

SOME EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF MONGOLIA'S SECURITY

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Security environment

The end of the "cold war" brought about far-reaching changes in international relations. The bipolar world has ceased to exist, while the new international order, based on emerging new power realities and structures, i.e. based on multiplicity, is yet to be established. These changes are directly affecting Mongolia's geopolitical environment. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and especially normalization of Sino-Soviet/Russian relations, Mongolia's geopolitical role as a buffer state has diminished. However Russia's natural unwillingness to be downgraded to a mere regional, second-grade power and China's ascendance as a new world power will surely increase Mongolia's role (and that of other states of Central Asia) as a buffer, whose orientation would surely affect future balance of power and interests not only between Russia and China, but in the region as a whole.

Today's geopolitical changes offer both challenges and opportunities for Mongolia. For the first time since the 17th century Mongolia has the opportunity to change its role from a mere pawn (or on object) in great power relations into a relatively independent, though weak, actor in international relations by overcoming its geopolitical virtual isolation and extending its foreign relations. This is made possible mainly because of the change in power relations between its two neighbors and Mongolia's growing ties with other states, especially influential ones.

The future of Mongolia's security will still to a large extent depend on its relations with the neighbors, relations between them, especially on communities and differences of their national interests, and on a broader scale on the relations among regional powers: Russia, China, Japan, the United States and in the not so distant future, a United Korea. Nevertheless, it will also depend to some extent on Mongolia's own policies, its future role in international relations, especially on the competitiveness of its economy.

National security concept

It is under these circumstances that Mongolia has elaborated its national security concept and strategy. The concept rightly stresses the vital role of

external factors on Mongolia's security. It also identifies the areas of security concern, the main one being the security of existence of Mongolia' as a sovereign nation.

In elaborating its national security doctrine, Mongolia has bore in mind its past experience, when during the major part of this century its national interests were identified with or subordinated to the alien ideological principles of proletarian and socialist internationalisms. These principles were in fact an ideological cover-up for and justification of Soviet policies, served to promote Soviet interests in its client states and throughout the world.

The new national security concept clearly defined the vital interests of Mongolia as consisting in the existence of the Mongolian people and their civilization, in the country's indecencies, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, inviolability of state frontiers, relative economic independence, sustainable ecological development and national unity.

Like the vital interests of other states, these interests constitute the object of special care and protection on the part of the Mongolian state and people. In other words, Mongolia's policy towards other states, including its neighbors, shall to a large extent be conditional on their attitude vis-a-vis its clearly defined vital interests.

Mongolia's approach to its security, unlike in the past, is a broad one. Its past excessive and obsessive view of security as being mainly of a military nature from the outside and of class nature from the inside pushed it into the arms of one superpower, thus further isolating it from the outside world.

An excessively ideologies, exaggerated understanding of internal security threats led to physical and political purging of its elite and intellectuals, of an entire stratum of society. The unity of the nation become very fragile, since members of society were divided into reliable and nonreplicable.

The nine areas of security concern are the security of the existence of Mongolia, of the social order and state system, of citizens' rights and freedoms, economic security, scientific and technological security, security of information of Mongolian civilization (i.e. of culture and lifestyle), security of the population and its gene pool and ecological security.

The security concept clearly identifies the nature and forms of external and internal threats in the above-mentioned areas of concern and lays out the ways and means to prevent, cope with or eliminate the threat. Mongolia believes that the policy of ensuring and strengthening the national security should aim at identifying and eliminating any threats at the "probable" stage of its occur-

rence, as well as at reducing or preventing objective threats by timely eliminating subjective ones. The concept also defines internal and external guarantees of national security, the role of specific state organs, of political and public organizations as well as individual citizens in ensuring national security.

Mongolia's vision of and approach to its national security have been formally reflected in the "security concept" adopted by the State Great Hural (parliament) in 1994 and has been published in the press. When publishing the document, the parliament was proceeding from the fact that implementation of the provisions of the concept depended to a large extent on proper understanding and support by its people, as well as by its neighbors and other states.

Mongolia's neighbors and security

Proceeding from the policy political realism in international relations, Mongolia has declared its relations with the two neighbors as its top foreign policy priority. A political debate in the early 1990s centered on what kind of policy to adopt with respect to the two neighbors: whether to try to maintain alliance or special relations with Russia, bearing in mind its history, national experience and virtual economic dependence on Russia, or declare strict neutrality (like Switzerland and other neutral countries) or find some other suitable "prescription" that would take into account Mongolia's geopolitical reality and the interests of its neighbors. The first option was rejected bearing in mind its recent experience, when during the Sino-Soviet cold war, i.e. between 1960 and mid1980's Soviet troops had been stationed in Mongolia and therefore its territory was in fact one of the potential battlefields of the two "red giants" with all the possible ensuing consequences. Furthermore, to make matters worse, there was no guarantee that nuclear weapons would not be used. The second option was also rejected on the grounds that strict neutrality of a small, economically weak, land-locked state, sandwiched between two major competing powers would not hold because of its economic and political vulnerability to outside pressure. Strict neutrality would require some degree of political and economic weight, none of which Mongolia has. On the other hand, absence of any political dispute with its neighbors creates favorable conditions for strengthening trust, developing good-neighborly and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Political realism and pragmatism prompted Mongolia to adopt a policy of ensuring its security primarily by political means and of a "balanced relationship" with respect to its powerful neighbors. Maintaining a balanced relationship is not seen as keeping equidistance between them or taking identical posi-

tions on all issues. This policy means strengthening trust and developing all-round good-neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with both of them. As it was mentioned earlier, in relations with these countries, due account is taken of their policies in regard to the national interests of Mongolia, and above all to its clearly defined vital national interests. Political declarations aside, much in this regard, depends on the degree of continuity and change in the policies of these neighbors towards Mongolia.

