

CHAPTER 10

Security and Defense Environment of Mongolia in 2015

Ganbat Damba

Preface

In the modern world, despite the advantages of development and growth, there are also new challenges. Thereby, the concept of security has expanded, creating various risks and dangers and traditional and non traditional securities.

In addition, in the process of globalization, the great powers are implementing “hegemonic policies” which cause a hidden competition. It clearly shows that the great powers are no longer able to bear responsibility and guarantee the security of the entire world while “small” countries are provided with less of a chance to ensure their own security in this competition. Like other small countries, the distinction of Mongolia’s security lies in its vulnerability to changes in the politics, economies and militaries of its neighboring countries.

One. Security Challenges for Mongolia

Mongolia faces relatively few security challenges, compared to the countries with complicated and challenging issues. However, the following challenges are considered as key challenges for Mongolian security: geographic location, economic dependency, and environmental and climate changes.

Geographic challenges

The location of Mongolia brings both positive and negative effects. In other words, Mongolian location is accompanied by the factors of its neighbors. On the positive side, it is no exaggeration to say that the Mongolian location guarantees our security. There will be no external military threat from a third nation over our two neighbors, Russia and China. Moreover, Mongolia enjoys friendly and equal relations with its neighbors and there are neither border disputes and nor any issues that violate interests.

On the negative side, Mongolian security will be directly impacted if the balance of power is distorted or any contention is built upon interests or further hostility is

provoked. On the other hand, surrounded by two great powers, it is possible that Mongolia can fall under pressure. Overly close relations between the two neighbors in particular, may increase their pressure on the country.

Mongolia maintains close political and economic ties with its two neighbors. The two countries' latest major documents of defense are largely aggressive which retain the potential to endanger Mongolia's security. Put differently, Russia's Military Doctrine states that "a buildup of NATO military potential and its empowerment with global functions implemented in violation of international law, the expansion of NATO's military infrastructure to the Russian borders" as top threats to the country.¹

Furthermore, it says that Russia can use nuclear weapons in retaliation if an existential threat is posed by a conventional attack against it or its allies.² China's Defense White Paper states that it shall protect nationals, investments, and business entities overseas.³ Although it does not explicitly mention any means of protection, it hardly guarantees the non-use of military force.

Challenges to economic security

Depending on the market situation, the balance of the investment and trade sector in Mongolia was being lost in the recent years. For instance, the percentage of two neighbors in foreign trade is quite high, which was 76 percent /88.9 percent of the total export and 62.6 percent of the total import/.⁴ 87.8 percent of the total export was for China, and Mongolia became dependent on a market of the country. In addition, 29.6 percent of our total import is from Russia, however taking 95 percent of oil products from only Russia is also creating dependency for our country.

According to statistics of the investment agency, foreign investment in 1990-2011 contained 48.34% with the PRC and 2.06% with the RF. It violated the Article⁵ that was pointed to keep the balance of Mongolian investment. The main approach to secure Mongolian economic security is to classify investment and partnership

¹ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, clause 2.12, December 30, 2014.

² The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, clause 27, December 30, 2014.

³ 美专家：中国国防白皮书引证美对华军力评估<<http://www.voachinese.com/content/us-experts-pla-taiwan-scenarios-20150526/2791401.html>>

⁴ Statistical Yearbook of Mongolia, 2014

⁵ 3.2.2.2. Design a strategy whereby the investment of any foreign country does not exceed one third of overall foreign investment in Mongolia.

in the economic sector and to attract economic interests of the “Third neighbor”. But in reality, implementation of this approach is insufficient because of market scale and economic structure⁶ of Mongolia. In 2013, investment in Mongolia had positive indications which were divided into China-26.77%, Russia-2.12% and third neighbor countries-71.11%. Mongolian third neighbor and European countries’ investment amount is at an acceptable ratio, however, if we see those countries as one by one it is really interesting that Netherland takes place on the most of the investment rate.⁷ It is becoming obvious that our two neighbors and “third neighbor” countries are giving priority to the mining sector.

