6

THE MASS PUBLIC AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN MONGOLIA

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1. MONGOLIAN DEMOCRACY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

ON OCTOBER 20, 1999, three members of the Mongolian parliament were convicted on corruption charges related to a casino bribery scandal and given prison sentences ranging from three to five years. The trio, all members of the ruling Democratic Coalition and one of them, a former justice minister, had been part of the crop of young reformers who swept into office three years earlier, dislodging the Communist Party from power for the first time since 1924.[1] For many, the guilty verdicts confirmed what was already suspected—that corruption in postcommunist Mongolia was rampant, and the biggest culprits were the high-living young democrats whose dramatic victory in the 1996 elections had been heralded as the dawn of a new era. Around the same time, as part of the celebrations for the 360th anniversary of the founding of Ulaanbaatar, workmen were refurbishing a statue of Marshal Choibalsan, one of the leaders of the communist regime, whose brutal sixteen-year rule (1936–1952) had earned him a reputation as "Mongolia's Stalin" (Severinghaus 2000). A newspaper took an informal poll of public opinion regarding the refurbishment and found a fair amount of support among men in the street. Despite his cruelty, the marshal was

regarded as a genuine nationalist hero. It was a fitting portent of things to come. One year later, the reconstituted Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP)—the party of the former communist regime—succeeded in refurbishing its political dominance as well, capturing seventy-two of seventy-six seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections.

The dramatic reversal of fortunes was in many ways emblematic of Mongolian politics in the transition era. Mongolia is often considered the only country outside of Eastern Europe to have made a successful transition to democracy from communist rule. It consistently receives high marks from international watchdog groups in areas such as political rights, civil liberties, and press freedoms. But unlike most other countries in the Soviet bloc, Mongolia remains a predominantly rural society, with nearly one-third of the population engaged in nomadic herding. In 2002, at the time of our survey, the country had a per capita purchasing power parity GDP of a mere $1,770 (compared to $4,600 for China and $4,000 for the Philippines), a UN Human Development Index ranking of 117, and a population with an average life expectancy of 64.5 years (UNDP 2002; CIA 2002).

Given its economic backwardness, Mongolia is often regarded as one of the most improbable cases to have undergone a successful transition among the family of third-wave democracies (Fish 1998:128). And democratization made its problems worse: the country has suffered from skyrocketing unemployment, rising poverty (36% of population lived below the poverty line in 2002), disintegration of the social service infrastructure, and a breakdown in law and order.

Prior to the fall of the communist dictatorship, Mongolia had been a client state of the Soviet Union, which dictated Mongolia's domestic and foreign policies with large amounts of economic aid and sixty-five thousand troops stationed in the country (Batbayar 2003). For more than six decades, beginning in 1924 when the communist state replaced a monarchy, Mongolia was ruled by the one-party dictatorship of the MPRP. Any criticism of the ruling party or its communist ideology and centrally planned economy was swiftly suppressed.

Democratic transition occurred in the wake of the upheavals that took place in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s (Batbayar 2003; Boone 1994). The collapse of Marxism-Leninism as the Soviet Union's guiding ideology led to communism's demise in Mongolia, testimony to the extent to which the political histories of the two nations had become intertwined despite their cultural, ethnic, and religious disparities.

Samuel Huntington (1991:113) characterized Mongolia's transition to democracy as a process of "transplacement," meaning that democratiza-

tion resulted from joint action by groups both in and out of power. In early 1990, the democratic opposition led by the Mongolian Democratic Union (MDU) began staging hunger strikes in front of the government compound to demand political freedom and human rights. The communist leadership initially ignored these demands; however, when they intensified, the ruling MPRP agreed to a roundtable meeting with the MDU. This process led to Mongolia's first-ever democratic elections in the summer of 1990. Under the new constitution of 1992, Mongolia became a parliamentary democracy with a directly-elected president endowed with certain key veto powers. In the 1993 presidential election, P. Ochirbat, the candidate of the Democratic Forces, became the country's first democratically elected president with 58% of the popular vote.

After the heady days of those founding elections, however, Mongolia's young democracy lost much of its political innocence. The reconstituted MPRP reestablished itself as the dominant political player. In the period leading up to our survey, the party won two out of three elections, capturing seventy-one out of seventy-six seats in 1992, and seventy-two out of seventy-six seats in 2000, thanks to a fractious opposition and a first-past-the-post electoral system (Severinghaus 1995, 2001).

The period from 1996 to 2000 was an exception to the pattern of MPRP dominance. An opposition coalition achieved a landmark upset in the 1996 parliamentary elections, capturing fifty out of seventy-six seats. This victory was touted as the first peaceful transfer of power between a Leninist party and the democratic opposition in Asia. But it was soon tarnished by infighting, corruption scandals, and the self-serving antics of some coalition MPs. The four years of coalition rule witnessed the rise and fall of four governments, the aforementioned conviction of three parliamentarians on corruption charges, and the unsolved murder of S. Zorig, a leading light of the democratic revolution who was poised to become the country's next prime minister.

