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КАМБОДЖИЙСКО-РОССИЙСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В 1993-2023 гг.:
ОСНОВНЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ, ТЕНДЕНЦИИ

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the research is due to the increased interest of world historical and political science in the transformation of international relations in the post-bipolar period, as well as to the growing role of Southeast Asian states in shaping a new regional security architecture. The modern system of interaction between states is undergoing a profound restructuring. The processes of redistribution of spheres of influence, the weakening of traditional centers of power and the strengthening of regional players create conditions for the emergence of new configurations of political interaction. Under these conditions, the focus is increasingly shifting to the Asia-Pacific region, which acts as a key platform for strategic rivalry between major powers and a zone of dynamically developing multilevel integration.

One of the most significant sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific region is Southeast Asia, where states demonstrate not only high rates of economic development, but also increasing independence in foreign policy. The Kingdom of Cambodia, located in the center of Indochina, occupies a strategically advantageous geopolitical position and participates in the most important regional cooperation formats. Since the end of the twentieth century, the Kingdom has gone through a difficult path of political stabilization, post-conflict reconstruction and international reintegration, which has brought it to a new level of participation in regional and global processes. Today, Cambodia is becoming an active actor in international politics, whose decisions have an impact on the overall dynamics of relations in Southeast Asia and ASEAN.

Russia, with its historical experience in supporting Cambodia during the most critical periods of the 20th century, retains significant potential for developing cooperation in the political, humanitarian, military-technical and economic spheres. After 1991, bilateral relations underwent a stage of regulatory and institutional renewal, expansion of the diplomatic base, and the formation of new areas of interaction. The gradual strengthening of Russia's position in Asia, the shift of foreign policy priorities to the East and the intensification of its presence in the

ASEAN countries give special importance to the study of the Cambodian-Russian partnership.

The study is particularly relevant due to the fact that in 1993-2023, Cambodian-Russian relations underwent qualitative changes related to the recovery from the period of Cambodia's international isolation, the modernization of its foreign policy strategy and the desire for multilateral integration, the expansion of areas of bilateral cooperation in the face of new geopolitical challenges, as well as increased external pressure from global actors influencing the maneuver space. Russia and Cambodia. Against the background of these processes, there is an increasing need for a comprehensive historical and political analysis of the main directions, mechanisms and trends in the development of Cambodian-Russian relations, which will allow an objective assessment of the potential for their further strengthening and determine their place in the system of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Literature review of the research problem is represented by three main groups of works by Russian and foreign researchers.

The *first group* includes works devoted to the theoretical aspects of the processes of regionalization and regional transformation taking place in Southeast Asia. This group allows us to assess the political and economic framework in which ASEAN and Cambodia interact. This group includes the works of such researchers as Jong-yun Ba¹, A.D. Voskresensky², A. Johnston, P. Katzenstein³, N. Kosolapov⁴,

¹ Bae J.-Y., Moon C.-I. Unraveling the Northeast Asian Regional Complex: Old Patterns and New Insights // The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis. 2005. Vol. XVII. No. 2. P. 7-34.

² Воскресенский А.Д. Регионализация в международных отношениях // Современные международные отношения / Под ред. А.В. Торкунова. - М.: Аспект Пресс, 2012. С. 103-116; Восток и политика Политические системы, политические культуры, политические процессы: Учебник для вузов/ Под ред. А. Д. Воскресенского. – 2-е и испр. и доп. - М.: Издательство «Аспект Пресс», 2015. – 624 с.; «Большая Восточная Азия»: мировая политика и региональные трансформации: научно образовательный комплекс / [В. Я. Белокреницкий и др.; рук. авт. колл. А. Д. Воскресенский]; под общ. ред. А. Д. Воскресенского; Моск. гос. ин-т междунар. отношений (ун-т) МИД России. – М.: МГИМО-Университет, 2010. – 444 с.

³ Katzenstein P.J. A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium. N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 2005. 320 p.

⁴ Косолапов Н.А. Пространственно-организационный подход к анализу международных реалий // Международные процессы. 2007. No 3. С. 57-65.

M. Lagutina⁵, M. Lebedeva⁶, A. Lake and P. Morgan⁷, D. Lemke⁸, L. Fawcett⁹, B. Hette¹⁰.

In recent years, there has been a lively discussion in the academic community about how to analyze international relations and regional specifics of Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the issues of methodology for studying international organizations in the Asia-Pacific region have not yet been widely covered in both domestic and foreign scientific literature. In the course of a comparative analysis of theoretical approaches to the study of ASEAN, the author was greatly assisted by the works of A.A. Acharya¹¹, N. Busse¹², H. Kai¹³, M.-H. Kim¹⁴, D. Cockerham¹⁵, Y. Ruland¹⁶, S.

⁵ Лагутина М.Л. Глобальный регион как элемент мировой политической системы XXI века // Сравнительная политика. 2015. Т. 6. № 2 (19). С. 16-21.

⁶ Лебедева М.М., Кузнецов Д.А. Трансрегионализм – новый феномен мировой политики // Полис. Политические исследования. 2019. № 5. С. 71-84.

⁷ Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World / Ed. By A. Lake, P. Morgan. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. P. 11—44.

⁸ Lemke D. Regions of War and Peace. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002. 235 p.

⁹ Fawcett L. Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. – 342 p.; Fawcett L. Exploring Regional Domains: A Comparative History of Regionalism // International Affairs. - May 2004. Vol. 80. Issue 3. P. 429-446.

¹⁰ Hettne B. Theorizing the Rise of Regionness // New Political Economy. 2000. Vol 5 (3). P. 457-473.

¹¹ Acharya, A. The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics // World Politics. 2007. Vol. 59. No.4. P. 629-652; Acharya A. Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies // International Studies Quarterly. 2014. Vol. 58. No. 4. P. 647-659; Acharya, A. The Myth of ASEAN Centrality? // Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Studies, 2017 (August), Vol. 39, №.2. P. 273-279.

¹² Busse N. Constructivism and Southeast Asian security // The Pacific Review, 1999, 12:1, P. 39-60.

¹³ Kai H. Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia // European Journal of International Relations, 2008, Vol. 14(3), P. 489-518.

¹⁴ Kim M.-H. Integration Theory and ASEAN Integration // Pacific Focus, Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (December 2014). P. 374–394.

¹⁵ Cockerham G.B. Regional Integration in ASEAN: Institutional Design and the ASEAN Way // East Asia, 2010, 27, P. 165-185.

¹⁶ Ruland J. ASEAN and the Asian crisis: theoretical implications and practical consequences for Southeast Asian regionalism // The Pacific Review, 2000, 13:3. P. 421-451.

Simon¹⁷, R. Stubbs¹⁸, which discusses issues of methodology and individual theoretical approaches to the study of Association.

When writing this paper, the author also relied on research on the early stage of ASEAN development. The problems of the Association's formation and institutional evolution were developed by reputable Russian historians Yu.A. Andreev¹⁹, Yu.A. Plekhanov, A.A. Rogozhin²⁰, V.V. Samoilenko²¹ and T.I. Sulitskaya²². Referring to these works allowed the doctoral candidate to analyze the dynamics of cooperation between ASEAN and Cambodia.

This group also includes the works of theoretical scientists studying the role of great powers in the formation and change of regional spaces, the criteria for their identification in the post-bipolar world (including the distinction between great and regional powers and middle-level powers), closely related to the changing concept of leadership in world politics. The research of A.D. Bogaturov²³, B. Buzan²⁴, A.D. Voskresensky²⁵, R. Gilpin²⁶, D.A. Degterev, P.O. Keohane²⁷, P. Kennedy²⁸, J.

¹⁷ Simon S. W. Security prospects in Southeast Asia: Collaborative efforts and the ASEAN regional forum // *The Pacific Review*, 1998, 11:2, P. 195-212.

¹⁸ Stubbs R. ASEAN's leadership in East Asian region-building: strength in weakness // *The Pacific Review*, 2014, 27:4, P. 523-541.

¹⁹ Андреев Ю.А. Страны АСЕАН: проблемы и тенденции современного развития. М., 1987. 62 с.

²⁰ Плеханов Ю.А., Рогожин А.А. Экономика и политика АСЕАН. М., 1985. 208 с.

²¹ Самойленко В.В. АСЕАН: политика и экономика. М., 1982. 192 с.

²² Сулицкая Т.И. Страны АСЕАН и международные отношения в Юго-Восточной Азии. М., 1985. 135 с.

²³ Богатуров А.Д. Лидерство и децентрализация в международной системе // *Международные процессы*. - 2006. №3. С. 5-15.

²⁴ Buzan, B., Waever, O. *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 564 p.

²⁵ Воскресенский А.Д. Структурный анализ проблем мировой политики в Восточной Азии в контексте дискуссии о глобальном лидерстве // *«Большая Восточная Азия»: мировая политика и региональные трансформации* / под ред. А.Д. Воскресенского ; МГИМО(У) МИД России. - М.: МГИМО-Университет, 2010. С. 12-31.

²⁶ Gilpin R. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. 272 p.

²⁷ Keohane O.R. *Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics* // *International Organization*. 1969. Vol. 23. No 2. P. 291-310.

²⁸ Kennedy P.M. *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 200*. N.Y.: Vintage books, 1989. 667 p.

Kugler²⁹, D. Nolte³⁰, A.F.K. Organsky, M.S. Ramich, K. Waltz³¹, O. Wavera, T.A. Shakleina³², A.V. Tsvyk³³ et al.

The *second group* includes works devoted to the peculiarities of Cambodia's foreign policy and Russia's place in it. Addressing them allowed the author to comprehensively explore the peculiarities of this actor's thinking on issues of regional security, foreign trade and investment, and the place of relations with Russia in the system of foreign policy priorities.

In Russian and foreign historiography, Cambodia's foreign policy is one of the most researched, interesting, but also the most difficult topics in the light of the rapidly changing political and economic situation in Southeast Asia. The works of prominent Russian international orientalists from the Institute of Oriental Studies, the Institute of China and Asian Countries and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as the Institute of Asia and Africa at Moscow State University and others are devoted to various aspects of Cambodia's foreign policy. Among them, the works of such scientists as

²⁹ Organski A.F.K., Kugler J. The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation // Handbook of War Studies / ed. By M.I. Midlarski. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989. P. 171-194.

³⁰ Nolte D. How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics // Review of International Studies. 2010. Vol. 36. P. 881-901.

³¹ Waltz K. Theory of International Politics. Reading: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979. 251 p.

³² Шаклеина Т.А. Новый этап в формировании мирового порядка планы США по управлению междержавной конкуренцией // Международные процессы. 2021. Т. 19. №. 3. С. 6-21; Шаклеина Т.А. Лидерство и современный мировой порядок // Международные процессы. 2015. Т. 13. №. 4. С. 6-19.

³³ Дегтерев Д.А., Рамич М.С., Цвык А.В. США — КНР: «властный транзит» и контуры «конфликтной биполярности» // Вестник РУДН. Серия: Международные отношения. 2021. Т. 21. № 2. С. 210-231.

Н.Н. Бектимирова³⁴, Е.А. Канаев³⁵, Е.В. Кобелев³⁶, Е.В. Колдунова³⁷, Г.М. Локшин³⁸, Н.П. Малетин³⁹, Д.В. Мосяков⁴⁰. In their works, the authors pay great attention to the analysis of the formation, development and cooperation within ASEAN in the political and defense spheres.

Among the works of N.P. Maletin⁴¹, it is necessary to mention the monograph "ASEAN: four decades of development", published in 2007. It examines the integration processes in Southeast Asia, the prerequisites for the creation of ASEAN, as well as the process of gradually overcoming the split of the region into two groups - East Indochina and ASEAN countries. It is worth highlighting the work of N.P.

³⁴ Бектимирова Н.Н. Приоритеты внешнеполитического курса нового правительства Камбоджи // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2024. Т. 1. №. 1 (62). С. 201-211; Бектимирова Н.Н. Камбоджа в XXI в.: современные политические процессы. М.: Lap Lambert. 2016. 248 с.

³⁵ Канаев Е.А. Факторы успешности АСЕАН и конституирование Большой Евразии // Международные процессы. 2017. Т. 15. no. 3. С. 81-89; Канаев Е.А., Королев А.С. Большая Евразия, Индо-Тихоокеанский регион и отношения России с АСЕАН // Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право. 2019. Т. 12. № 1. С. 26-43.

³⁶ Локшин Г. М., Кобелев Е. В., Мазырин В. М. Сообщество АСЕАН в современном мире. М.: ИД "Форум", 2019. 296 с.

³⁷ Колдунова Е.В. "Диалоговые партнерства" во внешней политике АСЕАН // Международные процессы. 2017. Т. 15. № 3. С. 55-66; Колдунова Е.В. АСЕАН на современном этапе и проблемы региональной стабильности // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2015. no. 28. С. 13-19.

³⁸ Локшин Г.М. Стратегическое соперничество Китая с США в Южно-Китайском море // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2019. Т. 1. №. 2 (43). С. 54-73; Локшин Г.М. Кодекс поведения в Южно-Китайском море (СОС) - иллюзия или отвлекающий маневр? // ЮВА: актуальные проблемы развития. 2017. №34. С. 5-25.

³⁹ Малетин Н.П. АСЕАН: четыре десятилетия развития. М.: Московский государственный институт международных отношений (университет) Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации. 2007. 312 с.; Малетин Н.П. Внешняя политика Камбоджи 1953-1998 гг. М.: МГИМО (У). 2004. 225 с.

⁴⁰ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 743 с.; Мосяков Д.В., Шпаковская М.А., Понька Т.И. Роль военной дипломатии во внешней политике КНР в Южно-Китайском море // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2023. Т. 23. №. 2. С. 358-371; Мосяков Д.В. Глобальная трансформация тихоокеанской Азии и Россия. М.: Институт стран Востока, Институт востоковедения РАН, 2019. 390 с.

⁴¹ Малетин Н.П. АСЕАН и ведущие страны АТР: проблемы и перспективы / Фонд сотрудничества России-АСЕАН. - М.: Гуманитарий, 2002. 156 с.; Малетин Н.П. АСЕАН: четыре десятилетия развития. М.: МГИМО, 2007. 261 с.; Малетин Н.П. Долгая жизнь Баийского договора//Международная жизнь. 2010. № 10. С. 78-84; Малетин Н.П. ЮКМ— бурное море Тихого океана // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2015. №. 29. С. 5-25.

Maletina's "Cambodia's Foreign Policy 1953-1998"⁴², which allowed the author to analyze the main directions of Cambodia's foreign policy activities against the background of general political processes in Southeast Asia after World War II before the country's accession to ASEAN in 1999.

Of particular importance for this dissertation was the monograph of the authoritative Russian researcher of Cambodia, D.V. Mosyakov, "The History of Cambodia. XX century"⁴³. This scientific work allowed the author to analyze the complex political and economic realities that led to a change in the types of government in the country.

To study the regional vector of Cambodia's foreign policy, conducted through the institutions of multilateral cooperation established under the auspices of ASEAN, the author studied the works of L. Jones⁴⁴, J. Komori⁴⁵, S.S. Tan⁴⁶, D. Yonglin⁴⁷. A serious analysis of the processes preceding the institutionalization of the East Asian Summit is carried out in the works of R. Stubbs⁴⁸, T. Terada⁴⁹.

The economic features of the development of the dialogue between Cambodia and Russia are reflected in a number of works by Russian Orientalists. First of all,

⁴² Малетин Н.П. Внешняя политика Камбоджи 1953-1998 гг. М.: МГИМО (У). 2004. 225 с.

⁴³ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 743 с.

⁴⁴ Jones L. ASEAN's unchanged melody? The theory and practice of 'non-interference' in Southeast Asia // *The Pacific Review*, 2010, 23:4, P. 479-502.

⁴⁵ Komori Y. In Search of Regional Governance in East Asia: Processes and Outcomes // *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 2012, 20:3, P. 221-243.

⁴⁶ Tan, S.S. Herding cats: the role of persuasion in political change and continuity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) // *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2013, Vol. 13, No. 2, P. 233 – 265.

⁴⁷ Yunling Zh. China and Asian regionalism. N.J.: World Scientific. 2010. 305 p.

⁴⁸ Stubbs R. ASEAN's leadership in East Asian region-building: strength in weakness // *The Pacific Review*, 2014, 27:4, P. 523-541.

⁴⁹ Terada T. The origins of ASEAN+6 and Japan's initiatives: China's rise and the agent–structure analysis // *The Pacific Review*, 2010, Vol. 23, No. 1. P. 71–92.

the works of E.Ya. Arapova⁵⁰, L.V. Arunova⁵¹, E.A. Kanaev⁵², G.M. Kostyanina⁵³, V.M. Mazyrin⁵⁴, A.A. Rogozhin⁵⁵ should be noted.

It is worth highlighting the works of E.S. Burova⁵⁶, which reflect the features of Cambodia's economic development and provide an in-depth analysis of factors and trends in trade and investment cooperation with Russia.

The *third group* includes works devoted to the Asian vector of Russia's foreign policy. These works make it possible to understand the reasons, formats, and features of the implementation of Russia's "turn to the East".

One of the leading scientific schools studying the problems of Cambodia was formed on the basis of the Center for the Study of Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The head of this center is one of the most prominent experts in the field of Oriental studies, history and foreign policy of Cambodia, D.V. Mosyakov. The range of problems studied in D.V. Mosyakov's works⁵⁷ is quite wide and covers such issues

⁵⁰ Арапова Е.Я. Экономическая интеграция в восточноазиатском регионе. М.: Проспект. 2015. 213 с.

⁵¹ Арунова Л.В. Этапы интеграции стран АСЕАН в единое экономическое сообщество // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2010. №. 15. С. 90-105.

⁵² Канаев Е. А. Экономическое сообщество АСЕАН-новое пространство деловой активности //Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2017. №. 37. С. 14-27.

⁵³ Костюнина Г.М. Экономическое сообщество АСЕАН: направления и перспективы формирования //Российский внешнеэкономический вестник. 2015. №. 12. С. 14-31.

⁵⁴ Экономика стран Юго-Восточной Азии / Под ред. В.М. Мазырина. М.: ИДВ. 2020. 241 с.; АСЕАН на пути интеграции: достижения, вызовы, дилеммы: Монография / Под ред. В.М. Мазырина, Е.В. Колдуновой. М.: Издательство «Аспект Пресс». 2023. 608 с.

⁵⁵ Рогожин А.А. Экономические отношения стран АСЕАН и Китая-взгляд без иллюзий // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2017. №. 34. С. 34-39; Рогожин А.А. Роль АСЕАН в региональном комплексном экономическом партнерстве (РСЕР) лидер или партнер? // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2014. №. 24. С. 11-18; Рогожин А.А. АСЕАН на пути к экономическому сообществу // Международная жизнь. 2010. №. 10. С. 56-63.

⁵⁶ Бурова Е.С. Сотрудничество Камбоджи с АСЕАН: экономические выгоды и трудности // АСЕАН на пути интеграции: достижения, вызовы, дилеммы. 2023. С. 279-302; Бурова Е. С. Воздействие пандемии COVID-19 на экономическое развитие Камбоджи // Восточная Азия: факты и аналитика. 2021. №. 4. С. 46-52; Бурова Е.С. Китай в экономике Камбоджи: выгодное или опасное партнерство? //Азия и Африка сегодня. 2021. №. 4. С. 41-47.

⁵⁷ Мосяков Д.В. Ситуация в АТР и ЮВА и новые возможности для России // Сборник Россия в АТР проблемы безопасности и сотрудничества. М.: РИСИ, 2011. С. 54-61. Мосяков Д.В., Хрящева Н.М. Сценарии для Индонезии до 2050 г. // Восточная аналитика. 2013. М. ИВ РАН. 2014. С. 16-19.; Мосяков Д.В. Глобальная трансформация Тихоокеанской Азии и Россия / Институт стран Востока. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН. 2019. 390 с.; Мосяков

as the regional system of relations in the Asia-Pacific region, the established international institutions in Southeast Asia, as well as the foreign policy of major powers (Russia, China, the United States) in them. Special attention to D.V. Mosyakov pays special attention to Russia's foreign policy in Southeast Asia and in ASEAN-centric formats.

In the collective monograph "The Countries of Indochina in ASEAN: key aspects of development" edited by A.A. Butko, E.A. Kanaev, V.N. Kolotov, and V.M. Mazyrin⁵⁸, they conduct a comprehensive analysis of the internal development and foreign policy strategy of the Indochina countries, paying special attention to the study of the forms, results, and prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation between this sub-region and Russia and the EAEU, including in the field of military-technical cooperation.

The collective monograph "The Asia-Pacific region: Yesterday and Today" edited by D.S. Panarina contains valuable material for analyzing Russia's foreign policy in Southeast Asia, along with a study of a wide range of issues related to the political, economic and cultural development of the countries of the region⁵⁹.

The fundamental monograph "The Asian Turn in Russian Foreign Policy" deserves special mention: Achievements, problems, prospects"⁶⁰, prepared under the editorship of A.V. Torkunov, D.V. Streltsov and E.V. Koldunova. Referring to this work allowed the doctoral candidate to analyze the strategic goals, challenges and results of the reorientation of Russia's foreign policy towards the Asian direction, with a special focus on its policy in the countries of Southeast Asia. The monograph has significant scientific value for understanding the structural foundations,

Д.В. Новая и новейшая история. Модернизация и глобализация восточных обществ. 3-е издание расширенное и дополненное. М.: Белый ветер. 2021. 600 с.

⁵⁸ Страны Индокитая в АСЕАН: ключевые аспекты развития / отв. редактор Мазырин В.М. М.: Институт Китая и современной Азии РАН. 2024, 308 с.

⁵⁹ Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион: вчера и сегодня / отв. редактор Панарина Д.С. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2023, 402 с.

⁶⁰ "Азиатский поворот" в российской внешней политике: Достижения проблемы, перспективы: Монография / Под ред. А. В. Торкунова, Д. В. Стрельцова, Е.В. Колдуновой. М.: Издательство "Аспект Пресс", 2022. 256 с.

diplomatic instruments and future trajectories of cooperation between the Russian Federation and key partners in ASEAN.

The authoritative school for the study of Russian foreign policy in Southeast Asia was formed on the basis of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. This Center is successfully headed by the famous political scientist E.V. Koldunova⁶¹. Within the framework of this Center, the scientific team's agenda is to penetrate into the depths of the problems of socio-economic, political, cultural and humanitarian development of the ASEAN countries, as well as the Russia-ASEAN dialogue partnership.

The collective monograph published by the scientists of this Center, "Russia and ASEAN in the Asia-Pacific region: dynamics of interaction, regional processes and the global context"⁶² deserves attention. Referring to the materials of this work allowed the doctoral candidate to analyze the evolution, current state and strategic prospects of the dialogue partnership between Russia and the Association as one of the priorities of foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The work has significant scientific value for understanding the specific mechanisms, problems and opportunities of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the countries of Southeast Asia in the format of multilateral diplomacy.

The specifics of cooperation between Russia and Cambodia in the field of culture are reflected in the monograph by G.M. Lokshin, E.V. Kobelev, V.M. Mazyrin "The ASEAN Community in the modern world"⁶³. In this paper, the authors analyze in detail the goals and successes of creating the ASEAN Cultural Community, into which Cambodia is integrated. This issue is also addressed by such

⁶¹ Колдунова Е.В. Юго-Восточная Азия перед вызовами индо-тихоокеанских концепций // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2019. Т. 1. №. 2 (43). С. 45-59.; Колдунова Е.В. Дилеммы и противоречия трансрегиональных отношений АСЕАН с ЕС, США и Россией //Актуальные проблемы Европы. 2020. №. 1. С. 54-61.

⁶² Россия и АСЕАН в АТР: динамика взаимодействия, региональные процессы и глобальный контекст. К 25-летию диалогового партнерства и 30-летию отношений России и АСЕАН: сборник научных статей / под ред. Е.В. Колдуновой, Н.С. Куклина, В.В. Вершининой. М.: МГИМО-Университет, 2022. 183 с.

⁶³ Локшин Г.М., Кобелев Е.В., Мазырин В.М. Сообщество АСЕАН в современном мире: монография. М. : ИД «ФОРУМ». 2019. 296 с.

authors as J. Adriani⁶⁴, L.V. Gladchenko⁶⁵, K. Keng-Lian⁶⁶, S. Sreisor, N. Chandarit⁶⁷ and others.

Concluding the review of the study of the research topic in Russian and foreign historiography, we can conclude that the scientific discourse covers a wide range of issues on Cambodian-Russian relations, ranging from the regional context to political relations and issues of economic cooperation. However, it is worth noting that the historical dynamics of bilateral cooperation, starting from the times of the USSR, has received the most in-depth study. At the same time, the specifics of bilateral relations at the present stage have not received systematic study in the Russian and foreign scientific communities. This dissertation is intended to partially solve this problem.

The object of this research is the bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Russian Federation.

The subject of the research is the political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian areas of relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Russian Federation, their content, forms and trends.

The purpose of the study is to identify the specifics of the development of relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Russian Federation, as well as to identify the factors that influenced this process, problems and prospects for interaction.

To achieve the intended goal, it is necessary to solve the following **research tasks**:

— to reveal the specifics of the retrospective of cooperation between Cambodia and Russia;

⁶⁴ Adriani I. ASEAN and Ongoing Cultural Conflicts // Jurnal Hubungan Internasional. 2015. Vol. 3. №. 2. P. 159-166.

⁶⁵ Гладченко Л.В. Проект «Сообщество АСЕАН»: проблемы региональной интеграции на современном этапе // Проблемы национальной стратегии. 2016. № 4(37). С. 31-44.

⁶⁶ Kheng-Lian K. ASEAN Cultural Heritage-Forging an Identity for Realisation of an ASEAN Community in 2015? // *Envtl. Pol'y & L.* 2014. Vol. 44. P. 237-251.

⁶⁷ Chandarith, N., Sreysour, S. Educational linkages in ASEAN – ASEAN University Network (AUN) in Cambodia's Chairmanship of ASEAN: Challenging Perceptions, Concretizing Consolidations ed. by Pich Charadine. 2021.P. 108-132.

- to consider the goals and objectives of Cambodia's foreign policy at the present stage;
- assess the place of Southeast Asia in Russia's foreign policy;
- to explore the development of political ties and the formation of the normative basis of bilateral relations;
- to study the specifics of bilateral cooperation in the field of trade and investment;
- to analyze the content, trends and prospects of military-technical cooperation between the two countries;
- to study the cultural and humanitarian aspects of the bilateral Cambodian-Russian cooperation.

The **chronological scope** of the research topic covers the period from 1993 to 2023. The lower limit is due to the holding of multiparty elections in Cambodia, which put an end to the civil war and led to the restoration of the monarchy, the restoration of the Kingdom of Cambodia, as well as the adoption of the Constitution. The upper limit is determined by 2023. In September 2023, following the results of the parliamentary elections in Cambodia, a large-scale change of power took place, which led to the formation of a new government headed by Hun Sen's eldest son, Hun Manet. In this regard, it becomes necessary to analyze the degree of adjustment of the Kingdom's foreign policy priorities. At the same time, observing the principle of historicism, in order to analyze the prerequisites of modern Cambodian-Russian relations, the author turns to the history of their interaction during the Soviet era.

Main Sources of Data. The solution of the tasks set became possible thanks to a thorough analysis of a wide range of published sources in Russian and English. The sources used to develop the topic can be divided by type into: regulatory, clerical, media, statistical.

The *first group* contains regulatory and legal sources, among which the

Constitutions of Cambodia⁶⁸ and Russia⁶⁹ occupy a special place. These documents play an important role in understanding the foreign policy of each country, as they set out the doctrinal foundations, national priorities, and goals of the foreign policy of the states. To understand the course of the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Cambodia, it is necessary to refer to the Constitution adopted by the Constitutional Assembly in Phnom Penh on September 21, 1993. This Constitution states that the country is an "independent, sovereign, peaceful" State pursuing a policy of neutrality and non-alignment⁷⁰.

In addition, the author studied the conceptual documents on the foreign policy of the two countries in order to get an idea of the basic values and principles on which their foreign policy is based. Referring to the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation from 2023 allows us to determine what place Cambodia occupies in the system of Russia's foreign policy priorities⁷¹. In the context of Russia's multi-vector foreign policy, the Asia-Pacific region is of great importance: Russia is striving to strengthen its image in the main integration structures of the Asia-Pacific region and, above all, in ASEAN, where Cambodia is a full member state. Cambodia's foreign policy document "Foreign Policy Direction" for 2021 reflects the current foreign policy guidelines of the Government of Cambodia⁷². Its value lies in defining the Kingdom's current strategic priorities and approaches to international relations, which makes it possible to determine an official position on

⁶⁸ Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia / adopted by the Constitutional Assembly in Phnom Penh on September 21, 1993 at its 2nd Plenary Session. URL: https://cambodia.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Constitution_ENG.pdf (accessed: 22.05.2024).

⁶⁹ Конституция Российской Федерации. Принята всенародным голосованием 12 декабря 1993 год с изменениями, одобренными в ходе общероссийского голосования 1 июля 2020 года // URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/constitution> (дата обращения: 05.02.2025).

⁷⁰ Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia / adopted by the Constitutional Assembly in Phnom Penh on September 21, 1993 at its 2nd Plenary Session. URL: https://cambodia.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Constitution_ENG.pdf (accessed: 22.05.2024).

⁷¹ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В.Путиным 31 марта 2023 г.) // МИД РФ. 31.03.2023. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/?ysclid=mi38hy46xv272893080> (accessed: 22.05.2024).

⁷² Cambodia's Foreign Policy Direction // Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. 2021. URL: <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/page/2021-02-08-Cambodia-s-Foreign-Policy-Direction> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

key regional and global issues.

International treaties should also be included in this group of sources, in particular, the dissertation referred to those treaties that created the legal framework for the subsystem of international relations established in Southeast Asia: the Bangkok Declaration of ASEAN 1967⁷³ and the Concept of the ASEAN Regional Forum for the period up to 2020⁷⁴. To solve the tasks set in the dissertation and systematically study the bilateral relations between Russia and Cambodia, the author studied the bilateral agreements, which record the result of the agreements reached on various areas of cooperation: economics⁷⁵, military-technical cooperation⁷⁶, cultural⁷⁷, educational and others⁷⁸.

The *second group* consists of "clerical sources", which include internal documents of the authorities of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Russian Federation, reflecting the process of implementing the conceptual provisions and strategies of the two states. This group includes memoranda⁷⁹, protocols on

⁷³ Бангкокская декларация АСЕАН 8 Августа 1967 года. URL: <http://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/> (дата обращения: 14.11.2020).

⁷⁴ ASEAN Regional Forum Vision Statement // ASEAN. URL: <http://www.asean.org/storage/images/archive/Doc-ARF-Vision-Statement.pdf> (date of access: 13.05.2020).

⁷⁵ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о торгово-экономических связях. 25.05.1995. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/55422/?ysclid=mhor9yttsm259144813 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁷⁶ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о военно-техническом сотрудничестве // МИД РФ. 17.05.2016. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/43617/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁷⁷ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о культурном и научном сотрудничестве. 25.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1720489/?ysclid=mhorbs85nw641791291> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁷⁸ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о взаимном признании образования, квалификаций и ученых степеней. 21.10.2019. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/563664623> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁷⁹ Меморандум о взаимопонимании и сотрудничестве в сфере молодежной политики между Федеральным агентством по делам молодежи (Российская Федерация) и Министерством образования, молодежи и спорта Королевства Камбоджа от 22.10.2019. URL: <https://intermol.su/upload/iblock/a9e/loqb2fo9g4p3eip9nzept6nrqw8yqr17.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia⁸⁰, as well as action programmes⁸¹. These sources are of key importance for analyzing relations between Russia and Cambodia, as they demonstrate the evolution and institutionalization of their dialogue at two levels: bilateral and multilateral.

The author also referred to the materials of international organizations. The order of the EEC Board on the draft Memorandum of Understanding with Cambodia⁸² indicates the desire to bring trade and economic cooperation to a supranational level, integrating the kingdom into the area of interests of the Eurasian Economic Union. To analyze the contribution of the international community, led by the United Nations, to resolving the military and humanitarian conflict in Cambodia, the author turned to United Nations sources: the UNTAC archive, UN General Assembly Resolution 2022⁸³.

Of particular value are archival materials about the activities of the USSR Embassy in Cambodia, stored in the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation⁸⁴. The author also referred to the materials of the meetings of the CPSU

⁸⁰ Протокол о консультациях между Министерством иностранных дел Российской Федерации и Министерством иностранных дел и международного сотрудничества Королевства Камбоджа. 26.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1728104/?ysclid=mhorcy61p701869832> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁸¹ Комплексный план действий по реализации стратегического партнёрства между Российской Федерацией и Ассоциацией государств Юго-Восточной Азии (2021–2025 годы) / Президент России. 28.10.2021. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5726> (accessed: 05.02.2023).

⁸² Распоряжение Коллегии Евразийской экономической комиссии от 10 мая 2016 г. N 56 "О проекте Меморандума о взаимопонимании между Евразийской экономической комиссией и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа" // Alta. 10.05.2016. URL: <https://www.alt.ru/tamdoc/16r00056/> (accessed: 05.03.2024).

⁸³ United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/untac.htm> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025); Резолюция, принятая Генеральной Ассамблеей 2 марта 2022 года // ГА ООН. URL: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/293/39/pdf/n2229339.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁸⁴ АВП РФ. Ф. 79. Оп. 24. Пор. №5. П. 35. Л. 119; АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 2. Пор. № 7. П. 1. Л. 3.

congresses⁸⁵, at which decisions were made regarding the USSR's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region and Cambodia. The study of these documents is of great importance for conducting a retrospective analysis of cooperation between the USSR and Cambodia.

The *third group* included media sources. The author attributed to them joint declarations⁸⁶, speeches and publications in the press of the leaders of Cambodia⁸⁷ and Russia⁸⁸, foreign ministers⁸⁹ and other official representatives⁹⁰. Since these sources are primarily declarative and programmatic in nature, referring to them allowed the author to fix the desired image of the result for the two countries in building their bilateral relations.

The *fourth group* includes statistical sources – databases of international specialized organizations⁹¹, as well as government agencies of the two countries⁹².

⁸⁵ Материалы внеочередного XXI съезда КПСС. М., 1959. 387 с.; Материалы XXIV съезда КПСС. М., 1974. 401 с.

⁸⁶ Совместная декларация об основах дружественных отношений России и Камбоджи. 26.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1721058/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁸⁷ Excerpts to address of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia on National Development Strategy // Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III of the Royal Government of Cambodia of the Fifth Legislature of the National Assembly. Phnom Penh. September 2013. URL: <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/cam145560.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁸⁸ Путин заявил, что РФ заинтересована в развитии сотрудничества с Камбоджей // ТАСС. 05.04.2023. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/17456751>

⁸⁹ Комментарий Департамента информации и печати МИД России в связи с визитом в Россию заместителя Премьер-министра, Министра иностранных дел и международного сотрудничества Камбоджи Хор Намхонга // МИД РФ. 01.03.2015. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1584355/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

⁹⁰ Послание Королевского Правительства Камбоджи Посольству Союза Советских Социалистических Республик. Пномпень. 25 мая 1959 г. // АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 5. П. 6. Пор. № 3. Л. 26.

⁹¹ The World Bank Data. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD> (accessed: 05.08.2024); ASEANSTAT. Metadata and notes. URL: https://cdn.aseanstats.org/public/docs/metadata/imts/summary/КН_Summary.pdf (accessed: 02.08.2024); Observatory of Economic Complexity. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/khm/partner/rus> (accessed: 05.08.2025).

⁹² Внешняя торговля с третьими странами. Евразийская Экономическая Комиссия. https://eec.eaunion.org/comission/department/dep_stat/tradestat/time_series/vneshnya-torgovlya-tovarami-dinamicheskie-ryady/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025); Cambodia: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix. IMF Country Report // International Monetary Fund. 2007. URL: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2007/cr07291.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025);

The importance of this group of sources lies in the fact that they provide empirical material that clearly characterizes trade, economic and investment cooperation. Referring to these sources allowed the author to back up his conclusions with concrete examples. In particular, access to the database of the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia⁹³ gave the author the opportunity to track changes in tourist flows during the study period and identify priority areas for the development of bilateral relations in this area.

Thus, the source base of this study is quite representative and well-founded, which allowed the author to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the problem of dissertation research.

Methodology of research. The theoretical and methodological foundation of this work was the school of *political neorealism*. It focuses on national interests, which are the main prerequisite for any actions of States. The author studied the bilateral relations between Russia and Cambodia using the tools of a systematic approach, which allowed analyzing the subject of the study as a single system consisting of various subsystems: political, economic, humanitarian. These subsystems, in turn, also consist of separate elements. For example, the economic subsystem in relation to the research object was divided into trading and investment subsystems. The changes occurring in each of the spheres under the influence of the internal and external environment were studied as processes of functioning of a single system. When conducting the research, the author proceeded from the principles of historicism, objectivity, reliability and consistency. The principle of historicism made it possible to study the current state of Cambodian-Russian relations, establish cause-and-effect relationships, identify development trends and patterns of issues, come to appropriate conclusions and develop forecasts for the further development of bilateral relations. The principle of objectivity allowed the author to consider the history and actions in relation to the two countries and the

Importer/Exporter TIV TABLES // SIPRI. URL: <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php> (accessed 13.04.2025).

⁹³ Tourism statistics report 2022. Tourism Statistics Department, National Institute of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, 2022. 31 p.

results of their relations from the point of view of objective patterns. In accordance with the principle of reliability, the author relied solely on proven facts, studied each phenomenon in its entirety of positive and negative aspects.

Research methods. A number of general scientific and special historical research methods were used in the work. General scientific methods include analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction. Special historical research methods were also used in the work: *historical-comparative*, *historical-genetic* and *historical-systemic*.

The *historical-comparative method* made it possible to identify the common features and differences of relations between Russia and Cambodia at different stages and, based on this, identify the main trends in the development of Cambodian-Russian relations during the period under review. This method, based on analogy, proved useful when considering the processes of socio-economic and socio-political development of Cambodia during the period under study.

The author used the *historical-genetic* method. Thanks to the application of this method, it was possible to reveal the properties and functions of Cambodia's relations with the USSR and Russia in the process of their historical movement. The author analyzed the development of Russian-Cambodian relations taking into account various factors, among which the most important are the disintegration of the bipolar structure of international relations, the processes of globalization, the Asian economic crisis, the multi-vector foreign policy of the Southeast Asian countries, the domestic political situation in Cambodia, the emergence of new challenges and threats to security in the region, etc.

The thesis used a *historical-systemic* method that allowed us to study the impact of the collapse of the bipolar system of international relations on the state of development of Soviet-Cambodian relations, as well as the impact of the multipolar system of international relations on the Cambodian-Russian cooperation.

