

# *Northeast Asian Security Issues and Mongolia's «Third Neighbor» Policy*

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## **I. Geopolitical Evolution on Northeast Asia**

In geographical and spatial respects, Mongolia is located at the crossing of two major regions, Northeast Asia and Central Asia. The Northeast Asia is a subregion of the East Asia and Pacific. The Russian Far East, Northeast China, Japan, two states of Korean peninsula at the heartland of the Northeast Asia, such as ROK and DPRK, and Mongolia located in this subregion. In broader context, the USA, mainly, and Canada have huge geopolitical interests in the Northeast Asian region.

Relations between the states of this region still have long-standing unresolved key issues such as territorial dispute, North Korean nuclear program and Korean reunification deep-rooted in history. The Northeast Asian region is controversial and diverse in many respects, but it is an integral part of interdependent one world. The establishment of a permanent mechanism for parallel development, mutual win and collective security in this region is necessary. Because in new era of globalization and growing interdependence our planet has become too small, and even industrialized economies cannot ensure and direct own development, prosperity and national security independently.

The *status quo* of the Korean peninsula formatted in this region after World War II is the only hotspot left unresolved after end of cold war and till recently the Korean crisis has risen. Today it is more certain that the Six-Party Talks cannot be a solution to stop the North Korean nuclear program. An address that «Even China may not be able to stop North Korea's ever changing behavior» is close to the truth. Having nuclear and missile playing cards, the North Korean diplomacy on an international stage aims to receive huge financial and economical aid «*gratis*». Therefore promising results from the Six-Party Talks in near future are not to expect.

After conducting a third nuclear test on February 12, 2013 North Korea became *de facto* a nuclear power. In this way North Korea hopes to become a main actor in the world politics and the country's army and security agencies make much efforts to show Kim dynasty's young leader image as a powerful figure.

Despite the fact that some international experts say on possibilities of Mongolia, as one of few countries in the world having "equal" good relations both with ROK and DPRK, to play a proper role in affairs of North Korea's nuclear program, armistice of two Korea and Korea's reunification, but circumstances to the current situation allow limited opportunities. Even so Mongolia should be a reliable actor and conduct either active individual diplomacy or active collective diplomacy and it cannot be ignored a positive role of Mongolia. Here is remarkable that Mongolia is the only state, which has established a legal

basis of strategic and comprehensive partnerships and friendly relationship and cooperation on bilateral levels with all states of the Northeast Asian region. In other words, Mongolia does not have any serious conflicts with countries of the region, especially political disputes. This is an important achievement of Mongolia's national security.

In New York, on 17 September 2012 the Permanent members of the UN Security Council signed, so called P5, representatives of nuclear powers, a Joint Declaration on Mongolia's Nuclear Weapon Free Status and a Declaration by Mongolia Regarding Its Nuclear Weapon Free Status. The Joint Declaration of P5 and the Declaration of Mongolia were very significant, *first*, in contribution for strengthening global and regional security, *second*, that showed the possibility how can the nuclear power and non-nuclear states cooperate with each other; and *third*, in efforts on non-proliferation of nuclear weapon. For the first time Mongolia's Law of Nuclear Weapon Free Status was officially approved by the Joint Declaration. And P5 have recognized Mongolia's unique status and declared that they would respect the status and would not contribute to any act that would violate it, which was politically the most important step. Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Deputy General Secretary of the UN, participant of occasion, remarked that it was also important that P5 has showed to world their joint position on particular issue.

***Therefore it is remarkable that Mongolia's this experience can be a possible paradigm to shape Korean peninsula into Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the near future.***

By initiative of Mongolia a Working group meeting on the Normalization of Japan-North Korean relations was held first time in September 2007 in Ulaanbaatar. This event has gained an attention not only in Northeast Asia, but also worldwide, and showed Mongolia's active diplomacy too. Compare to previous bilateral talks held and ended in Vietnam unsuccessfully, both sides, Japan and North Korea, expressed their satisfaction at the results of the meeting. The following meeting was held in Ulaanbaatar in November 2012 under the auspices of the President of Mongolia. The second meeting in Ulaanbaatar was specific in that it held in the form of *official intergovernmental bilateral talks*.

