

## **National Security of Mongolia: Past, Present & Future\***

*M. Batchimeg (Mongolia)*

It is my great honor and pleasure to visit Indiana University and give a speech about my country to this distinguished audience. Indiana University is home to the Mongolia Society, one of the biggest and most important centers of Mongolia studies in the United States. It is also home to many distinguished American Mongolists, including Dr. John Hangin Gombojav. It was also my distinct pleasure to meet with two well known Mongolist professors here; Christopher Atwood and Gyorgy Kara. During my stay in Washington DC, I have held very fruitful discussions with Dr. Alicia Campi, President of the Mongolia Society.

During this trip, thanks to the Eisenhower Fellowship Organization, I have been traveling extensively throughout the United States, visiting 13 cities, dozens of organizations, and hundreds of people. As a result, I am very delighted to see the American peoples' growing interest in Mongolia.

My first visit to the United States was a decade ago. I have spent two months in beautiful Hawaii and had the pleasure to visit the historic city of Washington DC. During the meetings I had at that time, I noticed that Mongolia was by and large "invisible" in the United States, even in the policy level.

This time however, ten years after my first visit, and on the eve of 25 years of diplomatic relations between our countries, I have witnessed how Mongolia is becoming much closer to the hearts and minds of our many American friends. I have found that many people value our commitment towards building democracy. I have also found that our American friends kindly appreciate Mongolia's contribution to the global peacekeeping endeavor, and our joint efforts with the US in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During this trip, I have received invitations from the Brookings Institution, and the Jamestown Foundation to speak about Mongolia. At Stanford University, I met a group of American undergraduate students who have been conducting their studies on Mongolia. During my visit to the Center for East Asian Studies at

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the University of California, Berkeley, I have learnt about their recently launched Mongolian Studies program. Many other initiatives, such as Stanford and Berkeley's joint plan to organize Mongolian cultural days in February next year, a forthcoming Smithsonian exhibition on Mongolia, the increasing number of scholarly publications on Mongolia, and gradually broadening business interests in Mongolia made me aware of America's growing significance given to my country.

Time is indeed not the only factor that ties our relationship closer. We greatly appreciate the efforts of many Mongolians and Americans, devoted to the cause of bilateral friendship and cooperation. We especially thank the American government and American people for their support in Mongolia. At the same time, I see it as a part of Mongolia's success story of the twenty year journey towards democratic development. We Mongolians, are always eager to share our story with our friends, no matter if it is about successes or challenges. Thus tonight, I am truly delighted to share the story of my country with this distinguished audience.

I believe that many of you are aware of Mongolia's history. History about the Great Chinggis Khaan, and history about the Mongolian Empire - the biggest empire in the history of mankind. We are one of Asia's oldest nations with an enduring historical legacy that had an enormous impact in shaping contemporary international relations. It is a historical fact that Eurasia has gained its present geopolitical shape only after many nations were brought under the united rule of Chinggis Khaan, his children and grand children. Some scholars even argue that this was the actual beginning of globalization. We believe in this theory, and take it as the Mongols' contribution to human history. Even though the size and visibility of the nation have hugely diminished than what it once used to be, Mongolians still strongly believe that we have an important international responsibility to bear as a sovereign nation in Eurasia's strategically important region.

We believe that Mongolia is a peace loving, open and democratic country that enjoys friendly relations with its immediate two neighbors and the rest of the world, and can make contributions to the peace and stability in the region. Strengthening balanced and friendly relations with our immediate and only neighbors-Russia and China, is a top priority of our state foreign policy. What you may find interesting is that learning from our experience of the past 20 years, we now came to believe that only democracy can give us a real opportunity to develop a relatively balanced relationship with our powerful neighbors. And we believe that this will not only serve for Mongolia's interest, but will also serve for both Russia's and China's interests as well.

On the other hand, developing close relationships with developed, democratic nations is another priority of our foreign policy. We call these countries our "third neighbors." Indeed, the Mongolia-US relationship occupies a very important

place in our “third neighbor” policy.

