

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND**

**The effects of regime changes – study of recent  
political history of Mongolia since the fall of  
Communism**

**A Dissertation submitted by Paul Mills, B. Arts, Dip.  
Ed.**

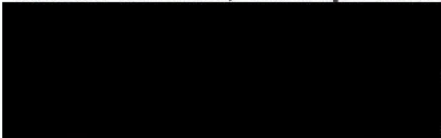
**For the award of Doctor of Philosophy**

**2018**

## Certification of Dissertation



I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Candidate

Date

## **Dedication**

Preparing this dissertation has been a joy. I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Helen Ware and Dr Brian Denman for their inspiration and practical support over my Ph.D. journey. Preparing a dissertation is much easier if you have a strong interest in the subject, and Mongolia has been an exciting environment in which to study. Most important of all, my much better half Battuya has been both inspirational and patient while I have prepared my thesis.

## **Abstract**

Western democracies frequently promote the spread of market democracy to other countries. But how do people in other countries really feel about this? Unless people have experienced different political and economic systems, it is difficult for them to make comparisons. Unlike scientific laboratory experiments, where it is possible to experiment with a control group and a subject group, this is generally not possible in respect to events within a country. If a government makes a social or economic experiment, for better or worse, the whole population shares the experience.

This thesis focuses on Mongolia, which has experienced three governance systems within the past century. Until 1924 Mongolia was still a quasi-feudal society, including a period as a quasi-feudal theocracy. Until the early 1920s Mongolia's economy was underdeveloped, with a nascent market system. From 1924 to 1990 Mongolia was a socialist republic, with a centrally planned command economy. More recently Mongolia has become a market democracy.

The transitions were economically chaotic. In the 1920s Mongolia's economy was heavily biased towards livestock herding. An experiment in collectivisation in the early socialist period is estimated to have resulted in the loss of one third of the national herd. More recently, the transition to a market economy was very difficult. The loss of subsidies from Soviet Russia, coupled with the loss of Mongolian export markets to Russia, resulted in a marked contraction in Mongolia's economy.

While it would be preferable to examine peoples' views on the transition from feudalism to socialism as well as the transition from socialism to

democracy, gaining people's views on the transition from quasi-feudalism to socialism is difficult given the absence of living witnesses. While histories of Mongolia give some, often fractured, and possibly biased views of the events surrounding this transition, there is little evidence about how the majority of people felt about this transition. Most studies focus on the actions and motivations of elites, the leaders of revolution.

However, there are abundant living witnesses to the latter transition. Hence this thesis concentrates on the political, social and economic effects of the latter transition, with a focus on how people who have lived under both systems feel about the transition. Nearly thirty years have passed since the transition. Do the Mongolian people feel they are now better off, or do they hanker for a return to socialism?

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine the political, economic and social impacts of Mongolia's transition from socialism to market democracy. Mongolia, the world's second Communist country, remained a communist country for nearly seventy years. Hence the change to a market democracy posed many challenges. Mongolia was also the first country in Asia to transition to market democracy in a peaceful, socially acceptable manner.

From the 1920s until 1990 Mongolia was a one party Communist state with a centrally planned economy. Since 1990, with the fall of the communist regime, Mongolia has transitioned to market democracy. The aim of this research is to compile a social and political history of Mongolia since 1990, taking into account the economic changes that have accompanied the change in Mongolia's political environment. The key research question is 'What has been the impact of the transition from Communist hegemony to market democracy on Mongolia?'

In many ways, Mongolia is unique. The political, economic and social changes experienced by Mongolia post-socialism have been profound. The difficulties caused by such vast changes may have been compounded, or alternatively ameliorated by the nature of Mongolian society. In some ways Mongols are very adaptive. For example, Mongols adapt to new technologies very well, such as telecommunications technologies. In other ways Mongols are quite conservative, with the traditions of centuries persisting into the present day. Audio visual materials from the early twentieth century emphasise that the traditional dress of centuries is still a part, albeit somewhat less of a part, of twenty first century life.

*It is difficult to consider the material culture of traditional Mongolia in isolation from non-material or spiritual aspects (Chabros 1987: 270).*

The most popular sports of a century ago, and the centuries before that, horse racing, wrestling, and archery, also remain very popular in twenty first century Mongolia. Traditional Mongolian foods from the time of Chinggis Khaan remain the favourite food, and indeed the staple diet, of many Mongols today. The Mongol language, while adapting to new things, essentially remains that of the last millennium. Traditional Mongolian housing, the *ger*, is still in extensive use throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> Traditional social customs also remain a significant part of contemporary Mongol life.

*Happy is he whom guests frequent, joyful is he at whose door guests' horses are always tethered, Mongolian proverb (O'Gorman and Thompson 2008: 1).*

Mongols also have elaborate traditional hospitality practices. As noted by Humphrey, 'In rural Mongolia, hospitality without expectation of a return is a prime ethical and practical virtue, but it is always performed rather than merely spontaneous. Oral maxims of hospitality designate the acts to be performed, lending them a crafted, aesthetic quality and forming a holding pattern that mediates the mutual vulnerability of the host and guest' (Humphrey 2012: 1). The ritual of hospitality involves a series of discrete acts by guest and host, beginning before entry to a person's home (the traditional countryside home being a round felt tent, a *ger*), and continuing until the guest(s) leave.

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<sup>1</sup> A *ger* has a wooden framework covered by large pieces of felt; decorative cloth covering may be laid over the felt. The wooden framework consists of collapsible lattice walls, topped by poles radiating from a central smoke hole. The entire *ger* is covered by a layer of thick felt held in place by ropes. During the summer, one layer is sufficient, but during the winter, two or three layers are necessary (O'Gorman and Thompson 2008: 3).

**Figure 1.1: The Gobi in winter**



Source: Author's collection

Chapter Two provides a brief overview of contemporary Mongolia, its mode of government, the current Mongolian Government, Mongolia's economy, and Mongolia's culture. Mongolia's challenges post 1989 reflect, in part, Mongolia's political and social experiences before transition. Mongolia has had a turbulent history in the past millennium, most famously with the establishment of the Mongolian empire under the leadership of Chinggis Khaan and his successors, the largest unified land empire in world history. However, in many ways the twentieth century was the most turbulent in the country's history. First, Mongolia moved from quasi-feudalism to secular theocracy, then to socialism as a Soviet satellite. Later, with the fall of socialism, Mongolia became a market democracy. To provide context about the extent of the changes faced in Mongolia post-socialism, Chapters Three and Four, provide an overview of Mongolia's history from the time of Chinggis Khaan until the end of socialism.

Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight then focus on the changes Mongolia has experienced in the transition to market democracy. The road from 1990

to 2018 has been very bumpy. Mongolia's political system needed to be replaced. A new foreign policy was also needed, as Mongolia was no longer a Soviet satellite.

Moreover, in the early transition years the Mongolian economy contracted markedly. In those early years it might have been reasonable to conclude on economic grounds that the transition had failed miserably. Even the rapid economic growth which took place from 2000 to 2013 following growth from mining developments has had limited consequences for many Mongols. The mining sector does not generate large numbers of jobs. Given that Mongolia has few other strong industries, jobs growth has therefore been limited even at times of high economic growth (Osborne et al. 2015: 19).

Hence, while the situation is improving somewhat, poverty still continues to be a major issue for Mongolia. Income and asset inequalities also appear to be strong concerns for many Mongolians. The road has also been bumpy in other areas, including, for example, in education and health. So the thesis examines Mongolia's transition from a variety of viewpoints, to identify and better understand the key challenges arising from the transition to market democracy and Mongolia's responses to these challenges, noting that, in a poor country, political developments are hugely influenced by economic capacity.

Of course, as well as the need to meet challenges, regime change also presented new opportunities. Important amongst these was the opportunity to have access to diverse, open information sources. The opportunity for renewed religious freedom, an important freedom for a country with a rich Buddhist and Shaman history, was also important to many Mongolians, and contrasted sharply with the repressions and purges of the early socialist period.



The impact of change relates not only to the material changes that Mongols have experienced post-socialism, but also goes to how Mongols *feel* about the transition. Chapter Nine reviews existing research which partially addresses the question about how contemporary Mongols feel about their lot under market democracy. Chapter Ten then draws together research conducted as part of the thesis, which examines how Mongols who have experienced both socialism and market democracy feel about the transition, including a survey, a series of interviews and focus groups.

Chapter Eleven summarises the research, considered against the thesis research objectives. The last chapter, Chapter Twelve, presents conclusions and offers suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Background information on Mongolia**

### **Introduction**

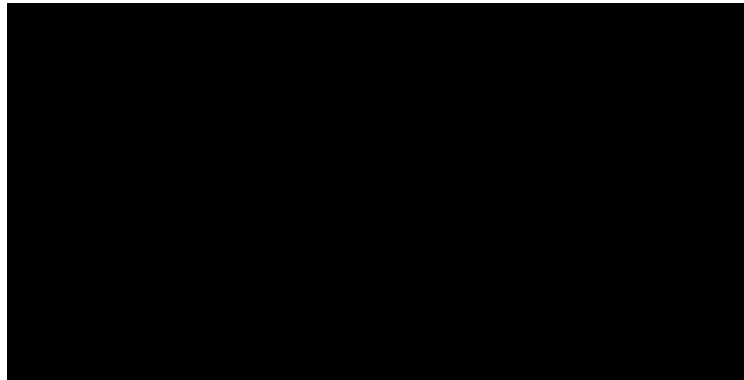
This chapter provides a brief overview of contemporary Mongolia, including its geography, people, governance, economy, natural resources and religions. The aim is to provide context so the broader discussion in the thesis about the impact of transition from socialism to parliamentary democracy could be more readily understood.

Driving into Ulaanbaatar from the airport in 2018 is a major contrast to the experience of even a few years ago. A new six lane highway, bounded by towering apartment blocks and shopping malls, replaced the former two lane, heavily pot holed road in mid-decade. To the west, a new international airport roughly the size of Australia's Brisbane airport is expected to commence operations in mid-2019. A walk around Ulaanbaatar, the national capital, also gives the impression of a nation on the move. There has been a building boom since 2010 with many new apartment blocks, palatial offices and (international) hotels coming on line. Mongolia has also done well against World Bank governance indicators since 2007. Nonetheless, many building projects have been abandoned, and the city is ringed by rather less well to do *peri-ger* areas, home to most of the city's population. This is a good introduction to the enigma that Mongolia can be.

## Mongolia's Geography

Mongolia, formerly known as Outer Mongolia, is a land locked country situated in Central Asia. Mongolia is 1,564,116 square kilometres in area (InfoMongolia, 2015). Mongolia is bordered by Russia to the north and China to the South. The border with Russia stretches for 3452 kilometres while the Chinese border is 4,630 kilometres in length (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). A map of Mongolia is shown below (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: Mongolia and its neighbours**



Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2018

Mongolia is therefore quite a large country. It is slightly smaller than Alaska, and twice the size of Texas. Mongolia's small population means the country is very sparsely populated. It should be noted that today's Mongolia is the former Outer Mongolia. Inner Mongolia is now an autonomous region within China, so a substantial Mongol population exists in Inner Mongolia. To the north, within today's Russia, there is also a small ethnic Mongolian population. In addition, from the period of the Mongol Empire there was significant migration, resulting in a large diaspora of Mongols across many countries, especially in Central and Inner Asia.

## **Mongolia's weather**

It is hard to have any discussion in Mongolia without some reference to the weather. Weather is still a dominant influence on life in Mongolia. The country has four distinct seasons, with summer temperatures rising as high as the mid 30's (Celsius). By contrast, winter, which extends from October to end March, is very cold. Winter temperatures in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital, may fall to minus 30 degrees Celsius or lower.

## **Mongolia's people**

As at 2018, Mongolia's population was slightly over three million people. Mongolia has a relatively young population. World Health Organisation (WHO) data indicate that as at 2013 some 27 per cent of Mongolians were aged less than 15, with only 6 per cent aged over sixty. The median age was 27 (World Health Organisation 2015c: 1). Life expectancy in Mongolia, although improving, is still relatively low. As at 2017 male life expectancy was 65.7 years, while female life expectancy was 74.4 years (Central Intelligence Agency 2018: 1).

**Table 1: Mongolia, Changes in Population, 1990 to 2016**

Year	Population	Annual Growth (%)	Annual Growth (number)	Migrants (net)	Median age	Fertility Rate (%)
1990	2,184,145	2.59	52,452	0	19	4.84
1995	2,298,038	1.02	22,779	-17,700	20	3.27
2000	2,397,438	0.85	19,8807	-10,500	22	2.40
2005	2,526,447	1.05	25,802	-3,000	24	2.08
2010	2,712,657	1.43	37,252	-3,000	26	2.37
2015	2,959,134	1.75	49,295	-3,000	27	2.68
2016	3,006,444	1.6	47,310	-3,000	27.6	2.65

Source: Worldometers ([www.Worldometers.info](http://www.Worldometers.info)), downloaded 2 November 2016

Mongolia's main ethnic groups include the Khalkha, representing 83 per cent of Mongolia's population, Kazak (4 per cent), Dorvod (3 per cent), Bayad (2 per cent), Buryat-Bouriates (2 per cent), Zakhchin (1 per cent), Dariganga (1 per cent), and Uriankhai (1 per cent). Other smaller groups represent about 5 per cent of the Mongolian population (Theodora 2015).

Despite its vast lands Mongolia is now very urbanised. The World Health Organisation (WHO) noted that 70 per cent of Mongolia's population lived in cities (World Health Organisation 2015: 1). The urban population is largely concentrated in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city. United Nations data indicated that the urban population grew by 2.8 per cent per year between 2010 and 2015, whereas Mongolia's rural population fell by 1.4 per cent a year over this period (United Nations 2015: 3).

Ulaanbaatar, the capital city, is located in the Tuul river valley, in the north. It is 1,300 metres above sea level. The National Statistical Office (NSO) estimated the city population at 1.47 million in mid-2018, representing 46 per cent of Mongolian population (National Statistics Office 2012). Ulaanbaatar is also the only city in the country with a population of over 100,000. The next largest city is Erdenet with 95,000 people.

## **Mongolia's system of government**

Mongolia adopted parliamentary democracy in 1990. Mongolia is a unitary state with four layers of government, a central government and three sub-national levels: 21 *aimags* (provinces), 329 *soums* (sub-provinces) and 1559 *bags* (communities) (Osborne et al. 2015: 3). The Parliament of Mongolia is known as the State Great Khural, the highest organ of state power. The Parliament consists of seventy six members who are elected for four year terms. The Parliament has the power to draft legislation, enact and amend laws, approve the annual budget, approve foreign and domestic policies, declare states of emergency and war and ratify international treaties and agreements. Since the socialist period, power has been shared by the Mongolian Peoples Party and the Democratic Party.

The President is the head of state, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and head of the National Security Council. The President is second in authority to the seventy six member Parliament. Presidential candidates are nominated by political parties that have at least one seat in the Parliament. Presidents serve a four-year term and are limited to serving two terms. The Prime Minister is the head of the executive branch (but does not need to be a member of parliament). The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Ministers are nominated by the ruling party and confirmed by the President. They are limited to serving a four-year term. The Prime Minister chooses

the Cabinet, subject to the Parliament's approval. The Cabinet appoints and removes deputy ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister and relevant Minister.

There are two major political parties: the Mongolian People's Party (MPP), (formerly known as the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party), which evolved from the communist single-party government, and the Democratic Party (DP) which grew out of Mongolia's 1990 democracy movement. Two new parties successfully contested the June 2012 parliamentary elections: a breakaway group from the MPP led by former president Enkhbayar, which took on the party's old name of Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), and the Civil Will/Green Party (Department of Foreign affairs and Trade, Australia, 2015).

## **Mongolia's economy**

As at 2017, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated Mongolia's gross domestic product (GDP) at 30,738 billion *tugrik* or approximately \$US12.8 billion (the *tugrik* is Mongolia's national currency) (IMF 2017: 22).<sup>2</sup> Some sources have also indicated that the informal sector also makes a very large contribution to national income, with one study indicating that the informal sector could add a further 35 per cent to Mongolia's GDP product (Anderson (1998), Dandar and Choijiljav (2014)). After heady growth from 2000 to 2013, led by major mining investments, the Mongolian economy slowed markedly in mid-decade. One project alone—the Oyu Tolgoi (OT) copper and gold mine—brought more than \$6 billion (50 per cent of GDP) in investment during its first phase of development, with another \$5 billion planned for the second phase, and ongoing

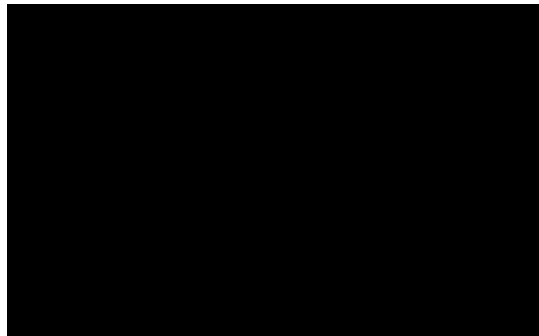
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<sup>2</sup> Assuming an exchange rate of 2,400 tugrik per U.S. dollar, as was the case mid 2018

negotiations over the Tavan Tolgoi (TT) coal mine could potentially yield \$4 billion in investment over the next five years (see below for a discussion of Mongolia's national resources) (International Monetary Fund 2015a: 31-33).

However, Mongolia remains a relatively poor country, although mining expansion over the 2000s has had a marked positive impact on GDP per capita. In 2005 the United Nations (UN) estimated GDP per capita at \$US998. By 2018, GDP per capita was around \$US4,000, although income distribution is very uneven. Mongolia's main industries are services and industry as shown in Figure 2.2 below, with the industry sector consisting of four main sub-sectors: (i) mining and quarrying, (ii) manufacturing, (iii) construction, and (iv) electricity, gas steam and air conditioning supply.

**Figure 2.2: Mongolia's main industries**



Source: United States Embassy, Mongolia, (undated) Mongolia: Economic Overview <http://mongolianembassy.us/about-mongolia/trade-and-economy/#.VhXbrmud4xJ>. Downloaded 10 October 2015

## **Mongolia's natural resources**

While per capita income in Mongolia is low, the country has very substantial mineral resources. The exploitation of these resources will



change Mongolia's economy substantially, both in the short term and the long term. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) notes there are an estimated \$US1 to \$US3 trillion worth of copper, gold, coal, oil, and other resources, close to growing markets in China and elsewhere in Asia. To exploit these reserves, Mongolia has in the last several years attracted very large Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into the sector. By mid-decade, mining accounted for around 20 per cent of GDP and close to 90 per cent of exports (International Monetary Fund 2015a: 31-33).

Major developments include the Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold mine. Mongolia is on track to become a globally significant copper and gold producer, with the Oyu Tolgoi (OT) mine set to become one of the largest mines in the world. The first-phase open-pit mine began construction in 2010, with investment exceeding \$6 billion, and production commenced in 2013. The second phase (OT-2) will be underground, and output will markedly increase once production comes on stream toward the end of this decade. The IMF estimated associated Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows are estimated at over \$5 billion.

Mongolia also has very substantial coal reserves. The Tavan Tolgoi (TT) Mine reserves are estimated at well over 6 billion tons. Mongolia is already a major exporter of coal to China for both power generation and for use in the heavy industrial sector. The total investment in TT is expected to be \$4 billion.

## **Religion in Mongolia**

Following the adoption of socialism post 1924, the regime led an anti-religious campaign in the 1930s, which largely destroyed the extensive

system of Buddhist monasteries. Under Communism, atheism was promoted. From 1945 to 1990, only one monastery (Gandan in Ulaanbaatar) was allowed to operate. As discussed in more detail below, the democratic reform that started in 1990 allowed freedom of religion.

Mongolia's 2010 Census indicated most Mongols have a religion, although nearly 40 per cent professed not to have a religion. Traditionally, Mongols practiced Shamanism, worshipping the Blue Sky. Tibetan Buddhism (also called Vajrayana Buddhism) gained popularity after the sixteenth century. Tibetan Buddhism shared the common Buddhist goals of individual release from suffering and reincarnation. Tibet's Dalai Lama, who lives in India, is the religion's spiritual leader.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 55.1 per cent of Mongolia's population is Buddhist, making Mongolia one of seven nations in the world with Buddhist majorities. The current incarnation of the Dalai Lama, the 14th, has made seven ostensibly private visits to Mongolia since the 1990 democratic revolution, the last in 2016, despite objections from China (Lawrence 2011: 27). There is also a significant minority of Sunni Muslims, living largely in the far western regions of Mongolia, most of whom are ethnic Kazaks. Mongolian Government census data also indicates there were about 40,000 practicing Christians in Mongolia in 2010.

## Chapter 3 - Mongol History 1200 to 1990

### Introduction

After the fall of socialism in Russia, Mongolia, the world's second Communist State, became a market democracy. To give more insights into the extent of this transition, this chapter provides a history of Mongolia from the time of Chinggis Khaan until 1989.

Given that the main focus of this thesis is with respect to the period when the socialist era ended in Mongolia and Mongolia's transition to a democracy with a market economy, the discussion focuses on the period 1911 to 1990. Nonetheless, Mongolian culture and self-identity has been shaped by Mongolia's earlier history, so a brief synopsis of earlier Mongolian history is presented below, followed by a more detailed discussion of more recent Mongolian history later in the chapter.

A key feature of Mongolian life is its nomadic culture. Mongols view nomadic life as the "good life", based around raising animals, notably horses, cows, camel, sheep and goats (the five snouts). Historically, Mongols have had little regard for the sedentary agricultural life styles of the Chinese. Mongolia's nomadic lifestyle was also important as it provided the basic need for the formation of the Mongolian Empire, huge numbers of skilled horsemen who were used as cavalry.

With the rise of Chinggis Khaan, Mongolia came to world prominence. Chinggis Khaan established the largest land empire in world history. For many Mongols, he continues to be the enshrinement of national identity.

The study of Chinggis Khaan is important not just because the history is interesting, but because he continues to dominate the Mongol national identity in the twenty first century.

Why did the Mongols set out to conquer first their immediate neighbours and later countries far from Mongolia? A variety of models have been developed to explain how large-scale and highly organized confederations and empires arose on the steppe using mainly historical evidence. For example, some models of steppe political organization share the proposition that nomadic polities emerged through forms of economic and political dependence on the Chinese states to the south (Barfield 2001a, Barfield 2001b, Krajin 2002).

**Figure 3.1: Chinggis Khaan: State Grand Khural, Mongolia, 2018**



Source: Author's collection

Such models imply the low productivity of pastoral nomadism meant steppe groups needed to obtain agricultural products and finished goods from the neighbouring Chinese states. For example, Jagchid and Symons (2009) argued that nomads preferred to obtain goods through peaceful trading, but were forced to raid when denied access to markets.<sup>3</sup> When strong centralized administration emerged in China in the form of a new

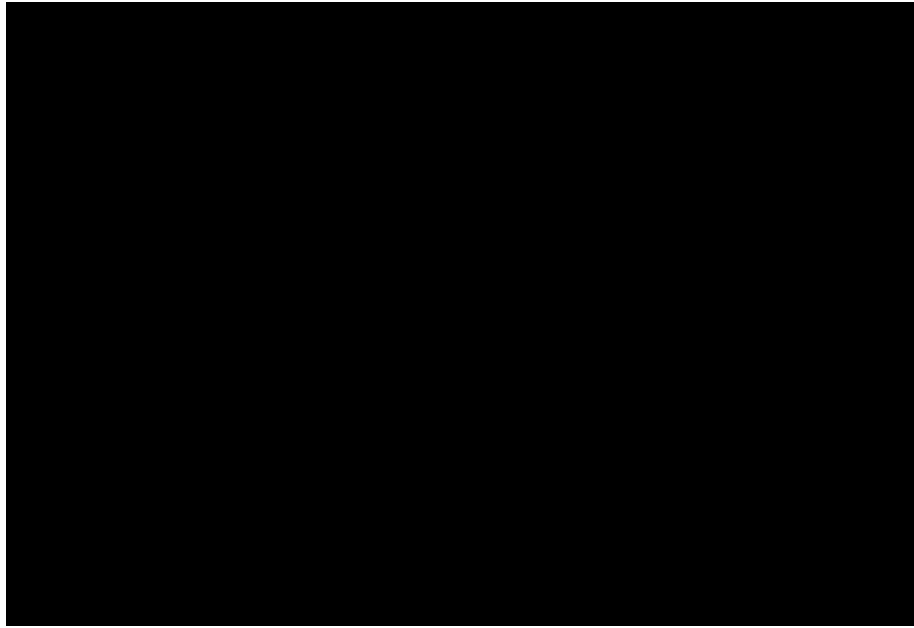
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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of steppe warriors motivations see, for example, Standen (2005) and Amitai and Biran (2005).

dynasty, border trade was often curtailed. In these cases Mongols attacked China to get what was not available through trade. In most cases such actions were by local tribes and not well organised or coordinated. With the emergence of Chinggis Khaan this situation changed. He came not only to loot, but to conquer and build an empire. Later, his empire was extended by his successors, his sons. Subsequently, when the leadership of the Mongolian empire became weaker, the empire collapsed and Mongolia came to be dominated by the Chinese Ming Empire.

Later Mongolia became a vassal state to the Qing Empire, first in respect to Inner Mongolia (1634), while Outer Mongolia capitulated in 1690. The Russian drive eastward, especially after 1800, when ethnic Russians began to settle in Siberia in larger numbers, also meant that Mongolia gradually became encircled by these two great powers, as shown in Figure 3.2. Following that, with the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Mongolia attempted to claim its independence. In the 1920s, with Russian assistance, Mongolia became autonomous and declared itself a socialist republic. However, China retained its legal claim to Mongolia (*de jure*), while Russians stationed in Mongolia in increasingly large numbers meant Russia had *de facto* control on the ground. This impasse was not resolved until 1946, when Mongolia achieved legal independence and international recognition. Nonetheless, *de facto* control still lay with Russia, which maintained significant military and civilian assets in Mongolia until 1990.

**Figure 3.2: Mongolia and neighbouring countries**



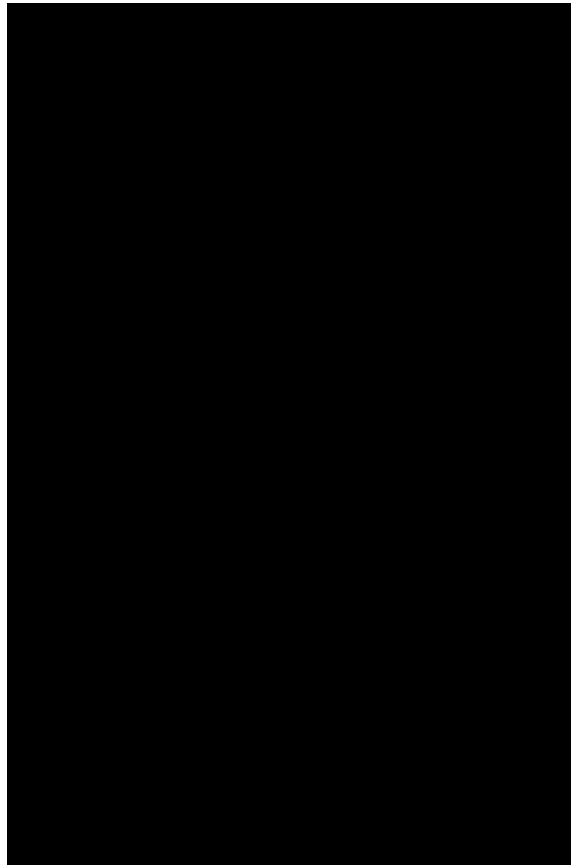
Source: Rogers 2012: 207

### **The rise of Chinggis Khaan**

The rise of Temujin, later to become Chinggis Khaan, has been documented by many historians, including for example, Rossabi (1998), Bawden (1968), Baabar (2006), Baabar and Kaplonski (1999), Kaplonski (1995), Onon (2001, 1990), Man (2005) and Amitai and Biran (2005). Temujin's early life is described vividly in *The Secret History of the Mongols* (Kahn 1984). The *Secret History* introduces a hungry, fatherless outcast who had a desperate struggle to survive, the orphaned son of a noble family. Habul Khan, Chinggis's great-grandfather, had risen to a position of power on the steppe, creating what was known as the Hamag Mongol Uls (Greater Mongolian State). Chinggis's own father died when Temüjin was still young (about eight or nine) (Kaplonski (1995) (other sources implied he was then aged 13 (Khan (2003))). Mongolia did not have a written language when Temujin was born. Hence, there are no written contemporary accounts of his life in Mongolia, and even later, there

were apparently few accounts of his life by Mongol authors. The story of his life was handed down through the Mongolian oral tradition, and later recorded in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

**Figure 3.3: The dynasty founded by Chinggis Khaan**



Source: Baabar, 2006: 14

Temujin drew the Mongol tribes together through a series of minor wars against opposing tribes (Lattimore and Nachukdorji, 1955: 6). In 1206 a grand assembly was held at the source of the Onon River in northern Mongolia. The gathering proclaimed Temujin (sometimes spelled in English as Temuchin) as Genghis (Chinggis) Khaan ('Universal Ruler') (Turnbull 2003: 14). At that time Chinggis Khaan was the unchallenged ruler of the land from Siberia to China with 400,000 tents and a population of more than two million people (Ramirez 2000: 3). This was more than a

secular confirmation of power.<sup>4</sup> A Shaman priest also recognized Mongolia's new ruler as a living god (Ramirez 2000: 3).

Chinggis Khaan's great strength in his military campaigns was his tactical genius. Allsen notes the Mongols' military campaigns were carefully organised, reflecting months, if not years, of careful preparation, with tactical, topographical and logistical problems being carefully discussed before detailed orders were given to the relevant military commanders (Allsen 1987: 1). Chinggis also enforced strict military discipline. His strategic capacities in deploying his huge light and heavy horse cavalry corps were demonstrated in many campaigns. Mongols used the latest technology in key areas such as archery and horse riding, hugely aided by the adoption of saddles and stirrups (Gommans 2007: 4). The adoption of stirrups meant mounted archers could still shoot while riding away from attackers (Lattimore 1938: 66). The strategic retreat, to lure opposition forces away from their strongholds, was a frequent Mongol military tactic (Turnbull 2003: 48).

Despite Mongolia's small population compared with the countries the Mongols invaded, Temujin was also able to put huge numbers of men into the field considered as a share of Mongolia's population. The Mongol armies were sustained through on route foraging and plunder from those they conquered (although plunder was not allowed until a battle had been won). As noted by Weatherford, (2004) organised looting would follow victory, with plunder being brought under Temujin's control, to be distributed as he saw fit. (Until late in the Ilkhanate Mongol soldiers were not paid, with their only income on active service coming from booty. Indeed, Mongol warriors themselves made contribution in kind called *qubchar* (Turnbull 2003: 11)).

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of Temujin's life and times, see Onon (1990, 2001).



Temujin rigidly enforced his military system, based around heavy and light cavalry. Each member of the cavalry kept several replacement horses. When the first horse was overtired it was replaced, a huge asset to battleground mobility. As the animals moved, they grazed, removing the need to support them with fodder (Turnbull 2003: 18). The main weapons of the heavy cavalry were their lances. The light cavalry (which were perhaps twice as numerous) relied on mobility and archery (see Ramirez (2000) for a detailed discussion of the Mongol's campaigns in Asia and Europe).

The Mongols had also developed a composite bow made out of sinew and horn and were skilled at shooting it while riding, both in attack and in (seeming) retreat. With a range of more than 350 yards, the bow was superior to the contemporaneous English longbow, whose range was only 250 yards. Arrowheads were tempered in brine. Eagle feathers were used as fletches (Turnbull 2003: 24). Warriors wore armour, sometimes of layered leather, and carried a wooden shield (Turnbull 2003: 24). A wood-and-leather saddle, rubbed with sheep's fat to prevent cracking, allowed the horses to bear the weight of their riders for long periods and also permitted the riders to retain a firm seat (Rossabi 1994: 1).

To best use these sturdy horses, Chinggis Khaan created a system called *Tumen*, an army of 10,000 built from units of 10 (*Aravt*), 100 (*Zuut*), and 1,000 (*Mingghan*), each with a leader reporting to the next higher level. *Tumens* were considered a practical size, neither too small for an effective campaign, nor too big for efficient transport and supply. A group of *tumens* was called a horde. Mongolian military manoeuvres were based on the practice of the *nerge*, a mass hunt. Troops would fan out over several miles, forming a circle. Gradually this circle would contract until all of the animals were trapped within this ring of men and horses. This approach was then adapted to warfare.

The wings of the Mongol army would wrap around the opposing army so that they overlapped. By leaving a gap in their encirclement, the Mongols also created a seemingly innocuous hole that appeared to be a means of escape. However, this was a trap. The fleeing enemy would generally be pursued (May 2006: 620). May noted that the Mongols avoided hand-to-hand combat. They preferred to use an arrow shower. This disciplined approach to warfare culminated in the establishment of a huge empire. By 1219 Chinggis Khaan had captured most of Central Asia, including the trading cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. The Mongols then moved into the steppes of Russia, and through the Himalayan Mountains into India (see Khan 2003 for a more detailed description). Before he died in 1227 during a campaign against the southern Chinese, Chinggis Khaan had established the largest empire in the world.

The military tactics of the Mongols in the thirteenth century are still under scrutiny. A relatively recent United States Army Staff College paper concluded the Mongol Army was “well-organized, brilliantly led and masterly controlled organization that achieved astounding military feats” (Pittard 1994: 1). Chinggis Khaan also smashed the Mongol feudal system of aristocratic privilege based on birth to create a new order predicated on individual merit, loyalty, and achievement (Carl 2012: 2). He also established a system of customary Mongol laws called the Great Yasa. The Great Yasa gave structure and diplomacy to the Mongols, encouraging them to embrace and respect various religions, to respect innocent people, to grant envoys diplomatic immunity and punish those of their own people who did not abide by these rules (Maximick 2009: 15).

On the other hand, Haag-Kang notes that Chinggis Khaan is mainly noted in world history for extreme cruelty. She contended that in reality, Chinggis Khaan displayed tactical genius, personal charisma, and an astute ability to use propaganda (Haag-Kang 2013: 2). By contrast, Morozva

argued the collective memory of the conquered people was more negative, reflecting war atrocities, and because the tribute system the Mongols imposed was onerous (Morozva 2009: 6). Anderson also argued that horrific tales of Mongol massacres were exaggerated, reflecting Mongol propaganda about atrocities, intended to scare cities into surrendering without a fight. Indeed, Anderson contended the Mongol invaders recognized that they needed skilled workers, skilled administrators, and taxpayers (Anderson 2005: 114). As noted by Biran, recent research implied the Mongols' image began to shift from that of barbarian warriors obsessed with massacres and plunder, to the Mongols as active promoters of cross-cultural connections, who even brought about the transition from the medieval to the modern world (Biran 2013: 1).

In contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century Mongolia, Chinggis Khaan is revered as a national hero, a great source of national pride. He is celebrated with a national holiday, and there is a huge statue of him at the entrance to Parliament House. Contemporary Mongols also take considerable pride in his establishment of the Mongol Empire. As noted by Man:

*... in his heartland, Genghis name sounds loud and clear, his brutalities forgotten or ignored in the rush of adulation. In Mongolia, after 70 years of Soviet inspired suppression, people are free to parade his image, honour his birthday and name all manner of things after him (Man 2005: 8).*

Indeed, Lamsuren (2006) notes that the main theme of Mongolian historiographical works from the seventeenth century onwards was the perpetuation and glorification of the Chinggisid lineage, the 'Golden Line' (Lhamsuren 2006: 1).

## The Mongol empire

After the death of Chinggis Khaan, the Mongolian empire remained intact for some years before becoming four often competing khanates. By 1279, the Mongols' influence spanned from the eastern shores of China to the border of Hungary in Eastern Europe (Hudson 2015: 3). Mongol warriors simultaneously set out to do battle with Japanese samurai on one side of the earth and Egyptian Mamluk slave armies and Polish armoured knights on the other side (Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2006).

The empire was a family affair. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, this great empire stood defined by the individual dynasties which the sons and grandsons of Genghis Khan had established as their inheritance. Most splendid of all was the Yuan dynasty of China, founded by Khubilai Khan. In Persia the Ilkhan's ruled, a hegemony founded by Hulegu, Khubilai Khan's brother, who died in 1265. Another of Chinggis Khan's grandsons, Batu, (son of Jochi, who died before Chinggis) who died in 1255, had become the ruler of the Golden Horde in Russia, while the Chagadai khanate, named after Temujin's second son, ruled what was left of the former Khwarazm Empire in Central Asia (Turnbull 2003a: 90).

But the Mongolian empire's time as a unified structure was relatively short. By 1260, succession disputes and rivalry between the descendants of Genghis Khan culminated in a four year civil war (Rogers 2012). This led to withdrawal from a unified imperial structure along the lines of regional successor states such as the Golden Horde in Russia, the Il-Khanate of the Middle East, the Chagadai Khanate and the Yuan dynasty of China (Khan 2003: 2).

In 1260, Khublai Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, became Great Khan, by virtue of defeating other claimants to the throne. To the disquiet of many Mongols, Khublai transferred his capital from Mongolia to Beijing in northern China. Later, in 1271 he adopted a Chinese dynastic name, the Yuan. Within a few short years, the Mongols had conquered all of southern China. Khublai Khan built a magnificent palace complex for himself, Beijing's Forbidden City. Reflecting the geographic diversity of the far flung Mongolian Empire, the Forbidden City contained elements of Arabic, Mongolian, western Asian, and Chinese architectural styles. It also contained a vast area for traditional Mongol tents and a playing field for Mongolian horsemanship. The Forbidden City of Khublai Khan was in many ways a protected sanctuary for Mongolian culture (Khan et al. 1996: 2).

### **The decline of the Mongol Empire.**

A number of factors contributed to the fall of the Mongolian empire, including factors at the local level in the far flung corners of empire. But there were also common high level problems across the Mongolian Empire, including problems caused by loss of military ascendancy, disease, fratricidal warfare and dissipation.

During Chinggis Khaan's lifetime, the Mongols held a pronounced military ascendancy over their rivals, based on their cavalry, their archery (their bows, the 'artillery' of their day, had much longer range than those of their rivals), their adoption of contemporary technology such as the stirrup, .and unrivalled strategy and battlefield tactics. However, these advantages dissipated over time, as rivals such as the Manchu adopted similar military strategies. One of the biggest changes was the development of gunpowder weapons, which had far greater range and capacity than archery. Such weapons were more commonly produced in wealthy sedentary societies.

Amitai and Biran concluded that by the mid-eighteenth century the nomads were finished as a credible independent military force, and the advent of the machine gun, the airplane and the railroads pretty much brought the nomads of the steppe and elsewhere under the full control of sedentary states (Amitai and Biran 2005: 9).

The bubonic plague or Black Death also ravaged the Mongolian empire in the fourteenth century. Hudson counselled that Pax Mongolica gave the opportunity for safe trade over vast regions but also gave the opportunity for rapid transmission of diseases throughout the Mongolian Empire (Hudson 2015: 1,2). As noted by Bayasakh, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Empire was not just an unrivalled military power, but also a tremendous force in the economic and cultural spheres (Bayasakh 2016: 155). Underpinned by the great *jasa*, this gave rise to a period in peace within the far flung Mongol empire which facilitated huge trade flows. Trade and cultural exchange took place along the so-called Silk Roads as early as 200 BCE, as Mediterranean Europe exchanged products such as glass and lead-glazed pottery for Chinese silk. However, until Pax Mongolica, such trade took place mainly through intermediaries, each of whom travelled just a short section of the Silk Roads at a time, i.e., while products traversed the Eurasian continent, people mostly did not. However, people movement became more common under the Mongolian Empire (Haag Kang 2013: 6).

The speed with which the Mongols were able to travel the trade routes, along with the volume of traders that were able to peaceably navigate the Silk Road, allowed new diseases to spread rapidly. The most deadly of these diseases was the Bubonic Plague, which may have had its origins in the steppes of Central Asia (Hudson 2015: 2, 3). Sadly, the Silk Road was the ideal conduit for the transmittal of potential pandemics. In 1313, another wave of plague appeared on the steppes of Central Asia and in 1331 it reached the Mongol courts of China. Even those fortunate enough

to survive still suffered greatly from the symptoms and never regained full strength. Hudson concluded that as a result the Mongols lost their military might. Cossar noted the Black Death began around 1320 in the Gobi, Mongolia, and adjacent regions. Over the next 30 years it spread inexorably across the Mongol empire, ranging across China, India, Central Asia, Arabia, the Middle East, northern Africa, the Mediterranean, throughout the whole of Europe, and north into Russia.

*Most Mongol rulers lived short lives. Those in the Middle East died, on average, at about age 38, and the successors of Qubilai (Khubilai) in the Far East at 33 (adding in Qubilai raises the average since he lived, atypically, for 78 years; Chinggis lived into his 60s; for the rest, few passed 50) (Smith 2000: 1).*

Possibly one third of the population in these areas was wiped out (Cossar 1994: 37). If the Mongols suffered similar losses this would have had a disastrous effect on their military capacity. Schamiloglu noted “the total fragmentation of authority” in the areas controlled by the Golden Horde after the outbreak of the Black Death, which decimated the military strength of the Mongols. Schamiloglu contended the Black Death may have had a greater impact on the urbanised elite of the Golden Horde than population groups in Russia living outside urban areas (Schamiloglu 1993: 451).

Fratricidal wars also contributed to the fall of the Mongol Empire. Disputes and warfare within each Khanate as well as between Khanates were common. Internal dissent probably contributed significantly to the weakening of the Empire relative to the enemies without. The capacity for discord was quickly demonstrated after the death of Chinggis Khaan, because “In spite of his many accomplishments, Chinggis failed to delineate a precise and orderly succession to the khanate” (Rossabi 1988: 8). It took two years to agree on his successor, Ogedei (McCreight 1983:

24). The rise of Khublai Khan followed family warfare and even as he grew in influence he was in conflict with his younger brother and other family members, who resented his adoption of what they perceived as a sedentary lifestyle (Rossabi 1988: 34).

As explained by Forbes Manz (2000), the great unresolved question was what belonged to whom. What had been the will of Chinggis Khaan about the disposition of the Great Khanate? While Chinggis Khaan was clear in his division of lands, the succession, beyond his sons, was less clear. In terms of lands, the Jochids received what is now the Kazakh steppe, southern Siberia, the lower Volga, the Qipchaq steppe, North Caucasia, and the Rus principalities. Chaghadai, his second son, obtained West Turkestan; Ögödei, his third son and political heir, had his personal territory in Jungharia and later moved to central Mongolia, the site of the imperial capital, Qara Qorum; and, finally, Tolui, the youngest, received eastern Mongolia (Allsen, 2001: 51, 52).

Chinggis also made his views on immediate succession clear. Chinggis Khaan named Ogodei as his successor in 1219 and again in 1227. However, the succession was disputed, with some support for Chinggis' fourth son, Tolui, the regent of the Empire during the interregnum, in line with the tradition that the youngest son should inherit his father's estate (Allsen 1987: 22). Significant disputes also arose in the next generation. This time the house of Tolui prevailed over that of Ogodei.

This caused considerable dissension. Was it right that Möngke, the son of Chinggis Khan's youngest son Tolui, should have come to the throne, ousting the line of Ögedei, whom Chinggis Khan had placed there (Forbes Manz (2000)). Jackson suggested the tension arose from the Turco-Mongol pattern of inheritance. The custom whereby the father's original

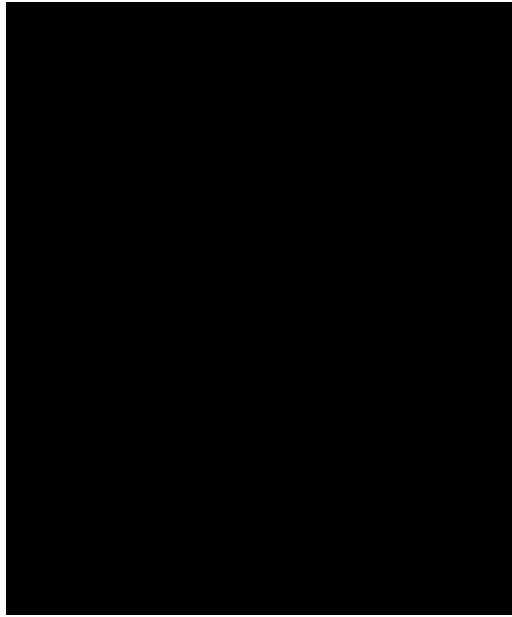


seat (*ordo*), passed on his death to his youngest son by his chief wife, was offset by at least an equal emphasis on seniority (Jackson 1978: 318). Poppe added another perspective: that the Mongolian empire "... contained within itself a great contradiction in the form of the unlimited supreme authority of the emperor... and the same almost unlimited authority of the vassal leaders in their holdings" (Poppe 1979: 34). The issue was to drive many disputes between and within Khanates.

In addition to problems of disease and fratricidal wars, another common theme was dissipation. Chinggis Khaan warned against this problem, but as time went by and the Mongolian Empire grew ever larger, his warning was disregarded (Turnbull 2003a: 90). Khublai Khan apparently typified the problem. Despite a long life against the standards of his era, his life of indolence led to extreme obesity as he aged. He also became a heavy drinker (Rossabi 1988: 66, 67). Anderson noted:

*Shaky administration, thanks in part to the excessive fondness of the Mongol elite for alcohol and feasting, led to inexorable decline in the mid-fourteenth century* (Anderson 2005: 1).

**Figure 3.4: Khublai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty**



Source: <http://www.pr-energy.info/usa/yuan-dynasty-kublai-khan.usa>, downloaded 2 September 2017

### **The fall of the Yuan dynasty**

Following the death of Khublai Khan, the Yuan Dynasty was relatively short-lived. The Dynasty ended in 1368. Kahn et al. considered the fall of the Yuan Empire, the shortest lived of the various dynasties to rule China, reflected a variety of factors. Kahn et al. believed the Beijing Khans lost legitimacy among the Mongols still in Mongolia who thought they had become too Chinese. They noted the fourteenth century saw a number of Mongol rebellions against the Yuan. For their part Khan et al. suggested the Chinese never accepted the Yuan as a legitimate dynasty, but regarded them as an occupying army. The failure of the Mongol rulers to learn Chinese and integrate themselves into Chinese culture also greatly undermined the Mongol rulers. Possibly just as importantly, nature conspired in the downfall; the Yellow River changed course and flooded irrigation canals and so brought on massive famine in the 1340's (Khan et al. 1996: 4).

Financial mismanagement was also an issue. Khublai's policies in the first two decades of his rule entailed great public expenditures, including building projects, patronage of the arts, lavish entertainments, feasts, and hunts. The costs of Khublai's military campaigns were also significant (Rossabi 1988: 432). Khublai's abortive missions against Japan proved extremely costly, resulting in the imposition of new taxes and higher tax rates, which were bitterly resented by the Chinese. Roberts also concluded that Khublai was wasteful, with his lavish lifestyle symbolised by his summer residence at Shangdu, which incorporated an extravagant marble palace (Roberts 1999: 112).

Turnbull considered the fall of the Yuan dynasty also reflected leadership issues. Turnbull concluded Temur (1294-1307), Khubilai's successor, was the last able member of the Yuan dynasty. After Temur's death there were also fierce succession disputes. The perception of weakness and debauchery among their rulers encouraged Chinese patriots to rebel (Turnbull 2003a: 90).

Poppe called the period after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, from the mid fourteenth to the late sixteenth century, the "dark period" (Poppe 1979: 32), because information about developments was limited. Nonetheless, Poppe noted that from 1388 to 1400 there was not a single day when Mongols did not war with each other.<sup>5</sup> The fall of the Yuan dynasty also led to Mongolia's economic ruin, as Mongolia did not have its previous access to markets, and the economy reverted to that of a simple pastoral society (Poppe 1979: 32).

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of the post-Yuan period, see Pokotilov's *History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1634* (1947).

### **The fall of the Golden Horde**

The remaining great Khanates also fell into decline over time. In Russia, the rule of the Golden Horde ended shortly after the overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty. From 1371 onwards the Russian princes ceased to render homage at the court of Sarai, or even to pay tribute. Grand Duke Dimitri of Moscow repulsed a punitive Mongol invasion in 1373 and five years later won a battle against the previously invincible Mongols (Turnbull 2003a: 91).

By the mid-fifteenth century, the Russians were strong enough to gain their independence. Civil Wars, the plague and constant changes in leadership led to the demise of the Mongols authority and geographical reach. By learning the Mongols and Tatars war techniques, the Russian princes fought and won significant battles against their overlords. By 1480, Russia emerged as its own small empire (Maximick, 2009: 17). The Mongol Yoke had been broken.

### **The fall of the Ilkhanate**

To the west, following the death of the last Mongol Ilkhan ruler Abū Saʿīd in 736/1335 (the Ilkhanate Mongols converted to Islam and adopted Muslim names), the region east of the Mamluk Sultanate, from the Euphrates to the Oxus, was thrown into political upheaval. The Ilkhanate had been ruled by Hülegü's descendants. By the fourteenth century, dynastic succession had been settled in one branch of the Hülegüid family, through Hülegü's son Abaqa, and Abaqa's son Arghun. However, when Abū Saʿīd Bahādur Khan died without an heir in 736/1335 (Wing 2007:1), the lack of a clear successor led to internecine struggles, ultimately leading to the failure of the Khanate.

## **The fall of the Khanate of Chaghadai**

When Chinggis Khaan allocated *appanu* (territories) he allocated Central Asia to his sons Obegedei and Chaghadai. The latter received most of the territories, as his elder brother was expected to succeed his father, as was the case. Chaghadai died three years after his brother, in 1244. His territory stretched from Uighurstan to the Oxus, roughly equivalent to today's Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Krygysten, parts of south Kazakhstan and Southern Xinjian. Part of this Khanate was to survive until the 1750s as Moghulstan (for a more detailed discussion see Swanson (2016)).

## **Mongolia at the time of the Ming Empire (1368-1644)**

The rise of the Ming meant that “Yuan power was effectively over within the Chinese ecumene” (Lorge 2006: 108). However, the Mongols continued to invade China throughout the Ming Dynasty. China also invaded Mongolia several times, mounting repeated campaigns on the Mongol steppe (Waldron 1994). Mounted Ming expeditionary forces repeatedly pursued Mongol nomads into the steppe, and in 1372 and 1380 two major Chinese expeditions came close to taking Karakorum.

However, in the middle of the fifteenth century the Ming began to turn inward. After 1449, when the Mongols destroyed an imperial expeditionary force, the Ming adopted reactive and defensive strategies, perhaps most dramatically manifested in the extensive program of border fortification that created the "Great Wall". During the Ming Dynasty China erected the Great Wall of China to deny the Mongols easy access to China. Hart's description of the size of this building project is eloquent:

*No other work of man compares with the Chinese wall for the human labour which it cost. It contains the mass of a hundred pyramids; its masonry would build a dozen Romes or fill six Panama Canals (Hart 1910: 438).*

**Figure 3.5: The Great Wall of China**



Source: <https://www.chinahighlights.com/greatwall/fact/>, downloaded 2 September 2017

Waldron commented that “Like the French decision to build the Maginot Line nearly four hundred years later, the building of the Chinese wall involved a shift from an offensive or counteroffensive military posture to the strategic defensive. And as in France, the decision created a great controversy” (Waldron 1994: 95).

Ming expansion hence ended with serious border issues unresolved. Fairbanks considered Ming China’s continued preoccupation with the Mongols was a major factor in the Emperor Yung Lo’s reign that pulled Ming China back from maritime expansion. In the very years when the Yung-lo emperor was sending out the first six fleets, he was obliged to lead five enormous military expeditions into Mongolia. The expedition of 1422 was said to have employed 235,000 men. Even so, the Mongols escaped westward and China’s Mongol problem thereafter increased. By 1449, Ming vitality was on the ebb after less than a century of power; when Mongol invaders captured the emperor himself, Ming dominance of East

Asia was permanently damaged (Fairbanks 1969: 464). However, the Ming Empire was to remain until 1644. By that time the Ming dynasty was both under external siege and weakened by internal rebellions. Importantly, tax collections fell, and late in the dynasty, the Ming army was unpaid at a critical juncture (Eberhard 2013: 162,163).

## **The rise of the Qing (1644-1911)**

Despite many punitive expeditions against Mongolia over the period of the Ming dynasty, Mongolia remained defiantly independent. Indeed, the Mongols were a constant threat to the Ming. However, the Qing dynasty, coupled with Russian imperialism, was to result in the loss of Mongolian independence, by agreement (Inner Mongolia 1640s) surrender (Khalka submission 1691) and by defeat (Zuunghar Empire, 1750s).

The fall of the Yuan Empire saw many Mongols seeking refuge to return to their native land (possibly around 60,000 Mongols returned to Mongolia (Worden 1991: 131)). It was probably not a happy experience for the returnees, who were suddenly exposed to the harsh realities of steppe life and most likely ill prepared for it, or the people who had remained there. Endicott noted that those who had left Mongolia for China had treated those who remained behind poorly, seeing Mongolia only as a reservoir of warriors and horses. In the Yuan period Mongolia became an economic back water, labouring to survive under harsh weather conditions, with the omnipresent danger of *dzuds*. There were several reports of food security issues in Mongolia in the Yuan period. Indeed, grain was convoyed to Qara Qorum to feed the garrison stationed there because local food supplies were inadequate (Endicott-West 2010: 466, 467).

So, the return to Mongolia was less than smooth. Among Chinggis' descendants to the east, there was constant turmoil as princelings fought for supremacy. In the west, the Oriad began to stir, seeking their own destiny, separate to the Chinggisids. The Oriads saw themselves as having distinct origins, language and religious beliefs compared to other Mongol groups. There were several different Mongolian language groups, in particular the eastern and western Mongolian ones (Chuluunbaatar 2010: 1).

In the east, it was not until the late 1400s that Queen Mandukhai oversaw a revival of central authority, declaring her great-great nephew Dayan as Great Khan. The eastern Mongols took territory from the Oriads, and repeatedly assaulted Beijing, efforts that led to firmer boundaries and trade deals with Ming China. Following Dayan, Altan Khan was to achieve renown as a cultural leader, and was a key actor in the introduction of Buddhism to Eastern Mongolia.

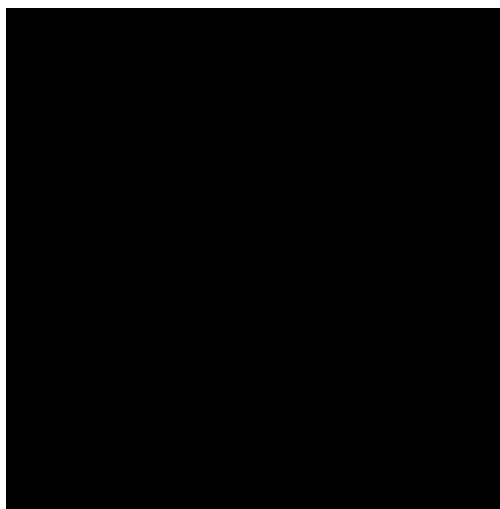
However, the ascension of Ligdan Khan was to lead to wars between Chinggisid led Mongols of Chahar and Khalka, and the Oriad Zuunghars. It was also to lead to the Jurchen, later known as the Manchu, to declare war on Ligdan Khan, who fought against the Qing until he died of smallpox in 1634. Thereafter, the Inner Mongols under his son Ejei Khan decided to join the Jurchen (Manchu). Inner Mongolian nobility became closely tied to the Jurchen royal family, intermarrying with them extensively. Many Mongol princes voluntarily joined the Manchu in raids into North China. In 1637 the united Manchus and Mongols conquered Korea. Their power steadily grew. In this period the Manchu created a new military organization, the "Banner Organization". Men fit for military service were distributed among eight "banners", which became the basis of Manchu state administration (Eberhard 2013: 163). Early Qing emperors used the 'banner' system as a 'nation-building' project to unify the Manchu clans and subsequently to incorporate Mongol and Chinese subjects and allies (Di Cosmo 1998: 287).



The Manchu first reached the walls of Beijing in 1638. They withdrew, but returned to conquer Beijing in 1644, with Mongol assistance. The remnants of the Ming dynasty fled to south China, but were eventually defeated by the Manchu. Manchu rule in China became absolute, and Inner Mongolia formally agreed to become part of the Manchu empire. Indeed, the Mongols presented the State seal of the former Yuan Emperors to the Qing Emperor because they regarded the Qing as Chinggis Khaan's rightful successors (Clifford 1949: 21). However, the notion of partnership proved illusory. The Manchu gradually asserted control over the people of Inner Mongolia (Elliot 2014: 20).

The beginning of Manchu rule in Outer Mongolia followed a bitter late seventeenth century war between the eastern Khalkha and western Oriads. In desperation, the Khalkha turned to the Qing for help. The price of this help was submission. Qing rule in Outer Mongolia was remarked by the submission in 1691 of 550 Khalkha princes by the convention of Dolon Nor (Di Cosmo 1998: 292). The Manchu Qing administration organized Khalkha Mongols into 36 noble appanages or banners (*khoshuu*). By the end of the 19th century there were 86 Banners (Purevjav 2012: 251).

**Figure 3.6: The Qing Emperor Kangxi**



Source: <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-history/the-qing-dynasty.htm>, downloaded 2 September 2017

The last group of Mongols to submit to Qing rule were the Oriads. As noted earlier, in the wake of the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongols split into two competing groups, the Oriad and the Chinggisids (Chahar and Khalhka people). In the time of the Ming dynasty, rivalry between the two groups was welcomed by the Chinese. The Mongols naturally presented a lesser threat to Chinese interests when they were at war with each other. The Chinese alternately supported one group of Mongols, then the other, which drained the strength of the Mongols (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 57).

However, in the late seventeenth century the Oriads, became a significant force, threatening both eastern Chinggisid Mongols and the Qing. The Zuunghar came to control vast reaches of present-day Xinjiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia, and parts of present day Qinghai, Tibet, and Kazakhstan (Perdue 1996: 758). The Zuunghar Empire was a very different polity to the Chinggisid empire. Whereas the Chinggisid empire was ruled by members of Chinggis' family (the Golden Line), the Zuunghar Empire was a confederation of smaller polities, within which commoners as well as nobles took leadership roles (Atwood 2006b: 610, 611).

Initially Oriad leader Galdan had a sound relationship with the Qing, and in 1678 the Emperor Kangxi accorded him the title of Khan. Later he sought alliance with the Khalhka. The Qing realised this northern polity would be a continuing threat, and decided to crush the Oriad. The Qing conquered the remainder of Mongolia, and of parts of eastern Turkestan and Tibet, since when Tibet has remained under some form of Chinese rule (Eberhard 2013: 169). The Zuunghar people, perhaps one million of them, were obliterated by a combination of starvation, disease and battlefield death, Chinese massacres, dispersal through flight, and enslavement to Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, and other overlords. Russian tacit acquiescence to the extermination of the Zuunghar state was critical to Qing success (Perdue 1996: 759).

During the Qing period the fealty of Mongol princes in Inner Mongolia was secured through salary payments to the Mongol princes. However, their lives were tightly controlled. In addition, by the early twentieth century Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia became significant. The numbers of ethnic Chinese living in Inner Mongolia rose markedly. Bulag noted there may have been approximately 1,000,000 in 1900, 1,500,000 in 1912, and over 3,000,000 in 1937 (Bulag 2004: 3).

In 1902, to assist in paying indemnities to European powers for damages arising from the ill-fated Boxer Rebellion, the Qing decided to increase use of pastures for agriculture in Inner Mongolia: at the same time they reduced the salaries of the Mongol nobles. To overcome this, some Mongol nobles decided to sell land to the Chinese, to the considerable ire of other Mongols living in Inner Mongolia.

These issues gave birth to an independence movement in Inner Mongolia. Some of the Mongol princes of Inner Mongolia attempted to join Outer Mongolia in its claim for independence in 1911. This was followed by a demand for independence by the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in 1925, and attempts by Inner Mongolian leaders to take advantage of Japanese occupation of parts of Inner Mongolia between 1931 and 1945 to break away from Chinese control. None of these efforts were to prove successful.

### **The growth of Buddhism in Mongolia**

Before Buddhism made its way to Mongolia, Mongolia had traditionally been a Shamanistic state (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 69). The rise of the

Mongolian empire attracted interest from different religions. Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Taoist missionaries came to central Asia to try to spread their respective religions at the polytheistic court of Khublai Khan. There is also some speculation that Khublai Khan's mother was a Christian. However, as Baabar and Kaplonski observed, after the fall of the Mongolian Empire the influence of these religions waned as travel became more difficult post Pax Mongolia. Baabar suggested Mongols then reverted to Shamanism (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 69).

**Figure 3.7: Gandan monastery, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**



Source: [www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-gandantegchinlen-monastery-tibetan-style-buddhist-monastery-mongolian-capital-ulaanbaatar-mongolia-image74440023](http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-gandantegchinlen-monastery-tibetan-style-buddhist-monastery-mongolian-capital-ulaanbaatar-mongolia-image74440023), downloaded 2 September 2017

However, in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan (or Yellow Line) Buddhism began to grow in importance in Mongolia. As the religion grew in importance, temples were built, and laws were adopted to weed out Shamanism, including efforts to end the Shaman practice of killing slaves and servants when their masters died. On the other hand, some Shaman practices like worship of the spirits of mountains and rivers came to be incorporated into local Buddhist practice. The conversion was aided by both the Tibetans and the Chinese. The Tibetans sent large numbers of Buddhist monks to aid the conversion. Baabar and Kaplonski inferred the Chinese had a political motivation: Yellow Buddhism forbids the shedding of blood, and the Manchu had been quick to understand that the savage and

warlike Mongols could be rendered meek through the inherent passivity of the Yellow religion (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 71).

Other authors have cast doubt on the effectiveness of this policy. Morgan noted it was not easy to demonstrate that the Mongols were much less warlike than their ancestors. Morgan argued that while Mongols were certainly less effective militarily this probably had more to do with changes in military technology than with religion (Morgan 1986a: 205). Whether the Chinese machinations to hobble the Mongol's war machine were effective is hence a moot point. Lattimore suggested the growth of Buddhism in Mongolia had rather more to do with Altan Khan's rise in 1530 to leadership of Inner and Western Mongolia than Chinese intrigue, because Altan Khan needed an administration which was not controlled by a Chinese bureaucracy. Lattimore considered a "celibate church with monastic property made possible better management of the most important working problem of all such border states of mixed economy and society" (Lattimore 1938: 86). (Later Lattimore took a different perspective. He took the view that the spread of Buddhism had been favoured by the Manchu Emperors "as a means of preventing Mongol unity and smothering Mongol nationalism" (Lattimore 1962: 4)). Whichever explanation is correct, Buddhist numbers increased markedly in Mongolia from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the early twentieth century, 100,000 males out of the estimated Mongol population of 700,000 were lamas (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 99). Monasteries became common place, and many Mongolians were in effect ruled by lamas.

**Figure 3.8: The Buddha at Gandan Monastery, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**



Source: [http://www.toursmongolia.com/mongolia\\_travel\\_news/9-must-see-places-in-ulaanbaatar-capital-city-of-mongolia](http://www.toursmongolia.com/mongolia_travel_news/9-must-see-places-in-ulaanbaatar-capital-city-of-mongolia), downloaded 2 September 2017

### **The rise of Russia**

While Mongolia was frequently preoccupied with China, after the collapse of the Golden Horde Russia gained strength, and began to expand. Ultimately Russia's eastern expansion caused Mongolia to become landlocked, with powerful and unfriendly neighbours to the north and the south. In addition, Mongolia lost lands to the north that earlier had belonged to Mongolia in Siberia, around Lake Baikal.

Over time, Russia's eastern imperialist ambitions came to be a significant issue for Mongolia. Northern Siberia was relatively lowly populated and Russian expansion into north Siberia under the guise of commerce was relatively untroubled. With the resettling of many ethnic Russians to North Siberia, the existing native populations quickly became a small part of the population of this part of Siberia. However, southern Siberia was not such an easy nut to crack. There were many ethnic Mongolians living in southern Siberia. Mongols presence in Siberia was reflected through Mongol burial sites. Gerhard Mueller, who travelled to Siberia to put Siberian administrative archives in order and write a history of Russia's

colonisation of Siberia, noted the presence of numerous Mongol/Tartar burial sites (Kotkin (1996)).

However, as discussed earlier, in the mid eighteenth century the Qing dynasty annihilated the Zuunghar Empire, which gave Russia the opportunity to expand into Southern Siberia. As noted by Kotkin, China and Russia ‘together battered and finally subdued the nomads of Eurasia in the geopolitical space carved out by Chinggis Khaan’ (Kotkin 1996: 11). Russia’s interests in Siberia were then protected by treaties with the Qing dynasty. Mongolia now had closely defined borders, limiting Mongol mobility. Mongols could no longer retreat from Chinese forces into the frozen north in Siberia. The nomadic Mongols had been contained. As was the case in Northern Siberia, the remaining population, including Buriat Mongols, were quickly overwhelmed by migration of ethnic Russians to Siberia (see Appendix 1, Supporting Data).

Russian imperialism was therefore rather different from other European powers. Whereas the number of British living in India remained quite small, Russia actively promoted transfer of ethnic Russians into new territories. Some of this migration was involuntary. The 1866 reforms to the Russian penal code identified exile to Siberia as a means of punishment. Involuntary settlement to Siberia has been part of the Russian penal code ever since (Gruszczynska and Kaczynska (1990)). As well as being a statutory punishment for criminals in civil courts, exile to Siberia was often imposed by military tribunals (de Silva 2001: 157).

Historically, getting to Siberia had been very difficult. The Russian Government gradually built a series of forts in Siberia. Then in the 1760s the Great Siberian Post Road (*Trakt*) was built. While “the Post Road consumed innumerable lives and *rubles*,” Russian expansion policy was well served by the increased flow of hardy peasant migrants (Kotkin 1996: 15). This was the precursor to the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Alexander III,

then Czar of Russia, put into action his decision to build the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Saara on the river Volga to Vladivostok, on the Pacific Ocean in 1891. Kleb stated: “This was a monumental undertaking to say the least...the straight line distance...is more than 4000 miles” (Kleb 1975: 1). Access to Siberia became much easier with the building of the railway.

The 1894-95 Sino–Japanese War signalled a decade when the Far East became a focal point for European powers and the United States. Global rivalry strongly influenced Russian thinking about its position in the Far East (Berryman 2002). (The nineteenth century saw a great rivalry develop between British and Russian interests, sometimes styled as the “great game” as the two countries sought to extend their colonial interests). Berryman notes that after the Sino-Japanese war St Petersburg sought to develop Russia’s economic and railway penetration of Manchuria, aware that the Trans–Siberian Railway, suitably extended to Manchuria, would enable Russia to exert influence throughout Northeast Asia without needing to be concerned about British sea power (Berryman 2002:7). Ethnic Russian population increases in Siberia post the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war reflected Russia’s recognition of the threat to its sparsely populated holdings in Siberia (Buzan and Segal 1994: 2).

Apart from national security issues, Russia also colonized this vast area to use the area’s rich fur supplies. In both northern Russia and Siberia, furbearing animals such as sables had long provided the main impetus for Russian imperial expansion. These animals, abundant and prolific, helped finance Russia to become a world power (Jones 2011: 588). Siberia was also noted for its amber and musk (Knapp 2012: 4). By the mid-1750s, Russians were also exploiting the rich marine life in adjacent coastal waters. Further, as Siberia was explored, vast mineral resources were discovered (Kotkin 1996: 15). Twentieth century Russia also exploited the region’s oil and gas resources. The Trans-Siberian railway was the key to facilitating eastern expansion. Hinada commented (bold added) “taking



advantage of the Siberian railway, Russia **invaded** Eastern Asia... to make up for her limited domestic market” (Hinada 1972: 164).

### **The decline of the Qing dynasty**

The Qing dynasty ultimately failed in 1911. The regime was weakened by population pressures, internal rebellion, external wars, (including wars against Mongolia and with European powers), by a lack of powerful successors when the Empress Tsuzi died, and the development of a new Western educated intelligentsia, who wanted Chinese to rule China.

Population increases over the latter Qing dynasty period without similar increases in food production led to great poverty throughout China, a ripe environment for dissension (food shortages were also a factor leading to the downfall of Yuan and Ming dynasties (Eberhard (2013))). Serious internal revolts took place against the Qing dynasty in the late eighteenth century, which were repressed at huge cost. Later came the *Tai P'ing* rebellion. In 1848, native unrest began in the province of Hunan and in the same year there was unrest farther south, in Kwangsi. The leader, Hung Hsiu-ch'üan (born 1814) had heard of Christianity from missionaries (1837), and believed he was Christ's younger brother. His movement was called *T'ai P'ing* ("Supreme Peace"). In 1852 he captured Hankow, and in 1853 Nanking, which he made his capital. Hung's followers pressed on from Nanking, and in 1853-1855 they advanced nearly to Tientsin; but they ultimately failed to take Beijing. By 1856 the *T'ai P'ing* were pressed back on Nanking and some of the towns round it; in 1864 the *Tai P'ing* were defeated.

External wars also plagued the Qing dynasty. The late Qing dynasty became involved in wars against European powers and Japan, which proved costly. Great Britain made several attempts to improve trade relations with China, but trade missions of 1793 and 1816 failed. English merchants, like all foreign merchants, were only permitted to settle in a

small area adjoining Canton and Macao. The Europeans concentrated on the purchase of silk and tea; but what could they import into China? Opium quickly became the answer. The Chinese government became apprehensive and in 1839 China prohibited the opium trade and burned British opium stores. In retaliation, in 1840 British ships-of-war bombarded China and later the British entered the Yangtze estuary and threatened Nanking. China, lacking modern naval resources, found herself defenceless. In 1842 China conceded defeat: under the Treaty of Nanking, Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain under a 99 year lease, a war indemnity was paid, and certain ports were opened to European trade. This undermined Qing prestige, a loss compounded by later concessions to other European powers as well as Japan.

Reflecting these difficulties, the Qing dynasty ended the nineteenth century in power but not in control. The Boxer Rebellion against foreigners in 1902, tacitly backed by the dowager empress, ended badly. Western powers claimed huge indemnities in compensation for their losses, forcing the financially weak Qing to seek new funding sources, which were to prove very unpopular. Succession was also an issue. Conflict between the Dowager Empress and the Emperor over the possible modernisation of China along Japanese lines led to his being imprisoned for life. As a result, he had no children. The end was somewhat farcical, aptly described by Eberhard. When she felt that her end was near, the Dowager had the captive emperor Tê Tsung assassinated: she herself died next day; “she was evidently determined that this man, whom she had ill-treated and oppressed all his life, should not regain independence. As Tee Tsung had no children, she nominated on the day of her death the two-year-old prince P'u Yi as emperor” (Eberhard 2013: 183).

A republic emerged from the ashes of the Qing Dynasty. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had seen a new development in China, the rise of a new intelligentsia, led and symbolised by Sun Yat Sen, committed to Chinese self-rule. They commonly saw reform in Japan as

the impetus beyond Japan's rapid growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a model they advocated for China. With the death of the Empress Tsuzi, and the lack of a mature heir, the new intelligentsia were quick to seize the moment.

The Qing dynasty, together with Russian imperialism, had profound and lasting effects on Mongolia. Possibly the most important was the decoupling of Outer and Inner Mongolia, with Inner Mongolia agreeing to be ruled by Beijing. Second, the Qing absorbed Outer Mongolia. China's suzerainty over then Outer Mongolia was recognised in several international treaties. Third, the Qing dynasty, in concert with Russia, agreed international boundaries with Mongolia which disadvantaged Mongolia, especially with respect to Russia's annexation of southern Siberia. The international boundaries contained Mongols within set limits. No longer could a Mongolian army flee to their Siberian lands when pursued by Chinese forces, because Siberia was now part of Russia. Fourth, during the Qing dynasty Buddhism became embedded in Mongolia, with huge numbers of monasteries being established. The previously very mobile Mongols became increasingly place based, which made them easier to attack and control.

## **Chapter 4: Mongolia from 1911 to 1990**

### **Introduction**

The period 1911 to 1990 saw Mongolia claim independence, establish a quasi-feudal theocracy, and later become a socialist state. Potkanski believed the quasi-feudal theocracy preserved and reinforced the old feudal social and political structure, which was highly stratified, with high-ranking feudal lords and lamas, followed by herders who were their feudal subjects, and herders who were subjects of the state (Potkanski: 1993: 123).

The latter change probably reflected more a desire for freedom from Chinese rule rather than a strong desire for socialism. Nevertheless, the change became quite real, based on the Soviet model, complete with an attempt at collectivisation and purges of nobility and religious leaders and lamas. Like Soviet Russia, Mongolia had a centrally planned economy, with stringent controls on peoples' businesses, jobs and movements, as well as price controls on key household needs.

### **Mongolia claims independence in 1911**

In 1911 Mongol Khalkha nobles based around Khuree (later renamed Ulaanbaatar (Red Hero), in honour of Sukhbaatar, an early socialist hero) were in the forefront of moves to declare then Outer Mongolia independent. This initiative reflected the fall of the Qing Dynasty in China. Mongols saw this as a good opportunity to pursue independence. The claim reflected Mongols' view of the Qing empire. Mongols recognised their connection with the Qing Empire, but not with China: they had become a part of 'our Great Qing' by personal vassal oath of Mongolian princes (Dmitriev and Kuzmin, 1991: 11). With the demise of the Qing Empire, the Mongols considered they had no legal links with China.

The Mongols from then Outer Mongolia were also motivated by events in Inner Mongolia. Lamb notes that Manchu policy changes led to pressure to push Chinese colonists from Inner Mongolia to Outer Mongolia, and ultimately to bring all Mongolia under direct Chinese administration (Lamb 1968: 199). After the failed Boxer rebellion of 1902, the Qing needed to pay large indemnities to European powers, whose business interests had been significantly damaged during the rebellion. The Qing then encouraged increased Han settlement in Inner Mongolia, with the objective of increasing agricultural output to assist tax collection in paying the indemnities. This adversely affected the Mongols nomadic pastoral economy (sadly, by the twenty first century, over cropping in Inner Mongolia has also led to desertification in many areas).

Mongols were horrified. Mongols in Outer Mongolia could envisage this new policy being extended to their lands. Culturally, sedentary agriculture was anathema to the nomadic Mongols, who favoured a pastoral economy. The Mongols were distraught that their lands could be abused in this way. The Mongols also noted with concern that Zhu Yuanzhang, a leader in the new Chinese republic of 1911 used as his rallying call, “expel the northern barbarian, and restore China” (Bulag 2002).

The combination of events led to a Mongol declaration of independence in 1911. While the claim for independence related to Outer Mongolia, there were also ethnic Mongol populations to the north in Urianhai (now Tuva) and Buriatya (southern Siberia), a large Mongol population to the east in Manchuria, and to the south in Inner Mongolia (the Mongol population in Inner Mongolia exceeded that in Outer Mongolia). Therefore, the claim for independence in Khalkha dominated Khuree represented the aims of only part of the Mongol people, although the hope was to later extend this claim to other areas.

Notably, in Inner Mongolia, Mongol nobles lacked a common stance about seeking to join the newly declared independent state of Mongolia. Tachibana, for example identified a number of different views among the Mongol nobles. Some areas of Khalkha moved toward independence, some Mongolian nobles in Beijing defended the Qing Dynasty, and the rest kept silent.<sup>6</sup> There was no unified Mongolian position. Just as reactions of the Han to the 1911 Revolution were various, Mongolian reactions were also various (Tachibana 2014: 8).

Western Manchuria (today's northeast China), also had a significant Mongol population. However, in the lead up to 1911 and beyond, aggressive Chinese immigration, coupled with later Japanese invasion and occupation, was to result in ethnic Mongols becoming a minority in these lands, extinguishing the potential for them to become part of broader Pan – Mongolia. Described by Lattimore as the “storm centre of the world” (Lattimore 1934: 5), underpopulated Western Manchuria was a target of Chinese, Russian and Japanese expansion plans in the early 1900s: Relatively fertile, it offered significant opportunities for food production. Assisted by new railways in eastern and Northeast China, Chinese colonisation was significant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As noted by Kwak, the construction of the Peking-Mukden railway into Manchuria and the Peking –Suiyan railway into western Inner Mongolia had been followed immediately by swarms of Chinese farmers who staked out lands within the jurisdiction of the Mongol leagues (Kwak 1966: 9).

