

Mongolia

Ethnicity in Mongolia

Group selection

Mongolia is a fairly homogenous, sparsely populated country of less than three million people. While, according to the CIA World Factbook some 90 per cent of the population is of Mongol background, mainly Khalka (90 per cent), Durbet, and other Mongols, there is a substantial (approx. 5 per cent; since their population number has varied over time (see below), this is an average for the whole EPR period) Kazakh-speaking Muslim minority concentrated mainly in the northwest corner of the country in the western province of Bayan-Olgii. There are a number of different Mongol groups (sometimes referred to as tribes or subethnic groups ⁽²⁰⁵⁴⁾), such as the Durbet, Bayad, Buryat and Dariganga Mongols with dialects and cultures distinct from the official Khalka variety of Mongolian used by the government and spoken mainly in the central parts of the country. But whether they are dialects or really distinct Mongolian languages is something of an open question ⁽²⁰⁵⁵⁾. Generally, ethnic distinctions between the Mongol subgroups are relatively minor, and those that do exist have not become significant in political or social terms ⁽²⁰⁵⁶⁾.

²⁰⁵⁴ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁵⁵ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁵⁶ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

Power relations

Aymags (Mongolian provinces) were established on the basis of, inter alia, geographic boundaries, ethnic groupings and population density ⁽²⁰⁵⁷⁾. As mentioned, the Kazakhs live in Bayan-Olgii Aymag in the far western part of Mongolia, where they constitute the majority ^(2058; 2059; 2060). It is a largely Kazakh administrative unit (created in 1940 ⁽²⁰⁶¹⁾), where the Kazakh language is used in primary schools and in local administrative offices ^(2062; 2063). Kazakhs dominate among the representatives elected in the local elections in Bayan-Olgii ⁽²⁰⁶⁴⁾, and in all Kazakh-majority areas, the local administrations are largely dominated by Kazakhs ⁽²⁰⁶⁵⁾.

²⁰⁵⁷ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁵⁸ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁵⁹ [Soni, 2007]

²⁰⁶⁰ [?]

²⁰⁶¹ [Soni, 2007]

Bilingual Kazakhs participate in the professional and bureaucratic elite just like the Mongols (which may reflect government efforts to favour a potentially restive minority) ^(2066; 2067; 2068). However, even though the 1960 Constitution guarantees equality irrespective of racial or national affiliation, elite government positions are occupied by Khalka Mongols ⁽²⁰⁶⁹⁾, while the Kazakh minority enjoys only token parliamentary membership ^(2070; 2071). Kazakhs do, how-

²⁰⁶⁶ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁶⁷ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁶⁸ [Soni, 2007]

²⁰⁶⁹ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁷⁰ [DEZA, 2008]

ever, occupy senior ranks in various other government institutions (2072). In 2009 (and for some years prior), there were 2-3 Kazakhs in parliament (2073; 2074), which remained the same throughout the years 2010/11/12/13 (2075; 2076). According to DEZA, this accounts for 4% of the parliament, which is approx. equivalent to the share of Kazakh citizens in the total population.

In general, there have been no instances of ethnicity-based suppression of Kazakhs by the Mongolian government. Both socio-economically and politically, ethnic Kazakhs are not subjected to systematic discrimination. Nevertheless, since the beginning of democratization, there has been a rise in ethnic tensions due to increasing nationalism among both Kazakhs and Mongols (2077).

Already during Soviet times, there was a fairly high level of contact with Kazakhstan (2078). Many Kazakhs migrated to Kazakhstan after democratization (1990 - 1996) as well as after the disastrous winters of 2001 and 2002 when extremely cold weather destroyed six million heads of cattle, bringing much of the country on the edge of famine. Emigration by Kazakhs may have been induced further also by economic growth in Kazakhstan, at a time when Mongolia experienced economic difficulties, as well as by the Kazakhstan government's call 'to come home' (2079; 2080). Figures for total Kazakh emigrants range from 63,900 (2081) to 70,000 (2082). However, as of 1994, a trend of re-migration back to Mongolia could be observed, since many Kazakhs found themselves politically, socially and economically marginalized in Kazakhstan (no reliable figures are available, approximations suggest between 10,000 and 20,000) (2083).

Other ethnic minorities are small, not organized politically and thus irrelevant for this dataset.

EPR-Update 2009 – 2013: The ethnopolitical situation in Mongolia remained largely unchanged from that described above during the updated period, on the grounds of which it is reasonable to extend the existing coding of Kazakhs powerless and Mongols dominant to 2013.

Further information on ethnicity in Mongolia in general: in the earlier decades, besides some Kazakh schools, ethnic minorities were largely unseen and unknown in terms of actual government-supported policies; traditionally the country was viewed as containing only ethnic Mongolians. The 1992 Constitution did include a clause regarding the right of national minorities to use their native language in education and communication, although there is no policy or implementation mechanism to ensure the recognition of this right in practice (2084). Also, mechanisms that allow minority groups to participate in decisions concerning the minority are largely absent (2085). Despite Mongolia's reaffirmation of its commitment to equality and non-discrimination on ethnic grounds and to protecting the rights of national minorities as part of its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2010, minorities are still

²⁰⁷⁷ [Soni, 2007]

²⁰⁷⁸ [Worden Matles Savada, 1989]

²⁰⁷⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁸⁰ [Soni, 2007]

²⁰⁸¹ [Soni, 2007]

²⁰⁸² [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁸⁴ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁸⁵ [DEZA, 2008]

discriminated in effectively participating in public life (²⁰⁸⁶). According to OHCHR, ethnic minorities continue to be also politically marginalized (²⁰⁸⁷).

²⁰⁸⁶ [Refworld, 2012]

²⁰⁸⁷ [OHCHR, 2010]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Mongolia

From 1946 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Mongols	0.9	DOMINANT
Kazakh	0.05	POWERLESS

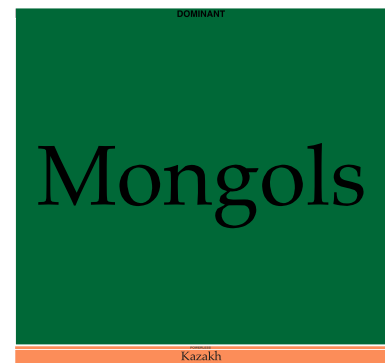


Figure 504: Political status of ethnic groups in Mongolia during 1946-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Mongolia

From 1946 until 2013

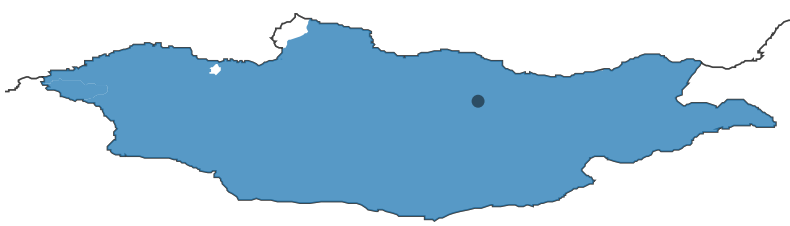


Figure 505: Map of ethnic groups in Mongolia during 1946-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Mongols	1 531 710	Statewide
■ Kazakh	15 050	Regionally based

Table 151: List of ethnic groups in Mongolia during 1946-2013.