEAN summit under the main 4 themes such as following:

¹² Kishore Mahbubani, Jeffery Sng, *The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 54.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE 8TH ASEAN SUMMIT, THE 6TH ASEAN + 3 SUMMIT AND THE ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed June 11, 2021, [MOFA: PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE 8TH ASEAN SUMMIT, THE 6TH ASEAN + 3 SUMMIT AND THE ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT](#)

- Collaboration with the Greater Mekong subregion program to accelerate ASEAN integration: The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is a sub-regional economic cooperation which is one of the Mekong Cooperation Framework. The GMS framework consists of six countries which are The Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and the Republic of China (Yunnan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region).¹⁵ This framework was created in 1992 in the aim of enhancing economic relations among the countries with the support from Asian Development Bank. During the 8th summit, we reaffirmed the strategic value of developing the Greater Mekong Subregion as well as encouraged the accelerated implementation of the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asia Growth Area Initiative, known as BIMP-EAGA. Moreover, we also repeated the invitation of ASEAN to China to take part in the accelerated implementation of sub-regional development cooperation arrangements in addition to the GMS such as BIMP-EAGA and the Malaysia-Indonesia-Singapore growth triangle.¹⁶
- To form ASEAN as a single tourist destination: During the 8th summit of ASEAN chaired by the Kingdom of Cambodia, we had convinced the members of ASEAN to discuss making ASEAN as a single tourist destination. ASEAN had proposed an agreement related to tourism in order to promote high priority placed in tourism development.¹⁷
- ASEAN solidarity for peace and security, especially in the fight against terrorism: Regarding the 8th ASEAN summit, the chair had shown the grave concerns of the

¹⁵ “GREATER MEKONG,” World Wild Life, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/greater-mekong>.

¹⁶ “Mekong Cooperation Framework,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/Page/2021-02-08-Mekong-Cooperation-Framework>.

¹⁷ Vannarith, Chheang, Tourism and Regional Integration in Southeast Asia. PDF File. May, 2013, <https://www.wide.go.jp/library/English/Publish/Reports/Vrf/pdf/481.pdf>.

security and peace in the region by mentioning the worse situation happened in the middle east such as Iraq and Israel which caused a problem to international community.¹⁸

- Sustainable natural resources management including ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by all ASEAN member states: The chair of 8th ASEAN summit had also discussed the problems related to the environment, specifically focusing on the natural resource's management in the ASEAN countries. The meetings also mentioned The Kyoto Protocol which was adopted on 11 December 1997.¹⁹

1.1.1. Accomplishment of the 8th ASEAN Summit in 2002

The kingdom of Cambodia, for its first time being the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2002, had put its effort to work hard on the agenda of ASEAN in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the whole ASEAN.²⁰ Cambodia, in the name of ASEAN Chair, during that time, had represented all ASEAN members by leading the meeting which was called '8th ASEAN Summit'. As mentioned in the previous page, the meeting had successfully brought many achievements to ASEAN community.

As a result of the 8th ASEAN summit, Cambodia had made remarkable accomplishments by leading all the members of ASEAN to reach a few agreements as well as some declarations which were fruitful achievements for every member of ASEAN as following:

Declarations

- Join Declaration of the leaders of ASEAN and Japan on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Phnom Penh, 5 November 2002: The declaration on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership underlined by ASEAN and Japan under the desire to seek such economic

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *supra* note 14.

¹⁹ "Kyoto protocol, 2002 target status," GRID-Arendal, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.grida.no/resources/6874>.

²⁰ *Supra* note 5.

integration through the creation of economic partnerships and linkages by providing greater market opportunities to their economies, through the creation of larger and new markets and enabling the industries to enjoy bigger economies of scale, and that such partnership would bring about greater stability and prosperity to this region, nurturing a sense of community between ASEAN and Japan.²¹

- Join Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues, Phnom Penh, 4 November 2002: The declaration was published by ASEAN and China in the purpose of enhancing the mutual understanding, expand mutual benefit and consolidate and substantiate the partnership of good neighborliness and mutual trust.²²

- Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002): Most significantly, among the declarations of ASEAN during the 8th summit, ASEAN had reached a declaration on the issue of South China Sea which was participated by ASEAN members and the Republic of China. The declaration underlined the affirmation of the claimant countries and China on the commitment to enhance peace and stability by providing peaceful solutions respectively under principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and other universally recognized principles of international law which shall serve as the basic norms governing state-to-state relations.²³ The 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) was meant to prevent precisely the situation in which we find ourselves today. Signed with much fanfare, and hailed at the time as

²¹ "FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv0310/framework.html>.

²² "Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, accessed June 13, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/zcfg_1/t26290.htm.

²³ 2002 DECLARATION ON THE CONDUCT OF PARTIES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. PDF File. November 04, 2002. <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2002-Declaration-on-the-Conduct-of-Parties-in-the-South-China-Sea.pdf>.

a major breakthrough in the long-running dispute, the DOC shows parties pledging to promote “good neighborliness and mutual trust” so as to create a “peaceful, friendly and harmonious environment in the South China Sea.”²⁴

- Declaration on Terrorism by the 8th ASEAN Summit, Phnom Penh, 3 November 2002: The declaration underlined the call for the international community to support ASEAN’s efforts to combat terrorism and restore business confidence in the region. The declaration also mentioned the condemnation of the act of terrorist in countries of ASEAN members.²⁵

Agreements

- ASEAN Tourism Agreement, Phnom Penh, 4 November 2002: The agreement was signed by ASEAN member states in the purpose to strengthen the cooperation in tourism and the private sector in the light of enhancing the tourism industry among ASEAN member states.²⁶ Moreover, to complement the development and promote or upgrade ASEAN tourism as a single destination with a world-standard. By enhancing tourism ASEAN member states also can engage more deeply in tourism development with international community and to get more investment by doing the tourism service and facilitates.²⁷

- Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Co-Operation Between ASEAN and the People’s Republic of China, Phnom Penh, 5 November 2002: The agreement between ASEAN member states with China was to force a closer economic relation, to create a larger marketing link with greater chance, to reinforce intra-regional trade and investigation. Regarding the Framework on Economic Co-operation, it was an establishment of ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (“ASEAN-China FTA”) which was involved with a newer member state

²⁴ “ASEAN’s Failing Grade in the South China Sea,” The Asan Forum, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://theasanforum.org/aseans-failing-grade-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

²⁵ “DECLARATION ON TERRORISM BY THE 8TH ASEAN SUMMIT,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv0211/terro.html>.

²⁶ *Supra* note 14.

²⁷ *Supra* note 17.

of ASEAN namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam during the ASEAN-China Summit held on 6th November 2001 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam which has created the great relation and partnership with parties and to give an essential mechanism to build up the co-operation and subsidy economic stability in East Asia.²⁸

1.1.2. The Opportunity for Cambodia of the 8th ASEAN Summit in 2002

Though Cambodia was the last member who lacked experience of preparing such an event, Cambodia had done a great job by holding the meeting successfully and productively. Basically, Cambodia, which used to be an isolated country for many years after having the civil wars in the country many times, Cambodia had managed to recover itself from the injury, strengthening itself by participating in ASEAN.²⁹ During its chance of holding a position as the chair of ASEAN in 2002, Cambodia had got opportunities and benefits from the year of being a leader of ASEAN.

Manifestly, Cambodia had noticed the growth in economic and external relations. After the 8th ASEAN summit, it was recognized that its economy has been rising up year by year. The Agreement on Tourism by ASEAN in 2002, had brought Cambodia a great opportunity to be noticed in the international community which attracted more investments as well as the tourists from all around the world.³⁰ Since then, Tourism is a key area where Cambodia has been able to work with ASEAN over the years. The regional cooperation and integration process have contributed to the growth of the tourism industry because the ASEAN connectivity

²⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA*. PDF File. November 06, 2001. <https://arc-agreement.asean.org/file/doc/2015/03/framework-agreement-on-comprehensive-economic-co-operation-between-asean-and-the-people-s-republic-of-china.pdf>.

²⁹ *Supra* note 5.

³⁰ *Supra* note 17.

plan creates a favorable condition for air, maritime, and land transport connections and for the movement of tourists across the region.³¹

Moreover, from the ASEAN integration, ASEAN had provided benefits to Cambodia in terms of economy which helped narrow down the development gap between ASEAN members, contributing to gain more chances to make trades and investments with other countries. Research showed that when it comes to Cambodia's exports to the ASEAN market, these increased from a mere 4.3 percent of total exports in 2000 to 22.1 percent in 2017.³²

However, Cambodia joined ASEAN in 1999 and two years later it had to be a chairmanship, it was quite a challenge for Cambodia in terms of organizing and everything. Obviously, it can be seen that Cambodia had leaked of resources such as human resources as well as experiences. Cambodia had struggled to overcome the challenges even though it never faced such an event before. However, it could be a lesson for Cambodia to learn in order to prepare itself for the next chairmanship in 2012.³³

1.2. Cambodia as ASEAN Chairmanship in 2012

In 2012, Cambodia had another opportunity to be the chairmanship of ASEAN. It was such a great honor for Cambodia to be the representative to host ASEAN twenty first summit in the next ten years after it chaired for the first time in 2002. One remarkable change in this year of chairmanship according to ASEAN Charter in 2008, was that ASEAN summits had to be conducted two times a year which means that the Cambodia as ASEAN Chair had to place two meetings instead of once compared to the previous chairmanship in 2002.³⁴ According to

³¹ Chap Sotharith, *Country Reports: Cambodia*. PDF File. August 31, 2017. <https://www.eria.org/3.6.ASEAN50Vol3CountryReportsCambodia.pdf>.

³² "After 20 Years, Cambodia Has Reaped Benefits from ASEAN," Reporting ASEAN, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://www.reportingasean.net/20-years-cambodia-reaped-benefits-asean/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rodolfo C. Severino, "Cambodia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2012," EASTASIAFORUM, February 20, 2020, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/02/20/cambodia-s-asean-chairmanship-in-2012/>.

article 8 of ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Coordinating Council shall comprise the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and meet at least twice a year.³⁵ Accordingly, Cambodia held its first summit of the year on the 3rd of April which was joined by ASEAN members and another one on the 18th of November which was joined by ASEAN and external partners.³⁶ The twenty first ASEAN summit was held on 18th November 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, chaired by the head of government of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, joined by the head of state or the government of ASEAN-member states in order to discuss about the plenary and retreat sessions.³⁷

Under the theme of “ASEAN: One Community, one Destiny”, Cambodia had committed to enhance the unity of all members of ASEAN to reach ASEAN Community by 2015.

