

WORKING PAPER NO. 03

**More Than Friends? A Content Analysis of Cambodia's Position
towards China's Core Interests**

Yun Pengtakpitou
2018 Young Research Fellow

January 2019

MAIN DONORS



More than Friends?

A Content Analysis of Cambodia's Position towards China's Core Interests

Yun Pengtakpitou

More than Friends?

A Content Analysis of Cambodia's Position towards China's Core Interests

Yun Pengtakpitou

Abstract

The 'Cambodia-China' relationship dynamic has spurred much debate between scholars for many years. However, the extent to which there exists explicit Cambodian support for China remains greatly contested. This divergence of view in academia has emerged from primarily qualitative studies and opinion pieces.

Therefore, this study aims to measure the relationship between Cambodia and China by employing a content analysis methodology. Utilizing the software 'Nvivo 12' to undertake the research, we identified and coded Phnom Penh-Beijing relations across five core themes: South China Sea, One China Policy, One Belt One Road, Chinese Assistance, and Chinese Investment. Data was collected and analyzed from the reputable Cambodia media outlet, the Phnom Penh Post.

The results show that only 1 per cent of publication content conveyed a skeptical position towards a Chinese core interest. The outcome conforms to this paper's hypothesis that Cambodia is largely in support of China's core interests.

Keywords: Cambodia-China relations; Content analysis study; Nivo 12 Plus

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract..... | 2 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Literature Review..... | 6 |
| Methodology..... | 7 |
| Conceptualization..... | 8 |
| Operationalization..... | 10 |
| Empirical Finding..... | 12 |
| <i>Table 1. 1 Frequency of Support.....</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Table 1. 2 Frequency of Opposition.....</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Table 1. 3 Frequency of Neutrality.....</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Table 2.1 Position of Prime Minister.....</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Table 2.2 Position of Government Spokesperson.....</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Table 2.3 Position of Analyst.....</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Table 2.4 Position of Minister.....</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Table 3.1. News Form.....</i> | <i>15</i> |
| Discussion..... | 15 |
| <i>South China Sea.....</i> | <i>16</i> |
| <i>One Belt One Road.....</i> | <i>16</i> |
| <i>One China Policy.....</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Chinese Assistance (Soft Power).....</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Chinese Investment.....</i> | <i>18</i> |
| Conclusion..... | 19 |
| References..... | 21 |
| Appendix 1. The Codebook..... | 24 |
| Appendix 2. Frequency of Unavailable Position..... | 26 |

Introduction

China's influence on Cambodia has grown significantly over the last decade. The intensive cooperation between both countries has been built upon a reinforcing process of substantial economic aid from China to Cambodia, and a strengthening of political relations across a broad range of topics (Ly, 2018; Renwick, 2016). This brand of Chinese foreign policy is often seen as a means of protecting national interest through a process of soft-power influence in other countries.

Phnom Penh-Beijing relations have greatly improved since 2003, when Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen publicly announced that China was the "Most Trusted Friend". China's subsequent assistance and investment in Cambodia has been acknowledged to have no strings attached, whilst being provided as and when required (Chandara, 2014). In 2010 relations took a codified development where both countries advanced their ties with the announcement of the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation".

Due to China's growing influence in Cambodia, a few commentators have moved to conclude that Cambodia is actually "China's de facto proxy" in Southeast Asia and that Cambodia has been bought by Chinese largess (Mahabubani, 2012; Ciociari, 2013). Part of this belief is predicated upon Cambodia's strong and public support of China on the regional and international stage: as seen in 2012 when Cambodia blocked an ASEAN joint communiqué for the first time in ASEAN's 45-year history in favor of China over the South China Sea issue. Previously, Cambodia has also been in full support of many Chinese initiatives, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. From the Chinese vantage, Cambodia is viewed as a loyal friend with comparable views on sovereign control, while China is Cambodia's most generous economic and military benefactor. However, despite the close national ties, people-to-people exchanges remain an identified gap within the relationship. Favorable future relations demand that both countries work collaboratively to ensure platforms between the people of both countries (Po, 2017).

Accordingly, this paper seeks to quantify and measure Cambodia's position and approach towards China's core interests.

Traditionally, national-relations papers on the China-Cambodia relationship utilize theoretical models and events-based analyses rooted in political study. This paper seeks to provide additional insights by employing a mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative analysis: specifically exploring the national sentiment as conveyed through national press publication. In doing so, we attempt to answer the research questions:

- *What are Cambodia's positions towards China's core interests?*
- *To what extent are these positions positive, negative or neutral?*

The primary goal of this paper is to:

- 1) *Examine the Cambodian support of Chinese interests, determined by the language employed in news articles.*
- 2) *Draw the implications of the Cambodia and China relationship from 2010 until 2018.*

To attain this goal, the news stories regarding Cambodia and China from 2010 to 2018 were examined through a content analysis of one popular Cambodian newspaper, The Phnom Penh Post. These results will then be discussed and interpreted. This paper considers that Cambodia may be ‘off the fence’ and aligned strategically with China.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 provides an overview to, and insight on Cambodia-China relations. It goes on to outline the premise that Cambodia’s behavior has been to support China. Section 2 reviews the outstanding literature discussing the relationship between Beijing and Phnom Penh. In section 3, in order to develop the insight on Cambodia’s position towards China’s core interest, we introduce the conceptualization of five key interest themes. In section 4, we then operationalize our methodology using the content analysis method. In the section 5, we review the results and analyze them critically. Section 6 concludes the paper and includes policy recommendations.

