

Sanctions, Subversion, and Color Revolutions: US Meddling in Cambodian Elections

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After a nearly year-long marathon of daily, acrimonious accusations against Moscow for alleged, yet-to-be proven interference in the 2016 US presidential elections, Washington finds itself increasingly mired in its own hypocrisy – openly and eagerly pursuing the very sort of interference abroad in multiple nations regarding elections and internal political affairs it has accused Russia of.

A particularly acute example of this is Cambodia where recently, the government has begun uprooting and expelling US State Department-funded fronts and media organizations as well as arresting members of the US-backed opposition party while disbanding the party itself – for interfering in preparations for upcoming elections.

The New York Times in its August article, "[Cambodia Orders Expulsion of Foreign Staff Members With American Nonprofit](#)," would claim:

Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday ordered foreign staff members of an American nonprofit that gets support from the United States government to leave the country within a week, part of an apparent attempt to silence opposition voices before national elections next year.

The NYT would elaborate, reporting:

The nonprofit, the National Democratic Institute [a subsidiary of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)], is loosely affiliated with the Democratic Party in the United States, and has provided training to various Cambodian political parties, including those from the opposition. Local news media organizations with ties to Mr. Hun Sen's party have accused the nonprofit of conspiring against him.

Unsurprisingly, the NYT attempts to portray Cambodia's uprooting of US government-funded fronts, media, and opposition directly and openly manipulating its political affairs as undemocratic. Such a narrative concurrently takes shape in the NYT's pages side-by-side an entire section titled, "[Russian Hacking and Influence in the U.S. Election](#)."

While Western media like the NYT claims foreign interference in America's affairs constitutes the destruction of American democracy, it simultaneously proposes that extensive US meddling in elections abroad – including in Cambodia – constitutes the promotion of democracy.

Unfortunately for many, the hypocrisy this glaring double standard represents goes

unnoticed – due in part to the notion of American – and to a larger extent – Western exceptionalism.

Washington’s Khmer Marionettes

The move by Phnom Penh is the culmination of years of US meddling in Cambodia’s internal political affairs and political processes including its elections.

The opposition party – the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) – is led by long-time US proxies Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha. Both have divided their time and activities between politicking in Cambodia and residing in Western capitals, including Washington D.C. openly conspiring with the US government to overthrow Cambodia’s current political order, and install themselves into power.



US State Department officials threaten Cambodia with sanctions for uprooting US-funded organizations openly engaged in political interference in Cambodia’s upcoming elections.

Kem Sokha in particular has been seen on video and quoted by the Cambodian press on numerous occasions causally discussing his leading role in US-backed sedition.

The Phnom Penh Post in its article, “[Kem Sokha video producer closes Phnom Penh office in fear](#),” would quote Kem Sokha who claimed (emphasis added):

And, the USA that has assisted me, they asked me to take the model from Yugoslavia, Serbia, where they can changed the dictator Slobodan Milosevic,” he continues, referring to the former Serbian and Yugoslavian leader who resigned amid popular protests following disputed elections, and died while on trial for war crimes.

“You know Milosevic had a huge numbers of tanks. But they changed things by using this strategy, **and they take this experience for me to implement in Cambodia. But no one knew about this.**”

Kem Sokha is referring to the openly admitted US-engineered regime change mechanism known as “color revolutions” and in particular the successful use of such “revolutions” in the overthrow of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

It is also mentioned in the article that Kem Sokha has traveled to the United States every year since 1993 to “learn about the democratization process.”

The video producer mentioned in the above article, the Australian-based “Cambodia Broadcasting Network” (CBN), [had published a video](#) of Kem Sokha with US Senator Ed Royce in Washington DC openly calling for the deposing of the Cambodian government.

This clear cut evidence was cited by the Cambodian government upon Kem Sokha’s arrest on charges of treason. It would be difficult to fathom Washington not likewise responding with swift and severe charges of treason in light of similar, explicit evidence of a US politician collaborating with a foreign power to overthrow the US government – especially considering the current fallout in the US over mere innuendo and outright fabrications.

Yet Washington’s hypocrisy is once again highlighted by its counterstroke to Cambodia’s efforts to uproot foreign interference.

Washington Strikes Back

In the wake of Cambodia’s moves against US government-funded media, opposition fronts, and the nation’s main opposition party itself, a quickly escalating confrontation with Washington is unfolding.

The Phnom Post in its article, [“US says more sanctions on table in response to political crackdown,”](#) would report:

Visiting US State Department official W Patrick Murphy yesterday warned that further punitive action could be forthcoming in response to the government’s recent crackdown on the main opposition, while repeatedly pointing to the US’s warm relationship with the people of Cambodia – if not their leaders.

In diplomatic but firm remarks made at a press roundtable yesterday, Deputy Assistant Secretary Murphy noted recent “negative developments with regards to democracy”, and implied that the US would be unable to recognise the legitimacy of an election that took place without the now-dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party.



