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Cambodian and Thai Political Actors Interest in Preah Vihear Temple Border Conflict in 2008-2011

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas bagaimana kepentingan aktor politik di dalam suatu negara dapat memicu konflik dan rekonsiliasi dengan negara lain. Studi kasus konflik antara Kamboja dan Thailand terkait Kuil Preah Vihear pada tahun 2008-2011 ini memperlihatkan bagaimana perbedaan kepentingan elite politik pada masing-masing negara membuat dinamika hubungan kedua negara naik dan turun dalam hal konflik dan rekonsiliasi. Dengan mendiskusikan bagaimana kepentingan Perdana Menteri Kamboja Hun Sen bersama *Cambodian's People Party* (CPP) dan Perdana Menteri Thailand Abhisit Vejjajiva bersama *Democracy Party* (PD) yang kemudian digantikan oleh Yingluck Shinawatra bersama Partai Pheu Thai, artikel ini berargumen bahwa konflik Preah Vihear telah dijadikan alat oleh aktor politik kedua negara tersebut untuk kepentingan politik dalam negeri mereka. Berdasarkan studi ini, dinamika suatu konflik perbatasan pada dasarnya dapat ditentukan oleh kepentingan aktor politik yang memiliki tujuan untuk mendapatkan kekuasaan di negara masing-masing. Dengan memberikan penekanan kepada kepentingan aktor politik secara domestik, studi ini memberikan dimensi yang berbeda dari penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya yang cenderung menjelaskan konflik Preah Vihear secara deskriptif dengan membahas sejarah serta kronologis dari konflik tersebut.

Kata Kunci: kepentingan, aktor, perbedaan kepentingan, konflik, kekuasaan.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how domestic interest of political actors in particular country may spark conflict and create reconciliation with other country. The case of the Preah Vihear border temple dispute between Cambodia and Thailand in 2008-2011 shows that distinctive political interest within each country has made the the relation of both countries in up and down situation, in term of escalating conflict or initiating reconciliation, in that period of time. By discussing the interest of Cambodia's political actor represented by Prime Minister Hun Sen with the Cambodian's People Party (CPP) and Thailand's elites represented by Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva with the Democracy Party (PD) and, later, by Yingluck Shinawatra with the Pheu Thai Party, the article argues that Preah Vihear conflict has been used by these political actors for their domestic

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political gains. Based on this study, it can be concluded that a border conflict can be basically influenced by political actor interest to maintain or gain domestic power. By underlining the domestic political actor interest, this study gives a different dimension compare to other studies at the same topic that tend to explain the conflict by using descriptive or chronological approach.

Keywords: interest, actor, difference of interests, conflict, power.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between states tend to occur when land and sea boundaries between them are uncertain and open to interpretation. Border disputes are common causes of interstate conflicts across the world (Putra, Utomo, & Windiani 2013, 2). In international politics, border conflicts may result in poor bilateral relations and trigger armed combat, which may cost lives. The discrete interests of each country's domestic political actors are a major reason for border conflicts (Sothirak 2013). The border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand, better known as the Preah Vihear temple border dispute, represents one such discord that stemmed from the divergence of domestic political interests in Asia.

This study focuses on the interests of the Prime Ministers of Cambodia and Thailand in the context of the Preah Vihear temple conflict that occurred between 2008 and 2011. Thailand's domestic politics heavily influenced for this border conflict. Thailand's Democracy Party (PD), its People Alliance for Democracy (PAD), and its "yellow shirts" incited the Thai people to claim the Preah Vihear temple is Thailand's national pride that it must be brought within Thailand's territory. This provocation succeeded in arousing the Thai people's anger.