We are always happy to note our successes gained in the field of international relations during the past 20 years.

We are proud of the fact that despite having numerous socio-economic challenges, Mongolia has gained enormous success in democratic consolidation. So far, the country has been the only successful post-socialist democracy in Asia. Since the early 1990s, Mongolia has always been rated as a “free country” according to the “Freedom House” survey. For the last 20 years, we had a number of general elections followed by the peaceful transition of power. Burgeoning civil society and free media are the symbol of a vibrant democracy in Mongolia.

The post-Cold war decade provided us with a unique opportunity to build democracy at home, and to promote proactive foreign policy abroad. It was a decade of rapid change, radical transformation, as well as great achievement for Mongolia. However, the country’s economy faced hardship during this period. Only for the last decade, our economy has begun to grow at a rapid pace. Even though it was impacted by the worldwide financial and economic crisis, Mongolia’s economy has achieved quick recovery in the last two years. We expect 7 percent economic growth for the year 2010.

We are enthusiastic about the potential of our economic development in the coming decades. Mongolia has abundant natural resources, such as copper, gold, coking coal and uranium that can supply a burgeoning Chinese market and other countries in demand for a long period of time. Last year, Government and State owned “Erdenes” company signed a U.S. \$4 billion mining deal with Canadian-based Ivanhoe Mines and its Anglo-American partner Rio Tinto. Currently, these companies jointly develop a project at Oyu Tolgoi, a location thought to hold one of the world’s largest copper and gold reserves. This is one of several large projects that has attracted investors’ interest to Mongolia. In 2011, our economic growth is expected to reach 8 percent. By conservative estimates, we expect an economic growth not less than 15 percent beginning from 2013. GDP per capita will double in the next five years, and will increase at least 5-6 folds by 2020. By all means, Mongolia is going to witness unprecedented economic growth in its modern history.

We are happy about all these new developments. At the same time, the majority of our people are concerned with the challenges that we face today in our daily life, and challenges that can be brought by the rapid economic growth based on mining sector development. We are also concerned about the continuing changes that have been taking place in international relations, especially in our immediate external security environment. Here, I would like to touch upon some security concerns related to domestic and external developments of Mongolia.

First, I would like to emphasize the three most pressing challenges directly

associated with the economic development.

The spread of corruption and misleading political developments in political parties present serious challenges to the young democracy in Mongolia. Democracy studies show that there is strong causal linkage between resource-based rapid economic growth and erosion, even reversal of democracy. History of many resource rich countries has proven this. Corruption has always been the major problem for these countries. We believe that unless the Mongolian government and people stay very much aware of this challenge, and implement substantial measures to increase government and political parties' accountability and transparency, strengthen independent judiciary, and empower civil society and free media, we would also not be able to avoid this risk. Only through combating corruption, and increasing accountability and transparency in the Government, will the majority of the population will benefit from this economic growth, further strengthening the democracy in the country.

I do not believe that the people of Mongolia have chosen a democratic way of development back in the early 1990s because it is theoretically superb. I think, we had good reasons too for that choice. Democracy provides greater sovereignty to the nation. This is how we see the value of democracy from the national security point of view. Therefore, we see the danger to democracy as a danger to our nation's well-being and security.

Earlier, I mentioned that democracy provides Mongolia with a domestic leverage to develop balanced relationships with our two neighbors, as well as our "third neighbor" countries. I am convinced that our multi-pillar foreign policy, well supported by democratic governance, has been helpful in maintaining peace and stability in the North East Asian region. Even though Mongolia is a small country in terms of population, economy, and military, our unique geopolitical position makes the country's political stance very much relevant to almost every country in this region, including the United States. Saying this, I wanted to emphasize the international importance of Mongolia's democracy, as well as the importance of international support for the consolidation of Mongolia's democracy.

