

**FINDING THE DOOR IN THE MIRAGE**  
*The Politics of Cultural Change in Mongolia*

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To my parents,  
who surely know why

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**Change is inevitable - except from a vending machine.**  
*~Robert C. Gallagher*

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**PREFACE**

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In 1996, as the Mongolian delegation entered the Olympic arena in Atlanta, a Russian announcer let his tongue slip and heralded the country as a true independent nation, because nobody depends on them. The comment triggered a scandal which was suppressed under a deluge of meaningless public apologies, yet merely eight years later, the Russian announcer's insult seems to barely even apply anymore. With Mongolia's entrance into the international community of interdependents, free from dictatorial control for the first time during the age of globalization, it has plunged into an era of change. The outcome of this transitional period will decide the future of the Mongolian nation.

This essay explores the consequences of Mongolian nomadic cultural change, the international progression in developing countries away from traditional cultures into which it fits, and its role in the turbulent political history of Mongolia. This paper also explores Mongolia's role as part of a widespread development pattern in the world today shared by all modernizing nations struggling forward in the shadow of those democratic giants that they follow so closely. In looking into the Mongolian case, the hope is to gain a specific perspective on a pervasive effort involving millions of people across the globe and perhaps shed light on the widespread phenomenon. What is it about Mongolian traditional culture that clashes with democracy and the nation's entrance onto the free market scene? To what extent is this part of a larger global trend away from traditional cultures and towards modernization along capitalist lines? How will this affect Mongolia in the future?

The paper is divided into three sections. Part 1 focuses on the origins of the Mongolian nomadic cultural heritage, a discussion of nomadic traditional values, and the affects that the Soviets had on customary Mongolian culture. Part 2 focuses on an anthropologically informed discussion of three different types of indicators currently pervasive throughout Mongolia, showing the clash of traditional values and heritage with modernization reforms. Part 3 discusses the democratic era in Mongolia, the political ramifications of cultural change, the markers of modernization already becoming visible throughout the country, and what the future may hold

All of the personal research for this paper was conducted in Mongolia, using field based methods of interviewing and observation throughout the country. Statistical information collected from nomadic family interviews comes from roughly 30 interviews conducted across the Gobi region, in Darkhan in the North, and in Delgerkhan on the central Mongolian steppe. A map of the areas visited can be found in Appendix B.<sup>1</sup> The statistical information collected from nomadic families is reflected in the graph in Appendix A.<sup>2</sup> All other personal observations come from four months of living, eating, and breathing the Mongolian cultural, geographical, and political climate.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B: Field Work Travel Map

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A: Interview Reference Graph

## **PART 1: NOMADIC CULTURAL LEGACY AND THE SOVIET ERA**

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Culture is roughly anything we do and the monkeys don't.  
~Lord Raglan

### **NOMADIC CULTURE**

Mongolia's nomadic tradition is one of the oldest surviving cultural heritages in the modern world. It is generally estimated that nomadic pastoralism originated roughly 11,000 years ago, representing a considerable advancement in human evolution away from the primitive hunter gatherer way of life. This new lifestyle led to mobile communities of herders who were able to produce most of the basic resources needed for daily life, relying mainly on meat products and animal skins to feed them and to protect them from the harsh Mongolian climate. Yet the nomadic pastoralists lacked specialization, rendering the tribes unable to trade internally for various peripheral commodities.<sup>3</sup> This shortcoming was exacerbated as new civilizations grew up in the south, agriculturally based civilizations occupying more forgiving climate zones which enabled specialization and trade. For the fierce nomadic tribes in the north whose mobility and animal skills led naturally to a proficiency in warfare, the easiest and most logical way to acquire these peripheral goods was through the ritualistic raiding of the southern towns and villages.<sup>4</sup>

For thousands of years the raiding cycle continued. Tribes inhabiting current day Mongolia became known as fierce and barbaric warriors, pillaging and plundering towns and cities alike throughout northern Asia in order to acquire what they needed to bolster their pastoralist way of life. Over the course of history, as these raids

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<sup>3</sup> Baabar. *History of Mongolia*. Cambridge, England: The White House Press. 1999. p.6

<sup>4</sup> Goldstein, Melvyn C., and Beall, Cynthia M. *The Changing World of Mongolia's Nomads*. Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press. 1994. p.18

became more audacious, less associated with immediate need than with domination, Mongolia became associated with fear and conquest. Led by Attila the “Scourge of God”, the Huns fought their way all the way from the Mongolian lands to the walls of Rome, helping the Goths and Vandals bring that ancient civilization to its end. Centuries later the rise of Chiingis Khan, the uniting of the Mongol Hordes, and the following rape and conquest of most of the known world cemented Mongolia’s legacy as a nation of outstanding warriors, rooted primarily in their nomadic way of life and mastery of horseback riding and weaponry.

By 1900, though all aspirations of conquest had been hammered out of the Mongolian people by 200 years of Manchu domination, nomadic pastoralism still thrived on the north Asian steppe. Yet contrary to the romantic views of many westerners, nomadic life did not entail, as it had not since before the Middle Ages, freewheeling nomads traipsing across the steppes as they liked, responsible to no one but themselves and their animals. In fact, since the thirteenth century “land, livestock, and even people of the commoner class, were conceived of as constituent elements of an inclusivist socio-political domain under the jurisdiction of an enfeoffed noble.”<sup>5</sup> This meant that in very real terms Mongolian nomads were living in a state relatively comparable to feudalism, a state in which the vast majority of the population worked under, and was protected by, an elite group of ruling nobles. This rendered upward mobility impossible except by birthright, yet kept the nomadic people protected through adjunct unifications under ruling lords. Within this communal feudalistic infrastructure the nomadic way of life prevailed for over 700 years.

Nomadic herding in Mongolia is an anomaly the world over as one of the last surviving cultural legacies of the old world. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, pastoral life on

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<sup>5</sup> Edited by Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A. *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. 1999, p.230

the Mongolian steppe had changed very little since the times of Chiingis Khan when compared with global cultural advancement. Even after 70 years of Soviet communist domination, nomadic pastoralism is still alive and functioning in the Mongolian countryside. Many traditional cultural values inherited down through the lineages of herding families have also survived to this day in Mongolia along with nomadism itself, yet the pastoral way of life may now be meeting its greatest challenge since the Stone Age: the advent of democracy, free market reforms, and the capitalist ideology.

Mongolian nomadic people are strong, peaceful natured, family loving individuals who value work, respect, and generosity highly. They have been hewn from the rock of Mongolian hospitality, a harsh environment where it is not often easy to survive in the open countryside and correspondingly have historically lived a life based more on necessity than desire. In addition, health is valued highly, although less so than the above, as is education, yet nomads whom I interviewed tended to see these as being recent developments, as recent as the turn of the last century. An explanation for this could be the historical lack of contact nomads have had with the outside world. Until the Soviet period, nomads lived beyond the reach of most media outlets and schooling opportunities, deemphasizing globally evolving values of long life and education.

The most notable characteristic of Mongolian nomadic society is the emphasis on family life and communal living. Of those interviewed, just under 50% identified living with family as their most important value, another 20% placing it in their top three values. Coming from a culture of ger living this is not difficult to understand. The one room traditional felt ger, the Mongolian nomadic home for thousands of years, usually houses most of the members of the family. When children become old

enough to marry and move away they more often than not stay nearby, occasionally even staying in the family ger with their spouse until they inherit it. As the Mongolian climate is nearly always chilly and is vastly colder during some of the year, the majority of time in the country is spent inside the one room ger where frostbite is less likely. In addition, even when family members do move away, they usually stay relatively close to their parents and siblings so that members of the family can help one another with the many arduous herding tasks, lessening the load. This tradition has led to a legacy of group herding among nomads in Mongolia that not only applies to family, but also to friends and neighbors. In a culture that has grown out of a frigid land in which survival is often a proactive skill and living space is always sparse, cohabitating with family and working with neighbors have become more than values; they have become routinized necessities.

There is also a strong emphasis on happiness in Mongolian nomadic culture which is inexorably linked to peace and a calm way of life. Of those interviewed, 70% listed happy living as one of their three most important values, most of those people listing it second to family life and the welfare of their children. Of that 70%, almost 40% linked happy living with peacefulness, a calm life, or generosity towards others. This touches on a central point in nomadic culture. It is not surprising that happiness is highly valued, I am confident that this point is the same in most cultures around the world, what is interesting is what the nomads interviewed indicated as leading to happiness; calm dispositions and peaceful atmospheres. In this perception of happiness, feelings of rage, disappointment, confusion, etc., are to some degree subjugated by the general impulse to keep a calm and peaceful home. For example, when asking about the appropriateness of showing love, the responses were identical across the boards. Love is something to be felt not spoken, experienced not seen.

Erdene-Ochir, a biology teacher in Bulgan sum who runs a vegetable garden next to his ger on the outskirts of town told me of an old wives tale he had heard from some nomad friends living deeper in the countryside. They had told him that if one kisses too much, one's lips will begin to hurt and it will become "not so tasteful" anymore.<sup>6</sup> He laughed throughout the story, but the people who told him certainly didn't find it as amusing. The dominant force in nomadic tradition is not to vent feelings, as is the case in many modern cultures; it is to subdue them in order to further a peaceful way of life on the surface as trouble is dealt with on an internal level below the line of sight.

Only 40% of people interviewed listed work as a top value, but 75% of those responses were listed as the number one priority. Mongolian nomadic society values work highly. Living in a ger for a single day this becomes apparent as one observes the diligence with which the men take care of the animals and the women take care of the house. This may be true more so now than in the Soviet period when animals were state owned and personal incentives were limited to cheaply made plaques, yet of those interviewed most thought a strong work ethic had been around long before the Soviets were. However even though the roots of this work ethic were undoubtedly founded on the difficulty of the herding lifestyle and the need to work to stay afloat, incentives are currently changing along with the political structures. Monkchimeg, a nomad living outside of Hambog sum who is planning to settle this year, regarded work as a quantifiable income. The harder he works, the more he makes, the higher he can climb on the social ladder. During our interview, he did not tell me work was important; he told me income was.<sup>7</sup> Already the incentives are changing, even in the countryside.