The **scientific novelty** of the obtained research results is as follows:

- for the first time in historiography, a comprehensive study of the dynamics of bilateral relations between Cambodia and Russia from 1993 to 2023 was

conducted. Relying on a wide range of previously unpublished documents allowed not only to clarify the key parameters of the foreign policy courses of Moscow and Phnom Penh at different stages, but also to identify the underlying structural factors that influenced the development of their dialogue;

- the stages of development of Cambodian-Russian relations based on the dynamics of international processes in Indochina, the transformation of the global political system and intraregional changes in Southeast Asia have been identified and scientifically substantiated;

- the key directions, features and mechanisms of interaction between the USSR and Cambodia in the period 1979-1991 were identified. For the first time, they were systematically analyzed as a single political and historical complex, which made it possible to identify the driving forces behind the formation of a strategic partnership in the context of the Vietnamese factor, Cambodia's foreign policy isolation and the confrontation of the great powers in Indochina;

- the role of the Russian Federation in post-conflict reconstruction and subsequent modernization of Cambodia's foreign policy strategy after 1993 has been scientifically substantiated, the reasons for the change in Phnom Penh's foreign policy priorities have been identified, and the factors influencing the nature of the political dialogue between the two countries have been identified in the context of growing rivalry between the United States and China in Southeast Asia;

- the potential for the development of Cambodian-Russian cooperation in the political, economic, humanitarian, and military-technical fields has been identified, trends affecting the potential for forming a new level of strategic partnership have been identified, and practical recommendations have been proposed for optimizing relations in the context of a changing regional security architecture;

- for the first time, a significant array of archival, diplomatic and analytical materials of Soviet and Russian origin was put into scientific circulation, which provided an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis, clarification of the factual base and systematization of information about Cambodian-Russian relations over the past seven decades.

The main provisions for the defense.

1. The interaction between the USSR and Cambodia was a dynamic reflection of the transformation of the Soviet Union's foreign policy in the "third world" countries from ideologically motivated support for anti—colonial and neutralist regimes to pragmatic cooperation aimed at ensuring regional stability in Southeast Asia. This position is confirmed by the fact that at the first stage (1955-1965), the Soviet Union considered Cambodia as an element of its anti-colonial strategy and sought to strengthen its own position among countries that had recently freed themselves from colonial dependence. Norodom Sihanouk's support for the policy of neutrality demonstrated the flexibility of Soviet diplomacy and a departure from a rigid ideological line. In the second stage (1965-1978), Soviet politics became hostage to global confrontation and reflected difficult relations with China, the United States, and Vietnam. During this period, cooperation with Cambodia was inconsistent, which showed the dependence of the Soviet course on external factors. The third stage (1979-1991) was marked by the transition to a form of strategic patronage: The Soviet Union became the main ally and guarantor of the survival of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, providing large-scale economic and political assistance. However, this support increased Phnom Penh's dependence and limited its independence, reflecting the contradictions of late Soviet foreign policy.

2. Cambodia's current foreign policy is a pragmatic "adaptive neutrality" aimed at protecting the country's sovereignty and development in the face of competition from China and the United States. The strategy is based on a combination of internal priorities – stability, integrity and growth – and external objectives: strengthening positions in international structures and a flexible balance between global and regional players. Cambodia exploits the contradictions of the great Powers, relying on the principles of flexibility, multi-level partnership and economic pragmatism.

3. South-East Asia is a key area for Russia to diversify its foreign policy in the face of tension with the West and growing dependence on China. Russia is strengthening its position in the region through mainly bilateral ties and cooperation

in the military and energy fields, while remaining limited involved in regional processes. ASEAN serves as the main platform for consolidating the Russian presence and promoting the principles of equitable and non-aligned security.

4. The development of political ties between Russia and Cambodia has gone from an ideologically oriented cooperation of the Soviet period to the formation of a sustainable strategic partnership based on a solid regulatory framework. The evolution of Russia's foreign policy and its active participation in the Cambodian settlement process have contributed to rapprochement with the countries of Southeast Asia and integration into regional cooperation formats. Russia's accession to the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, as well as its participation in the work of ASEAN, have consolidated the institutional mechanisms of dialogue and laid the foundation for the formation of a comprehensive system of international legal agreements.

5. Trade and economic relations between Russia and Cambodia are developing against the background of deepening integration processes in ASEAN and the formation of a new architecture of global economic ties. Despite the existing potential and institutional framework for cooperation, the level of bilateral trade remains extremely low and is characterized by pronounced sectoral asymmetry. A key area for improving the effectiveness of cooperation is the conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement between Cambodia and the EAEU, which can eliminate tariff barriers, stimulate investment activity and diversify the trade structure. The implementation of this agreement, subject to the harmonization of technical standards and the creation of favorable business conditions, will allow Russia to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia, and Cambodia to expand access to the EAEU markets and attract new investments in the agricultural, tourism and infrastructure sectors.

6. Investment cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is becoming increasingly important: Cambodia is open to external capital and provides access to the Southeast Asian market. Despite infrastructural and structural constraints, they create opportunities for Russian investments in energy, transport, digital

infrastructure, agriculture and industry. The scale of investments is still limited, but both sides express their willingness to increase them.

7. Military-technical cooperation between Russia and Cambodia remains an important, albeit moderate, instrument for building trust and ensuring regional balance. Russia maintains its influence in the Southeast Asian security architecture, while Cambodia gets opportunities to modernize its army and diversify its partners. Despite external constraints, the parties are ready to develop a regulatory framework and joint projects.

8. Cultural and humanitarian cooperation forms a stable foundation for Cambodian-Russian relations. Education, culture, youth exchanges and tourism strengthen trust, but the potential for cooperation has not been fully realized due to Russia's weak information visibility and the lack of a systemic soft power strategy. Strengthening cultural and humanitarian policy is the key to strengthening Russia's long-term presence in Cambodia.

The **theoretical significance** of the dissertation research lies in the fact that the totality of the author's results, theoretical conclusions and analytical generalizations makes a significant contribution to the development of scientific knowledge about modern international relations in Southeast Asia, the specifics of Russia's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the foreign policy strategy of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The thesis is a comprehensive study that comprehensively reveals the evolution of Cambodian-Russian relations in their historical and political context, which allows us to deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of interaction between major powers and small states, the patterns of behavior of small countries in the context of foreign policy competition and the factors determining the dynamics of bilateral cooperation.

The **practical significance** of the dissertation is due to the fact that the results and conclusions obtained can be used in the preparation of scientific and analytical materials on modern international relations at the regional and global levels,

problems of foreign policy of Russia and the states of Southeast Asia, as well as issues of security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The findings of the study may be in demand when developing recommendations for Russian and Cambodian government agencies involved in shaping foreign policy, as well as structures responsible for the development of trade, economic, humanitarian, and military-technical ties. The materials of the work are of interest to public and private companies focused on participating in joint projects and expanding cooperation with Cambodia.

In addition, the thesis's provisions can be used in the preparation and reading of university courses and special courses on international relations, Russian foreign policy, political processes in Southeast Asia and the history of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as in the further scientific development of the subject under study.

Approbation of the work. The main results and conclusions of the dissertation research are reflected in the scientific publications of the dissertation, including articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals included in the RUDN University List, the international citation databases Web of Science and Scopus.

The **structure of the research** is determined by the purpose and logic of the research. The work consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of used sources and literature.

CHAPTER 1. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND RUSSIA

1.1. Historical ties between the peoples of the two countries

Before gaining independence, Cambodia found itself in a Cold War situation, when the two superpowers were in a state of confrontation that divided the whole world into two camps. It was this configuration that influenced Cambodia's foreign policy, which implemented the principle of neutrality (like many other developing countries of the "third world"). This principle was formulated by the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia in September 1953. Defining this choice, Sihanouk stated that the principle of neutrality is determined both by the geographical location of the countries and by the political logic of the system of international relations, which consisted in the "global struggle between democracy and communism"⁹⁴. The principle of neutrality implied that Cambodia would not participate in military blocs and would not allow the deployment of foreign military bases on its territory.

To implement this course, Cambodia used its diplomatic capital to ensure broad international recognition of its proclaimed status, as well as to constantly balance between the great Powers. Each of these powers, guided by their own geopolitical interests, sought to win over Phnom Penh and other regional countries to their side within the framework of their foreign policy interests.

The independence of the Indochina States was then confirmed by the Geneva Agreements of 1954, under which Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam pledged to respect each other's «sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity»⁹⁵. However, the United States ignored this desire for independent states. D. Eisenhower proceeded from the fact that it was necessary to protect regional countries from the spread of communism. The main opponents of the United States in this region were the USSR

⁹⁴ Малетин Н.П. Внешняя политика Камбоджи 1953-1998 гг. М.: МГИМО (У). 2004. С. 25.

⁹⁵ *Op. cit.* С. 26-27.

and China. The United States believed that the loss of one of the countries would lead to the subsequent joining of the other regional countries to the socialist bloc.

After World War II, the French colonial system in Southeast Asia collapsed, and the United States hoped that the power vacuum and weak governments in independent countries would allow the United States to turn Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia into a «testing ground for combating communist influence»⁹⁶. It is noteworthy that the United States did not just want to deploy military infrastructure in these countries. It was of fundamental importance to them that local governments should be fully and independently involved in the fight against communism.: both with individual cells and societies on their own territory, and within the framework of international institutions, adjacent to capitalist countries. However, the factor of the USSR's foreign policy was not taken into account by the American administration.

The issue under consideration – the settlement of the war in Indochina and the determination of the status of the former French colonies – was of fundamental importance for relations between the USSR and Cambodia. At the 1954 Geneva Conference, the Soviet Union consistently advocated recognition of the independence of not only Vietnam, but also Cambodia. This position (to seek recognition of the independence of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) was a direct act of support for Cambodian statehood. For Cambodia, whose interests in the international arena then largely depended on the decisions of the great Powers, such support from one of the key players was critically important.

As you can see, the direct object of the USSR's diplomatic efforts was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Cambodia, along with Laos, appears as one of the parties to the conflict, whose fate was decided, including beyond its borders. Judging by the text, relations between Moscow and Phnom Penh during this period were not direct, but indirect through the general context of the settlement in

⁹⁶ Селиванов И.Н., Конорева И.А. Международные отношения в Индокитае: геополитика, дипломатия, правовые проблемы (1939-1954). Курск : Курский гос. ун-т, 2008. 367 с.

Indochina. The USSR saw Cambodia as part of a broader regional problem that needed to be resolved in favor of the forces fighting colonialism.

«The USSR's active and generally pro-Vietnamese position at the Geneva Conference, aimed at ending the war and France's withdrawal, objectively contributed to the creation of an independent and neutral Cambodian state under King Norodom Sihanouk. Thus, the actions of the Soviet Union in 1954 laid a positive foundation for the subsequent development of bilateral relations. Phnom Penh could see Moscow as a force that helped liberate it from the colonial system and as a potential counterweight to pressure from other great powers»⁹⁷.

In 1955, Cambodia withdrew from the French Union. In December 1955, it was admitted to the United Nations. Accordingly, since 1955, the first stage of bilateral relations between the USSR and Cambodia can be counted. This stage will last until 1965.

The *first stage (1955-1965)*. After Khrushchev came to power, the USSR began to pay more attention to third world countries. Especially those of them who did not join any of the camps. As emphasized in the famous report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the XX Congress (February 1956), "the peoples of the East are beginning to take an active part in deciding the fate of the whole world. International relations have gone beyond the relations of States populated predominantly by white people and are beginning to take on the character of truly global relations"⁹⁸.

As the famous Russian orientalist A.M. Vasiliev rightly noted, the USSR realized quite early that "the revolutionary potential cannot be converted into any visible political actions of these countries"⁹⁹. Institutional underdevelopment and lack of experience in political management affected. The issues of strengthening the power of local parties, ensuring the legitimization of political regimes, security, as

⁹⁷ Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

⁹⁸ XX съезд КПСС: стенографический отчёт. Т. 1. М., 1956. С. 25.

⁹⁹ Васильев А.М. Россия на Ближнем и Среднем Востоке: от мессианства к прагматизму. М. 1993. С. 19.

well as the search for allies on the world stage were on the agenda in these countries. Even before World War II, the USSR began to develop a model of relations with third world countries, sometimes turning a blind eye to their domestic policies (including the persecution of Communists). The main goal was to strengthen the independence of these states, and at best, to increase their distance from the West.

The USSR's foreign policy towards Cambodia vividly demonstrated this model. Moscow has initiated the establishment of diplomatic relations. The reason for their beginning was the coronation of Cambodian King N. Suramarit in 1955. On March 21, 1956, K.E. Voroshilov sent a telegram to the King, expressing his desire to establish diplomatic relations. The King supported this wish¹⁰⁰. And after a couple of months of the necessary formalities, the Embassy of Cambodia opened in Moscow. And in November 1956 An active exchange of diplomatic notes between the Embassy of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR has already begun. Among all the topics discussed in the bilateral format, one was the most frequently encountered, namely, the problem of easing international tensions¹⁰¹.

Timely information about the situation in Indochina has become an important aspect of bilateral cooperation. An example is a note sent to the Embassy of Cambodia on December 30, 1956. For example, an excerpt from it should be given (with some abbreviations for clarity): «The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR presents its compliments to the Embassy of Cambodia and, in accordance with the agreement reached between the two Presidents of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, has the honor to inform... that both Presidents agreed to consider Thursday, January 3, 1957, as the date of publication (in whole or in part) of the sixth interim report of the International Commission for Control and Supervision in Vietnam. Accordingly, both Presidents hope that if other participants in the Geneva

¹⁰⁰ АБП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 2. Поп. № 7. П. 1. Л. 3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Оп. 2. Поп. №1. П. 1. Л. 1. Thus, the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a note dated November 20, 1956, reported: "The USSR presents its respects to the Embassy of Cambodia and has the honor to transmit the text of the Statement of the Soviet Government on the issue of disarmament and reducing international tension. The Ministry would appreciate transmitting this Statement to the Government of Cambodia".

meeting or the Governments of India, Poland and Canada intend to publish this report, they will do so on January 3, 1957»¹⁰².

In parallel with the development of diplomatic contacts, bilateral cooperation has been intensified in the field of cultural exchange. In addition, the exchange of government delegations, as well as the permanent presence of officials in the USSR and Cambodia, began to be systematic¹⁰³. Thanks to such close cooperation, on May 31, 1957, the parties concluded bilateral agreements that facilitated trade contacts between them, as well as agreements on cooperation in the field of trade and science.

The Soviet side, as follows from the documents, was interested in expanding and deepening cooperation with Cambodian partners, and also sought to form an objective (of course, from Moscow's point of view) view of the USSR. In particular, this goal was set in 1958-1960 before the Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, A.S. Anikin¹⁰⁴.

One of the first major achievements of the first ambassador to Cambodia was the establishment and timely transmission to Moscow of information that Sihanouk was leaning towards a pro-Western orientation in his foreign policy. At the same time, Anikin protested against the publication of an anti-Soviet article in the Cambodian newspaper *Dispatch du Cambodia*, after which the Cambodian authorities assured him that they did not share such views¹⁰⁵.

Soviet diplomats also discussed the situation in Indochina with Cambodian politicians. In a conversation with Leng Nget on April 30, 1958, the ideas of a

¹⁰² АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 2. Пор. №1. П. 1. Л. 2.

¹⁰³ Конорева И.А. Советский Союз и Индокитай: 1943-1976. Курск: Изд-во Курского гос. ун-та. 2011. 369 с.

¹⁰⁴ АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 4. Пор. №8. П. 4. Л. 17. The interlocutors raised the issue of the nature of newspaper propaganda in Cambodia. Kim Tit noted that newspapers close to government circles, such as the weekly *Reality Cambodienne* and the *Dispatch du Cambodia*, adhere to the points of view of Western powers in their statements and assessments of political events. Some political circles are perplexed by the fact that the officialdom of *Reality Cambodienne* or the newspaper *Dispatch du Cambodia* sometimes speak out in a disloyal spirit towards the friendly country of Cambodia of the Soviet Union.

¹⁰⁵ Конорева И.А. СССР и страны Индокитая: исследования, документы, библиография / И.А. Конорева, И.Н. Селиванова, Ю.Ф. Коростелев; М-во образования и науки РФ, Федер. агентство по образованию, Курс. гос. ун-т. Курск: Изд-во Курского государственного университета, 2007. С. 27.

federation of Laos and Thailand and the deterioration of Cambodia's relations with Thailand and South Vietnam were discussed¹⁰⁶. Leng Nget criticized the United States for militarizing South Vietnam, calling it a political mistake¹⁰⁷.

An important area of activity of the USSR Embassy in Cambodia was the collection and analysis of information on relations between Cambodia and South Vietnam. In particular, the Soviet leadership was interested in possible contradictions between the countries of Indochina. With the skillful use of these contradictions, the USSR could strengthen its influence in the region, as well as prevent the United States from doing the same. The USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared a special report on this issue. This report emphasized that Cambodia's relations with South Vietnam have developed very unfavorably since independence. There were two reasons for this state of affairs. First, there are contradictions on territorial and economic issues. Secondly, the political factor. It was about the discrepancy between the principle of Cambodia's neutrality and, as the authors of the report put it, "the aggressive, separatist policy of South Vietnam pursued by the United States"¹⁰⁸.

A new impulse in the USSR's policy towards the countries of the "third world" occurred at the XXI Congress of the CPSU. Previously, these countries were considered neutral with the message of the need to educate them and include them in the orbit of their own influence, but now they were recognized as full-fledged «allies of the USSR in the fight against imperialism»¹⁰⁹. Cambodia, with its policy of neutrality, undoubtedly fell into this category. The USSR sought to use its influence to strengthen its anti-imperialist positions, while simultaneously developing economic and cultural ties with the states of the region¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Л. 61.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Л. 62-63.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Л. 125. The memo also noted that "in an effort to involve Cambodia in the SEATO bloc, the United States maintains tensions between Cambodia and South Vietnam by provoking constant military incidents in the border areas of Cambodia. In March 1957, in connection with N. Sihanouk's trip to Beijing, an economic blockade of Cambodia was organized on the initiative of the United States.

¹⁰⁹ Материалы внеочередного XXI съезда КПСС. М., 1959. С. 120.

¹¹⁰ АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 5. Пор. №3. П. 6. Л. 46.

However, in practice, cooperation did not always go smoothly. It is worth noting that the issue of trade imbalance was on the agenda. There was no demand for goods from Cambodia in the USSR, since the country was self-sufficient and the Soviet economy did not need the goods provided by Cambodia. However, this problem did not negatively affect the dialogue itself. Cambodia was sympathetic to this situation. The Soviet side's awareness of the real state of affairs in Cambodia remained incomplete. Characteristic episode: N. Khrushchev mistakenly offered to help fight the "smallpox epidemic," which simply did not exist in the country. The Cambodian authorities, in turn, asked Soviet diplomats to refrain from political propaganda in order not to violate the principle of neutrality¹¹¹.

In 1960, King N. Suramarit died, and the question arose in the country as to who would take the throne next. N. Sihanouk abdicated in 1955 and, for ethical reasons, was unable to ascend the throne as if nothing had happened just five years later. It was also impossible to find any worthy candidates. The impasse was resolved as follows: the post of head of state was officially introduced with the vacant throne. It was occupied by Sihanouk's mother, the Dowager Queen Kossamak, who was declared a "symbol of the monarchy"¹¹². Thus, indirectly through his mother, N. Sihanouk retained his position in power. This does not fully correspond to Western ideas of a constitutional monarchy, but it fits perfectly into the local political logic.

In the USSR, these changes were assessed quite positively. However, the Soviet leadership had concerns due to the rapprochement of the Cambodian leadership with the leaders of the CPC (Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi). It was natural for Cambodia, but relations between the USSR and China cooled after criticism of the cult of personality and Stalin. Because of this, Cambodia was forced to maneuver between two former partners in the socialist camp¹¹³. The Soviet side publicly

¹¹¹ Послание Королевского Правительства Камбоджи Посольству Союза Советских Социалистических Республик. Пномпень. 25 мая 1959 г. // АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 5. П. 6. Пор. № 3. Л. 26.

¹¹² See: Бектимирова Н.Н., Селиванов И.Н. Королевство Камбоджа: политическая история (1953-2002). М., 2002. С. 102.

¹¹³ Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

approved Sihanouk's refusal of American military and economic assistance (November 1963)¹¹⁴ and Cambodia's subsequent severance of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1965¹¹⁵.

The *second stage (1965 – 1978)*. The situation in Cambodia at this stage was characterized by a high degree of tension, as the country actually found itself in the sphere of strategic interests of the United States, becoming another testing ground for the hidden confrontation between Washington and Moscow. Cambodia's foreign policy positioning at this stage can be expressed in the words "Asian Switzerland", since the principle of neutrality was the basis of the country's foreign policy, and the leadership applied it, implementing a policy of "balancing" both in the international arena and in domestic politics between various social forces within the country. However, as the Cold War escalated, this model of foreign policy became less and less acceptable to the United States and the USSR, who wanted more certainty.

Cambodia relied on China during this period. Thanks to his support, on October 27, 1964, the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers of Cambodia adopted a joint statement warning the United States that Cambodia would sever diplomatic relations with them in the event of a unilateral aggressive policy. In March 1965, during the Phnom Penh Conference of the Peoples of Indochina, Cambodia participated in the drafting and adoption of a declaration openly condemning American interference in internal affairs. The climax was the decision to sever diplomatic relations with Washington in May 1965¹¹⁶.

Strangely enough, the break in relations with the United States did not lead to an improvement in relations with the USSR, because Moscow was wary of Cambodia, which, as the USSR believed, was in the orbit of Chinese influence. N. Sihanouk even had to postpone a visit to Moscow in October 1965, because he criticized the policies of the USSR in Southeast Asia. Despite the fact that N.

¹¹⁴ Правда. 1963. 24 ноября; Известия. 1963. 25 ноября.

¹¹⁵ Сочевко Г.Г. Современная Камбоджа. (1941-1965). М.: Наука. 1967. 123 с.

¹¹⁶ Бектимирова Н.Н., Селиванов И.Н. Королевство Камбоджа: политическая история (1953-2002). М., 2002. С. 87.

Sihanouk later did not allow such a thing, in the USSR they began to treat him as an "unreliable partner." Accordingly, this complicated the bilateral dialogue¹¹⁷.

However, since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China, accompanied by aggression against Cambodians by the Red Guards, as well as Beijing's support for the Khmer Rouge insurgents, Cambodia has decided to move away from the pro-Chinese course in its foreign policy. At the same time, France was chosen not by the USSR as the main foreign policy partner during this period, but by France, which at that moment was engaged in changing its approach to politics in the region. It is worth noting that it was "the French vector that became an alternative to pressure from the socialist camp for Sihanouk"¹¹⁸.

During this period, relations with the USSR also developed steadily on the diplomatic track. In particular, from July 1966 to August 1967. The Soviet Union made important statements about its respect for Cambodia's independence, neutrality, and territorial integrity, and recognized its borders. This step was very significant for Cambodia, as it gained support in the eyes of one of their major players, while the political leadership in Moscow continued to be treated with caution, believing that it could rely on the support of Western countries¹¹⁹.

The US war in Vietnam played a major role in changing the regional security architecture, as well as Cambodia's foreign policy. In March 1964, the US Secretary of Defense, R. McNamara issued a memorandum addressed to President L. Johnson. In this document, the Minister of Defense sought to convince the president to move

¹¹⁷ Apparently, this circumstance played an important role in the USSR's attitude towards N. Sihanouk after his removal from power in Cambodia in March 1970.

¹¹⁸ Черкасов П.П. Франция и Индокитай, 1945-1975 (Эволюция фр. политики в Индокитае). Ин-т мировой экономики и междунар. отношений. М.: Наука, 1976. 168 с.

¹¹⁹ Михеев Ю.Я. Индокитай: путь к миру: (Индокит. пробл. в свете соврем. междунар. права). М.: Междунар. отношения. 1977. 296 с. During this period, translated articles by N. Sihanouk and some other Cambodian politicians on Soviet-Cambodian friendship began to appear on the pages of Soviet periodicals, which was clearly intended to demonstrate the improvement of bilateral relations after the events of October 1965. See, for example: Сианук Н. Ответ клеветникам // За рубежом. 1966. №27. С. 26; Сон Санн. Кхмеро-советская дружба опора для сотрудничества наших стран // Культура и жизнь. 1966. №4. С. 46-47.

military operations from Vietnamese to Cambodian territory, believing that without Cambodia's support, Ho Chi Minh's regime would not last long¹²⁰.

In the summer of 1966, the bombing of Cambodia by the US Air Force took place. Cambodia has established camps for Vietnamese soldiers on its territory, as well as supply bases and hospitals for the Vietnamese army. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, which passed through the northeastern regions on the border with Laos and South Vietnam, was of considerable importance for Vietnam. This trail was used for the transfer of troops, military equipment and ammunition from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

On January 18, 1968, American and Saigon troops invaded the Cambodian province of Prey Ng. Thus, we add, the promise to respect the country's neutrality was violated. The United States justified the invasion with the notorious "right to self-defense"¹²¹. The rest developed according to the already familiar scenario: These actions became the reason for Soviet anti-American propaganda, and Cambodia participated quite actively in this campaign. However, one could not expect anything else, given the degree of her irritation with US policy.

«In November 1968, Sihanouk appealed to the United Nations to protest the attacks and threatened to reconsider the policy of neutrality. Moscow explained the US policy as a desire to intimidate Cambodia and turn it into a springboard against Vietnam. Washington's mistakes allowed the USSR to use the situation for diplomatic pressure and strengthen its influence»¹²².

«Sihanouk began calling the USSR, China, and France Cambodia's "friends," but the country continued to balance between the great powers, which did not suit either the USSR, the United States, or its neighboring countries»¹²³. In March 1969,

¹²⁰ The Pentagon Papers. P. 283.

¹²¹ Усватов А. Угроза Камбодже // Новое время. 1968. № 4. С. 14.

¹²² Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

¹²³ АВП РФ. Ф. 79. Оп. 24. Пор. №5. П. 35. Л. 119. It is noted that Cambodia «although it is not... one of the main recipient countries of Soviet aid or a trading partner," there is a "constant improvement" in relations between the countries.- By 1969, military and economic assistance to Cambodia from the USSR amounted (in the last year) to only about \$ 4 million... Evidence that

Nixon began bombing Cambodian border areas, which led to massive civilian casualties and increased support for leftist forces, gradually dragging Cambodia into the war¹²⁴.

In March 1970, an uprising broke out in Cambodia and King N. Sihanouk was ousted from his post. At that time, N. Suanuk was in Moscow on a visit and did not express a desire to return to his homeland in order to stop the collapse of the political system.

Later, in his memoirs published in 1973, N. Sihanouk confessed that L.I. Brezhnev, A.N. Kosygin and N. Podgorny offered him to return to Phnom Penh when he arrived in Moscow from Paris, because anti-Vietnamese pogroms were just beginning in Cambodia at that time. Accordingly, the king's authority would help to restore order¹²⁵.

However, since the king did not express such a desire, and his early attempts to establish relations with France rather than the USSR, as well as anti-Soviet statements during the aggravation of the Soviet-Chinese contradictions, prompted the USSR to begin developing diplomatic contacts with the Lon Nol regime in an alternative way, while maintaining dialogue with the Embassy of Cambodia in the USSR, whose staff remained loyal to Sihanouk. The Soviet Embassy in Phnom Penh maintained full-time activities¹²⁶.

After some time, the Cambodian diplomatic mission in Moscow split into two groups: some diplomats, led by the ambassador, remained loyal to Sihanouk, while

Cambodia "occupies an important place in Soviet plans is the fact that Sergey M. Kudryavtsev, a professional Russian diplomat who ranks 6th among Soviet diplomats, was appointed ambassador to Phnom Penh». (АВП РФ. Ф. 79. Оп. 24. Поп. № 5. Л. 125).

¹²⁴ According to UPI (Saigon), on October 8, 1969, Prince N. Sihanouk acknowledged for the first time that 40,000 North Vietnamese troops were stationed in Cambodia. (АВП РФ. Ф. 540. Оп. 17. Поп. № 10. Л. 30).

¹²⁵ For more information, see: Марунова И.Б. Место Кампучии в военном конфликте в Индокитае и положение в стране после победы патриотических сил. М.: Институт востоковедения. Спецбюллетень. 1976. №10; Марунова И.Б. Что произошло в Камбодже // Институт востоковедения. Спецбюллетень. 1970. №7 (112). С. 209-242; Sihanouk N. My war with CIA: The memoirs of the prince Norodom Sihanouk as related to Wilfred Burchett. L., 1974. P. 21-27.

¹²⁶ Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

others supported Lon Nol¹²⁷. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR tried not to separate one group from the other in its work, maintaining constructive work with the Embassy.

However, the unexpected invasion of Cambodia by the armed forces of the United States and South Vietnam on May 1, 1970, made a destructive contribution to this process. The Soviet Government issued a statement on May 4, condemning this aggression as a gross violation of international law and agreements on Vietnam. Moscow, in particular, accused Washington of seeking to eliminate progressive regimes and subjugate the countries of Indochina to its military interests, noting the glaring contradiction between Nixon's promises to end the war and his actual actions¹²⁸.

The Cambodian crisis seems to have become a new round of ideological confrontation between the superpowers. In those days, problems in the Middle East were on the agenda, and issues related to Cambodia were in second place. R. Nixon made it clear to the Soviet diplomat that he was aware of Moscow's concern about the Indochina policy of the United States, and also realized that the continuation of this foreign policy line "could lead to a freeze in Soviet-American relations"¹²⁹. Soviet diplomat A.F. Dobrynin informed G. Kissinger that China, whose position in Cambodia had historically been strong, could take advantage of the need for local authorities to protect themselves from bombing and invasion. As a result, China may send troops into Cambodia, repeating the Korean scenario of 1950-1953.

Eventually, the United States withdrew its troops from Cambodia by the end of June 1970. They took this step after large-scale protests broke out all over the world and in the United States itself. However, the withdrawal of the American contingent led to the fact that it was replaced by a large contingent (48,000 people) of South Vietnamese troops. This regrouping took place in the spirit of the foreign

¹²⁷ АВП РФ. Ф. 570. Оп. 3. Пор. №5. П. 16. Л. 12, 16, 44, 87; Советско-американские отношения: годы разрядки. Т. 1. Кн. 1. С. 182-208.

¹²⁸ Заявление советского правительства в связи с вооружённым вторжением американских войск в Камбоджу. 4 мая 1970 г. // Новое время. 1970. № 19. С. 16-17.

¹²⁹ Там же. С. 216.

policy "Guam doctrine" developed by R. Nixon. She implied that US foreign policy in the region should be implemented not directly by the United States, but through intermediaries, allies who follow in the wake of the US foreign policy strategy. At the same time, the United States itself did not refuse to support Cambodia.: they supported the equipping of new formations with weapons, ammunition, medicines, etc. Cambodia's response to these processes was general mobilization.

On July 15, 1970, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR declared: "by carrying out a coup in Phnom Penh and spreading the war to Cambodia, the United States has jeopardized peace throughout Southeast Asia"¹³⁰. The Council demanded the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Indochina and strict compliance with the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962.

The document sharply condemned the "aggressive goals" of the United States — the suppression of national liberation movements and the transformation of Indochina into a military base. The USSR opposed Washington's aggressive imperialist line to its "peace-loving policy".

These events have caused a new outburst of anti-American criticism. At the Warsaw Pact meeting on December 2, 1970, «the war in Indochina was described as a single manifestation of the policy of violence and dictate of the United States»¹³¹. In Washington, plans were being developed in case of a threat to Phnom Penh, which reflected «the desire of the United States to become increasingly involved in the conflicts of Indochina under the pretext of "protecting its interests"»¹³².

¹³⁰ Заявление ВС СССР в связи с расширением агрессии американского империализма в Индокитае, 15 июля 1970 г. // Правда. 1970. 16 июля. The Statement also stated that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR «fully approves the political line and practical activities of the Soviet Government to support the peoples of Indochina in their struggle against imperialist aggression." The Soviet side called on "parliamentarians of all countries and people of good will" to raise their voices of protest and resolutely advocate the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops and their allies from the area, in order to ensure the peoples of Indochina the right to decide their own fate without foreign interference».

¹³¹ Новое время. 1970. № 50. С. 30-31.

¹³² Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

At the XXIV Congress of the CPSU, the Soviet leadership once again condemned American imperialism. In L. Brezhnev's report, the aggressive policy of the United States, manifested in interference in the internal affairs of other countries, was considered as the main threat to international peace and stability. In particular, the "aggression against the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos"¹³³ was noted as the main manifestation of colonialism and violence.

In June 1973, realizing that the Khmer Rouge had become a truly significant force in Cambodia, Moscow for the first time tried to establish a dialogue with them through its Vietnamese allies. According to the well-known orientalist D.V. Mosyakov, this is at least surprising, «since the trust of the Vietnamese in the Cambodian leadership was minimal (if not zero)»¹³⁴. By the summer of 1973, the United National Front of Kampuchea, with the support of China and Vietnam, began to carry out actions to overthrow the Lon Nol clique and build a "new" Cambodia led by N. Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan.

N. Sihanouk decided to enlist the support of the USSR for this action. While on a visit to Algeria in September 1973, N. Sihanouk sent telegrams to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. These telegrams requested the recognition of the Royal Government of National Unity of Cambodia. As proof of her political power, N. Sihanouk argued that it controls «more than 90% of the country's territory, where 5.5 million people live, and is the only legitimate government of an independent and non-aligned state»¹³⁵. In addition, N. Sihanouk emphasized that «the USSR should be ahead of the United States in this recognition, showing the whole world that it cares about the fate of the young state and is ready to support the will of its people»¹³⁶.

¹³³ Материалы XXIV съезда КПСС. М., 1974. С. 15-18.

¹³⁴ Мосяков Д.В. «Красные кхмеры» и вьетнамские коммунисты: история отношений // Восток. 2000. № 5. С. 43.

¹³⁵ Советский Союз и камбоджийский вопрос (1973-1974). М., 1975. С. 23.

¹³⁶ Там же. С. 25-26.

The Soviet side gave its answer, bringing it to N. Sihanouk through its ambassador V.S. Tolstikov. The USSR's position was that Moscow was on the side of progressive forces and free peoples seeking self-determination. «The struggle of the Cambodian people for independence was described as fair»¹³⁷. Moreover, it was linked to the broader context of the general resistance of the peoples of Indochina to imperialist interference in their internal affairs. The USSR voiced this position from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly in December 1973¹³⁸, as well as in negotiations with American diplomats, noting that «ending the conflict would allow peace to be established throughout Indochina»¹³⁹.

By 1975, the armed forces of the United National Front of Kampuchea had liberated 90% of Cambodia's territory. On April 17, the capital was taken, and Lon Nol fled from it, leaving the apparatus and all power. The USSR sent its congratulations to Sihanouk, Penn Nut and Khieu Samphan in this regard. In particular, these congratulations read: «The Soviet Union has always supported the Cambodian patriots, the United National Front and the Royal Government of National Unity of Cambodia. The USSR will continue to develop the traditional relations of friendship and fruitful cooperation between our countries and support the Cambodian people in their efforts to build a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic and prosperous Cambodia»¹⁴⁰.

However, in the same days, the Khmer Rouge seized the building of the Soviet embassy in Phnom Penh. The remaining employees were not harmed, they were sent home. During the entire reign of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia did not maintain official contacts with the USSR. But in the Soviet Union, this was not perceived negatively. Throughout 1975-1978, the USSR maintained the image of Cambodia as a country that overthrew the puppet government of a pro-Western dictator and embarked on the path of creating a "new society"¹⁴¹.

¹³⁷ Там же. С. 38.

¹³⁸ Подробнее см.: Бектимирова Н.Н., Селиванов И.Н. Указ. соч. С. 147-149.

¹³⁹ Совместное советско-американское коммюнике от 24 июня 1973 г. // США: экономика, политика, идеология. 1973. №8. С. 102.

¹⁴⁰ Правда. 1975. 18 апреля.

¹⁴¹ АВП РФ. Ф. 569. Оп. 21. Пор.№3. П. 30. Л. 7.

In general, it can be noted that in the second period of Soviet-Cambodian relations, the events of the Second Indochina War had the greatest impact on them. Both Laos and Cambodia tried to distance themselves from Vietnam, fearing that the war on its territory would spread to them, and they also feared that the Vietnamese leadership would interfere in their internal affairs. This suggests that for Cambodia, in particular, domestic issues were more of a priority than international ones. At the same time, external forces, on the contrary, sought to involve them in a major geopolitical game. Cambodian politicians themselves perceived both the United States and the USSR as participants in this geopolitical game and sought to balance between them, receiving help and diplomatic support on various issues.

The *period 1979-1991*. cmc This period began with the proclamation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (NRK) on January 7, 1979. At the same time, the very prerequisites for the creation of a new political entity began to take shape in December 1978, when the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea was formed in the city of Snowl with the assistance of Vietnam. It was formed as a response to the acute social, economic and political crisis in the country, when, after the genocide and the socio-economic collapse created by Pol Pot's policies, it was necessary to rebuild the country.

This group includes former communists, the state apparatus of previous governments, as well as public figures opposed to the terror of the Khmer Rouge. The goals of the Front were large-scale and nationwide in nature. These included the holding of general elections, the adoption of a new constitution, and the economic and social reconstruction of the country.

However, as often happens, domestic political problems turned out to be just one of the obstacles facing the young state. After the declaration of independence, the NRK faced foreign policy isolation. The new State needed to demonstrate to the entire world community that it had become a full-fledged subject of international relations and was ready to take the place of the previous Government in international institutions. In this situation, Phnom Penh relied on the socialist bloc, hoping that

through rapprochement with it, it would restore relations with the countries of the "third world", as well as the USSR and its partners.

This strategy has been successful: The NRK received official recognition from the USSR, Vietnam, Laos, the GDR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Cuba and Mongolia. Later, the new state began to be recognized by the countries of the "Global South" with which the USSR interacted: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Angola, Congo, Nicaragua, Syria and others. In 1980, India established diplomatic relations with the NRK, which was done as one of the steps to strengthen India's relations with the USSR. However, representatives of the Pol Pot regime, namely the delegation of Democratic Kampuchea, continued to be the legitimate representatives of the Cambodian people at the UN. This fact seriously limited the freedom of the NRC in the international arena, undermining its legitimacy.

The internal situation in Cambodia was also unstable, as the Khmer Rouge retreated from Phnom Penh and retained their fighting ability and organization. Pol Pot's supporters launched a large-scale guerrilla war in the border areas, and also conducted a number of successful operations in 1983-1984. The purpose of these operations was to destabilize the situation and restore control over part of the country in the hope that the power of the young government had not yet fully strengthened on the ground.

The Vietnam factor played into the hands of the Pol Pot regime. They emphasized in their propaganda that the People's Republic of Kampuchea actually acts as a puppet government under the patronage of Vietnam. This forced nationalist-minded citizens to refuse to trust the new government, and it also aggravated the external isolation. It is worth noting that the personnel appointments in the new administration were controlled by Hanoi. Vietnam also had an indirect influence on the country's foreign policy. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the ruling elite inside the country was split. Two camps have formed in the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea: the old and the new leaders. The latter included Hun Sen and Chea Sim, whose course was eventually recognized as the only true

and correct one. Their program was aimed at centralizing power and carrying out reforms.

