

CAMBODIA-INDIA RELATIONS

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Cambodia-India relations refer to the bilateral ties between the India and the Cambodia. India has an embassy in Phnom Penh, and Cambodia has an embassy in New Delhi. Relations between India and Cambodia go back to ancient times. India's influence in Cambodia is visible from the Hindu-style temples of Angkor Wat to written Khmer, which is a derivative of Sanskrit and Pali script from South India. Both nations are part of the Non-Aligned Movement India established formal diplomatic relations with the Heng Samrin regime and opened its Embassy in Phnom Penh in 1981 when Cambodia was internationally isolated. India had provided various personnel the conduct of the UNTAC-sponsored elections in Cambodia in 1993. The Government of India agreed to preserve Angkor Wat temple when the Government of Cambodia appealed, between 1986 and 1993 and spent around four million dollars during this conservation. While Cambodia has historically aligned itself more with the People's Republic of China, India's greatest geopolitical rival, Theravāda Buddhism is the official religion of Cambodia, practiced by around 95% of the Cambodian population, and its intrinsic Indian culture has considerably impacted Cambodian society and culture. There is a small community of Indians in Cambodia mainly expatriates and immigrants from India. It is estimated that there are about 1,200 to 1,500 Indians living in Cambodia, one-third of whom are in the capital, Phnom Penh.

History

Relations between India and Cambodia goes back to ancient times. India's influence in Cambodia is visible from the Hindu-style temples of Angkor Wat to written Khmer, which is a derivative of Sanskrit and Pali script from South India. The first Indians in modern times to settle in Cambodia arrived in the 1960s and 1970s. Primarily coming from the northern province of Punjab, they worked as jewellers, moneylenders and traders around Central Market, but they left the country once the Khmer Rouge arrived. The Indians returned to Cambodia when Pol Pot's regime collapsed.

Indian Diaspora in Cambodia

The first Indians in modern times to settle in Cambodia arrived in the 1960s and 1970s. Primarily coming from the northern province of Punjab, they worked as jewellers, moneylenders and traders around Central Market, but they left the country once the Khmer Rouge arrived. The Indians returned to Cambodia when Pol Pot's regime collapsed. There is an Indian diaspora in Cambodia and they have established an Indian Association, Cambodia. The President of India Pratibha Patil visited Cambodia in 2010 on a state visit and asked the Indian diaspora in the country to, "be the bridge between the two countries to access knowledge, expertise, resources and markets for the development of the country of their origin. While human resource development and capacity building have been the primary focus of our bilateral relations, India is extremely happy to cooperate with Cambodia in infrastructural projects, as well as in projects related to conservation and preservation of historical monuments.

Current Status

Today, many Indians in Cambodia are involved in pharmaceuticals, the United Nations and businesses such as restaurants. The growing economy is also attracting more opportunity seekers from India. Unlike other Indian communities in Southeast Asia such as Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, the Indian population in Phnom Penh is too small to support a Little India quarter, but it remains an intimate and close-knit group that has integrated well into local society.

Indian culture is visible in Cambodia. Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated by the Indian community. Thanks to satellite television, popular Indian soap operas are shown daily while a small selection of Indian restaurants hosts weekly showings of the latest Bollywood films as well as cricket matches. Indian film DVDs can be bought throughout the capital, and expatriates can peruse a number of Indian-based websites for the latest news and entertainment.

It is often said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Not so, perhaps when it comes to ancient Hindu temples. Earlier this week, officials in eastern India announced their plan to build a replica of Cambodia's spellbinding 12th century temple, Angkor Wat, on the banks of the Ganges in the state of Bihar. A religious group, the Mahavir Mandir Trust, said that when it is completed, the £13m project will not only be a major attraction in its own right, but will be the tallest Hindu temple anywhere in the world. As he laid the foundation stone, Kishore Kunal, the trust's secretary, told local media the temple's name will be Virat Angkor Wat Ram Mandir. "The site is blessed as Ram, Lakshman and Vishwamitra were welcomed here on their arrival by King Sumati of the Vaishali kingdom," he added, referring to the Hindu deities. But while people in Bihar may be excited about the project, not everyone is happy. Having learned of the plan, officials in Cambodia yesterday said they believed the move was "a shameful act" that would undermine the value of the country's best-known tourist attraction which has been a World Heritage Site since 1992.