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<sup>6</sup> Erdene-Ochir, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>7</sup> Monkchimeg, *Nomadic Interview*

## THE SOVIET ERA

There have been few threats to the nomadic pastoralist way of life in its long history on the Mongolian steppe. Up until the arrival of the Soviets, Mongolia's vast plains remained reasonably isolated from exterior contact beyond China and any sort of influence that could have disrupted nomadic life. Thus due to the geographical location of Mongolia, the harshness of the climate, and general undesirability of the land, nomadic culture and its semi-feudal political accessory survived relatively untouched into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is unprecedented on the global scale is not that nomadic culture survived that far, however, it is that it survived the next 70 years within the confines of a radically different political ideology, a time during which most of the other lingering traditional cultures of the world began to die away in the face of modernization. However, through a closer examination of the overlap between the nomadic feudalist way of life and Soviet aspirations for Mongolia, the possibility becomes clear that the Soviets purposefully preserved nomadic life, enclosing it in a time capsule wherein it was able to flourish far beyond its natural lifespan.

As opposite as a nomadic society may seem to a communist dictatorship at first view, in Mongolia, they were "surprisingly compatible".<sup>8</sup> Before the Soviet takeover in 1921, nomads had owned their own animals on an individual basis, yet herded them on land owned and controlled by feudal lords. Under the new Soviet arrangement, the power structure was shifted to the *negdel*, a newly created organizational grouping constituting a community of herders. The purpose of the *negdel* was to transform the feudal society into a Soviet communist one through an equal paring of all goods across the communities. To this end the *negdel* became the

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<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, Melvyn C., and Beall, Cynthia M., p.73

owner of all land and livestock, with individual animal stocks and pastureland distributed by the governor of the negdel, inevitably a member of the Revolutionary Party.<sup>9</sup> Each herder was assigned roughly the same amount of livestock and provided extra provisions by the umbrella government organizations, making all herders roughly equal in terms of their holdings, no matter how hard they worked. Although this represented a shift in the organization and control of the nomadic way of life, it represented a relatively small change in the nomadic lifestyle. As the Soviets had “inherited a society in which pastoralism and political hierarchy were [already] inextricably combined”, the transition to communism in Mongolia was much smoother and more effective than it was in many of the Eastern European satellite states.<sup>10</sup>

As the Soviets dismantled the neo-feudal Mongolian hierarchy, just as the Chinese Communists would later do in Tibet, a new collective based nomadic infrastructure grew up. During the first 15 years of this new system the size of the national herd increased over 15 million animals, or about 150%.<sup>11</sup> This could have been due to lower rates of animal slaughter because it was governmentally controlled, or simply due to an institutionalized work ethic that outstripped that of the neo-feudal system. Based on responses I received during my interviews throughout the countryside, the former seems more likely.

Of the people interviewed, the overwhelming sentiment was that Soviet communism did in fact work well with the nomadic herding lifestyle, even if it was nowhere near optimal. Most people separated the fact that they did not like the Soviet period quite efficiently from their opinions of its effectiveness. One person I interviewed in the Gobi, a camel herder who lived practically in the shadow of the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A., p. 231

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Flaming Cliffs, said she thought communism worked for some people, but not for others.<sup>12</sup> Banzragch, a 63 year old settled herder, told me that while state animals were “not great, most everyone had enough and it was not bad.”<sup>13</sup> Those were the two responses that strayed farthest away from the usual “Yes, communism worked well with nomadic herding” that I received over and over again. Most of the herders I interviewed also believed that group herding having existed before the arrival of the Soviets eased the transition into communism. As most of them were yet to have been born during that time, these sentiments came largely from what their parents had told them of nomadic customs before 1920. Nomadic herding worked, I believe for the above reasons, more efficiently with communism than perhaps any other culture that encountered the Soviets, yet simply because nomads were able to tolerate the system does not imply that they liked it.

When asked whether families preferred the communist or the new democratic free market system, the response was almost always an endorsement of the latter. One herder called their livestock under communism “punishment animals”, citing that when they were injured or died the families had to pay the government out of their own pockets.<sup>14</sup> Another herder living outside of Hambog referred to the communist period as “difficult and insane” and he was hard pressed to say anything past that.<sup>15</sup> Yet although the vast majority said that they prefer democracy, about 90%, the above two cases were relatively unique in the rancor held against the Soviets. Most herders said simply that life was inherently and unavoidably mediocre or satisfactory during the Soviet era, but now they can make their lives better through diligence and hard work. Dorj, a 54 year old who was a state worker during the communist period but

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<sup>12</sup> Tsetsegdelger, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>13</sup> B. Banzragch, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>14</sup> Erdene-Ochir

<sup>15</sup> Monkchimeg

has now retired as a herder, summed up popular sentiment towards the era quite nicely. “It seemed like during communism people were fine, but now they are a little more fine.”<sup>16</sup> Most herders appear to be pleased with the current system, while at the same time not totally disenchanted with communism.

It seems that nomadic culture and the herding lifestyle, while working just well enough with communism, as exemplified by the relatively peaceful nature of the time, never really provided communism with an enthusiastic home base of support. However the apathetic support of communism by the nomads can be seen in the lack of revolts or any type of resistance to the Soviet impositions during the period. There were of course other factors that led to the apathy, such as the lack of foreign instigation in wresting Mongolia away from the Soviets, or the distance of so many of the rural population from information outlets. Yet in practice, the complete lack of nomadic movement against the Soviets does denote the historical presence of a sort of indifferent, if not active, support of the communist agenda. However on the other hand, the majority of those interviewed today say that they did not favor communism, and that democracy is their choice for Mongolia.

Using the relative historical peacefulness and interview responses as indicators of the sentiment of the times, I have concluded that while not many people were actually tied to the communist ideology during the Soviet era, it did fit well with the Mongolian culture as affected by the predominant nomadic tradition. This in addition to the distance of most people from the cities, absence of media in the country, and lack of foreign imperial instigation, resulted in an anomalously calm Soviet period. Consequently there was no viable reason for the Soviets to disturb the nomadic way of life; it helped them to maintain control while enduring the least resistance that they

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<sup>16</sup> Dorj, *Nomadic Interview*

received in any satellite nation. Cocooned away in the folds of Soviet protection, hidden from the advances of foreign culture through the censorship of global media, nomadic tradition survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, outstripping its contemporary cultures by an unprecedented amount. Yet with the current democratic and free market reforms in Mongolia, the traditional culture that has survived thousands of years may finally be starting to decay into the history books whose pages have long since been filled with the annals of its descendants.

#### **THE NOMADIC LEGACY: FOLLOW THE RURAL LEADER**

The Soviets may have preserved nomadic tradition, yet their influences on both that cultural legacy and the course of Mongolian politics were far from benign. The Soviets brought globalization to Mongolia communist style. Under the ever paranoid supervision of the communist elites, that meant opening Mongolia to the Soviet Union, and to the Soviet Union alone. This faux-internationalization coincided with an intensely strong movement towards citification in Mongolia as the Soviets bolstered city industries in order to foster a proletarian workforce. Varying statistical data indicates that urbanization in Mongolia rose from below 40% in the 1930s, to almost 55% in the early 1990s, a quantifiably large jump.<sup>17</sup> Yet without true access to global media this migration led to a half-growth, a sort of stunted transition in which country culture was in large part brought into the city for lack of any other foreign imported city-bred culture to fill the void. Left to develop their own city identity under the watchful eye of the Revolutionary Party elites, country born Mongolians infused the cities with a new *hybrid culture*, a culture born from the intermingling of age old country customs with a new city lifestyle in which they did not necessarily fit.

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<sup>17</sup> *Nationamaster Statistical Database*, [www.nationmaster.com/country/mg/People](http://www.nationmaster.com/country/mg/People)

With the international disintegration of the Soviet Union, this quirky hybrid culture found in the cities is now facing the challenge of adapting to a new political landscape devoid of protection, changed daily by the rapid influx of modern amenities bundled along with cultural incentives.

Examples of how country culture was imported into the city under Soviet protection are evident in every corner of Ulan Baatar. One of the most striking examples is the continued tradition of family living in the city. Having moved into a completely different context, a context offering arrangements that are not limited to one room gers alone on the steppe, family bonds have stayed incredibly strong in the city. Those living in the hybrid culture, in the cities, have retained their strong sense of individuality within family, not hinging personal independence on leading a life detached from one's parents. In many developed western countries people find it difficult to define their own individuality without being physically alone, materially cutting the bonds that tie them to their dependencies, yet in Mongolia this is not the case. The traditional value of family life has carried into the cities, even though this is not a conventional value in most western cities across the world. It is a nomadic cultural leftover.

Likewise young marriage has remained customary in the cities. Demographic surveys conducted in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998 showed that the average age at first marriage was 17.5 regardless of the regional development.<sup>18</sup> The surveys further showed that the median ages of marriage in rural and urban areas were strikingly similar at 20.6 and 20.9, respectively.<sup>19</sup> These figures are remarkable when compared with the average marriage ages in either America or countries of the European Union. In America, according to the 2000 survey, women marry at an average age of 25.1,

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<sup>18</sup> *UNESCO Statistical Database*, [www.unescobkk.org/ips/arhweb/demographics/mongolia2.cfm](http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/arhweb/demographics/mongolia2.cfm)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

with men marrying on average 2 years later at 26.8 years old.<sup>20</sup> In addition, American marriage rates are consistently higher in cities than in rural areas. These numbers are similar to numbers recorded across Europe and are almost identical to those found in Canada.<sup>21</sup> In Mongolia, however, marriage rates are almost equal in rural and urban areas, emphasizing a common western cultural shift that did not take place during the citification of the country.

In addition, country food is still eaten to a large extent in the cities, with international restaurants only now beginning to slowly spring up in the absence of Soviet culinary control. Households in Ulan Baatar usually serve traditional country meals several, if not many, times per week. I can attest to this based on personal knowledge and through the experiences of my friends. In addition, *Buuz* (a traditional Mongolia mutton dumpling of sorts) restaurants, or *buuz places*, line the streets of Ulan Baatar and can be found in all other provincial capitals and cities as well. If the town is big enough for a restaurant, it is big enough for a *buuz place*.