The socio-economic crisis has become an equally serious challenge. Infrastructure, agriculture, medicine, and education were in disrepair and decline. There were massive epidemics, famines in the country, which led to great casualties. And «only the active help of the USSR and Vietnam made it possible to keep the state from complete collapse»¹⁴².

It is worth noting the role of the USSR at this difficult stage for Cambodia. It was the Soviet Union that became a key partner of the NRK. He not only allowed her to come out of isolation, but also provided comprehensive support. During this period, the USSR sent significant forces to help the Cambodian people in their trials. The USSR built a hospital and a Higher Technological Institute, training personnel for these institutions. The top government and party leadership of the USSR expressed their support and commitment to strengthening friendly ties. In particular, L. Brezhnev and A. Kosygin declared his «readiness to contribute to the creation of an independent, neutral state following the socialist path through economic cooperation and assistance in rebuilding the country»¹⁴³.

The USSR provided assistance not only by creating infrastructure, but also by providing financial assistance. In 1979, he sent 130 million rubles, and in 1980, 200 million.

In addition, the USSR actively met the urgent needs of Cambodians suffering from hunger and disease. In particular, in 1979, the USSR supplied humanitarian aid worth 134 million US dollars to Kampuchea. Among these goods were 112 thousand tons of food, 130 thousand tons of fuel and 8 million tons of fabrics¹⁴⁴.

In 1980, the USSR had already sent 164 thousand tons of food to the NRK. Cambodian leaders then explicitly admitted that "it was these supplies that prevented

¹⁴² Бектимирова Н.Н. Камбоджа в XXI в.: современные политические процессы. М.: Лар Lambert. 2016. 248 с.

¹⁴³ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. С. 461.

¹⁴⁴ Short Ph. Pol Pot: Anatomy of a Nightmare, New York: Henry Holt and Company. 2004. P. 271.

a large-scale famine"¹⁴⁵. In addition, Soviet specialists participated in the restoration of rubber plantations, the modernization of ports, the construction of roads, bridges and dams.

In parallel with humanitarian aid, the USSR concluded intergovernmental agreements with the NRK, which created a legal framework to strengthen the necessary support and assistance. In this way, agreements were concluded on the restoration of critical infrastructure and the training of specialists. This allowed the NRK to systematically send its personnel to study in the USSR, creating entire professions and its own engineering and technical school from scratch. The acute shortage of qualified specialists was compensated by extensive educational programs for students from Cambodia (more than 500 students from the NRK received a quota to study at Soviet universities).

The USSR helped financially by supplying equipment, building materials, and also sent engineers and doctors. In the short term, "efforts were focused on the reconstruction of the capital's hospital, two universities, the Phnom Penh road network, and telecommunications"¹⁴⁶. In addition, the USSR provided assistance in creating an administrative structure and management system in the state. In 1979, the USSR–Kampuchea Friendship Society was established. This structure included «Soviet political and public figures»¹⁴⁷. This organization actively cooperated with the Association of Kampuchean-Soviet Friendship, contributing to the development of bilateral relations between the two peoples.

The USSR has defined a large-scale investment program in the country's infrastructure. The emphasis was placed on the industrial infrastructure, which fell into disrepair or was destroyed under the rule of the Khmer Rouge, who relied on

¹⁴⁵ Конорева И.А. СССР и страны Индокитая: исследования, документы, библиография / И.А. Конорева, И.Н. Селиванова, Ю.Ф. Коростелев; М-во образования и науки РФ, Федер. агентство по образованию, Курс. гос. ун-т. Курск: Изд-во Курского государственного университета, 2007. С. 45.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. С. 462.

¹⁴⁷ Конорева И.А. СССР и страны Индокитая: исследования, документы, библиография / И.А. Конорева, И.Н. Селиванова, Ю.Ф. Коростелев; М-во образования и науки РФ, Федер. агентство по образованию, Курс. гос. ун-т. Курск: Изд-во Курского государственного университета, 2007. С. 46.

the peasantry and pre-industrial methods of running the national economy. The USSR began systematically rebuilding power plants, a cement factory, grain storage facilities, and port complexes in Kampong Saom and Phnom Penh. The USSR also promoted the development of logistics and transport accessibility. In particular, in 1979-1980. The crew of the Lyubov Orlova helped to establish logistics, unloading cargo from the USSR and other countries. To optimize maritime transportation, two river—sea lighters, the Morskoy—10 and the Morskoy-20, were placed at the disposal of the NRK, which provided communication between key ports¹⁴⁸ (which was vital in conditions of destroyed infrastructure). Soviet specialists were involved in projects to restore rubber plantations, the road network and port infrastructure. Technical assistance extended even to the communications sector, ensuring the country's integration into global telegraphic and telephone networks.

The above examples of international and economic support for the young country by the USSR have yielded results. The authority of the NRK and the stability of the political regime have strengthened. Data on the extent of this support, by the way, "were officially published in the report of the UN Economic and Social Council, which was then distributed as a document of the General Assembly"¹⁴⁹.

An important milestone in the diplomatic cooperation between the USSR and Cambodia was the visit to Moscow of the Chairman of the Central Committee of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea, Heng Samrin, in 1980. In a joint statement concluded after the negotiations, the USSR confirmed the recognition of the Samrin government, supporting its "right to participate in the UN and other international institutions"¹⁵⁰. Following the visit, the parties signed a number of agreements: on the supply of Soviet goods, on cultural and scientific cooperation, as well as on economic and technical assistance in the restoration of infrastructure¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁸ Gottesman, E. Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: Inside the Politics of Nation Building. London: Yale University Press. 2003. P. 201.

¹⁴⁹ Малетин Н.П. Внешняя политика Камбоджи 1953-1998 гг. М.: МГИМО (У). 2004. С. 101.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. С. 115.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. С. 122.

In the following years, the USSR continued to provide humanitarian and technical assistance to the NRK, coordinating it with other States of the socialist bloc and international organizations. After 1982, relations between the USSR and the NRK remained stable and had the character of a strategic partnership. At the same time, they underwent a certain transformation due to a change in the international situation and a change in Moscow's political priorities, which entered the era of perestroika. In the foreign policy of the USSR, cooperation with the countries of Indochina was the same priority, and Moscow sought to expand the dialogue. This was evidenced by a series of visits between high-ranking officials of the ruling parties and state administrations in 1984¹⁵².

Separately, it is worth noting the official visit of the leader of Kampuchea, Heng Samrin, to the USSR. He expressed "gratitude for the large-scale Soviet support and confirmed the course towards strengthening cooperation, both at the level of parties and state institutions"¹⁵³. An important achievement of these negotiations was the creation of a joint intergovernmental commission. This institute was aimed at coordinating trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation.

Kheng Samrin's next visit took place in November 1987, when the Cambodian President met with Mikhail Gorbachev. During the conversation, the steps taken by the People's Republic of China to achieve national reconciliation and stop the civil war within their country, as well as the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, were discussed. Mikhail Gorbachev supported Cambodia's course, expressing "solidarity with the intentions of its leadership to move towards a political settlement"¹⁵⁴. In 1988. The Soviet leadership provided goodwill services and acted as an intermediary between Vietnam, Cambodia and external forces (China and the United States) in order to contribute to the achievement of peace.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union's foreign policy was focused on defusing international tensions. The fruits of this course were an unprecedented improvement

¹⁵² Ibid. С. 120.

¹⁵³ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: ИВ РАН, 2010. С. 204.

¹⁵⁴ Титаренко М.Л. Геополитическое значение Дальнего Востока. Россия, Китай и другие страны Азии. М.: Памятники исторической мысли. 2008. С. 341.

in relations with the United States, with which the USSR actively began to work on limiting strategic offensive weapons, as well as with China, to normalize relations with which the USSR withdrew a contingent from Mongolia, and also began to actively participate in negotiations on the demarcation of the state border. The rapprochement of the USSR with the USA and China led to a more neutral attitude towards partners from among the "third world" states. The USSR began to put pressure on the leadership of the NRK in order to accelerate the process of national reconciliation. At the same time, the USSR increased its economic assistance to the countries of Indochina in order to stabilize the situation in the region and around Cambodia. In addition, the USSR tacitly supported the departure of the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from a harsh Marxist line, which was a compromise within the framework of national reconciliation within the country.

However, it is worth noting that the change in the USSR's policy towards the NRC did not produce visible results, since the country remained in foreign policy isolation, its GDP was one of the lowest in the world, and China and the United States did not seek to support it. For this reason, Cambodia was treated with caution in the region itself: it was not involved in integration processes, and the ASEAN member countries worsened relations with it.

Thus, analyzing the dynamics of the development of Soviet-Cambodian relations, which were closely intertwined with global and regional processes, it is worthwhile to draw a number of conclusions. The first stage (1955-1965) was the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the formation of trust. The USSR, pursuing an active policy towards the countries of the "third world", considered Cambodia as an important partner in the Indochina region. Moscow was characterized by flexibility: support for Sihanouk's neutrality was combined with a cautious desire to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia. During this period, a pattern of Soviet policy emerged — an orientation towards anti-colonial and neutralist regimes as a tool for expanding influence without direct intervention.

The second stage (1965-1978) was marked by the increasing complexity of the foreign policy situation and the growing influence of the Indochina conflict. The

USSR found itself involved in a multi-level game between China, the United States and Vietnam, where Cambodia became an object rather than a subject of international relations. A characteristic feature of this period was the inconsistent and forced maneuvering of Soviet diplomacy between N. Sihanouk, the Lon Nol regime and the forces oriented towards Vietnam. Despite the declarative support for Cambodia's independence, Soviet policy was largely determined by external factors, primarily relations with Hanoi and Beijing.

The third stage (1979-1991) is associated with the existence of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and is characterized by the closest alliance between Moscow and Phnom Penh. The USSR became the main guarantor of the political and economic survival of the new regime, ensuring its international recognition and material support. However, the dependence of the PRC on Vietnam and the USSR simultaneously led to a unilateral foreign orientation and loss of sovereignty, which in the long run limited the effectiveness of the Soviet strategy. Over the course of the 1980s, especially during the era of perestroika, Soviet policy evolved towards pragmatism and the search for compromises, reflecting the general course towards detente and normalization of relations with the West and China.

The analysis of the selected periods makes it possible to identify key patterns of interaction between the USSR and Cambodia: Moscow's steady desire to use relations with Phnom Penh as an element of regional policy in Southeast Asia; the dependence of the degree of Soviet activity on the general state of international relations (primarily on the course of the Vietnam conflict and the Soviet-Chinese contradictions); gradual transition from ideologically motivated support to pragmatic cooperation at the final stage.

In general, Soviet-Cambodian relations are an example of the evolution of the USSR's foreign policy line — from ideological priorities and revolutionary romanticism of the 1950s to realistic diplomacy of the late 1980s, in which Cambodia became not so much an object of confrontation in the context of a bipolar world as a factor of regional stabilization.

1.2. The goals and objectives of the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The end of the multi-year stage of internal conflict and international isolation in 1993, as well as the UN transitional administration, marked the beginning of a period of state stabilization and reintegration into the world community for Cambodia. The relative peace and order that has developed since that time has enabled the Royal Government to focus on key priorities: post-conflict reconstruction and stimulating economic growth. Since the 1990s, the country has demonstrated significant success; The first government, elected under the supervision of the United Nations, initiated the transition to a multiparty system, the fight against poverty and the formation of market-based economic mechanisms. With the assistance of international partners, the Government has adopted the concept of building a prosperous, diversified and socially just society. «Cambodia's strategic targets are to achieve the status of an above-average income State by 2030 and the status of a developed country by 2050»¹⁵⁵.

To achieve these goals, an "open door" policy is being implemented, aimed at the kingdom's comprehensive integration into the regional and global economy. The expectation is that active participation in international cooperation will stimulate the economy, attract foreign investment and reduce poverty. The Kingdom's willingness to deepen regional ties is confirmed by its activities in organizations such as ASEAN, the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

The Government has made significant efforts to implement a large-scale transformation program aimed at strengthening security, stability and civil society, as well as reducing poverty. Prime Minister Hun Sen has repeatedly stressed the critical importance of reforms, saying they are "a matter of life and death" for Cambodia. Despite the positive developments in recent years, the ambitious task of

¹⁵⁵ Excerpts to address of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia on National Development Strategy // Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III of the Royal Government of Cambodia of the Fifth Legislature of the National Assembly. Phnom Penh. September 2013. URL: <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/cam145560.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

building a liberal democracy and a prosperous society has not yet been achieved, as the country continues to face a complex of political, economic, etc. challenges.

Despite impressive macroeconomic growth indicators, due to deep social inequality, a significant part of citizens continue to be in poverty. According to World Bank estimates, «about 40% of the population lives below or in close proximity to the poverty line»¹⁵⁶. «Cambodia remains one of the least developed countries in ASEAN and relies heavily on foreign aid to maintain economic momentum, especially from China and the United States, which are themselves vying for influence in Southeast Asia»¹⁵⁷.

The formation of liberal democratic institutions is fraught with difficulties. Prime Minister Hun Sen has consistently consolidated his power since the landslide victory of his Cambodian People's Party (CPC) in 1998. After the controversial success in the 2013 elections, the NPC retains a dominant position, which, according to analysts, has a deterrent effect on the democratization of the political system. According to expert Carl Thayer, «the dominance of the NPC and the Prime Minister casts doubt on the prospects for both economic reforms and liberal democracy in the country»¹⁵⁸.

Cambodia's strategic interests in foreign policy are determined by three main security factors. The first is related to the internal political confrontation between the ruling NPC and the main opposition force, the National Salvation Party of Cambodia (PNSK). This struggle creates serious obstacles to internal development and the formation of a foreign policy course.

¹⁵⁶ Poverty has fallen, yet many Cambodians are still at risk of slipping back into poverty, new report finds // World Bank Press Release. February 20, 2014. URL: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/02/20/poverty-has-fallen-yet-many-cambodians-are-still-at-risk-of-slipping-back-into-poverty> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁵⁷ Ek C., Sok H. Aid Effectiveness in Cambodia, 'Wolfensohn Center for Development, Working Paper 7 // Brookings Institute. December 2008. URL: http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/12_cambodia_aid_chanboreth/12_cambodia_aid_chanboreth (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁵⁸ Thayer N. Cambodia: misperceptions and peace // The Washington Quarterly. 1991. Т. 14. №. 2. P. 179-191.

The second problem concerns economic security and the need to balance the strategic competition between China and the United States for increasing their influence in the kingdom. This external rivalry has a significant impact on the domestic political and economic situation, given Cambodia's continued high dependence on foreign aid. The key difficulty lies in the fact that Washington and Beijing, being the largest donors, primarily promote their own interests in the Southeast Asian region.

The third problem was the need to resolve a controversial issue that concerned various claims by China and a number of Southeast Asian countries to territorial ownership of the waters and marine facilities in the South China Sea. «This problem is one of the most serious dilemmas for the Kingdom's modern foreign policy»¹⁵⁹.

Cambodia is facing a complex of threats stemming from its geopolitical position, which pose risks to the sovereignty and development prospects of the State. One of the key and long—standing difficulties is the territorial differences with the bordering countries - Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. While the dialogue on border demarcation with Vietnam and Laos is gradually progressing on the basis of bilateral agreements, the conflict with Thailand has become particularly acute and poses a significant danger. It is aggravated by the presence of a marine area with an uncertain status (OCA) in the Gulf of Thailand, where hydrocarbon deposits have been discovered. In 2009 Thailand unilaterally abandoned the implementation of the 2001 Memorandum regulating the issues of joint use of the shelf in the OCA area. «This decision was the result of an escalating land border dispute. For Cambodia, the potential of marine resources remains important: it is expected that their development can bring up to \$1.7 billion annually to the budget»¹⁶⁰. A detailed analysis of this problem is beyond the scope of this paper, but its impact on defense strategy requires a brief review.

¹⁵⁹ Chanborey, C. The South China Sea and ASEAN Unity: A Cambodian Perspective // Cambodian Institute for Strategic Studies. September 5, 2016. 23 p.

¹⁶⁰ Cambodia: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix. IMF Country Report // International Monetary Fund. 2007. URL: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2007/cr07291.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

The period 2014-2016, which could symbolize for Cambodians the 35th anniversary of the end of the Khmer terror era, turned out to be overshadowed by acute internal political contradictions. The parliamentary elections in July 2013 were considered an important stage of democratization, but their results provoked a protracted institutional crisis. The confrontation between the ruling elite and the opposition has paralyzed the work of the Government and revealed continuing challenges to national unity and social peace. The current situation has demonstrated the unwillingness of key political forces to seek consensus in the interests of society. «The contesting of the vote led to an acute confrontation between the Cambodian People's Party (CPC), led by Prime Minister Hun Sen, and the opposition Cambodia National Salvation Party (PNC), led by Sam Rainsy. According to official data, the ruling party won 68 seats against 55 for the opposition»¹⁶¹.

This victory was supposed to extend Hun Sen's continuous stay in power for more than 30 years, providing him with a new five-year mandate. However, the opposition did not recognize the legitimacy of the elections, demanding an independent investigation of numerous violations and fraud. She initiated a boycott of parliamentary activities and attempted to attract the attention of the international community. At the same time, a wave of mass protests swept across the capital, Phnom Penh, which were used as a tool of pressure on the authorities in order to achieve political concessions. The destabilization was intensified by the forceful actions of the authorities in relation to the strikes of thousands of textile industry workers, who demanded an increase in the minimum wage. The apogee of the confrontation «was the use of weapons by the army against demonstrators, as a result of which four people were killed and dozens of protesters were imprisoned»¹⁶².

¹⁶¹ Chheang, V. Hun Sen Stands Firm on Election Results // East Asia Forum. October 4, 2014. P. 2-4.

¹⁶² Valenzuela, R. Cambodian Tensions Escalate Amid Protest Ban // Voice of America. January 08, 2014. URL: <http://www.voanews.com/content/cambodia-tensions-escalate-amid-protest-ban-/1826071.html> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Cambodia's political system is characterized by the monopolization of power and the use of force to suppress instability, which causes mass protests and disillusionment with the ruling regime.

The country's economy is critically dependent on textile and clothing exports, which account for 80% of total exports and 18% of GDP. Internal political confrontation and strikes pose serious economic challenges for the Government¹⁶³.

The political situation is significantly influenced by the world powers. The opposition and the West (USA, EU) criticize the ruling party for violations of democracy and human rights, linking further assistance and investments with the reforms¹⁶⁴. In contrast, China supports the ruling party and advocates continuity of course. Thus, «overcoming the political crisis in Cambodia continues to depend on the influence of these external forces»¹⁶⁵.

Ensuring security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region in the current century is determined by the strategic confrontation between China and the United States for dominance in areas of vital interests. China's pursuit of a strategic partner equivalent to the United States has generated intense competition between the powers. This confrontation has a direct impact on the countries of Southeast Asia, especially Cambodia. The States of the region are forced to develop a complex diplomatic strategy of interaction with both superpowers, striving not only to protect national interests, but also to extract maximum advantages from this rivalry.

Cambodia maintains close partnerships with China, which have been consistently strengthened to the level of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The leaders of both countries describe these relations as brotherly and reliable. At the same time, «Cambodia depends on large-scale foreign aid from donors such as the

¹⁶³ In Cambodia, Political Instability Threatens Economic Prosperity // Stratfor. August 19, 2013. P. 3-4.

¹⁶⁴ Pennington, M. Pressure Grows for US to Cut Aid to Cambodia // Associated Press News. 4 July 2013. URL: <http://news.yahoo.com/pressure-grows-us-cut-aid-cambodia-055818662.html> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁶⁵ No End in Sight as Cambodian Political Crisis Deepen // Radio Free Asia. May 31, 2016. P. 3-5.

United States, Japan, and Australia, with the United States being the country's key export market and investor»¹⁶⁶.

This state of affairs puts Cambodia in a difficult situation, forcing it to balance between two major Powers. The approaches of the United States and China to cooperation are fundamentally different. China focuses on infrastructure projects and provides assistance without political conditions, which, however, is sometimes associated with the risks of corruption. The United States, on the contrary, directs aid through non-governmental organizations, focusing on the development of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and makes the provision of funds strictly dependent on the fulfillment of these conditions. A striking example was the suspension of American aid after the domestic political crisis in Cambodia in 1997. Thus, the rivalry between the United States and China creates both development opportunities for Cambodia and challenges that require careful foreign policy maneuvering.

Unlike Western powers, China's foreign policy adheres to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Financial and economic support is provided by Beijing without making mandatory demands regarding democratic reforms, respect for human rights or environmental standards¹⁶⁷. China has consistently refrained from criticizing Cambodia's domestic policies, including election and human rights issues. A typical example is the reaction to the events of July 1997, when the international community, led by the United States, condemned Hun Sen's forceful consolidation of power, while «China allowed the domestic political process to develop independently»¹⁶⁸.

This position is approved by the Cambodian leadership, which regards it as a manifestation of respect for national sovereignty. However, analysts point to the

¹⁶⁶ Var, V. China's Influence in Cambodia // Khmer Times. June 29, 2016. 7 p.

¹⁶⁷ Long, K. Cambodia- China Relations // Cambodia Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP). Working Paper. 2009. No. 28. 28 p.

¹⁶⁸ China-built dam in Cambodia set to destroy livelihoods of 45,000 // South China Morning Post. September 20, 2015. URL: <http://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/article/1858974/china-built-dam-cambodia-set-destroy-livelihoods-45000> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

potential risks of such an approach for ordinary citizens, peasants and workers, since the lack of external control can contribute to strengthening authoritarian tendencies and eventually lead to social destabilization.

Critics also point to the lack of transparency of Chinese aid programs and the lack of standardized procedures for their implementation. In the conditions of the Cambodian system, where the mechanisms of state accountability are insufficiently developed, there is a possibility of misuse of resources and corruption schemes, when financial flows can be redirected in the interests of the ruling elite. Thus, «Chinese aid, without formally influencing domestic policy, can have an indirect impact — both positive, provided resources are distributed fairly, and negative, increasing social inequality»¹⁶⁹.

Despite the fact that China holds a leading position among Cambodia's donors and investors, its participation is primarily driven by pragmatic economic interests and strategic objectives in Southeast Asia. «Beijing's economic strategy is aimed at ensuring stable supplies of natural resources, including timber, energy, rubber, minerals and agricultural land. Financial support helps strengthen partnerships and guarantees China access to key raw material assets»¹⁷⁰.

In exchange for its "unconditional" assistance, China expects political loyalty from Cambodia, primarily support for the "One China" policy. Cambodia has consistently demonstrated it: in the late 1990s, it closed the Taiwan representative office, rejecting millions of investments, and in 2012, as chairman of ASEAN, «it blocked the joint communique on the South China Sea in favor of Beijing's interests. This caused distrust of Cambodia from other countries in the region»¹⁷¹.

The United States, in turn, is struggling to balance China's growing influence through initiatives such as the Lower Mekong (L.M.I.), due to disagreements over human rights issues. Relations remain tense: Washington directly links the

¹⁶⁹ Ciorciari, J.D. China and Cambodia: Patron and Client // International Policy Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy University of Michigan. 2013. No. 121. P. 11-17.

¹⁷⁰ Burgos, S., Ear, S. China's Strategic Interests in Cambodia: Influence and Resources // Asian Survey 50. 2010. No. P. 600-620.

¹⁷¹ Cheng-Hin Lim, A. Sino-Cambodian Relations: Recent Economic and Military Cooperation // Eurasia Review. 2015. P. 10-14.

development of bilateral ties with democratic reforms. This became clear during Leon Panetta's visit in 2012 and Barack Obama's talks with Hun Sen, where «the American side explicitly stated that the lack of progress in the field of human rights was the main obstacle to deepening relations»¹⁷².

The Cambodian leadership faces a difficult diplomatic task related to the choice between two fundamentally different models of international cooperation. On the one hand, there is the Chinese approach, characterized by large-scale investments in infrastructure without political conditions, but raising questions about environmental and social impacts. On the other hand, there is the American strategy aimed at creating sustainable democratic institutions through improved governance, protection of human rights and political freedoms. Both options have significant advantages and serious limitations at the same time.

The Government of Cambodia highly values the principle of non-interference, which China adheres to, perceiving it as respect for national sovereignty. However, this position creates an opportunity for strategic maneuver: when international organizations increase pressure on issues of human rights, anti-corruption or democratic standards, Cambodia may turn to Chinese support. As researcher Sofal Ear notes in her work "How Foreign Aid Undermines Democracy," this pattern emerged in 2011, when, «after the suspension of funding by the World Bank due to large-scale forced evictions in the Lake Bueng Kak area, the authorities promptly received alternative financing from China»¹⁷³.

Although foreign investment objectively contributes to economic development, the lack of transparency of Chinese projects is a serious concern. The activities of Chinese companies are often focused on obtaining their own benefits without due consideration of long-term environmental and social consequences. For example, «the construction of hydroelectric power plants in the Mekong River basin,

¹⁷² Todd, W.E. The US-Cambodia Relationship: A Work in Progress // The Ambassadors Review. Spring 2013. № 6. URL: <http://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/23086/uploads> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁷³ Ear, S. Aid Dependence in Cambodia: How Foreign Assistance Undermines Democracy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. P. 29-30.

carried out with the participation of China, has a significant impact on the hydrological regime on which the existence of local communities depends»¹⁷⁴.

American assistance is also making a significant contribution to Cambodia's development, especially in the field of democratic governance. Since the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1993, the United States has focused on supporting democratic institutions, the rule of law, human rights protection, and judicial processes against the Khmer Rouge regime. In an emerging Cambodian democracy, American programs play an important role in strengthening civil society, governance transparency, and political accountability. However, the harsh conditions accompanying American aid periodically create tension in bilateral relations.

Having no territorial claims of its own in the South China Sea, Cambodia nevertheless found itself at the center of this regional dispute. «The problem has become a serious foreign policy dilemma for the country, as it is accused of lobbying China's interests within ASEAN to the detriment of the unity of the organization»¹⁷⁵.

This was most clearly demonstrated in 2012, when Cambodia, as the ASEAN chairman, blocked the adoption of a joint communique following a ministerial meeting, an unprecedented event in the history of the bloc. This was seen as a concession to China, Cambodia's largest investor and donor, which gave rise to the label of a "client state." A similar situation occurred in 2016, when «Cambodia refused to support the arbitration court's decision on the Philippines' lawsuit against China»¹⁷⁶.

Phnom Penh's official position is one of neutrality: it calls for the implementation of existing agreements, the early creation of a Code of Conduct and the resolution of disputes on a bilateral basis. However, «critics regard this position

¹⁷⁴ Piesse, M. Livelihoods and Food Security on the Mekong River // Future Directions International, Strategic Analysis Paper. May 26, 2016. № 6. URL: <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Livelihoods-and-Food-Security-on-the-Mekong-River.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁷⁵ South China Sea Dispute John Kerry says US will not Accept Restrictions on Movement in the Sea // ABC News, August 7, 2015. P. 10-14.

¹⁷⁶ Ciorciari, J.D. China and Cambodia: Patron and Client? // International Policy Center Working Paper No. 121, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, June 14, 2013. 28 p.

as de facto support for Beijing's line, which prefers to avoid multilateral negotiations»¹⁷⁷. Cambodia's economic dependence on China, supported by generous financial assistance, calls into question its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy and forces it to run counter to the interests of other ASEAN members.

If we use the terminology of representatives of the theory of "small powers", it can be noted that Cambodia's foreign policy strategy in the 2010s and 2020s was characterized by a dynamic transition from a strategy of "strategic hedging" to a strategy of "balancing-bandwagoning"¹⁷⁸ – targeting China. At an early stage of the period under review, Cambodia sought a balanced policy between the United States and China, guided by the principle of maximizing benefits and minimizing risks. As part of the hedge, Hun Sen's government tried to take advantage of cooperation with both centers of power: receiving economic and infrastructural support from China, simultaneously developing trade and military cooperation with the United States, and also supported participation in multilateral initiatives — the Chinese Lancang-Mekong and the American Lower Mekong initiatives. Such a dual policy allowed Cambodia to strengthen its economy, maintain political legitimacy, and maintain room for maneuver in the face of escalating great Power rivalry.

The six principles of foreign policy enshrined in article 53 of the Cambodian Constitution should be considered in the same vein¹⁷⁹. The document, as one can understand, fixes a rather rigid system of restrictions and obligations. Firstly (and this is perhaps the most important thing), the country strictly adheres to the course of permanent neutrality and non-alignment. Secondly, a policy of peaceful coexistence is being proclaimed, not only with neighbors, but also with all other States. The third principle, please note, is no longer declarative, but purely instrumental in nature: Cambodia undertakes not to invade other countries, not to

¹⁷⁷ Chanborey, C. The South China Sea and ASEAN Unity: A Cambodian Perspective // Cambodian Institute for Strategic Studies. September 5, 2016. 30 p.

¹⁷⁸ Doung C., Kang W., Kim J. Cambodia's foreign policy choice during 2010 to 2020: from strategic hedging to bandwagoning // The Korean Journal of International Studies. 2022. Vol. 20. №. 1. P. 55-88.

¹⁷⁹ Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia 1993 (rev. 2008). URL: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cambodia_2008 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

interfere in their internal affairs and resolve any disputes exclusively by peaceful means.

This is followed by provisions that can be called "prohibitive". Fourth, it is forbidden to conclude any military alliances or pacts incompatible with the policy of neutrality. The fifth, to a certain extent, develops the same logic — the presence of foreign military bases on the territory of Cambodia is not allowed, as well as the deployment of their own bases abroad (an exception, however, is made for UN peacekeeping missions). Finally, the sixth principle introduces an important caveat: a country reserves the right to receive foreign military assistance and train its armed forces — for self-defense purposes, of course. This latter position, we note in parentheses, often comes into conflict with the idea of absolute neutrality, but it is precisely this flexibility that allows Phnom Penh to maintain a balance in practice.

The document "Directions of the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Cambodia", published in 2021 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia¹⁸⁰, noted that Cambodia's foreign policy is aimed at protecting and promoting national interests through the implementation of five key objectives:

1. Strengthening sovereignty and protecting national interests

Cambodia is determined to defend its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutrality, ensuring peace, stability and social harmony. The country will independently determine its domestic and foreign policy course in the fields of politics, economy, trade, investment, and especially in the field of national security and defense. This course is based on the principles of permanent neutrality, non-alignment, peaceful coexistence with all countries of the world, as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes and mutual benefit.

Cambodia reserves the right to act in the most appropriate manner to protect its territorial integrity and key national interests in accordance with the Constitution.

¹⁸⁰ Cambodia's Foreign Policy Direction // Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. 2021. URL: <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/page/2021-02-08-Cambodia-s-Foreign-Policy-Direction> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

In addition, the country will make every effort to protect the rights and interests of its citizens abroad, cooperate with the authorities of other countries in solving the problems of Cambodian migrant workers and provide them with the necessary support.

2. Deepening international cooperation and friendly relations

Cambodia will continue to strengthen existing friendly relations, cooperation and partnerships with other States, restore ties with long-standing partners and build relationships with new ones, especially with the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

The country also intends to contribute to the development of the people-centred ASEAN community, to preserve and strengthen the unity and central role of this organization. Through ASEAN, Cambodia will promote the development of relations with external partners for socio-economic growth, guided by the principles of consensus in decision-making and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

3. Focus on economic diplomacy

To achieve the Government's goal of making Cambodia an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050, the focus in foreign policy is shifting from traditional diplomacy to economic, cultural and tourism diplomacy. This will help attract foreign investment, diversify its sources, expand export markets for Cambodian goods, attract tourists and promote the national culture in the world.

Cambodia will continue its policy of economic liberalization, open trade and globalization, as well as promote the development of multilateral trade within the WTO. In this vein, the country has already made a constructive contribution to the conclusion of the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (CEP) and will continue negotiations on free trade agreements with other actors such as the Republic of Korea and the Eurasian Economic Union.

4. Support for multilateralism and global initiatives

Cambodia advocates a multilateral approach to solving global problems and actively participates in international efforts to counter threats to peace, security, the international rules-based order, and sustainable development. The country will continue to contribute to peacekeeping by sending its military personnel to participate in UN peacekeeping missions, professionally carrying out humanitarian operations, strictly observing international law and building good relations with the local population.

Cambodia welcomes and supports all regional initiatives that promote peace, stability and prosperity, which are based on mutual benefit and complement each other. In this regard, it is extremely important to ensure synergy and complementarity between key regional projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the policies of major regional Powers towards Southeast Asia, as well as various mechanisms within the framework of sub-regional cooperation in the Mekong River region.

5. Improving the professionalism of diplomatic staff

The priority task is to carry out internal reforms to create a professional, patriotic, active and competent diplomatic corps.

To protect Cambodia's key interests, it is essential to invest in human capital development and professional development, including through the establishment and strengthening of the role of the National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations (NIDMO).

In this context, Cambodia welcomes the continued support and fruitful cooperation from all foreign partners in the field of human resource development, whether in the form of scholarships, study trips, exchange of experiences, training courses or exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Thus, the modern foreign policy of the Kingdom of Cambodia is a complex combination of the desire for independence, neutrality and the need to adapt to a changing regional and global environment. After decades of internal instability and international isolation, the country has set a course aimed at ensuring national sovereignty, socio-economic development and strengthening its position in the

international arena. The main priorities include maintaining internal political stability, protecting territorial integrity, developing economic diplomacy, and deepening cooperation within ASEAN and intergovernmental organizations.

Participation in international organizations allows Cambodia to actively communicate its position on a number of issues to the world community, thereby strengthening its credibility and attracting FDI. At the same time, Cambodia's participation in international organizations is consistent with its model of "middle Power" diplomacy. As she works within organizations, she successfully balances relations with the United States and China, benefiting from cooperation with both powers. At the same time, such dependence on external assistance creates a strategic vulnerability that requires careful maneuvering between large centers of power.

In general, Cambodia's foreign policy is focused on strengthening sovereignty, developing the economy and increasing the international prestige of the State while maintaining the principles of neutrality, non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. The implementation of these tasks will allow the country not only to strengthen its internal stability, but also to establish itself as a responsible and constructive state in the system of international relations in Southeast Asia.

1.3. Southeast Asia as a vector of Russia's Foreign Policy

After the collapse of the USSR, the focus of the Russian Federation shifted from various regions of the world to the post-Soviet space. The most important priority was the restoration of economic and production chains, ensuring stability and prosperity in the immediate borders. In this situation, Russia could not pay the same attention to its active foreign policy in the Southeast Asian region, as well as cooperation with Cambodia. This partnership allowed Moscow to influence the architecture of regional security and promote national interests in the context of ideological confrontation with the West. With the end of the cold war, the importance of the region for Russia has sharply decreased, and it has ceased to be considered as

a zone of primary interests, which explains the relatively low intensity of interaction with Southeast Asian countries compared with other states in the Asia-Pacific region.

Based on the analysis of the concepts of Russia's foreign policy, there is a gradual and consistent evolution in the perception and practical role of Southeast Asia in the system of the country's foreign policy priorities. Cambodia is not mentioned as a separate partner, but it is considered part of the region and ASEAN.

In the 1993 Concept, Southeast Asia is referred to in the general context of the Asia-Pacific region. The document captures the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region as a new center of world politics and economics, the acquisition of positions in which should contribute to internal reforms. The potential for cooperation with ASEAN countries and the need to rebuild relations with traditional partners such as Vietnam on a new basis are noted. However, in general, the region has not yet been identified as an independent priority area; the emphasis is on the general "integration" of Russia into regional processes and «overcoming the perception of it as an exclusively European power»¹⁸¹.

The 2000 concept demonstrates a significant increase in attention to the region. Russia's participation in key Asia-Pacific integration structures, including the ASEAN Regional Security Forum, is explicitly stated as one of the objectives. This is due to the overall strategy of strengthening Russia's role in Asia, the proclamation of a course towards a multipolar world, and the pragmatic desire to use the region's economic dynamism to develop Siberia and the Far East. Southeast Asia is beginning to be seen as an important platform for multilateral diplomacy and partnership¹⁸².

In the 2008 Concept, the role of Southeast Asia is further consolidated and specified. Participation in dialogue mechanisms with ASEAN is considered an integral part of foreign policy. The region was considered not only in terms of

¹⁸¹ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 1993 г./ Внешняя политика и безопасность современной России. 1991–2002. Хрестоматия в четырех томах / Ред.-состав. Т.А. Шаклеина. Т. IV. Документы.–М.: Московский государственный институт международных отношений (У) МИД России, Российская ассоциация международных исследований, АНО «ИНО-Центр (Информация. Наука. Образование)», 2002. С.19–50.

¹⁸² Концепция внешней политики 2000 г. (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 28 июня 2000 г.). Режим доступа: http://www.ng.ru/world/2000-07-11/1_concept.html (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

possible economic benefits from increasing its policy in it, but rather as a space that needs to be protected from the challenges of non-traditional security that threaten international trade and supply chains¹⁸³. Terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, and regional instability are among the challenges. Thus, by 2008, Southeast Asia had established itself as an important vector of Russia's foreign policy, which was returning to the ambitions of the USSR, considering itself as a security provider, occupying its niche in global positioning. In addition, this course also testified to the increased potential of the Asia-Pacific region in world politics and economics. This potential required the collective participation of different countries in maintaining stability and peace.

In the system of foreign policy priorities approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated May 7, 2012 No. 605, the Asia-Pacific region occupied only the fifth place, even inferior to cooperation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of all the Southeast Asian countries, only Vietnam was identified as a promising strategic partner¹⁸⁴.

The content of the document indicates that the interest in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Southeast Asian countries, was determined mainly by economic considerations. The region was considered as a potential catalyst for the development of the Far East and Eastern Siberia. Participation in the formation of a new security architecture based on non-aligned principles and international law seemed to be a secondary task subordinated to the goals of economic expansion¹⁸⁵.

For a long time, Russian policy in Southeast Asia was characterized by the absence of a systemic strategy and was implemented mainly through limited bilateral cooperation. An attempt at a qualitative breakthrough was made only in 2016 during

¹⁸³ Концепция внешней политики 2008 г. (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации Д.А.Медведевым 15 июля 2008 г.). Режим доступа: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁸⁴ Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 7 мая 2012 г. N 605 «О мерах по реализации внешнеполитического курса Российской Федерации» // Российская газета. 9 мая 2012 // <https://rg.ru/2012/05/09/vn-polit-dok.html> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁸⁵ Канаев Е.А., Королев А.С. Большая Евразия, Индо-Тихоокеанский регион и отношения России с АСЕАН // Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право. 2019. Т. 12. № 1. С. 26-43.

the Russia-ASEAN summit in Sochi, where a declaration on strategic partnership was adopted and a comprehensive cooperation plan for 2016-2020 was approved¹⁸⁶. However, there was no significant improvement in relations, as the region remained on the periphery of Moscow's foreign policy interests.

In the last two years, there have been certain changes in the Russian position. The overestimation of the importance of the ASEAN forum, which was previously viewed as a platform dominated by the United States and China and therefore unsuitable for promoting Russian interests, unlike BRICS or the SCO, was indicative.