Literature Review

The concept of national interest dates back to when the evolution of the modern state system took place (Beard, 1977). Despite this, and the huge interest with which the topic is pursued, a fixed conceptualization has always remained difficult to land on. National interest covers a suitably wide number of parameters for which there is no succinct category. As noted by Webber (2014) “in the contemporary world, it appears that foreign policy interest has been both riddled through society and politicized to nothing of kind degree” (Webber, 2014). However, generally speaking national interest can be ascribed as both a defense of, and explanation for, policy-making and outcomes.

China’s core interests, and the motivations that govern them, have attracted much academic and public attention for which it has been found that China’s foreign policy is embedded in its domestic issues (Swaine 2010; Campbell et al. 2013). The foremost foreign policy objective is identified to be domestic political stability, however Zeng, Xiao, & Breslin (2015) found that the term ‘core interests’ is too vague for Chinese discourse, despite its increasing use by the government to legitimize its diplomatic actions and claims.

Regarding the tools at Chinese disposal for achieving international relations and domestic needs, diplomacy is still the most popular approach, followed by the suggestion to develop a stronger military power (Weissmann, 2015).

Since the early 2000s, China’s leaders have focused on three important national, or what authorities call “core,” interests: security, sovereignty, and development (Mazarr, Heath, & Cevallos, 2018). Although China’s White Paper provides an official definition of core interests including sovereignty claims and territorial integrity, China’s political system, and socio economic development (China 2011), we find that this official line is open for academic interpretation—ranging from conventional domestic affairs (e.g. Taiwan and Xinjiang), controversial territorial disputes issues (e.g. South and East China Seas) to even new expansion (e.g. energy interests in the Middle East and China’s dominance in the North-East Asia region) (Zeng et al. 2015).

In recognition that the relations between Cambodia and China have been upgraded, the Cambodian PM praised China on its effortless financing of projects, that sees Cambodia owing a great deal to China’s investment and steady technical and financial assistance (Pheakdey, 2012). The Cambodia-China relation dates back decades, and this example of country praise is not unusual. However, the last decade has seen an increase in Cambodian behavior and sentiment that consistently falls in line with China’s position: this alignment can be classified as a common form of Cambodia’s diplomatic behavior (Leng, 2017). Cambodians are generally supportive of Cambodia’s current relations, and do not view Cambodia’s actions as contradicting or harming ASEAN (Kong et al., 2017).

Vannarith (2009), however, found that Cambodia-China relations are mainly shaped by traditional political links such as the ethnic Chinese community residing in Cambodia, recent bilateral economic relations, China’s dominant participation in Cambodia’s economy, and Chinese financial aid to Cambodia (Vannarith, 2009).

As identified by John (2014), although many aspects of the Sino-Cambodian partnership are unique, the case draws attention to factors that can help inform studies of China’s other asymmetric partnerships as well. These include the general reluctance of small or weak states

to enter into highly subordinate patron–client pacts absent dire threats, and China’s caution in pressing for such arrangements given its strategic environment and normative commitment to non- interference (Jonh, 2014).

The above literature illustrates considered aspects of the relations between China and Cambodia. By introducing the new method employed in this paper, one hopes to shine further insight on the key drivers of the China-Cambodia relationship. While previous studies are qualitative, rhetorical in nature and from the lens of international relations, none provide quantitative evidence of this relationship, more specifically on Cambodia’s support of China’s core interest.

Methodology

This paper employs a mixed-methodology form of content analysis. Content analysis is a set of procedures for the collection and organization of raw and unstructured information into a standard format that allows analysts or researcher to make inferences about the characteristics and meaning of written and other recorded material (GAO, 1989).

It is a powerful tool for examining trends and patterns in documents. The values and intensions of the authors can be inferred from the data, which may reveal underlying themes and associations (Duriau et al., 2007). It is a research method, which allows the qualitative data collected in research to be analyzed systematically and reliably so that generalizations can be made from them in relation to the categories of interest to the researcher (Gaggarty, 1996).

To perform the content analysis, we use the Nvivo 12 Plus program: a convenience program for utilizing content analysis to run the data. It is run against articles taken from the English language publication, The Phnom Penh Post that discusses Cambodia-China matters. Appendix 1 contains the codebook descriptions utilized by this paper for the Nvivo data analysis process.

This paper codes articles published between 2010 until 2018. This is predicated on the fact that both countries upgraded their bilateral cooperation to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation in 2010. Later in 2013, in Beijing, both nation’s leaders signed the action plans to carry out this comprehensive strategic cooperation. Therefore, 2010 signals a marked turning point in Sino-Cambodia relations.

Concerning the source material, we identified the Phnom Penh Post newspaper as the most appropriate for both independent coverage and readership. It was ranked as the second largest independent media outlet after the Cambodia Daily (CCIM, 2017). Two other daily English language newspapers have operated within or across this timeframe; however, they are not suitable for inclusion. The Cambodia Daily was closed down in 2017 following the issue of a large tax bill (Nachemson, 2017). The Khmer Times, by comparison, only began operations in 2014.

Conceptualization

In order to address the question, we first need to understand what we mean when we discuss the concept of Cambodian support for China's core interests. It is often approached in too vague a manner as to be broadly understood.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to define the concept by developing a framework that incorporates the five key international policy areas that influence the China-Cambodia relationship. These policy areas have been determined by the existing literature to be of significance to the relationship. We decided to justify the themes at first we have observed out of over 3000 news articles by searching key words "Cambodia* and China or Chinese", there are 221 articles were suitable to formulate five themes since the nature of news articles filled up what have been framed. Secondly, the conceptualization is also supported by existing literature on Cambodia-China relations (Kosal, 2009; Heng, 2012; In et al., 2017). The five themes are the: South China Sea, One China Policy, One Belt One Road, Chinese Investment, and Chinese Assistance. Each will be coded and operationalized to provide a contextually appropriate and applicable conceptualization of Cambodian support.