Three million foreign tourists visit the Cambodian temple located close to the town of Siam Reap, which was off limits to visitors for many years because of the presence of the Khmer Rouge rebels. Such is the importance of the site to the largely Buddhist nation, both culturally and in terms of the revenue it generates, that it features on the national flag. "Angkor Wat is Angkor Wat – it is unique," Cambodian government spokesman Phay Siphon said. "They are raising this to be confrontational and it is provocative of the World Heritage principle. We won't let anyone confuse the world that there are two Angkor Wats." The location of the Indian temple, or Angkor Nagar as some are already calling it, is about 25 miles outside of the Bihar state capital, Patna. Indian officials say it will stand 222ft high. While the Cambodian temple was built to worship the Hindu god Vishnu, the Indian replica will also invite worship of Shiva and other deities. Mr Siphon said officials in Phnom Penh would raise its concerns with the Indian government to try to resolve the matter. "[The two nations] have good relations and good

cooperation, so we are looking for that to solve this issue," he said. "The tourists who come to visit Angkor Wat are not seeing it simply as a stone building. They come here to see the culture and to learn." The Indian Angkor will have five storeys and five "shikhars" or pinnacles, like the Cambodian original. It is estimated that work on the main structure, which will sit on a 40-acre site in Vaishali district, will take up to five years, while completing the entire project could take a decade. Informed of the controversy the plan had sparked, Mr Kunal told *The Independent* they were not trying to make an exact copy but would have some changes in scale.

Losing the limelight

CAMBODIA rarely gets the chance to shine on the international stage. A decade ago it scored kudos for its first-time effort as chair to the ten-nation Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a significant milestone for a country that was still struggling after 30 years of war. Phnom Penh's diplomats revelled in the summits that came with the job and in the company of their guests, including America's then-secretary of state, Colin Powell, and Japan's prime minister at the time, Junichiro Koizumi. The dignitaries lent an unprecedented air of political celebrity to the capital. Since then, however, Cambodia's external relations have changed. With billions of dollars of aid at stake, Cambodia has snuggled up to China and become its de-facto proxy within ASEAN. The attendance of Hillary Clinton, as America's current secretary of state, could not make the same impression as Mr Powell's. And China arrived with every reason to try taking advantage of its new leverage as Cambodia played host to the block for its second summit in Phnom Penh. At the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—where foreign ministers from South-East Asia and farther afield thrash out their differences—China picked a backroom tussle for influence in the South China Sea. Their Cambodian hosts might have been alone in failing to anticipate the manoeuvre. The remote Spratly islands are claimed in whole by China and in whole or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The Paracels are claimed entirely by both China and Vietnam. China wants to negotiate disputes over the potentially resource-rich Spratly and Paracel islands with its neighbours on a series of bilateral talks. ASEAN would prefer to present a united front. America tends to see these matters in the ASEAN way.

Two years ago China was angered by America's declaration that it sees the South China Sea—which about half of the world's ship-borne trade passes through—as a proper part of its own national interests. America ratcheted up the diplomatic stakes by signalling a realignment of its priorities back towards Asia. Central to this is the Code of Conduct (COC), a document that has been tossed around and discussed between ASEAN countries and China ever since Cambodia first time as the summit's host. The COC's purpose is to prevent or limit any military confrontation before it gets out of hand. Many argue the COC is needed now more than ever, with the frequency of clashes involving civilian and military vessels increasing over recent months.

Cambodia attempted to nudge the COC along by writing up a list of “key elements” for which it hoped would win acceptance from ASEAN. Instead its proposal was criticised for lacking teeth and demurring to China—and for infuriating the Philippines and Vietnam, who have led the block on this issue. The negotiations quickly became heated. As reports circulated to the effect that Cambodia's foreign minister, Hor Namhong, was simultaneously seeking China's advice while negotiating with fellow members of ASEAN, the atmosphere grew dismal.

The Philippines' contingent then upset their hosts by insisting on a communiqué that mentioned their navy's standoff with Chinese vessels at Scarborough shoal, a ring of mostly submerged rocks to the east of the Paracels. The Cambodians balked and in the end delegates failed to strike any deal on the COC. For the first time in its 45-year history ASEAN's delegates also failed to issue a closing statement. Caught between defending the national interest and wanting to keep the Chinese sweet, Cambodia's delegates went into a huddle. Mrs Clinton took a moment to remind ASEAN that America had invested much more in South-East Asia over the years than China ever has. She also warned that confrontations over the Spratly and Paracel islands would probably escalate. “None of us can fail to be concerned by the increase in tensions, the uptick in confrontational rhetoric and disagreements over resource exploitation,” Mrs Clinton said. “We believe nations of the region should work collaboratively and diplomatically to resolve disputes without coercion, without intimidation, without threats and certainly without the use of force.”

