

Parliamentary Elections in Mongolia

July 9, 2024

Mongolia, an important U.S. [partner](#) in the Indo-Pacific region, held parliamentary elections on June 28. Sharing borders with Russia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China), Mongolia stands out among its neighbors as a multiparty parliamentary democracy. Congress has [expressed](#) strong support for Mongolian democracy and the U.S.-Mongolia [strategic partnership](#). Mongolia is one of 21 countries worldwide that participate in the [House Democracy Partnership](#). The 2024 parliamentary elections were the first held following constitutional changes that expanded the size of the unicameral parliament, known as the State Great Khural, and introduced a mixed electoral system. The Mongolian People’s Party (MPP) maintained its majority, winning 68 seats. The opposition Democratic Party (DP) won 42 seats. The new parliament also includes three smaller parties: the HUN party won 8 seats, while the National Coalition and the Civil Will-Green Party, neither of which had deputies in the previous parliament, won 4 seats each (see **Figure 1**). Voter turnout was about 70%, compared to 73.6% in the 2020 parliamentary elections. The MPP, which had held a supermajority since 2016, plans to form a [coalition government](#) with the DP and the HUN party.

Political Background

Following a peaceful revolution in 1990, Mongolia embarked on a democratic transition that set it apart from other formerly communist countries in the region. Elections in Mongolia are generally considered free and fair, and Mongolia is the only formerly communist country in Asia classified as “[Free](#)” by the U.S. nongovernmental organization Freedom House. The U.S. State Department describes Mongolia’s achievements in terms of democratization and market reforms as “[considerable](#),” but notes widespread [corruption](#) as an enduring challenge.

Although Mongolia has a multiparty system, political power since the country’s democratization has generally alternated between two major parties, the MPP and the DP, which have established a track record of peaceful transitions of power. In 2016, the MPP won 65 of 76 seats in parliament, while the then-ruling DP won 9 seats. The MPP maintained its commanding majority in the June 2020 parliamentary elections, winning 62 seats. The DP increased its share of seats to 11. This was the first time since Mongolia’s transition to democracy that the same party maintained a parliamentary majority in two consecutive elections.

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Constitutional [reforms](#) passed by the MPP-dominated parliament in 2019 reduced the scope of presidential powers and limited the president to one six-year term (previously, presidents were eligible to serve two four-year terms). Critics [accused](#) the MPP of attempting to manipulate the 2021 presidential election by preventing the DP incumbent, President Khaltmaagiin Battulga, from running for reelection. Although Battulga challenged his exclusion from the race, Mongolia's Constitutional Court upheld the term limit. The election delivered a decisive victory for MPP candidate Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, who had served as prime minister until he resigned from that post in January 2021 amid protests over his government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Khurelsukh's victory represented a [consolidation](#) of MPP control over the government in light of the party's supermajority in parliament.

Constitutional Reform and Changes to Parliament

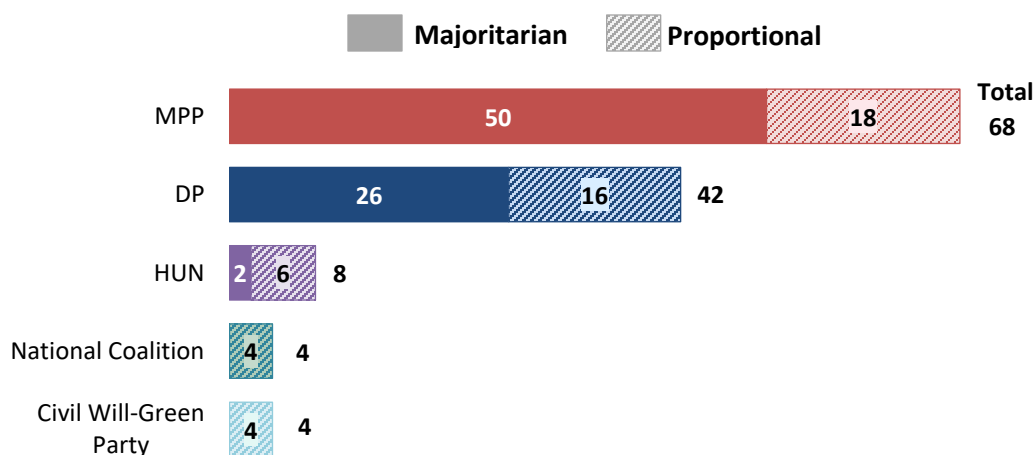
Constitutional [changes](#) passed in May 2023 [increased](#) the size of the State Great Khural from 76 members to 126 and introduced a mixed electoral system, with 78 members elected directly in a majoritarian vote and 48 elected from nation-wide party lists via proportional representation. The expanded size of the legislature [decreases](#) the average number of constituents per member of parliament. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) [notes](#) that Mongolia's electoral districts vary widely in terms of electorate size, "contrary to international good practice related to equality of the vote." The mixed electoral system may serve to boost political [pluralism](#) by making it easier for smaller parties to enter parliament. The constitutional changes also include a [gender quota](#), requiring that women be 30% of each party's candidates, set to increase to 40% in the 2028 elections.

Electoral Campaign

The 2024 elections took place amid widespread public [frustration](#) with corruption and [concerns](#) about the economy. Following 2022 [protests](#) over [corruption](#) in the mining sector, the MPP government introduced a new [National Anti-Corruption Strategy](#), which includes enhanced whistleblower protections and seeks to increase transparency, and [declared](#) 2023 as the "Year of Fighting Corruption."

The OSCE determined that the elections were well-administered, but [noted](#) that "competitiveness was negatively affected by the lack of a level playing field," arguing that the short duration of the official 17-day campaign period favors incumbents and well-established parties. Nineteen political parties and two coalitions fielded a total of 1,336 candidates.

Figure 1. Electoral Results



Source: Graphic created by CRS

Outlook

While the MPP's supermajority has been reduced to a majority, one expert [assesses](#) that the outcome of the elections "implies government and policy continuity" and the election "has (re)solidified the dominance of MPP and DP in a two-party system, though proportional representation has led to a diversity of parties in parliament." The outcome of the elections is [unlikely](#) to influence Mongolia's foreign policy posture, which emphasizes balancing relations with Russia, the PRC, and "[Third Neighbors](#)" such as the United States.

The new parliament includes [32 women](#), about a quarter of all deputies, which is a record for women's representation in the Mongolian legislature. The majority of female deputies were elected through the party list system, while eight were elected directly (out of 316 female candidates); each party in the new parliament has at least two seats held by women.

Voter turnout [fell](#) among voters under 55, perhaps reflecting [frustration](#) within the electorate about the perceived entrenchment of [corruption](#). Corruption, particularly in the mining sector, is likely to remain a concern for the Mongolian public. At the same time, the Mongolian government will likely continue to seek increased foreign investment in mining and other sectors of the economy, which has historically been a challenge given the country's difficult [investment climate](#). The United States and Mongolia are expanding [cooperation on critical minerals](#), and some Members of Congress have [expressed](#) interest in helping Mongolia diversify its economy and decrease its economic dependence on China and Russia.

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