The formation of Russia's new approaches to the Southeast Asian countries is due to several factors. The task of diversifying foreign policy in the context of the crisis in relations with the West requires attracting new partners. The Southeast Asian countries «can become an additional pillar for Russia in the Asia-Pacific region and help reduce its growing dependence on China, an inevitable consequence of the unbalanced implementation of the "pivot to Asia" policy»¹⁸⁷.

The Russian leadership is aware that in the current situation it is forced to agree to not always favorable terms when concluding economic agreements with China. According to experts, «Moscow is afraid of becoming Beijing's junior partner and, in order to strengthen its negotiating positions, must demonstrate the availability of alternative opportunities in Asia, primarily in Southeast Asia»¹⁸⁸.

The strategic importance of the Southeast Asian region for Russia has increased again for a number of key reasons. The countries of this region are in dynamic economic development. These countries have a fairly large market with

¹⁸⁶ Comprehensive Plan of Action to Promote Cooperation Between The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and The Russian Federation (2016-2020) // ASEAN. May 21, 2016. URL: <https://asean.org/comprehensive-plan-of-action-to-promote-cooperation-between-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations-and-the-russian-federation-2016-2020/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁸⁷ Storey I. What Russia's "Turn to the East" Means for Southeast Asia // ISEAS Perspective. No 67. December 3, 2015. URL: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2015_67.pdf (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁸⁸ Brown J. Moscow's 'Look East' Policies Could Add Muscle to Southeast Asia // Nikkei Asian Review, June 8, 2017. URL: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Moscow-s-look-east-policies-could-add-muscle-to-Southeast-Asia2> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

more than 640 million people. By the middle of the 21st century, the Southeast Asian region may become the fourth largest economy in the world. In addition, there are prospects for these countries to join Russian integration initiatives. The geopolitical aspect is conditioned by the possibility of participating in the formation of a regional security architecture, the principles of which correspond to Moscow's strategic interests.

At a meeting of the ASEAN and Partner Countries (CMOA+) Defense ministers in 2017, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu formulated the key principles of interstate cooperation: non-aligned character, equality, indivisibility of security, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful conflict resolution and respect for international law¹⁸⁹. These provisions «coincide with the approach of the Southeast Asian countries to building regional security»¹⁹⁰.

A unique feature of Southeast Asia is the presence of an effective institutional structure - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This opens up a window of opportunity for Russia to participate in the regional security dialogue, as well as to develop cooperation with ASEAN partner States. «The Association itself positions itself as a source of normative principles binding on all regional powers»¹⁹¹.

Russia recognizes the importance of these negotiation platforms for advancing national interests and strengthening international prestige. An example is the demonstration of successes in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East at the CMOA+ and ARF forums. Such tactics allow Moscow «not only to demonstrate the effectiveness of its anti-terrorist operations and weapons, but also to increase

¹⁸⁹ Молчанов В. Сообща против новых угроз // Красная звезда. 24 октября 2017. URL: <http://archive.redstar.ru/index.php/siriya/item/34896-soobshcha-protiv-novykh-ugroz> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁹⁰ Михеев В.В., Швыдко В.Г. (ред.) Транстихоокеанская безопасность: иерархия силы и ответственности. М: ИМЭМО РАН. 2016. 241 с.

¹⁹¹ Рогожин А.А., Рогожина Н.Г. Юго-Восточная Азия в приоритетах российской политики «поворота к Азии» // Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право. 2019. Т. 12. № 1. С. 185–203.

confidence from Southeast Asian countries facing the threat of Islamic radicalism, which stimulates their interest in deepening military cooperation»¹⁹².

According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, countering cybercrime and eliminating the consequences of natural disasters are also promising areas of cooperation¹⁹³.

Moscow considers the deepening of diplomatic and military-political ties with the Southeast Asian countries as a necessary condition for full-fledged participation in the formation of the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. In order to strengthen its position in the region dominated by China and the United States, Russia needs to create a solid foundation for expanding cooperation both within ASEAN and on a bilateral basis. The level of Russia's authority among the Southeast Asian states directly affects its perception as a great power in the international arena.

Until the 2010s, Russia maintained comprehensive relations mainly with Vietnam¹⁹⁴. Political changes in these countries have contributed to the expansion of cooperation with other countries in the region. After the military coup in Thailand in May 2014, relations with the United States deteriorated, which was especially evident in the military sphere after Washington imposed a moratorium on arms supplies. This prompted the Thai leadership to look for alternative partners, including Russia. In May 2016, «during the visit of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha to Russia, an agreement on military cooperation was signed between the Ministries of Defense of the two countries»¹⁹⁵.

A similar dynamic was observed in the case of the Philippines, another key U.S. ally in the region. President Rodrigo Duterte, who was elected in 2016, faced

¹⁹² Стрельцов Д.В. (ред.) Россия и страны Востока в постбиполярный период. М.: Аспект Пресс. 2014. 304 с.

¹⁹³ Выступление и ответы на вопросы СМИ Министра иностранных дел России С.В. Лаврова в ходе пресс-конференции по итогам Совещания министров иностранных дел Россия – АСЕАН, Сингапур // Министерство иностранных дел РФ. 2 августа 2018. URL: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3313736 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁹⁴ Лузянин С.Г. Восточная политика Владимира Путина. М.: Восток-Запад, АСТ. 2007. 328 с.

¹⁹⁵ Рогожина Н.Г. Визит тайландского премьер-министра в Россию – что дальше? // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. Выпуск 31. С. 42–52.

harsh international criticism, especially from Washington, for his methods of combating drug crime, which were regarded as human rights violations. In response, «the United States suspended the transfer of small arms to the Philippine police and froze financial assistance in the amount of 434 million dollars»¹⁹⁶. Under these conditions, Manila signed an agreement on military-technical cooperation with the Russian Federation.

The countries of Southeast Asia, which had fallen out of favor with the West, began to actively look for alternative partners in the military sphere. Russia has become one of these partners because it adheres to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and does not impose political conditions related to democratic standards or human rights. The Moscow approach «makes it possible to maintain even relations with both authoritarian and democratic regimes, without focusing on sensitive issues of their domestic politics»¹⁹⁷.

Russia's observance of the principle of sovereign equality gives it certain advantages over Western states, which often use political pressure. The perception of Russia in many countries of the region continues to be based on its historical image as an alternative center of influence to the West. The Russian position is particularly attractive for small states seeking to create a balanced security architecture and experiencing discomfort from excessive US guardianship. Their perception is also «influenced by China's expansionist policies, while Russia is not seen as a source of threat»¹⁹⁸.

For the countries of Southeast Asia, an active Russian presence will prevent the establishment of the hegemony of any one great power in the region. The states of Southeast Asia are interested in Russia realizing itself as a full-fledged great

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Arms and Aid to the Philippines // Forum Arms Trade. 2016. URL: <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/resource-page---us-philippines1.html> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁹⁷ Le Hong Hiep. Defence Cooperation Underpins Vietnam-Russia Push for Renewed Economic Cooperation // East Asia Forum. November 13, 2013. URL: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/11/13/defence-cooperation-underpinsvietnam-russia-push-for-renewed-economic-cooperation/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

¹⁹⁸ Martynova E.S. Strengthening of Cooperation Between Russia and ASEAN: Rhetoric or Reality? // Asian Politics & Policy, 2011. Vol. 6. No 3, P. 397–412.

power to maintain a multipolar international order. Moscow, in turn, is interested in preserving ASEAN as an independent entity in order to maintain stability in the region and polycentricity in the global system. This status of the organization allows Russia to freely develop trade and economic ties without the risks associated with a change in the foreign policy of the countries of the region or their involvement in military alliances.

The question remains whether Russia is capable of becoming a real "counterweight" in the rivalry between the United States and China for influence in Southeast Asia and whether it is ready to assume such a role.

Russia's position as an independent political actor in the region is strengthening against the backdrop of a changing foreign policy environment. The uncertainty of the US policy towards the Southeast Asian countries after the arrival of the Trump administration and Washington's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership has caused fears in the region about the strengthening of Chinese influence and a possible imbalance of power. The deepening trade and economic confrontation between the two powers is further destabilizing the already fragile security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

The intensification of the US-Chinese rivalry in the economic and strategic spheres creates serious problems for the Southeast Asian states, which historically adhere to the policy of equidistance. As Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsiang Loong noted at the ASEAN summit in November 2018, the countries of the region may have to choose between Washington and Beijing. A dangerous situation arises when "external challenges distort the concept of ASEAN centrality and undermine the unity of the bloc"¹⁹⁹.

These concerns explain the restrained reaction of the countries of the region to the American initiative to create an "Indo-Pacific region" aimed at forming a new security system in Asia. On the one hand, they are attracted by the proclaimed

¹⁹⁹ Tobin M. ASEAN in Singapore, APEC in Papua New Guinea: All You Need to Know about Asia's Summit Season // South China Morning Post, February 16, 2018. URL: <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2172832/asean-singapore-apec-papua-new-guinea-all-you-need-know> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

principles of openness, cooperation and equality, on the other hand, they seek to avoid involvement in the confrontation of great powers and preserve their special role in the regional architecture.

Although officially the strategy of the "free and open Indo-Pacific region" presupposes respect for sovereignty, the rule of law and the principles of free trade, in fact it is aimed at redistributing influence in the region and has a pronounced anti-Chinese orientation. Its main task is to counter the implementation of China's large-scale "One Belt, One Road" and "Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century" projects through the creation of new allied structures.

While the Indo-Pacific Strategy remains largely a conceptual project, the Chinese Belt and Road initiative is already being actively implemented. The participation of Southeast Asian countries in it significantly strengthens Beijing's influence, which causes their ambivalent reaction - from interest in investments to concerns about threats to national security.

In the new geopolitical reality, the ASEAN countries found themselves forced to balance between the great powers. The great Powers, in turn, sought to enlist their support through economic aid and various projects. This awareness reinforces the region's traditional pragmatism in protecting national interests and upholding its own central role in the Asia-Pacific region.

Russia has the opportunity to use this situation to advance its strategic interests. According to Western analysts, Russian diplomacy in the region combines criticism of the "provocative policy" of the United States in the South China Sea with restrained opposition to Chinese dominance. «The establishment of Chinese hegemony would limit Russia's own room for maneuver and could lead to large-scale destabilization in the event of an escalation of the US-Chinese confrontation»²⁰⁰.

²⁰⁰ Brown J. How Moscow's 'Look East' Policy Can Help Southeast Asia // Nikkei Asian Review. June 22, 2017. URL: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/James-D.J.-Brown-How-Moscow-s-look-east-policy-can-help-Southeast-Asia> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

According to Western estimates, «between 2010 and 2016, the volume of Russian arms supplies to Southeast Asian countries doubled, reaching \$5 billion and accounting for 15% of total Russian arms exports. For comparison, a decade earlier this figure did not exceed 6.2%»²⁰¹. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), «Southeast Asia has become a key market for Russian defense products»²⁰². In particular, «in 2000-2016, Russia accounted for 80% of Vietnamese, 60% of Myanmar, and 80% of Lao arms purchases»²⁰³.

The year 2018 was marked by a qualitative breakthrough in military-technical cooperation with the countries of the region. Arms supplies to Laos have increased, and agreements have been reached on training Lao military personnel in Russian educational institutions. Contracts worth «over \$4.5 billion have been signed with Vietnam, which also provide for joint exercises»²⁰⁴. The Philippines has expressed its willingness to purchase Russian weapons, ignoring the threat of sanctions from the United States, and Myanmar has provided Russia with access to its military ports.

The Southeast Asian countries' interest in Russian weapons is primarily due to concern about terrorist threats, but the Chinese factor cannot be discounted, given the ongoing tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Russia has traditionally taken a neutral position on this issue, but the practice of supplying weapons to all parties to the conflict creates certain diplomatic difficulties and puts Moscow in a delicate position.

²⁰¹ Abbey M. Russia Finds Ready Friends in a Southeast Asia Battling Terrorism // South China Morning Post, July 20, 2018. URL: <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2106361/russia-finds-ready-friends-southeast-asia-battling-terrorism> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁰² Jun Suzuki, Tomoyo Ogawa. Russia Draws Closer to Southeast Asia with Arms and Energy Trade // Nikkei Asian Review, November 14, 2018. URL: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Russia-draws-closer-to-Southeast-Asia-with-arms-and-energy-trade> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁰³ Putin Uses Arms Sales to ASEAN to Increase Russian Standing in Southeast Asia // ASEAN Today, March 14, 2018. URL: <https://www.aseantoday.com/2018/03/putin-uses-arms-sales-to-asean-to-increase-russian-standing-in-southeast-asia/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁰⁴ Гореславский С.С. Современный рынок вооружений стран Юго-Восточной Азии: вектор развития и новые возможности для России //Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития. 2020. Т. 3. №. 4 (49). С. 20-33.

This problem has clearly manifested itself in cooperation with Indonesia, the largest and most influential country in the region, with which Russia seeks to establish a strategic partnership. Plans to achieve an appropriate level of relations during the meeting of the Presidents of the Russian Federation and Indonesia in November 2018 were not implemented. According to expert A. Tsvetov, «the difficulties in developing cooperation with Indonesia are related to the perception of Russia as an ally of China»²⁰⁵. Given the growing anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesian society, such an association undermines Moscow's credibility. Thus, the strengthening of Russia's position in Southeast Asia will largely depend on its ability to demonstrate political distance from Beijing, which creates additional challenges for Russian diplomacy, which will have to balance the interests of various parties in implementing its foreign policy course.

The threat of US sanctions against regional partners acquiring Russian weapons is hindering the development of military-technical cooperation between Russia and the Southeast Asian countries.

Neither the United States nor China is interested in strengthening Russian influence in the region. In the context of current US-China relations, Washington is inclined to regard any actions by Moscow in Southeast Asia as contributing to Beijing's expansion. This is confirmed by joint Russian-Chinese exercises, Moscow's support for China's position on the Hague court's decision on the South China Sea (2016), as well as the supply of Russian weapons to China. For its part, Beijing, which considers Southeast Asia to be a zone of its exclusive influence, is also wary of strengthening Russia's position in the region.

In general, neither the United States nor China consider Russia to be a serious competitor capable of significantly influencing the balance of power and the security architecture in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Moscow's presence in the region is of demonstrative importance for both powers. President Putin's participation in the ASEAN summit probably pursued precisely this goal.

²⁰⁵ Tsvetov A. After Crimea: Southeast Asia in Russia's foreign policy narrative // Contemporary Southeast Asia. 2016. P. 55-80.

By pursuing its policy in Southeast Asia, Russia does not seek regional leadership, realizing the limitations of its economic and political resources. «Local experts doubt Moscow's willingness to invest significant funds to really strengthen its position»²⁰⁶. Therefore, in their search for a guarantor of stability, the Southeast Asian countries are unlikely to rely solely on Russia, given the presence of other influential players in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Japan, South Korea and India.

The Greater Eurasian Partnership Initiative proposed by Vladimir Putin is an attempt to create a common economic space from the EU to ASEAN. Although «this ambitious geo-economic project could potentially strengthen Russia's political influence in Southeast Asia, it was met with restraint by the countries of the region»²⁰⁷. The idea of integrating various formats (BRICS, EAEU, SCO, ASEAN) remains theoretical, not economically developed, and is perceived as potentially risky for ASEAN, which seeks to maintain its central and independent role.

The commonality of strategic approaches and diplomatic language served as a key resource in the development of Russian-Asean relations. This foundation helped to strengthen cooperation and eventually allowed us to bring it to the level of a strategic partnership. «ASEAN has shown restraint by refraining from public criticism on issues sensitive to Moscow, including the Ukrainian crisis and deteriorating relations with the West»²⁰⁸. For its part, Russia has consistently followed a similar line with regard to the domestic political crises in Southeast Asia - the situation in Myanmar, the coups in Thailand, and the political instability in Malaysia and Cambodia²⁰⁹. Of particular importance was Moscow's position on territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where Russia remained neutral despite

²⁰⁶ Cheang C. Russia Looks Further East // East Asia Forum. November 23, 2018. URL: <https://eastasiaforum.org/2018/11/23/russia-looks-further-east/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁰⁷ Jonathan E. Russia's Asean Moves Part of Putin's Power Play // The Straits Times, August 14, 2017. URL: <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/russias-asean-moves-part-of-putins-power-play> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁰⁸ Tsvetov A. After Crimea: Southeast Asia in Russia's foreign policy narrative // Contemporary Southeast Asia. 2016. P. 55-80.

²⁰⁹ Рогожин А.А., Рогожина Н.Г. Юго-Восточная Азия в приоритетах российской политики «поворота к Азии» // Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право. 2019. Т. 12. № 1. С. 185-203.

the contradictions between its two key partners in the Asia-Pacific region, China and Vietnam.

However, it was not always possible to maintain distance. «Joint Russian-Chinese naval exercises in the South China Sea in 2016 provoked a negative reaction from Vietnam and other parties to the dispute. Nevertheless, in general, Russia's presence in the region is not perceived as a threat to the interests of the conflicting parties»²¹⁰.

The sharp escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in February 2022 created fundamentally new conditions for the Russian-Asean partnership, posing serious strategic and economic challenges. The start of a special military operation has become a test for strategic partnership, which, logically, involves, if not support, then at least information and coordination of actions. However, neither one nor the other followed, although there was no open criticism of Russia either²¹¹. ASEAN, in its diplomatic manner, expressed concern about the escalation and the humanitarian situation, calling for a ceasefire and a peaceful settlement, without directly mentioning Russia.

It would be unrealistic to expect a clearer position from the Association, since all the main parties to the conflict - Russia, the United States and the EU - are strategic partners of ASEAN. Direct criticism from either side could undermine the credibility of the ASEAN-centric model of cooperation.

The current situation raises the question of the real content of the strategic partnership. «ASEAN's restrained position contrasts with its long-standing policy of defending sovereignty and territorial integrity»²¹². At the same time, some member

²¹⁰ Why Location of China-Russia South China Sea Drill Matters // Voanews. 04.08.2025. URL: <https://www.voanews.com/a/location-matters-for-russia-china-south-china-sea-drill/3448594.html> (accessed: 03.07.2022).

²¹¹ ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement Calling for a Ceasefire in Ukraine // ASEAN.org. 2022, March 3. URL: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ASEAN-Foreign-Ministers-Statement-calling-for-Ceasefire-in-Ukraine-EN.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²¹² Королев А.С. Новый «поворот» или пробуксовка: влияние украинского кризиса на отношения России и АСЕАН // РСМД. 17.03.2022. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/novyy-povorot-ili-probuksovka-vliyanie-ukrainskogo-krizisa-na-otnosheniya-rossii-i-ASEAN/?ysclid=nhok91ic61301116229> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

countries took a tougher stance: the Philippines condemned Russia's actions, and Singapore, the only ASEAN member, imposed sanctions against Moscow. It is noteworthy that the Association has not challenged the legality of these unilateral measures, although previously the parties jointly opposed discriminatory measures in politics and trade²¹³.

At the same time, some ASEAN members demonstrate neutrality or even support for Russia. Myanmar made relevant statements, while Laos and Vietnam, the largest recipients of Russian weapons in the region, abstained from voting on the UNGA resolution on March 27, 2022²¹⁴. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian crisis has clearly revealed vulnerabilities in the strategic partnership between Russia and ASEAN.

Thus, during the post-Soviet period, South-East Asia gradually turned from a peripheral area of Russia's foreign policy into one of the key regions, reflecting the desire to diversify international relations and strengthen the status of an independent center of power. If in the 1990s-2000s. Cooperation was mainly limited to economic cooperation with individual states (primarily Vietnam), but since the mid-2010s, Russia has attempted to institutionalize relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and reach the level of strategic partnership.

At the same time, Russian policy in the region remains largely reactive and pragmatic: Moscow seeks to use the opportunities of Southeast Asia to balance the influence of China and the West, while maintaining the principle of non-interference and equal cooperation. The complex configuration of international relations, increased rivalry between the United States and China, as well as the consequences of the 2022 Ukrainian crisis have given Russia's relations with ASEAN a new, more controversial character: the Association, while maintaining neutrality, avoids direct

²¹³ Philippine Statement at the Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Ukraine. Republic of the Philippines. Department of Foreign Affairs. URL: <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/statements-and-advisoriesupdate/30160-philip-pine-statement-at-the-emergency-special-session-of-the-un-general-assembly-on-ukraine> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²¹⁴ General Assembly resolution demands end to Russian offensive in Ukraine // UN. 2 March 2022. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113152> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

confrontation with Moscow, but individual countries (for example, Singapore and the Philippines) have taken a more critical position.

In general, South-East Asia remains an important but difficult foreign policy area for Russia. The region opens up opportunities for expanding its economic and military-political presence, but at the same time places high demands on Russia in terms of flexibility, diplomatic balance and willingness to act in conditions of limited resources. The implementation of the "Greater Eurasian Partnership" concept and the strengthening of dialogue with ASEAN can become a tool for Russia to maintain its influence in the Asia-Pacific region, but the success of this policy depends on Moscow's ability to adapt to new realities and maintain trust from the countries of the region.

1.4. The development of political relations and the establishment of a regulatory framework for interstate relations

Russia became the legal successor of the USSR not only as a nuclear power, a center of integration in the post-Soviet space and an independent player in relations with the great powers, but also in its role regarding cooperation with Cambodia. The Soviet Union has always been sympathetic to the problems and difficulties of the Cambodian people, providing support when the survival of the State as such was at stake. The collapse of the USSR and the transfer of powers to the Russian Federation took place at one of the most dramatic moments in the history of Cambodia.

In July 1982, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (KPDK) was formed, which included three political forces opposed to the People's Republic of Kampuchea: the opposition was represented by the United National Front for a Sovereign, Independent, Neutral and Peaceful Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) led by N. Sihanouk, the Khmer National Liberation Front (KNLF) led by with Son Sang and the Democratic Party of Kampuchea (KDP) led by Khieu Samphan²¹⁵. China

²¹⁵ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 743 с.

supported the Khmer Rouge, while the United States financially and materially supported the "non-communist" groups. The volume of these injections turned out to be such that it allowed the KPDK forces to persistently wage armed struggle for more than ten years.

As mentioned above, the USSR provided comprehensive support to Kampuchea, helping to strengthen this state. However, since the beginning of perestroika and the proclamation of the course of "new political thinking", the priorities of the USSR have undergone changes. Now the issues of establishing relations with China and the United States came to the fore, and this went against the support of the government, which was fighting the Khmer Rouge²¹⁶.

The Soviet Union recognized that there was no military solution to the conflict and began active peacekeeping activities. During a series of visits to ASEAN countries, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said that Moscow's opinion had changed and called for a political settlement. «Using the example of the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan, the USSR gently pushed its allies in Vietnam and Cambodia to seek a compromise»²¹⁷. These efforts led to a "breakthrough": direct negotiations began between the warring Cambodian factions, Vietnamese troops were completely withdrawn by 1989, and the Paris Peace Conference was convened. At the final stage, the USSR actively worked in the format of permanent members of the UN Security Council, supporting the plan to create a UN transitional administration in Cambodia. Thus, the refusal of the USSR from confrontation and its diplomatic mediation became a key factor that allowed the beginning of the process of peaceful settlement in the country.

In February 1990, multilateral negotiations were held in Jakarta. The negotiations were characterized by a truly broad representation, which confirmed their legitimacy. They were attended by representatives of all social groups and

²¹⁶ Конорева И.А. Индокитайский регион во внешней политике СССР: 1943-1976 : диссертация ... доктора исторических наук : 07.00.02, 07.00.03. Тамбов.: Тамб. гос. ун-т им. Г.Р. Державина. 552 с.

²¹⁷ Шеварднадзе Э. Когда рухнул железный занавес. Встречи и воспоминания. М., 2009. 324 с.

forces of Cambodia, delegations from Vietnam, Australia and France, as well as representatives of ASEAN. As a result of productive work, the members of these negotiations managed to come to a common decision – to create a collegial body of the interim government until the moment when universal conclusions are drawn. Such a body became the Supreme National Council (VNC) of Cambodia, which operated in Jakarta at the time of the fighting²¹⁸. The next important step was to coordinate the ceasefire regime in the agreement between Hun Sen and N. Sihanouk. This agreement was made possible thanks to the diplomatic mediation of Thailand, which provided the conditions for a meeting between the two politicians. In August, by decision of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the UN mandate was expanded for the period of national reconciliation.

During the autumn of 1990, intensive work was carried out to detail the draft Agreement on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian conflict. A landmark event was the October proposal of the Soviet Union, announced at the meeting of the "five", to impose an arms embargo on all Cambodian parties. A consistent measure «was the March 1991 declaration of the USSR on an 80% reduction in all aid to Hun Sen's government»²¹⁹.

The long-term and laborious negotiation process was crowned with success. At the Paris Conference on October 21-23, 1991, the parties signed peace agreements. All permanent members of the UN Security Council and ASEAN acted as mediators in this process, which provided unconditional diplomatic support for this decision. As the future UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali later noted, "the achievement of these agreements was a direct result of the end of the Cold War, the strategic rapprochement of the positions of the USSR and the United States, as well as the normalization of relations between China, the ASEAN countries and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam"²²⁰.

²¹⁸ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 743 с.

²¹⁹ Berry K. Cambodia - From Red to Blue: Australia's Initiative for Peace. Canberra, 1997. 405 p.

²²⁰ Бутрос-Гали Б. Организация Объединенных Наций и Камбоджа. Информационный Центр ООН в Москве, 1996. 302 с.

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Russia adopted the full range of agreements and membership in international organizations from its predecessor. The Geneva Agreements were no exception. However, its ability to influence the situation in the region has weakened. At that time, Russia faced important problems on its own territory and in its immediate environment. For this reason, she took a limited part in the UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia. "While the contingents from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand numbered hundreds and thousands of troops, Russia sent only 52 people. In addition, there was not a single Russian representative in the UN civilian police"²²¹.

Nevertheless, Russia's diplomatic contribution as a permanent member of the UN Security Council should not be underestimated. An "expanded five" was created in Cambodia (permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Australia, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand), whose ambassadors maintained constant contact with the Special representative of the UN Secretary-General Yasushi Akashi, who coordinated the operation. Russian Ambassador Yuri Myakotnykh actively worked in this format, working with colleagues and UN staff to resolve numerous operational issues. The professional experience and deep regional knowledge of Russian diplomats accumulated during the existence of the People's Republic of Kampuchea proved to be extremely in demand in this work.

In parallel with the ASEAN countries, Russia participated in the work of the UN Interim Body in Cambodia (UNTAC)²²². In 1992-1993, Russian diplomat V.A. Yulin held the responsible post of Director of the UN Administration in Kampong Speu province. His Indonesian colleague Beni Widnyono, who later took up the post of Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Cambodia, praised Yulin's professional qualities and noted the friendly relations that had developed between them.

²²¹ Бектимирова Н. Общий путь к урегулированию в Камбодже // Международная жизнь. 2010. № 10. URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/331?ysclid=mhomu1v8vc23992669> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²²² United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/untac.htm> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

On December 27, 1991, Cambodia officially declared recognition of Russia, and Russia itself recognized the Kingdom of Cambodia only in September 1993. At the same time, Russia became a member of the International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia.

However, despite this beginning of cooperation, relations between the two countries did not develop intensively enough in the 1990s. Among the reasons for this state of affairs, it is worth mentioning both the domestic political situation in Russia itself (disruption of established production chains, political and economic reforms) and the situation in Cambodia, where the civil war has not yet subsided, accompanied by negative trends in socio-economic and humanitarian spheres. Despite the fact that in 1993 A new Constitution has been adopted in Russia, and the degree of stability and predictability in domestic politics has not increased. It is also worth noting that in the 1990s, Russia's foreign policy was characterized by a pro-Western bias, which in practice led to a decrease in Russia's involvement in the processes taking place in Southeast Asia. At the same time, Russia actively used its diplomatic potential and the status of a permanent member of the UN Security Council to coordinate the efforts of the participating countries of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia.

The depression of the late 1990s caused severe damage to the Russian economy, which was caused by the failure of liberal reforms and extremely low prices for raw materials. It led to the devaluation of the ruble and a decrease in the standard of living of the majority of the country's population. These economic difficulties have become an obstacle to providing comprehensive assistance to Cambodia.

At the same time, the activity of Russian state-owned companies in the international market has significantly decreased. This trend has not spared the Cambodian market either. For this reason, companies from Japan, Hong Kong, and the ASEAN countries (mainly Thailand and Singapore) began to gradually replace their share in Cambodia.

On the positive side, it is worth noting that Russia's diplomatic work on a peaceful settlement in Cambodia has contributed to Russia's rapprochement with the ASEAN countries. Largely due to the experience gained, Russia was invited to become an official ASEAN dialogue partner. This was the beginning of the strengthening of Russia's relations with this regional organization, which are currently characterized by the strategic nature of their partnership.

It is of fundamental importance that the legal and political framework developed in the Russia-ASEAN dialogue is the basis for Russia's bilateral relations with individual member countries of the Association, including Cambodia. As part of the ASEAN legal framework, Cambodia participates in the implementation of all key agreements and declarations signed by the organization as a whole. Thus, the multilateral treaties and agreements between Russia and ASEAN not only set the general tone, but also directly form the context and agenda for Russian-Cambodian cooperation, from security issues to economic cooperation.

The beginning of relations between Russia and ASEAN was laid back in 1991 at the initiative of ASEAN. Malaysia then invited the Russian diplomat to participate in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting. In 1994 The Russian Federation has entered into an important format responsible for security coordination, the ASEAN Regional Security Forum (ARF). In 1996, Russia and ASEAN established the status of a dialogue partnership. All this indicates that during the 1990s. Russia restored its participation in the affairs of the regions, while in Soviet times it did so as one of the centers of power to which it was necessary to adhere, now Russia was a full partner for every ASEAN member country.

In the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept, Southeast Asia did not stand out as a region. It was considered as part of the Asia-Pacific region, which, from the point of view of the Russian leadership, is becoming an "emerging pole of global influence"²²³. In this situation, Russia sought to strengthen its position in this space,

²²³ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 1993 г./ Внешняя политика и безопасность современной России. 1991–2002. Хрестоматия в четырех томах / Ред.-состав. Т.А. Шаклеина. Т. IV. Документы.–М.: Московский государственный институт

thereby finding drivers for the development of its economy. This region was also valuable because it was home to Russia's traditional ally, Vietnam. However, as it was rightly emphasized, "during this period, Southeast Asia had not yet acquired the status of an independent and key priority; the main task was formulated as the country's overall integration into the affairs of the region and a departure from its narrow image of a purely European power"²²⁴.

Relations between Russia and Cambodia were frozen in the period from 1991 to 1993. A new impetus to these relations was given by a package of documents proposed by the Russian side in the framework of the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 625 dated June 30, 1993 "On measures to develop relations with the countries of Indochina"²²⁵.

Cambodia reacted positively to the Russian proposal, and on May 25, 1995, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Alexander Panov visited Cambodia. During this visit, the parties signed a number of documents that formed the legal framework of bilateral relations between Russia and Cambodia. Thus, a joint declaration on the foundations of friendly relations²²⁶ was signed; an intergovernmental agreement on trade and Economic Ties²²⁷; an agreement on

международных отношений (У) МИД России, Российская ассоциация международных исследований, АНО «ИНО-Центр (Информация. Наука. Образование)», 2002. С.19–50.

²²⁴ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 1993 г./ Внешняя политика и безопасность современной России. 1991–2002. Хрестоматия в четырех томах / Ред.-состав. Т.А. Шаклеина. Т. IV. Документы.–М.: Московский государственный институт международных отношений (У) МИД России, Российская ассоциация международных исследований, АНО «ИНО-Центр (Информация. Наука. Образование)», 2002. С.19–50.

²²⁵ Постановление Правительства Российской Федерации «О мерах по развитию странами Индокитая» № 625 от 30 июня 1993 г. URL: <http://government.ru/docs/all/92426/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²²⁶ Совместная декларация об основах дружественных отношений России и Камбоджи. 26.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1721058/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²²⁷ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о торгово-экономических связях. 25.05.1995. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/55422/?ysclid=mhor9yttsm259144813 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Cultural and Scientific cooperation²²⁸, as well as a Protocol on consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries²²⁹.

It is worth noting that Russia and Cambodia could not agree on a number of issues. In particular, the parties did not reach an understanding regarding the creation of a double taxation regime, as well as the development of measures to promote and protect investments. Due to the fact that Phnom Penh tried to pursue a protectionist policy, visits by representatives of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy of Russia were canceled, and the texts of the agreements were sent for additional expert consultations.

At the same time, the parties have established cooperation in the field of communication and information exchange. In 1996, a cooperation agreement was signed between ITAR-TASS and the Cambodian News Agency. At the same time, the interparliamentary dialogue was developing. In June 1995, a delegation of the Federation Council visited Cambodia, and in July 1996, representatives of the State Duma²³⁰.

It is worth noting that Russia has actively participated in global efforts to rebuild Cambodia from the effects of the fighting. Russia provided its assistance through a specialized international format - the International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Country (later transformed into an advisory group of donors). In four years (from 1994 to 1998), Russia has sent, according to available data, about 14 million US dollars, financing mostly humanitarian initiatives²³¹. In particular,

²²⁸ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о культурном и научном сотрудничестве. 25.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1720489/?ysclid=mhorbs85nw641791291> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²²⁹ Протокол о консультациях между Министерством иностранных дел Российской Федерации и Министерством иностранных дел и международного сотрудничества Королевства Камбоджа. 26.05.1995. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1728104/?ysclid=mhorcy61p701869832> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²³⁰ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 743 с.

²³¹ Лукин А.В. Поворот к Азии: российская внешняя политика на рубеже веков и ее активизация на восточном направлении. М.: Весь Мир. 2014. С. 135.

Russia has focused on educational programs for Cambodian students, making investments in future generations.

In the 2000s, relations between Russia and Cambodia noticeably intensified. In the "Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" from 2000, the importance of developing relations with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region was emphasized, especially in connection with the need to improve the economic situation in the Far East. At a meeting in Khabarovsk on July 2, 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev set goals to "expand economic cooperation with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as strengthen Russia's involvement in regional processes by intensifying work in the ASEAN international formats"²³². After that, the concept of "strengthening the Eastern vector through more active participation in the political and economic processes of the Asia-Pacific region"²³³ emerged in Russian political discourse.

It is worth noting that Cambodia actively promoted Russia's involvement in the activities of regional formats, positively assessing the increasing role of Russia in Southeast Asia. In particular, Cambodian Foreign Minister Khor Namhong stated back in 2001 that President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Hun Sen have a common political will to strengthen bilateral ties. He called for the expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the field of trade, noting that "cooperation has reached a qualitatively new level." During this meeting, an assessment of the current period of Russian-Cambodian cooperation was expressed as "an important stage in the development of bilateral relations"²³⁴.

Russia's rapprochement with Cambodia was facilitated by the accession to the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2004. At the first Russia-

²³² Rodkiewicz, W. The turn to the East: The flawed diversification of Russian foreign policy // Centre for Eastern Studies. 2014. No 44. P. 32-41.

²³³ Тихоокеанский вектор внешней политики России // Индекс безопасности. 2010. № 2 (97). Т. 17. С. 87-104.

²³⁴ Камбоджа заинтересована в активизации и углублении отношений с Россией во всех областях // Asia Times. 15.05.2001. URL: <https://asiatimes.narod.ru/news2001/0203/ria01.htm> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

ASEAN Summit in 2005, the parties "identified key areas of cooperation: security, crime control, and economic ties"²³⁵.

An extensive institutional framework has been created for the development of UAV cooperation: meetings at the ministerial level, expert events and summits. The Joint Cooperation Committee (ARJCC) and the Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund (DPFF) were established to finance joint projects. "ASEAN-oriented institutions such as the Regional Security Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) are of particular importance to Russia"²³⁶. These institutions do not make legally significant decisions, but they allow for the exchange of opinions, as well as to promote Russia's position in the regional institution. Such an opportunity for Russia to influence regional processes in Southeast Asia is in Cambodia's interests.

Bilateral contacts were also actively developing. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has repeatedly participated in a bilateral dialogue with the Cambodian leadership. There are regular exchanges of visits between representatives of the legislative branch of government of Russia and Cambodia to exchange experiences.

2015 was one of the most productive years in Cambodia-Russia bilateral relations. This is largely due to Russia's "turn to the East", a nationwide concept that aims to demonstrate that Russia is distancing itself from Europe and the United States, which are unable to view Russia as a full-fledged partner. Instead, Russia is moving closer to the Asia-Pacific countries. In this regard, Russian-Cambodian relations have undergone a significant upswing. In particular, in November 2014, the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, D. Medvedev held talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen at the 9th East Asia Summit. "During the negotiations, the

²³⁵ Соглашение между правительством Российской Федерации и правительствами государств членов Ассоциации государств Юго-Восточной Азии о сотрудничестве в области экономики и развития 2005 г. URL: <https://rulaws.ru/government/Rasporyazhenie-Pravitelstva-RF-ot-09.12.2005-N-2150-r/?ysclid=ls8y3wpbe0467540425> (accessed: 05.02.2024); Комплексная программа действий по развитию сотрудничества Российской Федерации и Ассоциации государств Юго-Восточной Азии на 2005–2015 гг. // Президент России. 13.12.2005. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/3708> (accessed: 05.02.2024).

²³⁶ Пичкхун П., Усапеа Ю. Сотрудничество Камбоджи и России в рамках АСЕАН // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2024. Т. 24. №. 3. С. 427-438.

parties identified priority vectors of bilateral cooperation and set specific tasks for its development, thereby laying the foundation for regular high-level political contacts"²³⁷.

In March 2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Khor Namhong paid a visit to Russia, where he met with his counterpart Sergey Lavrov. The parties touched upon the problems of creating a new security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the directions of deepening the bilateral dialogue. In particular, "the Cambodian side supported the Russian initiative to develop a framework for a new regional security structure under the auspices of ASEAN"²³⁸.

The first official visit of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, was the highlight of diplomatic cooperation. Medvedev visited Cambodia in November 2015, during which he met with Prime Minister Hun Sen. During this meeting, the premiers signed 10 agreements that determined the vector of development of the bilateral dialogue for the near future²³⁹. Perhaps the key ones are the intergovernmental agreement on air services (which created the legal basis for the organization of direct flights), as well as the "agreement on cooperation between Rosfinmonitoring and the Financial Intelligence Service of Cambodia in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing"²⁴⁰.

The anniversary Russia–ASEAN Summit in May 2016 gave a new impetus to relations between Moscow and Phnom Penh. During the summit, Vladimir Putin met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. The summit resulted in the adoption of

²³⁷ Бектимирова Н.Н. Традиционные факторы во внешней политике Камбоджи на современном этапе // ЮВА: актуальные проблемы развития. 2015. №26. С. 114-137.

²³⁸ Комментарий Департамента информации и печати МИД России в связи с визитом в Россию заместителя Премьер-министра, Министра иностранных дел и международного сотрудничества Камбоджи Хор Намхонга // МИД РФ. 01.03.2015. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1584355/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²³⁹ Хунг Н.К. Углубление участия России в интеграционных процессах АСЕАН в условиях мировой нестабильности нарастания новых проблем и трудностей в Юго-Восточной Азии // Экономика и управление. 2019. №. 1 (159). С. 44-52.

