

## **EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT OF MONGOLIA'S SECURITY**

*By D. Myagmar (Mongolia)*

### **Changes in the global international situation**

Following the disintegration of one of the two major blocs which defined the global order, the international situation is determined by the fact that relationships and cooperation among states and the formation of new blocs and alliances are simultaneously consolidating and falling apart. The interrelationship among states which was formed after WWII is changing and is being replaced by a brand new process which, in fact, has become a forerunner of the above situation. This process is likely to continue for some time and today, although the relationship among the countries which belonged to two different opposite systems is improving and assuming more of a partnership, the establishment of a new global order and a total end to the contradiction and rivalry among nations and peoples within its framework remains an issue for the future.

The conclusion of the Cold War put an end to the division of the world into two opposite camps and to the predominating role of ideology in inter-state relations. As a result, there seemed to be a real opportunity for the development of mutual dependence of states, mutual trust, and cooperation in the economic and humanitarian sectors.

Gone is the time when countries around the world frantically built up arms and when humanity came to the brink of a nuclear conflagration. The barriers of ideology which divided mankind are no longer in place and economic, commercial, scientific, technological and informational relationships are no longer confined to national or alliance borders. All these changes are undoubtedly becoming a major trend and a major historical milestone in the progress of human societal development. International alignment for the benefit of national and universal peace and progress has become a reality and regions and sub regions are developing rapidly. Cooperation between the regions of Europe and the Asia-Pacific has become a new development and ties between them are becoming increasingly active.

At the same time, it is becoming increasingly evident that these global universal changes and underlying reasons, which are racing against time, are

bringing in their wake many outstanding issues emanating from various sources.

People around the world are alarmed by the conflicts persisting in some parts of large regions which were under the administration and influence of the former Soviet Union, e.g., the armed conflicts between the different ethnic groups which erupted in the form of a civil war in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Central Asia; and the bloodshed in some countries of the Middle East, South and South-East Asia, and Africa.

International terrorism, religious and nationalistic fanaticism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and attempts to steal and sell nuclear materials are growing in both scale and scope in some sub regions around the world.

The process of creating a system for ensuring security has already started in Western Europe and the desire of the rapidly developing sub-regions and countries to develop independently is becoming increasingly evident.

The West is seeking to expand NATO eastward by bringing under their fold the Eastern European and Baltic region countries. In retaliation, the Russian Federation has launched a policy and action designed to restrict the eastward expansion of NATO by seeking an alliance with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and some Asian countries which are gaining strength gradually. Russia is working energetically to strike a military and political partnership with these countries.

In addition, we are living at a time when the effort of influential international organizations to keep under surveillance the process of establishing a new global order and manage the current state of relations between the nations is likely to grow and when many countries are increasingly adopting this trend in their foreign policies.

### **General trends of the international situation in the Asia-Pacific region**

The international situation in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years has been moving towards stability. This is a direct outcome of both the radical changes which are taking place throughout the world and the developments in different regions.

The renunciation by the major global powers of ideology and military force as the key instruments of securing “victory” and the end of the Cold War have had a very strong impact on stabilizing the regional international situation. Furthermore, ever-increasing economic cooperation based on friendly relations and confidence among regional countries has become one of the most important factors for securing stability.

The end to the confrontation between the two systems which divided the Asia-Pacific region as well as the full normalization of relations between Russia

and China and their preoccupation with securing internal stability and resolving economic and social problems in their respective countries, have all had a positive influence on the regional situation.

Major trans-national alliances are being formed and the influence and role of such major international organizations as ASEAN, APEC, NAFTA and PECC on global developments are growing in both scale and scope. In view of this, it is becoming increasingly evident that the nations in the western and eastern coasts of the Pacific will become the leading forces in global development in the foreseeable future.

The European notion of common values has not yet developed in the Asia-Pacific region. This zone can be divided into several branch or sub-regions and energetic efforts are being made to develop unity and common values.

Within this context, the rapid economic growth of China is a factor that needs to be followed closely. The influence of the United States and the Russian Federation in Asia is receding, in some respects, and the growing influence of China based on its sustainable economic progress is gradually filling this gap. This is becoming increasingly evident lately. This is result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which posed a constant pressure on China, and also the fact that China now is faced with greater opportunity to win for itself a favorable position in the Asia-Pacific region.

