

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND CAMBODIA

#### A. China and Cambodia with Marxist-Leninist and Maoist Ideology

A tight relationship between China and Cambodia occurs because of the similarity of their ideology. Ideology can bind and create emotional atmosphere between two countries. Moreover, the historical factor contributed toward their relations recently. The nature of Cambodia's ideology was inspired by Marxist-Leninist and Maoist. The ideology spread at the time of Khmer Rouge triumph. China and Cambodia have similar root of ideology which was coming from the ideas of Marx-Lenin-Mao. The difference is only the class that each one is trying to focus on. China focuses on labourer while Cambodia focuses on farmers. Most of Cambodian people believe, agricultural is an appropriate areas of work. It can be seen from the products produced from this country is partly agricultural products such as rice.

Marxist-Leninist analysis argues all historical development is the result of a process of struggle, between classes within a nation, between nations themselves, or between broader forces such as socialism and imperialism. As Mao said, "win over the many, oppose the few, and crush our enemies one by one." The Leninist policy is uniting with some forces in order to oppose others more effectively in a

united front. This is one of contradictory principal based on Mao's thought. The Leninist emphasizes the opposition against imperialism of western countries.<sup>65</sup>

The above statement is very suitable according to Chinese thinking until now. China's relations are less harmonious with the western countries like America. While Cambodia indicates otherwise with China's principle. In conjunction with the western countries seem more harmonious and open. This is due to a less strategic position of Cambodia and is a Third World country. Cambodia still relies on some western aid. That better explain where China is using the power of third world countries to offset the power of other hegemony in the region. In this case it looks Cambodia used as an arm of China on several occasions, especially in Southeast Asia.

The similarity makes ideological relations between the two countries intertwined emotionally. The principle of common sense help us to understand what makes the relationship stronger politically. Between China and Cambodia will be easier to integrate understanding even in the midst of a dilemma of Cambodia. Ideology inspired by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist is only a cover. Cambodia is actually more influenced by the understanding of China since the days of Mao. So the ideology held by Cambodia remains an ideology brought by China.

#### B. The Nature of Cambodia's Ideology

Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Pol Pot, the full support of the Chinese communist government. At that time, China is very aggressively to

spread the ideology of communism in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Cambodia first have proximity to China during Sihanouk served. But communist ideology has not become as Sihanouk had another lane which is neutralism among ideologies battle. At the time of Pol Pot leadership, the Communist party was formed as well.

Prince Sihanouk interested in the non-aligned movement after meeting U Nu of Burma and Nehru of India. After the Manila visit, Sihanouk went to China and Russia. They recognized the neutrality and integrity of Cambodia and offered unconditional aid. During a long National Congress debate, Cambodia accepted the above aid, and swung to the left. Early in 1967 Sihanouk was doubt about the intentions of the Chinese, who for the first time showed the signs of wanting to interfere directly in the country's internal political affairs. Chinese economic aids enabled China to have a firm ground to spread their communist ideology in Cambodia. Their technicians and consultants lured young Cambodian especially Chinese Cambodian and workers in their Chinese aid factories. These young people learnt Maoism and created their local networks. The prince saw the internal threat from the communists and the suspected link of the external communists, "he reaffirmed his determination to defend the country's neutrality against any enemy whether it would be the Viet Minh or the United States." <sup>66</sup>

Thayer (1994: 513) points out:

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<sup>66</sup> Davidson, J. Indochina: Signposts in the Storm, Longman, 1979, in Man Hau Liev, "Cambodia", Centre for Refugee Education School of Social Sciences, 1998.

Ideology once brought the two parties and states together in a relationship characterized as "close as lips and teeth". Ideology has thus served as an additional dimension for the conduct of bilateral relations which otherwise have been based on *real politik*.<sup>67</sup>

Even though what Thayer tries to point is the ideological relation between China and Vietnam but it happens as well in the relations between China and Cambodia. Ideology brings positive energy on their bilateral relations. Although their ideologies are not identical, it will be much easier to establish relation upon ideological foundation.

#### C. China and Cambodia are engaged in the Same Political Ideology

By sharing ideology, is part of measurement of the relationship between two countries to be more in deep. Without any frills of ideology, there is no relationship between states in which intense. Although their ideologies are not identical but they tend to believe that the same ideology can make them easier to fill each other.

Marsot (1969: 190) also stated in his opinion:

Chinese aid is motivated by political considerations of influence and prestige. An examination of the motives behind China's policy of economic aid to Cambodia involves a consideration of the political relations between two countries, who share neither a common frontier nor a common ideology or culture.<sup>68</sup>

Ideology is one of the most important considerations of China to grant economic aid to Cambodia. Without any share of ideology and culture, there will

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<sup>67</sup> C. A. Thayer & R. Amer "Vietnamese foreign policy in transition", *Singapore ISEAS*, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Alain Gerard Marsot "China's Aid to Cambodia" *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 42 No. 2, 1969, p. 180.

not be a special attention given to Cambodia. Although their ideologies are not identical but it could make their relations run easily. These indicate the ideology of Cambodia is more pragmatism on political point of view. Cambodia ideology was inspired by the teachings of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist over the things that are not resistant and sealed but rather the most profitable option. The most favorable option is from China as the country which significantly helps Cambodia in economic terms. However, when ruling on pragmatism factor, there are influential factor which is the same political ideology of communism that makes the relationship between Cambodia and China still enduring.

