

Homework: Please answer the questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why did the United States conduct bombing raids and send troops into Cambodia during the Vietnam War?
2. How did the United States contribute to the overthrow of the Cambodian government in 1970? Why did the US do this?
3. Who were the Khmer Rouge? How did they come to power in Cambodia?
4. How was the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia similar to the Chinese Cultural Revolution?
5. Describe how the rule of the Khmer Rouge impacted the Cambodian people.
6. Create a timeline of political events in Cambodia since 1979.
7. In your opinion, to what extent have Cambodia's problems in the postwar era been caused by foreign interference? Support your argument using factual data from the reading and your knowledge of global history.

Cambodia in the Postwar Era

The end of the Vietnam War did not put an end to bloodshed and chaos in Southeast Asia. Until the late 1960s Cambodia remained neutral in the Vietnam War, but like Laos, Cambodia suffered the misfortune of lying along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. (Ho Chi Minh used Cambodian land for moving troops and supplies from the communist North to South Vietnam). In 1969 President Nixon ordered secret bombing raids in Cambodia to intercept traffic on the trail, and the next year he sent US troops into Cambodia.

Realizing early on that North Vietnam would be stronger in the war, Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk had abandoned America to seek the friendship of China in the 1960s. Sihanouk's pro-Communist stance was unwelcome to the US, and with American support, Lon Nol took control of the Cambodian government in 1970. After the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, the Lon Nol regime could not survive the onslaught of communist forces. When the Americans finally left, a radical Cambodian Communist group called the **Khmer Rouge** easily captured Phnom Penh in April 1975 and took over the whole country with Vietnamese support.

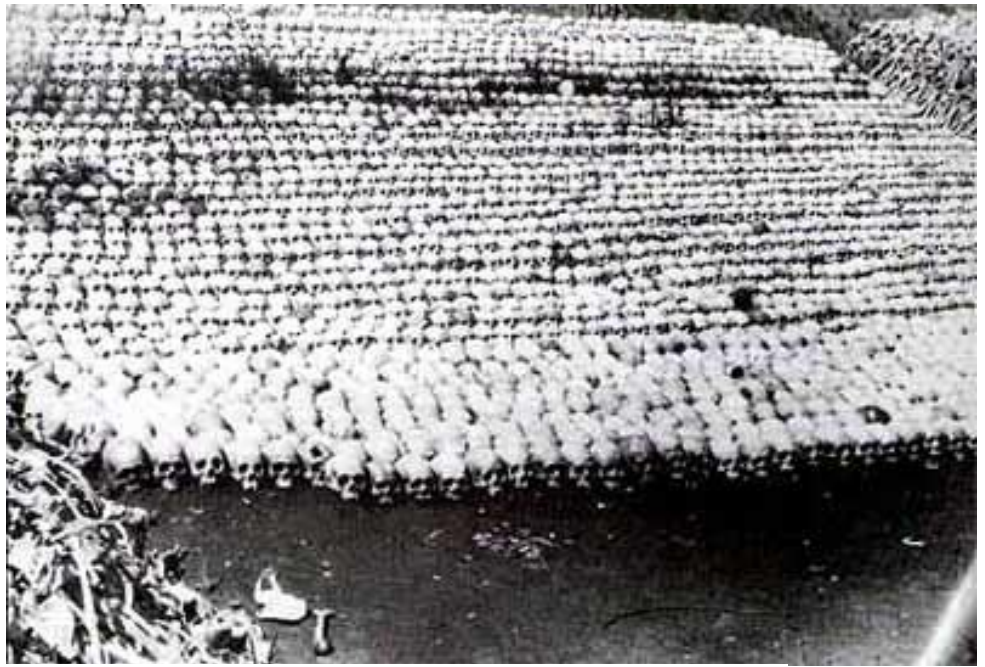


Pol Pot

The Khmer Rouge, under the leadership of **Pol Pot**, turned out to be the most ruthless rebel group in all of Southeast Asia. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were determined to apply the methods of China's Cultural Revolution to Kampuchea, as they now called Cambodia. As one western observer described, they planned to

“psychologically reconstruct individual members of society... stripping away, through terror and other means, the traditional bases, structures and forces which have shaped and guided an individual's life... rebuilding him according to party doctrines.”

The Khmer Rouge ordered a total evacuation of all Cambodian cities, sending city-dwellers to do manual labor in the countryside. The group also executed entire classes of people suspected of supporting the old order, including army officers, civil servants, teachers, and intellectuals. Between 1975 and 1977, according to some estimates, through murder or starvation the Khmer Rouge was responsible for the deaths of about 1.2 million people—nearly a fifth of Cambodia's entire population.



Victims of the Cambodian Genocide

The brutality ended in 1979 after Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia. While in Cambodia, the Vietnamese put a moderate Communist government into office and kept it under Vietnamese supervision. Violent occupation and warfare between the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge holdouts continued throughout the 1980s. Peace efforts began in Paris in 1989, culminating two years later in October 1991 in a comprehensive peace settlement.

The United Nations was given a mandate to enforce a ceasefire, and deal with refugees and disarmament. Norodom Sihanouk was reinstated as King of a constitutional monarchy. A coalition government, formed after national elections in 1998, brought renewed political stability and the surrender of remaining Khmer Rouge forces in 1998. Compared to its recent past, the 1993–2003 period has been one of relative stability for Cambodia. However, political violence continues to be a problem. Cambodia is moving past its war torn history and focusing on national reconstruction. In recent years, the country has seen double digit economic growth, and seeks foreign business investment to modernize the nation and eliminate poverty.



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