

# Extended essay

## Title:

Rise of the Khmer Rouge

## Research question:

“To what extent were foreign influences the main cause in the Khmer Rouge’s rise in power in Cambodia in 1975?”



Word count: 3.980

## **Table of content**

Introduction	3
Historical Background of Foreign Influence in Cambodia	4
Cercle Marxiste	5
Vietnamese Alliance	8
Political Turmoil	9
Chinese Ambitions	11
American Involvement	12
Assessment	14
Conclusion	15
Bibliography	17
Appendix	22

## Introduction

The Communist Party of Kampuchea, subsequently referred to in this essay as the Khmer Rouge, were the ruling party of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. The party was led by Pol Pot (Saloth Sâr), Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, and Khieu Samphan<sup>1</sup> and under their rule, the state was renamed Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>2</sup> This investigation will focus mainly on the influences of foreign powers on the rise of the Khmer Rouge regime in April of 1975. The research of the rise to power of the Khmer Rouge is significant because to this very day, there are still on-going trials to prosecute leaders of the regime for crimes against humanity. During the period of Khmer Rouge dominance, the Cambodian populace were arrested, tortured, and executed. Events that have shaped and changed South East Asia have greatly influenced my life as I grew up. This fuels my on-going interest in the influences of foreign powers on catastrophic events such as the Khmer Rouge.

Initially, the Khmer Rouge regime seems to be solely influenced by French colonialism and French communism. With further analysis into various contributing ideologies, this is not the case. The scope of this essay will focus on the various other international influences and how those influences brought to power a group who would subsequently kill approximately 1.7 million civilians in just four years.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Khmer Rouge Page." *Cambodia*. Cambodian Information Centre, 15 Aug. 1995. Web. 10 Jan. 2013. <[http://www.cambodia.org/khmer\\_rouge/](http://www.cambodia.org/khmer_rouge/)>.

<sup>2</sup> Sok Udom, Deth. *The Rise and Fall of Democratic Kampuchea*. N.p.: n.p., Winter 2009. PDF.

<sup>3</sup> "The CGP, 1994-2012." *Cambodian Genocide Program*. Yale Assistance to Documentation Center of Cambodia, 1995-2005, 2010. Web. 17 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.yale.edu/cgp/>>.

## Historical Background of Foreign Influence in Cambodia

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia was a nation that underwent several drastic changes in terms of territorial loss, colonialism, and political turmoil. Despite being situated between Siam (Thailand) and Vietnam, two nations that were gradually increasing in power, Cambodia's prosperity during the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not provide enough competitive footing with these two nations. Cambodia was controlled and protected by Siam until the Vietnamese annexation of the Mekong Delta during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Vietnam's successful attempt of invasion allowed Cambodia to break free from Siamese control, into Vietnamese control. As a result of Vietnamese control, a kingdom in Cambodia was established under full Vietnamese suzerainty.<sup>5</sup>

The reigning monarch of Cambodia from 1860 to 1904, King Norodom I, struggled to bring an end to the utilization of Cambodia as vassal territory for Siam and Vietnam. Constant struggle for liberation from the control of two dominating nations led to Cambodia signing a protection treaty with France. Cambodia came to rely heavily on French protection to prevent Vietnamese invasion on their eastern frontiers. After the treaty between France and Cambodia was signed, Cambodia struggled to maintain its autonomy. Cambodian monarchy held very little power, maintained merely for cultural reasons. In 1941, Norodom Sihanouk, an inexperienced monarch from a weak Cambodian house was brought to power by France to be utilized as a French political pawn, with the belief that he would not be defiant to French will.<sup>6</sup> During WWII, the Japanese allowed French colonialism to prevail but encouraged nationalism in Cambodia, through the Japanese policy of "Asia for Asians" designed to rid Southeast Asia of Western influence, replacing it with Japanese hegemony.<sup>7</sup> From early on, the seeds of Cambodian nationalism were sown by a foreign power – Japan.

After WWII, the French returned to Cambodia to reinstate its rule in the region. Cambodia was made an autonomous state within the French Union, but France retained de facto

---

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, Phil. "Indochina." *Flagspot*, 26 Aug. 2005. Web. <<http://flagspot.net/flags/vn-inchn.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> "History of Cambodia." *History of Cambodia*. N.p., 2004. Web. 17 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.historyofnations.net/asia/cambodia.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Becker, Elizabeth, and Seth Mydans. "Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodian Leader Through Shifting Allegiances, Dies at 89." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 14 Oct. 2012. Web. 10 Jan. 2013. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/norodom-sihanouk-cambodian-leader-through-shifting-allegiances-dies-at-89.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/norodom-sihanouk-cambodian-leader-through-shifting-allegiances-dies-at-89.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>.

