

TOWARDS PERSONALIST PARTY: HOW DOES THE MONGOLIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AFFECT REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY ?

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The Mongolian constitutional amendment on executive power and decline of voters' trust in political parties are emerging as highly elevated risks stimulating the growth of personalization of politics. This situation is weakening the check and balance system in Mongolia's democracy. This study aims to explore how the constitutional amendments on party regulations and changes of central tendency of voting behavior are related to the rapid growth of personalization of party politics. It also focuses on capturing what patterns are appearing as consequences or effects of growth of political personalization. To find answers to my research questions, I employed grounded theory research approach that develop a theory from the qualitative and quantitative data. I generated primary data by having face-to-face interviews and collected secondary data from articles published in mass media by utilizing purposive sampling. As a grounded theory approach, I performed data collection and analysis concurrently. The results showed that voters are more likely to make their voting decisions on the basis of evaluations of individual candidates rather than parties. The evidences indicate that the constitutional amendments have significantly increased the powers of individual party leaders and helped them emerge as a personalized dominant leader. This personalization of party politics is accompanied with political monopolization. This is doing harm to the development of Mongolia's democracy.

Since the amendments of 2020 of Mongolia's Constitution of 1992, political personalization has become much more serious challenge to the representative democracy. The amendments provide the prime minister with very much higher power at the expense of serious declines of control powers of both parliament and presidential institution. The Prime Minister has almost absolute authority to appoint government members within 7 days even when he is not able to reach consensus with the President. The parliament can't influence the

appointment decision of Prime Minister. This situation has become a highly elevated risk to most seriously weaken check and balance system of democratic governance in Mongolia. This new situation is now at the center of concerns on recent controversial events in Mongolian politics. This intense national debate had begun few days before the State Great Khural of Mongolia passed the passages of amendment to the Constitution on November 14, 2019. First event occurred on November 08, 2020. "Shilen Nam" partnership submitted a complaint to the

Parliament of Mongolia in which they argued that the unification of more than one percent of eligible voters (over 21,000 signatures of eligible voters) is too high threshold for forming a political party. They claimed that the proposed amendment violates the constitutional right of citizens to freedom of association in political parties or other public organizations on the basis of social and personal interests and conviction. They also argued that the proposed passage would disband small parties having less than one percent of members or make them unite. After the State Great Khural approved the passages of amendments to the Constitution, the controversial events and debates have become more intense. The passage of the Constitution gives more power to the Prime Minister to ensure a stable government. However, the prime minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa suddenly offered his resignation on January 21, 2021 while there is a peaceful protest for press freedom and the right to assembly, along with overall dissatisfaction about the government's handling of COVID-19. The resignation of his cabinet was a shock surprise to both citizens and protesters. The protesters didn't demand the resignation of Prime minister. Some activists argue that the shock resignation is a "way of escaping from responsibility and accountability." The resignation shows that the amendment doesn't

ensure a stable and accountable government. Most recently, "the President Battulga Khaltmaa issued a degree and appealed to the Supreme Court to dissolve the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) on April 19 for unconstitutional activities". The incumbent refers to Democratic Party. On 28th April, the Socialist International rejected the President's appeal as an unconstitutional attempt. The State Great Khural where the Mongolian People's Party(MPP) holds a parliamentary supermajority approved a "hasty passage of an amendment to the Presidential Election Law of Mongolia on 29th April. It was a super quick that took only 7 minutes. The passage barred the incumbent from seeking reelection." The incumbent is a main rival to MPP. It occurred after the removal of a Constitutional Court judge. Democratic party parliament members went on a hunger strike after the general election commission refused to accept their candidate "N.Altankhuyag". They argue that they don't believe that there will be a fair presidential election when supermajority ruling party controls the judiciary, and constitutional court, and fabricate a Democratic Party. U.S. senators Marco Rubio and Patrick Leahy view these recent events as "a political crisis that would undermine the credibility of presidential election on 9th June." They wrote that "Last minute changes to election laws risk

undermining public confidence in the government and could give rise to instability.” This political crisis that has emerged as an intense national debate after passing the amendment of the Constitution is requiring the need to study how the constitutional amendment affects the Mongolia’s representative democracy.

