

## Mongolia- South Korea Bilateral Engagements

PRANJALI JAISWAL

Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India)

### ABSTRACT

In order to understand the political relations between Mongolia and South Korea, a brief account of Mongolia's policy towards its neighbours and pre-Soviet disintegration period needs an understanding. The article tries to explain the changing perspectives of the policymakers in both the respective countries for having political links on various issues. The period between 1924-1989 is observed as the period of Soviet occupation of Mongolia. During this period, Mongolia charted all its political and economic decisions closely in association with Moscow's foreign policy. After the pillar of Soviet Union began cracking and disintegrating the supremacy was no longer been able to maintained by the MPRP. Three constitutions have been adopted by Mongolia within the period of 1924-1960.

**Key Words :** National Security, Ulaanbaatar dialogue, NAPCI, Diplomacy, MPRP (Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party), Great Khural

### INTRODUCTION

Both the countries established their diplomatic relations on March 26, 1990. The country adopted its third constitution in the month of July 1960 during the first session of the "Great Khural". By 1960, Mongolia had a working class and a mixed agrarian-industrial economy, whereas in 1940 it was primarily a livestock-raising nation. It had state-controlled herding and established mining and light industry. Starting from the 1990s till the year 1992, Ulaanbaatar started changes in the political sphere in order to eradicate the "important role" of the MPRP in the country. As the new constitution was enacted in January 1992, Mongolia entered a new era of democracy. The country's name was changed to "Mongolia" from "People's Republic of Mongolia" (Sanders, 1992).

Since the formation of the diplomatic relations both Mongolia and South Korea have concluded numerous bilateral visits by the political executives. In the year 1991,

the first summit took place when the President of Mongolia P. Ochirbat visited Seoul. Subsequently, in the year 1999 Kim Dae-Jung, South Korean President visited Mongolia and signed various trade agreements and treaties. The president also widened the projects in the field of economic cooperation and provided grant aid of about \$10 million through the Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF). Kim elucidated his "sunshine"<sup>1</sup> engagement policy with respect to North Korea and obtained public support from then Mongolian President N. Bagabandi (Campi, 2012)

The foreign policy of Mongolia with respect to the political field is a significant apparatus for safeguarding and consolidating its security. In this particular way, its outcome will be estimated most importantly by what ways the country's security and freedom interests are achieved, and the extent of the degree of its worldwide status has remained reinforced and its status improved. The objective of Mongolia's foreign policy action is to maintain friendly relations with developed countries of both the East and

1. "The Sunshine Policy was South Korea's approach to North Korea under the presidency of Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-Hyun. The programme, which was first unveiled in 1998, sought to reduce containment of North Korea, embrace North Korea, and ultimately persuade the North Korean regime to denuclearize on its own".

West. These countries majorly include the USA, Germany and Japan. It also aims at promoting friendly cooperation with other countries such as India, ROK, Turkey, Denmark, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand, and Sweden also at constructing and producing to suitable level their economic and various different interests in Mongolia.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1999, 'South Korean President Kim Dae Jung' paid a visit to Mongolia, therefore he was the first South Korean president to visit the country. After the interval of half-year, Prime Minister of Mongolia Rinchinnyamyn Amarjargal made an equal visit to Korea in order to facilitate discussion with the government of Korea on improving relations between the countries. After Amarjargal, Cho Sung Tae Defence Minister of South Korea paid an official visit to Ulaanbaatar and also met with his Mongolian counterpart Sharavdorj Tuvdendorj (Defence Minister of Mongolia) (Daly, 2008).

The South Korean President visited Mongolian counterpart in the year 2011. Both the sides agreed to significantly escalate the resources and energy collaboration and furthermore to improve their associations to a "comprehensive partnership" level. Both the leaders also released a mutual announcement and agreed to a mid-term action plan, which provided the strategies for mutual collaboration. Different MoUs were signed on areas such as electricity, development of natural resources (Soon, 2011).

The inaugural of the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of bilateral diplomatic relations between South Korea and Mongolia, the projections for trade as well as economic relations—predominantly in the areas of civil nuclear cooperation, railways and construction are brisk and growing. South Korea is Mongolia's third largest partner in trade with reciprocal exchange capacity adding up to \$230 million, an 85-fold increment from \$2.71 million of 1990 (Campi, 2012).