The Chinese aimed to link their expansion into Western Manchuria with the China Eastern Railway to the east. The result was to be significant for the ambition of creating a Pan-Mongolian state. As summarised by Lattimore, Chinese colonization of Manchuria thwarted the ambitions of Russia and Japan and proved “beyond competition from the non-Chinese

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<sup>6</sup> See Valliant (1977) for a detailed discussion.

indigenous races” (Lattimore 1934: 5). The Mongols in Manchuria turned to Japan for support. However, Japanese support for Mongol nationalist aspirations in either Manchuria or Inner Mongolia was lukewarm. The sometime confluence of these interests around this period is demonstrated through Russian and Japanese negotiations over the fate of Mongolia: Her draws attention to Russo-Japanese negotiations as early as 1907, when Russia and Japan considered dividing Mongolia into outer and inner zones with Russian and Japanese spheres of influence respectively. Japan and Russia reconsidered this same idea in 1912 (Her 1997: 62).

The Chinese claimed Outer Mongolia as their territory in part because the Khalkha had given suzerainty to the Qing Dynasty in 1691 (earlier Inner Mongolia had been ceded to the Qing). Later the Qing had also conquered the Zuunghar Empire. These factors had also been significant in treaties between the Qing and Russia which defined the boundaries between the remaining two hegemonic empires in Northern Asia after the defeat of the Mongol Zuunghar Empire.

While China had not exploited the Outer Mongolia lands during the period of the Qing Dynasty, the emerging Chinese Republic had a strong desire to take over Outer Mongolia. Once the foreign Qing rulers had been deposed, China was free to pursue this ambition. Outer Mongolia has a huge land area, a land area equal to one third of China. China believed this land could be devoted to agriculture to support China’s rapidly growing population. Before the demise of the Qing Empire, Han Chinese were already being encouraged to settle in neighbouring Manchuria, a process which continued in the post-Qing Republican Chinese political environment. Mongolia’s vast mineral and coal resources were also of strong interest to resource limited China.

Imperial Russia also had a strong interest in Mongolia. As outlined by Lieven, Russia considered that sparsely populated Russian Asia faced a threat from both Japan and China, especially given China's huge population (Lieven 1990: 179). Imperial Russia expanded its empire into Siberia over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then expanded into Manchuria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, leading to clashes with both China and Japan. There is also evidence that Czarist Russia also planned to annex Mongolia, in part to compete with the British who had a strong interest in Tibet. Jamsran notes that following Japanese victory in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war, and the loss of its Manchurian interests, Russia began to more actively target Mongolia (Jamsran 2015: 4). Nonetheless, according to Spring, in the decade before 1914 Russian government policy was to pursue its interests in bordering countries by indirect means rather than by annexation or other political action, a policy which placed emphasis on Russian trade and private enterprise in these countries as a foundation for the protection of Russian political and strategic interests (Spring 1979: 305). The state of the Russian treasury, essentially bankrupt after the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war, influenced this policy. Later, of course, even without formal annexation, Soviet Russia essentially colonised Outer Mongolia, which Stalin viewed as an important buffer zone which protected Russia against both Japan and China. Sizova considered the pre-revolution Saint-Petersburg aim was to preserve Outer Mongolia in Russia's sphere of influence, and not allow Mongols either to separate from China or to be under the total Chinese control, a "challenging goal" (Sizova, 2016: 14).

Mongolia's attempts to gain its independence in the early 1920s came at a time when the new Soviet Republic was: fighting a civil war against pro Czar forces (the 'Whites'); attempting to establish a relationship with the Chinese government (as a step in gaining international recognition for the Soviet regime); and trying to protect itself against Japanese incursion into Siberia (and potentially Outer Mongolia). Soviet Russia made overtures to China, and also established a new state, the Far Eastern Republic (FER), as



ordered by Leon Trotsky in 1920. The Soviets could use this puppet state for support in international diplomatic negotiations (Elleman 1997: 23).

The Far Eastern Republic was useful as a buffer zone against the Japanese. Indeed, Russia appealed to the United States to defend the new 'state' against the Japanese, including the Trans-Siberian Railway, to make sure it did not fall into Japanese hands. When Japan deployed an army of 75,000 men and naval assets to Siberia, then United States President Woodrow Wilson sent a small contingent to Vladivostok to 'thwart' Japanese intentions (Elleman 1997: 30). The new Soviet government, with few friends in the world, faced a delicate task in winning recognition from the Chinese Republic while reasserting Soviet influence in Outer Mongolia and North Manchuria (Whiting 1954: 6).

Also in the balance was ownership of the China Eastern Railway (CER), a matter of major interest to Russia, China and Japan. China was, for the first time, a united market because of this railway. Hence the railway was of immense strategic importance to China. There was also strong Japanese interest in Mongolia; including 'romantic musings of Meiji politician Suematsu Kencho' that Chinggis Khaan was in fact Japanese. Japan also considered it had cultural and religious links with Mongolia (Boyd 2008: 8). Less romantic, but of strategic importance, was the potential for Mongolia to supply horses for the Japanese army. By the late 1920s, a Japanese army Division required 5,000 horses. Overall, the Japanese army required over 100,000 horses. Horses were in short supply in Japan, and of poor quality (Boyd 2008: 193).

Japan was aggressive in pursuing colonies in north Asia in the early twentieth century. Japan had a rapidly growing population, limited agricultural capacities and lacked resources vital to industrialization, such as iron ore and oil. Japan's ambitions led to war with China in 1894-95 and

Russia in 1904-05. As well as seeking to expand into Manchuria and Siberia, Japan had a strong interest in taking over resource rich Outer Mongolia. The reason for Japanese interest in Manchuria is underscored by Wright's analysis of Manchuria's economy in the early 1930s, which demonstrated that Manchuria was more industrialised, prosperous and involved in the world economy than China as a whole, with a significant surplus of agricultural products, predominantly soy beans, available for export (Wright 2006: 3).

At various stages, the people living in Outer Mongolia favoured aligning themselves to the Chinese, the Russians, and the Japanese, as well as self-rule. Ultimately, the Mongol nobles and lamas decided to pursue self-rule, culminating in the declaration of independence in 1911. The Mongols claimed independence from the Qing dynasty under the leadership of the Bogd Khan, the Living Buddha (also known as Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu), whom they proclaimed as their Emperor. Later, some nobles may have come to regret the secular leadership of the Bogd Khan, as it had the potential to limit their power (Howard-Gibbon 1971: 8).

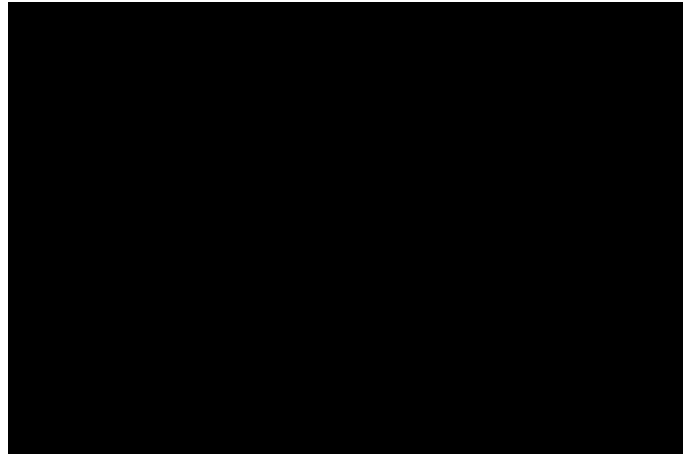
So Mongolia became a secular theocracy, with a quasi-feudal economic system. The new Mongolian government sought international recognition of Mongolia as an independent country from countries such the United States and Japan as well as Russia and China. However, such recognition was not forthcoming (Damdinjav 2011: 1). Rather, as noted by Peterson:

*Over the course of the next ten years, the nascent polity would become a battleground for Japanese and Russian imperial agents, traditional Mongolian noblemen, and socialist revolutionaries (Peterson 2009: 31).*

The immediate effect of the Mongol announcement was Chinese outrage and Russian concern. As explained by Dashtseren, when Mongolia

proclaimed independence China claimed the whole of the country, still considering it as a part of China. Russia and China were against the recognition of Mongolia, and Mongolia's demand for the unification with the Mongols in Inner Mongolia (Dashtseren 2015: 1).

**Figure 4.1: Image of the Bogd Khan and wife, National Museum of Mongolia**



Source:

<http://ozoutback.com.au/Mongolia/museums/slides/2011072102.html>,  
downloaded 2 September 2017

For his part, the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (or Bogd Khan or living Buddha) characterized Mongolia's geopolitical position as a "critical condition, like piled up eggs, in the midst of neighbouring nations" (Her 1997: 61). The Chinese government quickly sent troops to Mongolia to reclaim what it regarded as Chinese property, while the Mongols in turn raised troops to counter this threat. In the background, Russia's military leader in Manchuria, Khorvat, submitted a report to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proposing the deployment of Russian troops to China, to stop Yuan Shikai's military intervention in Mongolia (Masafumi 2010: 19).

However, Mongolia's immediate future following the 1911 declaration of independence was resolved through discussions between China, Russia and the Mongolian leadership. Following discussions between the Mongols and Russian representatives, on November 3 1912 the two parties signed a

treaty that pledged St. Petersburg to assist Outer Mongolia in preserving its “autonomy,” maintaining a national army, and keeping Mongolia free of Chinese troops and colonizers (Her 1997: 2). Why did Russia take this course? Apart from its interest in Mongolia as a buffer zone to protect Russia from China (or as a potential future colony) Masafumi considered Russia may have acted to thwart Japanese interests (although Russia and Japan had signed a secret treaty in 1907 which recognised Russia’s sphere of interest in Mongolia in return for Russian non-interference on the Korean peninsula (Dashtseren 1997: 49). Masafumi noted correspondence by a local Far East Russian leader, Martynov, by telegraph to St Petersburg foreign affairs leader Kokovtsov in January 1912, stating that if Russia did not immediately assist, the Mongol nobles would seek Japanese assistance (Masafumi 2010: 20).

Chinese authorities were indignant about the Russia-Mongolia agreement and reluctantly agreed to Russia-Chinese negotiations in a last attempt to assert Chinese domination over Outer Mongolia. Sino-Russian negotiations began in November 1912 (Her 1997: 64). Although the Mongol leadership demanded to be part of the discussions, initially this was not to be. Later the Chinese and Russian Governments relented and tripartite discussions followed.

Despite Mongolian resistance, Russia and China agreed that Mongolia would become autonomous, rather than independent, under Chinese suzerainty. This agreement was ratified through a 1915 treaty between Russia, China and Mongolia. The treaty also required China to withdraw its troops from Inner Mongolia. If the success of a treaty can be gauged by the attitudes of the parties, Mongolian and Chinese distress indicates both parties were highly dissatisfied. Only Russia, which secured a buffer zone and promoted its trading interests in Mongolia, was satisfied with the outcome. The Mongols had not achieved full independence and the dream of creating Pan-Mongolia, including Inner and Outer Mongolia and

Western Manchuria had been shattered. For China, the permanent loss of a valuable part of what it considered 'greater' China was now very possible.

This was to remain a bitter issue for China's leaders. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty, Republican China planned to incorporate Tibet and Mongolia into Chinese territory by declaring the "the Republic of Five Races" (Kobayashi 2014: 1). The loss of Mongolia meant that Chinese ambitions would not be realized. The loss of 'face' was galling for the Chinese leadership. Sun Yat Sen, for example, could not reconcile himself to the loss of Mongolia. In 1923, while negotiating for Soviet assistance, Sun Yat Sen extracted a statement from the Soviet representative that 'it is not, and never has been, the intention or the objective of the present Russian government to carry out imperialistic policies in Outer Mongolia, or to work for Outer Mongolian independence from China' (Hyer 2009: 259).

Why did China agree to grant "autonomy"? After all, China initially protested bitterly at the Mongol declaration of independence, disputing Mongolia's right to secede, the Mongol's choice of title for the Bogd Khan (this issue stopped negotiations at one point), and the Mongol's choice of a new calendar. Border issues also caused bitter disputes. However, Batsaikhan notes China was also under pressure from Japan, which had presented China with "twenty-one demands", including laying claim to the Chinese province of Shandong, and had sent troops to China in pursuit of this claim (Batsaikhan 2016b: 83). China itself was also in turmoil, with an impoverished central government in collapse as warlords emerged throughout China. Perhaps the Chinese side did not want to face multi-faceted threats at this delicate time, and resolved to settle the Mongolian question peacefully. Later, Chinese leaders took the same attitude. Chiang Kai-shek was extremely reluctant to accept Mongolia's independence. Hyer noted Mongolian independence was grudgingly accepted by Chiang Kai-shek, because Stalin demanded it at the Yalta conference in 1945 with

the acquiescence of the United States and Great Britain (Hyer 2009: 261). In later years, Mao Tse Tung, who had considered establishing a base in Mongolia in the late 1930s to better link with Russia, also regarded Mongolia as unfinished business. In the 1930s Mao supported the future reintegration of Outer Mongolia into China. Later comments to Stalin and Khrushchev in the 1950s also reflected his earlier views (Her 1997: 68).

## **Mongolia 1919 to 1924**

Many authors have reported the events that took place in Mongolia between 1919 and 1924. However, many histories have an ideological basis. Hence the course of events and the factors that led to these events can be somewhat obscure, depending on the perspective that particular authors seek to present. Morozova (2009) emphasised this concern, while Luzianin suggested “one cannot help noticing a somewhat embroidered and formalized assessment of the key events of the period that recurred in papers written over the 1960s to 1980s” (Luzianin 1996: 1).

The presentation of ideologically based rather than historically accurate information persisted throughout the socialist period.<sup>7</sup> For example, in 1968 Evans was derisory about recent writings of Western authors such as Murphy, Rupen, Ballis and Ginsburg, but much more generous in his remarks about contemporary Soviet authors focusing on Mongolia such as Matveyeva, Roshchin and Mayskiy (who focused on presenting the good things about Mongolia’s economic development under socialism) and Seryys (Evans 1968: 27, 28).

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<sup>7</sup> Morozova suggested that: “When confronted with the question on the causes of the dismantling of socialism in their country, Mongolian intellectuals tend to prefer to imagine the Mongols of the MPR as victims, active or passive. In their interpretations socialism is sometimes associated with repressions of the 1930–40s and is believed to have been a result of the Kremlin’s pressure (Morozova: 2014: 50).

In bald terms, the history of this period might be described in the following way. China reluctantly recognized Mongolia's autonomy under duress from Imperial Russia (but not Mongolia's independence) in 1915. However, the Great War from 1914-1918 and the 1917 Russian Bolshevik revolution, together with the subsequent Civil War in Russia between Soviet forces (the Reds) and Imperialist forces (the Whites), diverted Russian attention to domestic issues. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Chinese troops invaded Mongolia and reoccupied Ulaanbaatar in 1919. Retreating White Russian (anti-communist) troops then expelled the Chinese from Ulaanbaatar in February 1921 and restored the Bogd Khan as Mongolia's leader.

After the success of the Red Army against the Whites in Siberia, Mongolian nationalists requested Soviet help. Soviet and Mongolian forces, the latter led by Sukhbaatar, recaptured Ulaanbaatar just five months after the Whites had invaded. Mongolia's theocratic leader, the Bogd Khan or Living Buddha, remained as nominal head of the Mongolian Government. However, many Mongols, inspired by events in Russia, became Communists. The Mongolian People's Revolution Party took over the nascent Mongolia government, and in 1924 declared Mongolia the world's second communist country.

**Figure 4.2: Sukhbaatar, sometimes remembered as Mongolia's Lenin**



Source: <https://alchetron.com/Damdin-S%C3%BCkhbaatar-2351118-W>, downloaded 2 September 2016

*The Mongols could not avoid being involved in and subordinated by events in China except by leaning against the other wall of the compartment in which they lived – which meant they had to adjust themselves so closely not only to Russia but events in Russia (Lattimore 1962: 272).*

However, while this description is essentially factually correct, the underlying nuances and motivations for various groups' behaviours were far from simple and still have resonance in contemporary Mongolia a century later. Issues for consideration from a Mongolian perspective include: the role and motivations of the Bogd Khan and the Buddhist movement over this period; the motivations and actions of Mongolia's nobility; and the roles of leading commoners (many of whom became leading members of the Mongolian Communist Party). Such a bald description also fails to adequately explain Russian and Chinese motivations.



## **The role of the Bogd Khan and the Buddhist movement**

Long term Qing policy to Mongolia included weakening Mongol aggressiveness by promoting Buddhism, and keeping Mongolia isolated and backward. This policy was premised on the belief that Mongol adoption of Buddhism, particularly the core Buddhist belief in non-violence, would help tame the unruly Mongols.

This policy was to prove very successful. Lattimore commented that all Tsarist Russian, Western, and Chinese travellers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries described Mongolian Lamaism as “ignorant, decayed, stagnant, superstitious and economically parasitical...” (Lattimore 1962: 5). Some estimates indicate that, around 1900, some forty per cent of the male Mongol population were monks, and that up to 200,000 people were under the control of the Buddhist movement. The monks lived in over 700 monasteries throughout Outer Mongolia, and the Buddhist movement was economically powerful. The Buddhists also controlled education, with the result that most Mongols were illiterate. Hence, the Bogd Khan, the Buddhist leader in Mongolia had enormous religious, economic and political influence.

Nonetheless, the choice of the Tibetan Bogd Khan as Mongolia’s King, rather than a Mongol noble, was noteworthy. The Mongolian nobles clearly failed to agree on a candidate from their own ranks, and probably supported the Bogd Khan as a compromise despite concerns about his behaviour (the Bogd Khan had significant notoriety, reflecting his dissolute lifestyle and heavy drinking (Batsaikhan 2016a: 69)<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, there was

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<sup>8</sup> The Tusheet Khan Dashnyam, who was most closely related from among the four Khalkha Khans to the golden lineage of Chinggis Khan, could have been elevated as the Khaan of the Mongolian nation. But he “was not and his words, that he was the most senior among the khans of the Bogdo Chinggis lineage compared to the Jebtsundamba of Tibetan origin, were hardly heeded by anyone” (Ookhnoi 2008: 225).

a link to Chinggis Khaan. The Bogd Khan was regarded as a reincarnation of Zanabazar, a leading figure in the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, a descendent of Chinggis Khaan (Batsaikhan 2016: 69). Indeed, the Bogd Khan was revered by the Mongol masses. Thus he was considered to be “a more fitting symbol of Mongol unity than any Mongol noble descended from Chinggis Khan” (Tatsuo 2005: 350). The division of interests between Mongolia’s princes and commoners has been noted by several authors (see Bawden for example). Nordby noted the national unity policies that had prevailed between 1921 and 1924 gave way to a programme which promoted the interests of the poorer sections of the population and discriminated against those of princely birth or of high rank in the Buddhist movement (Nordby 1988: 5).

Indeed, it appears that some Mongol princes who played an important role over this period viewed developments more from the perspective of their own personal advantage than from the perspective of a greater Mongolian nation. The princes had much to lose. Under the Qing dynasty the princes had been given titles, privileges and salaries, including exemption from state taxes (Nordby 1988: 12). An independent future would not offer these benefits. As a result, the energies of the Bogd Khan and his circle of high lamas were spent in a power contest with the hereditary ruling princes. Reflecting these divisions, in 1919 Khalkha nobles renounced independence and attempted to return to Chinese rule as to better advance their self-interests (Howard-Gibbon 1971: 21). However, the Republican Chinese Government felt the 63 clauses in the proposed demission still gave the Mongols the very autonomy they seemed to be renouncing. (For a detailed discussion see Howard-Gibbon (1971), who gives valuable insights into Chinese government deliberations from translations of period Chinese documents).

The consequences were possibly not to the princely families’ liking. Instead of agreeing to the request, the Chinese invaded and dethroned the Bogd Khan, forcing him to swear allegiance to China. (This was a time of

considerable strife in Chinese politics, with several warlords threatening to overtake the Republican national government. It is questionable whether the leader of the invading Chinese forces was in fact reclaiming Outer Mongolia for the national government or intending to set up his own state in Mongolia). Chinese soldiers were to remain in command in Khuree until 1921.

Other groups in Mongolia were angry with the nobles' attempt to return to China, which possibly contributed to the establishment of a socialist party in Mongolia committed to self-rule. At first, the main motivation driving this last group, many of whom were of humble birth, appears to have been the loss of Mongolia's autonomy in 1919, which greatly stimulated Mongol nationalism. As discussed by many authors (see, for example Baabar and Kaplonski (1999), Bawden (1968), Ewing (1978a), (1978b)) two nationalist groups emerged: the 'Russian Consular Hill group' headed by Bodo, which included Chagdarjav, Jamyan, Losol, and Choibalsan and the 'Dzüün Khüriye (East Urga) group' headed by the former Bogdo Khan government official, Danzan, which also included Dogsom and Sühbaatar, the latter apparently being a very poor man. Sühbaatar, stylised by Lattimore as the Sun Yat Sen of revolution in Mongolia, was a leading figure in the establishment of socialism in Mongolia, before he died in mysterious circumstances in 1923, the year before Mongolia declared itself a socialist republic (Lattimore 1955: 3).<sup>9</sup> Sühbaatar's nationalistic and leftward leanings may have been stimulated by military training in Czarist Russia, and barrack room conversations about political issues during the Russian revolution of 1917 (Lattimore 1962: 280).

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<sup>9</sup> Although some historians downgrade Sühbaatar's role in the establishing the socialist republic, Bawden suggests that Sühbaatar was the leader of the revolution, evidenced by his leadership of the Mongol army, his role in the overthrow of rival Bodo, in ordering the elimination of the lama Dambijantsan who led a separatist movement in western Mongolia, in beginning reform of Mongolia's justice system by banning imprisonment in small coffin like chests, and in establishing medical services for the army. Bawden suggested these developments reflected "the practical drive of Sukebator" (Bawden 1968: 257).

**Figure 4.3: Sukhbaatar and Choibalsan**

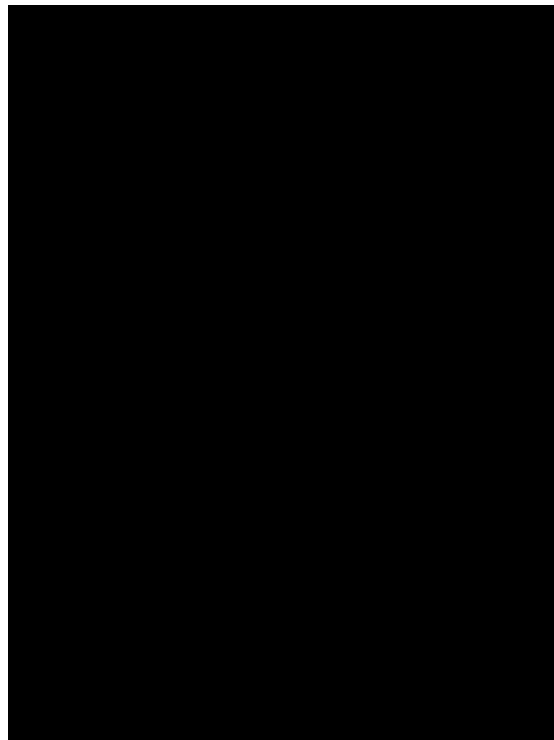
Source: Unknown

Indeed, men of common birth were to take a key role in this upsurge of nationalism. It is unclear whether this was motivated by the desire to achieve freedom from China, or there was some taste for communist style rebellion in Mongolia. Article 35 of the constitution of the MPP later gave little doubt that class struggle, as well as struggles against religion, were to be key components of MPP policy. Wealth distribution in pre-revolutionary Mongolia was firmly pro-noble. Lattimore also noted land deals in were “frequently carried out by the nobility and the heads of rich monasteries, who got out of the ‘squeeze’ with money for themselves at the expense of the rest of the Mongols” (Lattimore 1962: 300). Sanders noted Sambuu’s remarks that half of the cattle, the country’s main wealth, were owned by secular and church lords, making up only 7.6 per cent of the population, with serfdom persisting until the people’s revolution (Sanders 1977: 83).

By this time civil war was raging in Russia between communists (Reds) and forces backing the ill-fated Czar (Whites). One group of Whites, under the leadership of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg (sometimes described as the Mad Baron), invaded Mongolia, chased out the Chinese and restored the Bogd Khan to his throne. However, the Mongols were quickly discovered Ungern-Sternberg was vicious, sadistic, brutal and pitiless (Evola 2011: 2).

The Mongol socialists, led by Sukhbaatar, were quick to appeal to Soviet Russia for help to remove this bloody tyrant. Sukhbaatar commented ‘we are hearing news of the revolution which has broken out in Russia... we need to see if this can be of help to our Mongol nation’ (Lattimore 1962: 285). First, the Russians appealed to China to deal with the Mad Baron, but the Chinese, themselves in political tumult, failed to act. The new Soviet government then decided to assist the socialists to drive the Mad Baron from Mongolia. This was not philanthropy. The Soviets understood the Mad Baron could easily strike at Russian Central Asia from his Mongolian stronghold, and this potential threat could not be tolerated. In turn, with encouragement by Sukhbaatar, the Soviet and Mongol forces drove the Chinese out of Mongolia.

**Figure 4.4: Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg**



Source: [http://kaiserreich.wikia.com/wiki/Roman\\_von\\_Ungern-Sternberg](http://kaiserreich.wikia.com/wiki/Roman_von_Ungern-Sternberg)

Campi notes Lattimore’s comment in Lattimore’s 1933 report to the U.S. delegation in Beijing that “The Bolshevik intervention came as a deliverance. Soviet Russia did not need to conquer Outer Mongolia; it had

only to organize a people who were already well disposed in its favor” (Campi 2009: 69). A bald description of events in Mongolia from 1919 to 1924 would also fail to adequately explain the motivations behind Russian and Chinese actions at this critical time. Ewing concluded few events have been more misunderstood by Western scholars than Russia-China border disputes, including with respect to Mongolia (Ewing 1980: 399).

The success of the Russian revolution was critical for Mongolia in gaining support from Russia. Imperial Russia was badly beaten by the Japanese in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war, and resulting political protest against the war in St Petersburg was brutally suppressed, both of which caused severe damage to the Tsar’s standing. As a result, Imperial Russia stepped back from Far Eastern expansion. In the period to 1911, when Mongolia first declared independence, Imperial Russia was apparently seeking to avoid confrontation with Eastern powers (Nakami 2005: 351).

Following the Russian revolution of 1917, Russia’s attitude changed somewhat, because the White Army led by the Mad Baron was a significant threat to Soviet Russia. Later the Soviet army, acting in concert with Mongolia’s military leader Sukhbaatar, was to drive the remaining Chinese troops from Mongolia. Soviet troops then remained in Mongolia, underpinning Mongolia’s claims of autonomy from China. Key Bolshevik leaders in East Asia, Smirnov and Sumackij, with Lenin’s support, also apparently played a key role in assisting the fledgling Mongol communist party (Sablin 2016: 4).

Possibly the Soviets also desired Mongolia as a buffer zone against any future Chinese aggression (for example, see Laruelle (2008), Koplanski (2008), and Bawden (1968)). Other authors believed the Soviets saw publicity advantages in this self-declaration of socialism by another country. Such a country also gave the potential for important support in

international forums. Sablin also contended that the Mongolian socialist republic, together with a separate state, Tannu-Tuva, established by Soviet Russia in the Buriat homelands, were seen by Comintern as an experimental model for developing new socialist states (Sablin 2016: 1).

In the period from 1919 to 1924 the Chinese did not change their views. The Chinese still desired to reacquire Mongolia. However, they lacked the unity and military capacity to do so. The early 1920s saw the rise of many warlords in competition with the Sun Yat Sen's Republican government, while the latter 1920s saw the split between Chang Kai Shek's National Party and the Communist party led by Mao Tse Tung. The need for internal focus meant that Chinese interests with respect to Mongolia could not be advanced.

Some idea of the extent of political turmoil in China over the late 1910s to 1920s can be gauged from the succession of governments and political movements over this period, including Yuan Shikai's Presidency 1912-16, the period of the warlords 1916-19, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, followed by the emergence of Sun Yat-Sen and Guomindang over 1920-24, and the May 30th Movement of 1925-26. Of course, as noted above, in the late 1920s there was also a bloody split between the Guomindang, (by then led by Chang Kai Shek following Sun Yat Sen's death) and the Communists led by Mao Tse Tung (for a more detailed account of Chinese politics over this period see Beck (2007)).

China's political focus was therefore overwhelmingly domestic over this period. In addition, China's political difficulties also led to economic difficulties and China's treasury became impoverished, limiting the funds available for military expenditure. Hence, China had neither the military or financial resources to ward off the Russian troops stationed in Mongolia in the early 1920s and impose its will. The Japanese threat was also ever

present, with Japan clearly coveting a slice of Chinese territory. Soviet support for Mongolia meant China could be ignored (Kirby 1997: 438).

## **Mongolia 1924 to World War II**

The period from 1924 until World War II became a dark era in Mongolia's history. Only one political party was permitted in the MPR (the MPRP's Third Congress, held in 1924, was told that no other party was allowed (Sanders 1977: 53)). Mongols were to discover that the Soviet yoke, the price for autonomy from the Chinese, was heavy. As noted by Nordby, "from 1927 the Comintern ordered stricter measures of class discrimination, harsher religious policies and a more rapid construction of state capitalism" (Nordby 1988: 2). Indeed, the Soviets considered many elements of Mongolian culture as inappropriate to the new communist society. They were "symbols of the old social order, and subsequently obstacles to its complete elimination" (Delaplace 2006: 41).

As a result, many of the MPRP's early 1920s leaders were not to survive until the outbreak of World War II. In the course of the Third Congress of the Nationalist Party in 1924 Danzan, a close ally of Sukhbaatar, the President of the Congress and Commander in Chief of the Mongol Army was arrested, convicted on charges of "economic counter revolution" and summarily executed (Lattimore 1962: 289, 290). All too often a Prime Minister summoned to Moscow was to have a one way trip. Like the simultaneous purges in the USSR, the violence snared many top leaders, including former Prime Ministers Genden (1892 or 1895 - 1937) and Amar (1886 - 1939). Genden, who apparently sought to protect lamas and monasteries, was stripped of his positions in Mongolia in 1936, and then executed in the USSR in 1937 (Rossabi 2011: 3).



**Figure 4.5: Prime Minister Genden, executed in 1937**



Source: Unknown

Major attacks on the Buddhist movement and the ‘feudals’ also commenced in the late 1920s. Baabar and Kaplonski (1999) noted that both Lenin and Stalin had a strong antipathy to religion, antipathy which was manifested through genocide in Mongolia. The first attack on the Buddhist movement took place in the late 1920s. The attack aimed to break the economic power of the Buddhist movement. Punitive taxes were imposed on monasteries and most livestock was expropriated and handed over to newly created communes. Ordinary lamas were forcibly converted into laymen and young men under eighteen were prohibited from becoming monks. Batbayar reports that the number of monks was reduced from about 100,000 to 75,000 during 1930–31 (Batbayar 2005: 358).

The ‘feudals’ also came under attack (included ruling and non-ruling nobles, officials under the old regime, and Buddhist priests including the Living Buddhas). Batbayar suggested property worth 5.2 million *tögrögs* (the Mongolian national currency) was confiscated from 729 of the 920 ‘feudals’. This was followed by a second stage of expropriation in 1930–2,

when another 4.5 million *tögrögs*' worth of property was confiscated from 825 'feudals.'<sup>10</sup>

The economic consequences were disastrous. Possibly Mongolia lost one third of its livestock in this period. Some owners killed their stock to avoid its expropriation by the State, while poor management also led to severe stock losses. This was to have a sad sequel. Civil war broke out in 1931-32 in protest against social and economic reform and property expropriation. Mongolia's leaders initially attempted to address the revolt through dialogue. When this failed, the Government called in the Mongolian army, complete with tanks. The revolt was brutally suppressed. This was a foretaste of the purges of the latter 1930s.

On the other hand, the period from 1924 to 1940 saw social reform: in 1924 Mongolia was still a very underdeveloped country with low levels of literacy, a narrowly based economy with extreme reliance on agriculture, with poor health standards and low life expectancy. Policies based on those of Soviet Russia, Mongolia's sometimes benign master, led to important improvements in many areas. Nordby noted this was "the period when the shape and character of the present Mongolian People's Republic came into being. New forms and methods of government were instituted." The economy was also modernised, literacy became a priority, and western-style schools were opened. New guidelines emerged to challenge Tibetan Buddhism (Nordby 1988: 7).

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<sup>10</sup> During the Manchu period, Mongolian society included ruling and non-ruling princes, *ards* or commoners and Buddhist monks or lamas who might be of princely or common birth. Some *ards* called *khamjilga* paid no state taxes, but were tied in service to the ruling princes as domestic servants and cared for the herds of their wealthy masters. Others, the so-called free *ards*, paid the taxes the princes levied on the emperor's behalf. Free *ards* had also to perform various types of corvee services called *alba*, including provision of horses to maintain a state postal relay service (*ortoo*), border guard duty (*kharuul*) and other military services and periods of duty in the seal office (*tamga*) of the local administration (Nordby 1988: 13).

Rossabi also identified a number of benefits arising from Russian influence, especially in terms of improvements in the availability and standard of education available to Mongols, the majority of whom were illiterate pre-socialism. The Russians helped found the first Mongolian university, and the best Mongolian students often pursued graduate studies in Soviet universities and academies. Russian was the second language taught in the schools. In the 1940s, the MPRP, under Soviet pressure, also replaced the old Uyghur script with the Cyrillic alphabet (Rossabi 2009: 236).

Despite these social improvements, in the late 1930s Mongolia experienced violent purges. Some authors, including Baabar and Maximick, argued that the purges largely occurred at the behest of Soviet Russia, with the close involvement of then Russian dictator Stalin. Batbayar noted that from 1928 Comintern had been pushing Mongolia's younger leaders into a leftist experiment (Batbayar 1999: 1). Sambuu, (a leading Mongolian politician and later head of the MPRP presidium) also highlighted the role of the Comintern in planning Mongol government policy against the Buddhist movement (Bawden 1968: 297). Baabar argued that both Lenin and Stalin sought to destroy organised religion. A 1984 United States Department of State report on Mongolia's boundaries concluded that after 1921, the USSR "rarely bothered to disguise its role as Mongolia's suzerain. In 1924, any pretence to unfettered independence was dropped, with the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic" (US Department of State 1984: 5).

For his part, Rossabi describes what might almost be characterized as fashion: events in Soviet Russia, he noted, were soon mimicked in Mongolia. He drew a parallel between Soviet purges of the late 1930s and those in Mongolia: by this reasoning, if there was a purge in Russia, this presented a template for the actions of local leaders in Mongolia (Rossabi 2009: 233).

Certainly, as argued by Kaplonski, the purges that took place in Soviet Russia implied a model in terms of method. Soviet show trials, the models for the Mongolian trials, apparently had a genealogy stretching back through Tsarist times to medieval European morality plays, a form of theatre intended to teach moral lessons (Kaplonski 2008: 11). As in Russia, Mongolia's show trials occurred in highly public venues. In Mongolia's case, the show trial theatre was the parliament building. Kaplonski suggested this was a blurring of the boundaries between theatre, law, and politics. The trials played to a packed house, and speakers were also placed outside to bring the trials to assist those unfortunate enough to miss a ringside seat.

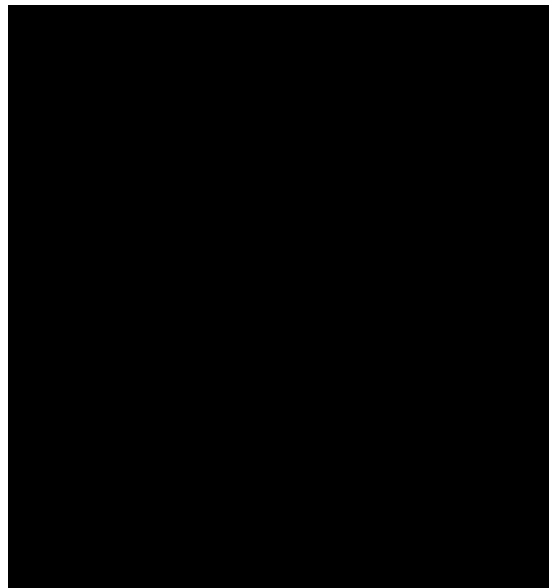
Maximick believed there was also strong anti-Mongol sentiment in Stalin's Russia, a reflection of Russia's bad memories of its period under Mongolian rule. Hence, Stalin's anti-Mongolian campaign in the 1930s had a strong focus on the descendants of Chinggis Khaan, because Stalin viewed the glorification of Chinggis Khaan as a threat to his own authority. As a result entire families thought to be Chinggis Khan's descendants were shot, and thousands more were exiled to the gulags (Maximick 2012: 22). Another focus of the purges was the destruction of religious objects, of the torching of ancient libraries and attacks on linguists, historians and archaeologists. It was believed that the Chinggis Khaan's historic spirit banner, or standard, was stolen and destroyed (Maximick 2012: 22).

Batbayar concluded that the 1932 revolt had led Stalin to become more closely involved in Mongolian affairs, because Stalin was dissatisfied with the leadership of then Mongolian Prime Minister Genden. In meetings in November 1934 and December 1935, Stalin urged the leaders of the MPRP to intensify their anti-religious campaign. Stalin maintained that the MPRP and the Buddhist movement could not co-exist in Mongolia. Genden, judged as having failed to meet Stalin's instructions, was purged in 1936. Following this, Russian advisers were dispatched to Mongolia to

mastermind show trials premised on putative links between leading links with the Japanese (Batbayar concluded that such links were entirely fictitious).

Possibly the purges were staged, at least in part, to shore up the authority of Mongolia' Socialist Government (Kaplonski 2008: 2). The trials were used to highlight alleged complicity between Genden, and one of Mongolia's top religious figures, the Jongzin Qambu. According to Kaplonski, Prime Minister Genden was alleged to have suggested that Mongolia re-align itself with Japan rather than Russia, and re-establishing imperial government by enthroning the 9th Bogda (Kaplonski (2008)).

**Figure 4.6: Prime Minister Choibalsan, Mongolia's Stalin**



Source: Unknown, downloaded 2 September 2016, [https://www.google.com.au/search?q=marshal+choibalsan&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjAawsjL94fWAhVHgLwKHTmbCIMQ\\_AUICigB&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=vewh3gPPPJ6iYM:](https://www.google.com.au/search?q=marshal+choibalsan&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjAawsjL94fWAhVHgLwKHTmbCIMQ_AUICigB&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=vewh3gPPPJ6iYM:)

The Jongzin Qambu, a Buddhist leader, was put on trial in 1937 and executed very shortly thereafter. This trial provided a framework for later show trials (Kaplonski 2008: 1). The results were to be devastating for Mongolia. The show trials foreshadowed wholesale murder of the lamas,

the nobility and Mongolia's intelligentsia in 1938. Official figures showed that 35,800 people suffered political repression, including 16,700 middle lamas, 1,516 aristocrats, 641 herdsman, 206 soldiers and 400 unemployed people (Naranatuya 1998: 1). At the end of 1939, Choibalsan noted in his diary that 56,938 persons (including 17,335 lamas) had been arrested between 1937 and November 1939, and 20,396 of them were executed (Szalontai 2003: 125). Monasteries, Buddhist literature and religious objects were also destroyed (Kollmar-Paulenz 2003: 1).

In addition to the loss of life and cultural vandalism, the attack on the Buddhist movement through the 1920s and 1930s also had adverse economic effects. Bawden notes many old monastery related occupations in Mongolia disappeared. In its heyday the lamaist monasteries had embraced up to half the male population of Mongolia (Bawden 1969: 17). Expropriation of land and other property from the Mongol nobility ('feudals') and the Buddhist movement added to Mongolia's economic dislocation over this period (Baabar and Kaplonski 1999: 305). Mongolia's vast animal herds from Buddhist sources were placed in public ownership, under the management of communes. Following the Soviet model the Government also experimented with collectivization in the 1920s. The results were disastrous. By early 1932, the Mongols were estimated to have lost 8 million head of livestock, a third of the total (Batbayar 2005: 357).

The purges thankfully drew to a close. World War II erupted, which was to have a powerful influence on Mongolia. It was also to provide the opportunity for Mongolia to become legally independent from China.

## **Mongolia becomes independent in 1946**

The 1945 Yalta conference on ‘the division of the spoils’ of Europe and Asia post World War II between the Allied partners was to have great implications for Mongolia. At this conference the Soviet Union, Britain and the Americans, by then confident of victory, decided to support Mongolia’s independence, despite strong opposition from the Chinese delegation, who still regarded Mongolia as coming within China. The creation of the United Nations in the wake of World War II was also to provide an important vehicle for Mongolia to establish its claim to independence on the world stage.

While Mongolia was nominally independent from 1911, the reality was somewhat different. The re-announcement of Mongolia’s independence in 1921, and the promulgation of a socialist republic in 1924 also gave limited satisfaction to the Mongols, as only two countries, the Soviet Union and Tanna Tuva (the latter was absorbed by the Soviet Union in 1944) recognized Mongolia as independent (Tumurjav 2005: 220). Mongolia’s more widely recognized declaration of independence in 1946 was a huge step forward.

Under the Yalta agreement the Soviet Union agreed that it would participate in the Pacific War (with Mongol assistance) after Germany was defeated, in exchange for recognition of several key Soviet gains in the Far East, including access to the naval base at Port Arthur, ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railroad (built by the Russians but later sold to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo), and a “status quo” for Mongolia. However, Mongolia’s boundaries were to remain in dispute for many years. There were also to be many instances when Chinese leaders indicated China’s strong desire to reclaim Mongolia. Hillam concluded Mongolia’s position was resolved only when it became a member of the United Nations

in 1961 (Hillam 1966: 97). Nonetheless, this was to take quite some time. Mongolia's first application to join the United Nations in 1946 was vetoed by the United States on the grounds that Mongolia was not in fact truly independent of the USSR (Lattimore 1945: 1).

China insisted that the boundaries between China and Mongolia be based on Chinese maps (Radchenko 2012: 19). The boundary issue was to remain unresolved for many years. It was not until 16 December 1964 that a boundary treaty was signed between China and Mongolia (Hyer 2015: 67). It took even longer to agree an exact boundary. This issue was not resolved until 2005 when a final agreement on the exact demarcation of the border was reached (Shen 2012: 1).

In the lead up to Mongolia's declaration of independence in 1946, Mongolia's Premier, Choibalsan, made no secret of his desire to create a pan-Mongol state. Choibalsan's vision of a pan-Mongol state included reclaiming parts of Siberia, which had traditionally been Mongol lands but now lay in Russia, as well as parts of Manchuria (where there was a significant Mongol population) and of course Inner Mongolia, the traditional heartland of the Mongol state (Radchenko 2015: 1). Japan's defeat would give Mongolia the chance to reclaim traditional Mongol lands in both Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.

For this broader vision to be realized, Stalin's support was essential. However, Wolff contended Stalin's apparent support for the pan-Mongolia envisaged by Choibalsan and other Mongol leaders was intended to place pressure on the Chinese Nationalist Government. In reality, Stalin did not support the creation of a new large Pan-Mongol state. Wolff suggested Stalin allowed the Mongols to propagandize Pan-Mongolian unity to scare Chiang Kai-shek into acknowledging Outer Mongolian "independence" and



the Soviet military presence in Manchuria, along the railway and in the ports of Dalian and Port Arthur (Wolff 2012: 5).

The Soviet Union's assistance to Mongolia may also have reflected a measure of gratitude towards its long term ally and supporter. After all, Mongolia, the second communist country in the world, provided significant troops and materiel to support Russia during World War II,<sup>11</sup> which included huge quantities of horses and sheepskins, the latter vital in Russia's winter defence of Stalingrad. Moreover, Mongol troops fought on all Soviet battle fronts, including the hugely successful Manchurian campaign. Mongolia also supported the Russian regime by declaring war against Japan in support of Russia the day after Russia declared war against Japan. Post war, an independent Mongolia may also have been seen as a useful ally in world councils such as the then nascent United Nations.

Moreover, as was to be demonstrated during the Cold War, and during the Sino-Soviet split, Russia still had de facto control of Mongolia, even if the de jure control was removed from China and given to Mongolia. An independent Mongolia, under de facto Soviet control, still gave Russia a buffer zone to counter Chinese ambitions. In discussions with Chinese officials, Stalin also apparently raised the need for Russia to have a buffer zone against any future Japanese aggression (Radchenko 2015:1).

The United States agreed to an extension of the 'status quo' in Mongolia in a secret treaty at Yalta (strangely, Britain, the pre-eminent Western power in the pre-war Far East, was not consulted about this agreement). The United States focus was to defeat Japan without further significant loss of

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<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to speculate about the long term effect of a battle between Russian forces, supported by Mongol troops, and Japanese forces in 1941, at the Mongolian border. Japan was then debating whether to strike north, against Russia via Siberia, or South. Japanese defeat in this battle may have influenced Japanese decision making. As noted by Hastings, Stalin was terrified by the prospect of simultaneous war against Germany and Japan (Hastings 2008: 4).

American lives. The invasions of both Saipan and Okinawa had resulted in heavy United States losses. The US was apprehensive about losses arising from an invasion of the Japanese home islands.

The United States therefore sought Russian involvement in the war against Japan through an invasion of Manchuko, the Japanese puppet state which controlled both Manchuria and Inner Mongolia (the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuko was quite large). The United States was worried that, without a Russian offensive in Manchuko, this large force might be deployed in defence of the Japanese home islands. In return for United States concessions at Yalta and in preceding conferences, Russia agreed to declare war against Japan as soon as Germany surrendered in Europe. The Russian invasion of Manchuko, supported by large numbers of Mongolian troops, resulted in heavy Japanese losses, thereby removing the potential threat to United States forces from this quarter. (The much touted Japanese army in Manchuko, the Kwantung army, was actually much weaker than the Americans believed to be the case).<sup>12</sup>

Although China participated at the Yalta conference under the guise of being a great Power, this was something of a sham. China was poor, had been ravaged by its war with the Japanese, dating from the early 1930s, and was in the midst of a savage civil war between Nationalist and Communist forces. As explained by Wolff, China, weakened by civil war, was in no position to take advantage of the opportunities, even though it was on the winning side (Wolff 2012: 3).

Even so, the Nationalist and Communist leaders in China strongly opposed the loss of Mongolia. Chang Kai Shek was forced to the negotiating table

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<sup>12</sup> Hastings suggests the Kwantung Army lost its best units to other fronts. The Russians had 3,704 tanks and 1,852 self-propelled guns, and enjoyed a paper superiority of two to one in manpower, five to one in tanks and artillery and two to one in aircraft (Hastings 2008: 487).

by the wily Stalin. China caved in because it feared potentially greater losses to the Soviets in respect to the Uigher and Turkish lands China claimed. Russia was interested in acquiring these lands and supported independence movements in those areas, so these potential losses could easily have become real rather than potential.

Reflecting these pressures, on July 9 1945, Chang Kai Shek, the Nationalist Chinese leader, renounced China's rights to Outer Mongolia. China demanded a referendum in Mongolia concerning this decision, and agreed to respect the outcome. The Mongols overwhelmingly voted for independence. China's de jure control of Mongolia was over. China, recognized as one of the world's great powers at Yalta, despite the dreadful poverty which pervaded much of China, meekly surrendered its claims to a land area equal to one third of post war China.

The Chinese Communists, triumphant in China in 1949, were very unhappy with this outcome, and were reluctant to acknowledge Mongolia's independence. This issue was apparently raised in a number of meetings between the Chinese Communist Government and the Russian government, including meetings in 1950 and 1954 when the Soviet government raised the issue. Apparently the MPRP and Russia, concerned about the PRC's ambitions in Mongolia, insisted on a Chinese declaration acknowledging Mongolian independence (Hyer 2009: 87).

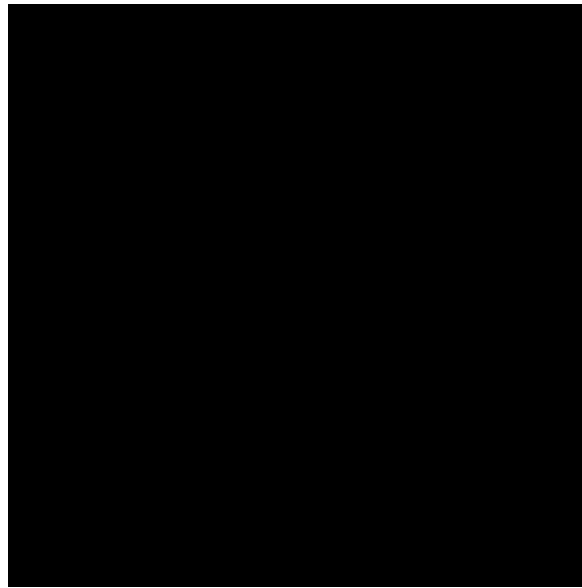
## **Developments post World War II**

### **Political developments**

Post World War II Mongolia continued to evolve as a socialist country, invariably following the Soviet model. By the 1970s Mongolia was closely integrated into the Soviet empire. Mongolia was essentially a Soviet

satellite, especially in political and economic terms. For most of this period Mongolia was led by Yumjaagiin Tsendenbal, complete with Russian wife, the Head of State and the leader of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party from 1952 to 1984 (Konagaya et al. 2012: 4). Tsendenbal succeeded Choibalsan, Mongolia's leader from the late 1930s. He was in turn succeeded by Jambyn Batmonkh, who continued as Mongolia's leader until the fall of socialism.

**Figure 4.8: Tsendenbal, Mongolia's President 1952 to 1984**



Source: Unknown, downloaded 2 September 2017

The Soviet Union exercised close control over Mongolian Government policy. Russian political advisers became the norm across the Mongolian bureaucracy. As well as Russian advisers and military personnel, Mongolia had a small population of ethnic Russians, descendants of Russian migrants to Mongolia, who had generally fled Russia to escape political repression. There were also significant numbers of Russian tourists to Mongolia.

While estimates of the number of Russians living in Mongolia vary, the numbers were substantial considered against Mongolia's relatively small population. Mikhalev, for example, noted that while in 1960 there were

502 Russian workers, by 1965 there were 3,379 people, and in the late 1980s there were up to 50,000 Russians workers living in Mongolia (Mikhalev 2013: 183). Mikhalev also noted half a million Soviet soldiers served in Mongolia over the socialist period. Other estimates indicated there may have been up to 100-200,000 Soviet troops stationed in Mongolia at the height of the Sino-Soviet confrontations from the 1960s when a number of deadly border confrontations occurred. The result, according to Mikhalev was that:

*...in Ulan Bator, in fact there were two “parallel realities.” One reality was actually Mongolian city, with people in European clothes and people in traditional Mongolian dress in its streets, the other reality was the territory of residence of Soviet experts (Mikhalev 2013: 185).*

As was the case in the Soviet Union, Mongolia remained a one party state until *perestroika* (political and economic reform) and *glasnost* (more open government) swept across the horizon, harbingers of the forthcoming collapse of socialism in both Russia and Mongolia. The influence of the MPRP was felt throughout Mongolian society. In 1966 the MPRP had 48,570 members. The related youth movement, the *Rovsomols* had 77,000 members. Considered together, MPRP and *Rovsomols* members represented a significant part of Mongolia’s then tiny population (circa 1.1 million) (Rupen 1967: 16). Soviet foreign policy was mirrored in Mongolia. Mongolia’s status as a Russian colony was emphasized by the heavy Soviet military presence in Mongolia from the 1950s until 1990. Soviet control over Mongolia increased after the Sino Soviet split, after which the USSR was to exert stronger controls with respect to military, economic and political policies (Smith 1970: 25).

Political dissent was not tolerated and carried heavy risks. Although Tsendenbal seemingly shied away from executing his opponents, he was not

averse to jailing or exiling them, and such punishments were generally accompanied by heavy handed treatment of victim's families. Prominent Mongol leaders who were purged included Lookhuuz and Nyambu, the former both jailed for six years and exiled, the latter exiled (for a more detailed account see Rossabi (2011)). Their families were also to suffer in many ways, such as public shaming and reduced educational opportunities).

Similarly, Jalan-Aajav, then one of Mongolia's most prominent lawyers, Tsedenbal's adviser on legal issues, was purged in the early 1980s. The Politburo and the government exiled him and his wife to his native *aimag* of Zavkan. His daughter, who had graduated first in her class in law school, was also fired from her Professorship of Law at the National Mongolian University. She had nothing to do with his case, and was merely punished as part of guilt by association (Konagaya et al. 2012: 17).

Political control was facilitated by government propaganda. News content was directed to promoting the Government and key Government messages. The key newspapers were state controlled. As explained by Patnaik, leading papers like *Uria* [The Call], *Nilslenlin* [New Capital Newspaper] and *Unen* [Truth] were the organs of either the government or the ruling People's Revolutionary Party. Mongols were news hungry and by the beginning of the 1980s, Mongolia had a widely circulated press. On average, each family took an average of five periodicals. The main topics discussed in the early years were revolutionary and labour heroism (1920s and 1930s). In the 1940s the press advocated patriotism and aroused people against fascism and militarism. Creative labour (1950s) and moral and ethical problems (1960s) were the subsequent focus (Patnaik 2005: 562).

Cultural programs were also used to promote socialism. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Cultural Campaigns in the Mongolian People's Republic, consisting of hygiene, health, literacy, and ideology goals, mobilized pastoral Mongolians and consolidated the authority of the socialist Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party to induce a new social order, way of living, and modern subjectivity (Marzluf 2016:1). Cultural events were also often used as a vehicle to present propaganda. For example, the secretary of the Party's central committee, D.Tömör-Ochir, complained at a meeting of provincial cultural officials in Ulaanbaatar in 1960 that Party organizations needed to be more vigilant about their cultural activities. "In order 'to eliminate the influence of the dark and undying parasites on naïve people,'" he said, "We must carry on a relentless program of propaganda in order to win the minds of these weak people and to divert their thinking into healthier and more realistic channels" (Marsh 2006: 296).

Further, the media was seen as an instrument in educating the nation. Romo-Murphy noted the press and other Mongolian communication media saw their key role as propagating Marxism-Leninism, and MPRP decisions (Romo-Murphy 2010: 81). Perhaps this control of media and its use to deliver socialist propaganda reached its zenith in respect to electronic media. In the socialist period Mongolia had one TV channel and one Radio station (Discover Mongolia 2015: 1). Content was directed towards support of government and party.

Although repression of religion in Mongolia reached its vicious peak in the late 1930s, repression continued throughout the socialist period. If monks attempted to conduct public religious services, they were routinely jailed or exiled. Repression of religion was a core element of the Mongolian communist party constitutions post 1924. Why was this a continuing imperative for socialist Mongolia? Demy considered that former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright summarized the issue well:

*'Religion counts'. This short declaration by former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright succinctly articulates the significant effect of religious values in today's national and international political environments. Why does it count? It does so, in part, because of the enormous influence that people of faith have on political processes including war, peace, conflict resolution, and humanitarian endeavours around the globe... (Demy 2007: 1).*

While the Buddhist movement was the principal target for repression, Dorj noted Shamanism was also repressed during the socialist period. Shamans were oppressed, jailed, and driven into hiding from 1930 until the end of the 1950's, although Shamanic rituals were still privately practiced in rural areas (Dorj (2012)). The state also strongly encouraged rational (rather than religious) thought. Hence, even though virtually all Mongolians were Buddhists or Shamans at the time of the socialist revolution in 1924, a substantial proportion of Mongols remain without religion in post-socialist Mongolia.

### **Economic development**

Economic policy in Mongolia also mimicked Russian economic policies. In particular, the Mongolian economy became a command economy along Soviet lines. Bruun et al. noted Mongolia's economic development strategy was 'virtually a blueprint' of that of the Soviet Union. As in the Soviet Union, the means of production were brought under state or collective ownership, the economy developed through central planning and there was an emphasis on the development of mining and heavy industry (Bruun et al. 1999: 10).



After World War II, the country modernized, using Soviet style five year economic plans as the blueprint. The First Five-Year Plan (1948–1953) was launched at the 11th Congress of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in 1948. The first Plan focused on industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. The Second Five-Year Plan (1953–1958) and the Three-Year Plan (1958–1960) strongly reaffirmed the objective of the collectivization of whole agricultural sectors (Spoorenberg 2015: 844).

Collectivization of the agriculture sector, Mongolia's main industry for most of the Soviet period, was a key feature of the command economy. Traditionally, Mongolia's pastoral industry had been based around nomadic herding of animals, using commonly held pastures. Mearns noted Mongolia's pastoral economy had three distinct historical periods: pre-collectivization (pre-1950s), collectivization (1950s-80s), and contemporary de-collectivisation post 1990 (Mearns 1996: 298).

To put this into context, as noted by Upton, writing in 2012, then recent estimates indicated that Mongolia had the largest remaining contiguous area of common grazing land in the world. Around 82 per cent of its 156 million hectares were classified as grasslands, these being central to the livelihood strategies of more than 35 per cent of the population (Upton 2012: 3). Hence, this industry is of immense significance to Mongolia, and each year, its success or failure is very important for Mongolia's national income.

The first attempt to collectivise Mongolia's livestock sector pre-World War Two was an abject failure. Mongolia's animal herd diminished by around one third between 1924 and the start of the Second World War. Post war, the policy proved more successful, but it was to take many years for the national herd to recover to pre 1930s levels. Later, subsidized agriculture

included the development of crop agriculture, improving universal food security (Markowitz 2013: 18). By contrast, collectivisation was more successful post World War II. Under the collective animal husbandry system used in Mongolia from the early 1950s, domestic animals were divided into “public animals” and “private animals”. The “public animals” belonging to animal husbandry cooperatives (herders received a salary to manage these animals) and the “private animals” were owned by individual herders (herder was the local name for a shepherd or cowboy) (although herders managed smaller numbers of their own animals (Mari: 53)). Private animals represented around twenty per cent of all animals in Mongolia in the mid 1980’s. The animals managed by herders under collectivization changed each year, but the herders managed their own animals for the animals’ lifetime. By 1959, 99 per cent of all households in Mongolia had joined collectives (Fernandez-Giminez 2006: 31).

There was also an emphasis on developing heavy industry in Mongolia. This reflected the Soviet model, but it was also intended to reduce Mongolia’s dependence on agriculture, which was at the mercy of Mongolia’s harsh climate (Lattimore, Granada TV documentary, 1976). This was also an important factor in delivering full employment, a key requirement of a socialist economy. Reflecting Soviet influence, Mongolia’s economy was developed to serve Russian needs. For example, Mongolian mines were developed to support Russian industry, especially in respect to finding and extracting minerals such as copper, molybdenum and uranium. Mongolia’s mining exports went largely to Russia. The pricing of such exports was controversial. Many in Mongolia considered the prices received from Russia were well below what would have been received in more open export markets. Notwithstanding the underlying structural issues and clear dependence on Soviet subsidies, Mongolia apparently experienced quite strong economic growth between 1970 and 1990, when Mongolia’s gross domestic product grew, on average, by 5.5 per cent a year, although growth fell significantly in the late 1980s (Denzinger and Gelb 1992: 5).

However, such figures are misleading, and mask the true levels of underlying economic activity. Aid from the Soviet Union was between 25 and 30 per cent of Mongolia's gross domestic product. Some estimates indicated trade with the Soviet bloc was more than 90 per cent of all imports and exports. As noted by Yano, post 1990 Mongolian products were therefore extremely uncompetitive in the global market and Mongolia was highly vulnerable to external shocks, especially the withdrawal of Russian subsidies following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Yano 2012: 24).

### **Positive aspects of Soviet influence**

Soviet Russia made many positive contributions to Mongolia. Mongolia received substantial subsidies from Russia. Phipps, for example, noted Moscow gave large amounts of aid to Mongolia, worth an estimated \$US800 million in 1989, the equivalent of \$US360 per person in a country where average annual income was then between \$US500 and \$US900 per year. A substantial part of these funds were directed towards improving education and health outcomes in Mongolia (Phipps 1990: 262).

Education, with Russian assistance and encouragement, became universal. Mongolia's literacy rate was very low before the Second World War. By contrast, in the 1950s and 1960s the literacy rate increased markedly. The number of schools increased across the country, and the university sector was established. As noted by Denzinger and Gelb:

*Great achievements were made in the social sectors. Mongolia achieved a 97 per cent rate of literacy, and a well-developed educational infrastructure (Denzinger and Gelb 1992: 5).*

Prior to the 1921 Revolution, education in Mongolia was provided in Lama monasteries and in one secular school, and only 1 per cent of the population was literate (UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia, 1971). In 1921, Soviet-style public education started, with one school and 40 pupils. The first Mongolian Constitution, adopted in 1924, gave workers and their children free and secular education, and foreshadowed closure of the Lama schools. In 1933, the first unified curriculum was introduced in Mongolia, based on the curriculum in Soviet schools. By the 1950s, the number of schools had increased to more than 400, enrolling around 60,000 pupils. During the Second Five-year Plan (1953-1957), the Mongolian Government achieved universal coverage for compulsory four-year education and decided to expand it to seven years (Yano 2012: 30, 31). Taken together, these initiatives represented a major transformation of the education opportunities available to the Mongolian people in a relatively short period of time.

This “cultural revolution” or Russification in Mongolia also led to the broad introduction of Russian language training at all levels of the Mongolian education system. By the end of the 1980s, around 90 per cent of the population could speak Russian at various levels. Some Russian Soviet schools were also established. Such schools and universities had the role of training Mongolia’s political elite (Mikhalev 2013: 179). Education at Russian schools, as elsewhere was free, and was considered as “rather prestigious.” Another opportunity also arose through the chance to attend school and/or university in Russia itself. Between 1922 and 1990 more than fifteen thousand Mongols received higher education in the USSR (Mikhalev 2013: 186). Rossabi’s biography of leading Mongolians Lookhuuz, Nyambu, and Damdin also emphasised the advantages of an education in Russia to career advancement. Rossabi commented:

*Like Lookhuuz and Nyambu, Damdin recognized that education and training in the USSR was essential for advancement in*

*Mongolia...Like most Mongolians who studied in the USSR, he was almost immediately granted a high office. From 1960-1968, he was Minister of Industry, and from 1968 to 1979, he became Minister of Light and Food Industry (Konagaya and Lkhagvasuren 2011: 26).*

The health of Mongolia's citizens also began to improve. Modern Soviet medical practices came to Mongolia, with the development of hospitals in city and country locations, and Soviet medicines were introduced, causing the influence of Shaman "medicine men" to wane. (However, Mongolian traditional medicines remained in use, and are still in use in modern Mongolia. Traditional medicines make an important contribution to healthcare, especially in country areas, where access to doctors is limited or the cost of conventional medicines is prohibitive for poor families).

Town planning was also introduced. The plan for Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city, was developed with Soviet assistance in the early 1950s. This was to have some perverse consequences. As explained by Demberel, when the current Ulaanbaatar city centre was built in the early 1950's, it was designed to accommodate a relatively small population (Demberel 2010: 15). Although future critics were to highlight the lack of vision of a larger future population, the 1950s planning was without precedent in Mongolia, and contributed significantly to the city's development.

However, population policy had a distinct Mongol flavour. Aware that Mongolia's then very small population had the potential to undermine aspirations of nationhood, the Mongolian government took a very pro population growth stance. Spoorenberg explained that:

*The very high fertility levels of the 1960s until the mid-1970s are understood as the result of the pro-natalist policies adopted by the*

*socialist government, consisting in generous benefits to families having children.* (Spoorenberg 2015: 842).

Mongolia's population quadrupled between 1918 and 2010, from around 650,000 to almost 2.65 million although population growth was uneven. During the first half of the twentieth century Mongolia experienced very low population growth. Between 1918 and 1956 the annual population growth rate reached 0.95 per cent at most. The first period of low population growth may have been linked to the political uncertainties of the 1920s, culminating in the purges of the late 1930s. Mongolia also experienced losses of soldiers during the Second World War. By contrast, in the more settled post war period, up to the late 1980s "unprecedented growth rates meant that the population doubled in less than 26 years." (Spoorenberg 2015: 845).

Social welfare provisions were also of a generous standard. First, there was full employment under socialism. Second, as in other socialist countries, social welfare was protected by an extensive system of subsidies and transfers. Denzinger and Gelb (1992) noted that by the end of the 1980s, pensions and allowances were received by some 800,000 persons out of Mongolia's then 2 million population. Sharp social dualism was therefore largely avoided, and living standards were broadly comparable in town and countryside (this is consistent with anecdotal evidence that income and wealth levels were largely comparable in Mongolia during the socialist period).

Social welfare was also addressed through price controls for many goods, especially basic household items such as bread, meat and petroleum products. It was a source of national pride that the price of bread was low, and remained unchanged for many years. Indeed, Mongolia had extensive price controls during the socialist period. Price controls were administered

by a single hierarchical structure and “Under this system, there was little actual movement in prices – a point of pride to Mongolians” (Murrell et al. 1992: 5).

On the other hand, personal mobility was closely controlled during socialism. There were strict controls on movement, both in terms of timing and location. From the early 1950s registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces was required by law. Later, people had to follow strict procedures in respect to internal migration. In particular, movement to Ulaanbaatar was strictly controlled, and if a herder wanted to move to the city he needed approval from the central government. The result, according to Williams, was that ‘the city (Ulaanbaatar) grew slowly but stably’ (Williams 2009: 8).

### **The seeds of dissent**

It is apparent that in the lead up to the Soviet collapse in 1990 the seeds of dissent had also taken root in Mongolia. Sometimes dissatisfaction may have reflected simple issues. For example, a lack of variety in foodstuffs and shortages of consumer goods contributed to dissatisfaction (Rossabi 2005: 15). More importantly, dissension in Mongolia was clearly influenced by *perestroika* (political and economic reform) and *glasnost* (more open and consultative government) in Russia under Mikhail Gorbachev’s leadership. Many Mongols studied in Russia in the 1980s and saw *perestroika* and *glasnost* at first hand. Huntington believed events in Eastern Europe also had a “snowball” effect on many countries, including Mongolia (Huntington 1991: 16). Indeed, Faber considered Mongolia was itself moving to *perestroika* in the late 1980s (Faber 1990).

In the late 1980s Mongolian leaders conducted their own form of *perestroika* through administrative and economic restructuring and introduction of *glasnost* in the form of tolerance for a free media without

communist party control, along with transparency in the political system. Bayantur noted *perestroika* in Mongolia “went through several stages: perception, implementation, and modification (adaptation)” (Bayantur 2008: 22). This interpretation of *perestroika* and *glasnost* was an attempt to reform from within, with the aim of retaining a socialist system. The leaders of student movements, whose roles in promoting reform are discussed below, had a rather different view of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, seeing a need for a change in governance paradigm rather than reform within the existing paradigm.

Hence, whether through government reforms or as a result of mass protest movements, Mongolia’s rapid transition to market democracy was not simply a response to or a copy of the events unfolding in neighbouring Russia. However, Soviet President Gorbachev’s tolerance for political dissent in his own country and his condemnation of the Chinese Government’s violent response to demonstrations in Tiananmen Square were important in a broader context. The success of dissenters in Moscow in protesting without personal harm may have been important in convincing Mongols that it would be safe to demonstrate without fear of reprisals in their country.

By the late 1980s there was also considerable disaffection among Mongols for Soviet socialism. In part, this reflected dissatisfaction that Russians living in Mongolia had a very privileged lifestyle. Indeed, Russians living in Mongolia were viewed as a separate and cosseted society. Rossabi notes, for example, that even in the early 1980s then Mongolian President Tsenenbal’s opponents argued that Soviet advisers did not listen to Mongolians, were paid high salaries by the Mongolian government, had extraordinarily privileged lives, and recommended policies that were not beneficial to Mongolia. Tsenenbal’s opponents also complained that the USSR sold poor quality goods at high prices to Mongolia while paying little for Mongolian products (Konagaya and Lkhagvasuren 2011: 21).



For example, Nyambuu, a leading figure in Mongolia's communist party before being purged and exiled by Communist party leader Tsedenbal in the early 1960s complained "Soviet advisers in Mongolia who had better housing, stores stocked with products unavailable to nearly all Mongolians, and higher salaries than Mongolians performing the same duties" (Konagaya and Lkhagvasuren 2011: 22).

National self-identity was also a cause for dissent. While many Mongolian intellectuals felt that rapid modernisation destroyed national traditions, the leadership actually considered much of Mongolia's cultural heritage an essentially retarding influence (Szalontai 2016: 161). Indeed, Shaw considered Mongolia's (1990) mass protests were united less by a desire for democracy or capitalism, and more by a sense of long-suppressed nationalism and resentment about lost culture (Shaw 2016: 1).

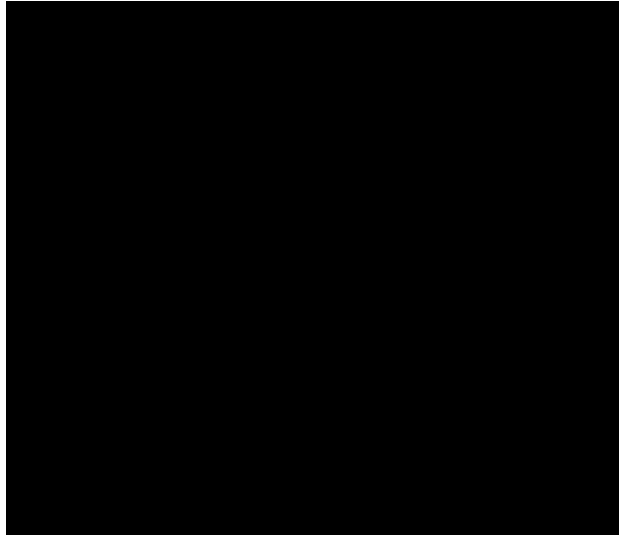
In addition, the late 1980s also saw some concerns arise *within* the Communist Government about the country's direction, for example, in respect to economic policy directions. The need for some policy reform was acknowledged in government, but critics saw the reforms which were attempted as slow and ill directed. The party leadership was apparently increasingly dissatisfied with some aspects of economic performance. According to Chuulunbat, the party leadership started to question the usefulness and efficiency of large loans provided by the Soviet Union and was concerned by Mongolia's fast-growing foreign debt. Chuulunbat suggested that:

*Although not openly anti-Soviet, some leaders raised the issue of inequitable trade and economic arrangements agreed with the Soviet Union and achieved some success in amending previous agreements (Chuluunbat 2013: 136).*

The late 1980s also saw the emergence of anti-Government student leaders in Mongolia. Perhaps the foremost among these leaders was a charismatic young man called Zorig, later assassinated by political opponents. Born in 1962 to an elite family, Sanjaasürengiin Zorig, later known as the Golden Magpie of Democracy, was commonly accepted as the leader of the democratic movement. His father was a Buriat—that is, from a minority Mongolian group—and his mother, a physician, was half-Russian and half-Mongolian. His paternal grandfather, a distinguished Russian scientist and explorer, had died in a Siberian prison camp. His maternal grandfather, a Buriat herdsman, had met the same fate as many Buryats in his generation. Probably due to a directive from the USSR, the Mongolian government had executed him. Although Zorig received his elementary and secondary education in Mongolia, he attended Moscow State University, graduating in 1985 with degrees in philosophy and the social sciences. Moscow State University introduced him to the excitement of student groups calling for an end to communist repression (Rossabi 2005b: 12).

Several small opposition groups were formed. The political group called “Shine Ue” (translated as the “New Generation”) was formed in October 1988 and headed by E. Bat-Uul. The “Young Economists’ Club” was another semi-underground group organized in April 1989 by young economists who graduated from universities in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. D. Ganbold led the group. (Chuulunbat 2013: 136). A group of mathematicians and scientists at the National University of Mongolia also formed a new movement called the Democratic Socialist Movement in 1990 which later transformed into the Mongolian Social Democratic Party (MSDP). B. Batbayar, a biochemist by training was one of the leaders of this group (Chuluunbat 2012: 136).

**Figure 4.8: Political protest, Sukhbaatar Square, 1990**



Source:

[http://www.mongoliatravelguide.mn/mongolian\\_facts/v/political\\_system](http://www.mongoliatravelguide.mn/mongolian_facts/v/political_system),  
downloaded 2 September 2017

Thus, many of the early ‘revolutionaries’ who led the democratic movement were a well-educated and relatively privileged group, many of whom were the children of the Communist party elite in Mongolia. Indeed, many had been, or were being educated in Soviet Russia. However, Chuulunbat notes that other groups (especially the Shine Ue group which later turned into the Mongolian Democratic Union) were less educated and held more extreme views (Chuluunbat 2013: 144). Peaceful student protests erupted in late 1989. As Rossabi dryly pointed out, the December 10 1989 Mongolian celebrations of International Human Rights Day did not proceed as planned. Rossabi commented:

*The authoritarian communist government that had ruled Mongolia since 1921 had in the past orchestrated numerous demonstrations, as well as so-called spontaneous mass movements, to commemorate important events or personalities in its history or launch new policies or programs...would be unable to manage the events of December 10, 1989 (Rossabi 2005b: 10).*

The celebrations were hijacked by around two hundred protestors calling for the elimination of bureaucratic oppression as well as a promise to implement perestroika (in Mongolian, *uurchlun baiguulalt*, or restructuring of the economy) and glasnost (*il tod*, or openness and greater freedom of expression). Rossabi noted the demonstrators were “mostly young, well-dressed, polite, and in no way obstreperous” (Rossabi 2005b: 11).

The student-led campaign against communist rule, from this first spontaneous demonstration on 10 December 1989 at Sukhbaatar Square, was clearly non-violent. Mongolia's new opposition movement was similar to other non-violent protest movements in East Asia in the late twentieth century (Svensson and Lindgren 2011). From a Government viewpoint, this approach may have frustrated violent reprisals. A violent response would probably not have been supported by the broader Mongolian population. Moreover, Mikhael Gorbachev made it clear that Russia would not support a murderous Chinese Tiannaman Square style response.

Within a few months, the General Secretary of the MPRP pledged to resign and to call for free multi-party elections. The then General Secretary of the Communist Party, Jambyn Batmonh, proposed an end to the ruling party's monopoly on power at the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party plenum. He also proposed an immediate resignation of the five member politburo, and an extraordinary party congress to elect new leaders in April 1990. The proposals were passed in July 1990, after the country's first free elections (Simpson 2000: 5). As summarized by Elbedorj, later to become Mongolia's Prime Minister and President:

*In the cold winter of 1989 and in the spring of the White Horse Year of 1990, decades of rule without the consent of the governed were swept aside. Individual rights and liberties prevailed. Our revolution did not break a single window. Not one drop of blood was shed* (Elbegdorj 2013: 5).

## Chapter 5: Mongolia: From socialism to market democracy

### Introduction

This chapter and the following chapters discuss Mongolia's transition from socialism to market democracy post 1990.<sup>13</sup> Earlier chapters have introduced the thesis topic, and provided an overview of contemporary Mongolia. Chapters 3 and 4 then discussed Mongolia's history between 1200 and 1990, to provide context for the discussion in this chapter which focuses on events post 1990. The transformation from a socialist society with a command economy to a market democracy has affected virtually every aspect of life in Mongolia. This part of the thesis looks at the transformation from a variety of perspectives, including through the lenses of:

- political changes;
- changes in foreign policy;
- economic changes;
- poverty and inequality;
- the effects of corruption;
- changes in human rights;
- changes in religiosity;
- changes in education;
- health changes; and
- the impacts of demographic change, including rapid urbanisation.

The aim is to better understand *what happened* from each of these perspectives, and *why* these things occurred. Later chapters address how

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<sup>13</sup> Material identified by the author prior to 31 August 2018 has been included.

Mongolian people, especially Mongols who have lived under both systems, *feel* about the change to market democracy, some thirty years after the transition. These are the key research questions for the thesis. Of course, over a period of nearly thirty years, many things have happened. The path of development has not always been serene, and indeed from some perspectives the transition road has been decidedly bumpy. Therefore, rather than simply presenting a before and after analysis, the review includes a discussion of events during the period. This Chapter addresses the first two topics, political change and changes in foreign policy. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 address the remaining topics.

## **Political change in Mongolia post-socialism**

Has Mongolia made a successful transition to a parliamentary democracy? The change to democracy began well, reflecting widespread enthusiasm for change. Hulan concluded the change was supported “because a democratic political regime meant an independent Mongolia” (Hulan 1994: 30). International political theorists were somewhat surprised. Many felt supporting preconditions had not been met. Political scientists rushed to explore transitions in ex-Communist countries, including O’Donnell and Schmitter who developed a concept called the democratic transition paradigm, and Carothers, a critic of that paradigm (see O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986) , O’Donnell (1996), (2002) and Carothers (1999), (2002) and Carothers and Ottoway (2000) for more detailed discussions).