“By adopting the theme of 'ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny,' Cambodia will ascertain the continuity of the 3 pillars of ASEAN Community,” said, PM Hun Sen after receiving the ASEAN chairmanship gavel from Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.³⁸

Cambodia has set the commitment to achieve during its chair on six priorities such as the following:

- to continue efforts to build rule-based people-driven ASEAN Community
- to roll the roadmap to ASEAN Community 2009-2015
- to assure the implementation of action plan of Initiative for ASEAN Integrity (IAI) 2009-2015

³⁵ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *The ASEAN Charter*. PDF File. 2008. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>.

³⁶ “Outcomes of the 20th ASEAN Summit,” ERIA, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.eria.org/news-and-views/outcomes-of-the-20th-asean-summit/>.

³⁷ Vibhanshu Shekar, “21st ASEAN Summit 2012: Key Outcomes,” Indian Council of World Affairs, December 21, 2012, https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=4341&lid=3225.

³⁸ “Kingdom of Cambodia Assumes ASEAN Chairmanship for 2012,” Human Rights Resource Center, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://hrrca.org/kingdom-cambodia-assumes-asean-chairmanship-2012/>.

- to enhance the implementation of the 3 pillars blueprint
- to encourage efforts toward ASEAN Community post 2015
- to make progress in ASEAN cooperation with partners and other forums.³⁹

1.2.1. The Accomplishments of 21st ASEAN Summit 2012

ASEAN twenty first summit, chaired by The Kingdom of Cambodia in November 2012, had completed successfully with many rewarding conclusions.⁴⁰ Cambodia successfully adopted agreements and documents in 2012 to enhance ASEAN's credibility and cohesiveness. Surprisingly, at the time of being a chairman of ASEAN in 2012, Cambodia had successfully accomplished many significant outcomes. First of all, Cambodia had made ASEAN members reach consensus on adopting the agreements on the following documents:

- ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD): During the 21st ASEAN Summit, ASEAN members agreed on the adoption of Human Rights Declaration in which promoting human rights, including the Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region.⁴¹
- ASEAN Leaders' Joint Statement on the Establishment of an ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC): ASEAN members had mentioned about the establishment of ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) which underlined the presence of landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in the soil poses constant threats to the safety of the people and hinders national socio-economic development and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Supra* note 37.

⁴¹ ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration*. PDF File. February 2013. <http://hrrca.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012ASEANHuman-RightsDeclaration.pdf>.

aggravates humanitarian problems in many countries in the region as well as other parts of the world.⁴²

Moreover, Cambodia also led ASEAN to launch the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) between ASEAN and China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. Cambodia also managed to get the UK, the EU, and Brazil, the first country in Latin America, to accede to Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).⁴³ One noticeable thing during 21st ASEAN Summit, when Cambodia chaired ASEAN for the second time in 2012, ASEAN and China adopted a joint statement on the 10th anniversary of DOC in November, which reaffirms the importance of the DOC and also calls for relevant parties to refrain from any activities that could escalate the tension in the South China Sea.⁴⁴

1.2.2. The Opportunity for Cambodia of the 21st ASEAN Summit in 2012

The Kingdom of Cambodia, the tenth member of ASEAN, after a decade of its chairmanship in ASEAN, had got another opportunity to be a representative of ASEAN members again in 2012. During the time of membership, Cambodia has gained a lot of benefits from its chairmanship. First of all, Cambodia has gained its reputation on the international stage which makes Cambodia well-known not only in ASEAN region but also in other regions such as European region. It was a path to lead Cambodia into the wider world by getting a glance from other countries which would help reinforce Cambodia's economic growth. Cambodia has

⁴² Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *Chairman's Statement of the 21st ASEAN Summit*. PDF FILE. November 18, 2012. <https://asean.org/wpcontent/uploads/images/documents/Chairman%e2%80%99s%20Statement%20of%20the%2021st%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf>.

⁴³ Heng Sarith, "A job well done: Cambodia as ASEAN Chair in 2012," EASTASIAFORUM, January 19, 2013, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/01/19/a-job-well-done-cambodia-as-asean-chair-in-2012/>.

⁴⁴ "ASEAN-China workshop marks 10 years of DOC signing," Vietnam Plus, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/aseanchina-workshop-marks-10-years-of-doc-signing/39841.vnp>.

also since then been seen as an investment-friendly environment due to the geographical advantage, the extension of partnership to regional and international cooperation, including being an ASEAN member in 1999 and the World Trade Organization in 2004 respectively, as well as many other bilateral agreements with other countries.⁴⁵

1.2.3. The Failure for Cambodia of the 21st ASEAN Summit in 2012

On the other hand, during the chairmanship, Cambodia had met some challenges which were not solved in the year of 2012. Most significant, the case of the South China Sea had remained unsolved during the presidency of Cambodia.⁴⁶ The dispute was a sensible case which was a hard case for Cambodia to reach a solution for ASEAN members. There was no consensus among ASEAN members, especially the claimant states, which made it fail to issue the traditional **Joint Communiqué** at the 45th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) in July 2012.⁴⁷ Cambodia Foreign Minister Hor Namhong expressed regret at the discord within ASEAN, but said he “could not accept that the Joint Communique has become the hostage of the bilateral issue (between the Philippines and China. After that, Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, who played a key role trying to broker a compromise, expressed “deep, profound disappointment” at the lack of consensus within the bloc.⁴⁸ This problem had come with many critics in Cambodia saying that Cambodia has a big interest with china. Moreover, Cambodia failed to put Timor Leste to be a new member of ASEAN. The chairman’s statement had revealed that ASEAN leaders still had not reached a decision on Timor-Leste’s application for ASEAN membership.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Supra* note 5.

⁴⁶ *Supra* note 34.

⁴⁷ “Asean nations fail to reach agreement on South China Sea,” BBC News, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18825148>.

⁴⁸ Angela Goh, “ASEAN talks fail, no joint statement,” ASEAN Research and Advocacy, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://www.cariasean.org/news/asean-talks-fail-no-joint-statement/#.YSDUD44zbIU>.

⁴⁹ *Supra* note 36.

CHAPTER 2: CAMBODIA OPPORTUNITIES AS A CHAIRMANSHIP IN 2022

The Kingdom of Cambodia joined ASEAN for almost 2 decades since 1999. Cambodia had done ASEAN chairmanship twice already; its first time was 2002 and its second time was 2012. So far, Cambodia, a tiny country in the region, has acted actively in the role of ASEAN membership in order to reach the goal of the community. After being the chair of ASEAN in 2002 and 2012, Cambodia has learnt a lot from its own experience as well as other countries' experience and has been ready to prepare for the next round of its chairmanship. Soon, Cambodia will have an honor to host ASEAN chairmanship for its third time which will occur in 2022.

During the time of its next chairmanship, Cambodia will hold the ASEAN summit which is the 38th Summit after the rotating chair from Brunei in 2021.⁵⁰ The year of its third chairmanship of ASEAN will be the challenging year since Cambodia has to solve the issues happening in the region that have not been settled yet by Brunei chairmanship in 2021. Meanwhile, Cambodia will have many opportunities for its chairmanship which will be a bridge for Cambodia to be on the international stage.

During the chairmanship in 2022, Cambodia will have the following opportunities:

2.1. Diplomacy Promoted

As the 2022 ASEAN Chair, Cambodia will again have an opportunity to shape regional diplomacy. Cambodia was taken for granted during Cambodia's chaotic situations, when it was the time that Cambodia was in civil wars and especially the Pol Pot regime.⁵¹ Cambodia was an isolated country which had been ignored by other countries, but after the membership of

⁵⁰ Taing Rinith, "Brunei chairs ASEAN Chairmanship 2021," Khmer Times, January 04, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50800219/brunei-chairs-asean-chairmanship-2021/>.

⁵¹ *Supra* note 5.

ASEAN in 1999, Cambodia became one of the active roles in the region. After that, Cambodia foreign policy has been strengthened with the implementation of what called Cambodia's foreign policy grand strategy. Cambodia has put in a great deal of effort to upgrade its diplomatic relations with its nearest neighbors, ASEAN, and regional and global powers, in particular, China, Japan, and the US.⁵² For instance, Cambodia has strengthened its diplomacy by joining ASEM. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) since its inception has been viewed as a non-binding platform for not only fostering soft and hard connectivity between Asia and Europe but also enhancing relationship and cooperation in both continents for the spirit of equal partnership and mutual interests.⁵³ ASEM is also an important platform for Cambodia to make more friends and extend more cooperation with other state members based on reciprocal respect and mutual interests. The study contends that ASEM fits well into Cambodia's current foreign policy thanks largely to its characteristics and roles. More importantly, ASEM is compellingly regarded as an excellent venue to raise Cambodia's image in the international arena, to enhance her bilateral cooperation with other member states, to develop human resource, and to provide a vibrant connection linking Cambodia to other member states in both regions. It enables the kingdom to attain her foreign policy objectives of protection of national interests, sovereignty and independence, as well as of further integration into global and regional contexts.⁵⁴

Moreover, Cambodia will host the 13th ASEM Summit (ASEM 13) in physical form on November 25 and 26 in 2021.⁵⁵

⁵² Hor Robertand Pich Charadine, "Diplomatic Briefing," *New Decade, Old Challenges?* 1, no. 01 (May 2022): 6. <https://www.kas.de/documents/264850/8651571/Diplomatic+Briefing.pdf/23d25a0b-0351-26df-b2ee9e81da7c6c66?version=1.2&t=1591610840457>.

⁵³ "FOSTERING DIALOGUE & COOPERATION BETWEEN ASIA & EUROPE," ASEM Info Board, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://www.aseminfoboard.org/about/overview>.

⁵⁴ Un Samnang and Yen Samnang, *ASEM in the Eyes of Cambodia: A Key Diplomatic Option for Her Future Global and Regional Integration* (Phnom Penh: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020), 52.

⁵⁵ "13th ASEM Summit (ASEM13)," ASEM Info Board, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.aseminfoboard.org/events/13th-asem-summit-asem13>.

*“Organizing this summit in physical form is a great pride for Cambodia as it can show the world that Cambodia is the first country to host an international event (in physical form since the pandemic began) with leaders from Asia and Europe to talk together to solve global problems that affect the common benefit, especially Covid-19,”*⁵⁶

The Cambodian government has prioritized its efforts to improve Cambodian image and promote engagement within the region and the international communities. Nowadays, the Kingdom of Cambodia pursues a foreign policy that protects and promotes its national interests, by undertaking the following five main tasks: Protect national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutrality; maintain peace, security, stability, order, and social unity; Foster more friendship abroad based on the spirit of national independence; Promote economic diplomacy; Continue to support and strengthen multilateralism; Enhance the quality, efficiency and capacity of Cambodian diplomats.⁵⁷

Hence, in 2022, when it is the time for Cambodia as ASEAN Chairman, Cambodia will get the opportunity to enhance its foreign policy with the regional countries as well as the major countries such as China and US. Through the diplomatic way, Cambodia will be able to promote national security, further economic and political interests.