In the year 2014, Foreign Affairs Minister of Mongolia L.Bold visited South Korea and met Mr Lee Byung Suk the Vice Speaker of National Assembly of South Korea. L.Bold underlined an important support of the inter-parliamentary participation in order to boost the political relations and ties between Mongolia and South Korea, furthermore, requested that the South Korean side draw extraordinary consideration to a visit of the Chairman of the State Great Khural (parliament) Z.Enkhbold to South Korea. Noticing that one of the needs of their government is to secure rights and interests

of South Korea based Mongolians, he recommended that the National Assembly shall give careful attention in order to improve the living conditions of Mongolian nationals in South Korea and that the related groups from both the sides should cooperate in order to ease visa necessities (Khuder, 2013).

The Foreign Minister of Korea in response guaranteed to determine opportunities to simplify the visa requirements for Mongolians and the pledge money as well as a visa-free agreement. Both the sides decided to take essential steps and establish an intergovernmental mechanism for economic cooperation with the purpose to increase the investment projects in Mongolian mining and infrastructure and in technology, management and human resources sectors. They also agreed to further cooperation and encourage understanding and knowledge for expanding economic and cultural ties (Khuder, 2014).

The two sides also expressed their opinions in order to develop the comprehensive partnership in different sectors. The minister also emphasized that Mongolia accords a specific attention to widen expansion of the mutual associations as well as assistance, to formulating investments for principal projects and programs on the major mining and infrastructure, and enhancing constructive bilateral cooperation in procedures and technologies, human resource and management issues. He also stated concerning safeguarding Mongolia's citizen interests residing overseas and subsequently requesting Korea for optimistically undertaking difficulties of illegitimate inhabitants in South Korea and simplifying the terms of visa in both Korea and Mongolia. Both the sides exchanged interpretations on the local problems and underlined the significance of maintaining harmony in the Korean Peninsula with an objective to safeguard the peace and security in Northeast Asia. Adding to this, the Minister also highlighted the prominence of the inter-parliamentary connections for increasing the bilateral relations and collaboration and establishing its legitimate basics (Khuder, 2013).

In the year 2013, 'Head of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Unification of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea', Mr. Ahn Hong Joon met the Speaker of the State Great Khural Z Enkhbold. The countries acknowledged each other's cooperation in different sectors ever since the formation of the diplomatic relations in 1990. There were continuous efforts, which were been made from both the sides in

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mongolia, [http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?page\\_id=26263&lang=en](http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?page_id=26263&lang=en)

order to deal with the problem of illegal immigrants from Mongolia to South Korea. The Speaker conveyed his contentment on the development of relations. He emphasized on the significance of the inter-parliamentary relations for increasing the mutual relations and collaboration and fortifying its base. "I am happy that a number of parliamentarians at Korea's National Assembly, who are really friendly with Mongolia is growing. As the Republic of Korea is a close partner of Mongolia in the region, Mongolia is attaching an importance to developing the mutually beneficial collaboration with South Korea in the mining and infrastructure fields and in making investments to the biggest projects and programmes," Mr Enkhbold underlined.

Stating that safeguarding welfares of Mongolians overseas and easing the visa terms for Mongolians are essential aims of the cabinet for transformations, the Speaker extended gratitude to the Korean side for the protection of interests for Mongolian citizens and wished that the support of Korea would continue further. Mr. Ahn Hong Joon expressed a confidence that this visit would contribute to expanding the inter-parliamentary ties (Khuder, 2013).

Minister of Foreign Affairs D. Tsogtbaatar visited the delegation headed by Prime Minister U. Khurelsukh and gave the following information on specific issues resolved within the Prime Minister's visit to the Republic of Korea. The two sides agreed to extend the current comprehensive partnership. The Korean government has proposed to develop a strategic partnership. The 3rd Joint Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee of Mongolia and the Republic of Korea agreed to conduct in the future period in order to facilitate prompt and timely issues during the visit. The two countries agreed to work in order to strengthen cooperation on the UN and international platforms. The Republic of Korea supported Mongolia's willingness to join the East Asia Summit and APEC Mongolia. The country also provided support and appreciation for the South Korean dialogue on safety issues in Northeast Asia.<sup>3</sup>

The Speaker to Mongolian Parliament Z.Enkhbold visited the Republic of Korea in the year 2014 on the invitation of South Korea's National Assembly, Kang Chang-Hee. They highlighted the importance of the bilateral visit and close cooperation between the two

countries. The speaker also discussed the upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2015 with South Korean President Park-Geun Hye over the expansion of bilateral relations at all level and issues related to visas. Bilateral relations between Mongolia and Republic of Korea have been expanded to include comprehensive partnerships in all fields (Sugirrachaa, 2014).