<sup>7</sup> "Useful Notes: Imperial Japan." *TV Tropes*. TV Tropes Foundation, n.d. Web. <<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/ImperialJapan?from=Main.ImperialJapan>>.

control.<sup>8</sup> Cambodia as a nation was not properly prepared for a parliamentary democracy and the French refused to give any genuine power to the National Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

## Cercle Marxiste

Among the five leading members of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, and Son Sen received scholarships to study in Paris. The experience exposed the future Khmer Rouge leaders to Marxism-Leninism<sup>10</sup>, between 1949 to 1951 Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, joined the French Communist Party (PCF). At the time the PCF was considered to be the tightest, most orthodox Marxist-Leninist of Western European Communism.<sup>11</sup> The Khmer student population of Paris made up the Khmer's Student Association (KSA), the KSA started as a non-political association but after the Berlin Festival its political perspective shifted drastically to the left.<sup>12</sup> Within the KSA a new organization was created, the Cercle Marxiste, consisting of 30 Khmer students. The Cercle, comprising of a secretive network of cells subsequently discovered Stalinism, providing the students with a sense of belonging and a goal.<sup>13</sup> Though they were exposed to Marxism,<sup>13</sup> their interpretation of it was heavily induced by Buddhism.<sup>14</sup> The Khmer students including Pol Pot studied various works of Stalin such as his 1912 essay *Marxism and the National Question* and *The History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik)*. The 1938 work by Stalin on the aftermath of the Great Terror can be considered a vital informative influence to the course of the regime.<sup>15</sup>

*The History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik)* emphasized on six basic lessons, like 'the need to stay close to the masses' and not to become 'dizzy with success'.<sup>16</sup> Though what stood out most for the Khmer Communists were Stalin's four precepts, focusing on the

---

<sup>8</sup> "Cambodia History." *History of Cambodia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cambodia/history>>.

<sup>9</sup> "Cambodia : World War II and Its Aftermath." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/90520/Cambodia/52486/World-War-II-and-its-aftermath>>.

<sup>10</sup> "Pol Pot." *More or Less*. N.p., 24 Sept. 2001. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Guiat, Cyrille. "Introduction." Introduction. *The French and Italian Communist Parties: Comrades and Culture*. London: Frank Cass, 2003. xvii. Print.

<sup>12</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 62. Print.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>14</sup> Wessinger, Catherine. *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2000. 282. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 67. Print.

<sup>16</sup> "History of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)." *Marxists*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/x01/ch11.htm>>.

importance of correct leadership, '*without which the cause of the proletarian revolution will be ruined.*'<sup>17</sup> Stalin taught that Marxism-Leninism was not a philosophy, but a guide to action. The *History* also provided the Cambodian Communists with other invaluable lessons on the importance of revolutionaries utilizing both legal and illegal forms of struggle in order to gain power. Stalin's messages constantly urged Communists to always be on the defensive.<sup>18</sup>

Though Stalinism provided the Khmer students with a sense of direction, Mao's speech *On New Democracy* in January of 1940, delivered to rural workers in Yan'an provided an intricate outline for revolution in colonial or semi-colonial states.<sup>19</sup> Mao taught that revolutions in semi-colonial states had to occur in two stages, first a democratic revolution must occur, initiated by an alliance of different classes then a socialist revolution must occur.<sup>20</sup> Mao explains, '*the universal truth of Marxism, must be combined with specific national characteristics to acquire a definitive form...to be useful, and in no circumstances can it be applied objectively as a mere formula. Marxists who make a fetish of formulas are simply playing the fool.*'<sup>21</sup> The Khmer students never accepted Marxism as a result of its theoretical insights but utilized it in attempts to expel the French from Cambodia.

Though Mao was flexible on combining national culture with communism, one thing he, like Stalin remained inflexible in, co-operation to the Communist Party. With Mao and Stalin, revolutions were ran by the industrial proletariat, Mao insisted, '*the revolution cannot succeed without the modern industrial working class.*'<sup>22</sup> The concept of an industrial working class, modern or otherwise was non-existent in Cambodia.<sup>23</sup> The Cercle had one option, a national-based revolution for which an entirely different model was needed, a model Pol Pot

---

<sup>17</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course*. New York: International, 1939. 391-402. Print.

<sup>18</sup> "WW II: Behind Closed Doors." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

<<http://www.pbs.org/behindcloseddoors/in-depth/stalins-spies.html>>.

<sup>19</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 70. Print.

<sup>20</sup> Zedong, Mao. "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party." *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*. 1940. *Marxists*. 2004. Web. 19 Nov. 2012.

<[http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_23.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm)>.

<sup>21</sup> Mao, Tse-tung. N.d. MS. *Marxists*. Web. 19 Nov. 2012.

<[http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_02.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_02.htm)>.

<sup>22</sup> Schoenhals, Michael. *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996. 231. Print.

<sup>23</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 72. Print.

found in *The Great Revolution* by the Russian anarchist, Kropotkin. The book's contents had undeniable parallels to the conditions of Cambodia at the time.<sup>24</sup>

The French Revolution of 1789 shared more similarities to conditions in Cambodia than Russia and China. Kropotkin's aims set out in *The Great Revolution* posed as inspirational ideas to Pol Pot.

*The Revolution was prepared and made by two great movements. One was the current of ideas – a tide of new ideas on the political reorganization of the State – which came from the bourgeoisie. The other, the current of action, came from the popular masses – the peasants and laborers ... When these two movements joined together for what at first was a common goal – when for a time they lent each other mutual support – the Revolution occurred ... the philosophers prepared the way for the down fall of the ancient régime... It was necessary to pass from theory to action, from an ideal conceived by the imagination to its practical implementation by deeds. What [we] must study today, above everything else, are the circumstances, which permitted the French nation, at a particular moment in history, to make that leap – to begin to make that ideal a reality.*<sup>25</sup>

Cambodia in the twentieth century was France during the eighteenth. Though parallels between the two nations were not apparent to those in Cambodia, the similarities cried out to the Khmer students. “Prime Minister Pol Pot and I were profoundly influenced by the spirit of French thought – by the Age of Enlightenment, of Rousseau and Montesquieu”<sup>26</sup>, explains Khieu Samphân. It was Robespierre's radicalism that drew in some of the future members of the Khmer Rouge. Suong Sikoen, who would later become one of the closest aids of Ieng Sary was quoted saying:

*“Robespierre's personality impressed me. His radicalism influenced me a lot. He was incorruptible and intransigent... If you do something, you must do it right through to*

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>25</sup> Kropotkin, Petr Alekseevich, and N. F. Dryhurst. *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*. New York: Vanguard, 1927. 1-2. Print.

