

MONGOLIA 2004 ELECTION ANALYSIS

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One. Pre-election psychological attitude of the society

Many people didn't sleep on Sunday night of June 27, 2004. By 1.00 o'clock of the night, preliminary results of the election became clear in electoral districts and started to show that candidates from "Motherland-Democracy" coalition were likely to win a majority. Election victories were celebrated with hurray of joy in many places. And in the morning the voters got quite surprised of knowing the MPRP was faced a serious strike. Many people started to ask each other why the MPRP won such a few seats. And many hypotheses came up. In order to answer this question thoroughly we need to analyze the situation before election.

Pre-election scenario

The MPRP rating was very high before the election. This can be seen from various survey results conducted by many organizations. For example, the International Republican Institute survey result showed that the MPRP had a rating of 48% and the "Motherland-Democracy" coalition 38% in April 2004. And the survey conducted by the Sant Maral Foundation also affirms that the ratio didn't change much until the election (the rating for the MPRP was 47%, for "Motherland-Democracy" coalition 36% and 17% not decided yet in June 2004). Moreover, the survey conducted by Sociological Academic Research Center at the MSU Faculty of Sociology had a close results. Therefore, the MPRP rating was absolutely higher. If this situation was kept unchanged in each electoral district under current election system of majority, it was reasonable that the MPRP could have won an absolute victory or at least in the half of electoral districts even if it was changed. On the basis of the same forecast, many of our researchers predicted that the 2004 election result would stay same as of the previous election. But they didn't recognize side effects such as possible psychological swing in voters' attitude and negative effects of overpower. The most interesting was the psychological surge created in a very short term or in the last 10-14 days.

What is the swing in the voting?

It can be defined as a complex psychological phenomenon in which voters' attitude (mostly for floating voters) toward a party changes radically. This phenomenon of swing was noted during the previous 1996 State Great Hural election and the following local election. Since then the votes were relatively stable as shown by the MPRP victory in all level of subsequent elections for the last 8 years. So-called phenomenon of election swing was repeated in the recent 2004 election and resulted quite a lot of effects to the election results. Obviously, the impelling factor was our system of election.

Whose votes were changed?

Were the votes of all electors changed? Whose votes swung? Why did they change their attitude toward a party? Answering these questions successfully means you handed the key of revealing all election secrets. For doing this you should estimate effects of the current election system. Therefore, we would like to answer to the question that the swing in the votes of floating voters affected the election results. It was clear from the election results that the MPRP won 48.9% and the "Motherland-Democracy" coalition won 44.6% of the total votes. In a raw estimate without accurate estimation, the MPRP got its own votes and the "Motherland-Democracy" coalition could gain the votes of floating voters in addition to its own votes. As of my earlier analysis on election

statistics, I predicted that the election results in electoral districts were likely to swing up to 60 percent. /Please refer to the series of articles written by Tamir on our portal site. Editor/

Two. Factors affected the voters

Unexpected result of the election became a surprise. Many people who expected that the MPRP would win a majority in the parliament were surprised, glad and shocked while talking to each other why the MPRP was lost. Was the message of 10.000 tugrics indeed a winning factor for the coalition? Or just a group of good PRs were decisive in all? Explaining election results with these reasons would be too far from the reality, so that we need to analyze the election processes on socio-psychological, political and phsephological grounds. Many factors affected the coalition to win many seats in the parliament. However, out of those factors, I would like to address and explain each of the main factors related to the MPRP activities.

1. From successes of a Grand Champion to a new choice

General factor that affected MPRP to loose the election was a psychology of tiredness. Why such psychology was created among voters? Actually, the MPRP alone have won absolute victories in all elections since 1996, including 1996 local election, 1997 Presidential election, 1997 by-elections in Zavkhan, Tuv and Darkhan-uul aimags, 2000 State Great Hural election, 2000 local election, 2001 Presidential election, 2002 by-elections in Zavkhan, Bulgan and Tuv aimags. Behind such successive victories continued for 8 years, a socio-psychological atmosphere for being tired of the only one choice had been created. Metaphorically, it's similar to the case of National Wrestling Champion of Mongolia B.Bat-Erdene, in which people talked for a year that the Naadam wrestling of the year was extremely nice since a different wrestler won the championship after ten years of consecutive championships won by the B.Bat-Erdene, although they all respect him. The psychology of tiredness was attracted magnetically by a word 'new choice'. Of course, the word, said first by the President, was extensively used as a tool of election campaigning everywhere by the coalition and the people liked its meaning of new choice, new image, new person, new political force and new policy.