The ROK's "Eurasian Initiative" was also discussed with the objective of promoting regional development and also Mongolian proposal to create a railways network, which will link Eurasian, and Northeast Asia. As Campi stated that these high-level bilateral interactions between both the countries would considerably increase in the years, as that was during those time when South Korea welcomed President Elbegdorj in 2015, which fell on the same day with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of diplomatic ties between the two countries (Campi, 2014).

The most recent visit in the month of October 2022 was made by Mongolian 'Chairman of State Great Hural of Mongolia G. Zandanshatar' to South Korea where he met with 'Speaker of National Assembly of ROK Kim Jin-pyo'. The Mongolian Chairman highlighted the importance of South Korea as a strategic partner and its significance for financing investments in support development-based green economy and green project. South Korean-Mongolian cooperation in trade, tourism, science and technology cultural exchanges, and education all intersect with and have a direct influence on Mongolian society. Both the sides also renewed the "Agreement on the Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments and established an "Economic Partnership Agreement" (Erdenejargal, 2022).

### **National Security Concept:**

There are political and security motivation following all contracts and plans, and their expectation for gaining in the political and economic field. The national security of Mongolia both in principle and practice are characterized as far as seen achievement in multi-dimensional geo-economical evaluation instead of the generally straightforward geopolitical and geostrategic balancing that controlled both the academic idea and functional activities since Mongolia's democratic revolution in the year 1990. All through Mongolia's twenty years' time of democratic involvement and genuine

3. Underground Mongolia United States Of Department Of Department Of Deputy Health Service December 2013, Ministry of Foreign Currency.<http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?p=43329>

autonomy following nearly 70 years of association in the Soviet Union which limited its freedom of activity in the global field its impression of and system for national security experienced noteworthy changes. In spite of the change in substance from politics to economy, the central concern continued as before. Mongolia started seeking after a procedure of expanding its partners and these large partners resulted in better balancing prospects and henceforth, a more definite external safety atmosphere (Dorjjuder, 2009).

Mongolia's concept of national security signifies that when its position is satisfactory external and internal conditions are protected to safeguard fundamental national interests. Such national interests based on the survival of the civilization as well as citizens of Mongolia. This also is further based on the independence of the country, its sovereign territorial integration and the inviolability of State frontiers as well as economically free in a relative sense. The persistence of national interests indicated that policies adopted by the states are intended to generate an agreement which is comprehensive in safeguarding and reinforcing the nations key national interests, its state actions, organizations also the methods and techniques which are being applied by the Mongolian people (ibid).

The responsibilities to give assurance to national security is obligatory on the State "Great Hural, the President of Mongolia, the National Security Council led by the President, the Government, the central and local law enforcement and State administrative agencies". The legislature, executive, judiciary and local self-governing bodies are necessitated to execute, in their capability, the principles of the national security sustained by the Constitution, regulation and other significant legal acts. Political and public organizations, as well as people, are obliged to strictly abide the laws and rules, which ensure national security and also to show active participation in order to realize it thereof. The Council of National Security Council is given the responsibility to coordinate with the strategies and policies in order to apply security procedures with respect to the prevailing situations. It also provides its supervision to the government so that the government can safeguard the national security and also helps in providing information to the State Great Hural consequently on a yearly basis. The funds are provided by the concerned organizations in order to implement the measures in the budget. The expenditure required in case

of special measures is taken care by the State budget<sup>4</sup>.

Ulaanbaatar and Seoul are in the similar "partnership basket" for NATO in the Asia-Pacific. Both Mongolia and South Korea have flourishing relations with NATO that signifies rather a new aspect of international arrangement for the region. Looking within the framework of "Strategic Narrative Theory", one can understand that the strategy of two countries as their narratives resonate with messages initiated from NATO and directed to allies in the Asia-Pacific. Both the countries are trying to obtain a positive level of stability with respect to their geostrategic locations in the Asia-Pacific. With respect to Mongolia's "Third Neighbour" strategy, the country is incorporating a protective policy with respect to NATO and other partners in the area that primarily includes "China, Japan, Russia, and the US". Whereas Seoul allocates prime importance to the larger powers with respect to its bilateral relations, most apparently and the US predominantly, although considering NATO mostly advantageous but occasionally perfunctory supplementary partner on various other security concerns (Yoon, 2005).

South Korean Defense Ministry conducted a round of security talks in the year 2008 and this was first such talk held between the two countries ever since they recognized each other diplomatically in 1991. The meetings held in Ulaanbaatar by the officials of South Korean and Mongolian defense led to the creation of a working group which included members from both the Ulaanbaatar and Seoul, with the purpose to facilitate discussion of mutual cooperation on defence, methods to standardize the substantive defence discussions, and techniques which will enhance cooperation militarily amid the countries. Kwon Young-Cheol, South Korean Defense Ministry Northeast Asia bureau official stated "There have been high-level defence dialogues, such as ministerial talks, between the two countries; but this is the first time they hold a working-level dialogue, at which the two sides will discuss ways to implement agreements reached in previous talks" (Daly, 2008).

