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# THESIS

**CORRELATION OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR MONGOLIA**

by

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September 2003

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Since the collapse of the Communist bloc, Mongolia has pursued the independent foreign policy with balanced relations attached to the two great neighbors – Russia and China. Meanwhile, the search for a "third neighbor" (the United States, Japan and/or the collective community of democracies) has been seen as the alternative approach to the existing "neighbor-oriented" policy. The thesis argues that both approaches are not mutually exclusive schools of foreign policy, but rather constitute the common approach that is described within this research as "bufferism."

To present an alternative vision of the nation's foreign policy orientation, the thesis covers the major schools of international relations and identifies the two major causes of policy: identity (based on constructivism) and interest (based on realism). As a nation, Mongolia faces the identity trilemma and the security dilemma, without much preference given to any of these options during the last decade. Hence appears the nation's ambiguity in identity, security and economic development. The thesis puts the argument that without prioritizing one option, Mongolia faces the risk of degrading into a failing state isolated from the global affairs. Thus, the reconciliation of its identity and interest, as well as of its aspirations must lead to a rational choice of a Sino-centric East Asian policy dimension over any other.


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# CORRELATION OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR MONGOLIA

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## ABSTRACT

Since the collapse of the Communist bloc, Mongolia has pursued the independent foreign policy with balanced relations attached to the two great neighbors – Russia and China. Meanwhile, the search for a "third neighbor" (the United States, Japan and/or the collective community of democracies) has been seen as the alternative approach to the existing "neighbor-oriented" policy. The thesis argues that both approaches are not mutually exclusive schools of foreign policy, but rather constitute the common approach that is described within this research as "bufferism."

To present an alternative vision of the nation's foreign policy orientation, the thesis covers the major schools of international relations and identifies the two major causes of policy: identity (based on constructivism) and interest (based on realism). As a nation, Mongolia faces the identity trilemma and the security dilemma, without much preference given to any of these options during the last decade. Hence appears the nation's ambiguity in identity, security and economic development. The thesis puts the argument that without prioritizing one option, Mongolia faces the risk of degrading into a failing state isolated from the global affairs. Thus, the reconciliation of its identity and interest, as well as of its aspirations must lead to a rational choice of a Sino-centric East Asian policy dimension over any other.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

During the opening ceremony of the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996, the anchor of the Russian state-owned TV channel RTR made a rather "politically incorrect" comment about Mongolia, as the nation's athletic team entered the stadium. His spontaneous words, roughly translated into English, as "Mongolia is indeed an independent country, for no one else depends on it," have triggered an unexpected discontent among the Mongolian public, the majority of whom accepted it as an insult. The scandal was solved immediately after the formal apology by Eduard Sagallaev, the then-executive director of the RTR channel and was forgotten thereafter. Nevertheless, this comment captures the essence of the reality that small states have to face in the era of globalization; change the jargon from colloquial to academic – and these words will sound somewhat like "independence without interdependence results in a failing state." Though by no parameters should Mongolia be described as a failing state, yet, the message that this comment brings should not be forgotten as the comment itself has been.

The post-Cold War period was pivotal for Mongolia in finding its place on the world map. Along with political democratization and economic liberalization Mongolia launched what it had been longing to achieve for decades – an open, independent foreign policy with equidistant relations with its two neighbors while pursuing the attention of the third partner(s). Alongside the opportunities, Mongolia had also to accept the challenges of handling its own destiny. The perception of independence

that influenced Mongolia's political and intellectual elite during this period is unique and derives from the legacies of the Communist era. Nearly eight decades of nominal independence under the Russian/Soviet protectorate had left a deep mark in Mongolia's political mentality, frequently expressed in the desire to write the nation's destiny without any form of foreign interference. Occasionally, this otherwise positive pattern of thought tends to be radicalized in a form of xenophobia and rejection of non-native values and practices. Though this trend has never exerted substantial influence over the nation's policymaking process, its traces nevertheless can be found in the founding philosophy of the contemporary Mongolian foreign policy – pursuit of a balance of power and a rather exaggerated self-perception of the role of buffer state.

Thus, the objective of this thesis is to apply the theoretical clauses of major schools of international relations with relevance to the current geopolitical situation that Mongolia faces and introduce an alternative approach to formulate the most effective adjustment of the nation's foreign policy orientation. Though the primary focus of the thesis research is academic, it is designed to provide policy recommendations for decision-making constituencies. While acknowledging all the major schools of international relations, I avoided the acceptance of any one of them in a pure form, and instead attempted to find a reconciliatory ground with stronger base on constructivism.

## A. THESIS QUESTION

Since the collapse of the Communist bloc, Mongolia has pursued an independent foreign policy with equidistant priorities attached to the two great neighbors – Russia and

China. Meanwhile, the search for a "third neighbor" (the United States, Japan and/or the collective community of democracies) has been seen as an alternative approach to the existing "neighbor-oriented" policy. The thesis argues that both approaches are not mutually exclusive schools of foreign policy, but rather constitute the common approach that is described within this research as "bufferism." To present an alternative vision of the nation's foreign policy orientation, the author enlists the major schools of international relations and identifies the two major causes of policymaking: identity (based on constructivism) and interest (based on realism). As a nation, Mongolia faces an identity trilemma and a security dilemma, without much preference given to any of these options during the last decade. Hence is the nation's current ambiguity in identity, security and economic development. The thesis puts forward the argument that without prioritizing one option, Mongolia faces the risk of degrading into a failing state isolated from global affairs. Thus, the reconciliation of its identity and interest, as well as of its aspirations must lead to a rational choice of a Sino-centric East Asian policy dimension over any other.

## B. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The thesis is organized in a form of research comprised of the introduction, three chapters and the conclusion. Each chapter is an independent research unit, resulting from applying different scientific disciplines and methodologies.

**Introduction** includes the thesis question and major propositions of the research work.

**Chapter I** provides the theoretical framework for the role of two main causal factors in foreign policy – identity and interest. The findings of this chapter are based on the major schools of international relations, namely constructivism, realism and liberalism. In the chapter, I correlate identity with the constructivist approach and interest with the realist approach, while applying some clauses of the liberal theory to analyze the correlation between the two factors. As part of the research findings, included in the chapter are my proposal for the classification of identity and interest, areas of their conflict and reconciliation.

**Chapter II** explicitly covers Mongolia, its historical pattern of international relations and its contemporary pursuit of an independent foreign policy. The same typology of identity, interest and their correlation, used in the Chapter One, is applied in this chapter to analyze Mongolia's quest for its proper place in the global affairs. The chapter identifies the identity trilemma and the security dilemma that Mongolia faces and provides the hypothesis of a risk attached to the continuation of this ambiguity. The chapter addresses the phenomenon of Sinophobia persistent in Mongolian society as a socially constructed myth hindering the nation's more thorough identification and interest affiliation with East Asia, and stipulates the need for "demythization." Overall, the chapter stresses the growing importance of the East Asian dimension in Mongolia's foreign policy.

**Chapter III** departs from a state-centered view of the regional trends and provides a more liberal-internationalist approach to emerging cooperation in East

Asia. For that purpose, the existing solid organizations, such as the ASEAN and its regional dialogue forum (ARF), as well as the embryonic mechanisms are reviewed. My argument is that while East Asia still remains a long distance behind Europe or North America in the development of regionalism, the pattern of *globalization through regionalization* has become inevitable. Also the construction of a common East Asian identity for the pursuit of each state's self-interest is underway. Thus, the main finding of the chapter is that in East Asia, much like the European or North American communities, fusion of all three approaches – constructivism, realism and liberalism – becomes increasingly visible and viable.

**Conclusion** offers the incorporation of the findings of the three chapters into a policy recommendation for Mongolian foreign policy constituencies, stipulating that the reconciliation of Mongolia's identity an interest inevitably demands adjustment to the existing "balanced relations" doctrine and emphasis on the East Asian dimension in the nation's foreign policy orientation.

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# II. ROLE OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY

## A. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Defining the causal factors in foreign policy depends on the perception of the international system itself, and the level of analysis used in the study. Two factors described as causal within the context of this research – identity and interest – represent two different schools – constructivism and realism, and require two different levels of analysis – the system and the domestic level. This chapter looks at identity and interest as separate factors in foreign policy, defines their types and components, and attempts to specify which one acts as the primary factor behind a state's behavior. For that purpose, the chapter looks at the constructivist view on identity and the neo-liberal view on ideas (herein identity is included as a distinct form of idea) and compares them to the realist view on interest. The chapter names the neo-liberal approach as having a reconciling role between the conflicting views on identity vs. interest.