2.2. An Opportunity for Cambodia to Enhance its Reputation into the International Arena

Cambodia is actively involved in enhancing and developing its capacity in the international arena. In fact, Cambodia, a small country in the world, has faced numerous challenges in the past, including civil conflicts that pushed the country to the brink of disaster. Cambodia has lost its ability to exhibit itself on the international scene as a result of the unfortunate events that have occurred in the country. Under the current government of Prime

⁵⁶ Sar Socheath, “Cambodia commits to host ASEM 13 in physical form,” Khmer Times, June 03, 2021, <https://www.khmerimeskh.com/50867145/cambodia-commits-to-host-asem-13-in-physical-form/>.

⁵⁷ “Cambodia’s Foreign Policy Direction,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, accessed June 25, 2021, <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/page/2021-02-08-Cambodia-s-Foreign-Policy-Direction>.

minister Hun Sen, stability and security - a slow process of recovery from the devastation of the Pol Pot years - have been achieved in large areas of the country which made Cambodia gain its prestige on the global stage.⁵⁸

Actually, Cambodia has demonstrated that it is one of the actors who is actively working to improve the global position as well as the issues that are now affecting the world. For example, Cambodia had successfully achieved and integrated in many tasks such as sending peacekeeping, being the co-chair of UNGA. Cambodia became a Member State of the United Nations in 1955 and it has worked with UN peacekeeping missions.⁵⁹ According to Khmer Times, in the last 15 years, Cambodia has sent 7,523 UN peacekeepers for missions in nine countries, said National Center for Peacekeeping Force Director-General, General Sem Sovanny. He added that so far 7,523 Cambodians have gone under UN peacekeeping missions to Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Syria, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Cyprus and Yemen.⁶⁰

"Cambodia is thankful to its peacekeepers for volunteering to go on these missions under the UN for world peace," he said.⁶¹

Another example is that Cambodia has been elected as one of the vice-presidents of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 2018.⁶² Cambodia occupied this position from September 2018 to September 2019. Back in history, Cambodia was first

⁵⁸ Jonh McDonell, Mary Byrne and McAuliff, "The Diplomatic Dance: Cambodia on the International Stage," Cultural and Survival, September, 1990, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/diplomatic-dance-cambodia-international-stage>.

⁵⁹ "The United Nations in Cambodia," United Nations Cambodia, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://cambodia.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>.

⁶⁰ Sen David, "Cambodia has sent 7,523 UN peacekeepers to nine countries in 15 years," Khmer Times, May 29, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50864639/cambodia-has-sent-7523-un-peacekeepers-to-nine-countries-in-15-years/>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Cambodia to be vice-president of UNGA," Open Development Cambodia, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/news/cambodia-to-be-vice-president-of-unga#!/story=post-118160>.

elected as vice-president of the 56th session of UNGA in 2001. It was such an honor for Cambodia to serve as the vice president for UNGA twice in the previous years.⁶³

*"This move shows the prestige of Cambodia in the international arena," said Yang Peou, secretary-general of the Royal Academy of Cambodia.*⁶⁴

In the time of being the chairman of ASEAN, Cambodia will get the chance to proudly integrate itself on the international stage both politically and economically. Especially to further strengthen its relations with the dialogue partners such as Australia in 1973, New Zealand (1975), Japan (1977), the United States (1977), the European Union (1977), Canada (1977), South Korea (1991), India (1995), China (1996), and the Russian Federation (1996).⁶⁵ Cambodia, which is a tiny country who used to face civil wars in its history before it came into ASEAN, is now a state with full sovereignty and integrity. Cambodia, more than two decades after joining ASEAN, has successfully promoted itself to the world, helping to strengthen Cambodia's economy and political stability.⁶⁶ We would not be able to embark on such a massive endeavor if Cambodia was in the midst of political turmoil and conflict. Cambodia now has played an active role in order to integrate itself into regional and global structure and architecture which broadly expands itself to the wider world. Thus, this event will increase Cambodia's profile in politics, diplomacy, economy, peacekeeping, and international humanitarian affairs.

2.3. An Opportunity to Address the Unsolved the Issues

When it comes to ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022, Cambodia will face many challenges which have appeared and mentioned in ASEAN. Many traditional and non-traditional security

⁶³ "Past Presidents," United Nations, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/president/56/>.

⁶⁴ Ven Rathavong, "Cambodia to be vice-president of UNGA," Khmer Times, June 08, 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/498656/cambodia-to-be-vice-president-of-unga/>.

⁶⁵ "10+1 Sessions with the dialogue partners," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://asean.org/tag/101-sessions-with-the-dialogue-partners/>.

⁶⁶ *Supra* note 5.

challenges are surfacing in the region and around the world, including superpower rivalries, the South China Sea issue, water use issues in the Mekong region, the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccination diplomacy, and post-Covid-19 economic recovery, natural disasters, cybercrime, transnational crime, human trafficking, and so on are to be mentioned and solved under the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2022.

For instance, for the case of Myanmar, if the case remains unsolved in 2021, it will be handed over to Cambodia in 2022, Cambodia as the ASEAN Chair will have the opportunity to settle the issue.⁶⁷ If the issue could be solved during the Cambodia Chairmanship in 2022, it would bring Cambodia a good reputation on the international stage by showing its capability in addressing the matters of ASEAN. Also, the case of Code of Conduct, that was supposed to be addressed in 2021 during Brunei Jerusalem Chair, but then it has been postponed to be addressed in 2022.⁶⁸ Brunei indicated early on it was unlikely to conclude a contentious Code of Conduct to manage maritime disputes in the South China Sea.⁶⁹ Moreover, the Mekong sub-region has become a crucial strategic location where ASEAN will keep an eye on as well as to seek for a solution in the Submit. More importantly, it is where a great power is competing for influence and leadership by establishing several initiatives with the region.⁷⁰ Also, climate change issue which is a tough situation for ASEAN and the global to put an effort to settle as well. Cambodia has played its active and leadership role in addressing climate change in the global community in order to achieve an ASEAN community resilient to climate change through national and regional actions since the impact of climate change is a big concern for

⁶⁷ Moez Hayat, "Brunei faces a tough year as ASEAN Chair," EASTASIAFORUM, April 20, 2020, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/04/20/brunei-faces-a-tough-year-as-asean-chair/>.

⁶⁸ Gurjit Singh, "No Sign of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea," Chanakya Forum, June 18, 2021, <https://chanakyaforum.com/no-sign-of-a-code-of-conduct-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ UM Kaknika et al, "US Engagement with the Mekong Region: Initiatives, Intentions, and Interests," *AVI COMMENTARY*17, no.2021 (August 2021): 3. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15vLusXO-yi8fNJRjCkK9UUjtQXR6n1DR/view>.

ASEAN countries as well as European countries. The climate system is evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level.⁷¹

Thus, Cambodia's role as ASEAN Chair in 2022 provides an opportunity for Cambodia to demonstrate its capabilities to collectively address the aforementioned complex challenges by setting the solutions and the effective agenda.

2.4. An Opportunity to Enhance its Economy Growth

Cambodia, as a role of ASEAN Chairmanship, will have a tremendous chance to promote itself in the region as well as in the global stage. Through this, Cambodia will be able to highlight its development in order to attract the investments (Foreign Direct Investment) not just from the ASEAN member states but also from other external countries.

For instance, Cambodia's entry into the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1999 provides Cambodia with opportunities for integration into regional and international economies. Since international trade plays a very important role in both developed economies and developing economies, it is more likely that Cambodia's AFTA membership would improve both micro and macro economy in the country through the increased access to global markets and expanding trade flows. As a result, Cambodia's trade volume has experienced a steady growth since its accession to AFTA.⁷² Whilst FDI has been the main source of Cambodia's market expansion, the regional organization has also given Cambodia potential access to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which account for 30% of the world's GDP and one-fourth of global export; this framework holds huge opportunities for Cambodia

⁷¹ "ASEAN Cooperation on Climate Change," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed June 27, 2021, <https://environment.asean.org/asean-working-group-on-climate-change/>.

⁷² Kimkong Heng, "Cambodia's ASEAN Membership Revisited: Challenges and Opportunities," *Cambodian Journal of International Studies* 1, no.2 (August 2017): 71. [CambodiaASEANmembership\(1\).pdf](#).

as an ASEAN member.⁷³ Moreover, Cambodia also became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2003, which further helps enhance its integration into Southeast Asian and global economics. Such economic development would be very difficult or even impossible if Cambodia were not a member of ASEAN.⁷⁴

At the same time, by providing the country's status and profile, Cambodia also has a chance to promote its tourism destination to the international stage which is the key factor in enhancing Cambodia's economy.⁷⁵ Regarding the World Bank statistic, Cambodia's economic system has sustained an average actual growth rate of 7.7 percent between 1998 and 2019, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world driven by garment and tourism and export.⁷⁶ Over the past two decades, Cambodia has undergone a significant transition, reaching lower middle-income status in 2015 and aspiring to attain upper middle-income status by 2030.⁷⁷

Last but not least, the event will allow Cambodia to decrease the development gap among the countries in ASEAN which is a very crucial challenge for Cambodia to integrate in to the regional countries.

2.5. Improve Bilateral Cooperation with many Countries

It would be a great honor for Cambodia to play such a brilliant role in ASEAN. In this sense, Cambodia, during the ASEAN presidency 2022, will have the opportunity to improve bilateral cooperation in many fields including ranking from politics to economics during the bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the summit as most of the time, the invited countries will

⁷³ Pich Charadine, *"Cambodia Within ASEAN: Twenty-Years in the Making"* (Phnom Penh: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020), 18.

⁷⁴ "Cambodia," World Trade Organization, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.wto.org/english/thewtoe/accet/a1cambodgee.htm>.

⁷⁵ *Supra* note 17.

⁷⁶ "The World Bank in Cambodia," World Bank, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>.