On the other hand, the Cambodian political actors, Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), were also interested in maintaining their power. They took advantage of the dispute to foment discord between the two countries, and some people were killed during the ensuing clashes (Nugraha 2011, 6). Increasing casualties and material losses then changed the Cambodian and Thai state actors' motivations, and they formed a common interest in expending serious efforts, both bilaterally and through the process of mediation, to resolve the Preah

Vihear conflict. Interestingly, when reconciliation occurred, the Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva was replaced by Yingluck Shinawatra. The 2008-2011 Preah Vihear conflict was different from previous conflicts between the two countries because political actors on both sides of the border were responsible for both the emergence and the resolution of the dispute. This study will examine the manner in which the motives of Cambodian and Thai political actors influenced the 2008-2011 Preah Vihear Temple conflict.

Most previous studies discussing this conflict (Irewati et al. 2015; Raharjo 2013) have only explicated its causes and described its progression through details on its history and chronology without analyzing internal and external factors, such as political actors and border issues. A few studies that did include explanations on discrete actors' incentives with regard to the border issues also do not explain how these actors' different interests triggered the conflict (Choi 2014; Salla 1997; Paradhisa 2012).

This study intends to contribute to studies of conflict by examining the political actors' motives. The dispute began when the Preah Vihear temple became a strategy for Hun Sen's bid to maintain power and gain public support in the Cambodian election because he was concerned about the CPP's declining vote in the 2008 elections. On the other side of the border, Thai political actors used the issue of Cambodia's entry of Preah Vihear as part of its world heritage to instigate Abhisit Vejjajiva's act of overthrowing the Samak Sundaravej government, which had supported Cambodia and UNESCO. Yingluck Shinawatra, who wanted to become Prime Minister of Thailand, also used this conflict for his political ends, handling the issue aggressively on behalf of the country and making it drag on for three years.

CONFLICT AS MANIFESTATION OF FRICTION AND OF THE LEGITIMATION OF INTERESTS

Pruit and Rubin (2004) define conflict as friction that arises because of differences in interests or beliefs among a number of parties or actors that cannot be resolved. Pruit and Rubin argue that interests

are caused by the desires of the parties or actors and are realized in thoughts and actions. Interests, thus, form the core of the behaviors, goals, and intentions of people. The varied actors and parties on discrete sides of an issue are driven to respond or to behave in a certain manner to avoid interference with the actualization of their interests. In reality, the diverse actors' divergent interests create dissatisfaction if obstacles stemming from the interests of one party prevent the realization of the interests of another party (Pruit & Rubin 2004).

From a political perspective, conflicts arise due to differences in the interests of political actors who have specific power-related goals. Power is a primary concern in politics since it promotes prestige and allows freedom and broad access to more resources compared to those who do not hold political power or position. It is undeniable that government administrators' political positions help them meet and realize their interests and aspirations, both from the psychological and material standpoints. Thus, political players are inclined to fight for their interests despite having to face conflict.

Silverman (2011) argues that the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia occurred because of historical issues and their relevance to forming the two countries' national identities, tourism interests, and political legitimacy. Further, control of the area became a manifestation of Cambodia legitimacy as a nation, strengthening the desire on the Cambodian side to acquire territories that were considered "lost" (Silverman 2011; Ngoun 2017).

Most researchers, such as Pongsudhirak (2011), Sothirak (2013), and Ngoun (2017), state that the border conflicts resulted from the rise in nationalist sentiments in the two countries because of domestic politics. Further, the dispute also threatened ASEAN's integrity. This article will reference Pruit and Rubin's conceptual framework and align with the notion that conflict occurs and is strengthened by policies devised by political rulers to achieve their individual and administrative interests. In the context of the present paper, the author argues the Prime Ministers of Thailand and Cambodia, who were supposed to resolve conflicts,

actually used the issues and disputes to gain and maintain power. Thus, conflict resolution became increasingly difficult.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the qualitative method to review scholarly literature as material for analysis. Books, journals, articles, and reports/texts from the two countries' embassies in Jakarta were used as sources to examine the historical and chronological aspects of the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict. The data were triangulated through interviews with scholars and researchers at the Indonesian Research Institute (LIPI) that have extensive knowledge on the topic. The relationship pattern between the data variables was analyzed after all the data were collected, and the investigation results were subsequently associated with the conceptual framework mentioned above.