With regard to political and diplomatic relations among states, the process of creating an alliance of democratic countries in the Asia-Pacific region is likely to take a relatively long time. However, the principle of tolerance “You live your life. Don’t get in the way of the life of others” is likely to predominate in inter-state relations. It is becoming evident that some Muslim countries will not be involved in such a relationship. To the contrary, they are simultaneously trying to continue a state and social system that rests on a hard-line policy of regulating society and the life of individuals, and making it into an international policy.

There are also many outstanding problems which could have an impact on international stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

So far there is no real mechanism for control, limitation or assessment of the armament and troops of regional countries, whose armed forces in terms of manpower are relatively large.

Although the Soviet Union no longer exists, the process of changing the military and strategic space it left behind is still continuing. One of the major directions of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation is the Asia-Pacific region, and, in particular, maintaining its military and political influence in the

region within the framework of the CIS. Six of the CIS countries are in Asia and they are increasingly seeking to take up independent positions by developing relations with the regional countries which are gaining in strength. In some respects, they are also seeking to strike alliances with the Islamic world from the position of religion and national fanaticism. The cessation of the East-West confrontation created the grounds for the emergence and exacerbation of latent conflicts of a regional, ethnic, religious nature and territorial disputes which existed among these countries. This contradiction has surfaced more seriously in the Caucasus and Central Asia than elsewhere.

The nuclear danger continues to be a potential threat in the Asia-Pacific region. There are signs of possible nuclear proliferation in the area and countries with dictatorial or authoritarian regimes may resort to the use of nuclear weapons to safeguard their narrow interests. Both the United States and Russia are striving to reduce nuclear weapons. China has acceded to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Such developments, on the one hand, will help improve nuclear weapons monitoring but, on the other, one issue of concern is that other nations could possess nuclear weapons thus facilitating nuclear proliferation. The nuclear programs of North Korea, Iraq and Iran are of major concern, while the drive by India and Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons may likely become a new source of instability in the region.

The acute and volatile relations between the two Koreas, China and Taiwan, and India and Pakistan, as well as the question of the Kurill Islands, the conflicts on the Indo-China peninsula and some islands of East Asia, the countries in the Asia Pacific region are concerned with such issues as armed conflicts, international terrorism, drug-trafficking, extremist actions based on religion and ethnic issues that have transcended the national boundaries of the states.

### **Key issues of regional peace and security**

As compared with Europe, there is less probability of security in the Asia-Pacific region deteriorating seriously or that large-scale conflicts and confrontation will emerge. The Cold War did not affect Asia as seriously as Europe and did not create deep-seated and persistent differences among the regional countries and nations. In this sense, it can reasonably be said that the balance of power in the relationship among regional countries was not changed that seriously with the disappearance of one of the two superpowers.

The Asia Pacific states have not witnessed big changes in the balance of the armed forces. Except the military establishments of South Korea, Japan and Afghanistan, at the present time the participation of the other Asian countries'

armed forces has not been much needed. Compared to other regions, the Asian continent was less affected by either the arms race or nuclear confrontation. The Korean War and the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan all flared due to outside interference; after WWII Asians have not engaged in wars with each other.

But this does not in the least mean that the issue of guaranteeing peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region is not considered important. An evidence of this is the fact that regional countries have been making numerous proposals and suggestions for creating a mechanism to regulate controversial issues among states by political means, similar to the Helsinki Final Document (1975) or the Paris Declaration (1990).

The general principle by which the European collective security system was created is also important for the Asia-Pacific region. However, the special features of this region must be taken into account.

Peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region can be guaranteed in many different ways. It can be done by monitoring the movements of hostile parties in those regions where armed conflicts could erupt and by restricting nuclear and chemical weapons within the region and/or creating zones and regions free of such weapons therein. Mutual military trust and confidence can be secured by reducing the number of troops and weapons through the mutual consent of nations; giving more transparency to military activities including large-scale military exercises and maneuvers; mutually restricting armaments; gradually restructuring the armed forces toward self-defense; making military policy and doctrine more open; and creating channels for mutual information flow.

