Modernisation and Mongolia

A case study on Inglehart’s and Welzel’s modernisation theory and the democratisation of Mongolia

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Abstract

This essay is a theory testing study that aims to examine to what extent modernisation promotes democratisation. This is done by applying and testing aspects of Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory to a case study of a specific country, namely Mongolia. The aspects studied are 1) trust in politicians and the political system, 2) how widespread literacy is within the nation and 3) the mass belief among the Mongolian people.

The study shows that elements of each aspect are present in Mongolia and that they have indeed influenced the country’s democratisation.

The study concludes by summarising the result of each aspect and stating that Mongolia’s democracy is still developing.

Keywords
Modernisation, Democratisation, Political trust, Literacy rate, Mass belief, Mongolia
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1 Introduction

In its simplest form, democracy means “rule by the people”, from the Greek words *demos*, which means “the people”, and *kratia*, which means “rule” (Oxford Dictionaries, Democracy). However, within the political science, a definition such as this one is much too simple, and researchers and scientists have developed multiple ways of defining what a democracy is, and what components make up a democratic society (Dahl, 1989; Schumpeter, 1992). Though the definitions are many, one should reflect upon how democracy came to be, and more specifically, how new democracies come to be. Since 1828, the world has seen the birth of democratic countries that still stand today (Huntington, 1991:16).

The process these countries have gone through is that of democratisation: a process in which a non-democratic country progresses towards becoming a democratic one. Just like with democracy itself, the process of democratisation has been well-studied by scientists and multiple theories have been developed on how and why democratisation occurs. Within the field, one can find that scientist often link economic growth to democratisation, and wealth to democracy. One theory that discusses this phenomenon is the modernisation theory. While the theory has developed into its own field of research, with multiple studies developing and revising it, it has its origin in 1959, when Seymour Lipset stated that economic growth aids the progress for countries to become more democratic.

Revised versions of modernisation, such as that of Inglehart and Welzel, argue that democratisation and progression towards democracy are not possible through economic growth alone. Instead, it is the affect that economic development has on a society that promote democratisation along with the cultural development that comes with it (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:134). With these contrasting ideas of which affect the economy has on democratisation, one may wonder if economic growth actually equals a democratic regime.

Indeed, some of the world’s wealthiest countries are strictly authoritarian, and in contrast, some of the poorer countries in the world are democratic, as can be seen if one compares numbers from Global finance (Gregson, 2016) to results from research done by Freedom House (Freedom House, 2018). Among the 20 richest countries in the world, one can find stable democracies, which are all classified as “free” by Freedom House. The only exceptions are states where the wealth mainly comes from selling
fossil fuel, such as oil. These countries, while among the wealthiest in the world, are all labeled “not free” according to Freedom House. In contrast, the poorest countries in the world are all classified as “not free” by Freedom House (Freedom House, 2018).

However, there are exceptions to the rule. Located in the east, and surrounded by non-democratic countries of various sorts, Mongolia has been a stable democracy since 1992 (Lattimore, Harris & Sanders, 1999). Yet since 1990, when Mongolia had yet to become democratic, there has been no extraordinary economic growth. Indeed, their GDP per capita in 1990 was $1172 while in 2017 it had risen to $3735 (Globalis). As Doorenspleet and Kopecký state, Mongolia is a deviant case of democratisation, that does not meet the typical requirements of modernisation theory (2008:710). Because of this, Mongolia may be an interesting case of democratisation to study through Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory as one may wonder if whatever modernisation Mongolia has gone through, if any, is substantial enough for modernisation theory to explain its successful democratisation? Thus, by studying Mongolia, this essay aims to investigate to what extent modernisation promotes democratisation by examining whether modernisation theory can explain the successful democratisation of Mongolia.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this essay is to examine to what extent modernisation promotes democratisation. This is done by applying and testing Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory in a case study of a specific country, namely Mongolia.

1.2 Research question

To better be able to reach this essay’s aim of examining to what extent modernisation promotes democratisation, a specific case has been studied through a case study. The specific case is that of Mongolia. Mongolia was chosen since it has been labelled a deviant case of democratisation, which makes it an interesting case of study (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008:698). Deviant cases of modernisation can usually not be explained through the traditional modernisation theory, where economic development is the cause of democratisation (Doorenspleet and Kopecký 2008:710).

Consequently, certain aspects of Inglehart’s and Welzel’s modernisation theory have been chosen, and relevant research questions have been based on these
aspects. More on Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory, and more information on the three aspects can be found in the third section of this essay.

This essay will attempt to answer the questions:

1) To what extent can trust in politicians and the political system explain the democratisation of Mongolia?
2) To what extent can literacy and education explain the democratisation of Mongolia?
3) To what extent can mass belief among the people explain the democratisation of Mongolia?

1.3 Disposition

This essay is divided into five chapters. Chapter one consists of a general introduction to this essay and introduces this essay’s aim and research questions. Chapter two discusses the material and method used in this essay. In chapter three, the theoretical framework for this essay is presented in three sections: research done on democracy, democratisation and modernisation. Chapter four consists of a case study and analysis on Mongolia’s democratisation, discussed through certain aspects of Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory. Lastly, chapter five consists of a conclusion which summarises the essay in its entirety and reflects upon the results from the case study.
2 Method and material

2.1 Method

This essay aims to investigate to what extent modernisation theory can explain democratisation. To do this, this essay will test whether modernisation theory can explain the democratisation of Mongolia. Mongolia’s democratic process has been labelled deviant, as the country lacks the economic growth that traditional modernisation theory deems crucial for democratic development (Doorenspleet and Kopecký 2008:710). Thus, a revised version of modernisation theory had to be used in this study. Therefore, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory was used in the analysis of this essay. Their theory allows this essay to study modernisation in Mongolia by focusing on democratic values instead of economic development. However, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s research is quite extensive. As such, this case study only focuses on three of the aspects they argue to be of importance for democratic development. The chosen aspects were 1) trust in politicians and the political system, 2) how widespread literacy is within the nation and 3) the mass belief among the Mongolian people. The theoretical framework of this essay offers a deeper insight into these aspects and the importance of them. Of course, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s theory on cultural change does not come uncriticised, and their studies have been accused to be successful only if their theories are used specifically in the way the Inglehart and Welzel use them (Wucherpfennig & Deutch 2009:6). Nonetheless, Inglehart and Welzel have been credited with having created some of the most extensive research within the modernisation field (Wucherpfennig & Deutch 2009:5). As such, their theories are still of value, which is why their research is the foundation of this essay.