²⁴⁰ Пичкхун П., Усапеа Ю. Сотрудничество Камбоджи и России в рамках АСЕАН // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2024. Т. 24. №. 3. С. 427-438.

key documents — the Sochi Declaration and the Comprehensive Plan of Action, which emphasized the importance of multipolarity and regional security²⁴¹. Thus, the relationship gradually moved from a state of "recovery after cooling off" to a phase of systemic strategic interaction²⁴².

As part of the deepening partnership, the countries signed a historic agreement on cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear energy and announced their intention to develop economic ties in various sectors²⁴³. At the same time, Russia, while strengthening military-technical cooperation with «a number of countries in the region, preferred to remain neutral on controversial issues such as the conflict in the South China Sea»²⁴⁴.

In 2017-2018, the practice of meetings between the Prime Ministers of Russia and Cambodia within the framework of international forums continued. Vladimir Putin's meeting with Hun Sen in Singapore in 2018 during the Russia-ASEAN summit deserves special attention. «A landmark event was the awarding of the Cambodian Prime Minister with the Order of Peoples' Friendship in July 2021 in honor of the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries»²⁴⁵.

Throughout this period, a constant dialogue was maintained between the foreign ministries of the two states. The consultations revealed a convergence or

²⁴¹ Report of the ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group ASEAN and Russia: a Future-Oriented Multidimensional Strategic Partnership». URL: <http://russia-asean20.ru/documents/> (accessed: 05.02.2024).

²⁴² Сочинская декларация юбилейного саммита Россия-АСЕАН в связи с 20-летием установления диалогового партнерства между Российской Федерацией и АСЕАН «На пути к взаимовыгодному стратегическому партнерству» от 20 мая 2016 г. URL: <http://russia-asean20.ru/documents/> (дата обращения: 05.02.2024).

²⁴³ Prak Sokhonn. Cambodia and Russia: Six Decades of a Solid and Dynamic Partnership // АКР Phnom Penh. 12 May 2016. URL: <http://www.akp.gov.kh/?p=80763> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁴⁴ Из вступительного слова и ответов на вопросы СМИ министра иностранных дел России С.В. Лаврова на совместной пресс-конференции по итогам переговоров с министром иностранных дел Китая Ван И. Пекин, 29 апреля 2016 г. / Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/vyskazyvaniya-po-teme/id/1527749/> (accessed: 05.02.2023).

²⁴⁵ Путин наградил премьер-министра Камбоджи орденом Дружбы // Риа Новости. 25.07.2021. URL: <https://ria.ru/20210725/nagrada-1742779288.html?ysclid=ml7u46frhp81893738> (accessed: 05.02.2026).

closeness of positions on a wide range of international issues: rejection of "color revolutions", condemnation of external interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, the need to jointly combat international terrorism, the formation of a polycentric system of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as recognition of multiple models of national development. It is significant that Cambodia «was among the few Southeast Asian countries that voted against the anti-Russian resolution on Crimea at the UN General Assembly in November 2016»²⁴⁶.

The contractual and legal framework of cooperation has significantly strengthened: if 17 joint documents were signed in 2005-2014, then in 2015-2019 their number reached 47. The areas of cooperation have significantly expanded, although some areas have remained predominantly formal.

An important milestone was the transition to strategic partnership relations, which took place at the third Russia–ASEAN Summit in Singapore in November 2018. In a statement on this occasion, the parties noted "the high importance of observing international law, developing equal relations and free trade, as well as strengthening the East Asian Summit as a platform for strategic dialogue"²⁴⁷. However, there are a number of challenges on the way to implementing a full-fledged strategic partnership. Russia's involvement in solving regional issues was hindered by the fact that this region was not among its priorities. Russia could have provided more assistance to the ASEAN member countries as a great power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Its involvement in ASEAN-centric formats made it possible to restrain the ambitions of other non-regional actors.

Maintaining diplomatic cooperation has a positive impact on bilateral relations. Their relationship is based on the unbreakable principle: "the right of every nation to choose its own path of development." It creates a solid foundation for cooperation within the United Nations, ASEAN, APEC and other international

²⁴⁶ 27 countries speak out against the Ukrainian resolution on Crimea in the UN // Top War. 2018. URL: <https://en.topwar.ru/151670-protiv-ukrainskoj-rezoljucii-po-krymu-v-oon-vyskazalis-briks-i-esche-22-strany.html?ysclid=ml7u72jjjn288033512> (accessed: 05.02.2026).

²⁴⁷ Joint Statement of the 3rd ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Strategic Partnership // ASEAN. November 14, 2018. URL: <https://asean.org/joint-statement-of-the-3rd-asean-russian-federation-summit-on-strategic-partnership/> (accessed: 05.02.2026).

platforms. A significant achievement of Russian diplomacy was the establishment of relations between Cambodia and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which is an important project of Russia in terms of the implementation of Eurasian integration. In 2016 A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Kingdom of Cambodia and this international organization. This document, it says, "laid the foundation for a future agreement on the creation of a free trade zone between the EAEU and Cambodia, identifying 17 promising areas of cooperation — from economic integration to the development of information technology"²⁴⁸.

Despite the positive developments, there is still a gap between the declared assessments of the quality of bilateral relations and its actual implementation. However, at the same time, this challenge opens up opportunities for further development. The active participation of the business community and political institutions represented by ASEAN seems to accelerate the implementation of joint projects.

The Association's role in strengthening Russian-Cambodian relations cannot be underestimated. Both countries adhere to the principle of foreign policy neutrality, and, by the way, their positions on the Ukrainian issue reflect this principle. Thanks to this policy, cooperation continues: Russia participated in the East Asian Summit held in Phnom Penh in 2022 and Jakarta in 2023. Thus, this relationship is gradually moving from a statement to a practice, although not always as fast as both sides hope.

Cambodia, acting as coordinator of Russia-ASEAN relations for 2021-2024²⁴⁹, demonstrates activity in the development of strategic partnership. Through

²⁴⁸ Распоряжение Коллегии Евразийской экономической комиссии от 10 мая 2016 г. N 56 "О проекте Меморандума о взаимопонимании между Евразийской экономической комиссией и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа" // Alta. 10.05.2016. URL: <https://www.alta.ru/tamdoc/16r00056/> (accessed: 05.03.2024).

²⁴⁹ The momentum of ASEAN-RUSSIA cooperation continues to rise // Khmer Times. April 24, 2023. URL: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501278052/the-momentum-of-asean-russia-cooperation-continues-to-rise/> (accessed: 05.02.2023).

her mediation, the Strategic Partnership Plan for 2021-2025 was adopted, which set priorities for cooperation and measures to realize the partnership's potential²⁵⁰.

The importance of ASEAN as a platform for dialogue is evidenced by the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Russia and Cambodia in July 2025. The ministers confirmed their mutual interest in strengthening ties: Sergey Lavrov noted the continuity of Cambodia's foreign policy, and Prak Sokhon congratulated his Russian counterpart on the 80th anniversary of Victory and Russia Day²⁵¹. The meeting resulted in the signing of an Inter-ministerial Consultation Plan for 2025-2027, which defines new prospects for bilateral cooperation.

To summarize the paragraph, it is worth noting that the development of political relations between Russia and Cambodia has gone through a difficult but progressive path from the ideologically driven cooperation of the Soviet period to the formation of a sustainable strategic partnership in the 21st century. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia not only inherited its obligations in the field of international agreements, but also managed to maintain a political dialogue with Cambodia, gradually building a new regulatory framework for bilateral cooperation. The key stage was the participation of the USSR, and then Russia, in the peaceful settlement of the Cambodian conflict and in the activities of international organizations, which laid the foundation for trust and mutual understanding between the countries. Russia's accession to the founding documents of ASEAN, including the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, has made it possible to institutionalize relations with the Association and strengthen their legal framework.

Concluding the chapter, it is worth noting that the history of Russian-Cambodian relations demonstrates their stability and continuity. Despite the changes in the international situation, from the global confrontation during the Cold War to

²⁵⁰ Комплексный план действий по реализации стратегического партнёрства между Российской Федерацией и Ассоциацией государств Юго-Восточной Азии (2021–2025 годы) / Президент России. 28.10.2021. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5726> (accessed: 05.02.2023).

²⁵¹ Россия и Камбоджа подписали план консультаций на 2025-2027 годы // РИА Новости. 10.07.2025. URL: <https://ria.ru/20250710/kambodzha-2028355538.html?ysclid=mhouywx5сес98870418> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

the modern multipolar system, the two countries maintained a mutual interest in cooperation. For the Russian Federation, Cambodia is an important partner in Southeast Asia, which makes it possible to strengthen its position within ASEAN and develop soft power. In turn, Cambodia's foreign policy, based on multi-vector approach, pragmatism and neutrality, finds a response in the Russian approach to building equal relations without ideological pressure. Thus, the interaction acquires a strategic character. Both countries demonstrate common approaches to the formation of a multipolar world, strengthening sovereignty and countering neocolonialism, which is confirmed by their joint initiatives at the UN and ASEAN venues.

CHAPTER 2. TRADE AND MILITARY-TECHNICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

2.1. Trade and economic relations: current state and prospects

Cambodia's economic development is influenced by three main factors: positive manifestations of integration into the regional economic system, stable inflow of foreign investment, and an increased role in international value chains. By becoming a full member of ASEAN, Cambodia joined the ASEAN common Market, removing most tariff barriers to trade with the Association's member countries. These measures stimulated trade. It is noteworthy that over the past 20 years, Cambodia's trade turnover has increased by 12-16% per year (see Figure 1).

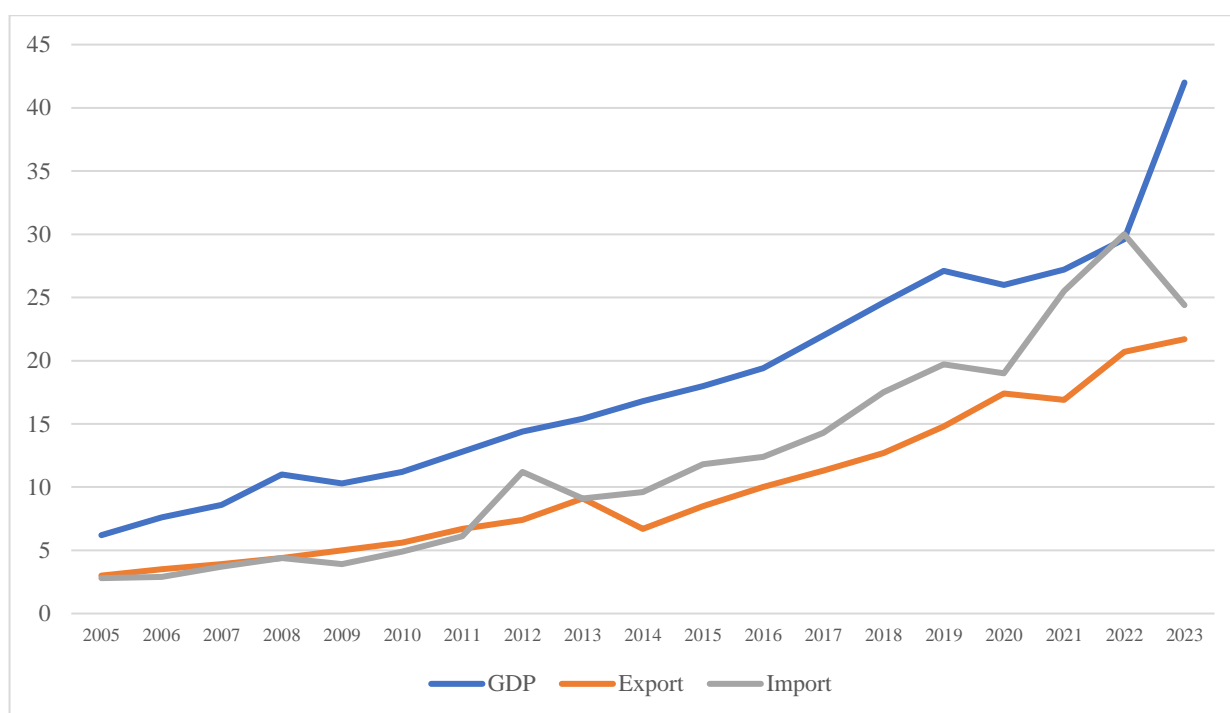
Nevertheless, the dynamic development of foreign trade is accompanied by a significant structural imbalance, resulting in a chronic negative trade balance²⁵². Import operations primarily cover goods necessary to meet domestic demand and ensure the functioning of export-oriented industries, primarily in the textile and footwear industries.

Nevertheless, the dynamic development of foreign trade is accompanied by a significant structural imbalance, expressed in a chronic negative trade balance. Import operations primarily cover goods necessary to meet domestic demand and ensure the functioning of export-oriented industries, primarily in the textile and footwear industries.

Figure 1.

Dynamics of Cambodia's GDP, exports and imports in 2005-2022, \$billion

²⁵² ASEAN 2030: Growing Together for Economic Prosperity - the Challenges Cambodia Background Paper. CDRI, Phnom Penh, 2014. 235 p.



Source: Compiled by: ASEAN Statistical Yearbook. 2024. <https://aseandse.org/asean-statistical-yearbook-2024/> (accessed: 10.11.2025).

From 2005 to 2023, Cambodia's economy showed significant growth: GDP increased 7—fold (from \$6.2 to \$42 billion), exports increased almost 7—fold (from \$3 to \$21.7 billion), and imports increased 10-fold (from \$2.8 to \$24.4 billion)²⁵³. Despite the persistent trade deficit, the economy has shown the ability to recover quickly from crises.

To maintain the dynamics of development, the Government focuses on three priorities: «Strengthening agriculture (especially rice production), developing the financial sector and supporting tourism»²⁵⁴.

An important milestone was the country's accession to ASEAN in 1999, which made it possible to overcome international isolation. In the pre-crisis period (1993-2019), «Cambodia became one of the fastest growing economies in Asia with an average annual GDP growth of 8.7%»²⁵⁵, actively integrating into the global economy. De facto economic integration is expressed in the growth of economic

²⁵³ ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2024. ASEAN Secretariat. 2024. URL: <https://aseandse.org/asean-statistical-yearbook-2024/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁵⁴ ASEAN 2030: Growing Together for Economic Prosperity - the Challenges Cambodia Background Paper. CDRI, Phnom Penh, 2014. 235 p.

²⁵⁵ Calculated by The World Bank Data. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=KH> (accessed: 05.08.2024).

cooperation in the region. As E. Harrell notes, «it may often be unrelated to de jure economic integration»²⁵⁶.

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union occupied a key position in Cambodia's trade and economic relations. Assistance from the USSR played a crucial role in eliminating the consequences of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979). As a result of technical assistance, «35% of energy capacities and 70% of natural rubber production enterprises were restored»²⁵⁷. With the support of Soviet specialists, the hydrometeorological service, the state construction organization and telecommunication infrastructure facilities were created. Restoration work was carried out in the ports of Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh, educational institutions, vocational centers and medical institutions. Within the framework of educational programs with the assistance of Soviet specialists, «more than 8,000 Cambodian citizens received education both in the USSR and the CIS countries, as well as in educational institutions in Cambodia»²⁵⁸.

In 1995, an agreement was signed between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia «on trade and economic relations»²⁵⁹. The main purpose of the document is to develop stable and long-term trade and economic relations between the two countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

«The key provision of the Agreement is the mutual provision of most-favored-nation treatment. This means that each party will provide the goods and economic

²⁵⁶ Hurrell A. Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective // Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order / Ed. by L.L. Fawcett, A. Hurrell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. P. 37-73.

²⁵⁷ Бектимирова Н.Н. Камбоджа в XXI в.: современные политические процессы. М.: Lap Lambert. 2016. С. 87.

²⁵⁸ Мосяков Д.В. История Камбоджи. XX век. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. С. 152.

²⁵⁹ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о торгово-экономических связях // МИД РФ. 25.05.1995. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/55422/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

operations of the other party with the same favorable conditions as for any other country in the field of customs duties, fees, trade rules and currency regulation»²⁶⁰.

The agreement also provides for the creation of favorable conditions for various forms of cooperation, including the creation of joint ventures and direct links between the companies. All payments will be made in freely convertible currency, and supplies of goods and services will be carried out on the basis of contracts.

The document stipulates exceptions to the general regime, for example, benefits within the framework of customs unions or for cross-border trade. This Agreement replaces the previous agreement of 1980 between the USSR and Kampuchea. It comes into force from the moment of signing, is valid for 5 years with automatic renewal and establishes the procedure for its termination.

By 2002, the volume of mutual trade between Russia and Cambodia reached 9.9 million US dollars. At the same time, Russian exports amounted to 8.9 million (see Figure 2). Trading operations, as noted, were characterized by stability, but remained limited in scope, and were based mainly on single contracts.

However, there was a positive trend in the 2010s. During his visit to Russia, Khor Namhong took part in the VIII meeting of the Intergovernmental Russian-Cambodian Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (IGC). At that time, in particular, a specific action program was discussed to provide practical content for bilateral cooperation. The result was not long in coming: in the period from 2010 to 2014, the trade turnover between the two countries tripled, reaching \$ 132.7 million. Russian exports (\$3.8 million) included food, agricultural raw materials, chemicals, machinery and equipment. Predictably, imports from Cambodia (\$128.9 million) consisted mainly of textiles and shoes²⁶¹.

The participants of the IGC meeting from the Russian side expressed interest in expanding business partnership and investment cooperation with Cambodian

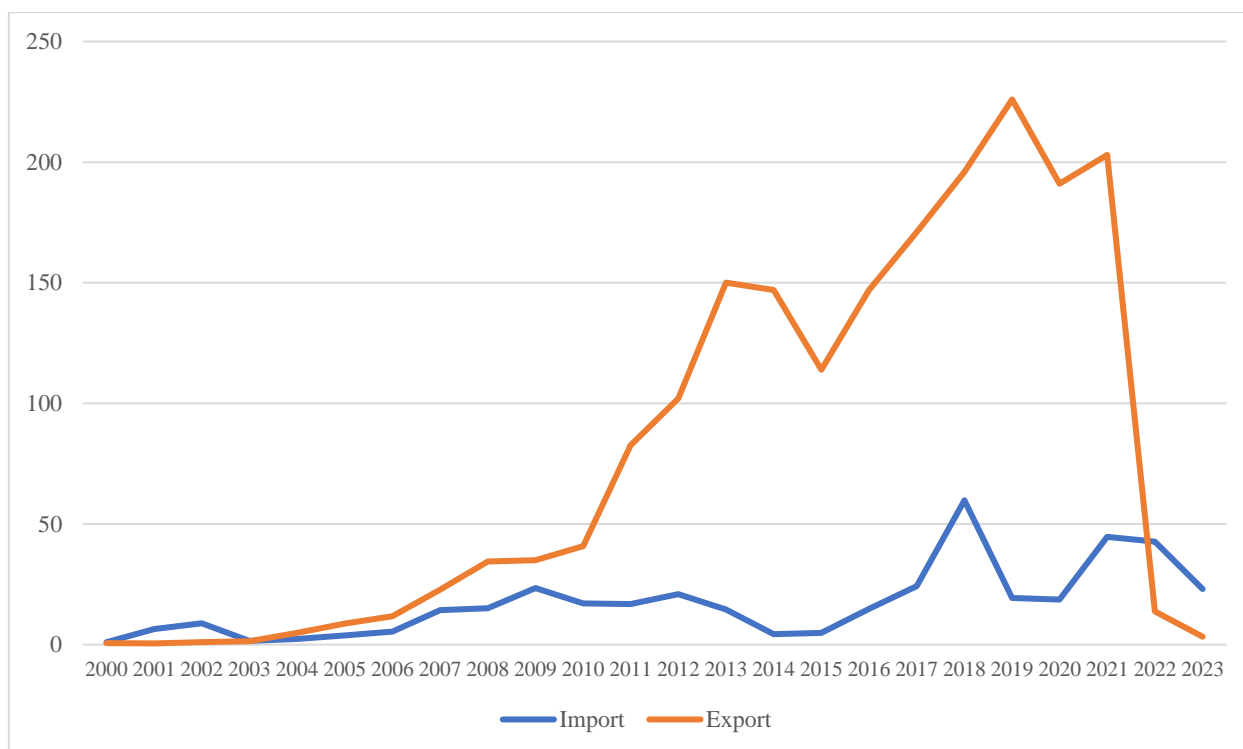
²⁶⁰ Пичкхун, П. Торгово-экономическое сотрудничество России и Камбоджи: тенденции и перспективы // Азия и Африка сегодня. 2025. № 10. С. 14-20.

²⁶¹ Торгово-экономические отношения // Посольство Российской Федерации в Королевстве Камбоджа. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/ru/countries/bilateral-relations/trade-economic-cooperation/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

counterparties. They discussed sectors such as energy, mining and processing, agriculture, civil aviation, telecommunications and tourism. «Prospects for increasing exports to Cambodia of Russian products meeting local needs, including supplies of KAMAZ trucks, Sukhoi Superjet 100 short—haul aircraft, and GAZ Group civilian vehicles, were also discussed»²⁶².

Figure 2.

Cambodia's trade dynamics with Russia in 2000-2023, \$ million



Source: Observatory of Economic Complexity. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/khm/partner/rus> (accessed: 05.08.2025).

The analysis of statistical data for the years 2000-2023 (it should be noted that it is quite revealing) reveals the complex and unstable dynamics of trade interaction. Despite the significant nominal growth in trade turnover compared to the beginning of the century, development was characterized by unevenness and sharp fluctuations, especially in the last period.

In 2020-2021, despite the restrictions associated with the pandemic, Cambodian exports to Russia remained at a relatively high level (\$191 million and

²⁶² Пичкхун, П. Торгово-экономическое сотрудничество России и Камбоджи: тенденции и перспективы // Азия и Африка сегодня. 2025. № 10. С. 14-20.

\$203 million, respectively). Imports even increased in 2021, to \$44.7 million. The turning point was in 2022, when Cambodia's exports dropped to 13.7 million, and in 2023 they reached their lowest level since 2005, at just 3.3 million. The sanctions pressure on Russia has certainly created additional obstacles. However, the main reasons for the decline seem to be structural factors: the difficulty of accessing Cambodian markets due to their focus on Chinese retail chains, as well as the focus of Russian companies themselves on developing cooperation with China and Vietnam (which, you see, distracts attention from the Cambodian direction). Russian imports to Cambodia in 2022-2023 (42.7 million and 23.1 million, respectively) decreased compared to the peak in 2018, but remained above the average level of the 2000s and 2010s. The result is, frankly, paradoxical: Cambodia's trade surplus turned sharply negative in 2022, and in 2023, imports from Russia exceeded Cambodian exports by more than seven times. Thus, quantitative growth at certain stages turned into a qualitative asymmetry, which probably requires a separate analysis²⁶³.

The range of Russian supplies includes trucks, pulp and paper products, energy equipment, metal structures and aircraft spare parts. Cambodian exports include clothing, tobacco products, spices, and wood products. For example, Russian Diesel has established direct supplies of components for local power plants, and Traktoroexport supplied \$1.2 million worth of road equipment in 2003. «Contracts for drilling equipment and spare parts for tractor equipment were also being prepared, and KAMAZ handed over 100 trucks»²⁶⁴.

The structure of Cambodian exports demonstrates a high dependence on a single commodity, tanned leather, which accounts for 44.3% of the total supply. This is followed by rubberized clothing (13.0%) and processed fruits with nuts (11.1%). Completing the top 5 export positions are women's non-fancy suits and textile shoes.

²⁶³ Observatory of Economic Complexity. URL: <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/khm/partner/rus> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁶⁴ Kotoski K. Russia and Cambodia look to increase investment // The Phnom Penh Post. 19.05.2016. URL: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/russia-and-cambodia-look-increase-investment> (accessed 20.05.2025).

Thus, Cambodian exports specialize in light industry goods and processed agricultural products, while maintaining a critical dependence on the supply of tanned leather²⁶⁵.

Russian exports to Cambodia are characterized by an extremely high concentration around raw materials and specialized industrial goods. The dominant position is occupied by uncultivated fur pelts with a share of 59.2% in the total supply. «Propylene polymers (12.3%), special purpose vehicles (8.3%), phosphate (6.0%) and nitrogen fertilizers (5.4%) also make up a significant part. These five commodity groups account for over 91% of all exports, which indicates a narrow, poorly diversified commodity structure reflecting both the general trends of Russian exports and the specifics of demand in the Cambodian market»²⁶⁶.

As part of the aviation cooperation, the transfer of used aircraft, including the AN-38-100 cargo aircraft, as well as the modernization of Mi-26 heavy helicopters were discussed. Aviaexport signed contracts for the supply of aircraft spare parts, and Nizhny Novgorod Airlines leased the Yak-42D airliner. Regional cargo transportation was carried out by Russian air detachments on AN-12 and AN-24 aircraft²⁶⁷.

An international securities company has reportedly been successfully operating in Phnom Penh, combining commercial activities with the implementation of social projects. But the Kasotim joint venture, which specialized in logging, suspended its activities due to financial pressure and regulatory barriers. VIRO, in turn, installed refrigeration equipment and began production of electrodes, however, these projects have not reached their design capacity.

The Russian-Cambodian Intergovernmental Commission (IGC), which has been operating since 1997, serves as the organizational basis for trade and economic

²⁶⁵ Observatory of Economic Complexity. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/khm/partner/rus> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁶⁶ Observatory of Economic Complexity. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/khm/partner/rus> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁶⁷ Торгово-экономическое сотрудничество между Россией и Камбоджей // МИД РФ. 06.09.2003. <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1746409/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

cooperation. Her tasks include coordinating cooperation and analyzing the legal aspects of bilateral relations. At the 10th meeting of the IPC, held in Moscow on August 22-23, 2017, two documents were signed: a Memorandum of Cooperation between the natural resource agencies of the two countries and a Program of joint actions in the field of tourism for 2018-2020²⁶⁸.

The Russian part of the commission is headed by Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology A.A. Kozlov²⁶⁹, the Cambodian part is headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Prak Sokhon. The last inter-sessional meeting of the Co-Chairs took place on January 25, 2019 in Phnom Penh. And the next, 11th meeting of the IPC was held in Moscow in 2024²⁷⁰.

Against the background of global economic transformations, Russian-Cambodian trade and economic cooperation seems to be showing signs of intensification. Since 2022, there has been a significant expansion in the supply of Cambodian agricultural products to the Russian market. A successful example is the increase in sales of Cambodian mango in Russian retail chains (including Vkus Ville)²⁷¹. This was preceded by multi-stage negotiations on phytosanitary standards. At the same time, this diversification is in line with Phnom Penh's strategy to find alternatives to the traditional markets of Southeast Asia.

The Government of Cambodia is interested in expanding the range of its exports to Russia, including bananas, rice and pepper. All this, in the future, can strengthen the kingdom's position as an agricultural partner. A significant factor in this trend, we add, was the sanctions pressure on Russia.: it stimulates the

²⁶⁸ Trade and economic relations // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/trade-economic-cooperation/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁶⁹ Распоряжение Правительства Российской Федерации от 02.12.2020 г. № 3179-р. URL: <http://government.ru/docs/all/131242/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁷⁰ Cambodia-Russia intergovernmental commission meeting to promote cooperation // Xinhua. 2025. URL: <https://english.news.cn/20250427/e634f5ace2e1421ebbd02198a247e6f5/c.html> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁷¹ Торкунов А.В., Стрельцов Д.В. Российская политика поворота на Восток: проблемы и риски // *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*. 2023. № 4. С. 5–16.

reorientation of foreign trade flows towards countries that have not joined the restrictive measures²⁷².

The Agreement on a free trade zone between Cambodia and the EAEU should be considered an important tool for developing cooperation. The implementation of the document provides for the reduction of customs barriers, the unification of technical standards and the optimization of logistics processes. All this creates prerequisites for the growth of trade turnover, which in 2021 reached, by the way, \$ 254.6 million²⁷³. Russia's share in the total trade turnover of the integration association with Cambodia was 97.2% (247.7 million). The agreement opens access to the markets of the EAEU countries for Cambodian goods. Russia gets additional opportunities to strengthen its position in ASEAN. A separate advantage is the stimulation of tourist exchange: before the pandemic, Russia was one of the ten main supplier countries for tourists to Cambodia, and the restoration of this destination is now considered a mutually beneficial task²⁷⁴.

The economic partnership is developing in the context of the transformation of global production chains and the growing competition of the great powers in the Indo-Pacific region. For Russia, cooperation with Cambodia is an element of a strategy to diversify «foreign economic relations and strengthen its influence in Asia against the backdrop of confrontation with the West»²⁷⁵. Cambodia, adhering to a multi—vector foreign policy course, «strives to maintain a balance between the

²⁷² ផ្លែស្វាយកម្ពុជាមានប្រជាប្រិយភាពកាន់តែច្រើននៅប្រទេសរុស្ស៊ី [Cambodian mango is becoming more and more popular in Russia] // Open Development Cambodia. 2024. URL: <https://opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/km/news/cambodian-mangoes-now-gaining-popularity-across-russian-markets/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁷³ Внешняя торговля с третьими странами. Евразийская Экономическая Комиссия. https://eec.eaeunion.org/comission/department/dep_stat/tradestat/time_series/vneshnya-torgovlya-tovarami-dinamicheskie-ryady/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁷⁴ Cambodia, Russia agree to advance cooperation in key areas // Xinhua. 28.04.2025. <https://english.news.cn/20250428/fee2444440844e00a5b1184930addfe5/c.html> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁷⁵ Prabowo T.B., Sihaloho R.A.H. Impact of the Ukraine-Russia Conflict on the Stability of Energy Geopolitics in Southeast Asia // Journal of International Studies on Energy Affairs. 2024. Vol. 5. № 1. P. 35–56.

interests of China, the United States and Russia - which, you see, increases its attractiveness as a neutral partner»²⁷⁶.

Despite the positive dynamics, the volume of bilateral trade remains, frankly speaking, modest compared to Cambodia's main partners — China (more than \$ 10 billion) and the ASEAN countries (more than \$14 billion). The main obstacles are geographical remoteness, lack of direct transport routes and, last but not least, lack of awareness among the business community. The continued effectiveness of the Free Trade Agreement will depend on the parties' ability to harmonize the regulatory framework and resist competition from other regional initiatives, primarily the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership²⁷⁷.

According to the statement of N. Kondratiev, Director of the Department of the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, made at the 11th meeting of the intergovernmental commission on April 29, 2025, the trade turnover between the countries increased by 8% by the end of 2024²⁷⁸. The meeting participants stressed the importance of resuming dialogue and noted the prospects for cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, agriculture, innovation and education. So, albeit slowly, the relationship is moving from one—time contracts to systemic interaction, albeit with considerable potential that has yet to be realized.

To summarize, it should be recognized that the prospects for deepening trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Cambodia are directly related to the

²⁷⁶ Cambodia and Russia strengthen trade ties at economic dialogue in Moscow // Khmer Times. May 17, 2025. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501685337/cambodia-and-russia-strengthen-trade-ties-at-economic-dialogue-in-moscow/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁷⁷ Всестороннее региональное экономическое партнерство, сокр. ВРЭП (англ. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, RCEP) — соглашение о «зоне свободной торговли плюс», охватывающее 10 государств-членов Ассоциации государств Юго-Восточной Азии (АСЕАН) (Бруней, Вьетнам, Индонезия, Камбоджа, Лаос, Малайзия, Мьянма, Сингапур, Таиланд, Филиппины) и 5 государств, с которыми у АСЕАН уже подписаны соглашения о свободной торговле (Австралия, КНР, Новая Зеландия, Республика Корея и Япония). Начало переговоров было положено 20 ноября 2012 года на саммите АСЕАН в Камбодже. Соглашение о создании ВРЭП было подписано в Ханое 15 ноября 2020 года. Его вступление в силу 1 января 2022 г. создало крупнейшую в мире зону свободной торговли.

²⁷⁸ Минэкономразвития: в 2024 году Россия и Камбоджа нарастили взаимный товарооборот на 8% // Минэкономразвития. 29.04.2025. URL: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/minekonomrazvitiya_v_2024_godu_rossiya_i_kambodzha_narastili_vzaimnyy_tovarooborot_na_8.html (accessed 20.05.2025).

implementation of long-term strategies. And those that would combine economic expediency and geopolitical complementarity. A significant drawback that Moscow has not been able to overcome at the moment is the sectoral asymmetry and, let's add, the extremely low level of economic cooperation. The legal foundations have certainly been laid, and the intergovernmental commission is working on an ongoing basis, but the volume of trade relations remains, frankly, catastrophically small. A total of 26.4 million US dollars is, you see, an indicator that is not comparable either with the potential of the countries or with the political will declared by both sides²⁷⁹.

What can change the situation? The conclusion of a free trade agreement with the EAEU seems to be a key factor. It will not only reduce tariff barriers, but also create a legal framework for cooperation in new areas such as the digital economy, green energy, and pharmaceuticals. The acceleration of the FTA negotiations, accompanied by the synchronization of technical standards and investment guarantees, may well attract Russian businesses to participate in infrastructure projects on Cambodian territory. For example, we are talking about the modernization of the deep-water port of Sihanoukville or the creation of "smart" agricultural clusters. The humanitarian dimension will also play a role: the expansion of student exchanges, joint research in the field of bioeconomics and adaptation to climate change — all this will gradually strengthen trust between the parties.

However, the success of these initiatives, we note in parentheses, will depend on the ability to overcome structural imbalances. First of all, economic asymmetry and competition with Chinese and Western investments (the latter, however, are more symbolic in the current conditions). In the medium term, the combination of niche specialization (agroexport, tourism, digitalization) with strategic infrastructure projects could form a more sustainable model of cooperation. One that will strengthen the positions of both countries in the context of fragmented global markets. The only question is whether there is enough political will and pragmatism to move from good wishes to systematic work.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

2.2. Investment projects in Cambodia and Russia

When assessing Cambodia as an investment partner of Russia, its deep integration into the ASEAN economic space should be taken into account. Significant liberalization has been achieved within the framework of the Agreement on Free Trade in Goods (ATIGA) - 98.6% of customs duties have been eliminated by 2020, which stimulated a sharp increase in mutual trade. According to Cambodia's national statistics, trade turnover with ASEAN increased 7-fold in 2003-2021, while according to partner countries, the increase was 16-fold²⁸⁰. There is a significant discrepancy in the figures (the gap reached \$ 13.67 billion in 2021)²⁸¹. It makes it difficult to accurately assess the role of the Association, although it retains the status of the second largest trading partner after China.

ASEAN membership has become an important catalyst for the influx of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the Cambodian economy. The volume of FDI shows steady growth - from \$7 million in 1993 to \$3.4 billion in 2021, and their share in GDP increased from 0.35% to 12.6%. ASEAN countries, especially Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand, rank second in terms of investment after China, although their share of total inflows has declined from 44% in 2003 to about 22% in 2021. The main areas of investment from the Association's countries are agriculture, the food and pharmaceutical industries, construction, the banking sector, and real estate²⁸².

Despite the relative decline in the share of ASEAN countries in the investment flow to 22.4% in 2023 (compared to 44% in 2003), due to the outpacing growth of Chinese investment, the bloc retains its position as the second largest investor. ASEAN partner countries consistently account for 20-21% of all accumulated investments in the Cambodian economy (Table 1).

Table 1.

²⁸⁰ ASEAN 2030: Growing Together for Economic Prosperity - the Challenges Cambodia Background Paper. CDRI, Phnom Penh, 2014. 235 p.

²⁸¹ ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2023 // ASEAN Secretariat. 2024. URL: <https://asean.org/book/asean-statistical-yearbook-2023/> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

²⁸² Экономика стран Юго-Восточной Азии / Под ред. В.М. Мазырина. М.: ИДВ, 2020. С. 37.

Dynamics and structure of accumulated investments in Cambodia in 2014-2023, USD billion

Country/group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ASEAN	4,38	4,82	5,56	6,11	7,08	7,78	8,05	8,99	9,47	9,87
	21,80	22,00	22,80	22,60	23,30	22,90	21,80	21,70	21,26	20,38
China	6,04	6,65	7,26	7,89	8,62	9,73	10,83	12,06	13,58	15,57
	30,10	30,40	29,80	29,20	28,30	28,60	29,30	29,30	30,49	32,16
Hong Kong	1,47	1,53	1,79	2,17	2,56	2,96	3,26	3,38	3,60	3,79
	7,30	6,90	7,30	8,00	8,40	8,70	8,80	8,20	8,08	7,83
Taiwan	1,21	1,31	1,41	1,59	1,75	1,96	2,10	2,46	2,63	2,62
	6,00	5,90	5,70	5,80	5,80	5,80	5,60	6,00	5,90	5,41
Republic of Korea	2,81	2,89	3,04	3,21	3,54	3,79	4,01	4,89	5,30	5,70
	14,00	13,10	12,40	11,80	11,60	11,10	10,80	11,90	11,90	11,77
Japan	0,98	1,18	1,30	1,52	1,84	2,02	2,18	2,43	2,71	2,99
	4,80	5,30	5,30	5,60	6,00	5,90	5,90	10,80	6,08	6,17
Total	20,06	21,90	24,37	27,04	30,36	33,98	36,90	41,02	44,54	48,42
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: ASEAN Stats Data Portal. URL: <https://data.aseanstats.org/fdi-by-hosts-and-sources-stock> (accessed: 02.08.2024).

Among the ASEAN countries, Singapore (29% of total investments from the region), Vietnam (27%) and Thailand (20%) are the leading investors in the Cambodian economy. The main areas of investment are the agro-industrial complex, the food and pharmaceutical industries, the construction industry and the production of building materials. The presence of banking capital is particularly noticeable in the service sector: «Malaysia's PayALLZ and Maybank, Vietnam's Vietcombank, Thailand's Kasikornbank and SCB are successfully operating in the country's financial market. In addition, ASEAN countries are actively investing in the real estate sector and individual infrastructure projects»²⁸³.

The policy of trade liberalization and economic openness has created the prerequisites for Cambodia's integration into regional production chains and global value creation systems. The growth of international trade and the influx of foreign

²⁸³ Пичкхун, П. Торгово-экономическое сотрудничество России и Камбоджи: тенденции и перспективы // Азия и Африка сегодня. 2025. № 10. С. 14-20.

direct investment contribute to the deepening of this process, creating new jobs and increasing the volume of domestic added value²⁸⁴.

In addition to construction and energy, the textile and clothing industries attract significant interest from foreign investors. It should also be noted that relatively small but strategically important projects in the light industry: The construction of a pyrotechnics factory by the Chinese company Jengshin International, as well as the creation, with Vietnamese participation, of enterprises for the production of paint and varnish products, processing meat products and processing cashew nuts.