Studies of the impact of party regulation on the behavior of political parties tend to compare party laws on selected topics such as regulatory framework of election campaigns, party finance, and corruption (Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002; IDEA, 2003; Katz and Mair, 2009; Bird, 2014; Sawyer and Gauja, 2016). Early studies focused on conceptualizing party regulation including objectives of legislation, definition of party, party activities, or party organization—the legislative target (Plasser 2002; Janda, 2005). Later studies examine the relationship between party regulations and corruption (Transparency International, 2004;). Evidence in some studies on party laws indicate that party regulations have different effects on political parties in advanced democracies and new democracies. For example, regulation requirements on party membership list may help party organization in advanced democracies, but it might decrease party competition in new democracies (Issacharoff and Pildes, 1998; Gregory, 2003). Other evidence in existing literature show

that countries use different alternative models that proscribe, permit, promote, protect, or prescribe parties for promoting strong and competitive parties (Janda, 2005). In recent decades, many studies proclaim that party regulations on finance and registration influence the types of parties, party formation costs, and number of political parties (Scherlis, 2014; Orr, 2015; Kelly, 2016). However, there is little knowledge on relationship between party regulations and growth of political personalization. Zof course, there have been many publications indicating the erosion of political groups and rise of personalized party politics (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Webb 2007; Baldacchino 2012; Corbett 2015; Corbett and Veenendaal 2018). However, we should know more on the effects of party regulations on the growth of personalization of politics. My research proposes three research questions. How do changes of party regulations aid the growth of personalized politics in unconsolidated democracies like Mongolia? “How does the growth of strong leaders in ruling parties influence internal party democracy?” and in consequence how does it affect the quality of representative democracy?

In this research, I will use grounded theory approach of qualitative research. I will apply thematic and content analysis to collect, analyze, and interpret qualitative data. This

study will attempt to contribute to the knowledge base by exploring the influence of party regulations on the emergence and growth of personalized politics.

A. Related Literature Review on Party Laws and Regulations

There are two key focus areas of studies on party laws and regulations. The first key focus area has studied the provisions of constitutional provisions, court laws, legislative statute, and executive order on the legal status, characteristics, and behavior of political parties as an organization in building, safeguarding, developing, and operating democracy (Katz and Mair, 1995; Janda 2005; Janda 2006; Bırtoa and Biezen, 2014). The second key focus area has conducted studies to get an in-depth understanding of party laws and regulations on selected topics such as election campaigns, party finance, corrupt political practices, and etc. (Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002; Austin and Tjernstrum, 2003; Elin Falguera, Samuel Jones and Magnus Ohman, 2014).

Most research of first key focus area describe how laws and regulations govern political parties in democratic countries. They refer to the regulations of political parties as organizations including party desired attributes and behaviors, roles and responsibilities in democratic system, membership, internal structure, and decision making. Findings show that

constitutions in democratic countries codify political parties as a democratic desirability (Biezen and Napel, 2014). This provision of constitution emphasizes what political parties should do and what political shouldn't do in democratic countries (Schneider, 1957; Kommers, 1997; Tsatsos 2002; Dumont et al. 2008). Most democratic constitutions establish the constructive role and relevance of political parties in the democratic systems (Pelizzo, 2004; Frankenberg 2006). Democratic constitutions don't tolerate political parties that have Nazi and Communist platforms (Kommers, 1997). Some study results indicate that significant differences of party laws and regulations emerged between new and old democracies after each wave of democracies Huntington (1991) observed (Biezen 2012). The first, second, third, and fourth waves of democracies brought countries to new constitution and consequently new codifications of political parties were written in the newly established constitutions (Elster, 1995; Kopecká, 1995).