Mongolia was chosen as the subject of analysis in this case study as it could offer some interesting insight into the ideas of democratisation and modernisation, since traditional modernisation theory is not substantial enough to explain Mongolia’s democratisation. Instead, the country’s democratisation process may prove to be a suitable and interesting case to apply to Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised version of modernisation, as the focus of study differs from the traditional theory.

As this essay aims to study the democratisation process and not the time after democracy has been established within a society, or consolidated, this essay will mainly focus on Linz and Stepan’s ideas of transition, as explained in the theoretical
framework of this essay. The time period discussed in this essay is that of after Mongolia passed its democratic constitution, which it did in 1992. Before that, Mongolia was still under communist rule, and as such, this essay considers Mongolia accepting its new constitution as the starting point of the nation’s democratic process. This point of view is something that can also be seen in Ganbat et al’s study, where they argue that even though Mongolia has a democratic constitution, it is still transitioning (Ganbat et al, 2008:132).

While some critics argue that case study research is ill-suited for theory testing studies, as this kind of research does not offer results to be generalised, case studies do offer a deeper understanding of theories, as the goal of a theory testing case study is to examine a specific theory and case (Løkke & Sørensen 2014, 70ff). George and Bennet also argue that case studies allow for deeper analysis of cases, which is suitable when one conducts theory testing studies (George & Bennett, 2005:5). Furthermore, by conducting a case study, the validity of this essay’s results will hopefully be increased (George & Bennett, 2005:19).

2.2 Material

The material for this essay comes from various sources. Discussions on education and literacy in Mongolia has mainly been gathered from the human right index. The survey that is the base for the discussion on trust for the political system in Mongolia comes from the East Asian barometer. The discussion on mass belief is based on previous studies and interviews made on Mongolia.

The empirical data has then been applied to, and reviewed based on, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised version of modernisation theory. Furthermore, previous research on democracy, democratisation, modernisation theory and Mongolia have all been used throughout this essay. In the theoretical framework, the information that is necessary to understand each concept is provided.
3 Theoretical framework

This section of the essay provides information about previous research done on democracy, democratisation and on modernisation theory. In this section, necessary definitions of both democracy and modernisation theory are presented and argued for, to prevent any confusion from occurring regarding the meaning of certain terms and concepts used in this essay. Furthermore, the aspects of modernisation that may explain democratisation are presented and reviewed at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Democracy

3.1.1 Definition of democracy

There are many ways in which democracy is viewed and defined within political science and in research concerning democracy. Indeed, to be able to study democracy, one must first define it.

Typically, there are two ways in which can define democracy: through minimalistic or maximalist definitions (Rindefjäll, 1998:29ff). Acclaimed as one of the more famous of maximalist definitions of democracy is that of Dahl’s in Democracy and its critics from 1989 (Rindefjäll, 1998:31-32; Denk & Silander, 2007:18). According to Dahl’s definition of democracy, democracy as we know it is measured within seven different arenas, that must be present within a society for it to be democratic. These are:

1) Elected officials. Control over governmental decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.

2) Free and fair elections. Elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed in relatively frequent, fair and free elections in which coercion is quite limited.

3) Inclusive suffrage. Practically all adults have the right to vote in these elections.

4) Right to run for office. Most adults also have the right to run for the public offices for which candidates run in these elections.

5) Freedom of expression. Citizens have an effectively enforced right to freedom of expression, particularly political expression, including criticism of the officials, the conduct of the government, the prevailing political, economic, and social system, and the dominant ideology.
6) Alternative information. They also have access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolized by the government or any other single group.

7) Associational autonomy. Finally, they have an effectively enforced right to form and join autonomous associations, including political associations, such as political parties and interest groups, that attempt to influence the government by competing in elections and by other peaceful means.

However, there are two major issues with Dahl’s way of defining democracy, one which he himself addresses. According to Dahl, there are no democratic countries. In fact, the set of criteria presented above are not those of a democracy, but those of a polyarchy (Dahl 1989:221). A polyarchy is the closest thing that society has gotten to a democracy and Dahl himself argues that it is impossible to reach the criteria that makes up the ideal of a democracy. Therefore, one could argue that by using Dahls definition of democracy, one would not be measuring how democratic a country is, but instead measure to what extent a country could be categorised as a polyarchy. Despite this, Dahl’s definition of democracy is one that is widely spread and used within the science.

Additionally, using Dahl’s definition of democracy would call for much more research to be made for a fair result to be produced. Rindefjäll argue that because maximalist definitions of democracy cover all areas of a society, at all times, the broad definition that makes up democracy becomes difficult to measure (Rindefjäll, 1998:27). Thus, this definition includes too many factors to keep track of when measuring democracy, therefore the definition is too complex for studies such as this. This is an issue which one should be well-aware of when studying democratisation. Maximalist definitions of democracy are generally based on the ideal of what a democracy should be, and not necessarily what it is (Linde & Ekman 2006: 16; Rindefjäll, 1998:27). Indeed, it is difficult to measure something that does not yet exist, and that all nations have difficulties accomplishing (Rindefjäll, 1998:27). As such, maximalist definitions of democracy are difficult to operationalise (Linde & Ekman 2006:16; Rindefjäll, 1998:27), something that is crucial when writing an essay (Esaiasson et al, 2017:56). Instead, a minimalistic definition has been used.