Each aspect is discussed in turn below.

| Topic | Description |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>South China Sea</i> | <p>In the South China Sea, Beijing has claimed territorial sovereignty over two groups of islands, Paracel and Spratly Islands. (Fravel, 2011). The overlapping claim is strongly contested by Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam (Evers, 2014; Amry, 2014).</p> <p>In formal setting, China has always dismissed the internationalization of the issue, and called for bilateral negotiation with each claimant state. In contrast, other claimant states have urged the issue to be solved multilaterally primarily by using ASEAN platform (Khoun, 2013).</p> |
| <i>One Belt One Road</i> | <p>Attention to China's grand strategy for the 21st century, the BRI or known as One Belt One Road, aimed at connecting China and the rest of the world with a network of roads, high-speed rail, power lines, ports, pipelines, and other infrastructure networks (Heng & Po, 2017). BRI is China's grand strategy for expanding global presence and leadership role, harnessing multilateral institutions, and enhancing partnership with neighboring nations. Following the report of the Eighteenth National People's Congress set out the vision of BRI focusing on five measures (policy communication, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, currency circulation, and shared understanding between peoples) and five communities (a civilized community, a community with common interests, a community with shared responsibility, a security community, and a community with common destiny) (Chheang, 2017).</p> <p>Christian demonstrated that the OBOR had been a key initiative working to shape geopolitics in the face of globalism. The 'OBOR initiative' can be</p> |

viewed as a framework of existing political-economic interests of the Chinese government that parallels a wide range of various policy proposals (Ploberger, 2017). However, some countries such as Sri Lanka, Zambia and Pakistan have increasingly become discontent with the OBOR initiative because it makes them vulnerable to massive debt, fueling corruption, and disgracing democratic behavior while promoting authoritarianism (Abi-Habib, 2018; The Strait Times, 2018).

One China Policy China has always remained consistent with regard to its One-China Policy, a policy that firmly opposes Taiwanese independence, and recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China. China considers Taiwan as an inalienable part of Chinese territory and it will continue to support China's cause of peaceful reunification (Hyer, 2006). However, Taiwanese government has regarded its country as an independent state, and not as part of China. Under President Lee's leadership, most of Taiwanese people began to interpret the One China policy as not a policy that only one China did exist, but that China was Mainland China, and no longer included Taiwan and its islands, and that Taiwan was its own independent state (Koopman, n.d).

Chinese Assistance (Soft Power) China's interest in soft power is rooted in its commitment to achieve its national interests; to this end, it has employed different apparatus including "*Chinese culture, language, arts, aids, trades and investments*" (Arif, 2017). Socio-cultural elements of Chinese assistance to developing countries includes a training component which focuses in part on transferring information about China's own experience with urbanization, economic growth, and poverty alleviation (Bräutigam, 2009, p.119). China has taken some steps to increase its assistance and aid to other countries around the world particularly in Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa. Since 2010, China's aid and assistance have increased dramatically. In 2009, China's foreign aid was \$124.8 billion, it then increased to \$168.6 billion in 2010 it continued to grow to \$189.3 billion in 2011, while it was only \$1.7 billion in 2001 (Wolf & Warner, 2013).

According to analysts, China's ODA aims to secure natural resources, establish strategic diplomacy, and spread Chinese values (see Lengauer 2011; Lum et al. 2011; Weston, Campbell and Koleski 2011). Given the nature of Chinese "no-strings attached" aid over that from the traditional donors, China will remain a major player and Cambodia-China relations will become even closer (Chanboracheat, 2015).

Chinese Investment The Chinese government has taken a number of measures to segment and decentralize foreign direct investment (FDI) administration and strengthen the enforcement. The emphasis has been on aligning inward FDI flows more closely with national priorities, including upgrading industrial sophistication, supporting innovation, setting up outsourcing industries and developing poorer hinterland regions (Davies, 2013). However, while Chinese investment

is largely linked to generating local employment and economic growth, it has become increasingly associated with the loss of livelihood, natural resource exploitation, human rights violation, and crimes (Heng, 2012).

Operationalization

All records directly related to Cambodia-China activities from 2010 to 2018 were included and imported into NVivo, software designed for qualitative and mixed methods data, text, and multimedia analysis. This paper aims to use text out of each article to identify the ‘language context’. The coverage of the material was found of more than 3000 articles on the Phnom Penh Post newspaper website following the key term of Cambodia and China. Only 448 articles were kept because it includes our key phrase, ‘Cambodia-China’, ranges from 2010-2018. This became 221 articles when the contents were run against the node theme as described in the Table 1. This coding manual provides a handy way to ensure that the coding process is suitably appropriate and operational across the five key themes. The number shown in each column aligns with a variable of interest. The names of issues, names of speakers, names of support, and type of news equivalent to the number on each of them as coding process took place. We replaced each issue with shortcuts; however, coding is largely subjective so to address this issue, the thematic coding is peer-reviewed by two international relations researchers. Under the term of quality control both help to bolster the credibility of the coding and ensure the quality in the need of back and forth revision as shown below.

