



**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING**

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Phnom Penh, 17 February 2024

**Mr. Sebastian Strangio
Southeast Asia Editor
The Diplomat**

Dear the Editor,

I read with dismay the wild allegations tarnishing the prestige of my country, the Kingdom of Cambodia, made in an article "US Sanctions and Rallying Around the Flag in North Korea and Cambodia" published in The Diplomat on 16 February 2024. I am therefore constrained to write this letter for the sake of my homeland's image.

As an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation dealing with the promotion of Cambodia-US relationship, I applaud Professor Steve Hanke's pragmatic position against the imposition of U.S. sanctions on foreign countries, including Cambodia as reported in this article. I have observed with encouragement the spread of this view in the U.S. policy.

Of course, Cambodia and the U.S. still have had differences on some issues, but the two countries have not allowed those differences to obstruct the promotion of relationship in many areas that they can find common ground for moving the cooperation forward while keeping on discussing on the remaining differences. I have noted with much pleasure the increasing US cooperation and engagement with Cambodia, particularly on diplomacy, economy & trade, culture & Conservation of Antiquities, health, education, POW/MIA, environment, clearance of unexploded ordnance and landmines, food security, etc.

I do acknowledge Mr. David Whitehouse's rights, the author of this article, to advocate for the view opposite to that of Professor Steve Hanke, but I question his flawed methodology by putting two completely different countries in a common category for comparison. The fundamental flaws and errors in the analytical framework of this article cast severe doubt on the validity and reliability of its contents.

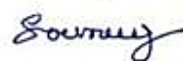
The allegation that Cambodia's power transmission operates solely on a hereditary basis is inaccurate and misleading. The country's Constitution clearly states that Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with a multi-party system, separation of powers, and guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms. The transfer of power in Cambodia has regularly operated on a democratic basis. Since 1993, the general elections have been conducted on

a regular basis, with multiple political parties contesting. The 2023 election was one of the most diverse general elections in Cambodia's modern political history with 18 political parties competing. The election was widely assessed as free and fair, credible, just, and inclusive by thousands of international and independent national observers.

Through the 2023 general election, Cambodia witnessed a peaceful, smooth, and democratic transfer of power, marking a historic political succession in Cambodia's contemporary political history. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) endorsed Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet as the future candidate for Prime Minister, and subsequently his candidacy was publicly and widely disseminated to Cambodian voters prior to the election. The results showed that Cambodian people trust and choose Samdech Thipadei HUN Manet to be their leader, whom they believe can best lead the nation on the path of peace, stability and socio-economic development.

The author's political judgement and allegations were largely the result of misperception and misunderstanding about Cambodia.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sounry'.

CHUM Sounry
Spokesperson of MFAIC