Minimalistic definitions are far from uncommon in research and has been used in democratisation research by both Huntington (1991) and Lipset (1959). Using a
minimalistic definition will allow for this essay to be precise and to the point. Just like these two researchers have done in the past, this essay will use Schumpeter’s minimalistic way of defining democracy. He defined democracy by explaining that “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter’s 1947:269). There are of course issues with using minimalistic definitions of democracy, such as non-democratic regimes being classified as democratic because they manage to meet the requirements of minimalistic definitions (Linde & Ekman, 2006:27)

3.2 Democratisation

3.2.1 Waves of democratisation

One may wonder how democratisation occur, and before diving into a study on democratisation, one should look at previous work done within the field. Like with democracy, democratisation has been studied extensively for years. One of the fields most prominent and widely accepted theories is Samuel Huntington’s theory on waves of democratisation (1991). He argues that democratisation is something that has occurred in waves throughout history, as countries influence each other into becoming democratic (Huntington, 1991:16). The first wave started as early as 1828 and its roots can be traced back to the American and French revolutions (Huntington, 1991:16). Each of the waves have been followed by counterwaves, where countries that have managed to progress towards democracy have reversed and once again shown non-democratic tendencies (Huntington, 1991:17). For example, Germany’s transition into Nazi-Germany is a case where a democratic country transitioned to become fully autocratic. Besides his theory on democratic waves, Huntington explains that there are various ways in which the democratisation process can be triggered within a society (Huntington, 1991:32-34). Huntington also argue that there can be no one explanation as to why and how democracy develops and establishes (Huntington, 1991:37). Indeed, arguing that a single cause could be the whole reason for democratisation would be setting oneself up for failure.

If one is to review the research made on democratisation, one must mention Larry Diamonds extensive research on the process. While some argue that democracy can only be upheld by a wealthy state, Dimond rebuts this by stating that
according to statistics on low human development, 13 of the lowest ranked countries by the UN are themselves democracies. Additionally, democracy is a valued form of governance in these countries, even by the general public (Diamond 2008:27).

Like Huntington, Diamond argues that the democratisation of nations can be triggered in multiple ways. Diamond, like Huntington argues that the snowballing effect, where democratisation spreads throughout countries as they are influenced by one another (Huntington, 1991:33), can have a particularly meaningful impact on democratisation when it comes to neighbouring countries. Indeed, if one non-democratic country makes the transition towards democracy, neighbouring ones may be inspired to do the same (Diamond: 2008:52).

3.2.2 Liberalisation, transition and consolidation

The theories about democratisation and the way towards democracy are many, but studies made by Linz and Stepan on transition and consolidation are among the most noteworthy (Denk & Silander, 2007:151). They argue that there are mainly three parts of democratisation: liberalisation, transition and consolidation (Linz & Stepan: 1996).

Liberalisation is mainly the process where a non-democratic state shows signs of decreased political oppression and violence towards its people, which is an important part of a democratic society if one considers both Dahl’s and Schumpeter’s definition of democracy. Transition refers to the phase in which a non-democratic state starts transitioning towards democracy (Linz & Stepan, 1996:3), and could therefore be considered the actual process towards democracy. The final phase, consolidation, is when democracy has been established as the only legitimate form of governance (Linz & Stepan, 1996:4-5), and can therefore be considered a sort of completion of the democratisation process, or the goal that the democratisation process is trying to reach. To better understand the democratisation process and the transition phase in democratisation studies, all parts of the democratisation process will be given a brief description below.

As has been previously mentioned, transition is the process in which a non-democratic country starts transitioning towards a more democratic rule (Linz & Stepan, 1996:3). During this process, states may establish a working democratic system, in which free and fair elections are held and where the decisions made by politicians are enforced (Linz & Stepan, 1996:3). However, this does not mean that those states become complete and successful democracies. In fact, the result of this process is
equivalent to that of electoral democracies: a democratic nation that, while maintaining a democratic regime with free and fair elections, still suffers from non-democratic elements such as limited political rights for the public (Silander, 2005). Furthermore, during the transition phase, a democratic government may be questioned and criticised. This in turn may lead to uncertainties regarding the political rules and boundaries within a society, and the democratic government may risk being overthrown (Karvonen, 1997:76). Usually, this phase of democratisation is the result of the liberalisation of a non-democratic society (Denk & Silander, 2007:29). While liberalisation may not lead to a democratic society by itself, the liberalisation of a state may open it up to the possibility of a transition towards democracy (Denk & Silander, 2007:29). Different political aspects can trigger a country to start liberalising, such as uprisings from the public against the non-democratic regime (Denk & Silander, 2007:29). However, just as the transition phase has no guarantee to be successful, the liberalisation of a state may be reversed, and, in such cases, the old, oppressive regime may establish itself once more (Denk & Silander, 2007:30). In the case of Mongolia, the country has yet to develop past this phase of the democratisation process.

While this essay will primarily focus on the democratisation process’s transition part for the sake of studying the democratisation of a country, consolidation is the actual establishing of a functioning democratic system (Linz & Stepan, 1996:). Consolidation is by many described as democracy becoming “the only game in town” (Denk & Silander, 2007:35). The famous expression describes how democracy establish itself within a state in such a way that it becomes an acceptable form of rule by several aspects of the state, such as by the people as well as the ones ruling (Linz & Stepan, 1996:1ff). Furthermore, it is within states such as this that democracy becomes so established that there is simply no going back, and all other forms of governance seem inferior or inadequate in comparison to democracy (Denk & Silander, 2007:35). Additionally, because democracy has become an established and accepted part of society, the system may not be abused by those in power but is instead a respected form of rule (Denk & Silander, 2007:33).

