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Deliberative Polling and Democratic Institutionalization in Mongolia: A Comparative Study of Four Cases (2015–2023)

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Abstract: Mongolia adopted a new Constitution in 1992 with the goal of building a humane, civil, and democratic society in which citizens exercise state power directly and through elected representatives. The transition from socialism to democracy brought rapid political, economic, and socio-cultural change, while limited public awareness, restricted access to information, and weak institutional support constrained effective citizen participation. This study examines four deliberative polling cases conducted in Mongolia between 2015 and 2023 to analyze the institutional, procedural, and event-driven factors shaping the development and institutionalization of deliberative polling in public policymaking. Using comparative case analysis, qualitative review, stakeholder evaluation, and process tracing, the study investigates how deliberative polling has evolved during this period. Against this background, this study analyzes four deliberative polling cases conducted in Mongolia between 2015 and 2023. The research objective is to examine the institutional and procedural factors shaping the development and institutionalization of deliberative polling within public policymaking. The findings show that Mongolia has established a relatively strong legal framework for citizen participation, particularly following the adoption of the Law on Deliberative Polling in 2017. However, the practical institutionalization of deliberative democracy remains incomplete. Key challenges include weak inter-agency coordination, limited transparency, inadequate access to information, and an underdeveloped culture of citizen deliberation. These factors have constrained the effective implementation of deliberative polling and limited its influence on policymaking. Despite these challenges, recent deliberative initiatives represent important progress toward strengthening informed citizen participation and improving the connection between public deliberation and policy decisions. The study concludes that stronger institutional coordination, better information quality, and a more developed deliberative culture are essential for embedding deliberative polling as a sustainable component of Mongolia's democratic governance."

Keywords: deliberative democracy, deliberative polling, citizen participation, public policy, constitutional reform, governance, Mongolia

Introduction

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The adoption of the new Constitution of Mongolia in 1992 marked a historic turning point in the country's political development by establishing the foundations of a democratic state governed by the rule of law and guaranteeing citizens' rights to participate in state affairs both directly and through their elected representatives. Mongolia's modern political history may broadly be divided into two periods: the socialist era of the Mongolian People's Republic (1921–1990) and the democratic period that began in 1990. The transition from a centrally planned socialist system to a democratic political order and market economy generated profound political, economic, and socio-cultural transformations within a relatively short period. Although democratic institutions were established rapidly, the transition also exposed challenges related to public participation. Limited access to information, insufficient civic education, weak institutional mechanisms, and inadequate public experience with democratic governance constrained citizens' ability to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes. Consequently, strengthening public participation became an essential component of democratic consolidation in Mongolia.

Citizen participation occupies a central position in democratic governance because it enhances the legitimacy, accountability, and responsiveness of public decision-making. Mongolia's democratic transition was itself initiated through peaceful civic mobilization and public demands for political reform. The participation of citizens in mass

demonstrations during the democratic movement of 1990 demonstrated the public's commitment to political change and underscored the importance of direct civic engagement in shaping the country's future political trajectory. However, democratic participation extends beyond electoral processes. Contemporary democratic theory emphasizes the importance of creating institutional opportunities through which citizens can contribute to public policymaking, express informed preferences, and engage in constructive dialogue concerning public affairs. Within this context, deliberative mechanisms have increasingly attracted scholarly and practical attention as tools for strengthening democratic governance and improving the quality of public decision-making.

The concept of deliberative democracy emerged as a response to perceived limitations of representative and aggregative models of democracy. Rather than treating citizen preferences as fixed, deliberative democracy assumes that public opinion may evolve through reasoned discussion, mutual learning, and exposure to balanced information. Among the principal contributors to this field, Joseph Bessette introduced the concept of deliberative democracy into democratic theory, while Habermas provided its philosophical foundations through the theory of communicative action and the public sphere.

Their participation in these peaceful protests and the assertion of their voices became the primary catalyst for the transition toward democracy and a market-oriented society.