## B. IDENTITY AS A FACTOR IN FOREIGN POLICY

### 1. Theoretical Framework

Identity, as collective self-perception of a group, serves as an idea in foreign policy. The definition of what should be called identity is highly controversial – from exclusively referring to cultural identity to encompassing political and systemic ones. Anthony Smith defends the narrow definition of identity and stipulates:

> The notion of "identity" has received considerable attention, not least in political science and international relations literature. Here, however, it relates mainly to a sense of community based on history and culture, rather than to any collectivity or to the concept of ideology.[1]

Nonetheless, Smith agrees to the wider perception of identity, especially "in its relevance to the disciplines of political science and international relations."[2] In this context, identity is viewed as a set of socially constructed ideas (self-perception) that serves as a causal factor in foreign policy. Therefore, for the conceptualization of identity I address the constructivist approach and use the examples of variations within it.

Constructivists reject the notion that reality reflects objective forces of nature and emphasize that political orders are socially constructed. They study "how norms, cultures, and debates about identity influence the development of collectively-accepted international rules and practices and how these international rules and practices affect domestic politics and agree that the spread of collective ideas, in the form of collective learning, adaptation, or socialization, is a key mechanism in the transformation of and reproduction of international political structures."[3] Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro link the social construction to interest and the means to achieve it. In their interpretation, "actors' conceptions

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[1] Anthony D. Smith (1986): The Ethnic Origins of Nations. Blackwell Publishers, p. 14.

[2] Smith (1986), p. 14.

[3] Anne L. Clunan (2001): Identity and the Emergence of National Interest in Post-Soviet Russia. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California-Berkeley, Chapter 1, paragraph 9.

of [such] methods may be shaped by such social structures as national identity, norms of scientific knowledge."[4] Alexander Wendt links collective identity formation to the realist approach of international system at the systemic level:

> Self-help security systems evolve from cycles of interaction in which each party acts in ways that the other feels are threatening to the self, creating expectations that the other is not to be trusted.[5]

Wendt stipulates that the construction of identity results from reiterated interaction with other states, thus, "security identities take the form of roles that states play."[6] Accordingly, a state's identity results from its treatment by other states. Hence, Wendt's constructivism resembles the realist school in two ways – recognition of the international system as anarchic, and derivation of a state's identity from external factors.

Ernst Haas, on the contrary, credits domestic factors more than the international ones in creating a national identity. As his theoretical proposition stipulates, "internal characteristics of a state, often in conjunction with desires for particular world roles or domestic political power, produce a state's identity."[7] In defining

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[4] Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro (1996): "Norms, Identity and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. (1996): The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics. Columbia University Press, p. 463.

[5] Alexander Wendt (1992): "Anarchy is What States make of It," in International Organization, Vol. 46, No. 2/1992, p. 406.

[6] Alexander Wendt (1994): "Collective Identity Formation and the International States," in American Political Science Review, Vol. 88/1994, pp. 384-396.

[7] Clunan (2001), Chapter 1, Paragraph 28.

whether national identities create nation-states, Haas notes that identity creation is "a task that political leaders set themselves in trying to make their society cohere."[8] Haas also introduces the concept of "national myth," as an indication of a more integrated society. His definition of "national myth" is:

> A core of ideas and claims about selfhood commonly accepted by all the socially mobilized. Put differently, the national myth represents those ideas, values, and symbols that most citizens accept despite their being divided into competing ideological groups.[9]

For Haas, national identity is based on "symbols and ideas of distinction and uniqueness, including status, religion, race and language" as well as "abstract ideas about law, cosmology, origins, futures and science."[10] He stresses that "national identities are chosen, not generally implanted, and they are subject to change."[11] Hence, Haas' understanding of the social construction of identity can lead to the policy implications akin to liberalism: emphasis on identity creation for the purpose of fostering cooperation among states.

Since I equate identity with ideas, the theoretical framework for this approach is also found in the neo-liberal school. Coming from this background, Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane challenge the traditional

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[8] Ernst B. Haas (1997): Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress, Vol. 1. Cornell University Press, p. 29.

[9] Haas (1997), p. 43.

[10] Haas (1997), pp. 23-24.

[11] Haas (1997), p. 39.

realist approach to policy-making with strict adherence to foreign policy as an outcome of a rational choice of states as unitary actors based upon their interests. At the same time, they also challenge the reflectivist approach of attributing the policy outcome exclusively to ideas without examining them empirically. In sum, they describe their proposition as "ideas matter for policy, even when human beings behave rationally to achieve their ends."[12]

In other words, despite the existence of an anarchic international system, where each state is a unitary actor behaving with a purpose of maximizing its power defined as interest, at the decision-making stage foreign policy is also influenced by a set of ideas and beliefs, shared by a certain constituency domestically and internationally. Goldstein and Keohane put the question: Do ideas have an impact on political outcomes, and if so, under what conditions?[13] Their arguments supporting and explaining the above-mentioned question is that first, ideas, classified by their scope as world views (exemplar case – major religions), principled beliefs (human rights) and causal beliefs (monetary theory), "serve as switchmen, not only by turning action onto certain tracks rather than others, but also by obscuring the other tracks from the agent's view."[14] Second, they suggest that there are three causal pathways through which ideas can hold the potential of influencing

[12] Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (1993): "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, ed. (1993): Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change. Cornell University Press, p. 5.

[13] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 11.

[14] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 12.

policy outcomes – ideas as road maps, ideas as focal points and glue, and ideas institutionalized.[15]

Among these, the first case presents ideas as a normative or causal set of focused beliefs that arise from "conditions of uncertainties about the actors' interests and how to maximize them."[16] In the second case the ideas are portrayed as a coordinator serving as key to a game's outcome that "alleviates coordination problems arising from the absence of unique equilibrium solutions."[17] Finally, the third case shows that "ideas can have a lasting influence on politics when institutions intervene,"[18] and that these institutions are often shaped and socially constructed under the impact of ideas. In sum, Goldstein and Keohane argue:

> Policy changes can be influenced by ideas both because new ideas emerge and as a result of changes in underlying conditions affecting the impact of existing ideas.[19]

The proposition of the influence of ideas on foreign policy, although recognizing the importance of the system environment in decision-making (Goldstein and Keohane do not deny the existence of the self-help system and rationality of actors' behavior as a basis of international relations), nevertheless identifies ideas as an important factor that can influence the policy. Ideas, regardless of their origin and scope (i.e. major world religions or

[15] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 12.

[16] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 16.

[17] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 17.

[18] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 20.

[19] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), p. 30.

domestic political view), do not affect the system but the state, especially its various constituencies, including the leaders. Therefore, the proposition is put at the domestic (pathways of direction and institutionalization), as well as the individual (pathway of policy coordination) levels of analysis. Within the context of this thesis, the former will be emphasized as the leading factor in contemporary Mongolian policymaking.

Goldstein and Keohane bring an intriguing discussion on the relation of ideas (within our context - identity) and interest; whether one of these two factors serves as the causal one and the other merely intervenes to shape the output. On the one hand, "ideas matter, as a result of a system of interacting causes of which they are a part," and ideas "have lasting influence on policy when institutions intervene."[20] Hence, the causal effect of institutions is limited to only one of the three pathways through which ideas influence policy.

On the other hand, Goldstein and Keohane, by challenging not only the rationalist approach, but also reflectivism as well, portray ideas not as the cause, but instead present it as a modifier to the primary cause, which is the state's interest. This interpretation derives from the hypothesis that ideas serve as three different pathways to policy outcome.

However, it is much more likely that ideas do serve as the cause of policymaking, though not the sole one, but are interchangeable with the interest. Depending on the objective of the research, we can talk of ideas as intermediary to the causal factor – the interest, or vice

[20] Goldstein and Keohane (1993), pp. 30, 20.

versa. In our case, I argue that ideas – hence identity – serve as a factor of equal importance as interest. Hence, I disagree with the functional approach, which argues that ideas themselves do not play a causal role, by suggesting that ideas as well as interests have causal weight in explanations of human action. Thus, assuming that institutions (as a key element shaping the longevity of an idea), equilibrium (presence or absence of a single equilibrium that influences the impact of an idea) and domestic situation (positive and negative developments) – are the intermediaries in policy outcomes, I define identity as the primary factor behind a state's behavior.