INTERESTS OF POLITICAL ACTORS IN CAMBODIA-THAILAND PRAEH VIHEAR TEMPLE CONFLICT

Border conflicts between countries essentially involve several actors both directly and indirectly. The motives of each actor generally differ. These divergent interests can potentially cause conflict. According to Pruitt and Rubin's theory of conflict, discord can occur due to actors' disparate interests. Conflict is eventually initiated at a stage when actors believe that their interests can be achieved. In addition, the actors' interests may oppose each other, making it difficult for them to find alternatives to the varied interests that can later grow to become the root of the conflict.

The actors' conflicting interests are caused by their desire to achieve a specific objective, as may be observed in the dynamics presented at the time of Abhisit Vejjajiva and Hun Sen and Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen (EPPO 2011, 36). The Preah Vihear conflict became important to the political actors of both countries because the communities considered the temple a national icon of their cultural heritage that could provide certain benefits to the nations, especially in terms

of tourism. In addition, the Thai and Cambodian political actors made safeguarding the two countries' sovereignty a supplementary issue of Preah Vihear temple conflict in an attempt to obtain public legitimacy.

INTERESTS OF CAMBODIAN POLITICAL ACTORS

The interests of the Cambodian political actors Prime Minister Hun Sen and the CPP as the ruling party in Cambodia initially caused the border conflict of Preah Vihear temple. Hun Sen wanted to maintain his position as the Prime Minister of Cambodia, and the CPP wanted to remain Cambodia's ruling party. A number of actions were taken to achieve these objectives, including financial support of the Cambodian military to garner increased support for Hun Sen and CPP in the guise of safeguarding Cambodia's sovereignty in the face of tensions with Thailand. (Irewati et al. 2015, 60).

With almost three decades in the position, Hun Sen is Cambodia's longest serving Prime Minister. Hun Sen is now 66, and his leadership tenure suggests that he may continue in this position for a much longer term. His special interest in the strategy of UNESCO's recognition of Preah Vihear as a Cambodian world heritage site is undeniable, as is the CPP's interest in maintaining its position as Cambodia's primary political party (Irewati et al. 2015, 36).

The issue related to Preah Vihear temple appeared to be one of significant national pride for the Cambodian people; they seemed willing to undergo the struggle of border disputes and submissions to the International Court of Justice, which declared the Preah Vihear temple was Cambodian territory in 1962. Hun Sen then used this decision to renew community support and win the 2008 Cambodian election. He argued for the need to maintain Cambodia's sovereignty, retain the Preah Vihear temple's cultural heritage against Thailand's claims, and enable the Preah Vihear temple to become a Cambodian tourism icon. Such strategies are usually employed by national leaders to maintain their power, especially against imminent threats from other political actors (Robison 2013, 30).

INTERESTS OF THAI POLITICAL ACTORS

Similarly, Thai political actors were also interested in taking advantage of the Preah Vihear temple issue to gain power. The internal upheavals of Thai politics affected both the conflict and its resolution. An examination of the Preah Vihear dispute period includes the two Thai leaders who handled the conflict: Abhisit Vejjajiva of the Democracy Party, subsequently replaced by Yingluck Shinawatra of the Pheu Thai party. The change of political actors significantly changed the way the conflict was managed. Abhisit Vejjajiva's interests led to escalation of the dispute, while Yingluck's concerns mandated resolving the conflict.

INTERESTS OF ABHISIT VEJJAJIVA AND DEMOCRACY PARTY

Abhisit Vejjajiva replaced the People's Power Party's (PPP) interim Prime Minister, Somchai Wongsawat. Abhisit Vejjajiva belonged to the Democracy Party (PD), which wanted to become the ruling party of Thailand, while Abhisit Vejjajiva wanted to become the prime minister. Abhisit Vejjajiva and PD used the Preah Vihear issue to incite Thai nationalist sentiments against the PPP government of the time. The replacement of the prime minister began a new chapter in handling the Preah Vihear conflict. In addition, Abhisit Vejjajiva also attempted to obtain support from the PAD, a government pressure group in Thailand. The PAD, commonly called the yellow-shirt group (anti-Shinawatra faction), shared the PD's objectives of toppling the PPP from power.