Mongolians are now contributing their own chapter to the global history of democratic progression, following the path taken by many other nations. Within this framework, numerous global scholars and researchers have proposed various theories and concepts regarding deliberative democracy and deliberative discussion. Among the key figures who first introduced this terminology and established its philosophical foundations are:

1. Joseph Bessette: Coined the term "deliberative democracy" in 1980 and integrated this concept into the framework of the American constitutional system.
2. James Fishkin: Developed the Deliberative Polling model through his theories and successfully implemented these experiments in countries worldwide.¹
3. Jürgen Habermas: Regarded as one of the most influential thinkers who laid the philosophical groundwork for deliberative discussion through his "Theory of Communicative Action."²
4. Jane Mansbridge: Developed theories concerning power, emotion, and self-interest within the deliberative process.
5. John Dryzek: Examined deliberative democracy at the level of global governance, particularly as a solution for environmental and ecological issues.³

6. Yasunori Sone: One of the pioneers who introduced deliberative polling in Japan.
7. Tetsuki Tamura: Aligned the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy with Japanese political theory.

In the case of Mongolia, several rounds of deliberative polling have been conducted within the framework of global theoretical and conceptual developments. Notably, Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University (USA) has served in an advisory capacity for multiple deliberative polls organized in the country.

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and the public sphere, as well as the relationship between informal deliberation and formal decision-making processes, provides a theoretical foundation for this study. James Fishkin's framework of deliberative polling is also applied, including core methodological criteria such as random and representative sampling, balanced informational materials, small-group deliberation, and opportunities to question experts. Furthermore, John Dryzek's deliberative systems approach conceptualizes deliberative democracy not as a one-time poll, but as a system characterized by flows of information, arguments, and accountability across institutions such as parliament, government, local administration, civil society, media,

¹ Fishkin, J. S. 2009. *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Mongolian edition: 2015. *Khumuus uzel bodloo ilerkhiilehui*. Translated by Nepko Publishing, Ulaanbaatar.

² Habermas, J. 1983/2006. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. (Russian translation by S.V. Shachin, St. Petersburg: Nauka).

³ Dryzek, John S. 2000. *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations*.

academia, digital platforms, and everyday public discourse.

Fishkin subsequently developed the Deliberative Polling methodology as a practical mechanism for combining representative public participation with informed deliberation.⁴ Additional theoretical contributions have been made by scholars such as Jane Mansbridge, John Dryzek, Yasunori Sone, and Tetsuki Tamura, whose work has expanded deliberative democratic theory across diverse institutional and cultural contexts.

For the purposes of this study, the theoretical foundations are derived primarily from Habermas's conception of communicative legitimacy, Fishkin's model of deliberative polling, and Dryzek's deliberative systems framework. Together, these approaches provide an analytical basis for examining how deliberative processes are designed, implemented, and incorporated into public decision-making structures.

A Brief History of Deliberative Polling in Mongolia

The development of deliberative polling in Mongolia reflects broader international developments in deliberative democracy. Over the past decade, Mongolia has conducted several deliberative polling exercises at both local and national levels, frequently with methodological guidance from Fishkin and the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. Notable examples include:

1. "Citizen Participation: The City's Tomorrow" (2015), the first deliberative poll conducted in Ulaanbaatar through cooperation between the Capital City Governor's Office and The Asia Foundation;
2. The National Deliberative Poll on Constitutional Amendments (2017), conducted under Resolution No. 24 of the State Great Khural;
3. The Nalaikh District Deliberative Poll (2018), organized to address the social, economic, and environmental consequences of unsafe coal mining;⁵
4. "Let's Deliberate and Decide" National Deliberative Poll (2023), designed to identify and prioritize major socio-economic challenges confronting Mongolia.

Most importantly, Mongolia adopted the Law on Deliberative Polling in 2017, creating a formal legal framework for the use of deliberative polling in public policymaking. In comparative perspective, this development represents a significant effort to institutionalize deliberative democracy within an emerging democratic context.