Mongolia is surrounded by the biggest and most populated two great powers of the world. Mongolia, described former as a far from world market, ODA-dependent and less developing country, became today a *galloper* between two grand elephants, locating in the most rapidly developing region of the world. Mongolia's natural resources are attracting international attention and geopolitical and geo-economical interests of great powers

and multinational corporations, which create both huge opportunities and new risks. *The geopolitical definition such as Mongolia is sandwiched between two powers, an ODA-receiver small state and far from world market today is in past.*

Today Mongolia's mining sector has come especially to the center of attention. But experiences of developing countries show that unequal distribution of natural resources to its people was a reason for outcomes such as ecological disbalance, armed conflicts, power and corruption, which leads to *natural resource curse*. In this context a term called *economic hit men*, consisting of interests of foreign transnational investors looking just for more profits, recommendations of international banks and financial institutions, impacts and influences of power states and national newborn elements much interested in wealth (also politicians), is existing in reality. Therefore this risk must be taken well into consideration in the "third neighbor" policy.

A short while ago in Mongolia a rapid development has occurred, a *big bang*, based on Mongolia's mining sector. In 2011 Mongolia's GDP growth has reached almost 18 percent, which was a *singular* case in the world, called the world economic development *phenomena* or Mongolia's *miracle*. However China's speed of rapid economic growth has reduced, but it still remains a Chinese demand for world natural resources and raw materials like a *black hole*. Global financial and economic crises, EU budget cut and debt issues were reasons for the downturn of economic growth of China to 7 percent, which has shown also some impact onto Mongolia. But starting end of 2012 Mongolian economic growth has turned down to 10 percent, foreign direct investment has reduced by 42 percent and in August 2013 began inflation of national currency, where instability and uncertainty of Mongolia's domestic law environment, government budget, investment and monetary policies and positions were the leading factors of economic downturn.

## II. Mongolia's «Third Neighbor» Policy: Nature and Purpose

The Mongolian geopolitical environment has changed fundamentally in Post Cold War. Mongolia became a weak buffered country in the *land-locked, nuclear-locked, power-locked* and *mongol ethno-locked* environment. However a most great achievement in Mongolia's External relations in last season of XX century was that Mongolia pursued a foreign policy respecting its own genuine national interests, and a peaceful, multi-pillar, independent and open foreign policy in geopolitical new environment. This gave wider opportunities for Mongolia to have an equal relationships with her two neighbors and establish new partnership relations with Eastern and Western developed countries.

Beginning 1990 in Mongolia's foreign policy has emerged an idea of "*third neighbor*" and "*third neighbor*" policy and it became a new research direction on levels of policy-making and theory-practice. Today's rapid progress of information and communication technology, which plays a new role in principle, has changed a traditional understanding of space and time, basic categories of neighbor and life style.

In the history of international relations there were

cases, when a country in order to ensure its own genuine national interests and security by political, diplomatic and economic means conducted *pecially formulated* independent foreign policy and diplomacy, and gained much international support. Its clear examples are the "*Ostpolitik*" by Willy Brandt, social democrat and former Chancellor of Federal Republic of Germany and the "*Northern diplomacy*" of Republic of Korea.

*A common basis of «ostpolitik», «northern diplomacy» and «third neighbor» policy is a balance of power.*

In political science, theory of international relations and geopolitics an understanding of "third neighbor" policy is not especially defined yet. Mongolia while initiating this category of "third neighbor" and "third neighbor policy" of small states and bringing it into a practice, brings hereby efforts in expanding a scope of research in political science, theory of international relations and geopolitics.

«Third neighbor» strategy was passed for the first time on a policy level such as in 2010 renewed "Concept of Mongolia's National Security": *Pursuant to a «third neighbor» strategy, bilateral and multilateral cooperation with highly developed democracies in political, economic, cultural and humanitarian affairs shall be undertaken.*(1) And in 2011 renewed "Concept of Mongolia's Foreign Policy": *Pursuant to a «third neighbor» strategy, partnership relations and cooperation with Western and Eastern countries and union such as USA, Japan, European Union, India, ROK, Turkey shall be undertaken.*(2) According to concepts in narrow range «third neighbor» is understood as, *first*, developed economies, *second*, democratic states and union.