3.3 Modernisation theory

Of course, when studying democratisation, one realises that there are several theories that may explain democratisation (Grugel & Bishop, 2014:74-75), and several factors,
both national and international, that may contribute and explain the democratisation of a society. However, this essay has focused on only one of these theories. This section provides information on the origin of modernisation theory as it is known today, and its development. This section also includes information on Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory, which is the version of modernisation theory that is used for this essay.

3.3.1 Lipset’s modernisation theory

Modernisation theory as it is known and accepted today has its roots in Seymore Lipset’s study from 1959 (Wucherpfennig & Deutch 2009:1). In his study, Lipset sets out to test to what extent Aristotle’s was correct in his thesis on the correlation between economic wealth and certain living standards and how they affect the political participation within a society (Lipset, 1959:75). This is done by examining democracy and the democratic process within several nations across the globe. While Lipset does acknowledge that there are multiple factors that explain and contribute to the democratisation of a nation, his study does stress the importance of economic growth and modernisation (Lipset, 1959:83). Furthermore, Lipset argues that a strong middle class in importance for the democratic process. As the economy of a country grows, so does the middle class. As such, pressure can be put upon those in power, so that the middle strata may have more of a say (Lipset, 1959:83-84). However, for the middle class to become more powerful, changes must be made within the lower class. By increasing the income and level of education in the lower classes, people get the opportunity to work their way up in society (Lipset, 1959:83). Additionally, Lipset concludes that Aristotle’s theory, while outdated, remains valid (Lipset, 1959:103).

While Lipset is indeed credited as the one to confirm the relation between wealth and democracy, there are some issues with his argument that cannot be left unsaid. Lipset’s argument that economic growth fuels the democratic process is not only based on economic growth regarding a country’s GDP. Instead, Lipset argues for the importance of the middle class, and education. These are indeed very different factors than simply arguing for the economic growth of a nation (Wucherpfennig & Deutch 2009:1). Thusly, modernisation is not just a matter of economic growth, but is in fact a matter of social change (Wucherpfennig & Deutch, 2009:1), and therefore modernisation according to Lipset can be explained as in the figure below (figure 1).
Furthermore, Lipset’s claim that modernisation leads to democracy was partly based on studying how widespread technology was in a nation and then relating the results back to how democratic that nation was. By studying democratisation in this way, one is actually studying how widespread capitalism is in a nation, which would suggest that high levels of capitalism lead to democracy, not wealth per se (Grugel & Bishop, 2014:78).

3.3.2 Modernisation theory after Lipset

While widely accepted, modernisation theory does have its critics. For one, modernisation theory has been criticised for its victim blaming ways (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005:17). This due to the fact that non-democratic countries have been called out for being unable to modernise because of internal conflict. Because of this, it has also been argued that modernised, democratic countries should show non-democratic countries the way, and help them adapt to modern values, as a way of promoting democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005:17).

Since Lipset released his finds on modernisation and democratisation, the theory has developed greatly. Additional factors as to how and why democratisation is possible has been presented within the science. Nationally, some of these factors includes economic, social and cultural factors (Denk & Silander, 2007). These factors will be described in brief next.

1) Economic factors. As for the economic factors, scientist argue that the average salary per person in a state will affect its democratisation. Nations with a higher average income are more likely to become and stay democratic (Denk &
Silander, 2007:40-41). Additionally, studies have shown that states with a mixed economy are more likely to be democratic than those who, for example, have a socialistic or planned economy (Denk & Silander, 2007:41). Connections to industrialisation have also been made, and it is argued that if a country consists of mainly farmers and other occupations related to agriculture, it is less likely to be equal and democratic (Denk & Silander, 2007:42). Furthermore, how financial resources are distributed throughout the population also affects a nations democratisation. An unfair distribution of resources is more likely to occur in non-democratic states (Denk & Silander, 2007:42-43).

2) Social factors. Urbanisation has been claimed to promote democratisation. Due to people living closer together, it is easier for them to mobilise against a non-democratic government (Denk & Silander, 2007:45). Besides urbanisation, education has been argued to help when establishing a democracy. Studies show that people with a higher education get more involved in politics, which is necessary for democracy to survive (Denk & Silander, 2007:45-46). Additionally, higher education creates a larger middle class, which in turn can contribute to a democracy being established (Denk & Silander, 2007:46).

3) Cultural factors. The fact that people are able to meet and socialize may have a positive effect on the democratisation process, as it allows them to talk and discuss their situations openly. Additionally, if citizens are allowed to meet in, for example, a club, they are also driven to promote and keep said club alive. This includes being involved politically, to ensure that nothing endangers the club’s survival (Denk & Silander, 2007:53-54). Moreover, the religion of country can also affect its democratisation, as can the level of secularisation. Christian and secular nations show stronger connections to democracy than other nations (Denk & Silander, 2007:55-56).

3.3.3 The revised modernisation theory by Inglehart and Welzel.

Due to the fact that Lipset’s modernisation theory has been revised so many times, it can be considered outdated. To allow for deeper analysis of democratisation through modernisation, a revised version of modernisation is used in this study, namely that of Inglehart and Welzel (2005, 2009). Wucherpfennig & Deutch (2009:5) argue that Inglehart and Welzel studies on democracy are the most comprehensive yet. Their
research is focused on providing explanations of democratisation by studying economic and cultural change (Wucherpfennig & Deutch 2009:5). Mongolia’s democratisation has been stated to be deviant (Doorenspleet & Kopecký, 2008:698). Thus, it cannot be explained through traditional modernisation, therefore Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory has been chosen, as their research is focused on values, and not on wealth. Because of this, their extensive theories on modernisation may offer some insight into Mongolia’s democratisation.