Meanwhile the MPRP proved a quick study in parliamentary maneuvering, paralyzing the government by boycotting legislative sessions for weeks at a time. The party's obstructionist powers were amplified after it recaptured the presidency in 1997.[2] By 2000 the reversal of fortune was complete. The Democratic Coalition was defeated at the polls and the MPRP recovered its ascendancy.

In light of such developments it was not surprising that our survey, conducted in 2002, revealed strong popular concern over issues of corruption and governance. These problems have persisted in the years following. In the fifth parliamentary elections, held in 2004, no party won sufficient seats

to form a cabinet, leading again to the formation of a coalition cabinet. The formation of the cabinet involved the electoral commission in behind-the-scenes negotiations that were widely criticized as nontransparent. In early 2006 the coalition collapsed and the cabinet resigned. Several members of parliament changed their party affiliations, bringing the MPRP back to power without a new election. These developments deepened public distrust of political institutions and popular concern with corruption.

Despite such problems, scholars have generally classified Mongolia as a successful case of democratic transition from communist dictatorship (Batbayar 2003; Ginsburg 1998; Finch 2002; Fish 1998). Its democratization was bloodless and no violent attempts were made subsequently to overthrow the elected government. Unlike many Eastern European and Central Asian examples, Mongolia's democratic system has been stable. The opposition parties remained viable and energetic. And even if the MPRP enjoyed a near monopoly of power at all levels of government much of the time, it remained bound by democratic principles and committed to free and regular elections, if only because of the government's dependence on foreign aid (Batbayar 2003:57).

International lending agencies have stipulated that any regression toward authoritarianism can result in a substantial decrease in loan guarantees. In 1996, advisors from the International Republican Institute helped draft a "Contract with Mongolia" as the centerpiece of the opposition campaign that led to victory in the parliamentary elections.[3] Cooperation between domestic and international prodemocratic forces has thus helped Mongolia remain politically free, even if effective governance proved more elusive (Freedom House 2004). Internationally, therefore, the country is often regarded as a third-wave democracy that has outperformed its East European and Central Asian counterparts, many of which Freedom House has rated as either partly-free or unfree (Fritz 2002; Sabloff 2002). Likewise, civil society in Mongolia has been rated as more active than those of its Central Asian counterparts (Clearly 1995).

However, constitutional reforms and economic liberalization based on the advice of international organizations have not yet produced a sizeable middle class, nor have these reforms narrowed the chasm between rich and poor that widened dramatically in the postcommunist era (Brooks 1998; Nixson, Suvd, and Walters 2000). In the long run, no system of government can be sustained by international donors alone. The ultimate guarantor of Mongolian democracy will have to be the Mongolian people. To appraise the state of Mongolia's democratic consolidation, we need to

understand how the new regime is perceived through the eyes of its ordinary citizens, who experienced the transition on a daily basis. We need to understand how much support the new regime enjoys from the public, how it fares when judged against the former regime, how much citizens trust institutions, how satisfied citizens are with existing channels of participation, and the extent to which they are committed to a democratic political culture, questions that have seldom been broached by Mongolia-watchers in the West.

This chapter offers initial answers to these questions. Data for this chapter come from the first-ever national random sample survey of political attitudes in Mongolia, conducted from October to December in 2002. Valid responses were collected from 1,144 randomly selected voting-age citizens across the country.

We found that although most Mongolians in 2002 acknowledged some genuine progress toward democracy, many appeared frustrated by the new regime's failure to deliver effective governance. Corruption was perceived to be rife, although most institutions of the body politic still retained the public's confidence. Although support for democratic rule was widespread, commitment to democratic principles was more moderate, not least because many citizens were cynical about their say in the system. On the whole, however, the vast majority of Mongolians were confident that the flaws of the system could be overcome, and by a margin of six to one envisioned a more democratic future for their country.

2. CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

We begin our analysis with a basic question: How do ordinary Mongolians understand democracy? As shown in chapter 1, table 1.3, Mongolians stood out among the countries surveyed for their strong identification of democracy with classic liberal democratic values. Fifty-nine percent associated democracy with freedom and liberty, and 25% associated it with political rights, institutions, and processes. Taken together, 71% of respondents selected one or both of these two categories, more than in any other country surveyed.

The second-largest category of responses in Mongolia associated democracy with social equality and justice. At 33%, the Mongolians were the second-most-likely nationality after the South Koreans to define democracy in this way. Although the two countries entered democracy from different

historical trajectories—Korea from a developmentalist capitalist state and Mongolia from a socialist background—their citizens seemed to expect the new regime to alleviate perceived inequities inherited from the past. As shown in our discussion of table 6.2 (see section 3.2), thus far Mongolians are far from satisfied with their new regime's performance in promoting economic equality.

Finally, like others in Asia, Mongolians who did not have very specific associations with democracy nonetheless viewed it favorably. Thirty-nine percent of respondents gave one or more responses that we coded either as "good government," "by and for the people," or "in general positive terms."