The creation of special economic zones offering a range of preferential conditions has become an effective tool for attracting foreign investment. Investors are provided with:

- Preferential terms of lease of land plots, industrial premises and warehouse complexes;
- Government guarantees of investment protection and favorable conditions for reinvestment;
- Tax benefits, including exemption from income tax in the first years of operation, guarantees for the smooth transfer of income, tax holidays for reinvestment;
- Customs preferences for imported equipment and exported products;
- Priority provision of material and technical resources at discounted prices;
- Access to qualified local labor;
- Opportunities for technological transfer and the use of advanced know-how.

Foreign investors receive the right to long-term lease of land for the construction of industrial and administrative facilities. The territories of special economic zones have a special legal status with a regulated regime of movement and residence.

²⁸⁴ Фонтанье Ф. Торговля добавленной стоимостью (TIVA). ОЭСР. Молдова, 2018. URL: https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.20/2018/mtg3/NatWS/1.2_OECD_long_RU.pdf (accessed: 02.08.2024).

In December 2006, Cambodia ratified the agreement on the establishment of the fourteenth special economic zone in Sihanoukville. The location of such zones, mainly in areas bordering Thailand and Vietnam, has a dual purpose: attracting investments not only from developed countries, but also from neighboring countries, as well as unloading infrastructure facilities in the central regions. The specialization of the zones ranges from textile production to tourist and recreational services. The largest industrial zone Manhattan Svay Rieng, located six kilometers from the Vietnamese border, unites about thirty enterprises managed by Taiwanese specialists. After the European Union imposed anti-dumping duties on Chinese and Vietnamese shoes and bicycles, a bicycle factory focused on the European market and a shoe factory producing products for the Clark brand were launched here. These enterprises provide employment for the local population in a country where 300,000 young Cambodians enter the labor market every year²⁸⁵.

The kingdom's economic potential is limited by a set of structural problems. The key challenges remain weak economic diversification and high export concentration (five commodity items account for 80% of exports), significant import dependence, undeveloped and expensive infrastructure (the cost of electricity, communications and logistics is 2-3 times higher than neighboring indicators), low labor productivity and limited competitiveness of goods (102nd out of 127 in the economic index difficulties), as well as the pressure of cheap imports from neighboring countries, hindering the development of national industry.

Despite the existing restrictions, Cambodia offers Russian businesses a number of strategic prospects. Investing in the creation of production facilities provides unique access to the vast ASEAN market with minimal trade barriers, allowing the country to be used as an export platform to enter the region. The urgent need to modernize energy, transport, and digital infrastructure opens up significant opportunities for Russian companies with expertise in construction and engineering. Successful implementation of projects in this area can significantly reduce

²⁸⁵ Warr P., Menon J. Cambodia's special economic zones // *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*. 2016. P. 273-290.

transaction costs. Additional areas of cooperation include the development of energy, the introduction of modern agricultural technologies, the diversification of industry through the creation of enterprises in the chemical, pharmaceutical and machine-building industries, as well as the development of high technologies. It seems promising to participate in the financial sector and increase direct supplies of Russian products, with the potential use of Cambodia as a hub for re-export to ASEAN countries.

If we talk about resources, it is worth noting that the geological surveys conducted on the territory of Cambodia did not lead to the discovery of mineral reserves of industrial importance there. Only small deposits of minerals have been discovered: iron ore, some gold, copper, tin, and manganese in the north of the country.

Coal reserves, which are of industrial interest, are available only in the Talat region (Styngtraeng province). Other explored reserves of coking coal are considered unprofitable.

Nevertheless, the country has large reserves of raw materials for the glass, ceramic and construction industries: limestone, sandstone, basalt, clay, sand and gravel, marble, granite, as well as oil and natural gas in the areas of the shelf on the coast and Lake Tonlesan.

Precious and semiprecious stones have been discovered in Cambodia: sapphires, rubies, zircons, amethysts, garnet, and black amber. Their main deposits are located near Pailin in Battambang province and along the entire area from the Pailin-Samlot line to the Thai border. Large deposits of precious stones are located on the border with Vietnam²⁸⁶.

In the province of Pawsat (Trasaya district), there are deposits of marble, the quality of which allows it to be used not only as a building material, but also for decorative crafts. Marble reserves are estimated at about 70 thousand tons. In

²⁸⁶ Кампучия: Справочник. М.: Главная редакция восточной литературы издательства "Наука", 1985. С. 5-12.

addition, Cambodia has about 60 granite massifs suitable for industrial development (the largest Boiler in the Kravan Mountains).

Approximately half of the country's territory is covered with forests (more than 90 thousand square kilometers), which are divided into two main types: flooded (mangrove forest, flooded by the sea or floodplain forests on the shores of Lake Tonle Sap and Mekong) and forests located in the mountains and on elevated plains, that is, in areas receiving the most precipitation. Upland mountains are of the greatest economic importance. The Kravan and Dangtrek regions are covered with evergreen tropical moist forests with more than 1,000 different plant species. Among the variety, valuable species stand out: sal, red, sandalwood, rosewood²⁸⁷.

It should be noted that the resources available on the territory of Cambodia cannot be called rare and especially valuable for Russia, which can extract these resources from its own bowels.

Cooperation between Cambodia and Russia in the investment sphere is developing in various directions and demonstrates positive dynamics, despite certain challenges. In recent years, there has been a growing interest of Russian companies in participating in projects related to the real and innovative economy of the kingdom.

According to Russian experts, «Cambodia has opportunities to organize joint ventures in the following areas:

- construction of power plants;
- construction of power transmission lines;
- cultivation and processing of peanuts, soybeans, coconuts, medicinal plants, spices;
- construction of port facilities and transport communications;
- Fish and seafood processing in the districts of Kampogsaom and Kampot;
- Exploration and mining of precious stones and metals»²⁸⁸.

²⁸⁷ Tang Q., Li M. Analysis of Cambodia's macroeconomic development // E3S Web of Conferences. EDP Sciences. 2021. Vol. 235. P. 10-15.

²⁸⁸ Страны Индокитая в международном экономическом сотрудничестве: возможности и перспективы. М., 1993. С. 35.

At the end of 2007, the first major Russian investment project in Cambodia began to be implemented: the creation of a resort area on Koh Puos Island near Sihanoukville. The project was carried out by a group of Russian investors and was estimated at about \$300 million (which immediately placed Russia in 3rd place among foreign investors in Cambodia in 2007). This is a very long-term investment: according to the executive director of the Russian company, which has secured the right to lease the island for 99 years, it will take at least three years to build a resort area on the 120-hectare island. At the first stage, «the company intends to focus its main efforts on the construction of a bridge between the island and a section of the coast, which is also leased to it for 99 years»²⁸⁹.

Energy is one of the priority areas of cooperation. Both sides are discussing joint initiatives to develop gas infrastructure, modernize energy facilities, and introduce renewable energy sources. Cooperation in the agro-industrial sector is actively advancing: Russia has started supplying meat products, mineral fertilizers and veterinary drugs, and is also considering the possibility of deepening cooperation in the field of agricultural education and technology. Russian companies are interested in projects for the assembly of KAMAZ trucks, «the production of building materials, as well as the processing of agricultural waste into thermal insulation materials»²⁹⁰.

Considerable attention is paid to construction and infrastructure. Russian companies are interested in participating in major projects, including the construction of the new Techo International Airport in Kandal Province. In the field of telecommunications and digital technologies, Russian enterprises have already firmly established themselves: for example, Vimpelcom provides mobile communications and Internet services in Cambodia, and GS Group, in partnership

²⁸⁹ Russian Firm Inks \$300 Million Sihanoukville Deal // The Cambodia Daily. 2006. URL: <https://english.cambodiadaily.com/2006/09/28/russian-firm-inks-300-million-sihanoukville-deal/> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

²⁹⁰ Thang Sinorn. Russia Vows to Stimulate Investment into Cambodia // KIRI POST. 26 Oct 2023. URL: <https://kiripost.com/stories/russia-vows-to-stimulate-investment-into-cambodia> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

with the Cambodian side, has created One TV, a digital television operator that successfully operates in the local market.

Notable projects also include the promotion of Russian Sukhoi Superjet 100 regional aircraft. Negotiations on their delivery are underway with Cambodia's national airline, Cambodia Angkor Air. The presentation of the aircraft has already been held, and the parties express interest in developing cooperation in the aviation industry²⁹¹.

Currently, more than 16 Russian companies are involved in the development of investment projects in Cambodia, including JSC Russian Railways and Inter Rao energy Holding, KAMAZ, Orenburg Minerals, ELTEX, etc. As Dmitry Medvedev rightly emphasized, Russia has good prospects for investing in the construction of energy facilities, the supply of lifting equipment, drilling and mining tools. There are also opportunities for «the development of agriculture and the telecommunications sector»²⁹².

Russian companies are showing a growing interest in participating in Cambodia's energy and infrastructure projects. In particular, the possibilities of building small modular nuclear power plants and modernizing transport networks are being discussed. «Scientific and technical cooperation focuses on personnel training and the introduction of digital technologies, which is in line with Cambodia's long-term plans for the transition to a smart economy»²⁹³.

This is how Rosatom participates in cooperation with Cambodian contractors. For this purpose, they were signed in 2015. Memorandum of Understanding between the State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom and the National Council for Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Cambodia on the establishment of an Atomic Energy Information Center in the Kingdom of Cambodia, as well as a

²⁹¹ Kotoski, K. Russia and Cambodia look to increase investment // The Phnom Penh Post. 19.05.2016. URL: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/russia-and-cambodia-look-increase-investment> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

²⁹² Dmitry Medvedev held talks with Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen // The Russian Government. 17.05.2016. URL: <http://government.ru/en/all/23060/> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

²⁹³ Kenh S., Wei Q. Industrial impact analysis of foreign direct investment on economic development in Cambodia // Journal of Business and Socio-economic Development. 2025. Vol. 5. № 1. P. 20–36.

Memorandum of Understanding between the State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom and the National Council for Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Cambodia on the establishment of a joint Russian-Cambodian The Working Group on Cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy²⁹⁴.

At the same time, the real volume of investment flows remains moderate. At the same time, Russia and Cambodia are actively working to expand trade and investment ties, considering the possibility of implementing joint projects under various intergovernmental agreements. In January 2025, Cambodia's Development Council approved 68 investment projects totaling \$748 million, an increase of 300% over the previous year. Although most of the investments came from China, Russian companies are also actively involved in various sectors of the economy²⁹⁵.

Cambodia's external debt to Russia, amounting to about \$1.5 billion, remains one of the most difficult issues. These obligations were formed in the 1980s, when Cambodia received loans from the Soviet Union. The Cambodian side insists on full debt cancellation, while Russia offers «a more flexible approach: partial cancellation is possible as part of participation in the Paris Club of Creditors, the remaining amount can be restructured and directed to the implementation of joint investment projects»²⁹⁶.

It is worth noting that both sides demonstrate their willingness to deepen cooperation. Agreements have been signed aimed at protecting investors' rights and providing legal support for business activities. Cambodia, in turn, is interested in diversifying its economy and modernizing its infrastructure, which makes it an attractive platform for new Russian investments. One of the options for strengthening investment cooperation is the initiative to establish a Cambodian-Russian business council, which would help Russian firms interact with relevant

²⁹⁴ Российско-камбоджийские переговоры // Правительство России. 24 ноября 2015. URL: <http://government.ru/all/20698/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁹⁵ Cambodia to Strengthen Ties with Russia Via Strategic Cooperation Areas // SME. May 5, 2025. URL: <https://sme.asia/cambodia-to-strengthen-ties-with-russia-via-strategic-cooperation-areas/> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

²⁹⁶ Бектимирова Н.Н. Камбоджа в XXI в.: современные политические процессы. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT. 2016. 248 p.

Cambodian institutions, explore specific economic opportunities and establish partnerships with the Cambodian private sector.

Cambodia has expressed interest in attracting Russian companies to invest in agriculture, and Russia has indicated its readiness to increase supplies of fertilizers, feed, vaccines for livestock, pharmaceuticals, carbon black, special equipment, and energy carriers (LNG). The parties paid special attention to the role of special economic zones (SEZs) as a tool for deepening partnerships²⁹⁷.

Speaking about the institutional foundations of investment cooperation, it should be noted that during the negotiations between Dmitry Medvedev and Hun Sen in 2015, an important mechanism of interaction was created - the Russian-Cambodian High-level Working Group on Priority Investment Projects. At the same time, «a joint statement was signed by the economic departments of the two countries on the List of projects for trade, economic and investment cooperation until 2020»²⁹⁸.

According to the regulations, the Russian part of the Working Group is headed by the Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, and the Cambodian part is headed by the Minister of Trade of the Kingdom, Ban Sorasak. The first meeting at the Vice-Chairman level was held on March 28, 2016 in Phnom Penh, and the next meeting was scheduled for 2021 in the videoconference format²⁹⁹.

In September 2021, the parties held negotiations, during which an open dialogue took place between Russian businesses interested in entering the Southeast Asian markets and representatives of Cambodia's public and private sectors³⁰⁰. The

²⁹⁷ Минэкономразвития: в 2024 году Россия и Камбоджа нарастили взаимный товарооборот на 8% // Минэкономразвития. 29.04.2025. URL: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/minekonomrazvitiya_v_2024_godu_rossiya_i_kambodzha_narastili_vzaimny_tovarooborot_na_8.html (accessed 20.05.2025).

²⁹⁸ Российско-камбоджийские переговоры // Правительство России. 24 ноября 2015. URL: <http://government.ru/all/20698/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

²⁹⁹ Trade and economic relations // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/trade-economic-cooperation/> (accessed 20.05.2025).

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

participants discussed practical aspects of project implementation, taking into account national investment legislation and potential obstacles.

The meeting was attended by more than 80 representatives of companies and organizations from both countries, including heads of relevant ministries of the kingdom. Five Russian companies presented specific projects: KAMAZ, the organization of truck assembly, Orenburg Minerals, the creation of an enterprise for the production of building materials from chrysotile asbestos, Gazprom, the installation of incinerators for waste processing, Karboil, the production of thermal insulation materials from rice husks, and ELTEX, the use of telecommunications equipment. for building communication networks³⁰¹.

As Natalia Stapran, Director of the Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects at the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, noted: "We aim to open a new chapter in trade and investment cooperation with Cambodia and consider the format of the Working Group as a platform for open and substantive discussion of specific projects with the assistance of the Ministry"³⁰².

Investment cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is currently mostly limited to declarations of intent and negotiations, while the parties have not yet reached the practical implementation of joint projects. At the same time, this creates the basis for further progress towards the practical implementation of joint projects. So on November 9, 2025 Chairman of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko, congratulating Chairman of the Senate of the Kingdom Hun Sen on Cambodia's Independence Day, said that "Russia and Cambodia have long-standing friendly and respectful relations <...> Russian-Cambodian ties have significant potential for further development, the implementation of multifaceted projects and initiatives in

³⁰¹ Россия и Камбоджа определили совместные инвестпроекты до 2025 года // Made in Russia. 20.09.2021. URL: <https://madeinrussia.ru/ru/news/5758?ysclid=mht4p0lcli280663860> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁰² Россия и Камбоджа утвердили перечень перспективных инвестиционных проектов // Минэкономразвития России. 20.09.2021. URL: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/rossiya_i_kambodzha_utverdili_perechen_perspektivnyh_investicionnyh_proektov.html?ysclid=mht4m1qfzx483068234 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

the interests of the peoples of our countries"³⁰³. In other words, it can be noted that on a rhetorical level, the ruling circles are exchanging wishes to strengthen investment cooperation, however, the parties have not presented practical steps to implement this will.

Thus, the potential for investment cooperation between Russia and Cambodia remains high. Subject to the consistent implementation of the agreements reached and the successful settlement of debt and political issues, this vector of interaction can become an important element of the foreign economic policy of both countries. Despite the positive dynamics of recent years and mutual political interest, cooperation is hampered by barriers: historically modest volumes of trade and investment against the background of the dominance of China and the ASEAN countries, Russia's lack of preferential trade regime with Cambodia/ASEAN, the structural problems of the Cambodian economy, competition with Asian players, and the unresolved issue of Cambodia's external debt, requiring a flexible approach. The prospects depend on the ability of Russia and Cambodia to focus on competitive niches and develop institutional support to remove all barriers to a mutually beneficial investment partnership.

2.3. Military-technical relations between Russia and Cambodia

Southeast Asia continues to maintain its status as a key hub of global geopolitics, where the interests of leading international players intersect. The central challenge for the ASEAN states remains the strategic rivalry between China and the United States, which determines the development of both regional security and economic integration. The strengthening of Beijing's military and economic potential is of concern to a number of association members, including the Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore. At the same time, the relative weakening of the American position in the context of the confrontation with China encourages

³⁰³ Матвиенко: связи РФ и Камбоджи обладают потенциалом для реализации проектов // ТАСС. 09.11.2025. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/25573059> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

regional states to build new balances, developing cooperation with the powers of the so-called "second echelon" — Japan, India and Australia.

The destabilizing factor is the initiatives promoted by the United States, in particular the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS. These alliances, positioned as security mechanisms, receive mixed reviews. While Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines see them as a counterweight to China's growing influence, Cambodia and Malaysia express concern about their outspoken anti-Chinese orientation and the potential weakening of ASEAN's role. In particular, «AUKUS is criticized for a possible escalation of the arms race and undermining the nuclear nonproliferation regime»³⁰⁴.

An escalation of the confrontation in the waters of the South China Sea remains a significant threat to regional stability, where territorial disputes are escalating due to the large-scale militarization of China's artificially created island territories. This poses risks to the freedom of maritime communications and provokes retaliatory measures from the United States and its partners. Additional factors of instability are the deterioration of the environmental situation, as well as the gradual reduction of the American military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

ASEAN's response to these challenges is a policy of maintaining neutrality and avoiding a clear choice in favor of Washington or Beijing. The strategy of "balanced non-alignment", popular in Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia, reflects the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) Forum and the ARF, relying on multilateral dispute resolution procedures.

Thus, the complex of military and political threats in Southeast Asia requires maximum flexibility and balance from the ASEAN countries. Strengthening intraregional cohesion, developing multilateral dialogue platforms, and avoiding dependence on any one external partner remain key conditions for ensuring long-term stability.

³⁰⁴ The State of Southeast Asia: 2023 Survey Report // ASEAN Studies Centre at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. February 2023. URL: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/centres/asean-studies-centre/state-of-southeast-asia-survey/the-state-of-southeast-asia-2023-survey-report-2/> (accessed 13.04.2025).

Russia has some potential to help reduce regional confrontation through multilateral diplomacy and flexible approaches. Its traditional ties with China and India open up the opportunity to act as a neutral mediator, especially in the settlement of disputes in the South China Sea. To achieve this goal, it is advisable to step up work at the ARF and ADMM+ venues, as well as promote dialogue between ASEAN and non-regional states³⁰⁵.

Maintaining the principle of ASEAN—centricity - recognizing the central role of ASEAN in the architecture of regional security — can become the cornerstone of a balanced foreign policy course. The Russian Federation could contribute to strengthening institutions such as ADMM+ or the EAC, which would reduce the risks of domination by external forces and maintain a balance of interests.

Economic and technological partnership is also a promising area. The development of mutually beneficial initiatives in the fields of energy, infrastructure development and digitalization, especially with countries seeking to diversify external relations, can strengthen the regional positions of the Russian Federation.

In its military and diplomatic activities in Southeast Asia, Russia uses an integrated approach combining participation in multilateral structures and conducting joint military exercises. An important tool was the participation in the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting with Partners (CMOA+), where the Russian Federation was admitted in 2010. As part of this format, Moscow, acting as co-chair of the expert groups on military medicine (2014-2017) and mine clearance (2017-2020), is not only strengthening ties with regional states, but also demonstrating its technological capabilities. Joint maneuvers remain an important focus, including the multilateral counter-terrorism exercises in Myanmar with Cambodia (2023), as well as «the LAROS bilateral exercises with Laos and naval maneuvers with the Philippines and Myanmar»³⁰⁶.

³⁰⁵ Цветов П.Ю. Внешнеполитические приоритеты государств-членов АСЕАН в XXI веке // Актуальные проблемы международных отношений и внешней политики в XXI веке / Под ред. Т.В. Кашириной и В.А. Аваткова. Дипакадемия МИД РФ. М.: Дашков и К°, 2017. 411 с.

³⁰⁶ Storey I. Russia's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: A Tenuous Lead in Arms Sales but Lagging in Other Areas // ISEAS Perspective. 2021. №33. URL: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles->

According to experts, over the past decade, Russia has maintained significant arms exports to the region, mainly due to large-scale contracts with Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos. However, in the current decade, there has been a tendency for countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia to strengthen military-technical cooperation with the United States and European states. Non-market mechanisms play a significant role in this transformation, including the threat of sanctions under the CAATSA law. An illustrative example was «Indonesia's decision to abandon a deal to purchase 11 Su-35 fighter jets under American pressure»³⁰⁷.

Current trends in the Southeast Asian arms market - the growing demand for high-tech designs, the desire to localize production, strengthen the position of new exporters and maintain sanctions barriers - pose a number of challenges for Russia. This has already led to the loss of market positions in such segments as the supply of diesel-electric submarines, corvettes, combat training aircraft and missile weapons, which the countries of the region now purchase mainly from South Korea, European countries and China.

Under the conditions of sanctions pressure, Russia has stepped up the humanitarian direction of its foreign policy, paying special attention to mine clearance operations in Laos and educational programs for military personnel of the ASEAN countries. The Moscow Conference on International Security, which «regularly gathers delegates from Cambodia and other countries in the region, has become an additional platform for dialogue»³⁰⁸.

These formats of interaction have a complex impact on Russian-Cambodian relations. On the one hand, Cambodia's participation in multilateral exercises similar to the anti-terrorist maneuvers in Myanmar (2023), as well as the visit of the Russian warship Admiral Panteleev to the ports of the kingdom in the same year, indicate a

[commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-33russias-defence-diplomacy-in-southeast-asia-a-tenuous-lead-in-arms-sales-but-lagging-in-other-areas-by-ian-storey/](#) (accessed 13.04.2025).

³⁰⁷ Военно-техническое сотрудничество России с иностранными государствами: основы, проблемы и перспективы. Под ред. Н.И. Калининой. М.: ИМЭМО РАН, 2010. 283 с.

³⁰⁸ Колдунова Е.В. Военная дипломатия Японии, Китая и России в Юго-Восточной Азии: стратегии и тактика реализации // Японские исследования. 2024. № 1. С. 111–125.

deepening of military-political dialogue and the development of interoperability. On the other hand, for Cambodia, the partnership with Moscow serves as a tool for diversifying its foreign policy, allowing it to reduce dependence on Western states, especially in the context of pressure from the United States.

Cambodia highly appreciates cooperation with China and Vietnam in the field of defense policy and military-technical cooperation. «The current bilateral defense agreement with Vietnam provides for joint training of military personnel, protection of border territories, maritime patrols, as well as the search and exhumation of the remains of Vietnamese servicemen who died during the conflict with the Khmer Rouge regime»³⁰⁹. At the same time, ties with China are strengthening: the kingdom's armed forces are participating in the Sino-Cambodian Golden Dragon exercises and sending personnel to UN peacekeeping missions, reflecting the growing military integration with Beijing.

The Cambodian army remains heavily dependent on external aid and arms purchases, the main sources of which are China, South Korea and a number of Eastern European countries. The lack of a developed military-industrial base deprives the country of the opportunity to independently develop modern types of weapons, forming a steady dependence on foreign supplies. «The training of military specialists is partially funded by the PRC, but the lack of transparent information leaves open the question of the real operational potential of the Cambodian armed forces»³¹⁰.

The kingdom's relations with Western states, especially the United States, have been significantly eroded amid criticism of the government's domestic policies. Repressive measures against the opposition in the run-up to the 2018 elections, including the dissolution of the opposition party, led to the curtailment of military

³⁰⁹ Cambodia and Vietnam Have Undertaken Joint Naval Patrol // Cambodia Insider. 30.06.2020. URL: <https://en.khmerpostasia.com/2020/06/30/cambodia-and-vietnam-have-undertaken-joint-naval-patrol/> (accessed 13.04.2025).

³¹⁰ Евтодьева М.Г., Крамник И.А., Стефанович Д.В. Военно-техническое сотрудничество стран Юго-Восточной Азии / Отв. ред. Евтодьева М.Г. М.: ИМЭМО РАН, 2021. 147 с.

cooperation programs with Washington and the cancellation of joint exercises³¹¹. An additional point of tension was reports of a secret agreement with China granting Beijing access to the facilities of the Ream naval base and allowing construction on its territory. These steps were perceived by the American side as a challenge to regional security, which aggravated the crisis in bilateral relations³¹².

In the current conditions, «military-technical cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is developing at a slow pace and occupies a peripheral position in the structure of bilateral relations. Nevertheless, the parties continue to work on the formation of a legal framework for the development of cooperation in this area»³¹³.

The intergovernmental agreement on military-technical cooperation, signed in 1995, became the basis of cooperation. The document provided for the supply of weapons and military equipment, technical assistance in the production and modernization of special equipment. Execution of the agreement on the Russian side was entrusted to Rosvooruzhenie, on the Cambodian side to the relevant body of the Ministry of National Defense. «The agreement established the procedure for concluding contracts, confidentiality and a five-year validity period with automatic prolongation»³¹⁴.

A significant milestone was the visit of Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Ban to Russia in May 2016, which marked the beginning of a dialogue on military-technical partnership. The negotiations resulted in the signing of an intergovernmental agreement in September 2016, which provided for the renewal of

³¹¹ Thul P.C. China pledges over \$100 million military aid to Cambodia // Reuters. 19.06.2018. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-china-idUSKBN1JF0KQ> (accessed 13.04.2025).

³¹² Hunt L. Cambodia Says Naval Base Open For All, Not Just China // The Diplomat. 08.10.2020. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/cambodia-says-naval-base-open-for-all-not-just-china/> (accessed 13.04.2025).

³¹³ Пичкхун П. Военно-техническое сотрудничество России и Камбоджи в условиях геополитической конкуренции в Юго-Восточной Азии // Конфликтология. 2025. №. 3. С. 48-55.

³¹⁴ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о военно-техническом сотрудничестве // МИД РФ. 14.01.1995. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/47929/?ysclid=mht67j4kat134998781 (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

outdated Soviet equipment, the creation of service centers and the training of Cambodian specialists in Russian military educational institutions³¹⁵.

Cooperation was further developed in 2019 during a visit to Moscow by Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Cambodian Armed Forces Hun Manet³¹⁶. The established contacts with this politician acquired strategic importance after his appointment as Prime Minister of the country in 2023.

For Cambodia, the agreement provides access to modern Russian military technologies and technical support, allowing the modernization of the army based on proven Soviet and Russian-made equipment. Of particular importance are the creation of service centers and the training of national personnel, which reduces dependence on foreign specialists.

For Russia, «the partnership allows it to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia, while maintaining influence in a traditionally friendly country and opening up a long-term market for the Russian military-industrial complex. Provisions on confidentiality and technology protection strengthen strategic trust between countries»³¹⁷.

In 2024, «the parties signed a military agreement at the ground forces level for the first time»³¹⁸. The memorandum of Understanding was signed during the visit to Russia of Cambodian Army Commander Mao Sofan, who met with Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces Oleg Salyukov. Both sides confirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation.

According to the Cambodian representative, military relations with Russia will remain strong despite the Ukrainian crisis. Although Cambodia opposes

³¹⁵ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о военно-техническом сотрудничестве // МИД РФ. 17.05.2016. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/43617/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³¹⁶ Россия и Камбоджа подписали первое военное соглашение // Коммерсантъ. 24.06.2024. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6789363?ysclid=mht6jlec1o24029541> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³¹⁷ Пичкхун П. Военно-техническое сотрудничество России и Камбоджи в условиях геополитической конкуренции в Юго-Восточной Азии // Конфликтология. 2025. №. 3. С. 48-55.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

aggression, it adheres to the principle of non-discrimination and continues to cooperate with both Russia and Western countries. This position was confirmed by Cambodia's refusal to participate in the Swiss conference on Ukraine due to the absence of the Russian delegation, as «the country considers it necessary for all parties to the conflict to participate in the negotiations»³¹⁹.

In the structure of Russian military exports to ASEAN countries for the period 2018-2022, Cambodia accounted for only 10.6% of the total volume of supplies. This figure is significantly lower than the shares of Vietnam (54.9%) and Myanmar (41.7%)³²⁰, which collectively absorb over 88% of Russian arms supplies to the region. This disparity indicates the peripheral nature of defense cooperation with Cambodia.

The limited interaction is also reflected in its content. While joint projects are being implemented with Vietnam, including the organization of vaccine production and naval maneuvers, no significant military activities have been recorded with Cambodia³²¹. It should be borne in mind that Russia's military-technical cooperation with the ASEAN countries is developing mainly through bilateral ties, rather than in the format of working with the association as a whole, which «further limits Cambodia's role as a significant partner»³²².

The status of the strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and ASEAN, which has been proclaimed since 2016, is not supported by specific mechanisms that could stimulate cooperation with Cambodia. According to analytical estimates, this status retains a predominantly declarative character, since it is not provided with a system of mutual obligations or long-term joint plans. As a member of the Association, Cambodia focuses on relations with more influential

³¹⁹ Россия и Камбоджа подписали первое военное соглашение // Коммерсантъ. 24.06.2024. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6789363?ysclid=mht6jlec1o24029541> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³²⁰ Importer/Exporter TIV TABLES // SIPRI. URL: <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php> (accessed 13.04.2025).

³²¹ АСЕАН на пути интеграции: достижения, вызовы, дилеммы: Монография / Под ред. В.М. Мазырина и Е.В. Колдуновой. М.: Аспект Пресс. 2023. 608 с.

³²² Korolev A.S. Russia-ASEAN Relations—Strategic Partnership or Strategic Illusion? // Russia in Global Affairs. 2024. Vol. 22. № 3. P. 159-178.

powers such as China and the United States, which provide it with large-scale economic and military support.

Indirect pressure on cooperation is also exerted by the foreign policy circumstances that have developed since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine in 2022. The reduction of Russia's trade and economic contacts with the ASEAN countries, which resulted in a 15% decrease in trade turnover in 2022, probably also affected the military-technical sphere³²³. An additional deterrent is the lack of coordinated positions on fundamental international security issues, «including the Ukrainian crisis and the situation in the South China Sea, which undermines mutual trust and narrows opportunities for deepening dialogue»³²⁴.

The tightening of the sanctions regime after 2022 creates obstacles to the implementation of large-scale military-technical cooperation projects, prompting Cambodia, like Vietnam, to exercise caution when purchasing military equipment. At the same time, participation in such formats as joint exercises and humanitarian operations allows Russia to position itself as a factor of regional stability, and Cambodia to strengthen its international authority. Such contacts form the basis for the potential development of a closer strategic partnership in the future, although its prospects directly depend on the geopolitical situation and Moscow's ability to overcome sanctions restrictions.

An analysis of the problem in this paragraph allows us to conclude that the military-technical cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is limited but strategically significant. Despite the relatively small volume of arms supplies and the absence of major joint projects, both sides strive to maintain a stable political and military dialogue. Russia views Cambodia as a friendly partner in Southeast Asia, through which it can strengthen its presence in the region and maintain an Asean-centric security balance. For Cambodia, cooperation with Russia serves as a

³²³ Trade in Goods (IMTS). ASEAN Stats Data Portal. 2024. URL: <https://data.aseanstats.org/trade-annually> (accessed 13.04.2025).

³²⁴ Мосяков Д.В., Астафьева Е.М. Реакция стран Юго-Восточной Азии на проведение Россией специальной операции на территории Украины // Восточная аналитика. 2022. №2. С. 10-21.

tool for diversifying foreign policy ties and modernizing the armed forces while maintaining the principle of neutrality between the great powers.

At the same time, the influence of external factors — sanctions pressure, competition from China, South Korea and Western countries, as well as Cambodia's limited economic resources — hinders the development of cooperation. Nevertheless, humanitarian projects, military training, and participation in multilateral formats create the potential for a gradual strengthening of bilateral ties. In the long term, the prospects of the Russian-Cambodian military-technical partnership will depend on the parties' ability to adapt to the changing geopolitical situation and find a balance between political risks and mutual interests.

An analysis of trade, investment, and military-technical ties between Cambodia and the Russian Federation has shown that cooperation between the two countries has a stable institutional base, but its scale and practical content remain limited. Despite the significant growth of the Cambodian economy and the country's active integration into the ASEAN regional structures, trade and economic relations are asymmetrical, characterized by a narrow range of goods and weak diversification.

Investment cooperation between the Russian Federation and Cambodia demonstrates positive trends, but its potential has only been partially realized. The implementation of a number of major projects in the energy, infrastructure, and telecommunications sectors indicates the parties' interest in expanding cooperation, but significant barriers remain due to Cambodia's debt obligations to Russia, the limited presence of Russian capital in the region, and competition from China and the ASEAN countries. Nevertheless, the formation of bilateral working groups, the holding of meetings of the intergovernmental commission and the preparation of new investment protection agreements create the basis for further development of the partnership.

Military-technical cooperation between Russia and Cambodia has symbolic significance, reflecting the political support and desire of the parties to strengthen trust in the security sector. The signed agreements and memoranda provide the legal

basis for the possible modernization of the Cambodian armed forces, but the actual volume of cooperation remains modest.

CHAPTER 3. CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN ASPECT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

3.1. Cooperation in the field of education

Educational cooperation between Russia and Cambodia began shortly after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956. The Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation made a significant contribution to the formation of Cambodia's modern educational and scientific system. Graduates of Soviet and Russian universities have played a key role in the development of the country's economy, healthcare and education. According to reports, «more than 8,000 Cambodians, including three members of the current government and numerous deputy ministers, were educated in the USSR and Russia»³²⁵.

It can be clarified that both during the Soviet era and at the present time Cambodia acts as a recipient in educational relations with Russia. Therefore, in order to analyze the specifics of this cooperation, it is advisable to generally characterize Russia as a destination for study in the ASEAN member countries.

The sphere of education in the Russian Federation has the status of one of the key directions of the state social policy. In accordance with the national Education project, an ambitious goal has been set to become one of the ten world leaders in the quality of educational services. Achieving leading global positions in this field is impossible without the active involvement of Russian higher education in the processes of globalization and internationalization. In this regard, the national project formulated, among other things, the task of increasing the number of foreign students in Russian universities: from 241 thousand in 2019 to 425 thousand by

³²⁵ Минобрнауки России определяет векторы сотрудничества с профильными ведомствами Камбоджи // Минобрнауки РФ. 05.04.2024. URL: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/81255/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

2024³²⁶, and subsequently this figure was revised upward to 710 thousand by 2025³²⁷.

Historically, «the main suppliers of applicants for the Russian higher education system have been the states of the former Soviet Union, China and India. However, in recent years, efforts to promote Russian educational programs in other geographical areas have intensified»³²⁸.

One of these promising regions is considered to be Southeast Asia, which combines two key factors that make it a priority market for educational services. This is a significant demographic potential, as well as a high unmet demand for high-quality higher education, which national university systems cannot fully provide due to a number of economic and social constraints.

Southeast Asia is characterized by exceptionally favorable demographic trends. The region's population is relatively young: the proportion of residents under the age of 24 exceeds the global average (41.6% versus 40.9%). Despite the general trend towards aging, «the proportion of youth under the age of 24 will remain significant until 2050 and will significantly outpace the indicators of developed countries: 31.9% is projected against 25.3% in the group of developed countries»³²⁹.

Taking into account the specifics of the topic under study – the potential of educational migration – the author focuses on a cohort of the population aged 15 to 24 years. It is this group (high school students nearing graduation, as well as undergraduate and graduate students) that is most active in finding opportunities to

³²⁶ Паспорт федерального проекта «Экспорт образования». URL: http://www.eduportal44.ru/deko/NPO1/FP-Eksport_ obrazovaniya.pdf (дата обращения: 13.02.2022).

³²⁷ Паспорт приоритетного проекта «Развитие экспортного потенциала российской системы образования». URL: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/DkOXerfvAnLv0vFKJ59ZeqTC7ycl5HV.pdf> (дата обращения: 13.02.2022).

³²⁸ Арефьев А.Л. Обучение иностранных граждан в образовательных организациях высшего образования Российской Федерации: Статистический сборник. Выпуск 16 / Министерство науки и высшего образования Российской Федерации. М.: Центр социологических исследований. 2019. 208 с.

³²⁹ Рязанцев С.В., Кузнецов Н.Г. Демографический потенциал стран Юго-Восточной Азии в контексте образовательной политики России // Известия Саратовского университета. Новая серия. Серия: Социология. Политология. 2022. Т. 22. Вып. 1. С. 23–30.

study abroad. Its representatives are young, mobile, and less often burdened with family obligations (which often act as a deterrent to educational migration, since academic visas in many countries do not automatically provide for the right to family reunification), which allows them to be considered a key target audience for promoting Russian education.

Although the average age of an educational migrant may be higher, the process of searching for and preparing for study abroad begins much earlier – several years may pass between making a fundamental decision and moving directly. Therefore, it is strategically correct to target the audience, starting from high school. Of course, international students over the age of 24 (postgraduates, students of second higher education and master's degree programs) They also play an important role in international academic mobility. However, from the point of view of demographic analysis, the expansion of the study cohort to 30 years and older can lead to a significant distortion of the real picture.

Based on the above, a target age group of 15 to 24 years was identified to assess the effectiveness of promoting Russian education abroad. When developing long-term forecasts, the authors also take into account the category of children under the age of 15 who will generate additional demand for higher education in the future. For this reason, when analyzing demographic potential, summary data on the number and proportion of children and youth (age range from 0 to 24 years) are provided, which makes it possible to take into account both current potential applicants and those cohorts who will reach student age in the foreseeable future.

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote educational services in the region, the Russian Federation provides citizens of Southeast Asian countries with a certain number of budget scholarships to study at domestic universities. This system sets quotas for each recipient country based on the level of bilateral relations, the staffing needs of joint projects and the number of incoming applications from applicants. There has been a consistent increase in government funding: if 15,000 quotas were distributed annually until 2020, their number increased to 18,000 in 2021, «23,000

international students were scheduled to be invited in 2022, and starting in 2023, the annual quota was set at 30,000»³³⁰.

The table below analyzes the ratio of the demographic potential of the Southeast Asian countries and the number of educational grants allocated by Russia for this region in 2021. It should be noted that the table takes into account only quotas distributed through Rossotrudnichestvo. It is important to understand that the scholarship system also includes direct contracts between Russian universities and educational institutions in the region. Such cooperation is usually based on bilateral academic exchange agreements or on the model of creating additional budget places: when concluding a contract for the education of a certain group of students (for example, through financing from the sending party), large Russian universities open an equivalent number of budget places for citizens of the partner country at their own expense. However, this form of cooperation is typical only for States with a high level of educational integration. In addition, collecting reliable statistics on such contracts is fraught with practical difficulties. The combination of these circumstances determines that it is legitimate to use only data on quotas distributed at the intergovernmental level for the initial assessment of the effectiveness of scholarship policy.