Research Problem:

Despite the establishment of a legal framework and the implementation of multiple deliberative polling exercises, important questions remain concerning the extent to which deliberative polling has become sustainably institutionalized within Mongolia's governance system. Existing

⁴ Fishkin, J. S. 2009. *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Mongolian edition: 2015. *Khumuus uzel bodloo ilerkhiilehui*. Translated by Nepko Publishing, Ulaanbaatar.

⁵ Report The Nalaikh District Deliberative Poll (2018)

evidence suggests that while deliberative polling has created new opportunities for citizen participation, substantial challenges remain regarding institutional coordination, information transparency, public trust, policy responsiveness, and the practical incorporation of deliberative outcomes into decision-making processes.

Although previous studies and official reports have documented individual deliberative polling initiatives, comparatively little research has examined the institutional evolution of deliberative polling across multiple cases or assessed the factors influencing its long-term development within Mongolia's democratic governance framework. Similar concerns have been identified in the 2018 report of the Asian Development Bank, which emphasized persistent barriers to transforming citizen participation from a formal procedure into a meaningful component of policymaking.⁶

Research Objective:

Against this background, the objective of this study is to analyze the institutional and procedural factors that have shaped the development and institutionalization of deliberative polling in

Mongolia between 2015 and 2023. Through a comparative examination of four deliberative polling cases, the study seeks to evaluate both the achievements and limitations of deliberative polling as a mechanism of deliberative democracy and citizen participation.

To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following research question: *How have institutional and procedural factors shaped the development and institutionalization of deliberative polling in Mongolia between 2015 and 2023, and what do the four deliberative polling cases reveal about its opportunities and limitations as a mechanism of deliberative democracy?*

To answer this question, the study employs a comparative case-study design based on qualitative review and process-tracing methods. By systematically analyzing four deliberative polling cases conducted between 2015 and 2023, the study identifies recurring institutional patterns, evaluates the practical implementation of deliberative democratic principles, and assesses the extent to which deliberative polling has become embedded within Mongolia's democratic governance framework.

The Inaugural Deliberative Poll in Ulaanbaatar Involving Citizen Participation (2015)

At the initiative of the Governor of the Capital City, the Mayor's Office of Ulaanbaatar, in collaboration with The Asia Foundation, organized the first-ever deliberative poll titled "Citizen Participation-The City's Tomorrow." The event took place

on December 12–13, 2015, in the Great Hall of the Government Palace. The primary objective of the poll was to present 14 major long-term development projects and programs to the citizens and incorporate their

⁶ ADB (Asian Development Bank) 2018. Report of Civil Society Participation in Mongolia. 34 p

specific feedback into the decision-making process.

During the event, G. Zandanshatar, Senior Advisor at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University and Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee, emphasized:

"A unique feature of this deliberative poll, initiated by City Governor E. Bat-Üül, is its organization independent of any political party affiliation. Therefore, I call upon the 400 randomly selected citizens representing the capital's residents to participate actively and responsibly in this vital process."⁷

Furthermore, James Fishkin noted in his work that one of the most significant achievements was the shift in participants' priorities following the deliberation. He observed that Ulaanbaatar's citizens moved away from short-term interests, such as direct cash transfers or welfare, and instead prioritized long-term development goals, specifically infrastructure and education, for budget allocation.⁸

Members of the Advisory Committee included:

1. D. Sodnom: Former Prime Minister of Mongolia
2. Ts. Gombosüren: Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
3. Ch. Ganbold: Chairman of the Board, XacBank
4. B. Dash-Yondon: Honored Scientist of Mongolia, Doctor of Philosophy, and Professor

5. D. Choijamts: Khamba Lama (Head Abbot) of Gandantegchinlen Monastery
6. T. Ariunaa: Executive Board Member, Arts Council of Mongolia
7. J. Od: President of MCS Group
8. B. Batbayar (Baabar): Noted Essayist and Historian
9. P. Tsengüün: CEO of Altan Taria JSC
10. D. Sükhjargalmaa: Senior Advisor, MONFEMNET National Network NGO
11. R. Bat-Erdene: Rector of the National University of Mongolia (NUM)
12. Meloney Lindberg: Country Representative of The Asia Foundation in Mongolia