<sup>26</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 73. Print.

*the end. You can't make compromises... You must always be on the side of the absolute – no middle way, no compromise. You must never do things by halves..."*<sup>27</sup>

Though Kropotkin praised the French Revolution, to him the Revolution never went far enough. Kropotkin had a more aggressive outlook on revolution, *"must never stop half way, for then it will surely fail...Rather, once a revolution has broken out, it must develop to its furthest limits. At its highest point, countervailing forces will combine against it...and it will be forced to yield...Reaction will set in...But the end result will be better than what went before."*<sup>28</sup> Though Kropotkin's work, *The Great French Revolution* contained much more viable information, three of his core notions stuck with Pol Pot.<sup>29</sup> These core notions include, a revolution's need for an alliance between intellectuals and the peasantry that a revolution once started, must be carried out to the very end, and egalitarianism makes up the basis of communism.<sup>30</sup>

After failing his exams three successive years, Pol Pot's bursary to study in France was cut-off.<sup>31</sup> On January 13, 1953, Pol Pot arrived back to Cambodia. During that time, several students studying in France were informed of the termination of their bursaries.<sup>32</sup> As the Khmer students returned to Cambodia, they were greeted to a country under Viet Minh control.

## **Vietnamese Alliance**

During 1953, the Khmer Viet Minh were one of the most promising resistance groups; it was at the time the only rebel group with international connections. These international connections originate from its alliance with Vietnam. Decisions had to be made on whether the future Khmer Rouge would attempt to seize power from within by working with the Viet Minh or by fighting against them by joining forces with the Son Ngoc Thanh led Khmer Issarak. The decision to join forces with the Viet Minh posed to be the best option for the

---

<sup>27</sup> Suong, Sikoeun. Interview. *Phnom Penh Post* [Phnom Penh] 15 Nov. 1996: n. pag. Print

<sup>28</sup> Kropotkin, Petr Alekseevich, and N. F. Dryhurst. *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*. New York: Vanguard, 1927. 646 and 738-9. Print.

<sup>29</sup> Short, Philip. "City of Light." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 74. Print.

<sup>30</sup> Adams, Matthew S. "Kropotkin: Evolution, Revolutionary Change and the End of History." *Anarchist Studies* 19.1 (2011): 56. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Rakower, Michael C. "The Khmer Rouge: An Analysis." *To Oppose Any Foe: The Legacy of U.S. Intervention in Vietnam*. By Ross A. Fisher, John Norton Moore, and Robert F. Turner. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic, 2006. 209. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Short, Philip. "Initiation to the Maquis." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 89. Print.



future Khmer Rouge leaders, as they felt that it would prevent the unnecessary casualties of Cambodian citizens.<sup>33</sup>

For the next nine months, Cercle members submitted, with resentment to Vietnamese orders. Pol Pot and other Cercle members introduced themselves as part of the PCF, coming to aid in the struggle for independence. Though they introduced themselves as Communists, there were difficulties in gaining the trust of the Viet Minh, mainly comprised of Vietnamese and only a few Cambodians. The Paris educated Cambodians felt like puppets to the Vietnamese, as they took all the decisions and left the Cambodians with insignificant tasks.<sup>34</sup>

*"After a while they let me work.... I was the deputy mess officer. The mess officer himself was Vietnamese. The Cambodians were only there in name"<sup>35</sup> – Future Khmer Rouge Leader Saloth Sâr (Pol Pot)*

Though Pol Pot saw that the movement was entirely controlled by the Vietnamese, it didn't necessarily fuel any anti-Vietnamese sentiments. Pol Pot felt that the movement on its own should be more independent and self-reliant; he felt that a good relationship with Vietnam was vital and often took valuable lessons from them that would, in the future aid in his rise to power. The Vietnamese communists were very talented in the art of gaining mass support; they had an intricate system of 'armed propaganda teams'<sup>36</sup> who worked closely on the infiltration of Cambodian hamlets.

## Political Turmoil

Sihanouk gained control of the Cambodian government in June of 1952.<sup>37</sup> He campaigned for international support by touring several nations with his "Royal Crusade".<sup>38</sup> The struggle for independence was a success by the end of 1953, as the French were ready to compromise to Cambodia's terms.

---

<sup>33</sup> Short, Philip. "Initiation to the Maquis." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 90. Print.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 96

<sup>35</sup> Pot, Pol. Interview by Cai Ximei. May 1984.

<sup>36</sup> Short, Philip. "Initiation to the Maquis." *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. 99. Print.

<sup>37</sup> "Cambodia - HISTORY." *Mongabay*. Mongabay, n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.

<[http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/cambodia/HISTORY.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/cambodia/HISTORY.html)>.

<sup>38</sup> Carvin, Andy. "Before the Holocaust: Sihanouk's Rise to Power." *EdWeb*. N.p., 1999. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.