3. EVALUATING THE TRANSITION

Given the continuing dominance of the former ruling party, one may wonder whether the democratic transition of the 1990s—lauded by democracy-watchers in the West—was perceived as such by ordinary citizens. Our data suggest that ordinary Mongolians did recognize the transi-

TABLE 6.1 PERCEPTIONS OF PAST AND CURRENT REGIMES: MONGOLIA

(Percent of respondents)

REGIME TYPES	PAST REGIME	CURRENT REGIME
Very dictatorial (1–2)	30.9	3.4
Somewhat dictatorial (3–5)	49.1	23.5
Somewhat democratic (6–8)	13.9	58.8
Very democratic (9–10)	1.7	11.8
DK/NA	4.4	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Mean on a 10-point scale	3.6	6.4

Notes: Regime types are based on the respondent's ranking of the regime on a scale from 1, "complete dictatorship," to 10, "complete democracy." Scores of 5 and below are degrees of dictatorship and scores of 6 and above are degrees of democracy.

N = 1144.

DK/NA = Don't know/no answer.

tion, although they perceived it to be limited. Democratization's impact on the quality of governmental performance and the nation's political life were perceived as uneven.

3.1. PERCEPTIONS OF REGIME CHANGE

Respondents were asked to rate both the current and the past (in Mongolia, identified as pre-1990) regimes on a 10 point scale of democracy. As table 6.1 shows, the mean rating of the past regime was 3.6 and the mean score of the present regime was 6.4, which represents an increase of almost three points on the 10-point scale. While 80% of our respondents perceived the past regime as undemocratic, nearly as many (71%) perceived the current regime (even if it is controlled by the MPRP, the reformed Communist Party) as democratic. Yet in the eyes of our respondents, the new democracy remains of a limited nature, having yet to evolve into an advanced form.

The distribution of regime change scores is presented in figure 6.1. The distribution follows a normal bell-shaped curve centered around 3, the average score differential between past and current regimes. Just under 85% of the scores are positive, indicating that the vast majority of Mongolian citizens perceived at least some progress toward greater democracy. However, approximately 60% of the sample is clustered between 1 and 4, suggesting that most Mongolians saw the progress to be modest in extent. Overall this

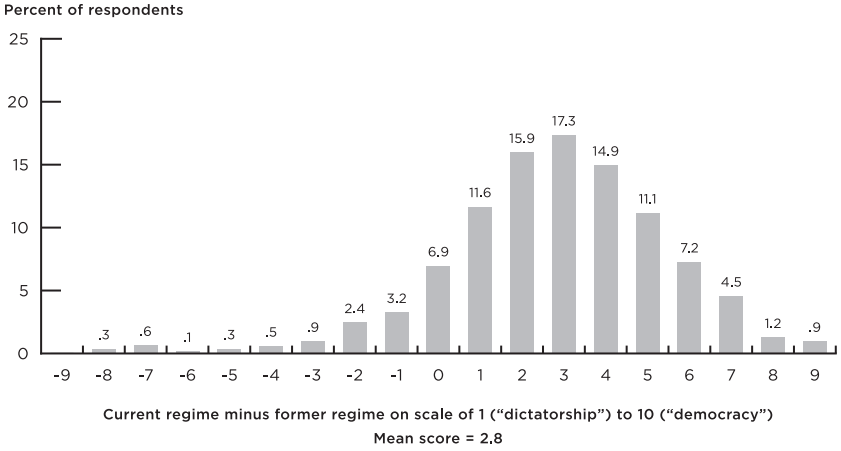

FIGURE 6.1 Perceived Regime Change: Mongolia

score distribution is fairly similar to those of other third-wave democracies in the survey, except for the Thais, who assigned noticeably higher scores to their transition.

3.2. COMPARING PAST AND PRESENT REGIMES

Respondents were asked to compare current circumstances with those under the former regime in nine major government performance domains. Table 6.2 shows that respondents perceived significant improvement in the area of democratic performance, but saw much to be improved in the area of socioeconomic policy performance.

The greatest improvements were felt in freedom of speech (+86%) and freedom of association (+85%). The remaining three areas of democratic performance also exhibited significant improvements. In fact the PDI scores for the five democratic performance domains average +52, indicating that Mongolians perceived substantial increases in their political freedoms as well as their ability to influence the political process. Mongolians registered the highest improvements in freedom of speech and freedom of association among all new democracies in the survey, perhaps reflecting the severe restrictions on civil liberties in the country's totalitarian past.

Despite progress in the political sphere, the current regime's policy performance drew negative evaluations, a problem common to many democratizing nations. In three of the four policy performance domains—corruption control, law and order, and economic equality—more Mongolians reported experiencing negative than positive consequences from the transition to democracy. Only in the domain of economic development did Mongolians report marked improvements in the wake of the shift to private ownership and a market economy. Despite a PDI score of +44 on economic development, the average PDI score of the socioeconomic policy domains is –17, one of the lowest among the countries surveyed. In fact, Mongolia's PDI scores in the areas of economic equality and law and order are the lowest among the third-wave democracies in the study. Because of the regimented nature of Mongolia's Soviet-era socioeconomic system, the impact of liberalization on these areas appears to have been severe.