China does not want the issue settled by the international courts nor by the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (to which it is signatory, though America is not). Its representatives said it would resume talks on a legally binding document, such as could regulate trade and shipping in the

South China Sea, only when “the time is ripe”. Mrs Clinton left Phnom Penh for a side trip to Siem Reap, home of the 12th-century temple ruins of Angkor Wat, and then she was on to Myanmar. Left behind was Hor Namhong, who tried to explain the summit’s failure. “I have told my colleagues that the meeting of the ASEAN foreign ministers is not a court, a place to give a verdict about the dispute,” he mustered for reporters. The feuding over the South China Sea will be no less vitriolic for Cambodia’s efforts to mediate between China and its ASEAN neighbours. All that has changed is that Cambodia’s place within the alliance—and its relationship with China—are being questioned as never before.

CAMBODIA IN THE 20th CENTURY

Under French rule some economic development took place in Cambodia. Roads and railways were built and in the 1920s a rubber industry grew up. However the Cambodians were forced to pay heavy taxes and from the 1930s Cambodian nationalism grew. Then in 1941 Cambodia was occupied by the Japanese. However at first they allowed French officials to remain in their posts but in March 1945 as the Japanese were losing the war they desperately tried to curry favour with the Cambodians. They arrested French officials and declared Cambodia independent. However when the Japanese surrendered the French took over again. They arrived in October 1945. This time the French did allow the Cambodians to have political parties and a constitution. By a treaty of 1949 Cambodia was made semi-independent. Then in 1952 King Sihanouk dismissed the government and took personal control of the country. Events then moved swiftly. On 9 November 1953 the French finally allowed Cambodia to become fully independent and in 1955 Sihanouk abdicated in favour of his father and elections were held. Sihanouk formed his own political movement. From 1955-1970 he dominated politics in Cambodia so much so that it is sometimes called the 'Sihanouk era'. In 1960, when his father died, he named himself 'Chief of State'. Sihanouk called his movement 'Buddhist Socialism'. However it was not really socialist at all. Sihanouk's reign began to crumble in 1968 when the communists began a civil war. In 1970 Sihanouk left the country. While he was away the National Assembly voted to remove him as chief of state. Cambodia was renamed the Khmer Republic. However

the communists slowly made headway. The Americans bombed Cambodia to try and stop the communists. Nevertheless they captured Phnom Phen on 17 April 1975.

THE KHMER ROUGE IN CAMBODIA

In 1975 a horrific and tragic era of Cambodian history began in the reign of the Khmer Rouge. They were led by Pol Pot (or Saloth Sar) also known as 'Brother Number One'. How many people were killed by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge is not known for certain but it was probably at least 1.5 million and it may have been as many as 3 million. Pol Pot declared that history would begin again in Cambodia. The first year of revolution was now the first year of history. In 1975 Cambodia was a mainly agricultural country. Pol Pot decided it should be *completely* agricultural. This meant all the people from the towns and cities were forced to move to the countryside. Pol Pot also decided that agricultural output should double in 4 years (a totally unrealistic target). Private property was banned and collective farms were formed. They were supposed to grow 3 tonnes of rice per hectare (again a completely unrealistic target). People were made to work very long hours to try and grow the extra rice. They were given insufficient food and many fell ill and died from a combination of exhaustion and malnutrition.

That was not all. Religion was banned in Cambodia (people caught practicing Buddhism were executed). Family relationships were banned (on the grounds that parents exploited their children). Furthermore the smallest infringement of the rules resulted in execution. Although they were half starved people caught foraging for food were executed. People were also executed for being lazy. Needless to say anyone who complained was executed. Furthermore the Khmer Rouge murdered intellectuals. Soon people who could speak a foreign language or who wore glasses were executed. This nightmarish situation was only ended by a war with Vietnam. The Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in December 1978 and quickly prevailed. Unfortunately Pol Pot escaped and he did not die until 1998.

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Pol Pot's soldiers fled to Thailand and they were welcomed by the Thai's who feared a Vietnamese invasion. The Khmer Rouge continued a guerrilla war against the Vietnamese. However the Vietnamese forces withdrew from Cambodia in 1989. Afterwards negotiations began among several different parties. The result was the Paris Peace Accords of 1991. Communism was abandoned in Cambodia and a provisional government ruled until 1993 when elections were held and a constitution was framed. Sihanouk was made a constitutional monarch. However the Khmer Rouge refused to take part in the elections and they continued their guerrilla war. Fortunately in 1996 Pol Pot's second in command Ieng Sary defected in 1996. Many Khmer Rouge troops followed him. Pol Pot himself died in 1998 and peace returned to Cambodia.