Environmental and climate change as a security challenge

The dreaded issues around the world community are climate change and ecological degradation. Mongolia is witnessing those threats as well. Arid and semi-arid ecosystems cover approximately 80 percent of the Mongolian total land area. But in recent years, due to the impact of climate change, 78.2 percent of Mongolian land has deserted at medium to higher levels.⁸

Despite the implementation and development of legal documents against non-traditional threats in Mongolia, dangers nationwide are increasing and appearing new types and gradually globalized in short periods and affecting the security environment regardless of our efforts.

Two. Defence Policy of Mongolia 2015

Mongolian National Security and Foreign Policy Concepts state the basic methods for ensuring Mongolia’s independence and sovereignty shall be political and diplomatic actions. In this regard, Mongolia pursues a peaceful defense policy and non-use of military force or non-threatening of military force. Moreover, Mongolia shall not firstly use its military force in any case, threaten others with military force, and it attends armed conflicts if it is not the other’s military intervention into the country. However, Mongolia shall not accept or tolerate any violence or aggression. Overall, these concepts can be considered as Mongolia’s national defense policy in brief.

⁶ Mongolia’s economy is built on the export of mining products with one buyer and multiple competitors.

⁷ The third neighbor and European total investment is 71.11% and 30.21% is directed from only Nederland.

⁸ Mining Journal “Mongolia: The Victim of Climate Change” (June 18, 2012) <http://mining.news.mn/content/111493.shtml> (accessed Oct 01, 2013)

The reform of the Basis of State Military Policy

The State Great Khural (Parliament) of Mongolia approved “the Basis of State Military Policy” (Resolution No. 085) on October 08, 2015. The document comprehensively takes into account the strengthening of a unified defense system based on local protection, the deepening of military confidence through an active participation in the promotion of international and regional security, the deepening of the reform, and the capacity building and advancement of military personnel through long- and medium-term programs. The policy includes the issues as follows:

- Reforming the State Military Policy based on the principle of defense as public services;
- Increasing the percentage of defense budget in gross domestic product;
- Maintaining the unity of the army and establishing modern armed forces based on professional troops;
- Newly defining boundary policies and introducing modern arms and techniques to borderline protection;
- Building the capacity of peacekeeping activities of the army and forming the permanent army system;
- Strengthening civil-military relations. Creating a favorable basis for patriotism, good manners and human development in the armed forces;
- Improving legal and social status of servicemen in the armed forces; and
- Involving the servicemen in the country’s construction and development works.

The defense policy of Mongolia and Permanent Neutrality

Mongolian President Elbegdorj submitted to the National Security Council of Mongolia an initiative to maintain “Mongolia’s permanent neutral status” on September 08, 2015. In accordance with the support and approval of the Council, the draft law of “Mongolia’s permanent neutrality” was proposed to the State Great Khural (Parliament) on October 20, 2015. In the meantime, the Mongolian President briefly presented the initiative at the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mongolia has declared that “Mongolia shall have armed forces for self-defense” in the Constitution. According to the National Security Concept and the Foreign Policy Concept, Mongolia adheres to the universally recognized norms and principles of international law and pursues a peaceful foreign policy, which has

become the firm foundation of military policy, the development of neutrality and multi-pillar military cooperation.

The basic principles and declaration of the neutrality status, which pursues a peaceful foreign policy, not joining a military alliance in peacetime, not allowing foreign troops either access or deployment and transit through its territory, nuclear-weapon-free status, increasing the need to improve defense policy, and developing armed forces for self-defense. Accordingly, the need to boost both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the defense sector is highlighted; however, it will not affect the status of neutrality.

Owing to develop the armed forces, firstly as self-defense, secondly, as it maintains world peace, security and subsequently it becomes the status of the neutrality. The public defense system that defined on the basis of state military policies consistent with the principle of the neutrality.