In broader context the UN, a world organization aiming to solve global issues and challenges facing mankind and ensuring security and peace, should be also a Mongolia's «third neighbor». The UN is a global community, expressing and protecting common interests of developing countries and both Mongolia and USA have an equal single vote there.

At the present, Mongolia has reached her «third neighbor» in global geopolitical environment and has already defined its legal framework. Mongolia has ratified legal documents with Japan in 1997 «*Comprehensive partnership*», in 2010 «*Strategic partnership*», in 1999 with ROK «*Complementary cooperation and development partnership*», in 2006 «*Good-neighborly friendship and cooperation partnership*», in 2011 «*Comprehensive partnership*», in 2004, 2005 with USA «*Strategic partnership*», in 2004 with Canada «*Expanded partnership*», in 2005 with Turkey «*Comprehensive partnership*», in 2007 with Australia «*Enhancement partnership*», in 2008 with Germany «*Comprehensive partnership*», in 2009 with India «*Comprehensive partnership*» and in April 2013 with EU «*Partnership and Cooperation Agreement*».

Pursuant to foreign policy's priority direction of balanced relationship with her two neighbors Mongolia has established in 2003 with Russia «*Good-neighborly traditional partnership*», in 2009 «*Strategic partnership*», in 2003 with China «*Good-neighborly mutual trust partnership*», in 2011 «*Strategic partnership*» legal frameworks, which are also important for implementation of Mongolia's «third neighbor» policy. In 2002 Mongolia

had renewed with DPRK the «*Friendly and Cooperation Treaty*», in same year also was reopened its embassy in Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolia's «third neighbor» policy and its goals and nature have to be correctly introduced and explained internationally, and here should notice that upto next supports from two neighbors on official and high levels are much important.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said: "*The foreign policy of a country is determined by its geography*". This is very relevant to Mongolia's unique geographical location. Every country borders and stays as neighbors next to each other. There is word by german geopolitician and professor Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) "*A neighbor can not be chosen*". This refers only to countries which are bordering to each other. But regarding good neighborhood, relationships can be established not only with neighboring countries also with countries far away. In this context neighbors can be as many as countries bordering to each other, *but non-bordering neighbor can be chosen*.

Mongolia's «third neighbor» policy is beyond the understanding of geography as well as it is not referring to one particular country; it is more a category of theory of international relations arisen from geographical location and spatial features, which covers some aspects of politics, security, economics and geopolitics. Thus, Mongolia's «third neighbor» strategy can be described as geopolitics associated with its unique geographical location and it is derived from Mongolia's genuine national interests directed towards securing and maintaining a long-term appropriate balance of power between the policies and actions of two neighboring powers and ensuring the national security by comprehensive political and diplomatic, and economic means. In the broader context, it comprises of those influential subjects of the global politics, such as the developed and democratic countries in the West and East, and the UN, and who are the strong supporters of Mongolia's democracy and market economy. The theoretical fundamental of the «third neighbor» strategy is a *balance of power*.

In a globalized world with growing interdependence and dynamic international relations, the ensuring of a small state's existence, its development and national security is not only a military strategical issue, but it covers a wide-range of aspects of sustainable development, economic security, trade, investment, loan, aid, reduction of poverty, smart governance, democracy, human rights guarantee and freedom, science and technology, and ICT. These are the factors expanding a category of «third neighbor».

In 2001 Mongolia initiated the "*Asian partnership initiative for democracy*", and the VII Ministerial conference of the Community of democracies held in Ulaanbaatar in April 2013 has confirmed again the efforts of Mongolia to build regional consultation mechanism.

### III. Her Neighbors Positions

Concerns about the positions of our two neighbors regarding Mongolia's «third neighbor» policy are a key issue in need of attention. South and North neighbors have never expressed unfavorable positions officially, but mass media, information channels, experts of international

relations, geopolitics and strategy say freely their point of views.

Chinese researchers say that *first*, Mongolia is inclined to China in ways of commerce and economy, to Japan and Canada in branches such as investment, new techniques and technology, to USA in political respect, to Russia on military and defense sides. *Second*, in the framework of «third neighbor» policy, an establishment of strategic and comprehensive partnership relations with USA, Japan and India is an intent of triangle blockade round China, *third*, defining USA as «third neighbor» Mongolians explain it like a multi-pillar foreign policy, which means 'cauldron is more stable when it has more than three pillars'.

