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TRANSFORMATION OF DISTRICT-LEVEL COMPETITION IN MONGOLIAN ELECTIONS, 1992–2020: TOWARDS TERRITORIAL HOMOGENIZATION (NATIONALIZATION) OF VOTER BEHAVIOUR?[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper tests the effects of the electoral reforms in all Mongolian elections between 1992 and 2020 by analysing national and district-level results. Especially, we address the question whether the pattern of the national competition is replicated also at the local level and the presence or absence of a (party system) projection from the local to the national level can corroborate the so-called nationalization thesis. We take different approaches. First, we use the Gallagher disproportionality index (LSq Index) to measure the disproportionality of an electoral outcome. Second, we use Laakso and Taagepera's effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) as a measure of parliamentary fragmentation, and effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) as a measure of concentration in the distribution of votes across parties. Third, we use graphic tool, simplex representation, to analyse the nature of competitiveness at district level. We have come to several conclusions. First, our analysis has shown that the tendency to symmetrical two-party competition was present in less than half of the elections, together with the increasing trend against bipolarization of Mongolian electoral politics. A very important finding has been also the confirmation of the continued importance of the urban-rural cleavage in Mongolia, which resulted in a different shape of party competition between the countryside and the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. Finally, the equilateral simplex representation has broadened our understanding of district-level electoral competition, when we address the so-called nationalization thesis. While some previous studies found the presence of some form of two-party system in almost all Mongolian elections, the simplex visualization of the competition showed that the district-level party system was far from nationalized, i.e., with the two nationally strong parties being strongest in the districts as well – quite the opposite.

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Introduction

On 24 June 2020, voters in Mongolia went to the polls to elect a new unicameral parliament (the Great State Khural) for the eighth time since the collapse of the former communist regime in 1990. As in previous elections, Mongolian electoral politics was affected by a reform adopted by the parliament half-a-year before the election – an amendment to the act on elections into Mongolia's legislature that introduced (like in the years 1992 and 2008) plurality vote in multi-member districts (MMDs), the so-called unlimited vote, or multiple vote, instead of first-past-the-post (FPTP) system in single-member districts (SMDs) used in 2016. The Mongolian election of 2020 thus confirmed the trend of frequent changes to the country's electoral laws; Mongolia used a specific modification of the two-round (TR) plurality-majority system in the elections of 1996, 2000 and 2004, and a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system in 2012 (see Maškarinec 2017: 149–152).

More importantly, as most of the electoral systems tended to exaggerate disproportionality and favour the two largest parties, the post-communist Mongolian People's Party (MPP)[2] and the Democratic Party (DP), Mongolian electoral competition alternated between extremely asymmetrical and rather more symmetrical (Croissant and Völkel 2012). However, although the tendency to bipolarization of Mongolian electoral politics was interrupted in the election of 2012, when the introduction of the MMM reoriented the party system (for the first time in Mongolian history) to multi-party system (see Maškarinec 2019), the implementation of the FPTP in 2016 suggested possible restoration of two-party system (see Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017).

Finally, while all previous Mongolian elections resulted in power alternation between governing and opposition parties, the parliamentary election in 2020 brought about one novelty, namely the second landslide victory of the MPP in a row. Thus, not only did MPP retain its dominant party status (with the exception of the 2012 election, the post-communists never received less than 40% of the

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[2] The Mongolian People's Party (MPP) is the former ruling party which had governed the country during the whole non-democratic period. Between 1924 and 2010 the MPP used the name Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). However, in November 2010, the party congress decided to rename the party to the Mongolian People's Party (MPP). In this paper, we use the label of MPP for the former MPRP.

vote), but for the first time, an incumbent party managed to retain a one-party government for the following electoral term, which suggests future possible transformation of the Mongolian party system.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the shape of district-level electoral competition in all Mongolian elections between 1992 and 2020 in the context of frequent electoral reforms and their impact on the shape of the party system. Especially, we address the research question whether the pattern of the national competition (oscillating between asymmetrical or more symmetrical two-party competition) is replicated also at the local level and the presence or absence of a (party system) projection from the local to the national level can corroborate the so-called nationalization thesis, i.e., that the Mongolian district-level competition have become similar in their electoral outcomes and that variance in district-level competition has decreased to the point where no significant electoral differences remain. Due to the frequent electoral engineering, Mongolia could serve as a very useful case for testing trend towards territorial homogenization (nationalization) of voter behaviour in the context of an emerging and transforming party system.

1. Research design
1.1 The nationalization of parties and party systems
Within the scope of research of multi-level governance, the concept of party system nationalization, accentuating significance of spatial aspects for an overall institutionalisation of party systems, has progressed to the forefront of interest (Jones and Mainwaring 2003; Caramani 2004; Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Bochsler 2006; Kasuya and Moenius 2008; Bochsler 2010; Harbers 2010; Pytelka 2015; de Miguel 2017; Harbers 2017; Panov and Ross 2018; Carson et al. 2020; Burke 2021; Shelemba and Shelemba 2021).

Party system nationalization may be defined as an extent within which individual parties evenly compete in different regions and thus it points at an uneven electoral gain across a territory of the state. Differences between different degrees of nationalization then impact both political strategies of individual actors and electoral behaviour as well as the patterns of political race (Jones and Mainwaring 2003).

In general, **Morgenstern, Swindle and Castagnoia** (2009) or **Schakel** (2013) mentioned several directions in the research of nationalization in the literature (see Morgenstern, Swindle, and Castagnoia 2009: 1322–1325; Schakel 2013: 212–214). The first one, dynamic nationalization analyses the level of

variation of party support amidst territorial units in time (Stokes 1967; Kawato 1987). The second one, static/distributional nationalization focuses on the extent to which there exists an even distribution of party support across territorial units (Jones and Mainwaring 2003; Caramani 2004; Bochsler 2010). Finally, the third direction, represented by party-linkage nationalization, monitors the extent to which the candidates link under common party brands, i.e., the process of party aggregation (Chhibber and Kollmann 2004; Johnston and Cutler 2009; Lago and Montero 2014).

However, other authors (see Kasuya and Moenius 2008; Morgenstern, Swindle, and Castagnoia 2009) argue for necessity to combine different dimensions of nationalization to a two-dimensional conception of party system nationalization. Such conception should include both the extent to which inter-party competition in each district is different from inter-party competition at the national aggregate level (inflation), as well as the variation across districts of the extent of each districts' contribution to national-level party system inflation (dispersion) (Kasuya and Moenius 2008). Similarly, **Hopkins** (2018) states that nationalization has two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the nationalization of vote choice (converging voting patterns between national and subnational elections), which can be seen as a by-product of partisan polarization or reliance of national partisan attachments in political decision making. In contrast, the second dimension concerns political engagement, and refers to situation, when the increasing salience of national-level politics could result in voters becoming less engaged with state or local politics in favour of more national politics. Furthermore, **Thorlakson** (2020) argues that the electoral system and social cleavage structure are important explanations of variation in party system structures and territorial concentration.

Besides, most literature addressing this topic, regardless of the choice of research area, almost entirely centres on the similarities of party systems in the elections to national parliaments and differences in the distribution of support for individual parties across geographic and administrative units. However, although **Caramani** (2004) speaks about a general trend towards territorial homogenization (nationalization) of voter behaviour in Western Europe, **Jones and Mainwaring** (2004) show that if research on party system nationalization extends to other areas outside Western Europe (Asia, Africa, Latin America), there is a much smaller degree of nationalization of party systems.

Similarly, recent research from US shows that while there is an increasing overlap between national and subnational electoral contests (e.g., the U.S.