It is vitally important to promote the establishment of treaties and agreements of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region that facilitate the creation of a mechanism which would settle disputes among nations by peaceful means. The establishment, with the involvement of the major countries, of regional organizations entrusted with the task of resolving conflicts and disputes through political means must become a key instrument for guaranteeing peace and security and building up mutual trust.

The maintenance of military equilibrium among states in order to guarantee peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region is also of paramount importance. This can be accomplished by conducting a policy of restricting either the unrestrained build-up or the total reduction of the armed forces of regional countries, and preventing sudden changes that may affect the balance. It is important to bear in mind that military and weapons build-ups in this part of the world are now proceeding without any limitation or control and outside the framework of international treaties and agreements.

When United States military presence in the Asia Pacific Region has decreased due to the end of the confrontation between the two poles and the influence of the Russian armed forces has been severed because of the internal crises broken out there, some developing countries have taken measures to strengthen their armed forces.

Recent years have seen an increase in the export, import and trafficking of arms in the Asia-Pacific region. As compared with Europe, the international situation in the region is fragmented and thus the task of restricting the arms race is not an easy task. In general, the immediate task of the major countries and influential international organizations is to launch a common policy aimed at restricting the proliferation of new weapons and military technology in the region. Measures could also be taken to restrict the arms exports of some countries. Proceeding from this premise, it is extremely important to implement a UN General Assembly resolution on enhancing the transparency of weapons supplies and on ways to register the supply of conventional weapons, enacted in 1992 through the initiative of Japan and the European Union.

## **Issues related to Mongolia**

### **New circumstances**

Many centuries after the downfall of the Great Mongolian Empire, Mongolians have now, for the first time, become genuine masters of their state and country and the time has come that national independence and territorial integrity are no longer the target of threats from without. The times are past when the country was confronted with the probability of becoming entangled in the confrontation between the two global hostile camps or in a possible armed conflict between the Soviet Union and China. However, the security of Mongolia has not been ensured reliably and no sure guarantees have been developed for safeguarding Mongolia against becoming a victim of wars and conflicts in the future.

Although the nature of the relationships among the countries of the Asia-Pacific region has changed, a collective security system is still not in place and conflicts of various sorts continue to persist. Given this situation, Mongolia faces the vital need to conduct an independent policy that gives priority to its national interests in order to ensure its national independence and sovereignty, and enable it to help address development issues.

An environment for complacency has not yet emerged, thus creating a new type of concern. Although at present there are no countries that can be dubbed Mongolia's enemy, its security has not yet been guaranteed to the full.

New, unprecedented factors are emerging and there is no guarantee that the former threats will not re-emerge in new forms and shapes.

The change in Mongolia's external security environment has made it imperative to alter the conception thereof, and, above all, to reconsider Mongolia's relationship with the two great neighbors and other countries and ways to guarantee security on its own.

Apart from developing a balanced relationship with the two neighbors, Mongolia is striving to rely on a third force, which has become a key orientation in the country's foreign policy. With a view toward implementing this policy Mongolia concluded a "Treaty on friendly relations and cooperation", first with the Russian Federation in 1992 and then with the People's Republic of China in 1994. In addition, Mongolia considers it vitally important to develop active cooperation with other influential countries in the Asia-Pacific region in order to create a new national security environment. In fact, Mongolia is working to develop such a strategy which would not only meet the national interests of the country but also one which would be understood and accepted by its neighboring countries as well as other nations in the Asia-Pacific region.

The drastic changes in the environment surrounding Mongolia and the future development trend since the end of the Cold War make it imperative that Mongolia consider its future development and security issues within the framework of the Asia-Pacific region, including North-East Asia. This necessity rises in view of the need to consider the future development of a small country like Mongolia within the context of the region with similar development trends, geo-strategic interests and economies.

One of the most pressing development issues confronting Mongolia is to determine correctly the position of the country in the geopolitical and geo-strategic environment which has emerged in North-East Asia as a result of the changes in international relations around the world. Mongolia needs to promote an energetic, friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia, China and with other countries of North-East Asia. Mongolia proceeds from the premise that the future of the country's security depends on how the country approaches these relationships.