As a result of this initiative, an initial survey was conducted among 1,500 citizens selected through a multi-stage random sampling method across 152 khoroos (sub-districts) in the nine districts of Ulaanbaatar. From this pool, 317 participants attended the second-stage deliberative discussion in person. Over the course of two days, these participants received comprehensive information from professional experts and engaged in moderated small-group discussions. This process formally utilized the Deliberative Polling methodology developed by Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University.⁹

⁷ James S. Fishkin, 2018. *Deliberative Polling for Urban Planning in Ulaanbaatar*. (Stanford CDD) 1 p

⁸ James S. Fishkin, 2018. *Deliberative Polling for Urban Planning in Ulaanbaatar*. (Stanford CDD) 3 p

⁹ Fishkin, James S. 2018. *Democracy When the People Are Thinking: Revitalizing Our Politics Through Deliberation*. Oxford University Press.

Out of the 14 projects proposed during the deliberative poll, participants identified the following as the highest priorities for immediate implementation:

1. Reduction of air and environmental pollution;
2. Ger district redevelopment;
3. Improvement of public transportation service quality;

While the significance and outcomes of localized deliberative polls-both domestically and internationally-have not yet reached a finalized or "perfect" form, media reports and documentation from various countries indicate that they continue to serve

4. Increasing the accessibility of schools and kindergartens.

A joint report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Stanford University characterized this 2015 event as a "pioneering model in Asia for ensuring citizen participation at the decision-making level".¹⁰

as highly effective experimental models. This development has positioned Mongolia as an exemplary nation that has embraced innovative mechanisms and healthy forms of democracy, garnering international recognition in the field of political science.

The First National Deliberative Poll under the Law on Deliberative Polling (2017)

Pursuant to Resolution No. 24 of the State Great Khural (Parliament) of Mongolia, dated April 7, 2017, a nationwide deliberative poll regarding amendments to the Constitution of Mongolia was conducted on April 29–30, 2017, in the Great Hall of the Government Palace. In accordance with the Law on Deliberative Polling, an independent Deliberative Council was established.

The council consisted of eight Mongolian citizens-comprising academic researchers and private sector representatives-aged 21 and older, who possessed specialized expertise and extensive experience. These members were selected through an open selection process and officially confirmed by parliamentary resolution.

Members of the Deliberative Council:

1. Ts. Gombosüren: Former Minister of Foreign Affairs.
2. N. Jantsannorov: Leading Professor at the Mongolian State University of Arts and Culture.
3. D. Lamjav: Constitutional law scholar and former member of the State Baga Khural.
4. B. Lkhagvajav: President of the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
5. Ts. Sarantuya: Professor at the School of Law, National University of Mongolia; Doctor of Juridical Science.
6. D. Sükhjargalmaa: Advisor to the "MONFEMNET National Network" NGO.
7. D. Choijamts: Khamba Lama (Head Abbot) of Gandantegchinlen

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2018. *Civil Society Participation in Mongolia: Country Diagnostic Study*.

Monastery, Center of Mongolian Buddhists; former deputy of the People's Great Khural.

8. G. Chuluunbaatar: First Vice President of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

Throughout all stages of the deliberative polling process, the Census and Housing Bureau of the National Statistics Office (NSO) maintained the highest level of engagement and responsibility. For the sampling frame, they utilized a database of 2 million Mongolian citizens aged 18 and older, as of 2016.¹¹

The inaugural national deliberative poll was designed to proceed in three distinct phases. In the first phase of the research, 1,570 citizens were selected; from this group, a second random sampling was conducted to select the final 750 participants for the actual deliberative session.

The sub-themes of the Deliberative Poll were categorized as follows:

First: Ensuring the Balance of Power and Oversight between the State Great Khural (Parliament) and the Government:

- 1.1. Granting the Prime Minister the full authority to determine the composition of the Cabinet and to appoint or dismiss Cabinet members;

- 1.2. Limiting the number of Cabinet members who concurrently serve as members of Parliament to no more than one-third of the total Cabinet;

- 1.3. Defining the structure of the Government within the Constitution of

Mongolia and specifying the names of the ministries in the law to ensure the continuity and stability of state policy.