According to existing literature, there are two dimensions measuring the positions of political parties that are codified in constitutions. They call them: the magnitude of party constitutionalization and range of party constitutionalization (Biezen & Borz 2012). Findings show that constitutions of some countries like Latvia, Iceland, and Luxembourg say

very little about political parties. Studies find that constitutions of other countries like Portugal and Greece contain a high number of provisions on political parties (Biezen and Napel, 2014). These research results suggest that new democracies in Portugal and Spain have a higher magnitude of party constitutionalization than their older ones. The difference between new and old democracies is a statistically significant at 0.05 level (Biezen & Borz 2012).

Some evidences in the existing literature reveal that countries use different constitutional and other law provisions of parties depending on what goals and strategies they have chosen to build ideal parties. Janda(2005) argues that countries use different regulation models of political parties for facilitating the emergence and growth of strong and competitive parties such as models of proscription, permission, promotion, protection, or prescription. For instance, the prescription model of party regulation could be used to produce an ideal type of parties that can contribute to the democratization in the given country. Many studies claim that constitutional provisions promoting party internal democracy is a good ground to protect the survival of democratic system (Katz, 2004; Mercel, 2006).

Studies on specific topics of party laws and regulations provide a new findings and in-depth understandings about the positive and negative

impacts of party finance (Biezen, 2004; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2004; Sawyer and Gauja, 2016). Biezen(2004) claims that parties have gradually been emerging as a necessary and desirable institutions for democratization in connection with the impact of direct involvement of state in internal affairs of parties through public funding. His finding says that certain party finance regulations focus on treating political parties as public utilities for achieving public purposes rather than as private associations based on voluntary principles. According to Sawyer and Gauja(2016), these public purposes cover “legislative recruitment, electoral competition and the formation of government and opposition, as well as developing policy agendas and mobilizing the vote”. Pinto-Duschinsky study (2004) shows that the finance issues of party organizations and campaign may give rise to the various problems of political corruption in many democracies.

Existing literature emphasizes appropriate and effective legal frameworks as the most important need for promoting the emergence and growth of competitive and influential political parties in unestablished and newer democracies. For this reason, the impact of party regulations and constitutional provisions on parties have been explored extensively by political scientists (Janda, 2005; Biezen 2004; Biezen and Borz, 2012;