It is beyond Mongolia's capacity to prevent all potential threats by relying solely on its own resources, therefore, Mongolia is certain that it can guarantee its security in the ever-changing external environment only by taking an active part in international relations in North-East Asia within the context of political and economic cooperation.

The normalization of relations between Russia and China and the fact that neither of these countries is striving to exert dominant influence in Mongolia

have provided more opportunities for other countries to build up their relationships, from a strategic point of view, with Mongolia. This has become one of the most important factors in the new security environment of Mongolia.

Mongolia is appreciative of the assistance and support being rendered by the major Western powers to the democratization process in the country and to the development of its economy. We firmly believe that the support being rendered to Mongolia in conducting an independent, peace-loving, non-aligned policy in Asia designed to create trust in our international relationships will meet the common interests of these major nations as well as the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It is becoming increasingly evident that these countries fully understand the reality that creating such a position for Mongolia will help create favorable conditions in the relationship among themselves, as well.

There are a number of regions in Asia and the Pacific where the balance of power must be maintained. Mongolia has successfully rid itself from being entangled in the confrontation between Russia and China and, in this sense, Mongolia must become an example to other countries lying in such regions. Although Mongolia is a small country, it has squarely refused to accept direct foreign military assistance, and it has solemnly stated that in times of peace it will not join any military bloc or alliance, station any foreign troops in its territory or allow their transit through its territory. Moreover, Mongolia has reduced its armed forces by several thousand men.

Mongolia's security is not only dependent on the positive changes in the external environment but also, to a greater extent, on the transformation of the social and political mentality in the country. Due to its land-locked location, Mongolia is concentrating its efforts to follow internal policies that fit to its characteristics of a small nation and its potentials and take into account to counter various forms of threat to its security.

Mongolia's notion of security is based on the idea of creating the necessary conditions for enabling the people of Mongolia to decide their destiny on their own, freely choose their path of social development and protect human rights, freedoms, and justice. We also understand that a relatively self-reliant development of the country as an independent state with independent government policies and activities are important conditions for ensuring its security.

It is believed that the perpetuation of the stagnant situation in the country's development, worsening of the living standards of the people and the predominance of instability in social consciousness pose much more serious threat to Mongolia today than any military threat. The economic crisis, the



questionable quality of foodstuffs, price hikes, the absence of modern transport and communication links with the outside world, and the growing pollution of the environment make it imperative to pay more attention to the non-military elements of security.

### **· Relationships with Russia and China**

From 1960 onwards, Mongolia became a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. This was connected, in some way, with the strategic importance of Mongolia's geographical location. Such a situation does not date back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century alone but history shows that the domination of Mongolia was one of the key factors for both Russia and China in establishing their influence in Asia.

It is a reality that Mongolia is a land-locked country with a small population that exists in relative isolation with regard to the other Asian countries. Such an objective factor played into the hands of the policy and geo-strategic interests of the former Soviet Union, and it is no wonder that Mongolia stood firmly on the side of the former USSR during the years of Soviet-Chinese confrontation.

In the 1960's, for the third time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mongolia allowed the stationing of Soviet troops on its territory and began to develop an all-round cooperation with the Soviet Union in the military sphere which clearly tipped the geo-strategic advantage in favor of the former USSR. The stationing of troops in Mongolia provided leverage for the USSR from a military-strategic stand-point. In particular, from the strategic-offensive point, Mongolia was the closest distance to the Chinese capital for the deployment of Soviet offensive means.

The Soviet military command was well aware that Mongolia provided easy access from the west, south and east to all strategically important regions of northern China. They regarded Mongolia as one of the key strongholds for the likely waging of a war and they considered it extremely important to carry out military operations in the direction of regions with relatively sparse populations inhabited by the minorities of China.

In view of this, China had an uneasy feeling about Mongolia, its neighbor with the 4,500 km common border, and time and again sought to make that known. From the Chinese strategic stand-point, China was also well aware that Mongolia, with its location providing a shield to its industrialized regions, could act as an important buffer zone from the "northern threat".