In terms of China's own interests, the country will get some benefit from cooperating with state that has same ideology. This could pave the way from China in terms of economic activities such as trade. Furthermore, in terms of China's political allies can add in Southeast Asia. But it all comes back to pragmatism itself. Values contained in the communist ideology can change according to the situation and cannot be adopted on an ongoing basis in the implementation in the field. Today, China and Cambodia are more inclined to pragmatism although admitted communist identity as a political ideology.

With this also, Cambodia faced a daunting task to reintegrate itself to the international community and to gain diplomatic recognition. Among many other nations that Cambodia got reengaged with was China. It emphasizes on the bilateral cooperation between Cambodia and China from the period of 1990 to 2007. The choosing of this timeframe is significant due to the fact that the

international community really had a great role establishing an elected Cambodian government, promoting democracy and, most important of all, stabilizing the flurry of Cambodian politics. In this aspect international contributions for Cambodian national reconciliation were tremendous and China played vital role in securing peace building in Cambodia. Not only were their efforts directed to effectiveness of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, but their presence provided a great opportunity for Cambodia's integration to the world. In addition to that was the development of Cambodian domestic politics and actors involved. That despite political turbulence and strong contest from political rivals, Hun Se remains the central figure in the Cambodian's political heart. Whether the international community including China likes it or not, they all have to engage Hun Sen in every aspect concern Cambodian issues. With this in mind, Hun Sen becomes very prominent domestically and internationally concerning the setting of Cambodian domestic and foreign policy.<sup>69</sup>

#### D. Chinese Socio-Cultural Influence Surrounds Cambodian Society

The number of Chinese ethnic population in Cambodia approximately last than 4% of total population. It is estimated around 500.000 Chinese and Chinese-Cambodians live here recently made the largest ethnic minority in Cambodia. The numbers of Chinese who have historically lived in Cambodia since the Khmer era, the numbers of persons with some pure Chinese blood, and Chinese cultural influence, the impact is tremendous.

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In promoting Chinese culture in the Southeast Asia, the Chinese diaspora has taken apart and donated contributions.<sup>70</sup> Several countries in the region have ethnic Chinese populations. The region's most vibrant economy, Singapore, has a predominant ethnic Chinese population, followed by Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. China has a contiguous boundary with Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos on its South, which has also facilitated considerable settling of ethnic Chinese in these countries. China's relationships with Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand were not particularly peaceful till the early 1990s.<sup>71</sup>

However, the presence of a diaspora has sometimes helped China in making its soft power overtures. For example, ethnic Chinese in Cambodia, 3-5 percent of the country's population, have been instrumental for facilitating China's economic involvement and cultural outreach in the country. Unlike other countries with predominant ethnic Chinese population, some minor countries such as Cambodia are obligated to obey Chinese request. The reason is explicitly read regarding the Chinese financial contribution to the minor countries in Southeast Asia like Cambodia. China is seemingly difficult to attempt several countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore because they did not owe China as much as Cambodia did.

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<sup>70</sup> Li Mingjiang. "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect", *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, No. 165, 1 September 2008

<sup>71</sup> Schobell, Andrew. "China's Geostrategic Calculus and Southeast Asia - The Dragon's

The popularization of the Chinese language in Cambodia far exceeds that in any other Southeast Asian country. This feather in the cap of Cambodia's Chinese has made an enormous contribution to both glorifying Chinese culture and developing the friendship between Cambodia and China (Yan Tingai, a former Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia).<sup>72</sup>

There are reportedly 75 schools in Cambodia teaching Chinese to around 40,000 students, many of whom are ethnic Chinese. To further promote the Chinese language, China has built a Confucius Institute in Phnom Penh to offer Chinese-language programmes to Cambodian learners and training programmes for Chinese-language teachers.<sup>73</sup> Some scholars say that the cause of Chinese involvement in Cambodia's economic affairs is stressed on ideological point. Aid and assistance flow smoothly to the recipients because the ideological factor has been very important for China. China and Cambodia have established a strong bond. Moreover, the relations based on the ideological similarities between both countries. China continues to expand its influence in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia. Chinese diaspora that has long existed since the days of Khmer, and the results of different ethnic marriages between Chinese and Cambodian, made major changes in which Chinese can contribute to the spread of cultural influence in Cambodia.

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<sup>72</sup> Marks, Paul. China's Cambodia Strategy, in: *Parameters*, 2000, p. 92-108.

<sup>73</sup> Xinhuanet (2010), "Confucius Institute Opens Chinese-language Class in Cambodia", 21