Our finding of public concern over the deterioration of law and order is consistent with other evidence. The courts are the least trusted branch of government in contemporary Mongolia (see figure 6.2). In surveys conducted by the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

TABLE 6.2 **PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE OF CURRENT AND PAST REGIMES: MONGOLIA**

	MEAN[a]	SD[a]	NEGATIVE CHANGE[b]	POSITIVE CHANGE[b]	NO CHANGE[b]	PDI[c]	VALID %[d]
Democratic performance							
Freedom of speech	1.29	0.78	3.7	89.7	6.6	85.94	99.4
Freedom of association	1.34	0.77	3.1	88.5	8.3	85.42	98.3
Equal treatment	0.27	1.03	25.2	48.0	26.8	22.78	98.5
Popular influence	0.38	1.01	19.9	53.3	26.8	33.42	98.2
Independent judiciary	0.36	0.98	19.1	50.6	30.3	31.52	94.9
Average	0.73	0.92	14.2	66.0	19.7	51.81	97.9
Policy performance							
Anticorruption	-0.06	1.06	33.3	32.6	34.1	-0.63	97.2
Law and order	-0.72	1.03	66.5	13.8	19.7	-52.71	99.2
Economic development	0.50	0.96	18.4	62.2	19.4	43.83	99.3
Economic equality	-0.89	1.11	72.0	14.3	13.7	-57.69	99.2
Average	-0.29	1.04	47.5	30.7	21.7	-16.80	99.7

Notes: N = 1144.

Past regime is defined as pre-1990.

[a] Scale ranges from -2 (much worse) to +2 (much better).
[b] Percent of valid sample.
[c] PDI (percentage difference index) = percent seeing positive change minus percent seeing negative change.
[d] Percent of sample giving a valid answer to this question.

(MCCI) as well as the Mongolian Judicial Reform Project (JRP), judicial corruption was perceived to be widespread. Forty-two percent of the respondents in the MCCI survey regard judicial institutions as the "most corrupt" institution of the government.[4] In the JRP survey, 56% of respondents claim that legal institutions cannot be trusted because of corruption.[5]

Finally, it should be noted that Mongolians give economic equality the highest negative PDI rating at -58, an indication of the widening gap between rich and poor in the postcommunist era. This is a price Mongolians have paid for the privatization of property ownership associated with the transition to democracy.

4. APPRAISING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Considering the tangle of economic troubles inherited from the Soviet era, it is hardly surprising that the most tangible achievements of the new regime are perceived to have come in the political sphere.

Our data reveal that although Mongolians were relatively confident in their own participatory capabilities, they were generally pessimistic about their political efficacy. Several key institutions of the new regime were deeply mistrusted, and perceptions of corruption remained prevalent. However, Mongolians appeared content with the functioning of the current regime, with more than two-thirds (67%) expressing satisfaction with "the way democracy works in our country."

4.1. POLITICAL EFFICACY

Respondents were asked about their self-perceived ability to understand the complexities of politics and government and their perceived capacity to participate in politics. As shown in chapter 1, table 1.4, less than one-third of Mongolian respondents (30%) expressed confidence in their ability both to understand and to participate in politics. Another 33% found politics too complex for their comprehension but were confident in their ability to participate. A total of 63%, therefore, were confident in their participatory capacity.

How can this be explained, given Mongolia's heavily rural population, modest level of development, and lack of a vibrant civil society tradition? Some scholars point to the rigors of the nomadic lifestyle: Mongolians are

the "Marlboro Men" of the steppes—rugged, self-reliant, resourceful, and confident—but thoroughly embedded within their communities. Modern Mongolians are also said to draw inspiration from the great Genghis Khan's teachings about participatory government (he convened the first Great Huraldai [assembly] of all Mongols) and meritocratic equality—he promoted commanders without regard to birth and knew them all personally (Sabloff 2001). Another factor may be Mongolia's communist legacy. The mobilizational nature of communist regimes demands high levels of participation and politicization from their subjects. Voting was compulsory, as was membership in various youth groups. While not democratic, such participation familiarized the citizenry with the political domain and imbued them with an egalitarian ideology.

Paradoxically, when it comes to the perceived efficacy of popular participation, Mongolians proved no more optimistic than their neighbors. When asked to evaluate the statement, "The nation is run by a powerful few and ordinary citizens cannot do much about it," only 38% disagreed. For the statement, "People like me don't have any influence over what the government does," only 42% disagreed. Less than a quarter (23%) disagreed with both statements, whereas nearly half (45%) agreed with both. These figures are almost identical to those from other third-wave democracies in the region. If an extraordinary level of self-confidence in participatory abilities is coupled with a significantly more pedestrian level of perceived efficacy, Mongolia's political system may be characterized by a frustrated desire for popular political influence.[6]

4.2. PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

Political corruption is widely regarded as the most serious obstacle to the consolidation of new democracies. Cooter (1997) claims that a democratic state must not only provide for the protection of civil liberties and individual rights, but must also ensure that market forces are able to operate unhindered by cronyism and nepotism in order to uphold some notion of moral equity.

