

MONGOLIA

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Mongolia has a semi-presidential political system with a president directly elected by popular vote. *Political system* The prime minister is elected by the parliament and is accountable to it. However, the Mongolian semi-presidential system has certain specific aspects. The power of the president is strongly limited by the parliament. After being elected the candidate is scrutinized because “the parliament considers the candidate who has obtained a majority of all votes cast in the first voting as elected president and passes a law recognizing his or her mandate” (article 31[4] of the constitution of Mongolia [CM]). Moreover, under article 35(1) of the constitution the president is accountable not directly to his electorate but to the parliament. The election of the president is also limited to those who are the candidates of the parliamentary parties. The president’s decree powers are limited by the prime minister, and his or her veto power is limited by the parliament.

Since the introduction of the new constitution in 1992, Mongolian history has been a never-ceasing power struggle between the office of the president and the parliament. The reason behind this has been the strong support for the presidential system from a part of the political establishment. In fact, Mongolia has been a rare example in post-communist Central Asia. The majority of the political establishment in Central Asia preferred a Russian-style presidential system which appeared more suitable for building a system not centred on the party and reshaping communist parties into parties of the president. Mongolia’s choice was undoubtedly the result of a non-confrontational policy of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP). The leadership of the party had resigned after negotiations with the opposition, and thus opened the way for a multi-party political system. The flexibility of both sides in a changing political environment provided Mongolia with the choice of a system in which political parties are the leading players in political decision making and not the president’s office.

However, as the head of state the president controls significant tools to influence national policy. Article 26(1) of the constitution states that the president, members of the national parliament and the government have the right to initiate legislation. What is more, the president has the right to veto, partially or wholly, laws and other decisions adopted by the parliament. The laws or decisions remain in force if two-thirds of the members of the parliament do not accept the president’s veto. Such a limitation of the presidential veto power was introduced as an amendment in 2000 as a result of the long confrontation between democrats who dominated the parliament in that period and the opposition of the MPRP, which later nominated the presidential candidate.

According to the Mongolian constitution the president has the right to propose to the parliament the candidate for the post of the prime minister in consultation with the majority party or parties in the parliament if none of them have a majority of seats, as well as to propose to the national parliament dismiss the government. Moreover he or she also has the right “to instruct the government on issues within his competence” (Article 33[3] of CM). On the other side if the president issues a relevant decree it only becomes effective when signed by the prime minister. The president

has the power to nominate judges of the supreme court. In consultation with the parliament he nominates the prosecutor general. These articles make him significantly influential in the judiciary through the appointment of key positions.

Two articles give the president powers in foreign policy: 33(4) and 33(5) of CM. He or she has the power to represent the Mongolian state in foreign relations. He can "conclude international treaties on behalf of Mongolia" but only "in consultation with the parliament". The president has also the power to appoint and recall heads of plenipotentiary missions to foreign countries in consultation with the parliament. Finally, the president, who also acts as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Mongolia, has typical presidential competences such as the right to head the National Security Council, to declare a state of emergency or a state of war on the whole or a part of the national territory and to order the deployment of the armed forces.

This semi-presidential system creates much overlap between the president, the parliament and the prime minister's office. However, the latest constitutional amendments made in 2000 shifted the power struggle between the president's office and the parliament to the latter and to the government.

There was a long constitutional controversy over whether a member of parliament could serve in government or in its administration. The possibility of serving as both a legislator and as a member of the executive branch was tempting for some. The strong role of the Mongolian state not only as a coordinator but as the direct distributor of public goods was inherited from its socialist past and was essential in these discussions. Because the constitution did not provide a clear statement there were conflicting interpretations of it by the constitutional court. Yet, the final interpretation in 1999 allowed MPs to combine legislative and executive duties. Nevertheless, this situation may be reversed as the corporate interests of the parties are slowly superseding the individual interests of its members. The number of MPs who also serve as cabinet ministers is a declining trend.

Constitution For a nomadic population one of the most important values, if not the most important, was personal freedom. It was (and is) closely linked to the nomadic way of life. As Mongolia is the last nomadic culture on the globe the value of personal freedom is encoded in Mongolian social behaviour. It creates definitions like a "ravine Mongol", which means a self-sufficient household that lives at a "non-disturbing" distance from its closest neighbour. Such behaviour was dictated by the nomadic economy, which required a vast area of common pastureland. The role of the state was more regulatory and it provided significant personal freedom. With the low population density there was weak regulatory interference by central and local government in household affairs. It made for the principal differences in citizen behavioural standards between Mongols and East Asians, who created sophisticated social hierarchies.

This situation changed dramatically in the 20th century. The price for Mongolian independence from Chinese occupation was to follow the ideological directives of the Soviet Union. State interference in personal life grew incessantly, reaching its apogee in 1961. The final blow was the loss of economic independence with the collectivization of herders' livestock and the announcement of industrialization. The financing for industrialization was borrowed from Russia: to build industry at the expense of the rural population. The sole populated town, the capital Ulan Bator, had barely 160 thousand people in 1960. It had reached more than 750 thousand in the mid-seventies because of the large number of rural migrants. To control its new assets the socialist state built extensive and expensive infrastructure all over the country. The government also had to introduce measures to stop the influx to the capital of nomads dispossessed of their property.