Senate and gubernatorial elections that encompass the same constituencies but constitute markedly different job descriptions and mandated responsibilities), and national political forces are gaining greater influence over gubernatorial contests, regional variation in the nationalization of senatorial and gubernatorial politics is more evident in the latter office (see Sievert and McKee 2019). More importantly, the degree of nationalization is moderated by the degree of polarization among the national parties, and if there is a high national polarization, the state legislative election results are determined by states' orientations toward the national parties rather than the positions taken by state legislative parties (see Zingher and Richman 2018). Finally, the research in context of dominant party systems shows that the crystallization of a dominant party can increase the party system nationalization at the beginning of the dominant party's growth, as well as the dominant party can elevate the importance and operation of party labels (Seredina 2022)

1.2 Methods and research design

We take different approaches to studying electoral competition and party system nationalization at the level of Mongolian electoral districts.[3] First, we use the **Gallagher** (1991) disproportionality index (LSq Index) to measure the disproportionality of an electoral outcome, i.e., the difference between parties' shares of the votes and their shares of the seat in parliament. Second, we use **Laakso and Taagepera's** (1979) effective number of parliamentary parties (*ENPP*) as a measure of parliamentary fragmentation, and effective number of electoral parties (*ENEP*), calculated in each district, as a measure of concentration in the distribution of votes across parties.

Third, we use graphic tool, simplex representation, to analyse the nature of competitiveness at district level. The simplex representation visualizes to what extent the pattern of the national competition is replicated at the local level and may be used to corroborate the presence or absence of a (party system) projection from the local to the national level. The main advantage of this method is that it allows us to present and compare visually (i.e., more intuitively than other methods) the shape of district-level electoral competition between the most successful parties and smaller parties (Taagepera 2004). The simplex

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[3] In the elections under TRS (1996, 2000, 2004) and FPTP (2016) there were 76 SMDs, while in the elections under unlimited vote there were 26 MMDs (M = 2–4 in 1992 and 2008; M = 1–3 in the nominal tier of the MMM in 2012), or 29 MMDs in 2020 (M = 2–3), respectively (see Table 1 below).

representation uses barycentric (i.e., triangular) coordinates in an equilateral triangle (Saari 1994) to visualize the competitiveness of the nation's two strongest parties at district level. By doing so, we can assess to what extent those nationally strong parties are strong in the districts as well, and to what extent district-level electoral competition is nationalized.

In the simplex representation (Figure 1), two of the triangle's vertices (and the lines parallel to their connecting edges) represent the votes for the two most important national parties and the third vertex (and the line parallel to its connecting edge) those the remaining parties. The triangle is then divided into six segments (by drawing medians from each vertex), which correspond to the six possible linear orderings of preferences over three alternatives. The vote share of each of the two largest parties is plotted as a point on the median perpendicular to the edge that represents that party, and subsequently a line is drawn that is parallel to that edge of the triangle through that point; the resulting point (representing the form of competition in a district) is located at the intersection of both parallel lines (see Grofman et al. 2004: 279–281).

Figure 1: Simplex representation with midpoint bisectors
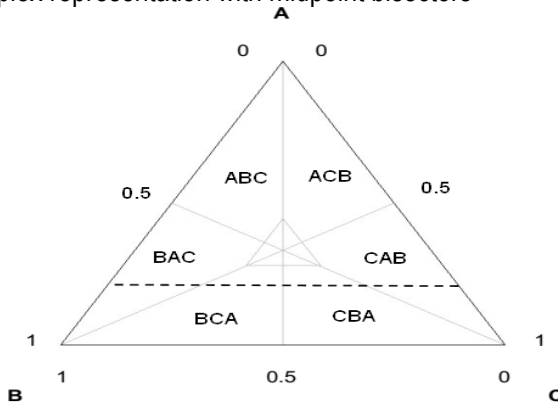
Source: Author.

In terms of interpretation, the closer the resulting point is to the given vertex, the more dominant the party is, while points located close to the triangle's bottom edge (which connects its bottom left and bottom right vertices, i.e., vertices B and C) represent dominance of the nation's two strongest parties in a highly nationalized party competition. Points located in the interior triangle suggest the existence of three almost equally strong parties. If the resulting point is located

right on the triangle's edge, then the party represented by that edge has zero electoral support and all votes in the district go to the two strongest parties (see Grofman et al. 2004: 282–284). Furthermore, the horizontal dashed line shows districts where candidates of the two nationally strongest parties in a given district were supported by more than 80% of the electorate, while the interior triangle shows areas of balanced three-party competition.

2   Historical background of Mongolian electoral reforms

In view of the frequent electoral reforms in Mongolia, it is necessary to briefly explain the background of these changes (see Table 1). Historically, the post-communist MPP was the main supporter of the FPTP, especially with regard to its strength in rural districts and its more developed organizational structure inherited from the era of the non-democratic regime, in which it had been the only existing party (see Ginsburg 1995: 464; Barkman 2005: 45; Fritz 2008: 773). In contrast, the DP, or its predecessor parties, plus other minor parties emerging after the Mongolian transition to democracy in 1990, were rather proponents of electoral systems that ensure fairer representation (see Batbayar 1993: 61; Severinghaus 1995: 71; Ginsburg 1997: 612).

More specifically, the strong support of the MPP in rural constituencies was the reason why the post-communists pushed for the adoption of the FPTP for the elections to the newly established unicameral parliament in 1992.[4] In contrast, the opposition parties (emerging after 1990), whose support was concentrated especially to large cities (specifically capital city of Ulaanbaatar), favoured a mixed electoral system. The result of a compromise between the MPP and the opposition parties was the adoption (on 8 April 1992) of a semi-proportional electoral system, so-called unlimited vote, or multiple vote (see Batbayar 1993: 61),[5] which, however, thanks to its majoritarian nature, significantly strengthened the MPP.[6]

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[4] Even with regard to the result of the founding election in 1990, in which Mongolia used a specific modifications of a two-round majority system in SMDs with no more than two candidates. In constituencies where more than two candidates were nominated, a "preliminary round" was held first, and two candidates who received the most votes could then participate in the election. As a result, the MPP won a landslide victory with 358 out of 430 seats (see Agwaandorjiin 1999: 191–203; Fritz 2008: 773–775).

[5] The unicameral parliament was elected by plurality vote in 26 electoral districts, with district magnitudes ranging from two to four seats.

[6] The ruling MPP captured 70 out of 76 seats (92.11%) with 56.90% of the vote, while its two main rivals – the Alliance coalition of the Mongolian National Progress Party (MNPP), the Mongolian Democratic

Considering the high disproportionality of the 1992 election results, all political parties agreed on the need for electoral reform. However, although an agreement was reached between the post-communists and the opposition in 1994, and the MPP agreed to the opposition's proposal to introduce a mixed system (the opposition parties assumed that they would benefit from a proportional component due to their higher support in urbanized areas), finally on 16 January 1996, the MPP-controlled parliament passed, despite protests from the opposition and the Mongolian president (see Severinghaus 1995: 71; Ginsburg 1997: 612), a controversial amendment to the electoral law that moved Mongolia to a two-round system (see Agwaandorjiin 1999: 191–203),[7] which has retained for the next three elections (1996, 2000, 2004).[8]

Even before the 2004 elections, however, there was a debate about the necessity of changing the electoral system. Aware of its strength in rural districts, the governing MPP preferred to maintain the existing two-round system (favouring rural districts in terms of the number of seats allocated), while smaller

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Party (MDP) and the United Party (UP), and the independently running Mongolian Social Democratic Party (MSDP), gained only four seats, or one seat, respectively, notwithstanding the vote share of 17.49% and 10.08%; the one remaining seat was captured by an independent candidate (cf. Agwaandorjiin 1999: 212–231; Barkmann 2005: 49–50). In response to the election defeat, the fragmented opposition entered a process of concentration and in October 1992, the MNPP merged with the MDP, the UP and the Mongolian Renewal Party (MRP) to form the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP) (cf. Sanders 2010: 469–471).