The PD strategy, espoused by Abhisit Vejjajiva, was initiated through the censure of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej and Foreign Minister Nappadon Pattama's May 22, 2008 joint statement endorsing the legalization of Preah Vihear temple as a UNESCO world heritage site belonging to Cambodia. This decision was taken unilaterally and without discussion with the Minister of Defense or with Thai society (Irewati et al. 2015, 56). The PD and its supporters declared that Samak Sundaravej and Nappadon Pattam were had sold Thai sovereignty out through this consent. PPP infighting led to a number of Sundaravej's

faults surfacing, and the yellow-shirt group provoked demonstrations to overthrow the ruling government. Sundaravej was temporarily replaced by fellow PPP member, Somchai Wongsawat. Increasingly murky internal politics in Thailand finally compelled the 2008 elections. Thai activists who joined the PAD Alliance also tried to enter the border area before the elections. They were captured by Cambodian troops; however, they successfully influenced the Thai people's attitudes toward the border region crisis between Cambodia and Thailand. This allowed Abhisit Vejjajiva to gain political support for the PD's victory in the 2008 Election.

INTERESTS OF YINGLUCK SHINAWATRA AND THE PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE CONFLICT

The Preah Vihear temple conflict caused the loss of many lives, much suffering, and tremendous material damage to Thailand. The lack of clarity in the conflict resolution forced the Pheu Thai Party and its leader, Yingluck Shinawatra, to stand against the Abhisit Vejjajiva government. It intended to restore the Pheu Thai Party to power and make Yingluck the prime minister. Yingluck was supported in this instance by the red-shirt group. Yingluck's conduct was triggered by Abhisit Vejjajiva and the PD's actions, which prioritized the governing party's efforts to use the Preah Vihear temple conflict as a tool to achieve its interests regardless of the extent of the losses Thailand suffered. These actions resulted in public anger and wide-ranging disappointment in Abhisit's leadership. Diverse demonstrations and rebellions began to emerge, and an atmosphere of political upheaval gripped Thailand as some of the largest protests caused significant casualties, especially between March and April 2010. Allegations that Abhisit Vejjajiva had failed to defend Thailand's territorial sovereignty in the Preah Vihear disputed area inflamed the public until the demonstrators were finally subdued by the military, resulting in 92 deaths (International Crisis Group 2011, 1).

The rejection of the PAD was clearly expressed by order refugees who wrote peace posters. Moreover, the refugees also tried to prevent

any soldiers, weapons, and tanks from entering the disputed territory. They argued that the conflict would not end if armed contact continued around the Preah Vihear temple region (Oktria 2013). The actions taken by the Thai government under Abhisit Vejjajiva actually paralyzed life and became a threat for residents around the border area. Military involvement in handling the conflict also resulted in war between Cambodia and Thailand.

Yingluck Shinawatra and the Pheu Thai Party took advantage of this opportunity to gain public support in the 2011 Thai elections. Yingluck and her party exploited the Thai people's anger and espoused the theme of reconciliation to end the political crisis that had gone on since 2008. Yingluck claimed that Abhisit's leadership only served to worsen Thailand's relations with Cambodia, and that the reigning government's coercive manner of dealing with the conflict had damaged Thailand's image in the global arena. In addition, the military presence behind Abhisit made the situation more volatile (Irewati et al. 2015, 115). Yingluck's campaign centered on the Preah Vihear temple conflict, and she promised to use non-violent diplomatic means to resolve the border dispute.