<<http://www.edwebproject.org/sideshow/history/sihanouk.html>>

In reaching a political settlement to the First Indochina War (French Indochina War) at the Geneva Conference in 1954. Sihanouk's government became recognised as the only legal authority within Cambodia,<sup>39</sup> preventing Viet Minh from gaining any regional power in Cambodia as they did in Laos.<sup>40</sup>

During the late 1960s, opposition to Sihanouk's rule increased.<sup>41</sup> Thailand and former Southern Vietnam posed as biggest threats to the survival of Cambodia as a prosperous nation-state.<sup>42</sup> Thailand and Southern Vietnam were close allies with the USA, which Sihanouk disliked.<sup>43</sup> Sihanouk enforced neutrality in international affairs in attempts to gain freedom to control issues within Cambodia.<sup>44</sup> Due to suspicion of American involvement in two South Vietnamese-backed plots against the Cambodian state in 1959 and encouragement in anti-Americanism by the French president, Charles de Gaulle, Sihanouk broke off relations with the United States in 1965.<sup>45</sup> After ending relations with the USA, Sihanouk arranged secret agreements with the Vietnamese communists. The agreements made with the Vietnamese communists enabled the stationing of communist troops on Cambodian territory in outlying districts, under the condition that Cambodian civilians were left undisturbed.<sup>46</sup>

In March of 1970, during Sihanouk's tour of Europe, the Soviet Union, and China, anti-Vietnamese demonstrations erupted in Phnom Penh.<sup>47</sup> On March 12, Sirik Matak cancelled

---

<sup>39</sup> "The Sihanouk Years." *Cambodia Heritage Travel*. Cambodia Heritage Travel, 2008. Web. 26 Jan. 2013 <[http://www.cambodiaheritagetravel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=71:the-sihanouk-years&catid=37:cambodia-history&Itemid=44](http://www.cambodiaheritagetravel.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71:the-sihanouk-years&catid=37:cambodia-history&Itemid=44)>.

<sup>40</sup> "Vietnam War Timeline." *Department of English, University of Illinois*. Web. 23 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/vietnam/timeline.htm>>.

<sup>41</sup> "Cambodia (Kampuchea)." *Uppsala Universitet*. Uppsala Conflict Data Program, n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=27>>.

<sup>42</sup> Kislenco, Arne. "A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina." *The Journal of Conflict Studies*. N.p., Summer 2004. Web. 12 Jan. 2013 <<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/292/465>>.

<sup>43</sup> "Cambodia History." *History of Cambodia*. Lonely Planet, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cambodia/history>>.

<sup>44</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency. National Security. *Prince Sihanouk and the New Order in Southeast Asia*. By John M. Taylor. Freedom of Information Act: Central Intelligence Agency, May 2007. Web. 16 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/ESAU/esau-25.pdf>>.

<sup>45</sup> Tighe, Paul, and Daniel Ten Kate. "Norodom Sihanouk, Former King of Cambodia, Dies at 89." *Bloomberg*. Bloomberg L.P., 15 Oct. 2012. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-15/norodom-sihanouk-former-king-of-cambodia-dies-at-89.html>>.

<sup>46</sup> "Norodom Sihanouk (King of Cambodia)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418437/Norodom-Sihanouk>>.

<sup>47</sup> "Lon Nol Ousts Prince Sihanouk." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lon-nol-ousts-prince-sihanouk>>.

Sihanouk's trade agreement with Northern Vietnam; the port of Sihanoukville received an order to be closed off to the North Vietnamese by Lon Nol.<sup>48</sup> An impossible ultimatum was issued: all PAVN (North Vietnamese Army) and Viet Cong forces were to evacuate from Cambodia within 72 hours or were to face military action.<sup>49</sup> On March 16, when it was clear that the demands of Lon Nol had not been met, civilians gathered outside the National Assembly in Phnom Penh to protest against the presence of Vietnamese troops. Sirik Matak, after listening to a tape-recorded press conference from Paris in which Sihanouk threatened to execute him and Lon Nol as he returned to Phnom Penh, convinced Lon Nol to depose the prince.<sup>50</sup> Of all the Communist parties, the Chinese were the only ones willing to support Sihanouk for they had a separate plan for Cambodia.<sup>51</sup>

## Chinese Ambitions

In the Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969, China found itself in a border skirmish with the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> China had a fear that in the event of North Vietnamese victory, a united Vietnam might follow suit with a pro-Soviet and anti-Chinese policies. Needing a proxy to exert leverage on Hanoi, China began playing a double game.<sup>53</sup> Zhou Enlai, the first Premier of the People's Republic of China was publicly committed to restoring the monarchy in Cambodia<sup>54</sup>; at the same time he was also increasing Chinese support for the Cambodia communist, the Khmer Rouge.

During Sihanouk's exile, the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea was formed and Sihanouk allied with communist forces of China, North Vietnam, and the Pathet Lao.<sup>55</sup> Through Chinese pressure, the Khmer Rouge were included into this newly formed

---

<sup>48</sup> Matak, Sisowath Sirik. "Open Letter to Prince Sihanouk." Letter to Prince Sihanouk. 27 Aug. 1973. *KI Media*. KI Media, 4 Aug. 2011. Web. 26 Oct. 2012 <<http://ki-media.blogspot.nl/2011/08/open-letter-to-prince-sihanouk-by.html>>

<sup>49</sup> "Lon Nol." *Khmer View - Lon Nol*. N.p., 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.khmerview.com/Lon-Nol.html>>.

<sup>50</sup> Marlay, Ross, and Clark D. Neher. *Patriots and Tyrants: Ten Asian Leaders*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 165. Print.

<sup>51</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Burr, William. "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict, 1969: US Reactions and Diplomatic Maneuvers." *The National Security Archives*. N.p., 12 June 2001. Web., 26 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB49/>>.