### 2. Typology of Identity

Tsedendamba Batbayar describes overarching characteristics of the Mongolian identity as a product of both geography and culture[21]; I borrow his methodology for this research in a slightly altered fashion and use it to classify the identity of any national group and apply it to a broader analysis of the patterns of foreign policy and international relations. Here I distinguish the identity as primordial, crystallized and constructed.

#### *a. Identity Primordial: Product of Geography*

The basic perception of a national identity stems from its territorial location. Hence occur the continental typologies, such as "European nation," "Oriental nation,"

[21] Dr. Batbayar discusses identity as product of geography and culture; he credits culture for shaping Mongolia's nomadic heritage and geography for constructing its geopolitical position. However, I borrow this methodology and apply a reversed causal mechanism: herein the geography serves as the creator of primordial identity, culture as the basis for crystallized identity, and politics as the foundation for constructed identity; see Tsedendamba Batbayar (2002): "Mongolia's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: New Identities, New Challenges," in Regional Security Issues and Mongolia, Vol. 17/2002. The Institute for Strategic Studies Press, pp. 19-30.

etc. Especially in cases where the dominant ethnic group(s) of a particular nation-state consider(s) itself an *autochthonous ethnie*,[22] geography plays a crucial role in defining its identity. Most of the European states have constituted such a *primordial* identity. For example, groups like the Germans, the Bohemians and the Hellenes, which became the dominant *ethnie* in Germany, Czech Lands and Greece respectively, consider their identity primordial, e.g. defined by their territorial location. In East Asia, the Han Chinese have a similar type of identity. Geography approximates the basic lifestyle of the people sharing common primordial identities; thus the "nomads," the "bedouins," the "sedentary peoples," etc. Ethnic or linguistic similarities also contribute to the formation of a "primordialist" view on identity. Notions like the "Germanic," the "Slavic," or the "Turkic" people, are to be viewed as primordial identity and a weak bonding factor *per se*, but are frequently enlisted as means of constructing a new identity serving a particular political goal (which has not been the case of the first one, but has been the case of the last two).

However, if the dominant *ethnie* is not an *autochthonous* population but are considered immigrants, the primordial or geographic identity tends to fade away and be replaced by a more distant ethno-linguistic affiliation. Such is the case of the Magyars and the Anatolian Turks; though as modern nation-states Hungary and Turkey are considered to be the European and Western Asian entities respectively, the dominant groups are the descendants of the Siberian and Central Asian nomadic peoples. In both

[22] An *autochthonous ethnie* is an ethnic group perceived as indigenous to a particular geographic region; see Smith (1986), p. 23.

occasions, primordial identities are not linked to geography, and the geography represents rather a different type of identity – the cultural one.

Though Eric Hosbawm's proposition on the nature and origin of nations describes them as "neither a primary nor an unchanging entity,"[23] one could assume that the primordial identity plays some role in shaping national statehood at the earliest stage of its formation. However, such a proposition could not be falsifiable, as Hobsbawm notes further:

> [Nation] belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the nation state.[24]

Thus, in general, primordial identity tends not to evolve into a major factor of policy for nation-states; for the reason that the latter is a too modern and dynamic institution to acquire such archaic features.

***b. Identity Crystallized: Product of Culture***

The second type of identity bears a more profound impact on states. I describe it as a *crystallized* identity, e.g. the type of identity that is formed throughout a continuous span of history as a product of long-lasting cultural impacts, such as religion, literature traditions, shared philosophical and ethical beliefs, etc. It is this type of identity that loosely can be equated to a broader notion of "civilization." Hence, we describe the existing

[23] E. J. Hobsbawm (1992): Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality. Cambridge University Press, p. 9.

[24] Hobsbawm (1992), p. 9.

nations of Western and Central, and to some degree, Eastern Europe as bearers of the common "Western" cultural identity (civilization). With the same criteria China, Japan and Korea are classified into a "Sinitic" cultural realm, based on Confucian/Buddhist tradition. The Middle Eastern, or Islamic, cultural area also encompasses a nearly contiguous landmass and shares strong commonalties across different ethnic and linguistic realms. Thus, in general, bearers of the same cultural identity are also bound by their geographical proximity, but belonging to a national or trans-national entity occasionally blurs geographical distance. Hence, the North Americans view themselves (and are classified by the scholars) as part of the "Western" civilization.[25]

It is this type of identity that constitutes the fundamentals of an idea as described in the first section of this chapter. Cultural, or crystallized identity, which I equate with the definition of a "civilization," serves in the capacity of the pathways – road map, focal point and institutionalization, though the latter one also largely derives from the constructed identity, which will be discussed next.

### *c. Identity Constructed: Product of Politics*

The formation and rise of nation-states and subsequent dominance of the Westphalian system assisted in the creation of yet another type of identity, transcending ethnic, geographic and civilizational boundaries, which I

[25] For further references on North American identity, see Samuel P. Huntington (1996): The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Simon & Schuster; and Arnold J. Toynbee (1948): The Study of History, Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D. C. Somerwell (1987).

label "*constructed*."[26] The major impulse for this type of identity was the rise of universally (or at least, broadly) shared political ideologies in the 19-20th centuries, such as Marxism, Liberalism, Nazism etc. Throughout the Cold War period, the majority of the states that embraced Marxist ideology and were ruled by the Communist party constructed a common identity. Likewise, the non-communist world created the notion of the "free world." Inclusive in this "free world," but not necessarily overlapping, was the community of democracies that shared even a closer identity within a larger non-communist bloc. Extreme nationalism coupled with militarism has created another, though short-lived identity in the period between First and Second World Wars – the so-called "Berlin-Rome-Tokyo" axis, encompassing the three regimes with originally diverse ideologies, and their allies. Constructed identity, therefore, does not possess longevity and tends to fade away after the founding ideology diminishes. Thus, in the contemporary period it is hard to trace such strong, politically constructed identity groups of nations, except the rapidly expanding community of democracies.

However, there are several examples of inter-connected identities, evolving from cultural to political and vice versa. Islamic fundamentalism today should be perceived as a political ideology and, therefore, bearers of such an idea constitute a group of populaces embracing a common constructed identity. However, the roots of this identity lie not in a political doctrine *per se*, but in an

[26] This thesis describes all types of identity as social construction. However, for this particular type I specifically use the word "constructed" denoting a construction of the modern period that is based on socio-political objectives of the respective national governments. Therefore, it should not be confused with a broader interpretation of constructivism.

exclusive cultural/religious affiliation. On the other hand, group identity of such entities as the community of post-Soviet nations (the Commonwealth of Independent States), the British Commonwealth and *La Francophonie*, all of which have the common characteristics of the post-colonial establishments, evolved from a political construction into a cultural crystallization over time. In all the cases, commonly shared language (non-native, but nevertheless principal), cultural and societal practices, as well as educational systems (for example, the notion of a "Francophone" person, or that of a *Homo Sovieticus*) became the bonding factors for the nations of otherwise diverse ethnic, religious and geographic identities. In such cases, e.g. when the constructed identity evolves into a cultural one, it tends to last longer due to the nature of cultural affiliations.

#### ***d. Divergent and Convergent Identities***

Construction of identity is the basis of nationalism, and thus, various forms of nationalism emerge from the types of identity. Primordiality serves as the basis for the development of *romantic* nationalism (sometimes referred to as *organic* nationalism or *identity* nationalism), which is the form of nationalism in which the state derives political legitimacy as a natural ("organic") consequence of race. Opposed to this, *ethnic* nationalism, in which the state derives political legitimacy from historical, cultural or hereditary groupings (ethnicities), most likely derives from the cultural crystallization of identity. Both forms of nationalism reflect the Romanticism and are opposed to the Enlightenment rationalism. The third type, *civic* nationalism, e.g. the form of nationalism in which,

according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the state derives political legitimacy from the active participation of its citizenry through the "will of the people" manifested in "political representation," tends to be the result of a political construction.[27] This form of nationalism lies within the traditions of rationalism and liberalism.

However, it would be an oversimplification to point out that only the constructed identity creates modern civic nationalism and others do not. A basic consideration for successful state-building is how the different identities correlate with each other. The three types of identity persist within modern nation-states in multiple variations. The three types can be all *inclusive, thus convergent*, or mutually *exclusive, hence divergent*. The state encompassing the former one has a solid international position whereas the state encompassing the latter one tends to face an identity dilemma or trilemma, thus creating complexity in policymaking pathways. Most of the Western European states can be classified as nations with convergent identity, inclusive of all three types – primordial (geography: European), crystallized (civilization: Western, or Christian) and constructed (politico-economic system: liberal democracy and free market economy). The Persian Gulf states probably share the same convergent identity – Arabic origins, Muslim civilization and traditionalist/monarchist order.