The stages of enforcing a collectivist communist ideology in Mongolia were reflected in three versions of the constitution: in 1924, in 1940 and in 1960. Although formally fixing basic rights, those constitutions were ideologically indoctrinated by using Marxist Leninist class theory. As the backbone of industrial development the members of the working class were privileged in that at least some basic rights were granted to them.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of the collectivist ideology in Mongolian society demanded new approaches to constitution-making. In January 1992 Mongolia adopted a new constitution. In that constitution new concepts of personal and political rights and also social, economical and cultural rights were introduced. This constitution guarantees personal rights and liberties such as the right of life, the right of personal liberty and safety, freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of movement, freedom of thought, opinion, expression, speech, press, and peaceful assembly, the freedom of association in political parties or other voluntary organizations on the basis of social and personal interests and opinion, the right to seek and receive information, the right to submit a petition or a complaint to state authorities and officials, the right to take part in the government of the country directly or through representative bodies, equality before the law and the courts, and many other social, economic and cultural rights and liberties such as sexual equality, the rights to a healthy and safe environment, the right of employment, education, the right of fair acquisition, possession and inheritance of movable and immovable property, and the right to material and financial assistance.

As Mongolia closely followed the Soviet model of political development, democratic orientation in Mongolian society is still very weak. Two of the main political parties, the MPRP and the Democratic Party (DP), have little attachment to liberal policies and their implementation despite their public declarations. The liberal Civil Will Party (CWP) is too weak to become significant in decision making. There is also little support for liberal ideas from civil society. The civil society that once flourished with the support of international donors seems to be slowly "drying out". Mongolian society is not developed enough to keep civil initiatives afloat. The reason is that the middle class is too weak for sustainable voluntary input and activity.

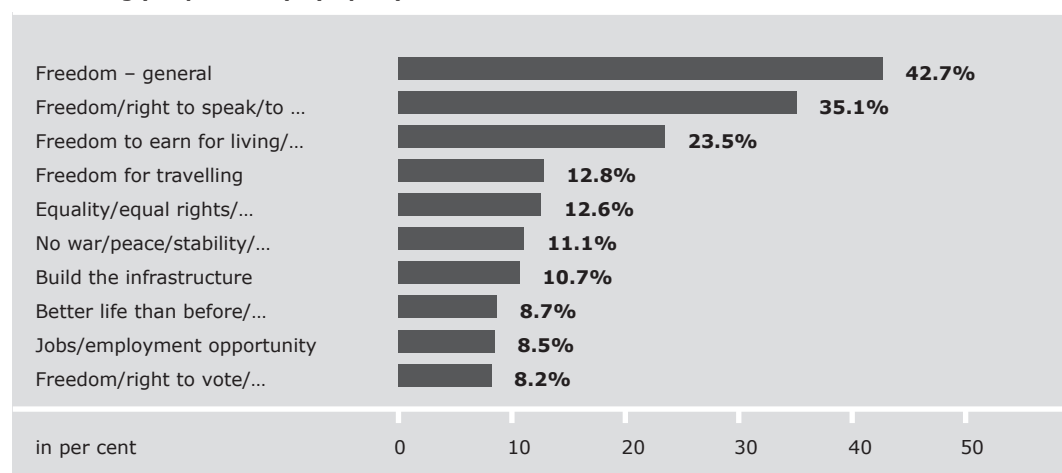
*State
of democracy*

However, the overwhelming majority of Mongols have accepted the democratic system. The restoration of the old system was never a popular idea despite frequent and continuous economic hardships. Between 1995 and 2007, 91 per cent of the Mongolian population approved of the introduction of a democratic system (Prohl and Sumati 2007).

Research done in November 2007 by the Sant Maral Foundation (SMF) revealed the strong weighting Mongols assigned to personal freedom in their democracy (chart 1). Undoubtedly, systemic stability in Mongolia should be linked to the level of public expectations about the Mongolian constitution and, more importantly, how effective is its implementation.

Chart 1 | PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS FROM DEMOCRACY ⁽¹⁾

What, if anything, is the most important thing that democracy in Mongolia will bring you personally? (Top 10)



⁽¹⁾Multiple answers possible.

Source: Sant Maral Foundation, Report on Voter Education, Nov. 2008.

In July 2008 the centre of Ulan Bator was rocked by public demonstrations which quickly turning into violent clashes with the police. The result was: several people dead, the MPRP headquarters set on fire and police officers under interrogation for the abuse of power. This was the first incidence of violent political turmoil since the peaceful transition in 1991. Mongolia was the focus of world attention. The most common question was: Is this the end of Mongolian stability or an isolated incident?

The opposition leadership explained the events as a response to election manipulation that snatched victory from the Democratic Party and triggered public discontent. But was the victory really snatched from the Democrats? Analysis of the political situation revealed a somewhat different picture. The unpopular coalition government of Prime Minister M. Enhbald dragged the MPRP's rating down through all of 2007. In October 2007 a SMF study (SMF Political Barometer N32) showed the Democratic Party leading the MPRP by 4 per cent in national polls, which in a simple majority system could have resulted in sufficient number of seats in parliament to form its own government. For example, in the 1996 elections the DU Coalition received 47.7 per cent of votes while the MPRP 40.6 per cent. However, the 7.1 per cent difference provided the Democrats with 50 out of 76 seats in parliament.

Realizing the problem, the MPRP replaced its party leadership. The party nominated the popular politician S. Bayar as the new party chairman and formed a new coalition government. This action changed the tide. In May 2008 a nationwide survey by SMF showed the MPRP leading over the DP by 10 per cent in rural areas while in Ulan Bator the DP was stronger by 5 per cent. As the 76 seats are split between 20 seats for Ulan Bator and 56 for the countryside the lead in the rural provinces gave the MPRP a chance to collect more seats than DP over the whole parliament. Based on SMF and other pollsters' observations the DP did not manage to swing support in the countryside in their favour during the election campaign.