Fish (1998) noted Mongolia’s democratisation occurred without prerequisites, in terms of economic development, history and culture. Huntington noted most wealthy countries were democratic, and vice versa (Huntington, 1991: 30). Landman et al. also noted endogenous modernization theory inferred high levels of economic development are conducive to democratisation, while exogenous modernization theory

argues that once democracy is established in wealthy countries, it tends not to collapse (Landman et al. 2006: 5).<sup>14</sup>

Migeddorj discussed other factors that facilitate democracy including proximity to mature democracies, political heritage and experience, levels of economic and social development, and the emergence of a middle class (Migeddorj 2012: 54). Many of these factors were lacking in Mongolia! Nonetheless, despite these issues, Shin was later happy to conclude that Mongolia had the distinction of being the only country outside Eastern Europe to have made a successful transition from communism to multiparty capitalist democracy (Shin 2009: 9).

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

Mongolia's political institutions changed dramatically in the early 1990s. Mongolia's previous socialist constitutions provided little guidance for post-socialist realities, and in fact left negative distortions in "almost all spheres of Mongolian social life" (Turbileg 1998: 76). By the mid-1990s the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) amended the constitution to facilitate democracy, create a Presidential system and a more representative legislature. Alternative political parties were legalized (Bajpai 2015: 8).

In 1990 multi-party elections were held for the first time. Over 90 per cent of eligible voters (Mongols aged eighteen and over) cast their vote. The election was won by the MPRP (the president, Mr Ochirbat, was elected by the legislature). The Government then developed a new constitution, a framework for democracy. Many international agencies provided advice

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<sup>14</sup> Papaioannou and Siourounis (2008) study, using political freedom indicators, electoral archives, and historical resources in 174 countries for 1960–2005, also suggested democratization was more likely to emerge in affluent and especially educated societies.

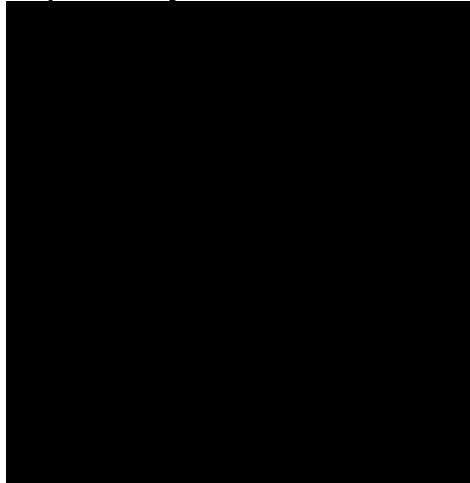
on the new constitution, including the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, the United Nation Human Rights Council and the Asia Foundation (Bruun et al. 1999: 8). In 1992 Mongolia adopted a new constitution, which allowed the establishment of new political parties and movements and competition for the right to govern through free and fair elections, as well as important symbolic changes (Amarsanaa and Doljin 2009: 159). The country's name was changed from "Mongolian People's Republic" to "Mongolia" and the Communist gold star was removed from the national flag (Soni 2013: 33).

Mongolia adopted a semi-presidential structure with a strong Parliament, which appoints the executive body (the Prime Minister and his Cabinet), a directly elected President, and an independent judiciary (Mendee 2009: 11).<sup>15</sup> While the system provides checks and balances, there are constant power struggles between the President, the Prime Minister and Parliament (Sumaadi 2013: 5). Parliamentary and Presidential elections are held at four year intervals. Presidential elections take place the year following Parliamentary elections. Mongolia also reorganised representative governance arrangements at the *aimeg* (province) and *soum* (district) level in the 1990s. The interaction of each level of government is shown in Figure 5.1.

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<sup>15</sup> Somewhat unusually, while the Prime Minister is nominated by Parliament, the Prime Minister does not need to be a member of Parliament.



**Figure 5.1: Mongolia's political system**

Source: Simonson 2007: 9

The 1992 Grand Khural elections used a proportional representative voting system. Voters gave power to the better organised MPRP (Basu 2013: 3), which won 71 out of 76 seats (Badamdorj 1998: 1). In 1993, the democratic parties coalition candidate, Mr. Ochirbat, who had left the MPRP to join the opposition, was re-elected to the presidency, this time by direct vote (Dugersuren 2015: 17). By 1996 the opposition was better organised, and the Democratic Union won 50 seats, ending the MPRP's 75 year rule (Ginsberg 1997: 60). The new prime minister was M. Enkhsaikhan, who had a strong commitment to the rapid establishment of a market economy. However, in a jarring note, there were suggestions the Democratic Union victory owed much to foreign organisations, political advice and financial backing, as well as Mongolian electoral factors. Reports indicated the U.S. government associated International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Endowment For Democracy (NED)<sup>16</sup> provided \$US450,000 and \$US1 million respectively (large amounts at that time), while the Adenauer Foundation also assisted the newly formed neoliberal political parties, and the Asia Foundation provided grants to 22 per cent of

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<sup>16</sup> In 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was set up to “support democratic institutions throughout the world through private, nongovernmental efforts”. Blum contended the NED progresses previously covert CIA political activities overtly (Blum 2000: 1).

Grand Khural members in 1996 (Jargalsaikhan 2016c: 2).<sup>17</sup> This scenario implied the evolution of Mongolian democracy in the early 1990s was not entirely home grown.

However, this funding support had little impact on the subsequent presidential election. An economic downturn in 1997 gave impetus to MPRP claims to being better economic managers (Freedom House 2009: 1). MPRP candidate Bagabandi received 61 per cent of the vote (Dumbaugh and Morrison 2009: 3). Ginsberg hailed the election as further evidence of democracy's consolidation in Mongolia, suggesting the new balance of forces reflected the deepening of the constitutional system and the democratic process (Ginsberg 1998: 1).

Bagabandi's elevation was to have long term consequences. Bagabandi's parliamentary seat was won by Enkhbayar, later to become Mongolia's Deputy Prime Minister, Prime Minister and President. (allegations of corruption tarnished his image. After his defeat in the 2009 Presidential election, Enkhbayar was convicted of corruption). The new constitution had some quirks. In the 1990s the parliamentary majority party tended to be from the party opposing the President's party. While the constitution indicated the President was to accept the candidate for Prime Minister from the parliamentary majority party, the constitution was not clear how agreement should be reached. The new President repeatedly refused Democratic Party nominations for Prime Minister. Indeed, in 1998, the DUC nominated D. Ganbold seven times, G. Gankhuyag three times, and E. Bat-Uul once for prime minister, only to be turned down by President Bagabandi (Chuluunbaatar 2012: 267).

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<sup>17</sup> Two authors by this name have been cited in this thesis. The author here is Sanchir Jargalsaikhan.

Overall, despite setbacks, growth in corruption and extraordinary economic problems, the initial political transition went relatively well. People associated freely. New political parties were formed, which were able to freely express their views. Elections were held regularly, with universal suffrage and very high voluntary voter turnout, and government changed hands peacefully. Indeed, late in the decade Ginsburg asserted the possibility of a reversal of democracy was almost nil (Ginsburg 1998: 68). Bruun et al. also noted the political reform process had been “smooth, swift and thorough” (Bruun et al. 1999: 5). Nonetheless, Severinghaus noted 1998 and 1999 were volatile years for Mongolia, with “revolving door governments, the assassination of a minister (Zorig), emerging corruption, a banking scandal, in-fighting within the ruling Democratic Coalition, frequent paralysis within the Parliament, and disputes over the Constitution” (Severinghaus 2000: 131).

The volatility of the late 1990s therefore represented something of a problem for democratic governance. Carothers considered transition to democracy needed to be followed by a period of consolidation, “a slow but purposeful process in which democratic forms are transformed into democratic substance through the reform of state institutions, the regularization of elections, and the strengthening of civil society” (from Bayantur 2008: 7). This, for Mongolia, was perhaps the period between 2000 and 2010.

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

Surprisingly, given Mongolia’s harsh economic experiences in the first decade of market democracy, the next decade began well in terms of consolidating democracy. Marangos noted that governments which used IMF recommended economic “shock therapy” policies generally lost power at the next election, inferring that such policies were “incompatible with democratic processes of decision making” (Marangos 2004: 1). Voter

turnout for the 2000 Grand Khural election was high, and government changed hands peacefully. Consistent with Marangos' perspective, the elections were a disaster for the reformist Democratic Union, reflecting four years of inept, stumbling government, many changes of leadership and several corruption scandals. There was also tough opposition from the MPRP, which won 72 of 76 seats (95 per cent) (Soni 2013: 35).

However, the drubbing also reflected electoral factors. The MPRP won 72 of 76 seats with only 52 per cent of the vote (Bayantur 2008: 68), raising questions about how representative the new government truly was.<sup>18</sup> As the President is elected through a direct plebiscite, this was less of an issue in Presidential elections. President Bagabandi, the MPRP incumbent, won 58 per cent of the vote in 2001, compared with 37 per cent for the Democratic Party candidate (Bayantur 2008: 72). In 2003, Mongolia undertook what Landman described as 'a remarkable process of self-reflection' and assessed the quality of its democracy (Landman 2012: 2). Landman commented:

*...intolerance towards corruption soared and political actors across the spectrum called for reform — a call that resulted in an assessment of Mongolia's democratic credentials (Landman 2012: 2).*

Mongolia's next State Khural election took place in 2004. This election was a setback for the consolidation of democracy. As usual, the election took place in summer (Mongolia's winters are very harsh, which would inhibit voting). Mongolia's economy had performed well, favouring the incumbent MPRP. However, the MPRP lost half of its members. The Motherland Democracy Coalition also fell short of achieving a majority.

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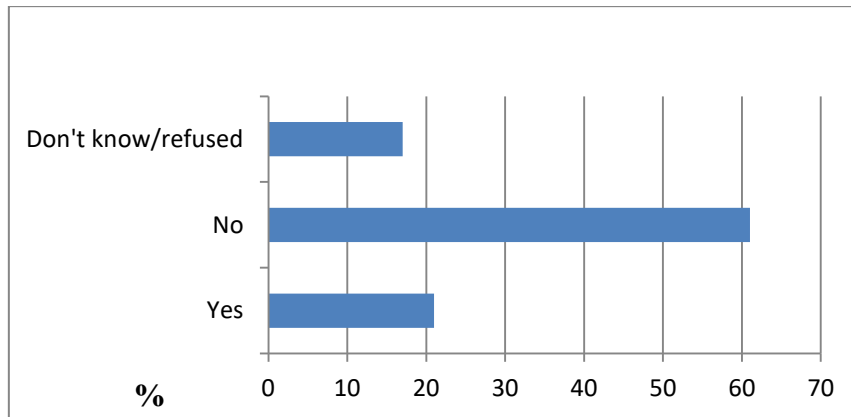
<sup>18</sup> In 2000, the MPRP won after introducing an unusual two-round runoff system, which required a plurality of 25 per cent of the vote for candidates to be elected. This allowed the MPRP to secure 72 seats in the 76-member parliament with around 52 per cent of the vote (Reilly 2007: 191).

Reflecting this impasse, a coalition government was formed, “paving the way for profound legal, social, and economic reform” (Schafferer 2004: 1).

Some commentators took a positive view of way the 2004 election was conducted. Lee suggested that after experiencing the governance of both groups for 14 years, citizens chose a balanced government (Lee 2013: 130). However, other commentators considered the election was undermined by corrupt electoral practices. A 2006 CIVICUS report concluded the election showed increasing corruption, including ‘voter list manipulation and the misuse of public servants and state property by the ruling party’ (Beck et al. 2007: 7).

President Bagabandi, the major political forces, and domestic and foreign observers complained of numerous irregularities and violations committed by political parties, individual candidates and members of the appointed district election committees. Widespread illegal use of state property and civil service workers (primarily by the MPRP) was also reported (Landman et al. 2005: 28). Bayantur suggested both parties cheated by tampering with voters’ lists, pre-distributing ballot papers, transporting voters, counterfeiting ballot papers, and invalidating opponents’ votes. Former Prime Minister Enkhsaikhan also expressed strong concern about the integrity of the election process (Enkhsaikhan 2005a: 22).

A Presidential election took place in 2005. The MPRP candidate, Mr Enkhbayar, (previously Mongolia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister) was elected with 53 per cent of the vote (Tuya 2005: 1), despite continuing concerns about electoral processes. Indeed, a Gallup Poll conducted prior to the 2008 parliamentary elections indicated only 21 per cent of voters had faith in the electoral process.

**Figure 5.2: Electors faith in election results in Mongolia, 2008**

Source: Ray 2008: 1

Reflecting these concerns, 2006 saw sweeping electoral reforms. The biggest change was the introduction of multi-member districts. Rather than dividing an *aimag* (province) into three or four districts, each with its own MP, voters selected three or four candidates (Simonson 2007: 14). Mongolia also adopted a ninth Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on democracy, zero tolerance of corruption, and human rights, described by Landman as a “uniquely Mongolian innovation (Landman 2012: 2).

Despite the reforms, the outcomes of the 2008 Grand Khural elections were bitterly contested, resulting in violent demonstrations, in a considerable setback to democracy. The preliminary election results gave the governing MPRP 46 seats in the 76-seat parliament, although pre-election polls had predicted an easy victory for the opposition Democratic Party (DP). DP leader Elbegdorj refused to concede defeat.<sup>19</sup> Many Mongols (and outsiders) viewed the election outcomes with utter disbelief. Guerin later noted the voter registration system was weak, vote counting was rigged, and vote buying was widespread, with few sanctions for violations of the

<sup>19</sup> Sumati, a leading pollster in Mongolia, considered the DP’s judgment was incorrect. Sumati contended that unpopular Prime Minister Enkhbold dragged the MPRP’s rating down in 2007. Enkhbold was replaced by the more popular Bayar. Second, the significantly pro-country electoral system, (with only 20 seats in Ulaanbaatar, where the Democrats polled well), meant that the rural popular MPRP won most seats (Sumati 2009: 96).

law (Guerin 2013: 5). Were the pre-election polls that wrong? Tkacik noted many independent surveys led people to believe the Democrats were headed for a victory, especially in the urban precincts in Ulaanbaatar (Tkacik 2008: 4). The consequences were tragic. On June 29, 2008, a protest against the election result in Ulaanbaatar descended into bloody riot. Five people died, three hundred were injured, and more than 700 were arrested (Maškarinec 2014: 168). The MPRP headquarters were stormed and burnt. President Enkhbayar declared a state of emergency and martial law (Chen 2009: 1, 2). Munkhзориг noted many detainees “suffered from cruelty and maltreatment and seriously injured as a result of beating and whipping” (Munkhзориг 2008: 202).

Delaplace et al. noted political violence was unprecedented in Mongolia, where protests were generally peaceful (Delaplace et al. 2008: 353). The international press was also surprised. *The Guardian* noted police used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon to drive protesters away, while armoured vehicles were stationed in the heart of the city (The Guardian 2008: 1). The *New York Times* noted deaths and injuries, suggesting hundreds of rioters, many of them drunk, torched MPRP headquarters and the neighbouring national art gallery, with more than 1,000 artworks being destroyed or damaged. The national Australian Broadcasting Commission noted the Democratic Party’s leader had insisted the national election had been “stolen” (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2008: 1).

Why did the demonstrations take place? Oleinik argued (based on interviews with protesters and analysis of visual records of the protest) that ordinary people felt unable to rely on the law and official procedures (Oleinik 2012: 1). In a sorry sequel, ten police officers were later charged with murder (Freedom House 2009: 1). Later, *The Economist Intelligence Unit’s* classified Mongolia as a “flawed democracy” because ‘Mongolian elections were often turbulent and controversial affairs, with persistent political volatility’ (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

Thankfully, the 2009 Presidential election was a quieter affair, without violent outcomes. In the 2009 election the MPRP candidate, President Enkhbayar, was defeated by DP candidate Elbedorj. Soni considered the election outcome reflected continuing commitment to democracy, despite the 2008 setbacks (Soni 2013: 37). Indeed, in 2011 Reilly concluded Mongolia was one of the few unambiguous examples of a successful transition to market democracy post-socialism (Reilly 2011: 117). Perhaps the peaceful 2009 election was even more remarkable because it took place against the backdrop of the Global Financial Crisis, a time of severe economic stress for the emerging Mongolian economy. As noted by Pepinsky, global economic crises are generally followed by regime change (Pepinsky 2009: 1).

However, as noted by Chang et al., by this time post-socialist democracy was also being judged in terms of the *quality* of democracy (Chang et al. 2012: 1). They noted widespread perceptions that democratically elected governments were corrupt, incompetent, unresponsive and untrustworthy (ibid: 3). Indeed, 36 per cent of Mongols considered getting rid of parliaments and elections would be a good thing, with many Mongols interested in a ‘strongman’ government (ibid: 12). Chang et al. suggested this indicated a “large number of confused and disoriented citizens in Mongolia” (Chang et al. 2012: 12).

### **More recent developments**

So how has democracy fared in Mongolia since 2010? Following the 2008 Grand Khural election, there was an appetite for electoral reform, reflected in a new election law in late 2011. As explained by Guerin, the Law on Parliamentary Elections introduced several substantial changes both to the electoral system and the administration of elections. The biggest change was from a plurality system to a mixed system (out of 76 seats, 48 were



elected from local districts and 28 from a national list). A 20 per cent quota for women candidates was also introduced. The use of automated vote counting machines was mandated, while Mongols living overseas were able to vote. Civil servants, and not political party nominees, were appointed to work as electoral committee and polling officers. New smart biometric identity cards were to be introduced, but, due to production delays the cards were not used for the election (Guerin 2013: 6).

The first test for the new rules was the 2012 parliament elections. The lead-up, process and outcomes were a fillip for democracy. Some 544 candidates contested the 76-seat parliament. The Democratic Party won the highest number of seats, followed by the Mongolian People's Party and the Justice Coalition. The Civil Will–Green Party won two seats and independent candidates won three seats (Narangoa 2012: 1).

To protect against multiple voting and unregistered voters, polling stations were equipped with fingerprint scanners. Voters were given clear instructions in the lead-up to the election, at polling stations and in voting booths. Ballots were counted by machine and video cameras were used to monitor voting machines. Domestic NGOs were able to nominate election observers as well as party and foreign observers (Dierkes and Miliate 2012: 1). There were few allegations of irregularities and the election resulted in a peaceful change of government. In a poignant postscript, on 1 July 2012, three days after the elections, many people gathered in Ulaanbaatar's Sukhbaatar Square (Mongolia's equivalent of Beijing's Tiananmen Square) to release floating lanterns commemorating the lives lost following the 2008 election. Dowler suggested "the lantern demonstration reflected a genuine desire in Mongolia to avoid a repeat of the events of 2008" (Dowler 2012: 1).

Nonetheless, while the political *process* was relatively smooth, there were clear policy tensions before this election. Resource nationalism (many

Mongols wanted sole ownership of major resource projects) was a significant issue, which was to bedevil the Government as it sought to get a better deal with respect to the giant Oyu Tolgoi mine development. Environmental issues were also important, especially in respect to uranium mining, water use in mining and potential desecration of sites of national significance.<sup>20</sup> Civil movements and local dwellers attempted to resist and stop mining exploration and production (Janar and Dashzevge 2015: 10).

In terms of process, the 2013 presidential elections also went well. The main candidates were President Elbedorj, and Baterdene, an ex-wrestler representing the MPP. President Elbegdorj was re-elected. For the first time, the Democratic Party held power in parliament as well as holding the presidency (Maškarinec 2014: 186). The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded the election was professionally and efficiently administered.

The international PEI (Political Integrity Index) survey also rated the contest as moderate in integrity with most concern about political finance (Norris et al. 2014: 71). Nonetheless, the 2012 Gallup World Poll indicated Mongols still had very little confidence in the election process (Asia Foundation 2016: 20). So, while political developments 2008-2013 appeared more positive for democracy than 2004-2008 when the democratic process was undermined by corrupt electoral practices, voters still had little confidence in the fairness of elections.

The 2016 Grand Khural elections were another test for the consolidation of democracy in Mongolia. Resource nationalism was still an important issue. Many Mongols were concerned by foreign ownership of mining

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<sup>20</sup> Water security is a very important issue in Mongolia. Permanent desertification can occur quickly if underground water sources are misused (see Yang et al. 2015).

companies. The economy was also weakening markedly as mining commodity prices fell from weak international demand. In addition, the second phase of the giant Oyu Tolgoi project was delayed, given the failure by government and company to reach agreement about the project's second stage. The Democratic Party also fractured in the election lead-up, reflecting significant factional infighting. More sensationally, in late 2015 the Democrat Prime Minister was dismissed on the grounds of corruption. Replacement Prime Minister Saikhanbileg was quick to progress major resource developments on assuming office. Saikhanbileg made a mark early in his tenure by conducting an SMS poll, which asked Mongols to choose between austerity or large mining projects. The poll delivered 350,000 responses, with 56 per cent of respondents preferring large projects over the austerity likely in the absence of such major projects (Dierkes 2015: 1).

The election was intended to be held under the 2012 system. Forty-eight members would be elected under a majoritarian system in 26 multi-member constituencies. Other members would be selected under a proportional system, in a single nationwide constituency through closed party lists (OCSE 2016: 4). However, as the parties prepared their election advertising, the Constitutional Court threw a curve ball. The Court declared the 2012 system illegal, because 28 members were appointed by proportional representation. The Court dropped its bombshell in late April 2016.

The Democratic Party, the largest party in the coalition government, accepted this decision (news.mn 2016e). The Great Khural agreed to revert to a majority system of 76 single-seat constituencies (Sanders 2016a: 1), using a 'first past the post system'. The crisis could have provided an opportunity for other electoral reforms. Mal-apportionment (or gerrymandering) had been a significant issue in the past. Kamahara and Kasuya's 2014 analysis of recent election results around the world

suggested significant and growing electoral fairness issues in Mongolia (Kamahara and Kasuya 2014: 9).<sup>21</sup>

In the lead up to the election, Ulaanbaator City Council Chairman Battulga noted the new law had not adjusted the constituencies to match the growth of the capital's population, estimated at 47 per cent of the country's total population. While electorates in the *aimags* (provinces) averaged 40-50,000 voters per constituency, the average in Ulaanbaator was up to 120,000 (Sanders 2016b: 1). The MPP, given its strong countryside base, refused to change the system.

The Constitutional Court's decision gave further opportunities for change. The new system still had a considerable countryside bias, clearly voiding the one vote one value principle that underpins democracy. By population, nearly half the seats should have come from Ulaanbaatar. Informal advice to the author from Mobicom executives (Mobicom is the largest telecommunications company in Mongolia) considered Ulaanbaatar's population was closer to two million people. Many Ulaanbaatar residents maintain their country address registration for taxation and social insurance purposes. The status of country students is also unclear, as many maintain their country addresses.

Only 28 seats were allocated to the national capital, resulting in wide variations in electorate sizes between city and country. (In its post-election report the OCSE also commented that 'the boundary delimitation process lacked transparency, public consultation and adherence to

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<sup>21</sup> The authors described mal-apportionment as "anathema to equitable and inclusive democracy... it violates the norm of the "one person, one vote" (Kamahara and Kasuya 2014: 3).

established criteria' (OCSE 2016: 4)). This favoured the country oriented MPP.

Aided by this factor, an economic slowdown and widespread dissatisfaction with the incumbent Democratic Party, the election results were very clear. The MPP won easily. The Democratic Party was thrashed, winning only nine seats, with Democratic Party leaders losing their seats, reflecting Mongolia's economic weakness, coupled with hubris and infighting in the Democratic Party. Nonetheless, if we ignore some electoral issues, especially concerning campaign financing, alleged MPP relocations of voters ("grasshoppers") to electorates where the MPP thought this would be to their advantage, and allegations of vote buying, the result appears to have been a triumph for democracy, with a high voter turnout, and a peaceful hand over, aided by a three day ban on alcohol sales. However, major differences in voter numbers between electorates undermined the legitimacy of the result.

Mongolia's 2017 presidential election was contested by three candidates, Enkhbold from the Mongolian Peoples Party (MPP), who was demoted from Prime Minister to Deputy Prime Minister around 2007, possibly for corruption in city land privatisation; Battulga, from the Democratic Party, himself accused of corruption concerning use of funds intended for railway construction; and Ganbaatar, a populist puppet candidate standing for the Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party, the party headed by former president Enkhbayar, who could not stand because of a prior corruption conviction.

Dirty tricks and advertising campaigns gathered pace as the election approached. The highlight was the release of a secret recording of a MPP party meeting where Enkhbold and other senior MPP members allegedly

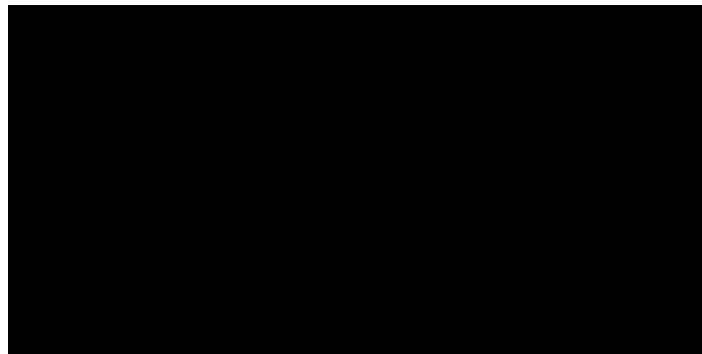
discussed financing the 2016 parliamentary elections by the sale of public service positions (post the election, sales of ministries were also "rumoured"). Ganbaatar was also alleged to have received illegal donations from a Korean citizen, while Battulga faced corruption allegations. However, no candidate won an absolute majority. The election was surprisingly close, with only two thousand votes separating third placed Ganbaatar and second placed Enkhbold. Amid allegations of vote rigging to assist Enkhbold, and mutual allegations of vote buying, the General Election Commission quickly announced a run-off election between first placed Battulga, and second placed Enkhbold. Surprisingly, OCSE foreign election observers viewed the first round of the election benignly. The OCSE's preliminary report concluded 'these were well-run elections, and are overall promising for the future of Mongolia's democracy (Amina 2017: 1).<sup>22</sup>

In the second round election Battulga won 51 per cent of the vote. Voter turnout was around 100,000 down on the first election. Many voters presented blank forms, a silent protest in Ganbaatar's favour. Although the OCSE noted the election was subject to "legal uncertainties", the election was declared in Battulga's favour by the General Election Committee, and Battulga was duly inaugurated on 10 July 2017, the day before Naadam, Mongolia's traditional holiday period, giving the new President the opportunity to open the Naadam celebrations.

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<sup>22</sup> For a rather different view, see Fox 2017. The Price of an Election: Split hopes and political ambivalence in the *ger* districts of Ulaanbaatar

**Figure 5.3: The new President is inaugurated, 2017**



Source: GoGo.mn <http://mongolia.gogo.mn/r/159636>, downloaded 11 July 2017

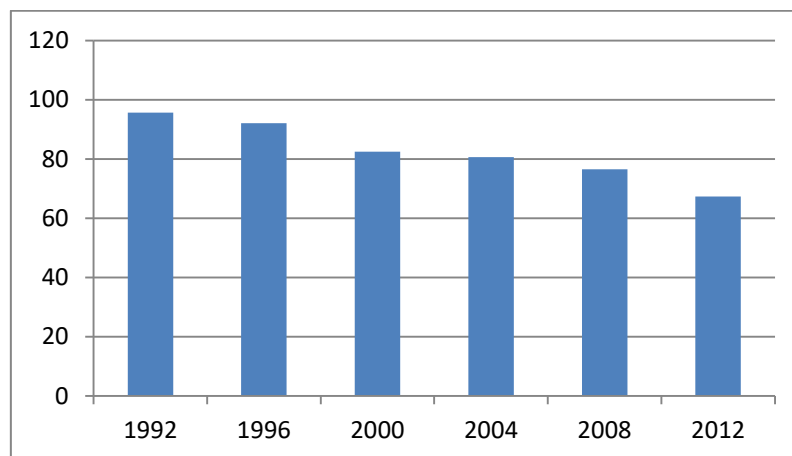
## **Conclusions**

*Democracy is considered ‘consolidated’ when democratic ‘rules’ are institutionalized in governing bodies and there arises a normative consensus among political elites and the public to abide by these rules (Bratton et al., 2005) (from Nisbet et al. 2012: 250).*

On the face of it, it appears democracy has been consolidated in Mongolia. Lee, for example, suggested that although Mongolia has some problems, “such as corruption in the government institutions, the media controlled by the government, and economic inequality, there are no critical problems challenging democracy” (Lee 2013: 130). Data from the international Electoral Integrity Index, based on expert opinion, also indicated democracy was doing well in Mongolia. In 2015 Mongolia was ranked as the 40<sup>th</sup> best country in the world for electoral integrity. Indeed, Mongolia was unique in terms of the ex-Communist countries associated with the former USSR (and southern communist countries) in terms of having ‘high’ electoral integrity.

Is this really the case? Elections are unfair because country voters' voices carry much more weight than city voters, as country seats have fewer voters than city seats. Moreover, most elections have seen significant corruption. There are several warning signs. First, voting in Mongolia is voluntary, and voter turnout was falling prior to the 2016 elections (although voter turnout in Mongolia compares very favourably with the US and the UK). As shown below, despite improving in 2016, voter turnout had fallen considerably since the early 1990s. Voters may be becoming disillusioned: perhaps with democracy itself, perhaps with political leadership, or perhaps with existing political parties.

**Figure 5.4: Voter Turnout, Mongolia, 1992-2012**



Source: Guerin 2013: 12

Another warning sign arises from economic issues. Most political theorists associate democracy with strong and equitable economies. Huntington, for example, warned that sustained inability to provide welfare, prosperity, equity, justice, domestic order, or external security could undermine the legitimacy of democratic governments (Huntington, 1991: 19). Is Mongolia failing this test?

A third warning sign is the continued presence of significant corruption at all levels in Mongolian society. Fourth, Huntington (1991) warned against



the re-emergence of authoritarianism, arguing the reinvigoration of authoritarianism in Russia would have unsettling effects on democratization in ex-Soviet republics. Indeed, in conversations with the author, many Mongols have expressed admiration for Russian authoritarianism, and inferred an authoritarian structure is preferable to democracy. Huntington was also concerned that if China developed, and expanded its influence and control in East Asia, democratic regimes in the region would be significantly weakened (Huntington 1991: 19).

Perhaps, nearly thirty years later, some of these concerns may seem misplaced. However, Fritz, writing much more recently, expressed similar concerns, warning that when a democratic system fails to deliver benefits in terms of good governance and shared prosperity, it “may...chip away at its minimalist foundation” (Fritz 2008: 780). Park also noted Mongolia displayed negative scores on ‘horizontal accountability, law-based governance, participation, control of corruption, vertical accountability, and responsiveness’ (Park 2012: 9). Chu et al. noted survey data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) indicated East Asians’ assessment of government performance, as well as their appreciation of the intrinsic value of democracy, plays a significant role in shaping how they understand democracy (Chu et al 2013: 27).

Khatabold also raised concerns about the results of a 2013 survey. Only 18 per cent of respondents assessed Mongolia’s electoral system as being ‘suitable’, 37 per cent, responded ‘unsuitable’ and 45 per cent responded ‘don’t know’ (Khatabold 2013: 78), suggesting public acceptance of Mongolia’s transformation to democracy was lagging. Nonetheless, the general international view seems to be that Mongolia has become a stable democracy. Soni, for example, drew attention to attention to Mongolia’s increasing role in international organisations that aim to promote democracy (Soni 2013: 30).

However, Tsedevdambato contended that being “elected” in Mongolia was not always an ideal scenario, as political parties charge large fees to run for office, discouraging potential new candidates, especially women with families to support (Tsedevdambato 2012: 81). Tamir was also concerned that political financing leads to conflicts of interest and corruption, suggesting it was “an open secret that sponsors contribute to political parties out of economic interest and their donations can be closely equated with bribery” (Tamir 2003: 1).

More positively, Diamond noted that a survey on democratisation in East Asia indicated the majority of respondents in Mongolia agreed that “Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.” (Diamond 2012: 7). Certainly, in its ‘neighbourhood’, Mongolia seems a bright beacon for democracy. As noted by Boonstra, outside Mongolia, the Central Asian region is considered by many Western analysts “as one of the most repressive regions in the world” (from Tugsbilguun 2013: 123).

Nonetheless, Bormann and Golder consider democracy has four critical elements: the chief executive must be elected; the legislature is elected; more than one party contests the election; and an alternation under identical rules has taken place (Bormann and Golder 2013: 360). Mongolia has yet to satisfy the last condition. Landman also noted Mongolian democracy still faces significant challenges, including poverty, corruption, inequality, and continued human rights violations (Landman 2012: 2).

## Changes in foreign policy post-socialism

*Still terra incognita for most Americans, the country will no doubt soon become better known as a result of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of a U.S. embassy in Ulan Bator (Henze 1989: 2).*

Foreign policy theory suggests a number of policy approaches (see for example, Allison and Graham (1999), Baumann, Rittberger and Wagner (1998), Beeson and Higgott, (2005), Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner (1999), Carlsnaes (1992), George and Smoke (1974), Glaser and Medeiros (2007), Harnisch, Frank, and Maull (2011), Hudson (2005), Lucarelli and Manners (2006), Mintz (2005), Most and Starr (1984), Morgenthau (1973), Rose (1998), Thies (2009), Tonra and Christiansen (2004)). Influential theories include those of neo-realism and constructivism. Rose, writing in 1998, noted that in the previous twenty years international relations theory was dominated by the debate between neo-realists and their various critics (Rose 1998: 1). According to Baumann et al., neo-realists believe a state's foreign policy behaviour is largely determined by its power position in the international system (Baumann et al. 1998: 4). Neo-realism assumes rational behaviour is the decisive link between system structure and behaviours. Morgenthau defined international politics as the concept of interest defined by power (Morgenthau 1973: 5).

Hudson also noted that nations understanding of consequence is one of the hallmarks of foreign policy, although Hudson further noted agents do not always act rationally (Hudson 2005: 2). George and Smoke noted that United States foreign policy has as its cornerstone deterrence (George and Smoke 1974: 2). By comparison, Boekle et al. noted constructivism refutes the basic assumption of neo-realist theory of logical behaviour, as constructivism assumes the working of a logic of appropriateness, based on

value-based norms (i.e. shared expectations about appropriate behaviour) which shape actors' identities and preferences, define collective goals and prescribe or proscribe behaviour (Boekle et al. 1999: 3).

Lucarelli and Manners (2006) also note norms are important in foreign policy, suggesting values and principles have had a major role in European Union foreign policy. Role theory is another branch of the foreign policy theory debate. This approach infers that states' roles differ depending on circumstances. For example, Thies notes Holsti's study (1970: 260-270) which identified seventeen major roles undertaken by states between 1965 and 1967, including: bastion of revolution liberator, regional leader, regional protector, active independent, liberation supporter, anti-imperialist agent, defender of the faith, mediator-integrator, regional-subsystem collaborator, developer, bridge, faithful ally, independent, example, internal development, isolate, and protectee (Thies 2009: 5).

In the early 1990s Mongolia had to confront a new reality, the end of military protection from Russia. Previously, under socialism Mongolia had nestled in the arms of the Soviet bear. While post-socialist Mongolia was cast adrift from 'subordination' to the Soviet Union (Bedeski 2006: 83), it also lost Soviet military support. Bayantur noted Russia and Mongolia feared China because of its huge population. Rupen contended many Mongols also feared Russia, but viewed the Russian threat as less direct, because massive Russian settlement in Mongolia was unlikely (from Bayantur 2008: 14).

In these circumstances, in line with neo-realist theories, Mongolia had to develop a new foreign policy and a new military strategy. Indeed, Mongolia's capacity to survive as a sovereign nation was questioned. For example, Bedeski argued that "few have illusions that Mongolians alone

could defend their territory if either neighbour wished to occupy it by military force” (Bedeski 2006: 85).

While Mongolia lacked initial expertise in the machinations of market democracy, this was not the case in respect to foreign policy. Mongolia had considerable experience in the nuances of foreign policy, and there is an extensive literature by Mongols on this subject (see for example, Batbaïar (2002), Batchimeg (2005), Bayar (2015), Dashtseren (2015, 2006), Dorjjugder (2009, 2003), Jargalsaikhan, (2015a, 2015b. 2012, 2011), Ochirbat, (2007), Oyunsuren (undated), Turbat (2007), noting that this list is by no means exhaustive). Mongolia’s foreign policy deliberations are well informed by the range of theories noted above.

Given that Mongolia does not have recourse to the neo-realist forms of international power envisaged by Morgenthau, Mongolia’s foreign policy post 1990 under market democracy has followed a softer course which might be stylised in three ways, branding, moral suasion and soft power. Branding has been important to present a good international image to prospective friends, investors and aid suppliers. Before the end of socialism Mongolia was little known to the outside world.

According to Olins, a national brand embraces tourism, foreign direct investment, brand exports, sport, the arts, cultural activities and “so on” (Olins 2005: 178) (perhaps “so on” includes hosting international events, including conventions and conferences, a strategy that has been employed by China, Korea and latterly Mongolia). Mongolia uses moral suasion to influence other’s behaviour: for example by appealing to old neighbours Russia and China to behave fairly towards Mongolia, or by appealing to new friends such as the United States and the European Union to promote good behaviour towards Mongolia. Soft power is also an important part of Mongolia’s foreign policy toolkit, because Mongolia does not have the

means to project hard power. Japan also generally uses soft power to attain national objectives, because its constitution limits its capacity to project hard power through military action (DeLisle 2010: 7). The European Union also uses soft power through persuasion to pursue its diplomatic goals (Michalski 2005). Indeed, Campi suggested that Mongolia “provides an interesting case study in how a small nation is able to leverage geographical, political and economic opportunities to compensate for a lack of traditional allies” (Campi 2017: 18).

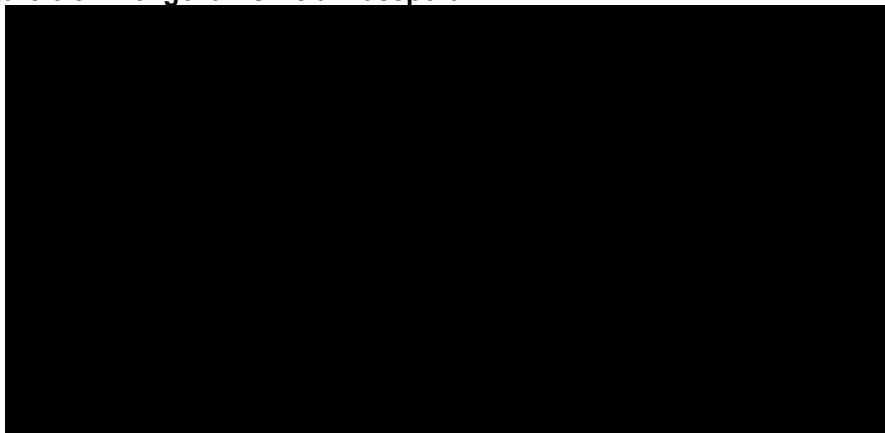
### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

As discussed, developing a new foreign policy stance was an immediate priority for Mongolia post-socialism. Mongolia sought bilateral relationships, and trilateral relationships through membership of international organisations. Mongolia pursued an open and non-aligned foreign policy, seeking supportive friendships broadly in Asia and around the world and taking a more active role in international organizations, especially the United Nations (Dumbaugh and Morrison 2009: 9). Mongolia’s post-socialist foreign policy goals were outlined in two 1994 documents: the *Concept of National Security* and the *Concept of Foreign Policy*. The policy called for Mongolia to exercise political realism and a consistent approach (Atwood 2006: 228). The policy emphasized Mongolia’s desire for a multi-partner or multi-pillar approach to securing its interests. Top priority was given to balanced relations with China and Russia, but Mongolia would also “pursue an open foreign policy” (Campi: undated: 89). Drysdale noted Mongolia’s ability to maintain constructive relations with its immediate neighbours reflected the government’s successful pursuit of close friendships with influential though distant countries (Drysdale 2014: 2).

Mongolia sought relationships with Europe, the United States, Japan and Korea, and had early success in developing its relationship with Europe. The European Parliament approved a trade and economic cooperation agreement in 1992 (Melandri 1992: 4). As former Mongolian Minister of Foreign Affairs Erdenechuluun noted, American officials initially dismissed the Third Neighbour concept as a non-starter, because they viewed Mongolia as a friendly, but minor nation wedged between significant American rivals, Russia and China (Campi undated: 90). Later, the approach was given gravitas by James Baker, then United States Secretary of State, who coined the phrase “third neighbour” foreign policy. As noted by Campi, this concept had political, military, cultural, and economic components. The idea was a large power, such as the U.S., Germany, or Japan, would act as a “Third Neighbour” for Mongolia to counterbalance the traditional roles played by Mongolia’s border neighbours, China and Russia” (Campi undated: 89).

Mongolia also quickly joined many international organisations. Already a member of the United Nations (1961), Mongolia also became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1991 and joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1997 (Shagdar 2003: 35).

**Figure 5.5: Mongolian Official Passport:**



Source: News.mn, downloaded 21 September 2017

But there were some speed bumps along the way. In 1992, China's State Security Ministry revived concerns about Chinese irredentialism by issuing a statement stating: "As of now, the Mongolian region comprises three parts that belong to three countries" - the Russian regions of Tuva and Buryatia, Mongolia, and the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region - but "the Mongolian region has since ancient times been Chinese territory" (Her 2015: 69). In 1995 Bayar (later to become Mongolia's Prime Minister) was quite pessimistic, noting that while Mongolia's future economic prospects looked promising, national security was an issue. Bayar suggested Mongols generally linked security with the presence of foreign troops on its soil, or at least with agreements, commitments and guarantees. Bayar considered the absence of these guarantees created a sense of "unprotectedness" (Bayar 1995: 9).

Some attempts to gain third neighbours in this period foundered because of external factors. Campi notes the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s dashed early hopes of the special Third Neighbour role for Japan or South Korea, while in Europe, Germany was self-absorbed with its own reunification problems. Campi suggested the United States was the only realistic choice as a "third neighbour."

Later in the decade relations with Russia and China improved somewhat, symbolized by visits by the Chinese Foreign Minister and former National People's Congress head in the late 1990s. Closer cooperation was also announced between Russian and Mongolian frontier guards to prevent rustling and poaching. Ginsberg concluded that Mongolia's basic foreign policy stance of maintaining close and balanced relations with the giant neighbours coupled with increased integration into the world economy was proving effective (Ginsberg 1998: 66, 67).



## Developments between 2000 and 2010

In 2000 Mongolia reaffirmed its *Concept of National Security* and *Concept of Foreign Policy* (Ministry of External Relations 2000: 8). The keystone for Mongolia foreign policy remained maintaining balanced relations with Russia and China. The quest for third neighbours also remained a key priority, whether bilaterally or through international organisations (Dashtseren 2015: 73). Over this period Mongolia also supported the U.S. global anti-terror effort. Notably, Mongolia contributed troops, engineers, and medical personnel to Operation Iraqi Freedom after April 2003. At the request of the U.S., Mongolian forces also participated in training artillery units of the Afghan National Army (Dumbaugh and Morrison 2009: 12).

Relationships with China also improved, highlighted by the declaration of “good neighbourly partnership” by both presidents during reciprocal visits in 2003 and 2004, which had a major impact on attitudes of political elites in both nations (Jargalsaikhan 2011: 18). Mongolian attitudes toward China became more positive due to increased interactions, information, and the changing economic reality (Jargalsaikhan 2011: ii). Nonetheless, generally speaking Mongols still favoured Russia as a partner over China. Surveys conducted in 2008 and 2011 indicated most respondents felt Russia was the best partner for Mongolia, followed by the United States (Jargalsaikhan 2011: 19, 20). Bulgan suggested the strength of the relationship with Russia had been enhanced through Soviet-era Russian language training, with Russian language still holding strong roots in contemporary Mongolian society and culture (Bulgan 2016: 1). Russia/Mongolia relationships also improved when Russia decided to forgive most of Mongolia’s debt to Russia. Previously bilateral economic relations had been overshadowed by Mongolia's huge Soviet-era debt to Russia (Blagov 2005: 61).

In summary, by 2010, Mongolia's foreign policy initiatives generally appeared successful. However, some commentators were less convinced. On the positive side, Wachman concluded that Mongolia had managed to keep its giant neighbours "reasonably content." Mongolia had also carefully balanced both neighbours by successfully making the United States a "third neighbour" by stressing its commitment to democratic values, and by becoming an active, cooperative participant in the international system (De Lisle 2010: 7). However, Bedeski considered Mongolia still faced military security challenges, and broader human security challenges through the threat of Chinese cultural and economic colonialism (Bedeski 2011: 13).

### **More recent developments**

Mongolia's foreign policy continued to evolve in the decade 2010-2010, in response to changing external conditions and internal political priorities. In 2015 Campi noted significant changes in Mongolia's foreign policy, including seeking new 'third neighbours' such as India, Turkey, Persian Gulf nations, and Vietnam, promoting a "neighbour tri-lateralism" policy through presidential summits with China and Russia, by emphasising Mongolia's permanent neutrality, promoting new international organizations; and through greater international activism, including seeking election to the UN Human Rights Council for 2016-2018 (Campi 2015: 2). In 2016 Mongolia also hosted the World Economic Forum's East Asia Summit and the 11th annual Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)); and launched a "branding" export campaign, intended to diversify trade, and attract more foreign direct investment and tourism.

Reeves noted high level exchanges between Mongolia, China, and Russia, and the updating of diplomatic agreements with China and Russia may have suggested Mongolia was seeking to rebalance its relationships with its

giant neighbours at the expense of its Third Neighbour policy. Reeves suggested this was not the case, because Mongolia continues to maintain deep political relationships with a wide range of states and international institutions, including Japan, Germany, Hungary, South Korea, North Korea, and the United Nations (Reeves 2015: 1, 2).

## Conclusions

*Having been dominated by China for two centuries and then by Soviet Union for seven decades, Mongolia has learned a single indelible lesson in terms of national sovereignty and security – that the nation should seek balanced, equidistant relations with its two neighbours while seeking wider recognition and global interaction to the utmost possible degree (Dorjjugder 2009: 1, 2).*

Since 1990 pragmatic Mongolia, consistent with neo-realist international relations theory, has needed to be mindful of the changing foreign policies of Russia and China, as well the foreign policies of the United States and Japan, the latter critical to Mongolia as influential ‘third neighbours’. As noted by Wachman, Mongolia is bounded by only two states and “that those two happen to be communist behemoths, compounds the difficulty that other landlocked states routinely face” (Wagner 2012: 3).

However, on the face of it, *China’s* policies with respect to Mongolia appear relatively benign as we approach 2020. China and Mongolia upgraded their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership in 2011. Later, both countries agreed a detailed action plan to strengthen their strategic partnership in respect to politics, security, the economy, culture, and multilateral diplomacy (Jargalsaikhan 2014: 1). Against this background, Batchimeg’s 2013 paper stressing the existence of sound

bilateral relations between Mongolia and China presents a reasonable perspective (Batchimeg 2013: 16).

High level good will visits also became more common. In 2014 Chinese President Xi stated that “China will respect Mongolia’s territorial integrity, independence, and developmental choice forever.” Jargalsaikhan noted that, under the rationale of ‘Peaceful Rise’ China’s policy has been progressive, tolerant, and accommodative to Mongolia (Jargalsaikhan 2015a: 5). China’s “Belt and Road” initiative appears consistent with this approach. Yet d’Hooghe noted that in the United States, the ‘China Threat’ debate flares up regularly and in many Asian capitals policy-makers are concerned that China’s economic strength will sooner or later encourage it to dominate the region or even to assert its power militarily...(d’Hooghe 2005: 90).

Moreover, China’s stance on Taiwan, its rigid control of Tibet, the tightening of control in Hong Kong following protests and criticism of the PRC regime, together with repression of Uigher and Inner Mongolian nationalist sentiments, perhaps present warning signs that Mongolia ignores at its peril. Tkacik also contended that in the 21st century, the Eurasian Heartland will be of vital strategic importance to the survival of both China and Russia. Tkacik suggested Mongolia’s water resources are likely to become Mongolia’s most prized asset, because water tables in North China are drying up. He noted Mongolia’s largest watershed, the Selenge River Basin, also provides over half the flow into Lake Baikal – the world’s largest fresh water lake, and the wellspring of Russia’s economy in the Far East (Tkacik 2012: 4, 5).

Religion is also an issue. The Dalai Lama, former king of Tibet, head of its government-in-exile, and leader of Tibetan Buddhism is the religious leader of most Mongols. China considers the Dalai Lama a threat to its national

integrity (Sarlagtay 2007: 1). The Dalai Lama's frequent trips to Mongolia hence create tensions between the two countries (Freeman and Thompson 2011: 61). A Mongol reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would challenge the Mongol-Chinese relationship (indeed a Mongol successor, grandson of M. Enkhbold, a leading MPP politician was briefly announced, the statement later withdrawn). A Mongol Dalai Lama would probably enjoy popular support in Tibet, Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia (Sarlagtay 2007: 2). This debate was intensified by the current Dalai Lama's comment that his successor would be born in a democratic country (Sarlagtay 2007: 3). The Dalai Lama's 2016 visit to Mongolia placed severe strains on the Mongolia/China relationship, especially considered against ongoing commercial negotiations with China intended to revitalise the fragile Mongolian economy. In addition, China's views toward the U.S. role in the Western Pacific, Central Asia and East Asia are moving from one of ambivalence toward a more aggressive stance (Freeman and Thompson 2011: 21). Mongolia, as was the case for Crimea, may again be forced to make choices between support for its physical or metaphorical neighbours.

Despite the *Russo/Mongolian* treaty of 1993 that declared new bilateral relations would proceed on a "mutually beneficial" basis, actual economic and political ties remained stagnant for several years, reflecting the economic challenges faced by both countries (Dorjjugder 2003: 67). Jargalsaikhan suggests Russia's relationship with Mongolia was largely ad hoc, reflecting Russia's most immediate needs (Jargalsaikhan 2015a: 5). However, Russia maintains leverage over Mongolia. Russia provides most of Mongolia's fuel (Russian company Rosneft supplies Mongolia with 92 per cent of its oil) and supplies electricity to Central and Northern Mongolia. A shortage of either could upset Mongolia's economy, society, and politics. Russia also co-owns the trans-Mongolian railway, the Erdenet copper and molybdenum factory, and the Mongolrostsvetment fluor spar factory. All three joint enterprises, especially the railway and copper factory, are vital for Mongolia's economy (Jargalsaikhan 2015a: 5, 6).

Russia used this leverage to take control of a major uranium deposit in Mongolia late in this period (Russia previously operated a uranium mine in Mongolia in the 1970s). After high-level exchanges between Ulaanbaatar and Moscow in 2008/2009, Mongolia cancelled Canada-based Khan Resources Company's license and established a joint uranium mining venture with Russia. Consequently, other uranium mining projects were delayed, and Mongolia had to pay \$US100 million damages to Khan Resources (Jargalsaikhan 2015a: 5,6).

Despite Mongolia's accommodative role in this matter, Radchenko suggested that the Russo-Mongolian relationship during the parallel Presidencies of Presidents Elbedorj and Putin was relatively cool (Putin apparently had a closer relationship with Elbedorj's predecessor, former President Enkhbayar) (Radchenko 2013), which Enkhbayar claimed had been important factor in his election to President (Radchenko 2013: 3). It remains to be seen how President Battulga's relationship with President Putin will develop.

More recently, the relationship improved given Mongolia's tacit support for Russia's Ukraine adventures.<sup>23</sup> However, Russia seems most uncomfortable with Mongolia's proposal to dam the Selenge River to enable the use of hydroelectric generators (the Selenge River is the major water source for Lake Baikal in Siberia, one of the world's largest freshwater lakes). In mid-2016 the foreign ministers of Mongolia and Russia also signed a 'Medium-term Strategic Partnership Development

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<sup>23</sup> Mongolia abstained, for example, from voting for UN resolution A/68/L.39 ('Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region'), which sought to censure of Moscow's Ukraine activities. President Elbegdorj also met President Putin several times as the crisis mounted. Moreover, "Mongolia bizarrely chose this period to adorn a Mongolian stamp with Putin's image" (Reeves 2015: 2).

Program' following on from 2014 meetings between the presidents of the two countries.

Turning to Mongolia's metaphorical third neighbours, the *United States* has maintained a diplomatic relationship with Mongolia since 1987. Nonetheless, the relationship seemed to cool post 2010, despite a fleeting goodwill visit by U.S. Secretary of State Kerry in mid-2016. However, the two countries have signed a cultural accord, a Peace Corps accord, and a consular convention and U.S. and Mongolian legislators participate in regular exchanges (Department of State 2015: 1). In return, Mongolia was quick to support the United States in its war on terrorism and supplied armed forces to support the United States in a variety of theatres post 1987. (As at 2011, Mongolia had dispatched troops in ten deployments to Iraq and has been engaged in assisting NATO's efforts in Afghanistan (Wagner 2011: 5)).

Reflecting these factors the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama administrations all claimed a "special" relationship with Mongolia (Noerper 2012: 1). On the other hand, the economic relationship is limited, and in a surprisingly candid statement, former United States Ambassador Slutz admitted Mongolia was not of strategic importance to the U.S., at least not in the conventional defence and security context. Mongolia was seen as too geo-politically, economically, and demographically challenged (i.e., landlocked between Russia and China, far from U.S. markets, and sparsely populated) to be a strategic partner (Tkacik 2012: 3). The United States' dismissal of Mongolia as having no strategic value may have reflected annoyance that Mongolia did not support U.S. policy during the Ukraine crisis, including a lack of support in relevant U.N. forums. U.S. disfavour may have been strengthened by Mongolia's decision to reject a U.S. request to establish a military base in Mongolia during the Ukraine crisis as proposed by U.S. Defence Secretary Hagel during a 2014 goodwill visit (Mongolian Economy 2014: 1). A further twist in the tale came with

the election of Donald Trump to the United States presidency. As noted by Dierkes, U.S. policy towards Mongolia in the Trump era was quite unpredictable (Dierkes 2017a: 1).

Mongolia has had a relationship with the *European Union* since the early 1990s, symbolised by a 2015 speech by President Elbedorj to the Parliament of the European Union, and recently established ties with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Hence Mongolia's relationship with European states and entities appears to have strengthened over time.

Mongolia also continues to develop *multi-state* alliances. In 2012 NATO announced that Mongolia would implement its first Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (IPCP), the first IPCP to be carried out under the new partnerships policy, adopted by NATO foreign ministers in 2011. This was a substantial change in NATO's behaviour towards Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar had sought to engage the NATO since the beginning of the 1990s, but until recently had been left out from the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program (Jargalsaikhan 2012a: 1)

Mongolia also participated in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The SCO includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as full members, with India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan as official observers. (The organization evolved out of the original Shanghai Five (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan), which concluded agreements between 1996 and 2001 to deepen military trust, reduce military forces in border regions, and define China's borders with these nations after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Boland 2011: 8)).



Keeping the nation safe and retaining sovereignty are the main measures of success for any country's foreign policy. Mongolia needed to make substantial changes in its foreign policy at the beginning of its transition to democracy to reflect changes in its circumstances. Mongolia has been very successful in meeting these objectives by carefully maintaining good relations with its real and metaphorical neighbours, and a careful campaign to develop "brand Mongolia" in the broader world. This endeavour has been helped by circumstances. For much of the period following the end of socialism there were few significant conflicts between Russia, China and the United States.

Lately this situation has been changing. Conflict between the U.S. and both Russia and China has increased. Mongolia's stance on Ukraine, including Mongolia's (quite reasonable) refusal to host a U.S. military facility did not go unnoticed. While the dire outlook predicted by Tkacik, Wachman and Bedeski is perhaps unnecessarily alarmist, Mongolia will need to continue its past deft diplomacy to avoid future adverse outcomes, especially economic, cultural and possibly physical encroachment from China. Xi Jin Ping's One Belt One Road initiative will provide many such challenges for Mongolia. Wachman also cautioned that Mongolia needs to be mindful of the limits to the projection of soft power through 'third neighbours', because 'third neighbours' are unlikely to come to the rescue if Moscow or Beijing impose military force (Wagner 2012: 3).

## Chapter 6: The economic impacts of transition

### Introduction

The second part of Mongolia's huge post 1990 social experiment was the dismantling of its socialist style command economy and its replacement with a market economy. In contrast to many other post-socialist countries, Mongolia opted for rapid change, reflecting the advice of international agencies. While by 2018 the economy had become somewhat more resilient, the short term effects were disastrous, leading to widespread and enduring poverty, caused in part by rampant corruption which has become endemic to Mongolia.

### Economic change in Mongolia post-socialism

*The IMF and the ADB sent research groups to Mongolia... the IMF and ADB groups religiously believed in a limited government...However, the quick and unplanned transition meant... widespread unemployment and hunger (Jargalsaikhan 2016: 4).*

There is a substantial literature concerning the economics of transition in post-socialist countries, including Mongolia (see for example Hare and Turley's (2013) handbook of the economics and political economy of transition, or Shleifer and Treisman (2014), Sonin (2013), Estrin, Hanousek, Kočenda, and Svejnar, (2009) Feige and Urban (2008), Marangos (2004), Filatotcheva, Wright, Uhlenbruck, Tihanyi, and Hoskisson (2003), Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann (2003), Filatotchev,

Wright, Uhlenbruck, Tihanyi, and Hoskisson (2003), Hellman and Kaufmann (2001), Peng (2001), Pomfret, (2000), Nixon, Suvd, Luvsandorj and Walters (2000), Heybey and Murrell (1999) and Lavigne (1999, 1995). In the early years of its transition to a market economy, Mongolia became an experimental zone for neo-liberal economists. As observed by Anderson et al.:

*Economists are rarely able to observe the results of clean, controlled experiments of significant scope, but the transition of the formerly socialist countries has taken us closer to this scientific ideal than ever before. One such experiment occurred in Mongolia (Anderson et al. 2000: 527).*

The experiment was “shock therapy,” a term coined by economist John Williamson together with other economists from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and US Treasury Department (Zorig 2013: 24). The architect of shock therapy, Jeffrey D. Sachs, came to Mongolia in 1991 to promote this agenda (Rossabi 2005: 48), which was viewed with concern by several leading economists (Nixon, Murrell) and many leading Mongols (e.g. Hulan). As the World Bank and the IMF were also providing post-socialist countries with Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs) to stimulate economic growth, lenders were not just suggesting that transition countries follow the “Washington Consensus” but were “more likely enforcing them to follow the strategy” (Zorig 2013: 25).<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in mid 1992 Western lenders emphasised their control by suspending loan payments to Mongolia, as they were disappointed with Mongolia’s “slow” economic transition (Hanson 2004: 57). This radical approach was a significant contrast to the ‘gradualist’ approach adopted by China and Vietnam, which allowed countries time to adjust to newly-introduced rules and modes of behaviour (Shimomura et al. 1994: 20).

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<sup>24</sup> The USA has far greater influence than any other country in the IMF. As in the (World) Bank, the USA is the largest single vote-holder in the Executive Board (Paloni and Zanardi 2006: 4).

*Yet the ADB was aware of the potentially harmful effects of these policies*  
(Rossabi 2005: 47)

As Khongorzul dryly noted, “the transition...did not proceed smoothly” (Khongorzul 2013: 118). Some persuasive reformers saw a quick switch to a market economy as the only alternative to communism. After all, “was not Big Brother also shifting to the market?” (Denzinger and Gelb 1992: 26). However, Lavigne noted there was no textbook theory available concerning transition from a socialist economic system to a market economy and suggested “some serious policy errors may be made in managing the transition” (Lavigne 1995: 249).

*If shop shelves had been monotonous under communism, they were empty now* (Hanson 2004: 54).

With hindsight, it seems shock therapy advocates underestimated the potential disruptions arising from the rapid adoption of a highly deregulated economy. Kovacic noted one assessment of privatization in Russia concluded a careful pre-reform evaluation of initial conditions might have raised doubts about the wisdom of adopting a strategy that immediately transferred vast amounts of state holdings into private hands (Kovacic 2001: 273). Przeworski and Vreeland found IMF program participation lowered growth rates for as long as countries remain under a program. Once countries left the program, they grew faster than if they had remained, but not faster than they would have without participation (Przeworski and Vreeland 2000: 385).

Indeed, Rana and Hamid considered Mongolia ‘was unlikely to incur a large cost’ from rapid change, as the economy could ‘hardly be worsened’ (Rana and Hamid 1996: 377). The World Bank suggested several of Mongolia’s industries had excess capacity, including the industrial sector which then employed 100,000 workers, especially firms focused on CMEA trade which employed 35,000 people (World Bank 1994: 2). Consistent with these rather perverse views, economic policy emphasised rapid reform (Fritz and Lhamsuren 2006: 17). Several authors were concerned that slow institutional changes inhibited reforms (see Nixson and Walters 1999: 147, Nixson, 1995a, Collins and Nixson (1993, 1991) (Anderson et al. 2000). Mongolia responded with wide ranging economic reforms, stylised by Marshall et al. as “Russian-style” reforms (Marshall et al. 2004: 1).

During the early 1990s the Mongolian Government created a legal environment for managing economic activities; took action to improve fiscal discipline, and developed a social safety network (Gantsog and Altantsetseg 2002: 2). The changes included floating the Mongolian currency (the *tugrik*) in May 1993 (Shagdar and Nakajima 2013: 44). Most import duties were abolished and other forms of protection removed (Pomfret 1999: 7). On 1 May 1997 Mongolia unilaterally removed import duties and taxes for most goods, except alcohol, tobacco, petroleum products and motor vehicles, and dropped excise taxes on exported goods (Shagdar and Nakajima 2013: 44).<sup>25</sup>

Price controls were also liberalised.<sup>26</sup> The prices of petroleum products were raised fourfold in June 1991, and the list of controlled retail prices was cut from 35 to 17 in September 1991 (Shagdar 2003: 36). The finance

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<sup>25</sup> By 2009, the IMF had changed its perspective about trade liberalisation, noting that trade liberalization meant that sectors that were protected before the liberalization contracted, leading to lower incomes in these areas (Oberdabernig 2013: 5).

<sup>26</sup> Prior to 1991, the prices of all products were set directly by the government through the State Committee for Price and Standardization. The difference between prices and domestic production costs was subsidized from the state budget (Shagdar 2003: 35).

sector also changed radically. Mongolia passed a new banking law and the banking system was reorganized into a two-tier structure, with the Bank of Mongolia acting as the central bank implementing monetary policy, and sixteen other banks providing commercial services (Shagdar 2003: 39).

*But in general, the quality of laws is quite low, in many cases lacking internal consistency and completeness. Moreover, these laws are often a facade without a foundation. Missing are the appropriately structured agencies, effective courts, the customary practice of enforcing private rights, the professionals, the scholarly and judicial opinion, and the web of ancillary institutions that give substance to written law (Murrell et al. 1996: 34).*

Perhaps the most symbolic event was the establishment of a stock market next to the main city square, conveniently close to the parliament building. Moreover, Mongols became shareholders in many enterprises as former state property came under private ownership.<sup>27</sup> This process was aided by policy advice from without, including assistance from the World Bank which financed, with Japan, a \$6.8 million project on how to establish a suitable economic framework. The objectives of the project were to help Mongolia develop its institutional capacity for macroeconomic management in its transition to a market economy; to help define strategies for sectors/subsectors key to Mongolia's economic development, and, as appropriate, demonstrate or confirm the feasibility of selected public investments (World Bank 1998: 1). The policy change was profound. As Munkh-Erdene commented, “Mongolia’s transition was a shift from the

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<sup>27</sup> The author’s discussions with many Mongols indicates there was mass confusion regarding the concept and mechanisms by which privatisation was achieved. “There was no private ownership of goods under socialism, and when these pink tickets came, we did not know what to do with them” was a fairly typical comment. Transition economies ordinarily featured “a comparatively small number of individuals with formal training in disciplines relevant to a market economy or experience in market-oriented institutions” (Kovacic 2001: 269).

extreme left of this politico economic continuum to the extreme right” (Munkh-Erdene 2012: 63).

How did these experiments work? Under socialism Mongolia was a relatively poor country, but unemployment was negligible and living standards were augmented by trade with the Soviet bloc and subsidies from Russia. Living standards, aided by social transfers, were similar for all Mongolians, whether they lived in the city or countryside, and pay levels between occupations were similar. Smith, for example, noted salary levels for high level jobs (such as doctors, inspectors and skilled factory workers) were around \$US210 a month in 1972, whereas clerical workers received circa \$US135 per month (Smith 2007: 23). The pastoral industry was also significant and provided adequate food for all the Mongolian population. (Pastoral livestock production employed around 34 per cent of Mongolia’s economically active population in the early 1990s (Cooper 1995: 6)).

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the consequent need for Mongolia to transform itself to a market economy caused severe economic dislocation, and poverty became endemic for a substantial minority over this period.<sup>28</sup> As noted by Denzinger and Gelb, Mongolia’s geography and economic orientation made disengagement from the Soviet economy and integration into the global market economy very difficult (Denzinger and Gelb 1992: 27). However, Mongolia had little choice but to establish a market economy. A return to socialism was impossible in the absence of substantial foreign support. Nonetheless, the economic transition had many adverse social consequences. As noted by Purevdawa et al., the loss of Soviet economic subsidies resulted in a deterioration of government services, rising unemployment, increased school drop-outs, higher rates of alcoholism, and increased crime and prostitution (Purevdawa et al. 1997: 398).

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<sup>28</sup> Soviet aid ceased abruptly, and the Russians also demanded immediate repayment of loans, which they estimated at \$US17 billion. Later they agreed to a ten year delay in repayments (Atwood 2006: 240).

Later, the Mongolian economy stabilised, and living standards began to improve somewhat. The huge Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold deposit in the Gobi Desert was commercialised between 2000 and 2010. In the longer term, given the extent of Mongolia's mining resources, economic prospects appear good, but this is critically dependent on the prices Mongolia receives for exports of copper, coal, gold, and iron.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

Mongolia's dependence on external assistance was felt badly when the Soviet Union and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), (CMEA had been a major export market for Mongolia) collapsed, leaving the country without any external subsidies and disappearing export markets. The dissolution of 'internationalist assistance' from 'fraternal socialist countries' contributed to the economic crisis, pushed the population to the verge of a hunger crisis (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2004: 32).

At the beginning of 1991, Soviet financial assistance (which had averaged 30 per cent of GDP) finished. Following the dissolution of CMEA, foreign trade also declined dramatically. CMEA exports were estimated at 17 per cent of Mongolia's GDP in 1990 (Fischer et al. 1996: 50). Exports fell from \$US795.8 million in 1989 to \$US346.5 million in 1991. Imports also fell, from \$US1.53 billion in 1989 to \$US391.5 million in 1991 (Denziger and Gelb 1992: 13). The results were stark. The IMF estimated per capita GNP at US\$522 in 1989, and gave an estimate for 1994 of US\$330 rising to US\$352 in 1995 "making Mongolia one of the poorest countries in the world" (Nixson and Walters 2000: 37).

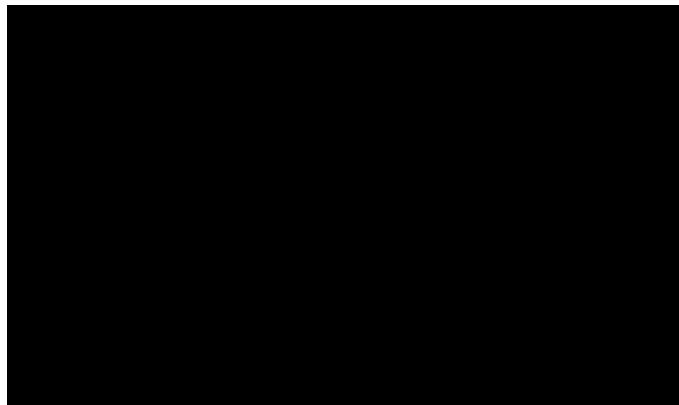
Yearly changes in Mongolia's gross domestic product between 1990 and 2001 are shown in Figure 6.1. Mongolia's GDP declined significantly in



the early transition years. Indeed, Mongolia's economic contraction was likely twice that experienced by the United States in the early 1930s Great Depression (UNDP 1998: 7). Reinert, a fierce critic of "shock therapy," lamented that fifty years of careful industrialisation was "annihilated" (Reinert 2004: 158).

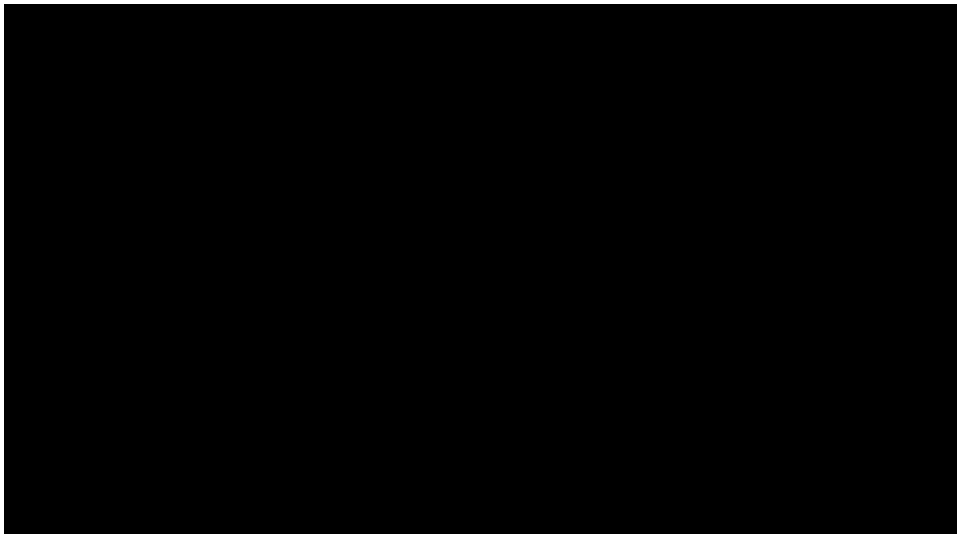
**Figure 6.1: Changes in Mongolia's real GDP, 1990 to 2001**

1999=100



Source: Cheng 2003: 4

National savings and investment also fell significantly. The economic collapse provided "a singularly inauspicious first data point on the performance of markets" (Murrel et al. 1996: 178). Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) also collapsed (Figure 6.2). Russian investment vanished, and investment from other sources was not available to Mongolia, given Mongolia's lack of links to countries outside the Soviet bloc.

**Figure 6.2: Mongolia: foreign direct investment, 1990 to 2000, \$US million**

Source: Demirbag et al. 2005: 254

The early transition years also saw hyperinflation and significant depreciation of the Mongolian tugrik. Inflation reached 330 per cent in 1993 (Nixson and Walters 2000: 43). While some commentators implied this was inevitable without price controls, McKinnon argued chaos could have been avoided with a gradual approach to ending price controls (McKinnon 1991: 1). The effects were devastating. The purchasing power of the average Mongolian was roughly halved (Reinert 2004: 159). Living standards declined markedly, because services guaranteed under socialism diminished, while the greater “availability and variety of goods promised by advocates of market-based reforms were scarcely visible” (Pomfret 1999: 5). Sneath suggested the real transition Mongolia experienced was from a middle income to a poor country, “as if the process of development had been reversed” (Sneath 2002a: 196).

*They gave us “shock treatment”. We were shocked. We had no understanding of how a market economy worked, and the government did not provide any education about these new things (Interview, 2018).*

The adjustment process was helped by two economic stabilizers. First, the traditional pastoral lifestyle was resilient (although Spoor noted that crop food production, including wheat and vegetables, plummeted in the early transition period (Spoor 1996: 616). Second, the informal sector eased transition from central planning by maintaining a flow of desired goods and services and alleviating urban unemployment (Pomfret 1999: 8). Anderson estimated the informal sector provided over 100,000 jobs in the late 1990s (Anderson 1998: 8) and around 22 per cent of household income (ibid: 13). Despite a highly educated population, unemployment and underemployment were “rampant” and new employment opportunities were largely limited to livestock herding and the informal sector (Morris 2002: ix).<sup>29</sup> The informal sector continues to be an important source of income, providing 17.7 per cent of employment in 2014 (Dandar and Choijiljav 2014: 2) and 13.7 per cent of national income (ibid: 6).

Later in the decade the economy improved somewhat, reflecting private sector growth. Bikeles et al. contended private sector growth compensated to a great degree for the abysmal performance in the faltering public sector. Between 1995 and 1999 the private sector's share of GDP expanded from 55 to 73 per cent (Bikeles et al. 2000: 4). Rapid growth in the cashmere industry was important in the latter 1990s (Pomfret 1999: 10). Goat herding became a major livelihood, with over 200,000 households involved in livestock herding by 2002 (43 per cent of households in 2002), with cashmere providing income to over a third of Mongolia's population (Ifft 2005: 3).

By the end of the 1990s, the data indicated the economy was only slightly smaller than in 1989. Out of 27 transition countries, only Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia did significantly better (Slok 2005: 129). The IMF believed

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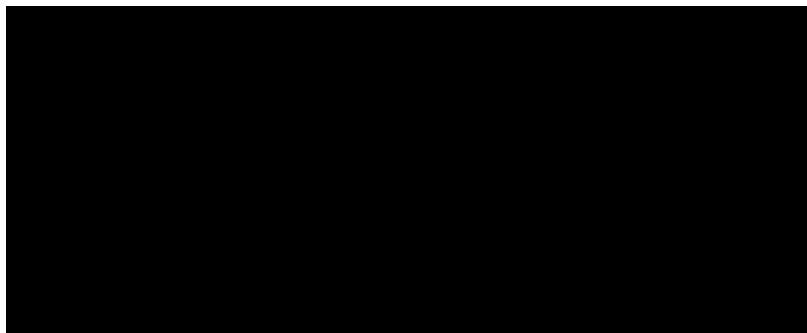
<sup>29</sup> The ILO defines the “informal economy” as economic activities that are not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements (ILO 2015: 1).

Mongolia benefited from efficiency gains following market reforms (Cheng 2003: 3). However, Mongolia's economy was still very troubled at the end of the decade. Sneath suggested the disappointing results revealed the limits of the thinking that lay behind reform, especially the emphasis on privatisation (Sneath 2002a: 196).<sup>30</sup> Most people in post-socialist Mongolia had no job security, no idea what their salary would allow them to buy, or "whether their meager savings would be available the next day" (Pederson 2012: 2).

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

The next decade was a period of relative economic sunshine compared to the previous decade, reflecting foreign direct investment in mining, and growth in mining exports (see Figure 6.3), although corruption, poverty and inequality increased markedly.

**Figure 6.3: Mongolia: Contribution of mining, 1997 to 2008**



Source: Batchuluun and Lin, 2010: 83.

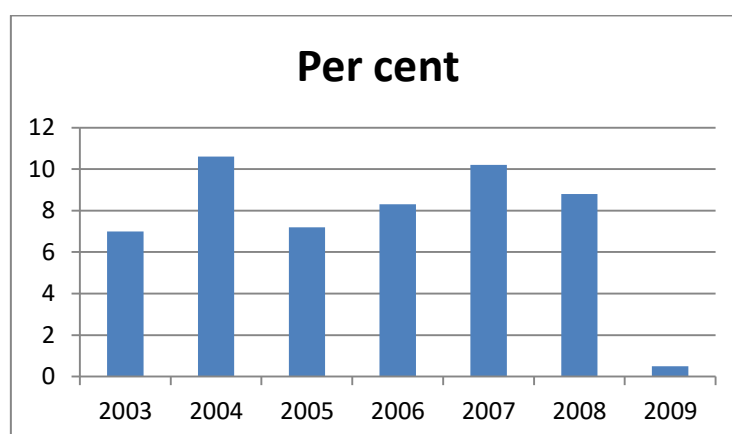
Although the giant Oyu Tolgoi project overshadows other developments, it was not the only source of foreign direct investment. Mongolia experienced phenomenal growth in FDI, from US\$1 million (under 1 per

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<sup>30</sup> Hanson noted the privatisation process was "something like a board game, which might have been amusing if the prosperity of the nation was not at stake" (Hanson 2004: 54).

cent of GDP) in 1990 to US\$1 billion (81 per cent of GDP) by 2010), of which 65 per cent went to mining and oil exploration (Davaakhuu et al. 2014: 667), with 50 per cent of FDI coming from China (ibid: 668). Nonetheless, the importance of the Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold deposit cannot be overestimated. Lander noted the “extensive Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold deposits in the southern Gobi region signified ... an opportunity to finally shake the poverty that had shadowed the 1990s” (Lander 2013: 7, 8). Growth in GDP was very rapid from 2003 until 2009, when the Global Financial Crisis severely reduced copper prices (see Figure 6.4). Over this period GDP per capita tripled (Batchuluun and Lin 2010: 83).