Another ground of being tired of the MPRP was overwhelming imbalance of advertisement campaign. Saying "Both the rolling advertisements broadcasted by all TV stations day and night and the large advertisement boards placed everywhere didn't help them, but they did become the curse of failure' is not a wrong conclusion. Let's leave this topic here since we will discuss it later in detail.

2. From one part dominance to a balance of political forces

The next reason of "Motherland-Democracy" coalition's winning of relatively more seats in the parliament was the people's will to balance political forces and make them control each other. In fact, the imbalanced political advertisement made the MPRP supporters and other floating voters that favor the party all to believe that the MPRP would certainly win the election. It can be proved by the survey conducted by Sociological Academy Center, in which 65% of respondents answered that the MPRP would win the election. In connection with this deep belief, a motive was established. First, the people assumed that the MPRP would inevitably win the election, so they voted against the party, thinking why don't we vote for the other side and make the opposition forces able to comprise a parliament group that can at least express their opinion. Voting against the MPRP while supporting the party is related to the mentality of Mongolians who defend a beaten child even though he was guilty. Certainly, behind those factors, there were ideas and opinions led voters to vote for stronger opposition including the ideas that there must be a mutual control, one party dictatorship is too much, the MPRP overpowers the country and opinions that we need to balance political forces in the parliament. Focused survey participants responded that they wish to allow the Hero of the People Mr. Gundalai to give his speeches, to make Democratic

forces able to comprise a party group in the parliament and to stop job discrimination by a party affiliation. Above mentioned opinions led significant portion of voters, especially all floating voters, who don't support a particular party except for the case of election, to vote for Democratic forces.

Besides those voters, we should mention that the MPRP lost the votes of a strong fanatic section supports the President. Due to the word 'new choice', the President and the MPRP caused a quite sensational arguments, throwing papers to each other through media. Of course the opposition used the President's word 'new choice' as a core of their election campaigning. In connection with this, distrust between the President and MPRP took place while people conceived that the MPRP even presses the President. As result, votes of the President's supporters turned away. I should address here that it's observed in our country that the President's rating is always higher than all other government institutions, which is very interesting and needs to be studied. Generally, Mr. Bagabandi has significant number of supporters attracted by his political capitals (own personality and President's institution) and he is always listed among top three politicians by any survey or opinion poll results. This was a policy mistake, which can be called 'unexpected loss of votes'.

With regard to the above mentioned processes, the attitude of floating voters to favour a party conflicted with their choice for a candidate, so that something that can be called 'voting paradox' was observed in this election.

3. Imbalance of political advertisement

Another very big factor that affected the coalition to win 35 seats was the overly biased and imbalanced advertisement by the MPRP. In brief, we can conclude that the MPRP made three kinds of mistakes for its advertisement: first, wrong content; second, excessive size and frequency; third, took off too early. Let's try to explain them in detail.

MPRP+Enkhbayar

Voters were deluged with the MPRP political advertisements day and night. Pictures of the MPRP Chairman and the party advertisements were seen everywhere. However, the content of advertisement that used the party leader as a background didn't meet psychology and mentality of Mongolians. Repeating appearance of the person who always appeared and talked on TV all four-year round made the tiredness stronger. According to a TV survey conducted by the Press Institute in the first week of election campaigning, Mr. N.Enkhbayar was listed in the second of those candidates who advertised most. Seems they based it on their Chairman's rating as a top politician who has been listed at the top for the last four years. If we see only the surveys conducted before election by the IRI, Academy of Sociology and Sant Maral Foundation, they all show that Mr.Enkhbayar led the rating with more than 50 percent, far above than others. But it was ineffective. Therefore, candidates from coalition sounded extraordinary for voters like scarce goods.