Kem Sokha's daughter, Kem Monovithya, in Washington DC appealing for more US interference in Cambodia's internal affairs as her father resides in jail for treason associated with seeking US interference in Cambodia's internal affairs.

The article would also report (emphasis added):

...in Washington, a panel of "witnesses" convened by the House Foreign Affairs Committee - including Kem Sokha's daughter, Kem Monovithya - called for additional action in response to the political crackdown. In a statement, Monovithya urged targeted financial sanctions against government officials responsible for undermining democracy. She also called on the US to suspend "any and all assistance for the central Cambodian Government", while "continuing democracy assistance programs for civil society, particularly those engaged in election-related matters".

Monovithya also asked America to review "Cambodia's eligibility for the Generalized System of Preferences", a program which gives favourable trade treatment to Cambodia's garment exports.

In other words, not only has Kem Sokha and the CNRP been accused of treason, but in its response, the Cambodian opposition has doubled down in its open collaboration with the United States to attack and undermine the Cambodian government while working its way - with continued US support - into power.

Realism Required to Break Free from the Illusion of "Democracy"

One can only imagine the headlines in the NYT should a US politician passionately plead within the walls of the Kremlin for Russian intervention in American elections - for the enacting of sanctions to target incumbents in power and for additional and open financial support to contest those elections.

In reality, democracy is - at its core - a process of self-determination. Self-determination is untenable if any "democratic process" is subject to outside interference, particularly the full-spectrum institutional meddling the United States engages in.

And despite America's immense hypocrisy, the geopolitical maxim of "might makes right"

prevails, enabling the US to both accuse and attack other nations for alleged political meddling, while overseeing institutionalized political meddling and electioneering abroad on a global scale.

Cambodia has taken a risk in directly confronting Washington's "democracy promotion" racket head-on. It risks not only sanctions and additional political subversion underwritten by the United States government, but also covert military aggression, proxy terrorism, and economic warfare – all ushered in under a US-sponsored color revolution. It was a color revolution that Kem Sokha sought US assistance in organizing in Cambodia.

To confront this, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has publicly warned about a color revolution by name and is making preparations to combat it.

The Phnom Penh Post in its article, "[New spy school announced](#)," would report:

Prime Minister Hun Sen announced the creation of a school to train spies to combat "colour revolution" and terrorism in Cambodia yesterday, tapping his son and Ministry of Defence Intelligence Director Hun Manith to lead it.

In front of an audience of hundreds of military and police officials, Manith said the facility will train soldiers and police in intelligence-gathering and maintaining "covert identities".

The article would also cite Human Rights Watch – a US-European government and corporate-financier-funded front posing as a rights advocate – attempting to dismiss the threat of color revolutions as "non-existent." Human Rights Watch would claim:

The government has excelled in manufacturing non-existent threats, like a colour revolution, to justify its crackdown on human rights and civil society. And now it's going a couple steps further by creating permanent intelligence training facilities to combat these and other threats, like Islamic terrorism, which has also yet to appear in Cambodia.

And yet, there is nothing at all "non-existent" about the threat of color revolutions. Kem Sokha himself openly admitted he was conspiring with the US to organize one. The same Western media dismissing Cambodia's concerns as a pretext for an otherwise unwarranted crackdown, has openly admitted that the US organized and executed color revolutions from Eastern Europe to North Africa and the Middle East.

The New York Times itself would admit regarding the so-called "Arab Spring" in an article titled, "[U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings](#)," that:

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

The article would also add, regarding the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – a

key component in US subversion in Cambodia, that:

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

In essence, the very same organizations admittedly responsible for plunging the Middle East and North Africa into chaos are the very same organizations Cambodia has targeted and expelled - while arresting and charging their Cambodian accomplices with treason. Considering the toll in human suffering, loss of life, and economic devastation nations targeted by US-sponsored color revolutions have suffered elsewhere, Cambodia's moves are far from unwarranted - and instead constitute measures a responsible nation would take in defending peace and stability.

Cambodia's efforts must go one step further. Media organizations and genuine, local nongovernmental organizations must fill the space left by expelled foreign fronts. Russia and China have provided a successful example of producing both local and international media and organizations to confront and displace foreign influence within their borders and to have their side of the story told beyond them.

The notion of "soft power" is as important as a conventional army. While most nations possess conventional armies able to keep foreign powers from outright invading, many are ill-equipped to defend against more subtle intrusions into their information, digital, sociocultural, and economic space. Developing and honing these tools will be essential for Cambodia and many other nations still targeted by US subversion. Noting America's immense hypocrisy is not enough. In a "might makes right" world, developing a defense to face America's might is an absolute necessity.

Read this [survey conducted by Comparitech on Americans' view on election hacking](#).

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