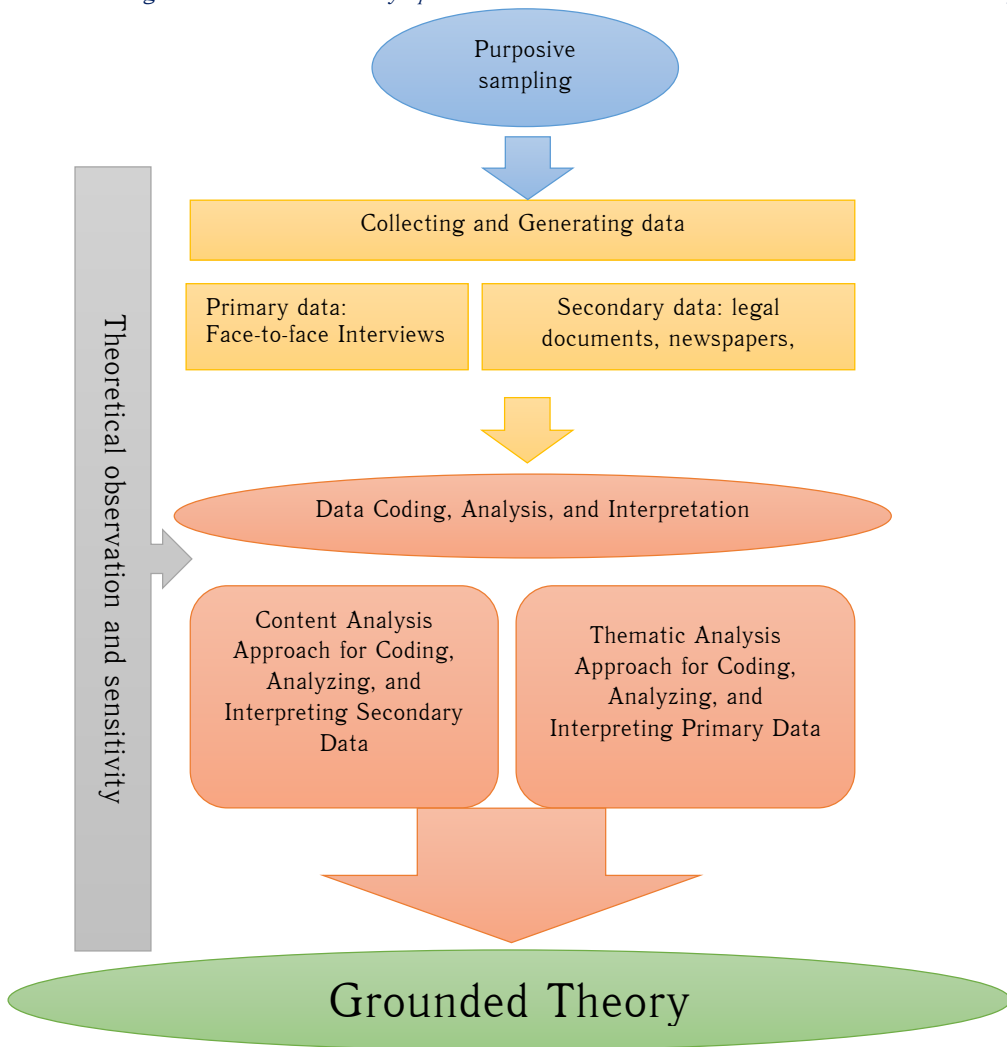
Bırtoa and Biezen, 2014). However, few studies have focused on generating an in-depth understanding about the impact of party laws on the emergence and growth of personalized party. This topic may remain open to be explored, because there have been very few opportunities or cases to observe such a phenomenon in the natural setting of real political life in certain countries. The recent events that are occurring in Mongolia's political life in association with the new passages of amendments to Mongolia's first democratic constitution are giving us a great opportunity to observe the phenomenon in the natural setting. Therefore, I have chosen the given topic to conduct the current research project with the hope to make a useful addition to the existing literature.

B. Research Design Framework and Preconceived Themes

This research will utilize the grounded theory research tradition.

The grounded theory approach has its roots in symbolic interactionism of Strauss and descriptive statistics of Glaser (Chamberlain-Salaun, Mills, and Usher:1-3, 2013; Tie, Birks, and Francis:1-2, 2019). The intent of grounded theory is to discover and develop theories inductively from both qualitative and quantitative data that are systematically collected and analyzed (Tie, Birks, and Francis:1-8, 2019). The grounded theory consists of meticulous applications of specific process and methods. Methods include "systematic modes, procedures or tools used for collection and analysis of data" that underpin the generation of a grounded theory (Mackenzie and Knipe:16, 2006). The process of a grounded theory is not linear. It is always iterative and recursive (Tie, Birks, and Francis, 2019). I developed a specific framework describing the process and methods of collecting and analyzing data in this study (see figure 1).

Figure 1. A Current Study-specific Research Framework of Data Collection and Analysis



As presented in the figure 1, I commence this study with purposive sampling to collect and generate data. I purposively select the interview participants and data sources that can help me find ideal answers to my research questions. As a unique feature of grounded theory research tradition, I will use the underpinning principle of concurrent data collection and analysis.

According to the underpinning principle, I collect, code, and analyze the initial data before I commence the next data collection.

