

The forces leading to the breakdown are still there. "The peace process is under duress - the war has never really ended". There is an absence of real reconciliation and political opposition is not seen as legitimate. Weapons are still readily available.

2.2 Political Environment

National Assembly The government has not functioned well. There has been no real political debate on issues, and this has affected the balance of power, (factions, mistrust). MPs are powerless on their own. If the CPP wins the July election (with alliances) and they continue to control most of the bureaucracy and institutions then an opposition may not be able to function, resulting in 'grid-lock'. One potentially positive indication is that the fighting last summer has loosened some log-jams and a political dynamism is taking place which is somewhat pluralistic. Some participants felt that the return of Prince Ranariddh is essential to the process of democratic development. Although many individuals have reservations about Ranariddh's ability to lead, he was elected Prime Minister in 1993, and the Cambodian people have a right to have him present in the 1998 elections.

Power-sharing mechanisms Mechanisms for dialogue and power sharing need to be identified because of the absence of cooperation. There is a lack of distinction between the party and the government and past attempts at power-sharing were not based on consensus. This has led to a very deep mistrust and factionalism.

Leadership The current government is based on personal contacts and relationships. This has meant that the situation stayed somewhat stable, as long as the leaders had some relationship. There is a deep reluctance for any movement towards changes. "We are not dealing with monolithic parties, CPP is more than Hun Sen. There are likely individuals who are far worse than Hun Sen and some who are better. Therefore, Canada should identify those with whom it can work". The Cambodian leadership has little experience with democracy. "We are talking about raw power, not leadership in a democratic process as we know it". It is unclear where the current leadership under Hun Sen is taking the country. Having a basic assessment of where Hun Sen is going is crucial, and addressing how one becomes a democratic ruler in a non-democratic environment should be part of the assessment.

Safety and Security Travel is fairly secure around the country, although parts of the country-side can be dangerous. This does lead to some climate of fear and intimidation. The urban areas are vibrant, open and relatively free of military presence.