⁷⁷ "Cambodia: One of the fastest growing economies in the world," ASEAN Business Partners, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.bizasean.com/cambodia-one-of-the-fastest-growing-economies-in-the-world/>.

have bilateral meeting with the chair. Cambodia's main trading partners are the United States, the European Union, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, among others. Cambodia and the United States are expected to see bilateral trade on the rise, with the two countries engaging in high volumes of trade. Figures from the Minister of Commerce state Cambodian exports to the US as reaching \$1.90 billion in the first four months of 2021, a 29 percent increase over the same period last year.⁷⁸ China who is another main trading partner, has shown a remarkable rise in bilateral trade with Cambodia.⁷⁹

Recently, bilateral trade between Cambodia and China increased by 19.7 percent to \$3 billion during the first four months of this year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.⁸⁰ On February 3, Cambodia and South Korea concluded talks for a bilateral FTA, which Minister of Commerce Pan Sorasak and his Korean counterpart Yoo Myung-hee plan to sign later this year, setting zero tariffs for a broad range of goods. Bilateral trade between Cambodia and South Korea in the first half of 2021 was valued at \$451.98 million, up by 6.7 per cent year-on-year from \$423.51 million, according to data from the Korea International Trade Association (KITA).⁸¹ Moreover, the value of trade exchange between Cambodia and other ASEAN member states dramatically skyrocketed last year, hitting \$11.330 billion even with flight and border restrictions in full force amid the Covid-19 pandemic. With neighboring Thailand and Vietnam accounting for the largest slice of the trade pie, 2020's total trade value figure marks a 22.42 per cent increase from the \$9.254 billion posted in 2019, the Ministry of Commerce reported.⁸²

⁷⁸ Chea Vanyuth, "Cambodia-US bilateral trade on course to growth," Khmer Times, June 02, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50866601/cambodia-us-bilateral-trade-on-course-to-growth/>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Husain Haider, "Cambodia trade with China hits \$3 billion," Khmer Times, May 28, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50863783/cambodia-trade-with-china-hits-3-billion/>.

⁸¹ Hin Pisei, "Cambodia-South Korea trade almost \$452M in first half of 2021," Phnom Penh Post, August 01, 2021, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/cambodia-south-korea-trade-almost-452m-first-half-2021>.

⁸² May Kunmakara, "Trade with ASEAN up 22% in 2020, hits \$11.3B," Phnom Penh Post, February 10, 2021, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/trade-asean-22-2020-hits-113b>.

"We encourage more internationals to invest in the processing industry and improve domestic production capacity and ensure the quality to compete with imports and step up export," Cambodia Chamber of Commerce vice-president Lim Heng said.⁸³

Despite the global economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia's total trade volume remains positive, reaching 35.8 billion U.S. dollars last year, up 2.5 percent compared with the year before, local media reported on Friday.⁸⁴ Cambodia's total exports were worth 17.21 billion dollars, up 16.7 percent year-on-year in 2020, and total imports were valued at 18.59 billion dollars, down 7.84 percent, the Khmer Times reported, citing a Ministry of Commerce's annual report.⁸⁵ Therefore, Cambodia, as a member of ASEAN, hopes to achieve more bilateral trade with other countries by 2022.

2.6. An Opportunity for Pushing Timor Leste as 11th ASEAN Member

Timor Leste is a country located in Southeast Asia.⁸⁶ With a population of about 1.3 million living on some 15,000 square kilometers, Timor-Leste remains the only part of Southeast Asian country not to be a member of the bloc yet, despite having declared its intentions to join ASEAN since the Unilateral Declaration of Independence on 28 November 1975 – the very year it escaped Portuguese colonial rule, and restored its Independence in 2002.⁸⁷

In 2005, Timor-Leste became a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and in 2007 it signed the ASEAN Treaty on Amity and Cooperation.⁸⁸ Since then, it has sent many

⁸³ "Cambodia: Trade with ASEAN up 22% in 2020, hits \$11.3B," ASEAN Economic Community Strategy Center, accessed June 21, 2021, <http://aec.utcc.ac.th/cambodia-trade-with-asean-up-22-in-2020-hits-11-3b/>.

⁸⁴ Huaxia Net, "Cambodia's trade volume up 2.5 pct in 2020 despite pandemic," Xinhuanet, April 02, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-04/02/c_139854547.htm.

⁸⁵ Xinhua Net, "Cambodia's trade volume up 2.5% in 2020 despite pandemic," Cambodia Daily, April 04, 2021, <https://english.cambodiadaily.com/business/cambodias-trade-volume-up-2-5-in-2020-despite-pandemic-172708/>.

⁸⁶ "Timor-Leste Geography," Country Reports, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.countryreports.org/country/TimorLeste/geography.htm>.

⁸⁷ Husain Haider, "Timor-Leste 'determined to join ASEAN,'" Khmer Times, May 25, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50861779/timor-leste-determined-to-join-asean/>.

⁸⁸ Dewa Gede Sudika Mangku, *"THE EFFORTS OF REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE (TIMOR LESTE) TO BE A MEMBER OF ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) AND TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN*

officials to attend all ARF events and has hosted three ARF workshops in 2011, 2017, and this year, from April 24-26, that brought together more than 100 participants from the ARF participating countries.⁸⁹ Timor-Leste's to join ASEAN is based on its geographic location, the interests of the country's leaders and people, and its cultural affinity with its neighbors, as stated in its Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030.⁹⁰

It has committed to be part a member of ASEAN while the formal application was already submitted in 2011.⁹¹ The 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok was officially concluded on June 23, 2019. In the Chairman's statement, Timor-Leste's membership bid is mentioned in item 15:

*"We were pleased to note the progress made on the consideration of Timor-Leste's application for ASEAN Membership, with all three Pillars preparing for their respective fact-finding missions to Timor-Leste, and look forward to the outcomes of the aforementioned missions. We also reiterated our readiness to provide capacity-building assistance to Timor-Leste." "It is about a 90 percent certainty that we will join ASEAN next year when Cambodia acts as chair for the Third time – and there is no better country to welcome us. Cambodia and Timor-Leste are more than neighbors: We are a family." said by the ambassador of Timor Leste.*⁹²

ASEAN membership for the Timorese is viewed as a way to reconcile economic, security, and geopolitical interests, while carving out a regional identity.⁹³

Cambodia will have the opportunity to put Timor Leste's candidacy for ASEAN membership on the agenda for all member states to come to an agreement. If Cambodia successfully approves the adoption of Timor Leste next year as President, Cambodia will have the opportunity to increase bilateral trade with Timor-Leste, as Cambodia will be able to demonstrate its capabilities on the international stage. Cambodia also has a chance to create a

MAINTAINING AND CREATING THE STABILITY OF SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA," South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law 13, no. 4 (2017): 20. <https://seajbel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/LAW-74.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Khoo Ying Hooi, "What Will It Take to Admit Timor-Leste Into ASEAN?," The Diplomat, August 01, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/what-will-it-take-to-admit-timor-leste-into-asean/>.

⁹⁰ *Supra* note 87.

⁹¹ Pugh Toko Arisanto, "AN ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL FACTORS," TIMOR LESTE'S ACCESSION TO ASEAN 2015, no. 2 (December 2020): 154. <file:///E:/208-Article%20Text-989-1-10-20201210.pdf>.

⁹² *Supra* note 89.

⁹³ *Supra* note 88.

better ASEAN community by expanding relations among ASEAN members, welcoming the presence of the new member.

2.7. UK Application to be the Dialogue Partnership

The United Kingdom (UK) is a long-standing ASEAN Partner, having recently applied to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner.⁹⁴ The UK has left the European Union and pledged to integrate into ASEAN by applying to become a Dialogue Partner.⁹⁵ Currently, ASEAN has ten dialogue partners, Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States; four sectoral dialogue partners namely Pakistan, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey; and Germany as a development partner.⁹⁶

In a meeting with Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn on June 24, 2021, British Foreign Minister Dominic Raab expressed his hope of becoming an ASEAN dialogue partner before Cambodia assumes the rotating presidency. from the region next year.

*"I look forward to building on these foundations, as Cambodia takes on the important role of ASEAN Chair next year," he added. "We shared a common desire to further strengthen and expand bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields of mutual benefits. We discussed Cambodia's chairing of ASEAN in 2022 as well as ways to further promote ASEAN-UK relations. We also agreed to continue working closely together in both a regional and international framework."*⁹⁷

While the UK has pledged to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner by 2022, no one can predict whether this year's ASEAN Presidency in 2021 will be able to do so as it is a worldwide fact of Covid Pandemic. If Brunei is unable to put the UK's candidacy on the agenda this year,

⁹⁴ "UK becomes ASEAN Dialogue Partner," GOV UK, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-asean-dialogue-partner>.

⁹⁵ "Brexit: What you need to know about the UK leaving the EU," BBC News, accessed June 27, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>.

⁹⁶ Sar Socheath, "Asean ministers grant UK dialogue partner status," Khmer Times, August 05, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50908748/asean-ministers-grant-uk-dialogue-partner-status/>.

⁹⁷ Sar Socheath, "UK's ASEAN hope: Britain seeks to be dialogue partner before Cambodia takes chair," Khmer Times, June 24, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50879986/uks-asean-hope-britain-seeks-to-be-dialogue-partner-before-cambodia-takes-chair/>.

it will be an opportunity for ASEAN to welcome a dialogue partner during the Cambodian presidency next year. However, if the UK becomes a dialogue partner of ASEAN this year, Cambodia will have an opportunity to attract the UK's attention to become a stronger trading partner, by increasing trade-bilateral trade between the UK and Cambodia as well as forging a stronger diplomatic relationship with the UK to benefit its people.

By leading closer cooperation between the UK and Cambodia it will lead on a range of issues such as trade, climate change, investment, the environment, science and technology, and education. These would be beneficial for Cambodia's future economy.⁹⁸ The ASEAN Dialogue Partnership will enable the UK to further strengthen its ties with ASEAN countries on the basis of mutual interests, constructive engagement and mutual benefit, which can contribute to the efforts. cooperation to build and develop the ASEAN community.

2.8. An Opportunity to Show its Resources

Although Cambodia is a geographically small country compared to other countries in ASEAN, that does not indicate Cambodia's ability in enhancing its resources.⁹⁹ Cambodia has proven to the international stage that it has strengthened its capacity in managing international events by showing its human resources and financial resources. Truthfully, Literacy rates in Cambodia have “increased significantly”, according to the General Population Census of Cambodia 2019. It said that the adult literacy rate in Cambodia increased a total of 10.1 percent from 77.6 percent in 2008 to 87.7 percent in 2019. There was a significant change in urban areas, with an adult literacy rate of 93.3 percent compared to 83.8 percent in rural areas.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ “UK becomes Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations,” Gov.Uk, accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-dialogue-partner-of-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations>.

⁹⁹ “Cambodia,” Invest in ASEAN, accessed June 23, 2021, <http://investasean.asean.org/index.php/page/view/asean-member-states/view/709/newsid/794/cambodia.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Sen David, “Literacy rates ‘increase significantly’,” Khmer Times, January 28, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50807840/literacy-rates-increase-significantly/>.