The largest countries in the region in terms of total population (including youth) are Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. However, an analysis of the distribution of educational quotas indicates a certain shift in the priorities of Russian policy – Vietnam, which has a long history of cooperation with the USSR and Russia, received over 70% of all quotas allocated to Southeast Asian countries in 2021. «Relatively active work is underway in Indonesia (161 quotas), where, in addition, there is a high interest of the local population in education in Russia (602 applications), as well as in Laos (93 quotas) and Thailand (50 quotas)»³³¹.

³³⁰ Письменная Е.Е. и др. Россия на рынке образовательных услуг стран Юго-Восточной Азии: возможности и перспективы // Вопросы управления. 2022. №. 3 (76). С. 64.

³³¹ Письменная Е.Е. и др. Россия на рынке образовательных услуг стран Юго-Восточной Азии: возможности и перспективы // Вопросы управления. 2022. №. 3 (76). С. 65.

The final column of the table shows relative indicators – the number of quotas per 1 million potential consumers – young people aged 15-24 years. If we do not take into account Brunei (due to the insignificance of absolute values in terms of population and quotas), then the regional average is exceeded only by data for Vietnam (76.1 quotas per 1 million youth) and Laos (66.4).

Table 2.

Information on the population of Southeast Asian countries and the quotas allocated by Russia for education

State	Population, million people	Population is 15-24 years old, thousand people	Quotas for studying in the Russian Federation	Quota applications	Quotas for 1 million people aged 15-24 years
Brunei	0,5	68	2	3	29,4
Cambodia	15,7	2970	16	7	5,4
Indonesia	275,1	46132	161	602	3,5
Laos	7,5	1401	93	47	66,4
Malaysia	32,8	5473	30	19	5,5
Myanmar	55,5	9863	8	14	0,8
Philippines	110,2	20708	6	14	0,3
Singapore	5,7	636	0	0	0
Thailand	66,7	9052	50	64	5,5
East Timor	1,3	287	1	0	3,5
SRV	100,2	13134	1000	1204	76,1
ASEAN	671	109724	1367	1947	12,5

Source: Письменная Е.Е. и др. Россия на рынке образовательных услуг стран Юго-Восточной Азии: возможности и перспективы // Вопросы управления. 2022. №. 3 (76). С. 60-75.

As it can be noted, Cambodia, like other Southeast Asian countries, has significant demographic potential for educational migration. With a population of about 15.7 million people, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 is about 3 million, which creates a steady demand for high-quality higher education. The main factors that make Russia an attractive destination for Cambodian students are the following. First, it is a direct financial incentive. Russia provides Cambodia with quotas for free tuition at Russian universities at the expense of the federal budget. In 2021, 16 such quotas were allocated. Secondly, the key "pushing" factors out of the region, confirmed by a survey of Vietnamese youth, are the higher quality of education and the demand for graduates abroad compared to national systems. These

rational reasons are complemented by aspects such as the perception of Russia as a country with modern, comfortable living conditions, rich culture, and ample leisure opportunities.

As for the promotion of educational cooperation, the main instrument of Russian policy is the scholarship program implemented through Rossotrudnichestvo. However, its effectiveness in the case of Cambodia is still limited. Data for 2021 show that, «with the allocation of 16 quotas, only 7 applications from applicants were submitted»³³². This indicates that the quota policy alone is insufficient without active information support. The statistics on the number of students in Russia also show modest results: «between 2014 and 2018, 52 to 89 Cambodian citizens studied at Russian universities, which in relative terms is about 3-5 students per 1 million population of the country – one of the lowest rates in the Southeast Asian region»³³³.

To increase the flow of students from Cambodia, it is necessary to adjust the promotion strategy. The study offers a number of recommendations applicable to the Cambodian destination. These include, first of all, the strengthening of information work: the active dissemination of information about educational opportunities in Russia through embassies, partner universities and digital channels. An important step is to facilitate the administrative procedures for admission and visa processing for foreign applicants. In addition, a key incentive may be the development of graduate employment programs, including the creation of institutional conditions for them to work in Russia after graduation, as well as the formation of an economic sector in Cambodia linked to Russia and interested in specialists with Russian diplomas.

Russia has significant, but not yet fully realized, potential to attract students from Cambodia. The existing quota system creates a foundation for cooperation, but its effective implementation requires an integrated approach that combines

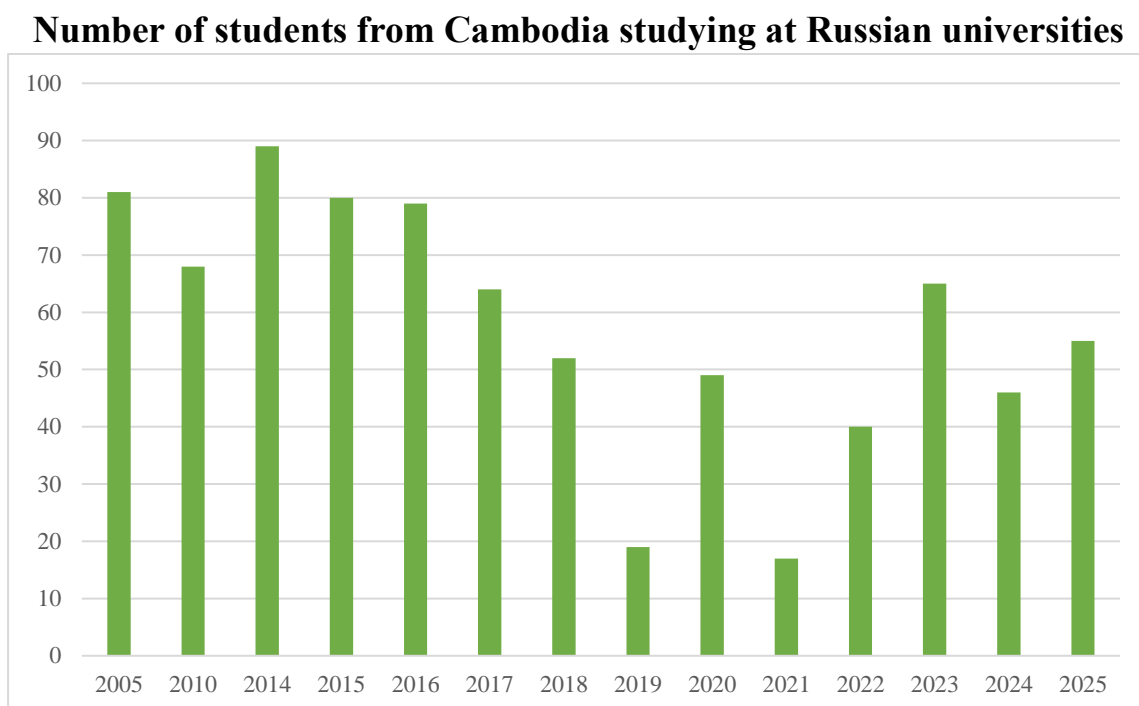
³³² Сычев А.А., Фофанова К.В. Образовательная дипломатия: формирование новой модели (на примере взаимодействия России и Юго-Восточной Азии) // Интеграция образования. 2025. Т. 29. №. 4. С. 610-625.

³³³ Ibid.

information support, the removal of bureaucratic barriers, and the creation of clear career prospects for graduates both in Russia and in their home country.

If we talk about the number of students from Cambodia, it is worth noting that the number of student quotas has never been static (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3.



Source: Россотрудничество. URL: <https://education-in-russia.com/education-in-russia/monitoring> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Employees of the representative office of Rossotrudnichestvo in Cambodia (known as the "Russian House" in Phnom Penh) organized a working visit to Kampot province. During the trip, consultations were held with representatives of scientific and academic circles, during which the possibilities of obtaining higher education in Russian universities for citizens of the kingdom were explained in detail. "The Education in Russia project has been implemented in Cambodia for the third year in a row. We introduce potential applicants to the benefits of government programs to support international students, assist in applying for admission within

quotas, and provide information about Russia's leading universities," said I. Tsatsulina³³⁴.

As part of the dialogue with the Deputy Director of the Regional Polytechnic Institute of Kampot Province, Neak Nan, options for joint work on career guidance for students were discussed. "For more than four decades, Russia has been providing Cambodian citizens with the opportunity to study under quotas free of charge, which is evidence of a successful and long—term partnership. Special emphasis is placed on training in engineering and technical areas, and it is extremely important for us to attract applicants from different cities of the country," emphasized the head of the representative office³³⁵. She added that after the working visits of the center's staff to Siem Reap and Battambang, applications from graduates from these provinces have already been registered on the official portal of the department.

Currently, 65 Cambodian citizens are receiving education at the expense of the federal budget of the Russian Federation, who are studying such specialties as engineering, architecture, biotechnology, construction and medicine. "Our students are distributed among universities from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok. Their academic credits also include the universities of Tula and Moscow, Ufa and Tomsk," said the head of the representative office³³⁶.

For the 2023/2024 academic year, a «quota of 40 places has been set for Cambodian applicants. Additionally, two educational grants have been allocated through MGIMO and six from the State Corporation Rosatom»³³⁷.

In June 2019, Cambodian delegates took part in the III International BRICS and SCO Student Spring Festival in Stavropol and the All-Russian Far Eastern

³³⁴ Студенты из Камбоджи хотят учиться в России // Русский мир. 26.05.2025. URL: <https://ruskiymir.ru/news/336426/?ysclid=mhum8uwjk3595521819> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ В Русском доме в Камбодже прошла встреча со студентами, направляющимися на учебу в Россию // ТАСС. 03.08.2023. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/18434841?ysclid=lvpkihhk6h584259628> (дата обращения 10.03.2024).

³³⁷ В Камбодже отметили заинтересованность в расширении связей с РФ в образовании // ТАСС. 25.05.2025. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24040535> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Forum Vostok in Vladivostok. On October 22, 2019, during negotiations between the head of Rosmolodezh, A.V. Bugaev, and the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia, Hang Chuonaron, «a memorandum of understanding and cooperation in the field of youth policy was signed»³³⁸.

In addition, in 2019 «the parties have adopted an important document for educational cooperation, the Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Education, Qualifications and Academic Degrees»³³⁹.

The Agreement clearly defines its purpose — to provide holders of educational documents and academic degrees with access to continuing education or professional activity in another country. It applies to documents issued by accredited educational institutions in both countries, and its provisions are retroactive and apply to documents received before its entry into force.

A key element of the Agreement is a direct comparison of education levels and qualifications. It prescribes in detail the equivalence of educational levels. In particular, the general secondary education in Russia is recognized as comparable to the secondary education in Cambodia, which gives the right to enter universities. Secondary vocational education in Russia is equivalent to an associate degree in Cambodia, and bachelor's, specialist's, and master's degrees from one country entitle students to continue their studies at graduate and postgraduate levels in another. Of particular importance is the provision on the recognition of comparable academic degrees of Candidate of Sciences in Russia and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Cambodia, which opens the way for academic and professional activities.

The Agreement establishes specific mechanisms for the implementation of these principles. The Parties undertake to exchange complete information about their educational systems, sample documents and lists of specialties. A joint committee of experts is being established to resolve controversial issues and interpret the

³³⁸ Россия и Камбоджа договорились о взаимном признании дипломов и ученых степеней // Минобрнауки. 2019. URL: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/main/23289/>

³³⁹ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о взаимном признании образования, квалификаций и ученых степеней. 21.10.2019. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/563664623> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

provisions of the document. At the same time, the Agreement contains an important clarification: the recognition of a document does not exempt its owner from fulfilling other requirements of the host country, such as passing entrance exams, confirming language proficiency or obtaining a work permit in regulated professions.

For students and applicants, the Agreement opens the door to a simplified and transparent continuation of education. A graduate of a Cambodian school receives a clearly defined right to enter a Russian university, and a Russian bachelor's degree gets a master's degree in Cambodia, which removes uncertainty about the recognition of their diplomas.

For scientists and researchers, this means official recognition of their qualifications. Candidates of sciences from Russia and Doctors of Philosophy from Cambodia receive employment opportunities at universities and research centers in another country, as well as participation in joint research projects.

For specialists, the agreement creates a legal basis for access to the labor market. Subject to migration and labor laws, a diploma recognized in accordance with the Agreement gives its holder the formal right to apply for a job in a specialty in another country, significantly reducing bureaucratic barriers.

In a broader sense, the Agreement encourages academic mobility and deepens bilateral cooperation. It creates a solid foundation for the development of joint educational programs, double degree programs and scientific partnerships between universities. By increasing transparency and predictability, it makes education in both countries more attractive to each other.

A dialogue is developing between the academic circles of the two countries. Memoranda of understanding were signed between the Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAS) and the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), the Institute of Modern China and Asian Countries of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of International Relations of the RAS. On the sidelines of the 11th Moscow Conference on International Security (August 13-16, 2023), «President of the Royal

Academy Sokol Tuch met with the leadership of the Russian Academy of Sciences»³⁴⁰.

Relations with MGIMO are actively developing: in October 2014, Cambodian graduates of this university participated in celebrations on the occasion of its 70th anniversary and in the Second Alumni Forum in Moscow. A year later, Cambodian Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Hang Chuon Naron attended the Third MGIMO Alumni Forum in Yerevan. On October 12-16, 2017, Cambodia's Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Hang Chuon Naron, was on a working visit to the Russian Federation. During the trip, «he took part in an international meeting of heads of departments responsible for youth policy, and also visited the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the Russian State Agrarian University»³⁴¹.

In June 2018, representatives of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO, headed by Director V.V. Sumsky, paid a visit to Phnom Penh. In February 2019, «a delegation from the National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia, led by its President, Chiv Iseng, paid a return visit to MGIMO, during which a bilateral memorandum of cooperation was signed»³⁴².

During a working visit to Phnom Penh in April 2024, the Russian delegation of the Ministry of Education and Science held a number of meetings with Cambodian departments. The delegation included representatives of St. Petersburg University, the Pushkin Institute and a number of academic institutions. The training of personnel in Russian universities, academic mobility and the importance of language education, including teaching Khmer in Russia, were discussed with the Ministry of Education of Cambodia. We talked with the National University of Battambang about training specialists in the field of IT and nuclear physics, and the

³⁴⁰ О встрече Посла России с президентом Королевской академии Камбоджи // МИД РФ, 2024. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1970440/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁴¹ Визит заместителя госсекретаря Министерства образования, молодежи и спорта Камбоджи // МГИМО. 2025. URL: https://asean.mgimo.ru/news/2025/vaddhana?ysclid=ml7v5sj3bn497841593&utm_source=ya.ru&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ya.ru&utm_referrer=ya.ru (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁴² Ibid.

Russian side proposed cybersecurity programs. Agreements have been reached with the Ministry of Tourism on programs for tourism industry personnel with practice in Russia. Scientific cooperation in such areas as agriculture, smart cities and biotechnology, as well as the initiative to open a Russian Language Center, were discussed with «the Royal Academy and the Ministry of Industry. In addition, Russian institutes have proposed to conduct joint environmental studies and expeditions on the Mekong River»³⁴³.

The Russian Center for Science and Culture operates in Phnom Penh, which hosts cultural, educational and educational events.

Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Mani, during a meeting with Irina Tsatsulina, Head of the Rossotrudnichestvo representative Office in Phnom Penh in May 2025, stressed the importance of educational cooperation with the Russian Federation for his country. The Deputy Prime Minister gave a positive assessment to the humanitarian initiatives implemented by the Russian House, including support for orphaned children and gifted youth. «The importance of the work of the representative office for the promotion of the Russian language in Cambodia was also highlighted»³⁴⁴.

In preparation for the 2026-2027 academic year, Russia will once again provide Cambodian citizens with quotas for secondary vocational education in several dozen specialties. As explained by I. Tsatsulina, the program revives the successful experience of the Soviet period, when such educational initiatives had already demonstrated their effectiveness.

As I. Tsatsulina emphasized, "we have managed to increase the number of quota places three and a half times — from 16 in 2019 to 55 in 2025. At the same time, the competition continues to grow: in 2024, 20 applicants applied for one place. The most popular among Cambodian students are medical, engineering and

³⁴³ Минобрнауки России определяет векторы сотрудничества с профильными ведомствами Камбоджи // Минобрнауки РФ. 05.04.2024. URL: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/81255/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁴⁴ Студенты из Камбоджи хотят учиться в России // Русский мир. 26.05.2025. URL: <https://ruskiymir.ru/news/336426/?ysclid=mhum8uwjk3595521819> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

construction specialties, IT technologies, as well as educational programs of the Rosatom State Corporation"³⁴⁵.

She also informed about the conclusion of memorandums of cooperation with universities of the provinces of Bantei Meanchey, Battambang and Prey Laing. "It is especially encouraging to see the concrete results of this work: for the first time in 25 years, teachers from the Russian University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Kolomna are conducting Russian language classes for students of the National University of Bantei Meanchey Province"³⁴⁶, the representative of Rossotrudnichestvo emphasized.

The educational cooperation between Russia and Cambodia, which has more than half a century of history, currently retains the dynamics of progressive development and strategic importance for both sides. Over the years of cooperation, a solid institutional and legal framework has been created, including an agreement on mutual recognition of education and academic degrees, as well as a number of memoranda between leading scientific and educational institutions of the two countries.

Russia continues to be Cambodia's most important partner in training qualified personnel, primarily in the engineering, medical, and IT fields. The gradual increase in the number of allocated quotas — from 16 in 2019 to 55 in 2025 - indicates the growing interest of Cambodian youth in studying at Russian universities and the effectiveness of measures taken to promote domestic education. At the same time, further development of cooperation requires an integrated approach, including active information work, improvement of academic mobility mechanisms and creation of conditions for professional self-realization of graduates both in Russia and Cambodia.

Thus, Russian-Cambodian cooperation in the educational sphere can be described as a promising area of humanitarian partnership, strengthening bilateral

³⁴⁵ В Камбодже отметили заинтересованность в расширении связей с РФ в образовании // ТАСС. 25.05.2025. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24040535> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁴⁶ Там же.

ties, contributing to the formation of human capital and serving as a foundation for expanding scientific, technical and cultural cooperation between the two states.

3.2. Cultural contacts and connections

Relations between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Cambodia in the educational and cultural fields remain positive and demonstrate potential for further development. Among the favorable factors stimulating this process is the strengthening of Russia's international authority, as well as the growing interest in practical cooperation from both Cambodian political and public circles and ordinary citizens.

Cooperation between Russia and Cambodia in the field of culture is based on a contractual and legal framework that began to develop in the 1990s. Thus, in 1995, an intergovernmental Agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation was signed, followed by the implementation of an intergovernmental cultural exchange program in the 2000s, and interaction was carried out at the interdepartmental level.

This agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia is a comprehensive document that «establishes the legal framework for long-term and multifaceted cooperation in the humanitarian and scientific fields»³⁴⁷. It is an updated version of the Soviet-Cambodian agreement of 1980, which marks the continuity and transition to a new stage of relations between the two countries.

The Agreement establishes specific mechanisms and areas of cooperation. In the field of science and education, this includes the exchange of scientists, students, publications and the creation of a joint scientific and technical center in Phnom Penh. In the field of culture and art, tours of collectives, exhibitions and joint work on the preservation of cultural heritage are provided. Cooperation in the field of media,

³⁴⁷ Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа о культурном и научном сотрудничестве // МИД РФ. 25.05.2025. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1720489/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

book publishing, cinematography, sports, tourism and even healthcare, including the exchange of medical specialists, is spelled out separately. Special attention is paid to the development of youth exchanges and regional ties.

To achieve these goals, the agreement opens up wide opportunities for citizens and organizations of both countries. Scientists and teachers get access to internships and joint research, students get access to exchange programs, and cultural figures get access to new audiences and joint projects. Publishers and filmmakers can translate and co—produce content, while sports and tourism organizations can develop joint events and specialized tours. The main opportunity created by the agreement is the formation of a solid "humanitarian cushion" that deepens mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of Russia and Cambodia, which creates favorable ground for the development of relations in other areas.

A significant part of cultural interaction is concentrated in the field of cinematographic cooperation. In the summer of 2007, a documentary feature film created by the St. Petersburg Documentary Film Studio (working title "Rainy Season") was shot on the territory of Cambodia. After a competitive selection process at the Federal Ministry of Culture, this project was awarded national status. In September of the same year, the official delegation of the Department of Cinematography of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia took part in the V International Film Festival of the Asia-Pacific region "Pacific Meridians" in Vladivostok. In December 2008, «a screening of Russian-made films was held in Phnom Penh, organized with the support of the Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography»³⁴⁸.

In September 2008, in Phnom Penh, the parties signed a Memorandum extending the intergovernmental Cultural Exchange Program (designed for 2006-2008) until December 31, 2010³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁸ Российско-камбоджийские связи в сферах образования и культуры // МИД РФ. 05.05.2009. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1728167/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁴⁹ Меморандум о продлении срока применения Программы культурных обменов между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Королевства Камбоджа на 2006-2008 годы. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/499045565?ysclid=ml7v92wmb9586624720> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Direct contacts between the capitals of the two states are developing. In 2005, Phnom Penh Governor Kaep Chotama paid an official visit to Moscow³⁵⁰.

As you can see, relations between Russia and Cambodia in the humanitarian sphere are developing consistently through the conclusion of bilateral agreements of various profiles. In 2005, the relevant departments of the two countries signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of sports. A year later, a cultural exchange program was approved. There is more to come: in 2013, an agreement was signed between the Royal Academy of Cambodia and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and in 2016, between the technological universities of both countries. Special attention has been paid to tourism on several occasions: relevant joint action programmes were adopted in 2015 and 2017³⁵¹.

A landmark event, without a doubt, was the visit of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to Cambodia in November 2015. Then, among other things, they signed memorandums of understanding in the field of culture and healthcare. In May 2016, Prime Minister Hun Sen paid a return visit to Russia, which resulted in an agreement on cooperation between the Olympic Committees of the two countries³⁵².

Cultural ties are actively maintained through the exchange of delegations and participation in international events. In 2014, Cambodian dancers successfully performed at a music festival in Krasnoyarsk; representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom, in turn, participated in the ASEM conference and the cultural forum in St. Petersburg. In the following years, Cambodian delegations continued to regularly participate in various Russian international forums — legal, women's, and public diplomacy events³⁵³.

In the fall of 2015, as part of the Russia–ASEAN Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund project, language courses were organized in Siem Reap for thirty

³⁵⁰ Российско-камбоджийские связи в сферах образования и культуры // МИД РФ. 05.05.2009. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1728167/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁵¹ Российско-камбоджийские отношения // МИД РФ, URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Песня, спетая всем миром // НКК. 07.07.2014. URL: <https://gnkk.ru/articles/pesnya-spetaya-vsem-mirom-2/?ysclid=mi0kd2muc8633939148> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

employees of travel companies from the Association's countries. Currently, the possibility of conducting a similar educational program in the Kingdom is reportedly being explored (as early as this year).

In December 2015, Russian artists visited Cambodia as part of the ASEAN Countries through the Eyes of Russian Artists project. At the same time, they met with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

On May 18-20, 2016, Sochi hosted the Russia–ASEAN Anniversary Summit dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the partnership dialogue. A meeting of the heads of cultural departments of Russia and the member states of the Association was held within its framework. In particular, Cambodia's Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, Ferng Sakona, participated. The First Russia–ASEAN International Cultural Festival, where creative teams from Cambodia performed, was also included in the program of the summit.

On October 28-30, 2016, as part of the Russia—ASEAN "cross-border" Year of Culture, the Days of Russian Culture were organized in Phnom Penh³⁵⁴. The program of the opening ceremony included concerts, master classes in ballet dancing, vocals and playing musical instruments, as well as a photo exhibition "Nature of the Russian North". The event was attended by the same Minister Ferng Sakona.

In honor of the 74th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Russian Embassy in Cambodia organized a number of events. In particular, on May 8, the campaign "Plant a tree for this guy" was held. This action turned out to be so large-scale that an entire alley was laid during its implementation. It was named Victory Alley. On May 9, a rally was held at the embassy, a monument to the fallen soldiers was erected and a "memory capsule" was laid for posterity. On the same day, a march of the "Immortal Regiment" took place in the capital. The celebrations,

³⁵⁴ Cultural interactions // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

we add, ended with a themed concert, exhibitions and the work of the field kitchen³⁵⁵.

On June 3, 2019, as part of the Days of Cambodian Culture in Russia, the Deputy Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom, Ferng Sakona, signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the relevant departments of the two states³⁵⁶.

The highlight of the gala evening was, as expected, a gala concert with the participation of Cambodia's leading creative teams. The program includes choreographic compositions representing various layers of national art.: from the ancient court ballet "Apsara" to the folk dances "Floi Suoi", "Picking Cardamom" and "Coconut Shell", as well as the classic productions "The Mermaid Princess Sovanmakha" and "Manimehala". The highlight of the concert itself, let's note in parentheses, was the dynamic "Garuda Dance".

The musical accompaniment was performed using traditional Khmer instruments: a variety of flutes "khloi", "pei-pok" and "pei-o", as well as a percussion instrument "snaeng". In parallel with the concert program, a large-scale photo exhibition was held in the premises of the Maly Theater, demonstrating the unique natural landscapes and sights of the Kingdom.

Contacts on issues of cooperation in *historical and restoration activities* are also maintained. The Russian side is currently studying the issue of joining the work of the International Coordinating Committee for the Preservation of the Preah Vihear temple complex — we are talking about the restoration of one of its gates, Gopuri IV. In order to determine the scope of work and its financing, a group of Russian experts examined the facility back in December 2017.

Cooperation in the field of *cinematography* is also developing. On December 2-5, 2016, the Days of Russian Cinema were held in Phnom Penh. At the opening

³⁵⁵ Празднование Дня Победы // МИД РФ. 09.05.2019. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1466994/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁵⁶ Церемония открытия Дней культуры Камбоджи в России // Министерство культуры РФ. 02.06.2019. URL: https://culture.gov.ru/press/announcement/tseremoniya_otkrytiya_dney_kultury_kambodzhi_v_rossii/ (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

ceremony, welcoming speeches were delivered by Ambassador D.Y. Tsvetkov, Deputy Minister of Culture and Fine Arts Som Sokun, as well as members of the Kinobatallion creative team — screenwriter and producer Evgeny Aizikovich, art director of the Kinofest production center Yulia Bragina, actress V.Y. Shkirando and composer Yu.A. Poteenko³⁵⁷.

On February 6, 2018, another solemn ceremony was held at the Russian Embassy. Ambassador Dmitry Tsvetkov presented a digital copy of the film "The Story of My Father" to the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom, Ferng Sakona. Note that this film was created by VGIK graduate Cheng Sovannoy in 1987 as a thesis. Subsequently, it was recognized as an important milestone in the development of Cambodia's national cinema.

The countries have also laid the foundation for cooperation in the *field of sports*. On October 20-22, 2015, a Cambodian delegation led by Secretary General of the National Olympic Committee Vat Temraen participated in the 1st World Olympic Forum in Moscow. On February 4, 2016, during a ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh, the head of the International Department of the Russian Gymnastics Federation, V. Solomatov, handed over gymnastics equipment from the Russian Federation to the President of the National Olympic Committee, the Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom, Tong Hong. And on July 5-17, 2016, the VI International Sports Games "Children of Asia" were held in Yakutsk, where Cambodian taekwondo athletes performed. In 2016, we also signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Russian Olympic Committee and the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia³⁵⁸.

The resumption of partnership in the *library sector* seems to have begun in November 2007. Then a delegation of library staff from the Senate (upper house of the Parliament of Cambodia) visited Moscow. Currently, the possibility of

³⁵⁷ Культурные связи // Посольство Российской Федерации в Королевстве Камбоджа. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/ru/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁵⁸ Российско-камбоджийские переговоры // МИД РФ. 20.07.2016. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1531689/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

organizing an internship for Cambodian specialists at the Center for Oriental Literature of the All-Russian State Library of Foreign Literature named after M.I. Rudomino is being considered.

Since 1984, the Russian Center for Science and Culture (RCSC) has been successfully operating in the capital of Cambodia. Russian Russian Library includes a library of Russian and foreign literature, Russian language courses, a video library with a collection of Russian and foreign films, a video club, a bilingual children's club "Rodina in two languages" (for children of compatriots), as well as a music and dance studio. Every month, the RCSC hosts thematic events dedicated to memorable historical dates and anniversaries of prominent figures, plus literary and musical evenings, photo exhibitions and book expositions.

The collaboration with the Russian World Foundation has significantly enriched the library fund of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia. We are talking about publishing and video products dedicated to the historical and cultural heritage of Russia. In November 2014, a Cambodian delegation led by Lee Resmey (he heads the Association of Graduates of Soviet and Russian Universities "Lid Khmer") attended the Eighth Assembly of the "Russian World" in Sochi. As part of this forum, by the way, negotiations took place between the rector of Sen Seok International University, Sabo Ogean, and representatives of the foundation's management. So, gradually, humanitarian ties complement political and economic ones, which, you see, is important for a long—term partnership.

The parties are also actively cooperating in the field of *mass media*. On December 22, 2010, the official ceremony of signing the partnership agreement in the field of information exchange was held in the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, with the participation of the Russian Ambassador A. Ignatov. The document was signed between the ITAR-TASS news agency and the national information agency of Cambodia AKP. «The Russian delegation at the event was headed by Deputy Director General A. Klein»³⁵⁹.

³⁵⁹ ИТАР-ТАСС и Камбоджийское информационное агентство Акр подписали соглашение о сотрудничестве // МИД РФ. 24.12.2010. URL:

The concluded agreement forms a stable contractual and legal basis for intensifying joint work and creates new prospects for objective media coverage of the most significant events taking place in the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Cambodia in the two countries.

In 2011, the information channel MIA Rossiya Segodnya and the National Television of Cambodia signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and mutual support in the organization of television broadcasting. On July 4, 2012, during the World Media Summit in Moscow, another agreement appeared - this time between RIA Novosti and the Cambodian News Agency. In the same year, by the way, the Russian-Cambodian digital terrestrial television project was launched with the participation of General Satellite Corporation (St. Petersburg) and the Cambodian Royal Group of companies.

In July 2015, the delegation of the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC) took part in the All-Russian Youth Educational Forum "Territory of Meanings". And in October of the same year, he participated in the 3rd Russia–ASEAN Youth Summit in Vladivostok. In November 2015, a Memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Rossiya Segodnya news agency and the National Radio of Cambodia³⁶⁰.

During the intergovernmental negotiations at the highest level in 2016, the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Cambodia signed a memorandum of understanding in the field of information and communication technologies. The document was signed by Nikolai Nikiforov, Minister of Communications and Mass Media of Russia, and Prak Sokhon, Senior Minister and Foreign Minister of Cambodia. The ceremony, remarkably, took place as part of a bilateral meeting with the participation of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. The signed memorandum established the legal framework for cooperation between the Ministry of Communications of Russia and the Ministry

https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/photo/meropriyatiya_v_zagran_uchrezhdeniyah/1721766/
(дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁶⁰ Российско-камбоджийские переговоры // МИД РФ. 20.07.2016. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1531689/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

of Posts and Telecommunications of Cambodia in the field of communications and information technology. Thus, as can be understood, we have created the institutional prerequisites for the implementation of joint projects in the digital sphere and the development of interdepartmental cooperation.

On October 26-28, 2016, TASS CEO Sergey Mikhailov visited Cambodia. He held meetings with Sok Mom Nimul, Director General of the Cambodian News Agency, Khieu Kanyarit, Minister of Information of Cambodia, and Svai Sith, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Government.

Cooperation in the field of *youth policy* between the two countries has noticeably intensified. From 2012 to 2014, delegates from the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC) participated in the INTERSELIGER International Forum, and subsequently, in 2014 and 2016, attended the Tavrida Forum.

The first official visit of the head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh) to Cambodia took place on January 28-29, 2015. The Russian delegation, headed by S. Pospelov, was received by Deputy Prime Minister Sok Ahn. In addition, negotiations were held with Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Hang Chuon Naron, as well as with Deputy of the National Assembly and head of the UYFC Hung Mani. The parties discussed a number of practical topics: increasing humanitarian, entrepreneurial and cultural exchanges among young people, strengthening coordination within global youth platforms, and launching common programs. The agreements reached were formalized in an agreement signed by Chairman of the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia (NCYCAR) G. V. Petushkov and UYFC leader Hong Mani³⁶¹.

A few months later, in July 2015, Cambodian representatives led by Hun Mani paid a return visit to Russia. In the same year, from April 12 to 17, an International Youth Festival was held in the vicinity of the Angkor Temple Complex (Siem Reap

³⁶¹ Культурные связи // Посольство Российской Федерации в Королевстве Камбоджа. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/ru/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Province), organized by the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the UYFC³⁶². The Russian side also sent its participants to this event.

In the spring of 2016, from April 19 to 24, the NCYCAR delegation led by G. V. Petushkov visited Cambodia again at the invitation of the Youth Union. A little later, on May 15-20, Rosmolodezh conducted a series of educational activities for employees of the Moscow Government's Press and Rapid Response Department — trainings, round tables and seminars on working on social networks.

In June 2016, from the 23rd to the 25th, Vladivostok hosted Watan San, Deputy Secretary General of the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development of Cambodia, as part of the New Generation study tour program for foreign representatives of the political, public, scientific and business circles. The purpose of his visit was to participate in «an international conference on food security in the Asia-Pacific region»³⁶³.

In the summer of the same year (August 14-20), employees of the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports participated in the track "Young Leaders of social NGOs and Projects" at the All-Russian Forum "Territory of Meanings on Klyazma." In autumn, from September 7 to 11, UYFC Head Hong Mani attended the first International Educational Forum "Eurasia" in the Orenburg region. And at the end of October (24-27), the 4th Russia-ASEAN Youth Summit was held in Siem Reap, bringing together teams from many countries, including the Russian Federation. «The event was opened by Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sohong, Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry Alexander Ivanov and UYFC Head Hong Mani»³⁶⁴.

³⁶² With Cambodia visit, Russia looks Southeast // DW. 2015. URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/with-cambodia-visit-russia-looks-southeast/a-18870632> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁶³ Cultural interactions // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁶⁴ 4-й молодежный саммит Россия — АСЕАН // МГИМО. 27.10.2016. URL: https://asean.mgimo.ru/news/2016/4-j-molodezhnyj-sammit-rossiya-asean?ysclid=mi0khlwvex124960882&utm_source=ya.ru&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ya.ru&utm_referrer=ya.ru (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

In 2017, the UYFC delegation, led by Environment Minister Sai Samal, worked at the Russian-Cambodian Forum in Moscow. From October 13 to 23, Cambodian representatives joined the XIX World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi. Hung Mani made a presentation here on «the importance of international youth relations for achieving peaceful goals, and the Director General of the Department of Youth Affairs, Chiv Ratha, attended the opening ceremony»³⁶⁵.

In April 2018, Mr. Petushkov, at the head of the NCYCAR delegation, participated in the 14th meeting of the General Assembly of the Asian Youth Council. A year later, on March 6, 2019, a commemorative medal ceremony was held at the Russian Embassy, established by Russian President Vladimir Putin for his assistance in organizing the Sochi 2017 festival. «Hung Mani, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Youth, Sports, Religion, Culture and Tourism, as well as the head of the UYFC, received the award from the ambassador»³⁶⁶.

Finally, in 2019, Rosmolodezh and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Kingdom of Cambodia formalized their intentions to develop youth cooperation by signing a memorandum of understanding. Thus, step by step, the humanitarian dimension of bilateral relations was filled with new joint initiatives and gained solid institutional foundations.

The Agreement establishes the following main areas of partnership:

- Exchange of practices in the field of formation and administration of youth policy institutes, as well as dissemination of relevant information, methodological and auxiliary materials.
- Mutual participation in international youth events organized by the parties, including conferences, seminars, forums, festivals, round tables and symposiums.

³⁶⁵ Cultural interactions // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁶⁶ Cultural interactions // Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Cambodia. URL: <https://embrusscambodia.mid.ru/en/countries/bilateral-relations/cultural-connections/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

- Organization of bilateral consultations on topical issues of youth policy with the involvement of relevant specialists and experts.

- Implementation of joint projects and initiatives aimed at stimulating social activity among young people³⁶⁷.

Interfaith cooperation is also actively developing. The bishops visit Cambodia and discuss issues of humanitarian cooperation with government officials. In particular, in February 2015, Archbishop Theophylact of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Royal Court Kong Samol, Grand Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Cambodia Tepe Vong and Minister of Cults and Religions Min Khin. During the meeting, Archbishop Theophylact conveyed a personal message from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the King of Cambodia. Thanks to this visit, in October 2015, Archbishop Mark of Ryazan and Mikhailovsky held a stone-laying ceremony at the site of the future St. Nicholas Church.

There are Orthodox parishes in Cambodia, which are attended by bishops from the territory of Russia. They regularly visit Cambodia to conduct services in temples, as well as to minister to the faithful. In particular, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk visited the Kingdom in 2017. During this visit, he served the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Great Martyr Panteleimon in Sihanoukville, as well as a prayer service at the Church of the Great Martyr George the Victorious in Phnom Penh. During the visit, the Archbishop also held a meeting with embassy staff and the Russian community in the capital.

Despite the cultural cooperation, which is full of various events and represented by various fields, it still needs to be worked out and deepened. This is especially noticeable when we talk not so much about the number of events, but about the quality of the impact on the peoples of the two countries. As E.A. Kanaev

³⁶⁷ Меморандум о взаимопонимании и сотрудничестве в сфере молодежной политики между Федеральным агентством по делам молодежи (Российская Федерация) и Министерством образования, молодежи и спорта Королевства Камбоджа от 22.10.2019. URL: <https://intermol.su/upload/iblock/a9e/loqb2fo9g4p3eip9nzept6nrqw8yqr17.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

notes, "if contacts have become regular in the interaction of individuals and organizations involved in shaping the country's foreign policy, then ties, primarily cultural and humanitarian, between ordinary citizens of the Russian Federation and ASEAN are rather poorly developed. Hence the distorted views of the parties about each other"³⁶⁸.

During the pandemic, the Russian Federation refrained from using vaccine diplomacy mechanisms, while Cambodia's other key partners, primarily China and the United States, actively used them. Prime Minister Hun Sen sent an official request to Moscow for support through the free supply of drugs. The answer was to provide only one thousand doses of Cycloferon.

Such actions directly affect the formation of the image of the Russian Federation in Cambodian society and the assessment of its international weight. According to research by local sociological centers, Russia's role in Southeast Asia was assessed by respondents as almost imperceptible. Surveys that needed to determine which of the ASEAN partner countries provided the most assistance in the crisis, choose a priority ally in case of instability in the United States, and identify a leader in global free trade showed a unanimous opinion: Russia received zero figures in all positions³⁶⁹.

The current geopolitical situation, marked by acute information confrontation and sanctions pressure, creates serious difficulties for states with medium and small potential, striving for neutrality and not ready to publicly express support for Moscow. A striking example is Cambodia itself, which, having submitted to American pressure, took a position critical of the Russian Federation, voting on March 2, 2022 for the approval of a «UN resolution condemning the actions of the Russian army on Ukrainian territory»³⁷⁰.

³⁶⁸ Канаев Е.А. Юго-Восточная Азия в современной внешней политике России // XII Международная научная конференция по проблемам развития экономики и общества. В четырех книгах. Книга 2. 2012. С. 151-158.