Somehow, the results of the election were distorted by multiple irregularities. Although international observers reported a relatively small number of violations on election day, there were violations during the counting process. The complicated electoral system, which gave multiple voting choices, created bitter rivalry not only between parties but within a single district between fellow party candidates. The media reported candidates from both major parties being equally engaged in fraud, which was later reflected in court cases.

Despite these political conflicts, the events of July 2008 had economic causes. Unemployment and a decline in living standards have topped the country's major problems for years. As the result there was a growing proportion of poor people in Ulan Bator, the result of incessant migration from the rural areas. Corruption, which is widespread and hinders effective governance, added to the discontent.

The critical situation forced the MPRP leadership to invite the DP into a joint coalition. This step was taken despite the majority of seats in the parliament being won by the MPRP and a strong move inside the party to create a single-party government. The complexity of national tasks and challenges, such as bringing in foreign investors, raising living standards and reducing unemployment obliged the MPRP to form a grand coalition with the DP. To summarize the latest events we can state that the transition initiated in the early 1990s is over. This end was officially announced by President Enhbayar in his public speech to the Japanese parliament on March 2007. In November 2007 he repeated his conclusion in a public lecture at Columbia University.

Separation of powers Article 38 of the constitution states the government is the highest executive body of the state. Mongolia is a unitary state. The territory of Mongolia is divided into 22 administrative units.

The judicial system consists of a supreme court, provincial and capital city courts, regional, inter-regional, and district courts. Specialized courts such as criminal, civil, and administrative courts may be formed and are supervised by the supreme court. The courts are financed through the state

budget. A general council of courts has the function of ensuring the independence of the judiciary. The constitutional court consists of nine members who serve for six years. Their nomination is evenly shared between the national parliament, the president and the supreme court. As the president also has the power to nominate the head of the supreme court, he or she has greater weight than the parliament. The president of the constitutional court is elected for a term of three years by majority vote by the members of the court. He or she can be re-elected once.

According to the constitution the constitutional court is the organ exercising supreme supervision over the implementation of the constitution, making judgments on the violation of its provisions, and resolving constitutional disputes. It is the guarantee for the strict observance of the constitution. One of the most frequent events of Mongolian political life arises from article 66(1) of the constitution. This states that the constitutional court examines and settles constitutional disputes at the request of the parliament, the president, the prime minister, the supreme court, and the prosecutor general, or on its own initiative on the basis of petitions and information received from citizens. For example, the power sharing confrontation between the president's office and the parliament has frequently ended at the constitutional court. It included issues such as constitutional amendments limiting presidential prerogatives. As a rule they have been initiated by petitions and on the basis of information received from citizens.

The Mongolian legislative branch consists of a one-chamber parliament which has 76 members. The current electoral system is a multiple choice, majority-system vote. The country is split into 26 multiple constituencies, which in the countryside overlap with the *aymaks* (provinces in Mongolian). Due to the uneven distribution of population and a high migration rate the system does not provide fair, proportional voting. Some highly populated constituencies give four votes to each voter while less populated only two. This discrepancy is based on the number of people in each *aymak*. For example, Huvsgul *aymak* has 122,000 people and four seats (four votes for each voter) in parliament while Dundgovi *aymak* with 50,000 has only two seats and two votes accordingly.

National assembly

Overall, it makes opinion polling complicated. The legal ban on any type of polling, including exit polls, from one week before elections until their end makes any prognosis very difficult. Because of the multiple problems with this system, the parliament is discussing a new electoral system. This system will be the fourth since 1992. It should have a combination of proportional and majoritarian elements. Previous attempts to switch to a proportional system were blocked by the constitutional court, which pointed to article 21 of the constitution that highlights that voting is personality based. The new mixed system is planned to be based on party lists of candidates at a nationwide level and a simple majority system, with a single candidate winning in his or her constituency. According to the constitution the parliament is the supreme legislative power. The primary tasks of the assembly are:

- to enact laws and make amendments to them;
- to determine the basis of domestic and foreign policies;
- to determine and change the structure and composition of the standing committees of the parliament, the government, and other bodies directly accountable to it according to law;
- to pass a law recognizing the full powers of the president after his or her election and to relieve or remove the president from office;
- to appoint, replace, or remove the prime minister, members of the government, and other bodies responsible and accountable to the national parliament as provided for by law;
- to define the state's financial, credit, tax, and monetary policies, to lay down the guidelines for the country's economic and social development, to approve the government's programme of action, the state budget, and the report on its execution;
- to supervise the implementation of laws and other decisions made by the parliament;
- to ratify and denounce international agreements and to establish or to sever diplomatic relations with foreign states at the suggestion of the government;
- under some extraordinary circumstances, the parliament may also declare a state of emergency to eliminate the consequences thereof and to restore people's lives and society to the norm.

The parliament has six standing committees:

1. Social Policy Standing Committee
2. State Structure Standing Committee
3. Budget, Finance, Monetary and Loan Policy Standing Committee
4. Legal Affairs Standing Committee
5. Rural Policy and Environment Standing Committee
6. Economic Policy Standing Committee

In the present assembly the Mongolian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (MPRP) enjoys a clear majority of seats (see table 1). Although the party won a majority in the parliamentary elections in 2008, for the reasons given above it built a grand coalition with the Democratic Party.