Second: Strengthening National Unity and Defining Presidential Powers and Duties to Eliminate Functional Duplication:

- 2.1. Setting the Presidential term to six years, with no re-election, and changing the election process so that the President is elected by an expanded session of the State Great Khural. (This expanded session would consist of the 76 members of Parliament plus all members of the Aimags, Capital City, and municipal Citizens' Representative Khurals);

- 2.2. Modifying certain Presidential powers stipulated in the Constitution, including the removal of the right to initiate legislation and the right to issue decrees that provide direct instructions to the Government.

Third: Strengthening a Professional, Competent, and Reputable Civil Service Independent of Political Influence:

- 3.1. Establishing the Civil Service Council as a constitutionally mandated authority independent of political influence;

- 3.2. Transitioning the civil service to a professional, stable, and merit-based career advancement (meritocracy) system;

- 3.3. Ensuring the civil service remains strictly apolitical. This includes incorporating constitutional provisions that prohibit discrimination against civil servants on political grounds, dismissal based on election results, or the demotion of rank and position

¹¹ Fishkin, J. S. 2018. *Democracy When the People Are Thinking: Revitalizing Our Politics Through Deliberation*. Oxford University Press. (Note: While your source cites the Ulaanbaatar

report, the 2017 national poll methodology is extensively detailed in Fishkin's 2018 Oxford publication).

for any reason other than those specifically provided by law.

Fourth: Enhancing the System of Administrative Units and Local Self-Governance:

4.1. Formalizing the administrative territorial divisions in the Constitution of Mongolia as follows: the territory is divided into aimags, the capital city, and cities; aimags are divided into soums and cities (under local jurisdiction); soums are divided into baghs and villages; the capital city is divided into districts; and districts and cities are divided into khoros;

4.2. Implementing a system where the governors of baghs, khoros, and villages are directly appointed by the governors of national-level cities, soums, or districts.

Fifth: Strengthening State Accountability, Discipline, and Justice, and Improving the Legal Enforcement System:

5.1. Establishing a constitutional body dedicated to enhancing state accountability and discipline, free from political interference;

5.2. Structuring organizations responsible for anti-corruption policy, ensuring social justice, and enhancing state accountability as independent and autonomous entities free from political influence;

5.3. Expanding the composition of the General Council of the Judiciary—which is

tasked with ensuring judicial independence—and clarifying the principles for the appointment of judges and Chief.

Sixth: Facilitating conditions for open deliberation on a bicameral parliamentary system, comprising the People's Great Khural as the supreme organ of state power and the State Baga Khural as the standing legislative body.

The deliberative poll on Constitutional amendments was organized in two stages, encompassing over 260 sub-issues consolidated into 80 comprehensive questions within the framework of the six themes mentioned above.¹²

This event can be regarded as a historical milestone that solidified the legal environment for the practical implementation of deliberative democratic mechanisms in Mongolia. This particular poll was conducted strictly in accordance with the law, and the influential British publication *The Economist* highlighted Mongolia's bold adoption of innovative democratic mechanisms, noting: "Mongolia is the first country in the world to have legislated deliberative polling at the national level. It is becoming an interesting experiment to bridge the gap between political elites and ordinary citizens."¹³

Budget: The deliberative poll was executed within a budget of 250 million MNT, in strict adherence to a detailed operational work plan.

The Second Local Deliberative Poll Conducted in Ulaanbaatar (2018)

In 2018, a deliberative poll was organized in Ulaanbaatar in accordance with

the Law on Deliberative Polling. This marked the first time such a mechanism was

¹² 2017.National Statistics Office of Mongolia.