**Figure 6.4: Growth in gross domestic product in Mongolia, 2003 to 2009 (constant prices)**



Source: Batchuluun and Lin, 2010: 83.

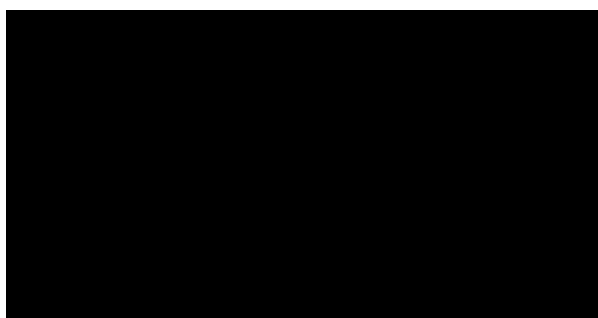
Sadly, wealth became more concentrated, and poverty and inequality remained entrenched, as discussed later in this chapter. The fabulous new apartment blocks, with electricity, running water, central heating and sewerage, especially to the south of Ulaanbaatar in Zaisan, were a flagrant contrast to the *peri-ger* districts around the city where Ulaanbaatar’s urban poor are concentrated.

## More recent developments

Between 2010 and 2018 Mongolia's economy waxed and waned. Early in the decade, fuelled by mining investment, Mongolia experienced rapid economic growth. However, from 2013 to 2017 mining investment plummeted, as did economic growth. The main factors contributing to this change in fortunes were changes in mining legislation to the perceived disadvantage of foreign investors, initial failure by government to reach agreement in respect to further expansion of the Oyu Tolgoi mine, and poor progress in developing the huge Tavan Tolgoi coal mine. China's economic slowdown in this period also resulted in falling commodity prices.

Growth in Mongolia's GDP from 2010 to 2014, and changes in mining output are shown in Figure 6.5. By 2016, many people were in economic distress. In the absence of significant capital inflows, and with mining commodity prices in hot retreat, the economy foundered. Household Socio-Economic Survey data indicate average monthly household income decreased by 9.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2016 compared to the same period a year earlier (Montsame 2016: 1).

**Figure 6.5: Mongolia, growth in GDP and the mining industry's share of GDP 2000 to 2014**



Source: Osborne et al. 2015: 9

Foreign debt also became a concern to many commentators. Between 2005 and 2015 Mongolia's total foreign debt rose to 175 per cent of GDP, with 75 per cent being public debt (Batsuuri 2015: 3). However, IMF projections suggested better outcomes later in the decade (Figure 6.6). These projections, of course, depend critically on the level of demand for the mining commodities produced by Mongolia and commodity prices.

**Figure 6.6: Mongolia: projected annual real GDP growth 2013 to 2022**



Source: International Monetary Fund, 2017: 22

## Conclusions

*Mongolia's future prosperity will undoubtedly depend on the ability of the governing politicians to earn the interest and support of foreign investors (MacDougall 2015: 52).*

Despite the severe hardships experienced early in the transition period, most Mongolian voters supported the move to market democracy. Surveys from 1996 to 2006 indicated between 88 and 94 per cent of voters took the view that the transition to a market economy was the correct decision for Mongolia (Prohl and Sumati 2008: 155), although there were strong concerns about economic conditions early in this period. Nonetheless,

most voters were optimistic that economic conditions would improve over time (Prohl and Sumati 2008: 165) although most voters generally took the view that living conditions were “bad” or “rather bad” (Prohl and Sumati, 2008: 176).

Later, strong growth in mining led to strong economic growth, but from 2012 to 2018 the economy foundered. Nonetheless, Mongolia’s economic future should be bright. With mineral wealth estimated at \$US1 to \$US3 trillion for a population of just 3 million, the IMF has forecasted that Mongolia should start running large fiscal surpluses and accumulating savings for future generations (IMF 2015: 4). However, the World Bank cautions that mining sector development will depend on the government’s ability to establish and maintain a clear policy stating the role of government in promoting and developing the sector, and a competitive, stable and predictable fiscal regime for mining (World Bank undated: 1).

Notwithstanding its strong growth potential, Mongolia still faces significant economic challenges, including: an unbalanced economy, weak employment growth, economic volatility; potential susceptibility to the ‘Dutch disease’ (discussed in more detail below), issues of governance, and poverty alleviation. Many commentators have expressed concern that the Mongolian economy is overly dependent on mining, with the result that economic activity fluctuates markedly in line with the mining sector’s fortunes. Mining is Mongolia’s largest export industry, major tax payer, and main source of direct foreign investment, and is also becoming *more* important to Mongolia’s economy.

Fisher et al.’s projections indicated the Oyu Tolgoi project would add 30 per cent to Mongolia’s GDP, which would add to resource sector



dependency (Fisher et al. 2011: 112).<sup>31</sup> This dependence makes it difficult to achieve sustained growth, and leaves the Mongolian economy very vulnerable to boom-bust cycles (Macdougall 2015: 45), (Oxford Business Group 2013: 48). The economy is very vulnerable to weakening sentiment for copper and coal and is almost entirely dependent on mining exports to China (MacDougall 2015: 43).

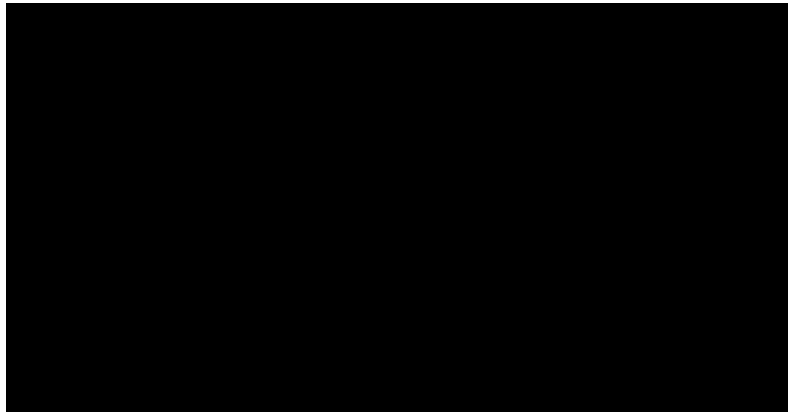
Mining led development also raises another red flag. Employment generation has been elusive, despite Mongolia's young and educated workforce. While the mining sector is important to GDP, it makes only a small contribution to employment growth. The 2013 labour market survey reported that only 14,541 job offers (6.6 per cent) were in mining (Zanabazar et al. 2017: 341).

Many commentators also believe Mongolia is susceptible to the "Dutch Disease" (or resources curse) where real or anticipated extraordinary earnings arising from mining cause upward exchange rate pressure. Other industries may then struggle to survive (Warr 2006: 1). Indeed, some researchers consider adverse effects from resources development are inevitable. Webb argues "an abundance of natural resources almost always has a negative impact on the economic growth and diversification of developing countries" (Webb 2008: 16). More optimistically, Pomfret suggested that a resource curse "is not inevitable among resource rich transition economies" (Pomfret 2011: 1). Mičánek and Blizkovsky's research also indicated that, as of 2016, Mongolia was not yet facing the resource curse, although they cautioned that this may change over time (Mičánek and Blizkovsky 2016: 304).

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<sup>31</sup> However, economic modelling can sometimes be very wrong. A recent review of a major gas project in Papua New Guinea concluded outcomes were very different from those forecast when project financing was sought. Against predictions of a doubling in the size of the PNG economy, the outcome was a gain of only 10 per cent, focused on the largely foreign-owned resource sector (Flanagan and Fletcher 2011: 5).

**Figure 6.7: The increasing share of mining in Mongolia's economy (real GDP, 2005=100)**



Source: Erdenebat undated: 7

Several commentators have also raised concerns about poor economic management and governance issues. Fiscal discipline has been poor. While fiscal revenues decreased by 75 per cent between 2011 and 2017, government spending tripled in nominal terms. The amount of government salaries, infrastructure costs, subsidized loans and cash transfers has exploded since 2011 (BTI 2018: 2). As a result, Mongolia needed to go, cap in hand, to the IMF in 2017 to beg for yet another bailout. Monetary policy has also been scatty, with high real interest rates occurring concurrently with very high growth in money supply. Prudential and transparent monetary policies in conjunction with budget-balanced fiscal policies are universally recommended as the mean to achieve a sound macroeconomic stance (Kamar and Soto 2017: 1).

Jargalsaikhan argues that Mongolia needs to put its “crabs in a barrel” politics in order, as intensive competition among political parties, factions, and interest groups has resulted in a weak bureaucracy, a vulnerable judiciary, and an unstable legal and regulatory environment (Jargalsaikhan 2015a: 9). Bataa also suggested fighting corruption and creating a stable legal environment where the rule of law and the property rights are respected should be high on the agenda (Bataa 2012: 1).

Perhaps most important of all, despite growth in Mongolia's economy since the start of the millennium, a drive through the peri-*ger* districts around Ulaanbaatar reveals both absolute and relative poverty. For many countries, income inequality is perceived to be the outcome of unfair access to resources and thus detrimental to social cohesion (Bastagli et al. 2012: 4). This problem is exacerbated by pervasive corruption in Mongolia. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

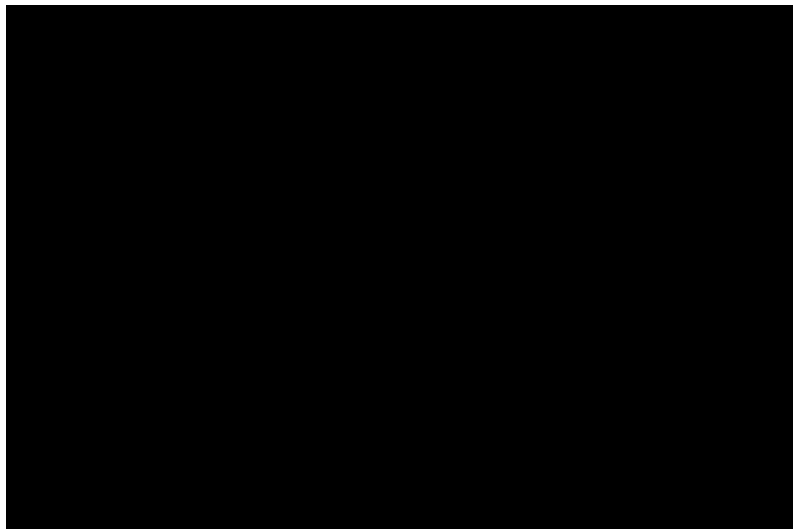
## Poverty and inequality in post-socialist Mongolia

There is an extensive literature about the causes and effects of poverty and inequality, especially with respect to transition and developing economies (see for example Adams and Page (2005), Ahluwalia, (1976), Allen (2016), Anderson (2005), Atkinson (2016), Balakrishnan, Steinberg, and Syed (2013), Barrett (2005) Beck, Demircuc-Kunt and Levine (2004), Bourguignon (2016), (2004), (2003), (2000), Bowles, Durlauf, and Hoff (2006), Carter and Barrett (2006) Dollar (2005), Fox, and Hoelscher (2010), Goldberg, and Pavcnik (2004), Ghosh, Mookherjee, and Ray (2000), Gupta, Davoodi, and Alonso-Terme (2002), Inglehart (2016), Irz, Lin, Thirtle, and Wiggins (2001), Jalilian, and Kirkpatrick (2002), Krahn, Hartnagel and Gartrell (1986), Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, (2003), Ravallion (2004), (2001), Rosanvallion (2016), Sociales (2001), and Tepperman, (2016)).

*Why does inequality matter? The IMF suggests 'Equality, like fairness, is an important value in most societies...Inequality can be a signal of lack of income mobility and opportunity—a reflection of persistent disadvantage for particular segments of the society. Widening inequality also has significant implications for growth and macroeconomic stability' (Dabla-Norris et al. 2015: 5).*

Several authors focus on economic theory concerning poverty and inequality. As noted by Inglehart, French economist Thomas Piketty argued “a tendency toward inequality is an inherent feature of capitalism” (Inglehart 2016: 2). Ahluwalia notes a similar perspective arises from Kuznets’ work on income distribution, which makes the hypothesis that the secular behaviour of inequality follows an inverted 'U-shaped' pattern with inequality first increasing and then decreasing with development (Ahluwalia 1976: 2).

**Figure 6.8: A homeless person in Ulaanbaatar**



Source: <https://www.chinasmack.com/mongolian-homeless-living-underground-in-sewers>, downloaded 21 September 2017

Even worse, in 1976 Ahluwalia observed that the process of development may lead not just to increased relative inequality, but also lead to absolute impoverishment of the lower income groups (Ahluwalia 1976: 2). Later, the IMF noted that the income distribution in a country itself matters for growth, arguing that if the income share of the rich increases, GDP growth declines, whereas improving the lot of the poor implies higher GDP growth. (Dabla-Norris et al. 2015: 4). That said, ‘investigating the impacts of IMF agreements on the distribution of income most studies find that

program participation is connected to higher inequality' (Oberdabernig 2013: 6).

What is the situation in Mongolia? Narangoa suggests *...those with money have become powerful and those with power have accumulated more wealth. The poor have become even poorer because there was no adequate welfare system to look after them after the collapse of the communist system'* (Narangoa 2012: 2).

Poverty and inequality reflect both the income and assets of individuals. A broad theory of income distribution suggests that income is heavily influenced by education levels (Inglehart 2016: 7). Consistent with Piketty's theory, the collapse of the Mongolian economy and hyper-inflation resulted in a significant decline in living standards and caused a new problem: poverty. Pomfret noted poverty was neither explicitly recognized nor extensively analysed during the Soviet era. The welfare system was designed for an egalitarian society with universal entitlement to pensions, child support, health, education and other social services (Pomfret 1999: 3).

In the early 1990s Cooper questioned what poverty meant in the Mongolian context, noting poverty is generally measured by income or expenditure capacity (based on recommended calorie requirements or the estimated cost of a bundle of goods (including food and shelter) necessary for survival). Cooper believed assets, in the form of livestock, were also an important indicator of wealth or poverty in Mongolia (Cooper 1995: 11). While Mongol's assets have broadened to include property, vehicles and other physical assets, the notion still has relevance in contemporary Mongolia.

In 2006, Mongolia's National Statistical Office adopted a similar approach, defining poverty as lacking the means to make a living; lacking sufficient nutrition and not being able to access sufficient healthcare. The NSO noted the poorest were those without assets, without homes, and with very little access to livelihood opportunities and services (Kabanga 2015: 145). Cooper noted the availability of public goods such as health, education or transport services was also relevant. During the early 1990s reductions in public services were significant. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, including severe weather, rural poverty also became evident in the early 1990s.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

Cooper's data indicated that by June 1994, 26 per cent of Mongolia's population were in poverty (Cooper 1995: 12).<sup>32</sup> Sobhan, appalled by images of homeless children living in sewers, lamented that in "the golden age of the market economy, 25 per cent of the families of Mongolia have fallen below the poverty line, which stands at a handsome \$US10 a month" (Sobhan 1995: 1).

The National Statistics Office began to measure poverty during the 1990s, through Living Standard Measurement Surveys (LSMS) in 1995 and 1998, and a Participatory Living Standards Assessment (PLSA) in 2000. LSMS 1995 indicated one third of the population were poor, with many people close to the poverty line (Nixson and Walters 2004: 16). LSMS 1998, although not strictly comparable with LSMS 1995, inferring that little had changed for the better between the two surveys.<sup>33</sup> The Participatory Living Standards Assessment over 1995-2000 suggested the proportion of poor

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<sup>32</sup> There is considerable debate about the reliability of Mongolian poverty data, especially longitudinal data. Some authors considered the data may underestimate poverty levels, possibly substantially. For alternative approaches, see Schreiner (2016) and Alkire et al. (2011).

<sup>33</sup> Schelzig argues there were significant changes in five important areas between the LSMS, which render comparisons fairly meaningless (Schelzig 2000: 13).

and very poor households increased markedly (Nixson and Walters 2004: 18). This problem has proven intractable. A decade later Shagdar noted the country was still struggling to bring one-third of its citizens out of poverty (Shagdar 2007: 13).

The IMF considered the groups most likely to experience poverty were single parent-headed households with many children, households with less than 100 head of livestock, the unemployed, the uneducated (without basic education), and vulnerable groups (elderly, disabled, street children and orphan children) (International Monetary Fund 2003: 11). Whereas socialist-era Mongolia had few divorces, by 1997 15 per cent of households were female-headed (compared to 5 per cent in 1990), including a high proportion of widows. Robinson and Sologlo noted that in this period around 65-80 per cent of all male deaths in Mongolia were men aged 20-29. Anecdotal evidence suggested young men's high death rates in the decade 1990-2000 reflected their often wretched experiences in respect to changes under market democracy when unemployment soared, leading to losses in income and self-esteem. Alcohol abuse also rose markedly. Official data also indicated alcohol related pathologies rose markedly, while the incidence of liver cancer doubled in the early transition years, when stomach cancer rates also rose markedly (United Nations Development Program 1997: 18). (Many households also functioned as female-headed households in cases where men were unemployed or unable to work because of ill-health or alcoholism (Robinson and Solongo: 2000: 15)).

*The impact of the transition on poverty levels is a facet of Mongolia's transition which is majored on by critical voices and one that tends to be overlooked by those with more positive perspectives (Marshall 2004: 20).*

Griffin described the first decade as “disappointing” in economic development terms and with the emergence of poverty and lack of growth

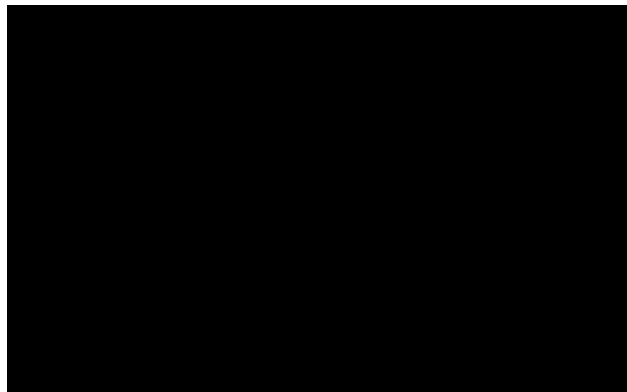
in productive jobs (Griffin 2003: 1, 2), while Brenner linked poverty to transition and rued the post-1990 poverty which affected the lives of one in three Mongolians (Brenner 2003: 29).

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

*...poverty reduction slows down and incident of extreme poverty also rises in regions where inequality is high (Islam and Ali 2015: 1).*

In 1989 Mongolia was a poor country, but there was little inequality. By 2000, the Mongolian economy had recovered to pre-transition levels. Hence, Mongolia was still a poor country, but by 2000 a significant share of Mongolians lived in abject poverty and there was marked inequality. By contrast, in the decade to 2010 Mongolia's national income grew significantly, assisted by major mining projects, and GDP per capita rose, which would have been expected to alleviate poverty (Figure 6.9). However, this was not the case. Increases in national income did not 'trickle down' to the poor.

**Figure 6.9: Mongolia, GDP per capita, \$US, 1995 to 2012**



Source: Fritz 2014: 38



Asian Development Bank data on personal expenditure for selected Asian countries showed extreme poverty persisted in Mongolia. Mid-decade, 39.2 per cent of Mongols had expenditure of \$US 2-4 per day, while 12.4 per cent had daily expenditures of \$US4-10 per day. In 2010 Walker and Hall again questioned the extent to which the poor benefited from the economic boom, as survey data from 2002-03 to 2007-08 showed little change in the proportion of poor households, “underlying the need for a clear social safety net program to address their needs” (Walker and Hall 2010: 391).

Of the 21 countries included in the ADB data, only three countries had a higher proportion of their populations with daily expenditure from \$US2-4 a day (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan). Moreover, as noted by the IMF, the gap between Mongolia’s rich and poor continued to widen (International Monetary Fund 2015b: 20). Mid-decade, USAID cautioned that Mongolia must delicately manage private sector transition and acceleration without significantly worsening the gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots (USAID 2003: 17). Johnson concluded those who started out in an advantageous position profited from the new regime, but the poor had neither the social and economic resources nor the opportunity to acquire them and so “remain entrenched in the daily struggle just to survive” (Johnson 2008: 391).

Social protection, including poverty alleviation, was a major Budget issue. Total expenditure on Social Protection (SP) in 2002-03 represented 10.5 per cent of GDP. Mid-decade, around 550,000 poor people were estimated to be beneficiaries of some form of SP assistance (60 per cent of the total poor population). Around 40 per cent of poor beneficiaries were recipients of health insurance benefits (Narantuya and Uuganbileg 2006: 159, 160). Child nutrition deficiencies were also an important indicator of poverty around this period. Sadly, child nutrition generally did not meet World Health Organization basic standards. Contemporary studies showed that

for children under five years, 13 per cent were underweight, 25 per cent had stunted growth, 32 per cent had rickets from vitamin D deficiency, and 40 per cent had anaemia (Narantuya and Uuganbileg 2006: 169).

While Dollar and Kraay assert growth is good for the poor (Dollar and Kraay 2002), Fosu, writing for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2010, considered this perspective was simplistic. Fosu noted strong GDP growth in several countries in the latter 1990s was accompanied by modest poverty reduction, because inequality increased to thwart the transformation process, including , Albania, Georgia, India, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, **Mongolia**, and Yemen (Fosu 2010: 12). Marshall, Nixon and Walters also argued poverty reduction would have been more substantial, had greater attention been paid to managing inequality.<sup>34</sup> They concluded:

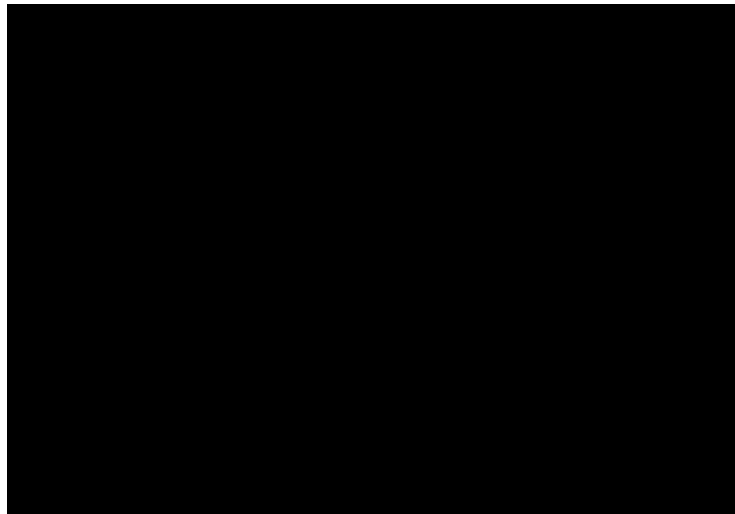
*...the current policy stance is “distributionally blind” and that ongoing reductions are dependent on “trickledown” gains from Mongolia’s booming mining sector, and as such, are fragile and vulnerable to external changes (Marshall et al. 2008: 1).*

As shown in Figure 6.10, Mongolia’s experiences were a marked contrast to those in many other emerging Asian economies over this time period. Whereas the extent of inequality declined in most emerging Asian economies in the decade 2000 to 2010, the opposite was the case for Mongolia.

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<sup>34</sup> Marshall et al. (2008) believed official Mongolian data understated poverty levels, possibly substantially, noting World Bank data compilation methodologies were opaque and that the NSO was very secretive about this data.

**Figure 6.10: Changes in Inequality: Mongolia compared with other developing countries**

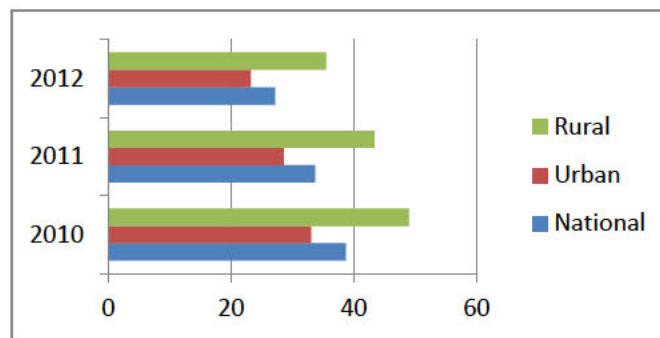


Source: International Monetary Fund, 2015a: 20

In summary, as concluded by Chuluundorj, despite fast economic growth and targeted antipoverty measures, poverty remained significant in Mongolia over the decade. Mid-decade, Mongolia was still one of the fifty poorest countries in the world (Pastore 2012: 3). Moreover, late in the decade the poverty level worsened to 38.7 per cent in 2009, and 39.2 per cent in 2010. (Chuluundorj 2012: 45). The lament noted by Pastore ‘I wish I had \$US100 per month’ was far from atypical in Mongolia in 2010 (Pastore 2012: 1).

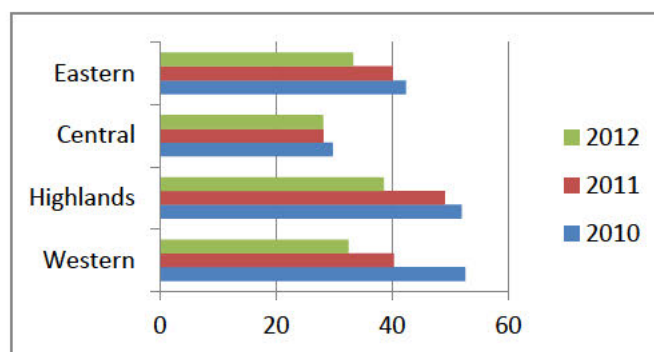
### **More recent developments**

The last decade has again not seen significant poverty alleviation in Mongolia, although early in the decade the signs were promising (see Figure 6.11). Between 2010 and 2012 the incidence of poverty declined in rural and urban settings. Country wide poverty fell from 38.7 per cent in 2010 to 27.4 per cent in 2012 (Osborne et al. 2015: 14).

**Figure 6.11: Poverty in Mongolia, 2010 to 2012, national, urban and rural**

Source: Osborne et al. 2015: 15

There were marked differences in poverty by region. Poverty was significantly higher in the Highlands and Western regions than in the Central region, as shown in Figure 6.12. This was reflected in low incomes in Western Mongolia. The monthly household income of herders from Western Mongolia interviewed by Fraser was both low and irregular, ranging from 50,000 MNT to 80,000 MNT, while some wealthier herders had incomes of up to 100,000 MNT, (say \$US35 to \$US70 a month at 2011 exchange rates) (Fraser 2018: 145).

**Figure 6.12: Poverty in Mongolia, 2010, 2011 and 2012, by region**

Source: Osborne et al. 2015: 15

A study of wellbeing conducted in Mongolia in 2012 also provided interesting results. Chuluun et al. noted income inequality seemed to be

more keenly felt in Mongolia than in other countries, in part because Communist regimes strived to achieve income equality, and such equality was much emphasized (Chuluun et al. 2014: 8). While the later 2016 United Nations Human Development Report for Mongolia concluded poverty and inequality fell in mid-decade, the latest data reported in this publication was generally for 2014, which measured improvements in the mining boom years, but failed to take into account the subsequent marked economic slowdown. The World Bank announced, with some excitement, that Mongolia's poverty rate declined from 27 percent in 2012 to 22 percent in 2014 (World Bank 2015:1). Later data indicated many had slipped back into poverty. The World Bank report also noted large differences in HDI scores between *aimags*, with a clear rural-urban divide. Large urban centres had higher HDIs 'suggesting that these locations offer better access to education and health care services and...the local populations are more uniformly able to find employment' (UNDPa 2016: 39, 40). Many people moved to Ulaanbaatar in the hope of better economic opportunities, often settling in *ger* districts.

## Conclusions

*For many people in post-socialist Mongolia, the crisis brought about by the 'transition' from state socialism to democracy and capitalism has become a permanent condition of life (Pedersen and Højer, 2012: 1).*

Most studies of poverty in Mongolia focus on income growth and changes in GDP per capita.<sup>35</sup> The Human Development Index also includes indicators for life expectancy and education as well as GDP/capita. The data inferred poverty was being reduced in Mongolia. By contrast, household income surveys presented a sad perspective, with average

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<sup>35</sup> This is a serious problem for Mongolia. GDP per capita is used as a criterion by donors in assessing aid needs. United States aid payments via the Millenium Challenge Account use this criterion. See Di Luzio et al. (2016) for a more detailed discussion.

household income declining by 10 per cent in the second quarter 2016 compared to a year earlier. Some 14 per cent of households had an average income of less than 300,000 tugrik per month (rather less than \$US 150 per month) and 17 per cent of households had a monthly income of 300-500 thousand tugriks (say up to \$US 225 per month), while 31 per cent had monthly incomes between 500-900,000 tugrik per month (up to \$US400 per month) (Khuder 2016a: 1). Individual incomes, are, of course, lower than household incomes (Mongolian families can be large), inferring GDP per capita figures severely misrepresent the reality of poverty in Mongolia.

*In many countries, income inequality coexists with non-income inequality in the form of unequal access to education, health, and basic services among different population groups classified by gender, location, and income (Rhee et al. 2014: 79).*

GDP/capita driven measures of poverty also ignore the issue of assets as opposed to income. Takiar and Sainbayar considered housing data, as well as other indicators need to be understood in understanding poverty in Mongolia (Takiar and Sainbayar 2016: 1), as well as the capacity of the country to meet basic living needs outside of food purchases, and the relative weakness of social services such as education and health services provision in Mongolia. In 2011 about 60 per cent of city residents lived in peri-urban *ger* districts, which lacked “modern infrastructure, such as piped water, sanitation and central heating. Some 85 per cent of *ger* area residents heated their homes with coal and wood during the severe winter” (Gan-Yadam et al. 2011: 53).

*Ger* areas also lack other basic facilities such as street lights, proper roads, footpaths, footbridges and adequate drainage, the last mentioned commonly leading to floods (United Nations Development Programme 2011: 2). Living in *ger* districts also affects access to social capital, as residents were

likely to have no access to doctors, teachers, and bank workers, which reflected the lack of health, education, and financial services in the districts. Johnson noted that “without these services, residents of *ger* districts are left out of the social and economic life of the city” (Johnson 2008: 393).

The UN also noted that, despite significant growth, economic prosperity has not been inclusive: in fact, it has failed to reach the most vulnerable in Mongolian society and has not translated into a significant reduction in poverty (Sepulveda Carmona 2013: 2,3).<sup>36</sup> Smith also concluded that it was unclear whether Mongolia was making progress towards poverty reduction (Smith 2012: 8). In part, this may reflect an overly large focus on minerals development, where jobs are few. Hull, for example, concluded that growth in one sector of the economy will not automatically translate into benefits for the poor (Hull 2009: 1). Kappel and Ishengoma also argued that an increase in the economic growth in a country does not automatically result in the movement of workers from the informal sector to the formal sector. Despite high GDP growth rates (over 7 per cent) some East Asian countries faced an increase in unemployment in the 1990s (Kappel and Ishengoma 2006: 10).

Indeed, Kabanga questioned the links between Mongolia’s high poverty rates and the phenomenal growth in socio-economic indicators ranging from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the Human Development Index (HDI) (Kabanga 2014: 143). Kabanga suggested a number of factors are at play, including corruption resulting in the concentration of wealth. Gochoosuren also noted research which indicated that a significant portion of social assistance goes to the rich rather than the poor, a bizarre social welfare policy in a country where so many live in abject poverty. Some 70 per cent of non-poor households receive some form of social assistance, but

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<sup>36</sup> Sepulveda Carmona’s report also highlighted a data issue. Mongolia’s GDP when she reported, improving GDP/capita, leading her to conclude that poverty fell from 39.2 per cent of the population in 2010 to 29.8 per cent in 2011. Nonetheless, the main growth in Mongolia’s output occurred in mining, and the benefits of this growth to the poor are questionable.

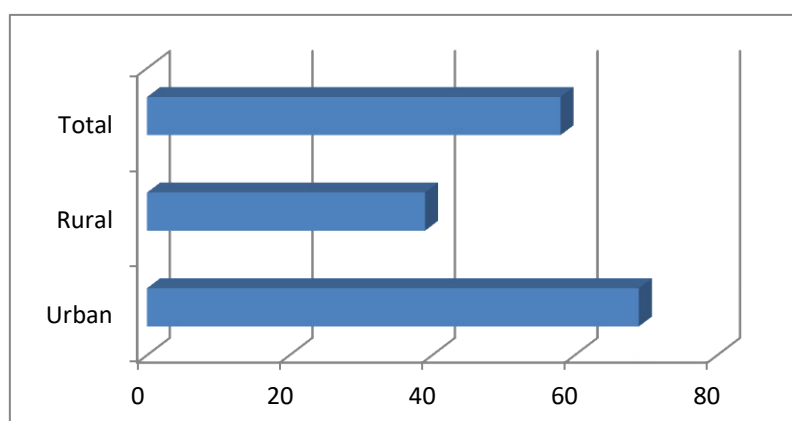
many poor people are excluded from these programs. Gochoosuren noted 40 per cent of the poor do not receive any form of social assistance (Gochoosuren 2014: 2,3). This desperate situation is reflected in child poverty. A significant proportion of Mongol children live in poor households which lacked sufficient financial resources to account for the age-specific needs of these children, causing multiple forms of deprivation (De Neubourg et al. 2016: 3).

Looking ahead, Asian Development Bank projections indicate that despite the excellent prospects for Mongolia's mining sector there is little good news for impoverished Mongolians. The ADB data inferred that many Mongols will continue to be impoverished well into the 2020s (Asian Development Bank, 2011: 17). This is a sad prospect. Pastore's estimates indicated a young person born in a household living on \$US1 a day had about 4 times greater probability of dropping out of school, 2.5 times greater of being educationally marginalized, and 20 times greater of being working poor than a contemporary born in a family living on more than \$US3 a day (Pastore 2012: 1). Breunig and Majeed's recent study also concluded inequality has a negative impact on economic growth, although the authors suggest the negative effect of inequality on growth appears to be concentrated amongst countries with high poverty, which Breunig and Majeed argue the need for policies targeted towards alleviating poverty rather than policies about redistribution (Breunig and Majeed 2016: 1).

Community health improvements are also important if the poor are to escape poverty, but the urban poor in Mongolia face multiple challenges in this regard. Soni et al. noted basic infrastructure services make significant contributions to well-being. They concluded basic services, such as safe water and sanitation (e.g., flushing toilets), have a direct impact on health status and overall well-being (Soni et al. 2014: 66). However, the majority of Ulaanbaatar's urban *ger* residents lack access to such basic services, as shown in Figure 6.13.



**Figure 6.13: Household members using a private improved sanitation facility**



Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2013: 15

The IMF has raised similar concerns, noting that while health outcomes are broadly similar across income groups in advanced countries, the infant mortality rate is twice as high in poor households (in terms of wealth) in emerging market economies. Similarly, female mortality rates tend to be disproportionately higher for lower-income groups (Dabla-Norris et al. 2015: 16). Health system changes post-socialism are discussed in more detail below.

Education is also important in poverty alleviation. Writing in 1999, Bruun et al. concluded Mongolia faced a 'fundamental challenge' to ensure that the newly poor were given a chance to quickly return to the economic mainstream. They were concerned that if poverty was not addressed quickly temporary poverty would 'become endemic' and would pass from one generation to the next, because poor children would have reduced access to education and health care (Bruun et al. 1999: 31). The IMF also noted that education can play an important role in reducing income inequality, as it determines occupational choice, access to jobs, and the level of pay, and plays a pivotal role as a signal of ability and productivity in the job market (Dabla-Norris et al. 2015: 16).

## Corruption in post-socialist Mongolia

There is an extensive literature concerning theories on corruption, the extent of corruption, and its impacts, much of which is applicable to Mongolia (see Aidt, Dutta and Sena (2008), Aidt (2003), Biswas, Farzanegan, and Thum (2012), Bose, Capasso, and Murshid (2008), Chang and Golden (2007), Damania, Fredriksson, and Mani (2004), Damania, Fredriksson, and List (2003), De Graaf, (2007), Foster, Horowitz, and Méndez, (2012), Habib, and Zurawicki, (2002) Hauk and Saez-Marti, (2002). Lambsdorff, (2002) Lambsdorff, (2001). Kaufmann, and Siegelbaum,(1997), Mbaku,(2008), and Treisman (2000)).

Economic theory assumes the corrupt gain financial advantages. Aidt, for example, takes this approach, following Jain (2001) who defined corruption as an act where the power of public office is abused for personal gain (Aidt 2003: 2). This certainly seems to be the case for Mongolia, where a report prepared for USAid noted that “graft on the most significant scales generally occurs ... where there is the most potential for financial gain” (Casals and Associates 2005: 1). Aidt considered three conditions were necessary for corruption to persist: public officials must have decision making power; the possibility of economic rents, where money or other items of value to accrue to the corrupt official; and weak institutions (Aidt 2003: 2). Lambsdorff also examined rent seeking from corruption, (Lambsdorff (2002)) while Damania et al. examined the persistence of corruption and regulatory compliance failures (Damania et al. 2004). Peng believed socialist era disregard of the supremacy of the law adds to corruption in former socialist countries (Peng 2001: 96).

Other authors approach corruption from other viewpoints. For example, Kaufmann and Siegelbaum suggested the origins of Mongolian corruption reach back to Czarist Russia, where officials “were generally considered to

be pervasively corrupt at all levels” (Kaufmann and Siegelbaum 1997: 423). Pipes noted Czarist officials augmented their “modest salaries” through bribes and tips (Pipes 1989: 68). Hauk and Saez-Marti also put forward theories on the cultural transmission of corruption. Hauk and Saez-Marti argued that unless there is some reason (such as the 1970s anti-corruption education campaign in Hong Kong) for changes in personal values, inter-generational corruption is likely to persist (Hauk and Saez-Marti 1997: 4). Habib and Zurawicki (2002) concluded foreign direct investment may be discouraged by corruption. Chang and Golden examined electoral systems and corruption (Chang and Golden (2007)).

Kolstad and Wiig examined links between democracy and corruption, suggesting corruption reduction through transparency in a democracy can be offset by corruption through election campaign finances (Kolstad and Wiig 2015: 6). Uslaner argues that high inequality leads to low trust and high corruption, and then to more inequality – an inequality trap (Uslaner 2017, 2008). Islam also draws attention to the strong relationship between crime and inequality (Islam and Ali 2015: 15). Diaby and Sylwester suggested corruption may be more significant in decentralised governance regimes like Mongolia’s (Diaby and Sylwester 2014: 1).

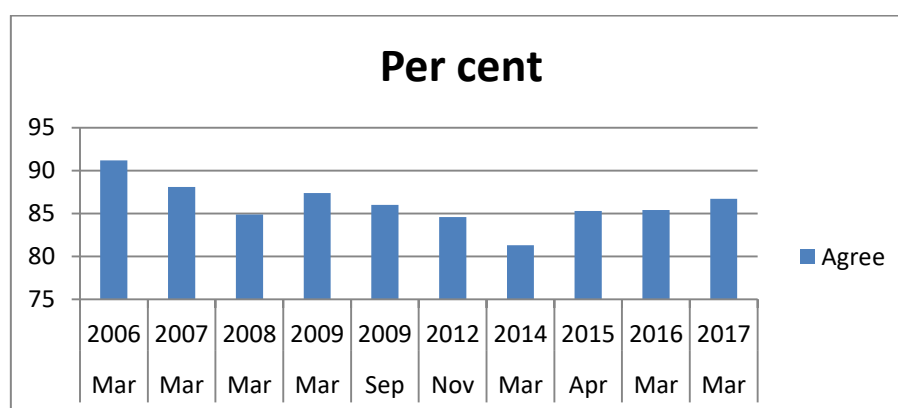
Rothstein and Torsello note that concepts of corruption can vary by culture. Rothstein and Torsello argued that the variation in how bribery is understood in different cultures does not relate to different moral understandings of the problem of corruption, but to how different societies value the difference, convertibility or blurring of goods belonging to the public and private spheres (Rothstein and Torsello 2013: 1).

Indeed, Mongols' understanding of corruption is different to that in Western societies, reflecting cultural factors.<sup>37</sup> As noted by Casals and Associates, Mongolia “possesses a unique set of centuries old traditions.... Tight familial ties and close-knit communities within a small nomadic population, and a tradition of “gift-giving,” often blur the lines between malicious graft and benevolent custom. At the heart of tradition is the notion of *ariin khaalga* ... an unwritten system of long-term barter, favours, relationships, and IOUs...in which money may or may not exchange hands” (Casals and Associates 2005: 19). For Mongols, corruption does not include these customs, corruption means bribery. Monetisation is the dividing line: Mongols do not like explicit (and often large bribes), especially if they do not have the capacity to pay (Sneath 2007b: 108).

In a speech to the United Nations in 2015 Mongolia's former president suggested Mongolia has a strong focus on reducing corruption (Elbegdorj 2015: 1). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also noted the policy and action programme of the President of Mongolia for 2009-2013 included a section, “Strengthening Judiciary, Establishing Justice and Eliminating Corruption and Red Tape” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2015: 12). Nonetheless, corruption is widely perceived as endemic in Mongolia, allegedly led by Mongolia's economic and political elite. Moreover, the problem shows no signs of abating. In the decade to 2017 more than 80 per cent of respondents to Sant Maral Mongolia surveys consistently agreed corruption was common in their country (see Figure 6.15). The same survey inferred Mongols' distaste for corruption was increasing.

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<sup>37</sup> See Sneath, 2002b, *Reciprocity and Notions of Corruption in Contemporary Mongolia* for a detailed discussion.

**Figure 6.14: Extent of corruption, Mongolia, 2006 to 2016**

Source: The Asia Foundation 2018: 19

### Developments between 1990 and 2000

Sneath suggests corruption, as understood by Mongols, was limited under socialism with a “strong perception that bribery was not a problem in the state socialist period” (Sneath 1999: 2), although Damindsuren noted the practice of so-called “back door” or clientalism was well known, while the party elite had significant privileges (Damdinsuren 2012: 6). However, by the late 1990s there was a widespread perception that corruption was rife in Mongolia. A late 1990s joint Sant Maral Foundation (SMF) and National University of Mongolia (NUM) project suggested widespread perceptions of government corruption in privatising State assets during the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> Some 51 per cent of Sant Maral respondents took the view that “government officers related to privatisation” most profited from privatisation, while 59 per cent of respondents to the National University survey said privatisation favoured politicians and people of influence, “who manipulate the process for their own benefit” (Sant Maral Foundation 1999: 5).

<sup>38</sup> The Sant Maral Foundation used three surveys, each of around 1,000 persons in reaching its conclusions. The National University nation-wide sampled city population (Ulanbaator, Darhan) and provinces (Hentii, Umnugovi, Uvurhangai, Uvs and Huvsgul). The objective was to investigate public perceptions of privatisation and social trends related to this issue.

*Corruption exists in every society, but the extent of corruption varies enormously among countries. Governments have taken up the challenge of reform to lessen the scope and severity of corruption. However, it is puzzling to see some countries are more successful than others, even if they have similar geographic, cultural and historical background (Jin 2007: 1).*

However, it is difficult to present accurate factual information concerning the growth of corruption. Corruption tends to be secret business. As noted by Dierkes, corruption is a prominent feature in overviews of Mongolian politics, but hard evidence is hard to come by (Dierkes 2012: 1). While some measures do exist, the scope and boundaries of collections differ, many collections have methodological weaknesses, use inconsistent time frames, and may not share the same definition of corruption (Anderson and Easpr 2009). Other than the Sant Maral Foundation/National University of Mongolia project referred to above, literature on corruption in Mongolia in the 1990s is scant. Nonetheless, it is clear that corruption emerged quickly. Indeed, a mid 1990s State Property Commission survey apparently revealed considerable misappropriation of state-owned assets (Rossabi 1997: 11). Sandholtz and Taagepera concluded privatization opened “myriad” opportunities for corruption in post-socialist countries, “especially since the administrators of the former system frequently devised and managed the privatization schemes” (Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005: 110).

While Mongolia adopted corruption legislation in 1996, the IMF suggested the law was not “adequately implemented” (IMF 2003: 90). By the end of the 1990s several authors were discussing the issue, notably Quah (1999) who discussed the problems and prospects in respect to combating corruption in Mongolia, Sneath (1998) and Bruun et al. (1999). Sneath concluded there had been a rapid increase in perceived corruption in Mongolia, with bribery becoming part of everyday Mongolian life.

Sneath noted the emergence of a small new elite, of wealthy businesspeople and politicians (Sneath 1999: 1). Bruun et al. argued the former *nomenclature* and their children were “emerging as key players in the economic arena and feature prominently among the nouveau rich” (Bruun et al. 1999: 16). By 1999, Mongolia’s corruption index stood at 43, but was to worsen markedly in the next decade (Bruneau and Matei 2013: 215). Privatisation of former State assets (including land) provided a significant opportunity for corruption (Global Security undated: 3).

*...high risk loans to friends and the well-connected constituted a substantial segment of some loan portfolios, jeopardising their liquidity and financial soundness (Rossabi 2005: 52).*

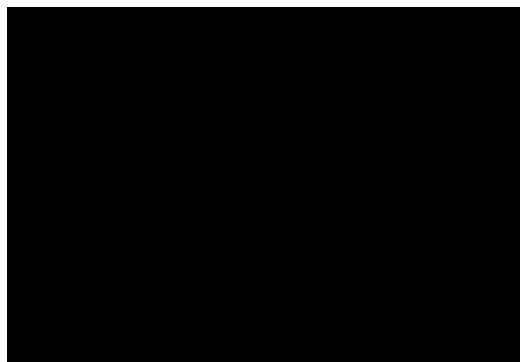
The emerging minerals industry also provided significant rent seeking opportunities for corrupt officials and politicians, as did the nascent private banking sector. Chene suggested the high commercial value of resources projects and “opaque commercial negotiations” implied that companies might be tempted to pay bribes, make political donations, or develop corrupt networks with politicians to “bend mining rules and regulations in their favour” (Chene 2012: 4).

Badamdorj noted the lack of public administration mechanisms to replace the party-centred system in the transition period weakened Government leadership and regulation (Badamdorj, 1998: 2). The low salary levels of public officials were also commonly cited as leading to corruption (Pedersen and Johannsen 2005: 22). Astrada noted La Mont’s suggestion that salary levels to allow judges to meet their needs would reduce bribery (Astrada 2010: 498). Indeed, there were significant concerns that Mongolia’s justice system was weak and corrupt, a keystone to corruption.

Yet there were no convictions for judicial corruption in Mongolia between 1991 and 2002. Moreover, there were only two corruption convictions, (involving MPs) to 2002. La Mont suggested reducing corruption in the justice sector would make it more likely that corrupt individuals in other sectors would be prosecuted and punished (La Mont 2002: 1).

Corruption grew in many ways. Petty corruption became common, including lower-level abuses of authority, such as inspectors' weekly visits to restaurants (with a "free lunch" the cost of avoiding citations), taxi drivers seeking to be stopped by police early in the day to collect a ticket that showed they had paid their daily "dues," "tipping" doctors for services, and paying for children to enter schools they didn't otherwise qualify to attend (Casals and Associates 2005: 3). Pharmaceuticals were also a target for corruption (Baghdadi-Sabeti and Serhan 2010: 5). Well known magazine *Mongolian Economy* suggested bribes were needed to gain places in kindergarten and primary schools, and that payment for good grades was common in higher education (Mongolian Economy 2012: 1,2).

**Figure 6.15: Corruption in education in Mongolia**



Source: Mongolian Economy 2012: 1

At the other end of the scale is 'grand corruption.' Fritz noted close links to practices of nepotism and paying kickbacks in government contracts



(Fritz 2007: 6). In the mining sector, Chene suggested the “high commercial value of natural resources makes them a coveted target for misappropriation, plundering and rent seeking behaviour” (Chene 2012: 2), consistent with Bhattacharyya and Hodler’s game-theoretic model predictions, that resource rents lead to increased corruption, if the quality of the democratic institutions is relatively poor (Bhattacharyya and Hodler 2009: 1). In banking, Global Security drew attention to the shadowy underground banking sector, which services overseas workers sending remittances to Mongolia. Global Security considered the formal commercial banking sector was also highly fractured which made Mongolia highly vulnerable to money laundering (Global Security undated: 3).

*The closed door format of negotiation has drawn a veil over the exact ways in which businessmen shaped the resulting mining contracts or party platforms, but domestic business interests have become less distinguishable from government initiatives over the course of the negotiations (Combellick-Bidney 2012: 278).*

The potential for state capture also became a concern. State capture was increasingly recognized as the most problematic form of grand corruption in transition economies (state capture refers to corrupt efforts to influence how laws, rules, and regulations are formed) (Hellman and Kaufmann 2001: 31). In Mongolia, oligarchs increasingly came to dominate the business and political environments, seemingly indifferent to the potential for conflicts of interests. Foreign companies, especially foreign mining companies, also began to wield immense influence over the Mongol body politic. Casals and Associates suggested most Mongol politicians saw politics in as a “domain for seeking economic advantage and accumulating wealth” (Casals and Associates 2005: 15).

*...as the Communist regime reincarnated as a neoliberal night watchman state, Communist nomenklatura (key administrators) have successfully reinvented themselves as an oligarchic plutocracy... (Lhamsuren 2012: 65)*

In 2000, Boldbaatar, in charge of the police unit tasked with combatting corruption, noted corruption had reached a level which threatened the economic security of the country as well as the stable working of state organizations. Boldbaatar considered the main causes of corruption were Mongolia's poor economic situation, low public service salaries and the weak social security system. Boldbaatar expressed concern that there was "a big discrepancy" between the extent of corruption, the clearance rate of corruption crimes and prosecution by courts (Boldbaatar 2000: 1).

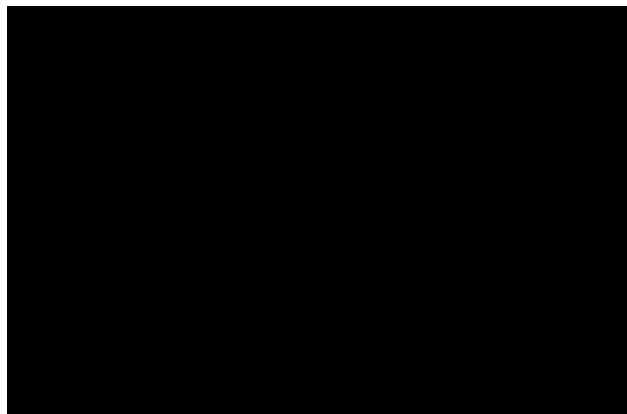
### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

Nevertheless, if corruption developed a deep foundation in Mongolia in the 1990s, worse was to come over the following decade. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Rating, Mongolia slipped from place 43 in 1999 to rank 85 in 2005 (Fritz 2007: 3). The slide in rankings continued later in the decade. Mendee noted that the minerals boom provided considerable opportunities for local political and business elites to engage in rent seeking (Mendee 2015: 2).

*...informal networks of familial kinship, friendship and other social ties as well as informal rules and practices have come to constitute a primary mechanism through which people gain access to valuable resources, such as information, money, social support and political influence (Dalaibuyan 2012: 31).*

By 2005, the Open Society Forum remarked “everyone in Mongolia currently accepts that corruption is the most serious, priority issue in the country” (Open Society Forum 2005: 4). Indeed, corruption was the subject of demonstrations and protests during the 2005 presidential election campaign (Dumbaugh and Morrison 2009: 5). As noted in Ochirbat’s thesis on art and political parody in Mongolia, the extent of corruption was well understood by Mongols (Ochirbat 2015). For example, in Tsogtbayar’s 2005 caricature “Many headed parliament” shown below, the hero runs from the 76 headed monster, parliament, who is “eating” (stealing) from the people, crying “I cannot fight and defeat him.” The caricature highlights political corruption and bribery, and appeals to people to fight against corruption (Ochirbat 2015: 97).

**Figure 6.16: The many headed parliament**



Source: Tsogtbayar, S., 2005. “Many headed parliament” <http://tsogtbayar.niitlech.mn> from Naidansuren 2015: 97

The Government did react to these concerns. In June 2000 Mongolia adopted a Code of Ethics for Civil Servants Conducting Procurement with conflict-of-interest provisions, e.g. when a civil servant is a supplier or a shareholder of a supplier, or a member of his or her family works for a supplier. Procurement staff were also prohibited from accepting gifts or hospitality from a supplier. A variety of penalties for corrupt civil servants were introduced (Asian Development Bank 2000: 62). A national anti-corruption program was also adopted by parliament in July 2002, including

creating an anti-corruption council. In October 2005, Mongolia also ratified the UN Anti-Corruption Convention (Beck et al. 2007: 11). In 2007 the Government passed further anti-corruption legislation and established an Independent Anti-Corruption Agency (IAAC). However, the World Bank noted the draft Anti-Corruption Law meant that only the total sum of assets and income for senior officials would be published, and suggested such general declarations were of limited use in tracking corruption (Beck et al. 2007: 11).

Nonetheless, significant concerns persisted about corruption. In 2010 Astrada noted surveys that indicated, after customs, participants ranked judicial institutions as Mongolia's most corrupt (Astrada 2010: 498). Astrada suggested judicial corruption was the "root of corruption throughout society," making access to justice insignificant (Astrada: 2010: 497, 498). The World Bank also suggested Mongolian society lacked confidence in the country's judiciary. Criticisms included allegations of high levels of corruption and low levels of professionalism among judges, a lack of transparency within the legal system, and cronyism between the judiciary and politicians (Beck et al. 2007: 9).

Cronyism was also seen as a problem in the public sector. Until 2009 public officials were not required to renounce party membership or duties. Dalaibuyan noted a 'widespread practice of discrimination for partisan political reasons in the public sector. Dalaibuyan concluded that after the MPRP won control of parliament, local governments, and the presidency in 2000/2001, partisan discrimination became widespread (Dalaibuyan 2012: 31).

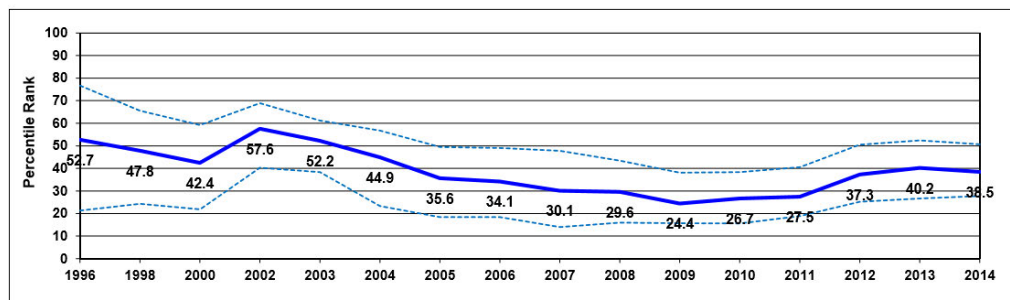
Quah contended that to be effective, anti-corruption agencies must be incorruptible; they must be independent from the police and political control; there must be comprehensive anti-corruption legislation; agencies

must be adequately staffed and funded; they must enforce anti-corruption laws impartially; and governments must be committed to curbing corruption (Quah 2007: 73). Many of these elements seemed lacking in Mongolia, where the police handled corruption, which Quah likened to giving candy to a child (Quah 2007: 83)!

### More recent developments

Figure 6.17 presents World Bank data for Mongolia on corruption from 1996 to 2014. Although World Bank composite data on thirteen indicators prepared by different organisations suggests Mongolia's control of corruption improved somewhat between 2010 and 2013 and declined somewhat in 2014, other indicators infer corruption has remained at very high levels in the later parts of the decade towards 2018. Late decade Sant Maral Foundation surveys indicated corruption remained a major concern for Mongolian voters.

**Figure 6.17: Control of corruption, Mongolia 1996-2014**



Source: World Bank 2015. Country Data Report for Mongolia, 1996-2014:

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In its 2010-11 report on world economic competitiveness, the World Economic Forum also rated corruption as the third most important factor constraining economic development in Mongolia (World Economic Forum

2011: 277). Fritz also lamented that there was no regulation of conflict of interest in mining licensing. Many politicians also had interests in the construction sector, while the scale of public contracts rapidly accelerated (Fritz 2014: 42). Osborne et al. also noted several reports indicated human rights violations, corruption and nepotism persisted throughout the judicial system (Osborne et al. 2015: 4).

In late 2014 an American Chamber of Commerce business survey raised questions about business constraints in Mongolia. Around 1,500 businesses responded to the survey (Mongolian American Chamber of Commerce 2014: 10). The economy, unemployment, and corruption (17 per cent of respondents) were identified as important concerns (Mongolian American Chamber of Commerce 2014: 1).

On the other hand, the Independent Anti-Corruption Agency has pressed charges against several public figures, including former President and Prime Minister Enkhbayar, (who was carried from his house by Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team members on charges of corruption (Knauff 2012: 20)), the jailing of a key aide to former Prime Minister Altanhayac, (who was himself impeached and dismissed from his position on the grounds of corruption) and the late 2015 arrest of the Health Minister, caught while receiving bribes from a pharmaceutical company.

Late in the decade, two former prime ministers and a former finance Minister were also subject to investigation by the Anti-Corruption Authority. Nonetheless, despite these isolated high level actions, Damdinsuren suggested “corruption is deeply rooted in all aspects of political, social and economic life of the country” (Damdinsuren 2012: 17), and questioned the effectiveness of the agency, arguing the agency’s effectiveness is “disputable” (Damdinsuren 2012: 11).

## **Conclusions**

*Corruption and organized crime are much more than an isolated criminal phenomenon. Theoretical and applied research have shown the interdependent links between the political, socio-economic, criminal justice and legal domains (Buscaglia 2003: 2).*

Corruption can be seen as good, as it “greases the wheels of commerce”, or bad because it is “sand in the wheels”. Most empirical studies conclude corruption is “sand in the wheels” i.e. bad for economic growth (Mauro (1995); Méndez and Sepúlveda (2001); Campos, Lien and Pradhan (1999), the inflow of foreign direct investment (Wei (1997) (also see Habib and Zurawicki (2002)), and that it delays trade reform (Azfar and Lee (2001), (De Jong and Udo 2006: 1).

Corrupt countries may also receive less aid (see Dreher and Schneider (2010), Alesina and Weder (2002), Alesina and Dollar (2000), Bardhan (1997), Knack (2004), Ohler et al. (2012) (Neumayer (2005, 2003)). Mid 2018 publicity about sales of public offices post the 2016 election by the victorious Mongolian Peoples Party in the Washington Post cannot have advanced Mongolia’s interests in this regard. The ability to attract finance from international lenders like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development may also be compromised by corruption (Neumayer (2002), Freytag and Pehnelt (2009), Presbitero (2009).

Corruption also raises moral questions. Corruption exists in many countries, but perceptions of corruption can differ by society. In Mongolia, corruption is understood as bribery. Behaviours that may be seen as

corrupt in other societies can be social norms in Mongolia.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, a survey of business ethics in Mongolia indicated unethical industry practices were more apparent in Mongolia (46 per cent of survey respondents) than in Japan (39 per cent) or Korea (35 per cent) (Choi and Zuzaan 2011: 95). One's 'personal financial needs' was the most important factor influencing unethical decisions among Mongolian managers (ibid: 106). The authors noted most Mongols surveyed were of an age to have experienced the financial desperation of transition. Humphrey suggested that for Mongols, morality is primarily referred to the self, adjudicating one's own actions as good or bad for oneself, whereas in the West the concept is broadened to include others (Humphrey undated: 32).

Yet corruption, in the form of bribery, continues to exist as part of normal life in Mongolia as we approach 2020. The 2016 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer indicated 20 per cent of Mongolians reported having paid a bribe, compared with Japan (0.3 per cent), Hong Kong 2 per cent, South Korea (3 per cent), Australia (4 per cent), and Taiwan (6 per cent) (Dierkes 2017b: 1). Moreover, the most venal appear to be Mongolia's elite. Such high level corruption is likely to be detrimental to the broader population. Barrington Moore labelled rulers of such regimes "predatory elites," who in the process of getting rich, produce a level of poverty otherwise unwarranted in their society (Mungui-Pippidi 2006: 89).

The Anti Corruption Agency, established in 2007, has faced an uphill battle. Judged against Quah's criteria for an effective anti-corruption agency, the agency also suffers structural defects given its strong links with the police and political oversight through reporting arrangements to parliament.

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<sup>39</sup> See Sneath (2002), *Reciprocity and Notions of Corruption in Contemporary Mongolia*, for a detailed appreciation of Mongols' perceptions of corruption.



*The fate of the Anti-Corruption Agency has been more mixed during this point. While it has gained in prominence, it has also seemingly been instrumentalized by various political actors during this time period (Dierkes 2017c: 1).*

These issues are all significant for Mongolia, which has been a notable recipient of direct foreign investment, a significant aid recipient in the past thirty years, has received several bailouts from international lenders, and continues to struggle to grow its economy. This makes Mongolia's eager pursuit of membership of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) somewhat ironic. The Initiative seeks to reduce corruption in oil, gas and mining by persuading governments to make resources revenues transparent (David-Barrett and Okamura 2013: 3): the authors note the Initiative's popularity is a puzzle; why would corrupt governments voluntarily expose themselves to sunlight and thereby forgo future corrupt revenues (ibid: 4). However, the best strategy for predatory elites may well be to seek to appear to be pure, whilst still circumventing the visible checks on corrupt behaviour.

## **Chapter 7: Mongolia: Social freedoms since 1990**

### **Introduction**

In discussions with the author, many Mongols stated that a common desire for greater social freedoms was an important factor in supporting transition in post-socialist Mongolia. Some aspects of transition to market democracy have proved difficult for Mongolia. However, there have been marked improvements in social freedoms, including with respect to human rights and religious freedom, reflecting a greater emphasis on individual rights (including individual rights to justice) as opposed to State rights, as outlined below.

### **Changes in human rights in Mongolia post-socialism**

Human rights reforms have been a significant focus for successive governments in Mongolia post-socialism. The reforms often reflect international views on human rights issues. A number of authors have contributed to the development of theories about human rights (see for example Donnelly (2007), Donnelly (1984), Douzinas (2000), Freeman (1994), Gewirth (1998, 1996, 1981), Sen (2004), Sen (2005), Shestack (1998), and Turner (1993)). Human rights were also a specific foundation for the American and French revolutions of 1776 and 1792. Raz, writing in 2007, declared that this was a good time for human rights, as “claims about such rights are used more widely in the conduct of world affairs than before” (Raz 2007: 1).

As noted by Sen, human rights are often a topic for discussion in a political context. For example, in an address in Havana Cuba in 2016, then U.S. President Obama used his major speech to discuss human rights abuses in Cuba (the first Cuba visit by a sitting United States President for nearly 90 years). However, as Sen points out, notions of human rights are fragmented, although as discussed by Turner, the notion of universal rights was discussed extensively in the past by important social theorists such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber (Turner 1993: 489). Sen remarked:

*... the central idea of human rights as something that people have, and have even without any specific legislation, is seen by many as foundationally dubious and lacking in cogency...where do these rights come from? (Sen 2004: 315).*

Shestack, writing in 1998 about the philosophical foundations for human rights theory, postulated that developing a notion of human rights also requires an understanding of what it is to be human. Shestack also raised the idea that morality, or ethics, are an important element in developing a theory of human rights, noting that “Some scholars identify human rights as those that are "important," "moral," and "universal." It is comforting to adorn human rights with those characteristics; but, such attributes themselves contain ambiguities” (Shestack 1998: 1). On the other hand, Bell remarked that such comments tend to reflect western value systems, and are not culturally sensitive to the reality of East Asia (Bell 1996: 641).

How do human rights practices in Mongolia stack up against these theories post-socialism? During the socialist era human rights were not a significant focus in Mongolia (see Amarsanaa and Doljin, 2009: 162). The rights of the state were paramount, not the rights of the individual. There were also significant abuses of human rights in Mongolia during this era, most notoriously in terms of human security through the genocide of the

1930s. However, even late in the socialist regime, freedom of speech, movement and association were strictly proscribed, there were significant abuses of the rights of prisoners, and official torture by police and security services was regarded as a normal part of life.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

*...the fundamental right is a legal protection against the excessive use of power by the state. According to the theory of constitutionalism the natural rights of a person should be reflected in the main legal norms and principles (Chadraabal 2014: 98).*

Enkhsaikhan suggested Mongolia's grand objective was "building a humane, civil and democratic society", as proclaimed in the 1992 Constitution (Enkhsaikhan 2005: 67). Consistent with this vision, during the 1990s, human rights were embedded in legal norms and principles in Mongolia. As noted by Amarsanaa and Doljin, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, Cultural rights (1966) which recognized the main parts of the Bill on Human Rights. Mongolia became a party to these covenants in 1974 and since then has acceded to and ratified over 30 international treaties and conventions on human rights. Nonetheless, as Turbileg observed, human rights were not properly represented in the Constitutions of 1921, 1940 and 1960 (Turbileg 1998: 76).

By contrast, the 1990s was a period when human rights became enshrined in the Mongolian constitution, which provided basic guarantees for a "humane civil society" (Dugersuren 2015: 16). As discussed by Amarsanaa and Doljin, the Constitution guaranteed equality before the law

and the courts, regardless of ethnic origin, language, race, age, sex, social origin and status, property, occupation and post, religion, opinion and education (Amarsanaa and Doljin 2009: 165,166). Mongolia's human rights legislation drew inspiration from a number of sources. Martenson, (then United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights) noted sections of the 1992 Mongolian constitution dealing with human rights drew on European models, the United States constitution and the United Nations conventions on human rights (Martenson 1992: 110).

Freedom House carries out annual international surveys of civil liberties. In the 1998 Freedom House survey of political rights and civil liberties, only the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the three Baltic countries scored better than Mongolia among the former socialist countries. Within Asia, Mongolia ranked at par with India, the Philippines and Thailand, while only Japan and South Korea scored better. Bruun et al. argued significant progress on human rights issues had occurred in Mongolia post-transition. They commented that the mass media was free and political debate and public protests are alive and:

*An open and democratic society-has been established and is being consolidated on all fronts. A modern constitution guaranteeing human rights and civil liberties within a democratic political system is in place and respected in all quarters. (Bruun et al. 1999: 14).*

By contrast, Middleton concluded the human rights balance sheet after ten years of transition, "was positive with respect to the introduction of democratic and civil rights, but negative with respect to social and economic rights" (Middleton 2000: 8). Writing later, Middleton reported that evaluations of training about human rights in Mongolia in 1998 suggested that the participants had little knowledge of their capacity to assert themselves about their human rights prior to this training (Middleton

2008b: 3). Ginsburg and Ganzorig also noted that the economic collapse weakened the social safety net and “jeopardised positive rights such as food, clothing and education (Ginsberg and Ganzorig 2006: 147). Skapa and Fenger also noted women’s rights were compromised through loss of (industrial) employment and by loss of social supports such as child care (Skapa and Fenger Bensen 2006: 135, 136). Hence the symbolism of the new human rights legislation was somewhat undermined by economic realities.

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

The decade started positively with the establishment of a Mongolian Human Rights Commission in 2001 (Durbach et al. 2009: 4), although the authors noted that Human Rights Commissions in Asia tend to have a voice but little real power. Access noted the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (“the Commission”) has the mandate to promote, protect, monitor and implement provisions on human rights and freedoms as provided in the Constitution of Mongolia, relevant laws and ratified treaties (Access 2015: 1).

Nonetheless, in 2005 a special UN rapporteur concluded that serious human rights abuses were prevalent with respect to prisoners and detainees. The Special Rapporteur concluded that torture persisted, particularly in police stations and pre-trial detention facilities and noted two cases where detainees were tortured to death. The Special Rapporteur suggested impunity for torture and ill-treatment continued unimpeded because: the Criminal Code lacked a definition of torture; there were no effective mechanisms to receive and investigate allegations of ill-treatment; and a basic lack of awareness, primarily on behalf of prosecutors, lawyers and the judiciary, of the international standards relating to the prohibition of torture. Nowak commented:

*...consequently, victims had no effective recourse to justice, compensation and rehabilitation for torture and other forms of ill-treatment* (Nowak 2005: 2).

The violent aftermath of the 2008 parliamentary elections also created a severe test for human rights legislation and conventions in Mongolia. A submission by a collection of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) commented that the police, prosecution, courts, advocates, the National Human Rights Commission, Constitutional *Tsets* (Laws) and the Human Rights Sub-committee of the Ikh Khural were unable to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens, and suggested this was caused by a deficient legal framework regulating the activities of these institutions (Center for Law and Human Rights - NGO Coalition for documentation and protection of human rights, undated: 1).

Ironically, as well as mass arrests, deaths by police actions, and other related human rights abuses, human rights activists and families of detainees protesting against mass arrests were also detained for 14 days for sitting in “silent protest,” including an elderly woman known to the author (such a protest was not permitted by a Procedure on Public Demonstration requiring that an event must be registered by the local authority before it could take place). Two election candidates were even detained for 1-2 months although they were protected by the election candidate immunity legislation. Late in the decade the U.S. Department of State noted in its 2009 Human Rights Report the following human rights problems:

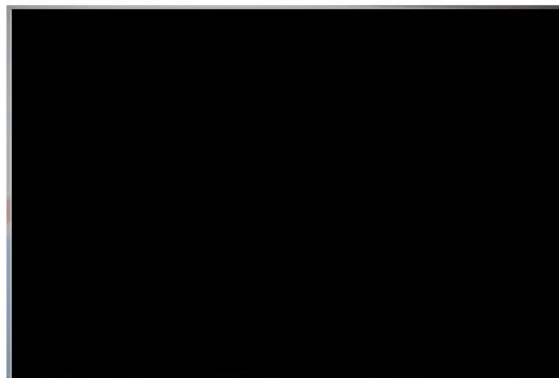
*police abuse of prisoners and detainees; impunity; poor conditions in detention centers; arbitrary arrest, lengthy detention, and corruption within the judicial system; continued refusal by some*

*provincial governments to register Christian churches; secrecy laws and a lack of transparency in government affairs; domestic violence against women; and trafficking in persons (Odonkhuu 2014: 2, 3).*

### **More recent developments**

During the period 2010 to 2018 Mongolia became known in international arenas as a keen advocate for human rights, and came to Chair the United Nations Council on Human Rights in the latter part of the decade, as well as becoming a key supporter of human rights in other fora. In 2015 Mongolia hosted the twentieth meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights (Elbedorj 2015: 1), when then President Elbedorj showcased the message that “Mongolia will always say yes to human rights.” Mongolia’s stance on international rights has been reflected in internal provisions for human rights, notably with respect to no longer using the death penalty. These improvements have been reflected in improvements in human rights ratings by relevant international organisations.

**Figure 7.1: Mongolia’s President Elbedorj addresses the 20th Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights**



Source:

<http://www.president.mn/eng/newsCenter/viewNews.php?newsId=1651>,  
downloaded 3 September 2017.



Nevertheless, in 2013 the United States State Department continued to raise a number of concerns about serious human rights problems in Mongolia, such as “police abuse of detainees, widespread corruption, and a lack of transparency in government affairs.” Other significant issues included: arbitrary arrests; poor conditions in detention centres; government media restrictions; and religious discrimination (including continued refusal by some provincial governments to register Christian churches). The State Department also raised concerns about denial of exit visas and immigration holds on foreign citizens (common tactics if there were any tax disputes); inadequate measures to counter domestic violence against women; human trafficking; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons (Lawrence 2014: 2).

While Bayarkhuu noted Freedom House ratings indicated press freedom in Mongolia compared well to that in other post-communist countries in 2003 (9<sup>th</sup> out of 27 such countries) (Bayarkhuu 2003: 68), more recently strong concerns have arisen about press freedom (see Globe International Center NGO (2018)). Gardner, writing in *The UB Post*, noted that Article 16 of Mongolia’s constitution guarantees rights of free expression, thought, speech, assembly and press. This ensures the right of media and citizens alike to “seek and receive” information. However, the country’s defamation laws criminalize slander, defamation and libel. Gardner noted the defamation laws are regularly used by prominent figures — namely, individual politicians and increasingly, powerful businesspeople — as a means of shielding themselves from public criticism. While criticism of any kind, say press advocates, is often deemed tantamount to defamation (Gardner 2014: 1).

Global Security noted that the World Bank, civil society and donors, including the U.S., have long identified the lack of transparency and citizen access to government information as a major invitation to corruption and have encouraged the Government of Mongolia to work with civil society and legal reformers to repeal or significantly amend the State Secrets Law, to de-criminalize the offense of libel, and to implement a Freedom of Information Act. Global Security suggested the State Secrets Law is among the most restrictive and punitive in any post-communist country, extending the definition of "state secret" to not only national security interests but also to maps finer than a 1:200,000 scale, to statistics on the number of prisoners, to basic economic and census data, to the identity of shareholders in private companies, to audits of state owned companies, even to access by citizens to state archives (Global Security undated: 1).

In 2014 Freedom House suggested that, while the Government generally respects press freedom, many journalists and independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship to avoid action under the State Secrets Act or libel laws that place the burden of proof on the defendant (Freedom House: 2014: 4). In a later publication, Freedom House noted defamation remained a criminal offense punishable by fines of between 51 and 150 times the monthly national minimum wage (roughly \$6,000 to \$17,000), or by jail terms of between three and six months (Freedom House 2015: 1). Freedom House also commented that the media landscape is diverse but politicized, with most print and broadcast outlets being affiliated with political parties and displaying political bias.

This matter has been a subject for debate at the United Nations. Globe International notes that the UN Human Rights Committee's 101st session in New York, March 14 - April 1, 2011, suggested Mongolia should consider decriminalizing defamation and ensure that measures are taken to protect journalists from threats and attacks. The Committee recommended that all allegations of such threats and attacks be immediately and

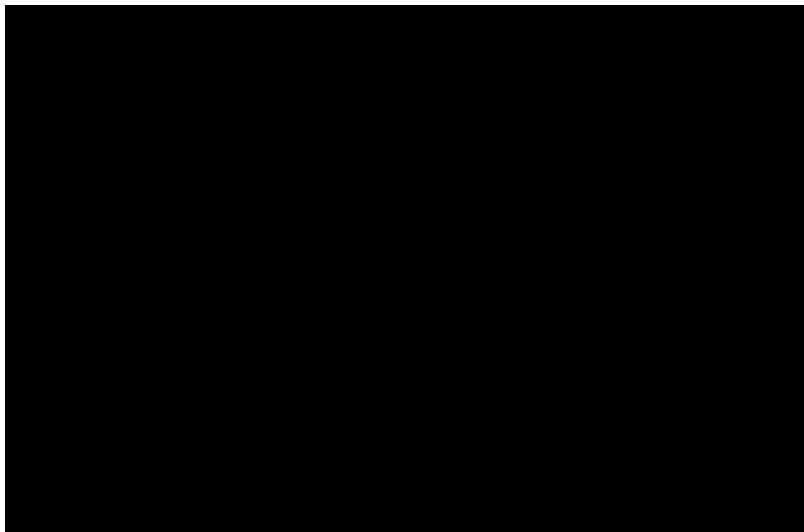
thoroughly investigated, and that the perpetrators be prosecuted (Globe International Center 2014: 1).

As noted by Hannum, human rights of every kind are diminished in times of violent conflict, even when the parties attempt to respect norms of humanitarian law (Hannum 2006: 5). In this respect Mongolia has a fairly good record. Since the democratic revolution of 1990, Mongolia has not formally been involved in external conflict, although Mongols were involved in a number of violent border incidents during the 1960s Russian-Chinese conflict. Political violence seems limited, with the notable exception of the murder or assassination of leading democracy campaigner Zorig, shortly before his anticipated appointment as Prime Minister (Kaplonski notes speculation that Zorig was murdered by political forces who feared he would have exposed rampant corruption if appointed as prime minister (Kaplonski 2004: 201). The bizarre death of Mongolia's Anti-Corruption Commissioner in Sydney in the mid-2000s where he was to speak at an anti-corruption conference may also have been politically motivated.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> A Mongolian web site, Censorship and Corruption in Mongolia, reported that 'Mystery now surrounds the death of the Chief Commissar of Mongolia's Independent Agency Against Corruption (IAAC), Baasain Dangaarsuren who died in Australia on October 25 2007. He was in Australia to attend the World Bank funded Australian Public Sector Anti Corruption Conference held during 22-29 October...Sha. Batbayar the Spokesman for the Democratic Party claimed on local TV that B. Dangaarsuren was murdered by Mongolians to cover up his recent public announcements of 84 big corruption cases, 56 of which involved the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, the party of President Enkhbayar.