Cultural outlets such as studio art and music in the city also still revolve around country themes. A trip to any art museum in Ulan Baatar instantly reveals the modern Mongolian artists obsession with country subjects. There are few paintings or works of sculpture in the museums which are not focused on the romanticism of horses, or the nomadic pastoral way of life in one way or another. Likewise most Mongolian music still hails from country themes, having lyrics that focus on country topics like the mountains, the wind, the earth, etc. Atypical to this would be the contemporary rap and hip hop culture currently growing in Ulan Baatar, yet this in no way was around before the Soviet crumble. In this light the movement is more of an indicator of the change that the Soviets prevented for 70 years than of anything else.

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<sup>20</sup>*EncartaEncyclopedia*,[www.encyclopedia\\_761574825\\_2/Marriage.html](http://www.encyclopedia_761574825_2/Marriage.html)+United+States+city+average+marriage+age&hl=mn

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Nomadic cultural heritage was brought into the cities, as seen by the above indicators, yet it also morphed in many ways into a culture that would work within the confines of city life with the addition of Soviet values. This can be seen even in the language, which although Mongolians might not take lightly to this comparison, sounds to a foreigner like a direct mix of Hungarian, Chinese and Russian.

Traditional language ran into barriers in the city as new Soviet imports had names that could not fit within the confines of traditional language. Thus Soviet words were introduced to make the language usable in the city. Likewise vodka was adopted as the defacto national drink, more of a cultural icon from the Soviets than anything else, cities grew up around buildings constructed in the Soviet concrete block style, and education and health care became primary social focuses. All of these introductions and more added a distinctly Soviet flavor to the new hybrid Mongolian culture and its evolving surroundings.

The hybrid culture born out of the meeting of traditional nomadic pastoralism and Soviet reforms, however, is having difficulty integrating into the new democratic free marketocracy currently being built from the ground up in Mongolia. It is simply not compatible with the ideals of democracy and the situations standard in a market economy with free international exchange of not only goods, but also of ideas and values. This has led to a host of congruency problems currently endemic throughout Mongolia, but most apparent in the cities, the battlegrounds where hundreds of years of cultural advancement throughout the world are meeting a hybrid culture built from an outdated legacy and a crumbled supranational ideology. This struggle between hybrid culture and modern values is mimicking Mongolia's current democratization process step for step. The outcome will decide the path that the Mongolian nation follows into the post-industrial, capitalist world.

## **PART 2: CULTURAL RESISTANCE TO A CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY**

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If the Aborigine drafted an I.Q. test, all of Western civilization would presumably flunk it.

~Stanley Garn

There are currently a rash of indicators in Mongolia, predominantly seen in towns and cities, stemming from and describing the clash of new customs and technology with a modern Mongolian culture formed under the influence of traditional nomadic heritage and Soviet reforms. As these indicators are most visible in urban areas filled with the above described Mongolian hybrid culture, they are predominantly the result of that same hybrid culture clashing with modern influx trends historically shielded by the Soviets from entering Mongolia. These indicators fall into two categories, those that stem directly from nomadic traditional culture as it was filtered into the hybrid culture, and those that stem from a predominantly Soviet influence on the hybrid culture. A third category is characterized by indicators that arise from a premature Mongolian desire to become westernized, or as I argue, Americanized, without the infrastructural or cultural framework to become so. This final section focuses on the difficulty in integrating new institutions, institutions born

largely in western countries where a long line of tradition has supported them, into a civil society that has no moral, cultural, or historical framework to substantiate their integration.

#### **HERITAGE INDICATORS**

The odd nature of dance clubs in Ulan Baatar, and in Aimag and Sum centers throughout Mongolia, is a prime example of the way in which traditional cultural values are currently clashing with modern changes. In Ulan Baatar there are numerous dancing clubs, disco clubs, and karaoke clubs. In the fourth district alone there are over 30 clubs. These clubs emulate western nightclubs as evidenced by their undeniable similarity in structure and attitude to clubs throughout Europe and the Americas, yet there is one thing missing; in clubs throughout Mongolia, men and women never dance together. Ever. In the west, clubs evolved in societies that had grown accustomed to outwards displays of affection as places where this sort of activity would be explicitly facilitated. In the west, dance clubs virtually exist so that men and women can dance together, and often it does not stop there. In Mongolia this is as of yet unheard of. This clearly touches on the traditional Mongolian sensitivity to public displays of affection which stemmed originally from nomadic cultural values as discussed above and has yet to change. Nevertheless, it is particularly strange to have clubs wherein the sole purpose is to display some sort of affection while dancing, in which it is taboo to do so. The confused nature of Mongolian nightclubs is a prime example of Mongolians desiring, and beginning to integrate, a distinctly western phenomenon while still clinging to a culture that is not entirely prepared for it.

The usage of cell phones across Mongolian cities is another flagrant example of a cultural clash. Cell phones are unbelievably popular in Ulan Baatar. Although

cell phone data has not yet been compiled in any formal way in Mongolia, about 90% of people I have met in Ulan Baatar over the age of 12 have cell phones. This is higher than the percentage of my friends and relatives at home who have cell phones, which is only surprising in contrast to the otherwise underdeveloped nature of the Mongolian infrastructure. Yet although almost everyone in Ulan Baatar has a cell phone, there is less culture attached to the use of cell phones than any other example in this section. People simply have no moral framework to guide cell phone use in the city, allowing phone conversations to disrupt almost anything else. I have experienced a waiter picking up a cell phone while taking my order in a restaurant and a cashier in a supermarket pause to answer the phone instead of handing me my change. At school, multiple lecturers have picked up their cell phones in the middle of their talks, answered them, and actually held a conversation while postponing the lecture indefinitely without a word to the students. Incidentally when an American lady who lives in Mongolia came to speak to us and her cell phone went off during her lecture, she quickly donned a very embarrassed look as she rushed to turn it off, apologizing as she went. There is simply no conception of how to use all these cell phones in a conscientious way that does not lead to numerous disturbances. It is easy to import cell phones from overseas, yet vastly more difficult to import a cultural awareness of their place in society.

The clash is even apparent in the structure of Ulan Baatar itself. Ulan Baatar was been designed to allow for automobile transportation, but barely. There are cars, but a striking lack of crosswalks, stoplights, or sidewalks for pedestrians to go along with them. Even on this physical structural level, the battle between cultural tradition and modern amenities is apparent. Cars are flooding in through the newly opened international market doorway, yet the city is not really structured to provide vehicles

with a rational place. This has led to many accidents per year in addition to injuries and fatalities in car related incidences in Ulan Baatar. Although official figures are bizarrely absent from most statistical databases on Mongolia, every family I spoke with in the city confirmed that a lot of people are injured or killed in a lot of car accidents every year. It is another example of a modern amenity lacking the cultural, or in this case even material, infrastructure to support its introduction in a cogent way. On the lighter side, Lonely Planet offers this reassuring advice about Mongolia: “Be aware that petrol can be hard to find; accidents, unfortunately, are not”.<sup>22</sup>

Free market reforms come along with many new job openings in many sectors, predominantly service oriented sectors, yet as with the above indicators, there is little if any culture to support the introduction of service jobs in Mongolia. As seen in the profile of nomadic cultural values, there is a strong emphasis on generosity and the will to do for others in Mongolian traditional culture. It is my hypothesis that this legacy has led to service workers in the city, in many instances, feeling as if the job they do should be being done as a favor to their paying customers. As such the customers should be thankful beyond the money they are paying, as they are being done a favor. Yet at the same time, many of these service jobs are not strikingly pleasant, it turns out, which has caused servers to dislike their jobs. Since tipping is not only uncommon but discouraged, as that would offend the generosity side of service that is still lingering in the Mongolian mentality, there is no incentive for the service people to do a good job. They do not wholly believe in the generosity aspect anymore as their jobs have become routinized and dull, resulting in a scenario where, without the institutionalization of tipping, they have no incentive to do a good job. Numerous examples can be found in restaurants, on trains, in cheap hotels, and

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<sup>22</sup> *Lonely Planet Guide*, [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north\\_east\\_asia/mongolia/printable.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/mongolia/printable.htm)

especially in taxi's. Once I was in a taxi when the driver got out and started fighting with another man in the middle of the street, leaving me alone in the taxi in the middle of nowhere. Another time my taxi ran out of gas in the middle of a four lane highway. Even though the trains in this country are remarkably nice and efficient, much more so than in America, the train workers are far from charming and often treated me as though they were paying me to ride the train. Unfortunately that was not the case. Far from being a blatant complaint about the nature of Mongolian society, the examination of service in this country provides insights into the ways in which culture has fallen behind political and social developments. The question is how long this can last.

Even in the countryside, which inevitably is reached later by developments initiated in the cities, clashing ideologies and desires can be seen in plain view. With the fall of communism, televisions, DVD players, and computers all began rushing into Mongolia at an incredibly accelerated rate. Even this tremendous influx, however, could hardly satisfy the Mongolian information craving in the city, not to mention the countryside. Today an estimated "50 to 60 percent of households have TV sets" in Mongolia.<sup>23</sup> However over 60% of the families I interviewed in the countryside alone had TV sets, almost 80% of those families also having satellite dishes. The data I collected makes me think that the previous statistics are underestimating TV ownership nationwide by a substantial amount. Either way, this is a large jump from the amount of technological communications available before the collapse of the Soviet Union only 14 short years ago. During my interviews, every single family with a television reported having purchased their first television after 1990. This phenomenon created a substantial rise in the amount of technology both in

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<sup>23</sup>*International Journalist's Network*, [www.ijnet.org/FE\\_Article/AssetShow.asp?ID=447](http://www.ijnet.org/FE_Article/AssetShow.asp?ID=447)

the cities and in the countryside and in the spread of information throughout Mongolia in the post Soviet years. Today, even families in the deepest areas of the countryside can learn about events happening across the globe, becoming educated as to their surroundings both on a national and on an international level.