As a result, for 30 years after 1960 Mongolia had to exist between the "Chinese threat", a sensitive issue for the Soviets, and the "Northern threat", a matter of concern for China.

Changes in the Soviet-Chinese relations as well as the political and economic transformations in both the Russian Federation and China starting in the 1990's created a brand new environment and factors affecting the security of Mongolia.

The joint Soviet-Chinese statement issued after their summit meeting in May 1989, as well as the subsequent bilateral meetings, treaties and agreements, rendered null and void the "mission" of the Soviet Union to "protect" Mongolia from China. Moreover, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China agreed not to use or threaten to use force against each other, or use the territory, water and air space of a third country for this purpose. This gave a powerful impetus to altering the security environment of Mongolia. The above agreement became a reality after the total Soviet military pull-out from Mongolia was completed in 1992.

Mongolia's policy for relating to its two neighbors is enshrined in the "Concept of Mongolia's Foreign Policy" adopted by the State Great Hural of Mongolia (parliament) in 1994. One of the key priorities in this concept is to develop friendly relations with both the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. That is, Mongolia strives to promote balanced and good-neighborly relations with these two countries without adopting the line of either country. Unless Mongolia's national interests are affected, the country shall invariably adhere to the position of non-interference in any argument arising between these two countries.

Mongolia's policy is that, in peace time, it will not station any foreign troops on its territory, allow them to transit its territory, or join any military alliance. This is a striking manifestation of the importance Mongolia attaches to maintaining balanced and friendly relations with its two major neighbors.

The Government of Mongolia attaches great importance to the requirement that Russia and China limit, for a definite period of time, military activities on the territory in the proximity of the regions neighboring Mongolia and substantiate this through treaties and agreements at the level of the governments of the three countries.

Mongolia has declared its territory a nuclear-weapons free zone. With an eye toward expanding the zone, the public of Mongolia calls on their neighboring countries to declare their territories as nuclear-free and their border areas as demilitarized zones. This is certainly in the security interests of Mongolia, but, may be in the interests of both Russia and China, as well.

In addition, Mongolia's security could be ensured by mutual agreement between Russia and China not to turn Mongolia into a theater of hostile

operations, by Mongolia to refrain from creating conditions which would lead Mongolia to such a state of affairs, and by the conclusion of a tripartite treaty or agreement to this effect.

So far there is no controversial issue between Mongolia and China which could spark military conflict between the two countries. The People's Republic of China has no legal basis to lay any kind of political or territorial claim on Mongolia. This is because all controversial issues between the two countries were resolved long ago at the highest level and ratified by the highest state legislatures of Mongolia and China. However, there is no guarantee that some of the contradictions existing in China's relations with other countries as well as the future development of internal social, political and ethnic controversies will not lead to a situation similar to that in the former Soviet Union. This is something which is a cause for concern of Mongolians who have been neighbors with China for a long time.

In recent years the Russian Federation has been working hard to precipitate military cooperation among the CIS countries and to develop military partnerships with China and other countries in Asia. The Russian Federation, on the basis of mutual understanding with other neighboring countries, has been able, in principle, to resolve the issue of guaranteeing the security of its southern borders. By doing so, Russia has resorted to its past experience in collaborating with the former socialist countries, including Mongolia, and the fact that it has stationed its troops in some CIS countries draws due attention.

Given the radical change in the international situation, including the Asia-Pacific region, the absence of the former bi-polar balance of power and the destruction of the traditional strategic equilibrium in the region requires a new assessment of events and factors which initially were viewed as ensuring peace and stability. Under such circumstances, it is natural that Mongolia seeks to safeguard its military security through developing relations, in compliance with the norms and standards of a civilized world, not only with Russia and China but with other nations through the United Nations and other international organizations.

The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China respect Mongolia's policy of guaranteeing its security through a non-aligned policy, within a framework of international cooperation and with the involvement of other influential countries. Furthermore, Mongolia is interested in further promoting trilateral Mongolia-Russia-China relationships, including the possibility of its becoming a bridge of cooperation between the two neighbors.