<sup>53</sup> Marlay, Ross, and Clark D. Neher. *Patriots and Tyrants: Ten Asian Leaders*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. 165. Print.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>55</sup> Carvin, Andy. "Before the Holocaust: The Coup." *Before the Holocaust: The Coup*. N.p., 1999. Web. 1 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.edwebproject.org/sideshow/history/coup.html>>.

government-in-exile. Despite Sihanouk's history with the Khmer Rouge, his Chinese-fuelled coalition became less significant compared to his hatred towards Lon Nol, referring to him as a "complete idiot".<sup>56</sup> Although Sihanouk had support from the peasantry, they were in no position to rise up against Lon Nol's army. The Khmer Rouge seized this opportunity to offer Sihanouk full support.

## American Involvement

Sihanouk's exile in China allowed Lon Nol to seize power in Cambodia marking the beginning of a downward spiral. Lon Nol misguidedly thought that military aid from the USA would help in the expulsion of Vietnamese communist troops and defeat the Khmer Rouge. Lon Nol was unable to avoid becoming the puppet of the USA as they controlled his budget.<sup>57</sup> In the summer of 1971, Lon Nol's army launched its last offensive as it progressively lost control of the countryside for the following four years.<sup>58</sup>

The United States of America's main focus in the region was to remove all Vietnamese Communist influences from the area.<sup>59</sup> In a joint coalition with South Vietnam, the US led a ground invasion of Cambodia in May and June of 1970<sup>60</sup>, which failed to serve its purpose of evicting the Vietnamese Communists from Cambodia. The failed efforts to evict the Vietnamese Communists from the region led to the US President Richard Nixon escalating air attacks towards Cambodia to destroy the mobile headquarters of the Viet-Cong and the North Vietnamese Army. Nixon demanded an increase in bombs on Cambodia and placed an order to utilize the bombs deeper into the country. The bomb orders towards Cambodia ignored all promises by Nixon made to the Congress that US planes would remain within 30 kilometres of the Vietnamese border.<sup>61</sup> President Nixon's "Madman Theory" was the

---

<sup>56</sup> Sihanouk, Norodom. "Intervista con La Storia." Interview by Oriana Fallaci. June 1973: 16. Print.

<sup>57</sup> Hersh, Seymour M. *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*. New York: Summit, 1983. 175. Print.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Owen, Taylor, and Ben Kiernan. "Bombs Over Cambodia." *The Walrus* Oct. 2006: 67. *Cambodian Genocide Databases (CGDB)*. Web. 20 Sep. 2012  
<[http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus\\_CambodiaBombing\\_OCT06.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus_CambodiaBombing_OCT06.pdf)>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

centrepiece of his foreign policy.<sup>62</sup> The US portrayed the bombardment of Cambodia as a symptom of Nixon's alleged instability.

*"I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war... "for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism..."<sup>63</sup> – Nixon to White House Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman*

For the next three years, under Nixon's orders, the US continuously dropped bombs deep inside the Cambodian borders. At first, the bombings were targeted to remove the North Vietnamese Army from the area, later the bombing campaigns were utilized to defend the Lon Nol regime from growing the number of Cambodian communist forces.<sup>64</sup> The last phase of the bombings occurred from February to August of 1973<sup>65</sup>. The bombings focused on stopping the Khmer Rouge's advance into Phnom Penh. The United States' fear of the Khmer Rouge taking over led to an unprecedented B-52 bombardment that heavily focused on the populated areas around Phnom Penh but left few regions of the country unscathed.<sup>66</sup>

Until Congress cut the funding for the war and forced an end to the bombings on August 15, 1973, it was believed that approximately 2,756,941 tonnes of ordnance were dropped in 230,516 sorties on 113,716 sites in Cambodia from October 4, 1965 to August 15, 1973.<sup>67</sup> The US bombardment of Cambodia merely temporarily delayed the Khmer Rouge's ability to seize power of Cambodia. Arguably, the US bombings of Cambodia created even more chaos and gave the Khmer Rouge even more power than it would have had if the US refrained from the bombardment. The Khmer Rouge were driven out of their base areas as a result of the bombings, but this just encouraged them to set up new bases in other parts of the country. Vast areas of the countryside to become uninhabitable which caused a rapid

---

<sup>62</sup> Simon, Harvey. *The Madman Theory*. Bethesda, MD: Rosemoor, 2012. Print.

<sup>63</sup> Haldeman, H. R., and Joseph DiMona. *The Ends of Power*. New York: Times, 1978. 122. Print.

<sup>64</sup> Owen, Taylor, and Ben Kiernan. "Bombs Over Cambodia." *The Walrus* Oct. 2006: 67. *Cambodian Genocide Databases (CGDB)*. Web. 20 Sep. 2012  
<[http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus\\_CambodiaBombing\\_OCT06.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus_CambodiaBombing_OCT06.pdf)>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Thayer, Nate. "Khmer Rouge, Cambodian Government Suffer Memory Failure in Court: This Might Help." *'Nate Thayer'* N.p., 8 Dec. 2011. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <<http://natethayer.typepad.com/blog/khmer-rouge-tribunal/>>.