[7] All 76 members of parliament were to be elected by a specific modification of TRS (plurality-majority) in SMDs, with the required plurality of at least 25% of the vote for first-round victory. Otherwise, a second round was to be held between the two most successful candidates from the first round.

[8] Before the 1996 election, the Democratic Alliance (DA) coalition was formed by both major opposition parties, the MNDP and the MSDP, together with some smaller parties, and as a result, the MPP was voted out of power for the first time since 1921. The DA captured 50 out of 76 seats (65.79%) with 47.05% of the vote, while the incumbent MPP won only 25 seats (32.89%) with 40.49% of the vote (see Barkmann 2005: 53–55). However, due to a complete fragmentation of the DA before the 2000 election, the MPP enjoyed a landslide victory with 51.64% of the vote, taking 72 of the total of 76 seats (94.74%) (see Barkmann 2005: 58–61; Maškarinec 2017: 150–151). In response to the situation, a new wave of concentration occurred in the party system, similarly as before the election of 1996. In December 2000, the Democratic Party (DP) was established by a merger of the MNDP, the MSDP and some smaller parties and finally, at the end of 2003, the DP joined the Motherland – Mongolian Democratic New Socialist Party (M–MDNSP) and the Civil Courage – Republican Party (CC–RP) to form an election coalition (Motherland – Democracy Coalition, MDC). As a result, before the election of 2004, the main opposition parties ran against the MPP as a single coalition, unlike in 2000, and although the ruling MPP successfully defended its top position with 48.83% of the vote, it obtained only 36 seats, half its number from 2000. The MDC coalition fell behind the MPP by a margin of less than 4 percentage points (44.85%) and won 34 seats (see Schafferer 2005: 745–746).

opposition parties advocated the adoption of a proportional or mixed system and, perhaps surprisingly, the DP, as the largest opposition party, did not declare a clear position on the issue of the electoral system (see Wang 2004: 3–5). This can be connected to the formation of a party, in which several different parties united, which as factions retained a significant influence on the running of the party in the following period as well (see Dierkes 2012, 2016; Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017: 1038–1041).

Table 1: Development of the electoral system in Mongolia, 1990–2020

Year	Electoral system	Number of seats	Number of districts (district magnitude)	Threshold	Vote allocation method
1990	TRS [a]	430	430 (1)	-	Absolute majority
1992	UV	76	26 (2–4)	-	Relative majority
1996	TRS	76	76 (1)	-	Absolute majority / Relative majority[b]
2000	TRS	76	76 (1)	-	Absolute majority / Relative majority[b]
2004	TRS	76	76 (1)	-	Absolute majority / Relative majority[b]
2008	UV	76	26 (2–4)	-	Relative majority
2012	MMM	76	26 (1–3)	-	Relative majority[c]
			1 (28)	5% [d]	Hare quota[e]
2016	FPTP	76	76 (1)	-	Relative majority
2020	UV	76	29 (2–3)	-	Relative majority

Notes: FPTP – first-past-the-post system; MMM – mixed-member majoritarian system; TRS – two-round system; UV – unlimited vote.

a. Election took place in SMDs between two candidates. In SMDs where more than two candidates were nominated, a "preliminary round" was held first, and two candidates who received the most votes could then participate in the election, with the condition that at least 2/3 of the turnout in the given SMD.
b. The qualified plurality of at least 25% of the vote was required for first-round victory. Two candidates then advanced to the possible second round. The turnout of at least 50% was required in both rounds for the elections to be valid.
c. The qualified plurality of at least 28% of the vote was required for election. Otherwise, by-elections were held.
d. For political parties and coalitions of political parties.
e. Vacant seats was allocated using the largest remainder method.
Source: SEC (2020).

Soon after the 2004 elections, however, debates about the necessity of reforming the electoral system resurfaced. Above all, smaller parties criticized the two-round system for its lack of representativeness and significantly disproportionate results. Discussions about the need to reform the electoral system intensified in the second half of 2005, and after four months of parliamentary debates, Mongolian lawmakers (on 29 December 2005) adopted an amendment to the electoral law, marking a return to the 1992 electoral system (i.e., unlimited vote).[9]

The very fact that the electoral reform was adopted by a grand coalition of the MPP and the DP, after the electoral coalition of the MDC fell apart and the representatives of the smaller parties also left the government (see Wang 2005: 5–11), can explain that even before the 2008 elections, the demands of smaller parties for the introduction of a more proportional electoral system ensuring fairer representation were not heard. A role in this decision was also played by the fact that the DP moved (by integrating most of the stronger opposition parties) to the position of one of the two main parties of the Mongolian party system, and it no longer felt so threatened by the majoritarian impact of the chosen electoral design.[10]

Similarly, even before the 2012 elections, the issue of introducing the FPTP advocated by the MPP versus the proportional system preferred by the DP became the core of the dispute. However, after long discussions, both parties, which formed a grand coalition after the 2008 elections, reached a compromise on the introduction of a mixed electoral system. However, the fact that the resulting ratio of seats (48:28) significantly favoured the majority (nominal) tier of the electoral system was again rather a success of the MPP.[11]

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[9] Mongolia was divided into 26 multi-member districts copying the country's administrative regions. District magnitude ranged from 2 to 4 seats. Of the total of 76 seats, 20 (26.3%) were allocated to the six districts of the country's capital and the remaining 56 (73.7%) to "rural/regional" districts. There were eight two-seat, twelve three-seat and six four-seat districts.

[10] In the elections of 2008, the MPP achieved a clear victory, despite surpassing the DP by less than 4 percentage points. The MPP received 43.06% of the vote and 45 seats (59.21%), while the DP obtained 39.21% of the vote and only 28 seats (36.84%) (see Bulag 2009: 129–131).

[11] However, the post-communist split, when some dissenting party members, led by former Mongolian president Nambaryn Enkhbayar, broke away and, in January 2011, formed a new party under the original name (MPRP), resulted in a tentative disruption of the bipolarization of electoral politics in Mongolia. The DP won 31 seats (43.06%), the MPP 25 seats (34.72%), the Justice Coalition (the coalition of the MPRP and the MNDP) ranked third with 11 seats (15.28%), and the small parliamentary Civil Will – Green Party (CWGP) came out fourth with two seats (2.78%) (see Maškarinec 2019: 240–243).

Neither the 2016 parliamentary election was exception, and although the parliament decided on 25 December 2015 to maintain a mixed system for the 2016 elections, the Mongolian Constitutional Court brought new dynamics to the future development of party representation. On 22 April 2016, the Constitutional Court concluded, less than two months before the general election, that the list tier, as one of the mechanisms for distributing seats within MMM, was in breach of the Constitution. As a result, on 5 May, the parliament passed an amendment to the electoral law introducing a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system.

But, while historically the MPP preferred FPTP, and the DP and other smaller parties preferred more proportional electoral systems, in 2016, the roles partially reversed. It was a part of the DP's top leadership that started advocating FPTP (in spite of opposition by another part of the party leadership), while the MPP's position on FPTP was not entirely positive. One of the reasons behind the reluctance of the MPP (then an opposition party) was the concern that the ruling DP along with its coalition partners would, given their majority in the parliament, control the delimitation of SMDs in a way to advantage their own candidates. After all, these concerns were confirmed during pre-election parliamentary sessions as the newly defined electoral districts were often inconsistent with the limits of existing administrative or electoral districts (cf. Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017: 1041–1047; OSCE 2016: 6–7).