One seat out of 76 is still being disputed and will probably only be settled through new elections. At the moment the parliament has 75 members. With only three seats the parliamentary opposition is extraordinarily small.

Table 1 | DISTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS

Party	2008	Present status	Seats in 2004
Mongolian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (MPRP)	45	PP, PPM/GS	37
Democratic Party (DP)	27	GJ	25
Civic Will Party (CWP)	1	O	2
Green Party (GP)	1	O	–
Independent	1	O	3

Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | PPM/GS = party of the prime minister and senior partner of a coalition government | GJ = party is junior partner in the government | O = party is in opposition.

II. PARTIES AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

II.1 Party System

Legal regulation Since the adoption of the new constitution in 1992 the electoral law in Mongolia has undergone several changes. In 1992 political parties took part in elections under a simple majority system in 26 multiple constituencies distributing 76 seats. Later amendments changed the system into 76 majority-based single seat constituencies. However, in 2007 the election system returned to the multiple seats, majority system.

The current law on Mongolian political parties (LMPP) was approved in May 1990. To participate in the elections of June 1990, parties had first to register with the supreme court. The requirements on party registration have not been changed since then. According to the LMPP a party has to submit the following information to the supreme court in order to participate in elections:

- the party's name and headquarters' location;
- information about the structure and organization of the party;
- an approved charter and action agenda;
- a registration list of not fewer than 801 members with names and surnames, and age;
- a property statement.

The main requirement for a party to participate in elections is an election programme and a financial statement for the last year. The LMPP requires that a party should be self-financed. Financing should be limited to the following sources (article 11, LMPP): *Party financing*

- membership fees and donations;
- donations by individual supporters and supporter-organizations in Mongolia;
- other income that has been generated from party activities;
- funds that come from affiliated enterprises' registered capital.

Parties may also receive donations from a foreign source. Yet, any donation regardless of its source, has to be publicly reported.

Self-financing of the parties creates severe problems of sustainability especially for minor parties. The complicated and expensive electoral system is another reason why the list of "relevant parties" is incredibly short compared to the list of registered parties. If we understand as relevant only parties that had won seats in parliament for two subsequent periods or if they force other parties to react because they campaign for the same group of voters, in April 2009 there are only three relevant parties: the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), the Democratic Party (no official abbreviation but throughout the text I will use DP), and the Civil Will Party (CWP). *Relevant parties*

Since the very beginning the democratic movement has been fragmented, reflecting the variety of ideas and trends in Mongolian society. The fragmented democratic forces had to compete with the MPRP, which inherited a strong corporate structure from its communist predecessor. For newly founded democratic parties it was a question of political survival to merge into alliances with others against the much stronger MPRP. The coalitions built by democrats in 1996 and in 2004 appeared to be very fragile and were driven apart by coalition partners. For example, after the elections in 2004 the Motherland Democracy Coalition (MDC) survived just a few months. Some of the coalition leaders decided to dissolve the MDC because they considered that the MPRP was hampering their ability to effectively participate in power. As a result, the parliamentary coalition that was formed by members of the MPRP and MDC broke up into seven parties and independents. Two of these were newly created split-offs from the DP. To avoid shaky coalitions the leadership of the DP is trying to create a political model that consists of only two major parties. Their tactics of creating an unfriendly legal environment – together with the existing self-sustainability problems for minor parties – have resulted in a critical situation for small parties. The number of minor political parties that may potentially be described as "relevant" is now decreasing, pushing them to the edges of political life. A formal faction in parliament requires a minimum of eight MPs, which is hard for minor parties to achieve in the existing circumstances.

The origin of the strongest political party, the MPRP, can be traced back to the year 1921. It was modelled on Bolshevik ideas and was governed by the "principles of democratic centralism", as invented by the Soviet revolutionary V.I. Lenin. These "principles" kept the party disciplined and structured but distant from democratic governance. The party of Marxism–Leninism lasted until the social transformation, which forced the MPRP to change. During the transition the party tried several options, including nationalist or religious components. The principal restructuring of this party is linked to its leader N. Enhbayar, who initiated major changes in 1997 as the party's chairman. The ideological background of the MPRP had become democratic socialism. *Party families*

Its main rival is the DP, created in 2001. Since its origin it has incorporated several parties with different ideological backgrounds. In the first merger one of the major parties, the MNDP (Mongolian National Democratic Party), claimed to represent both conservative and liberal orientations while the other, the MSDP (Mongolian Social Democratic Party), called itself social democratic. Mergers with radicals, religious and other, ideologically unspecified, parties makes it difficult to classify the DP. At the moment the DP is dressed in a liberal, social liberal and social democratic ideology.

However, the problem of clear classification on ideological grounds holds true for all relevant parties, especially for the two biggest. If we look at the political orientation of the population, 33 per cent of Mongols with an orientation towards democratic socialism are supporters of the DP, which makes them 22 per cent of DP supporters (see table 2). On the other side only 35 per cent of this group supports the MPRP, making up 23 per cent of its supporters, although it claims to be as a party of democratic socialism (Prohl and Sumati 2007). Among all who support the idea of a social market economy, the majority of 51 per cent supports the MPRP, making up 31 per cent of its total supporters, and 27 per cent are supporters of the DP, which makes up 17 per cent of all its supporters. Of all sympathizers of a liberal market economy, 27 per cent supported the DP, consisting of 11 per cent of its all supporters, and 44 per cent support the MPRP, making 18 per cent of its supporters. Thus we can conclude that there is no clear social division between the supporters of the two major parties but the DP has proportionally much more of the poor population while the MPRP gets strong support from members of the state administration.