On the contrary, nations with multiple identities, which I describe as "divergent," generally correspond to what Samuel Huntington defines as "torn

[27] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762): The Social Contract and Discourses, translated [from the English] and introduced by G. D. H. Cole (1950). E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., pp. 45-54.

countries."[28] A primary example of this type is Russia, the national identity of which is dispersed among the three versions of its self-perception: Slavic (primordial), Christian/Orthodox (crystallized) and Eurasian (constructed). In addition to the latter one, constructed throughout the long span of the Russian Imperial past, there are two more politically motivated constructed identities persistent in the contemporary Russian society: the above-mentioned "Soviet," (now fading and gradually being transformed into a Eurasian identity) and the emerging "Western" one (largely a construction of the liberal camp in Russian politics, which is likely to prevail in the future due to its correspondence with Russia's national interest). One also can name Turkey as a nation possessing divergent identity, which has found an even stronger reflection in its foreign policy. Identity of this nation includes Central Asian (primordial), Middle Eastern/Muslim (crystallized) and Western (constructed) ones. Of these, the cultural affiliation with the Muslim world must be the strongest one, but due to the policy of secularization and guided modernization, the new secular culture had become dominant over the traditional one and thus, the constructed identity has undergone the process of crystallization.

A unique example of a nation with divergent identity is the United States. From its birth, it encompasses the Western Hemispheric (primordial), Western/Christian (crystallized) and democratic (constructed) identities. Throughout its evolution as a political, military and economic superpower, the United

[28] Huntington (1996), pp. 139-141.

States has acquired several other diverging identities: geographically, notions of an Atlantic and a Pacific power; and culturally, the cosmopolitan/universalist perception of the self. However, it should not be viewed as a "torn" state, since the primary difference of the divergent identity of the United States from that of Russia or Turkey is that it has the capacity to project power and influence in all the above-mentioned directions. Therefore, the diverging identities of the United States are mutually complementing and not mutually competing.

Divergent identity can be interpreted both as a positive and a negative factor in foreign policy. The convergent identity - if shared with neighboring states - creates solid regional institutions to promote security and economic cooperation. Compelling evidence is the European Union. In the capacity of ideas, the divergent identity provides the state with multiple pathways of policymaking. On the one hand, it is a positive factor because it broadens the equilibrium, thus, creating more opportunity to maneuver within the complex international system. However, a state must possess the power to exploit multiple policy choices, and yet, with the exception of the United States there is hardly any state with such capacity. Therefore, the mutually exclusive, competing divergence of identity tends more to complicate the options rather than enrich them. The civilizationally "torn" nations thus can become the politically "torn" states, with domestic constituencies engaging in a struggle for adoption of one or another particular foreign policy agenda. Russia's contemporary political spectrum, ranging from the statist-nationalist camp pursuing the "Eurasianist" doctrine to the

liberal internationalist camp advocating thorough Westernization, might be an example of a political division based on foreign policy issues.[29] Hence, it reveals the importance to consider the second causal factor of foreign policy – the interest, and thus switch into a realist approach to the international system.

## C. INTEREST AS A FACTOR IN FOREIGN POLICY

### 1. Theoretical Framework

Many authors in the realist camp explain the rationale for behavior of great powers. Among these, the rigid, classical realism a-la Morgenthau would have difficulty providing a solid theoretical background for the analysis of national interest in its correlation with such constructed notions, as identity. Therefore, although I depend on Hans Morgenthau's fundamental definitions of interest and rationality of foreign policy, I rely mostly on John J. Mearsheimer's neo-realist propositions about the nature of the international system as well as of the states as actors. He stipulates that "great powers vie with each other for power and strive for hegemony,"[30] and that "the structure of the international system, not the particular characteristics of individual great powers causes them to act offensively and to seek hegemony."[31] By this proposition Mearsheimer distances himself from the realm of classical realism, which, according to Morgenthau, claims that "states invariably behave aggressively because they have a

[29] For further reference on identity perceptions across Russia's political spectrum, see Clunan (2001); and A. P. Tsygankov (2003): "Mastering Space in Eurasia: Russia's Geopolitical Thinking After the Soviet Break-up," in Communist and Postcommunist Studies. No. 1/2003, pp. 101-127.

[30] John J. Mearsheimer (2001): The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Norton, p. 29.

will to power hardwired into them,"[32] and notes that "the principal motive behind great-power behavior is survival."[33]

Mearsheimer's logic to support this thesis is based on five assumptions that describe the nature of the international system, namely, the anarchic nature of the international system; inherent possession of military capability by great powers; uncertainty of other states' intentions; importance of survival as a primary goal of great powers; and, the nature of great powers themselves as rational actors.[34] Considering these assumptions the axioms for his proposition, i.e. taking them as basic facts unchallenged by critique, Mearsheimer leads us into five consequent modes of states' behavior, namely, their fear of one another; their access of capability to attack one another; their engagement in political competition, which is, by its nature, far more destructive and dangerous than the economic intercourse; their aim to survive; and, their mode of action according to their self-interest without subordinating it to the interests of other states or common interests of the international community.[35] In other words, in a system where there is no world government to provide a prescription for a set of behaviors and in which the major actors, i.e. the states, possess paramount sovereignty, it is natural for such rational actors as states, and in particular, great powers, to behave in a manner that would reciprocate mutual struggle for power, often assisted by

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[31] Mearsheimer (2001), p. 53.

[32] Hans J. Morgenthau (1948): Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Fifth Edition (1973). Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., p. 9.

[33] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 10.

[34] Mearsheimer (2001), p. 54.

[35] Mearsheimer (2001), pp. 32-33.

their aggressive measures taken to grant their own survival as well as a quest for more power.

All five above-mentioned assumptions can be traced to a single causal factor of state sovereignty. Sovereignty that exercises paramount impact causes the system to maintain its anarchic order instead of being reshaped into one of the two hypothetical patterns: world government (single supra-national actor) or elimination of states' functions by non-state actors (sub-national actors). Although modern trends in world politics allow both to appear as possible challenges to the nation-state-based system, states are not likely to give up their sovereignty in many vital spheres. It should also be noted that these two trends basically create varying scopes and limits of sovereignty, which is true for great powers and small states alike. In addition, sovereignty makes the states' intentions unknown to others; it justifies states to be the only legitimate unit of the system to possess offensive military capability; and because of the sovereignty's prevailing supremacy over other attributes of nation-states, survival, both physical and structural, remains the main concern for states, i.e. it is the factor that causes the phenomenon of fear. Noteworthy, neo-liberals like Keohane and George also name physical survival as an "irreducible national interest."[36] Since there can be constraints on sovereignty, its actual scope may vary, which leads to the states' behavior of vying for more power, i.e. for more unrestricted sovereignty, including the potential of dominating all other states within the

[36] Robert O. Keohane and Alexander L. George (1980): "The Concepts of National Interests: Uses and Limitations," in Alexander L. George (ed.), Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy. Westview Press, p. 223.

system, defined as hegemony.[37] Considering the scope of state sovereignty that reveals itself in five characteristics of the system the causal factor, we can as well conclude that the behavioral mode of states, described above as five consequences of the system nature, is the system's output.

Given that the scope of sovereignty can vary from state to state, influenced by other factors, such as geographical location, comparative military strength and power distribution among major actors, state behavior also varies despite the generalization that great powers seek unrestrained power and thus, behave aggressively. Factors listed above that influence the behavior of states constitute one category, which can have geopolitical (an example - difference of behavior between that of the two powers separated by large water masses and that of the two contiguous land powers),[38] socioeconomic (domestic capability to sustain the growth of military strength and/or support of the regime), military or even political (for instance, international treaties or membership in alliances that force the states to abide in certain norms of behavior despite their real intentions) characteristics. These factors, which serve as intervening variables of the proposition, set the limits and, consequently, the scopes of state sovereignty, and therefore, there is no possibility for an unrestrained aggressive mode of behavior, that otherwise would be exercised by great powers in their pursuit of hegemony.

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[37] Mearsheimer (2001), p. 40.

[38] Mearsheimer (2001), p. 44.