Next, the accelerating economic development makes the economic security an important corner stone of our national security. For the sake of our nation's economic sovereignty, the sources of foreign direct investment should be well balanced to the best possible extent. Economic development should bring not worse, but better international stance for Mongolia. Despite its potential to generate vast amounts of income, the mining sector should not dominate the nation's economy alone. We need a diversified and healthy economy that is self-sufficient at least in the areas of the country's basic strategic need. Without meeting these requirements, economic growth could seriously damage the nation's well being by undermining the political and economic security.

Finally, global warming paired with mineral sector growth poses various threats to our mother nature and all around the world. Until recently, mainly with credits to our traditional culture, Mongolians have managed to preserve the purity and wilderness of our surrounding environment in most parts of the country. With the global climate change and environmental degradation related to mining activities, ecological security is becoming an important cornerstone of our national security. It means environmental degradation is and will be another worrisome challenge for us.

Secondly, I would like to mention some security factors in our external environment.

In the post-Cold war era, the world experienced dramatic changes in many areas of international life. Globalization has made the world unimaginably interdependent. Mongolia is no more an isolated country from international life.

The attack of 9/11 created unprecedented changes in the nature of threats to nation states and ordinary people all around the world. Today's world is becoming much more complex in a sense, which is impossible to explain only within the framework of a traditional, state-to-state relationship. Recently, the reshaping of national security strategies and restructuring of armed forces have been taking place in many countries.

Despite all these shifts, the fundamental thinking of national security of Mongolia remains unchallenged because of its very unique geopolitical location. Stable balance of power in the region remains as an important foundation of Mongolia's national security. Any substantial power shift among the major powers in the region directly and deeply affects Mongolia's security.

Along with other countries, Mongolia has been carefully watching the rise of one of our powerful neighbors - China. We have seen for the past 20 years that the Government of China has been extremely capable in handling its mounting challenges at home and abroad. Many of China's neighbors have benefited hugely from China's economic development. As a country that is becoming increasingly economically dependent on China, and shares more than 4000 kilometers of border land with China, Mongolia wishes to witness China's stability and further development. In particular, continued benign foreign policy from China, and a stable friendly relationship between Russia and China should be pointed out as the most important external security factors for Mongolia.

Any other factors that could directly challenge the relationship among the major powers in the region would be equally relevant to us. Growing uncertainties due to the power transition in North Korea requires the countries in the region, especially countries directly involved in Korean Peninsula nuclear and security issues, to be prepared for any possible changes.

Despite the growing economic integration and interdependence in East Asia,

cultural and political diversity, lack of political trust and nationalism remain prevalent in the region. All these issues complicate the relations in the region, and require increased mutual understanding, mutual trust, and cooperation towards addressing the security challenges.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words on Mongolia's new National Security Concept, adopted by our Parliament in July 2010, as a reflection of the new internal and external security challenges of the country.

Mongolia adopted its first National Security Concept in 1994, soon after ending its socialist type political regime. This policy paper played an important role in shaping Mongolia's security and foreign policy, based on its national interests. However, the paper also contained a strong inertia of state-centered thinking inherent from socialist era.

Concerning the major security challenges, and complexity and comprehensiveness of security issues, the new concept challenges the traditional way of security thinking. It has redefined the major components of our national security, such as security of existence, economic security, domestic security, human security, environmental security, and information security.

Besides re-emphasizing the state responsibility for well-being of the nation, the Concept highlighted the need for citizen's participation for the entire process of security policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. It called and encouraged our citizens to work together with the government in order to ensure a safer future for the society and country. It means, this concept acknowledged the urgency and need to strengthen democracy in the country as a means to strengthen National Security in Mongolia. As we see, only through "Good Governance" and "civil participation" can we effectively address many challenges facing us.

The importance of an open and multi-pillar foreign policy with an increased highlight on the relationship with our "third neighbor" countries has also been highlighted in the concept.

This new concept will produce a great impact on the broad range of Government policies. We will have a new Foreign Policy, Defense Policy, and a number of laws which will be revised or amended due to the changes in the concept. We hope that these changes in our policy will provide us with improved opportunities to deal with growing new security challenges in the future.

This concludes my talk on security environment and challenges facing Mongolia.

Thank you very much for your attention.