Corruption is a pervasive feature of political life in today's Mongolia. In April 2002, about six thousand Mongolians protested outside the national government's headquarters in Ulaanbaatar, demanding the resignation of several government ministers. These "corruption rallies" were organized by the opposition Democratic Party, which accused the ruling party of giving the Russians

more ownership rights to Mongolia's copper industry (Erdenet Mining Corporation) than had been publicly revealed. Protest rallies proliferated as the opposition hammered the government for cronyism and lack of transparency in the allocation of government contracts. The ruling party was accused of rewarding business deals to close associates and personal relatives of governmental ministers. Despite these accusations, national radio and television outlets rarely reported on corruption at the local and national levels, because they remained state owned and subject to tight government controls.[7]

The EAB survey included a number of items probing the respondent's perception of corruption (see table 6.3). When asked about the extent of corruption among officials at the national level, 57% believed "almost everyone" or "most officials" were corrupt. Officials at the local level did not fare much better—43% of the respondents believed either "almost everyone" or "most officials" were corrupt. Taken together, more than a third (35%) believed most national and local government officials to be corrupt, whereas those who did not believe most local or national officials to be corrupt amounted to only 28%.

A notable feature of political corruption in Mongolia is that citizens perceive national officials to be more corrupt than local officials. As noted, respondents were more likely to classify national level officials as almost all or mostly corrupt than to classify local level officials as such. The perception that hardly anyone is corrupt was significantly more common at the local level than at the national level (18% versus 4%). This contrasts with our findings from other countries in the EAB surveys, which typically show that national governments enjoy more popular confidence than local governments (see also Wang 2005).

Media coverage of major national corruption cases may have influenced this perception—and citizen perceptions may be correct. Whether due to narrower opportunities for corruption or to the bonds of local solidarity, local corruption may in fact be less pervasive in Mongolia than corruption at the national level.

4.3. INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

The EAB survey asked respondents how much trust they had in twelve governmental and political institutions. The results are presented in figure 6.2. Eight of the twelve institutions were trusted by at least half of our respondents. Those highly trusted included both national and local governments,

TABLE 6.3 PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS: MONGOLIA

(Percent of total sample)

	NATIONAL GOVERNMENT					
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are involved	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	DK/NA	Total
Hardly anyone is involved	2.8	7.1	4.7	1.4	2.4	**18.3**
Not a lot of officials are involved	0.5	**17.1**	**11.9**	3.3	0.6	**33.4**
Most officials are corrupt	0.5	5.1	**15.9**	5.9	0.4	**27.9**
Almost everyone is corrupt	0.2	1.7	4.6	8.2	—	**14.7**
DK/NA	-	1.0	0.9	0.4	3.4	5.7
Total	4.0	**31.9**	**38.0**	**19.3**	6.8	**100.0**

Notes: N = 1144.

Blank cell means no cases.

Percentages above 10 are in boldface.

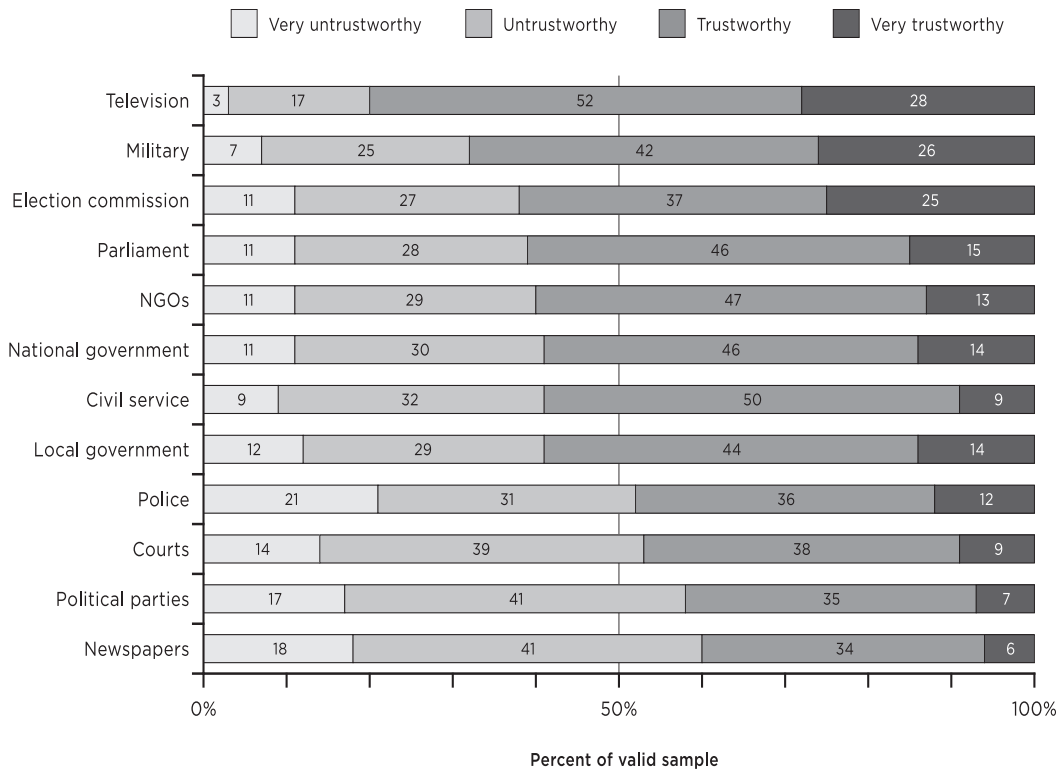

FIGURE 6.2 Trust in Institutions: Mongolia

despite widely held perceptions of corruption in both. However, political parties were regarded by a majority as untrustworthy, hardly unexpected considering that the country's first experience with multiparty politics was marked by four years of petty bickering that repeatedly brought governmental functions to a halt. Yet, the Great Hural (parliament)—scene of many unsightly squabbles—commanded an impressive amount of popular confidence.