<sup>67</sup> Owen, Taylor, and Ben Kiernan. "Bombs Over Cambodia." *The Walrus* Oct. 2006: 63. *Cambodian Genocide Databases (CGDB)*. Web.. 20 Sep. 2012  
<[http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus\\_CambodiaBombing\\_OCT06.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus_CambodiaBombing_OCT06.pdf)>.

increase of refugees into Phnom Penh, which posed as a problem to the ill-equipped Lon Nol regime. Many children were orphaned due to the intense bombardment, many wandering groups of Cambodian children turned to a new father figure, the Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot.<sup>68</sup>

*“Every time after there had been bombing... Terrified and half crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told. It was because of their dissatisfaction with the bombing that they kept on co-operating with the Khmer Rouge, joining up with the Khmer Rouge, sending their children off to go with them.... Sometimes the bombs fell and hit little children, and their fathers would be all for the Khmer Rouge.”<sup>69</sup> – Chhit Do, Former Khmer Rouge Officer*

## Assessment

Nationalism in Cambodia has always been stimulated by foreign influences. Siam and Vietnam’s continuous conflict over Cambodian territory caused Cambodia to fall into French protectorate. French colonialism was the ammunition for Khmer Rouge leaders, giving them purpose, as they sought to rid Cambodia of colonialism. The French prevented the National Assembly from having any real governing power in Cambodia, leading to a nation divided, unable to make major decisions. Instilling nationalistic sentiments within the nation was not required, as it was already existent, encouraged by the Japanese. As France and Japan carried on with their imperialistic ambitions, the path for Khmer Rouge success was unintentionally paved.

The leaders of the Khmer Rouge studied different Communist writings of Mao, Stalin, Kropotkin, and Marx. The Khmer Rouge leaders were drawn to these writings for its potential of liberation in Cambodia, not for its philosophy. The Khmer Rouge leaders pulled different aspects of the success of Mao and Stalin, manifesting it into their own rendition, toward power. Though the forms of Communism as executed by Mao and Stalin were not exactly applicable to situation of Cambodia, Pol Pot found inspiration in a more suitable model. Heavily influence by Kropotkin, Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge members created parallels between their national situation and the French Revolution. They saw the need to

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Do, Chhit. Interview by Bruce Palling. *Bangkok Post* 1979: Print.

overthrow the monarchy, the emphasis on radicalism and complete execution of their goals. Foreign ideology provided the Khmer Rouge with a concrete basis for the beginning of their rule.

The Khmer Rouge were opportunists, taking advantage of any chance they got that would potentially lead them to a path of greater power. This led to an unlikely alliance with the Vietnamese controlled Khmer Viet Minh in which, the future Khmer Rouge leaders became subordinates of the neighboring race. Instead of allying with Son Ngoc Thanh's movement, they worked with the Viet Minh disassembling it from within, gradually shifting the power to their hands. The alliance with Viet Minh posed not only significant in terms of the changing the balance of power but, provided the Khmer Rouge with lessons on propaganda that they would utilize to lure popular support and indoctrinate a sense of hatred towards foreigners.

The Chinese were responsible for shaping the Khmer Rouge into a legitimate governmental force, by pushing Pol Pot towards an alliance with Sihanouk. Forming an even further division within the nation as citizens were forced to choose sides. Having the support of a major power like China provided the Khmer Rouge with enough force to guarantee them success, as long as they continued on making the right decisions.

American bombings between 1970 and 1973, left not only areas of Cambodia barren, but instilled severe hatred and anger within the people affected. The Khmer Rouge played on this hatred and utilized propaganda techniques picked up from their years with the Viet Minh to induce support for their regime. The US bombings of the region intended to rid the area of Communists resulted in the exacerbation of the situation. People were drawn to the Khmer Rouge as the Lon Nol regime relied on the US. In turn, Communism in Cambodia became more appealing than ever before.

## **Conclusion**

1975 saw the start of one of the biggest post WWII human catastrophes in Southeast Asia, one which would rival the catastrophes of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. What first began as attempts to rid a Cambodia of French colonialism resulted in a downwards spiral of a nation far too familiar with the effects foreign influences. The Khmer Rouge regime

massacred approximately 1.7 million Cambodian civilians, within four years. Were foreign influences the main cause in the rise of the regime?

The Khmer Rouge executed their regime based on a selection of various foreign ideologies, the potent concoction of Communist ideology in addition to external attempts of its suppression allowed for the outburst of one of the most notable genocides in history. In assessing the reason behind the creation of the Khmer Rouge, it's clear that foreign influences were the root of nationalistic ambitions in the Khmer Rouge and Cambodia. The chain-reactions of events that took place in Cambodia, aided by foreign nations in support and protest against the Khmer Rouge greatly influenced their rise in power. The unintended effects of the US bombings meant to suppress the regime became the final trigger, driving the Khmer Rouge into power. The Khmer Rouge could not have gained power without foreign influences, for without it; there would have been no basis of their regime.



# Bibliography

## Primary Sources

- Owen, Taylor, and Ben Kiernan. "Bombs Over Cambodia." *The Walrus* Oct. 2006: *Cambodian Genocide Databases (CGDB)*.
- Do, Chhit. Interview by Bruce Palling. *Bangkok Post* 1979: Print.
- Sihanouk, Norodom. "Intervista con La Storia." Interview by Oriana Fallaci. June 1973: Print.
- Kropotkin, Petr Alekseevich, and N. F. Dryhurst. *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*. New York: Vanguard, 1927. Print.
- Pot, Pol. Interview by Cai Ximei. May 1984.
- *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course*. New York: International, 1939. Print.
- Zedong, Mao. "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party." *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*. 1940. *Marxists*. 2004. Web. 19 Nov. 2012. [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_23.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm)
- Matak, Sisowath Sirik. "Open Letter to Prince Sihanouk." Letter to Prince Sihanouk. 27 Aug. 1973. *KI Media*. KI Media, 4 Aug. 2011. Web. 26 Oct. 2012 <http://ki-media.blogspot.nl/2011/08/open-letter-to-prince-sihanouk-by.html>
- United States. Central Intelligence Agency. National Security. *Prince Sihanouk and the New Order in Southeast Asia*. By John M. Taylor. Freedom of Information Act: Central Intelligence Agency, May 2007. Web. 16 Jan. 2013 <http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/ESAU/esau-25.pdf>
- "History of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)." *Marxists*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Jan. 2013. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/x01/ch11.htm>