**Figure 7.2: Zorig, the ‘Golden Swallow’ of Mongolian politics**



Source: Anonymous, [www.alchetron.com](http://www.alchetron.com) downloaded 5 September 2017

Domestic violence also continues to be a very significant issue (although new legislation (2015) may lead to improvements in this context). Earlier, Advocates for Human Rights presented a bleak picture of the extent of domestic violence in Mongolia. As late as 2013, police officers still reported receiving a high volume of domestic violence calls. One *khoro* (district) police station reported an average of 63 domestic violence calls per week (Advocates for Human Rights Minneapolis/National Center Against Violence Mongolia, 2015: 5).

Amnesty International has also expressed strong concern that torture of prisoners to force confessions is still prevalent in Mongolia. Amnesty International was also concerned that police officers and prison guards suspected of torture and other ill-treatment of people held at police stations and detention centres were not effectively investigated (Amnesty International (2015a, 2015b, 2015c). Lines also noted that, in its Concluding Remarks, a mid-2000s UN Human Rights Committee report cited lack of “adequate space” among those conditions that should be improved in Mongolian prisons to “ensure that imprisonment does not

endanger prisoners' health" (Lines 2008: 32). However, Amnesty International noted Mongolia had taken initiatives to improve the human rights framework in the country, such as submitting a draft new Criminal Code to the State Great Khural (parliament) during the previous administration in 2014, which included the abolition of the death penalty (Amnesty International 2015c: 1) (the death penalty was in fact suspended by Presidential Decree).

## Conclusions

*A law can be changed. But we see it is much harder to change people's mentalities* (Elbedorj 2015: 4).

As with many things in Mongolia, good intentions can be thwarted by bad practice. For example, capital punishment has been replaced by life imprisonment, but the thirty year sentence is very long by international standards; moreover, ten years will be spent in solitary confinement (United Nations 2017: 4). Such a long period in solitary confinement would seem likely to have severe effects on prisoners' mental health. Other major concerns raised by the United Nations include that torture was still not adequately defined in Mongolian law, allowing adverse treatment of prisoners in detention centres. Other issues raised in the 2017 United Nations report included discussion about provisions on defamation in criminal law and reports about the increasing use of civil law defamation clauses, 'which has a chilling effect that may unduly restrict the exercise of freedom of expression' (United Nations Human Rights Committee 2017: 7). The U.N. also expressed concern about reports of attacks and harassment against journalists and media workers.

While Mongolia has embedded human rights provisions in its constitution, and in other pieces of legislation (although some would argue there are still deficiencies in these provisions) human rights can also be compromised through official ineptitude or the disregard of human rights by officials. In its 2017 report on human rights in Mongolia, the United Nations also concluded ignorance in the public sector about human rights legislation can lead to a lack of follow up and enforcement. The U.N. suggested the Mongolian Government should: strengthen its efforts to promote the effective application of the provisions of the U.N. Human Rights Covenant before domestic courts, including through institutionalized training of lawyers, prosecutors and judges on international human rights treaties, and awareness-raising among the public at large; and ensure that the national Human Rights Commission is independent and adequately funded to discharge its statutory responsibilities (United Nations Human Rights Committee 2017: 2).

It is sad that in 2015 Mongolia hosted an international conference on human rights, but was severely castigated for human rights failures by the U.S State Department in its annual report on human rights issues. Similar issues to those canvassed in U.N. reports were also raised by the State Department, such as the use of torture to extract confessions and other abuses of prisoners, but the State Department also highlighted corruption and widespread domestic violence as major concerns its report (United States State Department 2015: 1).

In 1993 d'Engelbronner-Kolff suggested that mass education about civil rights may be one solution to this problem, as a citizenry which understands its rights may be prone to protest if its rights are abused. She noted that at that time some countries officially have education for human rights and democracy in the curricula of schools, including Mongolia (d'Engelbronner-Kolff 1993: 72). The conundrum is that, while Mongolia has long provided education about human rights (although some Mongols

say the training is insignificant), significant human rights abuses continue. For example, the culture of corruption seemingly evident in the police service, and other police related complaints are concerns. In the case of organisations such as the police, this may be an issue of promoting organisational cultural change rather than education about the law. The Human Rights Commission has also piloted a new three year program in training in human rights in schools, which may serve as a useful model for broader community awareness raising about human rights.

**Figure 7.3: Training in human rights in schools**



Source: <http://www.scientologynews.org/press-releases/creating-a-humane-culture-in-mongolia.html>, downloaded 4 September 2016

## Changes in religiosity post-socialism

*...it is the religion of Zingis [Chinggis] that best deserves our wonder and applause... His first and only article of faith was the existence of one God, the Author of all good, who fills by his presence the heavens and the earth, which he has created by his power (Gibbon 1977, cited in Atwood 2004b: 1).*

Religion has long been an ideological and theological battleground in Mongolia. Although clearly favouring their own religion, since the time of the Mongol Empire, Mongols and their leaders have apparently demonstrated tolerance to people from different religions, and in several cases have changed to a new religion, including Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (noting, however, that there was no religious tolerance under socialism). Neal noted William of Rubrik's account that Grand Khan Mongke had a Nestorian Christian wife, as did Mongke's uncle Batu, Mongke's key ally in Mongke's quest to become Great Khan (Neal 1995: 11).

During the Yuan Dynasty the Mongols were curious about different religions (Hua (2016)). The climax of William of Rubrik's thirteenth century journey to the Mongol empire came after William had been in Qara Qorum (the Mongol capital, later destroyed by the Ming) for several months, when he participated in a formal debate between Christians, Buddhists and Muslims under the auspices of the Grand Khan, serving as chief Christian debater (Neal 1995: 12). Indeed, the Mongol regime was known for its policies of ethnic diversity and religious tolerance (Hua 2016: 2), although Jackson suggested Mongol religious tolerance was overstated and had much less to do with their rulers' religious sympathies than with an eclecticism that made use of whatever talents were available (Jackson 2005: 248).



There is a rich literature on religion in Mongolia, including works by Atwood (2016), (1996), Serruys (1963), Kaschewsky (1986), Hua (2016), Ertl (2015), Siklos (2005), Diener (2007) and Kollmar-Paulenz (2003). Heissig, in particular, provides rich insights into Mongolia's traditional religion, Shamanism (also known as Tengrism), Buddhism in Mongolia and Buddhist suppression of Shamanism, the presence of Nestorian and Catholic Christianity in the Mongol Empire, and the spread of Islam throughout the Mongol Empire (Heissig (1983, 1980, 1970)). Wazgird (2011) provides a detailed perspective of post-socialist religious developments.

Prior to the spread of yellow line Tibetan Buddhism in the sixteenth century, Shamanism was the predominant religion in Mongolia. Buyandelger (2013a, 2013b) suggested Shamanism has existed in Central Asia for 30,000 years. Shamanism, the religion of Chinggis Khaan, was led by male (*boo*) and female Shamans (*udgan*) who could invoke curses and deliver blessings. Heissig described Shamanism as:

*The cult of the eternal blue sky, the veneration of fire, the invocation of Geser Khan and the veneration of the ancestor of the princely family, Chinggis Khan, ... as well as prayers to hills and mountains for the powers that dwelt within them...* (Heissig 1980: 3).

Later, Tibetan Buddhism became the main religion in Mongolia. The Yellow School Movement was inspired by the Third Dalai Lama's travels in the Mongol regions from 1578 under the patronage of Altan Khan (Mullin 2012: 89). Strong monastic organization, development of *sangha* (lay congregations), and intense education of the laity concerning the

precepts of Buddhism characterized this period (Purevjav 2012: 250). This might be described as a hostile takeover. Successive Dalai Lamas, determined to root out Shamanism, ordered the destruction of Shaman idols and punishment of Shamans (Heissig 2003: 245, 246).

Nonetheless, over time Mongolian Buddhism came to synthesise Shamanist practices into Buddhism. For example, Buddhist lamas later took an active part in mountain worship, a Shamanist practice (Humphrey 1995: 140). Shaman sacred sites were recognized as inhabited by Buddhist *nagas*, or nature spirits. *Ovoos*, sacred piles of stones, previously a Shamanic tradition, started to be worshipped in Buddhist ceremonies. This association is symbolised by the use of blue ceremonial scarves. Mongols use blue *khadag* ceremonial scarves, as opposed to the yellow and white scarves used in Tibet, a link to Shamanic worship of the Eternal Heaven, which was traditionally honoured by making offerings of blue strings, and is very particular to Mongolian Buddhism (Chimedsegee et al. 2009: 11).

Buddhism came to have an immense influence on Mongolia. With independence in 1911, Mongolia became a theocracy ruled by lamaist monks (Merli 2006: 254). Immediately prior to the socialist period, there were an estimated 600-700 temples and monasteries in then Outer Mongolia, home and workplace to 100-200,000 people out of a population of 600-700,000 persons. However, from the early 1930s the Communist regime started open destruction of monasteries and the community of monks. “The final solution of the issue of the Buddhist clergy” was foreshadowed as early as 1923, when the 22nd Congress of the Communist party approved a resolution called On Anti-religious Agitation and Propaganda, which stated that there was no place in communist society for any kind of religion (Belka 2002: 18). Morozova suggested that by the early 1930s, “the impossibility of the two systems co-existing, the MPRP and the Buddhist *sangha*, became more obvious than ever” (Morozova 2003: 1).

Soon, under the leadership of Premier Choibalsan, most monasteries and temples were destroyed, many lamas were executed and others were forced out into the lay community. For example, all of the eighty or so buildings at Khamar in the Gobi, a famous temple complex, were destroyed during Choibalsan's purges (Wickham-Smith 2006: 19).

*The Soviet-backed "Modern Mongolia" that emerged in 1921 proved to be a mixed blessing. Less than a decade later, Stalin carried Russia into a path of seemingly unprecedented mass murder, social repression, and repeated cultural purges, and Mongolia soon fell prey to the same evils (Mullin 2012: 191).*

Wallace notes that in 1933 (when military taxation and military service were introduced), there were about 41,000 military age monks. By 1940 there were only 251 (Wallace 2008: 45). Sanders suggests that at least 35,000 people were purge victims, including nearly 26,000 people tried between 1937 and 1939, of whom 20,424 were executed (Sanders 2003: 272). In addition, Buddhist literature and religious objects were largely destroyed during these years (Kollmar-Paulenz 2003: 4). While the crackdown focused on Buddhists, Christian numbers also fell. Very few Christians were left in Mongolia at end of the socialist period (Austin 2015: 2).

The repression of Islam under Stalin in Soviet Russia was very severe from 1927 onwards. Two further offensives against Islam were to follow after Stalin's death. Khrushchev forced the closure of 25 per cent of official mosques between 1958 and 1964 (Sheik 2015: 1). Many Kazakhs, Sunni Muslims, migrated to Mongolia to avoid religious repression in Russia. Most settled in the far west. Later Kazakhs migrated to coal mining

developments throughout Mongolia, especially to Nailakh to the east of Ulaanbaatar. Diener (2007) noted the Mongolian Kazakh community has succeeded in preserving traditional Kazakh culture and language to a far greater degree than any other Kazakh community in the world. In 1990 Kazakhs represented 6.8 per cent of Mongolia's population (Baatar 2014: 97).

Since 1990, religion has enjoyed a considerable renaissance in Mongolia, although a significant minority of Mongols still claim they have no religion. Nonetheless, concerns have arisen that religious freedom tends to be a public relations position rather than the reality for minor religions, with suggestions that the Buddhist movement, through sympathetic political actors, has attempted to suppress other religions.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

*So a common concern among Mongolians seems to be: how should one practice religion in the face of this loss, when one does not know how to do it, or what kind of powers one is dealing with (Hojer 2009: 152).*

In 1990 religious institutions were in short supply in Mongolia. There was only one functioning Buddhist monastery, Gandantegchinlin in Ulāanbāatar, a state-dependent establishment. The retention of this monastery, and state protection of the monasteries of Kharkhorin and Erdeni dzuu was forced upon Choibalsan by Stalin, who was pressured by a delegation sent to the Soviet Union by President Roosevelt in 1944 (Kollmar-Paulenz 2003: 19). With the end of socialism, the situation changed dramatically. In 1989 only 20 per cent of Mongols professed they held religious beliefs, compared to 70 per cent in 1994 (Daliabuyan 2013: 3). (Perhaps in 1989, when socialism still reigned, people may have been

cautious in the responses about questions on religion, fearing reprisals. Kaplonski, contended there was a huge informer network in Mongolia under socialism (Kaplonski 2004: 192)).

Why did this religious renaissance occur? The causes underlying the apparent growth of religion in Mongolia post-socialism reflected cultural and political factors, legislative actions and factors peculiar to the faith in question. The new political parties' policy platforms included promises of religious freedom (Even 2008: 420). Religious freedom was then guaranteed by the new 1992 constitution (Even 2009: 5), although this guarantee was somewhat circumscribed by later legislation, which asserted the "predominant position of the Buddhist religion", outlawed the "propagation of religion from outside," and banned "religious activities alien to the religions and customs of the Mongolian people" (Marshall 1998: 2).

For Buddhism, the renaissance was immediate. This reflected Buddhism's traditional role in Mongolia, where Buddhist philosophical doctrine took a major place in Mongolian philosophical and social political thought (Gantuya 2003: 2). Kaplonski suggested Buddhism also re-emerged as a key symbol in constructing conceptions of 'Mongolness' (Kaplonski 2004: 23). An Association of Believers was founded to restore and re-open temples in the countryside. In 1992, around 100 were opened, even if "only as a simple *ger* served by a lonely old lama" (Even 2008: 42). Gluckman declared Mongolia was again moving to "ancient hymns and hopes" (Gluckman undated: 1).

*...the communist revolution, which forcibly imposed secular culture, values, and a way of life upon Mongolian society by means of systematic prohibition of religious freedom, anti-Buddhist propaganda, and the destruction of traditional Buddhist institutions and education, resulted in the tradition's demise, the effects of which continue to this very day... (Wallace 2012: 90).*

However, seventy years of socialism had seen the destruction of most Buddhist monasteries, temples and religious texts, while the leaders of the Buddhist movement in Mongolia had been annihilated. People struggled to revive Mongolian Buddhism, because knowledge of religious practices had declined significantly in the socialist era (Sandag 2012: 103). As Majer and Teleki noted there were:

*...a very few old lamas still alive who were lamas in the old capital, before the purges...it was not easy...to find them or ...get them to talk about the religious life of the old capital...those who have real knowledge of Buddhist life at that time had to have been at least teenagers in 1937... (Majer and Teleki 2006: 5).*

Nonetheless, some elderly lamas emerged to teach younger devotees. Elderly monks of 70, 80, or 90 years of age taught near-forgotten Buddhist texts and practices to post-socialist teenagers and young adults (Teleki 2012: 269).<sup>41</sup> Monasteries also continued to be restored. By 2003, nearly 200 monasteries had been restored, more than 3,000 monks were registered (the number of nuns was not ascertained), and there was ongoing teaching activity, mostly carried out by Tibetan teachers (Kollmar-Paulenz 2003: 3).

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<sup>41</sup> See Teleki (2012) *Buddhist Ceremonies in the Mongolian Capital City Before the Communist Repression and After the Revival*, for a more detailed discussion.

Shamanism also re-emerged, as the threat of repression faded (Merli 2006: 257). Shamans suffered during during socialism and many were jailed (Dorj 2012: 118), but Shamanism continued to be practiced in secret. Shamanism's re-emergence was remarked by the founding of the Shamanic Centre in Ulaanbaatar in July 1996 by Tömör, a 74 year old, tenth generation Shaman (Merli 2006: 259). Shamanism re-emerged quickly among Buryats, which Buyandelgeriyn argued reflected economic impoverishment, failed expectations of democracy, disbelief in the government, and intracommunity hostility. Buyandelgeriyn suggested that "As the sense of anxiety, fear, and panic mounted, fuelled by events that did not necessarily make sense to Buryats, Shamanic practices seemed to offer an explanation for poverty and other misfortunes" (Buyandelgeriyn 2007: 130).

For Christianity, growth factors varied by church. The Catholic Church was guaranteed the right to operate in Mongolia as part of the conditions agreed when Mongolia established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Fagan noted the Catholic bishop advised that, when the Mongolian authorities requested diplomatic relations with the Holy See in the early 1990s, it was agreed on the condition that Catholics could send missionaries. Eleven years on, the Catholic Church Mission in Mongolia - comprising 45 foreign clergy and monastics--ran a host of free social projects, including kindergartens, English classes, outpatients' consultation, a technical school, soup kitchens, two farms and a care centre for 120 disabled children (Fagan 2003: 34).

Missionaries were also important in establishing Protestant churches in Mongolia post-socialism. Their efforts were assisted by having the Bible available in Mongolian: modern Bibles were published in Mongolian in

1990 (Dalaibuyan 2013: 3).<sup>42</sup> Protestants of various denominations established churches. By 1999, seventeen churches were registered including Baptists, Evangelicals, Seventh-day Adventists, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

Christian churches provided free medical assistance to their members; social services to street children, the disabled, and women-headed households; and sent youth abroad. Christians presented their religious doctrine in simple language (Even 2009: 5). Apart from regular religious classes, English, music, and dance classes took place at the churches. Comprehensive Christian texts and precepts in Mongolian language were useful in attracting recruits. The good morality and manners of missionaries also attracted Mongols, particularly youth, to Christian churches (Narantuya 2005: 4). While church leadership was initially provided by expats, the need for new church leaders was addressed by training Mongol pastors. Churches in Mongolia also established a large Union Bible Theological College and the Mongolian Evangelical Alliance. These organizations established a self-governing system between 1995 and 2000 (Jamsran 2012: 133). Nonetheless, as noted by Fine in 1997, the predominant religion in Mongolia was Tibetan Buddhism, “so December 25th will come and go with very little ceremony” (Fine 1997: 1).

*In those states whose governments permit greater religious freedom (notably Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan), there has been a tremendous resurgence in Islamic practice in both traditional/local and new/transnational forms (Brede 2014: 24).*

For Muslims, the initial change post-socialism was reduced numbers. Many Kazakhs, the main group of Muslims in Mongolia, emigrated to

<sup>42</sup> One Christian denomination established a television station (Eagle TV) to publicise Christianity (Rossabi 2005: 41).



Kazakhstan. Possibly the egress reflected ethnic links rather than religion (Diener (2007) suggested the Kazakh's did little to integrate into Mongolian society). The Mongolian government was apparently not adverse to this migration, as it relieved inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions which "assumed alarming proportions in the Bayan-Ulgii aimag where Mongolian Kazakhs constituted about 90 per cent of its population" (Baatar 2014: 97). Later, many were to return, because the repatriation experience proved uncomfortable (Diener 2013: 1).

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

The continued renaissance of religion in this period was symbolised by growth in teaching about Buddhism in Mongolian universities, especially at the National University of Mongolia. Four volumes of the History of Mongolian Buddhist Philosophy were published from 2000-2003, largely written by National University professors (Gantuya 2003: 1).

Indeed, this period was characterized by a fight for market share, with the Christian and Shaman movements trying to improve their share, while the dominant Buddhist movement worked hard to maintain or increase its presence. The Buddhist movement probably prospered through its close association with government, the Shamans became somewhat better known through celebrity television interviews, while the Christian movement continued its aid and charity work. King noted the Buddhist movement had also adopted community outreach programs in response to similar Christian activities, including "prison counselling, poverty outreach, English language and computer instruction, walk in Buddhist classes, study groups for laity and so on" (King 2012: 21).

Nonetheless, the period did not see a marked change in numbers practicing religion in Mongolia. Buddhism remained predominant, aided by national religious history and a quiescent government. A leading Buddhist was appointed as a religious adviser to then President Bagabandi, and government leaders were frequent participants in contemporary Buddhist religious festivals. However, there were significant tensions between Tibetan Buddhists and local Mongol lamas. The Tibetan exile community and the Dalai Lama took a keen interest in the renaissance of Mongolian Buddhism (Kollmer-Paulenz 2003: 22), but the Dalai Lama was apparently uncomfortable with the Mongol Buddhist movement's acceptance of married lamas.

Other key developments were the continued rise of the Shaman movement, the strengthening of perceptions of Chinggis Khaan as a key Mongol religious figure, and the continued emergence of Christianity. The adoption of Chinggis Khaan as a religious figure and a focus for Mongolian identity was in marked contrast to the events of the socialist period when "His name was forbidden and banished to oblivion" (Tsetsenbileg 2001: 184, in Kaplonski 2004: 4).

The Christian movement was something of a problem for the Mongol Government. Each Christian denomination wanted to erect their own church, whereas Buddhists erected fewer structures, but attracted many more worshippers. The Christian building boom irritated Buddhists, who felt Christians were receiving favourable treatment. However, in turn Christians were concerned that their activities were being restricted. Marshall, for example, felt Mongol Buddhism was favoured by the Mongolian Government and suggested the U.S government should appoint religious attaches in Mongolia and elsewhere to protect the interests of Christians (Marshall 1998: 5).

The Christian movement was possibly constrained by government actions at the province and local level. Responses by the Christian movement varied from facilitation by graft, or complaints at various levels. Fagan, for example, reported that some Korean churches donate 1,000 US dollars to the city fund, then “registration is easy” (Fagan 2003: 38). The Government was also concerned that Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) were used to recruit converts to Christianity. Legislation was passed to control this issue, forbidding the spreading of religious views by “force, pressure, material incentives, deception, or means which harm health or morals or are psychologically damaging.” Groups involved in providing child care, welfare, or child protection services were not allowed to promote religion or religious customs counter to the child’s “national traditional religion.” The law also prohibited the use of gifts for religious recruitment (United States Department of State 2013: 3).

The Mongolian government monitors compliance by foreign NGOs, including annual checkup visits to NGO’s, sometimes with staff from the Mongolian intelligence agency. (National NGOs never experienced this kind of visits). However, in recent years there have been no reported violations of the ban. More broadly, because many church missions are in remote areas, they are rarely seen as a threat. Indeed they are often viewed as a positive source of rural development assistance that may reduce pressures on the government to reallocate its own domestic resources (Dalaibuyan 2007: 6).

The Muslim movement remained largely the legacy of past migration, emigration, and remigration by the Kazakh community, largely focused in two population centres, a province to the far west of Mongolia and the Nailakh community forty kilometres to the east of Ulaanbaatar, although Kazakhs are represented in coal mining counties throughout Mongolia.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Brede (2010).

There is little evidence of expansion of the Muslim presence through conversion to Islam, or of significant Muslim migration to Mongolia from other countries. The net result seems to have been negligible changes in “market share.”

By 2010, there were 254 Buddhist monasteries/organisations, 198 Christian churches, 44 Islamic mosques, and seven Shamanic, five Bahaist, and three non-classified organisations (Dalaibuyan 2013: 4). Being a Buddhist monk in Mongolia is now considered a profession, and monks receive a small salary from their monastery. ‘Employment’ of nuns also occurs in some nunneries. For many, being a monk appears “far more attractive than unemployment” (Bareja-Starzynska and Havnevik 2006: 221).

### **More recent developments**

Religious freedom has perhaps become even more evident in the period since 2010. Many religions are practiced openly, but competitive tensions exist between and within major religious groups. For example, it appears tensions remain between Mongol led Buddhists and followers of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama’s 2016 visit to Mongolia was contested by Z. Sanjdorj, the highest lama at Ikh Khuree monastery, and head of the Mongolian Buddhist Centre (Misheel 2016: 1).

However, most Mongols probably view Mongolia as a Buddhist country. The continued relevance of Buddhism is reflected in the 2010 decision to build a 108 meter stupa with a standing Maitreya statue of 54 meters on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar (Mishig-Ish 2012: 109). The perception of Buddhism as the “national” Mongol religion is perhaps associated with broader nationalistic sentiment, typified by the continued strong adoption of Chinggis Khaan as a national symbol (Bareja-Starzynska and Havnevik

noted Chinggis Khan was recognized by Mongolian Buddhists as the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Vajrapani. (Bareja-Starzynska and Havnevik 2006: 225)). The Shaman movement, marketed as Mongolia's old religion, has also successfully ridden the coat tails of nationalism, and is now again a significant minority religion in Mongolia.

Much of this nationalistic sentiment is benign, but a strong xenophobic sentiment, exemplified by the establishment of Mongol Dayar, a neo-Nazi organisation, has also emerged. This organisation openly argues for Mongol racial purity, and members have attacked several young women for associating with expatriates, especially Chinese men, as well as being involved in attacks on other expatriate men. To some extent there is an unfortunate overlap between religion, xenophobia, nationalism, and economic crimes against expatriates, which resurged at mid-decade as the Mongolian economy slowed to a standstill. Xenophobic violence also weakens the image of religious tolerance, an image the government has been careful to facilitate to encourage aid and foreign direct investment.

Perhaps reflecting these underlying sentiments, despite declared official tolerance in the constitution, some provinces still try to block Christian churches. There were also perceptions that it was difficult to register Christian churches, which has adverse implications for granting visas. On the other hand, some Christian organisations are perhaps too strident in arguing against perceived injustices, which is unlikely to aid their case.

Nonetheless, despite these issues, twenty five years after the democratic revolution, Austin estimated that there were 40-100,000 Christians in Mongolia, representing up to 10 per cent of voters (Austin 2015: 2). The Muslim movement, centred around the Khazakh community, also continues to emerge as a significant minority religion in Mongolia.

## Conclusions

Since the end of socialism Mongolia has experienced a remarkable religious renaissance, although a significant minority of Mongols claim to have no religion. The renaissance was formally launched through the 1992 Constitution which allowed religious freedom, although legislation passed a year later made it clear that some religions, especially Buddhism, were somewhat more equal than others. Although Buddhism has not been officially adopted as the state religion, former President Bagabandi set a precedent by having a Buddhist lama as his official religious advisor.

Buddhism, Shamanism, Christianity and Islam have all flourished to some degree, with strong competition between faiths for followers. King presents a picture of strong competition between Christian and Buddhist movements, and within the Buddhist movement. He noted a strong “defensive push” in the Buddhist movement (King 2012: 21).

Successive governments have trodden a delicate path. They need to be seen to facilitate Buddhism, the traditional pre-socialist national religion, to satisfy Mongol electoral pressures, while also being tolerant to other religious groups to encourage foreign aid and direct foreign investment. As well as competition between religions, competition also exists within religious groups. There is apparently competition between different groups in the Buddhist movement, between Mongols and Tibetans, where Tibetan Buddhists practice of chastity contrasts with Mongol monks’ practice of having wives. Competition also exists between traditional Shamanists and neo-Shamanists. Within the Christian movement, competition exists between the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and the various Protestant churches. Mormon missionaries are also seen regularly in

Ulaanbaatar's streets, with more occasional sightings of Jehovah's Witnesses.

## **Chapter 8: Changes in major social systems post 1990**

### **Introduction**

Transition to a market economy has also impacted on major social systems, especially Mongolia's education and health systems. Demographic changes, reflecting post-socialist freedom of movement as well as economic necessities, have also resulted in major changes in the nature of Mongolian society. Social systems are important in developing a cohesive society, and can have a major impact on living standards.

### **Education developments post-socialism**

Human capital theory contends that improvements in a country's education stocks will be reflected in higher national economic growth. Improvements in an individual's education stocks are also seen as likely to boost the life-long income of the individual. Human capital theory is often used as a justification for individual or government investment in education and training.

*No country grew quickly without the benefit of a highly qualified labor force. In Asia, all those that grew quickly possessed a workforce that was exceptionally well qualified (Kim and Terada-Hagiwara 2013: 22).*

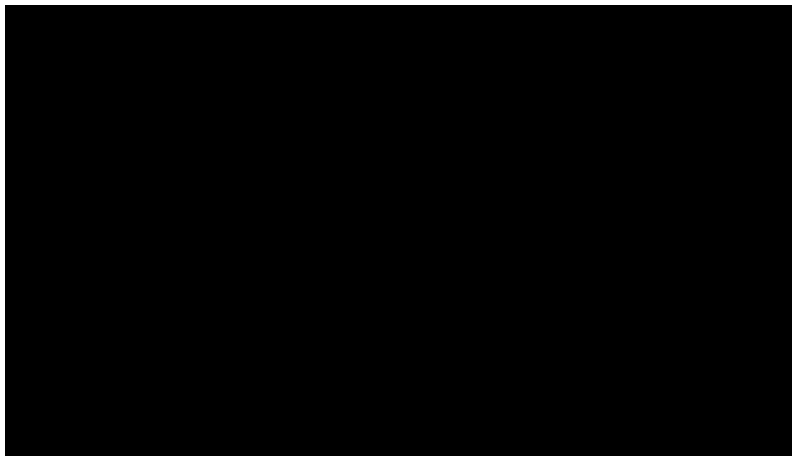
There is an extensive literature on this issue, including work by Solow (1956), Schultz (1961) Becker (1962), Chiswick and Miller (2009) Romer (1989, 1988, 1987, 1986), Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), Quiggin



(1999). Mincer (1970), Ben-Porath (1967), Preston (1997) Boucekkine, De la Croix and Licandro (2002), Weiss (1995), Benhabib and Spiegel (1994), Mincer and Polachek (1978, 1974).

For example, Becker argued human capital is concerned with activities that influence future real income through the “embedding of resources in people” (Becker 1962: 9). Schulz contended investment in human capital accounts for most increases in real earnings per worker (Schultz 1961: 1). Weiss also suggested better-educated workers are not a random sample of workers. Weiss notes they have lower propensities to quit or to be absent, are less likely to smoke, drink or use illicit drugs, and are generally healthier (Weiss 1995: 133).

**Figure 8.1: The British School, a symbol of change**



Source: [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-QN3YZgSnElo/UEdBxjbrI8I/AAAAAAAAASA/JcBA552l0pA/s1600/IMG\\_7624.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-QN3YZgSnElo/UEdBxjbrI8I/AAAAAAAAASA/JcBA552l0pA/s1600/IMG_7624.jpg)

This theory has critics. For example, England argued human capital theory fails to explain occupational sex segregation (England 1982: 358). Nonetheless, the expectation that improved personal human capital will boost personal and community incomes often motivates education

decisions in Mongolia. Dairiia and Suruga estimated the rate of return to schooling in Mongolia at between 6.6 and 7.2 per cent a year (Dairiia and Suruga 2006: 11). Pastore's analysis also "confirms the importance of education as an income multiplier for young people and, therefore, as a buffer against poverty" (Pastore 2010: 248).

*In the early 1990s Mongolia may have lurched from a rather extreme model of socialism to a rather extreme model of capitalism (Bray et al. 1994: 41).*

Before transition, Mongolia had a strong commitment to investment in education, in line with human capital theory. The transition to a market democracy quickly resulted in disarray. Since then there has been substantial change in Mongolia's education system, including the introduction of private education provision. Costs in higher education have also been shifted from the state to students. Capitalist ideology was hugely influential in transition socialist countries. This ideological influence extended to education, reflected in a number of contemporary World Bank education publications. The largely free market American education model was exported to the world, including Mongolia. It is a moot point whether such models have been useful in the Mongolian context.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

*Since the withdrawal of Soviet support in the early 1990's and the difficult transition to a market economy, there has been several emerging and continuing challenges to education in Mongolia. (Embassy of Canada to Mongolia 2014: 1).*

The socialist period saw considerable success in education provision in Mongolia. Education was a state priority. Whereas most Mongols were illiterate at the beginning of the socialist period, by the mid-1980s Mongolia had “liquidated illiteracy” (Suprunova 2007: 78). Reflecting this priority, in 1990 education received the largest share of government expenditure (17.6 per cent). Robinson concluded this was reflected in “correspondingly high levels of educational development” (Robinson 1995: 3).

Education provision extended to every corner of the country, including an innovative dormitory system for herders’ children so they could attend school in winter. Higher education also began during the socialist period, with the establishment of the Mongolian State University in 1942 (under socialism, there was only one university and a few higher education institutes) (Jugder 2014: 13). Tursunkulova noted that under socialism, higher education (especially in the sciences) was considered to be of high standard (Tursunkulova 2015: 10).

Students who attained high standards also had opportunities in other socialist countries, especially Russia. Russia influenced Mongolia’s education system in many ways, with teaching and learning styles emphasizing rote learning; five year undergraduate degree programs; and extensive use of Russian textbooks (Hall and Thomas 1999: 443). Russia also provided significant support (e.g., books, equipment, and training of academics) for Mongolian higher education (Weidman and Yeager 1999: 21). However, the early transition years resulted in major disruption to Mongolia’s education system. Funding declined markedly as the economy foundered and new education policies were adopted. School participation also fell. The innovative dormitory system for country school students was dismantled, as Western lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank and aid donors considered boarding schools an elite system and an inefficient use of funds.

Post-1990 reforms seemed rather more focused on at removing Soviet influences rather than improving learning outcomes (Yano 2012: 19). As remarked by Stolpe “there was a widespread tendency to condemn everything associated with socialism for ideological reasons and to simply equate Mongolia with the Soviet Union” (Stolpe 2016: 21).

More broadly, Yano notes Mongolia’s 1990 education share of government expenditure was heavily criticized by international organizations.<sup>44</sup> The IMF and development banks imposed cost-cutting and cost recovery measures, including freezing capital investment, retrenching non-teaching staff, partial cost recovery for kindergartens and boarding schools, and fees at post-secondary and higher education levels, against the general aim of minimizing the government’s role in the economy. Expenditure on books and learning materials was negligible (Yano 2012: 13).

The shockwave arising from Mongolia’s economic shock therapy meant access to and demand for secondary and tertiary education were undermined by funding problems (Engel et al. 2014: 9). During 1990-92, government expenditure on education was cut by 56 per cent, falling further in 1993 to 4 per cent of a diminishing GDP, and capital investment was halted (Robinson 1995: 4).

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<sup>44</sup> An IMF research team visited Mongolia in August 1990 and produced a report entitled *The Mongolian Peoples Republic, Towards a Market Economy*. In May 1991 ADB staff produced a report entitled *Mongolia: A Centrally Planned Economy in Transition*. The central theme of both papers was a vision of (very) small government, to be facilitated by a sharp reduction of tax collection, including the abolition of Mongolia’s main tax source, a turnover tax. This would have entailed a marked reduction in government expenditures, including education and health expenditures (Rossabi 2005b: 43, 44).

... 'there were times when the school did not have any cash. not because of misuse and abuse of funds; just there was no cash inflow from Government [...]. the school would pay teacher salaries in whatever commodity they were able to find – meat, even flour donated [or] obtained through barter' – education activist (Engel et al. 2014: 9).

At the primary/secondary school level, drop-outs and non-enrolments soared. According to Ministry of Science and Education statistics, in 1995-1996 51,544 children were not in school: 38,867 were defined as drop-outs, as opposed to the 12,677 others who had never attended school (including disabled children for whom special schools had been established (Khishigbuyan and Bandii 1996: 10). This reflected an increase in the value of child labour arising from privatization of herds (Robinson 1994: 4). Around 44 per cent of dropouts who left school did so to help their parents breed cattle (Khishigbuyan and Bandii 1996: 10). The closure of some local boarding schools, requiring children to travel to more distant ones, also caused enrolments at boarding schools to halve between 1989 and 1992 (Robinson 1995: 4).

World Bank recommendations to reduce government involvement in education became a reform framework for many transition countries, including Mongolia (Otgonjargal 2004: 1). Baterdene suggested this was a major shock for a country where hitherto all aspects of education had been controlled by the State. Moreover, this created something of a policy vacuum, as strategic planning and policy development had been undertaken by the ruling party, not the relevant ministry, much less the institutions the ministry had hitherto oversights (Baterdene et al. 1996: 5, 6). Hence policy making was easily dominated by outside interests.

The 1994 World Bank paper: *Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience* recommended four types of reforms for higher education:

redefinition of government roles in higher education, institutional differentiation, diversification of funding and policy attention to quality, responsiveness and equity (Otgonjargal 2004: 2). From a similar perspective Mongolia's 1991 education reform legislation introduced private education at the preschool, school, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and university levels. This was a major change for Mongolia.

In 1993, with the support of the Asian Development Bank, (a significant influence in the economic shock strategy adopted by Mongolia), Mongolia initiated large-scale education planning and development work, based on the new political and economic assumptions. Stolpe noted that in the face of the severe economic crisis "Mongolia's government had to make concessions to international donors to receive loans" (Stolpe 2016: 23).

The ADB funded a comprehensive education and human resource sector study that became the basis for a master plan to guide future legislation (Weidman 1999: 22). Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe noted (consistent with education reform proposals for many ex-socialist countries during this period), decentralization (in the name of efficiency) was a key principle of reforms for Mongolia, à la American and British education models (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe: 2004: 340).

The Government also encouraged private education through exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT). Many private secondary schools are also government-subsidized and very few are fully independent. The outcome was the development of a two tier school system, with most private schools offering better curriculum and higher quality instruction when compared with those of public schools (UNESCO 2009: 11).

Later the Government approved the 1994 Education and Human Resource Master Plan (EHRMP), which aimed to reform higher education and to privatize Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Jugder notes the reform package was supported by international organisations. Jugder noted that during the transition it was common for higher education policies to be imposed by international loan granting organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, or to be imported from other countries voluntarily by institutions (Jugder 2014: 13, 14).

For example, the degree structure was changed from a Soviet model to the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. borrowed from the United States higher education system “that was perceived as the most suitable model for a free market economy with democratic governance respecting human rights and free competition” (Batsukh 2011: 118). Reforms in 1998 devolved responsibility for key decisions (such as appointments for vice chancellor (or rector), budgets and student fees together with admission policy settings) to higher education institutions. Five new universities (Agricultural University, Medical University, Technical University, Pedagogical University and the University of Art) were created by the mid-1990s. There was also an explosion in private Higher Education Institutes with forty-six in existence by the mid-1990s (Hall and Thomas 1999: 443). By 2000, there were 172 higher education Institutions (Yano 2012: 19).

Higher education enrolments soared, mainly in low cost to teach disciplines, with very strong growth in demand for foreign languages, business, management, law, and computer science (Weidman 1999: 23). Part of the expansion in enrolments in higher education in the early 1990s reflected the absence of opportunity costs. Jobs supply was very limited, so many students enrolled in the absence of jobs (Otgonjargal 2002: 30). Weidman questioned how quickly the quality of graduates could be raised to international standards or whether the labor market could absorb the

numbers of graduates resulting from the burgeoning demand for higher education (Weidman 1999: 23). Altanseteg also noted the oversupply of specialists, such as doctors, economists, business managers, lawyers, accountants and teachers was a serious problem as were skill levels in demanding specializations (Altanseteg 2002: 14). Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe argued that while private sector involvement in tertiary education was considered ‘successful’ from a governmental and macro-economic perspective, this was not the case from an education viewpoint. They noted a decrease of the quality of education in colleges and universities, unequal admission procedures (including requirements for admission “donations” (Otgonjargal 2002: 30)), fraud in awarding degrees and titles, and financial hardship for families (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2004: 40).

*In 2000 primary school enrolment dropped to only 75.6 per cent and completion rates for basic education were down from 87 per cent in 1990 to only 64 per cent in 1999 (UNICEF 2003: 7).*

### **Developments between 2000 and 2010**

The decade began positively. Fees for dormitories for rural children were withdrawn. The introduction of the fees in 1996 had reduced enrolments in rural primary schools. Poorer parents often could not afford the fees (Yano 2012: 14). On the other side of the coin, despite their frequently high fee levels, a key development in this period was the continued expansion of private schools. By 2007 private schools enrolled over 7 per cent of upper secondary students (UNESCO 2009: 11).

In mid-decade the government also reformed school attendance requirements. The Government added an 11th year to the primary-secondary education cycle in 2004-2005 and subsequently added a 12th



year beginning in 2008-2009. The World Bank noted the reform addressed the short 10-year school cycle that existed in Mongolia before 2004-2005 (World Bank 2010: 3).

The Government also reformed teachers' salaries in 2007 to make government teaching more attractive. The base salary was raised significantly; several salary supplements were integrated into the base salary; and the number of additional teaching hours that teachers were permitted to teach was limited (World Bank 2010: 1). The Asian Development Bank suggested this "energized the sector" (Asian Development Bank 2008: 13). Previously, UNESCO had lamented that the qualifications of students entering teacher training courses had fallen dramatically and was "one of the major problems attending the quality of teacher training course delivery" (UNESCO 2011: 16). The Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE), the largest supplier of teacher training, had admitted students with scores of 350-400 out of 800. Some institutions outside Ulaanbaatar had admitted students with scores as low as 250 (UNESCO 2011: 16), inferring many students would have difficulty completing their courses.

The higher education system also continued to expand. By 2004, there were 183 higher education institutions, of which 47 were public, 129 private, and 7 foreign. Enrolment in undergraduate university programs increased from 27 per cent of school leavers in 1999, to 57 per cent in 2011,<sup>45</sup> reflecting the growth in the number of private universities. The most popular programs were business and commerce, mining and engineering, and computer sciences (Embassy of Canada to Mongolia 2014: 18). By 2009, there were 151 tertiary education institutions (TEIs), of which 72 per cent were private. Mongolia's Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in tertiary education was twice as high as China, and close to the

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<sup>45</sup> However, the Asian Development Bank has raised strong concerns about the reliability of education indicators in Mongolia, including enrolment data (ADB 2008: 11).

OECD average. However, 66 per cent of students still enrolled in public TEIs (World Bank 2010: 1). About 82 per cent of private and 61 per cent of public institutions were not accredited, raising issues about the quality of education service delivery in these institutions (Sodnomtseren 2006: 1).

However, the rapid expansion appeared to be paying limited social dividends. The 2014 ILS-RAND Mongolian Youth Survey of young people aged 15 to 34 showed 25 per cent were not in employment, education, or training (NEET). While some people were raising families this was “an extremely high number” and “a drag on the economy” (Shatz et al. 2014: 19-20). This may also reflect skills mismatch. The skills attained by young people are often not in demand. Only 30 per cent of 2008 graduates found jobs (Asian Development Bank 2008: 1). Indeed, the International Labor Organisation (ILO) considered the mismatch between the skills supplied and the skill requirements of the market place was widening (International Labor Organisation undated: 3).

Because technical skills are generally accorded low status in Mongolia, most young people continue to choose academic education rather than vocational training (World Bank 2010: 39). Public spending on Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was only 6 per cent of public spending on education, with about 45 per cent of the TVET budget going to students’ stipends. Less than one per cent is used for the purpose of infrastructure development and training equipment acquisition, which are critically inadequate (World Bank 2010: 41).

Pastore also noted a number of shortcomings in TVET. In 2008 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS), the sole public sector provider of technical and vocational education training administered 42 TVET institutions, including 22 vocational education and training centres which offer 2.5 years of combined professional and general education

based on the former Soviet system, leading to a professional certificate and a secondary education certificate. Fourteen branch schools and six technical colleges, provided advanced training for higher level skills up to a professional diploma or bachelors degree (Asian Development Bank 2008: 2). There were very few private providers of TVET. However, skills supply of skills from TVET was limited. Only 3.4 per cent of young people attended vocational technical education compared to about 8 per cent of their parents, leading to a reduction in the supply of technical skills (Pastore 2008: 31).

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on education for Mongolia in 2010 noted several challenges, including school dropouts, a lack of reliable statistics, infrastructure conditions of schools in respect to access to water and sanitation, and the state of the dormitories in rural areas. Villebos also noted internal migration to cities was leading to overcrowding in urban schools (Villebos 2010: 2). Narantuya's analysis of urban migration adds another dimension to Villebos' perspective. She noted city schools had no capacity to accommodate so many children. Indeed, some urban schools had to organize classes in three shifts with up to 60 pupils per teacher (Narantuya 2010: 2), meaning students have limited teaching hours, implying the quality of education is likely to suffer.

### **More recent developments**

There have been positive developments in terms of participation and in terms of equity in recent years. New school starters in 2010 were expected to complete 14 years of education. In addition, significant gains in equity have been made, with access gaps between urban and rural, rich and poor, and girls and boys all having narrowed since the transition period (Engel et al. 2014: 6). As noted by the Canadian Embassy to Mongolia, Mongolia has a very educated society, with a high literacy rate (96 per cent), a

secondary education completion rate of 86 per cent, with 56 per cent of the population continuing to postsecondary education.

Both state and students also continue to value education. A 2014 survey (Shatz et al. (2014)) indicated 40.8 per cent of respondents believed a university education was the lowest level of education needed to get a decent job, while 43.8 per cent believed a TVET education was sufficient. Only 11.3 per cent believed that all they needed was a secondary education, and even fewer, 4.1 per cent, believed that they needed only a basic education or less (Shatz et al. 2014: 23).

However, education remains ill-related to labour market needs. Over supply of business administration graduates is significant. A 2015 Labor Research Institute study indicated there were approximately 2,000 business administration jobs each year, “yet more than 5,000 to 6,000 students graduate in this field every year” (Boldsukh 2016: 2) (few graduates establish their own business, although many may be absorbed (often underemployed in terms of their new skill sets) into existing family businesses in the absence of other opportunities). More broadly, Boltsukh noted oversupply from higher education across all fields means that of the 45,000 students graduating annually only 28,000 find jobs, leaving 17,000 graduates unemployed. This is a significant waste of both scarce educational resources and young talent.

Moreover, the quality of education and training continue to be a concern, especially in respect to many private higher education institutions. In 2010 the World Bank concluded the Government needed to strengthen the quality assurance and accreditation system and improve links with the labor market against international accreditation benchmarks, and better engage with distance and overseas learning activities (World Bank 2010: 17).

The Canadian Embassy also expressed concern that a chronic lack of investment and a very limited pool of experts meant that much of the knowledge and skills being transferred through academic institutions was out of date (Embassy of Canada to Mongolia 2014: 1). In part, concerns about quality of higher education reflects rapid growth in private higher education institutions, a concern raised by Bray et al. in 1994, who argued it was not a foregone conclusion that the sudden proliferation of institutes was desirable, as many were too small to reap economies of scale (Bray et al. 1994: 40). With the benefit of hindsight, these concerns were quite reasonable. As noted by Teixeira, markets do not always produce the best outcome from a society's point of view. "This is a case of market failures" (Teixeira, 2006: 10) from (Jugder 2014: 23).

## **Conclusions**

Mongolia's education system is commonly reported as either an important national asset or something of a disaster. There is very little middle ground in these discussions. It would be fair, however, to suggest that Mongolia's education system is still evolving over the period since the transition to market democracy. One of the key changes was the introduction of private education in schools and higher education. Elite schools, charging up to 80 million tugriks a year for tuition (over \$US30,000), are now a significant element of Mongolia's school system (Boldsukh 2016: 1).

At the higher education level, the introduction of private providers has improved education access, but the quality of services is frequently viewed as poor, and many private providers are still unaccredited. World Economic Forum ratings suggest that outside of science and mathematics, where Mongolia's education system rates well, the quality of higher

education is not well regarded, especially in regard to private university business training (see World Economic Forum 2016: 263), (although to be fair some institutions have performed credibly in international testing (Peregrine Education Services 2016)). Students from many private providers struggle to get jobs as their courses often lack relevance to labour market needs. Employers are well aware of the poor quality of courses provided by some institutions. It hence remains a moot point whether this ideologically driven reform has provided real benefits to the Mongolian community.

With regards to tertiary education, there is still much to do. As a result of rapid expansion, an inequitable financing mechanism, and insufficient quality assurance, the World Bank considered Mongolia's tertiary education system suffers from low external efficiency, inequitable access, and poor quality. The World Bank noted there was an urgent need to improve the coherence, governance, and responsiveness of the country's tertiary education system to the changing demands of the market economy, to improve efficiency and resource utilization; and improve the quality of curricula, teaching, and learning in the subsector (World Bank 2010: 47).

Vocational education and training continues to be the poor relation in the Mongolian education system, despite graduates' success in getting jobs compared to higher education graduates (Lkhanyam and Yudina note the employability of TVET graduates is higher than their higher education counterparts, with the employment rate among university graduates at 36 per cent as against 60 per cent among TVET graduates (and 90 per cent in some TVET programs) (Lkhanyam and Yudina 2017: 99). However, less than ten per cent of 2011 high school students were enrolled in vocational programs. During the same year, only 4 per cent of high school graduates, went into a vocational post-secondary program (UNESCO 2013). Despite the growing need for tradesmen and vocational experts in Mongolia "there is still a strong stigma associated with this level of education" (Embassy of

Canada to Mongolia 2014: 17). Moreover, Duggan suggested Mongolia had not taken advantage of funding opportunities for vocational education arising from mining developments (Duggan 2015: 1).

In conclusion, as noted by Olaniyan and Okemakinde, the “belief that education is the engine room of growth depends on the quality and quantity of education in any country” (Olaniyan and Okemakinde 2008: 1). Post-socialism, Mongolia has expanded the volume of education. However, inequality has become entrenched in the school system, with students in government schools lacking the opportunities available to rich students attending Ulaanbaatar’s swanky private schools. Moreover, the quality of education, a source of national pride under socialism, is now a major cause for concern at all levels. Combined with concerns about widespread corruption in the education sector, poor quality education is likely to be weakening Mongolia’s struggle to shake off the shackles of poverty and inequality.

## **Health system changes post-socialism**

Early reforms in Mongolia’s health system post-socialism reflected contemporary Western economic health theories. See, for example Phelps’ seminal work on health economics (1997); Kakwani et al. (1997); Whitehead (1992); Kearns and Moon (2002); and Folland, Goodman and Stano (2007) (who discussed efficiencies and equity in health care provision).

Before socialism, most Mongols used traditional Mongolian medicines, generally distributed by Shamans.<sup>46</sup> Under socialism, Mongolia’s free

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<sup>46</sup> Traditional Mongolian medicines are still used extensively in Mongolia, for example, in treating cancer, as complementary medicines (see Oyunchimeg et al. 2017).

health care system was based on the Soviet Semashko model. The state was responsible for both the financing and delivery of health care (Asian Development Bank 2008: 1). By 1981 Mongolia had eliminated smallpox, typhus, plague, poliomyelitis, and diphtheria, and had sharply reduced the incidence of other infectious diseases. Free medical care was provided through a hierarchy of clinics and hospitals. In 1985, Mongolia had approximately 4,600 physicians, 24.8 per 10,000 people. There were also about 8,500 nurses and 3,800 physician's assistants (Central Intelligence Agency 1989: 1).

The Soviet style health system was centrally planned, dominated by the hospital sector with no network of primary health care, and “exclusive of community involvement or participation” (Vang and Hajioff 2002). Patients were regarded as passive consumers of services prescribed and organised by anonymous bureaucrats (O’Rourke et al. 2003: 124). Bolormaa suggested the bureaucratic, over-centralized health monopoly suffered gross inefficiencies (Bolormaa et al. 2007: 1). In the late 1980s, the country spent about 7 per cent of GDP on health. Over 10 per cent of the government budget went to health (Bayarsaikhan et al. 2005: 28).

With the breakdown of the Soviet system, five-year Soviet type plans were discontinued, and comprehensive long-term planning for the health sector disappeared. In this vacuum, development objectives were largely determined by donors, with development assistance delivered mainly as projects, fragmenting an already fragile health system—still strongly centralized and hospital based following the Semashko model (Ulikpan et al. 2014: 2). Funding problems post-socialism dictated the need for change. Nonetheless, it is ironic that Mongolia’s health system post-socialism was modelled on the expensive American system. In 1999, health administration costs totalled at least \$US294.3 billion in the United States, or \$1,059 per capita, as compared with \$307 per capita in Canada (Woolhandler et al. 2003: 768). Moreover, the United States was then the



only industrialized country that did not guarantee universal health insurance coverage or access to health care (Ruger 2007: 52).

More positively, the policy environment also included a new emphasis on preventative health care as opposed to the Semashko model's acute care focus. This change has undoubtedly aided improved health outcomes in Mongolia. Many new medical facilities have also come into existence in the last decade.

### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

Financial issues meant the early transition years were a disaster for health services in Mongolia. Stocks of essential drugs and medical supplies were exhausted. Without heat and electricity, many hospital and clinics were forced to close or curtail operations (World Health Organisation 1999). Most maternity waiting homes were closed. Many physicians left the health service, particularly in rural areas. Shortages of fuel in rural areas impaired the ability of county and township medical facilities to respond to emergencies (Janes and Chuluundorj 2004: 236, 237).

The loss of Russian subsidies meant changes were needed. The influence of Western donors, both financially and technically, became crucial to health sector reform, despite their relatively small contribution to overall health budgets (Ulikpan et al. 2015: 1). Economic rationalists advocated privatizing the health sector: doctors would be dropped from the government payroll and allowed to set up their own practices on a fee-for-service basis. Wealthier patients would pay in full, or take out private insurance. The poor would receive free services (but with a co-payment where possible) from a remnant of the government primary care sector (Hindle et al. 1999: 30).

This option was rejected by the Mongolian government in favour of partial privatization. Hospitals continued to have a significant role, but Family Group Practices were also established, paid by government on a capitation basis. In 1994, Mongolia established a Health Insurance Fund (HIF), (described by Neuport as “a vague health insurance model with unclear funding sources” (Neuport 1995: 35) which the ADB estimated contributed about 33 per cent of health expenditure (Asian Development Bank 2008c: 4).

Nonetheless, by 1998 it was clear privatization had not been successful (Diaz 1998: 352). Janes and Chulundorj considered it was “clear that the social protections afforded by the old socialist regime provided households and individuals far more health, economic, and social security than are now afforded under the new capitalist system” (Janes and Chulundorj 2004: 234). Sadly, infant and maternal mortality rates rose in the early transition years (Strickland 1993: 1). Diaz also noted the high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases,<sup>47</sup> reflecting an increase in prostitution during Mongolia’s economically desperate transition. One survey suggested five per cent of adolescent women had sex for money in this period (Diaz 1998: 352). Tandon et al.’s 2001 international comparison of health systems rated Mongolia’s health system at 145<sup>th</sup> out of the 191 countries studied (Tandon et al. 2001: 20).

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<sup>47</sup> Mongolia’s gonorrhoea rate per 100,000 people rose from 51 cases in 1983 to 142 cases in 1995 (Purevdawa et al. 1997: 399). Funding cuts meant Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) surveillance was reduced over this period, so the true incidence of STDs was in fact likely to be higher. STD’s continue to be a problem in Mongolia. Syphilis prevalence in pregnant women was estimated at 1.7 per cent in 2000 and 3.0 per cent in 2016 (Enkhbata et al. 2018: 13).

*The relationship between socio-economic progress, improvements in living standards and development of the health system on the one hand, and infant mortality on the other, has been repeatedly established in several studies (Neuport 1995: 36).*

## Developments between 2000 and 2010

The next decade essentially saw more of the same, donor insistence on health sector privatization (seemingly accepted by Mongolia's governments over this period, though somewhat compromised by "dumb insolence" on the ground by those opposed to reforms). Nonetheless, the reforms began to bear fruit. The private health sector, like the private education sector, grew in importance over this decade. By mid-decade there were large numbers of private sector health institutions. By 2007, Bolormaa suggested the "Semashko system had evolved into a health system with a mix of revenue sources, private sector service delivery and a plurality of actors" (Bolormaa 2007: xix).

**Table 2: Number of private health institutions in Mongolia in the mid 2000s**

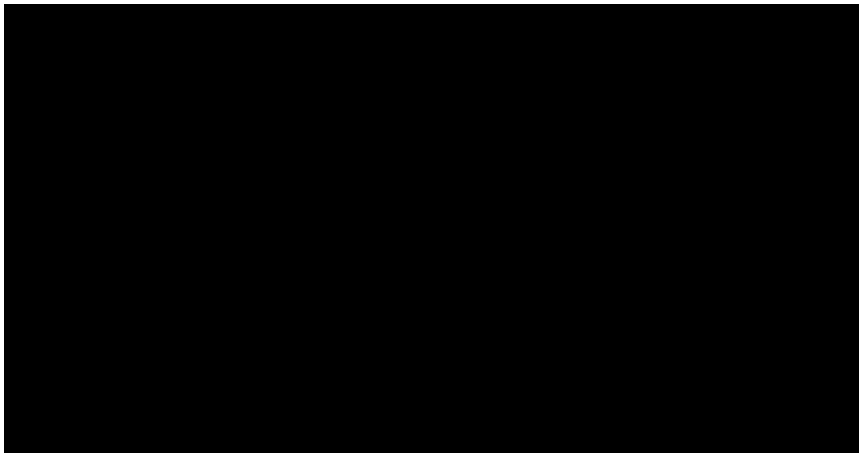
Location	2006		2007		2008	
	Hospitals	Clinics	Hospitals	Clinics	Hospitals	Clinics
Aimags	84	145	85	156	81	159
Ulaanbaatar	84	467	74	542	78	745
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>904</b>

Source: Asian Development Bank, 2010. Health Subsector Analysis

However, private sector institutions often duplicated public sector services, reflecting the combination of persistent inpatient-oriented care and perverse financial incentives that privileged admission over outpatient management (Tsevelvaanchig et al. 2016: 1). Services standards were also concerning,

reflecting weak accreditation processes (Oxford Business Group 2012: 204). ADB analysis indicated most district hospitals lacked complete, functioning basic sets of diagnostic equipment, and had limited pharmaceutical supplies. Sanitary conditions in rural district hospitals were also concerning (Asian Development Bank 2008c: vi).

**Figure 8.2: Symbol of change: Intermed private hospital, Ulaanbaatar**



Source: United Family Intermed Hospital web page, [www.archetype-group.com](http://www.archetype-group.com)

The ADB suggested there was premature emphasis on privatization in the Health Sector Development Plan (HSDP), and believed private health services were likely to replicate state services shortcomings in quality and service orientation, the outcome in most locations. The public was also likely to bypass PHC services when these services are unsatisfactory (Asian Development Bank 2008c: vii). Service gaps also existed, including significant gaps in mental health services for children and adolescents (Battuvshin 2008: 28). Spiegel et al. also noted significant shortfalls in health centres' surgical and anaesthetic services capacity, with deficiencies

in infrastructure and supplies being common, and limited supply of trained surgeons and anaesthesiologists. Most procedures were performed by general doctors and paraprofessionals (Spiegel et al. 2011: 272).

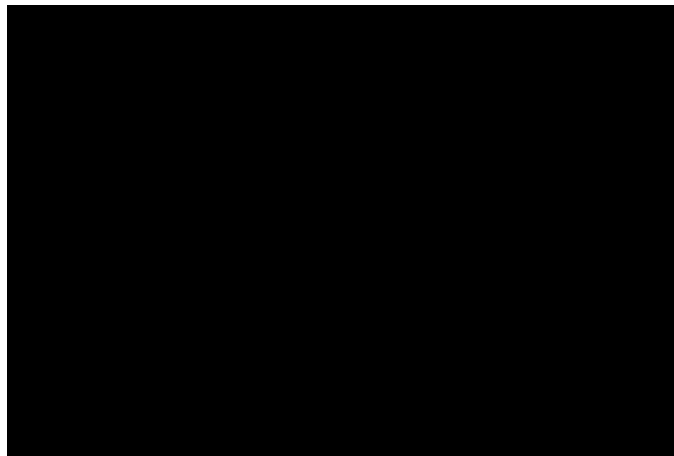
The decade ended with a substantial reduction in health funding: the 2009 health budget was significantly lower than the previous year's, and was then further reduced by 10 per cent. Budget cuts were concentrated in investment line items. The pharmaceutical budget was hard-hit, but salaries were largely preserved, and there were no hospital staff retrenchments (Bredenkamp et al. 2010: 1). Hence, in some respects, late in the decade the situation remained dire. The brutal reality was demonstrated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's 2010 study, which provided disease comparisons for Mongolia with 15 comparator low income countries. Mongolia rated poorly against comparators against virtually every disease (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation 2013: 3). Health insurance coverage also fell over the decade. As noted by Joshi et al. the poor, especially migrants from rural areas, are less likely to be registered with the city authorities to receive health-care. The percentage of the population with health insurance decreased from 95.3 per cent in 2000 to 82.6 per cent in 2010. Estimated out-of-pocket (OPP) payments for healthcare rose sharply, from 15 per cent in 2000 to 41 per cent in 2010 (Joshi et al. 2017: 2). The World Health Organisation expressed concern that the government practice of controlling the health budget failed to contain costs; and increased the burden on households, because hospitals applied additional charges to fill financing gaps. This increased the risk of direct out-of-pocket payments and financial barriers in accessing needed health care, especially for the poor (World Health Organisation 2011: 12).

### More recent trends

*A sea change is taking place in Mongolia's health sector as a solid but unresponsive system is overhauled (Oxford Business Group 2012: 202).*

The Oxford Business Group's heady perspective reflected startling economic growth in Mongolia arising from major mining sector developments. More new private hospitals came on line, including the Grand Med and Intermed hospitals south of the city. Later in the decade the Mongolian economy stagnated and the underlying problems in health service delivery again become evident.

**Figure 8.3: Staff at the new Grand Medical Hospital, Ulaanbaatar,**



Source: Grand Med Hospital web site

Notwithstanding increases in health services capacity in some areas, Mongolia's health system capabilities remain challenged by several factors. First, Mongolia is a large country, and health services are uneven across the country. Second, winter can be harsh, with very low temperatures. This causes respiratory diseases, as do summer dust storms, and increases risks of trauma from falls or car accidents. Recurrent natural winter disasters

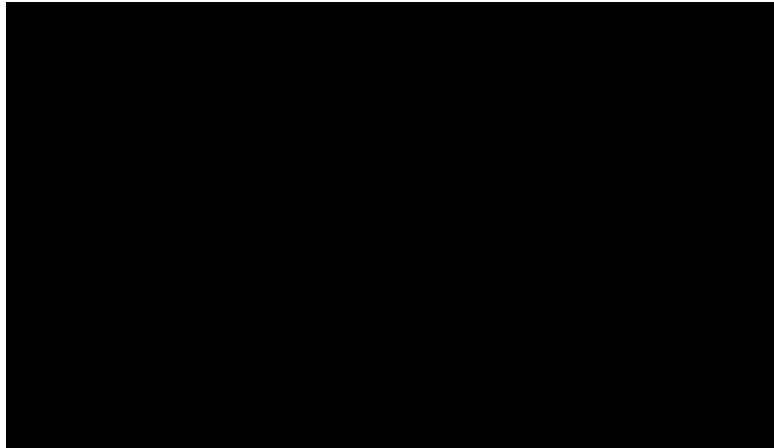
(*dzud*) add to health system challenges (Lindskog 2014: 1). Indeed, *dzud* related food shortages can impact on child height (Groppo and Schindler 2014: 1).

*During winter... the monthly average temperatures in Mongolia are typically -20 degrees C, and the differences between day and night temperatures are usually very large, with night temperatures falling as low as -40 C (Jadambaa et al. 2015: 2).*

Mongolia also suffers very high levels of urban air pollution. Wang et al. noted major air pollution increases in winter (Wang et al. 2017: 1). As Ulaanbaatar is located in a basin surrounded by mountains, it is affected by the mid-continental Siberian anticyclone, a system characterized by stagnant air masses (Hill et al. 2017: 2). The effects can be disastrous. Allen et al. estimated that 29 per cent of cardiopulmonary deaths and 40 per cent of lung cancer deaths in the city reflect air pollution (Allen et al. 2013: 137). Child birth weights also fall in the months when air pollution is highest (Baljinnyam et al. 2018: 1). Moreover, respiratory tract infections (RTIs) are the second leading cause of death in children aged under five. RTI-associated hospital visits for young children comprised 87 per cent of all hospital visits in 2015, compared to 18 per cent in developed countries (Dagvadorj et al. 2016: 2).

Indeed, the air pollution problem seems to be intensifying, not abating (Praamsa 2016a: 1). In mid-December 2016 the authorities advised air pollution levels were “hazardous” (Odontuya 2016: 1). Hoffman et al. suggested Ulaanbaatar has perhaps the worst particulate air pollution of any city in the world. Substantial scientific research strongly associates this level of pollution with significant mortality (Hoffmann et al. 2012: 512).

**Figure 8.4: Air pollution in Ulaanbaatar mid December 2016**



Source: The UB Post, December 2016, [www.ubpost.mongolnews.mn](http://www.ubpost.mongolnews.mn).

It is a matter for speculation as to whether this situation would have been as bad had socialism continued. Nonetheless, economic distress post-socialism clearly influenced urban migration, as did the abandonment of strict population movement measures. Ulaanbaatar now has possibly two million residents, the majority living in peri *ger* areas.<sup>48</sup> Domestic coal based heating in *ger* areas is the major cause of air pollution in Mongolia (Huang et al. 2013: 5). Extreme air pollution has further stressed Mongolia's public health system.

*Ulaanbaatar is today one of the most polluted cities in the world. Air pollution has now reached critical levels, with city residents exposed to annual average concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5 ) over seven times higher than World Health Organization (WHO) international guidelines (UNICEF 2016: 8).*

Alcohol abuse is another major public health challenge, and is a leading cause of death. In 2007, liver cancer accounted for 40 per cent of new

<sup>48</sup> Sadly, as reported in mid December 2016 in *The UB Post*, low income families burn coal, plastics, rubbish and car tyres to keep warm (Seaniger, C-A., 2016: 1).



cancers (World Health Organisation 2007: 39).<sup>49</sup> Alcohol abuse is possibly more of an issue post-socialism. In 2009 Mongolia's top policeman suggested "Unemployment and poverty are the main issues why people get drunk. In the early '90s the manufacturing plants closed down, and their workers became very poor. With market democracy, the unemployment rate became critical and the drinking really started," (NPR 2009: 1).

A 2006 survey found 22 per cent of Mongolian men and 5 per cent of women were dependent on alcohol, rates three times higher than in Europe (NPR 2009: 1). A later survey indicated persons aged 25-34 years were the heaviest drinkers. Drinking rates for urban youth were almost twice as high as rural youth (Demaio et al. 2013: 13). Access is easy, because 'there are more licensed points of sale per person in Mongolia than in any other country in the world' (Armstrong and Tsogtbaatar 2010: 209). (The alcohol industry is very powerful in Mongolia, and until the recent expansion of the mining sector, was the major source of revenue for the Mongolian Government). As was the case with respect to air pollution, it is open to question whether alcohol abuse would have been lower had socialism persisted, but it seems likely that alcohol abuse may have worsened post-socialism. Urbanisation post-socialism has probably added to the problem, in part because there are so many alcohol sales outlets in the cities.

*Alcohol is easily available in cities and towns, which have a growing number of shops, bars and restaurants (Duerre 2013).*

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<sup>49</sup> For a detailed discussion of the incidence and types of cancer in Mongolia, see Chimed et al. (2016).

Tobacco abuse has been another leading cause of premature death. Tobacco is related to around one third of cancers. In 2007 the WHO noted most males smoked and numbers were rising, while the proportion of females who smoked was small but increasing. Post-socialism, imports of tobacco products increased dramatically. Cigarettes imports per person increased by 10–15 times from 1997 to 2000 (World Health Organisation 2007: 42). Adolescent smoking is also an issue. A 2003 survey found 54.6 per cent of male students and 28.4 per cent of female students aged 13–15 had smoked; 15.2 per cent of male students and 4.4 per cent of female students currently smoked. Some 64.2 per cent had been exposed to second-hand smoke at home (World Health Organisation 2011: 8).

These risk factors add to the potential for cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVDs are Mongolia's leading cause of mortality. In 2011, CVD accounted for 36.7 per cent of all deaths, cancer accounted for 20.7 per cent and external causes of morbidity and mortality for 18.3 per cent (Chimeddamba et al. 2014: 2). Life style changes causing obesity have also contributed to growth in the incidence of diabetes. Measured by Body Mass Index (BMI), between 2005 and 2013, male and female obesity rates rose markedly (Chimeddamba et al. 2016: 1). Blood Lead Levels (BLLs) among Mongolia's young population are also concerning, reflecting coal related air pollution. Praamsma et al. suggest parents with high occupational lead exposure have inadvertently added to household pollution (Praamsma et al. 2016: 203).

Health funding remained a major issue. Mongolia continued its attempts to promote primary health care. Family clinics, 'family health centres' (FHCs) are private entities, funded by Government on a capitation basis. Services are free to Mongols. FHCs are the major facilitators of primary health care in Mongolia. Of the 228 FHCs nationwide, 136 are located in Ulaanbaatar City and the remainder in the provinces (Chimeddamba et al. 2015: 2). However, urban patients continue to bypass family health centres,

preferring secondary hospitals and specialist services, believing that these are better equipped and better staffed (World Health Organization 2012: 5). Therefore, hospitals remain a key source of treatment. Mongolia has twice the average number of hospitals of the EU and other transition countries, although numbers have been declining since 1998.<sup>50</sup> Average hospital stays decreased from 12.3 days in 1990 to 8.1 days in 2011, when inpatient and outpatient visits were 2,491.6 and 6,187.2 per 10,000 population respectively. The number of outpatient and inpatient visits is higher in Ulaanbaatar city than in *aimags* (World Health Organization 2012: 3).

The number of private health care providers rose from 683 private hospitals and clinics in 2005 to 1184 in 2011 (mainly small hospitals with 10-20 beds and outpatient clinics). There are increasing numbers of NGOs active in health promotion and awareness in HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol issues. (World Health Organization 2012: 3).

Other system weaknesses also persist. For example, as late as 2008, Battuvshin noted Mongolia still did not have any separate or affiliated specialized institution or governmental entity with clearly identifiable overall responsibility for the child and adolescent mental health system (Battuvshin 2008: 25). Boldmaa et al. also suggested traffic accidents are an urgent social health issue. Traffic accidents take third place as a cause of death, reflecting the widespread unavailability of professional accident and emergency services (Boldmaa et al. 2012: 32). Boeriu et al. raised similar concerns (Boeriu et al. 2014: 50).

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<sup>50</sup> Many hospitals would be better described as clinics or respite centres. Most are at the *soum* or district level in rural areas, small, under-resourced centres, often lacking basic diagnostic equipment, underutilised given the extent of urbanisation in Mongolia, while city public hospitals, are severely overcrowded. Hospital stays are also influenced by endemic diseases (such as tuberculosis), which often require long hospital stays.

Ulikpan noted both government and development partners recognize the importance of Health Systems Strengthening (HSS). However, donors continue to prioritise service support over broader HSS interventions, and the early promise of governance and resource management capacities shown by the Ministry of Health in the HSSMP had not been sustained, with the result that improvements in health systems performance have stagnated (Ulikpan 2015: iii).

*Within countries, not only is child mortality highest among the poorest households but also there is a social gradient: the higher the socioeconomic level of the household the lower the mortality rate (Marmot 2005: 1100).*

Health outcomes are also influenced by socio-economic status (SES) and/or poverty. The high incidence of poverty in Mongolia, where over one third of the population live in poverty, is reflected in health outcomes. In adults, low SES also is associated with greater rates of morbidity and mortality, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, osteo-arthritis, asthma, and cancer (Hanson and Chen 2007:1). A 2018 study also showed that children of less educated mothers were at increased risk of developmental delay compared to children of more educated mothers (Dagvadorj et al. 2018: 4).

Joshi et al.'s analysis also shows clear links between stunting and low socio-economic status (Joshi et al. 2017: 13). As noted by the World Health Organization, data from the fifty two countries included in the World health Survey indicate the rich tend to access health services far more frequently than poor people, 'despite the fact the poor need them much more' (World Health Organization 2010: 10).

Costs to patients remained a very important issue (Cashin and Somanathan 2015). Despite the high coverage of social health insurance, major health issues can be financially disastrous. A 2016 study indicated a significant proportion of the population incurred catastrophic health expenditures and was forced into poverty due to out-of-pocket (OOP) payments for health care (Dorjdagva et al. 2016: 2). The impact of OOP can be seen from costs for non-communicable disease care: 2013 survey data indicated public sources financed 51.0 per cent of inpatient spending and OOP payments financed 82.2 per cent of outpatient care and diagnostics and 85.6 per cent of the drugs prescribed by ambulatory care services. Overall, OOP payments funded almost two-thirds of estimated non-communicable disease spending in Mongolia (Dugee et al. 2018: 5).

## Conclusions

Under socialism Mongolia had a relatively strong but costly health system, based on the free hospital based Russian system. Cost pressures meant that post-socialism this system could no longer be maintained. Changes were needed, and western health models, promoted by aid providers, quickly replaced the defunct Soviet doctrine. There are some positives. Some major new private facilities have come on line. A recent study also showed that the Mongolian age-standardized Amenable Mortality Rate (AMR)<sup>51</sup> per 100,000 population declined from 226.6 in 2007 to 169.2 in 2014, although this is still high compared to other countries (Surenjav et al. 2017: 7). Overall, however, results have been uneven, compounded by demographic changes, and the growth of poverty and inequality in Mongolia. Corruption has also reduced public spending efficiency and lowered education and health expenditure as a percentage of GDP (Delavallade 2006: 235).

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<sup>51</sup> Amenable mortality (AM) is mortality that can be avoided by effective healthcare.

Socio economic differences can impact adversely on health outcomes, even in rich societies. Rich American may live fifteen years longer than poor Americans (Glenza 2017: 1). In poor Mongolia, the results can be even more traumatic. Dorjdagva et al.'s study of income-related inequalities in health care utilization from 2007 to 2012 suggested significant and growing differences in health care for rich and poor people. Although the poor had greater need, the rich used more health care services, except for FGP/*soum* hospitals' outpatient services. Tertiary level hospital outpatient visits in Mongolia, especially private hospital outpatient visits and inpatient use were concentrated in rich populations. Moreover, inequity in 2007 was observed to have worsened by 2012 (Dorjdagva et al. 2015: 23). Dorj's work addressed a related problem, medicine costs. Dorj noted "empiric treatment with appropriate antibiotics for respiratory infections, including pneumonia is crucial in the reduction of mortality from pneumonia...Treatment of pneumonia with amoxicillin suspension would cost more than a half day's wage, whereas for other respiratory infections (otitis media), the cost of treatment would be 1 day's wage" (Dorj et al. 2018: 7).

*... despite the improved GDP across the decade, the effect of social determinants on child health increased from 2005 to 2010. Significant improvements in some household conditions (sanitation) and mothers education could not mask the dramatic effects of inequalities as measured by household wealth and maternal education in terms of child health outcomes (Joshi et al. 2017: 13).*

Mongolia's nouveau riche and emerging middle class have money to access private health care, or engage in medical or health tourism to countries like China, Korea, Thailand and Singapore. Well-to-do patients often seek treatment abroad because they lack faith in the domestic health system, combined with the hope for treatment afforded by seemingly unlimited

options abroad (Snyder et al. 2015: 2). However, poor people tend to use the public health system, especially hospitals.

*Health care service previously available to Mongolian citizens—all expenses paid by the government—has become, in large part, “off limits” to the poor. The few resources Mongolian hospitals do manage to procure, such as drugs, equipment, ambulances, instruments and personnel, are accessible only to those with the means to pay for them, and, oftentimes, “unofficially” to the hospital faculty (Kim 2011: 38).*

Emphasis on privatization of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the system, coupled with deployment of universally-accessible, but from a clinical standpoint, limited, version of essential primary care, produced a fragmented system (Janes et al. 2006: 1). For example, while a 2016 study indicated intensive care units bed capacity in Mongolia was higher than in other low-and lower-middle-income countries, availability varied considerably between regions, and functional mechanical ventilators were available for only half of the ICU beds (Mendsaikhan et al. 2016: 8).<sup>52</sup>

A survey by Hoffman et al. suggested that people living in Ulaanbaatar place a high value relative to their income on reducing their risks of death (Hoffmann et al. 2012: 512). Notwithstanding this concern a 2015 report, *Measuring the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in 188 countries*, which uses similar measures to the Global Burden of Disease reports still rated Mongolia at 111 in the world (Lim et al. 2015: 1828).<sup>53</sup> As noted by Bolormaa et al., in 2007 Mongolia was “still challenged by the double burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases and health disparities between its socioeconomic groups. An appropriate

<sup>52</sup> 11.7 Intensive Care Units (ICU) beds per 100,000 inhabitants

<sup>53</sup> This measure also includes factors such as war and violence (where Mongolia rates well) as well as disease measures.

response to these health issues demands a stronger health system” (Bolormaa et al. 2007: xix). Sadly, these issues persist in Mongolia, as do funding concerns, while new issues such as air pollution have emerged post socialism. Moreover, while socialist Mongolia’s health system was far from perfect, all Mongols could access health services without fear of the financial consequences.