THE INTERESTS OF ABHISIT VEJJAJIVA AND HUN SEN IN INFLUENCING THE 2008- 2011 PRAEH VIHEAR TEMPLE CONFLICT

The Preah Vihear temple was contested by Cambodia and Thailand in the 1950s; the dispute was resolved through the 1962 International Court decision. It resurfaced because of the interests of political actors of both countries and the resulting internal political upheavals. The conflict escalated when Hun Sen attempted to renew the Cambodian community's support for registering the Preah Vihear temple with UNESCO as a Cambodian world heritage site in an effort to divert attention from Cambodia's economic decline due to the world economic crisis. Hun Sen felt that the political opposition, under the leadership of Sam Rainsy, had become a potential threat that could reduce CPP's vote share in the 2008 Cambodian election (Plattes 2010, 36).

Responding to Hun Sen’s actions in January 2008, Abhisit Vejjajiva and the PD opposed this move in Thailand with the goal of toppling the ruling Thai government since Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej had agreed with Hun Sen’s desire to register the Preah Vihear temple as a Cambodian heritage site with UNESCO. Tensions were rife in Thai politics after the 2006 coup, in which Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was removed and his party, Thai Rak Thai, was dissolved. The leaders of Thai Rak Thai formed the PPP, which won a majority in the 2007 elections. Thus, Abhisit Vejjajiva and the PD were quick to take advantage when this sovereignty-related issue, said to oppose the Thai Constitution, emerged in 2008. They took joint action with Thai nationalists and the yellow-shirt group, securing victory for the PD. Abhisit Vejjajiva then became the new Thai Prime Minister (BBC News 2008). The interests of these actors are explained in detail in Table 1, which shows the differences in interests that created this border conflict.

Table 1
Conflict of Interests of both Cambodian and Thai Political Actors

Factors	Abhisit Vejjajiva	Hun Sen
View of the ownership of Preah Vihear temple as Cambodia’s World Heritage	A step to take over power from the PPP and Prime Ministers Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat	An effort to defend power from the opposition’s threats and to win the 27 July 2008 elections
Actors’ interests in the Preah Vihear temple Conflict	Seize the Preah Vihear temple to become the Prime Minister	Defend the Preah Vihear temple and retain power
Actors’ goals in the achievement of their interests	Become Thai Prime Minister	Become Cambodian Prime Minister
Ownership of the disputed area of 4.6 km ²	Claim that the area belongs to Thailand	Claim that the area belongs to Cambodia
Conflict resolution with regard to the Preah Vihear temple	Bilateral and coercive means	Involve third parties
Observers from Indonesia	Reject	Accept
Response to the decision of the International Court of Justice	Reject	Accept

Source: Processed from several sources by the author

The difficulty of finding alternatives to these different interests formed the basis for the conflict, as became clear when Abhisit Vejjajiva became the Thai Prime Minister. The military played a greater role in the Thai government and deployed 2,000 troops to the contested

area. This move increased the intensity of armed combat between the two countries, which began with 100 Thai soldiers crossing the border near the Preah Vihear temple on March 25, 2009. Hun Sen received this report and reminded Abhisit Vejjajiva, on March 31, 2009, that Cambodian soldiers would wage war if Thai troops were discovered crossing the border (Karisma 2013, 50). Abhisit Vejjajiva denied Hun Sen's claim, saying that the Thai soldiers were merely guarding the border region and that, in fact, the Cambodian army had crossed the border and caused the armed contact.

Disputes between the two prime ministers continued as Hun Sen appointed Thaksin Shinawatra as Cambodia's economic adviser on October 27, 2009. In response, Abhisit Vejjajiva alleged that Hun Sen was attempting to interfere in internal Thai affairs because Thaksin Shinawatra was a fugitive who had been found guilty in absentia by Thailand's judiciary. On November 5, 2009, Abhisit Vejjajiva ordered the Thai foreign ministry to recall the Thai ambassador to Cambodia. He also issued a statement that Thailand would discontinue bilateral relations with Cambodia. Hun Sen reciprocated in similar vein, recalling the Cambodian ambassador to Thailand (Karisma 2013, 52).