Among the organs of the state, the military and the election commission were regarded as the two most trustworthy institutions. The positive rating of the election commission is noteworthy because opposition party legislators have accused the commission of being biased toward the ruling MPRP. While the civil service received reasonably good marks, the performance of the police and the courts failed to inspire confidence, again confirming the judiciary's disrepute among the citizenry.

In general, Mongolians placed greater faith in their societal institutions than in their government. Television was especially well regarded, earning the trust of nearly four out of five Mongolians, whereas only about half as many expressed faith in the print media. This was ironic, because the print media had begun to steer an independent course away from government monopoly, while the broadcast media remained state-owned at the time of our survey (in 2005, the parliament passed a law to privatize Mongolian National Radio and Television).

Over one hundred newspapers representing a wide array of political ideologies are freely circulated on a national basis, although the opposition still complains of lack of full access, especially to the major outlets. Meanwhile, the ruling parties have not hesitated to exercise their influence over television program content, sometimes denying access to the opposition. Even the Democratic Coalition lost its reformist zeal on the issue during its four years in power, an attitude it would later regret.[8]

Overall, Mongolian citizens exhibit a middling level of institutional trust compared to other countries in our survey. Like most of their neighbors, Mongolians place faith in the media and the military, and are suspicious of their government and contemptuous of political parties. While most East Asians hold their courts in high esteem, however, the legal system is one of the least trusted institutions in Mongolia; and while parliaments are seldom trusted across East Asia, most Mongolians cherish their Great Hural. Perhaps the public has not forgotten the heroic days of 1990, when tens of thousands demonstrated to demand multiparty elections and made the Great Hural the symbol of Mongolia's struggle for democracy.

5. COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY

The consolidation of new democracies hinges critically on the development of a culture that embraces democratic legitimacy and rejects antidemocratic alternatives. The Mongolian public's attitude toward democracy and its alternatives will be the focus of this section.

5.1. ATTACHMENT TO DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

We used five questions to estimate Mongolians' level of support for democracy in principle as well as in action. These questions addressed the desirability of democracy, the suitability of democracy, the preference for democracy, the efficacy of democracy, and the priority of democracy. The findings are summarized in chapter 1, table 1.8.

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale how democratic they want their current political regime to be. Ninety-two percent of Mongolians articulated a clear desire for democracy, choosing a score of 6 or above. A plurality of one-third (30%) expressed the desire for complete democracy, choosing 10 on the scale. At least in principle, most Mongolians wanted to live in a democracy as opposed to other alternatives.

Another 10-point scale was employed to gauge the respondent's evaluation of democratic suitability. As with desirability, a large majority (86%) believed democracy to be suitable for their nation, with more than one-quarter believing that complete democracy was suitable, choosing 10 on the scale. The EAB survey also asked respondents whether or not they believed that "democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society." A majority (78%) again replied affirmatively, although the figure was somewhat lower than the percentages expressing desirability and suitability.

The EAB survey asked respondents if they would always prefer democracy to authoritarian rule. Fifty-seven percent preferred democratic rule to authoritarian rule, while about a quarter expressed feelings of communist nostalgia, and about 20% did not believe that regime type matters. These results reveal a substantial reservoir of nostalgia for the former regime, which had been firmly rejected a decade ago. The economic dislocation created by the marketization of the economy is a contributing factor to this nostalgia. When asked to indicate their priority between economic development and democratic governance, a majority (54%) replied that economic development is far more or somewhat more important than democracy.

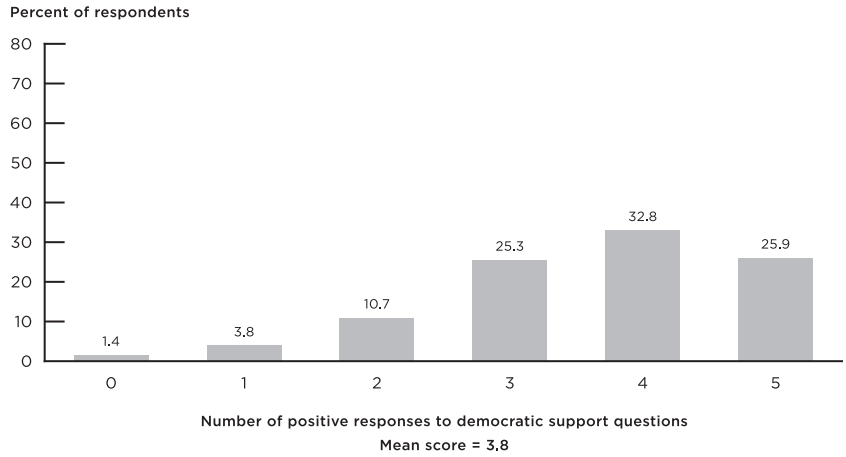

FIGURE 6.3 Democratic Support: Mongolia

Only about a quarter (26%) believed that democracy is somewhat more or far more important than development. A fifth of respondents considered economic and democratic development to be of equal importance. In all, fewer than half of Mongolians (45%) valued democracy at least as much as economic development.