In addition, the MPRP campaigns were dominated by advertisement that reminds people of former MPRP, but not the new one. Opposition forces surely knew how to use it skillfully. Indeed, you can see it from the motto of democratic coalition: "Let's remove current pressures and support households". Voters bore in their mind the bad memories of various taxation, vertical budget management law, strict controls on media, partisanship, fear of civil servants etc.

The motto "MPRP is Your party and My party" was a policy theoretically based on attracting voters by identifying them with the party. This policy served as a safeguard to maintain supports of some certain groups, particularly strong MPRP supporters, but couldn't become attracting

factor for floating voters. Although this kind of general advertisement used to become a winning factor for their candidates in 2000, it didn't match the objective in 2004.

Oversize

Once Baabar wrote 'everything has own overdose'. According to the Press Institute survey on implicit and explicit paid political advertisements broadcasted by TV stations, 70.36% of total advertisement hours of MN Television, 66.93% of TV5, 81.6% of UBS and 97.48% of TV9 were spent for broadcasting MPRP advertisements. A monitoring survey sponsored by the Soros Foundation shows also that the MPRP political advertisement alone took up 96% of total advertisement hours on radio by the first four weeks of election campaign. Also advertisements on newspaper and street boards shall be added. How high was the scope of advertisement can be seen from the survey result conducted by Sant Maral Foundation, in which 71% of respondents answered that the MPRP advertisement was more intensive in their electoral districts. Moreover, Russian researchers warned about the excessive frequency, scope and size of MPRP advertisement. In fact, it was similar to the case: 'when a good person tells to all that he is good, people start looking at his bad sides in return'. Also in a survey conducted just before election, more than half of voters supported MPRP.

In such situation, giving excessive praise to a well-run party resulted adverse effects, as Hegel once said that a thing denies itself when it comes to an opposite position. It's similar to a man who likes to eat chocolate and ate 10 pieces surfeits himself. That's why Russian researchers conducted a survey and concluded that a significant portion or 35 percent of voters got tired of advertisement campaign conducted by the MPRP and its candidates. Even they concluded that 31% of MPRP supporters got bored of the advertisements. If they did it in opposite ways, allowing opposition parties to defame them more, then probably the MPRP would have won a majority.

Start of the rally

Very strong start of the MPRP political advertisement campaign was tactically wrong because of difficulty to maintain the high level reached too early. Therefore, subsequent advertisement efforts followed the sensational opening show couldn't catch up the progress and gradually fell down. Very similar case was noted in 2001 when R.Gonchigdorj stood for presidential election.

Finally, the MPRP could maintain its rating by its campaigning while the coalition could gain votes of floating voters in addition to votes of their own supporters. In any events, the election 2004 became a lesson that showed the excessive control over media brings adverse effects.

4. From an attitude toward a party to independent candidates

Preferring to vote for an individual person rather than a political party was a decisive factor for many voters. Of course most of them were floating voters, but we should address here that they also included MPRP fans and democratic supporters. Both floating voters and even MPRP fanatics maintained a basic principle to prefer personality to party affiliation, which was another root of success for the coalition. Although it was not a sudden trend of the election 2004, the victories of three independent candidates made it distinctive. 1992 Zuunai's and 2000 Gundalai's victories were strongly featured by the factor of locality while 2004 victories in Erdenet and Ulaanbaatar were affected by the factor of personality. Independent candidates collected 3.07% of votes nationwide, which is more than the votes collected by some other weak parties. Even though this kind of voting practice is likely to become popular among voters, certainly it cannot alone be a key factor to explain voting behaviors of voters. In any event, those independent candidates will play significant role in the parliament and they could create hopes for a broad opportunity to involve in politics individually.

Also a message to elect a personality who have own business activities and able to help people substantially with his creative activities lies behind the idea to vote for individual personality. Indeed this idea received significant public support assuming such people would build at least hospital and children's playground as well as they can further give 10000 MNT from their private resource even if their parties lost the election. This matched with the election result in which half of elected members of the coalition were businessmen. "Anyway MPRP is a good party, but our life will get better if we vote for a personality"- that is what the election campaigners from coalition persuaded the people and could reverse many votes to their side.