However, the efforts of the DP leadership were completely ineffective and confirmed the strength of the MPP in SMD contest. In 2016, the governing DP suffered a disastrous defeat with 33.12% of the vote but only 9 seats (11.84%), compared to 45.09% of the vote and 65 seats (85.53%) obtained by the MPP. Furthermore, the MPRP received only one seat (for 8.02% of the vote), compared to 11 seats of the Justice Coalition in the previous term, and its result confirmed the complete disruption of the tendency to multiparty competition observed in the election of 2012 (see Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017: 1032–1033; Maškarinec 2018: 517–518).

Furthermore, the FPTP, too, was short-lived, as an unlimited vote was implemented in Mongolia for the third time before the election of 2020.[12] The MPP thus used its dominance in the parliament and enforced an electoral system with

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[12] Mongolia was divided into 29 multi-member districts. District magnitude ranged from 2 to 3 seats. Of the total of 29 districts, 20 districts, with 52 seats (68.4%), were located in rural areas and the remaining 9 districts with 24 seats (31.6%) in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. This was in contrast to 2016, when 48 SMDs (63.2%) were located in rural areas and the remaining 28 SMDs (36.8%) in Ulaanbaatar.

which it historically had a very good experience. The outcomes of the 2020 election then confirmed expectations attributed to the unlimited vote (see Taagepera 2007: 29) which favoured the MPP. The governing MPP gained 44.96% of the vote, taking 62 of the total of 76 seats (81.58%), i.e. three fewer than in the year 2016, while the DP obtained 11 seats (14.47%) with 24.48% of the vote. Furthermore, the MPRP-led Our Coalition captured only one seat with 8.07%, like the Right Person Electorate Coalition with 5.24%, while the New Coalition remained without parliamentary representation despite gaining 5.34% of the vote; the one remaining seat was captured by an independent candidate. Overall, the results of the 2020 election confirmed the continuing disruption of Mongolian two-party competition (SEC 2020).

3   Fragmentation and concentration of Mongolian electoral competition in a historical perspective

After the transition to democracy in 1990 (see Fish 2001; Fritz 2002; Maškarinec 2010; Aagaard Seeberg 2018), Mongolian political competition was characterized by contestation between the former ruling party, MPP, which had governed the country since 1921, and political parties established after 1990 (parties of the so-called "democratic camp"). However, while the post-communist MPP inherited an extensive organizational structure from the communist period and also preserved high electoral support within the country's (especially rural) population (see Gluchowski and Grotz 2001: 495–509; Rossabi 2009: 236–250), the opposition was characterized by frequent establishing and merging of parties (see Fritz 2008: 775–782; Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017: 1038–1041).

Nevertheless, these changes in the political landscape were largely enacted by the same political leaders, who were merely switching from existing groups to new ones. The permanent fragmentation of the party spectrum was also facilitated by the absence of any substantial ideological or programmatic differences between Mongolia's main parties (see Barkmann 2005: 58–60; Prohl and Sumati 2008: 372–382; Sumati 2009: 99–106). Overall, electoral systems generally favoured the larger parties, as evidenced, for instance highly disproportionate electoral outcomes measured by Gallagher (1991) disproportionality (LSq) Index (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Gallagher's disproportionality index for parliamentary elections, 1992–2020
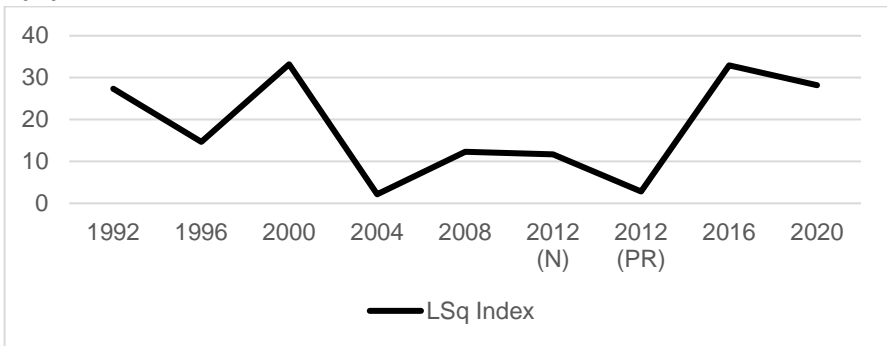
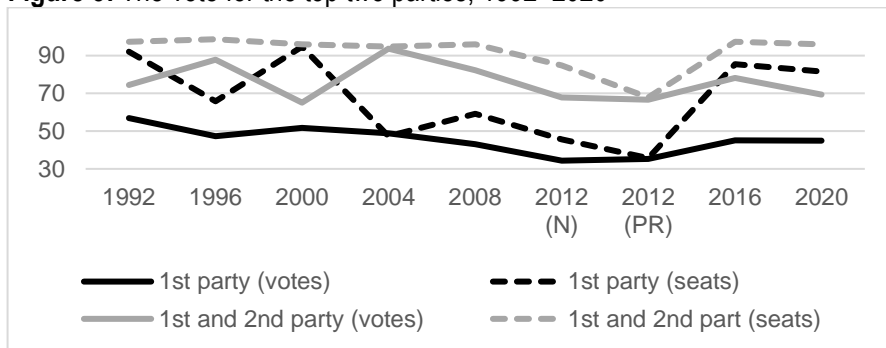Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.
Note: 2012 (PR): LSq Index value in the proportional representation tier; 2012 (N): LSq Index value in the nominal (district) tier.

This index is especially useful for comparing proportionality across electoral systems and across time. In Mongolia, the LSq Index was the lowest in 2004 and 2012 parliamentary elections (reaching 2.16 or 2.84) and the highest in 2000 and 2016 elections (equalling 33.19 or 32.91), although also in 1992 and 2020 elections the value of LSq Index approached 30. So, low disproportionality does not go hand in hand with the type of electoral system, but rather the fragmentation of the "democratic camp" (below) was decisive for the shape of the party system and disproportionality of electoral outcomes. More precisely, while in the elections when there was an united opposition against the MPP, or there was a brief questioning of the position of the MPP as one of the two main parties of the party system (after the split of the post-communists before the 2012 elections), disproportionality decreased significantly, the opposition split into several entities or significant disputes between different factions of the DP (reducing the party's credibility) on the contrary led to an increase in the dominance of the MPP and a significant increase in the disproportionality of election results.

Figure 3 presents the percentage of the votes and seats received by the two nationally strongest parties (the MPP and the DP, or its predecessors). The results demonstrate that the tendency to rise of two-party competition was (at the level of representation) interrupted only in 2012 elections (especially in proportional tier), and only in this election the combined share of seats of the top two parties fell below 90%. However, comparison of seats received by two

strongest parties suggested asymmetrical competition between top two parties as in half of elections (1992, 2000, 2016, 2020) only one party, the MPP, received the vast majority of the seats. More importantly, the tendency to symmetrical two-party competition, which was strengthened by the establishment of the DP in 2000, almost disappeared in last two elections.

**Figure 3:** The vote for the top two parties, 1992–2020

Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

Tendency to asymmetrical competition (or disruption of the bipolarization of Mongolian electoral competition) confirmed also values of *ENPP* (as a measure of parliamentary fragmentation), which in four elections (1992, 2000, 2016, 2020) oscillated between 1 and 1.5 (Figure 4). In contrast, only outputs of three elections (1996, 2004, 2008) suggested symmetrical two-party competition, and while the introduction of the MMM in 2012 resulted in emergence of multiparty competition – the effective number of parliamentary parties ranged between 2.68 (the district tier) and 3.35 (the PR tier), transition to FPTP in 2016 and unlimited vote in 2020 confirmed some expectations attributed to these electoral systems (see Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005: 35–47). Furthermore, results of both elections suggested the complete disruption of the tendency to multiparty competition observed in the elections of 2012. This finding was also confirmed by the *ENPP* value (1.34 or 1.46, respectively) which, at the parliamentary level, indicated a shift to one-party dominance.

