

Silas Everett introduces himself as the country representative for the Asia Foundation in Cambodia, with prior experience in Timor-Leste. He thanks ODI and Elena for the introduction and Claire for setting the stage for his presentation. Everett acknowledges his position as a practitioner and takes the opportunity to reflect on the challenges in his work. He plans to share personal experiences from Timor-Leste and Cambodia to stimulate reflection and discussion on issues raised by Claire.

Everett discusses the importance of elections as a foundational aspect of legitimacy in Cambodia and Timor-Leste, noting that winning at the ballot box is increasingly crucial. However, he raises concerns about the weak translation of electoral victory into actual governance legitimacy. In Cambodia, elections have been contested by the opposition, with threats and boycotts, and the ruling CPP's attempts to regain legitimacy may lead to uncertain outcomes, including reform, repression, or crisis. In Timor-Leste, all elections except one in 2007 were accepted, but the political landscape has created a uni-polar order with less opposition pressure, potentially affecting government accountability and transparency.

Legitimacy is dynamic, especially in post-conflict transitions from war to peace, and what constitutes legitimacy can shift based on the population's needs. Everett compares Cambodia's transition from the Khmer Rouge period and Timor-Leste's transition from Indonesian occupation, highlighting the initial need for physical security before economic stability. He illustrates how legitimacy in Cambodia was built on stability and growth, but a sudden drop in the ruling party's popularity suggests a shift in what the population views as legitimate governance. He speculates on the factors influencing this shift, including economic factors and the limitations of a uni-polar, hierarchical political system to adapt to changing expectations of legitimacy.

Everett concludes by pointing out that Cambodia and Timor-Leste face challenges in maintaining legitimacy as they move forward, especially in terms of delivering developmental goods to satisfy the population. He apologizes for going over time and expresses a willingness to discuss ideas and recommendations further.