Table 2 | MPRP AND DP SUPPORTERS' COMPOSITION IN OCTOBER 2007

	MPRP	DP
Supporters of a liberal market economy	18%	11%
Supporters of a social market economy	31%	17%
Supporters of democratic socialism	23%	22%
Passive system supporters	14%	23%
Pessimistic group	15%	26%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Prohl and Sumati 2007.

If we compare the two major parties by the distribution of their supporters' political orientations it is clear that the MPRP embraces a proportionally higher number of sympathizers of a social market economy and democratic socialism. The situation within the DP is more complicated. A large number of passive system supporters and from the pessimistic cohort can drive the party to populism and may foster the elimination of the liberal ideologies they declare. Along with the difficulty of obtaining any information from parties about their ideological backgrounds, the declarations of political leaders are often contradictory and there is no safe source for a classification (Prohl and Sumati 2007). Despite these analytical problems it is possible, however, to classify the parties in Mongolia in accordance with the established criteria of party sociology such as "left/labour", "conservative", "liberal" and so forth (see table 3).

Table 3 | IDEOLOGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

	Name and founding year	Present situation	Situation prior to the present
Labour parties	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), 1990	PP, PPM/GS	PP, PPM/GS
	Motherland – Mongolian New Socialist Democratic Party (M-MNSDP), 1998	NR	O, GJ
	People's Party (PP), 2005	NR	O, GJ
Conservative	Mongolian Republican Party (MRP), 2004	NR	O, GJ
	New National Party (NNP), 2006	NR	O, GJ
Liberal	Democratic Party (DP), 2001	GJ	O, GJ
	Civic Will Party (CWP), 2000	O	O, GJ
Green/Environmental	Mongolian Green Party (MGP), 1990	O	NR

Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | PPM/GS = party of the prime minister and senior partner of a coalition government | GJ = party is junior partner in the government | O = party is in opposition NR = no parliamentary representation.

The formation of parties in Mongolia can be divided into two periods: during the transition and after the transition. As the dividing point we take the elections in 2004, which proved a certain level of political maturity among the population accompanied by emerging professionalism in politics. Until 2004 there was an outburst of spontaneous public activities. Some parties were created as a result of ideological clashes, others as a support base for personal ambitions. Quite often, personal rivalry between political leaders split existing parties. In the reverse situation, minor parties merged, contributing to the volatility of the political environment. The common problem of parties was sustainable self-financing, which is demanded by the party law. In a time of economic crisis and poverty, self-financing was extremely difficult to achieve. Volunteers in Mongolian politics and civic society are rather a weak factor. This is mainly due to the absence of a middle class and the negative experience of communism, when "volunteering" was enforced on a massive scale. All these make the efficiency of the party's apparatus very problematic. A shortage of political and managerial experience also added to the poor organization of political parties. The latest political survey, from October 2008, showed that only 25 per cent of the population thinks that political parties represent public opinion against 62 per cent who think that they do not.

Origins of parties

There are new parties emerging in the post-transition time, but this has not had an impact on the number of *relevant* political parties. There are unoccupied or emerging ideological niches and new parties are trying to take those vacant positions. Political ambitions in combination with ideology are playing a significant role in the creation of new parties. We can put in this category the following parties, which recently emerged: the People's Party, New National Party, Mongolian Social Democratic Party, Citizen Movement Party, and the Republican Party.

The main problem for new parties is the old one – sustainability. Many of them emerge shortly before elections and serve particular political or individual purposes. Quite often they stop regular activities shortly after elections. Their founding and sporadic activities do not cause a serious challenge to the two major political parties. The rural areas are especially difficult for minor parties, as the vast depopulated Mongolian countryside demands considerable spending for rural branch maintenance. As a result all new parties initially target densely populated urban areas.

General significance of parties One of the main purposes of political parties is the political integration of voters. The elections in 1996 and 2000 are clear indicators of this. In 1996 the Mongolian Social Democratic Party and the Mongolian National Democratic Party created the Democratic Union Coalition (DUC). The DUC had appealed voters on the basis of rapid alternative development for the country. At that time the MPRP failed to persuade the population with any political vision. In the following four years the DUC disintegrated, causing doubts about the democrats' ability to govern professionally. In the meantime, the new leadership of the MPRP picked up the point by attracting voters with promises of good governance.

Minor parties are trying to follow some ideologies but are mainly vehicles for their leaders to pursue political and/or individual interests. The disintegration of the grand coalition in 2004 allowed minor parties to participate in government as members of two sequent coalitions. It was an accident which may become more regular with the introduction of a new proportional election system.

Voter-party relations Both the MPRP and DP have core-voters; this hard core deviates within a range from 20 to 30 per cent. The parties usually get their strongest support from members. This is an especially strong criterion for the capital Ulan Bator where almost half of the population and voters with party affiliation concentrate.

The radicalism of some DP voters is creating a certain instability in voting preferences. For example, in January 2006 the leader of the newly founded People's Party, L. Gundalay, a deserter from the DP, had consolidated 29.3 per cent of voters against 8.7 per cent for the DP in the area around Ulan Bator (UB). At that time the DP was part of the ruling coalition and because of that it had lost all of its protest votes. The protest-driven support for L. Gundalay evaporated in less than two months as he joined the new, MPRP-led coalition as a minister of health. Simultaneously, the DP joined the ranks of the opposition and regained its voters.