However these new amenities also come with problems, kinks that have yet to be worked out. Televisions were not designed for one room environments, and gers are the poster child for that type of living situation. From my experiences living in both gers in Delgerkhan in central Mongolia and Darkhad in the far north, this often led to conflicts. More often than not, half of the family would want to watch television and the other half would not, yet in a one room home with inhospitable temperatures outside, there was no choice. It was wonderful to be able to see the awe in the eyes of those watching television for the first decade in their lives, the amazement at such a new technology, yet at the same time the upcoming changes were apparent even in these early stages. With a television it is very useful to have a second room, and with a second room it is harder, perhaps even impossible, to move. In this culturally set up dilemma, nomads had the television, but no suitable environment in which to watch it. They had the goods, but not the cultural framework to support the new imports. Gers just don't come standard with television parlors; at least not yet.

#### **THE SOVIET INFLUENCED INDICATORS**

There is currently a large drinking problem Mongolia. Since the Soviet era, there has been a substantial increase in the rate of alcoholism in Mongolia.<sup>24</sup> Today, the estimated rate is above 20%, meaning that one in five Mongolians is an

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<sup>24</sup> *The Centre for Harm Reduction*, [www.chr.asn.au/freestyler/gui/files/Mongolia1.pdf](http://www.chr.asn.au/freestyler/gui/files/Mongolia1.pdf)

alcoholic.<sup>25</sup> If those figures applied to SIT and its students, 5 of us would be alcoholics. It is telling that in a country where the vast majority of males, and most females, smoke cigarettes, alcohol poisoning both over the short and long term consistently beats out respiratory disease as the number three killer of Mongolians.<sup>26</sup> Unsurprisingly, circulatory disease ranks first given the heavy meat and fat diet, almost tripling the rates of respiratory and poisoning mortalities.

Sambo, a 72 year old nomad living in the far north of Darkhad, gave me a particularly insightful reason for the substantial increase in alcohol abuse since the Soviet collapse. He told me that during the communist period there had been a consciousness of elders that related to, among other things, drinking habits. There were no set laws, but it was universally accepted that at 40 one started drinking a little bit, at 50 one could drink as one liked, and at 60 one could go “overboard”.<sup>27</sup> However under the new democratic system everyone has become theoretically equal, even across age lines. A misinterpretation, or even abuse, of that has led to people dismantling the old drinking culture and drinking whenever they want in order to celebrate their freedom and equality. This is an interesting case because during communism there was already an established drinking culture that accompanied the copious amounts of alcohol provided by the Soviets. In this situation it isn't that a new commodity is being introduced due to free market reforms, but that new social reforms are being interpreted such that the old drinking customs have been abandoned without replacement while the liquor continues to be present. That has created a different kind of clash between old and new; the vodka has been around for generations, but with the introduction of the new system, there is no longer a rational

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<sup>25</sup> *SIM*, [www.sim.org](http://www.sim.org)

<sup>26</sup> *World Health Organization*, [www.wpro.who.int/chip/mog.htm](http://www.wpro.who.int/chip/mog.htm)

<sup>27</sup> Sambo, *Nomadic Interview*

place for it to fit within the changing culture. This has led, at least in part, to the unprecedented rise in alcoholism.

Another puzzling phenomenon is that of voting in Mongolia. The voting rates in Mongolia are incredibly high. During the parliamentary elections of 1992, 98% of registered voters turned out to choose their first free parliament.<sup>28</sup> By 1996 these numbers had dropped to 88.39% and in 2000 they dropped even further to 82.4%, still well above the global averages. Furthermore, turnout for the 1993 Presidential election was recorded at 96.3% of the total voting age population, a number which rose almost unbelievably to 100% in 2000.<sup>29</sup> What is more, of all the herders I interviewed throughout Mongolia, every single one votes, and none of them have ever heard of any one eligible not voting. All in all Mongolia has averaged a voter turnout of 82.4% of the voting age population, ranking 24 in the world.<sup>30</sup> To add some perspective, the United States is ranked at 139<sup>th</sup> with a historical participation average slightly over 50% (although this does not take into account the recent American presidential election which might bolster that figure to some extent, albeit minimal). What is even more interesting, however, is that voter participation is so high in a country where the amount of information received by the majority of the population is so low. Furthermore, many of my interview accounts verify that apathy is common among nomadic herders as they doubt to some extent what affect the different parties can have on their lives, as removed from the urban centers as they are. This raises the question of what propels such an astonishingly high rate of politically under-educated, apathetic, voters to the polls.

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<sup>28</sup> *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*,  
[www.idea.int/vt/country\\_view.cfm](http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

When asked why they thought the rates of voting were so high, many nomads that I interviewed said they thought it was because people here are simply more active than people in countries who have long since taken their freedom for granted after years of habitual liberties. I believe this to be one of the main reasons for the high voting rates, yet I believe that there is also another dominant reason. Having lived under dictators for so long without the civil liberties taken for granted in most western nations, I simply do not think Mongolians have yet registered on a conscious level that they are free to *not vote*. In this light the phenomenal voter turnout is partially a legacy of doing what one is told, which would explain high voting rates even in the face of low information availability and general political apathy throughout the countryside. In this somewhat demented case, the legacy of anti-democratic rule that dominated civil culture for so long may actually be assisting voting rates in the new democratic era.

Another mark of the Soviet era is the way in which people treat queues in Mongolia. Lines in this country are very rarely respected at all. Usually if one doesn't push to some extent, it can take an hour to move three feet closer to checkout in a supermarket as people seem to keep materializing in the space between. This may seem like a small, even trite observation, yet it has cultural ramifications that are important for the featured discussion. The mentality that upholds culturally institutionalized cutting and shoving is not one that has historically fared well with democratic marketocracies that run on a certain civil order and professional expediency. In reference to interview responses across the boards, this is not a cultural trait that seems to have come from the nomadic way of life. I find it more likely that this cultural phenomenon evolved either during the Soviet era in the city when many middle class workers were hard pressed to maintain the lives they knew

before communism, or more probably, from as recently as the 1990 switch to democracy. With poverty at an all time low and the nation using a card system and in some cases bread lines, it is not hard to see where an acceptability of and movement towards cutting and pushing in lines to get ahead could have been born. Either way, the disregard for lines is a cultural institution that has outlived its usability within the national system, another anachronism that will soon begin to deteriorate under the weight of the new capitalist democracy.

The above indicators are a tangible result of modernity coming to Mongolia that might have happened no matter what the circumstances. Yet they have been undeniably exacerbated by their political surroundings. A loss of Soviet control married with the influx of hundreds of year's worth of other nations' progress, enacted by a culture that sprung from nomadism, is having understandable difficulties working out the numerous cricks. The same might have happened even if Mongolia had stayed Soviet, yet it is doubtful as in that case scenario the country would have remained controlled, not truly opened to the outside world. In the end it is a historian's dilemma; there is no way to know if the above would have played out had the Soviet Union not crumbled and still retained Mongolia as its Asian satellite. However the reality is that, the circumstances as they were, the above indicators have risen to the surface. In the very real power vacuum of Soviet dispersal, new moral, ethical, and ideological infrastructures of normalcy are being created, to some degree necessitating the dismantlement of those influences that the Soviets had on the Mongolian hybrid culture.

#### **THE THIRD NEIGHBOR INDICATORS**

In 1990, then US Secretary of State James Baker introduced to Mongolia his concept of a "third neighbor". Baker's theory was that Mongolia, in an effort to move

away from the legacy of previous totalitarian regimes, could look to the international community of democracies for support as their “third neighbor”.<sup>31</sup> As Mongolia has co-opted Baker’s model during the 14 years since the Soviet collapse, western influence has, for the first time in a century, begun to infiltrate Mongolian society. This has led to cultural clashes which represent a premature desire to westernize while still retaining a cultural legacy not entirely prepared for change. The new understanding of a pan-global consciousness, previously held out by the Soviets, is causing a predominant desire among Mongolians, especially those of the younger generations, to westernize. Yet many Mongolians, predominantly those of the older generations, still find themselves holding onto cultural traditions that are strained to accommodate democracy. These modernization desires, and resulting confusion, can be seen in the following indicators.

Although Mongolia is one of the only modernizing countries in the world where McDonald’s has not yet dared to go, fast food American style is beginning to become popular in Ulan Baatar, even if only as a concept. Various burger joint imitations are springing up around town, the most conspicuous of which was the scandalous MonRonald’s which was forced to change names shortly after opening due to international copy write laws. The restaurant now simply has a large sign which reads “Burger”, written in yellow on red, the McDonald’s colors. One can even still see the outline of the title MonRonald’s on the sign below the shoddy repainting job. What is interesting about all these imitation burger joints, however, is not that they are infringing on international copy write laws, but that they are slower and more expensive than most traditional *buuz places* in Ulan Baatar. Burgers cost two dollars on average, whereas an entire meal can be bought in a traditional *guanz*,

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<sup>31</sup> *The Baker Institute*,  
[www.bakerinstitute.org/Pubs/bipp200202\\_06.html+James+Baker+%22third+neighbor%22&hl=mn](http://www.bakerinstitute.org/Pubs/bipp200202_06.html+James+Baker+%22third+neighbor%22&hl=mn)

or café, for under a dollar. Likewise, food in traditional Mongolian cafés is brought out amazingly fast. I am always astounded when I place an order in a *buuz place* how fast the food is brought to the table; it is as if my arrival was premeditated by the staff who also managed to preordain what I would be ordering, having it ready for me as soon as I sat down. McDonald's in America is nowhere near that fast. In this way if McDonald's ever does get to Mongolia, which it most surely will, it won't really be fast food at all. In this culture it will be comparatively slow, and most probably not cheap. It will, however, most definitely be American, its only true selling point. What is more, people I have talked to throughout the city of the younger generation who have traveled abroad would welcome American fast food chains. Not because they are cheap or fast, but because they like the food; they have bitten into the image. In my mind this shows an increasingly pervasive, at least in the city, Mongolian desire to Americanize.