Tensions intensified through 2010, with soldiers of both countries engaging in high intensity gunfire. The hostilities were also aggravated by mutually accusatory statements by the militaries of the two countries about who initiated firing until armed contact finally occurred. The armed combat affected the surrounding areas, silencing community activities and causing fear among people living along the borders. Gunfire continued until the beginning of 2011, when the political actors of the two states started thinking seriously about reconciliation (Hughes 2010, 98).

Hun Sen then initiated bilateral negotiations with Abhisit Vejjajiva in both Cambodia and Thailand, which were not fruitful even though some meetings took place. Hun Sen also sought UN assistance to resolve the Preah Vihear temple conflict, but Thailand rejected this proposal. The UN insisted the case must be resolved at the regional level, and the two countries eventually agreed to involve ASEAN as a third

party. As the ASEAN chair, Indonesia was appointed mediator, and its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marty Natalegawa, attempted to facilitate a meeting entitled The Thailand-Cambodia Joint Commission on the Demarcation of the Land Boundary (JBC) at the Presidential Palace in Bogor, Indonesia on 7 and 8 April, 2011 (Robison 2013, 76). However, the meeting did not yield results because only the Secretary to the Foreign Minister attended from the Thai side, and he could not take decisions without discussions with the Thai Foreign Minister and with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

The absence of good faith on Abhisit Vejjajiva's part made Hun Sen file a case at the International Court of Justice on 28 April 2011, asking for a reinterpretation of the 1962 decision to resolve the dispute pertaining to the 4.6 km² area and for a decision on the Thai military's withdrawal from the disputed region (Raharjo 2013). Obviously, Abhisit Vejjajiva and the Thai military reacted negatively to Hun Sen's move. Thus, the meetings conducted by Abhisit Vejjajiva and Hun Sen at the ASEAN Summit in Jakarta actually elevated tensions and did not put an end to the conflict. Over time, the opinions of the two countries, represented by their Foreign Affairs ministries, were heard by the International Court in Hague on May 30 and 31, 2011.

Essentially, the changing interests of the political actors who caused the Preah Vihear conflict within the two countries finally led to reconciliation. In Cambodia, Hun Sen came under pressure to resolve the conflict from the Cambodian opposition, considering the expense of recruiting and deploying more troops to match the number of Thai troops (Wagener 2011). Hun Sen was considered incapable of handling the dispute that had cost a lot of money, both for the soldiers and for repairing the damage caused by the border conflict (Irewati et al. 2015, 185). Hun Sen thus became interested in the early resolution of the conflict to retain his power, which was under threat from Cambodian opposition parties.

On the Thai side, Abhisit Vejjajiva was also under pressure from the yellow-shirt group; he was being labeled too weak to resolve the dispute. There were increasing demands for concrete action to end the

increasingly protracted conflict that had been detrimental to Thailand's interests. More, the Thai people, especially in the border area, also repudiated Abhisit Vejjajiva and PD through written posters that asked for peace. The public argued that Abhisit's leadership had only made the conflict worse, and that they wanted a non-violent, diplomatic solution.

INTERESTS OF YINGLUCK SHINAWATRA AND HUN SEN IN THE RECONCILIATION OF 2008-2011 PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE CONFLICT

The military's involvement in the conflict was actually detrimental to both countries, and this later became the basis for Yingluck Shinawatra's campaign to resolve the dispute through diplomacy and without violence. Hun Sen immediately congratulated Yingluck Shinawatra after her ascension, stating that her victory represented hope for the resolution of the conflict to restore and improve bilateral relations (Kompas.com 2011). The bilateral relations between Cambodia and Thailand were indeed disrupted when the Thai government was controlled by PD. Thaksin Shinawatra's period of governance had increased bilateral cooperation between Cambodia and Thailand, and Hun Sen hoped that the Shinawatra family leadership's return to the Thai government would again yield the same outcome.

Hun Sen's positive response to Yingluck Shinawatra's victory was also based on his interest in reconciliation because of internal pressures from Cambodia's opposition parties. He argued that the reconciliation process would be easier with Yingluck Shinawatra, given the close relations between Hun Sen and the Shinawatra family. In addition, Hun Sen also believed that, unlike Abhisit Vejjajiva, Yingluck Shinawatra would comply with the International Court's ruling without protest or violent actions involving deployment of the army.