On the other hand, values of *ENEP* (as a measure of concentration in the distribution of votes across parties) showed in first four elections (with exception of 2000 election) tendencies to two-party competition. Especially a concentration in the party system before the elections of 2004 (formation of an election coalition

Motherland – Democracy Coalition [MDC] between the DP, the Motherland – Mongolian Democratic New Socialist Party [M–MDNSP], and the Civil Courage – Republican Party [CC–RP]), when the main opposition parties ran against the MPP as a single coalition (like in the year 1996 in contrast to 2000), brought the party system closer to a two-party format (insofar as the MDC is viewed as a single contender), as indicated by the *ENEP* value of 2.27.

Figure 4: Distribution of *ENPP* and *ENPP*, 1992–2020 (nationwide)
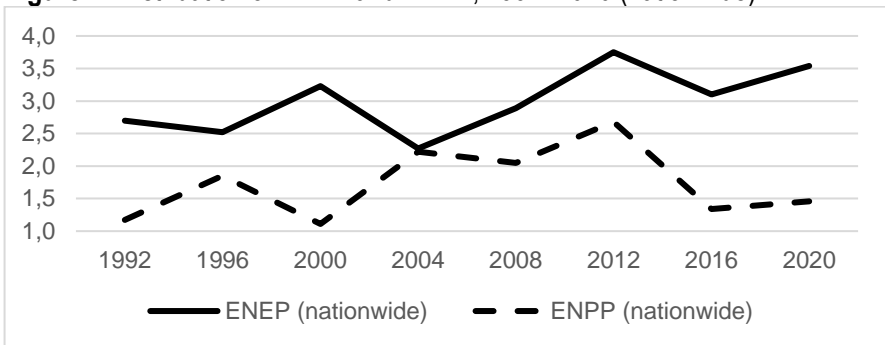
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.
Note: 2012: values of *ENEP* and *ENPP* in the nominal (district) tier.

Disruption of the bipolarization of Mongolian electoral competition (at the electoral level) thus occurred no earlier than 2012, together with the introduction of MMM. Although the *ENEP* value grew from 2.27 to 2.89 between the elections of 2004 and 2008, this growth was caused less by the electoral system change than by the fact that in contrast to 2004, when all major opposition parties ran against the MPP as the MDC, of which the DP was the main constituent, in 2008 the MPP was challenged by several opposition parties, although, in contrast to the past, the DP maintained the position of the strongest opposition party by far (see Bulag 2009: 129–131; Maškarinec 2014: 186–188).

Similarly, the trend against bipolarization of Mongolian electoral politics before the elections of 2012 was caused not only by the transition to MMM but, more importantly, also by the party system's de-concentration which, in contrast to the past, was not caused by parties of the 'democratic camp', but by the post-communist split, when some dissenting party members, led by former Mongolian president Nambaryn Enkhbayar, broke away and, in January 2011, formed a new party under the original name, the MPRP (see Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan

2017: 1047–1049).

Furthermore, Enkhbayar's MPRP formed an electoral coalition, the Justice Coalition, together with the MNDP, and the 2012 election results confirmed that the Justice Coalition's position was significantly different from that of third-place parties in past elections. The Justice Coalition received 11 seats (14.47%), which amounted to a historical success because no other third party in Mongolia had won more than one seat since 1992 (see Barkmann 2005: 49–61; Maškarinec 2019: 237–239), and the *ENEP* value grew from 2.89 to 3.62 (PR tier) or 3.75 (nominal tier) between the elections of 2008 and 2012.

De-concentration of the party system before the 2012 election was also confirmed by a comparison of the number of candidates. The average number of candidates per seat dropped from 7.9 in 2000 to 3.2 in 2004. This was even lower than in 1996 (4.0 candidates per seat). Also, the values of the 1996 and 2004 elections were similar to those of the 1992 and 2008 elections (3.9 and 4.7 candidates per seat, respectively), when Mongolia applied the unlimited vote. It was only the introduction of MMM in 2012 that brought about a significant increase in the number of candidates per seat. That number grew to 7.2, but while the nominal tier saw 4.0 candidates per mandate, even less than in 2008, that value grew to 12.6 in the list tier (through which only 28 of the 76 mandates were distributed), which confirms the list tier's strong effect on party system fragmentation (see Maškarinec 2019: 240–243).

Although the introduction of FPTP for the 2016 election resulted in a lower number of candidates per seat,[13] persistent de-concentration of the party system (at the electoral level) confirmed also level of the *ENEP* value of 3.10 which was the highest in all Mongolian elections, except the 2012 elections, when Mongolia used MMM. Overall, the results of the 2020 election confirmed the continuing disruption of two-party competition. The governing MPP received 62 seats (81.58%), i.e., three fewer than in the year 2016, while the DP obtained 11 seats (14.47%) compared to 9 seats in 2016. However, while the *ENPP* value (1.46) indicated, at the parliamentary level, a continuation of the MPP's one-party dominance, value of *ENEP*, measuring of concentration in the distribution of votes across parties, rose to 3.54.

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[13] The average number of candidates per seat reached: 3.9 in 1992, 4.0 in 1996, 7.9 in 2000, 3.2 in 2004, 4.7 in 2008, 7.2 in 2012 (4.0 in nominal tier compared to 12.6 in the list tier), 6.6 in 2016 and 8.0 in 2020.

Figure 5: Distribution of *ENEP* at the district level, 1992–2020 (1996–2004 and 2016: n = 76; 1992, 2008, 2012: n = 26; 2020: n = 29)
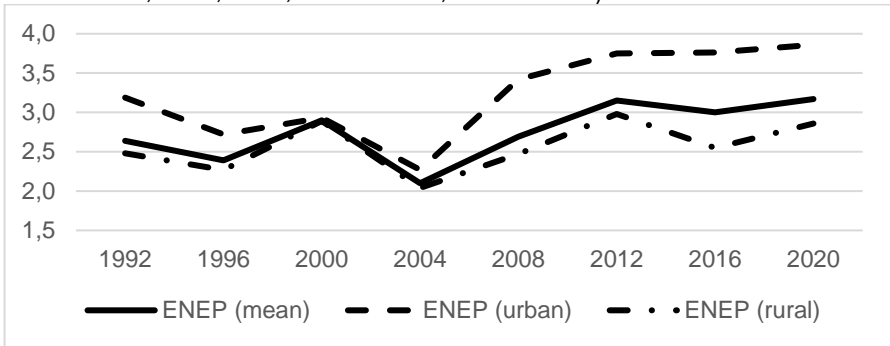
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

Furthermore, a comparison of *ENEP* values and parties' electoral gains between the regions and the capital city (Figure 5) demonstrated the increasing importance of the urban/rural cleavage in Mongolian politics. Whereas the mean value of *ENEP* reached 2.57 in rural districts, it was 3.24 in Ulaanbaatar. When we focus separately on elections that took place in SMDs and MMDs, we can see that the mean value of *ENEP* reached 2.44 in rural SMDs compared to 2.92 in rural SMDs. Similarly, MMDs in the countryside have the lower mean value of ENEP (2.70), in contrast to the capital city where ENEP reached 3.56. More importantly, since 2004, there is increasing gap between rural and urban districts, indicating prevalence of multi-party competition in Ulaanbaatar's districts.