¹³ *The Economist*.2017. "Mongolia is using 'deliberative polling' to tweak its constitution."

implemented at the local government level under the formal legal framework, introducing new terminology and concepts to the public. The poll was executed following Government Protocol No. 53 (2017) and Order No. 308 (2018) issued by the Head of the Cabinet Secretariat of Mongolia. The primary catalyst for this measure was a tragic incident in December 2017, where two individuals performing artisanal coal mining in Nalaikh District lost their lives due to a mine shaft collapse.

A subsequent investigation revealed that out of approximately 10,000 households in Nalaikh District, over 3,000 households were economically dependent on these coal mines. Data indicates that since 1992, mining activities in Nalaikh have resulted in 735 injuries and 237 fatalities. Most accidents and injuries in these underground mines are attributed to asphyxiation, oxygen deficiency, inadequate structural reinforcement, and overloading.¹⁴

To address these pressing issues, the Governor of the Capital City issued Ordinance No. A/462 on May 21, 2018, regarding the "Organization of a Deliberative Poll." Consequently, Order No. 159, dated May 18, 2018, established a 9-member Deliberative Council through an open selection process.¹⁵

The council consisted of the following members: D. Choijamts, G. Chuluunbaatar, D. Lamjav, B. Chinzorig, B. Ulaanbaatar, T. Okhobal, L. Damdinsüren, N. Altangerel, and D. Ölziibayar.

Phase One of the Deliberative Poll: A comprehensive questionnaire consisting of 44 items was developed within the scope of the deliberative poll's core themes. The first phase was conducted from June 8–10, 2018. Utilizing a simple random sampling method based on statistical science, 970 households were selected from the total of 10,000 households in Nalaikh District. One representative from each selected household was then interviewed using the 44-item questionnaire.

Phase Two of the Deliberative Poll: On June 16, 2018, 270 citizens participated in the second phase of the deliberative event. Information was provided and discussions were held on the following key topics:

1. The status of coal mining in Nalaikh District;
2. Supporting employment and job creation for those dependent on Nalaikh's coal mines;
3. Environmental protection and land reclamation of depleted mining areas, their transfer to local administration, and the adoption of international best practices;
4. Supply chain management systems for ensuring the coal needs of Ulaanbaatar and Nalaikh citizens in the event that local extraction is halted;
5. Ensuring public health and safety by definitively terminating illegal and hazardous coal mining in Nalaikh District.

¹⁴ Law of Mongolia on Deliberative Polling 2017. Available at: <https://legalinfo.mn/mn/detail/12492>

¹⁵ 2017. National Statistics Office Report.

The participants were organized into 23 breakout groups, each consisting of 10–15 individuals. Deliberations were centered around 164 sub-questions across four primary thematic areas.¹⁶

In the deliberative poll conducted in Nalaikh District, notable differences were observed between the pre-deliberation and post-deliberation survey results. For example, regarding the issue of protecting, rehabilitating, transferring to local ownership the areas affected by coal mining in Nalaikh District, and introducing international best practices, respondents were asked whether professional organizations' research findings and assessments concerning all illegal artisanal mining operations and mining pits in the district should be consolidated and disclosed to the public.

In the first survey, 75.9 percent of respondents expressed full support for this proposal by selecting scores ranging from 1 to 3, whereas in the second survey this proportion decreased to 53.2 percent. This shift suggests that participants' views

changed following the deliberative process and exposure to additional information and discussion.¹⁷ The findings presented above demonstrate that involving citizens in decision-making after providing them with well-founded and balanced information produces different outcomes from participation based on limited or uninformed understanding. The survey results indicate that participants' views changed following access to relevant information and deliberative discussions, underscoring the significance of informed public participation in the deliberative polling process.

Outcomes: As a direct result of this deliberative poll, the hazardous coal mines in Nalaikh District have been closed. Positive socio-economic impacts have been observed, such as the transition of local workers into employment at refined fuel processing plants.

Budget: According to the second annex of the Capital City Governor's Ordinance No. A/462, the total budget for the operation was approved at 42,256,750 MNT.