For data analysis, I will utilize content and thematic analysis that are employed to analyze and interpret qualitative data. I will apply content analysis to understand how the meanings and semantic relationship of words and concepts of individuals

and political parties are related to the social context where personalized party politics is emerging in Mongolia. I will use thematic analysis to closely examine qualitative interview data to identify common themes including topics, ideas, and patterns that frequently come up. From their meanings, I expect to find out important things about participant's opinions and experiences that help me understand how personalized politics is rising since the amendments in the constitution. For both content and thematic analysis, researchers use coding methods. I will apply deductive approach that involves employing preconceived themes to code data. For constructing the preconceived themes for the study, I rely mainly on

the knowledge of the paper of Isaacs and Whitmore on personalized dominant parties in the post-Soviet space in 2014 and other publications (Bennet, 2012; Balmas, Rahat, Sheaffer and Shenhav, 2014; Holtz-Bacha, Langer, and Merkle, 2015). The preconceived themes aim to describe key attributes of personalized party.

As presented in the table 1, I will utilize three key themes to come to the data including (1) parties lacking policy-making role and powers of resource distributions, (2) rhetoric of party leaders as the 'stability and prosperity of the nation', and (3) 'monopolization of the electoral and legislative space' (Isaacs and Whitmore 2014: 700-705).

Table 1. Preconceived Themes for Categorizing Codes – Deductive Approach to Thematic Analysis

Themes	Description
Power Shift from the group to a party leader	This a centralizing type of personalized party where "power flows upwards from the group (e.g. political party, cabinet) to a single leader (e.g. party leader, prime minister, president)" (Balmas, Rahat, Sheaffer and Shenhav, 2014:37-38)
"Increasing Weight of Personal Vote"	This refer to candidates depending more on their reputation rather than the reputation of their respective parties (Balmas, Rahat, Sheaffer and Shenhav, 2014:39)
"Behavioural personalization of voters"	This is a voting behavior when voters make their voting decisions by evaluating individuals more than evaluating political parties.
Media personalization	There is an increasing focus on individual politicians at the expense of political parties.
Parties lacking policy-making role and powers of resource distributions	Parties where policy-making powers and resources are distributed more towards individual leadership rather than to institutions or collegial bodies.
Rhetoric of party leaders as the 'stability and prosperity of the nation'	Parties, which "promote a discourse concerning the centrality of party leaders as the stability and prosperity of the nation" in election campaign (Isaacs and Whitmore 2014: 700).
"Monopolization of the electoral and legislative space"	Parties that employ informal practices or "political technologies" to decrease the competitiveness of elections, control political sphere, and "maximize their dominance" by neutralizing and integrating

	powerful opposite parties (Isaacs and Whitmore 2014: 703) Decline of competitive opposite parties No competitive third party
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Using the above research design framework including preconceived themes, this research will focus on exploring how the party laws, most especially constitutional passage may affect the decline of party role and rise of personalized party. I will attempt to explain the relationship between them on the basis of information from face-to-face interviewees and discourses and meanings in the secondary data. As it is shown in the figure 1, this grounded theory research commences with purposive sampling. I concurrently perform initial data collection, analysis, and interpretation before collecting next round data. The theoretical sampling will be made until theoretical saturation is reached. I rely on two types data sources including primary and secondary data. For generating the primary data, I will have face-to-face interviews with 8 participants. I will code, analyze, and interpret the interview data using thematic analysis approach. I expect to reveal many useful codes from these interview transcripts that help me understand how the existing voting behavior influences the rapid growth of personalization of party politics in Mongolia. I will collect the secondary data from electronic archives of legal documents and Mongolia's mass media including articles, campaign

speeches, opinion pieces, and social media posts in newspapers and online reliable sources. I am confident that I will observe many useful information and data from the secondary data that relate to the rapid emergence of personalization in Mongolian party politics. The primary and secondary data will cover the time range of Mongolia's parliamentary election that was held in June, 2020 and coming Presidential election 2021 that will be held in June, 2021. I will use QDA Mine Lite 2.0.8 for coding data in the sets of text data and interview transcripts according to the preconceived themes.

