

by one commentator as a "bunch of cowboy capitalists", ie, in for quick, high risk money, then out of the country again in a downturn. Much illegal logging and gem exports occur, a source of corrupt wealth for officials, politicians, and the Khmer Rouge and a contributor to violence and environmental degradation. Corruption in general is a serious problem.

One hope for Cambodia lies in its integration into ASEAN and the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), and in greater Mekong basin cooperation, but this, unfortunately, seems to have dropped in rank on the government's agenda (although the Secretariat of the Mekong River Commission will open in Phnom Penh next July, and ASEAN can be expected to invite Cambodia in if the elections are reasonable).

In light of this context, the key peacebuilding challenge ahead will be, of course, to secure a free and fair election. But, beyond elections, a stable and prosperous democracy will demand, in the government sector, the reinforcement of the rule of law and of accountable, competent public institutions, together with steps to facilitate regional integration. Within broader civil society, the principal challenge will be to replace the legacy of factionalism and violence with new habits of peaceful problem-solving.