In 1999 Cambodia joined ASEAN.

CAMBODIA IN THE 21st CENTURY

In 2004 King Norodom Sihanouk abdicated. His son became King Norodom Sihamoni in his place. Today Cambodia is still a poor country but there is every reason to be optimistic about its future. In the early years of the 21st Century the Cambodian economy grew rapidly. Cambodia suffered badly during the recession of 2009 but it soon recovered and today it is growing strongly. Today the textiles industry in Cambodia is booming. Tourism is also an important industry in Cambodia. However many people in Cambodia still live by farming. In 2005 oil was discovered in the sea off Cambodia and it holds great promise for the future. Today the population of Cambodia is 14.9 million.

ANCIENT CAMBODIA

Cambodia has a rich and fascinating history. The first humans in Cambodia were Stone Age hunters and gatherers. However farming was introduced into Cambodia about 2,300 BC. The first farmers in Cambodia used stone tools but from about 1,500 BC the Cambodians used tools and weapons made from bronze. By about 500 BC they had learned to use iron. The first civilisation in the area arose about 150 AD in the Mekong River delta in South Vietnam. This civilisation was known to the Chinese who called it

Fu-nan. While Fu-nan was trading with the Chinese Cambodian society grew more sophisticated. Settlements grew larger. So did kingdoms. By the beginning of the 7th century AD all of Cambodia was highly civilised. At first Cambodia was divided into rival states. However at the beginning of the 9th century a king named Jayavarman II founded the Khmer Empire in Cambodia.

THE KHMER EMPIRE IN CAMBODIA

Like all early civilisations the Khmer Empire was an overwhelmingly agricultural society, Although there were many craftsmen the great majority of the people were farmers. Their staple diet was rice. The Khmers were animists. They believed that spirits inhabited natural phenomena such as the earth and trees. Later Indian religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) were introduced but they co-existed with traditional beliefs. The rich and powerful built fine temples (the only stone buildings in Cambodia). They were richly decorated with fine stone carvings. The most famous temple is Angkor Wat which was built in the early 12th century. For Cambodia was prosperous and powerful. Then about 1000 AD King Jayavarman V was killed. Civil war followed until Suryavarman I founded another dynasty. By 1011 he was in control of Cambodia. However his dynasty only lasted until 1080 when it was replaced by another.

In 1177 a people called the Chams from Champa (on the coast of Vietnam) invaded Cambodia. However King Jayavarman VII managed to drive them out by 1183 and between 1203 and 1220 he was able to force the Chams to submit to him. Nevertheless by the mid-13th century the Khmer kingdom was in decline. In 1431 the Thais captured the Cambodian capital, Angkor. Afterwards it was abandoned and new capital was founded at Phnom Phen. By the mid-16th century Angkor was overgrown by the jungle and it was accidentally rediscovered by a Cambodian king.

CAMBODIA 1500-1800

During the 16th century Cambodian power continued to decline. At the end of the century Cambodia fell under Thai suzerainty (loose control). In 1594 the Thais captured the capital. After that they dominated the region. From the middle of the 17th century the

power of Vietnam grew. In the early 17th century the Cambodians controlled parts of what is now South Vietnam. They held a port called Prey Nokor. (Later it was renamed Saigon). In the late 17th century Prey Nokor fell under Vietnamese rule. During the 18th century Cambodia found itself squeezed between two powerful neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam. The Thais invaded Cambodia several times in the 18th century and in 1772 they destroyed Phnom Phen. In the last years of the 18th century the Vietnamese also invaded Cambodia. The Cambodian king was forced to look to the Thais for protection. In return Thailand took north-west Cambodia.

CAMBODIA IN THE 19th CENTURY

In the early 19th century King Chan (1806-1834) turned to the Vietnamese for protection from the Thais! The Thais were annoyed by this policy and when a rebellion occurred in south Vietnam in 1833 they took advantage by invading Cambodia. However the Vietnamese king crushed the rebellion and the Thai army retreated. As a result the Vietnamese emperor strengthened his control over Cambodia. When Cambodian King Chan died in 1834 one of his daughters was installed as Queen and Vietnamese people settled in Cambodia. The Vietnamese regarded the Cambodians as 'barbarians' and tried to 'civilise' them by teaching them Vietnamese customs.

Resentment at Vietnamese influence led to a rebellion in 1840-1841. The Thais invaded again to re-assert their control of Cambodia. However in the 1850s French missionaries arrived in Cambodia. The Cambodian king turned to the French to protect him from both the Thais and the Vietnamese. So in 1863 Cambodia became a French protectorate.

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