C. Results of Qualitative Data Analysis

As it is written in the above section of research design and preconceived themes, I applied two ways of data generation and collection. They are primary and secondary data sources. For generating the primary data, I utilized an interview method. The interviews were held among 8 participants. I used the preconceived themes about voting behavior that is chosen in the previous section to analyze and interpret the data I generated from the interview transcripts. The themes is "behavioral personalization of voters".

In analyzing the interview data, three code categories were found which

will be discussed in this section. As it is presented in the table 2, these code categories were: (1) more likely to vote leaders than parties, (2)strongmen, and (3)vote by

evaluating individuals. This theme implies that there is a voting behavior where voters make their voting decisions by evaluating individuals more than evaluating political parties

Table 2. Three Codes into the Preconceived Theme “Behavioral Personalization of Voters”

Theme	Codes	Frequency	Percent
Behavioral personalization of voters	More likely to vote leaders than parties	7	17.1%
	Strongmen	12	29.3%
	Vote by evaluating individuals	22	53.7%
Total		41	100%

When I asked about how participants make their voting decisions, all participants answered that they evaluate individuals rather than political parties. Among 8 interviewees, 5 stated that they voted all candidates from the Mongolian People’s Party(MPP), because they supported the team for the Prime Minister Khurelsukh whom they evaluate as a strong and transformative leader. Even most of them said that they voted other candidates of MPP without seriously evaluating their campaign materials since they wanted to allow Prime Minister Khurelsukh to complete his reform he started in the past. One participant stressed that he voted the medical doctor Chinburen(MPP) as the most promising candidate who can transform the public health sector and voted other MPP

candidates in his constituency as a team for Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa although he didn’t believe in their competencies. Three participants who didn’t vote the candidates of MPP said that they voted individuals whom they believed most. They all stressed that they ignored the political party and evaluated personalities, biographies, and education of candidates in their respective constituencies to make their voting decisions. These interview information and data provide evidences that most participants prefer to evaluate individuals more than parties to reach their voting decisions. This evidence also shows that there is a decline of reputations of political parties among voters.

For the secondary data sources, I analyzed 17 articles, campaign

speeches, news, and legal documents that were collected from mass media including newspapers and online reliable sources. I employed six preconceived themes about personalization of politics to analyze their data and information. As presented in the table 3, these preconceived themes are media

personalization, powers' shift from the group to party leaders, increasing weight of personal vote, rhetoric of party leaders as the "stability and prosperity of the nation", "monopolization of the electoral and legislative space", and parties lacking policy-making role and powers of resource distributions.

Table 3 Themes and Codes of Personalization Politics

Category	Code	Frequency	Percent
Media personalization	Sensitive leader	4	17.6%
	Strong leader	8	
Power Shift from the group to a party leader	Leader-centered politics	4	5.9%
"Increasing Weight of Personal Vote"	Candidates focusing on their reputations	8	14.7%
	Leader of the nation	2	
Rhetoric of party leaders as the "stability and prosperity of the nation"	Rhetoric of Transformative Leader	3	4.4%
"Monopolization of the electoral and legislative space"	Neutralizing opposite party	18	50.0%
	Ineffective minor parties	2	
	Decline of powerful opposite parties	3	
	Unfair conditions	5	
	No strong third party rival	1	
	No Effective and strong opposite party	3	
	Integrating strong opposite force	2	
Parties lacking policy-making role and powers of resource distributions	Prime minister predominance	3	7.4%
	Decision-making powers' flow upward to party leaders	1	
	Dominant leaders	2	
Total		68	100%

The data presented in the table 3 clearly show how personalization of politics is becoming popular trend in Mongolian democracy. They reveal that all six preconceived themes that are recognized as key attributes of personalization of politics exist at the level of secondary data sources. There are totally 16 codes that

provide us the evidence of the existence of these six preconceived themes. The total frequency of these codes are 68. According to the statistics in the table 3, the most frequent theme of personalization of politics is "monopolization of the electoral and legislative space". The second most frequent one is media

personalization. The third most frequent one is “increasing weight of personal vote”. The fourth most frequent one is parties lacking policy-making role and powers of resource distributions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the beginning, this study aimed to derive a theory that will explain the relationship between the change of party regulations and the rise of personalized parties based on the qualitative data analysis. By analyzing the data, it has been found that there are two key patterns or themes that explain how political personalization is growing in Mongolia’s party politics. These results indicate that these two themes have produced a scenario of rapid expansion of monopolization of electoral and legislative space.