Bearing in mind its experience from the sixties to the mid-eighties above, Mongolia declared that in case of future disputes between Russia and China, it would pursue a policy of non-entanglement and neutrality, unless the disputes affect its vital national interests. In the latter case Mongolia would follow its vital interests.

As a practical step towards realizing its policy of balanced relationship with China and Russia, Mongolia has declared non-alignment with any great power, and that it would not allow any state to use its territory for the purpose of committing acts of aggression or any other violent acts, nor would conclude any treaty or agreement that would run counter to the sovereignty and independence of its neighbors. Moreover mindful that the two neighbors nuclear powers, Mongolia has declared its territory a nuclear-weapons free zone and thus has pledged not to allow the stationing in or transiting through of any nuclear weapons or parts thereof. Mongolia's policy non-stationing of foreign troops on its territory or transit through it is in full conformity with the Sino-Russian declaration not to use the territory, territorial waters and airspace of other countries against each other.

In the past few years Mongolia has not only declared its policy of balanced relationship with respect to China and Russia, but has also obtained their support in this regard, as subsequently reflected in the bilateral treaties concluded with each of them. The nuclear-weapons-free zone (NWFZ) status has received the endorsement of all nuclear weapons states, as well as of the entire non-alignment movement. The joint statement by nuclear weapons states, which includes both of Mongolia's neighbors in support of the status would give additional weight to its NWFZ policy, making it a mere than a more declaration of good intent and thus jointly filling in some of political vacuum created by the Soviet Russian virtual political withdrawal.

Mongolia has pledged to respect the sovereignty of its neighbors and not to interfere in their internal affairs. This means that it has no % interest in or intention to use the so-called Mongolian nationality card to foment dissent in China or Russia.

The absence of any political dispute with its neighbors does not necessarily mean the absence of any problems. Mongolia and Russia have numerous problems and questions, inherited from the Soviet era, which relate mainly to economic issues. Thus the debt issue still remains unresolved. Bearing in mind the “socialist” system of economic relations, which was highly politicized, Mongolia views the debt issue as primarily of a political nature and thus should be resolved mainly by political means, while the Russians, on the other hand, believe that the issue is mainly economic. Other questions are arising in connection with difficulties and inexperience resulting from the transition of our economies and economic relations from highly centralized and subsidized to market-oriented.

Factors beyond Mongolia, such as a resurgent Russian nationalism, its relations with China, Central Asian neighbors, Russia’s perception of its security threat, especially in connection with NATO’s possible eastward expansion or international isolation could compel Russia to embrace Mongolia again as a possible buffer or its all, a move that Mongolia would not be enthusiastic about. Nor would Mongolia be interested to be perceived as an ally or accomplice of Russia’s adversary. On the other hand, only Mongolia’s perception of imminent external threat from other powers could push it into the arms or “security umbrella” of Russia, a move that could alter the balance of power and interests in this part of the region.

With respect to China, our relations, frozen for about quarter of a century as a result of the Sino-Soviet dispute, are rapidly developing. China’s share in Mongolia’s over-all trade turnover is increasing rapidly. Both countries have opened seasonal border crossing points, while their citizens are traveling more freely and frequently across the border.

Nevertheless, Mongolia is concerned about increasing Chinese economic power which could, willy-nilly, by filling some of the economic vacuum left by the Soviet/withdrawal, draw Mongolia into the Chinese economic sphere of influence with all its ensuing consequences. The other long-term concern on the Mongolian side is the potential objective need for China to expand its living space (*Lebensraum*) by the middle of the next century. Moreover, China’s somewhat ambiguous position on Mongolia’s independence also gives rise to unease and concern. Though officially China does not question Mongolia’s sovereignty, Chinese writings medieval and recent history persistently distorts Mongolia’s history, its relation with China and Russia, and thus throws a shadow on Mongolia’s sovereignty. This persistence is giving rise to uneasy feelings

among Mongolians. Continuing nuclear tests near Mongolian territory and ongoing projects to dump nuclear wastes in territories adjacent to Mongolia are also arousing uneasy feelings and alarm in Mongolia.

On the other hand, China (like to some extent Russia) is apprehensive of Mongolia's policy towards the Mongol living in China. Neither Mongolia's assurances of respect for China's sovereignty and non-interference in Chinese affairs, nor common logic of the suicidal consequences of any merger of Inner Mongolia with Mongolia allay the fears of China. Moreover, despite Mongolia's pledge of non-admittance of the use of its territory against its neighbors, Chinese suspicions seem to persist, or at least the Chinese pretend that there is such lingering apprehension.