While clarifying that modernisation theory is based on human progress, Inglehart and Welzel state that the said progress in not just connected to wealth and economic growth. Instead, they argue that it is the changes in value that come with socioeconomic development that make modernisation, and by extension democratisation, possible (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:15). Not so coincidentally, their research confirms that the factors mentioned in the previous section of this essay does have an impact on a nation’s democratisation. Indeed, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s research focuses on how different aspects of modernisation lead to cultural changes within a society, that in turn promotes democratisation. While economic growth does play a part in the democratisation process, it is what comes after that truly matters. If traditional values remain, even when a nation has experienced economic growth, modernisation and democracy will be difficult to establish (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:18). According to Inglehart and Welzel, socioeconomic development starts with technological development. With technological development comes such things as occupational specialisation and education. Consequently, wages will be raised, and a middle class will be established and strengthened. When such changes are made within a society it becomes diverse, and bargains can be made. Skills are bought and sold and focuses shifts from being authority relations to bargaining relations. As such, different groups within a society start interacting and bonding. Due to this, cultural changes that promote political participation by the public can be established (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:19).

However, it is important to note that a nations background may affect its development. For example, Inglehart and Welzel state that low-trust societies, where the public have difficulties trusting the authorities, have difficulties creating big, complex institutes, such as those needed in a democratic society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20).

Nonetheless, when a society does experience socioeconomic growth, long-lasting effects can be made. When states secure their peoples basic needs, such as
shelter and food, people are able to shift their focus from mere surviving (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20). Inglehart and Welzel call this phenomenon self-expression and quality-of-life concerns (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:23), elements that belong in a postmaterialist society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:33). As time goes by and the new lifestyle establishes itself within a nation, future generations are able to focus on these issues further, which is what differs democratic regimes from non-democratic ones. A democracy offers its people a sense of security and autonomy that non-democratic nation may lack. Therefore, Inglehart and Welzel argue that democratisation does not just consist of modernisation and education but is, in fact, the establishment of a sense of security within the people (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:38, 45). Indeed, one may be able to educate oneself within a dictatorship, as well as a democracy, but a nation must invest in establishing a sense of security for it to be able to develop post-modern society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:45). For example, China may be a wealthy country where people are able to educate themselves and earn high salaries. Indeed, the country is by all sense and purposes modernised, yet it is not free and democratic (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:42). Inglehart and Welzel’s modernisation theory can be presented as in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

Economic change → Cultural change → Political change  
(Existential security) → (self-expression values) → (democratic institutions)

*Comment: Human development according to Inglehart and Welzel, 2007:134*

In addition to their theories of cultural change, Inglehart and Welzel also argue that democratisation is possible when there is a mass belief among the people that democracy is the preferred form of government (Inglehart & Welzel 2009:129). In fact, they state that the mass belief in democracy can be crucial for a country’s democratisation process as it is the people who legitimise a political system (Inglehart & Welzel 2009:126). Indeed, a regime’s survival is up to its people (Inglehart & Welzel 2009:126) However, they also stress the fact that just wanting democracy for the sake of democracy will not be enough for a people to bring about a democratic change (Inglehart & Welzel 2009:129). Instead, people need to value the components that come with democracy, such as freedom of speech and other self-expression values. Mass belief in favour of democracy may have its roots in emancipative values, where people
start valuing and demanding civic freedom rather than just wanting a government that ensure its people’s survival (Inglehart & Welzel 2009:133).

3.4 Summary of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this essay consists of a discussion on previous research made within three different fields: democracy, democratisation and modernisation theory.

The discussion on democracy focuses on how what democracy is, and how it should be defined. Both maximalist and minimalistic definitions of democracy are presented and evaluated. While minimalist definitions may allow for non-democratic states to be categorized as democratic, maximalist definitions are difficult to operationalise when conducting research on democracy and democratisation. For this essay, Schumpeter’s minimalist definition on democracy will be used.

Following the discussion on democracy is a discussion on previous research made on democratisation. Huntington’s wave theory is presented and different ways that democratisation can be triggered are discussed. Additionally, the section consists of a discussion on the actual democratisation of a nation, and the liberalisation, transition and consolidation of a country is discussed. Furthermore, it is stated that this essay will mainly focus on the transition phase of democratisation.

Lastly, the theoretical framework on modernisation theory is presented. Firstly, Lipset’s modernisation theory from 1959 is presented and criticized. Secondly, a brief history on the development of modernisation theory is presented as factors of democratisation are discussed. At last, the revised modernisation theory by Inglehart and Welzel is presented. Their research on modernisation theory reaches further than just economical wealth and argues the importance of cultural change. From their research, three aspects will be used in this essay:

1) Trust in politicians and the political system. This aspect may be interesting to study closer as Inglehart and Welzel argue that low-trust cultures have difficulties establishing complex political systems and institutions.

2) How widespread literacy is within the nation, and thus, how educated the people are. This aspect will be studied because Inglehart and Welzel argue the importance of education and its effect on cultural change.
3) Mass belief among the Mongolian people as a driving force for democratic change. This aspect will be analysed as, while this is a part of Inglehart’s and Welzel’s modernisation theory, it goes beyond economic growth. Considering that Mongolia has yet to experience a boost in wealth, this may indeed be able to explain Mongolia’s successful democratisation. As a part of this discussion, emancipative and self-expression values in Mongolia will be examined.
4 Case study and results

Mongolia has been called a deviant case of democratisation (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008:698). A deviant case of democratisation is a case of democratisation where the country has become democratic against all odds. Additionally, theories such as the traditional modernisation theory on economic development cannot explain why or how the country has become democratic (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008:710). Indeed, it seems difficult to explain Mongolia’s democratisation based on its wealth, as the country suffers from high levels of poverty, and a low GDP of 11.49 billion dollars (World bank, 2017a).