³⁶⁹ The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 survey report. ASEAN Studies Centre. Singapore, 2021. P. 34-39.

³⁷⁰ Резолюция, принятая Генеральной Ассамблеей 2 марта 2022 года // ГА ООН. URL: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/293/39/pdf/n2229339.pdf> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

In conclusion, it should be noted that cultural ties between Russia and Cambodia have become one of the most stable and dynamically developing elements of bilateral cooperation over the past decades. They are based on an extensive contractual and legal framework supported by regular exchange of delegations, joint projects in the field of cinematography, librarianship, art, media, sports and youth policy. A rich range of cultural programs — from festivals and cultural days to educational initiatives and restoration projects — contributes not only to strengthening interstate relations, but also to creating an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and interest between the peoples of the two countries. The gradual expansion of cooperation and the involvement of new institutions and community groups suggests that cultural cooperation between Russia and Cambodia has significant potential and will continue to play an important role in the further development of the entire range of bilateral relations. At the same time, it is worth noting that the process of forming a truly deep and diverse partnership, despite the presence of a favorable foundation, is at an early stage and requires further specification.

3.3. The role of tourism in the development of bilateral relations

Bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism is being strengthened between Russia and Cambodia. To characterize it, it is worth analyzing first how the tourism industry is developed in Cambodia and Russia.

As for Cambodia, the liberalization of the ASEAN services sector is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), which provides for seven liberalization packages in such areas as distribution, professional and business services, construction, education and finance, healthcare, ecology, maritime transportation, telecommunications and tourism. The tourism industry is a key segment of Cambodia's service sector, generating a significant trade surplus in services.

Some time ago, the head of Cambodia's tourism department, Dr. Tong Hong, described the tourism sector as "green gold", emphasizing its exceptional role in the

progressive development of the state³⁷¹. Statistics show a steady increase in tourist flows from the Russian Federation and India, but Vietnam, Korea, China, Japan, America, France, Great Britain, Thailand, Australia and Taiwan remain the key sources of tourists.

This industry is a strategic complex that contributes to economic recovery and social well-being. It provides jobs for the population, increases income levels, improves the quality of life and helps in the fight against poverty. Being an integral component of the "green" economic model, the tourism industry directly affects the country's financial system, contributing to an increase in gross domestic product and strengthening the position of the foreign trade balance.

The increased international interest in Cambodia is due to the strengthening of its image as a promising destination on the world stage and within the region. The state has significant resources to promote such formats as health and cultural and historical tourism. The international community has awarded the Kingdom of Cambodia the status of the most sought—after travel destination twice, in 2016 and 2018. The Angkor Wat temple complex was recognized as the leading object of the exhibition on a global and Asian scale, and the city of Siem Reap took the highest position in Asia and became the second in the world ranking of popular tourist centers³⁷².

Participation in ASEAN has become a determining factor in the development of tourism, one of the main drivers of economic growth. Its share in GDP reaches 16.3%. «Tourism services are also the main export item, providing a surplus in trade in services and significantly offsetting the deficit in commodity trade. In 2019, exports of travel services amounted to \$4.7 billion, or 80% of total exports of services»³⁷³.

³⁷¹ How tourism is shaping Cambodia's economic growth // Khmer Times. 10.02.2025. URL: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501636593/how-tourism-is-shaping-cambodias-economic-growth/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁷² Нехорошков А.О. Возможности и перспективы развития туризма в Камбодже. В сб.: Физическая культура, здравоохранение и образование: Мат. X Междунар. науч.-практ. конф., посв. памяти В.С. Пирусского / Под ред. В.Г. Шилько. 2016. С. 355-356.

³⁷³ ASEANSTAT. URL: <https://data.aseanstats.org/sits-by-reporters-and-services> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

Having a much more modest tourist infrastructure compared to neighboring countries, especially at the initial stages of economic recovery, Cambodia was significantly inferior to them as an independent tourist destination. Multi-country tours involving visits to several countries are in high demand than trips to a single country. That is why regional and sub-regional programs have played a key role in the dynamics of the tourist flow. As a result, from 2000 to 2019 The number of arrivals in Cambodia increased by more than 14 times, from 466,000 to 6.6 million trips, and industry revenues increased from 166 million to 4.9 billion dollars³⁷⁴.

In the pre-pandemic period, ASEAN countries were Cambodia's second largest source of tourists after China. The total number of arrivals from the region was 2.22 million, while from China it was 2.36 million. The share of tourists from other ASEAN countries reached 33%. After the opening of borders, neighboring countries began to play a much more important role in tourist flows. In 2021, «they accounted for 70% of all arrivals, which contributed to the recovery of the industry after COVID-19»³⁷⁵.

Even in the face of global financial difficulties, the kingdom maintains a positive trend in the development of the hospitality industry. It accounts for «about 30% of the gross domestic product, which is equivalent to cash receipts of five billion US dollars with an annual number of visitors exceeding 4.5 million people»³⁷⁶. Experts are unanimous in assessing the future prospects of the industry, which is currently focusing on the implementation of the plan for the development of sustainable tourism in the period 2019-2020.

The growth of tourist demand stimulates an increase in capital investments in infrastructure and the expansion of the real volume of production of services and goods for tourist purposes, which serves as a reliable indicator of the intensification

³⁷⁴ Tourism statistics report 2022. Tourism Statistics Department, National Institute of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, 2022.

³⁷⁵ Заглязьминская Е.О. Стратегии восстановления туристической отрасли стран АСЕАН в условиях пандемии COVID-19 и фактор Китая // Азия и Африка сегодня. 2022. №. 6. С. 30-37.

³⁷⁶ Cambodia's new tourism marketing strategy // B2B Cambodia. 30.03.2016. URL: <https://www.b2b-cambodia.com/articles/cambodias-tourism-marketing-strategy/> (дата обращения: 11.11.2025).

of economic activity. The development momentum generated by the tourism industry is transmitted along the chain to other sectors of the economy, thus creating a multiplier effect from tourism.

The development of the tourism industry has become a catalyst for the active construction of related infrastructure. Between 2000 and 2019, the country's hotel stock underwent significant changes: the number of hotels increased from 179 to 531, and the number of guest houses increased from 60 to 1,218. Most of the accommodation facilities are concentrated in Phnom Penh (35%) and Siem Reap (23%). During the specified period, the utilization rate of accommodation facilities showed a significant increase — from 30% to 72%³⁷⁷.

There is a steady trend towards consolidation and the emergence of international hotel operators in the market. The arrival of global brands in the hospitality segment has contributed to the intensification of competition. According to the Phnom Penh Post, «a significant number of travelers prefer hotels with well-known international names, considering this as a guarantee of the quality of service»³⁷⁸.

Competitive pressure has also increased in the small business segment, where local residents have begun to actively invest in residential real estate for subsequent short-term rental at more attractive prices³⁷⁹.

The growth of tourist flows stimulated the development of the restaurant industry, which was previously at an early stage of development due to the low solvency of the population. Cambodia's modern restaurant market, despite its relative youth, has gone through several stages of evolution. At the moment, the problem of insufficient supply has been solved, and the quality of services has improved significantly. Popular tourist centers feature a diverse array of food establishments of various formats and culinary trends.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Моеун Нхен. More hotels, more problems // Phnom Penh Post. 16.02.2017. URL: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-property/more-hotels-more-problems> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁷⁹ Бурова Е.С. Тенденции развития туристической отрасли Камбоджи // Вос-точная Азия: факты и аналитика. 2019. № 1. С. 19

ASEAN integration has had a positive impact on the transport sector, contributing to the growth of passenger and freight traffic. The implementation of the ASEAN Master Plan for Interconnectedness and the "open Skies" Policy (known as the ASEAN Single Aviation Market) has created favorable conditions for the development of air, sea and land communications.

There was a steady positive trend in the air transportation sector. Since 2004, «international passenger traffic has increased by 20% annually, reaching 3.3 million people in 2019»³⁸⁰. With the development of air travel, the structure of tourist arrivals has changed in favor of air transport.

The foundation for the development of the tourism sector in Cambodia, as in any other country, is the complex of its unique physical, geographical and environmental conditions. The environmental situation in the kingdom is assessed as favorable. The guests are particularly interested in such natural phenomena as the rich flora of the tropical forests, the mysterious Mekong River basin, the world-famous Angkor Wat temple complex in the vicinity of Siem Reap and the famous Elephant Terrace. The combination of these facilities creates a high attractiveness for supporters of eco-tourism and connoisseurs of the exotic nature of Southeast Asia.

Koh Kong Nature Reserve is particularly popular among guests starting the route from Siem Reap. This location contains some of the most impressive natural attractions of the state. Outstanding sites include the Cardamom Mountains, almost two dozen large rivers, vast tracts of humid tropics and the habitat of about sixty endangered species of fauna.

According to its historical and cultural value, Cambodia's Angkor Wat belongs to a narrow group of the world's greatest monuments. The Ta Prum Temple, which is part of this grandiose ensemble, deserves special mention. Unlike many of the restored sanctuaries of the archaeological park, Ta Prum was preserved in a condition

³⁸⁰ Putri M.Y., Purnawarman A. ASEAN Tourism Forum Efforts to Increase Tourist Visits in Southeast Asia // Research Horizon. 2024. Vol. 4. № 3. P. 137-148.

as close as possible to the original. This area of the reserve is still tightly entwined with jungle roots and vines.

For a deeper dive into the historical heritage after visiting Angkor, travelers should consult the exposition of the National Museum of Cambodia. His collection, which includes one of the world's largest collections of Khmer sculptures and ancient artifacts, provides a comprehensive view of the country's rich past.

The Virachi National Park occupies a significant area of 3,325 square kilometers. His possessions, located in the northeast and bordering Laos and Vietnam, are still not fully explored. Visitors to the park can observe rare wildlife such as elephants, tigers, Malay bears, clouded leopards and giant ibises. One of the most thoughtful eco-tourism programs in the country is being implemented here.

However, Cambodia offers more than just an introduction to ancient ruins. On its territory there are modern and stylish cities that are loved by tourists. A striking example is Battambang, where French colonial architecture has been preserved, cozy cafes are open, and «the traditional Khmer style harmoniously combines with current trends. For connoisseurs of water travel, an 8-10-hour boat trip from Siem Reap to Battambang is organized, passing by picturesque landscapes and distinctive floating villages»³⁸¹.

Cambodia is developing "sacred tourism" to attract wealthy travelers interested in spirituality and culture. The new strategy offers them not only the beaches and ruins of Angkor, but also a unique experience of immersing themselves in vibrant Buddhist culture through visits to pagodas. The government is developing the infrastructure of temples in order to receive up to 2 million tourists per year over a decade. The flagship will be the ancient Unnalom pagoda in Phnom Penh. As the example of Siem Reap shows, such tourism generates steady income for the pagodas themselves and local communities. For success, «strict rules of conduct for tourists are being developed in order to preserve the sanctity of places. The initiative is

³⁸¹ Чудайкина Г.М., Авагян А.А., Логинова Н.Ю., Костоварова В.В. К вопросу о туристическом потенциале Камбоджи // Сервис в России и за рубежом. 2019. №1 (83). С. 15-26.

supported by monks who see this as an opportunity to promote Buddhism and Khmer culture»³⁸².

An analysis of the Russian tourism industry shows the complex and multidimensional development of a sector located at the intersection of significant resource potential and systemic constraints. Russian tourism relies on a unique combination of natural, cultural, and historical resources, encompassing diverse landscapes, rich architectural heritage, diverse ethnic and cultural traditions, and a large number of sites of historical value. The natural and geographical diversity of the country provides the basis for the development of a wide variety of types of tourism - from ecological and extreme to cultural, educational and recreational. However, the use of this potential turns out to be uneven due to serious territorial imbalances in infrastructure provision and the degree of socio-economic development of the regions.

The regional structure of tourism in Russia is characterized by polarization. Central Russia remains the core of cultural and educational activity and the center of business tourism due to the concentration of historical sites, well-developed infrastructure and logistical accessibility. The North Caucasus, with its unique natural conditions and high ethnic and cultural saturation, is experiencing limitations related to security and insufficient infrastructure. Siberia and the Far East, which are of exceptional interest for ecological and adventure tourism, remain difficult to access due to poor transport connectivity and lack of tourist infrastructure. These territorial differences determine the overall fragmentation of the Russian tourist space and create the need for differentiated management strategies.

The Russian tourism industry faces a wide range of challenges that limit its development. Infrastructure deficits are manifested in the poor quality of transport networks, a lack of modern accommodation facilities and a lack of outdoor infrastructure. Geopolitical factors, including a decrease in international tourist

³⁸² Камбоджа запустила «Священный туризм», для состоятельных российских туристов // Турпром. 14.11.2025. URL: <https://www.tourprom.ru/news/79878/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

traffic, a reduction in air travel and the complication of visa procedures, significantly limit the prospects for inbound tourism. The industry is experiencing an acute shortage of qualified personnel, which negatively affects the quality of services provided. The problem of seasonality remains significant, leading to uneven utilization of tourist capacities, as well as environmental risks, exacerbated by the growth of tourist flows to specially protected natural areas. The insufficient level of marketing activity of the regions «limits the country's presence on the world market, which is also hindered by the lack of a unified system for promoting tourism brands»³⁸³.

The development of Russian tourism is influenced by global trends that require the industry to adapt to new patterns of consumer behavior. Sustainable tourism reinforces the importance of environmental responsibility and the preservation of cultural heritage by stimulating the creation of eco-routes, the development of agrotourism and the participation of local communities. Digitalization promotes the spread of electronic services, mobile applications, artificial intelligence technologies, virtual and augmented reality, increasing the availability of tourist services and the quality of customer experience. The increased personalization of demand is «reflected in the growing demand for customized routes and exclusive offers, which requires increased flexibility of travel companies and the introduction of analytical tools»³⁸⁴.

The prospects for the development of the industry are related to the comprehensive modernization of infrastructure, improvement of regulatory and administrative mechanisms and stimulation of investment activity. The growth potential of domestic tourism can be realized through the development of year-round tourist products, support for autotourism, and the promotion of specialized segments such as ecological, gastronomic, event, and cultural tourism. An important

³⁸³ Туризм в России: статистический сборник. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/statistics/turizm/publications> (дата обращения: 10.11.2025).

³⁸⁴ Гизатуллина О.М. Анализ современного состояния туризма в России и основные направления развития туристской деятельности в РФ // Экономические науки. 2023. № 224. С. 66–70.

area is the digital transformation of the industry, involving the expansion of online services, the introduction of intelligent systems and digital platforms. The development of sustainable tourism allows combining economic interests with environmental responsibility, which is especially important for regions with a high concentration of unique natural sites³⁸⁵.

Thus, the Russian tourism industry is in a state of transformation due to the need to adapt to external challenges and internal constraints. Despite the systemic problems, the industry has significant potential, which can be realized if a coordinated government policy is implemented aimed at infrastructural development, improving the quality of services, promoting Russian tourism brands and introducing innovations. The implementation of these measures will strengthen the role of tourism in the country's economy, expand employment, diversify regional development and increase Russia's international competitiveness as a tourist destination.

If we talk about tourism cooperation, it is worth noting that after a slight decrease in the tourist flow from Russia to the country in recent years, the figures have again shown growth. In 2014, more than 108,000 Russian tourists visited Cambodia, in 2015-2016 - about 50,000 people annually, in 2017 - 47,000 people, in 2018 - about 55,000 people. On February 4-6, 2015, «Deputy Head of the Federal Tourism Agency N.V. Korolev took part in the World Conference on Culture and Tourism “Creating New Models of Partnership” in Siem Reap»³⁸⁶.

Delegates from the tourism sector of the Kingdom are constantly present at the key Moscow reviews of the travel industry — Intourmarket and Leisure.

On the day of the fifth anniversary of the reunification of Crimea with Russia, on March 25, 2019, a press briefing was held at the Phnom Penh residence of the Russian Embassy. During the event, the official point of view of the state regarding

³⁸⁵ Акимова О.Е., Кожухова М.Т., Айбазова М. Развитие туризма в России на современном этапе: вызовы и перспективы // Вестник Адыгейского государственного университета. Серия 5: Экономика. 2025. №1 (355). С. 21-32.

³⁸⁶ UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture: Building a New Partnership // UNESCO. 4-6 February 2015. URL: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1214/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

the status of the peninsula was outlined, as well as the vectors of its further development. In order for the Cambodian guests to better appreciate the tourist attractiveness of the region, a photographic exhibition was opened for them, the authors of which were students of the Russian school³⁸⁷. An addition to the exhibition was the screening of the film "The Bridge", filmed in English by the international channel Russia Today.

As a result of the work of the Intergovernmental Commission, a number of bilateral documents were signed. These include, in particular, the joint action plan of the Federal Tourism Agency and the Cambodian branch office, designed for the period 2015-2017. This area of cooperation was assessed as very promising, which was confirmed by the explosive growth of interest in Cambodia from Russian travelers at the beginning of the last decade. So, from 2010 to 2013, the number of Russian citizens who visited the kingdom for tourist purposes increased fourfold: from 34 thousand to 130 thousand people. However, the subsequent deterioration of the economic situation in the Russian Federation corrected the dynamics: in 2014-2015, the flow decreased to 108.6 thousand visitors³⁸⁸.

The Russian presence in the Cambodian information field remains minimal. Unfortunately, modern Russia does not use the potential of the favorable historical heritage associated with the support that the USSR provided to the People's Republic of Kampuchea in the 1980s. The consequence of this is the almost complete oblivion of those events. It is characteristic that Heng Samrin's book "Reborn Cambodia" (2018), which describes that period, talks exclusively about Vietnam's help, while the Soviet Union is not mentioned at all. Meanwhile, after the departure from the political arena of a generation of leaders who were directly involved in those events, the task of recalling Russia's role in rebuilding Cambodian society after the Khmer Rouge regime will become even more difficult.

³⁸⁷ Пресс-конференция, посвященная пятилетию возвращения Крыма в состав России // МИД РФ. 25.03.2019. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kh/1466922/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁸⁸ Посольство Российской Федерации в Королевстве Камбоджа. URL: <https://www.embrusscambodia.mid.ru/> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

According to official Cambodian statistics, in 2024, the flow of Russian travelers to the kingdom decreased by 15.7% compared to the previous year. At the same time, according to tour operators, the volume of sales of travel packages shows a positive trend, which indicates an increase in the percentage of organized travelers. However, according to analysts, it is premature to talk about the mass nature of the direction, and the resumption of direct flights is unlikely to be able to radically correct the situation. The main constraining factors remain the lack of awareness of Russian tourists about the country and the influence of outdated ideas about it.

The total number of foreign visitors to Cambodia in 2024 reached 6.7 million, which was almost a quarter higher than in 2023. According to information provided by the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom, 65% of this volume was provided by three key markets — Thailand, Vietnam and China³⁸⁹.

Russia's share in the total tourist flow was only 1.1%, which is equivalent to 71,901 arrivals of Russian citizens. This result is 15.7% lower than in 2023, when 85,329 visits by Russians were recorded³⁹⁰.

The tour operators Space Travel, Intourist and ITM group characterize consumer interest in Cambodia as moderate, but showing positive dynamics. The Russian Express company notes that sales in this direction have tripled over the year (however, based on initially low figures). The main customer request is to book ground handling services through the Online Express platform.

In addition, travel agencies are developing sightseeing programs in Cambodia for Russian travelers, as well as combined routes that include visits to Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia.

³⁸⁹ Спрос на Камбоджу снизился: у страны проблемы с продвижением в России // Ассоциация туроператоров. 24.03.2025. URL: <https://www.atorus.ru/article/spros-na-kambodzhу-snizilsya-u-strany-problemy-s-prodvizheniem-v-rossii-61343?ysclid=mi0l2mp8zu145341859> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁹⁰ Российский туризм в цифрах и графиках // Ведомости. 2025. URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2025/09/06/1137075-rossiiskii-turizm> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

"Combined trips are the most popular among Russians, most often combining Cambodia with Thailand. They account for approximately 95% of the total number of tours sold," Space Travel said³⁹¹.

"The demand is not massive, but it is stable. There is also an interest in unique excursion programs. At the moment, our group is in the kingdom on the ITM Club author's route, which is characterized by a non-standard program," added Irina Yurina, Product manager of the ITM group³⁹².

The Angkor Wat Temple complex in Siem Reap remains the center of attraction for tourists. The key sites also include the Bayon Temple, Ta Prohm, the Royal Palace of the capital and others.

According to the Angkor Enterprise report, in 2024, the number of foreigners who purchased a pass to the Angkor Archaeological Park exceeded 1.02 million people, which is 28% more than in 2023. However, the destination has not yet recovered to the pre-crisis level of 2019, when over 2.2 million tickets were sold.

Siem Reap accounts for over 60% of bookings in the Russian Express sales structure; other tourists prefer Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville beach³⁹³.

"About 35% of Cambodia's guests stay in category 5 hotels, and 40% stay in four-star hotels. The average budget for accommodation reaches 86 thousand rubles. The typical booking period is 4 months, and the most requested travel duration is 7-8 days. The peak of pre-orders is in August; the largest volume of current sales is concentrated in April (23.8%) and May (26.2%) of 2025," Russian Express said³⁹⁴.

The Cambodian authorities have set a target to receive 7 million foreign visitors in 2025. To achieve this goal, among other things, it is planned to simplify the procedure for issuing electronic visas and reduce visa fees.

³⁹¹ Спрос на Камбоджу снизился: у страны проблемы с продвижением в России // Ассоциация туроператоров. 24.03.2025. URL: <https://www.atorus.ru/article/spros-na-kambodzh-snizilsya-u-strany-problemy-s-prodvizheniem-v-rossii-61343?ysclid=mi0l2mp8zu145341859> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

So, starting from January 1, 2025, the cost of a tourist visa (category T) for a period of 30 days upon receipt at the border decreased from 36 to 30 US dollars. The requirement to provide photos has also been lifted³⁹⁵.

Despite the recognition of the promising direction, tour operators do not predict a sharp increase in the tourist flow from Russia in 2025.

The key factor constraining growth is the lack of a systematic advertising campaign in Cambodia in the Russian market aimed at debunking outdated stereotypes.

"One of the problems is the lack of information about the country from both ordinary tourists and agents. In our work, we regularly encounter the prejudice that Cambodia is an "undeveloped and backward" country. In fact, guests are often surprised by how much these ideas do not correspond to reality,³⁹⁶" comments Irina Yurina from the ITM group.

Intourist agrees with this assessment, noting that Cambodia is "unheard of" among Russians, and few people are aware of its tourist opportunities. Other obstacles include the level of infrastructure development, difficulties with transportation, and limited hotel facilities.

"A significant disadvantage is the transport problem, both internationally and domestically. In most cases, the vehicle fleet, including taxis, is very worn out. Traveling between cities is also associated with discomfort. Let's add here a peculiar local cuisine, poorly adapted for Europeans. In addition, the destination is poorly suited for discerning travelers, as the overall quality of service remains low"³⁹⁷, Space Travel noted.

³⁹⁵ Спрос на Камбоджу снизился: у страны проблемы с продвижением в России // Ассоциация туроператоров. 24.03.2025. URL: <https://www.atorus.ru/article/spros-na-kambodzhu-snizilsya-u-strany-problemy-s-prodvizheniem-v-rossii-61343?ysclid=mi0l2mp8zu145341859> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Спрос на Камбоджу снизился: у страны проблемы с продвижением в России // Ассоциация туроператоров. 24.03.2025. URL: <https://www.atorus.ru/article/spros-na-kambodzhu-snizilsya-u-strany-problemy-s-prodvizheniem-v-rossii-61343?ysclid=mi0l2mp8zu145341859> (дата обращения: 16.11.2025).

The prospects for the development of Russian-Cambodian relations in the field of tourism are shaped by both the internal dynamics of the tourism industries of the two countries and changes in the regional market of Southeast Asia. Cambodia is demonstrating steady growth in its tourism infrastructure, investing in the development of hotel facilities, transport, and sightseeing products, and actively participating in ASEAN integration initiatives, which makes it an increasingly attractive destination for international travelers, including Russians. Russia, in turn, has significant tourism potential, which can become the basis for the mutual exchange of flows and the creation of bilateral projects.

Further strengthening of the institutional framework for cooperation can be expected in the coming years. The practice of implementing joint plans between Rostourism and the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia has already proved its effectiveness, and regular contacts, participation in exhibitions and cultural and informational events create a favorable background for expanding cooperation. The availability of such mechanisms makes it possible to predict the preparation of new cooperation programs focused on sustainable tourism, the digitalization of the industry and the promotion of tourism brands in both countries.

The further development of organized tourism will be a promising area. Despite the decrease in the general flow of Russians to Cambodia, tour operators have noted an increase in sales of package tours, which indicates a gradual expansion of interest. Combined routes can provide an additional boost, which today provide up to 95% of purchases: most Russians prefer to combine a visit to Cambodia with a vacation in Thailand, Vietnam or Malaysia. Given the popularity of such programs and the growing quality of Cambodia's tourism infrastructure, we can assume an increase in the number of comprehensive offers, as well as the creation of joint routes focused on cultural, ecological and religious tourism.

An important condition for increasing the tourist flow will be the improvement of transport accessibility. Despite the promising direction, the lack of direct flights and outdated transportation within Cambodia still limit the possible demand. The resumption or expansion of flights, modernization of domestic

transport and simplification of logistics between the main tourist centers will increase the attractiveness of the destination for Russians. The steps Cambodia has already taken, such as reducing the cost of a tourist visa, eliminating the photo requirement and simplifying the e—visa system, indicate the state's desire to create more comfortable conditions for guests, which in the long term will contribute to the development of cooperation.

The issue of information policy deserves special attention. The main obstacle to the growth of tourist flow, tour operators call the lack of awareness of Russians about Cambodia and widespread stereotypes about its "underdevelopment." Eliminating the information deficit, conducting advertising campaigns, creating Russian-language materials about the kingdom's tourism opportunities, as well as developing cultural diplomacy can radically increase interest in the country. Russia also does not fully exploit the historical potential of Soviet-Cambodian relations, which, if properly handled, could become an additional tool of "soft power."

The content of Cambodia's tourism offer creates significant opportunities for expanding cooperation. The growing interest in the Angkor Wat temple complex, the development of ecological, sacred, cultural and adventure tourism, the creation of new nature routes and the expansion of infrastructure — all this opens up space for specialized programs aimed at specific segments of the Russian market. On the other hand, Russia can offer Cambodian tourists unique natural and cultural routes, which creates opportunities for bilateral tourist exchange, albeit uneven in volume.

In conclusion, it can be noted that tourism cooperation between Russia and Cambodia has significant potential, based both on the objective growth of the Cambodian tourism industry and on the sustained interest of Russian travelers in the cultural and natural resources of the kingdom. Despite the existing limitations — lack of information promotion, problematic transport accessibility and persistent stereotypes — the dynamics of interaction shows positive trends. Cambodia is actively expanding its infrastructure, simplifying visa procedures and striving to position itself as a modern and safe destination, while the Russian side is demonstrating its readiness to expand organized tours and combined routes. The

comprehensive development of these areas will strengthen mutual tourist attractiveness, increase the volume of tourist flows and give additional impetus to bilateral humanitarian relations. Thus, tourism will continue to play an important role in strengthening the partnership between the two countries, acting as one of the most promising and dynamic areas of their cooperation.

An analysis of the cultural and humanitarian dimension of Russian-Cambodian relations shows that educational ties based on many years of experience in training Cambodian specialists in the USSR and Russia continue to develop today, forming a positive image of the Russian Federation in Cambodian society and providing long-term human resources for the Kingdom's economy. However, the potential of this interaction has not yet been fully realized: limited awareness, low competitiveness of Russian educational programs in the regional market and the need to simplify administrative procedures require additional work aimed at increasing the attractiveness of Russia for the youth of Cambodia.

Cultural ties are showing impressive dynamics, based on a broad contractual and legal framework, the activity of relevant institutions, as well as the sustained interest of creative, scientific and public structures of both countries. However, despite the significant number of events, there is a need to move from episodic actions to systematic and in-depth work aimed at expanding contacts between societies and improving mutual perception.

Tourism cooperation, in turn, complements the humanitarian component of bilateral relations, strengthening intercultural contacts and expanding Russia's presence in the information field of Cambodia. The steady growth of the tourist flow in the pre-pandemic period, the participation of the parties in international tourism forums and the development of interdepartmental cooperation confirm the relevance of this area. However, the Russian tourist destination is still characterized by structural difficulties that limit its competitiveness and require comprehensive government support.

In general, humanitarian and cultural cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is an important resource of bilateral relations, contributing to the

strengthening of trust, the expansion of public relations and the formation of a positive image of the state. It serves as a foundation on which the further development of political dialogue, economic cooperation and the expansion of partnership in new areas can be built. To achieve a strategically significant effect, it is necessary to further improve the mechanisms of interaction, strengthen communication work and implement programs aimed at involving broad segments of the population of the two countries in the processes of cultural and educational exchange.

CONCLUSION

In the course of the research, political, trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian Cambodian-Russian relations, their content, forms, trends, factors influencing their development, problems and prospects were analyzed on a wide range of sources and scientific literature in Russian and English.

The history of Soviet-Cambodian relations has gone through several distinct stages, each of which reflected not only the dynamics of bilateral cooperation, but also changes in the international system. The first stage (1955-1965) was the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the formation of trust. The USSR, pursuing an active policy towards the countries of the "third world", considered Cambodia as an important partner in the Indochina region. Moscow was characterized by flexibility: support for Sihanouk's neutrality was combined with a cautious desire to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia. During this period, a pattern of Soviet policy emerged — an orientation towards anti-colonial and neutralist regimes as a tool for expanding influence without direct intervention.

The second stage (1965-1978) was marked by the increasing complexity of the foreign policy situation and the growing influence of the Indochina conflict. The USSR found itself involved in a multi-level game between China, the United States and Vietnam, where Cambodia became an object rather than a subject of international relations. A characteristic feature of this period was the inconsistent and forced maneuvering of Soviet diplomacy between N. Sihanouk, the Lon Nol regime and the forces oriented towards Vietnam. Despite the declarative support for Cambodia's independence, Soviet policy was largely determined by external factors, primarily relations with Hanoi and Beijing.

The third stage (1979-1991) is associated with the existence of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and is characterized by the closest alliance between Moscow and Phnom Penh. The USSR became the main guarantor of the political and economic survival of the new regime, ensuring its international recognition and material support. However, the dependence of the PRC on Vietnam and the USSR

simultaneously led to a unilateral foreign orientation and loss of sovereignty, which in the long run limited the effectiveness of the Soviet strategy. Over the course of the 1980s, especially during the era of perestroika, Soviet policy evolved towards pragmatism and the search for compromises, reflecting the general course towards detente and normalization of relations with the West and China.

The analysis of the selected periods makes it possible to identify key patterns of interaction between the USSR and Cambodia: Moscow's steady desire to use relations with Phnom Penh as an element of regional policy in Southeast Asia; the dependence of the degree of Soviet activity on the general state of international relations (primarily on the course of the Vietnam conflict and the Soviet-Chinese contradictions); gradual transition from ideologically motivated support to pragmatic cooperation at the final stage.

The modern foreign policy of the Kingdom of Cambodia is a complex combination of the desire for independence, neutrality and the need to adapt to a changing regional and global environment. After decades of internal instability and international isolation, the country has set a course aimed at ensuring national sovereignty, socio-economic development and strengthening its position in the international arena. The main priorities remain the preservation of political stability, the protection of territorial integrity, the development of economic diplomacy and the deepening of cooperation within ASEAN and other multilateral formats.

Cambodia actively uses its participation in regional and international organizations to strengthen its authority and attract foreign investment, while seeking to balance the interests of the United States and China, benefiting from cooperation with both powers. At the same time, such dependence on external assistance creates strategic vulnerability, which requires careful maneuvering between large centers of power.

During the post-Soviet period, South-East Asia gradually turned from a peripheral area of Russia's foreign policy into one of the key regions, reflecting the desire to diversify international relations and strengthen its status as an independent center of power. If in the 1990s-2000s. Cooperation was mainly limited to economic

cooperation with individual states (primarily Vietnam), but since the mid-2010s, Russia has attempted to institutionalize relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and reach the level of strategic partnership.

At the same time, Russian policy in the region remains largely reactive and pragmatic: Moscow seeks to use the opportunities of Southeast Asia to balance the influence of China and the West, while maintaining the principle of non-interference and equal cooperation. The complex configuration of international relations, increased rivalry between the United States and China, as well as the consequences of the 2022 Ukrainian crisis have given Russia's relations with ASEAN a new, more controversial character: the Association, while maintaining neutrality, avoids direct confrontation with Moscow, but individual countries (for example, Singapore and the Philippines) have taken a more critical position.

The development of political relations between Russia and Cambodia has gone through a difficult but progressive path from the ideologically driven cooperation of the Soviet period to the formation of a sustainable strategic partnership in the 21st century. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia not only inherited its obligations in the field of international agreements, but also managed to maintain a political dialogue with Cambodia, gradually building a new regulatory framework for bilateral cooperation. The key stage was the participation of the USSR, and then Russia, in the peaceful settlement of the Cambodian conflict and in the activities of international organizations, which laid the foundation for trust and mutual understanding between the countries. Russia's accession to the founding documents of ASEAN, including the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, has made it possible to institutionalize relations with the Association and strengthen their legal framework.

The intergovernmental agreements, memoranda and joint declarations signed in the 1990s and 2020s form a solid contractual and legal framework for cooperation covering the political, economic, cultural and scientific spheres. Of particular importance is the development of multilateral cooperation within ASEAN and the EAEU, which gives Russian-Cambodian relations a trans-regional dimension. In

general, the political ties between Russia and Cambodia have evolved from an ideological partnership to a pragmatic strategic interaction based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and international law. The modern regulatory framework of these relations ensures their stability, and the participation of both countries in the ASEAN formats contributes to further strengthening trust, expanding areas of cooperation and enhancing Russia's role in Southeast Asia.

The prospects for deepening trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Cambodia are linked to the implementation of long-term strategies combining economic expediency and geopolitical complementarity. A significant drawback that Russia has not been able to overcome in bilateral relations at the moment is the sectoral asymmetry and the extremely low level of economic cooperation. Although the legal foundations of cooperation have been laid, the intergovernmental commission is constantly working, but the volume of trade relations remains catastrophically small. This is only 26.4 million US dollars.

A key driver for solving this problem may be the conclusion of a free trade agreement with the EAEU, which will not only reduce tariff barriers, but also create a legal framework for cooperation in new areas such as the digital economy, green energy and pharmaceuticals. The acceleration of negotiations on a free trade area, accompanied by the synchronization of technical standards and investment guarantees, can attract Russian businesses to participate in infrastructure projects in Cambodia, including the modernization of the deepwater port of Sihanoukville or the creation of "smart" agricultural clusters. The humanitarian dimension will also play an important role: the expansion of student exchanges, joint research in the field of bioeconomics and adaptation to climate change will strengthen trust between the parties. However, the success of these initiatives will depend on overcoming structural imbalances, including economic asymmetries and competition with Chinese and Western investments.

The potential for investment cooperation between Russia and Cambodia remains high. Subject to the consistent implementation of the agreements reached and the successful settlement of debt and political issues, this vector of interaction

can become an important element of the foreign economic policy of both countries. Despite the positive dynamics of recent years and mutual political interest, cooperation is hampered by barriers: historically modest volumes of trade and investment against the background of the dominance of China and the ASEAN countries, Russia's lack of preferential trade regime with Cambodia/ASEAN, the structural problems of the Cambodian economy, competition with Asian players, and the unresolved issue of Cambodia's external debt, requiring a flexible approach. The prospects depend on the ability of Russia and Cambodia to focus on competitive niches and develop institutional support to remove all barriers to a mutually beneficial investment partnership.

Military-technical cooperation between Russia and Cambodia is limited, but strategically significant. Despite the relatively small volume of arms supplies and the absence of major joint projects, both sides strive to maintain a stable political and military dialogue. Russia views Cambodia as a friendly partner in Southeast Asia, through which it can strengthen its presence in the region and maintain an Asean-centric security balance. For Cambodia, cooperation with Russia serves as a tool for diversifying foreign policy ties and modernizing the armed forces while maintaining the principle of neutrality between the great powers.

At the same time, the influence of external factors — sanctions pressure, competition from China, South Korea and Western countries, as well as Cambodia's limited economic resources — hinders the development of cooperation. Nevertheless, humanitarian projects, military training, and participation in multilateral formats create the potential for a gradual strengthening of bilateral ties. In the long term, the prospects of the Russian-Cambodian military-technical partnership will depend on the parties' ability to adapt to the changing geopolitical situation and find a balance between political risks and mutual interests.

The educational cooperation between Russia and Cambodia, which has more than half a century of history, currently retains the dynamics of progressive development and strategic importance for both sides. Over the years of cooperation, a solid institutional and legal framework has been created, including an agreement

on mutual recognition of education and academic degrees, as well as a number of memoranda between leading scientific and educational institutions of the two countries.

Russia continues to be Cambodia's most important partner in training qualified personnel, primarily in the engineering, medical, and IT fields. The gradual increase in the number of allocated quotas — from 16 in 2019 to 55 in 2025 - indicates the growing interest of Cambodian youth in studying at Russian universities and the effectiveness of measures taken to promote domestic education. At the same time, further development of cooperation requires an integrated approach, including active information work, improvement of academic mobility mechanisms and creation of conditions for professional self-realization of graduates both in Russia and Cambodia.

Over the past decades, cultural ties between Russia and Cambodia have become one of the most stable and dynamically developing elements of bilateral cooperation. They are based on an extensive contractual and legal framework supported by regular exchange of delegations, joint projects in the field of cinematography, librarianship, art, media, sports and youth policy. A rich range of cultural programs — from festivals and cultural days to educational initiatives and restoration projects — contributes not only to strengthening interstate relations, but also to creating an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and interest between the peoples of the two countries. The gradual expansion of cooperation and the involvement of new institutions and community groups suggests that cultural cooperation between Russia and Cambodia has significant potential and will continue to play an important role in the further development of the entire range of bilateral relations. At the same time, it is worth noting that the process of forming a truly deep and diverse partnership, despite the presence of a favorable foundation, is at an early stage and requires further specification.

Tourism cooperation between Russia and Cambodia has significant potential, based both on the objective growth of the Cambodian tourism industry and on the sustained interest of Russian travelers in the cultural and natural resources of the

kingdom. Despite the existing limitations — lack of information promotion, problematic transport accessibility and persistent stereotypes — the dynamics of interaction shows positive trends. Cambodia is actively expanding its infrastructure, simplifying visa procedures and striving to position itself as a modern and safe destination, while the Russian side is demonstrating its readiness to expand organized tours and combined routes. The comprehensive development of these areas will strengthen mutual tourist attractiveness, increase the volume of tourist flows and give additional impetus to bilateral humanitarian relations. Thus, tourism will continue to play an important role in strengthening the partnership between the two countries, acting as one of the most promising and dynamic areas of their cooperation.

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