This pattern of thought, laid by Mearsheimer, thus closes the circle and leads us to a paradoxical conclusion: sovereignty of states creates the anarchic nature of the international system, which allows other intervening factors to challenge and set restraints in the execution of unchallenged sovereignty, thus, preventing the major actors, i.e. great powers, from being engaged in continuous violent struggle for hegemony. In other words, it is the anarchy that sets the world order in its present shape. The main cause for states' behavior, therefore, lies within the two above-mentioned variables, the scope of sovereignty and its limits (advantages/disadvantages); thus, no reference to sub-system level units is made in defining this phenomenon. Analysis for this research, therefore, is conducted at the system level and, with his logic and subsequent reasoning based on accurate calculation of variables, one can predict the behavior of a particular great power. Within the framework of this research an attempt at such prediction for several major powers has been made.

## 2. Components of Interest

Identification of interest for a state must focus on the assumption that the state is the single actor within the international system, therefore, its typological classification will also refer to the components that are collectively recognized by all the constituencies within a state. However, the role of domestic constituencies should not be underestimated in formulating the interest – when the latter prevails, analysis must recognize the presence of the individual/bureaucratic factors, e.g. enter the domestic level of analysis. In general, I propose the

classification of a state's interests as *rational* and *irrational*. Generally, though not exclusively, the former is based on the single-actor proposition, whereas the latter is based on the influence of the domestic constituencies.

#### ***a. Rational Component of Interest: Security***

For states, one interest that can be described as the single common denominator is physical survival, which is referred to as "irreducible national interest" by Keohane and George.[39] Hans Morgenthau places security as the primary cause for the behavior of the states.[40] Though the definition of security varies from state to state in accordance to the particular political agenda, individual and/or bureaucratic interpretations, most states commonly share the perception of the following as their security interest: political independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty within its boundaries.[41]

Direct threat to the physical security of the state, therefore, derives from another state and/or coalition of states. Therefore, the foreign policy of a state aims at achieving its protection by enlisting the alliance. However, domestic factors also challenge the above-mentioned three dimensions of security: for instance, the territorial integrity and sovereignty are often threatened by separatism. Even in such a case, the aim of foreign policy is not much different from the previous example – a state strives to receive the assistance of its

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[39] Keohane and George (1980), p. 223.

[40] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 10.

[41] Ravdan Bold (2000): "The Security of Small States: Option for Mongolia," in Regional Security Issues and Mongolia. Vol., 9, The Institute for Strategic Studies Press, p. 21.

allies. In sum, protection of the status quo and preservation of itself is the primary rational interest of a state, toward which it directs its foreign policy.

#### ***b. Rational Component of Interest: Economy***

On the first impression, identification of the economy as one of the rational components of interest must rely primarily on the liberal interpretation of the world system more than the realist one. Nonetheless, in three capacities the economy serves as the causal factor of foreign policy based on the rational, realist calculation.

First is the perception of economic strength as a foundation for military power. The collapse of the former Soviet Union is caused by, among other factors, its crumbling economy that could not sustain the arms race with another superpower. On the contrary, the United States' enormous economic strength enables its military to maintain an unparalleled might. Even for smaller countries, weakening of the economy causes downsizing the military and its associated expenditure.

Second is the role of national priority in the absence and/or weakening of the direct security threat – though the pure example of this category is nearly impossible to find. There are, nevertheless, states that perceive no direct security threat *within the framework of existing international and regional security order*; Mongolia, as will be described later, falls into this category of nations. Other examples might include Canada and the Western European states, which enjoy security alliance or full-fledged friendly relations with their neighbors.

Third is the perception of the economy as indirect catalyst of security threats *per se* – e.g. the understanding that the economic underdevelopment and poverty will ultimately cause threats to a state's physical security, aggregated in various forms of the loss of sovereignty. The latter may involve both foreign invasion and internal strife. Besides religious affiliation, perhaps this is one possible explanation of the difference in behavior of the Quebecois (Canada) and Chechen (Russia) separatism and the degree of threat that each movement poses to the security of the respective state.

Hence, economy is an integral component of national interest based on both traditional and non-traditional perception of security.

**c. *Irrational Components of Interest: Prestige***

Interest can also receive some irrational components. By defining some "irrational," I refer to the types of perception of interest that exceeds the rational understanding of security and economic development. Within this context, the line between irrational interest and identity blurs; the difference between constructivism and realism fades away. Moreover, irrational interest is itself an idea, which serves in one of the three capacities defined earlier as pathways for policy-making. The difficulty in identifying the irrational component of interest lies in the fact that it is almost indistinguishable from the two other factors of foreign policy: rational interest and identity. In the former case, by the notion of greatness and ambition of power projection, the great powers extract economic benefit and protect their security orbit at a distance from their

physical boundaries. In the latter case, states exploit their identity for narrowing the pathway of policy choices. In this sense, there should be no need to identify irrational interest as a separate causal factor. Therefore, the irrational components of interest can be disregarded as the interests of a state as single actor and viewed as ideas carried by the individual and/or bureaucracy levels. However, such an approach would undermine the very logic of irrationality: how would a set of ideas, which is a product of a rational construction that influences the rational decision-making on the part of domestic constituencies, be equaled to irrational interest? And the next logical question is, can there be an interest that is irrational, or is it merely an oxymoron?

The argument I bring here is that there are some aspects of an idealistic view on the world, that without being institutionalized as a set of ideas, effects the behavior of states and their societies on the international scene. It might not be a direct result of the willed action of policymakers, but a behavioral trend persistent in that particular society for generations. In such cases, this trend is generally accepted among the domestic constituencies not as an idea (or, for that matter, as identity) *per se*, but rather as a national interest inherent to that state. This behavior and behavioral mentality is defined herein as the irrational component of interest. The most common form of such interest is the perception of prestige and respect by other members of the international system. It is common among the post-colonial metropoles and borders with the imperial nostalgia. However, policies and actions dictated by such a notion are

far from being nostalgic. The self-perceived demand for prestige by the post-Soviet Russia, or the Gaullist idea of *grandeur* that continues to inspire France are the most notable examples.

Great powers are more prone to self-esteem and perception of prestige than small states; it means that the great powers tend to behave more irrationally than the small states. Russia in 1914 entered the First World War based on the irrational understanding of its "vital national interest" – defending the "brotherly" Orthodox and Slavic state of Serbia. Paradoxically, the same irrationality over the same issue has nearly driven modern Russia into another conflict with its Western "friends" in 1999, when the NATO led a campaign against the-then regime in Belgrade over the human rights issue in Kosovo. The United States might have more interest in the events in Liberia, the history of which is linked with that of America, whereas any event of the same size and significance happening in any other African country of the same size and "relevance" may deserve much less attention from Washington. Do these two examples point us to any interest-driven agenda of a major power, or reveal to us an irrational perception of interest, interlinked with identity and appealing to a larger constituency at home?

There is a solid argument that the pursuit of prestige is a rational act, as Morgenthau describes:

> [P]restige, in contrast to the maintenance and acquisition of power, is but rarely an end in itself. More frequently, the policy of prestige is one of the instrumentalities through which the policies of the status quo

> and of the imperialism try to achieve their ends.[42]

I, however, associate rationality with the actual capacity to achieve a particular goal associated with prestige, and vice versa. Thus, any pursuit of prestige, when matched by the state's capacity, can be regarded merely as an extension of the security and economic interest, and whenever the capacity falls short of ambitions, it has to be defined as irrationality. In either context I do not disregard the irrational pursuit of interest as a negligible factor in foreign policy, primarily because of Morgenthau's own recognition of it:

> The policy of prestige, however exaggerated and absurd its uses may have been at times, is as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals. Here again it becomes obvious that international and domestic politics are but different manifestations of one and the same social fact.[43]

Irrationality persists in the policies of not only the great powers, but of the small states too, though mainly in its moderate form. In its extreme form it has produced the "rogue ideologies" of the past century, still relevant in the present – ideas and perception of interest based on ethnic and racial superiority, class struggle or religious exclusiveness. In sum, the less the irrationality persists in the foreign policy, the more stable the

[42] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 73.

[43] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 74.

environment in which a particular state is situated, and vice versa. Ironically, in a totalitarian society, the irrational perception of interest can be disregarded by the decision-makers. On the contrary, in a democracy, the elected officials and institutions face a challenge to be accountable and be responsive to their domestic constituencies, which, in turn, are bearers of the irrational perceptions of the national interest. Therefore it is extremely important to identify the conflicting and complementing areas of the above-mentioned three components of interest.

