

AVI COMMENTARY

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Cambodia Under Prime Minister Hun Manet: Continuity of Peace and Development

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Recent discourse surrounding Cambodia's political landscape has sparked debates about the nature of governance under Prime Minister Hun Manet's leadership. Some critics may argue that Prime Minister Hun Manet's government is merely a continuation of his father's policies; however, it's essential to understand that continuity is crucial for stability. Prime Minister Hun Manet has demonstrated a commitment to governance that balances development, security, and the gradual expansion of democratic space, ensuring that Cambodia can progress without succumbing to the instability seen in other regions.

Prime Minister Hun Manet's governance strikes a balance between continuity and progress. While building upon previous policies, he demonstrates a commitment to upholding the rule of law, promoting economic growth, and fostering regional partnerships. This approach operates within a framework that carefully weighs national security concerns against the promotion of human rights and democratic values, all tailored to Cambodia's unique context. Recent actions taken by the Cambodian government align with this approach aiming to reinforce the narrative of balanced development and stability.

Legal actions taken by the government are targeted responses to specific illegal activities rather than an indiscriminate crackdown on dissent. For instance, the case of Cambodia's Mother Nature organisation illustrates this point. Registered in 2012 under the leadership of Alejandro Gonzalez Davidson, the organisation was removed from the official list by the Ministry of Interior on 15 September 2017, due to illegal activities. The individuals convicted by the courts committed offences that caused serious disruption to safety, order, and peace, as well as infringing upon the rights and freedoms of others. Most notably, they were found guilty of insulting His Majesty the King, a violation of the Criminal Code as stipulated in Article 7 of the Constitution: "...the rights and freedoms of every citizen are respected, but those rights must be limited, and must not affect the rights of others or the national society."

Regarding accusations of forced confessions and unlawful detentions, the Cambodian government adheres to due process and ensures that all legal procedures are followed. The judicial system in Cambodia operates independently and any claims of wrongdoing are subject to thorough investigation. It's important to note that freedom of expression, press freedom, freedom of unsupervised broadcasting and the right to confidentiality of news sources are all guaranteed by the Cambodian law.

On the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle (CLV-DTA), the focus remains on ensuring Cambodia's continued economic growth whilst maintaining peace and stability. Opposition to such critical projects might risks overlooking the broader interests of the nation.

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It is worth noting that this development project was established and spearheaded by Samdech Techo Hun Sen to transform the border areas of the three countries into zones of peace, friendship, and development. The project involves cooperation with Japan, USAID, and ADB. The CLV-DTA also reflects Cambodia's strong commitment to sustainable development and regional cooperation.

That said, Samdech Thipadei Hun Manet's leadership balances continuity with progress while navigating the complexities of national security, human rights, and democratic principles in the context of Cambodia. This strategy positions Cambodia to address both domestic and international challenges, ensuring the nation's continued stability and prosperity in a changing global landscape.

The views expressed are the author's own and do not reflect the views of the Asian Vision Institute.