Table 1. Coding Manual

| Issue | Speaker | Position | Type of News |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. South China Sea | 1. Prime Minister | 1. Support | 1. Hot News |
| 2. One Belt One Road | 2. Spokesperson | 2. Against | 2. Feature |
| 3. One China Policy | 3. Analyst | 3. Neutral | 3. Commentary |
| 4. Chinese Investment | 4. Minister | 4. Not Available | |
| 5. Chinese Assistance | 5. Ordinary Person | | |
| | 6. Other | | |
| | 7. Not Available | | |

The ‘Issue’ column contains the five Chinese core interests described above. The ‘Speaker’ column contains the seven classifications of speaker¹. The ‘Position Column’ contains the codified position of the speaker with respect to the issue being discussed.

Articles are then separated in to three type of news, contained in the ‘Type of News’ column in Table 1:

¹ Numbers 5, 6, and 7 were unable to be identified and unusable for the result.

- 1) Hot News. Primarily refers to the latest breaking news. The top current events of the day.
- 2) Feature news. Features that contain more in-depth analysis of the story at hand. Often, they may contain specialist insight, facts and figures, included to build upon the headline.
- 3) Commentary. The expression of opinions or offering of explanations about an event or situation.

Empirical Finding

This section presents the results of the mixed methodology content analysis. Results are discussed across three sections. The first section describes the breakdown of each issue by year and position of support. The second section describes each issue with reference to the position of the speakers. The third section describes the issue by the news type classification, with consideration of the speaker. Articles that could not be classified by opinion have been included in Appendix 2.

Table 1. 1 Frequency of Support.

| Year | SCS | OBO R | OCP | CH I | CH A | Tota l |
|-------|-----|----------|-----|---------|---------|-----------|
| 2010 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| 2011 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| 2012 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 14 |
| 2013 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| 2014 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| 2015 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 2016 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 12 |
| 2017 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| 2018 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| Total | 19 | 1 | 19 | 20 | 18 | 77 |

Table 1.1 contains the incidences of declared Cambodian support for any of the five listed Chinese core interest; there are 77 in total, with all interests receiving frequent coverage apart from OBOR (only one positive mention in 2017). There are 80 articles in our sample that offer a measurable position. Accordingly, 95 per cent of all such articles express positive sentiments towards a Chinese Core Interest.

Table 1. 2 Frequency of Opposition.

| Year | CHI | SCS |
|-------|-----|-----|
| 2018 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | |

If we consider Table 1.2, there are reportedly 2 incidents on CHI and 2 incidents on SCS whereby Cambodia appears to be critical of Chinese core interest. These were both in 2018 and both regards Chinese Investment and South China Sea.

Table 1. 3 Frequency of Neutrality.

| Year | SCS | Total |
|-------|-----|-------|
| 2016 | 1 | 1 |
| 2017 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 2 | 2 |

Table 1.3, there are only 2 incidents (2.5 per cent) where Cambodia demonstrated neutrality towards China’s core interest, specifically on SCS issue. Both positions are given by Cambodian analysts between 2016 and 2017.

The section two tables contain the outputs associated with the issue position of particular speakers: the PM, Government Spokesperson, Analyst, or Minister.

Table 2.1 Position of Prime Minister.

| Issue | Support | N/A | Total |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|
| SCS | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| OBOR | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| OCP | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| CHI | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| CHA | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| Total | 31 | 7 | 38 |

Table 2.1 emphasizes that Prime Minister has made his support for Chinese core interests a total of 31 times between 2010 and 2018. The majority of his commentary is spread evenly across the issues: OCP (29%), CHI (26%), CHA (23%), SCS (19%): with the exception of OBOR (3%).

Table 2.2 Position of Government Spokesperson.

| Issue | Support | N/A | Total |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|
| SCS | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| OCP | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| CHI | 1 | 1 | 2 |

| | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|
| CHA | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 5 | 4 | 9 |

Table 2.2 represents the support of official government Spokespersons. Between 2010 and 2018, they have given their support 5 times: 2 for SCS, 2 for OCP and 1 for CHI.

Table 2.3 Position of Analyst.

| Issue | Support | Against | N/A | Total |
|-------|---------|---------|-----|-------|
| SCS | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| CHA | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 |

Table 2.3 emphasizes the analyst support on issues. Intriguingly, of their three measurable opinions, Analysts have shared negative views twice.

Table 2.4 Position of Minister.

| Issue | Support | Against | N/A | Total |
|-------|---------|---------|-----|-------|
| SCS | 10 | 0 | 6 | 16 |
| OBO | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| R | | | | |
| OCP | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| CHI | 11 | 2 | 12 | 25 |
| CHA | 10 | 0 | 10 | 20 |
| Total | 39 | 2 | 31 | 72 |

Table 2.4 contains the support stance of Cambodian ministers. There are 39 incidents of support and 2 against: both of which concern the CHI issue.

In summary, as shown in tables above, there are 76 reports with in person to support on China's core interest, equivalent to 95%, 2 reports with critical views raise by analysts (2.5%) and 2 reports raise by minister (2.5%).

The third section describes the outputs of issue and speaker against the type of news.

Table 3 News Form.