Due to the way in which foreign sport was integrated into the Mongolian lifestyle late in its developmental stage, post citification, yet at a point where most international information still only trickled into the cities, basketball became the preeminent foreign-imported sport. Basketball, the city sport, was a natural choice over soccer, the true international sport, as space for soccer fields in cities is hard to come by. As the information of new sports did not make it into the countryside, there was no viable way to import soccer as an international phenomenon, leading to a striking predominance of basketball as the idolized sport in Mongolia. Just like in America.

Foreign media, particularly American and South Korean, is idealized in the city centers of Mongolia. When one turns on the TV in Ulan Baatar at least half, if not more, of the channels will inevitably be running American movies or South

Korean soap operas. There are more American movies on television in Ulan Baatar in one day than I get on my television at my home in New York in a week. Every night there are at least three, if not four, Korean soap operas on different channels on television which families watch with ritualistic vigilance. American media even carries into the deep countryside. Otgon, a 60 year old herder settled in the middle of the Gobi far from any sum center, with two permanent structures, a television, and a car, told me as an example of why technology is so great how she had been able to watch the United States election the previous week. She told me she had been riveted by it and that she had found it “so exciting”. She even had a favorite; she was routing for Bush.<sup>32</sup> Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, South Korean and American culture are spreading through the newly installed media outlets and infiltrating Mongolian society at a startling rate. In only 14 years, even countryside life is being substantially affected.

Mongolia is becoming westernized. With the fall of the Soviet Union imminent, Mongolian policy experts and political elites spent 1989 searching for a third party to “guarantee national security and support modernization” in the coming vacuum of Soviet withdrawal.<sup>33</sup> Living perpetually in the Soviet/Chinese nutcracker, Mongolia had no choice but to cooperate with its two superpower neighbors, yet turning to either of them to balance out the other was out of the question. Russia lay in shambles economically and politically, and distrust of the Chinese people ran as high as ever in Mongolia. In a survey of the Mongolian population conducted at the time asking who Mongolia should turn to for economic support, China only garnered 6.2% of the responses, with Russia the non-option looming at 35.2% and America registering a solid 25.6%. Nonetheless, in order to balance out these two great powers,

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<sup>32</sup> Otgon, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>33</sup> Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A., p. 250

Mongolia needed a third party, a third neighbor as proposed by James Baker. Nearly fifteen years later it seems Mongolia has found that neighbor in the international democratic community, led by none other than the United States of America.

Even though the indicators listed above are currently clashing with a newly imported democratic free market culture and the values and norms that it brings along with it, I believe that they will be sorted out in the near future. As the indicators listed in the first two sections yield to the pervasive and seductive influence of those listed in the third, the Mongolian hybrid culture itself will once again begin to change, transforming into a culture that works with the path that the political nation is taking. As capitalist ideology leaks in new ideals, new standards, even new theoretical lifestyles, first the hybrid city culture, then the old nomadic rural culture will begin to dissolve from the inside out by popular demand and a desire for change. This process of a new cultural framework being created as a reaction to national political changes is the unavoidable process of cultural erosion and eventual dissolution.

The current catch-22 of the Mongolian meat industry is a prime example. With Soviet aid gone, in order to bolster GDP and further national development Mongolia is searching for ways to put itself onto the global scene as a serious market player. In a country dominated by nomadic herding, advancing the meat industry to accommodate serious international market sale would seem like a logical progression; yet there is a catch. Nomadic herding has sustained itself as long as it has by virtue of being protected from the outside world, shielded from competitive international markets. Historically, herders have been able to provide their families with what they need to live, and little more. This was one of the main reasons for the development of a war culture as described in Part 1. In the new free market system the limit of how much herders can produce in a rational way is already being pushed, yet meat

production in Mongolia is in no way prepared to support the Mongolian GDP. In order to convert the Mongolian meat industry into an international meat machine, enabling it to quantifiably boost Mongolian GDP beyond its current rates, a number of changes would have to be enacted to the nomadic way of life that would almost certainly alter the path of pastoralism forever. Transportation would have to be formalized throughout the countryside, herders would need to raise their animals in accordance with international health standards, etc. Shifting a pastoralist society to a society that cranks out large numbers of meat products to be sold on an international market with quality standards and deadlines would most certainly alter life on the Mongolian steppes. However if the meat industry is not revolutionized, where is the GDP boost going to come from? Looking into the issue further, which is not the explicit purpose of this paper, variations of the above predicament are present in virtually every case scenario, in every economic sector wherein Mongolia could further their international market role. With possibilities expanding beyond any previous horizons, the question is, does Mongolia really want America to be its third neighbor?

### **PART 3: DEMOCRATIZATION AND A CHANGING SOCIETY**

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All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.

~Anatole France

He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.

~Harold Wilson

Since the transition to a democratic government over a decade ago, the Mongolian political machine has met with significant resistance along the road to modernization. An antiquated cultural legacy, a harsh and undesirable geographical setting, and the lack of material infrastructure in all sectors, has led to many challenges while trying to build a democracy from the ground up in Mongolia. As the democracy is formed, and the infrastructure that was so neglected by the Soviets for so long begins to be installed through the introduction of foreign investment, change can currently be seen everywhere. Yet I do not believe that even many of those who advocate democracy in Mongolia as a harbinger of freedom and peace on an intellectual level really understand the scope of what democracy entails, what it necessitates, the cultural changes it bundles along with it. The progress of these cultural changes and the path of democracy to which they are linked will be the story of the next several decades in Mongolia.

#### **DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE DOOR IN THE MIRAGE**

The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union sent shockwaves through the international community, shifting global politics away from an era dominated by cold war tensions and ushering in a new era of internationalization dominated by democratic free market economies. The most potent and immediate affects of the collapse, however, rippled throughout the Soviet satellite community, vaulting the newly autonomous nations into an involuntary vacuum that none of them could have

adequately prepared for. The numerous economies that had previously depended on the Soviets for sustenance throughout Eastern Europe rapidly fell through the opened floor. In the absence of international trade, imports became scarce and many countries were hard pressed to provide basic supplies for their populations. Most post-Soviet militaries were undermanned and under funded. In most cases, governmental structures were left in shambles. These circumstances left the post-Soviet countries desperately searching for partners outside of their previously diminished sphere of communication in order to help them onto a new track.

The Mongolian situation was no different. In 1990, with the Soviet Union no longer propping up the Mongolian economy it plummeted headlong into the abyss. Imports were minimal due to a boost in prices making supplies scarce even until 1994, when the rationing of bread finally ended. Poverty rose at a monumental rate, growing from 0% income poverty in 1989 to over 26% only four years later in 1994.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, these numbers are thought to be low by some statisticians due to the difficulty of quantifying nomadic poverty and other inherent statistical biases incorporated at the time of calculation.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, real wages in the cities were “halved by 1992, and then declined again by a third in 1993”.<sup>36</sup> In the face of a tremendous rise in oil prices, causing frequent power shortages that set back production and affected transportation and a number of other pivotal amenities, the government was forced into expansive budget cuts, slashing spending primarily in education and healthcare. The four year period from 1990-1994 saw the rapid decay of the benefits in those sectors that the Soviets had spent nearly 70 years building, leaving a legacy of vacant hospitals and crumbling schools across the country. In

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<sup>34</sup> Edited by Griffin, Keith. *Poverty and the Transition to a Market Economy in Mongolia*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1995, p.31

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 32-33

<sup>36</sup> Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A., p.226

addition, Mongolia had to face the international community without protection for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, subjected to the influx of 90% of the century's developments rushing into the country in the mere 10% of the century that remained. With all of these factors added up, it is not surprising that the transition period quickly turned into more of a traumatized withdrawal phase from Soviet communism than a sudden renaissance of liberal values and luxuries. This phase was marked not by the exalted virtues of democracy, liberty, and free market opulence, but by extreme poverty, low imports, the battle for uncontrolled media, cultural uncertainty, and the creation of an entirely new governmental structure from the ground up.

Mongolia has yet to recover entirely from the 1990 collapse, either economically or politically, yet advances are being made at remarkable speed in both areas. Until 1990, the Soviets controlled Mongolia under a mono-party system dominated entirely by the communist backed MPRP (Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party). With the fast death of political repression in 1990, a variety of democratic parties began springing up to challenge the previously uncontested MPRP. Of these new parties, the MDP (Mongolian Democratic Party) and MSDP (Mongolian Social Democratic Party) were the two largest groups, occupying center right and center left, respectively. Beyond these were a host of other democratic parties which garnered less support, yet enough to stay competitive. That same year saw the first ever free and fair democratic election held in Mongolia, drafting parliament members into the old Soviet Hural, a bicameral parliament consisting of 450 seats. With the consolidation of smaller democratic parties not having taken place yet, and elections being run on a plurality system, or First Past the Post system, the former communists took 60% of the seats. The grab bag of non-aligned democratic parties took the other 40%.

During the next two years the elected parliament wrote a new constitution for Mongolia, including delineations for the restructuring of the previously totalitarian pseudo-governmental organization. The old Hural became a unicameral parliament consisting of 76 seats to be filled by elected officials from various parties, the parliament would in turn appoint the cabinet and the elected president would appoint the judges. The new parliament also organized in the constitution a system of checks and balances to be carried out in the new governmental structure resembling that of the United States, with the three branches of government responsible for vetoing one another on legislation and appointments. During this time many of the smaller democratic parties merged into a democratic coalition union under the MDP name and began forming grassroots networks throughout the countryside in order to further support.

The effort paid off, and in 1996, the MDP Coalition won 50 of the 76 seats in the new unicameral parliament, taking the control of Mongolia away from the MPRP for the first time in 70 years. However with majority consensus set at 2/3, the democrats were 1 seat short. Although the MPRP had only won 25 seats they were able to win over the one independent that had been elected, the 76<sup>th</sup> seat, enabling them to block legislation at their whim. With a parliament divided between two diametrically opposed political parties concerned more with their private ideologies than national progression, a stagnant term followed in which little was accomplished. The MDP coalition was founded in the hopes of expediting the transition to a democratic market economy through the installation of dramatic reforms along capitalist lines. This primarily included the opening of markets, privatization of assets, and decentralization of social benefit programs and institutions. The MPRP, on the other hand, became increasingly socialist and decreasingly communist along Soviet

lines post 1990, favoring the continuing subsidization of social institutions, a strong welfare system, and decreased privatization while still opening the country in some capacity to international markets and media. Nevertheless, MPRP members would simply walk out of parliament if they did not fully support any bill or legislation item proposed by the MDP Coalition members. This created an atmosphere of stunted growth from 1996-2000, where radical initiatives encompassing the mindset of the elected MDP government officials were shot down internally by the 26 seat veto set up by the opposing MPRP. The result was a torpid, even retrogressive, few years in which the Mongolian population became increasingly wary of the democrats as substantial visible benefits did not manifest themselves on the MDP's watch.