Back to Cambodia's history of ASEAN chair in 2002 and 2012 when it was a tough situation for Cambodia to face many challenges, but it was also an opportunity for Cambodia to demonstrate and give a chance for our citizens to show out their education and skill on the international stage. Cambodia has successfully adopted the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), which is crucial to provide a peaceful settlement and stability called the Code of Conduct.¹⁰¹ Moreover, for its second time of ASEAN chairmanship; Cambodia also indicates our resources by accomplished to adopted a joint statement on the 10th anniversary of DOC in November between ASEAN and China.¹⁰²

Regarding the previous chairmanship, Cambodia has learnt a lot from its own experiences. This time, in the next round of chairmanship, Cambodia will be allowed to show its resources-both human resources and financial resources, to organize such a large international event. During the chairmanship, Cambodia will grab a chance to proudly present its human resources by conducting the meeting which will be participated by the highly educated and professional people in each organization from Cambodia as well as other member states in ASEAN. Moreover, even Cambodia is a developing country with middle income country,¹⁰³ Cambodia will be able to show the international stage that it can still manage to conduct the international meeting productively and effectively whether through physical meeting or virtual meeting. In addition, Cambodia will be able to prove to the international stage that, even though Cambodia is a developing country with less population compared to other countries, Cambodia is rich in knowledgeable people that will be the human resource for further development.

¹⁰¹ "Joint Communiqué of the 36th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Phnom Penh," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed June 29, 2021, <https://asean.org/joint-communicue-of-the-36th-asean-ministerial-meeting-phnom-penh/>.

¹⁰² Heng Sarith, "A job well done: Cambodia as ASEAN Chair in 2012," EASTASIAFORUM, January 19, 2013, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/01/19/a-job-well-done-cambodia-as-asean-chair-in-2012/>.

¹⁰³ "About Cambodia," UNDP, accessed June 25, 2021, <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

2.9. Determination of Socio-Cultural Community

Over the last two times, Cambodia has gained significant benefits from the ASEAN Chairmanship. As the 2022 ASEAN Chair, Cambodia will again have to shape image and prestige on the international stage.

With regard to socio-cultural interest, cultural identity is one of the positive steps for Cambodia as ASEAN Chair in 2022. Cambodia will address both domestically and externally to seize opportunities and overcome challenges. Moreover, it has been one of the key national interests for Cambodia foreign policy. It will help Cambodia promote and strengthen its national identity at the regional as well as global level.¹⁰⁴ However, if there is a physical meeting it would benefit Cambodia to indicate our culture for the other country to visit as well as to gain more financial support to our economy. Over the last two decades since Cambodia joined ASEAN, it was a great experience and opportunities which we can show our amazing culture to the global state. For instance, the ASEAN Leaders at the Opening Ceremony of the 20th ASEAN Summit and the 45th Anniversary Celebration of ASEN in Phnom Penh, April 3, 2012.¹⁰⁵ It would be a great chance for Cambodia to spread and share our culture by showing traditional performances, as well as our Khmer cuisine, especially our cultural heritages.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ “After 20 Years, Cambodia Has Reaped Benefits from ASEAN,” Reporting ASEAN, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://www.reportingasean.net/20-years-cambodia-reaped-benefits-asean/>.

¹⁰⁵ Kin Phea, “Cambodia and ASEAN Chairmanship 2022: Opportunities and Preparedness in the Process of ASEAN Political-Security Community Building,” International Relations Institute of Cambodia, May 31, 2021, <http://iric.gov.kh/cambodia-and-asean-chairmanship-2022-opportunities-and-preparedness-in-the-process-of-asean-political-security-community-building/>.

¹⁰⁶ Supra note 5.

CHAPTER 3: CAMBODIA CHALLENGES AS A CHAIRMANSHIP IN 2022

After a half century of its existence, ASEAN has made many achievements through cooperation among ASEAN member states as well as other countries around the world. Despite its numerous achievements, ASEAN has been confronted with many challenges in terms of economic, political and security challenges as well as the environmental issues in the region especially in the current situation.¹⁰⁷

As the world is under the threat of Covid-19, Cambodia being a chairmanship in 2022 will surely face significant challenges which might include terms of economic, political and security challenges as well as social and environmental issues in the region especially in the current situation. Therefore, the Kingdom will have to encounter the following issues such as inability to conduct physical meetings, financial resources, ASEAN unsolved issues, super power pressure, and some logistic matters.

3.1. The Possibility that the Summit could not be Conducted Physically: Covid-19 Pandemic Period

Cambodia is facing a tough time when it comes to the existence of the world pandemic which is called Covid-19.¹⁰⁸ Since the crisis is still occurring in Cambodia as well as other countries in the region, it would be a challenge for Cambodia to conduct a physical meeting for ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022.

Coronavirus was originally found in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The name of the virus was the name of the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, shorted called

¹⁰⁷ "ASEAN's Challenges and the Way Forward," THE DIPLOMAT, accessed July 11, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/aseans-challenges-and-the-way-forward/>

¹⁰⁸ "The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Socio-Economic Issues in Cambodia: A Youth Perspective," Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia, accessed July 30, 2021, <https://www.kas.de/en/web/kambodscha/single-title/-/content/the-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-the-socio-economic-issues-in-cambodia-a-youth-perspective-2>

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).¹⁰⁹ After that, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially confirmed the disease as the world disease and named it as Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 12 February 2020. According to WHO, current evidence suggests that the virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with each other, typically within 1 meter (short-range). A person can be infected when aerosols or droplets containing the virus are inhaled or come directly into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth.¹¹⁰

Up until now, Coronavirus has been fully spread all over the world, mostly in more than 200 countries including ASEAN member states according to WHO and has caused millions of deaths to humans. It has raised a major concern for every country in the world as well as in ASEAN member states. Nowadays, the case of the corona virus is still being injected into people which is a very harmful disease to overcome in today's situation. Millions of people in ASEAN countries have been injected and died every single day. According to the survey poll in ASEAN Briefing, the case of Covid-19 has been increasing day by day, as Brunei has recorded eight new cases on July 24, taking the total to 321 amid three deaths, Cambodia reported 819 new cases and 29 deaths on July 25, taking the totals to 72,923 cases and 1,283 deaths, Indonesia saw 38,679 new cases and 1,266 deaths on July 25, taking the totals to 3,166,505 cases and 83,279 deaths, Laos recorded 142 new cases on July 25, taking the total to 4,762 cases amid five deaths, Malaysia saw 17,045 new cases and 92 deaths on July 25, taking the totals to 1,013,438 cases and 7,994 deaths, Myanmar recorded 4,998 new cases and 355 deaths on July 25, taking the tallies to 269,525 cases and 7,111 deaths, The Philippines recorded 5,749 new cases and 93 deaths on July 25, bringing the tallies to 1,548,755 cases and 27,224

¹⁰⁹ "Background & History of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)," PsychCentral, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://psychcentral.com/coronavirus/background-history-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19#1>.

¹¹⁰ "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How is it transmitted?," World Health Organization, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted>.

deaths, Singapore saw 125 new cases on July 25, taking the total to 64,179 cases amid 37 deaths, Thailand saw 15,335 new cases and 129 deaths on July 25, taking the tallies to 497,302 cases and 4,059 deaths, Vietnam saw 3,979 new cases on July 25, taking the total to 94,913 cases amid 370 deaths.¹¹¹

In Cambodia, the first case in the country was diagnosed on 27 January 2020 in a Chinese man who had flown from Wuhan to Sihanoukville who then recovered and returned home. On March 16th, almost six weeks after the first reported case in the country, the government closed all public and private educational institutions across the country. The following day, a 30-day travel ban on visitors from the four most affected European countries as well as the US came into force. As of March 18, 2020, the Ministry of Health has confirmed 165 cases, most of them imported.¹¹²

ASEAN countries are seeking solutions to the Corona 19 situation through vaccination for the people and the people, but we can see that the outbreak of coronavirus is growing rapidly while some countries were forced to lock down. However, if we are able to hold a physical meeting, individuals will be required to take a Covid-19 Test or be quarantined before attending. We cannot guarantee that it will disappear at a specific time or in a specific period in which ASEAN as well as Cambodia as a chairmanship in 2022 have to put it into consideration whether to have a physical meeting or a virtual meeting.

¹¹¹ Dezan Shira & Associates, “COVID-19 Vaccine Roll Outs in ASEN & Asia Live Updates by Country,” ASEAN BRIEFING, August 19, 2021, <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/covid-19-vaccine-roll-outs-in-asean-asia-live-updates-by-country/>.

¹¹² Ministry of Health, *Cambodia COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (P173815)*. PDF File. July 15, 2021. <http://hismo.hcambodia.org/public/fileupload/Updated%20SEPCOVID-19%20FINAL%2028%20July.pdf>.

3.2. Financial Resources: COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

Currently, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has brought impacts on Cambodia as well as other ASEAN member states especially on economics.¹¹³ Cambodia has faced the economic challenges which made it hard for Cambodia to hold its ASEAN chairmanship in 2022. The issue will make Cambodia, which is a developing country, at risk of financial resources. Cambodia's economy has been decreasing due to the impact of Coronavirus and it will be a pressure for Cambodia to control its financial resources.¹¹⁴

“The economy contracted by 3.1% in 2020 because of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The government has responded quickly to the recent spike in cases, and we expect the economy to return to growth in 2021. This will help increase household incomes, but not all sectors and regions will benefit equally, so it will be essential to closely monitor household welfare and the need for additional support,” said ADB Country Director for Cambodia Sunniya Durrani-Jamal.

“The uneven pace of the recovery across sectors will continue to put pressure on some households and firms this year, which will slow down the overall recovery. Key risks to the outlook include widening community outbreaks of COVID-19, slower than expected growth for Cambodia’s major trading partners such as the US and EU, continued weakness in domestic demand, and stress on financial services and banking,” said Ms. Durrani-Jamal, adding that the government needs to maintain its accommodative fiscal policy stance this year and next to support growth.”¹¹⁵

The global shock triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Cambodia’s economy in 2020 at a time when Cambodia also faces the partial suspension of preferential access to the EU market under the “Everything but Arms” initiative.¹¹⁶ The outbreak caused sharp deceleration in most of Cambodia’s main engines of growth—tourism, manufacturing exports, and construction—which together accounted for more than 70 percent of the country’s growth in 2019 and almost 40 percent of paid employment. The economy in

¹¹³ “The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Socio-Economic Issues in Cambodia: A Youth Perspective,” Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia, accessed July 30, 2021, <https://www.kas.de/documents/264850/8651571/Cover+Story.pdf/020e5b7c-46b4-74ef-49b0-de90e3865a82?version=1.1&t=1590394722280>.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ “Cambodia DGP growth forecast,” Asian Development Bank, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.adb.org/news/cambodia-economy-recover-2021-accelerate-2022-adb>.