Due to the fact that Mongolia does not reach the traditional requirements of a country going through a democratisation process, it is democratic nonetheless and has been so since 1992 (Ganbat et al, 2008:118). Due to this, it may indeed be interesting to see if there are other factors that may explain its democratisation. Following is a discussion on potential factors that may explain Mongolia’s successful democratisation. Since economic growth cannot explain Mongolia’s democratisation, these factors were chosen based on Inglehart’s and Welzel’s revised modernisation theory: trust in the political system, the effect of literacy and education and the development of post-modern values.

As this essay aims to study the democratisation process, and not the consolidation of democracies, this essay will mainly focus on Linz and Stepan’s ideas of transition. This choice of study was also made due to the fact that some argue that Mongolia was still transitioning, even though they had a democratic constitution (Ganbat et al, 2008:132).

4.1 Trust in political systems

Inglehart and Welzel argue that a society that has little trust for political systems will have difficulties creating and establishing complex democratic systems (2007:20). If this is the case, then the opposite should also hold true: that it will be easier to establish complex political systems, such as the democratic one, in a society that show high levels of trust for the political system.

In 2002, The East Asian barometer (EAB) conducted its first survey where trust in the political system came to be examined. According to the results, a majority of
the Mongolian people associated democracy with that of classic liberal democracy (Ganbat et al, 2008:121). According to the EAB, Mongolians generally saw democracy from a minimalist view, in accordance with that of Schumpeter (Chu et al 2008:23). Despite this minimalist view of democracy, more than half of the respondents defined their current government as “only somewhat democratic” (Ganbat et al 2008:121). As such, one could argue that these results reflect the Mongolian government failing to live up to its people’s basic expectation of what a democratic society should be like.

However, according to the Ganbat et al, the EAB show that a majority of the Mongolian people were confident in their right to actively participate in the nation’s politics (2008:24). Democracy, as it is defined in this essay, is made up by the competition for the people’s vote (Schumpeter’s 1947:26). As such, the people should be able to participate in its nation’s politics, something which the Mongolian people seem to be able to do. Ganbat et al state that the high levels of confidence may come from Mongolia’s past, as the nation has always demanded public participation in politics (2008:24) Contrastingly, a majority of respondents also claimed that they were unable to influence government decisions (2008:24-25). Once again, these results could reflect how the government is failing to live up to its people’s expectations.

Regarding the level of trust for the national government, 60% of the respondents considered it to be trustworthy, or very trustworthy according to the EAB (Ganbat et al, 2008:127). However, 57% of the respondents believed that most government officials are corrupt (2008:125). Ganbat et al once again argue that Mongolia’s history may still affect the overall trustworthiness of the national government (Ganbat et al, 2008:127). Indeed, other studies argue that peaceful demonstrations of Mongolia’s past persuaded the government towards democracy and that this is something that may still have a positive effect on the people’s trust in government (Tsedevdamba, 2016:141-142).

Additionally, some argue that having a common enemy have brought the Mongolian people together in a way which has promoted democracy to flourish within the nation (Shaw, 2016: 3-4). Shaw argues that while being under Russian and, by extension, communist control, the Mongolian culture were repressed to the extent that the Mongolian people could unite in the desire to reclaim their own culture (Shaw, 2016). Because of the communist rules suppressing ways, the Mongolian people protested against their leaders while wearing symbols and clothing of their own culture (Shaw, 2016:20). It could indeed be argued that with the fall of the communist regime,
the people of Mongolia had to make sure that their own culture would not be discriminated against by their leaders, as it had previously. To prevent that from happening, adapting to a democratic government may seem to have been the best option.

Taking the results of the EAB, and Ganbat et al’s analysis of the results into consideration, as well as Shaw’s study, what can be said about the trust in the political system in relation to modernisation theory? Inglehart and Welzel state that, in part, democracy comes from a place of cultural change. While Mongolia does have a history of public participation in politics, it does not have a long history of democracy, what with it only becoming a parliamentary democracy in 1992 (Ganbat et al, 2008:118). Considering its communist past, it is not too surprising that the people show signs of being sceptical towards its regime, even when believing in a democratic system. In the case of Mongolia, while trust for politicians may vary, and while the people views of democracy are that of a minimalist one, Inglehart and Welzel argue that cultural and historical heritage are “remarkable enduring” (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:46), which could possibly explain Mongolia developing into a democracy.

4.2 The effect of literacy and education

Mongolia has a literacy rate of 98.3% among its adult population of 15 and older (Human development report, Mongolia). Generally, the Mongolian population enjoy 15.5 years of schooling, with women attending school slightly longer than men (Human development report). Additionally, in 2014, women made up 60% of the student body at Mongolian universities (Freedom House, 2015). Despite this, the benefits that Inglehart and Welzel argue comes with literacy and higher education are hard to find in Mongolia’s general development.

According to Inglehart and Welzel, higher education should lead to higher wages and with that, a large, mature middle class (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:19). The middle class, as many researchers claim, is crucial for democratic development since it has the ability to, as a collective group, put pressure on governments and bring about political change (Lipset, 1959; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Denk & Silander, 2007). According to figures from 2016, 29.6% of the population lived below the poverty line of $1.90 per day. With this said, it would be false to claim that Mongolia lacks a middle
class (Mongolian Economy), even though the country is classified as a lower-middle income country (World Bank, 2017b). The economic growth is slow, and surveys show that the economic situation for some of those who have previously managed to get out of poverty have taken a turn for the worse (World Bank, 2017a). While this aspect of modernisation may have yet to develop into a strong economy, it can be argued that Mongolians high levels of literacy and education have promoted a democratic society.