## Secondary Sources

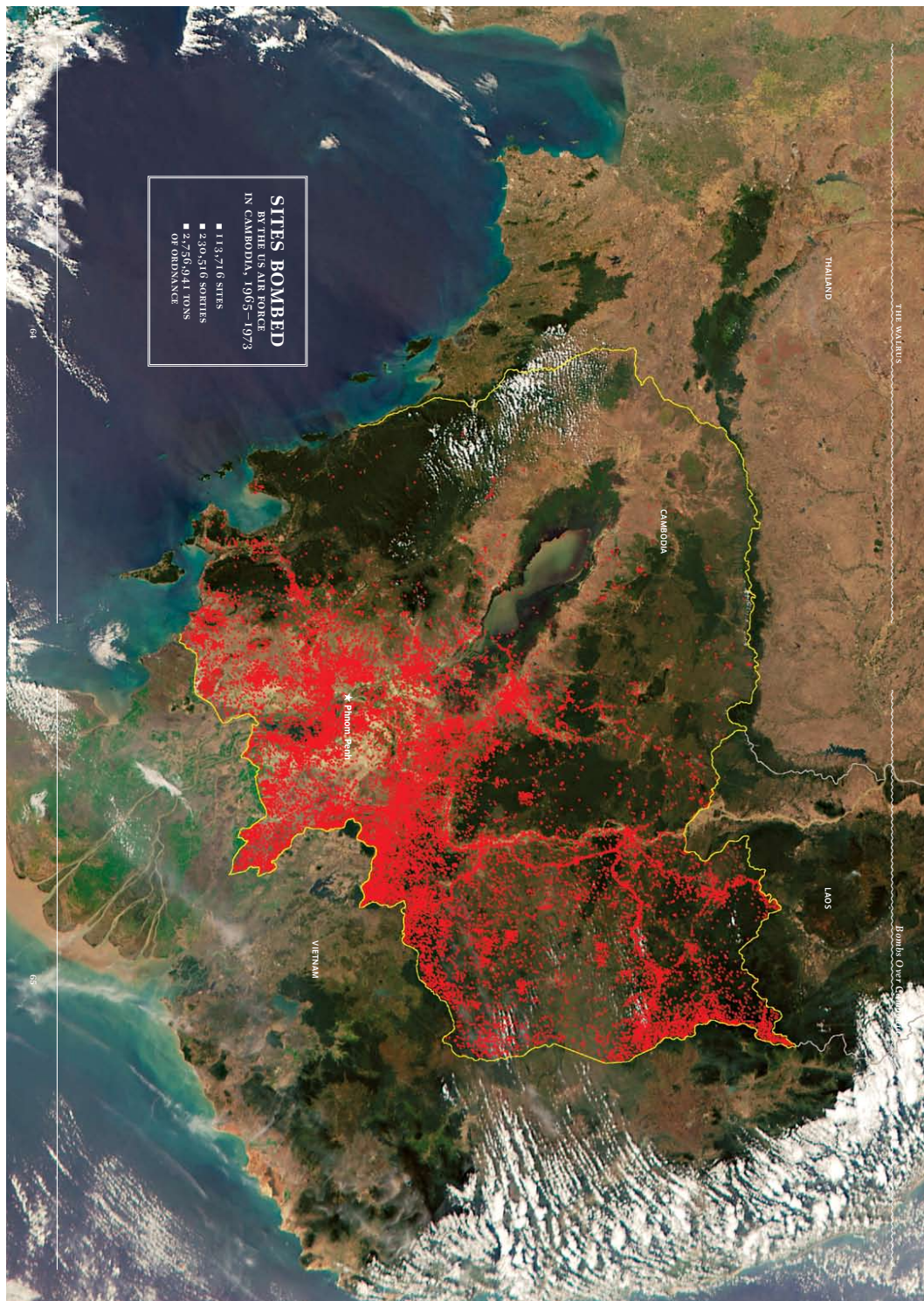
- Thayer, Nate. "Khmer Rouge, Cambodian Government Suffer Memory Failure in Court: This Might Help." *'Nate Thayer'* N.p., 8 Dec. 2011. Web. 12 Jan. 2013. <<http://natethayer.typepad.com/blog/khmer-rouge-tribunal/>>.
- Simon, Harvey. *The Madman Theory*. Bethesda, MD: Rosemoor, 2012. Print.
- Haldeman, H. R., and Joseph DiMona. *The Ends of Power*. New York: Times, 1978. Print.
- Hersh, Seymour M. *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*. New York: Summit, 1983. 175. Print.
- Marlay, Ross, and Clark D. Neher. *Patriots and Tyrants: Ten Asian Leaders*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. Print.
- Adams, Matthew S. "Kropotkin: Evolution, Revolutionary Change and the End of History." *Anarchist Studies* 19.1 (2011): Print.
- Rakower, Michael C. "The Khmer Rouge: An Analysis." *To Oppose Any Foe: The Legacy of U.S. Intervention in Vietnam*. By Ross A. Fisher, John Norton Moore, and Robert F. Turner. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic, 2006. 209. Print.
- Schoenhals, Michael. *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996. 231. Print.
- Guiat, Cyrille. "Introduction." Introduction. *The French and Italian Communist Parties: Comrades and Culture*. London: Frank Cass, 2003. xvii. Print
- Wessinger, Catherine. *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2000. Print.
- Short, Philip. *Pol Pot*. London: John Murray, 2004. Print.
- Sok Udom, Deth. *The Rise and Fall of Democratic Kampuchea*. N.p.: n.p., Winter 2009. PDF.
- Burr, William. "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict, 1969: US Reactions and Diplomatic Maneuvers." *The National Security Archives*. N.p., 12 June 2001. Web., 26 Oct. 2012 <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB49/>