¹¹⁶ Cambodia: Market Profile,” KHTDC Research, February 18, 2021, <https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/MzIwNzAzMDA1>

2020 registered negative growth of -3.1 percent, the sharpest decline in Cambodia's recent history. Cambodia's economy is expected to start recovering this year, growing at 4 percent, helped by an improving external environment and unprecedented government support. The COVID-19 outbreak and slow recovery in global economic activity, alongside prolonged financial market turmoil, poses risks to Cambodia's growth outlook.¹¹⁷

Moreover, Cambodia's main factors in its economy are also facing the economic retrenchment which made Cambodia's GDP decline. For instance, ASEAN, the pandemic of COVID 19 has deeply impacted its economy. After the outbreak of the pandemic, ASEAN's economy has dramatically decreased which has become a very big concern to all ASEAN member states. The growth forecasts for the AMS have been revised downwards, for example, Indonesia projected a 5.3% growth in 2020 prior to the outbreak; by 1 April, the forecast has been reduced to 0.4% to 2.3%.¹¹⁸

The ASEAN market has shrunk at a remarkable rate. China, which is ASEAN's main supply chain, has come to a stage where its factories had been temporarily closed and all the productions were all stuck. Hubei, a province in China, a major industrial hub, particularly for machineries and electronics, after the pandemic, production there went on a standstill, it created shortages in supply of parts, which caused operations along the supply chains including those abroad, to reduce operations.¹¹⁹ As a result, it led to the disruption in ASEAN's member state economy who integrated with the industry. The pandemic has so far brought disruptions to ASEAN economic activities such as the decline in tourism flows, disruption in air travels,

¹¹⁷ "The World Bank in Cambodia," The World Bank, accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>.

¹¹⁸ "Cambodia," 2021 INDEX OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/cambodia>

¹¹⁹ "COVID-10 crisis response in ASEAN Member States," OECD, May 4, 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-response-in-asean-member-states-02f828a2/>

weakening in consumer and business confidence, temporary business closures, community quarantines, and travel restrictions or prohibitions to contain the virus.¹²⁰

Tourism is one of the key sectors in ASEAN which could help contribute to ASEAN's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹²¹ According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism directly contributed to ASEAN's GDP (4.4%) and employment (3.2%) in 2011. In 2020, Cambodia alone was estimated to experience a loss of revenues in the tourism sector of around \$3 billion according to the Minister of Tourism.¹²²

3.3. ASEAN Unsolved Issues

3.3.1 Human Rights Crisis in Myanmar

The political crisis in Myanmar will be a great challenge for Cambodia as an ASEAN chair in 2022 if the issue cannot be solved timely under Brunei's ASEAN chairmanship this year 2021.

Recently, Myanmar which is a member of ASEAN has come to chaos where the country has been taken over by the military coup on the 1st February 2021.¹²³ The military coup has claimed itself as the state government and declared a year-long state emergency. Later, it announced that Senior General Min Aung Hlaing would take charge of Myanmar during a yearlong state of emergency.¹²⁴

The military detained and charged Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi, a member of National League for Democracy Party, and other members of the party as well as social activists have

¹²⁰ "Tourism where to invest," Invest in ASEAN, accessed June 30, 2021, <http://investasean.asean.org/index.php/page/view/tourism>.

¹²¹ "Enhancing the tourism industry in ASEAN," THE ASEAN POST, August 19, 2018, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/enhancing-tourism-industry-asean-0>

¹²² "Cambodia to lose \$bn in revenue from tourism sector," Khmer Times, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50730893/cambodia-to-lose-3b-in-revenue-from-tourism-sector/>.

¹²³ "Myanmar crisis," Help Age International, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/emergencies/humanitarian-response/rohingya-crisis/>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

been arrested after the general election which Mrs Suu Kyi's NLD party won by a landslide. The military suffered a major blow in the elections: the USDP won just 33 of 476 available seats, while the NLD won 396.¹²⁵ The military coup claimed that the election was not fair, demanding a rerun election. The event has triggered massive civilian protests and violence reactions to the shooting of security forces across the country.¹²⁶

This includes the shooting of protestors with 892 casualties, including over 50 children and the detention of over 5,085 protesters, activists, journalists and government officials as of 5th July 2021 according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoner (AAPP).¹²⁷ Many people, especially children and women, are living in fear under the serious situation in Myanmar. Moreover, any social media and internet have been blocked by the military which is an act of the violation of human rights.¹²⁸

However, the international community as well as ASEAN has condemned the act of military coup saying it is a violation of human rights.¹²⁹ The United Nations condemned the new regime and called for human rights, fundamental freedom and the rule of law. Moreover, the international community also put sanctions on the military coup for its act over the Myanmar people.¹³⁰ For instance, U.S. President Joe Biden has already approved sanctions on coup leaders, their business interests and close kin, and redirected more than \$40 million of aid from

¹²⁵ [Lindsay Maizland](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya), "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict," Council on Foreign Relations, February 10, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>.

¹²⁶ "Myanmar coup: Aung San Suu Kyi detained as military seizes control," BBC NEWS, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55882489>

¹²⁷ World Vision, *Myanmar Crisis Response 2021*. PDF file. July 7, 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2.MYAO%20Situation%20Report%20Myanmar%20Crisis%20Response%20External.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ DAMIAN LILLY, "The UN's Response to the Human Rights Crisis after the Coup in Myanmar: Destined to Fail?," IPI INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE, accessed June 25, 2021, <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-UNs-Response-Coup-in-Myanmar-Final.pdf>

¹³⁰ Supra note 129

the Myanmar government to civil society.¹³¹ ASEAN, on the other hand, have also urged for a peaceful solution and negotiation between the military coup and the relevant parties. ASEAN made a special summit on 24 April to settle the serious problem in Myanmar with the participation of junta leader Sen. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing. The summit had reached a consensus on five points which were “immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and for all parties to exercises utmost restraint; future commencement of constructive dialogue between all parties in the interests of the people; the appointment of a special envoy to facilitate mediation of the dialogue process with the assistance of the ASEAN Secretary-General; the provision of humanitarian assistance through the AHA Center; and planned visit for the special envoy and delegation to meet with all parties concerned.”¹³² Although, the military leader of Myanmar, Min Aung Hlaing, accepted the five points but he did not accept to release the freedom for Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi and her members of NLD which is still a concern for ASEAN to find a peaceful settlement for Myanmar.¹³³

3.3.2 South China Sea Dispute

The South China Sea dispute has been a sensitive issue for the international community, especially for the Association of South Asian to find a peaceful settlement for the relevant parties.¹³⁴ The South China Sea – a crucial passage for a significant portion of the world’s commercial shipping – is bordered by Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the

¹³¹ “Responding to the Myanmar Coup,” International Crisis Group, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/b166-responding-myanmar-coup>.

¹³² Muhammad Waffaa Kharisma, “ASEAN’s Next Steps for Ending the Myanmar Crisis,” The Diplomat, April 29, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/aseans-next-steps-for-ending-the-myanmar-crisis/>.

¹³³ Aung Myo Min, “Myanmar’s Covid-19 and human rights crisis is growing. UN, Asean must act now to save lives,” THIS WEEK IN ASIA, July 16, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3141365/myanmars-covid-19-and-human-rights-crisis-growing-un-asean-must>

¹³⁴ “The South China Sea, Southeast Asia’s Patrimony, and Everybody’s Own Backyard,” U.S. Mission to ASEAN, July 14, 2020, <https://asean.usmission.gov/the-south-china-sea-southeast-asias-patrimony-and-everybodys-own-backyard/>

Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.¹³⁵ China claims roughly 90% of the sea, which encompasses an area of around 3.5 million square kilometers (1.4 million square miles). While other states which bordered around the South China Sea did not agree to the China declaration for its sovereignty over the sea, the claimant states such as Brunei, Malaysia, Philippine and Vietnam came to a conflict asking for their sovereignty over the sea as well.¹³⁶ The dispute has been one of the challenges for ASEAN since the claimant parties are members of ASEAN.

So far, the ASEAN has tried to solve the problem of the dispute over the sea, setting up peaceful negotiation and peaceful solutions for every relevant state namely Brunei, Malaysia, Philippine, Vietnam and China. During the Cambodia Chair in 2002, Cambodia had led all the members to reach a Declaration on Conduct (DOC) asking for every relevant state to practice under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982.¹³⁷ However, the declaration was just a silent paper which was not implemented by China and other claimant states. In 2019, ASEAN and China completed the first reading of the draft of the code of conduct (COC) that was announced at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Singapore a year earlier. After that, during the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020, the leader of ASEAN members reached a joint statement that the basic law which is to solve the dispute is only the international law which is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. However, ASEAN and China have agreed to finalize the CoC by 2022, the increasing tensions in the South China Sea in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to reach the plan by 2022.

¹³⁵ Pizaro Gozali Idrus, "ASEAN eyes code of conduct for disputed South China Sea," ASIA-PACIFIC, November 12, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/asean-eyes-code-of-conduct-for-disputed-south-china-sea/2041388>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Nengye Liu, "Towards a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea," ASIA & THE PACIFIC POLICY SOCIETY, September 8, 2017, <https://www.policyforum.net/towards-code-conduct-south-china-sea/>

Cambodia, who will be the chairman of ASEAN in 2022, will continue to accelerate the CoC between ASEAN and China.¹³⁸

3.3.3. Mekong River Subregion

The Mekong River is the 12th longest river basin in the world. The river connects upstream China to downstream Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.¹³⁹ It is a crucial waterway for ASEAN, especially the mainland countries-bordered along the river- to do trade and deliver goods. They make up the Mekong subregion and serve as an important land bridge between Southeast Asia and China in the north and India in the west; effectively, between East Asia and South Asia. The Mekong River plays an important role in supporting the gap in development among ASEAN members.¹⁴⁰

However, the Mekong River has been an important issue for ASEAN to discuss in order to enhance the economy.¹⁴¹ Nowadays, economic development and high population pressure, the lack of proper water resources management, and the lack of cooperation amongst riparian countries have resulted in rising complications in water quantity and quality, biodiversity loss, and disasters such as drought and flooding.¹⁴² In 2019, the lower Mekong basin experienced severe drought, with water flow dipping by 70–75% from the average of the same period in 2018. Moreover, the river's flood cycle has become irregular, severely affecting fishing, agricultural production, and people's lives. Despite the existence of many sub regional cooperative mechanisms, water resources in the Mekong subregion have, in practice, been

¹³⁸ Pich Charadine, *"Cambodia Within ASEAN: Twenty-Years in the Making"* (Phnom Penh: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020), 18.