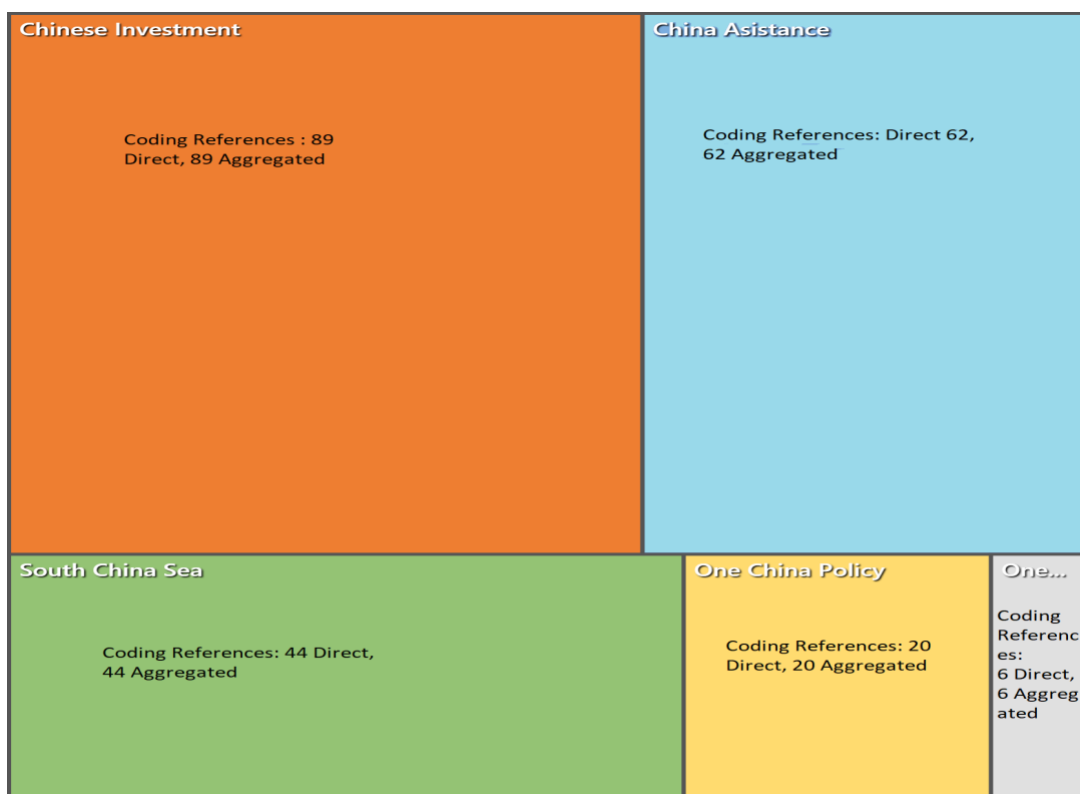
| Issue | Hot News | Feature News | Commentary | Total |
|-------|----------|--------------|------------|-------|
| SCS | 36 | 7 | 1 | 44 |
| OBOR | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| OCP | 20 | 1 | 0 | 21 |
| CHI | 89 | 4 | 0 | 93 |
| CHA | 52 | 5 | 0 | 57 |
| Total | 203 | 17 | 1 | 221 |

As can be seen in Table 3.1, there are 203 hot news articles equivalent to 97% of the total output. By comparison, Feature news accounts for only 17 articles (2.5%), and Commentary accounts for only 1 news article (0.5%).

Discussion

In total this paper was able to make use of 221 articles that discussed one of the five core interest. (See Figure 1): Chinese Investment (89), China's assistance (62), South China Sea (44), One China Policy (20), and the One Belt One Road (6). Overall, based on the news analysis, Cambodia fully supports China's core interests 98%; only 2% it demonstrates concern/critical views on China, particularly on influx of Chinese nationals into the kingdom. We review each policy interest accordingly, bringing together the aforementioned literature and empirical outputs.

Figure 1 Tree map of overall view of 221 News Articles



South China Sea

There are 44 news articles coverage on SCS equivalent to 20% of news coverage on the five issues. Of these, 19 articles demonstrate Cambodia's support on this issue, with no negative position and 2 neutral positions. As presented in the tables above, all of the support positions on the SCS issue are given by government. Comparatively, neutral positions are given by Cambodian analysts. This implies that the Cambodian government's position on the SCS issue is aligned with China's core interest.

The South China Sea remains a hot topic of discussion at all levels. As we look over the statements reported on the issue, we can add further credence to our assertion that the Cambodian government shows clear support for China over the SCS issue. According to a quote made by the prime minister in 2016:

"If you or your country has issue with China, please solve it peacefully. Do not blame me and do not involve Cambodia to your own country's internal issue," the premier wrote (Samean, 2016).

Similarly, Tea Banh, Minister of National Defense made his opinion clear in 2016 stating that:

"Cambodia has a clear stance; we want to encourage the conflicting parties to sit down and solve the issue among themselves," he said. "Outsiders should not come in and mess things up."

Following the empirical insight, alongside quotes made on the topic, we believe that Cambodia has a positive approach to China on the SCS issue and appears likely to align with China's core interest towards promoting bilateral discussions.

One Belt One Road

There are 6 articles mentioned on One Belt, One Road initiative equivalent to 2% of news coverage on the five issues. However, only 1 article offered a tangible position and this position was of support. This was made by the PM during 2018. Given the timing, and the increasing future importance of OBOR, it suggests that the Cambodian default position will remain aligned with Beijing interests.

Beyond the official communiqué printed in the Post, the PM has made supportive statements on alternative platforms. For instance, a statement published in 2017 reads:

Prime Minister Hun Sen, who is attending the summit in Beijing, said on his official Facebook page yesterday that the Belt and Road initiative was "based on win-win cooperation". (Sokhorng, 2017)

By employing the language of 'win-win' engagement, the PM is clearly stating his support for the policy. The OBOR is one of the core interests of China to connect, and also expand, its regional strategy to forge itself as the major global economy. Cambodia has found itself to be one of the key countries to benefit from these initiatives. The core interest of China 'OBOR soft power' is based on three key pillars: utilizing industrial capacity, nurturing a network of

economic interdependence, and fostering regional stability and prosperity. As a marked part of its history, Cambodia has found itself heavily reliant on strong global states and institutions for the economic prosperity of the country. Close relations with China mark a natural progression in terms of aid, opportunity and growth.