5. 10,000 > (Millennium road + Russian debt)+ 100,000

Messages of the two main political forces were 10.000 MNT for each child and subsequently followed 100.000 MNT for each newborn child. Democratic forces could take the game initiative by opening their cards first. In fact, they also started first in 1996. They proposed the same message delivered in America in 1980s to give 1000 dollars for each American. Most importantly, the MPRP had to play with the game rule of the coalition in order to cover its effects and they started to pledge various items. Otherwise the Millennium road, Russian debt and MPRP membership to the Socialist International would be unable to become substantial pledges directly benefit the people. On the other hand, the coalition managers started their campaign from an unnoticeable point, gradually increased its intensity and could reach to its top point just in 10 days before the election, which was a very big success. This linear growth reminded a racing horse performs a good finish while MPRP raced with good start and poor finish.

Need to say that if MPRP candidates raced to show their own images but not the party, they would have chances to succeed in the race. The Academy of Sociology surveyed that majority of voters didn't trust the coalition's pledge of 10.000 MNT. There are two reasons: First, they didn't expect that the coalition would win. Second, they doubted economic estimation of the 10.000 MNT. Voters doubted whether such a big amount of money was available to the state since Mongolians have many children to receive the money each month. They talked to each other 'Then why don't they increase the amount of pension and welfare'. Revolutionary Party members also worked at all levels to put down the message. Therefore, the coalition made efforts to cover disadvantages of their main motto of 10.000 MNT. For this purpose, they delivered various mottos and messages to the public, including 'this is the money spend for a bread in a day', 'money of trust is our future', 'we will soon reach 18', 'destiny of a million Mongolian children is on your pen point', 'Debtor can find a way to pay', by printing them on posters and advertising on TV and radio. Also they distributed certificates of 10.000 MNT signed by leaders of the three parties writing names of children and even drafted a law on the trust money in order to make voters believe. These activities quite well influenced the voters. All surveys conduct in 2004 showed that citizens worried more about the most serious issues of unemployment, poverty and alcoholic abuses as well as education. Once giving 10.000 MNT for each child seemed to solve most of these issues, voters responded 'It sounds nice if it is true'.

Obviously, small and medium businessmen are very influential in the current society of Mongolia. But those who objected most to the MPRP policies and activities during 2004 election were private business owners, small and medium businessmen. Many issues such as land issues, bureaucracy, corruption, taxation, alcoholic drink sales, various types of licensing, night shops, Narantuul black market, small kiosks, microbus lines and leasing issues- all led the ruling party policies directly and indirectly intervene business interests of many private businessmen. Let's explain them taking one example: Alcoholic drink sales after 12 o'clock at night was prohibited, which directly closed the sales incomes of night shop, drink shop, bar and restaurant owners. This was followed by rules of local administration in which prohibited to sell alcoholic drinks on 27th of each month and every Friday. Nobody knows how many people quit drinking as result of this method that reminds of former controlling. Though this policy brought adverse effects on election results by blocking interests of many businessmen and consumers. It was similar to the western policy that influence through educated people. Turn-about in the votes of businessmen

further influenced quite number of people and became a very dangerous factor. Such kind of pressures on small and medium businessmen were common not only in Ulaanbaatar, but also in rural areas. In rural areas, businesses of the governor or one influential person or one family were prospering while they strictly controlled licenses of vodka production, shopping network and mineral exploitation. In many places, wrong operations of local authorities contributed to the MPRP's defeat in the election. For example, there was a historical turn-up in Bayan-Ulgii aimag where candidates of the coalition won all in its three constituencies, which was directly related to the operation of local authorities.

"Motherland-Democracy" coalition paid special attention to the policy mistakes of ruling party and proposed pledges directly designed for businessmen in the fourth of its 21 articles introduced to voters. Of course the MPRP didn't have certain impressive pledges on that.

The next large group was vulnerable group of indigent people. They expressed a strict position not to support the MPRP because their pension increased relatively less than what the rulers pledged and their lives didn't get better. Although candidates used various methods to attract numerous number of those people, finally they could affect the election results considerably. Besides of the above two groups, we should mention the partisans that supported democratic forces from the beginning to the end. Those, who participated in many of political events and faced all sufferings except for death, played important role in the election 2004.