Additionally, one of the factors that Inglehart and Welzel argue is an effect of higher education and cognitive ability is the change in values regarding gender (2005:23). As previously mentioned, women in Mongolia are generally more educated than men and make up the majority of university students. Despite this, there has generally been a higher number of unemployment among women than men (Tsedevdamba, 2016:143). However, Tsedevdamba argue that many women were not, in fact, unemployed, but self-employed (Tsedevdamba, 2016:143). Women who could not find a job simply created one by working in areas such as trading, farming and crafting. Inglehart and Welzel argue that creating a bargaining culture eliminates the traditional roles between employees and their authoritarian employers. Thus, these women have, by creating their own business, made this development possible for themselves by becoming their own employers. Therefore, one could argue that while Mongolia has seen slow and low economic growth, democratic and modern values have established themselves, nonetheless. Furthermore, the Mongolian state legitimised these women’s work further by passing a new law in 2012 (Tsedevdamba, 2016:144). The new law made it possible for women who had previously been registered as unemployed to be eligible for a full pension by crediting their time in self-employment (Tsedevdamba, 2016:144).

4.3 Emancipative values, self-expression values and the mass belief of the people

Mongolia’s first democratically elected government were elected in 1990 (Fritz, 2002:86), and a new constitution ensuring that Mongolia’s would continue to be run democratically were passed in 1992 (Fritz, 2008:775). As such, this makes Mongolia a rather young democracy. With this in mind, it would be naive and foolish to compare certain aspects of Mongolia to other democracies in the world. Inglehart and Welzel argue that wealth is what makes self-expression and emancipative values develop within a society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20ff). Though Mongolia have yet to
experience the economic development that traditionally comes with modernisation, the Mongolian people still show signs of established self-expression and emancipative values.

According to Inglehart and Welzel, emancipative values are a set of values that separate the individual from the authorities, and as such emancipate the population from the people in power (Inglehart & Welzel, 2009:129). Self-expression values traditionally develop within a society when people’s basic needs are secured, and they are able to shift their focus from mere surviving to something more (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20). An example of the consequence these values can have is valuing freedom of speech and understanding the importance of it within society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2009:130). Freedom of speech is highly valued in Mongolia. Previous studies argue that Mongolians value freedom of speech so highly due to the fact that during it communist rule, people were not allowed to speak their mind freely and were indeed punished for saying anything that went against the communist rule (Sabloff, 2013:2ff). Between 1998–2003 Sabloff conducted 1283 interviews with the people of Mongolia. According to her findings, the political freedom that the Mongolian people value the highest is that of freedom of speech. Though this finding comes from the Mongolian people post-democratisation, her findings also show that freedom of speech has been important since before Mongolia’s democratisation. Many of her respondents talk of the punishment that came with speaking one’s mind during Mongolia’s communist rule (Sabloff, 2013:64-65). Furthermore, Mongolia’s democratisation did not come from violence, but came in fact from peaceful protests—from people speaking their mind even when they were not allowed to do so (Tsedevdamba, 2016:141). While the people value freedom of speech, the press is not as free as the public. Freedom house categorise Mongolia as “partly free”, with a score of 37 of 100 (Freedom House, 2017a). Even the press though, are standing up for their rights and in 2017 several news outlets arranged media black-outs in protest of the government (Freedom House, 2017b).

If one explores the mass belief in democracy further, if one is to return to EAB’s survey, one can find that when asked, nearly 40% of the Mongolian people believe that Mongolia will become a complete democracy within the next five years after the research were being conducted (Ganbat et al, 2008:130). This trend can be seen in other studies. Tsedevdamba (2016:142) state that 90% of the Mongolian people say that they do not regret becoming democratic, even though the country has experienced little economic growth since becoming democratic. Sabloff’s interviews also show that
the Mongolian people have positive attitudes towards democracy and the values that come with it (Sabloff, 2013:2ff).

In addition to this, as mentioned in the section on trust in the political system, Shaw argues that the fact that the communist regime repressed Mongolian culture may have contributed to its democratisation (Shaw, 2016). By having a government that openly discriminated against Mongolian culture, the people were able to unite against a common enemy (Shaw, 2016). The Mongolian people’s desire for freedom of speech can be traced back to its communist rule, and it could be argued that so can its desire to celebrate its own culture (Shaw, 2016). Since the change in regimes, communist monuments and statues have been demolished and instead, traditional Mongolian language and scriptures have been re-introduced to the country, along with statues of some of Mongolia’s most prominent historical figures, such as Genghis Khan (Shaw, 2016:29). With the pride that the Monglian people have in their culture and history, it could be argued that the mass belief of the people reflects a desire to cherish their culture, and as such, they need a regime that will allow this.

Furthermore, when it comes to dethatching people from the authorities and emancipative values, one can see that democratic values have established within the country since, when asked about preferred regimes, a large majority of the respondents rejected the return to one, or more authoritarian forms of government (Ganbat et al, 2008:128). It does indeed seem that, while some argue that Mongolia have yet to consolidate its democracy (Ganbat et al, 2008:132), the opinion of democracy as “the only game in town” seem to have consolidated within the people.
5 Conclusion
In conclusion, what can be said about the questions asked at the beginning of this essay?