One China Policy

There are 20 articles mentioned in relation to the One China Policy (OCP); equivalent to 10% of news coverage on the five issues. It has been supported 9 times by the PM and 8 times by ministers. The OCP has been given support 19 times in total since 2010. All of the support position on OBOR has been given by government officials. It would therefore appear to be the case that the Cambodian government's position on the OCP issue is once again aligned with China.

Based on the speech made by the Cambodian Prime Minister on the reaffirmed commitment of Cambodia to support Beijing's One China Policy in 2010.

"If the provincial governors think they are in power and Taiwan wants to hold any ceremony in their province or post any Taiwanese flags, there would be disaster quickly. I would like to send a message at this point.

"We follow the One-China Policy Taiwan is a just one province of the People's Republic of China." (Stragio & Sokha, 2010).

Cambodia appears to embrace the One China Policy and adhere to One-China Policy as an act of mutual respect between both countries. However, this unwavering promotion may contain underlying opportunism for Cambodia. From the standpoint, Taiwan is just one province of the People's Republic of China; therefore, reaching out for friendship with big states is one of Cambodian traditional foreign policy. One China Policy is embedded into Cambodia's foreign policy to not recognize Taiwan as a state but the province of China, therefore Cambodia follows China's core interest towards the recognition China but not Taiwan is be acknowledged as the above discussion.

Chinese Assistance (Soft Power)

There are 62 articles on Chinese Assistance (CHA); equivalent to 28% of news coverage on the five issues. The position of support had been positive again from both ministers (10 occasions) and the PM (7 occasions). There have been no negative positions printed on the issue. This points to Cambodian government alignment with China's core interest to promote its soft power (CHA).

A key and credible component of Chinese assistance abroad is that of foreign aid. China is fully equipped with the White Paper in the release of providing assistances for recipient countries in order to facilitate and contribute to the economic growth of the country. China has been considered a generous country that provides assistance to Cambodia. Recently China's development projects have offered to aid the development of the kingdom with the dam projects, road projects, and buildings projects. For instance, under the headline of Phnom Penh Post: PM Hun Sen lavishes praise on China, 2012

“On behalf of the government and people of Cambodia, I would like to express thanks to the government of China for providing grants and loans to Cambodia for social and economic development,” added Hun Sen. (Sokheng, 2012)

To support the growth of the Cambodia economy through foreign aid in this form, Cambodia may have to readily accept the conditionalities that China offers. The Cambodia economy has sustained consistently high growth rates per annum of around 7%, with the aid of Chinese foreign assistance. More significantly, Cambodia to support Chinese Aid, because Cambodia would like to enjoy the aid with no string attached, unlike western’s aid in demand to promote human rights and democracy of the country. Chinese is publicly perceived to be largely beneficial to elites, rather than to the society of Cambodia. Whilst China can lift up the state’s economy, it struggles to fulfill the needs of society in the expansion to build the trust with local Cambodian people.

In conclusion, Chinese’s Assistance remains a significant input for Cambodia development. Based on the analysis, Cambodia fully supports China on Chinese aid to the country, and willingness to still contribute for the growth of the country.

Chinese Investment

There are 89 articles included on Chinese Assistance (CHI), equivalent to 40% of news coverage. Support has come 8 times from the PM, 1 time from a government Spokesperson and 11 times from ministers. Whilst there is overwhelming support for Chinese investment in the news, there are 2 reports made against. These had been made by a minister in 2018 and regarded concerns with Chinese investors/nationals in their constituencies. The government’s Council of Development Council Secretary General Sok Chenda Sophea wrote,

“The success of the Cambodia economy is because of Chinese companies and because of Chinese investment,” he said. “All of the Chinese investments into roads, bridges and electricity have helped to make Cambodia a success.” (Kimsay, 2017)

China has contributed 44 percent of the \$19.2 billion of FDI funneled to the Kingdom between 1994 and 2014 (NBC, 2014). Cambodia is known as a country that massively welcomes foreign direct investment. Simultaneously, Chinese Investors have provided a huge amount of investment in the Kingdom, whilst introducing myriad issues. For example, in news article coverage (Sassoon & Dara, 2018), a senior Cambodian police officer reportedly expressed concerns over Chinese nationals in his province.

Major General Kul Phaly, deputy commissioner of the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Police, admitted that money laundering, illegal casino operations and human trafficking have become acute concerns (Sassoon & Dara, 2018).

This evidence outlines the contrast between the growth of Chinese investment and the presence of Chinese activities in Cambodia; especially in Kampong Som. Such discontents over Chinese nationals in Cambodia are not accidental but a reflection of the high number of crimes committed by Chinese nationals in the kingdom. According to VOA (2018), at least 1,000 Chinese nationals have been deported to China since 2012 for various crimes especially on Internet scamming. Therefore, the concerns have publicly risen upon the changing of Kompong Som into a new phase of development, this led to openly discussion to the extent that at first stage of development causes instability and insecurity.

Whilst Cambodia has generally welcomed Chinese investment/investors, there are growing discontents due to disrespectful behavior and crimes associated with some Chinese nationals in Cambodia. Despite this, support remains strong and seeks to engender reciprocity.

Conclusion

Informed by the above discussion, the implications of this paper provide a comprehensive learning curve in which Cambodia is contained within a sphere of Chinese influence. Cambodia has certainly benefited from China and has found itself to be a part of China's growing global interest; growing from a bilateral partnership into a more comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation for the 21st century. This has marked the milestone of Cambodia's long journey into the new phase of sustainable economic.