#### *d. Competing and Complementing Interests*

Interests of a state may overlap and contradict each other. No policy or agenda guarantees the harmony between the rational and irrational interpretations of interest, or between security, economy and self-esteem. A situation in which a particular state has conflicting interests is easy to imagine; its primary economic benefactor at the same time might be a dominant security threat, and its security provider may be a military power but has little to offer to that state's economic well-being. In addition, both security and economic interests may conflict with the irrational perception of the state's role and image; such a situation is plausible if our hypothetic state has shared interests with the third power, or any constituencies within its security provider and/or economic benefactor. Russia's arms sales to the regimes labeled by the United States as "rogue," and as members of the "axis of evil" is an example of such a conflict and its temporary solution by the current Russian leadership. It is in essence a conflict between short-term economic benefit,

coupled with the self-perceived role as a regional power on the one hand, and the long-term national interest of elaborating its confidence and cooperation with the West, on the other.

The rational and irrational components of interest not only conflict with one another, but also complement each other. There could be situations where a state that pursues the policy driven by an irrational stance eventually accumulates what it has been rationally longing for – economic incentives and security guarantee. An example of such a situation is North Korea, which has been acting on the basis of the irrational doctrine, while being engaged in a relentless politics of nuclear brinkmanship. Nevertheless, to some degree it facilitated the appeasement and the subsequent economic and security assurances from both its adversaries (the United States, Japan and South Korea) and former allies (Russia and China). This depiction of North Korea's situation can be argued, because the very assurance of its economic and security well-being is highly limited. In addition, such policy could not bring about a long-term or permanent satisfaction of its vital interests and could lead to more tragic consequences. Nonetheless, in the meantime P'yŏngyang seems to be driven by a combination of both rational and irrational components of interest.

Thus, a question arises whether in a broader meaning of our approach, identity and interest conflict and whether those can be effectively reconciled. The next section is designed to discuss this issue.

## D. RECONCILIATION OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST

### 1. Dilemma Between Pragmatism and Idealism

From the typology of identity and interest as the two main causal factors of foreign policy, there stems a necessary question: What combination of identity types and interest components assist in forming a solid and sound foreign policy and which ones do not? The answer was partially answered when the particular factors were addressed in the previous sections, but an integrated statement must be made in order to provide this chapter with its own thesis. In terms of identity, states with convergent identity tend to have stable policy orientations. With regard to interest, the absence or lower level of irrationality leads to, in Morgenthau's words, a "good" foreign policy. Hence, the overall judgment is that a state with convergent identity and rational interest should be viewed as a stable regime in terms of international relations. Nevertheless, these types of identity and interest do not automatically overlap; a very convergent identity could conflict with a very rational interest. Hence appears the phenomenon of the conflict of the two major schools of international relations – realism and constructivism.

A state's perception of its role vis-a-vis external actors and the ideas chosen by domestic constituencies compose what theorists describe as "identity." Identity reflects the interest of a state but is also a social construction; and therefore, interest, too, can be perceived differently depending on how identity is constructed. Max Weber observed that:

> Interests (material and ideal), not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men. Yet the "images of the world" created by these ideas have very often served as switches determining the tracks on which the dynamism of interests kept actions moving.[44]

Therefore, though I agree with the importance of interest as the cause of behavior, I ascribe the perception of interest to the construction of identity. Thus, the causal chain is that identity in its various forms is constructed by a society, which defines a state's interest, and in the conflict and/or reconciliation of the two exist the criteria for a state's success in foreign policy. In sum, neither identity nor interest is static and both are subject to choices and interpretations. The two can correlate in various matters, and the common ground can be found in the neo-liberal approach stressing cooperation among rational actors.

#### *a. Conflict of Realist and Constructivist Approaches*

In a hypothetical situation, state A must declare war against state B based on its rational calculations of safeguarding the national security. The following is the ambiguity of this situation. State B is of the same geographical, civilizational and political identity as state A, while state C, belonging to a different, rival identity group, fulfills its objective of breaking the unity among the group encompassing both A and B. In this context, state A might even enlist the help of state C against state B, and while solving its immediate concern of

[44] Max Weber (1920): Gesammelte Ausfätze zur Religionsoziology. Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, p. 252; this citation is quoted in Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 9.

interest, enters a phase of detachment from its core area of identity. An example would be the Sino-Soviet split, a process that undermined the politically constructed identity for the sake of the interest of domination over the world's Communist movement (this interest could be defined as both rational and irrational), and thus facilitated the Western powers (principally, the United States) to exploit the divergence within the bloc.

The reverse situation is also plausible, where state A decides to reach a peace settlement with the state B belonging to a different identity group, against which it had fought a war. In doing this, state A antagonizes the multitude of states with which it shares common identity and all of which perceive state B as the prime threat to their security. As a consequence, state A becomes the "rogue" within its own realm of identity. This is strikingly similar to the depiction of Egypt's situation following its peace negotiations with Israel.

From a realist point of view, once a security threat is removed, or an economic advantage is gained, the identity affiliation is secondary and therefore could and should be sacrificed. However, from a constructivist point of view, there is a different angle to look at. Identity, as a set of ideas, is not an important value *per se*, as opposed to security and economy, but is a long-term stabilizing factor that facilitates the safeguarding of the security and economic interests. Preservation of identity at the expense of interest might lose some dividends, but can earn political and security investments. These two viewpoints clash seemingly without any crossing point. Nevertheless, the third approach to the international

system bears some of the reconciling capacity that realism and constructivism do not possess.

### *b. Neo-liberal Approach to Regional Order*

It is not the objective of this section to provide an overall evaluation of liberalism, but to define the areas in which the liberal and neo-liberal schools offer a middle-ground position on the contradictions between constructivism and realism, e.g. in the conflict between identity and interest. Classical liberalism deriving from the Kantian proposition of "perpetual peace,"[45] seemingly presents a sharp contrast to the Hobbesian[46] notion of a self-help system of international relations and implicit idealism of constructivists. But the neo-liberal camp offers an approach that does not deny the significance of the rationality and interest-based policymaking or the acknowledgement of the role ideas play in shaping the policy outcomes. Perhaps, in defining the nature of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between any two states we can apply the abstract formulation, labeled "the Prisoner's Dilemma", according to which "the pursuit of self-interest by each player leads to poor outcome for all."[47]

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[45] For further reference on Immanuel Kant's ideas on "utility for perpetual peace," see Carl Joachim Friedrich (1948): Inevitable Peace. Harvard University Press, pp. 189-209.

[46] For further references on Hobbesian ideas on the world order, see Thomas Hobbes (1650): The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic: Human Nature and De Corpore Politico, edited with an introduction by J. C. A. Gaskin (1994), Oxford University Press; and Thomas Hobbes (1651): Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme and Power of A Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil, edited with an introduction by Michael Oakeshott (1960). Basil Blackwell.

[47] Robert Axelrod (1984): The Evolution of Cooperation. Best Books, p. 24.

In such a situation, neo-liberals claim, the possibility of cooperation based on reciprocity exists. However, this possibility is likely to be stronger within a regional framework rather than outside it. Rational actors do not seek confrontation with their more powerful opponents. Under certain conditions "cooperation can emerge in a world of egoists without central authority."[48] In other words, "a state will attempt [to change] the international system … only if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs."[49]

Development of free markets and business culture throughout the world requires increased say of the business communities, which prioritize economic interests over any other incentives. Common economic interests lead the states in the region to search for a collective mechanism to safeguard their interest, thus paving a way for security cooperation. In a way, this attitude of economic pragmatism and realism, based on "win-win" approach, shall eventually create a cooperative environment that resembles political idealism. Therefore, as for the long-term perspectives, "with an indefinite number of interactions, [genuine] cooperation can emerge."[50]

As a result, the crystallization of the regional identity undergoes a more rapid process within the framework of interest-driven cooperation, rather than the zero-sum approach. It is this neo-liberal viewpoint that can be exploited as a tool of consolidating the emerging

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[48] Axelrod (1984), p. 3.

[49] Robert Gilpin (1981): War and Change in World Politics. Cambridge, p. 10.

[50] Axelrod (1984), p. 6.

regional identities and reconciling the identity and interest of particular states. In other words, economic interest can lead to cooperation, and successful cooperation can lead to a collective regional identity, which in turn makes conflict less likely.