4 Visualization of Mongolian district-level competition

As we mentioned above, the simplex representation is a useful tool for understanding the competitiveness of the nation's two strongest parties (blocs) at the district level. By doing so, we can assess to what extent those nationally strong parties/blocs are strong inthe districts as well, and to what extent district-level electoral competition is nationalized. In looking at the Mongolian election data, we opted to use vertices B and C to represent the two major national parties, showing the results from elections between 1992 and 2020 whenMongolia used SMDs or small MMDs to elect its parliamentary representation. Vertex B (on the left) represents the MPP's vote share (or the former MPRP's, respectively) and vertex C (on the right) the share of votes for the DP (or its predecessors).

Figures below (Figures 6–9) then offer highly contrasting patterns of

Mongolian electoral competition at the district level. When we start with the simplex representation for the election of 1992 in which Mongolia used the unlimited vote, we see that there were only very few districts with two-party competition between the two strongest parties nationally, but also with balanced three-party competition. The election results then confirmed the expectations attributed to this system, as the ruling post-communist MPP captured 70 out of 76 seats (92.11%) with 56.90% of the vote, while its two main rivals – the Alliance coalition, and the independently running MSDP, gained only four seats, or one seat, respectively (see Agwaandorjiin 1999: 212–231; Barkmann 2005: 49–50; Prohl and Sumati 2008: 41–42).

Thus, electoral competition in 1992 took place between the MPP, as the only strong party nationally at that time, and all other parties, which can be demonstrated by the presence of most points (76.92%) in the area between vertices B and A (segment BAC), i.e., districts where the competition took place between one of the nation's main parties and some of the nation-wide minor parties, when the MPP dominated in all of these districts. In contrast, there were no districts with electoral competition dominated by the Alliance (the second strongest party nationally), as all remaining districts (20.08%) were located in the left trapezoid (segment BCA), which represents MPP's dominance.

When we move to three elections in which Mongolia used TRS, we see that electoral competition in 1996 was, in stark contrast to 1992, in a large part of the districts (92.11%) characterized by more or less perfect competition between the two major parties (segments BCA and CBA), which resulted from the fact that in contrast to previous elections, in 1996 the MPP was challenged by the election coalition of all major opposition parties (the Democratic Alliance, DA). The winning DA captured 50 out of 76 seats (65.79%) with 47.05% of the vote, while the incumbent MPP won only 25 seats (32.89%) with 40.49% of the vote. The one remaining seat was captured by a candidate of the small Mongolian United Heritage Party (MUHP), sometimes also called the Mongolian Traditional United Party. Contrary to the elections of 1992, no independent candidate was successful (see Agwaandorjiin 1999: 212–231; Barkmann 2005: 53–57; Prohl and Sumati 2008: 44–48).

Figure 6: Equilateral simplex representations for Mongolian districts, 1992 (n = 26) and 1996 (n = 76)

1992 elections   1996 elections
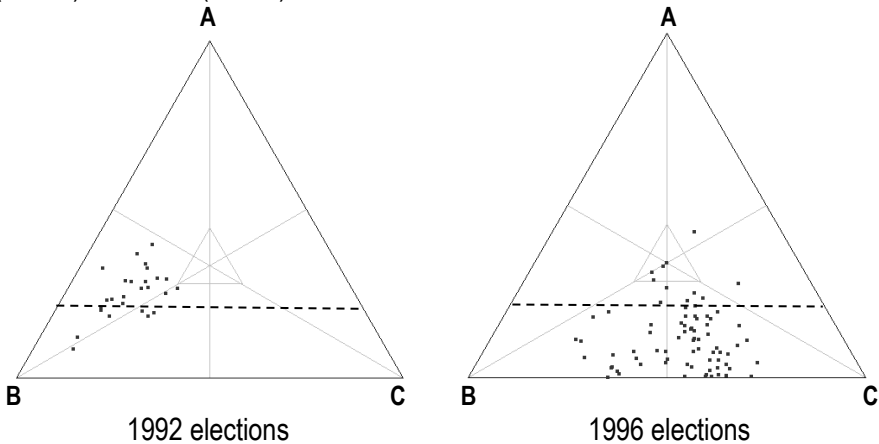
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

At the same time, most of the points are not close to either of the two vertices representing the strongest parties (B and C), which confirms the prevalent competitiveness of electoral competition in most districts. At the same time, this also suggests weak presence of districts with multiparty competition, as a large part of the SMDs is located under the horizontal line in the bottom part of the triangle (82.89%) which indicates districts where the combined vote share of the two largest parties (vertices B and C) is 80% or above. Similarly, the very limited number of SMDs with balanced three-party competition, located in the interior triangle (5.26%), confirmed that electoral competition in 1996 was mostly in compliance with expectations of two-party competition.

As with the previous indicators, comparison of the simplex representations, too, confirmed a dramatic transformation of Mongolian electoral competition in 2000 due to total fragmentation of the governing DA shortly before election (see Rossabi 2005: 69–96). As a result, in the 2000 election, the MPP was challenged by four different successors of the DA. So, parties of the former government coalition experienced a bitter defeat, while the post-communist MPPP enjoyed a landslide victory and restored its dominant (ultra-dominant) position. The MPP gained 51.64% of the vote, taking 72 of a total of 76 seats (94.74%), while the DA obtained only one seat with 13.35% of the vote. Similarly, the M-MDNSP captured one seat with 11.03%, and the CCP-MGP election coalition (coalition of the Civil

Courage Party and the Mongolian Green Party) one seat with 3.61% of the vote; the one remaining seat was captured by an independent candidate. In contrast, the MSDP (which had taken 13 out of DA's 50 seats in the election of 1996) remained without parliamentary representation, although it gained 9.14% of the vote, and so did the MDP with 1.82% of the vote (see Barkmann 2005: 58–61; Prohl and Sumati 2008: 47–49).

On the one hand, there are only very few SMDs with two-party competition between the two strongest parties nationally (11.84%) and almost none where their joint vote share exceeded 80% (9.21%), but also with balanced three-party competition (2.63%). This result confirmed that the electoral competition in 2000 took place between the MPP, as the only strong party nationally at that time, and all other parties, which can be demonstrated by the shift of most points to the area between vertices B and A (segments BAC and ABC).

In contrast to 2000, the simplex representation for the 2004 election results (Figure 7) confirmed strong tendencies to concentration in the party system, which resulted from the emergence of the DP or the MDC, respectively. Once again, like in the year 1996, the 2004 election results brought the party system closer to a two-party format. The ruling MPP defended its top position, yet with 48.83% of the vote, it obtained only 36 seats, half the number from 2000. The MDC coalition fell behind the MPP by less than 4% of the vote (44.85%) and won 34 seats. One seat in the parliament was obtained by the Republican Party (RP), with a vote share of 1.39%, and three seats by independent candidates (see Schafferer 2005: 742–746; Prohl and Sumati 2008: 51–52).

As a result, most districts (94.74%) showed an almost perfect competition between the two main actors (the MPP and the MDC) and a resulting very strong bipolar domination (segments BCA and CBA). The limited success of third- or worse-placed parties is indicated by the large number of districts located close to or on the line between vertices B and C. Remarkably, most of the points are located in the centre of that line, which attests to the competitiveness of the electoral contest and the limited number of districts with clear dominance of one of the main parties. The few exceptions that suggest dominance of third parties represent the districts won by independent candidates or popular politicians of minor parties (segment ABC). Overall, most of the SMDs is located under the horizontal line in the bottom part of the triangle (92.11%) which indicates districts where the combined vote share of the two largest parties (vertices B and C) is 80% or above.