The first stage of analysis points us to the conclusion that Cambodia is in pursuit of China's favor by aligning with its core interests. Crowned by large portions of Chinese investment to Cambodia, Cambodia has shared a closely tied relationship with China for both countries benefit.

The paper provides a new conceptualization of Chinese-Cambodian relations that promotes the initial hypothesis that Cambodia is in support of Chinese core-interests. Additionally, the role of Cambodia on the international stage have been framed and convinced by the five existing key themes, leaving doubts for ASEAN members states when Cambodia's host chairmanship. Nevertheless, when it comes to strategic tie between both countries, we have noticed more assistance has been poured into Cambodia.

Across the time-frame, the enhanced tie has upgraded to focus not only on government to government, but to people-to-people investment and structured support. This is a mark of Cambodia's perception that China provides win-win cooperation. The generosity of support demands that Cambodia conveys strong support for Chinese foreign policy.

Cambodian foreign policy traditionally rests on geopolitical realities (relations with other countries), nationalism, historical memories, historical memories (anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism), and economic condition (Chheang, 2014). Within a globalized world Cambodia has been shaped by the economic condition and become one of China's grand strategic focus points. Therefore, Cambodia has fallen into a sphere of influence of China's core interest.

Based on Cambodia-China relations, the alignment of China's grand strategy in promoting the sustainable economic growth has been one of the factors to push both countries into a depth of praising each other's as close friend. However, strong relations have not considered positively but the negativities shall be aware of.

Cambodia should accordingly consider implementing two mechanisms to maximize the relationships potential, and mitigate against its undesired consequences:

- 1) Cambodia should maintain its long-term foreign policy goal with a renewed domestic security focus. Chinese Investment in Cambodian coastal areas evokes the argument as to why security requires renewed focus. The domestic political stability has the

potential to be challenged by increasingly unhappy residents in Sihanoukville province who have seen their livelihoods and homes swept up in extensive Chinese investment. Cambodia should accordingly introduce stringent background checks on Chinese investors, alongside the introduction of a 'Khmer Requirement' obligation. This would see all Chinese investment contribute by necessity towards prioritized areas of Cambodian development. This will be bolstered by a Chinese investment density legislation that ensures against rampant development at the expense of locals.

- 2) Second, Cambodia needs to develop and harness the strong capacity of think-tanks or institutions related to forecasting probabilistic outcomes as they relate to emerging trends. If Cambodia can better identify its preferred trajectory, it can better utilize sources of external funding and capacity. This is a subsidiary recommendation based on the necessity of the first.

References

- Abi-Habib, M. (2018, June 25). How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port. *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 2, 2019, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>
- Amry, S. (2014). *An Analysis of the South China Sea Dispute: Focusing on the Assessment of the Impact of Possible Solutions on the Economies of the Region*. Retrieved December 30, 2018.
- Arif, B. H. (2017). The Role of Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 3(3), 100. Retrieved from <http://ijsses.org/index.php/volume-3-issue-3-article-11/>
- Baviera, A. S. (2003). *Ocean of Opportunity or Sea of Strife: Transforming the South China Sea Conflict: An Expository Framework*. (K. Askandar, Ed.) Penang, Malaysia: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN).
- Beard, C. A. (1977). *The idea of national interest: An analysis study in American foreign policy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bräutigam, D. (2011). Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics': Chinese Foreign Aid and Development Finance Meet the OECD-DAC Aid Regime. *Journal of International Development* 23(5): 752–764. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1798>
- Burchill, S. (2014). *National interest in international relations theory*. Place of publication not identified: Palgrave Macmillan. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230005778>
- CCIM, See Cambodian Center for Independent Media
- CCIM. (2017). *Challenges for Independent Media*. Cambodian Center for Independent Media
- Chandara, K. (2014). *Cambodia-China Relations Based on the Mutually Beneficial Interests: China, the 'Most Trusted Friend' beyond Doubt*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261988062_Cambodia-China_Relations_Based_on_the_Mutually_Beneficial_Interests_China_the_Most_Trusted_Friend_beyond_Doubt
- Chanboracheat, I. (2015, May). *Cambodia's Bureaucracy and China, Friends for Benefits?* Retrieved January 3, 2019, from <http://khmerscholar.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cambodias-bureaucracy-and-China.pdf>
- China, S.C.o. 2011. *The 2011 white paper on China's peaceful development*. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-09/06/c_131102329_2.htm.
- Chinas Ocean Development Strategy and its Handling of the Territorial Conflicts in the South China Sea. (2016). *Chinas Foreign Policy*, 497-524. doi:10.1142/9789814719032_0014
- Ciorciari, J. D. (2014). *A Chinese model for patron–client relations? The Sino-Cambodian partnership*. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.859.3394&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