## **Demographic changes post-socialism**

*Widespread urbanization is a recent phenomenon. In 1900 just 15 per cent of the world’s population lived in cities. The 20th century transformed this picture, as the pace of urban population growth accelerated very rapidly in about 1950. Sixty years later, it is estimated that half of the world’s people lives in cities (Annez and Buckley 2009: 2).*

There have been major demographic changes in post-socialist Mongolia. First, Mongolia has experienced significant population growth. Mongolia’s population has increased by nearly 40 per cent since 1990 and forecasts predict Mongolia’s population at over 3.4 million by 2030. Second, notwithstanding continued population growth post-socialism, fertility rates declined markedly post-socialism. As noted by Gerber, the countries of Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union experienced substantial declines in fertility rates during the 1990s (Gerber 2009: 6). Indeed, Russia was very concerned, and adopted a strong pro-natalist policy in 2006, with increased child benefits, longer maternity leave, and a payment of over US\$9,000 to each woman who had a second child. Borodaevskiy commented that some scholars regard Russia’s population decline as a catastrophe, a “deadly” threat to the country (Borodaevskiy 2013: 1).



Third, post-socialism Mongolia has urbanised significantly, reflecting both population growth and internal migration. Historians and social scientists have traditionally associated the ‘Urban Revolution’—the emergence of cities and urban ways of living some 6,000 years ago—with the rise of civilization, with progress, and with modernity (Fox 2013: 9). Theories concerning urbanisation frequently provide economic rationales for urbanisation (Peng et al. 2011: 1). Gottman (1978) argued the “pull of the city” resulted from the expansion of urban labour markets. Dahiya, for example, suggests cities and towns have been the “engine room of growth” in developing Asia (Dahiya 2012: 548). Urban migration is often seen as a stepping stone for a better life (Tettey 2005: 8). Dahiya also considered links between urban formal and informal sectors have played an important role in growth (Dahiya 2012: 549).

Gottman suggests the converse, the “push from the land,” resulted from the shrinkage of the labour required for agricultural production and for servicing farms. Both “push” and “pull” factors, Gottman concluded, concurred to accelerate urbanisation and both were explained by the advances of technology (Gottman 1978: 1). Both factors have been important factors underpinning urbanisation in Mongolia, although rural output in Mongolia seems to have been influenced by land degradation arising from climate change and overstocking rather than improved labour productivity.

Harris and Todaro contended that expected earnings differentials between city and country also promote city-bound migration, although this may be tempered by fear of unemployment (Harris and Todaro 1970: 126). However, Todaro also suggested urban labour markets seldom provide permanent jobs to the majority of rural migrants (Todaro 1969: 138). This is consistent with Mongolia’s experiences post-socialism. Numerous studies of rural-urban migration in the developing world indicate migration to the towns often exceeds urban job creation (Todaro 1980: 362).

For most Mongols, including young herders, the modern life of Ulaanbaatar has exerted a strong cultural attraction as the *ville lumière*, the symbol of modernity (Mayer 2015: 12). More broadly, Annez and Buckley note the more ready availability of specialized services—such as accounting, tax advice, and intellectual property management—in large cities (Annez and Buckley 2009: 13) attracts people to the city. Cities are also the focal point for justice systems, health systems, advanced education, entertainment and cultural pursuits. Engel noted such services are more difficult to access and are of lesser quality in rural Mongolia (Engel 2015: 1). Radnaabazar et al. also remarked that in Mongolia “The obviously attractive city life, as opposed to the rather traditional rural life with its rigid social structure, has provoked the massive influx of people to the capital city” (Radnaabazar et al. 2004: 333). Kaplonski noted responses to a survey published in the newspaper *Ardyn Erh* (People’s Right, 2 December 1992), indicated about 80 per cent of respondents preferred a sedentary lifestyle to a nomadic one (Kaplonski 2004: 27). Mongolia’s rapid urbanisation post-socialism also reflected the end of socialist-era movement restrictions, when a person who wanted to move from one *soum* to another needed authorisation from the place of origin and the destination, as well as a job offer in the new *soum* and a waiver from the current job in the place of origin (Neuport and Goldstein 1994: 21).

Rapid urbanisation occurred following initial flight from the city. Mongolia’s early 1990s economic crash forced many urban people out to the countryside, to gain a livelihood through herding (Griffin et al. 2002: 4). Later this trend was reversed. Mongolia’s fickle weather also destroyed the livelihood of many herders in the late 1990s, when the country was hit by massive winter storms (*dzuds*) which killed millions of livestock and destroyed the livelihood of thousands of herding families.

Therefore, many people were forced to flee the countryside and seek refuge in the cities (Griffin et al. 2002: 5).

It is a moot point whether urban migration has led to greater life satisfaction for the Mongols who have resettled in the city. Data on life satisfaction in China suggests urban migrants have lower life satisfaction than city or country residents who stay put, although strangely enough, urban migrants would prefer to relocate to another city rather than to the country if relocation became necessary (Helliwell et al. 2018: 67, 68).

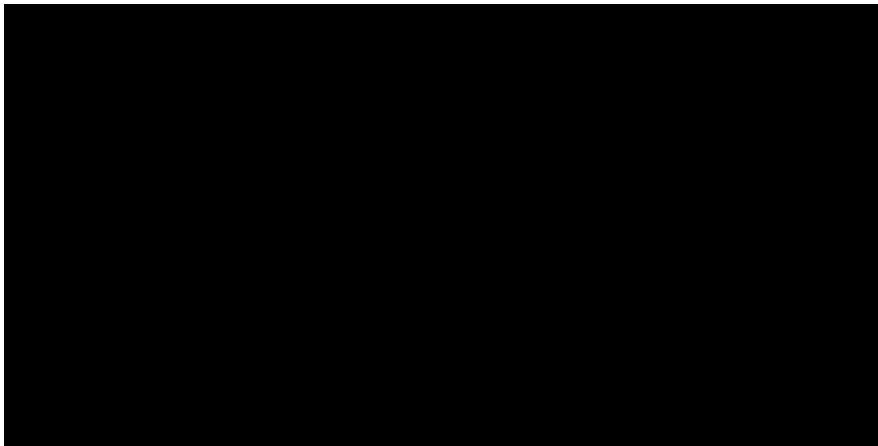
### **Developments between 1990 and 2000**

*The 1998 Mongolian Reproductive Health Survey indicated that women who were 45 to 49 years of age in 1998 had been married at an earlier age than their younger counterparts...significant changes have been taking place in marriage patterns...(Gereltuya 2008: 87).*

The 1990-2000 decade saw a marked reduction in population growth reflecting economic and social distress. Changes in government policy also influenced family formation. In the latter socialist period, the government favoured strong pro-natalist policies. Mongolia's Third Five year Plan (1961-65) included pro-natalist policies, including subsidies and awards (Neuport 1994: 19). Contraception options were also limited. The pro-natal subsidies disappeared with socialism. Contraception became more widely available, and women were legally allowed access to abortions (Gereltuya et al. 2007: 801). As noted by Gereltuya et al., between 1963 and 1975 total fertility fluctuated between seven and eight children per woman. However, total fertility fell to 2.8 children per woman by 1993 (although it should be noted that Mongolia's fertility rate in 1993 was still amongst the highest in Asia (Lee 1993: 623).

Gereltuya noted that female education and female labour force participation might have been influential in women limiting their childbearing from the mid-1970s up to 1989 (Gereltuya 2008: 94). Spoorenberg (2009) concluded that although early post socialist economic conditions did not necessarily overcome the Mongol cultural tradition of early marriage and child bearing, the 1990s saw delays in subsequent child bearing across all age groups, and a new social phenomena, a common decision to “stop at two”. Skirbeck et al. (2015), in examining fertility trends in Asian countries, suggested that Buddhism tends to be a low fertility religion, and argued the post 1990 renaissance of Buddhism may have contributed to low post-socialist fertility in Mongolia (although in reality latent Buddhism was revealed, rather than mass conversion to Buddhism post 1990: that is, there was no real change in religious preferences post-socialism).

The extent of urbanisation, concentrated around Ulaanbaatar, has also been significant, although it would be wrong to infer that urbanisation in Mongolia took place only in the post-socialist period. By 1990 nearly 60 per cent of the population was urban, and 22 urban locations had over 10,000 inhabitants (Neuport and Goldstein 1994: 1). Nonetheless, the post socialist period marked a major shift in the share of Mongolia’s population resident in city and country. For a city which was originally planned for 130,000 residents, Ulaanbaatar’s population explosion post-socialism has been profound. (The first scientifically based plan of developing Ulaanbaatar, prepared in 1953 with the involvement of Soviet experts, expected the city’s population to increase to 130,000 by 1970 (Szalontai 2016: 168-169)).

**Figure 8.5: First Ulaanbaatar city master plan, 1954**

Source: McCormack 2012: 7

Whereas in 1990 most Mongols lived in the country, or in country cities or towns, this changed markedly post-socialism. Following initial mass migration to the countryside when the economy imploded in the early 1990s, many people came back to live in Ulaanbaatar, or migrated to Ulaanbaatar (Mayer 2015: 4). As noted earlier, economic factors were a major factor underpinning this change (see Anderson (1998) for a detailed discussion of the factors leading to rapid growth in the informal sector in Mongolia in the 1990s.

Of course, the massive demographic changes which began post-socialism had social, cultural and political as well as economic effects. Bruun and Narangoa noted the “Mongol nation had become equally divided between pastoral and urban lifestyles, holding seemingly contradictory values and identities, even irreconcilable grounds for nationhood” (Bruun and Narangoa 2006: 6). Another consequence was the impact of economic disarray on population growth in the early transition period. Population growth plunged with the adoption of a market economy. Although population growth rebounded after 2000, fertility rates remained well below socialist levels.

## Developments between 2000 and 2010

*...today Ulaanbaatar...is home to over a third of the country's population, produces over 40 per cent of the nation's GDP, and is the junction point of all the country's major roads, railway and air service (Herro et al. 2003: 2)*

Mongolia's population rose from 2.4 million in 2000 to 2.7 million in 2010. Fertility rates remained low compared to the pre-socialist period. Within this broader context, Ulaanbaatar's population grew significantly between 2000 and 2010, especially in the *ger* or peri urban areas. This was the most common urban destination for herders doing it hard on the land. Rural productivity has declined, reflecting climatic factors as well as overgrazing.

The volume of lakes and rivers in Mongolia has diminished in recent years reflecting climate change, deforestation, land degradation, and other adverse human activities. According to the National Survey for Surface Water conducted in 2003, 683 rivers (out of 5,565 rivers), 1,484 springs (out of 9,600 springs), and 760 lakes and ponds (out of 4,196 water bodies) had disappeared since the previous survey in 1995. Ojima and Chuluun noted "This further concentrated grazing pressure and has led to a rapid degradation of grassland ecosystems" (Ojima and Chuluun 2008: 186).

This has led many herders to seek work in Ulaanbaatar, the majority of whom live in peri-*ger* areas. As noted by Herro et al., by the early 2000s Ulaanbaatar's *ger* areas were immense, both geographically and in terms of population. The *ger* areas accounted for 70 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's residential area, and 58 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's registered population. The *ger* area registered population grew by 10 per cent from 2000 to 2002 while the apartment area population remained stable (Herro et al. 2003: 1).

Unemployment was rife in *ger* areas. Most unemployed did not register, and therefore real unemployment was understated. Herro et al. contended that in the early 2000s the actual unemployment rate was 28 per cent for the *ger* area, and 17 per cent for the apartment area. With underemployment factored in, they estimated real unemployment at 45 per cent for the *ger* area (Herro et al. 2003: 21, 22). However, internal migration to Ulaanbaatar accelerated. Mayer notes that Ulaanbaatar's population grew by 3,700 per year in the 1930s and 1940s, by 12,000 per year in the 1950s to 1980s and 24,000 per year in the 1990s, and by 39,000 per year in the 2010s (Mayer 2015: 3). The total number of vehicles has rapidly grown in the past few years. There were 42,509 vehicles in 2000, compared with 209,791 vehicles in 2011 (Huang et al. 2013: 2).

**Table 3: Mongolia, Urbanisation, 1990 to 2016**

Year	Population	Urbanisation Rate (%)	Urban Population (number)
1990	2,184,145	57.8	1,262,435
1995	2,298,038	56.8	1,305,480
2000	2,397,438	57.1	1,368,937
2005	2,526,447	62.5	1,579,029
2010	2,712,657	67.6	1,833,756
2015	2,959,134	71.2	2,106,903
2016	3,006,444	71.8	2,158,626

Source: Worldometers ([www.Worldometers.info](http://www.Worldometers.info)), downloaded 2 November 2016

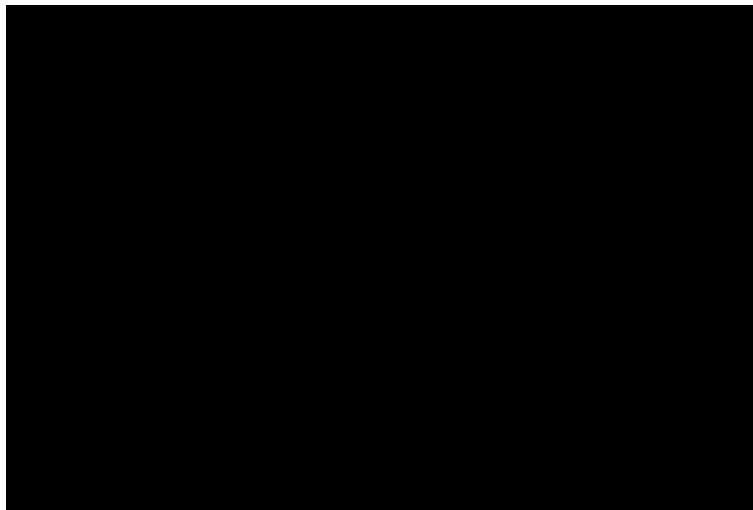
Guttikunda argued the *ger* areas were ill equipped to absorb such a fast growing population, noting the lack of infrastructure for waste management, provision of clean water and sanitation. Air pollution was also very high in these areas (Guttikunda 2008: 24). These issues raise health concerns as discussed earlier in this chapter.

### More recent developments

*Several of Ulaanbaatar's current issues are directly related to Ulaanbaatar's sprawling Ger District...home to approximately 736,000 residents, 61 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's population (Galimbyek, 2015), from Engel 2015: ii).*

While Mongolia's population has continued to increase, despite a rebound in fertility rates post transition, population growth has been relatively low by historical standards. Saavala suggested that the factors that usually go hand in hand with fertility decline globally are well known, despite regional idiosyncrasies: falling child mortality, resource constraints, new economic opportunities, exposure to new ways of life and more equitable gender relations, and improved means of birth control (Saavala 2010: 46). Some of these factors are relevant to Mongolia. Mongolia's rate of population increase has clearly been lower than was the case in the late socialist period.

**Figure 8.6: Ulaanbaatar's sprawling ger areas**



Source: The Asia Foundation,  
<http://asiafoundation.org/2013/01/16/ulaanbaatars-ger-residents-may-see-improvements-under-new-leadership/>, downloaded 21 September 2017



Population increases were concentrated in Ulaanbaatar, particularly in *ger* areas, despite growth in apartment construction. It is tempting to view the rapidly growing *ger* area as an urban tragedy. However, research by several analysts, including Calderion and Miller, and Kamata et al. indicated residents viewed their accommodation positively. Calderion and Miller's survey on residential satisfaction gave a surprisingly positive outcome for the *ger* area (Calderion and Miller 2013: 14). Calderion and Miller's survey indicated 35 per cent of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their dwelling. Around 29 per cent were 'unsatisfied' or very unsatisfied, while 33 per cent expressed average satisfaction. Most of the 'very unsatisfied' settlers did not have latrines, and were living in new areas in *ger* districts that were a long distance from public transportation. In these areas, there are no real streets and no sanitary services (Calderion and Miller 2013: 15).

Kamata et al.'s survey also indicated most *ger* area residents were satisfied with their living conditions. Satisfaction levels may reflect land ownership. Most *ger* area residents own their land, and only a small minority lack legal rights to the land they occupy. Moreover, Sugimoto et al.'s survey on living conditions for nomads and peri-*ger* areas suggested *ger* district residents generally have less problems when it comes to access to electricity and better health care compared to countryside living, (Sugimoto et al. 2007, from Engel 2015: 4).

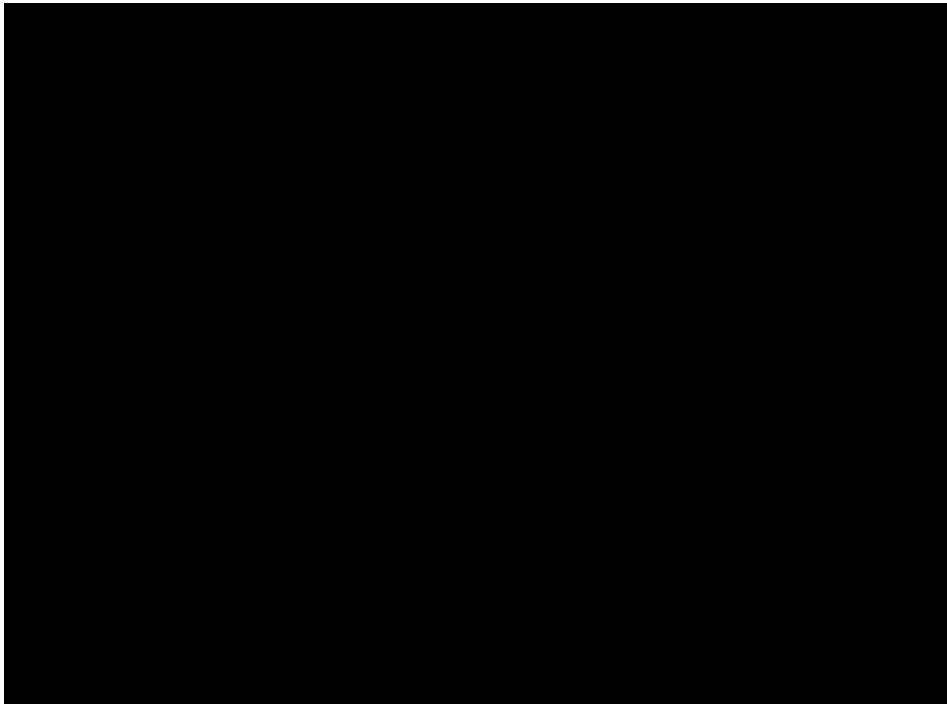
Nevertheless, Gunsentsoodol et al. argue this change in demographics has had a profound effect on health care in Mongolia, with new residents in *ger* areas creating unprecedented demand for medical services, while people who remain in the vast rural areas of Mongolia are increasingly isolated and difficult to reach (Gunsentsoodol et al. 2006: 1254).

## Conclusions

*From Dar es Saalam to Karachi to Caracas... one hears of the ever-increasing flow of rural migrants into urban areas and of the inability of the urban economy to provide permanent jobs for even a majority of these workers (Todaro 1969: 138).*

Both during and after the socialist period Mongolia has seen substantial demographic changes. In particular, Mongolia's population has risen by over 40 per cent post-socialism. Nonetheless, as explained by Gereltuya, population growth has become more muted than was the case under socialism. Under socialism, Mongolia had a strong pro-natalist policy. Families having children were provided with generous benefits. Changes to these policies post socialism had a considerable impact on fertility and family formation in Mongolia. Gereltuya noted Mongolia may soon face population ageing and a decline in its dependency ratio, which would have profound effects on many socio-economic issues (Gereltuya 2008: 81).

At the same time urbanisation has increased markedly, reflecting both population growth and migration from the countryside. In 1956 only 21.6 per cent of Mongols lived in cities, with only Ulaanbaatar having a population over 50,000 (Tsogtsaikhan 2001: 143). Post-socialism, Ulaanbaatar has experienced marked population growth, especially in *periger* areas around Ulaanbaatar, which have very poor infrastructure. That is not to say there has been a lack of urban planning in Mongolia, both historically and prospectively. The Ulaanbaatar city master plan for 2020 is shown in Figure 8.7 below. The city master plan is rather more complex than that developed in 1954 under Soviet tutelage.

**Figure 8.7: Ulaanbaatar City Master Plan for 2020**

Source: McCormack 2012: 10

Nevertheless, Shaw noted Ulaanbaatar's development has not been smooth, and suggests that Mongolia exhibits seemingly intractable symptoms of mismanaged urbanization (Shaw 2015: 8). Ulaanbaatar's city design was intended for a far smaller population, with the result that outside of buses, no mass transport system was envisaged. Today the main streets and narrower side streets suffer perpetual traffic jams. Another consequence of disjointed development is that fossil fuels are the main energy source for cooking and heating in the *per-ger* districts. Central services – electricity, gas and sanitation - are not available in these *ger* area, resulting in massive air pollution. Ulaanbaatar was ranked one of the worst five cities for air quality in the world in 2013. Key indicators of poor air quality exceeded both national and global air quality standards by 7 to 17 times respectively (Tsevegjav 2013: 11).

As noted by McCormack, probably the biggest challenge for Mongolia is future population growth. If future population growth is concentrated in Ulaanbaatar, this will have immense implications in a city where over half the population lacks basic services and is impoverished. Worldometers projects Mongolia's urban population will rise to over 2.7 million people by 2030 (see Appendix 2: Supporting Data). Most of Mongolia's urban population lives in Ulaanbaatar, and this is unlikely to change.

Some population forecasts assume Mongolia's fertility rate may decline further (see Appendix 2: Supporting Data). This may not be a safe bet for three reasons: first, in Mongolia a large family is viewed as important for elderly people's security in their old age (see Skirbekk 2008: 149); second, Mongols are concerned to increase their population to ensure the security of the Mongol blood line; and third, Mongolia has a very young population, with high potential for child bearing, and while population growth initially attenuated with the move to a market economy, any pro-population government policy initiatives would have some potential to return Mongolia to higher population growth patterns. Moreover, by 2010 fertility rates were on the increase (Spoorenberg and Enkhtsetseg 2009: 1).

If population growth is larger than forecast, and Mongolia's traditional pastoral sector continues to be adversely affected by climate change and overgrazing, this would have immense implications for urbanisation, for urban poverty, and for urban service provision, especially for health and education services provision.

## **Conclusions**

The aim of this review was to examine changes in Mongolia post-socialism and to shed light on the factors causing changes. Mongolia has

experienced massive changes in the thirty years post-socialism. Change was inevitable with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but in many ways Mongolia was totally unprepared for massive social, political and economic upheaval.

After seventy years of socialism, it was not possible to turn off Soviet style thinking and habits overnight. For example, the *nomenclature* and politicians who ruled Mongolia under socialism saw little distinction between their interests and those of the State, a factor which was to remain important as Mongolia began to move to a market economy, for these people remained very influential. Moreover, in many ways Mongolia is a very conservative society, with culture and traditions arising from the time of Chinggis Khaan, suggesting even more difficulties in adjusting to massive social changes.

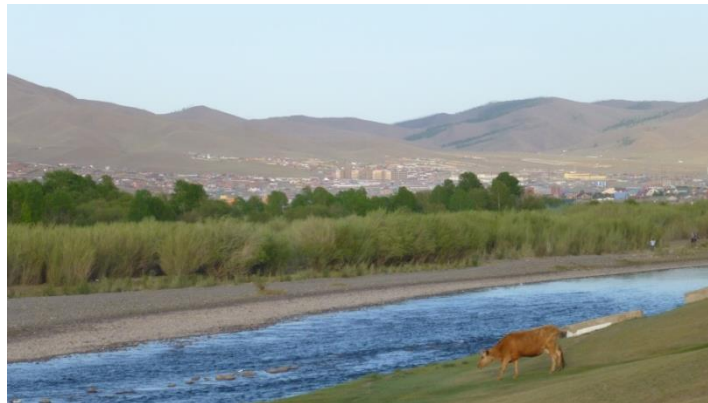
The next two chapters assess the mood of the Mongolian people about the move to market democracy. Chapter Nine examines people's views of contemporary Mongolian society. Chapter Ten then introduces new research examining people's views on the relative strengths and weaknesses of life under market democracy vis-à-vis socialism.

## Chapter 9: Existing research relating to Mongols' views on the transition

### Introduction

*....the defeat of Communist ideologies led to a certain triumphalism for Western ideals relating to democracy and human rights (Landman 2013: 63).*

**Figure 9.1: Mongolia old and new: cow grazing by the Tuul River**



Source: Author's own collection

The preceding chapters have introduced this thesis, given background information on Mongolia, examined Mongolia's history to provide context about the extent of political, social and economic changes that Mongolia's people have experienced in the transition from socialism; and reviewed many of the changes that have occurred in Mongolia post-socialism. This chapter introduces the further research that underpins the next element of the thesis: the views of Mongols who have lived under both systems concerning the benefits and costs arising from the transition from socialism. The research that is available either does not fully address this

issue, or the time frame under consideration. Nonetheless, such research provides useful insights into Mongols' state of mind, in terms of their attitudes towards market democracy. This chapter therefore examines theory on these issues and examines the attitudinal research available concerning these issues at the time of writing.

The following chapter then introduces further research intended to add to the information available from existing research. The qualitative research undertaken as part of this thesis included three elements: a survey of peoples' views about the impact of the transition; a series of interviews with people from a variety of backgrounds to further test their views on issues arising from the survey questionnaire; and focus groups addressing some of the major issues exposed through the survey questionnaire in more detail.

## **Theoretical perspectives**

Are Mongols happy? Are Mongols happy with their political and economic systems? Is market democracy contributing to Mongols' life satisfaction? Although these questions raise somewhat different issues, it is also reasonable to suggest meaningful links exist between these issues. So what are the determinants of happiness?

*According to the economic definition of well-being, higher levels of income are associated with higher levels of well-being through greater levels of material consumption (Fuentes and Rojas 2001: 1).*

Economic theory examines this issue from a number of standpoints. Dumludag (2015) examined the impact of varying consumption categories on life satisfaction at different levels of development in transition countries and developed European countries. Dumludag examined seminal works including those by Smith, Marx and Veblen, noting that Smith recognized comparisons as a result of “passions,” Marx mentioned comparisons in order to explain the social aspect of utility, while Veblen used the term conspicuous consumption to suggest the amount a consumer spends on goods is an indication of that the consumer’s position in society (Dumludag 2015: 3).

*Most politicians who pronounce about the economic matters of the day do so under a set of assumptions about human enjoyment that are usually not articulated to the listener. The chief of these, perhaps, is the belief that by raising its output and productivity a society truly betters itself (Oswald 1997: 2).*

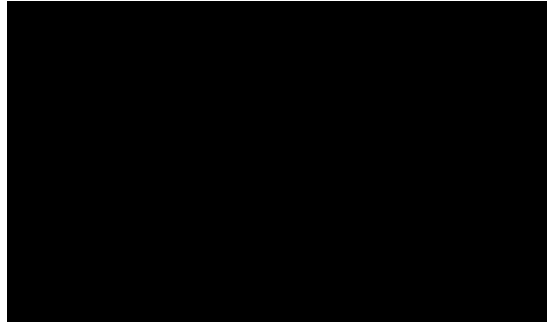
Ng also notes most economists trust what people do, rather than what their say (‘cheap talk’), i.e., if an individual is willing to pay from her own pocket to buy something, economists are willing to accept that he/she values that item. However, as most measures of happiness are only based on how happy people *say* they are in questionnaire surveys, economists are sceptical about their reliability (Ng 2008: 428, 429).

Nikolova and Sankey’s study of life satisfaction surveys also raises issues concerning the reliability of such surveys. Initial responses to questions can be at odds with later responses to the same questions (Nikolova and Sankey 2016: 4). Nevertheless, Lipsett (1959), often viewed as a seminal author on this issue from the perspective of the economics profession, recognised that income alone does not ensure the success of democracy.



His perspectives, as modelled by Wucherpfennig and Deutsch, are shown at Figure 9.2.

**Figure 9.2: Modernisation theory according to Lipset**



Source: Wucherpfennig, J., and Deutsch, F., 2009: 2

From the perspective of behavioural psychology, Diener et al.'s studies of subjective well-being across countries also suggested that subjective well-being is not correlated with economic growth or cultural homogeneity (Diener et al. 1997: 7). Nonetheless, other theorists argue that subjective well-being is probably income related in some circumstances. As Veenhoven wryly remarked in a review of unhappiness in Russia post-transition:

*...it seems that the Russians are indeed as unhappy as they say they are. Their reason for that unhappiness is probably the troublesome situation in the country... (Veenhoven 2001: 10, 11).*

More broadly, Veenhoven's analysis of freedom (defined as the possibility to choose) and happiness for 44 nations in the early 1990s showed positive correlations between freedom and happiness. However, Veenhoven suggested that closer analysis reveals that freedom and happiness do not always concur. Freedom was positively related to happiness among rich

nations, but not among poor nations. Veenhoven concluded that “freedom does not pay in poverty”. Veenhoven noted freedom was related to happiness only when 'opportunity' and 'capability' coincide (Veenhoven 2001: 1).

Easterlin's late 1990s analysis of happiness in several post-socialist countries added another perspective. Easterlin concluded post-socialism life satisfaction in Eastern Europe followed a U-shaped pattern of GDP (GDP fell dramatically in most post socialist Eastern European countries and then gradually recovered), but failed to recover commensurately. Easterlin contended increased satisfaction with material living levels generally occurred at the expense of decreased satisfaction with work, health, and family life (Easterlin 2008: 1).

In study of (mostly well off) OECD countries, Di Tella and MacCulloch also suggest a positive correlation between absolute income, the generosity of the welfare state and (weakly) with life expectancy; and negative correlations with hours worked, measures of environmental degradation, crime, openness to trade, inflation and unemployment. The authors found that the happiness responses of almost 400,000 people living in the OECD during 1975-1997 were positively correlated with absolute income, the generosity of the welfare state and (weakly) with life expectancy (Di Tella and MacCulloch 2005: 1).

Chzhen et al. reviewed literature on the impact of poverty and inequality on adolescent youth. Their study suggested clear links between poverty, inequality and psychological health, as well as academic performance (Magklara et al. 2010), mental health problems (Reiss 2013), and life satisfaction (Cavallo et al. 2015), (Levin et al. 2011), and (Chzhen et al. 2016: 6). Given the extent of adolescent poverty in Mongolia, this analysis

is illuminating, and raises the question as to whether such adolescent issues persist into adulthood.

Reiss reviewed publications from 1990 to 2011 on the relationships between socioeconomic status (SES) and mental health outcomes for children and adolescents aged four to 18 years. Fifty five studies were identified. Fifty two studies indicated an inverse relationship between socioeconomic status and mental health problems in children and adolescents. Socioeconomically disadvantaged children and adolescents were two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems (Reiss 2013: 1).

Rojas argued well-being is influenced by a number of factors, and considered that poverty in isolation is not a good indicator of subjective well-being. Rojas put forward four perspectives. First, “absolute theory” assumes that basic-needs satisfaction is related to subjective well-being; it suggests the existence of a threshold beyond which the impact of income on subjective well-being is not important. Second, “adaptation theory” focuses on peoples’ ability to adapt to positive and negative events; thus, persons with higher adaptation capabilities tend to be happier, even in situations where income is low (Brickman et al. 1978). Third, “aspiration theory” suggests people who believe that their desires are fully satisfied tend to be happier than persons who have unsatisfied desires, regardless of their income levels (Michalos 1985). Last, “conceptual-referent theory” stresses the importance of heterogeneity in the SWB conceptual referent; i.e., the relevance of some explanatory factors of happiness differs across persons. Thus, while for some people income would be a relevant proxy for well-being, for others it would be completely irrelevant (Rojas 2004: 4).

Winkelmann and Winkelmann, following earlier work by Clark and Oswald (1994), analysed the cost of unemployment in terms of direct

(pecuniary) costs through reduced income and indirect (non-pecuniary) costs through reduced wellbeing. They concluded the pecuniary costs are small compared with the non-pecuniary costs (Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1997: 2).

Social psychologists' theories and research concerning relative deprivation (RD) is the judgment that one is worse off compared to some standard accompanied by feelings of anger and resentment) are also relevant. A meta review by Smith et al. examined 210 studies (representing 293 independent samples and 186,073 respondents), and concluded relative deprivation may be a significant factor explaining individual and societal unhappiness (Smith et al. 2015: 2).

How does Mongolia stack up against these theories? Is Mongolia a happy country? What are the implications for Mongols views about market democracy? Partial evidence for Mongolia arises from a number of sources, including broad international comparative data; surveys of post transition countries; surveys of East Asian countries; and surveys with respect to Mongolia.

## **International comparative data**

Before discussing the data presented below, it is important to give some caveats. International comparisons using surveys can be difficult. Different cultures may have different values, and different concerns, depending on the circumstances then prevailing in different countries. Moreover, translation of ideas into different languages can be fraught. Janar, in reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the World Values Survey noted that significant discrepancies existed between the questionnaire used in the USA and that used in China (Janar 2012: 162).

Therefore, international comparisons should be viewed with caution. This warning is especially apt when we are considering “happiness” or relative well-being, which are difficult concepts to understand and/or measure.

As noted above, economists commonly argue that income is related to utility, (a proxy for happiness). Mongolia’s GDP per capita is low in absolute terms and by comparison with many other countries. IMF data suggest that in 2016 Mongolia’s GDP per capita was \$US3,704 (Mongolia ranked at 116<sup>th</sup> in the world). Mongolia’s ranking was projected to decline to 119<sup>th</sup> in the world by 2020 (International Monetary Fund 2016: 1) (although it should be noted that such GDP per capita averages can be misleading: as discussed earlier, poverty and inequality have become major issues in Mongolia). *A priori*, this would infer that many Mongols may well be unhappy, and may lack enthusiasm for the transition to market democracy, although Frey and Stutzer’s survey of 6,000 Swiss suggested a strong link between democracy and happiness (Frey and Stutzer 2000: 92). Frey and Stutzer concluded that the better developed the institutions of direct democracy, the happier are the individuals, and participation was also important in promoting happiness.

*The problem with averages is that they fail to show the whole picture. Simple arithmetic explains that if, for example, people who already have high incomes receive an even higher income, the average increases even though those with middle or low incomes do not get a salary increase (Aguilar 2013: 1).*

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a proxy measure for happiness. In 2015 Mongolia’s HDI score put the country in the high human development category. Mongolia ranked at 92nd out of 188 countries and territories. Mongolia’s 2015 HDI was below the average for countries in the high human development group, but above the average for countries in

East Asia and the Pacific. It was slightly higher for women than for men, with higher female life expectancy offsetting males' higher income levels. From 2010-2015 Mongolia's world ranking jumped 8 slots (Michel 2017: 1) (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data). The measure is not without its critics (see Seth and Villar (2017)). When the HDI value is discounted for inequality, Mongolia's HDI fell by 13.0 per cent. The most significant factor influencing the decline in the inequality adjusted index was a 17.1 per cent anticipated inequality in life expectancy at birth (United Nations Development Program 2016: 4, 5).

*Due consideration of differences in cultural and social context helps researchers to stay clear of many common pitfalls in cross-national surveys and buttresses the internal validity of their research designs (Fu and Chu 2007: 1).*

Moreover, the 2018 *World Happiness Report* suggested that post-socialist Mongolia was not a very happy place. The World Happiness Report, measures happiness against six key variables: GDP per capita (data based); social support (survey based); healthy life expectation at birth (survey based); freedom to make life choices (survey based); generosity (relating to donations to charity) (survey based); and perceptions of corruption (survey based).<sup>54</sup> The 2018 report ranked Mongolia at 95 of the 156 countries included in the analysis. By comparison, across 2010-2012, Mongolia ranked 102<sup>nd</sup> in the world (Helliwell and Wang 2013: 23). For Mongolia, the outcomes were heavily influenced by relatively low GDP/capita and perceptions of corruption. Social support, healthy life expectancy and freedom to make choices were more positive influences.

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<sup>54</sup> In an article addressing the accuracy of social attitudinal surveys Krueger and Schkade (2008) noted considerable debate about the accuracy of point in time surveys, as emotions change over time. Nonetheless, Krueger and Schkade considered evaluative measures of subjective well-being were relatively consistent over time.

Chaaban et al.'s rankings added another dimension to international comparative data. Chaaban et al.'s Composite Global Well-Being Index (CGWBI) spans ten well-being dimensions: safety and security, health, education, housing, environment and living space, employment, income, life satisfaction, community and social life, and civic engagement. It included both subjective survey data and socio-economic indicators, using the same methodology as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index (BLI). The analysis also included developing countries (Chaaban et al. 2015: 1).<sup>55</sup> In 2015 Mongolia ranked 90<sup>th</sup> in the world against this index, bracketed by Nepal (88<sup>th</sup>) South Africa (89<sup>th</sup>) and Angola (91<sup>st</sup>) and Tunisia (92<sup>nd</sup>) (Chaaban et al. 2015: 20).

Trust issues also suggest an unhappy Mongol citizenry. This is important because since the 1960s and 70s, a number of studies have indicated that “political trust is fundamentally important for democracy and political order” (Schneider 2016: 1). While Schneider notes many surveys on this issue lack international comparability, the World Values Survey and related surveys generally ask questions about *interpersonal trust* and *trust in government*. Data from 2008 surveys associated with the World Values Survey suggest that at that time Mongols demonstrated very little interpersonal trust although, surprisingly, the data suggest a relatively high level of trust in Government. This finding seems inconsistent with frequent accounts of government surveillance and use of informers under socialism. Discussions with the author indicate the use of such surveillance measures has continued in the market democracy era.

The seeming lack of interpersonal trust in Mongolia is important. Bartolini et al.'s study of money, trust and happiness in transition countries using evidence from time series provided evidence that aggregated social trust

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<sup>55</sup> The OECD identified 11 dimensions to bridge the gap between the information provided by aggregate GDP data and what counts for people's well-being. The OECD developed the Better Life Index, which is a web-based tool that allows users to create their own index for the 34 OECD countries as well as Brazil and Russia.

predicts social well-being (SWB) in the medium-term (4 - 6 years) with a strength comparable to the one of GDP (Bartolini et al. 2014: 2). To the extent that trust is low, social well-being may be reduced.

Data from World Gallup Polls about respondents' perceptions of the way their life has progressed, vis-a-vis the best possible life respondents could envisage for themselves, also suggested a Mongolia where happiness, compared to other countries, (including other transition countries), was relatively low (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data, for detailed information). The data suggest that Mongolia was relatively unhappy in the early years of the twenty first century, although life satisfaction rose in the "good years" (2011-12) when the Mongolian economy grew rapidly. This outcome perhaps supports the notion underpinning some of the other indices discussed above: income is probably a key determinant of happiness in a relatively poor country like Mongolia where many people live in poverty.

However, other data give a more muted impression of unhappiness in Mongolia. Veenhoven's analysis of Mongols' happiness over the market democracy period 2005 to 2014 uses measures of average happiness, happy life years, and inequality of happiness coupled with a measure of inequality adjusted happiness inferred Mongolia was a mid-ranking country, neither extremely happy nor extremely unhappy (see Appendix 1, Supporting Data).

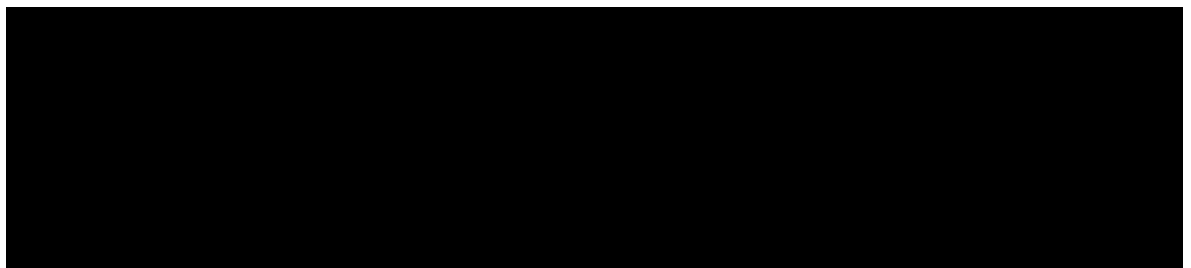
A similar perspective arises from the Gallup-Healthways State of Global Well-Being: 2014 Country Well-Being Rankings Report, which provides an overview of global citizens' well-being for 146 countries. The Global Well-Being Index measures well-being across five elements (purpose, social, financial, community and physical) and individual responses are



categorized as thriving, struggling or suffering.<sup>56</sup> In this setting, Mongolia did quite well, being ranked 68<sup>th</sup> among the 146 countries for data were collected, just below Belgium. Mongolia ranked well against several criteria for this survey, especially the “social” criterion, although it ranked poorly against the “purpose” and “financial” criteria.

In terms of measuring social progress, the 2016 Social Progress Index (SPI) ranked Mongolia at 80<sup>th</sup> in the world, among a group of countries ranked as having lower middle social progress (Porter and Stern 2016: 18). The Social Progress Index attempts to measure social progress without using measures of economic progress such as GDP per capita. The matters measured through the Index are shown in Figure 9.3. The 2016 Social Progress Index included 133 countries covering 94 per cent of the world’s population.

**Figure 9.3: What the social progress index measures**



Source: Porter, M.E. and Stern, S., 2016: 32

Mongolia, according to this index, underperforms in respect to nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation and shelter. Mongolia also underperformed in respect to health and wellness. Porter and Stern found

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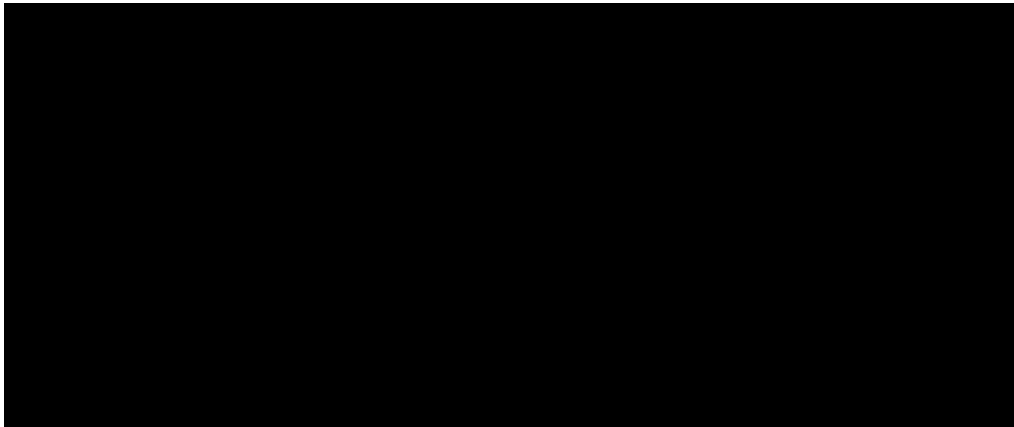
<sup>56</sup> The five elements of well-being as defined by Gallup are - Purpose: Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals, Social: Having supportive relationships and love in your life, Financial: Managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security, Community: Liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community, Physical: Having good health and enough energy to get things done daily.

the most extreme examples in nutrition in Botswana, Iraq, Mongolia, Namibia, and Swaziland, where the undernourishment rate exceeded 20 per cent, and the obesity rate exceeded 15 per cent (Porter and Stern 2016: 96). This is perhaps an indication of Mongolia's poverty divide as discussed earlier. On the other hand, Mongolia over performed in regard to personal rights, an important issue for Mongolia, where personal freedoms are cherished (see Chapter 10).

The desire to emigrate can also be a measure of life satisfaction in a particular country, its political system, and economic conditions. *A priori*, it would seem reasonable to assume people in a happy society with good opportunities would find emigration an unattractive proposition. On the other hand, people may choose to emigrate to avoid an unhappy country where they perceive there are few opportunities for personal development. In 2005, 100,000-120,000 Mongolians were living and working in foreign countries. About 17,000-20,000 were estimated to be in South Korea, 10,000 in the US, and over 2,000 in the Czech Republic (a small number for other countries, but almost 5 per cent of Mongolia's population) (Vangansuren 2007: 9). Most migrants were women, who had difficulties in getting jobs in Mongolia. Vangansuren noted contemporary surveys indicated the dominant motives for going abroad were poor economic conditions, unemployment and family and personal matters.

Later research suggested emigration intentions remained relatively high in Mongolia, inferring an unhappy population (see Figure 9.4). A 2012 youth survey in Mongolia also suggested a high proportion of the mainly sixteen to eighteen year old survey respondents intended to migrate. Over 70 per cent indicated they were likely to emigrate (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 13, 14).

**Figure 9.4: Emigration intentions by main emigrant countries**



Source: Nikolova and Graham 2015: 36

Thus, the available international comparative data presented quite different perspectives of Mongolia post-socialism, from extraordinary unhappiness where trust is minimal (World Happiness Report, Chaaban et al.) to rather more moderate perspectives (Gallup-Healthways, Social Progress Index, Veenhoven).

### **Comparisons with other post-transition countries**

How does Mongolia compare to other post-transition countries? The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has undertaken sample surveys of life satisfaction in transition countries, including Mongolia, in 2006, 2010 and 2016 with respect to persons aged 18 and over.<sup>57</sup> Survey respondents were asked “All things considered, are you satisfied with your life now.” The EBRD concluded life satisfaction was closely associated with incomes in market economies (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2016a: 13). The survey involved face

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<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the inclusion of younger participants who have not lived under both systems means the surveys do not give insights into life satisfaction pre and post transition

to face interviews with 1,500 people in each country in 2016, and 750 people in 2006 and 2010. While the data suggested some improvement in life satisfaction in Mongolia between 2006 and 2010, there was little change between 2010 and 2016, despite strong economic growth early in this period. Data with respect to satisfaction with government services for Mongolia for 2016 indicates, by comparison with other indicators, a surprisingly high level of satisfaction with health and education services (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Mongolia, satisfaction with government services, 2016, proportion of respondents**

Service type	Proportion per cent
Public health system	60
Primary/Secondary education	73
Traffic Police	39
Official documents	61
Vocational education and training	75
Social security benefits	55
Unemployment benefits	50
Civil courts	31

Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2016a: 24

Hayo's 2004 paper on public support for creating a market economy in Eastern Europe creates an interesting context from the viewpoint of ex-socialist countries. While the study did not include Mongolia, many of the issues faced by ex-socialist Eastern European countries were similar to the issues faced by Mongolia. Hayo used two survey databases, the Central and Eastern Eurobarometers (CEEB) and the New Democracy Barometers

(NDB). Both surveys asked about the respondent's attitude towards the creation of the market, but not about particular reform strategies leading to a market system. About 1,000 people in each country were selected randomly for a personal interview.

Hayo concluded that if a fast-track approach produces high inflation, falling per capita income, and higher unemployment, combined with expectations of a medium-run recovery based on a fully re-structured economy, public support for market-oriented reforms may be dissipated before the process reaches a critical point (Hayo 2004: 739). Hayo also noted that higher unemployment had a negative effect on market support, fast privatization reduced support for reforms, income inequality may have a negative impact on market support, a high share of pensioners (with relatively fixed incomes) voted against reform parties whereas people having more advanced degrees support market reforms, probably because they anticipated higher future returns from their education than would have been the case under socialism. Several of these factors have relevance for Mongolia, which experienced a very rapid transition, with high post transition unemployment and the emergence of marked inequality. By contrast, Hayo found well off people were more in favour of the market economy compared with poorer respondents (Hayo 2004: 737-739).

Djankov et al.'s analysis also indicated contemporary post-communist economies were systematically unhappier than their advanced and developing counterparts in the rest of the world. This happiness gap changed little even after accounting for a variety of factors, such as per capita income, life expectancy and Eastern Orthodox religion (Djankov et al. 2016: 2). The authors concluded that results imply that corruption and poor government performance may have overarching consequences for both objective welfare (reflected in standard economic indicators) as well as subjective well-being (Djankov et al. 2016: 4). (The negative link between corruption and perceptions of social well-being is very relevant for

Mongolia, where corruption is rife, as discussed previously). Weak governance structures are also an issue. Analysis by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) suggests Mongolia has relatively weak governance structures in respect to tax collection, control of corruption, and in education and health service delivery (ESCAP 2017: 89-95)).

## **Comparisons with other East Asian countries**

Information from the fourth wave of the Asia Barometer series of surveys adds to the puzzle.<sup>58</sup> This data, from attitudinal surveys conducted across East Asia in 2015/2016 suggested that, by comparison with authoritarian Vietnam, Mongols' support for the their current political system was lukewarm.<sup>59</sup> Some 93 per cent of survey respondents in authoritarian Vietnam supported their political regime, and 87 per cent of respondents expressed their willingness to live under their current political regime. By comparison, only 60 per cent of survey respondents in democratic Mongolia supported their political regime. More pointedly, only 52 per cent of respondents in Mongolia expressed their willingness to live under their current political regime (Pan and Wu: 2017: 5).

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<sup>58</sup> The Asian Barometer (ABS) surveys public opinion on political values, democracy and governance around the regional network. The fourth wave surveys took place in 2015/2016.

<sup>59</sup> The fourth Asian Barometer Survey (ABS4) sample size was 19,047 (Wu and Chu 2016: 14).

**Figure 9.5: Support for current system, by country**

Source: Wu and Chu 2016: 24

The conundrum grows when we return to considering Mongols' support for democracy. Mongolian respondents to the fourth wave Asia Barometer survey generally expressed strong support for democracy, seemingly at odds with the notion that positive views on social well-being (where the discussion earlier in this Chapter suggested that Mongols are not necessarily a happy lot) are linked with positive views of views of democracy.<sup>60</sup> When asked if democracy was the best form of government for their country, 82 per cent of survey participants in Mongolia responded positively (although it should be noted that survey respondents in authoritarian East Asian countries also overwhelmingly felt democracy was the best form of government) (Pan and Wu: 2016: 6).

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<sup>60</sup> Chu et al. noted these measures have some inherent difficulties, and these items may be criticised 'for social desirability bias, because they capture "questionnaire democrats" (Dalton 1994) "who pay lip-service to democracy" (Inglehart 2003) rather than unconditional support for democracy over non-democratic alternatives' Chu, Chang, Huang and Weatherall 2016: 6). Norris contended this reflects the growth of a critical citizenry in democracies (Norris 1999: 4).

Perhaps the answer lays in responses to second level survey responses. When asked if democracy was preferable to other forms of government, only 44 per cent of Mongol survey participants supported responded positively. Moreover, as shown in Figure 9.6, Mongols showed little pride in their political system compared to people from other East Asian and South Asian countries, although Mongols were somewhat more proud of their system in the later fourth wave survey.

**Figure 9.6: Pride in system of government, by country**



Source: Wu and Chu 2016: 23

Shin and Kim (2016) also reviewed East Asians preference for democracy, in terms of their publicly stated and more private preferences. They noted Fourth Wave Asian Barometer survey results suggested most East Asians, regardless of whether they lived in authoritarian or democratic regimes, publicly expressed their support for democracy as their preferred system of government. However, the survey results indicated their private preferences were rather different, with most respondents favouring authoritarian, meritocratic or hybrid regimes. Indeed, among East Asian respondents, survey results indicated that only a minority favoured liberal democracy (Shin and Kim 2016: 18). Mongolia's results followed broader trends among East Asian respondents. Democracy was one the two least



favoured options for Mongols, with 56 per cent of participants favouring autocracy (Shin and Kim 2016: 19).

## **Evidence from Mongolian surveys**

Sabloff's 1998 and 2003 Mongolian surveys indicated that, at that time, respondents generally favoured the move to market democracy. Around half of 1998 respondents and nearly three quarters of 2003 respondents suggested democracy was good for Mongolia (Sabloff 2012: 60). However, Mongols' perceptions of democracy reflected knowledge of the possibility of good risk, associated with economic success, and bad risk, associated with the possibility of economic failure (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data). Indeed, Sabloff contended Mongol's views about democracy were closely correlated with their perceptions of economic risk (Sabloff 2012: 56). That is, Mongols views on democracy reflect hopes about economic success and the fear of economic failure (Sabloff 2012: 57). Sabloff observed that while Mongols want freedom, they also want some security (Sabloff 2012: 57).

Another potential cause for dissatisfaction with market democracy may come from people's lack of trust in political actors and the integrity of election processes in Mongolia. Results from a 2017 survey of potential Mongol voters on how voters view their elected representatives indicated the majority of voters did not perceive their local members well, with 42 per cent of respondents suggesting their local member represent voters' personal interests and the interests of their constituency 'not very well' and a further 26 per cent responding 'not well at all' (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data).

Similar adverse results arise from the Asia Foundation's 2016 survey on corruption in Mongolia. The 1,360 survey respondents showed very little

faith in the integrity of electoral processes (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data). The election campaign was the only aspect of an election where a majority of survey respondents expected the election to be fair and honest. The preparation stage (registration of voters, hiring staff, recruiting local and foreign observers, vote counting, and election funding) were not expected to be fair and transparent.

This lack of trust in institutions extends to lack of trust in financial institutions (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data). Afandi and Habibov's study of trust in banking suggests individuals who have recently suffered a trauma or a financial loss are generally less trusting (Afandi and Habibov 2017: 74). Indeed, financial crisis may lead to changes in preference for political and economic systems, and ultimately cause a decline in support for democracy and free markets (Grosjean et al. 2011). The data suggest something of a decline in trusts in banks between 2006 and 2010. Mongolia was strongly affected by the 2009 Global Financial Crisis, although negative effects from this source may have been offset by the ramp up of investment for the Oyu Tolgoi project in 2010.

On the other hand, a 2013 study of survey of well-being in Mongolia presented a somewhat more optimistic perspective. The study team analysed two distinct dimensions of well-being—hedonic and evaluative—separately, comparing findings across these dimensions in Mongolia to those based on worldwide data.<sup>61</sup> The survey was carried out by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Orkhon-Bulgan provinces in Orkhon Province during October/December 2012. It covered 1,225 respondents between the ages of 15 and 64. The results “demonstrate that the basic determinants of well-being are no different in Mongolia than they

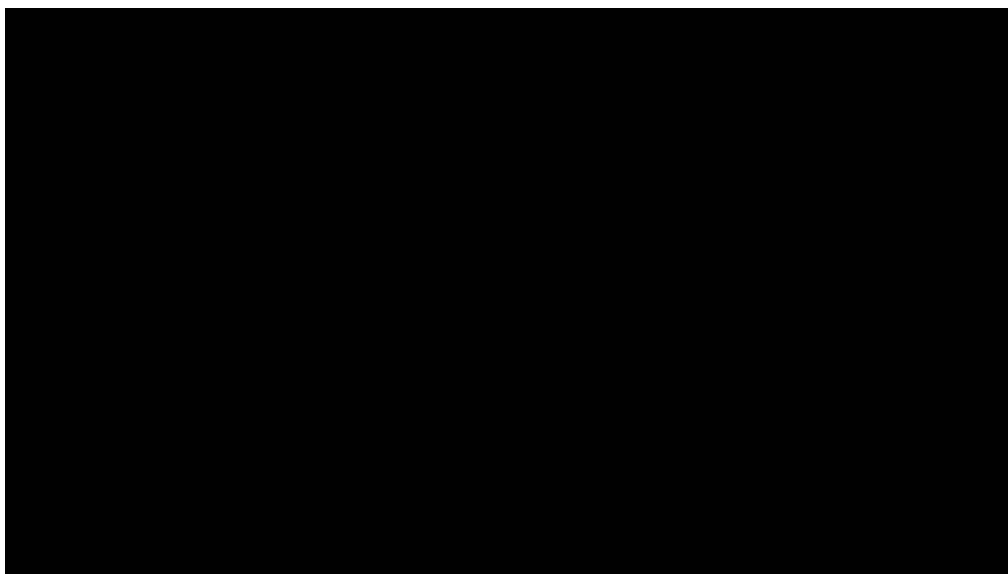
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<sup>61</sup> Hedonic well-being captures the manner in which individuals experience their daily lives, the quality of those lives, and their moods (both positive and negative) during those experiences. Evaluative well-being captures how people think about and assess their lives as a whole (Chuluun et al. 2013: 1, 2).

are anywhere else, despite the unique context, and the dramatic economic and political transition the country has experienced” (Chuluun et al. 2013: 6). They found income, health (self-reported), marriage and employment were all important correlates, “as they are in other places.” However, income comparisons could cause unhappiness. As the authors put it “...wealthier neighbors are not necessarily good for you, but happier ones surely are” (Chuluun et al. 2013 : 11).

Figure 9.7 provides data from Chuluun et al’s study concerning hedonic well-being. Survey respondents were asked if they were happy last week. Most respondents indicated they were happy “most days” last week, and a substantial number indicated they were happy “every day.” Nonetheless, many respondents indicated they were only happy “occasionally” and some respondents were clearly very unhappy. This range of responses may or may not be atypical, as the author’s experiences suggest weather, and the proximity of holidays, can have a powerful effect on community mood in Mongolia. Nonetheless, the data do not suggest the land of misery portrayed in some international surveys.

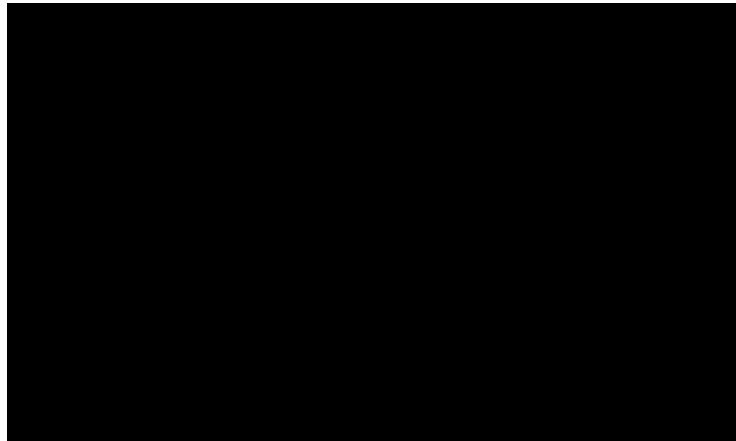
**Figure 9.7: Survey respondents’ views on happiness**



Source: Chuluun et al. 2013: 17

The evaluative questions asked respondents to evaluate their own life satisfaction (see Figure 9.8). Well over half of the survey respondents were “satisfied” with their life, and a significant number of respondents were “very satisfied” with their life. Two caveats come to mind here. First, people were asked to evaluate their life at the time the survey was conducted, so although most respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their life, this doesn’t necessarily facilitate comparison with the socialist period because we have no data for the socialist period. Second, many respondents would have been born post-socialism, which does not facilitate comparisons with earlier periods. Nonetheless, as was the case with data from this survey relating to hedonic perceptions, the evaluative data does not support the notion of a gloomy Mongolia as suggested, for example, in World Happiness reports.

**Figure 9.8: Survey respondents’ views on life satisfaction,**



Source: Chuluun et al. 2013: 17

How does the preceding discussion relate to the acceptance of market democracy in Mongolia post-socialism? The most prolific survey house in Mongolia, the Sant Maral Foundation, has conducted many surveys about political issues in post-socialist Mongolia. In particular, Prohl and Sumati used Sant Maral attitudinal survey data to underpin a 2007 publication,

*Voters Voices.* Mina Sumati also used Sant Maral data extensively to support her Masters' thesis about modernisation and democratisation in Mongolia.

The initial perception that arises from an examination of this data is that Mongols supported the end of socialism and that they support a democratic form of government (noting support for the end of socialism does not automatically imply support for democracy). For example, data presented in Figure 9.9 below suggest that the overwhelming majority of Mongols supported the transition to democracy, and that this support has been consistent over a long time period.

**Figure 9.9: Survey participants, 1996-2006, who supported transition to market democracy**



Source: Prohl and Sumati 2007: 101, 102

Similar results persist to the present day, including among Mongolia's youth. Damdin and Vickers 2012 study of young peoples' attitudes to contemporary Mongolian society suggested considerable support for democracy among Mongolia's youth. Damdin and Vickers surveyed about 400 young people as part of their study which examined civics education in

Mongolia.<sup>62</sup> Pride in democracy ranked well as a source of pride to young people, although it fell well below issues such as national unity, traditions, customs, achievements in sport, and literature (see Appendix 1, Supporting Data). Damdin and Vickers noted campaigns to have traditional folk instruments, artistic forms such as long-tune singing and throat singing, traditional costumes and wrestling formally registered by UNESCO as artefacts of ‘World Cultural Heritage’ had attracted substantial popular support. Success in international sporting competitions is also widely celebrated – particularly in wrestling, with Mongols now dominating Japan’s sumo leagues (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 10). Notwithstanding the importance of sport, art and literature as important sources of national pride, the three quarters of the sample for this survey who displayed ‘strong pride’ and pride to ‘some extent’ in democracy was quite similar to the proportion of the broader population who approved of democracy in responses to Sant Maral surveys, as explained above.

However, Sant Maral’s survey outcomes about attitudes towards democratisation are somewhat undermined by results arising from two other sets of questions persistently raised in Sant Maral surveys. The first relates to satisfaction with the political system. (Sant Maral has also raised questions about trust in democratic institutions in Mongolia, which would seem closely related to overall satisfaction with Mongolia’s political system). Second, Sant Maral raises questions about political involvement. Responses to these questions suggest that Mongols are less satisfied with the change to democracy (see Appendix 1: Supporting Data).

Turning first to satisfaction with Mongolia’s political system, data from 1995 to 2006, (i.e. from relatively early in Mongolia’s transition to the mid-point of Mongolia’s transition as at 2007), do not suggest that Mongols

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<sup>62</sup> Fieldwork for this survey was conducted in 2012 amongst 400 11th-grade students in urban, rural and peri-urban schools in Ulaanbaatar and five other *aimags*: 46 per cent of respondents were male, while 54 per cent were female. Almost all were aged between 16 and 18 (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 7).

were overly enchanted with their new political system over this period. Indeed, people who were 'not satisfied' or 'totally dissatisfied' were in the majority over this period. Moreover, yearly data show that dissatisfaction was even higher for many years within this time frame. For example, in September 1995, 49 per cent of survey respondents were 'totally dissatisfied' and a further 33 per cent were 'dissatisfied'. Four years later, in April 1999, only 23 per cent of Sant Maral respondents were 'satisfied' with Mongolia's political system, while 2 per cent were 'very satisfied' (Prohl and Sumati 2007: 103).

Stepping forward ten years to 2017, the March 2017 Sant Maral PolitBarometer suggested survey respondents held a somewhat higher level of satisfaction with Mongolia's political system (noting that Sant Maral had changed response categories somewhat over the intervening period). By 2017 a small majority of respondents approved of Mongolia's political system (13 per cent 'satisfied,' 39 per cent 'rather satisfied'), but the categorization system for approval was weaker in 2017 than for 1995-2007. Moreover, a substantial minority of survey respondents still expressed some form of dissatisfaction with Mongolia's political system, with 25 per cent 'rather not satisfied' and 19 per cent 'not satisfied.'

The survey also indicated that a significant proportion of survey respondents considered Mongolia would be better off with a strong leader 'who does not have to bother with Parliament or elections'. Most survey respondents thought such a system would be better for Mongolia, with 28 per cent suggesting such a system would be 'good' and 41 per cent suggesting such a system would be 'rather good.' Indeed the proportion of survey respondents who viewed this idea negatively only slightly exceeded the 'no answer' and 'don't know' responses.

The seeming underlying dissatisfaction with democracy was further emphasised by responses to a question canvassing views about whether state policy should be developed by professionals or experts, independent of the government. Most survey respondents supported this proposition: 18 per cent of respondents considered this would be ‘good’ and a further 37 per cent considered this notion would be ‘rather good’ (Sant Maral Foundation 2017: 8).

Data for 2018 present a similar perspective. By then, over three quarters of voters considered Mongolia would be better off with a strong leader ‘who does not have to bother with Parliament or elections’, and nearly 64 per cent supported a technocratic or elitist government (Sant Maral 2018: 7). Sant Maral surveys also suggest a substantial proportion of voters believe they have little say in the nation’s political decisions. The majority of respondents considered they had little influence over national policy.

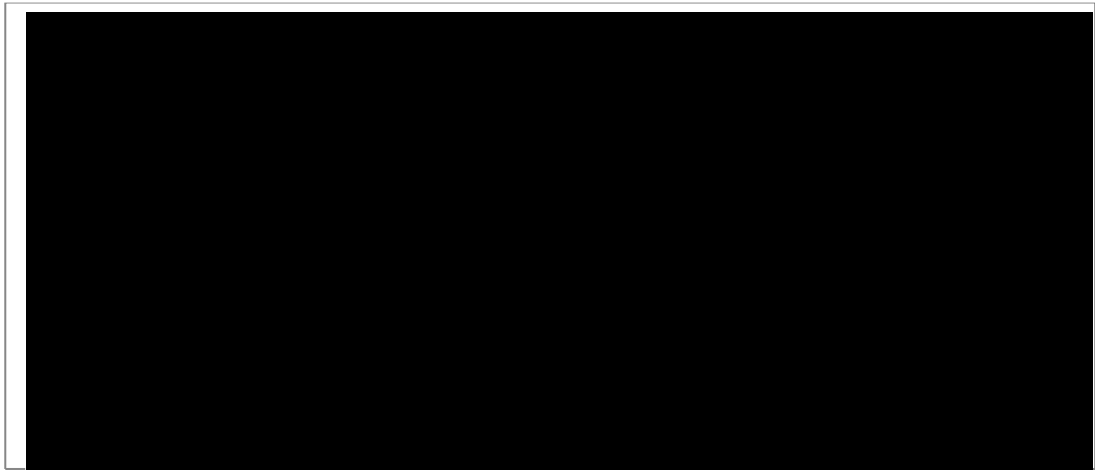
Mongols’ views on their influence on political decision making were also tested by a contemporary International Republican Institute survey, where the results were even more emphatic. Of respondents to the IRI survey who were not affiliated with a political party, 38 per cent ‘strongly disagreed’ that it was ‘easy to have my voice heard by my elected government representatives’ while a further 28 per cent ‘rather disagreed.’ Even for those with affiliation to a political party, 29 per cent ‘strongly disagreed’ that it was ‘easy to have my voice heard by my elected government representatives’ while a further 22 per cent ‘rather disagreed’ (International Republican Institute 2017: 19).

In another test of Mongols’ attachment to democracy in March 2017 International Republican Institute survey respondents were asked whether



prosperity or democracy was more important to them.<sup>63</sup> The results were ambivalent. Democracy won narrowly over prosperity. Indeed, in responses to the same question a year earlier, prosperity had won over democracy. In March 2016, only 27 per cent of IRI survey respondents had responded ‘democracy is definitely more important to me’ with a further 14 per cent indicating ‘democracy is somewhat important to me’. By contrast, 31 per cent responded that ‘prosperity is definitely more important to me’ and 18 per cent responded that ‘prosperity is somewhat more important to me’ (International Republican Institute 2017: 11).

**Figure 9.10: Democracy versus prosperity**



Source: International Republican Institute 2017: 11

Moreover, data from the IRI survey suggested significant disenchantment with Mongolia’s political and social outlook in the late 2010s. The 2016 parliamentary election had provided hope that economic conditions would improve. However, as shown in Figure 9.11, over half of survey respondents considered Mongolia was heading in the wrong direction, while those with a more positive mindset only marginally exceeded those who responded ‘don’t know’.

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<sup>63</sup> The sample consisted of 5,000 respondents aged 18 and older, with a response rate of 97.2 per cent (International Republican Institute 2017: 2).

**Figure 9.11: Is Mongolia heading in the right direction?**



Source: International Republican Institute 2017: 4

While the Sant Maral and IRI data may not be atypical in an international context, considered in isolation it suggests a substantial proportion of Mongolia's citizens feel disenfranchised under democracy. Extrapolating from this, the data also indicate considerable frustration (and possible unhappiness) with the political system.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has examined evidence about support for the transition to market democracy in Mongolia in terms of broad international comparisons, by comparison with other ex-socialist countries, by comparison with other East Asian countries, and in respect to evidence for Mongolia itself. The data suggest a relatively unhappy country, where support for democracy may be waning, but the information available does not directly address a key question for this thesis, how Mongols who have lived under both socialism and market democracy feel about the transition from socialism. This question is addressed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 10: Further research about Mongols' views about the change from socialism to a market democracy**

*Interviewees at Ulaanbaatar Central High School (the top state high school under Communism) were also divided on this issue – but half or more opined that socialism was better, because the city was 'less crowded' and less polluted; people 'worked harder'; or the rich-poor divide was less stark (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 13).*

### **Introduction**

Chapter 9 reviewed existing research which partially addressed the question of how Mongols who have lived under both socialism and market democracy feel about Mongolia's transition from a socialist state to a democracy with a market economy. This chapter introduces new research directly addressing this issue, including a survey of Mongols who have experienced life under both socialism and a market democracy, and a series of interviews and thematic focus groups which address key issues in greater detail.

### **Thesis Survey**

The survey addressed how Mongols feel about the transition from socialism to market democracy. It is often held as self-evident in Western democracies with market economies that this is the best social and economic model, especially following the demise of communism. Reflecting this perspective, the governments of such western democracies, frequently led by the United States, often try to promote the spread of democracy to other countries.

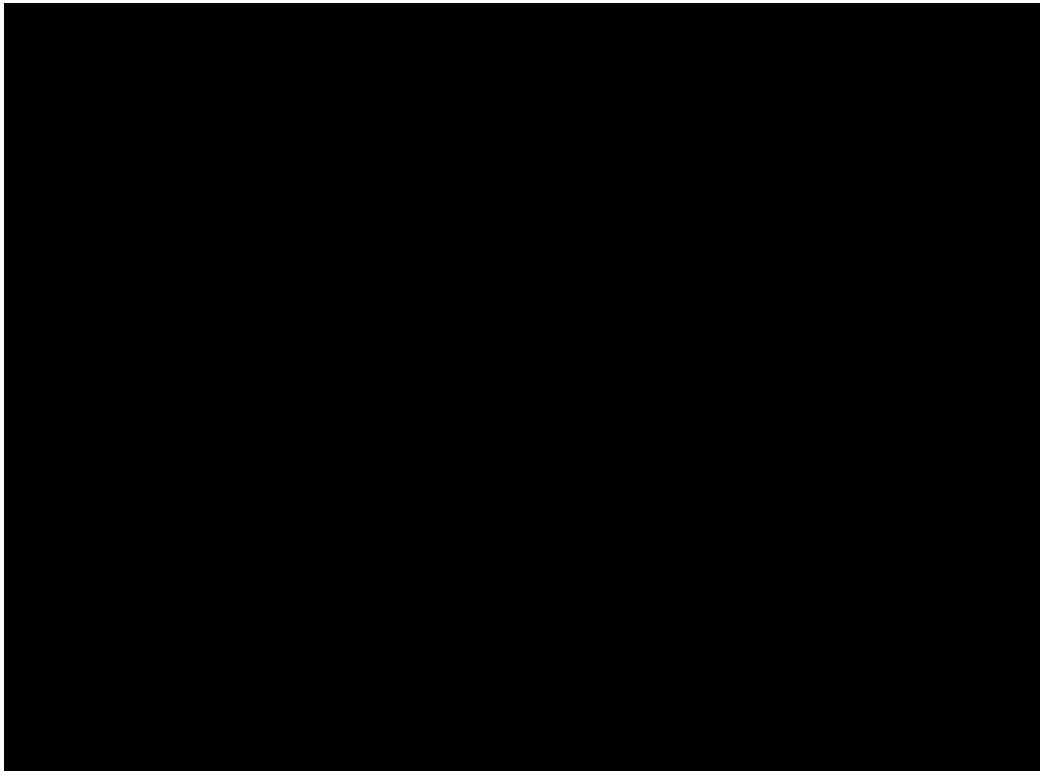
But how do Mongols really feel about this? Unless people have experienced different political and economic systems, it is difficult for them to make comparisons. Unlike scientific laboratory experiments, where it is possible to experiment with a control group and a subject group, this is not possible in respect to events within a country. If a government makes a social or economic experiment, for better or worse, the whole population shares the experience. To gain a better understanding of how Mongols feel about the transition, the first step was to undertake a survey of people old enough to have experienced the transition from socialism to market democracy. While the material presented in Chapter 9 gives a variety of insights into how Mongols feel about life in contemporary Mongolia, the material largely does not give insights into how those Mongols who have experienced both systems feel about the transition some thirty years later. This issue is addressed in this Chapter, beginning with a sample survey of Mongols aged over thirty who have experienced life under both systems.

The choice of survey questions reflected a great many informal discussions with Mongols by the author. These informal discussions, while unstructured, suggested many Mongols held common views about the costs and benefits of socialism and market democracy. Nonetheless, these discussions were unstructured and while the discussions reflected the author's (wide) circle of Mongol acquaintances, participants were not selected at random. Moreover, many such discussions were conducted in English, the author's native language, and therefore may not have reflected the views of the broader Mongolian population as many Mongols, especially older Mongols, do not speak English. The survey therefore reflected an attempt to test if similar views about the good and bad things arising from living in a socialist state or market democracy were held in the broader Mongol population, by using a structured set of

questions to test the views of a random sample of Mongols, who have lived under both socialism and market democracy.

The sample size for the survey was calculated using the Australian Government National Statistics Service Sample Size Calculator, based on data from the Statistical Office of Mongolia, which estimated the Mongolian population aged thirty plus at 1.3 million in 2016. This population was chosen because it represents all Mongols now living who were alive when the transition from socialism began. The required sample size with outcomes with +/- 5 per cent confidence interval is shown in Figure 10.1.

**Figure 10.1: Required sample size**



Source: Australian Government National Statistics Service, <http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/Sample+size+calculator>, downloaded 16 June 2016.

The National Statistics Service suggested the proportion be set conservatively (the proportion specifies the expected proportion of the population to have the attribute that you are estimating from your survey). The National Statistics Service notes that you can get the proportion from previous cycles of the survey or by an educated guess. If this proportion is unknown, it should be set to 0.5 (i.e. 50 per cent, as this produces a conservative estimate of variance. For this reason, although all the population from which the sample was drawn all experienced the change from socialism to market democracy the proportion was set at 0.5 to ensure a conservative result.

As noted by Australia's National Statistical Service, with a 95 per cent confidence level, you can be 95 per cent sure that the survey results reflect the views of the broader population. That is, the results can be generalized. With the confidence interval of .05 as selected, the answers to particular questions are accurate to plus or minus 5 percentage points. The statistical validity of the survey is further strengthened by the choice of proportion at 50 per cent, which is the Australian National Statistics Office suggestion for a conservative setting. In reality, all survey participants had this experience, and a far smaller sample could have been used. The sample size also resulted in relatively small Standard Errors and Relative Standard Errors. That is, the outcomes are statistically valid and robust.

Prior to undertaking the research, ethics approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University Of New England, Australia. The research was approved by the Committee (Approval Number HE16: 263). Advice was also sought on the need for ethics approval in Mongolia, but no such approval was required, as the research was not of a medical nature.

Given that around half of the Mongol population live in *gers* (traditional Mongolian felt tents) addresses can be unclear, especially if people live in

the city but have countryside registered addresses. It is therefore not easy to undertake random mail surveys. Participants were therefore selected at random from telephone number listings using a random number generator. Mongolia has very few handset style telephones in use in domestic situations. The market is dominated by mobile telephony, with three main suppliers, Mobicom, Skytel and GMobile. The carriers have their own range of phone numbers. Therefore it is possible to select numbers for the survey from the range of numbers known to be in use. There are around 2 million subscribers. The simplest way to select at random from these numbers in use is to select every xth number, say every 500<sup>th</sup> phone number. This would give 800 subscribers to contact and request their participation, against a desired sample of 400 people.

Potential participants were then contacted by phone by a Mongolian survey company and asked for their consent to participate in the survey (noting potential respondents must be aged 30+ to participate in the survey). Several firms were contacted regarding undertaking the sample survey. The choice of firm to undertake the sample survey reflected their expertise in conducting social surveys and their competitive pricing. If consent was given, the interview would proceed. Participants were advised that no individual data would be retained. Survey responses were directly entered into the project data base on the day the interview was conducted, and no paper records were collected. The survey was undertaken in April/May 2017. A copy of the survey questionnaire is at Appendix 4.

A total of 420 persons participated in the survey, slightly exceeding the survey design requirements. All the persons who were interviewed were aged over thirty, because persons aged under thirty would have had no direct personal experience of living under a socialist regime as well as having experience of living in a market democracy. Therefore, survey participants could make informed assessments about the good and bad things about living in a socialist society as well as in a market democracy.

Tables outlining the results of the survey are at Appendix 1, Supporting Data.

Survey participants were quite evenly split by gender. In total 420 persons participated in the survey, of whom 218 (52 per cent) were female and 202 were male (48 per cent of participants). Some 40 per cent of participants were aged 31-40, while 31 per cent were aged 41-50, and 29 per cent were aged 51 and over. Therefore, there was a slight bias towards relatively younger persons among the survey participants. This is not surprising, as Mongolia has a relatively young population. Although in recent years Mongolia's birth-rate has been below that in the socialist period which featured strong pro-natalist policies, the birth-rate has increased somewhat in the later transition period. Moreover, in the past life spans in Mongolia have been relatively short compared to those in more advanced countries.