The situation appears different in the countryside where party affiliation is more strongly motivated by the candidate's origin than in the capital. Sometimes this factor is so strong that it outweighs party affiliation, allowing a few independents to get through elections. All parties take this factor into consideration when nominating candidates in rural areas. Although most candidates are UB dwellers they have to show a clear link to the local community to gain party approval.

Overall, the relationship between voters and parties is becoming more stabilized. Concentration of economic and political activity in UB strips politics from any local or ethnically-based political parties. It may change with the mining development. The political situation in UB today is more volatile than in the countryside because of the large number of people living below the poverty line. Without significant improvements for poor households no party can count on continuous support.

II.2 Individual Parties

Party membership There is generally poor availability of Mongolian national statistics and party membership records are no exception. The inaccuracy in real-time registering of members makes the statistics unreliable. The idea of a "party without membership" is quite popular among some parts of the political establishment. In the elections in 2000 the total number of members provided by the various parties was higher than the adult population. It was the result not only of inflated numbers for campaigning purposes but also of frequently duplicated membership.

There is no sign of membership recording improving. The most organized party, the MPRP, provides obsolete information of 166,368 members for 2007 on its official website. The DP also lacks basic statistics. The party runs no website providing basic information. The DP, as well as the CWP, uses a broad definition of "supporting members", which does not require formal registration and membership fees. By this definition the DP has 200,000 and CWP 35,000 "supporting members".

Despite the absence of valid and reliable statistics there are signs of a membership decline. The strongest factor keeping membership high is not to insist on membership fees. At present, only the parties' bureaucracy and decision-making bodies are subject to obligatory fees. If the fee were also enforced for "supporting members" it would undoubtedly decimate the party ranks. The new law on state administration introduced in 2008 demands that people employed in the state administration resign their party membership. The state administration is split into two groups: state officers who occupy positions in the state administration and those in state service, which includes doctors, teachers and all others subjected to budget salaries. The new law especially hits the MPRP, which was sometimes described as a party of "power" because of its higher proportion of state officers (see table 5).

Table 4 | OCCUPATIONAL COMPOSITION OF PARTY SUPPORTERS ⁽¹⁾

	MPRP	DP	CWP
Workers	29.3%	26.2%	27.1%
Clerical staff	20.6%	16.4%	20.4%
Self-employed	18.5%	26.6%	21.5%
Nomads/farmers	9.2%	9.1%	6.4%
Intelligentsia	22.4%	21.6%	24.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

⁽¹⁾Based on SMF research database, average from 2000–2007.

Table 5 | PARTY SUPPORTERS BY SECTOR ⁽¹⁾

	MPRP	DP	CWP
State officers	15.4%	10.1%	11.9%
State service	29.7%	24.4%	23.7%
Private/mixed private–state sector	40.2%	49.8%	46.4%
NGO	14.7%	15.7%	18.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

⁽¹⁾Based on SMF research database, average from 2000–2007.

The continuing social mobility and formation of different strata, along with the vague ideological affiliation of political parties makes it difficult to link particular social groups to a party. Education is not a strong explanatory factor, and the same is true of gender. The urban-rural division, in fact, leads to different voting patterns, not necessarily party affiliation. Yet, the increasing standard of living in the rural areas against the growing poverty among the urban population has been observed in the last few years (Prohl and Sumati 2007). This brings rural voters closer to the MPRP, which

gained support from rural areas in the 2008 elections. Additionally, the MPRP is gaining more support from older voters. In contrast, the Civil Will Party has a more specific support base with stronger support from the intelligentsia.

Party organization For its registration every party is required by law to provide information about its structure and organization and an approved charter and action plan. Yet, as a rule, minor parties are not very interested in developing sophisticated internal regulations because they rely more on the personality of their leaders (Republican Party, People Party, etc.). The complexity of problems the relevant parties are facing forces them to pay more attention to internal regulations. When the MPRP entered politics in a new age it was equipped with all the procedural and organizational resources that the party inherited from its past. Compared to others, this was a clear advantage.

On the other side the Democratic Party, whose official birth is dated to 2000, had to be built up from scratch. The party developed through a difficult learning process. Party members realized too late that its statutes had granted the party chairman too much power. Adopted without any serious discussion, the statutes passed power to the chair, M. Enkhsainkhan, in all major decisions. He could do whatever he wanted without consultations with the party's National Council (NC), which found itself somewhat redundant. No regular meetings of the NC were held; the chairman only called them if he considered them necessary. On the eve of the elections in 2004, the DP realized that the shaping of an electoral strategy, its tactics, and negotiations about possible coalition partners was solely in hands of the party chairman. His subsequent actions, especially the creation of the Motherland Democracy Coalition (MDC), led to confrontations with the rest of the DP. This confrontation turned final in 2006 when the chairman and some of his loyal followers left the DP and formed the New National Party (NNP). The positive outcome was that DP started to give proper attention to democratic components within its statutes and internal regulations.

The CWP was built by the more educated Mongolians as a model for party development. The CWP made significant efforts to maintain democratic procedures within the party. Since the very beginning, the party has combined all the necessary attributes of a political party with clear internal regulations. Despite financial constraints, it has regularly organized conventions or contacts with grassroots organizations. What the CWP has been missing, however, is an appealing action plan with follow-up actions.

