

A Theory-Based Analysis on Implications of Democracy in Cambodia

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Abstract : Democracy has been categorially accepted and used as foreign and domestic policy agendas for the hope of peace, economic growth and prosperity for more than 25 years in Cambodia. However, the country is now in the grip of dictatorship, human rights violations, and prospective economic sanctions. This paper examines different perceptions and experiences of democratic assistance. In this study, the author employs discourse theory, idealism and realism as a theory-based methodology for debating and assessing the implications of democratization. Discourse theory is used to establish a platform for understanding discursive formations, body of knowledge and the games of truth of democracy. Idealist approaches give rational arguments for adopting key tenets that work well on the ground. In contrast, realism allows for some sweeping critiques of utopian ideal and offers particular views on why Western hegemonic missions do not work well. From idealist views, the research finds that Cambodian people still believe that democracy is a prima facie universality for peace, growth and prosperity. From realism, democratization is on the brink of death in three reasons. Firstly, there are tensions between Western and local discourses about democratic values and norms. Secondly, democratic tenets have been undermined by the ruling party-controlled courts, corruption, structural oppression and political patronage-based institutions. The third pitfall is partly associated with foreign aid dependency and geopolitical power struggles in the region. Finally, the study offers a precise mosaic of democratic principles that may be used to avoid a future geopolitical and economic crisis.

Keywords : corruption, democracy, democratic principles, discourse theory, discursive formations, foreign aid dependency, games of truth, geopolitical and economic crisis, geopolitical power struggle, hegemonic mission, idealism, realism, utopian ideal

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