There was a slight bias towards younger participants for both men and women. That said, there were relatively fewer older men among male participants (28 per cent) than older women among female participants (30 per cent). Again, this slight bias is not surprising as men generally have shorter lives than women in Mongolia.

The overwhelming majority of survey participants remembered the end of the socialist era well. Some 82 per cent of participants claimed a good memory of the socialist era. Women had somewhat stronger memories of the socialist era than men. Some 85 per cent of female respondents and 79 per cent of male respondents said they had a good memory of the socialist era. A significant majority of survey participants considered the change from socialism had been good for them, and good for Mongolia. Indeed, the views about personal gains and national gains were very similar. However, views about the benefits of the change from socialism to market democracy varied significantly by gender. Men who responded to the



survey were more enthusiastic about the change to market democracy than women. Some 79 per cent of men who participated in the survey thought the change to market democracy was good for them and 79 per cent considered the change had been good for Mongolia. By comparison, 69 per cent of female survey participants considered the change had been good for them, and 71 per cent thought the change had been good for Mongolia.

Younger participants were much more enthusiastic about the change than older participants. While over 80 per cent of participants in the 30-40 and 41-50 age groups were enthusiastic about the benefits to them and Mongolia arising from the end of socialism, this was not the case for older participants. Only 49 per cent of participants aged over 51 thought the change had been good for them, and only 47 per cent considered the change had been good for Mongolia. Nearly two thirds of older women aged over fifty one did not consider the change to market democracy had been good for them or for Mongolia.

Survey participants were also asked for their views about the best features of the socialist era. Survey respondents considered job security was a strong feature of the socialist era. As discussed in Chapter 5, concerns about contemporary job security were consistently raised as significant concerns by participants in recent Sant Maral and International Republican Institute surveys. The study of Mongolian culture undertaken by Rarick et al. also indicated that Mongols, compared to people from other countries, have a strong dislike for uncertainty (Rarick et al. 2014: 2).<sup>64</sup> Participants also viewed fixed prices with high regard (under socialism the fixed price of bread was an important symbol, and it was a matter of national pride that bread prices remained stable for extended periods).

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<sup>64</sup> Rarick et al. (2014) examined Mongolian culture using the Hofstede 5-D model of cultural values, which had then been applied to 80 countries.

Nonetheless, men and women had somewhat different views concerning the benefits of socialism. Men who participated in the survey gave more emphasis to economic concerns such as job security, adequate pay and fixed prices, whereas women, while also concerned by economic considerations, gave far more emphasis to the opportunity for equality under socialism than men.

Even today, survey data suggest Mongolia is one of the most male dominated societies in the world.<sup>65</sup> As in other socialist countries, socialism placed greater emphasis on equality, including education for women, than had been the case in feudal Mongolia, and provided greater opportunities for broader labour force participation than hitherto (for a more detailed discussion of male and female roles in Mongolia, see Buyandelger (2013a), and a United Nations Development Fund for Women report on women and transition in Mongolia (Burn and Oidov (2001)).

*The first constitution, adopted in 1924, declared that "all citizens of Mongolia are entitled to equal rights irrespective of their ethnic origin, religious belief and sex." Arranged marriage was prohibited by law in 1925, providing the legal framework for women to choose a husband (Burn and Oidov 2001: 15).*

On the other hand, views on equality as an attractive feature of the socialist era varied markedly by age. Younger and older survey participants did not value the attractiveness of equality under socialism as much as participants aged 41-50. However, participants in all age groups were enthusiastic about the job security which prevailed in the socialist period, adequate pay and the fixed prices for essentials which were the norm under socialism.

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<sup>65</sup> Rarick et al.'s study of Mongolian culture concluded Mongolia was 'very high in masculinity' (Rarick et al. 2014: 1).

Survey participants considered one of the worst things about the late socialist era was the lack of goods in shops, both in absolute terms and in terms of lack of choice (although in conversations with the author, many Mongols have praised the quality of Soviet era Russian foodstuffs such as biscuits and ice-cream). Such concerns were common in socialist countries from the mid 1980s, when young people became envious of Western fashions, perhaps best symbolized by desire for Levi jeans! Limitations on personal freedom and corruption were also strong concerns. Apart from the lack of political freedom characteristic of life in socialist states Mongols were also not able to travel, change their place of residence or change jobs without State approval, and Mongols were circumspect in the face of many paid police informers.

Respondents' views about the worst things about the socialist era were quite consistent considered by gender. Inconsistent with social stereotypes that suggest women are more prone to shopping than men, men were equally unhappy about the lack of shopping choices available to them under socialism. Women were slightly less concerned than men about lack of freedom, and somewhat more concerned by socialist era corruption.

Survey participants saw many advantages from the end of socialism. In particular, Mongols were pleased to be able to travel freely and to live where they chose without need for the need for government approval as had been the case under socialism. For a nomadic society these were important issues. Consistent with this, Mongols were also happy that their country was no longer a closed society: Mongols could both travel outside Mongolia and welcome visitors. They also saw more opportunities for personal development in a market democracy than under socialism. Approval for democracy, consistent with other surveys discussed in Chapter Nine, was high, and Mongols appreciated the opportunities to live more freely than was possible in a socialist environment.

There were some differences in the pattern of survey results considered by gender. Both men and women who responded to the survey placed a high premium on the greater opportunities that they saw arising from the end of the socialist era, as well as the opening of Mongolia to the world and ability to travel freely. Male survey participants were somewhat more attracted to freedom, democracy, and the capacity for greater individualism in a post socialist society than female participants. Indeed, 94 per cent of male survey participants viewed democracy as important, compared to 74 per cent of female participants. Moreover, 85 per cent of male survey participants appreciated the opportunity for individualism compared to 74 per cent of women. Some 88 per cent of men, compared to 81 per cent of female participants, considered freedom one of the best things about the end of socialism. This is consistent with the findings of Rarick et al.'s study of Mongolian culture, which concluded that Mongols were 'high in individualism' (Rarick et al. 2014: 2).

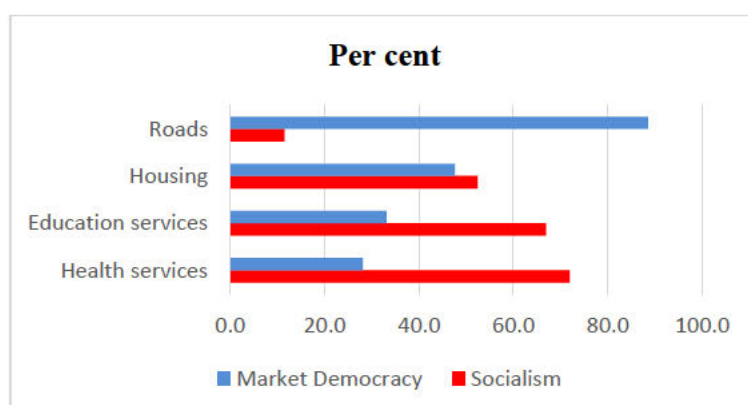
However, views varied quite markedly when cross tabulated by gender and age. For women, the results in respect to questions about the benefits of the country being open to the world were overwhelmingly positive, and consistent across age groups. Older women did not take the same positive view of opportunity, freedom, democracy and individuality as benefits arising from the end of socialism as was the case for the younger women who took part in the survey.

As was the case for women, men of all age groups placed emphasis on the country being open and the ability to travel freely. These results are consistent with Mongolia's nomadic heritage. However, while older men (as was the case for older women) placed lesser emphasis on the opportunities arising from the end of socialism and the new freedoms, they rated freedom as more important than was the case for older women. Men

of all ages placed emphasis on democracy, including older men, a marked contrast to the views of older women. Older men also placed more value on the capacity for individualism post-socialism than older women.

Although the majority of survey participants considered the change from socialism to market democracy was good for themselves and good for Mongolia, people were concerned about some aspects of market democracy. There were concerns about several issues, most noticeably in respect to the gap between the rich and the poor, the number of people moving into the cities and corruption. A review of the data about this question disaggregated by age and by gender reveals that participants' views on these issues were remarkably consistent. The concerns expressed by survey participants around these issues are also consistent with those raised in earlier Chapters.

The final question in the survey asked participants to make comparisons about the standards of key government services under socialism and market democracy. Most respondents felt the majority of government services about which survey participants' views were requested were better in the socialist era than in the market democracy period. Participants considered education, health and housing services were better under socialism, although the majority of survey participants considered roads were better under market democracy. It is concerning that, after thirty years of transition, the majority of participants overwhelmingly considered health and education services were better under socialism. The discussion in earlier Chapters highlighted the inequalities that have emerged post socialism in the health and education sectors following transition to a market democracy. Such inequalities can add to life dissatisfaction. The 2018 World Happiness Report concluded that inequalities in the distribution of health care and education have effects on life satisfaction above and beyond those flowing through their effects on income (Helliwell et al. 2018: 14).

**Figure 10.2: Services, better under socialism or market democracy?**

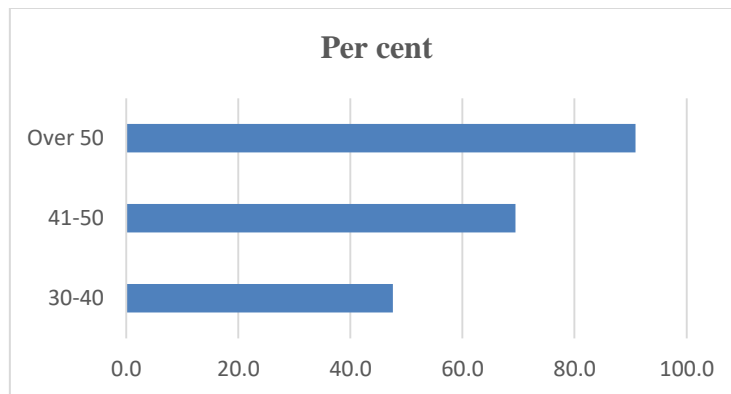
A significant majority of both men and women took the view that health services were better under socialism, although a somewhat higher proportion of male survey participants took this view. Nonetheless, views on health provision varied considerably by age. Older participants' views of socialist era health provision were considerably more favourable than those of younger participants. Whereas a decisive majority of older participants favoured socialist era health services provision, only a small majority of participants aged 30-39 took this view. Discussions during interviews and focus groups (see below for more detailed discussions) suggested the cost of health services was a key issue in contemporary Mongolia, consistent with the research on health services reviewed in Chapter 8. Mongols seem to hanker for socialist era free health service provision.

Views about education provision by gender in the socialist era compared to the more recent experiences of education provision in a market democracy were quite consistent. Around two thirds of men and women took the view that education provision was superior in the socialist era. This suggests significant disenchantment with nearly thirty years of neo-liberal reform

efforts, although views on education provision by age under socialism vis-à-vis market democracy did vary by age of survey participants. Older participants took a harsher view of post-socialist education service provision compared to younger participants, although more than half of younger survey participants were disenchanted with market democracy period education service provision. It is possible that that this may reflect cost issues: under socialism education was free and stretched to every corner of Mongolia, supported by a popular free boarding school system for herders' children.

*Our country is quite rich in the number of universities as well. Mongolia's universities may lack quality but they definitely make up for it in numbers (Myagmardorj 2017: 7).*

Nonetheless, participants' dissatisfaction may also reflect concerns about the quality of education. For example, well intentioned reforms to increase years of schooling are being undermined by limited attendance. Reflecting scarcity in infrastructure, some city based school students attend school for only three hours a day (this example relates to Bayanzurkh district, arising from parents comments during an interview). Consistent with concerns about the quality of university education raised in Chapter 8, a late 2017 newspaper article also raised concern about the quality of university education. The article noted that Mongolia had at least four times the number of universities per 1,000 people than Japan, South Korea and Australia; ten times more than India, fifteen times more than Thailand, and three times more than the United States (Myagmardorj 2017: 7).

**Figure 10.3: Views on education provision: better under socialism by age**

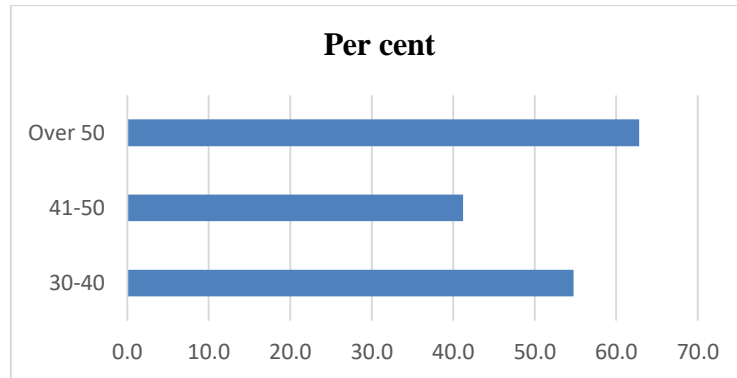
Although views on housing provision under socialism compared to market democracy were more balanced, a small majority of survey participants considered housing provision was better under socialism than under market democracy. Given the extent of apartment building in Ulaanbaatar post 2010, this outcome is somewhat surprising, and may reflect frustration with the rapid Ulaanbaatar centric urbanization that Mongolia has experienced in the past decade, particularly the parallel population expansion in poorly serviced *ger* areas (in terms of water, waste water, road and electricity provisions).

Nonetheless, views varied markedly by gender. Some 53 per cent of women who participated in the survey felt housing provision was better under socialism, while 59 per cent of men who participated in the survey considered housing provision was better under market democracy. Considered by age, views on housing provision were mixed. Older participants felt housing provision was better under socialism as did younger participants. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 10.4, middle aged participants aged 41-50 took a more benign view of housing provision under market democracy. This may reflect the increasing difficulties experienced by younger participants in buying real estate after the



resources sector driven boom in housing prices around 2010, or later employment uncertainties as the economy faltered post 2012.

**Figure 10.4: Views on housing provision: better under socialism by age**



The one area where there was significant enthusiasm for post-socialist era developments was in respect to road developments. Both male and female survey participants overwhelmingly endorsed road developments in post-socialist Mongolia. Further, only a small minority of survey respondents in any age group considered roads provision was better under socialism. The strong results may reflect a nomadic population's enjoyment of enhanced mobility capacity. The timing of the survey may also be a factor in these results. Post 2012, the then Democratic Party led government invested significantly in road development, markedly improving the extent of urban and rural roads, and significantly improved the extent and quality of city roads.

By contrast with the overwhelming endorsement of post-socialist era road provisions, survey participants were rather more concerned by the extent of corruption under market democracy than was the case under socialism. The proportion of respondents expressing concern about corruption under market democracy was significantly higher than under socialism, although the survey outcomes also indicate concern about corruption was also evident during the socialist period.

Even housing provision barely rated a pass mark. Only a small majority of survey participants considered housing provision better under market democracy, a surprising result given the extent of apartment construction post 2010. The outcome may reflect concerns about rapid urbanization and overstretched city infrastructure.

Considered as a whole, the survey results suggest that most survey participants considered the change from socialism to market democracy has been good for participants and for Mongolia. Nonetheless, the survey results also suggest significant dissatisfaction with some aspects of the transition. Survey participants were concerned about economic security, inequality, corruption and unemployment. The results also suggested long term dissatisfaction with government performance in terms of both policy initiatives and program implementation in key areas of public policy, as reflected in discussions in interviews and focus groups.

## **Thesis interviews**

The aim of the interviews was to examine the issues commonly raised in the thesis survey in more detail, and draw out any other issues interviewees saw as pertinent in comparing socialism to market democracy. Interviewees were asked a common set of questions, but were not prompted through examples. In other words, interviewees discussed the issues most important to them. Interviewees were also asked to share their personal transition experiences and views about living in a market democracy vis-a-vis socialism. Twenty nine interviews were conducted.

Interviewees came from all walks of life. The views of eminent thought leaders in various fields such as business leaders, lawyers, doctors and

engineers were sought out as well as selected “ordinary” Mongols with whom the author had regular contact arising from living in Mongolia – e.g., maintenance workers, staff at public agencies, supermarkets, staff at restaurants etc. The interviews were intended to complement the survey by eliciting more detailed comments from Mongolian thought leaders from various walks of life about how they feel about the changes that have occurred in Mongolia post socialism.

*Saraa goes to Korea every year. Although she is a qualified and experienced doctor, as a government employee her salary is very small, at 550,000 tugrik a month. In Korea she works non-stop as a hotel cleaner. In two months she earns roughly the equivalent of her annual income in Mongolia.*

Most interview participants thought it was sensible to break discussion of post-socialist Mongolia into two periods. The first period they discussed concerned the early years post socialism, when the economy crashed and people lived in an atmosphere of economic crisis and despair. Unemployment rose markedly, and as noted by Jambaa, even those people lucky enough to keep their jobs faced extreme difficulties because salaries remained static but prices soared. Social order disintegrated and crime and violence became rife as people fought to survive. The second period, post 2000, was somewhat different because the emerging mining sector brought better economic outcomes for some, although corruption became entrenched, to the distaste of many Mongols.

*At the time of her interview, Ataraa was in her mid-eighties. As was generally the case in socialist Mongolia, she had a large family. As was the case in Mongolia, Ataraa also worked, because under socialism everyone worked, although the socialist system also allowed for time off for childbirth and childminding. Ataraa worked as a seamstress in a country clothing factory. After retiring, Ataraa and her husband decided to return to their roots and work as herders, and for many years they managed a medium sized herd. In poverty stricken post-socialist Mongolia, herding also provide food security for her large family. This decision also reflected the fall in age pension purchasing power post-socialism. Pensioners were among the most impoverished groups in post-socialist Mongolia. In 1999 Mongolia had 200,000 senior citizens, whose socialist era pension entitlement was as little as \$US13 a month (Oyunbayar 1998: 1).*

Although Mongols shared the common experience of the collapse of socialism, the effects for individuals were very diverse. The end of socialism brought big changes to many lives in Mongolia. For example, Amaraa was studying socialist style economics in East Germany when the end came. He was transferred to another university in the West, in Cologne, to study capitalist economics. He did not think the course was very good! He also felt the Ossi (East German educated) students were ostracized at the University. So Amaraa's initial experiences of western market democracy were uncomfortable. His experiences were not isolated. Others, who were then students found that their studies now lacked relevance to Mongolia's new economic circumstances, or worse, the jobs they had studied for no longer existed in post-socialist Mongolia

This was especially the case for Government jobs, which were cut markedly as the Mongolian economy collapsed and Russian subsidies were withdrawn, leading to major cuts in government revenue. Burmaa, fresh from her studies abroad, found her promised job no longer existed. She

went home to her family in the countryside, and with much idle time, spent her days lying in the fields meditating the changes in her world.

The structure of jobs also changed. For example, under socialism, all artists worked for the Government. Many art jobs were oriented to government propaganda, such as production of portraits of Mongolian presidents or other eminent people. These jobs were quickly abolished. Namsrai, hitherto a government propaganda artist, lost his job, and quickly realized that in the absence of wealthy private art patrons, he needed a new role to support his then young family. Like many well educated ex government officials, he became a member of the 'carry' trade, constantly travelling to China (and occasionally Russia) by the slow and uncomfortable Trans Mongol Railway, leaving Mongolia with an empty suitcase, and returning with goods he hoped to sell in street markets in Ulaanbaatar. As noted in earlier Chapters, this sort of informal employment was to become common in uncertain Mongolia in the late 1990s.

While most people realized the need for change following the Soviet collapse, there was significant opposition from some sectors of the Mongol community. Many people were philosophically opposed to change, while others realized change would threaten their jobs. Enkhtuya suggested that community acceptance of transition to a market economy was far from universal. In particular, from her experiences, the notion of replacing the Soviet style hospital based medical system with an American style health system was not welcomed by many in the health sector. The medical sector quickly split into two camps, those who supported transition, and those who did not. This split solidified around political party lines and the Democratic Party became dominant in the health sector. She suggested the Democratic Party's strong market orientation coupled with major budget reductions as the economy imploded and Soviet subsidies were withdrawn was a significant factor in health workforce reductions in the early 1990s.

*Miigaa is a restaurant manager and her husband is a wheat farmer. During the socialist era her father, who supplied traditional Mongolian medicines, was frequently taken to the police station and accused of conducting religious services. This was a significant crime under socialism, frequently leading to prison sentences or exile to a distant province. Miigaa felt that post socialism freedom of religion was liberating for many people.*

Nevertheless, most interviewees welcomed the change, because they enjoyed new freedoms arising from the change, such as travel freedoms and residential freedom. Some enterprising souls saw great opportunities arising from the change. For example Erkhaa, who studied and later worked in Czechoslovakia, made money by bringing a car home to Mongolia each year which she then sold at a handsome profit to support her essentially destitute family post-socialism. This brave woman, driving home by herself through strife torn and Maffia dominated Russia first brought an Opel home to Mongolia, followed by a BMW a year later, then an Audi in her homecoming year. Baterdene, finishing his information technology studies in Russia, hunted for furs in Mongolia, which he sold in Russia, using the proceeds to buy computer parts, before returning to Mongolia, likewise running the gauntlet of the emerging Russian Maffia. He then assembled the parts into complete computers, for which there was a ready and profitable market in Mongolia.

*Burmaa, who was aged in her mid-forties at the time of her interview, and has one son, was something of a casualty of the fall of socialism. On the other hand, the fall of socialism gave her a substantial break, giving her the chance to contemplate herself and life over an extended period. The end of socialism came at the time when Burmaa was outside Mongolia completing her studies, which were oriented to a specialised government role in Mongolia. As was the case with many other graduates at that time, with the collapse of the Mongolian economy the expected, indeed promised job did not eventuate.*

### **The best things about the socialist era**

Interviewees held positive views of several aspects of life under socialism. For example, most interviewees took a positive view of the economic conditions under socialism. There were also positive comments about several of the social aspects of life under socialism, although some aspects of life under socialism, as discussed below, were rather less popular. Interviewees also had strong positive views of the socialist era education and health systems.

In particular, Mongols liked the economic security that was seen as the norm under socialism. This is consistent with Rarick et al.'s analysis, which suggested that Mongols are relatively risk averse compared to people from over eighty countries where similar analyses had taken place (Rarick et al. 2014). Sabloff's work (2012) concerning Mongols' adaptation to a market economy in the 1990s also suggested that Mongols had quickly come to appreciate that risks as well as opportunities were an inherent characteristic of a market economy.

*For Namsrai, the best thing about the socialist period was that everyone was employed, a gross contrast to his post socialist experiences. While incomes were modest, they were adequate, especially in a world where there were fixed, low prices for most basic necessities.*

All of the interview participants took the view that the socialist era full employment policy and the resulting lack of unemployment was a key feature of socialist economies. Bayarsaikhal, for example, considered the best thing about life in the socialist era was the economic certainty that came with assured employment. He noted that as well as providing a satisfactory level of income considered against the low level of prices for essentials that prevailed in the socialist era (and noting that both men and women enjoyed universal employment which added to household incomes), employment provided social status and dignity. Burmaa took a similar view, noting the popular certainty that, post-graduation, employment was assured under socialism.

*Ataraa felt the best things about socialism were the economic security arising from full employment and low prices, coupled with the free education and health systems.*

Erkhaa also felt the economic certainty of socialism was one of its key attractions. Knowing that Mongolia's economic development was carefully planned, with a focus on reducing the uncertainty of the pastoral economy through industrialisation was reassuring, because *dzuds* could severely damage the pastoral economy. Several interviewees remembered aspects of central economic planning fondly, especially the price controls on essentials that prevailed under socialism. The low and seldom changing price of bread was a source of national pride. Burmaa also remembered socialist era economic security and full employment with fondness. The



Soviet style 5 year economic plans which Mongolia had adopted had led to significant industrial development, which had reduced Mongolia's previous dependence on agriculture, which was always potentially subject to weather related disruptions like dzuds.

*Erkhaa believed the planned economy was an important element in promoting a calm, kind, and dignified society. Erkhaa, like many other interviewees, also took comfort in socialist era low fixed prices for basic commodities like bread.*

Similar perspectives were put forward by Lattimore in mid 1970s Granada Television/Mongol Television documentaries. Lattimore argued that, under socialism, mid 1970s living standards in Mongolia were the highest in any Asian country he had seen (especially since the rapacious nobility and the Buddhist movement no longer took a large share of the country's economic output) (Lattimore 1975). Interviewees frequently said this full employment policy was a major positive when considering life under socialism vis-a-vis market democracy. They felt employment was important for several reasons, including having a positive personal self-image, a feeling that one was contributing to society, and of course, the personal independence that arises from have an income sufficient to meet personal and family living expenses.

*Like several other interviewees, Amaraa noted the relative economic and social security that existed under socialist rule, where people were required to work, and therefore had secure jobs and a guaranteed income.*

Several interviewees spoke about the community spirit which was part of the socialist era ethos. Several people also commented positively on Soviet

era social discipline and the shared vision and community spirit that existed in the socialist era. OyunErdene, for example, has relatively fond memories of life under socialism. In particular, she remembered the socialist period as a time of significant social discipline, where people had a shared vision for their country and took responsibility for working for greater social good as well as personal self-development.

*Saraa, now aged in her mid-forties, was a young woman at the time of the transition. From the countryside in Eastern Mongolia, she was then a student. She studied medicine in Ulaanbaatar. She qualified as a doctor, and has worked in community health centres for most of her career. She is married with two children. However, due to the lack of jobs in market democracy Mongolia, her husband has worked in construction jobs in Korea for much of their life 'together.' Saraa recently joined her husband in Korea.*

She noted, for example, that it was the norm for people to do voluntary work on Saturdays on community projects. Battsetseg, a doctor, also remembered the socialist era as a friendly environment, where people were happy to help each other out. For example, neighbours were happy to help mind other people's children, so child care for working mothers was not a problem. She also remembered the socialist period as a safe period, where there was little crime and violence.

*Now in her late thirties, Miigaa was a school girl, living in the countryside, when socialism collapsed post 1990. Miigaa, who qualified as a lawyer, now works as an executive in the hospitality industry, managing an upmarket restaurant. Miigaa has three children, a daughter and two sons. Her husband is a wheat farmer, managing a property to the north east of Ulaanbaatar.*

Solongo, for example, remembered the socialist era as a calm time, where families had jobs, with adequate incomes to meet living needs. There was little social stress. Amaraa noted that his parents and older relatives considered the socialist period was in many respects a gentler period in social terms, with warm community spirit, and very little crime. Namsrai also spoke passionately about the ‘social spirit that existed in the socialist period, suggesting that ‘social spirit’ was much stronger in socialist times. Then, people were not ‘broken’ by economic circumstances, and there was strong community support for those who needed help, in contrast to the competitive self-serving attitudes he considered had evolved under market democracy. He also noted that community spirit was reflected by Saturday social work, e.g., infrastructure work, where people happily volunteered their time to facilitate social development.

*Solongo is aged around 40, which made her a little girl at the time when socialism ended. A school girl then, she nevertheless remembers the early transition period quite well. It became a time of great hardship for her family. At that time her family was quite well to do. Her family lived in Erdenet, where her father worked as an engineer. Her mother also had a good job. These jobs were soon to disappear, and the family moved to Ulaanbaatar to seek work, but jobs, particularly good jobs, proved very hard to get and money became very tight.*

When asked for her thoughts about the best aspects of socialist life, Saraa (2) was very thoughtful. The good things, she felt, largely related to the nature of socialist society and the economic certainty of life under socialism. She noted that society under socialism was very structured. For example, young people became Pioneers, and generally holidayed together

at holiday camps such as Nerimdal to the west of Ulaanbaatar.<sup>66</sup> Post school, and post university, it was the norm (and remains so) to hold regular class re-unions. As a result people had a wide social network, and guided by socialist propaganda, there was a strong sense of community purpose (Saraa and Battuya also commented positively on this aspect of socialist life).

*Jambaa was twenty when the Communist regime collapsed in 1989. He was a law student and later graduated in law at the Mongolian National University. He was a city boy, born to a well-educated couple who worked in professional occupations. As was the case with most Mongolian families in that period, Jambaa was a member of a large family. He was fortunate because his mother kept her government job (although his father was less fortunate) and the family kept their Ulaanbaatar apartment.*

The socialist era Mongolian health system was also remembered fondly. This may reflect the fact that several participants were doctors, but other interviewees also expressed strong support for the previous socialist era health system. Enkhtuya focused somewhat in this area. She noted the socialist system had brought free, universal health care to all areas in Mongolia, a major improvement on previous health care arrangements, with local hospitals at the soum (district) and aimag (province) level providing well-articulated health care in conjunction with specialist city hospitals. She also felt the socialist system worked much better than the contemporary market era health care arrangements, because the high costs of the new system meant appropriate health care was unaffordable for many people.

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<sup>66</sup> This holiday complex, now somewhat aged, must have been a wonderland in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. A large complex, with extensive dormitories and entertainment rooms, it became the temporary home of thousands of young Mongols from all over Mongolia, as well as international visitors from other socialist countries every year, generally in two week cycles

*Namsrai suggested the free health service of the socialist era was also much appreciated, with health care through hospitals being readily available throughout the country*

The interviewees viewed the socialist period free universal Soviet style education system with high regard. Every participant noted the widespread availability of the State school education system throughout Mongolia, supported by the then prevailing free boarding school system available to country students. They also noted the tertiary education system was well regarded, with science education based on the Russian model, with many instructors themselves having been educated at Russian or other Soviet bloc universities. Battuya noted the socialist era education system was a source of national pride. Enkhtuya also considered Mongolia's education and training systems worked very well under socialism. She noted training arrangements were closely articulated with job markets, ensuring a steady supply of workers in the skills needed in the workforce, which in itself was a useful strategy in maintaining full employment. The comments were consistent with the thesis survey results, which indicated survey respondents had positive views of the socialist era education compared to the mixed State/private system which had evolved post socialism.

*Several people noted the quality of foodstuffs was high during the socialist era. Battuya, OyunErdene and Miigaa remembered socialist era Russian fruits, candy, chocolates and ice-cream with deep affection.*

### **The worst things about socialism**

While most people focused on the social and political repression which was generally seen as part and parcel of life under a socialist regime, Amaraa (2) suggested the worst thing about socialism was that, as reflected by the fall, the economic system did not work. He believed the economic

certainty of socialism was really something of a sham, with around one third of Mongolia's socialist period national income coming from Soviet subsidies.

Several interviewees spoke about socialist era repression. For example, Enkhtuya believed the socialist era had been marred by political, social, and religious repression. Jambaa also noted that socialism had been characterised by social repression, including political and religious oppression. Jambaa reflected that repression could be harsh, as reflected in the anti-religion, anti-elite and anti-intelligentsia purges of the 1930s, when his own family had suffered. Oyun expressed similar views, noting that Buriats seemed to have been targeted during the 1930 purges.

*Erkhaa did not enjoy the lack of choices in careers, controls on residence, nor travel restrictions in the socialist era. She had been very lucky compared to many of her contemporaries to have the opportunity to travel to Czechoslovakia, a privilege granted to few students in the socialist era.*

Jambaa also noted that State choices came before personal choices. For example, State choices about education and jobs came before personal preferences. People also had little choice about where they lived, and were not free to travel either in Mongolia or to other countries. Free speech was not permitted and people who expressed anti-State views publicly could be subject to a variety of punishments, including prison or exile to a remote area where they did not have family available to support them. Enkhtuya expressed similar views, remarking that people had little information available to them, as the Propaganda Ministry closely controlled the media, which in any event was all State owned, with only one television station and one radio station in operation. Burmaa also noted Mongols' discomfort with the political repressions of the socialist era, explaining that the information people received was largely the propaganda generated by the

few state media products then available to the Mongolian people. While people commonly mistrusted the information available to them, they were afraid to speak out, because there were many government informers about, and punishments could be severe, for both the person who had spoken out, and their families. Solongo also noted that people were cautious in expressing their views, because there were many informers, and past and present government repression was well understood.

*Ataraa noted that socialist life, while simpler, was in many ways harder, especially in Mongolia's harsh climate. She noted, for example, that very few people had cars, making winter transport a hazardous proposition.*

Like several other interviewees, Namsrai spoke with dislike about the socialist era travel restrictions, which he remembered as being very unpopular. He noted, for example, that it was very difficult to get a foreign passport, and that the authorities were very suspicious of people desiring to travel outside Mongolia, especially those who sought to travel to capitalist countries. Even possession of \$US was illegal, and people caught with \$US were liable to harsh punishment.

### **The best things about market democracy**

The interviewees put forward a variety of perspectives concerning the good aspects of life in a market democracy. All of the interviewees welcomed the opportunity to vote, and the opportunity to make choices from a number of candidates and political parties. They appreciated the new freedom to speak their mind, symbolized by rapid growth in the number of newspapers and magazines, and the emergence of non-state electronic media. However, while there were some common views among the interviewees, other comments reflected the individual circumstances of the interviewees.

*At the time when socialism ended, Bayarsaikhal was aged thirty two. He worked as a teacher, a biology teacher, in the aimag where he had spent most of his life. Bayarsaikhal was lucky, as he managed to keep his job, unlike many other teachers, although he noted that funds for teaching materials and heating were significant problems in the early post transition years, which made the school environment very challenging. Bayarsaikhal continued to work as a teacher, for some twenty four years, until he retired. He found his work very rewarding, although stressful, as classes were quite large.*

For example, Amaraa considered market democracy offered many advantages. In particular, he spoke about national self-identity. He considered (as did his parents) that Mongols had a much stronger perception of Mongolia as an independent country than was the case under socialism, when Mongolia was dominated by Soviet political thinking, and essentially managed as a Soviet satellite despite nominal independence.

Amaraa also enjoyed market economy wider economic opportunities, in terms of post school study choices, career choices, and/or decisions to set up and operate your own business. Amaraa also appreciated the new freedom of movement, which allowed significantly greater travel opportunities, within and outside Mongolia. Travel had been very strictly controlled under socialism. Amaraa also appreciated the new political freedoms. Amaraa was very comfortable with the new political environment, as people could now talk as they felt without fear of repression, and there were choices of party, and people could vote as they pleased, rather than being forced to follow the party line in staged elections.



*Ataraa welcomed market democracy for the social freedoms that came with market democracy. As a nomad, she welcomed the end of restrictions on residence and mobility. In particular, as a mother, she welcomed these freedoms for her children, because the new freedoms meant her children and grandchildren could now travel and study abroad, giving them significant new life opportunities which had not been available during her youth in the socialist period.*

In many cases, the other interviewees offered quite similar perspectives. To Zayaa, the fall of socialism was significant because it brought many new freedoms which she enjoyed, including choice in where to live and work, the freedom to establish and develop a private business, and freedom to travel within and without Mongolia. She also appreciated the opportunities to accumulate personal wealth that could arise from a successful business, like her husband's business, in the market era (very few Mongols had personal savings to help ride out the economic storm that followed the collapse of socialism). Saraa (2), a hard working entrepreneur, took a similar perspective. They noted the socialist era gave little opportunity to develop personal savings or wealth, which had placed many Mongols in a very difficult financial position when the economy collapsed post socialism, especially given the massive inflation that occurred in the early market democracy years.

*Saraa (2) was aged around fifty when the interview was conducted. Saraa is now a very successful businesswoman. She appears to have extraordinary drive and energy. Her main business was in preparing pre-packaged traditional Mongolian foods,*

Zayaa also enjoyed the new political freedoms, with choices in who she could vote for. Zayaa noted she was not alone in this view, with over 90

per cent of Mongols taking the chance to vote in elections in Mongolia over the 1990s, with the 1996 parliamentary elections leading to the first change in government in Mongolia for seventy years. She also noted that astute Mongols had been able to take advantage of the new economic freedoms and many had established very successful businesses.

Other perspectives related more to individual circumstances. For example, Miigaa was enthusiastic about the recognition in the constitution of the right to practice religion freely, not so much because of her own religious beliefs, but because she had seen religious repression, and the associated fear of punishment, at first hand. Erkhoo also applauded the new religious freedoms. In particular, she enjoyed the renaissance of the Buddhist movement, which she saw as Mongolia's national religion. Buriat interviewees with long memories of family suffering in the purges of the 1930s were also glad to be free from political repression and the reprisals that they saw as symbolizing the socialist period.

*For Oyun, who works a restaurant manager, whose husband is a banking executive, the big advantage of the end of socialism was the end of fear of repression. A Buriat, she had lost several family members in the purges of the 1930s.*

The notion of freedom of movement was also very important to Mongols, who see freedom of movement as fundamental to their nomadic culture. Every interviewee strongly welcomed the end of socialist era travel and residence restrictions. For some, this had provided the opportunity to move to the city, to take advantage of job and business opportunities, or soak up the bright lights, entertainment opportunities and restaurants that came with city living. Some, like Battuya, had taken the opportunity to study abroad in non-Soviet bloc countries, a forbidden fruit in the socialist era, while the rapprochement with China post-Soviet dominated Mongolian socialism had

resulted in major increases in the number of people from interviewees' families studying in China in recent years.

*Erkhaa appreciated the opportunity for free speech without fear of repression, and enjoyed the flood of new information that arose post socialism, including significant growth in the number of newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television channels.*

Many others, including OyunErdene, Zayaa, Miigaa, and Oyun had travelled extensively outside Mongolia, whether for business or pleasure. Summer holidays now also encompassed extensive travel options within Mongolia, whether to resorts like those at Terelj close to Ulaanbaatar, or out to the country side to the likes of the Gobi desert in the south or Lake Khovsgol in the West, opportunities that were available to very few people in the socialist era.

### **The worst things about market democracy.**

*Several interviewees felt one of the worst things about market democracy was that a rich-poor divide had developed. At one end of the spectrum, an uber-rich class had arisen. To some extent, this reflected the fruits of corruption, especially through privatisation and later from mining developments, and the emergence of this group was therefore distasteful to many Mongols. By contrast, the economic chaos of the 1990s had led to poverty, often extreme poverty, for large numbers of Mongols, and this mire of poverty had proven very difficult to escape.*

Looking back to the immediate post-socialist period, all the interviewees suggested the early years of market democracy were largely a period of

economic despair. Several people who were interviewed talked about the emergence of street people, with huge numbers of drunks concentrated in some parts of Ulaanbaatar. Street muggings and sometimes violent home invasions became a common part of Mongolian life. Pickpockets also became an everyday hazard (as they continue to be). The underground tunnels that service Ulaanbaatar became the home of many of the newly poor and dispossessed, again a practice that has persisted towards 2020. Battsetseg noted that, given Mongolia's savage winters, homelessness was a bitter experience. Some interviewees also lamented the development of intergenerational poverty, with the children of the poor facing multiple disadvantages in seeking a better life.

*In the early transition years, economic collapse and savage price hikes for staples meant like many Mongol families, Miigaa's family struggled to survive. Later the situation improved somewhat, and after she married Miigaa and her husband moved from precarious small business jobs to more stable occupations.*

Miigaa, for example, felt the market period had led to a significant breakdown in social order in Mongolia. The economic meltdown of the early 1990s had led to widespread poverty and despair, coupled with a marked increase in alcohol abuse, which caused many marriages to founder. Bayarsaikhal also expressed concern that early market era economic chaos had led to significant family breakdown in Mongolian society, with divorce rates much higher than hitherto, which was a significant factor in household poverty for many families. Ataraa was very concerned by market era poverty and inequality. She declared angrily, 'in socialist times there was no poverty, and no one had to eat rubbish to survive.'

*While he appreciated the freedoms associated with market democracy, Namsrai was concerned that abuse of these freedoms was leading to the development of a self-centred, selfish society, for example without the respect for elders that has long been a feature of Mongol culture.*

Several interviewees also expressed concern about the emergence of violent economic crime post-socialism. For example, Miigaa and Battsetseg noted market era poverty had led to marked increases in theft, often violent theft. The early market period saw many apartment holders fit substantial additional steel doors to their apartments, to reduce the ever present threat of violent home invasion. Interviewees noted social attitudes began to change, with personal concerns overriding broader community social issues.

*Burmaa was troubled by the emergence of a seemingly uncaring uber-rich group in Mongolian society, and as was the case for other interviewees, linked the emergence of this group to the growth of rampant corruption that many Mongols see as one worst features of market democracy.*

A number of interviewees remained quite unhappy about some of the economic realities of a market economy in a poor country circa 2020. When talking about contemporary economic issues, several interviewees expressed strong concern about the number of people living in poverty in Mongolia, the emergence of a ‘working poor’ who did not make enough money to meet their living needs, and growth in corruption. They were also uncomfortable and in some cases quite angry with the continued failure of successive Mongolian governments to acknowledge or effectively address these issues. For example, Amaraa (2) discussed the continued prevalence of low salaries in the market economy, with salaries for Government professional workers (doctors, engineers) in the region of

\$US200-250 per month. He suggested the low salary levels had contributed markedly to growth in corruption, with workers forced to embrace corruption in order to survive. Reflecting these pressures, as noted above Saraa, a government doctor, was forced to work in low skill jobs in Korea each year to make ends meet. Ultimately Saraa elected to emigrate to a low skill but much better paid job.

*Namsrai felt the benefits of privatization of State assets had gone to very few people, and most people had not benefited from this aspect of transition. He was very concerned that so many Mongols had become impoverished; with socialist era equality became replaced with a society where inequality was commonplace.*

Several interviewees also expressed concern with the standard of education and health services in the age of the market. Amaraa, for example, expressed concern about aspects of contemporary education in Mongolia. Post socialism freedom of movement, he noted, has led to empty schools in the country side and over-crowded schools in the city, with many city public school students only able to attend school for only a few hours a day because overstretched authorities had divided school attendance by shifts (morning, midday, and evening), so that all students could attend. Amaraa questioned how much students could learn under these arrangements. Burmaa also expressed concern that education standards had been compromised in Mongolia post-socialism at the university level. While she well understood Mongol parents' ambitions for their children to attend university, she was frustrated that many parents had only realized this ambition through low standard business administration courses offered by the burgeoning private university sector, with the result that many students found it very difficult to get jobs post-graduation.

Several interviewees (Battuya, Bayarsaikhal, Battsetseg, and Enkhtuya, for example) also expressed concern that market age health care costs make quality health care an impossible dream for many Mongols. This was a big contrast to socialist era health care, when the hospital based health system was free.

Another interviewee, Batzundean expressed profound distaste for the widespread emergence of bribery, exclaiming “people hate it.” Concerns about rampant and unchecked corruption were common among interviewees, as reflected in Solongo’s comments on education system corruption below. Similar concerns were also reflected in the thesis survey, where the majority of respondents saw growth in corruption as one of the disadvantages of a market system. Indeed, many Mongols view the emergence of sudden wealth with suspicion and contempt, believing sudden new wealth may have its origins in corruption. Ataraa, for example, was disgusted with the bribes that seemed to characterise the new society, and she was very upset that high level politicians seemed to be leaders in this corruption. As noted by Empson, “In Mongolia’s present-day burgeoning capitalist economy, these forms of wealth are a visible feature of what some Mongols have termed ‘wild capitalism’ (*zerleg kapitalizm*), whereby some appear to have gained money as if from nowhere, while others have none at all. The turns of fortune involved in the accumulation of this kind of wealth are frequently judged as suspect” (Empson 2012: 1).

*Solongo is a building manager. She complained that her university was very corrupt. Coming from a poor family she worked hard to get good grades and always attended classes. Many students did not attend classes and she found them very lazy. Despite this, they got very good grades. She believed they were paying academic staff for good grades.*

All of the interviewees expressed concern that market democracy Mongolia remains a poor country, despite the discovery and exploitation of the country's mineral wealth. There was a strong dissatisfaction with the low level of salaries in Mongolia, which led many people to seek work overseas. Perhaps the general feeling about Mongolia's economic circumstances post-socialism is well summarized by the remarks of Sanjaasuren Oyun, a prominent Mongolian politician in her own right and brother of Zorig, a leading figure in Mongolia's peaceful transition to democracy, in an interview with Radio Free Europe: "If your life isn't better than it was 20 years ago," she imagined people musing, "what was the point of moving to a market economy?"(Radio Free Europe 2016: 9).

*Munksetseg, a meteorologist, also goes to Korea each year in her holidays to earn more money. Last year, working as a cleaner, she earned enough for a deposit on a small apartment and to buy some furniture. Without her holiday work, she would not have been able to afford these purchases.*

OyunErdene also felt that the change to market democracy has resulted in undesirable social changes in Mongolia. She considered the economic uncertainty inherent in a market economy, and the lack of jobs post socialism had led to poverty and despair for many Mongols.

Interviewee's views were consistent with data from a Mongolian survey on fear circa 1987, which reported 45 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women were afraid of unemployment. Students (44 per cent) were also commonly afraid of unemployment. Later surveys also suggested Mongols fear of poverty was significant, and growing. Data from a 2007 survey suggested 35 per cent of Mongols feared poverty, whereas 86 per cent of respondents to a similar survey in 2013 feared poverty, and 86 per cent feared debt (Jagdug and Balgan 2015: 143, 151).



OyunErdene suggested that strong competition for scarce jobs had also resulted in a breakdown in the community social spirit and cohesion that many Mongols had prized under socialism. Economic chaos and high unemployment post socialism had also led to economic violence, with many people turning to crime to survive. Alcohol abuse had also increased among the economically dispossessed.

*Burmaa felt that the economic uncertainties and high unemployment that have characterised Mongolian society in the market era has seen a breakdown in Mongolia's social structure. She noted that young people exhibit much less respect for elders than previously, highlighted by the failure of young people to stand up on buses for elder people. Such respect had been an important aspect of Mongolian culture in the socialist period and under earlier regimes.*

Battsetseg also expressed strong reservations about some aspects of Mongolian society under market democracy. She feels that people are demanding and expecting more from society, and that they have become more selfish and less friendly. She was concerned that Mongolia is becoming a world of 'faceless neighbours', where people are much more competitive than was the case under socialism. She believes that individualism is triumphing in contemporary Mongolia, suggesting individuals now tend just take care of themselves and take responsibility for meeting their own needs. By contrast, she suggested, in the socialist period the state was a 'caring hand,' but this was no longer the case.

*OyunErdene concluded by saying that while under socialism Mongols were socially and economically secure, with strong social discipline, with low cost health and education systems readily available to all, this was no longer the case under market democracy, where there was economic and social insecurity where access to good healthcare and education were determined by financial capacity rather than need. Overall, OyunErdene had a strong nostalgia for socialism, although she also appreciated the freedoms and opportunities available under market democracy.*

## **Thesis Focus Groups**

### **Introduction**

The focus groups were conducted to cover specific topics, for example changes in Mongolia's health and education systems post-socialism. The research was approved by the Human Relations Ethics Committee at the University of New England (approval number HE17-088). Enquiries indicated research approval for social research in Mongolia was not required by the local authorities, although medical research faces stringent approval procedures.

The selection of participants presented significant challenges. The interviews had clearly demonstrated the importance of a broader, trusting relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Mongols tend to be reserved in the face of strangers, and focus group discussions where participants were unknown to each other would seem likely to have resulted in limited, guarded discussions. As discussed earlier, outside of family and other close networks, Mongols exhibit limited trust.

Therefore a “stratified snowball sampling” approach was used, utilizing social networks and informal connections to recruit participants. As noted by Brede, although random sampling is often considered preferable, many sources suggest that stratified snowball sampling offers logistical benefits without degrading academic rigor (Brede 2010: 10). As also noted by Brede, snowball sampling has methodological advantages when working with populations for which social and family networks are important because it illuminates interconnections of behaviour, ideas and discourse that might otherwise be missed.

The study population was drawn from people aged thirty plus who had personal experience of the effects of the transition from socialism to market democracy. The aim was to get the views of thought leaders in Mongolia in key areas where Mongolia has experienced profound change post such as the economy, the legal system and in health and education. The focus groups were intended to complement the survey and interviews discussed above by gaining more detailed comments from focus group participants concerning a particular major change associated with the transition from socialism. Some thirty five people participated in the focus groups. Five focus groups were conducted. Most Mongol participants preferred to remain anonymous. The focus groups were conducted in Ulaanbaatar. Focus groups were conducted in respect to changes in Mongolia’s economic system, education system, health system, legal system and human rights provisions arising from the change from a socialist system to a market democracy. The focus groups were held over February/June 2018. The focus groups sought to identify major changes in different social systems since the transition from socialism, the best changes in the Mongol arising from the end of socialism, the worst changes in the Mongol economic system arising from the end of socialism, whether the system was more effective under socialism or market democracy, whether the system in question was fairer under socialism or market democracy. The outcomes for each focus groups are reported below.

## Economic system

In many ways, the replacement of a socialist command economy with a market economy was probably Mongolia's biggest challenge post-socialism. It was not just a change in the economic system; it was also a change in culture. Management priorities in socialist era enterprises were very different to the profit seeking behaviours of managers in the market era.

*...most socialist era managers (darga or chief) did not have business training (most were trained in engineering as the country was inclined more towards manufacturing, (which had been carefully expanded under socialism) than the service industry (Manalsuren 2017: 137). There was also an issue of culture. Socialist-era managers, whose understanding of a manager was being the 'head' or 'parent' of an organisation, defined management as looking after people, not acting as entrepreneurs (Manalsuren 2017: 141).*

This aspect of the transition impacted heavily on people's daily lives, in terms of core issues such as income, employment opportunities, housing and health and education service provision. The aim of the focus group was for participants to discuss the biggest economic challenges faced by immediate post-socialist Mongolia, and contemporary economic challenges faced by Mongolia. While many eminent economists, both expat and Mongol, were happy to discuss these issues, scheduling issues meant that it became very difficult to get everyone together at the same time. It proved simpler to hold one-on-one thematic discussions. The results of these discussions are synthesised below.

As noted by Jim Anderson from the World Bank, who had worked in Mongolia in the early 1990s (and returned to manage the World Bank country office in the mid 2010s), and has published many papers about Mongolia's 1990 economic transition experiences, very few Mongols had much knowledge of the ways in which market economies functioned. This policy vacuum had led to the involvement of western institutions in economic policy development in Mongolia. Another economist, Marshall, noted in 2004 that policy making in Mongolia's early transition was "fragmented and confused. Several reforms were hurried and poorly sequenced, and it is likely that the consequences of these failures were severe both for the economy and the livelihoods of ordinary Mongolians" (Marshall 2004: 1). Nonetheless, Jim Anderson noted that many Mongols adapted quickly to the new environment. Goods markets were quickly established, while the informal sector grew very rapidly.

In another meeting, Declan Magee from the Asian Development Bank also noted that Mongolia had faced immense economic challenges in the early transition years. Mass poverty had rapidly become a significant issue. Nonetheless, Mr Magee suggested that since the early 1990s Mongolia has achieved a great deal. He noted that, approaching 2020, the economy was much stronger than was the case in 1990, emphasised by radical growth in the Ulaanbaatar built environment in the past 10-15 years.

He also noted that Mongolia continues to face significant economic challenges. He suggested economic policy tended to be fragmented, which is weakening Mongolia's economic growth. For example, from 2009-2012 Mongolia adopted a restrictive monetary policy stance to address inflation through higher interest rates, while also progressing a very expansionary loans based fiscal policy regime. He suggested a greater focus on research to assist more informed policy development, noting that the establishment of the Mongolian Economic Research Institute in 2011 and the recent establishment of a research institute at the Mongol Bank were positive

steps in this regard. Mr Magee suggested a greater focus on evaluations of government initiatives would also aid more informed policy development. He also noted that the common post-election practice of terminating government programs when government changed and wholesale government staff changes inhibits policy development.

*Some Western economists and Mongolian reformers cautioned against the use of shock therapy. Frederick Nixon, a professor of economics at Manchester University who served briefly as an advisor to the World Bank, proposed a gradual and sequenced development to a market economy (Rossabi 2005b: 48, 49).*

Tuvshintugs Batdelger, the Director of Mongolia's Economic Research Institute (ERI) and an associate professor of economics at the National University of Mongolia, also took part in the discussions. His research interests are macroeconomics, monetary economics, international finance and the Mongolian economy. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Boston University and previously worked at the Bank of Mongolia, Mongolia's central bank.

This discussion largely focused on Mongolia's contemporary and future economic challenges, although Tuvshin also noted the economic distress experienced in the early stages of Mongolia's transition to a market economy, when consumer goods became scarce and food shortages caused by drops in food imports and domestic food production led to the need for food rationing. The mornings saw long queues for bread rations. Tuvshin noted mining led growth in the decade from 2000 and into the 2010s has thankfully given Mongolia a very different economy than was the case in the early transition period, which has resulted in greater economic security for most Mongols, although Tuvshin also noted that poverty is still a contemporary issue for many Mongols.

Other “modern” economic challenges noted by Tuvshin included an over-reliance on the mining sector, which is subject to cyclical pressures as world markets wax and wane, resulting in fluctuating prices and revenues from mining activities. Tuvshin noted that this caused significant problems in establishing fiscal policy settings in Mongolia, as revenues can change markedly from year to year. Although the Budget laws include deficit limitation measures, past heavy government spending from loans has now compromised Mongolia’s ability to set stimulatory measures in place when needed, as was the case in 2014 when the economy slowed markedly. Tuvshin also noted that political spending pressures can also cause difficulties in coordinating monetary and financial policies (the Mongol Bank has been under pressure to control inflation arising from exchange rate weaknesses, which it has addressed by maintaining relatively high interest rates). The result in 2014-18 when the economy was very weak was that both fiscal policy and monetary were both pro-cyclical i.e. they contributed to economic weakness.

Tuvshin suggested that these experiences reflected the relatively short time that Mongolia has experienced market democracy. He noted that Mongolia’s limited economic research and evidence based policy development capacities meant that economic policy positions were often the result of short term political aspirations. The result, Tuvshin suggested, is that government programs tend to be fragmented, and are not well prioritised against national needs. Nonetheless, Tuvshin took an optimistic view and suggested that Mongolia’s economic experiences will gradually lead to more rational policy settings, although he has repeatedly expressed concern that Mongolia’s governance settings are weak. Gerring et al. took a similar view, suggesting that “the longer a country remains democratic, the greater will be its physical, human, social, and political capital - and the better its growth” (Gerring et al. 2005: 325). Nonetheless, Nicholas Edwards, an investment analyst who focuses on the Mongolian financial

sector, and who previously ran hedge funds based in New York and Tokyo, suggested that as of 2018 the Mongolian financial sector continued to be fragile. He remarked that the Asset Quality Review (AQR) of the Mongolian banking sector conducted in 2017, which had been a condition of the IMF's loan program, had been "inadequate," and failed to reflect the reality of a banking sector which remains under capitalized and continues to struggle to meet international prudent banking requirements. Despite an improving economy during 2018 non-performing and past due loans have continued to rise. As of August 2018, these stood at 15 per cent of total outstanding system loans. He suggested the weakness of the banking sector is a handicap to the broader economy and limits its ability to grow.

*...the quality of institutions is a key ingredient in successfully taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the mining boom. That is, if a country's institutional quality remains weak, the country will not be able to attract foreign investment, which is of paramount importance to reaching full economic potential (Batdelger 2014: 1).*

Overall, this set of discussions suggested an optimistic economic future for Mongolia, although it was acknowledged that it was important for growth was to become more inclusive, to assist in maintaining support for democracy in Mongolia. Declan Magee noted the need for a more diverse economy, given the mining sector, Mongolia's dominant industry, is not a major employer (in 2013, out of 219,013 job offers identified by the NSO, only 14,541 jobs or 7 per cent were in the mining exploration sectors) (Zanabazaar et al. 2017: 1). This conclusion is consistent with something of a renewed international focus on industry policy, which ul Haque suggests "remains important for the promotion of industrial development... Indeed, there are few examples of successful industrialization where government did not actively promote industry" (ul Haque 2007: 1).



However, Mr Magee suggested Mongolia needs to approach this goal realistically, in ‘bite sized’ pieces, by building on its strengths in industries like tourism, and attempting to do better in those areas where Mongolia suffers economic weaknesses. As was the case for Tuvshin, he suggested that Mongolia needs to develop its capacities in economic policy development, so that economic priorities better reflect national needs.

### **Education system**

The education focus group took place in May 2018. As was the aim for the other focus groups, the aim was to examine change in Mongolia’s education system post-socialism, with the intention of distinguishing between beneficial changes and less popular changes. Teacher salaries had been in the news, and schoolteachers had recently protested about salary levels on Sukhbaatar Square in central Ulaanbaatar, with some teachers being shorn of their locks in protest about poor pay levels. Government school teachers who participated were very unhappy with salary levels, of around \$US220-\$300 month.

The focus group discussed change in Mongolia’s school system as well as in Mongolia’s higher education system. Participants noted that the entry of private providers into the school and higher education systems had radically changed the nature of Mongolia’s education system. Under socialism, there had been no private schools, and the no fee school system had been egalitarian. Participants noted there were good things and bad things about private education in Mongolia. They also noted the small role that vocational education and training plays in Mongolia’s education system. They also noted that urban migration had placed huge strains on Mongolia’s public education system, which faces severe financial constraints.

Participants also noted a strange new phenomena. Growth in the private sector in Mongolia has meant that many students do not progress to higher education post-school as they now directly enter family businesses, as they see little value in post-school education to their family businesses.

Participants also remarked a systemic weakness in market democracy era schooling: the lack of career advice and planning, which they felt was resulting in poor education and career choices. In the socialist era, central planning meant that education opportunities were closely linked to labour market needs. This meant university graduates were quickly employed post-graduation. By contrast, in contemporary Mongolia, higher education reforms and lack of knowledge of ongoing and emerging labour market needs meant that many graduates, especially in business studies, struggle to get jobs. The National Survey Office May 2018 Labor Survey estimated that identified that 30 per cent of jobseekers had difficulty getting a job post university (Bayarsaikhan 2018c: 1) (and many more job seekers would have entered the job market in June, post university graduation).

In the *schools* sector, the big change has been the introduction of private schools. The contribution of private schools to education in Mongolia was hotly debated by participants. Participants noted the general tendency had been to create elite schools, such as Orchlön, the International School, the American School, and the British School, where fees were very high. Participants noted very few Mongol parents have the means to send their children to these schools. Participants noted the education experience at these schools was very different to those of cash strapped government schools, which often lacked adequate sanitation facilities and other basic infrastructure.<sup>67</sup> Participants were concerned that such elite schools continued to attract government per capita funding to the same extent as

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<sup>67</sup> Participants noted parents' concerns, however, that given tuition at private schools is generally in English, they have little understanding about what their children are learning. Many parents are apparently also concerned about students' command of the Mongolian language.

government schools, despite the high level of non-government funding they were able to access. They also expressed concern that private schools were attracting the best government school teachers, as they had the capacity to offer much higher salaries, which weakens the teaching capacity of government sector schools.

*School teacher: I am starting to feel I am losing my identity. I am losing touch with my pupils. This is partly due to age, I have less in common with young people now. But it is also due to social change. Teachers get much less respect from students now, and we have much less social status than was the case under socialism. When we have school reunions, we all buy presents for our teachers. I wonder if my students will do the same for me.*

Participants noted that one policy rationale for the introduction of private schools in Mongolia was the argument that this would force government schools to become more competitive to attract and retain students. They felt that in some ways the entry of private schools had encouraged the use of better teaching methods, but this benefit was undermined by the poor level of funding and teaching resources available to public sector schools, especially overcrowded city schools. Public city schools, which commonly have sixty students in a class, generally operate in shifts, with one group of students attending from 7.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., while a second group attends from early afternoon to 7.00 p.m., a tough regime in a city where winter temperatures can plunge to minus 40 degrees.<sup>68</sup> (Some schools operate three shifts). This teaching environment, coupled with low salaries, participants suggested, means that many teachers lack motivation.

The participants noted that in one key respect, student outcomes, the school system is not progressing well. High school test results, the basis for

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<sup>68</sup> Participants considered the state school system was better in teaching life skills and resilience than private schools.

university entry, have been falling over time. In turn, this has significance for the *higher education sector*, where low entry standard private sector universities are now common.

While participants acknowledged the benefits of what they saw as better Western curricula and learning resources for *higher education* vis-à-vis the socialist era, they were less sanguine about the offerings of many of the private higher educations established in Mongolia post-socialism. While they noted several private universities do offer high standard tuition, they suggested this was the exception rather than the rule. They suggested money, rather than academic excellence, was a key factor driving the behaviour of many private sector institutions. They considered these institutions, often with poor learning and teaching resources, were little better than corrupt diploma mills.

Participants suggested easy student entrance was oriented towards maximising tuition fees rather than reflecting the academic standards of people wishing to enrol. They also suggested that at many such universities academic outcomes reflected bribery, not the standard of student's academic achievements. Participants noted these institutions, which frequently pay commissions as a share of tuition fees to country schools which act as their recruiting agents, often have fine buildings, but lack accreditation. To control these problems, entry scores to university have been increased, from 400 to 480. Staff-student ratios can also be low in such institutions. By contrast, the national agriculture university, which has 7000 students and 400 teaching staff, is typical of government universities staffing arrangements.

On balance, participants were pragmatic. They understood that market era changes were irreversible, and in some respects, they applauded the changes. Nonetheless, adoption of a substantially privatised school system

was viewed with distaste from an equity perspective. Participants, who noted the rising cost of education for parents, a vivid contrast to socialist era free education, suggested it would be desirable to improve funding to needy government schools by reducing government funding to elite private schools. They also understood the factors driving the development of a mass higher education system, but were concerned that education and employment outcomes from many private sector universities were very poor.

### **Health system**

The health focus group was conducted in February 2018. The focus group largely comprised medical practitioners, some of whom had worked under both socialism and market democracy. All were aged over thirty, so those who had not actually worked in the socialist era health system nonetheless had some experience of socialism. The medical practitioners' expertise was diverse, the group included a gynaecologist, a dermatologist, a neurologist, a specialist in communicable diseases, and the manager of a large public hospital emergency department, a trauma specialist, and family group practice doctors.

The participants noted that medical care, and training for medicine, had changed markedly post-socialism. They noted that medical technology had advanced significantly, and doctors now used such technology more widely than under socialism. They also noted doctors have a wider knowledge base, in part from technology, in part because post-transition doctors were trained using English language based texts rather than Russian texts, which gave very detailed explanations and were quite difficult to understand. They also noted that Mongolia now has several high standard private hospitals, although these were largely used only by well off people. In the public sector, the number of emergency service centres has doubled, and

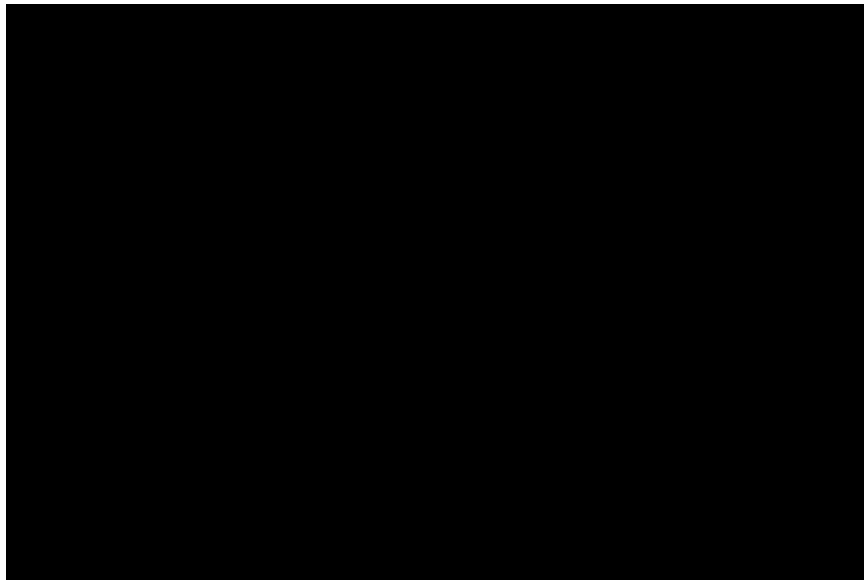
the ambulance service capacity had increased markedly, sharply reducing ambulance response times.

The participants noted that health system funding had become a major issue post transition, with the result that costs had increasingly been transferred to patients. At the same time, training costs had been passed to health sector professionals. They noted that under socialism university fees were paid by the state, and students received a stipend while undergoing training. After graduating, doctors had also received a salary while undergoing training as residents in the hospital system. All this funding support had been removed post-socialism, which meant that family financial capacity, rather than academic excellence and diligence had become a key selection criteria for people wishing to undertake medical training. They also noted the training regime for doctors had been very strict under the socialist system, with regular Department of Health monitoring of progress. For those who studied in Russia, failure carried penalties. Students who were not doing well were not allowed holidays, or to return home, until their progress was satisfactory. They also noted students young as sixteen were entering university medical training, which meant they were very young at graduation and lacked the life experience that was needed to work as a resident in the hospital system.

Participants noted that despite attempts to redirect patients to family group practices, many patients still preferred to by bypass these practices and use hospitals for health care. To some extent this was a financial issue, as patients at the communicable diseases hospital, for example, receive free treatment. The result is that city hospitals are overloaded. The communicable diseases hospital admitted 150 new patients each day, while the Han Uul district hospital treated from 1300-1500 new patients each day, many of whom came outside of normal hours.

Medical salaries were also a contentious issue. There is a smouldering resentment about health professionals' poor salaries. Government doctors receive small salaries (under \$U.S. 300 a month) as do allied health professionals. Under socialism, doctors had a relatively high status and well paid occupation. Doctors, generally passive about pay issues, have begun to agitate for better pay, although they lack experience in lobbying for better pay and conditions. In May 2018 tensions about low pay boiled over into public protests (see Figure 10.5).

**Figure 10.5: Nurses protest about poor salaries, May 2018**



Source: Ankhtuya 2018a: 1

On balance, participants suggested that health provision is better than under socialism, although they acknowledged that from the patients' viewpoint, healthcare is much more expensive than was the case under socialism, to the extent that many patients do not access healthcare because they cannot afford the associated out of pocket expenses. However, because travel restrictions to and from Mongolia had been removed post-socialism, the age of the market had also caused many new challenges for the health system, because many new diseases had been introduced. They also

expressed concern that inadequate public health budgets meant that technology advances were being compromised, as machines were often left un-serviced due to funding constraints. Funding issues also meant that expendable medical supplies were frequently in short supply. The fall of socialism has also had other consequences, post-socialism alcohol abuse is now manifesting itself in high levels of liver disease.

### **Legal system**

The focus group took place in February 2018. Focus group participants were asked to identify changes in Mongolia's legal system since the end of socialism, to talk about the positive and negative aspects of the new system, and for their views concerning whether the new system was positive for Mongolia vis-a-vis the socialist-era legal system. Focus group participants came from a range of backgrounds, including participants who practiced criminal law, as well as participants who practiced civil law in respect to mining, foreign investment, and banking. One participant, a former judge, had also worked at a high level in the administrative and law enforcement agencies in the Mongolian bureaucracy, while another worked as a parliamentary counsel. Two participants held Ph.D.'s in Law, while a further two held Masters in Laws.

Kotz and Zweigert suggest that a legal system reflects its "historical background and development, its predominant and characteristic mode of thought in legal matters, its institutions, the kind of legal sources it acknowledges and the way it handles them, and last, its ideology" (Kotz and Zweigert 1998: 68). Considered against this model, virtually every aspect of Mongolia's legal system became defunct in 1990. The participants noted that Mongolia's legal system had changed substantially as the result of the move to market democracy. They explained change in several ways, including changes in the sources of law, and changes in the



types of law, and changes in the courts system post-socialism. They also noted a change in the philosophic basis for the Mongolian legal system. Focus group participants endorsed Chadraabal's view, that the "primary goal of the Constitution is to safeguard the fundamental rights of citizens against arbitrary state power, and the illegitimate decisions by those in power (Chadraabal 2014: 7).

In terms of changes in the source of law, participants noted that under socialism, laws frequently came from the Communist Party Politbureau, which used the law to reinforce its rule, rather than the legislature. By comparison, under market democracy, the government of the day could pass its own legislation in parliament. Parliament members could also introduce a law. (The latter source was viewed as messy, because new legislation was sometimes introduced without research on previous legislation, which could result in two contradictory laws being in play at the same time). The participants also noted the addition of many new types of laws (which means the Mongolian legal code has grown substantially).

Under socialism, the law largely related to criminal matters. Post socialism, the laws had been augmented by legislation in virtually every area of civil law, especially commercial law, including property law. As noted by Anderson et al. capitalism "was implanted in a country ...lacking even the most rudimentary institutions of corporate capitalism" (Anderson, Lee and Murrell 2000: 527). The court system also changed, but focus group participants suggested it has not grown commensurate with the volume of legislation the system now deals with. Possibly the biggest early change had been the introduction of the new constitution, dramatically different from its socialist predecessor.

The participants felt there were several good things about the new system. These included a substantial change in the philosophical change in the legal

system. They noted that under socialism, the government was all powerful, with state prosecutors as their organ. Participants considered the new system now featured powerful checks and balances, a change enhanced by the more open nature of the state, which was also now much more subject to media scrutiny.

However, the participants were concerned that in the early post-socialist period, a raft of new civil legislation had been introduced very rapidly, often copied from other countries, as Mongolia tried to rapidly develop a new legal framework to cope with managing the new economic system. They noted that the lawyers of the day had lacked experience in civil law, because they had only worked under socialist rule. Consequently, much of the new legislation lacked a sound conceptual basis, especially given the heavy involvement of political actors who themselves had very limited legal training, whose thoughts often reflected “thought bubbles” rather than considered opinions. This had resulted in the passing of some ill-considered legislation which did not work well, which was subject to frequent revisions as new issues came to light. Anderson et al. suggested corporate governance statutes were vague, inconsistent, and toothless (Anderson et al. 2000: 527).

Participants were also concerned that the courts had become (and remain) overburdened. Local courts deal with a wide variety of issues on the civil side as well as criminal law, which means that judicial expertise is thinly spread. The limited number of judges in higher level courts also concerned participants as this could result in lengthy delays in proceedings.

On balance, participants argued that the new legal system was much better than the legal system under socialism. In part, this reflected the wider nature of laws under market democracy vis-à-vis socialism. They also applauded the change in legal philosophy to place far greater emphasis on

individual rights than had been the case under the old system, where state rights were all pervasive.

### **Human rights provisions**

*...December 1989. The MPR was the only legal party. The Government still violated human rights and still had not loosened its grip on the mass media. The secret police, security guards and army remained intact and repression continued (Rossabi 2005: 10).*

Changes in human rights post-socialism were addressed in Chapter 4. The focus group offered an opportunity to see this issue “from the street” as well as from the literature. The focus group took place in May 2018. In the lead-up to the focus group, Altantuya, Country Director for Amnesty International, suggested that human rights were much better than was the case under socialism, and had generally improved under market democracy, although new issues had arisen. Nonetheless, focus group members, who included members of the Human Rights Commission, and a variety of human rights NGOs, raised a number of contemporary human rights issues, and suggested that implementation and monitoring of human rights legislation was becoming neutered by funding issues.

Participants noted there had been major changes in human rights in Mongolia post-socialism, especially in terms of the legal environment. They noted that article 16 in Mongolia’s 1992 constitution specifically addressed human rights, a major change from socialism when state rights had prevailed over human rights, as emphasised by the purges of the 1930s. Later legislation has further embedded the concept of human rights into Mongolia’s legal environment, such as the gender equality law approved by

government in 2011 and the 2015 legislation to better address domestic violence (which is now a criminal offence).

The institutional environment has also changed significantly, highlighted by the establishment of Mongolia's Human Rights Commission in 2001, which monitors and advises on human rights concerns. Participants also noted the establishment of enabling frameworks. For example, the gender equity law of 2011 is facilitated by a standing committee chaired by the Prime Minister, with input from all Ministries.

Human rights are also enhanced through Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Mongolia now has a wide variety of international and domestic Human Rights NGOs which address either a wide range of issues, such as Amnesty International, and NGOs which address more specific issues such as gender issues, domestic violence, children's rights concerns and economic security issues. This is remarkable in itself. Organisations of this nature would not have been allowed under socialism, nor permitted to develop a dialogue often critical of government. The NGOs have become a significant part of Mongolia's civil society.

Nevertheless, participants noted that despite these improvements, significant human rights issues remain. Some relate to human security, in terms of issues such economic security, access to food, education and health facilities. Participants noted that these issues had arisen post-socialism. Participants noted economic security was poor for many people, and poverty related food security was a pressing concern, leading to a variety of problems, e.g., wide spread anaemia among pregnant women. They noted the Department of Health avoids providing information about these sorts of issues on its website to control bad publicity. The Constitution also does not address this issue, despite several UN recommendations aimed at dealing with this problem.

Issues such as prisoners' rights, and allegations of torture by police have persisted since socialist times. Domestic violence is also a very significant problem, which participants argued may be linked to increased alcohol abuse post-socialism.<sup>69</sup> Child abuse and human trafficking have also emerged as significant issues. Gay people are also often at risk of violence, as highlighted by a savage daytime public beating suffered by a gay man on Peace Avenue, Ulaanbaatar's main street, in 2017. Participants also noted that new human rights issues have emerged post-socialism. They expressed concern that developers place heavy pressure on land owners to quit their land to allow new developments to take place.

Participants also expressed concern that legislators' good intentions, as expressed through human rights related legislation, are often thwarted by what are compliance issues, with compliance frequently being compromised by funding issues. They contended there are two types of funding issues: funding issues caused by the penury of the Mongolian government; and issues associated with tied funding coming from international organisations which make funding available to progress their own agendas rather than providing funding in the areas of greatest need (participants also noted domestic NGOs are generally cash strapped, which impedes their ability to monitor and address human rights abuses in their areas of expertise).

Participants were also worried: they feared human rights may be becoming a less important issue to government(s) in Mongolia. They noted, for example, the abolition of a government office which had addressed police torture complaints. Concern was also expressed that while the Human Rights Commission Annual Report was discussed by the parliamentary

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<sup>69</sup> The author has met several women who have clearly suffered from domestic violence, or received threats of domestic violence.

Justice Standing Committee, it was not discussed in plenary parliamentary discussions, with the result that there is very little government publicity about human rights issues, which in turn reduces government accountability to address these issues. Participants also expressed concern that lobbying by large mining companies to promote their interests tended to weaken focus on human rights issues.

In summary, participants suggested human rights post-socialism are therefore something of a mixed bag: symbolic legislation through the Constitution and later laws to address specific issues, coupled with good intentions of pursuing marked improvements in human rights, is being undermined by recurring issues such as prisoner torture. New issues have also emerged, especially human security issues associated with post-socialist poverty, which were yet to be addressed effectively. Good intentions, they suggested, are also thwarted by compliance failures, which is exacerbated by compliance funding shortfalls.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter sought to build on the evidence arising from the social research that was presented in Chapter Nine which partially addressed how Mongols feel about the transition from socialism to market democracy. While Mongols tend to be pragmatic, the information presented in Chapter Nine tended to give a picture of a relatively unhappy contemporary society. This may reflect disappointment with some aspects of market democracy. The survey, interviews, and focus groups reported above suggest that Mongols strongly approve of certain aspects of the transition from socialism to market democracy, especially the social freedoms that democracy has provided. For example, Mongols were clearly very happy that socialist era repressions such as religious repression had ended.

On the other hand, Mongols who remember the socialist era well were more impressed by the more egalitarian nature of socialist society and the economic and social certainty that characterized socialism. The research suggested Mongols are also clearly disenchanted with the marked growth in corruption, especially bribery, that has remarked the age of the market, and relate this strongly to the emergence of mass poverty and inequality that have arisen in capitalist society. One interviewees' passionate remark "people did not need to eat rubbish under socialism," probably summarized the thoughts of many people.

Many people obviously also took the view that key social systems, for example, in respect to health, education, law, had not improved or indeed had worsened under market democracy. There seemed a general dissatisfaction with the economic management performance of successive Mongolian governments. "Bullshit democracy", remarked a high level Mongol government employee with whom the author held informal discussions, "means that many Mongols are poor." Other high level discussants often took the view that Mongolia needs "a strong leader" to overcome its economic malaise.

## Chapter 11: Summary of findings

Figure 11.1: The Naadam opening ceremony 2017



Source: Gogo.mn, downloaded 12 July 2017

### Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine change in Mongolia post-socialism from a variety of perspectives, to better understand what happened, why it happened, and how Mongols feel about the transition. This chapter summarises the finding arising from the thesis.

