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China Builds Deep Water Seaport in Cambodia on the Gulf of Thailand

By [Michael Bengt](#)

President Obama's pipe dream policy of using Vietnam to contain China, which was conjured up years ago by two Senate Johns – Kerry and McCain – is falling apart. This should not surprise anyone who has compared the populations and economies of these two nations.

While U.S. Southeast Asia policy has myopically focused on China's growing occupation of and base construction on the South China Sea Islands, China has made a Hail Mary pass by building a new deep-water port in Cambodia. Many strategists see this as part of China's gun-boat subversion scheme to claim a vast economic exclusion zone, controlling shipping, fishing, energy production, and even air travel within one of the world's busiest transportation corridors.

A Chinese company, working with the diplomatic support of the People's Liberation Army, is close to completing construction of this [deep-water port](#) on a 90-kilometer stretch of Cambodia's coastline, according to the company's executives and documents. The port, which is deep enough to handle cruise ships, bulk carriers, or naval vessels of up to 10,000 tons in displacement is located on the Gulf of Thailand just a few hundred kilometers from disputed territories in the South China Sea. China now controls more than 20% of Cambodia's total coastline.

As [reported by Financial Times](#):

China has drawn Cambodia into a closer military and diplomatic relationship in recent years as part of its effort to quell regional opposition to its sea territorial claims in Asia. China is presently the largest investor in Cambodia. As China has sought to assert its authority in the South China Sea, some Southeast Asian nations have bolstered their ties with the US, including Vietnam and the Philippines, while Cambodia is China's staunchest counterweight. With an effective veto in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the region's top diplomatic grouping, Cambodia has a weapon to wield on China's behalf.

Cambodia used this effective veto to protect China in July when ASEAN was poised to issue an official statement mentioning an international tribunal's ruling that there was no basis under UN law for China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. However, after Cambodia objected, a watered-down final communique was issued with no mention of the ruling. China, which had pledged \$600 million in aid for Phnom Penh just days before the ASEAN meeting, reacted with gratitude. ... A few days after the meeting, Beijing said it would also build a \$16 million National Assembly hall in Phnom Penh.

"In terms of money, China is the number one," says Phay Siphon, a secretary of state within Cambodia's council of ministers. "The power of China is getting much bigger... we choose China because [its investment] does not come with conditions." China invested \$9.6 billion in the decade to 2013; and about a further \$13 billion is yet to come, according to the think tank Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace. "A number of western investments come with attachments," he adds. "[They say] we have to be good in democracy. We have to be good in human rights."

Among its many projects, HydroLancang, a state-owned Chinese company, is also constructing the \$800 million Lower Sesan II Dam in Cambodia, with funding from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private lending arm. Although the 400MW dam has been hit by protests from thousands of villagers it remains on schedule for completion in 2019. Some 45,000 people will lose their homes, land and livelihoods without adequate compensation or employment possibilities.

China is also gaining ground in Cambodia under the guise of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) whereby the Hun Sen regime grants tracts of land under 99-year lease agreements that cost just a few dollars per hectare. An area larger than the Netherlands – 4.6 million hectares – went to Chinese interests between 1994 and 2012 according to estimates by the Cambodia Centre for Human Rights. It is expected that Chinese laborers will be brought in to develop these concessions and produce the products for export to China with little to no benefit to the Cambodian people. Families of the laborers can be expected to follow and settle on the concession areas.

Hun Sen has given away over half of Cambodia's arable land through ELC lease agreements, some 2.14 million hectares. This land was expropriated from Cambodian farmers who depended on it for their livelihood with no compensation, and will now be used to grow crops and products for export with little or no benefit to the Cambodian population.

The kleptocratic Hun Sen regime prefers Chinese companies over others, as they deliver critical infrastructure projects quickly and without delays caused by human rights and environmental objections, since they bring in their own construction workers. The downside is that after projects are completed, Chinese workers remain. With the plethora of projects planned for implementation by Chinese companies, a large influx of Chinese migrants into Cambodia is imminent. An additional reason for Hun Sen's tilt toward China is because its bribes are much sweeter than what Vietnam might offer.

As in the Bible, Cambodia is suffering from a series of devastating plagues. The first the Khmer Rouge genocide; the second Vietnam's 1978 invasion of Cambodia; the third UNTAC's (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) sellout of its supervision of so called free and fair elections in 1993. UNTAC gave the Vietnamese-controlled Khmer Rouge equal power in the government even though the pro-democracy opposition received the majority of votes, setting the stage for a bloody communist coup; the fourth the amoeba-like neo-colonization of Cambodia by Vietnam, for it is now estimated by researchers that the number of Vietnamese who have been given Cambodian nationality and Khmer-ized their names exceeds six million; 40% of the population census of the country. (*Notes from Cambodia's Border Committee in France and Worldwide Concerning the violations of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements on Cambodia*. Paris. 07/30/2016)

The human rights situation in Cambodia continues to deteriorate under decades of dictatorial rule by Hanoi's puppet regime in Phnom Penh and it may get worse. The Peoples' Army of Vietnam-owned multi-industries conglomerate - Viettel - now controls Cambodia's Post and Telecommunications, cellular phone network, internet and social media. Hun Sen and his cohorts are now armed with a powerful tool for Vietnamese technical "advisors" to crack down on and control dissidents and democracy advocates in Cambodia, as is already happening in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese-installed "Prime Minister" Hun Sen is one of the longest serving dictators in the world. In August of this year, he ordered the media to henceforth address him in all communications as "Lord Prime Minister and Supreme Military Commander." Cambodians say that although Prime Minister Hun Sen may have some Cambodian blood in his veins, his heart and brain are Vietnamese.

Instead of opposing Vietnam's violations, President Obama chose to reward Vietnam for its aggressive actions against its neighbors by lifting the lethal arms sales ban.

Yet another plague? China, with its much larger economy, is "yuaning" to give the Vietnamese competition for the domination of Cambodia. Whoever may win, the outnumbered and undefended Cambodian people will be the real losers.

And the band plays on!

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