- Ciorciari, J. D. (2013). China and Cambodia: Patron and Client? SSRN Electronic Journal. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2280003
- Chheang, V. (2014). Thein Sein: ASEAN Is at Critical Juncture.
- Chheang, V. (2017a). Cambodia embraces China's Belt and Road Initiative. ISEAS Perspective, Issue: 2017, No. 48. ISSN 2335-6677
- Chheang, V. (2017). CAMBODIA-CHINA PARTNERSHIP IN REALISING BRI. 54-56.
- Chheang, V. (2017). Cambodia Embraces China's Belt and Road Initiative Retrieved from https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2017_48.pdf
- Chheang, V. (2014). The Making of Cambodia's Foreign Policy. Retrieved December 22, 2018, from <https://vannarithchheang.com/2014/05/24/the-making-of-cambodias-foreign-policy/>.
- Campbell, C., E. Meick, K. Hsu, and C. Murray. 2013. China's 'core interests' and the East China Sea. US—China Economic and Security Review Commission Report. <http://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%27s%20Core%20Interests%20and%20the%20East%20China%20Sea.pdf>
- Davies, K. (2013), "China Investment Policy: An Update", OECD Working Papers on International Investment, 2013/01, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k46911hmvbt-en>
- Dara, M. (2016, June 02). 'Outsiders' shouldn't get involved in South China Sea row: Tea Banh. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/outside-shouldnt-get-involved-south-china-sea-row-tea-banh>
- Dara, M., & Sassoon, A. M. (2018, January 29). Preah Sihanouk governor bemoans Chinese influx.
- Nachemson, A. (2016, July 21). Analyst warns gov't over stance on South China Sea. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/analyst-warns-govt-over-stance-south-china-sea>
- NBC (2014), National Bank of Cambodia, report on Foreign Direct Investment Survey Result 2014. Retrieved from https://www.nbc.org.kh/download_files/other_reports/english/Report-on-FDI-Survey-Result-2014_NBC_ENG.pdf
- Samean, L. (2016). *of Hun Sen responds to Vietnamese Facebook user on South China Sea.*
- Sassoon, A. M., & Dara, M. (2018, July 29). Preah Sihanouk governor bemoans Chinese influx. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/preah-sihanouk-governor-bemoans-chinese-influx>
- Sokhorng, C. (2017, May 15). Chinese FDI to flow in on Silk Road. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/chinese-fdi-flow-silk-road>
- Sounry, C. (2017, March 15). Letter to the editor: On 'South China Sea fears laid at US's door'. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/letter-editor-south-china-sea-fears-laid-uss-door>

- Khoun, T. (2013). Rethinking the Relevance of Preventive Diplomacy in Asean and Policy Responses. Retrieved November 29, 2018, from [http://www.icird.com/publications?task=file&action=download&path=\[DIR_PUBLICATIONS_PAPER\]/02_khountheara_fullpaper.pdf](http://www.icird.com/publications?task=file&action=download&path=[DIR_PUBLICATIONS_PAPER]/02_khountheara_fullpaper.pdf)
- Kimsay, H. (2017, September 15). CDC official thanks China for investment. *The Phnom Penh Post*. Retrieved January 4, 2019, from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/cdc-official-thanks-china-investment>
- Koumou, R. F. (2016). Effects of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in Africa. *Journal of Finance and Accounting*, 4(3), 131. doi:10.11648/j.jfa.20160403.15
- Kosal, L. (2009). Sino-Cambodia Relations. *CICP Working Paper*, 28. Retrieved January 3, 2019, from http://www.cicp.org.kh/userfiles/file/Working Paper/CICP Working Paper No 28_ Sino Cambodia Relations by Long Kosal.pdf
- Um, Seiha (2012), Cambodia: Tax Revenue Reform Issues, Further Reforms, Presentation in IMF-High Level Tax Conference For Asian and Pacific Countries, 31 January-03 February, Retrieved from: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/seminars/eng/2012/asiatax/pdf/seiha.pdf>
- VOA (2018, November 26). More Than 200 Chinese Arrested in Cambodia for Online Scams. *VOA*. Retrieved January 4, 2019, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/more-than-200-chinese-arrested-in-cambodia-for-online-scams/4674113.html>.
- Vannarith, C. (2009). Cambodia: Between China and Japan. Retrieved November 27, 2018, from http://www.cicp.org.kh/userfiles/file/Working Paper/CICP Working Paper No 31_Cambodia_Between China and Japan by Cheang Vannarith.pdf
- Wang, V. W. (2017). Reconciliation without Convergence? China-Taiwan Relations in Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives. Retrieved November 30, 2

Appendix 1. The Codebook

| Code Name | Definition |
|--------------------|--|
| Node | Sort of coding represent themes, concepts, ideas or experiences. |
| South China Sea | A coding concept detailing of the text in saying related to South China Sea word. |
| One Belt One Road | A coding concept detailing of the text in saying related to One Belt One Road initiative. |
| One China Policy | A coding concept detailing of the text in saying related to One China Policy. |
| Chinese Investment | A coding concept detailing of the text in saying related to Chinese investment. A coding concept |
| Chinese Assistance | A coding concept detailing of the text in saying related to China Assistance. |
| Case | Represents the units of observation- a case can be a place, a person, an organization or any other entity. |
| Date | Represents of the exact day, month, and year of each article. |
| Position | Represents the whole picture of who are related with issues. |
| Support | Place a positively view over the case or article. |
| Against | Place a negatively view over the case or article |
| Neutral | Place a Neutrality view over the case or article. |
| Not Available | Showing no signs or quotes no attachments to the case or article |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Person | Represents of what exact people are involved |
| Prime Minister | The person who have the high rank official known as the head of government. |
| Ministry Officer | The person who are acting as the deputy prime ministers or minister. |
| Ordinary Person | A casual person or citizen of country. |

Appendix 2. Frequency of Unavailable Position

| Year | SCS | OBOR | OCP | CHI | CHA | Total |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 2010 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 4 | 20 |
| 2011 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 11 |
| 2012 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 5 | 28 |
| 2013 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 10 |
| 2014 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| 2015 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 2016 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 27 |
| 2017 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 15 |
| 2018 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 16 |
| Total | 23 | 5 | 2 | 71 | 39 | 140 |

Appendix 2 contains the frequency of articles with an unavailable position. Quotes and insights, and statements were unable to be framed or classified. They frequently took the form of objective statements that declared the facts of the matter at hand.