It is admissible that either of the two neighbors could have doubts not about Mongolia's commitment to its policy of non-alignment and balanced relationship with respect to its neighbors, but rather about its actual ability to deliver, to implement that policy, given the fact that its power or rather lack of it, compared to Russian China is too small to ensure evenhandedness with respect to them.

Third neighbor

Mongolia's open, multitasked foreign policy is designed not only to overcome its relative isolation from the outside world. It is also intended to accelerate its development and, Mongolia being a political and economic lightweight, to add some weight as well as to obtain some credible counterweights to its northern and southern heavyweight neighbors. Hence its foreign policy priority is to develop broad relations with highly developed countries, such as the USA, Japan, and Germany and so on, as well as with influential countries like India, the Republic of Korea, and Turkey and to create economic interests of these countries in Mongolia. For it is understandable that despite its interest in and political will to pursue its declared policy, the stark imbalance of power itself, i.e. lack of political and economic weight of Mongolia necessary to consistently implement its declared policy, prompted it to search for political and economic counterweights. Hence Mongolia is looking for a third neighbor, understanding full well that not one single state but a group of states would together add up to a "third neighbor".

Regional mechanisms

The policy of ensuring its security by political means is not restricted to acquiring a third neighbor or rapidly developing its economy and increasing its

international profile and economic competitiveness. It also means joining regional organizations that would not only integrate Mongolia into the community of nations, promote its foreign policy aims, but would also reduce the stark imbalance of power with regard to its two neighbors by somewhat diluting their overwhelming power in regional mechanisms. Hence Mongolia's interest in joining ARF, APEC and other regional for.

In its turn, Mongolia is also interested in making its contribution to maintaining international security. Thus it has offered its territory to be

Used as part of an international network to monitor compliance of states-parties with the comprehensive test ban treaty to be finalized and adopted this year. Bearing in mind Mongolia's geostrategic location, the offer was accepted by the world community.

Central Asian factor

An important factor in the country's external security environment will be Central Asia with its problems and promises. The Central Asian sub-region is becoming a vast arena of international, especially great power, relations that could shift the balance of power and interests on the entire Eurasian landmass, the impact of, which is difficult to foretell or underestimate. Geographically, and some respect politically, it is difficult to confine this sub-region to the five newly emerged states only, without at least including Afghanistan, Mongolia as well as parts of China and Russia.

While crystallization of national interests of the newly emerged states is underway, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan as well as remote USA, Germany, France and Japan are all formulating their political lines based on their national interests.

The emerging Central Asian geopolitical and economic sub-region constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity. Though abundance of human and natural resources is a positive economic factor, lack of an appropriate infrastructure and of direct cases to the sea are very serious handicaps that cannot be overcome easily.

The development of a trans Asian railway, of auto and air routes, of oil and gas pipelines, exploitation of natural resources would surely increase the role and importance of this sub-region in the years to come, which could in the long run serve as an available link between Europe or Ireland and South and South-east Asia. On the other the 10,900 km long transcontinental rail container service between Qinghuangdao in Hebei, China and Rotterdam, the Netherlands which began to operate, is precursor of more links like that.

In the political sphere, it is too early to predict the geopolitical contours that the region choice take, although the neighboring and other states are already trying to shape the sub-region's contours to their own interests or at least not opposed to them.

It is believed that some countries want to see the sub-region as an extension of the Islamic world, while others as their sphere of influence. The competition and rivalry for the nearest and minds, for the loyalty of the peoples of this sub-region is well underway, while the five newly emerged states are still in search of their own identity after having suddenly become in dependent. The geopolitical contours of the sub-region will have far-reaching international implications because it is situated between two of the five declared nuclear powers - Russia and China - as well as such near nuclear states as Iran, India and Pakistan, which have a history of district, rivalry and competition.

Relationship with key major powers, membership of the Central Asian states in universal and regional international organizations, such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the CIS, OSCE, OIS and others, are making their policies more predictable. However, old historical rivalries between them or with their neighbors, their vital needs and interests, the enormous economic, social, ecological, demographic, ethnic, national and religious problems, their geographically vulnerable location - all these pose a real political challenge that would have a direct impact on Mongolia's two neighbors and their relations.

It is in these circumstances that the states of the sub-region and others are looking for appropriate political arrangements and regimes that would help them to resolve bilateral and sub-regional problems.

Mongolia is activating its policy towards the Central Asian countries, considering it an important aspect of its foreign policy. It has recently joined the search for ensuring stability and predictability in this region. As one of the concrete measures, it has proposed that the entire Central Asian region, which for the past 47 years has been a testing ground for nuclear weapons with all the ensuing consequences for its population and environment are, declared a NWFZ. This would benefit not only the countries of the sub-region, but international peace and security as a whole.

Conclusion

Mongolia's security concept, its policy with respect to its neighbors and other powers shows that they are not directed against their neighbors or other countries, and that Mongolia's unimpeded, accelerated development, adding "weight" as well as acquiring counterweights would contribute to ensuring stability and predictability in this part of the region.