6. Election misdeals and victories of few votes

This time, the election experienced more misdeals than ever. The phrase 'more than ever' doesn't mean never happened before. Both competing parties of this election were involved in organized misdeals. Although they tried to reveal each other's misdeals after the election, in fact, both of them used various misdeals, including confusing namelist of voters, chaining, microbusing, pre-distribution of ballot papers, bringing a mass of tranferred voters, counterfeit ballot papers, invalidating competing votes, ringing etc. So let's explain just few of them.

What is the chaining?

Need to bespeak with 50 persons to buy their votes. Buying rate was 5000-10000 MNT in capital city; of course, it was different at aimag and soum centers. The first person enters the polling station, takes a ballot paper, keeps it in his pocket unfilled, instead he puts into the ballot box a ballot paper that was filled in advance. So he got one extra ballot paper. Now when he comes out, he circles own candidate's number and gives to the next person. The next person enters with the filled paper, puts it into ballot box and he comes out with his own ballot paper unfilled, which becomes a guarantee of receiving his money. They fill out the blank ballot paper and transfers to the next person. The chains continue like this.

What is the ring?

Electoral sub-district committee officer or women attaches very small pencil to his/her finger ring. And when she counts votes she draws an additional mark on the ballot paper voted for the competing party, thereby invalidates the ballot paper. According to the current electoral law, a ballot paper becomes invalid if there was a mark other than circled the number before a candidate's name.

A survey taken from electoral sub-district committee officers and observers shows that one out of five of them accepted the possibility of collecting about ten percent of total votes illegally. Also 22 percent of them accepted 6-9% of total votes involve misdeals¹. This is very dangerous for the current small electoral districts. For instance of the election 2004, candidates won the election with 0-6% more votes in 25 electoral districts and 6.1-12% more votes in 15 electoral districts. In

some districts winners were decided by very few votes. In these circumstances, election misleads might have affected the election results to some extent.

In the current political situation with underdeveloped electoral law and General Election Committee with unclear authorities, political parties competed by their personnel worked in electoral sub-districts. A provision that prohibits one party majority representation in any electoral district and sub-district committee exists in the National Human Rights Program of Mongolia, approved by the parliament in 2003. But in many places, complaints were raised about inclusion of MPRP members into electoral sub-district committees under definition 'non-partisan'. Therefore, the opposition forces often mention that the MPRP dominated all levels of election organization including electoral district, sub-district and general committees. Let's cite an example from a central press. In Zuunbayan-Ulaan soum of Uvurkhangai aimag, competing two party members reached a consensus to divide the positions of electoral sub-district committee chairmen and secretaries, one by one respectively. But the Chairman of Citizens' Representative Hural Presidium of the aimag directly revised their decision and appointed all from one party. In fact, MPRP got relaxed by its superiority, which led them to loosen their attention to electoral sub-district committees and observers.

However, the situation was different for the coalition. They started to make efforts to include their people in each sub-district committee as more as if fighting for each piece of land and tightly worked with their observers. Their observers were trained at workshops organized by an international organization. They didn't repeat the traditional practice that sends more active and orally capable people to election campaigning rallies and leaves weaker and less active ones for observation at the sub-district committee. Especially, those who worked as sub-district committee officers and observers were paid more attention than those worked in election campaign rallies and central election headquarters, financing all of their necessary costs and wages. Thanks to this solution decided urgently by the coalition headquarter they could protect their votes from misdeals in many sub-district committees. Observers who came with photo and video cameras could cut out many misdeals that were common before. A man with camera looked intimidating as we say 'feels uncomfortable even if not afraid'. While protecting their votes, they could smartly use underdevelopment of the electoral law. Later many complaints about mass transportation came to election committees. In this election, well-prepared coalition professionals confronted relatively experienced MPRP officers dependent on their central headquarter. The MPRP election headquarters understood their mistakes afterwards, but it was late. The train had gone already. Anyway, the talk about attempts to buy electoral sub-committee chairmen and officers came out long after.