On our 6-point summary measure of support for democracy Mongolians average 3.8, indicating a fairly robust level of democratic support (see figure 6.3). Like most of their neighbors in East Asia, Mongolians tend to be more supportive of democracy as a political ideal than as a political practice. Even among those who embrace democracy as the best method of governance, it is not always regarded as a higher priority than economic development.

5.2. DETACHMENT FROM AUTHORITARIANISM

The hardships of transition may foster rose-tinted memories of life during the communist past. The EAB survey asked respondents if they would support the return to some form of authoritarian rule. The results are displayed in chapter 1, table 1.9. Seventy-two percent of Mongolians rejected a return to one-party dictatorship. An even larger majority (86%) rejected military rule, which is remarkable considering the high level of trust enjoyed by the army. Some 66% of respondents rejected rule by technocratic experts and

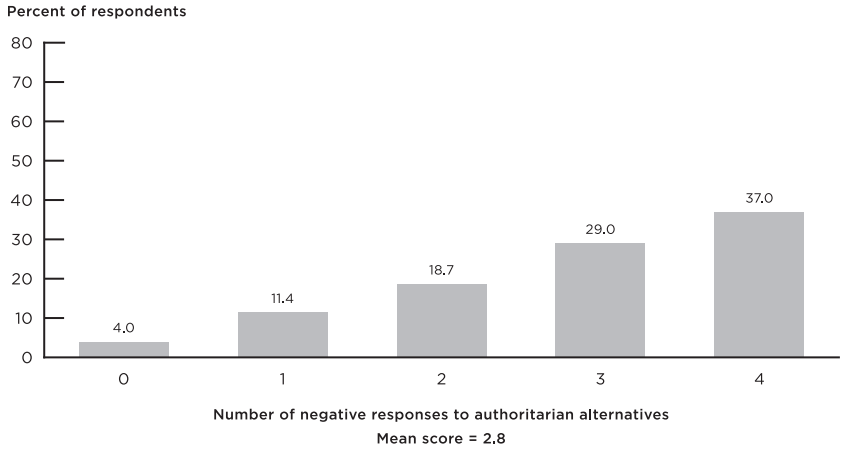

FIGURE 6.4 Authoritarian Detachment: Mongolia

59% turned down dictatorship by a strong leader. Yet only 37% of respondents rejected all four types of dictatorships, which suggested that economic collapse, deterioration in law and order, or failure to bridge class cleavages could lead to the rise of antidemocratic forces in the political arena.

We constructed a summary measure of authoritarian detachment by counting the number of authoritarian alternatives rejected by each respondent. On this index, the mean for the Mongolian sample stands at 2.8. As figure 6.4 shows, nearly over one-third (34%) remain open to two or more authoritarian possibilities. A significant number of Mongolians have yet to reject authoritarianism fully after more than a decade of democratic experience.

5.3. OVERALL COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY

When all our measures of democratic attachment and authoritarian detachment are combined, Mongolians' strong support for democracy comes into view. Figure 6.5 presents seven patterns of regime orientation (for definitions of the categories, see the notes to table 1.11, chapter 1). Roughly 69% of Mongolian respondents were clear supporters of democracy (not including skeptical supporters). Relatively small groups had mixed attitudes (11%) or attitudes of opposition (8%). By this criterion, Mongolia has to be viewed as one of the more consolidated democracies in our study.

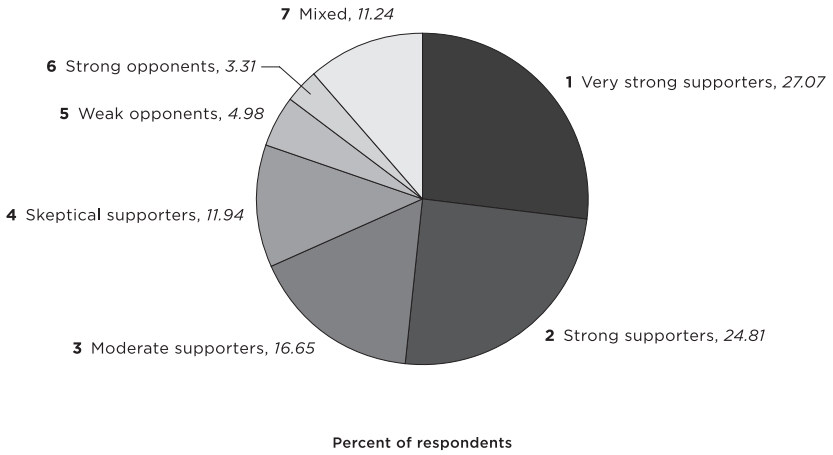

FIGURE 6.5 Patterns of Commitment to Democracy: Mongolia

6. EXPECTATIONS OF MONGOLIAN DEMOCRACY

As we have seen, Mongolia's experiment with democracy to date has been marked by uneven accomplishments. It has delivered on promises of freedom but fallen short in effective governance. The citizenry is skeptical of political leaders and institutions, and public support for democracy is shallow. Under these circumstances, popular optimism for the future of democracy might prove decisive for the prospects of consolidation. To assess these expectations, the EAB survey compared each respondent's current and future regime ratings on the 10-point scale.