Figure 7: Equilateral simplex representations for Mongolian districts, 2000 and 2004 (n = 76)

2000 elections   2004 elections
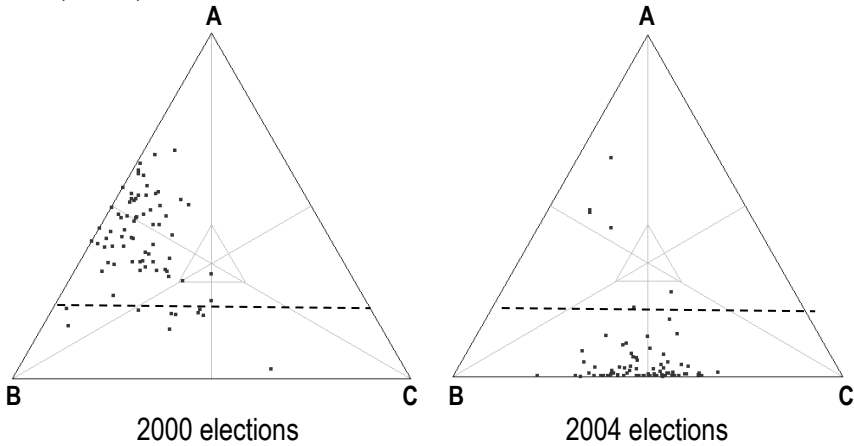
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

Neither did the reinstating of unlimited vote for the election of 2008 result in any major transformation of the Mongolian party system. The MPP was challenged by several opposition parties, although, in contrast to the past, the DP maintained the position of the strongest opposition party by far. The ruling MPP achieved a clear victory, as the party was able to transform 43.06% of the vote to 45 seats (59.21%), the DP obtained 39.21% of the vote but only 28 seats (36.84%), while remaining three seats were captured by two small parties and one independent candidate (see Bulag 2009: 129–131; Maškarinec 2014: 186–188). In short, the 2008 election results confirmed the party system's tendency to two-party system and the fact that other parties needed to nominate highly popular candidates in order to achieve electoral success.

Similarly, the simplex representation for the election of 2008 (Figure 8) shows the continuing features of two-party competition, as the electoral competition in a large part of the districts (84.62%) was characterized by more or less perfect competition between the two major parties (segments BCA and CBA). At the same time, most of the points are not close to either of the two vertices representing the strongest parties (B and C), which confirms the prevalent competitiveness of electoral competition in most districts, although especially in districts where the DP was stronger (segment CBA). At the same time, this is also weak presence of districts with multiparty competition (7.69%), as almost two

thirds of the districts located under the horizontal line in the bottom part of the triangle (61.54%) which indicates districts where the combined vote share of the two largest parties (vertices B and C) is 80% or above.

Figure 8: Equilateral simplex representations for Mongolian districts, 2008 and 2012 (n = 26)

2008 elections   2012 elections
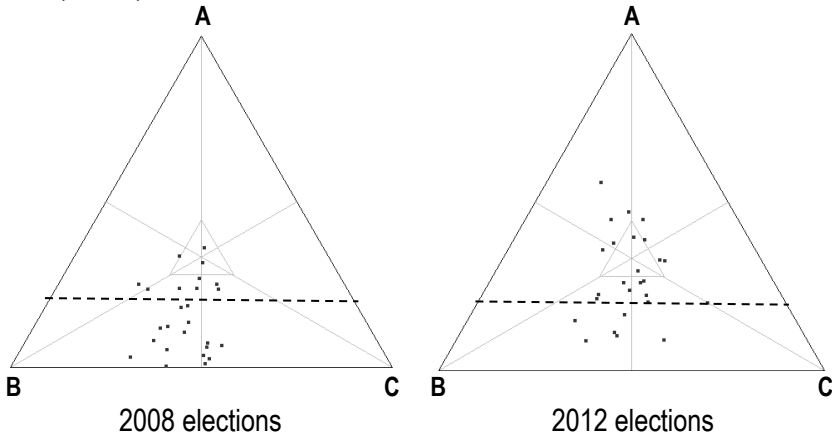
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

However, the tendency to bipolarization of Mongolian electoral politics was interrupted in the election of 2012, when the introduction of the MMM reoriented the party system (for the first time in Mongolian history) to multi-party system. The DP won 31 seats (40.79%), an increase of 3 seats compared to 2008. In contrast, with 25 seats (32.89%), the ruling MPP lost almost half of its seats from the previous election, although it maintained the position of the second largest party. The Justice Coalition ranked third with 11 seats (14.47%), which amounted to a historical success because no other third party in Mongolia had won more than one seat since 1992. The parliamentary Civil Will – Green Party (CWGP) came in fourth with two seats, i.e., the same number which both parties had secured in 2008, before they merged. Finally, independent candidates won three seats, compared to one in 2008 (see Maškarinec 2014: 186–188).

Similarly, the simplex representation for the Mongolian election of 2012 confirmed a dramatic transformation of Mongolian party system. First, there are only 53.85% of the districts with two-party competition between the two strongest parties nationally (segments BCA and CBA) and only less than a quarter of the

districts where their joint vote share exceeded 80% (23.08%). Second, there are 42.31% of the districts with strong third-place parties or where the competition took place between one of the nation's main parties and some other party. More importantly, in almost a fourth of the districts (23.08%), we found a dominance of third parties (segments ABC and ACB), together with 7.69% of the districts with balanced three-party competition (the interior triangle of the simplex representation).

However, the MMM, too, was short-lived, as a FPTP was implemented in Mongolia for the first time before the election of 2016. The winning MPP captured 65 out of 76 seats (85.53%) with 45.09% of the vote, while the incumbent DP won only 9 seats (11.84%) with 33.12% of the vote. The two remaining seats were captured by a candidate of the MPRP (compared to 11 seats of the Justice Coalition in the previous elections) and one by independent candidate. The election results thus showed (at the national level) the complete disruption of the tendency to multiparty competition observed in the elections of 2012 (see Dierkes 2017: 129–133; Maškarinec 2018: 517–518).

Furthermore, the simplex representation for the election of 2016 shows that the electoral competition was not only in stark contrast to the previous elections using SMDs (1996–2004), but also far away from theoretical assumptions about the effects of FPTP, suggesting voters' limited rationality and problems with strategic decisions, as the distribution of the points representing competition between the two nationally strongest parties confirms that many districts did not exhibit the characteristic traits of a more-or-less perfect competition between the two main parties.

All in all, there were several typical characteristics of Mongolia's electoral competition in 2016. First, there were a high number of districts with asymmetrical two-party system, with clear advantage of the MPP over the DP, as indicated by 57.89% of the SMDs in sector BCA (dominance of MPP) in contrast to 7.89% in sector CBA (dominance of DP). Second, we found a relatively large number of districts with clear dominance of the two strongest parties nationally. This is demonstrated by a half of the SMDs (52.63%) under the horizontal dashed line, where candidates of the two nationally strongest parties were supported by more than 80% of the electorate. At the same time, this was in stark contrast to previous elections when Mongolia used SMDs; in 1996 and 2004 this category included 82.89%, or 92.11% of SMDs, respectively. Third, we see a relatively high number of SMDs (13.16%) with balanced three-party competition (the interior triangle of the simplex representation). Fourth, there is a high number of SMDs with strong

third-place parties or where the competition took place between one of the nation's main parties (typically the MPP) and some other party (21.05%).