Firstly, regarding the question “to what extent can trust in politicians and the political system explain the democratisation of Mongolia”, the responses of the East Asian Barometer and Ganbat et al’s study of them give some insight to what the Mongolian people think of their leaders. While the results may seem conflicting, with most of the people believing that most of the nation’s government officials were corrupt (Ganbat et al, 2008:125), it does seem likely that the nation’s history plays a part in the level of trust among the people. Scientist argue that Mongolia’s history affects the level of trust in a positive way (Tsedevdamba, 2016; Ganbat et al, 2008). Looking to modernisation theory, and the trust aspect of Inglehart’s and Welzel’s argument, this belief may not seem so far- fetched. Inglehart and Welzel argue that cultural and historical heritage may have such significance, that it may indeed affect the levels of trust within a society, even in modern time (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:46). This is reflected in the results from the EAB as, while people may not believe that they can influence government decisions, they still believe that are able to participate in the nation’s politics (Ganbat et al 2008:24).

In this case, the trust in question may not be the trust that the people have for politicians or separate institutions. The trust that may have affected Mongolia’s democratisation is the trust that the Mongolian people have for democracy itself. Indeed, Inglehart and Welzel does argue that low- trust societies have difficulties establishing complex political institutions (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20). In the case of Mongolia, it may be the people’s persistent belief in the democratic system that makes it democratisation possible, even with the lack of economic growth.

Secondly, as for the question “to what extent can literacy and education explain the democratisation of Mongolia”, Inglehart and Welzel argue that higher levels of education among a nation’s people will lead to a series of consequences. One of these consequences is higher wages as well as a larger and stronger middle class (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:19). As previously stated, the economic growth that usually comes with modernisation has yet to hit Mongolia. However, Inglehart and Welzel also argue that with the economic changes comes a series of cultural changes. Amongst these, one can find equality and a cultural change in values regarding gender (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:23). As for these aspects, the case study in this essay show that this is one effect of modernisation that is present in Mongolia.
Furthermore, these values are not only present among the Mongolian people, but also within its leadership. As mentioned in the case study section of this essay, the government passed laws to help unemployed women credit their time in self-employment so that they could enjoy a full pension (Tsedevdamba, 2016:144). By doing this, the government takes it responsibility for these women and their economic situation. One can speculate and wonder if equal gender values were not present in Mongolia, would the government of a already poor nation prioritise in this way? Thus, considering that these women for a long time were counted as unemployed, one can argue that the new laws reflect a change in values. It would therefore be ignorant to say that there has not been a change in values in Mongolia.

Lastly, when it comes to the mass belief of the people and its effect on democratisation, several previous studies show that the Mongolian people value the democratic regime (Sabloff, 2013; Ganbat et al, 2008). While Mongolia quickly adopted a democratic constitution after being run by communists, the people were the ones fighting for democracy and are seemingly the ones who would defend it, should something threaten it. With modernisation, comes self-expression and emancipative values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007:20ff). These can indeed be found in Mongolia and its people. This essay discussed freedom of speech as an example of these values. The case study made on this aspect show that freedom of speech is one of the aspects of democracy that is valued the highest among Mongolians. This can also be reflected in the results from the first aspect studied, where the Mongolian people claim high levels of confidence in their own ability to participate in the nation’s politics (Ganbat et al, 2008:24). Again, Mongolia’s history becomes relevant to its current state, as the importance of freedom of speech can be traced back to the lack of it during Mongolia’s communist rule (Sabloff, 2013:2ff). Once more, Inglehart’s and Welzel’s argument of historical heritage (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:46) comes into play: as the Mongolian people were ones pressed by its government, they are now doing their best to ensure that their freedom is ensured. There is further evidence of this, as the mass belief of the Mongolian people is that democracy is the best form of governance (Ganbat et al, 2008:).

If one considers the results of each studied aspect, one could claim that while modernisation theory may not be able to fully explain Mongolia’s democratisation, what with its lack of economic growth, there are aspect of Inglehart’s
and Welzel’s revised version of modernisation that are indeed present in Mongolia, and as such, may have affected its democratisation.

Linz and Stepan argue that democracy is consolidated when it becomes “the only game in town” on several planes (Linz & Stepan, 1996:4-5). While some elements, such as the low level of economic growth and the limited freedom enjoyed by the press, may suggest that Mongolia could reverse from its democratic regime, it does indeed seem like the idea of democracy has consolidated in the minds of the people. As such, if one looks back on the aim of this essay: to examine to what extent modernisation promotes democratisation, one can claim that Inglehart’s and Welzel’s theories on how changes in culture and value promotes democracy are reflected within Mongolian society. Indeed, the analysis show that democratic values are not only present, but strong, with the Mongolian people.

Further research on the topic is highly encouraged. Unfortunately, the case of Mongolia’s democratisation is subject to few studies (Shaw, 2016:2). As such, empirical data may be difficult to come by, but the case is interesting to study, nonetheless. Indeed, Mongolia does seem to have democratised against all odds, and to find out why that is may offer interesting insight in how democratisation in other, less economically developed countries, may develop. Additionally, World value survey will for the first time include Mongolia in their studies, in their seventh wave (World value survey, a). The results of said study may offer deeper insight in Mongolia’s democratisation. Furthermore, it may also offer a deeper understanding of Mongolia’s modernisation in relation to Inglehart’s and Welzel’s theories, as they themselves have studied the results of World value survey based on their own theories (World value survey, b).

Finally, Schumpeter’s minimalist view of democracy state that “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter’s 1947:269). This study shows that democracy in its minimalistic form is indeed present in Mongolia. However, the study also shows, that while Mongolia have effectively succeeded in becoming democratic in the minimalist sense, there are elements of a more complex democratic society, such as that of Dahl’s definition (Dahl 1989:221), present within the country, that may suggest that Mongolia’s democracy is indeed still evolving.
References