The "Let's Deliberate and Decide" National Deliberative Poll (2023)

Pursuant to Resolution No. 80 of the State Great Khural (Parliament) of Mongolia, dated December 22, 2022, a nationwide deliberative poll titled "Let's Deliberate and Decide" was commissioned. The primary objectives were to identify the country's most pressing socio-economic challenges with the assistance of the citizenry, prioritize these issues, and foster national consensus on

potential solutions and decision-making pathways.

Within the framework of this resolution, the national deliberative poll was conducted on February 14–15, 2023. In accordance with the functions stipulated in the Law on Deliberative Polling, the Deliberative Council was tasked with consolidating the polling results, drafting formal recommendations, and presenting

¹⁶ 2018.Report of the National Statistics Office of Mongolia.

¹⁷ 2018.Report of the National Statistics Office of Mongolia.

them to the Parliament. An 11-member Deliberative Council was officially confirmed, comprising the following members: 1. Otgondavaagiin Amartuvshin, 2. Gombosurengiin Galbadrakh, 3. Huyagiin Ganbaatar, 4. Olziikhutagiin Gankhuyag, 5. Tsevegmiidiin Mandkhaikhatan, 6. Dorjiin Moondoi, 7. Odonkhuugiin Munkhsaikhan, 8. Banzragchiin Ogtontogs, 9. Lkhagvajaviin Tor-Od, 10. Gelegpiliin Chuluunbaatar, and 11. Sukhbaataryn Erdenebat.

In developing the survey instruments, the Council synthesized approximately 600 proposals from participants of the scientific conference "Pressing Socio-Economic Issues and Solutions" and the forum "Political, Economic, and Legal Solutions-Social Consensus." Additionally, nearly 500 suggestions were collected electronically from professional associations, civil society organizations, and individual citizens. Furthermore, the Council held virtual consultations with Professor James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, to integrate his expert recommendations and methodologies.

The thematic scope of the "Let's Deliberate and Decide" national poll was structured into four major categories encompassing 22 sub-topics. These themes were formulated based on the critical analysis of proposals received from conference participants, professional associations, civil society, and the general public through digital platforms.

Thematic Scope of the Deliberative Poll:

1. Group 1: Civil and Political Rights and Responsibilities
2. Group 2: Parliamentary Democracy

3. Group 3: Economy, Wealth Funds, and Decentralization

4. Group 4: Pressing Social Issues

Stages of the Deliberative Poll: The National Statistics Office (NSO) employed a random sampling method to select a representative subset of 1,570 individuals to reflect Mongolia's total population of 3.4 million for the initial phase of the survey. For the second stage, the Deliberative Forum, the law requires the physical attendance of at least 50% of the initially sampled group; accordingly, a minimum of 785 participants convened at the Government Palace.

Significant advancements have been observed through the successive implementation of these deliberative polls. These include the solidification of the legal framework, the refinement of selection criteria for the Deliberative Council, the enhanced capacity of civil servants to manage information, and the commitment to providing transparent and open data to the public. Furthermore, the practice of inviting international scholars to provide external oversight is a notable achievement. Collectively, these developments represent substantial progress and an innovative contribution to the field of political science in Mongolia.

While deliberative polling has been implemented in a number of democratic countries, including the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, it has generally been utilized as a policy consultation mechanism, an experimental democratic innovation, or a research-based participatory exercise. In contrast, Mongolia has sought to institutionalize deliberative polling through the adoption of the Law on

Deliberative Polling (2017), thereby providing a formal legal framework for its application in public decision-making processes. In this regard, Mongolia constitutes a noteworthy case within the broader field of deliberative democracy. However, further comparative research is required to assess how Mongolia's experience relates to other institutionalized deliberative arrangements, such as Citizens' Assemblies in Ireland and similar deliberative mini-publics in other democratic contexts.

The significance of the Mongolian experience lies not simply in the implementation of deliberative polls, but in the attempt to embed deliberative mechanisms within a formal legal and institutional framework. The findings of this study suggest that legal institutionalization has created important opportunities for enhancing citizen participation and strengthening the democratic legitimacy of public decision-making. At the same time, the case studies demonstrate that the existence of a legal framework alone is insufficient to ensure the effective functioning of deliberative institutions.