¹³⁹ "The Mekong River," THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SIEM REAP, August 24, 2017, <https://www.siemreap.net/visit/about-cambodia/general-info/the-mekong-river/>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "Asean needs to act on Mekong River," Bangkok Post, September 30, 2020, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1994067/asean-needs-to-act-on-mekong-river>

¹⁴² Kimkong Heng, "Cambodia to hair ASEAN in choppy waters," EASTASIAFORUM, July 17, 2021, [CambodiatochairASEANinchoppywaters\(eastasiaforum.org\)](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/07/17/cambodia-to-hair-asean-in-choppy-waters/)

managed in an uncoordinated manner, and dominated by energy and food objectives, leading to their rapid degradation. The issues of the Mekong River are still occurring until now; which Cambodia as Chair of ASEAN has to put into consideration.

3.3.4. Climate Change

As the ASEAN Chair, Cambodia needs to consider a treaty about the environmental issue. Climate change has been one of the major concerns for the countries in Southeast Asia for a very long time, especially when it comes to the advanced economy.¹⁴³ Simply put, climate change is a long-term change in global climate models such as temperature, precipitation, over a long period of time.¹⁴⁴ Human activities contribute to climate change by significantly increasing emissions of the main greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrogen oxides (N₂O) in the global atmosphere. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been working roughly to overcome the matter of climate change for decades. The economies and livelihoods of ASEAN member states are highly dependent on agriculture, natural resources such as fisheries and forestry.¹⁴⁵ Climate change, along with biodiversity loss and pollution, is devastating the natural patterns and processes on which these industries depend. Developing economies such as those in Southeast Asia are those whose emissions are steadily increasing. According to the International Energy Agency, Southeast Asia is one of the few regions where demand for coal is expected to increase in the coming decades. The increased dependence on coal and oil associated with deforestation will only exacerbate the effects of climate change.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ “Impact of Climate Change on ASEAN International Affairs: Risk and Opportunity Multiplier,” OCHA Services, July 13, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/impact-climate-change-asean-international-affairs-risk-and-opportunity-multiplier>

¹⁴⁴ David Dennis, “Southeast Asia’s Coming Climate Crisis,” CSIS, May 22, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/southeast-asias-coming-climate-crisis>.

¹⁴⁵ “Climate change in Asia,” IUCN, accessed July 20, 2021, [Climate change in Asia | IUCN](#).

¹⁴⁶ “ASEAN Cooperation on Climate Change,” Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed July 01, 2021, <https://environment.asean.org/asean-working-group-on-climate-change/>.

If left unchecked, the economic impact can be severe. The Asian Development Bank estimates that climate change could affect 11% of the region's GDP by the end of this century because it has adverse consequences for key sectors such as agriculture, tourism and fisheries, as well as human health and productivity, the AfDB estimated in a 2015 report. Since agriculture is regulated by temperature and precipitation, it will be sensitive to changes in climatic conditions.¹⁴⁷

Southeast Asian rice production, which accounts for nearly 30% of the global rice supply, is expected to decline to 5% between 2010 and 2050. For instance, in the absence of technical breakthroughs, rice yields in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam could drop by as much as 50 per cent by 2100 from 1990 levels due to the cause of climate change. In the last 45 years, the most economically damaging events in Southeast Asia that occurred were climate-related ones, namely the 2011 floods in Thailand, which caused over 45 billion US dollars' worth of damage in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and Central Thailand, and Typhoon Yolanda (known internationally as Typhoon Haiyan) in the Philippines in 2013, which resulted in 10 billion US dollars' worth of damage. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), 185 million people in Southeast Asia are likely to experience water stress by 2050.¹⁴⁸

3.4. Super Power Pressure: China Vs USA

The game of the super powers such as the US and China has become one of the challenges for Cambodia as ASEAN chairmanship in 2022. Cambodia has to remain neutral between China and the United States. In the time of Chairmanship, actually, China and the US will put pressure on Cambodia to reach out any documents or agreements. It is such a geo-political game between the rich countries over the ASEAN region. ASEAN countries as well

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "GDP Growth Outlook: Developing Asia," ADB ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, accessed July 28, 2021, <https://www.adb.org/ru>

as Cambodia are concerned over the rivalry between the US and China and wish to see a stable and constructive partnership between the two top global economies.¹⁴⁹ In the world of grand geopolitical narratives, the countries of Southeast Asia usually feature as a relatively minor player. At most, they are expected to either balance skillfully between China and the United States, or edge closer to one or the other superpower. However, if both superpowers get into the conflict, the countries especially ASEAN would face many harms just like the cold war between the US and USSR which resulted in many matters in Europe.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, it is considered to be a major concern for Cambodia since ASEAN members have their favors which make it difficult for ASEAN to reach a consensus on some issues. According to a survey, China was given the nod by the majority of respondents from seven of the 10 ASEAN countries, with 69% from Brunei favoring the country, 58% from Cambodia, 52% from Indonesia, 74% from Laos, 61% from Malaysia, 62% from Myanmar and 52% from Thailand.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, The U.S. was the overwhelming choice among respondents from the Philippines and Vietnam at 83% and 86%, respectively, followed by 61% from Singapore. The strong support shown by the Filipino and Vietnamese respondents appears partly due to ongoing maritime squabbles their countries have with Beijing over the South China Sea.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Heimkhemra Suy, "In 2022, Cambodia Faces Challenging Turn at ASEAN's Helm," RECENT FEATURES, June 10, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/in-2022-cambodia-faces-challenging-turn-at-aseans-helm/>

¹⁵⁰ Iiona RaskoInikova and Pravda.Ru, "China has territorial claims to nearly 20 countries," Pravda, July 17, 2012, <https://english.pravda.ru/world/121658-chinateritorialclaims/>.

¹⁵¹ "Cooperation between China and ASEAN under the building of ASEAN Economic Community," East Asia, February 22, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24761028.2021.1888410>

¹⁵² "7 of 10 ASEAN members favor China over US: survey," NIKKEI ASIA, accessed July 23, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/7-of-10-ASEAN-members-favor-China-over-US-survey>.

3.5. Logistic Matters

3.5.1. Human Resources

During the Cambodia Chair in 2022, human resources will still be a challenge for Cambodia. Cambodia's demography has been highly influenced by its long history of civil war, conflict, violent revolution, and foreign intervention for over four decades (Rana and Ardichvili, 2015).¹⁵³ The Khmer Rouge government which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 destroyed everything, so Cambodia has to start from scratch after the collapse of the Pol Pot regime.¹⁵⁴ The Pol Pot regime between 1975 and 1979 changed all that. The regime rejected the education system itself, and the system was destroyed. For example, at least 75% of schoolteachers were lost. Textbooks and curriculums developed between the 1960s and the early 1970s were discarded. Schools were also used as substitute detention camps or prisons for holding anti-Pol Pot elements.¹ Such extensive destruction has been a great hindrance to the subsequent efforts to restore the education system in Cambodia.¹⁵⁵

Although, Cambodia literacy rate is significantly increasing, Cambodia is still facing the lack of human resources. According to our estimates, 8,827,394 persons or 77.14% of the adult population (aged 15 years and above) in Cambodia are able to read and write.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, about 2,615,277 adults are illiterate.¹⁵⁷ Cambodia still needs more human resources such as volunteers as a factor to boost our country in holding the big international.

¹⁵³ Kin Phea, "Cambodia and ASEAN Chairmanship 2022: Opportunities and Preparedness in the process of ASEAN Political-Security Community Building," KHMER TIMES, May 18, 2021, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50858254/cambodia-and-asean-chairmanship-2022-opportunities-and-preparedness-in-the-process-of-asean-political-security-community-building/>

¹⁵⁴ "Cambodia," Driven to Discover, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/cambodia>

¹⁵⁵ WAKABAYASHI, Mitsura AND KATO, Norio, *Human Resource Development*. PDF File. accessed July 20, 2021, https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/IFIC_and_JBICI-Studies/english/publications/reports/study/country/pdf/cambodia_13.pdf.

¹⁵⁶ Voun Dara, "Census results reveal rising literacy rates," The Phnom Penh Post, January 28, 2021, [CensusresultsrevealrisingliteracyratesPhnomPenhPost](https://www.phnompenhpost.com/census-results-reveal-rising-literacy-rates)

¹⁵⁷ "Cambodia Population," Country Meters, accessed July 02, 2021, <https://countrymeters.info/en/Cambodia>.

3.5.2. Security

At the time, security was also considered as one of the concerns for Cambodia during its chairmanship. Since it is the period of Covid Pandemic, the Cambodia government has to ensure that every participant in ASEAN meeting under its chairmanship, will be safe and not infected by the virus. Furthermore, the virus is transmitted easily from one person to another. In order to ensure that everyone is secure, Cambodia must examine the number of persons expected to attend the conference.

“The arrival of the Delta variant – which can spread more rapidly and cause more severe illness – requires our greatest efforts at this stage to break the chains of Covid-19 transmission and prevent it from reaching our communities.”¹⁵⁸

The security in physical meetings during ASEAN summit would be a difficult and uncertain time for Cambodia in 2022.

¹⁵⁸ Mom Kunthear, “Covid-19 pandemic far from over; health ministry warns,” The Phnom Penh Post, July 26, 2021, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/covid-19-pandemic-far-over-health-ministry-warns>.

CHAPTER 4: CAMBODIA ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP IN 2022 ANALYZE

After doing the research on Cambodia as ASEAN Chairmanship, in the previous years, which were in 2002 and 2012, we have seen that Cambodia had made many achievements even though we had faced some challenges, Cambodia managed to hold it successfully and fruitfully. For instance, in 2012 during Cambodia's second time of ASEAN Chairmanship, Cambodia faced a big challenge which was that ASEAN had not reached a consensus on the joint statement on the issue of South China Sea which called a failure on Joint Communiqué. Despite serious problem in this regard, Cambodia had managed to solve the problem effectively and peacefully.