By declaring the status of neutrality, Mongolia is fully coherent with the form and action of Mongolian foreign policy and cooperation, thus Mongolia will keep its role in the fight against global terrorism, activities protecting human rights and participation in UN peacekeeping activities, and has a right to append their forms and contents or intensify its activities. These rights were included in the draft law on the status of Permanent Neutrality and Foundation of State military policy. In other words, Mongolia will support UN mandated peacekeeping operations as well as other UN Security Council authorized international operations in accordance with the Chapter VI, VII of the UN Charter. Therefore, Mongolia will continue its peacekeeping operations farther, and will comply with the neutrality status actively and responsibly. Furthermore, there will be no change in the principle of defense sector cooperation of Mongolia which has been developed with other countries before.

Three. Regional Security Cooperation

The security mechanism to ensure a secure region is still absent in Asia. Therefore, Mongolia is fully committed to actively participate security activities in the region. For example, Mongolia has been expressing our interest to play an intermediary role in the termination of the Korean Peninsula's nuclear program. Within the framework

of six party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Mongolia has organized bilateral and trilateral meetings between six party talks members US, Russia, Japan, South Korea and North Korea since 2007. In this regard, the "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security" international conference, initiated by the President of Mongolia Elbegdorj, will be held for a third time on June 2016.

Mongolia has proposed the idea of creating a regional security dialogue mechanism in Northeast Asia since 1980. For example, In 2000, Mongolia started studying the possibility of a new official dialogue which led to a conference under the theme "Security Perspectives of Central and Northeast Asia: Ulaanbaatar as a New Helsinki" organized by the Mongolian Institute for Strategic Studies in 2008.

Conceived by the President of Mongolia Elbegdorj, the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asia Security Initiative (UBD) was publicly announced during the Seventh Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Ulaanbaatar on April 29, 2013. Since then, Mongolia has been introduced the initiative to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Northeast Asian countries and explained its objectives and implementation measures to interested parties.

Mongolia has always supported "six party talks", as they have the potential to lay the foundation for a security cooperation in Northeast Asia. However, it should be noted that Ulaanbaatar dialogue has no intention to compete or substitute with initiatives that contribute to regional peace such as "six party talks" and "NAPCI".

Regional security issues based on the regional countries' interests are covered in the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue. The "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security" international conference has raised the following issues.

Including:

- Economic cooperation
- Energy connectivity
- Infrastructure cooperation
- Non-traditional security challenges
- Environmental security issues.

Furthermore, there are possibilities to raise challenging issues and to be able to hold talks among regional countries within the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue. We welcome any further proposals. We believe these constructive interactions between researcher and scientists can lay a firm foundation for trust building in the region.

Conclusion

Within the ever expanding and equally globalizing concept of security, a trend of nations not being able to maintain their national security through its own means and resources can be observed. With this in mind, I attempted to outline the key challenges to Mongolia's national security.

Our two neighbors, Russia and China, are undergoing great changes in force capacity, foreign policy and their way of evaluating threats and challenges. This shift in Russian and Chinese strategic outlook is causing significant disturbance in the international order, which poses risks to Mongolia's security environment. It is important to note that both our neighbors are steadily increasing their military capabilities and building their offensive power by investing heavily in new technologies and next generation weaponry.

Mongolia, caught between these two powers, is left with few options. Against this background, it is possible that the most preferable stance for Mongolia is neutrality. Nevertheless, by declaring permanent neutrality, there will be no changes to the basic principles of Mongolian foreign policy. The finer details of our neutrality will be made clear once the parliament passes the law on Mongolia's permanent neutrality.

"The basis of state military policy" was revised on May 10, 2015. Mongolia has once again outlined its policy to implement peaceful defense policy, avoid use of military force or pose any military threats, as well as avoiding any case first-use of the military against any other country, to avoid posing military threat to others, armed aggression, to be neutral in armed conflict or war, not to join any military alliance, and not accept any kind of violence and aggression through this document.

Mongolia will support any regional security mechanism that aims to foster peace and security in the region. We will actively promote and develop an Ulaanbaatar Dialogue that aims to build trust and also lays the foundation for cooperation in the

region. These international conferences are major steps to address regional security challenges through the recommendations of researchers and deepening cooperation through an unofficial diplomatic dialogue mechanism.