### 2. Identity and Interest of A Small State

One more component is critical in studying or prescribing Mongolia's foreign policy. Mongolia is a small state, and the research on its identity and interest must address the specific features of small states. First, in order to avoid any misunderstanding further in this research piece, the term "small state" must be defined.[51]

#### *a. What is a Small State?*

Among the political entities with statehood status, there are a number of them that could qualify as "small states" without any debate: both geographically and demographically. These are the mini-states of Europe, the Persian Gulf and Oceania. Others may qualify exclusively by their small area size or small population. There are many anomalies attached to various classifications. For instance, is Mongolia, equaling to one-fifth of the continental U.S. a small state, or is Bangladesh with its 100 million citizens? One possible criterion is low population density, but those, such as Canada and Australia, are certainly not to be regarded as "small." Other categories, such as GDP or GDP per capita, are simply disregarded, since there are a number of unquestionably small states with high level of economic achievement and living standards, such as Singapore or Kuwait. Perhaps the

[51] For further information on small states see Michael Handel (1981): Weak States in the International System. F. Cass Publishers.

overarching definition would be the combination and/or correlation of all the above-mentioned criteria, with addition of the state's international position and influence. However, for this research, the population is exclusively regarded as the key criteria of a small state and other calculations are disregarded.

#### *b. Identity of Small States*

The identity of small states derives from their place within the respective civilizations. Most of the small states are ethnically homogeneous, and hence the identity affiliation does not usually create a great sense of ambiguity among the domestic constituencies. Therefore, small states as the product of ethnic consolidation of the small population do not constitute the distinct cultural realm. The only exception could be Israel, which, discounting large diaspora communities, solely represents the Jewish identity and cultural orbit. Hence the uniqueness of the small states – their identity reflects a marginal or integral part of a broader identity grouping, regardless of its typology. In the civilizational context, small states do not represent a civilization, but constitute its part. The same argument could be made about the small states' political and/or geographic identity.

The distinction between integral and marginal parts of an identity group – in all three categories of it – is not brought here by accident. Even nations descending from the founders of the civilizations, if they constitute a small state in the modern times, cannot play a role of the core of their respective civilizations. Modern Greece should be regarded as the center or the dominant entity within the Eastern Orthodox realm; however, due to its

size, Russia is more likely to acquire that recognition. The same argument can be used about the group of nations collectively referred to as the "Anglo-Saxon world": it is the United States and not the United Kingdom that represents the reflection of this identity. In broader terms, the United States has become the quintessential member of the Western civilization, despite the Greco-Roman and Judaic roots of the latter.

The above-mentioned examples show how the identity of small states is reduced to that of an integral, but ordinary part of a broader identity realm. There is another dimension to the identity evolution of small states. If great powers acquire divergent identity, they tend to obtain the characteristics of the "torn" nations, unless when possessing overwhelming power and the capacity to project it in all directions. On the contrary, small states when faced with divergence of identity tend to be marginalized from the greater identity realms. One might think of Christian/Muslim Albania, which is not fully accepted by either of the two civilizations as their integral part. Another cause of marginalization is geographical distance from the core area of its identity. This is a form of divergent identity, conflicting along the primordiality-crystallization lines. Ethiopia, Armenia and Georgia represent the earliest but geographically distant outposts of the Christian civilization, located within the boundaries of the Islamic world, but none of these nations are recognized as "Western." All these analogies will be used to describe Mongolia's identity divergence in the next chapter.

### *c. Interest of Small States*

Small states reflect their specific features when defining their national interest. From the three components of interest, irrationality, though present, plays the least role in policymaking. Irrational perception of interest therefore is confined to the civil society rather than in the bureaucracy and/or elected offices. For most small states, survival, e.g. the security interest is the key concern for all constituencies. Hence, small states mostly tend to follow Morgenthau's definition of a "good foreign policy" being a "rational foreign policy."[52] However, possessing insufficient political, military and/or economic power to use as leverage against its opponents, it is natural for small states to eschew pure realism and power-balancing politics. Instead, small states see their economic interests as both a top priority and as a necessary intermediary for safeguarding their security interests. Especially if the criterion for labeling a country "small" is the population size (which is used herein), the physical survival of a small state directly connotes the demographical survival and social development, which is the amalgam of national, societal and individual interests.[53]

### *d. Advantages and Disadvantages*

Thus, if in identity small states face more challenges of marginalization than great powers, in the context of interest they are confronted with greater vulnerability, but at the same time enjoy more space to

[52] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 8.

[53] The terms used in the cited book are "state, social and civilian interests," which are identical to the terms "national, societal and individual" used herein; see Bold (2000), p. 36.

reconcile the interests of their domestic constituencies into a common agenda. The United Nations General Assembly recognized that:

> Small states may be particularly vulnerable to external threats and acts of interference in their internal affairs and may have special needs consonant with the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity.[54]

Hence the disadvantages of small states in the international arena: risk of identity marginalization leading to international isolation, greater vulnerability and insufficient power and capacity to ensure security. The advantages are: relative ethnic homogeneity, causing the convergence of identity into a strong national and regional ones, lack or low profile of irrationality in the pursuit of interest, greater reconciliation of the national, societal and individual interests, thus contributing to the domestic and regional stability. Therefore, the ultimate policy of any small state is the exploitation of the latter while eschewing the former. The next chapter will address these particular issues with regard to Mongolia.

## E. CHAPTER FINDINGS

The following are generalizations of the theoretical findings that are intended to guide the rest of the thesis:

- Though state is a single, rational actor, it consists of a society, e.g. a sum of individuals that convey different views on policy;

[54] United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/49/31, 9 December 1994. Paragraph 4.

- Identity and interest are equally important factors in foreign policy;
- Identity causes the construction of what is perceived to be interest; on the other hand, interest, too, can serve as the pathway of shaping identity;
- The two seem to be in an inherent conflict, but those are reconcilable, especially via the means of a liberal approach to regional identity and cooperative pursuit of interest;
- Identity has three types; of these, the primordial plays the least role in foreign policy due to its archaic nature, and the civilizational and political identities tend to be the stronger forms of construction;
- The three types of identity can diverge or converge; the states with divergent identity face the dilemma or trilemma, thus complicating interest formulation and policy choices;
- Interest can be rational (pursuit of security and economic benefits) or irrational (pursuit of prestige without obtaining sufficient capacity); the latter, too, complicates the policy options;
- Small states are particularly vulnerable not only to the external threat, but also to the possibility of being marginalized from the core areas of civilizational or geo-political identity, and thus, from the global affairs at large.

- Therefore, the optimal, rational choice for a small state is to minimize the identity divergence and interest irrationality and to maximize cooperation within the regional structures by the means of sound identity politics.

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# III. MONGOLIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AS DEFINED BY IDENTITY AND INTEREST

## A. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The previous chapter described the roles of identity and interest in foreign policy with particular emphasis on the implications for small states. This chapter addresses Mongolia's current geopolitical situation within the context of the theoretical framework laid out in the previous chapter. First, Mongolia's identity formation will be briefly analyzed; the chapter will name the three types of identity that were constructed throughout its long history. The chapter will cover the divergence of identity and the subsequent identity trilemma that Mongolia faces.

Second, Mongolia's national interest will be assessed from the viewpoint of the two inherent paradigms present in modern Mongolia's foreign policy and security: the "two-neighbors" vs. the "third neighbor" paradigm. An evaluation of each paradigm's benefit and risk factors within the context of identity construction is offered. Further, I shall propose three parameters of the correlation of identity and interest based on the premises of the small states' relative weakness. In this chapter I advocate a stronger pursuit of regional identity, especially the East Asian one, and for that purpose I introduce a "construction-deconstruction" dichotomy in identity politics.

## B. IDENTITY AS A FACTOR IN MONGOLIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

### 1. Three Perceptions of Identity as Historical Legacy

The previous chapter provided the identity typology as a framework to address the impact of identity on policy-making. The same pattern is used in this chapter to distinguish the existing trends of identity perception in contemporary Mongolia and their causal influence on foreign policy. As a result of historical processes leading up to the 21st century, Mongolia has acquired a triple form of identity, representing the three types classified in the previous chapter.