It is certain that Russians do not regard well the impact of USA on Mongolia. According to russian experts, an aftermath of A. Kozyrev's policy (former minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia), which pursued only towards Western Europe, enabled USA to increase its geopolitical interests into Mongolia.

### Conclusion

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Mongolian alliance relationship both states established a friendly and a new strategic partnership, but Mongolia's buffer role still remains. On the other hand, interconnected with the economic rapid development of giant south neighbor in XXI century, its geopolitical and geo-economical spheres of influences are expanding. It means a "*Chinese danger*" called by Western experts.

The main pillar of the guarantee of sustainable development and security of small states is an active foreign policy and diplomacy.

The goal of the concept of Mongolia's «third neighbor» strategy is to create a political, economical and legal environment where Mongolia's fortune, national security and prosperity depend not only on two neighbors, but also on «third neighbor's» strategical interests and interdependence. Geo-economical policies of two neighbors towards Mongolia should touch in some respects interests of third neighbor too. Mongolia's «third neighbor» strategy might also contribute to ensuring the Northeast Asian security.

Furthermore, the stability of the world trade and economic situation, monetary and financial system will directly impact Mongolia's national security. The big challenges in near future are price changes of Mongolia's main export products such as copper, molybdenum, gold, coal, flourite, oil shale, wool on global market for raw materials, instability of exchange rates, natural disasters, non-traditional new disease, regional conflicts, economic management and democracy crisis. Therefore the *preventive diplomacy and crisis management* are important among countries in Northeast Asia.

A Mongolian national security is one part of Northeast Asian security. The Korean peninsula is a most sensitive challenge not only to Northeast Asia but it also is most likely to effect international security. Cooperations in spheres of trade, economic and other humanitarian fields are an important background for strengthening the political and military confidence in the Northeast Asia.

Finally, an experience of Mongolia's Nuclear Weapon

Free Status and Mongolia's possibility to be an international peace mediator are significant to Northeast Asian security.

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## 北東アジアの安全保障問題とモンゴルの「第三の隣国」政策

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### (要旨)

モンゴルは、北東アジア地域内すべての国々と2国間レベルで法に基づく戦略的・包括的なパートナーシップ及び友好的な協力関係をもつ唯一の国である。言い換えれば、この域内において、とりわけ政治的論争などの深刻な対立関係を持たないことは、モンゴルの国家安全保障上、重要な成果である。

2012年9月に署名された国連安保理常任理事国5カ国によるモンゴルの「一国非核の地位」を支援する共同宣言と、モンゴルによる「一国非核の地位」宣言は、次の点において大変重要である。第一に、世界及び地域の安全保障強化への貢献。第二に、核保有国と非核国の相互協力の可能性の提示。第三に、核兵器の不拡散努力。このモンゴルの経験は、近い将来、朝鮮半島を非核兵器地帯へと変える手本となるかも知れない。

さらに、モンゴルの「第三の隣国」戦略も、北東アジアの安全保障の確保に役立てられそうである。今のところ、モンゴルは世界の地政学的環境において「第三の隣国」となり、すでにその法的枠組みを決めている。

モンゴルの「第三の隣国」政策は、地形的理解を越えており、特定の1国を対象としてはいない。地理的配置や空間的特徴からくる国際関係論の枠を外れて、政策、安全保障、経済、地政学の側面にまで及んでいる。こうしたモンゴルの「第三の隣国」戦略は、その特異な地理的位置に関係した地政学として示され、2つの隣国の政策と行動の間で長期に亘って適切な力のバランスを保ち続けることと、総括的な政治的・外交的・経済的手段による国の安全保障を確保することに向けられたモンゴルの純粋な国益から生まれている。広い文脈においては、東西の先進・民主主義国家、国連、モンゴルの民主主義と市場経済を強く支持する国々など、世界政治の中で影響力ある主体を含んでいる。「第三の隣国」戦略の理論的基礎は、力のバランスである。

従って、モンゴルの「第三の隣国」戦略は、北東アジア各国間の協力を発展させる材料をもたらすはずである。

[英語原稿をERINAにて翻訳]