An all-embracing diplomatic cooperation has been established among Mongolia, South Korea and the United States due to their commonality of values. Mongolia and Korea have always provided their support to the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, and both have generously added to United Nations operations on peacekeeping in numerous regions. US Pacific Command plays a

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4. National Security Concept of Mongolia

significant role in Mongolia peacekeeping military exercise, Khaan Quest. The participation from Asian countries is also witnessed with South Korea joining the exercise in 2009. South Korea sent working-level officers as observers to the exercises in Mongolia from 2006 to 2008. Mongolia has made strenuous efforts in order to cooperate with the other countries on the basis of its “third neighbour” policy, which goes beyond the two immediate neighbours (Russia and China). The “third neighbour” countries are influential democracies: the United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, and Europe. Concretizing its steps further, Mongolia has also successfully taken up the participation in the “Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” and, also became a member of the Community of Democracies along with South Korea. Korea and Mongolia have served as the host to the Community of Democracies in past years (Minton, 2017).

Since 2003 Mongolia conducts peacekeeping and military exercises on an annual basis with an objective to strategically advance its Armed Forces and also improve its regional confidence-building mechanism. Though, both the US and NATO have been playing noticeable roles on their part. But the Khan Quest has attracted a lot of interest from different countries in order to participate and South Korea being one of them. These training are seen as meetings, which are committed to strengthening global collaboration and interoperability on peacekeeping initiatives all over the world (Moon, 2015).

In the year 2004, Mongolia conducted its first joint military exercise with the United States, which is known as “Khan Quest”. This exercise provided support to Mongolia in order to expand in its military strategy internationally. In the year 2006, South Korea sent five military officers but as observers. In the year 2007 consequently, South Korea also provided training to its military personnel with Mongolian counterparts in “Khan Quest 2007”. Mongolia though is continuing in deepening its relations with the allies of the Western world, the country is always careful with its relations with respect to the military with its powerful neighbours in a positive situation which can be reflected in its participation as an observer country in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Daly, 2008).

“In creating a truly global environment for peace and security, not only global and regional powers but small states too should contribute an important part, as noted in the UN Secretary-General’s address to the Mongolian

Parliament during his visit to Mongolia in 2002” (Annan, 2002).

Mongolia is a self-governing nation in the international community. It desires to benefit from NEA with respect to the political as well as economic support and its transition into a “free, democratic country with a market-based economy” in these past fifteen years. The Foreign Policy Concept of Mongolia states, “conditions for joining the regional integration will be created by expanding the bilateral cooperation with countries within the region.” (“Concept of Mongolia Foreign Policy” 1994: 40).

On the basis of recommendations made by Sapporo, Mongolia presented a written proposal to both its neighbours Russia and China and the response from these countries to this proposal was positive. In the current scenario, Mongolia is expected to engage with its two neighbours with the help of tripartite discussions. The country is also thankful to UN General Assembly Resolution No. 55/33S which incorporates the aspect of Mongolia being a non-nuclear state for its security, as well as its economic and environmental vulnerability, which also adds up to its NWF status (UNDP Mongolia 2005).

The process to form a multilateral security organization in the Northeast Asia region is difficult to arrive because of the presence of some obvious reasons, which include the enormous political, cultural social and historical diversity and also the unresolved issues among the nations. However, prerequisites such as economic assimilation and increasing interconnection within larger East Asia and resolving historical disputes through consensus and negotiation have acted positively in order to gradually arise as the set of norms. Countries are henceforth responsible to make joint efforts to make positive achievements in place of halting them by concentrating more on the challenges. The key players should largely accept the common responsibility. Mongolia always provides its support to East Asia in order to formulate and integrate a multidimensional security mechanism and also to surface in NEA and also, desires to join its membership. As Tuvshintugs states that this will be the best for NEA countries with respects to development and security interests as Mongolia is regarded as a free democracy, developed and peace-loving nation (Tuvshintugs, 2009).

#### **Ulaanbaatar Dialogue:**

The parties involved in the UBD are Mongolia,

Russia Federation, ROK, DPRK, PRC and USA. The other participants include the international organizations also the non-regional countries (Caprara, 2015).