### What happened and why did it happen?

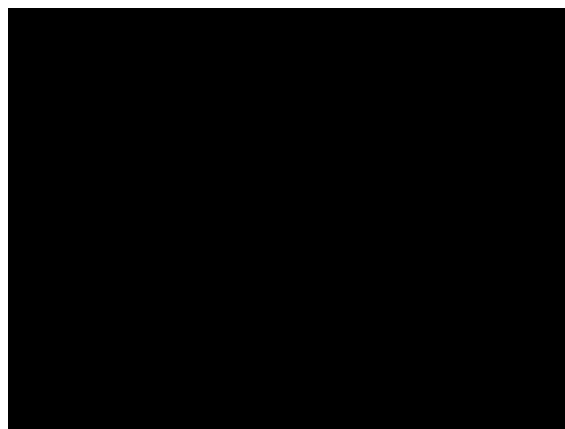
This part of the summary examines some of the key changes in Mongolia in the post-socialist period. Over time, the meaning of transition has perhaps become obscure: as noted by Mungiu-Pippiddi, the original meaning, an exit from political authoritarianism, was lost when the economic dimension was added (Mungiu-Pippiddi 2015: 90). The thesis follows the broader approach, and examines economic and social changes as well as political changes.



## The political transition: successes and failures

Mongolia is rightly held forward as a shining light among post transition economies and in East Asia in terms of being a successful democracy. After all, elections are held regularly, which are contested vigorously. As noted by Dierkes and Jargalsaikhan in late 2017, “in the last 20 months, Mongolia has seen a parliamentary and presidential election, three changes in governments and several associated bureaucratic personnel rotations” (Dierkes and Jargalsaikhan 2017: 1). Mongolia also compares well with its neighbours. Post-socialism, Russia, while nominally a democracy, has become an authoritarian regime, dominated by President Putin. China, despite its economic success, remains an authoritarian one party state. Kazakhstan has also evolved into an authoritarian state. Nonetheless, despite being a celebrated flower, it can be argued that Mongolia’s democratization is only partial. In 2015, *The Economist* again rated Mongolia as a flawed democracy (*The Economist* 2015: 5). Previously, in 2012 *The Economist* explained that, as shown by the violence that followed the parliamentary poll in 2008 (see Figure 11.2), elections are often turbulent and controversial affairs (*The Economist* 2012: 1).

**Figure 11.2: Riots follow the 2008 election**



Source: Anonymous

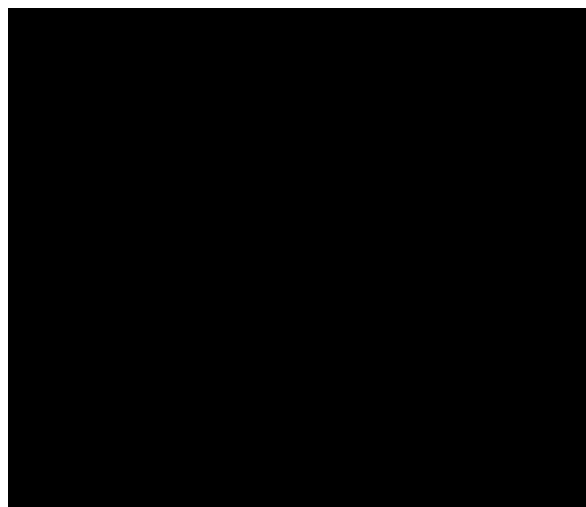
More broadly, Landman argues that a democratic state can be viewed as a procedural democracy, a liberal democracy, or a social democracy (see Appendix 1, Supporting Data, for tables detailing Landman's model). Mongolia certainly demonstrates most of the hallmarks of procedural democracy. From the perspective of participation, Mongolia has universal suffrage, and the right to vote is embodied in the 1992 constitution.

In terms of contestation, the constitution also establishes the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression (although the last is somewhat undermined by criminal libel laws). The right to hold multi-party elections is also enshrined in the constitution, the party system has become consolidated and, generally speaking, the right to oppose is accepted by political actors. However, the requirement for free and fair elections raises issues. Many elections in Mongolia seem to have been unfair, with electoral irregularities being sadly commonplace, while a significant gerrymander exists in favour of country voters. This situation is worsened by murky political party funding systems, where contributions might well be considered as bribes.

The situation becomes less clear when we consider Mongolia's claims to be a liberal democracy. Many politicians appear to lack accountability, and seem to have little concept of, or regard to, conflict of interest issues. For example, in opening the autumn 2017 session of parliament, new President Battulga condemned the actions of a government Minister who changed tax payable to five per cent for tobacco products produced by his own companies, while maintaining the tax paid by other companies at thirty per cent (who remained in office despite these allegations) (Adiyasuren 2017b: 1). Perceptions of judicial corruption can also undermine liberal democracy.

Mongolia's shortcomings as a democracy become more evident when we consider the third form of democracy, social democracy, which extends the concept of democracy to include economic and social rights (see Figure 11.3). Given that a significant proportion of Mongols live in abject poverty in a society where inequality is rampant, Mongolia does not meet this test well. Measured against Landman's model, Mongolia would appear to have the characteristics of a thin democracy.

**Figure 11.3: Thick and thin definitions of democracy**



Source: Landman 2009: 30

### **Foreign policy – deft and generally lucky?**

One of Mongolia's key early challenges post-socialism was to devise a foreign policy to promote national sovereignty. Mongolia has developed a 'smart' foreign policy, emphasizing balanced relations with Mongolia's two giant neighbours, while also reaching out to metaphorical third neighbours, especially the United States, European countries, Japan and Korea (although, as noted by Bailey, trade relations with metaphorical third neighbours have been limited (Bailey 2016: iii)). Former President Elbegdorj was also an excellent advocate for Mongolia on the international

stage. Concerns have emerged that his successors may not demonstrate the same representational skills.

Circumstance has assisted Mongolia. For much of the post-socialist period, conflict between China, Russia and the United States has been limited. Recently, these circumstances have changed. Mongolia's luck in avoiding hard choices for much of this period appears to have ended, with breakdowns in the China/US and Russia/US relationships. In particular, things have changed in China. Zhao suggests that nationalism has now become the cornerstone for Chinese identity, and market based economic policy has increased in importance (Zhao 2016: 7). President Xi Jinping has begun a more assertive engagement that has included a military build-up in the South China Sea, a deepening of the "one Belt, one Road" initiative and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Huang and Welsh 2017: 112). China has also launched a charm offensive, with a vision of a "harmonious world" and "the shared destiny of human beings" (Chu and Chang 2017: 105).

However, China has also scaled up its armament procurements and has been much more assertive with its neighbours, especially with respect to maritime rights. While the One Belt One Road initiative has an economic dimension, a more nationalistic China also sees it as having a political purpose. This initiative will also pose a variety of challenges for Mongolia. While high speed transport to European markets has promise in terms of greater trade possibilities for Mongolia, China sees the initiative as increasing its influence over its neighbours (Kong 2015), raising the shadow of Chinese irredentialism.

Perhaps reflecting such uncertainties, Mongols remains apprehensive about China. A mid-decade Asia Barometer survey suggested Mongols' perceptions of China's influence on Asian countries was relatively negative

(32 per cent of respondents), whereas it was predominantly positive in countries such as Cambodia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong Malaysia and Indonesia. As noted by Bedeski, should the “democratic experiment fail, the donor nations lose interest, and the Ulaanbaatar government collapse, Chinese influence would be unstoppable” (Bedeski 2006: 83). However, despite domestic concerns about increasing engagement with China, Mongolia’s 2010s economic woes have led to much closer economic ties with China. This situation will be difficult to change. China is a major investor in Mongolia, and most of Mongolia’s exports go to China, and most imports come from China.

Russia also remains enigmatic. Russia’s Ukraine and Crimea adventures have created the need for Mongolia to make choices between support for Russia or the United States. Mongolia’s overt support of Russia has probably weakened the relationship with Mongolia’s most important metaphorical ‘third neighbour.’ The United States’s relationship with Mongolia had already seemed to wane during the Obama presidency. Dierkes described this as “benign neglect” (Dierkes 2017w: 1). Any deepening of tensions between Beijing and Washington would again have implications for Mongolia’s relationship with these global giants.

### **The economic transition: a harsh experience**

*...democracy came relatively easily to Mongolia...The transition to capitalism has been much more difficult (Hanson 2004: 53).*

Mongols, and international commentators, have questioned the management of Mongolia’s economic transition and subsequent economic management. Mongol policy makers, without significant experience in market economies, were placed under immense pressure. Wolf commented “policymakers in the early transition economies were faced with a wide

disparity of external and internal advice, without having much empirical basis to judge alternatives” (Wolf 1999: 5). Moreover, the economic transition was disjointed, which added to transition difficulties. For example, herders, the mainstay of the socialist era economy, did not experience the post-socialist transition “as a linear unfolding of events but rather as a series of fractures and dis-junctures” (Fraser 2018: 143).

Manalsuren notes that most socialist era managers (*darga* or chiefs) did not have business training. Indeed, most were trained in engineering as the country was inclined more towards manufacturing, (which had been carefully expanded under socialism) than towards the service industries (Manalsuren 2017: 137)). Socialist-era managers, whose understanding of a manager was being the ‘head’ or ‘parent’ of an organisation, defined management as looking after people, not acting as entrepreneurs (Manalsuren 2017: 141).

Financial pressures added to Mongol policy makers’ difficulties. The views of aid providers and lenders could not be ignored. While some economists, (e.g. Nixon, Murrell) argued for a gradualist approach to change, the views of the World Bank’s Jeffrey Sachs who favoured a “big bang” approach proved more influential in Mongolia (later Sachs (1994) expressed concern that adjustment assistance was inadequate). The “big bang” approach resulted in significant de-industrialisation. There were also difficulties in Mongolia’s pastoral industry. The economic downturn resulted in the rapid establishment of a large impoverished underclass in Mongolia, which still exists today.

Although Havrylyshyn et al. (2016) argued that twenty five years of reforms in ex-Communist countries led to higher growth and more political freedom, Feige and Urban’s study of twenty-five transition countries

suggested GDP estimates for these countries were unreliable because measurement of informal economic activity was unreliable,<sup>70</sup> suggesting that ‘studies examining the consequences of the radical transition from planned to market economies and the causes and consequences of underground economies must be viewed with considerable scepticism’ (Feige and Urban 2008: 1). Heybey and Murrell also found no relationship between reform speed and economic growth (Heybey and Murrell 1998: 123). Falcetti et al. also found differences in starting points in terms of national economic endowments were far more important than reform commitment as determinants of growth and prosperity in transition countries (Falcetti et al. 2001: 2).

Other research indicates that privatisation, the bedrock reform, had adverse impacts for economic outcomes in post-socialist countries (Carvalho et al. 2016: 1). Perhaps most telling of all, China and Vietnam’s economic performances have been the strongest in post 1990 Asia, despite a cautious approach to economic reform and the continuation of authoritarian regimes. Between 1990 and 2014 China, Vietnam and Laos were the three fastest growing economies in the world (Malesky and London 2014: 396).

More recently, the Mongolian economy has had significant structural issues, with only one powerful industry, the stop-start mining sector, which together with an ineffective tax structure and frequent political interference, has led to sometimes bizarre policy settings, with the result that the country’s economic performance has been insufficient to drag the country out of poverty.

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<sup>70</sup> Underground, unobserved and unrecorded economic activities are widely recognized as playing a major role in transition economies.

## Too many Mongols are impoverished

If there is one searing indictment of the economic experiment unleashed on Mongolia and other post-socialist countries in the early 1990s by the IMF, the World Bank, and championed by several international aid agencies as the price for post-socialist economic support, it was rapid growth of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Government funding crises, post-socialist de-industrialisation and removal of foreign trade controls contributed to high unemployment, leading to loss of income, self-esteem and self-identity. Widespread poverty emerged rapidly, and inequality became entrenched.

*When traveling to Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, with friends from the countryside, we sometimes stop and wonder in awe at the 'new rich' (hurgan bayan, literally, the 'rich lambs') who can be seen passing through the streets in their large, blacked-out, 4x4 Jeeps toward their exclusive villas or exchanging wads of money for lavish banquets in Korean restaurants (Empson 2012: 1).*

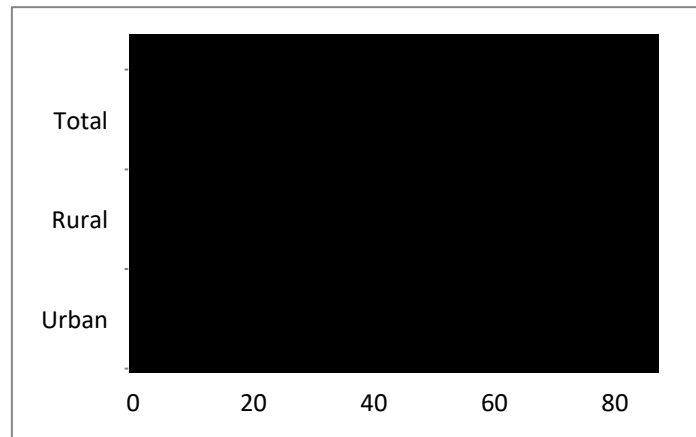
Poverty and inequality have persisted despite the emergence of mining industry led growth post 2000. The fruits of economic growth have not been well distributed. Economic growth has not 'trickled down' to the poor. Contemporary Mongolia can be divided into three socio-economic groups: an uber-rich group; a small middle class of professionals and successful business people; and a staggeringly large underclass suffering mass poverty. Pope Francis' remarks on poverty (below) seem entirely relevant to Mongolia's situation.



*Pope Francis: “Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion has never been confirmed by the facts, Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting” (Brown 2017: 1).*

Data prepared jointly by the Mongolian National Statistics Office and the World Bank indicated that the poverty rate in Mongolia reached 30 per cent in 2016, when over nine hundred thousand people were living in poverty. It should be noted that the official definition of poverty only included people with an average expenditure of less than \$US2 per day. Even a mildly more rigorous test would see much larger estimates of the numbers of people in poverty.

In addition to financial estimates of poverty, if additional indicators are taken into account, such as the availability of clean drinking water (See Figure 11.4), improved sanitation and clean air, Mongolia fails even more badly in the poverty and inequality stakes. The fact that Mongolia leads the world in domestic child deaths from fire (a large proportion of Mongols still live in *gers* with unguarded fireplaces) is another tragic reflection of poverty (Sengoelge et al. 2017: 116).

**Figure 11.4: Per cent of household members using improved water source**

Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2013: 15

The thesis survey, interviews and focus groups suggest that Mongols are very unhappy with the extent of poverty in their country, consistent with other evidence, and the failure of government to effectively address these issues. Why have successive Mongolian governments failed so miserably in addressing poverty and inequality (although cash bonuses for the poor seem a regular feature of political life at election time)? Perhaps Gugushvili provides a perspective. Based on analysis of the European Values Studies and the Life in Transition Survey, Gugushvili noted the findings suggested that the lack of social mobility is associated with perceptions of individual blame and social blame as to why some people are in need. These effects are manifested primarily among subjectively mobile individuals (the well to do) and are also conditioned by the legacy of socialism and the level of economic development of countries where individuals reside (Gugushvili 2016: 402).

*Twenty six years of democratic capitalist development in Mongolia has not brought economic equality in the society, nor has it brought equal opportunities or juridical equality for everyone, which is what everyone dreamed it would bring. The nation's economic circumstances are rapidly failing, and people are getting poorer (Erdenebat 2016: 3).*

## Corruption is entrenched

Corruption is also weakening economic outcomes and causing growth in poverty and inequality. However, corruption in Mongolia is not well understood by Western commentators. As discussed earlier, several activities that are regarded as corrupt in Western societies, such as nepotism, are viewed as the social norm in Mongolia. Corruption is also difficult to prove. Nonetheless, many Mongols believe corruption, in terms of bribery, is significant in Mongolia, in terms of grand (major) corruption and every-day life. In March 2016, 43 per cent of Asia Foundation Survey respondents believed there was significant grand corruption in Mongolia (The Asia Foundation 2016: 65). In late 2016, Tor-od, Chair of the Public Council at the Independent Authority Against Corruption described the situation as “precarious” and suggested political and grand corruption was “on the rise”. Tor-Od also noted community concerns that most government procurement exercises were corrupt (The Mongolian Observer 2016: 2). Similar views were evident from the thesis survey, interviews and focus groups. As noted by Empson, Mongols use a term ‘wild capitalism’ (*zerleg kapitalizm*), whereby people appear to have gained money as if from nowhere. To many Mongols, the “turns of fortune involved in the accumulation of this kind of wealth are frequently judged as suspect. Somebody somewhere, it is often claimed, must have been seriously cheated in order to secure these possessions” (Empson 2012: 1).

Mongolia’s experiences are consistent with those in other post-socialist countries, where corruption is seemingly more significant than in Western countries (Uslaner 2017: 302). For example, Sandholtz and Taagepera’s study, using cultural dimensions captured by the World Values Survey, indicated a strong “survival” dimension contributed significantly to corruption in post-socialist countries, and that these cultural characteristics change slowly (Bozovic 2017: 1).

*No society is immune from corruption, and within any society taxation plays a pivotal role in relation to such activity – which can be both positive and negative. Positively the tax system can provide the kind of regulatory framework and institutional foundations which can help to eradicate or constrain corrupt practices. On the negative side, corruption reduces tax compliance (Evans et al.: 2018: 1).*

The effects of corruption on a society can be severe. For example, studies on healthcare in transitional countries support the view that corruption is the “sand in the wheels,” for healthcare, because there is a lower propensity to use healthcare when needed (Habibov 2016: 119). Habibov and Cheung’s modelling also supports the view that, for education, corruption in former socialist countries via informal Out of Pocket (OOP) payments (e.g. for better text books) is associated with significantly lower satisfaction with education services (Habibov and Cheung 2016: 77).

Corruption in the transition countries, like Mongolia, also erodes trust at all levels of societal institutions including political parties, government and financial institutions, international investors, non-profit organizations, and trade unions. This finding is important since it highlights the negative consequences of corruption on the development of broader level economic institutions and on civil society (Habibov et al. 2017: 172). Li Tang, and Huhe note that in countries with more developed democratic institutions, individuals with stronger democratic values are less likely to perceive the government to be corrupt (Li Tang, and Huhe 2015:1).

In Mongolia, corruption has proved very difficult to control. Recent survey data suggest only one third of Mongols believe the political system could stop corruption (Sant Maral Foundation 2018: 20). A spate of high level

corruption investigations in early 2018 may provide the counterfactual to this view, but in the past allegations against high political figures and the judiciary have seen remarkably few convictions. There appears to be little political commitment to controlling corruption in Mongolia.

### **Human rights: a symbolic success story**

Human rights in Mongolia were enshrined in Mongolia's 1992 constitution and in other legislation, a significant improvement on the socialist era when state rights predominated and individual freedoms were circumscribed. Mongolians can generally live their lives relatively freely. Nonetheless, human rights concerns persist, in part because officialdom can be intransigent in following symbolic legislative changes. The 2017 Mongolian National Human Rights Commission's *14<sup>th</sup> Status Report on Human Rights and Freedom* raised a number of concerns about human rights abuses (Mongolian Observer 2017: 1). Non-government organizations such as Amnesty International also raise a number of issues, such as food security, and domestic violence, as does the latest United States State Department report on human rights in Mongolia. The 2016 United Nations Committee on Torture also raised a number of concerns about prison and interrogation practices.

Other concerns have also emerged. For example, in 2017 U.N. special rapporteur Knox urged the Mongolian Government to step up its action to protect the environment, including "tackling the severe impacts of mining and coal-burning." The rapporteur recommended creating an Environmental Ombudsman, and considered that the development of new laws on protecting human rights defenders, and on public access to information were also needed (United Nations Human Rights Council 2017: 1). Knox also urged a Government investigation into the death of conservation ranger Lkhagvasumberel (Sumbe) Tumursukh, (who raised

concerns about mining related river pollution) whose death in 2015 was declared as suicide even though he had suffered repeated attacks. Knox commented “This progression is all too typical of the untimely deaths of environmentalists around the world – threats, followed by violence, followed by murder.”

### **Religion: Buddhism with pluralism**

As noted by Popova, religion was marginalized by communist regimes, and while some post-socialist countries are experiencing a revival of religiosity, others are prone to secularization (Popova 2017: 1). Warf notes the horrific state-enforced atheism of the Soviet Union and Communist China in the twentieth century was scarcely a matter of choice (Warf 2016: 2213). In Mongolia, after socialist-era attacks on all forms of religion, the post-socialist period has seen a remarkable renaissance in religiosity, in a manner that is in some ways reminiscent of the religious freedom generally evident under the Mongol Empire. Buddhism, in particular, has come out of the shadows, although there appears to be a significant split between Tibetan led and Mongol led Buddhist movements, with the lama marriage issue (favoured by Mongol led lamas) becoming a significant divide.

Shamanism (also known as Tengrism) has also enjoyed a new growth period, with Shaman religious edifices becoming commonplace around Ulaanbaatar. Christianity has also re-emerged, with perhaps 40,000 practicing Christians living in Mongolia. Mongolia’s Muslim population remains a significant minority, mainly centred in Western Mongolia. There are estimated to be around 133,000 Muslims in Mongolia (see Pew Research Center). Generally speaking, the religions appear to co-exist peacefully, although some tensions exist. Demberel describes the situation as “Buddhism with religious pluralism,” an apt description (Demberel 2017: 1). Participants in the thesis research welcomed the end of socialist-

era religious repression and appear relatively comfortable with Mongolia's religious diversity.

### **Education: public education remains stressed**

The thesis survey, interviews and the education focus group all suggested that Mongolia's education system is somewhat on the nose. People who had experienced both felt the post-socialist education system did not compare well with the socialist model, although the post-socialist period has seen major education reforms in Mongolia, including the introduction of private education at all levels alongside the state education system. The benefits of these reforms remain subject to vigorous debate in Mongolia. The reforms have seen the establishment of a number of elite schools (which seem to provide a very high standard of education, based on the author's discussions with parents whose children attend the high fee British, American, Orchlun and International Schools, although some recent social media contributions have presented rather a different view) and proliferation of low standard private universities, many of which focus on business education, and whose graduates struggle to get jobs.

*...evidence on how the education level and education inequality influence income inequality in the Asian and Pacific areas, based on the panel data of 1990, 2000, and 2010... indicate that a higher level of schooling of the population has reduced income inequality while a greater dispersion of schooling among the population has increased income inequality (Park 2017: 16).*

By comparison, the public school system struggles. This reflects urban migration, with public schools being swamped by country children. Many

public schools operate two shifts a day, some three. Yet private schools continue to attract public funding, which might be better directed to the public school system. Steiner-Khamsi notes one of the rationales for using public funds to finance expensive private schools (by means of vouchers or grants) is the expected spill-over effect. The spill-over argument has been made in Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, and many other countries where the government attempts to downplay criticism of inequity by highlighting the positive effects that elite schools are supposed to have on public schools. In Steiner-Khamsi's words "In neoliberal parlance, the logic is as follows: in a two-tiered system, regular schools will inevitably lose their 'customers' (students) to the more effective elite schools. In the next phase, regular public schools will do whatever they can to improve quality, by emulating the elites" (Steiner-Khamsi 2016: 11). To date, the spill-over effects have been limited, and the public funding going to elite schools must be questioned.

As noted above, there has been a huge growth in private universities post socialism. Marginson suggested Mongolia's Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (GTER) doubled between 2000 and 2012, rising by 7.4 per cent a year (although the average annual growth in the tertiary age population was only 1.6 per cent a year) (Marginson 2016: 1). Even in some of the major universities, entry standards have fallen. Little wonder then that graduates in the hugely oversupplied business administration job market have struggled to get jobs.

Growth in university enrolments reflects both demand and supply, the latter being closely associated with the funding available for education. For the cash strapped Mongolian governments of the 1990s, opening the university system up to private providers provided a neat solution. Together with the use of student loans, the system could be enlarged without a huge drain on the public purse. As discussed in more detail earlier, the reforms also



pleased aid donors and lenders such as the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary fund who were uncomfortable with the previous Soviet style education system.

More broadly, Marginson (2016) noted Trow's conclusion: the key factor was family aspirations to maintain and to improve their social position. Trow noted there was no limit to aspirations for social betterment through education. It was not subject to economic scarcity. Higher education is rapidly becoming a universal aspiration in Mongolia, where 'every herder wants his children to go to university, and is willing to make big sacrifices so that happens' (interview, Battuya).

Trow also noted that government policy followed the social demand for higher education, rather than vice versa. Governments were under ongoing pressure, especially from middle class families, to facilitate the growth of higher education until saturation was reached (Marginson 2016: 259). Reflecting this, Dunroog argues that massification of higher education has and will continue to create a heavy financial burden on the public budget of most countries in the region (Dunroog 2015: 14). Most Asian private universities which serve the mass higher education market tend to be relatively nonselective in their admissions (Dunroog 2015: 14) and tuition quality can be poor.

However, mass higher education growth in Mongolia has been accompanied by concerns about the employability of graduates from low standard private universities, where corruption is widely perceived as the path to graduation. As noted by Chapman and Lindner, corruption in higher education is the focus of growing international concern among governments, educators, students, and other stakeholders. The authors

cautioned: “The risk is that employees and students come to believe that personal success comes, not through merit and hard work, but through cutting corners” (Chapman and Lindner 2017: 1).

Mongolia’s vocational education and training system is perplexing. It is very much the poor relation in Mongolia’s education system. It has low prestige, attracts few students, and is poorly funded. It is very much a student funded front end training system (unlike Australia’s system where apprenticeship training goes hand in hand with employment). Nonetheless it has excellent employment outcomes, especially when compared to outcomes for university graduates. Hence its low priority in terms of government funding is surprising.

### **Free health for all?**

*...health outcomes within and between countries...could be seen as the final product of “structural violence” in society - the social and economic inequities that determine who will be at risk and who will not be...(Bayarsaikhan 2017: 10).*

Reform of health care economics was essential for Mongolia post-socialism because the government’s capacity to provide healthcare funding was severely compromised by a huge fall in tax revenue, partly arising from economic implosion and partly reflecting policy decisions to minimise government revenue and expenditure. The need was exacerbated because the Mongolian medical system, based on the Soviet Semashko model with a strong focus on hospital based acute care, was expensive.

Given the collapse of socialism, there was also a void in health policy, which was filled by Western aid agencies and international agencies like the World Bank. Western aid agencies advocated a free market health system on American lines. The cash strapped Mongolian government had little option but to move along these lines to be eligible for foreign aid, and a hybrid model evolved.

*As a result of prioritized and targeted efforts, health outcomes and indicators are improving. However, there are still significant problems associated with poor quality of care, inefficiency, and inadequate implementation of reforms and institutional improvements (Tsilajav et al. 2013: 136).*

As Tsiljaav et al. suggest, there have been impressive health sector improvements in many areas in post-socialist Mongolia. However, endemic health issues remain, in terms of communicable and non-communicable disease. Baatarkhuu et al.'s study, for example, indicated that Mongolia still has one of the highest hepatitis A, C, B and D infection levels worldwide (Baatarkhuu et al. 2017:1).

Again, health care, like wealth, is not evenly distributed in Mongolia. Bayarsaikhan's (2017) analysis suggests a strong difference in health outcomes in Ulaanbaatar by place of residence, with residents in poorer (*peri-ger*) areas having worse outcomes than residents of richer areas: healthcare is very expensive for poor Mongols, often impossibly so. Poverty results in poor health outcomes, even in the wealthy countries, especially the United States, where wealthy citizens live much longer than the poorest members of society (Glenza 2017: 1). In Mongolia, the poor,

doomed to be treated through the highly under-resourced public hospital system, are severely disadvantaged in access to effective health care. Joshi et al.'s research on health care in Mongolia also suggests that increasing levels of GDP are not correlated with equal benefit for the most vulnerable and this "poses an ethical question for the Mongolian Government to impose taxation and development policies which will benefit the poor as well as the newly rich" (Joshi et al. 2017: 15).

### **Demographic changes: good things, bad things**

Post-socialist Mongolia has experienced significant demographic changes including marked urbanization. Population growth, subdued immediately post-socialism, has again become significant, and increasingly city based. Jack notes there are three potential factors that contribute to urbanization, which have varying impacts in different countries: net inward migration to urban areas, as more people move from rural to urban areas than from urban to rural areas; natural population growth being higher in urban areas than in rural areas; and reclassification of rural settlements as urban settlements (Jack 2006: 1).

In Mongolia the main factor is simply mass migration in an attempt to escape rural poverty, and in search of the opportunities offered by the capital. If we examine demographic change and urban poverty against Satterthwaite's typology, post-socialist Mongolia meets many of the criteria. Satterthwaite contends absolute poverty in an urban context usually involves eight interrelated sets of deprivations, inadequate income, unstable or risky asset bases, inadequate shelter, poor public infrastructure, inadequate basic services (schools, public transport, limited social safety nets, inadequate protection of poorer groups, and the voiceless nature of

poorer groups (Satterthwaite 2003: 75)). These factors continue to prevail in Mongolia.

*The National Emergency Agency's surveys, records and official news shows about 80 per cent of the total house fires in Ulaanbaatar breaks out from Ger areas because of unsuitable housing for urban areas and lack of infrastructure (Ishdorj 2017: 5).*

## **How Mongols feel about the transition**

The second question addressed through the thesis was how Mongols feel about the transition from socialism to market democracy. This issue was initially addressed in Chapter Nine through the review of survey material and literature which partially answer this question, and more directly through the thesis survey, interviews and focus groups, the outcomes of which were discussed in Chapter Ten. The thesis research addresses an important gap in the literature. While contemporary evidence examines how Mongols view their lot, there is less published evidence available about how those Mongols who have experienced both socialism and market democracy view the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems.

The thesis survey suggested that around 80 per cent of participants (who had lived under both socialism and market democracy) felt the change to market democracy had been of benefit to them and Mongolia. Interview participants gave a similar perspective. Focus group outcomes were also similar. Nonetheless, the survey data, the interviews and focus groups indicated Mongols were somewhat ambivalent about several aspects of transition. Mongols clearly enjoy the vast increase in personal freedoms

under market democracy, such as freedom of choice in residence location, freedom to travel within and without Mongolia, freedom to associate, and freedom of expression. However, they appear less enraptured with other aspects of post-socialist life. Some of these concerns relate to democracy itself, while other concerns relate to Mongolia's market economy, which reflects the neo-liberal economic regime 'fostered' by international financial institutions and aid donors. This perception is reinforced by Veenhoven's analysis of happiness in Mongolia as compared to other countries for the period 2005-2014, well into the post-transition period. Mongolia scores relatively poorly against most of the Veenhoven criteria, particularly in terms of inequality. This data is consistent with a number of other partial indicators reviewed in Chapter Nine, which generally suggested Mongolia does not rank well in international well-being surveys.

As discussed in Chapter Nine, a number of models exist which examine the factors which influence peoples' perceptions of well-being. Nonetheless, there are some common themes, especially poverty, inequality and insecurity. Some thirty years post-transition, nearly one third of Mongols live in wretched poverty. Inequality is symbolized on the roads when cars driven by the rich and uber-rich: Lexus, Land Rovers and Mercedes, frequently demand right-of-passage from lesser, poorer mortals. Economic insecurity is rife. Responses to a 2016 Asia Foundation survey indicated that most respondents were very concerned about unemployment and the state of the economy. Similar concerns were frequently raised in the thesis survey, interviews and focus groups.

Reflecting such concerns, nearly 60 per cent of respondents to a 2017 survey considered Mongolia was heading in the wrong direction (see Figure 11.5). The timing of this poll was interesting, as it was sandwiched by the 2016 Parliamentary elections, where an overwhelming MPP victory reflected economic concerns, and the 2017 presidential election, where

disappointment in the MPP government's performance probably contributed to the success of Democratic candidate Battulga.

**Figure 11.5: Was Mongolia heading in the right direction, March 2017?**



Source: International Republican Institute 2017: 4

Of the respondents who suggested Mongolia was heading in the wrong direction, 39 per cent cited economic instability and inequality as the key factor in shaping their views, while 26 per cent indicated failed government policies influenced their thinking (International Republican Institute 2017: 6). When respondents were asked for their views on the then biggest problem facing Mongolia, the most significant concerns raised were unemployment (31 per cent of respondents), and poverty (21 per cent of respondents).

Unemployment is consistently identified as a significant issue by Mongols and is a major factor leading to poverty and inequality. It is also a key factor influencing perceptions of subjective well-being. The thesis survey, interviews and focus groups persistently identified economic uncertainties, unemployment and poverty as some of the least endearing attributes of life in a market democracy. However, unemployment data only tell part of the story. Labour force participation has fallen markedly in the post-socialist

period. Mongolia was characterized by highly active participation in the previous regime due to the socialist employment policy that “every person should be employed.” During the transition period between 1991 and 2001, the participation rate dropped sharply from 87 per cent to 62 per cent, and has since remained at similar levels (Batchuluun and Bayarmaa 2014: 58). As noted by Gassmann et al., youth of working age (15+) were “plagued by high levels of unemployment and inactivity. When young persons who are not actively searching for work are included in the calculations, this number rises to 16 per cent” (Gassmann et al. 2015: 14).

Most jobs are also relatively poorly paid, another source of social disquiet. Many government employees earn less than \$US300 a month, pre-tax. Tudev and Damba noted the results of the 2013 World Economic Forum (WEF) survey indicated that wages in Mongolia were highly flexible (17th out of 144 countries included in the WEF analysis) (Tudev and Damba 2015: 65). Such flexibility probably reflects weakness in wage bargaining.

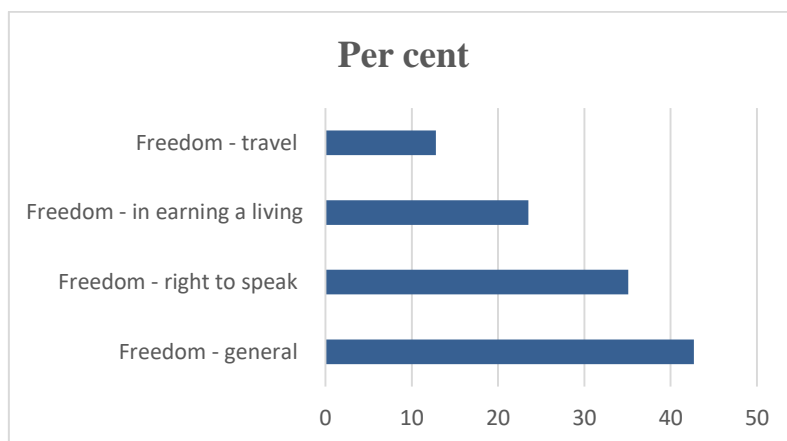
## **Future prospects**

The main focus of this thesis has been to examine social and economic change in Mongolia post-socialism, with the aim of better understanding various aspects of transition to market democracy, and how Mongols feel about the transition. The analysis has resulted in some mixed results, with an apparent acceptance of democracy and a market economy frequently being undermined by concerns about poverty and rising inequality, corruption and worsening government services in some areas. The apparent acceptance of democracy is also at odds with interest in strong man one party government, as discussed below. Perhaps the apparent acceptance of democracy hides other views, and/or misunderstanding of what democracy really entails.



Research carried out in November 2007 by the Sant Maral Foundation (SMF) revealed the strong weighting Mongols assigned to personal freedom in their democracy (Sumati 2009: 95). As shown in Figure 11.6, the four most important expectations of Mongols surveyed by the Sant Maral Foundation related to aspects of personal freedom. Sabloff's survey work in 1998 and 2003 also highlighted that Mongols saw democracy as providing people with economic freedom (Sabloff 2012: 66). However, Sant Maral suggested the freedom to vote did feature highly in personal expectations for Mongols.

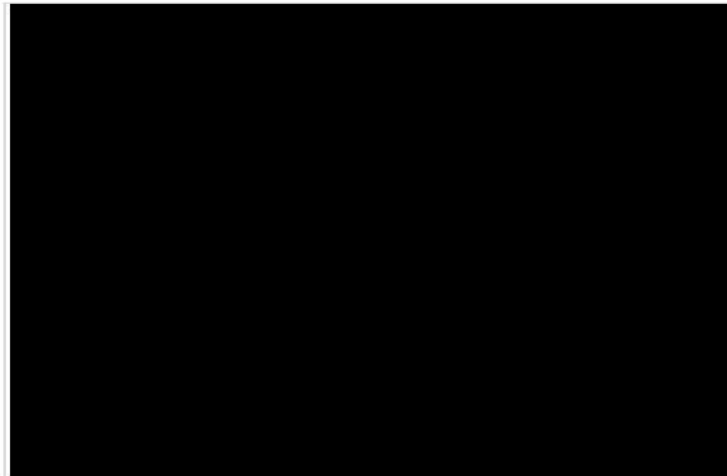
**Figure 11.6: Mongols' most important personal expectations of democracy, 2007**



Source: Sumati 2009: 95

The more recent fourth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey also emphasized Mongols' strong preference for freedom and liberty. Mongolia's score was high, ranking second in the countries taking part in the Asian Barometer Survey (Figure 11.7). This outcome is consistent with data arising from the thesis survey, interviews and focus groups.

**Figure 11.7: Freedom and liberty, Mongolia compared to other countries**



Source: Pan, H-H., and Wu, W-C., 2017: 11

Asian Barometer data suggested good governance was the second most important criteria for Mongols.<sup>71</sup> This perspective was consistent with the views of Asian Barometer survey participants from most countries, as shown in Figure 11.8. Mongolia took a mid-ranking position among countries taking part in the survey against this criterion. Of course there is an unanswered question here: are Mongols satisfied with the governance of their country? Research discussed in the first part of the thesis, data arising from the thesis survey, from interviews and from focus groups suggest this is not the case, which may go some distance to explaining Mongols support for the concept of democracy but their rather restrained support for government under market democracy.

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<sup>71</sup> Respondents were asked two questions: first “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.” Respondents were asked to rate this question on a four-point scale from “strongly agree”, to “strongly disagree,” and second: choose one of the following three statements: (1) Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government,” (2) “Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one,” and (3) “For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic government or non-democratic government.”

**Figure 11.8: Good governance, Mongolia compared to other countries**



Source: Pan, H-H., and Wu, W-C., 2017: 11.

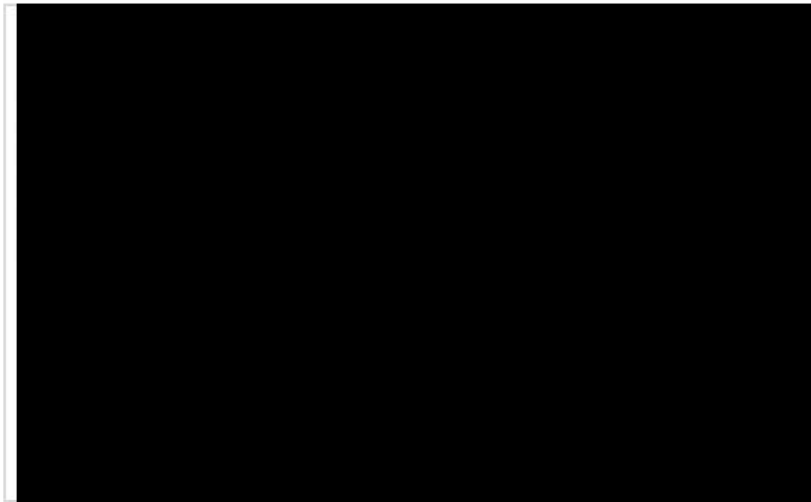
Note: The criteria for good governance were that the government does not waste any public money, provides quality services, and ensures law and order, and that politics is clean and free from corruption.

This may explain responses to other questions which suggest Mongolia's commitment to democracy as a system of governance is somewhat questionable. Data from the fourth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey suggests that, considered by country, there is a moderate positive correlation between survey respondents support for democracy as the best political system and preference for democracy.<sup>72</sup> Yet the correlation was modest, and views varied considerably among countries. As shown below in Figure 11.9, there is a considerable gap between support for democracy as the best political system for most countries taking part in this survey and other governance options. The gap for Mongolia was considerable, only exceeded by that for Taiwan.

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<sup>72</sup> The Spearman correlation score between the two data series was .549, i.e., a mid range positive correlation.

**Figure 11.9: Asian countries' support for democracy versus other political systems**



Source: Pan, H-H., and Wu, W-C., 2017: 6

The attitudes of young people are also concerning. Damdin and Vickers examined youth and civic attitudes in post-socialist Mongolia through a survey in 2012. Some 400 students completed the survey, 46 per cent of them from Ulaanbaatar, 40 per cent from provincial towns and 14 per cent from rural *soums* (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 6). Almost all were aged between sixteen and eighteen. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with groups of students (about ten per school) to probe their attitudes in more depth, as well as with individual teachers and curriculum developers.

In terms of longer terms prospects for democracy, some of the results were worrying. Only a minority of respondents saw voting in elections as “very important,” very few saw joining a political party as being “very important,” and only 15 per cent viewed remaining aware of current events as “very important.” (On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of students considered human rights were “very important”).

Damdin and Vickers noted there was a certain nostalgia for the socialist era, related to concerns over rising social inequality, environmental degradation, especially air pollution in Ulaanbaatar, unemployment; and problems such as alcoholism – all of which were perceived as having become considerably worse since 1990 (Damdin and Vickers 2014: 12). This is consistent with the views of participants in the thesis survey, interviews and focus groups.

## Chapter 12: Conclusions

### Introduction

This chapter presents some final thoughts, as well as some suggestions for further research. It is to Mongolia's considerable credit that democracy has persisted post-socialism, without a descent into authoritarianism. Also to Mongolia's credit, as was the case with the change to socialism, the change to market democracy has not compromised Mongolia's rich culture, including its intricate culture of hospitality, its language, or its traditional foods and clothes. Nonetheless, as noted in the thesis introduction, modern Mongolia is an enigma: great things exist alongside sad things: spectacular wealth exists alongside widespread, protracted and seemingly intractable poverty.

That is not to say that things are not changing. Mining led development has led to a marked increase in building, especially in Ulaanbaatar, and some aspects of public infrastructure have improved markedly in the past decade, especially in respect to urban road infrastructure. Improvements in infrastructure are highlighted by the construction of a soon to be opened modern international airport to the west of Ulaanbaatar.

The problem is that the great things are not well distributed in Mongol society. The ultra-rich exist in their own bubble, of expensive fashion stores, hotels and luxury restaurants. Others do much less well. This has led to significant disaffection with the political system, an anger fanned by repeated corruption scandals in 2018, with many high ranking figures, including former Prime Ministers becoming the subject of corruption investigations.

## **Some final thoughts**

As noted earlier, the aim of this thesis is to examine social change in Mongolia post-socialism from a number of perspectives and to better understand how Mongols feel about the transition. The country has experienced massive change, and faced extraordinary challenges. Mongolia entered a strange new world in 1990. In terms of possibly the most important criteria against which Mongolia's progress since 1990 could be judged, Mongolia has done well. Mongolia has survived as a sovereign nation.

Mongolia's political leaders were bold: they sought rapid transformation of Mongolia's political and economic system. The political transition was peaceful and orderly. There was strong support for democracy and the freedoms that are generally part of a democratic society. On the other hand, the economic transition was brutal. Unemployment soared, and abject and intractable poverty was to prove the lot of many Mongols. In the 1990s many Mongols would have yearned for the economic security that prevailed under socialism. However, as we approach the end of the second decade of the twenty first century, Mongolia has become a low middle income country with strong prospects, underpinned by the mining sector, reflected in marked improvements in road and air transport infrastructure, with significant developments also planned for the rail sector. There has also been a building boom since 2010.

This makes it a good time to review Mongolia's transition from socialism. Approaching 2020, peoples' views will be somewhat less influenced by the initial brutal economic transition. Moreover, Mongols who have experienced both socialism and market democracy are aging. The twenty year old of 1990 is now approaching fifty and so on. Given Mongolia's

relatively short life spans, it was important to capture these peoples' views on the transition while the opportunity still exists. The thesis survey, interviews and focus groups provide valuable insights into these peoples' views. On balance, research participants supported the transition to market democracy, but they also drew attention to a number of concerns.

While some aspects of the transition have gone relatively well, others have not. Perhaps the biggest problem has been the economy: growth has not been particularly strong, and while an uber-rich has emerged, many people are impoverished. The change has also seen the emergence of considerable corruption.

Perhaps these factors are contributing to widespread public dissatisfaction with many aspects of governance post-socialism. Respondents to the thesis survey, and participants in interviews and focus groups were scathing in their responses concerning post-socialist growth in corruption. Participants in the survey, interviews and focus groups also generally felt services such as education, health and housing were better under socialism. Moreover, although participants in the thesis research, as well as participants in research conducted by others, clearly favoured the personal and economic liberties that come with a democratic society, participants in the thesis research also clearly hankered for the economic security that prevailed under socialism, which many also remembered as a happier, more caring society.

Together these issues appear to be having a negative impact on Mongols' acceptance of democracy as a form of government. In discussions with the author, many people have argued that Mongolia may be better off with a hybrid or authoritarian government, which, they believe, would do a far better job of managing the economy, to the benefit of the majority of Mongols, rather than to the benefit of a corrupt minority. Højer, in



describing conversations about politics during a picnic by the Tuul River near Ulaanbaatar in 2011, suggested despondency and apathy were the “hallmark” political attitude of large segments of the Mongol population. Some visitors considered the political situation was *herregui* (“useless” or “unnecessary”). Højer recalled a conversation with a woman called Ariunaa, which summarised these concerns well. Ariunaa commented that regular people don’t like to talk about politics “because politics is all about money and politicians don’t care about people” (Højer 2018: 75).

Wolves lurk here. Carothers noted some polities demonstrated some characteristics of democracy, but suffered from “serious democratic deficiencies,” including poor representation of citizens’ interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions, and persistently poor institutional performance by the state (Carothers 2002: 9, 10). Such characteristics, significant in Mongolia, could be seen as inhibiting consolidation of democracy. While Fish (2017) suggested civil society organisations tend to prop up democracy in Mongolia, they can also be an organ of protest. As noted by Lkhaajav, in recent years, there have been a number of social mobilizations aiming to stop political corruption, police brutality, and a troubled judicial system (Lkhaajav 2017: 1). For example, in May 2018 civil society organisations protested in favour of nationalizing the 51 per cent of the giant Oyu Tolgoi mine held by Rio Tinto (Gogo.mn). The quote below is not atypical: many Mongols have expressed similar concerns to the author. Mongolia’s governments need to do better if democracy is to survive and prosper.

*Well, currently Ulaanbaatar is polluted because of the wrong system that we adopted which is the democracy. We are having problems in the economy and social structure because it didn't work well for us (Amai, prominent Mongol musician) (Bayasgalan 2018b: 4).*

## **Suggestions for further research**

In many ways, the key factors influencing social development in poor countries like Mongolia are economic: if there are not enough job opportunities, even a well-educated population will struggle to get ahead. Money is a key determinant of living standards, both at the personal and national level. This is very much the case for Mongolia, where an unacceptably large proportion of the population is very poor. Corruption can flourish in these circumstances.

Research is lacking concerning the types of economic opportunities Mongolia could pursue to address this issue. For example, certain countries with population levels similar to Mongolia's, which also lack Mongolia's vast mineral resources, have much higher income per capita than Mongolia, with Singapore being perhaps the most famous example. Even Costa Rica fares better than Mongolia. Comparative research which identifies the key success factors in improving economic conditions in these countries, especially in land locked countries like Mongolia, would be very valuable in addressing Mongolia's worst economic problems.

In addition, while mining is clearly Mongolia's most important industry, there has been little systematic research on the costs and benefits of the mining sector to Mongolia (while mining houses conduct their own research, the results are viewed with scepticism by many, especially when such reports' conclusions clearly favour the interests of the promoters).

Independent research would better serve the public interest, and would do much to address scepticism about the benefits of mining. Such research could also include cross country studies on options on how best to maximise national benefits from mining, including the best regimes for taxation, royalties and the like. Targeted research on the environmental impacts of mining in Mongolia would also be useful. For example, water availability and quality is rapidly becoming a very important issue in East Asia. Research on international best practice in water usage in mining may help in addressing this issue.

China's One Belt One Road initiative also has the potential to provide significant economic benefits to Mongolia. However, at the time of writing, there has been very little research undertaken which addresses this issue from a Mongolian perspective. Moreover, Mongolia's involvement would come at a cost, a potential threat to national sovereignty. Research on how Mongolia can participate in the initiative, but best protect its own interests, would be of immense value.

While jobs growth is probably the most important option for poverty reduction in Mongolia, social justice oriented research on poverty reduction strategies would also be beneficial. In particular, an examination of poverty reduction strategies in other emerging lower middle income countries would be useful, with the aim of identifying "what works" in other countries. Mongolia's social welfare system also clearly lacks focus, with relatively high income individuals being able to access a wide variety of social benefits. Research on social welfare focussing strategies in other countries at a similar stage of development would be useful, so that Mongolia's scant social resources can be best targeted towards those in need.

Mongolia's legal system drew very mixed reviews during the thesis research. This is a significant concern, because a sound legal system, with a focus on rule of law rather than rule by law, is a key foundation for democracy. However, significant concerns emerged about judicial corruption, including anecdotal evidence that judicial appointments, at entry level, cost 100 million tugriks. There were concerns that post-socialist Mongolia's capitalist era economic legal system lacks consistency, with some legislation seemingly at odds with other legislation. Moreover, while a body of western style commercial law has slowly emerged in post-socialist Mongolia, the legislation is administered through a socialist style bureaucracy which serves to markedly slow the judicial system. Cross country research in respect to other post-socialist countries may provide a basis for a judicial review in Mongolia to modernise and harmonise the legal system, as well as insights into options to address perceived judicial corruption.

Air, water and soil pollution have also become major problems in Mongolia. Research on 'what works' in other countries facing similar challenges may assist Mongolia in exorcising its own environmental demons.

The opening of Mongolia's borders post 1989 has brought both benefits and costs. On the debit side, Mongolia has been exposed to new diseases and social practices. While Mongolia has a long history of alcohol abuse, the evidence suggests drug abuse among young Mongols is both significant and increasing. Mongolia would benefit from research on 'what works' in addressing this emerging problem.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Supporting data

Appendix 2: Acronyms used in this thesis

Appendix 3: Mongolian words commonly used in this thesis

Appendix 4: The survey questionnaire

Appendix 5: Questions raised in interviews

Appendix 6: Issues discussed in focus groups, the legal focus group

## Supporting data

**Table 3.1: Population of Siberia 1662 to 1911**

Year	Natives	Russians and foreigners	Total
1622	173,000	23,000	196,000
1662	288,000	105,000	393,000
1709	200,000	228,127	429,127
1737	237,000	297,810	527,810
1763	260,000	420,000	680,000
1796	336,362	575,800	939,162
1815	434,000	1,100,500	1,534,500
1858	648,000	2,288,036	2,936,035
1897	870,536	4,889,633	5,760,169
1911	972,886	8,393,469	9,366,355

Source: Kotkin, 1996. *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1914): 81

**Table 4.1. Dynamics of Mongolian State Attitude towards China**

1911-1915	1915-1921	1921-1945	1945-1963	1964-1988	1989-now
Neutral	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly	Hostile	Neutral-Friendly

Source: Jargalsaikhan 2011: 16

**Table 4.2: Middle class, Asia, by daily expenditure and country**

Country	Survey Year	Per cent of population				
		\$2-4 (2005 PPP \$)	\$4-10 (2005 PPP \$)	\$10-20 (2005 PPP \$)	Total	\$20+ (2005 PPP \$)
Azerbaijan	2005	43.00	55.66	1.34	100.00	0.00
Malaysia	2004	27.05	48.1	14.13	89.28	3.44
Thailand	2004	33.50	41.69	10.63	85.82	3.46
Kazakhstan	2003	39.40	38.30	5.44	83.14	0.28
Georgia	2005	37.19	28.35	4.00	69.54	0.88
PRC	2005	33.97	25.17	3.54	62.68	0.68
Sri Lanka	2002	37.75	18.70	2.68	59.13	0.80
Armenia	2003	44.16	12.07	1.10	57.33	0.75
Philippines	2006	31.49	19.65	3.80	54.94	0.70
Vietnam	2006	35.53	14.81	1.93	52.27	0.15
<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>39.22</b>	<b>12.40</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>51.89</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Bhutan	2003	30.61	16.69	2.90	50.20	0.97
Krygyz Republic	2004	36.36	12.05	0.60	49.01	0.00
Indonesia	2005	34.96	10.46	1.16	46.58	0.26
Pakistan	2005	32.99	6.56	0.62	40.12	0.15
Cambodia	2004	24.72	7.41	0.91	33.04	0.33
India	2005	20.45	4.15	0.45	25.05	0.10
Uzbekistan	2003	19.39	4.11	0.45	23.90	0.13
Lao PDR	2002	19.60	3.88	0.41	23.89	0.02
Nepal	2004	16.74	5.30	0.85	22.89	0.38
Bangladesh	2005	16.38	3.48	0.37	20.25	0.05



Source: Asian Development Bank, 2011. The rise of Asia's middle class: 8

**Table 4.3: Mongolia, Population Forecast to 2050**

Year	Population	Annual Growth (%)	Annual Growth (number)	Migrants (net)	Median age	Fertility Rate (%)
2020	3,178,904	1.44	43,954	-3,000	29	2.54
2025	3,363,803	1.14	36,980	-3,000	30	2.43
2030	3,519,003	0.91	31,040	-3,000	31	2.33
2035	3,656,571	0.77	27,514	-3,000	32	2.26
2040	3,785,279	0.69	25,742	-3,000	33	2.19
2045	3,909,407	0.65	24,826	-3,000	34	2.14
2050	4,027,935	0.60	23,706	-3,000	35	2.10

Source: **Worldometers**, ([www.Worldometers.info](http://www.Worldometers.info)) , downloaded 2 November 2016

**Table 4.4: Mongolia, Forecast Urbanisation to 2050**

Year	Population	Urbanisation Rate (%)	Urban Population (number)
2020	3,178,904	74.1	2,354,525
2025	3,363,803	76.2	2,562,190
2030	3,519,003	77.4	2,724,468
2035	3,656,571	78.5	2,855,896
2040	3,785,279	78.6	2,973,850
2045	3,909,407	78.9	3,086,308
2050	4,027,935	79.0	3,181,338

Source: **Worldometers** ([www.Worldometers.info](http://www.Worldometers.info)) downloaded 2 November 2016

Notes: Elaboration of data by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision. (Medium-fertility variant).

Source: [http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm\\_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=MN](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=MN)

**Table 5.1: Mongolia, changes in Human Development Index: 1990 to 2015**

Year	Index Value
1990	.579
1995	.554
2000	.588
2005	.649
2010	.701
2011	.712
2012	.720
2013	.729
2014	.733
2015	.735

Source: United Nations Development Program 2016: 3

**Table 5.2: Mongols views about their lives compared to the best possible life (one to ten ranking)**

Year	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	World rank	Transition countries rank
2007	943	4.611	1.690	81/104	21/26
2008	979	4.392	1.606	98/114	15/16
2010	995	4.590	1.729	98/125	20/277
2011	995	5.057	1.672	73/126	16/28
2012	993	4.785	1.566	98/140	24/30
<b>All years</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>4.689</b>	<b>1.668</b>		

Source: World Gallup Poll, from Chulun, Graham and Myanganbuu 2013: 18. (Data for Mongolia became available from 2007).

**Table 5.3: Happiness in Mongolia: Veenhoven analysis, 2005 -2014**

Possible ranges	0-10 Average happiness	0-100 Happy life years	0-3.5 Inequality of happiness	0-100 Inequality adjusted happiness
Highest score	8.5 (Costa Rica)	67.9 (Costa Rica)	1.71 (Costa Rica)	74 (Denmark)
Mongolia	5.7	38.2	2.37	44
Lowest score	2.5 Tanzania	14.8 Togo	3.19 (Angola)	19 (Tanzania)

Veenhoven, R., *Happiness in Mongolia (MN)*, World Database of Happiness, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, [http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap\\_nat/nat\\_fp.php?cntry=229&name=Mongolia&mode=3&subjects=0&publics=1](http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/nat_fp.php?cntry=229&name=Mongolia&mode=3&subjects=0&publics=1), downloaded 1 June 2016

**Table 5.4: Mongolia's world ranking: Gallup Healthways survey, 2014**

Criterion	World ranking
Purpose	114
Social	16
Financial	97
Community	73
Physical	76

Source: Gallup Healthways 2014: 6

**Table 5.5: Attitudes toward democracy: 1998 and 2003**

	Responses			
	1998		2003	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Democracy is bad (for Mongolia)	41	11.2	1	0.4
Democracy is good and bad	147	40.2	63	26.9
Democracy is good (for Mongolia)	178	48.6	170	72.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sabloff 2012: 60

**Table 5.6: Association between attitudes toward democracy and risk, 1998**

Democracy has	Bad risk		Good and bad risk		Good risk		Subtotal	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Bad traits	14	7.7	6	9.8	3	4.7	23	11.3
Good and bad traits	50	63.3	34	55.7	16	25.0	100	49.0
Good traits	15	19.0	21	34.4	45	70.3	81	39.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sabloff, P., 2012: 63

**Table 5.7: Association between attitudes toward democracy and risk, 2003**

Democracy has	Bad risk		Good and bad risk		Good risk		Subtotal	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Bad traits	0	0	1	1.5	0	0	1	0.7
Good and bad traits	4	23.5	31	47.0	10	15.4	45	30.4
Good traits	13	76.5	34	51.5	55	84.6	102	68.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sabloff 2012: 63

**Table 5.8: Mongols views on how well local members of State Grand Khural represent voters' personal interests and the interests of their constituency, 2017**

Response	Per cent
Very well	5
Well	15
Not very well	42
Not well at all	26
Don't know	9

Source: International Republican Institute 2017: 23

**Table 5.9: To what extent do you expect the following aspects of the elections to be fair and transparent?**

Election stage	To a small extent (per cent)	Not at all (per cent)	Total (per cent)
Preparation stage	25.7	45.0	70.7
Campaign funding	29.3	34.2	73.5
Election campaign	20.9	25.5	46.4
Vote Counting	24.2	25.9	50.1

Source: The Asia Foundation 2016: 21-23

**Table 5.10: Mongolia, trust in banks, 2006 and 2010, proportion of respondents, per cent**

Year	Complete distrust	Some distrust	Neither trust not distrust	Some trust	Complete Trust
2006	10.1	8.1	18.4	36.5	26.6
2010	5.2	10.7	21.1	47.2	15.7

Source: Afandi and Habibov, 2017: 84

**Table 5.11: Sources of national pride, Damdin and Vickers survey of Mongol youth, 2014, per cent**

Source of Pride	Strong pride	To some extent	Not that proud	Not at all proud	Total proud
National unity	58.4	33.2	5.5	2.9	91.6
Democratic state	28.8	45.3	20.9	5.0	74.1
Economic growth/potential	19.0	36.5	32.8	11.6	55.5
Equality of social groups & fair distribution	17.8	28.8	33.5	19.6	55.5
Social care and protection system	22.4	46.4	21.9	9.3	68.8
Achievements in sport	73.4	20.1	5.2	1.3	93.5
Art and literature work	72.2	21.2	5.5	0.8	93.7
Development of safety and defence sector	34.3	37.2	22.3	6.3	71.5
Characteristics of Mongolians	47.5	36.6	12.3	3.7	84.1
Traditions, customs and cultural heritage	81.6	10.7	2.9	1.3	95.8

Source: Damdin and Vickers 2014: 9

**Table 5.12: Sant Maral polls 1995 to 2006: satisfaction with political system.**

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents
Very satisfied	1,964	4.9
Satisfied	17,034	42.2
Not satisfied	16,849	41.8
Totally dissatisfied	4,502	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,349</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Prohl and Sumati 2007: 102

**Table 5.13: Sant Maral poll 2017: satisfaction with political system.**

	<b>Per cent of respondents</b>
Satisfied	13.0
Rather satisfied	39.4
Rather not satisfied	24.9
Not satisfied	18.6
Don't know	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sant Maral Foundation 2017: 9

**Table 5.14: Sant Maral poll 2017: Proportion of respondents who considered Mongolia would be better off with a strong leader and no Parliament or elections**

	<b>Per cent of respondents</b>
Good	27.5
Rather good	40.6
Rather bad	9.8
Bad	6.0
No answer	0.9
Don't know	15.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sant Maral Foundation 2017: 8

**Table 5.15: Sant Maral poll 2017: voters influence on political decision making**

	<b>Per cent of respondents</b>
Strong	12.2
Rather strong	21.0
Rather little	39.18
None	19.6
No answer	1.0
Don't know	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Sant Maral Foundation 2017: 9

**Table 6.1: Men and women's views about the end of socialism, proportion of respondents**

	Good for you (%)	Good for Mongolia (%)
Men	79.2	78.7
Women	68.8	71.1

**Table 6.2: Views about the end of socialism, by age, proportion of respondents**

	30-40 (%)	41-50 (%)	Over 51 (%)
Good for you	84.5	83.2	48.8
Good for Mongolia	83.3	89.3	47.3

**Table 6.3: Best things about socialist era, proportion of participants, by gender**

Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Equality	76.2	87.2
Job security	97.5	98.2
Adequate pay	93.6	91.7
Fixed prices	95.0	96.3

**Table 6.4: Best things about socialist era, proportion of participants, by age**

Age	31-40 (%)	41-50 (%)	Over 51 (%)
Equality	77.45	91.6	77.7
Job Security	96.4	97.7	100.0
Adequate pay	89.3	92.4	97.5
Fixed prices	93.5	96.9	97.5

**Table 6.5: Worst things about socialist era, proportion of participants, by gender**

Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Lack of freedom	76.7	71.6
Corruption	54.0	59.6

Lack of choice in shops	95.0	95.3
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**Table 6.6: Best thing about the end of the socialist era, proportion of participants, by gender**

Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
More opportunity	87.6	86.7
Freedom	87.6	81.2
Democracy	93.6	83.0
Individuality	85.1	74.3
Country open to the world	98.0	97.2
Able to travel freely	97.5	97.7

**Table 6.7: Women, best things about the end of the socialist era, proportion of participants, by age**

Age group	31-40 (%)	41-50 (%)	Over 51 (%)
More opportunity	87.1	97.1	75.4
Freedom	88.2	92.6	60.0
Democracy	97.6	89.7	56.9
Individuality	77.7	88.2	55.4
Country open to the world	95.3	98.5	98.5
Able to travel freely	96.5	98.5	98.5

**Table 6.8: Men, best things about the end of the socialist era, proportion of participants, by age**

Age group	31-40 (%)	41-50 (%)	Over 51 (%)
More opportunity	94.0	92.1	75.4
Freedom	90.4	93.7	76.8
Democracy	91.6	93.7	96.4
Individuality	79.5	92.1	85.7
Country open to the world	97.6	96.8	100.0
Able to travel freely	96.2	98.4	100.



**Table 6.9: Views about better education provision, by gender**

Gender/ Better	Male (%)	Female (%)
Under socialism	68.8	65.1
Under market democracy	31.2	34.9

**Table 6.10: Views about better housing provision, by gender**

Gender/ Better	Male (%)	Female (%)
Under socialism	40.6	53.2
Under market democracy	59.4	40.8

**Table 6.11: Views about better roads provision, by gender**

Gender/ Better	Male (%)	Female (%)
Under socialism	9.4	13.3
Under market democracy	90.6	86.7

**Table 7.1: Characteristics of procedural democracy**

Contestation (uncertain peaceful competition)		Participation (popular sovereignty)	
Legitimacy of opposition	Right to challenge incumbents	Universal suffrage	Right to vote
Freedom of expression	Free and fair elections		
Freedom of association	Consolidated party system		

Source: Landman 2009: 27

**Table 7.2: Characteristics of a liberal democracy**

Institutional dimension (popular sovereignty)		Rights dimension (rule of law)	
Accountability	Restraint	Civil rights	Property rights
Representation	Participation	Political rights	Minority rights

Source: Landman 2009: 28

**Table 7.3: Characteristics of a social democracy**

Institutional dimension (popular sovereignty)		Rights dimension (rule of law)	
Accountability	Restraint	Civil rights	Property rights
Representation	Participation	Political rights	Minority rights
		Economic rights	Social rights

Source: Landman 2009: 29

#### 7.4: Poverty is still entrenched in Mongolia: data for 2012 to 2016

Year	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016
Poverty Line, Tugrik	92072	99729	118490	146650	146145
Poverty Rate					
National (%)	38.8	33.7	27.4	21.6	29.6
City (%)	33.2	28.7	23.3	18.8	27.1
Rural areas (%)	49.0	43.2	35.4	26.4	34.9

Source: GoGo.mn, 2017. People who were above the poverty in 2014 slipped back into poverty, <http://mongolia.gogo.mn/r/160463>, downloaded 18 October 2017: 1

**Table 7.5: Happiness in Mongolia: Veenhoven analysis, 2005 -2014**

Possible ranges	0-10 Average happiness	0-100 Happy life years	0-3.5 Inequality of happiness	0-100 Inequality adjusted happiness
Highest score	8.5 (Costa Rica)	67.9 (Costa Rica)	1.71 (Costa Rica)	74 (Denmark)
Mongolia	5.7	38.2	2.37	44
Lowest score	2.5 Tanzania	14.8 Togo	3.19 (Angola)	19 (Tanzania)

Source: Veenhoven, R., *Happiness in Mongolia (MN)* World Database of Happiness

**Table 7.6: Most important issue facing Mongolia, 2016, proportion of respondents**

Issue	Proportion of Respondents (%)
Unemployment	27.8
General crisis	9.7
Poverty	9.1
Corruption	7.7
Inflation/Price increases	6.7
National Economy	5.8
Standard of living	3.7
Ecology	3.1
Policy/Future	2.3
Health	2.1

Source: Asia Foundation, 2016: 14

**Table 7.7: The biggest problem facing Mongolia, March 2017, proportion of respondents**

Issue	Per cent
Unemployment	31
Poverty	21
Corruption	8
Economy	8
Price inflation	6
Pollution/Environmental issues	5
Political conflict	5
Foreign loan debt	4
Alcoholism	4
Other	1
Don't know	1
<b>Total</b>	

Source: International Republican Institute 2017: 7

**Table 7.8: Mongolia: salaries by sector, and by organization size, 2013, MNT (000s)**

Sector	More than 100 employees	Less than 100 employees
Construction	813.5	569.2
Education	682.5	618.1
Manufacturing	633.1	509.4
Wholesale and retail trade	761.2	691.9
Accommodation and food service	634.4	508.8
Information and communication	882.6	637.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	1239.7	927.3
Public administration and defence	724.5	688.2
Transportation and storage	843.5	633.9
Administrative and support services activities	611.0	558.6
Arts, entertainment and recreation services	571.9	538.0
Water supply, sewerage, waste management	578.9	454.2
<b>Mining and quarrying</b>	<b>1443.8</b>	<b>1022.8</b>
Other services	307.5	537.9
Real estate services	462.7	713.6
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	360.4	302.6
Human health and social work activities	716.4	627.7
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	945.2	461.8
Foreign organisations	n.a.	1139.1
<b>National Average</b>	<b>813.5</b>	<b>627.2</b>

Source: Gassmann Francois and Trindade 2015: 16, 17

**Table 7.9: Characteristics of the good citizen: students' views on which issues were very important**

Issue	Percentage of respondents
Vote in elections	41.2
Join a political party	8.1
Know the history of one's country	81.4
Follow current affairs	15.6
Respect government officials and elected representatives	23.1
Participate in political consultations	16.8
Participate in peaceful demonstrations and protests	14.7
Actively <u>organise</u> public campaigns	48.2
Promote human rights	76.7
Protect nature and the environment	88.1
Work hard	75.7
Obey laws and regulations	81.4

*Source:* Damdin and Vickers 2014: 11

**Table 7.10: The properties of democracy East Asians named frequently and exclusively**

	Frequently Named (per cent)	Exclusively Named (per cent)
Freedom and liberty	41	23
Political process	32	16
Social benefits	11	4
Other	14	6

*Source:* Shin and Cho, 2010: 30

**Table 7.11: Mongolia; commitment to democratic principles**

	Democratic Principles (%)			
	<i>Government by the people</i>	<i>Government of the people</i>	<i>Government for the people</i>	<i>All three</i>
Japan	80	64	36	25
Korea	81	36	46	18
China	63	45	46	23
<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34</b>
Philippines	68	45	56	15
Taiwan	79	64	34	23
Thailand	72	57	28	18
Indonesia	77	40	48	21
Singapore	80	36	46	20
Vietnam	70	44	46	29
Cambodia	76	29	33	15
Malaysia	69	33	23	10
Pooled	73	48	40	21

*Source:* Shin and Kim 2016:

**Table 7.12: The meaning of democracy in East Asia**

Country	Freedom and Liberty ( per cent)	Norms and Procedures ( per cent)	Social Equity ( per cent)	Good Governance ( per cent)
Myanmar	24.5	20.1	36.5	18.9
Philippines	26.2	21.5	30.5	21.7
Cambodia	20.7	29.9	26.9	22.5
Hong Kong	18.9	19.1	36.2	25.8
China	11.1	30.1	30.0	28.4
Taiwan	14.9	23.5	32.3	29.3
<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>31.8</b>
Singapore	14.8	21.1	31.1	33.1
Vietnam	12.3	18.2	36.1	33.4
Indonesia	14.6	21.3	30.4	33.7
Korea	21.5	24.8	18.8	34.9
Thailand	16.6	20.5	27.9	35.1
Malaysia	12.6	27.4	24.3	35.7
Japan	12.5	18.3	26.9	42.6

*Source:* Pan, H-H., and Wu, W-C., 2017: 11

**List of acronyms used in this thesis**

- ACA - Anti-Corruption Agency
- ADB - Asian Development Bank
- AMR - Amenable Mortality Rate
- ASM - Artisanal and small-scale miners
- BLL - Blood Lead Levels
- BLI - Better Life Index
- BOM - Bank of Mongolia
- BMI - Body Mass Index
- CEEB - Central and Eastern Eurobarometers
- CGA - Customs General Administration
- CMEA - Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
- CGWBI - Composite Global Well-Being Index
- CVD - Cardio Vascular Disease
- DFI - Direct Foreign Investment
- DP - Democratic Party
- EC - European Community
- EDA - Effective development assistance
- EHRMP - Education and Human Resource Master Plan
- EMDC - Emerging and Middle Development Countries
- EITI - Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
- ESCAP - Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- EU - European Union
- FHC – Family Health Centre
- FHSDP - First Health Sector Development Program
- GEC - General Election Commission
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GER - Gross Enrolment Rate

GYTS - Global Youth Tobacco Survey

HSDP - Health Sector Development Plan

HEI - Higher Education Institutes

HDI - Human Development Index

HDR - Human Development Report

HIF - Health Insurance Fund

HSES - Household Socio-Economic Survey

HSSMP - Health Sector Strategic Master Plan

HIV/AIDS - Human Immune deficiency Virus

IPCP - Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (a NATO program)

ICRG - International country risk guide

IAAC - Independent Agency Against Corruption

ILO - International Labor Organisation

IMF - International Monetary Fund

IDD - Iodine deficiency disorder

IRI - International Republican Institute

JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency

LGBT - lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

LSMS - Living Standard Measurement Survey

MDG - Millennium Development Goal

ME - Mongolian Economy (bi-monthly magazine)

MECS - Ministry of Education and Science

MMJ - Mongolian Mining Journal (monthly magazine)

MNT - Mongolian tugrik (official currency of Mongolia)

MPI - Multidimensional Poverty Index

MPP - Mongolian People's Party

MPRP - Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party

MSUE - Mongolian State University of Education



NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NDB - New Democracy Barometers

NED - National Endowment for Democracy

NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training

NER - Net Enrolment Ratio

NGO - Non Government Organisation

NSO - Mongolia National Statistics Office

OCSE - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OEM - Operations Evaluation Mission

OOP – Out of Pocket

OT – Oyu Tolgoi

PfP - Partnership for Peace program

PEI - Political Integrity Index

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

PLSA - Participatory Living Standards Assessment

PPE - Post-Primary Education

PSMFL - Public Sector Management and Finance Law

RD – Relative Deprivation

RTI's – Respiratory Tract Infections

SALs.- Structural Adjustment Loans

SGH – State Grand Khural

SDP – Social Democratic Party

SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

SLE - School Life Expectancy

SP – Social Protection

SPI – Social Progress Index

STD - Sexually Transmitted Disease

SWB – Social Well Being

TEI - Tertiary Education Institution

TI - Transparency International

TIMSS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

TT – Tavan Tolgoi

TVET - Technical Vocational Education and Training

UK - United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNESCAP - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund

UIS - UNESCO Institute of Statistics

UNOPS - UN Office of Project Services

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VAT - Value Added Tax

WDI - World Development Indicators

WEF - World Economic Forum

WHO - World Health Organisation

### Appendix 3

#### Mongolian Words Commonly Used in this Thesis

*Aimag* - largest subnational administrative–territorial unit

*Appanu* - territories

*Aravt*- ten

*Bagh* - smallest rural subnational administrative–territorial unit

*Boo* - male Shaman

*Emch* - doctor

*Emchy* - specialist in traditional Mongolian medicine

*Feldsher* - medically trained primary health care workers, usually in more remote rural regions (bagh feldsher)

*Ger* - felt tent– traditional dwelling used by herders

*Herregui* - useless or unnecessary

*Hurgan bayan* - literally, the ‘rich lambs’, more broadly, the new rich

*Ikh Khural* - National parliament

*Intersoum* - something which caters for the population of two or more soums

*Khadag* - blue scarf used in Mongol ceremonies

*Kheseg* - primary health care units in the communist health care system

*Khoroo* – district

*Khoshuu* - banners

*Khural* - local government body

*Mingghan* - one thousand

*Nagas* – Buddhist nature spirits

*Negdel* - herders cooperative

*Nerge* – traditional Mongolian hunt

*Otoch* - specialist in traditional Mongolian medicine

*Ovoos* - sacred piles of stones

*Sangha* - lay congregations

*Soum* - medium-sized subnational administrative–territorial unit

*Sudnii Emch* - dentist

*Rovsomol* - Youth Communist Party

*Tsets* - laws

*Tugrik* - (Tug) national currency of Mongolia

*Tumen* - an army of 10,000 built from units of 10

*Udgan* – female Shaman

*Zerleg kapitalizm* - wild capitalism?

*Zuud* - especially harsh winter which leads to the loss of much livestock

*Zuun* – left

*Zuunghar* – left hand

*Zuut* – one hundred



**Question 8. What was the best thing about the end of the communist era?**

More opportunity:	Yes	No
Freedom:	Yes	No
Democracy:	Yes	No
Individuality:	Yes	No
Country opened to the world:	Yes	No
Able to travel freely:	Yes	No

**8. What is the worst thing about a free society?**

Uncertainty:	Yes	No
Lack of jobs:	Yes	No
Corruption:	Yes	No
Too many people moved to the city:	Yes	No
Competition:	Yes	No
Gap between the rich and poor:	Yes	No

**Question 9. What about?**

Health services,

better:                      under Communism                      in free economy

Education, better:        under Communism                      in free economy

Housing, better:            under Communism                      in free economy

Roads, better:                under Communism                      in free economy

**Question 10. Any other comments?**

**Appendix 5****Interview questions**

Question 1. What has been the biggest change for you arising from the end of socialism?

Question 2. What has been the biggest change for Mongolia arising from the end of socialism?

Question 3. What do you think were the best three things about living under socialism?

Question 4. What do you think were the worst three things about living under socialism?

Question 5. What do you think are the best three things about living in a market democracy?

Question 6. What do you think are the worst three things about living in a market democracy?

Question 7. On balance, do you believe the change from socialism has been:

Good for you?

Why?

Good for your country?

Why?

Question 8. Would you like to make any additional comments about the change from socialism to market democracy?

**Examples of focus group questions  
(laws and legal services focus group)**

1. What were the biggest changes in Mongol laws and legal services since the transition from socialism)
2. What do think have been the best changes in the Mongol laws and legal services system arising from the end of socialism?
3. What do think have been the worst changes in the Mongol laws and legal services system a arising from the end of socialism?
4. Do you think laws and legal services system planning was better than under socialism or better now
5. Can Mongols easily afford legal services?
6. Is the system fair or unfair?
7. Do you think the national laws and legal services system are is working well?
8. Do you think the quality of laws and legal services was better under socialism or under the current market democracy?
  - In the city?
  - In the countryside?
9. On balance, do you believe the change from socialism has been:
  - Good for the national laws and legal services system?
  - Bad for the national laws and legal services system?



10. Would you like to make any additional comments about the effects on Mongolia's laws and legal services system of the transition from socialism?