Correspondingly, for ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022, Cambodia will surely meet many challenges but those challenges will be a chance for Cambodia to strengthen itself. Actually, the upcoming ASEAN Chairmanship will provide Cambodia many opportunities to economically and politically enhance and reinforce itself in the global arena. Basically, Cambodia will have opportunities such as enhancing its reputation in to international stage, showing its resources, addressing the ASEAN issues, enhancing the economic growth, pushing a new membership of ASEAN, and benefiting from the new ASEAN Dialogue partner, promoting diplomacy, determining Socio-Cultural Community, as well as improving bilateral relations with other countries. On the other hand, Cambodia will face challenges which will occur during its time of ASEAN Chairmanship. But those challenges will not be too tough for Cambodia to deal with. As we have discussed earlier, the challenges that Cambodia will meet during the chairmanship will be caused by Covid Pandemic which will affect the economy and cause Cambodia to consider whether to conduct physical meetings or not. Moreover, there will be some unsolved issues that Cambodia must come to the negotiating table and try to find solutions together with other member states such as the human rights crisis in Myanmar, the pending issue of every ASEAN summit which is South China Sea dispute, and other unsolved

problems of ASEAN. Even though those problems will occur during ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022, Cambodia will be able to solve the problems productively. Obviously, the Covid Pandemic which is a serious challenge, Cambodia has been ready to fight with it. For example, we have seen that Cambodia's Covid-19 vaccination campaign has reached 76.13 per cent of its targeted adult population of 10 million as of August 5, according to the national vaccination committee.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Cambodia is now second only to Singapore for the number of vaccinations it has provided among the ASEAN countries according to Prime Minister Hun Sen, who noted this achievement in remarks made on April 28 after another 400,000 doses of the Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccines donated by China arrived in Cambodia.¹⁶⁰ Thus, in the third time of ASEAN Chairmanship for Cambodia, we strongly believe that Cambodia will be able to seize opportunities rather than challenges in 2022 either in physical meeting or virtual meeting.

¹⁵⁹ “Cambodia announces nearly 49% of Kingdom’s population has been vaccinated,” The Star, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/08/06/cambodia-announces-nearly-49-of-kingdom039s-population-has-been-vaccinated>.

¹⁶⁰ “Cambodia ranks second in ASEAN for Covid-19 vaccinations,” The Star, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/04/30/cambodia-ranks-second-in-asean-for-covid-19-vaccinations>.

RECOMMENDATION

Regarding the research, Cambodia who will hold ASEAN chairmanship in 2022 will have both opportunity and challenge. In this sense, Cambodia should be well prepared both domestically and externally to seize opportunities and overcome challenges. There are some considerations on Cambodia's preparedness as ASEAN chairmanship. Absolutely, Cambodia belongs to all of us, not to the Royal Government or any single state institution. Cambodia's success or failure is the responsibility for all of us, including all Cambodian citizens. Moreover, Cambodia must prepare the strategies to overcome the upcoming challenges. Obviously, according to what we have analyzed so far, Cambodia will face major challenges such Covid-19 Pandemic, Human rights in Myanmar, South China Sea issue, as well as the Pressure under the Superpowers.

1. Domestic Aspect

In the domestic aspect, it is to ensure that Cambodia shall has everyone on board, taking the "whole-of-Cambodia"¹⁶¹ approach towards the undertaking of this historical chairmanship role by preparing human resources, materials, budget, technology, security, protocol and hospitality affairs, especially document work for summits and related meetings, being the most important work for this event.

2. Covid-19

For Covid-19 Pandemic, Cambodia should put the priority to further the cooperation on enhancing the health system as well as strengthening human security. For instance, Cambodia should request all the members to consider vaccine acceleration to the main sectors in order to prevent the increasing cases. In Cambodia itself, in order for the physical meeting, it is

¹⁶¹ Uch Leang, "The role of Asean Chairmanship: Promoting "Cohesive and Responsive"," KHMER POST, November 16, 2020, [The role of Asean Chairmanship: Promoting "Cohesive and Responsive"- KhmerTimes\(khmertimeskh.com\)](https://www.khmertimeskh.com/asean-chairmanship-promoting-cohesive-and-responsive/)

recommended to work closely with the Ministry of Health in Cambodia to guarantee that the participants are provided a safe and non-infected area.

3. The Unsolved Issues

In connection with the political crisis in Myanmar, Cambodia should form an ad hoc task force to work with Myanmar's conflicting parties quietly or through back-door diplomacy to share lessons and experiences of peacebuilding and win-win policy implementation for Myanmar. It is also an opportunity to indicate that Cambodia is capable of assisting other ASEAN members in resolving political difficulties. Cambodia shows that it respects the ASEAN rule which is non-interference. Helping to resolve the political crisis in Myanmar is not an interference in the internal affairs of the country, but an expression of ASEAN solidarity and mutual assistance based on mutual respect for sovereignty.

Furthermore, in case of the South China Sea dispute, Cambodia itself should remain neutral and play a broker's role in easing the South China Sea conflict escalation. Moreover, Cambodia should strive to impose the Code of Conduct in order to prevent the serious damages which will happen in the future.¹⁶²

4. Balance of Power

However, in the rivalry of superpowers situation, Cambodia is required to carry out a silent diplomacy and consultation to seek common ground for regional collaboration among countries in the region so that ASEAN members do not fall apart, one side running to the United States and the other side running to China just for individual interests. Cambodia would stand many chances to further boost its economy while at the same time, enhancing the essence of ASEAN unity and Centrality at large.¹⁶³ Placing ASEAN at the core would also prevent the

¹⁶² Supra note 161.

¹⁶³ "Cambodia's Aspirations for a Successful ASEAN Chairmanship 2022: The Political-Security Community," Asian Vision Institute, June 15, 2021, [\(17\) AsianVisionInstituteFacebook](#)

internalization of the superpower competition within this region, which has the possibility of escalating to armed conflicts among countries in the regional grouping. Cambodia should continue to strategically diversify its diplomacy, support the principles of multilateralism, maintain close ties with all major powers, strengthen the important role of ASEAN by adhering to the principles of rule-based international relations, and promote peace through dialogue and negotiation method.

5. Learn experiences from the chairmanship in 2020 and 2021

Cambodia should take a look at ASEAN chairmanship in the previous years as lessons to learn in order to produce a successful meeting. By that, Cambodia should be taking ASEAN Chairmanship in the year of 2020 and 2021 which were under Vietnam and Brunei.¹⁶⁴ These two members are the best examples for Cambodia to learn from since these countries had both held ASEAN chairman in the time of Covid Pandemic. For instance, in 2020, by successfully organizing the teleconferenced 36th ASEAN Summit amid the complexities of COVID-19, Vietnam has once again affirmed its proactive and responsible chairmanship of ASEAN in 2020, which is also the common assessment shared by many foreign leaders and experts. The country has shown its activeness, proactiveness and sense of responsibility in guiding ASEAN to cope with unprecedented challenges, thereby helping to strengthen solidarity and unanimity of the grouping. These are also favorable prerequisites for it to fulfill its chairmanship role for the rest of 2020. Echoing the view, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said this ASEAN summit reflected Vietnam's capacity in guiding the bloc, regardless of difficulties caused by the coronavirus outbreak.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ "Cambodia 22 years in Asean," FRESH NEWS, April 30, 2021, [កម្ពុជា ២២ឆ្នាំក្នុងអាស៊ាន \(freshnewsasia.com\)](http://freshnewsasia.com)

¹⁶⁵ "Vietnam shows proactive, responsible chairmanship of ASEAN: opinions," Vietnam Law Magazine, accessed July 05, 2021, <https://vietnamlawmagazine.vn/vietnam-shows-proactive-responsible-chairmanship-of-asean-opinions-27243.html>.

6. Cambodia Shall Prepare Two Scenarios

In the time of ASEAN Chairmanship, Cambodia shall prepare two scenarios to make it ready for any circumstances. In this sense, the scenarios here refer to the form of meetings which are the physical meetings and virtual meetings. Since the Covid Pandemic is now still existing and the cases over the region as well as in Cambodia have been still rising up, the government of Cambodia should consider being well prepared for both platforms of meetings. Even, the virtual meeting is such a new experience for Cambodia to hold ASEAN summits and related meetings, it will not be a big challenge for Cambodia to overcome as we have seen that Cambodia has already attended some ASEAN meetings through online successfully recently. For instance, the 54th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) and other related meetings which were held on August 2-6 via video conference.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, if the situation is still bad, Cambodia who will be the host for 13th ASEM in November, will experience of how to hold online meeting before Cambodia holds ASEAN Chair in the next year.¹⁶⁷

7. Others

Finally, along with the summits and related meetings, Cambodia should organize business and investment forums to show Cambodia's potential and attractiveness for trade, investment and tourism in line with Cambodia's economic diplomacy strategy. However, Cambodia should raise agendas that are touchable and feel-able so that we can provide ASEAN citizens a strong sense of pride and hope for the future, and confidence for the wellbeing of generations to come with no one left behind, and also try to strike a balance between three

¹⁶⁶ Lay Samean, "Sokhonn set for ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting," Phnom Penh Post, July 31, 2021, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sokhonn-set-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting>.

¹⁶⁷ "Cambodia to hold twice-postponed ASEM summit in November," The Jakarta Post, accessed July 06, 2021, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2021/05/28/cambodia-to-hold-twice-postponed-asem-summit-in-november.html>.

pillars of ASEAN such as political-security community, economic community and socio-cultural community.

CONCLUSION

ASEAN Chairmanship is totally an important responsibility for the memberships of ASEAN to fully implement and enforce their roles in the association. Since the ASEAN was established in 1967, it has provided ASEAN chairmanship which conducted ASEAN summits for almost thirty-seven times already. Cambodia, on the other hand, had already prepared for ASEAN chairmanship two times, which was in 2002 and 2012. Both times were done successfully and effectively even though Cambodia had met some challenges.

However, Cambodia will hold ASEAN chairmanship again in 2022 which will be both an opportunity and a challenge for Cambodia. According to our research, the opportunities that Cambodia will have when it takes the role of ASEAN chairmanship will be the opportunity to enhance its reputation in to international stage, show its resources, address the ASEAN issues, enhancing the economic growth, pushing a new membership of ASEAN, and benefit from the new ASEAN Dialogue partner, promoting diplomacy, determine Socio-Cultural Community, as well as improve bilateral relations with other countries. Alternatively, Cambodia will face many challenges especially when it comes to the Covid Pandemic. The challenges that Cambodia will face during 2022 will be inability to conduct physical meetings, financial resources, ASEAN unsolved issues, the pressure from super powers, and some logistic matters.

Overall, Cambodia will benefit a lot from being ASEAN chairmanship even though the meeting would be conducted physically or virtually. We strongly believe that Cambodia will hold the ASEAN chairmanship in 2022 successfully and effectively either in both physical meetings or virtual meetings. Moreover, Cambodia will produce successful and fruitful outcomes during its chairman by reaching ASEAN versions and missions in the three pillars.

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