The results are displayed in table 6.4. On the whole, Mongolians anticipated significant improvements in the development of their new democracy. On the 10-point scale, they expected the system to progress toward democracy by 1.6 points from 6.4 to 8.0 in the next five years. Nearly 40% thought that five years from the time of the survey they would live in a complete democracy, despite the fact that only 12% placed the current regime in the same category. Even most of the 27% who also considered the current regime to be of a dictatorial variety were optimistic about the future, as only 7% expected to live in an authoritarian regime in five years. In fact, close to 85% of Mongolians believed that in five years, they would live in at least a limited democracy.

TABLE 6.4 CURRENT AND EXPECTED FUTURE REGIME TYPE: MONGOLIA

(Percent of respondents)

RATING	CURRENT REGIME	FUTURE REGIME	CHANGE[a]
Very dictatorial (1–2)	3.4	0.8	-2.6
Somewhat dictatorial (3–5)	23.5	6.5	-17.0
Somewhat democratic (6–8)	58.8	44.9	-13.9
Very democratic (9–10)	11.8	39.9	28.1
DK/NA	2.6	8.0	5.5
Total	100.0	100.0	
Mean on a 10-point scale	6.4	8.0	1.6

Notes: N = 1144.

Scale runs from 1, "complete dictatorship," to 10, "complete democracy."

Future regime is five years from time of survey.

[a] Change in percent of respondents rating the regime at the given level when the object of evaluation shifts from the current to the future regime.

We classified our respondents' current and future regime ratings into seven patterns of expected regime change (see chapter 1, table 1.12). Only 7.9% of respondents expected the future regime to be authoritarian (either through persistence or reversal); 22.5% who viewed the current regime as not yet truly democratic expected a limited or advanced democratic transition; and a large majority of about 70% expected democracy either to struggle ahead slowly, to develop markedly, or to achieve consolidation.

By these measures, Mongolians were among the more optimistic citizens of the region. Their doubts about the achievements of the new democratic regime are tempered by optimism for the future.

7. CONCLUSION

Mongolia represents an East Asian case of double transition: unlike other third-wave democracies in the region, the country has undergone the democratization of communist one-party rule into a multiparty competitive system and the simultaneous transformation of a planned economy into

a free market economy. As many scholars (Linz and Stepan 1996a; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998) point out, the totalitarian nature of the communist past and the economic costs of market reform in former communist countries pose special obstacles to democratic consolidation.

Unlike South Korea and Taiwan, Mongolia lacks the cultural legacy of a vibrant civil society (Clearly 1995). Nor does it have an institutional legacy of checks and balances to safeguard constitutional rule. Democracy was introduced without the crucial institutions of civil society and the rule of law, a phenomenon termed "backward democratization" by Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin (2001). As Rose and Shin point out, transitions of this sort may be haunted by the specter of electoral authoritarianism, bedecked in the institutional trappings of democratic governance yet falling short of the standards of established democracies.

The EAB survey reveals that Mongolian democracy in 2002 was still some distance from consolidation as defined in chapter 1. Discontent over the perceived breakdown in law and order and economic equality simmered, and the public's distrust for their political leaders remained high. After more than a decade of democratic experience, a sizeable minority was not yet fully detached from authoritarian rule.

Yet, despite widespread perceptions of corruption among the country's leaders and a pervasive feeling of political impotence, large majorities of the public expressed themselves as satisfied with the performance of the current system, committed to democracy, and optimistic that the regime would become more democratic in the near future. Such positive attitudes carry a risk of complacency. If the sanguine attitudes of the citizenry are translated into a low level of public demand for greater democracy, there will be little pressure on the power elite to increase its supply.

NOTES

1. "Mongolia: Casino trial ends in sentences for legislators," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific—Political*, October 21, 1999. See also, "Mongolia corruption," *Agence France Presse—English*, May 6, 1999. Available online from LexisNexis.
2. The MPRP controlled just enough seats to prevent parliamentary overrule of a presidential veto. On one occasion, the MPRP president rejected the same coalition nominee for prime minister seven times in a row.
3. Calum MacLeod, "The Politics of the Zud," *Newsweek*, August 21, 2000.
4. Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, "Corruption in Business Sector," Ulaanbaatar, 2000, annex 4, question 11. The report is available through the chamber, whose Web site is www.mongolchamber.mn/en.

5. Robert La Mont, "Some Means of Addressing Judicial Corruption in Mongolia," August 1, 2002, at http://www.forum.mn/res_mat/Judicial%20Corruption%20in%20Mongolia.pdf.
6. Compare Mexico's "aspirational" political culture as characterized by Almond and Verba (1963:416).
7. Irja Halasz, "Thousands Protest Corruption in Mongolian Capital," *Global Policy Forum*, April 15, 2002. Accessed from: http://www.globalpolicy.org/nations/corrupt/2002/0415mongolia.htm.
8. Morris Rossabi, "Mongolia in the 1990s: From Commissars to Capitalists?" Accessed from http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/mongolia/links/rossabi.html. See also Severinghaus (2000).