During the period of the early 1980s, the idea to create a regional security dialogue was first proposed by Mongolia. In this Mongolia called for an 'All-Asia Convention' in which it asked the countries to prohibit the use of force and also to prevent conflicts. Later in the year 2000, Mongolia further studied the prospect for a new dialogue which was meant to be official and for this purpose Mongolia concluded a conference which was themed as "Security Perspectives of Central and Northeast Asia: Ulaanbaatar as a New Helsinki". Mongolian Institute of Strategic Studies organized this conference in 2008. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, Mongolian President came up with the idea of "The Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asia Security Initiative" and declared it in the "VII Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracy" in Ulaanbaatar on April 29, 2013 (Campi, 2014).

While Track 1 discussions are official mainly between the 'diplomats and government delegates' in order to justify their official positions, Track 1.5 and Track 2 are regarded as the most influential efforts for the promotion of mutual understanding. The UBD outcome is required to be practical as well as formal in respect of security cooperation and consultation (Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the UN).

UBD priority areas mainly comprised of following fields:

- Issues concerning conventional security
- Issues concerning non-conventional security
- Connectivity through energy
- Development of Infrastructure
- Conservation of Environment

The Ulaanbaatar Dialogue also provides an additional confirmation over Mongolia's essential role as an honest negotiator as well as an organizer for peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The UB dialogue further increases its quality by providing its continuous support on various services such as humanitarian economic and cultural as well initiating the exchange of youth population with other countries and its neighbours as well (Caprara, 2015)

### **Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI):**

The concept of *trustpolitik* is behind the NAPCI from the administration of Korean President Park. This

is based on the aim to develop an infrastructure on the basis of trust amongst different countries and also fostering cooperation with respect to regional order. "*Trustpolitik* is an umbrella concept that comprises the trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula, NAPCI, the Eurasia Initiative, and middle power diplomacy and networking". NAPCI is defined as a procedure that is multilateral. It focuses on establishing trust by the method of gathering resolutions through discussions and also categorizing areas where cooperation can be made with respect to non-traditional security issues. NAPCI essential principles include: instituting a liberal transnational decree in East Asia, pursuing East Asia's joint peace and prosperity, overcoming the Asia Paradox, and creating a vision for the Asian community. Firstly, with the help of collaboration and dialogues, Northeast Asia can progress as a whole and this would also facilitate the communication of "Trust-Building Process" on the Korean Peninsula. Secondly, it discards the concept of the zero-sum game and aims to develop a liberal international order thereby defining national interests. Thirdly, in order to maintain its idea of "the New Asia," NAPCI attains the structure of regional collective security. This can be described as a method to create a process and culture with the help of concord and collaboration through multilateral dialogue (Hyun, 2014).

The activities of NAPCI can, therefore, benefit with the help of the country's distinctive location and its contacts with North Korea. Mongolia possibly can operate as an impartial assembly platform, literally and metaphorically, for both North Korea and South Korea. South Koreans with the help of NAPCI can, therefore, seek to establish a compliant association with the different multilateral bodies and can henceforth emphasize on supplementary and comprehensiveness while operating and assisting Mongolia with its successful rounds of UB dialogue (Paul, 2015).

The core of NAPCI Centre resides on its regional participants, which include the "ROK, the United States, Japan, China, Russia, Mongolia, and the DPRK." An open stance initiative is adopted by NAPCI in order to prevent delays with respect to discussion and cooperation on the issue of regional security and it aims to develop into "inclusive regional cooperation." With respect to membership, NAPCI welcomes the cooperation as well as participation from different regional associations, which are the European Union, OSCE, and ASEAN that can throw some light on the difficulties and consequences of

regional cooperation (Hyun, 2014).

UB dialogue is looked as an easy pathway to engage with North Korea as compared to that of maintaining bilateral relations or NAPCI. Mongolia is one among the Northeast Asian Country that has maintained a normal and stable policy security with North Korea and with the actors surrounding the region. It has not fallen over its own feet by politicizing old objections with its neighbours. Mongolia has relatively applied a composed approach and can-do attitude with its neighbours, on the other hand, Mongolia' neighbours have surrounded themselves with the concept of extreme nationalism and also with the mire of doctrines. Therefore, these can be remarked as significant assets, which can benefit Mongolia and add up to advantage not only the country capital Ulaanbaatar but also the region as a whole (Carpara, 2015).

Both NAPCI and the UB Dialogue seek to wither away the misunderstandings as well as suspicion which exists among the Northeast Asian countries and escalate cooperation and assistance through multi-faceted arrangements, and also the mutual reinforcement of "Track 1,1.5 and 2" gatherings. Both highlight multifaceted collaboration on non-conventional security concerns and citizen exchanges as techniques to assist in order to form trust and undertake local complications one by one (ibid).

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