By 2009 only two parties, the MPRP and the DP, had permanently active branches in rural areas. Although other parties like the CWP and NNP cover many provinces, they suffer from a constant shortage of funds for regular operations.

Societal entrenchment There are different ways in which parties can develop relationships with civil society organizations. The MPRP has several registered NGOs closely associated with it: the Veterans Union, Mongolian Democratic Socialist Women Union, Mongolian Democratic Socialist Youth Union, and the Mongolian Democratic Socialist Students Union. The DP and the CWP follow a different approach. There is only one registered Democratic Union that is directly linked to the DP. Both parties have internal committees dealing with veterans, gender and youth issues but no closely affiliated organizations.

Internal decision-making After their victory in the 1996 elections, the members of the Democratic Alliance, made up of the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP) and the Mongolian Social Democratic Party (MSDP), were confronted with the necessity to link party policy with state policy. The MNDP, which was the senior member of the coalition with the higher number of MPs, decided to introduce an amendment that allowed only the party chairman to occupy the post of prime minister. It perfectly suited the ambitions of party chairman Ts. Elbegdorj to replace Prime Minister M. Enkhsainkhan. The MNDP controlled the position of prime minister while the MSDP held the parliamentary speaker post. Such action facilitated the power of the party leader in internal decision making. This principle was later accepted by the MPRP, which traditionally prioritized the position of its party leader. The DP inherited the main structures and procedures of the MNDP and maintains the same principle while

in 2007 the MPRP changed the requirement that the party chair takes the prime minister post. Besides the party chairman, the party secretary has a strong influence over internal affairs in all the relevant parties. Formally, party conventions are the highest decision making body for parties. As the party law does not cover conventions, the scope of their authority as well as frequency varies from party to party. Conventions are planned and conducted regularly, usually once in two years. Emergency situations like the collapse of the government or changing leaders require additional conventions, which are subject to individual party charters. Between conventions, the national councils of the parties take care of major decisions, although the power sharing between councils and chairs varies in parties and over time.

In minor parties the party leaders are the most influential actors in internal decision making. It is easier if the leader is a member of the parliament as in the Republican Party, the CWP, NNP, the Green Party or others. The presence of its leader gives the minor party greater opportunities to present the party's position in the media, thus influencing party rating. In the MPRP and in the DP, MPs also have a strong influence over internal party decisions. Most of them are members of formal decision-making bodies like the national councils of their parties and do not act independently of party policy.

In all relevant parties the nomination of candidates for parliamentary elections starts from grassroots party organizations. In a majority system local support plays a key role in elections and grassroots organizations are expected to provide the basis for a candidate's campaigning. The decisions of the national councils of the parties should finally be approved at convention level.

The attempt to introduce a gender quota first occurred shortly after the 2004 elections. Under pressure from feminist groups the parliament adopted an amendment to the election law. By this amendment no party could be registered if it did not fill at least 30 per cent of its candidate list with women. However, the amendment was never tested as in December 2007 the same parliament introduced a new amendment that removed a gender quota from the election law.

Since the process of party formation is not yet complete in Mongolia, it is difficult to clearly categorize internal decision making. The most accurate description of internal decision-making processes would be a combination of democratic and hierarchical. It reflects the situation that the old socialist style of management is not fully functional while the development of a new one still requires time to become the norm.

The only relevant party that has kept its name over time is the MPRP. This name can be traced back to the year 1921 when the Bolshevik-style party was initially founded. There have been frequent attempts to change its name to underline the fundamental changes that have taken place in the MPRP. However, all attempts have failed due to strong resistance from all strata, including the grassroots level. One of the arguments of opponents is that the party was not primarily created for ideological indoctrination but to liberate the country from Chinese domination. Keeping its name gives the MPRP the support of the conservative part of the population that regards it as a brand name of stability against unpredictable political changes. The party has shown a definite shift away from its original position of being the Mongolian people's and revolutionary party.

*Stability
of party ideology/
programmes*

Two other relevant parties frequently change their names, which reflects the merger and splitting processes within parties. The Civil Will Party (the direct translation is the Civil Courage Party) selected its name in 2000 to link the party with the murdered, popular politician S. Zorig (Zorig in Mongolian means courage). The CWP has changed its name twice: to CW-RP in 2002 in relation to the merger with the Republican Party and two years later back to its old name because of the divorce from the Republican Party.

The Democratic Party could be traced back to 1990 when it started as the Mongolian Democratic Party. Through mergers it changed in 1992 into the MNDP and finally in 2000 to the present Democratic Party.

Table 2 reflects the political orientations of party supporters. It also highlights some proportional differentiation among certain groups, but these are not sufficient for a clear ideological distinction between the two major parties. No party can mobilize a homogenous group of liberals or supporters of democratic socialism for their sole support. This may require more time. However, the MPRP does better among voters who prefer classical leftwing social spending and distribution. Together with an increased role of state governance this features more strongly in party policy. The DP has proportionally more support from the pessimistic group, which may force the party to collect protest votes. This strategy may work well but only in opposition to unpopular MPRP policies. In the 2000 elections when democrats were in power, the MPRP appeared impressively strong with the same strategy of collecting protest votes and gained 72 seats out of 76.

Both parties are increasingly populist with their pre-election promises, which hits them badly afterwards. For the elections in 2008 the DP organized a nationwide census "to ask the population what they wish for democrats to do". The result was the announcement of a vague ten-page action plan which had little chance of being implemented even in a much stronger economy. The MPRP retaliated within a few days with 12-fold action plan. On the whole, the MPRP plans was a mere duplication of the DP action plan with the same probability of execution.