- Carvin, Andy. N.p., 1999. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.  
<http://www.edwebproject.org/sideshow/history/coup.html>
- "Lon Nol Ousts Prince Sihanouk." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2012 <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lon-nol-ousts-prince-sihanouk>
- "Lon Nol." *Khmer View - Lon Nol*. N.p., 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2012  
<http://www.khmerview.com/Lon-Nol.html>
- "Cambodia - HISTORY." *Mongabay*. Mongabay, n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.  
[http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/cambodia/HISTORY.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/cambodia/HISTORY.html)
- Burr, William. "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict, 1969: US Reactions and Diplomatic Maneuvers." *The National Security Archives*. N.p., 12 June 2001. Web., 26 Oct. 2012  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB49/>
- "The Sihanouk Years." *Cambodia Heritage Travel*. Cambodia Heritage Travel, 2008. Web. 26 Jan. 2013  
[http://www.cambodiaheritagetravel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=71:the-sihanouk-years&catid=37:cambodia-history&Itemid=44](http://www.cambodiaheritagetravel.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71:the-sihanouk-years&catid=37:cambodia-history&Itemid=44)
- "Vietnam War Timeline." *Department of English, University of Illinois*. Web. 23 Jan. 2013 <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/vietnam/timeline.htm>
- "Cambodia (Kampuchea)." *Uppsala Universitet*. Uppsala Conflict Data Program, n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2013. <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=27>
- Kislenco, Arne. "A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina." *The Journal of Conflict Studies*. N.p., Summer 2004. Web. 12 Jan. 2013  
<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/292/465>
- "Cambodia History." *History of Cambodia*. Lonely Planet, n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2013  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cambodia/history>
- Tighe, Paul, and Daniel Ten Kate. "Norodom Sihanouk, Former King of Cambodia, Dies at 89." *Bloomberg*. Bloomberg L.P., 15 Oct. 2012. Web. 15 Oct. 2012.  
<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-15/norodom-sihanouk-former-king-of-cambodia-dies-at-89.html>

- Norodom Sihanouk (King of Cambodia)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.  
Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2012  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418437/Norodom-Sihanouk>
- Bekken, John. "Peter Kropotkin's Anarchist Communism." *Spunk Library*. N.p., n.d.  
Web. 19 Nov. 2012. <http://www.spunk.org/texts/writers/kropotki/sp000065.txt>
- "Pol Pot." *More or Less*. N.p., 24 Sept. 2001. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.  
<http://www.moreorless.au.com/killers/pot.html>
- "WW II: Behind Closed Doors." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.  
<http://www.pbs.org/behindcloseddoors/in-depth/stalins-spies.html>
- Nelson, Phil. "Indochina." *Flagspot.*, 26 Aug. 2005. Web. <http://flagspot.net/flags/vn-inchn.html>
- "History of Cambodia." *History of Cambodia*. N.p., 2004. Web. 17 Jan. 2013.  
<http://www.historyofnations.net/asia/cambodia.html>
- "Useful Notes: Imperial Japan." *TV Tropes*. TV Tropes Foundation, n.d. Web.  
<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/ImperialJapan?from=Main.ImperialJapan>
- "Cambodia History." *History of Cambodia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2013.  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cambodia/history>
- "Cambodia : World War II and Its Aftermath." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.  
Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2012.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/90520/Cambodia/52486/World-War-II-and-its-aftermath>
- "Khmer Rouge Page." *Cambodia*. Cambodian Information Centre, 15 Aug. 1995. Web.  
10 Jan. 2013. [http://www.cambodia.org/khmer\\_rouge/](http://www.cambodia.org/khmer_rouge/)
- Becker, Elizabeth, and Seth Mydans. "Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodian Leader  
Through Shifting Allegiances, Dies at 89." *The New York Times*. The New York Times,  
14 Oct. 2012. Web. 10 Jan. 2013.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/norodom-sihanouk-cambodian-leader-through-shifting-allegiances-dies-at-89.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/norodom-sihanouk-cambodian-leader-through-shifting-allegiances-dies-at-89.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

- "The CGP, 1994-2012." *Cambodian Genocide Program*. Yale Assistance to Documentation Center of Cambodia, 1995-2005, 2010. Web. 17 Jan. 2013.  
<http://www.yale.edu/cgp/>

## Appendix 1



Mapping by: Taylor Owen<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Owen, Taylor, and Ben Kiernan. "Bombs Over Cambodia." *The Walrus* Oct. 2006: 64-5 *Cambodian Genocide Databases (CGDB)*. Web. 20 Sep. 2012  
<[http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus\\_CambodiaBombing\\_OCT06.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/Walrus_CambodiaBombing_OCT06.pdf)>