Across the four cases examined, the effectiveness of deliberative polling was found to depend on a range of interrelated factors, including institutional coordination, transparency and access to information, public trust, political commitment, and the development of a deliberative culture that supports informed and reasoned public

discussion. These findings are broadly consistent with the existing literature, which emphasizes that the democratic value of deliberative institutions depends not only on procedural design but also on their integration into broader governance structures and policymaking processes.

From a theoretical perspective, the Mongolian cases support key assumptions of deliberative democratic theory by demonstrating that citizens' preferences may evolve when individuals are provided with balanced information and opportunities for structured deliberation. At the same time, the findings suggest that the institutionalization of deliberative democracy should be understood as a gradual and multidimensional process rather than as a single legislative achievement. From a practical perspective, Mongolia offers a valuable example of both the opportunities and the challenges associated with embedding deliberative mechanisms within the institutions of an emerging democracy.

Therefore, rather than presenting Mongolia as an exceptional or unique case, this study argues that Mongolia represents an important and still evolving example of legally institutionalized deliberative polling. Its experience contributes to the growing comparative literature on deliberative democracy by illustrating both the potential benefits and the practical constraints involved in transforming deliberative democratic principles into sustainable governance practices.

Conclusion

Ensuring meaningful citizen participation has remained an important

objective of democratic governance in Mongolia since the country's transition to

democracy. In this context, deliberative polling has emerged as a mechanism intended to strengthen public participation by enabling citizens to engage in informed discussion and contribute to public decision-making processes.

This study examined the development of deliberative polling in Mongolia through a comparative analysis of four cases conducted between 2015 and 2023. The findings suggest that Mongolia has made important progress in incorporating the principles of deliberative democracy into its legal and institutional framework, particularly through the adoption of the Law on Deliberative Polling. The selected cases demonstrate the growing use of deliberative mechanisms at both national and local levels and provide valuable insights into the opportunities and limitations of their implementation.

The analysis further indicates that deliberative polling can facilitate more informed public participation. Evidence from the Nalaikh deliberative poll shows that participants' preferences differed before and after deliberation, suggesting that access to balanced information, expert knowledge, and structured discussion may influence public opinion. This observation is broadly consistent with the theoretical assumptions of deliberative democracy regarding the importance of informed and reflective citizen engagement.

At the same time, the findings reveal that the existence of a legal framework alone is insufficient to ensure the effective institutionalization of deliberative democracy. Across the four cases, several recurring challenges were identified, including weak inter-agency coordination,

limited transparency and access to information, insufficient mechanisms for incorporating deliberative outcomes into policymaking, limited institutional capacity to sustain meaningful public participation, and an underdeveloped deliberative culture. These challenges continue to affect the consistency and effectiveness of deliberative polling practices in Mongolia.

The study therefore concludes that Mongolia has established an important legal foundation for deliberative polling, but its practical institutionalization remains incomplete. Strengthening institutional coordination, improving transparency, enhancing citizen participation, and creating more effective linkages between deliberative outcomes and public policy will be essential for ensuring the long-term effectiveness of deliberative mechanisms.

From a broader perspective, Mongolia provides a noteworthy example of efforts to institutionalize deliberative polling through a dedicated legal framework. However, rather than claiming exceptionalism, the findings suggest the need for further comparative research examining how Mongolia's experience relates to deliberative practices in other democratic contexts. Such research would contribute to a better understanding of the conditions under which deliberative mechanisms can become sustainable components of democratic governance.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on deliberative democracy by illustrating both the potential and the limitations of institutionalizing deliberative polling in an emerging democratic context. The Mongolian case demonstrates that successful institutionalization depends not

only on legal provisions but also on institutional capacity, political commitment, transparency, public trust, and the continued development of a deliberative culture. As such, the study offers both theoretical insights and practical implications for

scholars and policymakers interested in strengthening participatory and deliberative forms of democracy.

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