Communication Because of the low cost of printing and broadcasting, Mongolia has a variety of newspapers and magazines and FM and TV channels. All business and political groups or factions consider it essential to have their own media channels. It makes information relatively unreliable due to the rivalry between groups and media sources. The best known party affiliated newspapers are *Unen* of MPRP and *Udrin sonin* of the DP.

Parties still have to learn to engage in regular communication with the public. The Democratic Party has announced regular monthly meetings with the media to discuss its policy. On the other hand the website of the DP has not worked for a long time. In general, it is very difficult to obtain classified information about any political party. The most advanced in new information technologies is the MPRP, which has its own operational website, though some of the information on it is outdated. Scarce resources and the lack of qualified staff is the main cause of this. Both factors are interdependent as parties are not able to recruit better people as they are competing with business or international organizations.

Relationship between parties and parliamentary groups At present there are only two large parties in parliament: the MPRP and DP. The relationship between the parliamentary groups and their parties is quite close and communication goes through the group leaders. The leaders usually hold a prominent position in the governing bodies of the parties, in most cases at the level of secretary general. Thus one of their main tasks is to keep group activity and discipline in line with party policy. Although MPs are responsible to their electorate, all major decisions are under party control. There is a quite visible subordination of the parliamentary groups to party decisions. One example is the failed attempt by the DP's MP L. Gundalay, who wanted to be nominated as the candidate for presidential elections directly by the parliamentary group. His intentions were rejected on the grounds that the party convention limits the power of nomination to the national council. Yet, the process of being nominated for elections is also closely linked to party loyalty. It makes the parliamentarians quite careful in manoeuvring between loyalty to the party and loyalty to their electorate.

III. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

In a short time the process of the formation of political parties in Mongolia has undergone major changes. After decades of a sterile atmosphere of Marxism-Leninism multiple political parties have emerged dressed in various ideologies. It often happened that they were trying "to run ahead of the locomotive" of social progress. With the collapse of the system, the whole society was on the move. Migration, privatization, politicization, social stratification – all these events made the political climate extremely volatile and unpredictable.

The MNDP, second in strength to the MPRP during the onset of political transformation in the early 1990s, emerged as a party claiming conservatism as its ideology. The party leadership was primarily lured by "traditionalism". Traditionalism was persecuted in Soviet times as communists do not differentiate it much from nationalism. Very soon the MNDP leadership realized that to the large number of radical, impoverished youngsters in their ranks demanding rapid changes, "conservative values" were not appealing. The merger with leftist oriented MSDP brought additional ideological embarrassment.

The DP, founded in 2001, had switched to "liberalism" but that was only the beginning of its drive to the left. The DP is internally fragmented and the division in most cases is along the lines of the previously incorporated political parties. This creates institutional weakness as those fragments have different political preferences. For example, ex- MSDP members are strong supporters of cooperation with the MPRP to which they still have positive feelings as ideological allies. The MNDP has a very different attitude towards inter-party cooperation. In future because of its fragmentation the DP may lose part of its support or break in two parts: a liberal and a socialist party.

On the other side the MPRP is gradually shifting to the right. Coming from a Marxist-Leninist ideology it has become a de facto social democratic party. This process intensified after the electoral defeat in 1996 under the leadership of N. Enhbayar. The party was renewed both in terms of organizational structure and by bringing young people into its leadership. In future there are fewer chances of this party splitting than the DP because of its strong corporate structure. On the other hand a strong liberal wing of supporters may move this party to the centre of the political spectrum.

The development of the CWP as a possible third player is locked. The party's inclusion in relevant policies is strongly dependent on one person: Ms Oyun, the party leader. Hitherto, the party has failed to send effective messages to the voters and potential supporters. The party leadership is deeply split, with one faction being led by Mr Ts. Ganhuyag, who is also deputy chair, and the other by Mr M. Zorigt, the party secretary. These two sides have different attitudes toward a variety of issues including party alliances. Mr Ganhuyag sees the role of the CWP as a third political force allied with other minor parties like the Greens. Mr Zorigt, in contrast, sees the CWP as a close ally of the DP and is a promoter of merger between the CWP and the DP.

This contradiction created the leadership crisis and left the CWP without allies in 2008. As a result, Ms Oyun narrowly escaped an election defeat in the Songinohairhan district where she was elected in 2004. This district had four seats and she was fourth with a margin of 1,000 votes (comparing to a margin of 2,400 votes in 2004) over the fifth contender. Two other defeats of leading CWP candidates were linked to election fraud and have left the party with only one seat in the parliament.

The latest poll by the Sant Maral Foundation (SMF 2009) shows the continuing decline of the CWP's rating from 4.5 per cent in 2008 to only 2.1 per cent in 2009. This continuing poor showing together with the planned switch of the electoral system to proportional representation with its electoral threshold may leave the CWP outside the political landscape. However, experience of Mongolian political life over time shows that the presence of a political party in parliament is of utmost importance to its political survival. Since the future of the two main Mongolian political parties looks more or less optimistic, the existence of a third political force is still under question. There are primarily three reasons for the rather weak success of smaller parties: (1) a still rather weak civil society; (2) the inability of many politicians to become genuine public representatives and an alternative to those from the major parties; and (3) an electoral system that still favours the two major parties.

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