Chapter 29
Electronic Voting System: Case of Mongolia

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ABSTRACT

Mongolia introduced a new electronic voting system for the first time for the 2012 parliamentary election. E-voting empowers citizens by making voting simpler and providing better opportunities for certain groups of citizens to participate in the election process. The electoral reform was one of the major steps the parliament carried out in order to restore public trust lost in the violent protests against the 2008 parliamentary election results. A free, transparent, and fair electoral system was important to correct the fraud in the old election system. This chapter examines the effectiveness of the mixed system of election, the electronic voting system, and other changes to the electoral system in Mongolia.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter will analyze the incidents that led to the change of election system, the introduction of electronic voting, and the effectiveness of these measures in the case of Mongolia. The election law of Mongolia was revised in December 2011 to introduce new changes to the electoral system. A mixed parallel electoral system was adopted instead of the majoritarian electoral system. Under the revised law, 28 of the 76 members of the State Great Khural (Mongolian parliament) are elected under a proportional representation system while the remaining 48 members are chosen by a majority vote within single-member districts. The law also introduced a 20% quota for women candidates to increase female representation in the parliament. The introduction of the electronic voting system and the use of other modern technologies in the parliamentary election was crucial for conducting a fair, transparent and legitimate election.

In previous elections, there were numerous allegations of election fraud, of which only a small number were documented and had concrete evidence. After the 2008 parliamentary election, protesters, dissatisfied with the election results and the alleged fraud, gathered in the central square of the capital city for a peaceful demonstration which turned into a violent riot and resulted in the death of five civilians. The incident indicated to the political leaders that, in order to conduct a free and fair election in conformity with the law

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and reestablish the popular trust in the representative democracy, the election system needed to be changed.

Among the challenges to achieving progress in elections, was the use of modern technologies such as electronic vote-counting machines, fingerprint recognition, and live monitoring of the polling stations with video cameras. Authorities believed that, by implementing these technologies, they would make the elections more efficient, cost effective, and help eliminate various rigging incidents that had occurred in the past. Furthermore, the government believed that this would also contribute to restoring public trust in the electoral process. However, there was a fear that adopting an electronic voting system would result in greater security risks and public mistrust if the system was implemented without careful planning and preparation time. In order to analyze the effectiveness of the electoral reform in Mongolia, this chapter will examine the following hypotheses:

- Overall benefits of e-voting outweigh its shortcomings when compared to the traditional paper voting system in Mongolia.
- E-voting empowers citizens by providing better opportunities for certain groups of people to access the election process.
- E-voting will restore public trust in the electoral system and its management as well as the political parties of Mongolia.
- E-voting will increase voter turnout by eliminating rigging incidents and election fraud.
- E-voting makes the voting process easier for both the citizens and the administration.
- A mixed system that uses both proportional and majority systems will help solve the problems of the FPTP system, such as wasted votes and disproportionality.
- The mixed system, along with the 20% quota for women candidates, will increase women representation.
- The introduction of e-voting requires time, planning and preparation to be successful.

The political events leading to the reform of the election system will be examined in detail. The use of electronic technologies in election along with the mixed system brought positive consequences in the case of Mongolia as the country struggles to prevent the negative impacts of "Dutch Disease" (increase in exploitation of natural resources and a decline in the manufacturing sector) through good governance, transparent public service, and resource management. This chapter has three sections. Section 1 provides background information about the events leading to the electoral reform of 2012. Section 2 focuses on the electoral reform and legislative framework. Section 3 discusses the implementation of the e-voting system and its effectiveness in Mongolia. This section also examines issues such as vote counting, voter participation, gender equality, prevention of vote buying, public trust, and international experiences in e-voting.

BACKGROUND

With a land area of 1.56 sq.km, Mongolia has the lowest population density (1.77 people per sq. km) in the world. (Kohn, 2008, p. 48) However, it has the potential to become a new Qatar as it is going through a period of remarkable economic growth. The Mongolian economy grew by 17.3% in 2011 and became one of the world's fastest growing economies.("Investing in Mongolia," 2012) The economy is projected to grow by 19% in 2013 (*Main directives for Mongolia's social and economic development in 2013*) and at an estimated 15-20% rate of increase per year until 2020.

Experts attribute the economic growth is mostly to foreign direct investment in the mining sector. The Mongolian economy is traditionally based on mobile livestock breeding and agriculture. Mongolia has vast untapped mineral deposits