Figure 9: Equilateral simplex representations for Mongolian districts, 2016 (n = 76) and 2020 (n = 29)

2016 elections   2020 elections
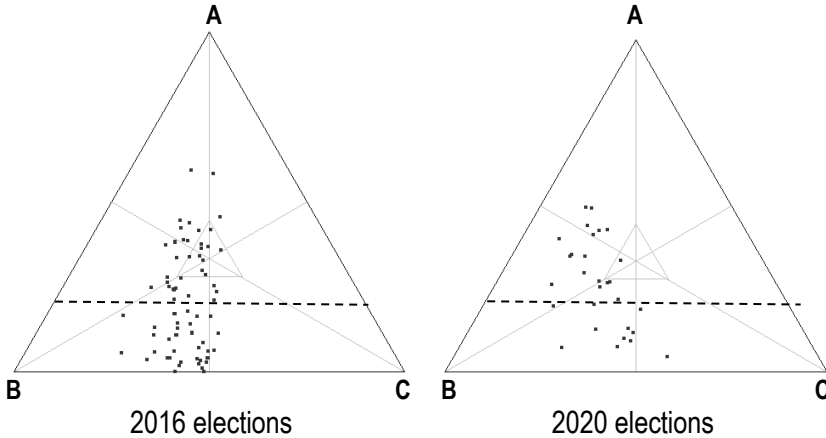
Source: SEC (2020), author's own calculations.

Finally, the results of the 2020 election confirmed the continuing disruption of two-party competition. The governing MPP gained 44.96% of the vote, taking 62 of the total of 76 seats (81.58%), i.e. three fewer than in the year 2016, while the DP obtained 11 seats (14.47%) with 24.48% of the vote. Furthermore, the MPRP-led Our Coalition captured only one seat with 8.07%, like the Right Person Electorate Coalition with 5.24%; the one remaining seat was captured by an independent candidate.

Overall, the change to unlimited vote transformed the electoral competition only in a limited way. As four years earlier, also in 2020 most of the points (41.38%) were located in the left trapezoid (sector BCA), which represents MPP's dominance, and only a limited number of points (6.90%) in the right trapezoid suggesting the dominance of the DP. Similarly, we found an extremely limited number of districts with clear dominance of the two strongest parties nationally, as demonstrated by the scarcity of points on the triangle's horizontal edge – especially compared to the 2004, and to a lesser extent the 1996 election, when a large number of districts were located directly on that edge, representing the almost complete absence of third or worse-placed parties.

However, in 2020, there was only one district (3.45%) in the interior triangle of the simplex representation showing balanced three-party competition, compared to 13.16% of SMDs in this sector in 2016. However, the biggest change in the 2020 election was a dramatic rise of districts with strong third-place parties, i.e., districts where the competition took place between one of the nation's main parties and some other party. While in 2016 these segments included a fifth of the districts (21.05%), with most points in segments ABC and BAC (in both cases 9.21%), in 2020 their share almost reached one-half (48.28%). At the same time, the growth was associated exclusively with competition between the MPP and some other party, when the MPP dominated in 27.59% and some of the nation-wide minor parties in 20.69% of the districts; in contrast, there were no districts with electoral competition dominated by the DP and some of the minor parties (segments CAB and ACB). Generally, the simplex visualization confirmed a continuing (and strengthening) decline of the DP and disruption of its position as the system's second largest party and a credible government alternative to the MPP.

Conclusions

The main aim of this paper has been to analyse the shape of district-level electoral competition in all Mongolian elections between 1992 and 2020. Especially, we address the question whether the pattern of the national competition is replicated also at the local level. So, we focused on question, whether the presence or absence of a (party system) projection from the local to the national level can corroborate the so-called nationalization thesis, i.e., that the Mongolian district-level competition has become similar in their electoral outcomes and that variance in district-level competition has decreased to the point where no significant electoral differences remain. Due to the frequent electoral engineering, Mongolia could serve as a very useful case for testing trend towards territorial homogenization (nationalization) of voter behaviour in the context of an emerging and transforming party system.

Having used some alternative methods to study electoral competition, we have come to several conclusions. First, while **Croissant and Völkel** (2012) classified Mongolia between 1990 and 2008 as having a two-party system with one dominant party and, similarly, **Reilly** (2007) considered Mongolia as having a two-party system between 1992 and 2004 (especially in 2004), our analysis (using the *ENPP* as a measure of parliamentary fragmentation) has shown that

the tendency to symmetrical two-party competition was present in less than half of the elections, and it almost disappeared in last two elections. So, transformation of the party system does not go hand in hand with the type of electoral system, but in most cases rather the fragmentation of the "democratic camp" was decisive for the shape of the party system, resulting in the frequent one-party (the MPP) dominance. Similarly, values of *ENEP* (as a measure of concentration in the distribution of votes across parties) showed the increasing trend against bipolarization of Mongolian electoral politics, which was caused not only by the transition to MMM in 2012, because persistent de-concentration of the party system prevailed also after the introduction of FPTP for the 2016 election, or unlimited vote for the 2020 election.

A very important finding in this context has been also the confirmation of the continued importance of the urban-rural cleavage in Mongolia, which resulted in a different shape of party competition between the countryside and Ulaanbaatar. This can be illustrated by the higher mean value of *ENEP* in Ulaanbaatar (3.86) compared to the countryside (2.86), as well as by the percentage of the vote received by the two nationally strongest parties (the MPP and the DP) in 2020. Both parties combined received 78.17% of the rural vote, compared to 58.77% in Ulaanbaatar, so the outcome of the election in the capital city was in stark contrast to bipolar competition. More importantly, their combined gains decreased by more than eight percentage points compared to 2016 (86.54% of the rural vote and 66.95% in Ulaanbaatar), with almost half of Ulaanbaatar voters having opted for an alternative outside the two major parties.

Especially district-level competition in Ulaanbaatar in the 2020 election shows increasing features of asymmetrical competition between the MPP with its dominant (ultra-dominant) position, the DP which again (as in 2000, or in 2016) lost its position as the system's second party and a credible government alternative to the MPP, and several small parties (as well as independents) which generally were stronger in Ulaanbaatar but were crippled by the majority logic of electoral system; the Right Person Electorate Coalition received 9.84% and only one seat in Ulaanbaatar, while Our Coalition with 8.87% of the vote, New Coalition with 6.72% and independent candidates with 10.78% (combined) received no seats in the capital city.

Finally, the equilateral simplex representation has broadened our understanding of district-level electoral competition, when we address the so-called nationalization thesis, i.e., the question whether the pattern of the national competition is replicated also at the local level, too. While some previous studies

(using the Nagayama diagrams) found the presence of some form of two-party system in almost all Mongolian elections (see Maškarinec 2017: 154–155; Maškarinec 2018: 520–523), the simplex visualization of the competition showed that the district-level party system was far from nationalized, i.e. with the two nationally strong parties being strongest in the districts as well – quite the opposite. The main reason was the considerable number of districts with asymmetrical electoral competition in most of Mongolian elections. As a result, the electoral competition in a number of districts did not take place between the MPP and the DP as the system's main parties but between the MPP and some other party.

More importantly, as this type of party competition existed in last two parliamentary elections of 2016 and 2020 (i.e., for the second time in a row), it cast doubt on the DP's position as the credible government alternative to the MPP. For the Mongolian case, this implies that the national-level dominance of the MPP has deeper consequences, namely the absence of a real contender to the post-communist MPP, one that would embody a genuinely credible government alternative for the voters, especially in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar where minor parties and independents have considerably risen in strength. If this trend continues, it may result in transformation of the Mongolian party system, for instance to a predominant party system (Sartori 1976). Overall, we can only hypothesize whether future of Mongolian party politics will be accompanied by the DP's recovery as the system's second largest party, the emergence of a new second system party, or whether the tendencies to asymmetrical electoral competition are in line with **Grofman's** (1999) 'embeddedness effects', i.e. the assumption that electoral rules (institutional structure) are embedded within a wider political system that provides its own set of incentives and as a such represents a highly endogenous phenomenon whose reproduction is affected by processes outside institutional factors.

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