During the 2000 election the MPRP effectively used the instability they had essentially created during the last term, in conjunction with the MDP Coalition's decision to once again splinter into a dozen shards, to take absolute control of the government. The MPRP won 72 of the 76 seats, an unprecedented number even granted the above concessions, with the democrats only taking 4 seats separately. This created a virtual one party parliament dominated by the socialists, who at this time dropped the last pretenses of direct communist ties, becoming the primary party occupying the central left. In America, bizarrely enough, this is a position held by none other than the Democratic Party. Even stranger still, during the following election of 2004 the Mongolian democrats once again banded together under a common goal with a common name, the Motherland Democratic Party, a politically contradictory name for the ages. With the Revolutionary Party becoming centrist to the point of occupying the center left, the democrats chose a name which combines modern democracy with a less than subversive hint at a none other than a Soviet

coined term for the national homeland. The 2004 election was a veritable mess of centrist movement.

With both parties rushing towards each other to bolster support among alienated voters in both camps, while trying to simultaneously retain a strong home base of support, the 2004 election resulted in a dead heat. The MPRP won 36 seats, the Motherland Democratic Coalition won 36 seats, and three seats went to independents, all of which had come from the previously disbanded MDP. With parties merging towards the middle, elections split 50/50, and a divided voting population, the parallels to the current political situation in the United States are striking. One nation progressing, the other regressing, both split between those who want to move towards the future and those who either want to hold onto, or revert to, a mutated form of a long lost past.<sup>37</sup>

Mongolia is also recovering economically. Between the last year of Soviet Communism in 1989 when 30% of Mongolia's GDP (Gross National Product) was contributed by the Soviets, and four years later in 1993, GDP fell 22%. This coincided with, partially creating and partially reacting to, the complete disintegration of the Mongolian economy during the transition period. However GDP began rising at a stabilized rate hovering above 3% in 1994, and has sustained this approximate growth rate until today.

These growth rates were accounted for due to production increases in almost every sector as the economy recovered from a 30% loss of GDP, with the removal of Soviet capital. By 1998, with the economy at least partially back on its feet, agriculture, trade, and material accounted for 32.8% of the GDP, industry for 24.1

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<sup>37</sup> *It was my initial aspiration to write a second section to this paper focusing on the parallel movement of the United States backwards, something hinted at here. Mongolia moving forwards, the US moving backwards grasping at a long lost cultural past in all the wrong ways; both divided right down the middle as they pass one another on two sides of the same road. Yet with time constraints, the addition will have to wait.*

(with 40% of that coming from the mining of metal ores), technical provision for 18.9%, services for 14.2, and the remaining 10.2% coming from other sources. The agricultural increase was due in large part to the privatization of animals which allowed animal numbers to rise well above what herders were motivated to sustain under communism. It was several years before privatization of livestock took effect, however, as animals take time to grow old enough to be sold. Likewise, with the departure of the Soviets, foreign mining companies were able to enter Mongolia, partially bolstering the mining output which had alone risen to 10% of the total GDP by 2000.<sup>38</sup> In addition Mongolia found a new trading partner to the south in China, with nearly 60% of national exports going to that vast country in 2000. With the added possibilities of animal production, the already flourishing cashmere industry grew even larger, accounting for “16% of exports [and] a quarter of the world's cashmere [stock]” by 2000.<sup>39</sup> All of these increases, and more, have added up to the effective bounce back of the Mongolian economy on the industrial level, an economy that Michael Richmond of the US Embassy in Ulan Baatar describes as “looking as though it were entering a boom”.<sup>40</sup> However none of this negates the fact that bouncing back to a mediocre economy does not make the economy any better than it was before the crash, and that on the ground, Mongolia is still an infrastructurally lacking, economically brittle country with underinvestment from abroad, scant resources, and a long way to go.

Having made the transition to a capitalist democracy, however, the potential is there. Theoretically, democratic capitalism opens the door in the mirage to a thousand possibilities that were previously only a thousand drops of dew entangled in an elusive vapor trail dancing on the horizon. Having attained a tenuous stability in

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<sup>38</sup> *United Nations DP, Mongolia Division*, [www.tumenet.org](http://www.tumenet.org)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Michael Richmond, *Lecture for SIT*

the wake of tumultuous political change, the current task for Mongolia is to see how far past a status quo which is aspired to by poor nations and dreaded by wealthy ones the country can go.

#### THE UNDEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

There are currently numerous road blocks strewn in the path of the Mongolian democracy that are preventing the country from moving forward at an accelerated growth speed. By most unbiased accounts corruption is rampant within the government. This point of view is most clearly expressed by S. Oyun, a member the Mongolian parliament who has fought throughout her career for the transparency the government is lacking. Although there are no statistics indicating the degree to which corruption is an issue in the Mongolian power structure, it would be impossible for there to be without transparency, it is clear that there is corruption throughout the governmental structures. For lack of more tangible evidence, the presence of corruption is verified beyond the shadow of a doubt given merely the degree to which most government members have resisted the transparency movement. Most officials have shied away from declaring their salaries publicly as a slug shying away from salt; afraid of melting into a little puddle.

The presence of corruption trickles down through the entire Mongolian infrastructure, affecting the degree to which foreign investors are willing to participate in the Mongolian economy, the degree to which the economy itself functions, and most importantly, the degree to which the Mongolian people believe in their own government as a rational entity worthy of the nation's trust. What is more, campaign finance reforms are virtually non-existent in Mongolia, leading to an economically

opaque political process from start to finish. Those with the most capital and campaign investment can sway the most voters, entering into a political position where they can make the most money, covering it all up through the skilled manipulation of media sources under the control of various interested beneficiaries who, more probably than not, funded the candidates campaign in the first place.

Freedom of the press and media outlets is another major issue in the current Mongolian political arena. Although 1990 saw the official liberation of all media, a move ratified in the constitution two years later, this dream is a long way from becoming a reality in Mongolia. Most of the papers, if not all, in the country are controlled by an interest group. Although the MPRP is the only party to actually own a newspaper, every other Mongolian newspaper is tied to a corporation or individual with explicit political opinions based on party lines.<sup>41</sup> Much of the television and radio media is still run by the state, meaning that the political inclination of these outlets sways back and forth with the balance of power ushered in by each new election. However with the growth of the internet in Mongolia, new fair and free media sources are beginning to populate the dot com world as the price of creating such a news source is vastly less than tackling a newspaper, television show, or radio program. Perhaps in the future this will affect media across the boards, stirring the true emancipation of subversively controlled media in Mongolia.

Furthermore, Mongolia's economic potential is currently being held in check due to the trickle down effects of a struggling democracy, and the contradictory desires to save cultural heritage and the Mongolian wilderness in the face of economic exploitation. It is difficult for Mongolia to court foreign investment away from their Chinese neighbor, a country that due to many factors, including predominantly

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<sup>41</sup> Mr. Lutaa, *Lecture for SIT*

strength in population numbers, can provide cheap labor on a scale not possible in Mongolia. Add to this the scare factors of corruption in Mongolian politics, a sign of instability that makes foreign investors wary, and investment is an uphill battle all the way. In addition, industries such as mining and meat producers are currently being held in check to some degree by the movement to protect in Mongolia. The meat industry could bring down nomadic herding, and the mining industry, with its enormous potential for international trade and profit, could literally destroy vast sections of the Mongolian wilderness. This is the inherent negative that comes along with the positive potential of capitalist democracies; how to enter the system without embarking on a myopic path that will lead to expansion in the short term, but will eventually turn Mongolia into a ravaged wasteland. The ability of a nation to soar within the capitalist system is irrelevant if, during the process, the nation destroys the ground on which they will inevitably have to land sometime in the imminent future.

It is my theory that all of the above democratic and economic problems, and all of the social indicators of resistance, are the result of a contradiction wherein the Mongolian culture is changing slower than its political arena. This phenomenon is not surprising given the 14 year super speed trip Mongolia has been launched on. In the fallout of a system that protected a cultural legacy well beyond its natural lifespan, these challenges are caused by the leftovers of nomadic culture crossing paths with democracy. Add to the fray the scraps of ingrained Soviet mentality that continue to linger in Mongolia and there is a veritable jumble of undemocratic legacy left in house, a legacy that democracy is currently clashing with. The challenges that have risen out of these cultural incompatibilities can only be overcome if the Mongolian civil society becomes actively involved, in democratic terms, necessitating another fundamental shift in cultural values.

Democracy is fundamentally different from previous dictatorial regimes in that it requires the active participation of the public in order to succeed. During the neo-feudal years the population did not have to consent to their rulers, they were made to consent whether they wished to or not. The same held true under Soviet rule; active participation was irrelevant. However this is no longer the case. In order to censor the democracy in which they live, Mongolians are required to, for the first time in the history of the country, become involved in the political process. Culturally, however, there is no legacy of involvement in the national rule, leading to the need for another cultural transformation in Mongolia in order to once again accommodate new governmental organizations. However this transformation may spell the end of traditions that have been carried in Mongolia since long before democracy was even a dot on the world scene.

The bribing culture needs to be curtailed on the side of the authorities, and stop being accepted on the side of the population. On a trip to Northern Mongolia our van was stopped as we crossed Aimag borders. The border police ended up accusing our driver of not having a medical kit in the car, and the driver paid them the equivalent of five US dollars to placate them and get us across the border. I was amazed at how natural it seemed, and how little everyone else was surprised by what had happened, even though the driver was angry at having to have paid the five dollars. When I suggested that the driver check police records in Ulan Baatar when he returned to make sure the five dollars had made it to the state coffers and not stayed in the policeman's pocket, he laughed. In fact all the Mongolians in the van laughed. Who would do all that work just to check up on five dollars? Touché, however it was not the five dollars that concerned me, it was the larger bribery problem in general. Bribery in Mongolia is able to survive simply because it happens

in such small incidences, involving just little enough money that no one deems the needed effort to resist worthwhile. The result is that policemen are never censured for their actions, and bribery continues to be a nationwide problem.