The first pattern is the decline of reputations of political parties among voters in association with their failures in dealing with domestic economic, social, and political problems. Political parties are the most important organizations for improving political life and consolidating democracy. Our findings of Mongolia’s case study indicate that among most of voters, the trust in political parties has disappeared, because their failures in implementing its role in improving political and social life of its home country and promoting the growth of national economy for a long time.

Therefore, most voters gave up evaluating programs and platforms of political parties to make their voting decisions since the last parliamentary election. Instead of reputations and ideologies of political parties, evaluating the competencies of individual candidates has already become the most popular voting decision-making pattern among Mongolian voters. As a result, individual political leaders have gained great opportunities to become a personalized dominant leader. It is now certain that this scenario has created space to individual politicians to occupy political arena at the cost of decline of political parties. This is what is currently happening to Mongolia’s party politics. This situation leads to the emergence of leader-centered politics that is closely related to the personalization of politics.

For the case of Mongolia, prominent leaders began to determine who will win the majority seats in the parliamentary election. Our findings show that MPP won the majority seats due to the reputation of Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa rather than the reputation of their party. Voters voted them to allow Khurelsukh Ukhnaa to complete his reform under the powerful support team in the parliament. Even some participants mentioned that they ignored competency weaknesses of some MPP candidates in their constituencies and voted them since they wanted to support the prime

minister's team. These evidences indicate that political personalization has already become the most significant explanatory variable determining who will become a winner in the political rival.

The second key pattern involves the effect of Mongolian constitutional amendments that increased the powers of prime minister at the expense of decline of president's powers and parliament's control. Some recent events suggest that the new situation that has emerged after approving the constitutional amendments has already given the former prime minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa an unexpected dominant leader status both over parliament and ruling MPP. In the last January, the Prime Minister Khurelsukh offered shock resignation during the minor peaceful protests against one patient case and government wrong response to COVID 19 and the parliament where MPP occupy absolute majority accepted his resignation by praising his leadership efforts. In May, the MPP nominated Khurelsukh as its candidate for the Presidential election with 100% of vote at MPP's conference. These findings show that powers are shifting from the group to the individual dominant leader.

The result of research represents that the rapid monopolization of electoral and legislative space is emerging as the most harmful consequences of political personalization. This research reveals that there are

various conditions and political practices that stimulate active monopolization of electoral and legislative space including neutralizing opposite party, decline of powerful opposite parties, and integrating powerful opposite forces. Recently, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party(MPRP) merged with the ruling MPP. This disabled parliament member Ganbaatar to be nominated by MPRP as a candidate for the Presidential election. He would be able to become a strong rival if he were nominated. MPP members hastily changed the rules of the presidential election and passed it within seven minutes by taking the full advantages of its absolute majority seats in the parliament. In association with this change, the incumbent Battulga Khaltmaa who could be another strong candidate for the Presidential election lost his opportunity to be re-elected. This picture shows that political personalization began to function as an explanatory variable that stimulates the growth of political monopolization.

Based on these findings, Mongolian legislators and political parties should consider the further negative effects of political personalization on Mongolian democracy. They should initiate responses to this harmful situation and recommend proposals to improve relevant constitutional amendments. Besides improving the constitutional amendments, it is also very important for them to make a

policy lobby or run policy advocacy activities to improve or change the existing party law, so that it will meet the needs of Mongolian democracy and political challenges. The emergence of personalized political parties and political monopolization could gradually motivate and stimulate the return of single dominant party that existed in the past history of former communist countries like Mongolia. Further research could study the relationship and interdependence among party regulations, political monopolization, and dominant ruling parties.

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