The congruence of the two leaders' goals and the close relationship between Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen were very helpful to the process of resolving the Preah Vihear temple dispute. Both sides demonstrated their willingness to reconcile by withdrawing all troops from the disputed area. The Indonesian monitoring team entered the

conflict zone after the interim decision of the International Court on July 18, 2011. Yingluck Shinawatra respected Hun Sen's decision to file the case with the International Court of Justice to interpret the 1962 decision because she felt that the action would dampen the tensions between the two parties.

Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen's mutual decision to demilitarize the Preah temple area brought real changes to the conflict resolution process. People living along the borders began to return to their homes and carry out their daily activities after the military troops left the area. People from both countries, especially those inhabiting the border region, began to feel the positive consequences of the reconciliatory efforts of Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen. Public trust in their leadership began to increase with the end of armed combat between Cambodia and Thailand.

Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen also attempted to understand the impact of the conflict, especially in terms of economics. Yingluck Shinawatra's business experience and her expertise in economics made her more conscious that the conflict had affected trade. The average volume of Cambodian-Thai trade before the conflict was 234 million US dollars per year, making Thailand the largest importer of Cambodian products. Cambodia was one of the most important export destinations for Thai products. Thailand exported fuel, vehicles and spare parts, chemicals, sugar, plastics, processed foods, and construction materials to Cambodia. On the other hand, Cambodia exported clothing, plywood, and other connected products to Thailand (Murshid & Sokphally 2005, 32). It is undeniable that the conflict caused a drastic decline in the exports and imports of the two countries. Yingluck Shinawatra explained the above situation to Hun Sen during her visit to Cambodia, and Hun Sen responded positively. Both sides immediately began to take steps to improve bilateral cooperation.

Hun Sen believed that Yingluck Shinawatra would be able to improve economic cooperation and would restore cooperation to pre-conflict levels. Hun Sen's trust also hinged on the fact that Yingluck's elder brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, had been Hun Sen's trusted economic

adviser for Cambodia in 2009. In addition to export and import, Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen also talked about strengthening tourism in both countries, especially travel between Cambodia and Thailand.

The measures taken by Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen actually served to reconcile the disputes between the two neighboring nations. The bilateral relations between Cambodia and Thailand also improved as the number of tourists from both Thailand and Cambodia visiting each other's countries increased by 90% (Bangkok Post 2012). After the decline of tensions over the Preah Vihear temple, Yingluck Shinawatra became interested in making Pheu Thai the main party in Thailand by improving Thailand's foreign policy, especially with regard to its neighboring countries. On the Cambodian side, Hun Sen strengthened community support for himself and the CPP, specifically with the motive of victory in the next election. It became increasingly apparent that the positive bilateral attitudes vis-à-vis the border issues and the economic commitments made to each other by Cambodia and Thailand could only occur because of the personal associations between the prevailing regime in Cambodia and the Shinawatra family-led Thai government (Irewati et al. 2015, 154). The interests of Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen may be explained through the following table:

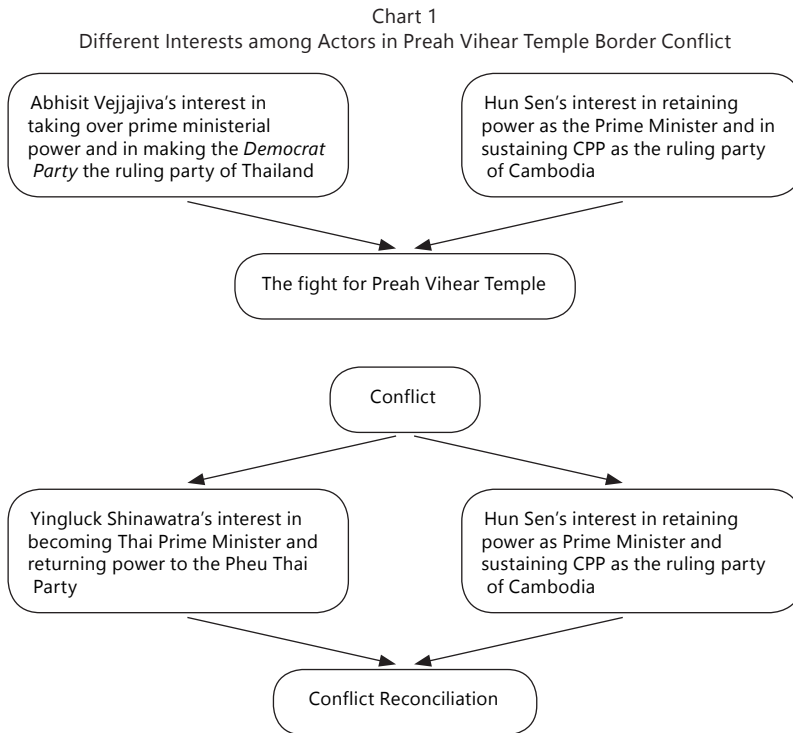
Table 2
Interests of both Political Actors in the Conflict Reconciliation

Factors	Yingluck Shinawatra	Hun Sen
View toward the ownership of Preah Vihear temple as Cambodia's World Heritage	Refer to the decision of the International Court of Justice	Refer to the decision of the International Court of Justice
Actors' interest in the conflict reconciliation	Seize the power of government party	Maintain the power
Actors' goal in meeting their interests	Become Thai Prime Minister	Become Cambodia Prime Minister
Ownership of Disputed Area of 4.6 km ²	Claim that the area belongs to Thailand but agree to the decision of the International Court of Justice	Claim that the area belongs to Cambodia but agree to the decision of the International Court of Justice
Conflict Resolution of the Preah Vihear temple	Bilateral negotiation and involve third parties	Involve third parties
Observer from Indonesia	Accept	Accept
Actors' response to the decision of the International Court of Justice	Accept	Accept

Source: Processed from several sources by the author.

Table 2 demonstrates fewer differences in the interests of the political actors on both sides. Thus, the conflict resolution process became easier. Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen succeeded in reducing tensions and peacefully resolving the longstanding conflict. Yingluck Shinawatra’s openness to the International Court of Justice decision later became the foundation for the settlement of Preah Vihear temple conflict. Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen undertook varied negotiations to find solutions for the different interests until a common goal was achieved.

The chart provided below shows the analysis of the events and indicates that the conflict emerged with the divergent interests of Abhisit Vejjajiva and Hun Sen and was later resolved as the internal political incentives of Yingluck Shinawatra and Hun Sen changed to demand reconciliation.



CONCLUSION

This study explains how domestic politics and the interests of political actors influence conflict. We examine the ways in which the conflict was aggravated by the interests of political actors in two countries: a historical issue, the concept of sovereignty, and electoral interests.

In Cambodia, Hun Sen intended to retain public support and to preserve his position of power as the Prime Minister of Cambodia. In Thailand, clear differences of perspective were observed between Yingluck Shinawatra and Abhisit Vejjajiva with respect to the border problem. Abhisit Vejjajiva made the border dispute and the Preah Vihear temple an issue of sovereignty, which inflamed the conflict. This perspective changed when Yingluck Shinawatra became the Prime Minister, and reconciliation began with initiating communication with Hun Sen.

Bilateral negotiations between the two countries were unsuccessful because of the lack of trust between the two parties. The Cambodian government did not really trust Thailand when military threats were used more than diplomacy. On the other hand, the existence of PAD and its military presence in Thailand forced the government to be more violent toward Cambodia, making agreement more difficult to achieve. Despite high expectations from ASEAN, the norms that prioritize consensus and non-interference caused ASEAN's role in the reconciliation to be limited. ASEAN can contribute to mediation or referee conflicts only when there is goodwill and trust between parties.

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