Likewise, the peculiar form of apathy inherited from previous autocratic governments that has many voters in the countryside voting without a clear idea of who they are voting for and why, needs to change. Over 60% of those interviewed in the countryside who indicated that they and their entire group of friends vote, also indicated that not much information on the political process or political parties reaches them. This leaves voting as more of a shot in the dark in most cases than an informed decision indicating a preference of how the country should be run. A smaller percentage of interviewees indicated that they receive information, but that they do not think that the government has the power to influence their lives in a substantial enough way to matter. It is partially this attitude that has led the striking lack of political participation beyond voting among common Mongolians, as indicated by the absolute shortage of political rallies and demonstrations not only now, but also under the Soviets. Apathy disguised in a rather meaningless high vote count is still apathy, no matter how misleading the numbers. The Mongolian population, especially those in the countryside, need to become actively involved in politics, necessitating broader communication networks, freer media, and a cultural shift towards desiring those amenities which will help them connect to the informational hub of Ulan Baatar. In order to accommodate a fluid, rational, democracy changes need to be enacted that will necessarily rock the foundations of the nomadic pastoralist legacy in Mongolia.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF RADICAL CHANGE: FOLLOW THE URBAN LEADER**

Change is becoming apparent everywhere in Mongolia. As a widespread phenomenon, this transformation it is not only limited to the city, as discussed at length in Part 2, but has already begun to creep out into the vast countryside regions, albeit at a slower pace. The most poignant examples of this change that I came across in the Mongolian countryside are taking place in the Gobi desert. Vegetable growing is becoming wide spread in the central Gobi since the introduction of agriculture to the area in 1990. What is conceived of as the most barren area of Mongolia, an already strikingly barren country, now produces some 25% of Mongolian vegetable stock. The farmers in the regions like to boast that most of the vegetables one eats in café's in Ulan Baatar come from their vegetable patches. Upon entering almost every ger that I visited in the region I was immediately offered pickles, or cabbage salad, or even in one case, tomato jam. As it was winter, the gers were overflowing with the canned vegetables stock produced during the summer months; they were stuffed under beds, spilling out of makeshift cabinets, even sitting on top of television sets. Vegetables were everywhere, and what is more, they were delicious.

This new vegetable movement has many nomads settling so that they can plant gardens in a return to an agricultural way of life last seen in Mongolia over ten thousand years ago. With new advancements in agricultural technology, finally allowed in with the departure of the Soviets, these Gobi farmers are able to work the soil into arability, something that had proved impossible in the area up until 1990. Furthermore, with the arrival of Ivanhoe, an international Mining company based in Canada, the area is already seeing a rise in living conditions in the towns, prompting citification. The company is currently scoping a potentially massive iron deposit in the region, and even though the company has yet to fully commit to the mine, changes are already coming. Hambog sum, a small sum center virtually in the middle of

nowhere, yet near the Ivanhoe site, has a completely renovated school, several little hotels, and a Xaan bank branch, all of which have recently sprung up. People are flocking to the city, settling either on the outskirts in ger districts or moving into the city proper in order to take advantage of the school and other amenities. All this and the mine has yet to open. When it does, it will absorb an approximate 6,000 workers from the region. The affects of that change will be even less gradual.

All in all, throughout the central Gobi region the nomadic people were surprisingly modernized. The gers were the largest I have seen in Mongolia and most had small hobbit hole-like entranceways to shelter the door from sand storms and provide additional storage room. An overwhelming proportion of the families I interviewed had permanent barns and pens linked to their gers, almost 90%, with 63% of families already settled permanently or planning to settle in the next year. In addition, just over 50% of families had televisions, all of them linked to satellite systems, and all but one family had a motorized vehicle, with 20% of those being cars and the remaining 80% being Russian motorcycles.

Families which I encountered in the central and northern regions had fewer amenities and generally were less likely to be settled. In the central region of Delgerkhan, 25% of families had televisions with only half of those linked to satellite systems, 75% of families had motorcycles, and over 50% of the families had sedentary structures, yet only one of those families was actually settled, moving into the sum center for the winter and living off the money generated by renting out a sulfur spring near the ger in the countryside during the summer. In the Northern region of Darkhan, the numbers were even smaller. Approximately 25% of families recorded had televisions, just over 50% had motorized vehicles, the majority being cars, and only 1 of the families interviewed was permanently settled. I would

attribute the lowness of these numbers to two primary factors. First of all the southern region has had much more exposure to modernization, due to foreign and domestic interest in mineral deposits and the comparative ease of travel year round. Secondly it is important to note that all of the families I interviewed in the north and central communities were hand picked by SIT school for students to stay with. These families do not necessarily represent the average Mongolian family in the region as they were hand selected for compatibility with the goals of the SIT program. This could have led to many families who are carrying on primarily traditional lifestyles being picked, and thus interviewed. In the Gobi, families were selected at random while driving across the desert, thus representing a much more natural, and in my opinion, accurate reflection of the realities of nomadic modernization.

The margin of error in the numbers I collected in the field is admittedly large. There are numerous biases that could offset the numbers substantially, yet the general outcome drawn could not, in my opinion, be fundamentally altered by any amount of offset. Twenty years ago none of those families would have had televisions, satellite connections, motorcycles, or would be considering settling down to grow vegetables. The purpose of my surveys was not to draw completely accurate statistical numbers on the nomadic possession of modern amenities, it was to draw a general conclusion that things in the countryside are changing, and changing quickly. It is beyond a shadow of a doubt in my mind, as based on the research I conducted, that they are. What is more, in all cases, the nomadic families interviewed were themselves quick to comment on the numerous changes of the last decade and a half. Purevsuren, a 68 year old nomad who does not even own a ger but travels truly nomadically from the home of one family member to another, was quick to comment on how much has changed during his lifetime. He said that nomadic life is becoming markedly more

sedentary with the addition of new, heavier, modern amenities that are weighing the nomads down into settling.<sup>42</sup> Ayosh, a 58 year old settled nomad in the Gobi who now grows vegetables said that here life has been divided into two distinct parts.<sup>43</sup> When she was young technology was a dream of the future, and now she lives a life in which “the dream has come true”.<sup>44</sup> She added that now she can even talk to her son who is living in Korea. Tsempil, another farmer in the Gobi corroborated that thought, saying that it is as if she has lived “two totally different lives”.<sup>45</sup> Tsempil is settled with a television, a satellite hook up, and a car, growing vegetables in the middle of the Gobi desert.

However when asked if nomadic cultural traditions may disappear in the coming years, even in the face of changes already taking place, pastoralists unequivocally answered negatively across the boards. Monkchimeg, the same herder who told me he valued his work in terms of a quantifiable income, told me while sitting next to his television, with a barn and a new motorcycle outside, that all of the new technological advances do not make nomads want to be more western.<sup>46</sup> He was certain that they will never abandon their cultural heritage, yet he was sitting in an environment that was living proof that they already are.

Tsetsegdelger, a woman living in the middle of the Gobi with a huge herd of camels, spoke to the intricacies of the situation quite profoundly. She held the same conviction of most other herders that nomads will never stop moving as they will always need to follow their animals that that will always be in search of better pastureland.<sup>47</sup> However she added that cultural traditions might change, alongside

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<sup>42</sup> Purevsuren, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>43</sup> Ayosh, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Tsempil, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>46</sup> Monkchimeg

<sup>47</sup> Tsetsegdelger

continued nomadic herding patterns, to such a great extent that nomadic culture will no longer be recognizable as such even though the people will still technically be moving nomadically.<sup>48</sup> Ayosh thought the same thing. She said that she could not predict whether culture would change or not, but she sees that many herders are already changing on a physical level. They are “settling, getting televisions, and herding with cars”.<sup>49</sup> However she was quick to comment that “others are still completely nomadic and don’t have any technology”.<sup>50</sup> The change has already begun, and I do not think it will stop, not because it can’t be stopped, but because the population does not want to stop it. The myopic view that many of the physical changes taking place in the herding community will never affect their cultural legacy is merely a symptom of a culture in transition that is difficult to analyze from within that cultural group itself. The seed planted, it is only a matter of time before rapid changes kept dormant for over a century, engulf Mongolia in a flood of transformation.

#### THE GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION CATALYST

With two opposing forces clashing in a struggle which will eventually decide the future of the Mongolian nation, the progress of democracy will inevitably be marked by the progressive demise of traditional culture in practice. On many levels, this is a much less disheartening concept than it may seem at first glance. Nomads in the country have incredibly tough lives, lives more suited to past centuries than to the one we are currently in. Some of the younger families I met even admitted to me that they do not like their lives, that they are “bored” and that they are trying to move into

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<sup>48</sup> Tsetsegdelger

<sup>49</sup> Ayosh

<sup>50</sup> Ayosh

the city in order to give their children a better life than they had.<sup>51</sup> How can foreigners rationally lament the downfall of a lifestyle we ourselves would not be happy living for an extended period of time, like a lifetime? In some cases, the transition will surely be cause for happiness, and as such should not be seen in such a negative light, predominantly by outside viewers. No change comes without loss, while holding natural change at bay is even more lamentable than the necessary losses of an evolving world.

By the same token, however, sometimes it is only to clear what you have lost once it is gone. Democracy is a double edged sword; it can elevate the standard of living in a country, yet the country has to sell its soul to capitalism and free market reforms in order to do so. The transition to a capitalist system from a traditionalist one imbued with lasting cultural legacies is bound to see the vast overhaul of nomadic traditions in accordance with modernizing trends. In Mongolia, this is happening in several steps. With the opening of international markets and the destruction of previous information boundaries, global media has set up an image of perfect modernization for everyone to see, dangling it like a carrot in front of the Mongolian population. Although this image of modernization may turn out to be nothing but a mirage, it looks and feels and smells wholly real, making it an enticing aspiration.<sup>52</sup> This is represented in Mongolia by the infiltration of, most notably, American and South Korean media, serving as an intoxicant to Mongolians, making them want to be more like what they see, to conform to an international capitalist methodology that could bring them the luxury and style they perceive abroad. In the Mongolian case, switching to a democratic marketocracy is the way in which the country can open the door in that previously unattainable mirage, stepping into a whole new world that was

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<sup>51</sup> Mendsaikhan, *Nomadic Interview*

<sup>52</sup> Kagarlitsky, Boris. *The Mirage of Modernization*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press. 1995.

formerly nothing but a fantasy like dream. Whether that dream turns out to be a viable route to national progress, or, in fact, nothing more than a fancy mirage, only time will tell. Yet democratic reforms are the way in which Mongolia can paint for itself the door in the mirage, creating an opening through which to enter.

Stepping through that door, however, necessitates a radical shift away from the trappings of previous old world legacies in order to facilitate movement towards a culture compatible with the newly appointed political systems. This leaves the present as an oddly anomalous time in Mongolia, a time stuck halfway between Chiingis Khan and Burger King, a time when the old has not yet fully subsided and the new has not yet fully been born. It is as if Mongolia is hovering between two worlds, the one behind the door which is being left behind, and the one on the other side of the door which has not yet come entirely into view. Only through fully committing to democratic reforms and the capitalist ideology can Mongolia step all the way through that door in the mirage and find out what really lies behind the façade.

However there is scant middle ground. In the global game of national political reconstruction and international ideological co-optation, it tends to be all or nothing; fully in, or fully out. Mongolia has to choose either to step past the door frame, or retreat, continuing to live with the possibilities of the mirage haunting the national dream. I believe the decision has already been made, a belief that has been backed up through four months of experiences living in Mongolia and numerous interviews conducted throughout the country. As Mongolia chooses its path, the progress of democracy and free market reforms will mark the progress of the disintegration of traditional cultures in practice. Herders will begin to herd, as has already happened, with motorcycles and cars. Some pastoralists will begin to choose agriculture as new technological advances inundate the country making it possible to work the land.

Increasing amounts of the political elite will rise from urban areas due to higher rates of schooling in those regions.<sup>53</sup> This will shift the political path of the country towards urbanized desires and away from the home base of nomadic legacy in the countryside. Tourism will rise as more and more westerners visit Mongolia, each one taking away with them a little bit of that very wildness they made the pilgrimage half way across the world to experience, until Mongolia becomes as popular and as common as Thailand, as Brazil, as the Caribbean. In Mongolia the stakes are high. The success of the national passage through that door in the mirage into a democratized capitalist society means the difference between the developing state succeeding and failing, and in my opinion, between nomadic tradition in practice living and dying out.

The prevalence of aged cultures in developing nations succumbing to the narcotic of modernization, changing, and eventually disintegrating, is a phenomenon currently sweeping the world over. Through global media, people in developing countries worldwide are realizing what they don't have. Of course this new information unfortunately does not come with disclaimer tags informing them of how much they do have, things that most modernized nations ceased to value long ago. Nevertheless, as these countries advance towards modernization following an externally sparked, internal impetus to change, they will slowly lose the cultural heritages of the past in practice, creating new cultures and new national transformations, as has happened time and time again throughout the history of the world. Mongolia is an exemplar of this current widespread evolution of a struggle as old as man, the struggle forwards, towards modernization, and away from traditional cultures that themselves were once the modernizing forces of change.

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<sup>53</sup> Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A., p268

In Mongolia, nomadic culture, after facilitating peaceful transitions during the Soviet takeover and subsequent crumble, created a society which is proving difficult to assimilate into the global community of democracies and free market economies. In the future, Mongolian values will shift, transforming into something unique and new, an entirely fresh breed of Mongolian culture built upon, but also necessitating, the dissipation of the old heritage in practice. This transition is not inevitably negative, as demoralizing as it may seem to scores of foreigners. Many of these foreigners simply lament the loss of past cultures in their own nations, whether subconsciously or otherwise, transferring these feelings onto the shoulders of developing countries abroad instead of dealing with the realities at home. In my opinion, it is actually quite an uplifting concept, the chance to perpetually improve, bettering ourselves and our surroundings. Nor is it by any means a new thing. The evolution of culture is the way of the world, and to try to stop it would be to deny the motion of the entire history of mankind and the movement of a constantly evolving universe. What is important is to work to ensure that the evolution always stays a progression, that children have a more relenting earth to live on than their parents, that the passage of time people become kinder, better educated, healthier, and more conscious of their place in the world, and that no one is left impoverished in the wake of dramatic changes. In short, the goal is to avoid regression. This is the task set for Mongolia in the next century; to create a world beyond the door in the mirage that validates beyond the shadow of a doubt the unconscious decision to have disrupted a millennium of cultural, historical, and civilizational advancements, leaving them behind to be written into the dust covered chronicles of the past.

**APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW REFERENCE GRAPH**

<u>Family Name and Region</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>Car</u>	<u>Motorcycle</u>	<u>Permanent Structures</u>	<u>Nomadic Status</u>
<u>Northern Region of Darkhan</u>					
Sambo	Yes	-	Yes	2	Nomadic
Ganbaatar	-	-	-	1	Nomadic
Bat-Erdene	Yes	Yes	-	1	Nomadic
Galsan	-	Yes	-	4	Settled
Vanchin	-	-	-	2	Nomadic
Mendsaikhan	-	-	-	2	Nomadic
Bashish	-	Yes	-	1	Nomadic
Tsuktsbaatar	-	-	Yes	-	Nomadic
<i>Total Percentages</i>	<i>25%</i>		<i>63%</i>		<i>13%</i>
<u>Central Region of Delgerkhan</u>					
Baasendaug	Yes	-	Yes	1	Nomadic
Batchaluun	Yes	-	-	-	Nomadic
Gantulga	-	-	Yes	2	Nomadic
Lhagvasuren	-	-	Yes	3	Settled
Mendsaikhan	-	-	Yes	-	Nomadic
Enkh-Amgalan	-	-	Yes	1	Nomadic
Aahuu	-	-	Yes	1	Nomadic
Tsegmed	-	-	-	-	Nomadic
<i>Total Percentages</i>	<i>25%</i>		<i>75%</i>		<i>13%</i>
<u>Gobi Region</u>					
Erdene-Ochir	Yes	-	Yes	1	Settled
Nergui	-	-	-	1	Nomadic
Batjargal	Yes	-	Yes	2	Settled
Tsedevsuren	-	-	Yes	2	Nomadic
Tsempil	Yes	Yes	-	1	Settled
Otgon	Yes	Yes	-	2	Settled
B. Banzragch	-	-	Yes	1	Settled
Tsetsegdelger	-	-	Yes	1	Nomadic
Ayosh	-	-	Yes	1	Nomadic
Dorj	Yes	-	Yes	-	Settled
Monkhchimeg	Yes	-	Yes	3	Settled
<i>Total Percentages</i>	<i>55%</i>		<i>91%</i>		<i>64%</i>
<b>Overall Percentages</b>	<b>37%</b>		<b>78%</b>		<b>30%</b>



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*UNESCO Statistical Database*  
[www.unescobkk.org/ips/arihweb/demographics/mongolia2.cfm](http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/arihweb/demographics/mongolia2.cfm)

*Encarta Encyclopedia*  
[www.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761574825\\_2/Marriage.html+United+States+city+average+marriage+age&hl=mn](http://www.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia_761574825_2/Marriage.html+United+States+city+average+marriage+age&hl=mn)

*Lonely Planet Guide* [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north\\_east\\_asia/mongolia/printable.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/mongolia/printable.htm)

*International Journalist's Network* [www.ijnet.org/FE\\_Article/AssetShow.asp?ID=447](http://www.ijnet.org/FE_Article/AssetShow.asp?ID=447)

*The Centre for Harm Reduction*  
[www.chr.asn.au/freestyler/gui/files/Mongolia1.pdf](http://www.chr.asn.au/freestyler/gui/files/Mongolia1.pdf)

*SIM*  
[www.sim.org](http://www.sim.org)

*World Health Organization*  
[www.wpro.who.int/chip/mog.htm](http://www.wpro.who.int/chip/mog.htm)

*International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*  
[http://www.idea.int/vt/country\\_view.cfm](http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm)

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[www.bakerinstitute.org/Pubs/bipp200202\\_06.html+James+Baker+%22third+neighbor%22&hl=mn](http://www.bakerinstitute.org/Pubs/bipp200202_06.html+James+Baker+%22third+neighbor%22&hl=mn)

*United Nations DP, Mongolia Division*  
[www.tumenet.org](http://www.tumenet.org)

### Interview Resources

*The following interviews were conducted from September-November, 2004:*

Sambo, *Darkhan Region*  
Mendsaikhan, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Baasendaug, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Erdene-Ochir, *Gobi Region*  
Nergui, *Gobi Region*  
Batjargal, *Gobi Region*  
Tsedevsuren, *Gobi Region*  
Tsempil, *Gobi Region*  
Otgon, *Gobi Region*  
B. Banzragch, *Gobi Region*  
Tsetsegdelger, *Gobi Region*  
Ayosh, *Gobi Region*  
Monkhchimeg, *Gobi Region*  
Dorj, *Gobi Region*

***The following accounts were recorded from September-November 2004:***

Batchaluun, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Gantulga, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Lhagvasuren, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Mendsaikhan, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Enkh-Amgalan, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Aahuu, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Tsegmed, *Delgerkhan Region*  
Ganbaatar, *Darkhan Region*  
Bat-Erdene, *Darkhan Region*  
Galsan, *Darkhan Region*  
Vanchin, *Darkhan Region*  
Basbish, *Darkhan Region*  
Tsuktsbaatar, *Darkhan Region*

#### **Lecture Resources**

Mr. Lutaa. Lecture for SIT, *On Mongolian Media*, October 2004: Erdenet, Mongolia.

Richmond, Michael. Lecture for SIT, *Mongolia's Economy*, October 2004: Ulan Baatar, Mongolia