#### *a. Central Asian Mongolia: Quest for Traditionalism*

Modern Mongolia is a relatively monoethnic nation-state. The majority (95 per cent, est.) of the population is composed of ethnic Mongols, considered to be *autochthonous ethnie* of the East Central Asian plateau. Linguistically, the Mongolian language belongs to the Altaic family and shares distant links to the Turkic, Tungusic, and possibly Korean and Japanese languages.[55] With regards to the socioeconomic traditions, nomadic herdsmen, as opposed to the sedentary farmers of East Asia proper, historically inhabited the elevated grasslands of Central Asia. Therefore, the Mongolian primordial identity (by virtue of geography, ethno-linguistic affiliation and lifestyle) is that of the Central Asian realm, sharing many commonalities with the kindred peoples to the west – the Turkic-speaking Central Asian nomads. Central Asian

[55] John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig (1989): East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, Revised Edition. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 145-163.

identity serves the primordial role for Mongolia and distances it from the Sinitic-Confucian East Asian civilization. However, the primordial identity (in general) precedes the formation of not only the modern nation-state, but also the formation of any forms of statehood, and therefore, cannot play a decisive causal role in the political process. The primordiality of the Mongols is rooted in the times long before the imperial age and commonality with other Central Asians in lifestyle, customs and basic utilitarian substances, such as traditional housing and diet, has been maintained. However, their mutual cultural unity was disconnected during the late medieval period, largely because of the nearly simultaneous conversion of the Mongolian- and Turkic-speaking peoples to the two different world religions, Buddhism and Islam respectively.

In contemporary Mongolian political thought, Central Asian identity is acquiring the role of a political idea, representing cultural conservatism, ethnocentrism and traditionalism in the domestic agenda and the continental orientation in foreign policy, though its influence is minimal. Central Asian heritage undoubtedly has many unique features distinct from both East Asian and Islamic civilizations; and although the reference to the "Mongolian civilization" is common in the contemporary Mongolian academic and political lexicon and is reflected in the National Security Concept,[56] the renowned scholars of civilization do not place a specific Central Asian realm

[56] Jamsran Bayasakh (2001): "Mongol Ulsyn Guravdagch Khörsh Khiigeed Tünshiin Asuudald," (Mon., "On the Third Neighbor and Partner for Mongolia") in Mongol Ulsyn Ündesnii Ayūlgüi Baidlyn Üzel Barimtlalyn Shinjlekh Ukhaany Ündeslel (Mon., "Academic Rationale for the National Security Concept of Mongolia"). National University of Mongolia Press, pp. 51-52.

among the world's core cultural areas. Only Arnold J. Toynbee recognizes the existence of the nomadic civilization, but he defines it as an "arrested civilization," and prescribes its merger with the Islamic and Far Eastern areas.[57] With its weak academic recognition and minimal impact on politics, the connotation of a "Central Asian Mongolia" is juxtaposed against the second identity, based on a broader notion of culture.

#### ***b. East Asian Mongolia: Quest for Prosperity***

It has been stated in the previous paragraph that Mongolia shares its primordial identity with the Central Asian nations, yet differs greatly in terms of religion and civilization. Search for, and definition of the Mongolian crystallized identity can be more difficult than of any other type. On the one hand, due to the sectarian differences within the dominant religion (*Vajrayana* Buddhism as opposed to the East Asian *Mahayana* and Southeast Asian *Hinayana*) and negligible presence, if not total lack, of Confucian tradition in the society, as well as the lifestyle difference, Mongolian national identity does not coincide with those of the other East Asian nations. Samuel Huntington places Mongolia not within the East Asian (Sinitic) civilization but within a separate Buddhist civilization, along with Tibet, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia.[58] On the other hand, separateness of the above-mentioned nations from the broader East Asian cultural realm is more artificial than factual. In addition, the sectarian difference within Buddhism, if properly counted, does not help place all of these

[57] Toynbee (1946/1987), p. 574.

[58] Huntington (1996), p. 48.

countries within one group, let alone with the non-independent Tibet. In reality, even the cultures with less influence of Confucianism as a philosophy had their share of Confucian values that still persist amidst tumultuous radicalism of the past century. Controversial though this statement might be, Mongolia's social ethics share common principles with the Confucian ones, namely, in the intra-societal relations and reverence for the scholars' strata.

In the 13-14th centuries the Mongolian Empire incorporated most of the Confucian, or Sinitic cultural area, and hence had acquired many of the latter's ethical and institutional norms. The patronage of the *Vajrayana* Buddhism, practiced by the Yuan court, is interpreted in two diametrically opposing ways – as a means of repudiating Confucian values, or as a means of stressing them along with the sense of Asian-ness of the imperial house against the influence of Islam, by then widely spread among the Central Asians.[59] During the Qing period, both Mongolia and Tibet were incorporated into the East Asian universalist empire, and thus, the local form of Buddhism, while retaining its distinctness, was influenced by and gave influence to the Confucian civilization. Therefore, the regional identity of the Mongols had become inalienably that of East Asia at the onset of the 20th century.

During the Communist rule, Mongolia's East Asian identity was harshly suppressed both by the Soviets and the local satellite regime. This situation was caused mainly by the Soviet geopolitical concerns, but was also supplemented by Mongolia's fear of China.

[59] On the religious policies of the Mongolian Empire, see Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig (1989), pp. 168-170.

The post-Communist period offered Mongolia a renewed position in international affairs, and the opportunity to reassert its once-disregarded Asian identity. Rapidly developing ties with Japan, South Korea and China, as well as emerging contacts with Southeast Asian states, leading to a further increase in investment, cultural and humanitarian exchange among these nations, serve as the key factors assisting this process. Henceforth the major argument of this thesis is that the East Asian identity is considered the most important factor in contemporary Mongolia's foreign policy. Centered on economic development and prosperity, this factor provides guidance for the approach favoring integration with East Asian states and regional institutions. Despite the obviousness of its prevalence, the third type of identity, constructed during the Communist period and revitalized after its end, currently acts as an alternative course. For the lack of an overarching term, this perception can be labeled as "quasi-Europeanism" or "globalism" etc., and preferred herein is the term "cosmopolitanism."

#### *c. "Cosmopolitan" Mongolia: Quest for Modernity*

The most important social construction in Mongolia's modern history occurred during the period of rule by the Communist regime. Mongolia's political leadership, as well as the large segment of society (in particular, the urban population which by now constitutes nearly two-thirds of the entire population), became increasingly aware of itself as a "non-Asiatic," "almost European" and "progressive" society. Largely derivative of the Marxist version of internationalism, it resulted from

the Soviet policy of maintaining Mongolia within its orbit of influence rather than of any rival power in East Asia. This identity, imposed and easily adopted, clashed with the East Asian one, and noteworthy, did not constitute an agreement with the Central Asian primordiality, for the latter was suspected by the Soviet and Mongolian Communist rulers as the carrier ideology of ethic nationalism. Instead, a totally new identity had to be constructed on the premises of "proletarian internationalism."[60]

The socio-political implications of this construction were significant: Mongolia joined all forms of integration with the East European socialist countries, except for the Warsaw Pact, while retaining minimal contacts with fellow Asian socialist states. By the late 1980s, the educated elite was comprised almost entirely of Soviet and Eastern European university graduates.[61] Institutional, societal and economic practices were thoroughly modeled after those of the USSR, so that the average Mongolian citizen could easily fit the qualifications for being labeled *Homo Sovieticus*. Dmitri Trenin stipulates this phenomenon:

> Mongolia [itself] has been a Russian protectorate since 1911. The Russian/Soviet political, economic and cultural influence in Mongolia was overwhelming. Ironically, the Russian-speaking Mongolian elites

[60] The study on this form of politicized identity is found in Tom Ginsburg (1999): "Nationalism, Elites and Mongolia's Rapid Transformation," in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman, ed. (1999): Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan. M. E. Sharpe, Inc., pp. 248-249.

[61] Ginsburg (1999), pp. 263-267.

> identified themselves with Eastern Europe rather than Asia.[62]

This had several impacts on Mongolia's political, economic and cultural development during and after the Communist period, both positive and negative. The negative side is the detachment of the nation from its cultural heritage and restraints on the prospects for wider regional cooperation. These factors have become the prime target for most Western scholars studying Mongolia's political transformation. According to Alan Sanders:

> For ideological and political reasons, Mongolia cut itself off unnecessarily from financial and economic aid offered it on favorable terms by developed countries, [and] … [Mongolia's] actions on the world scene as a player of the international system had not always been in the country's own interests.[63]

Furthermore, Steven Fish identifies the Soviet influence as responsible for many challenges that Mongolia had to face in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Communist bloc:

> Because the duration and extent of Sovietization was greater in there than in any other country in the Soviet bloc outside

[62] By "Russian-speaking elites" Trenin probably means the people with fluent knowledge of Russian and not people who speak Russian as a native tongue, as this term is used most of the time; see Dmitri Trenin (2001): The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization. Carnegie Moscow Center, p. 291.

[63] Alan J. K. Sanders (1996): "Foreign Relations and Foreign Policy," in Ole Bruun and Ole Odgaard (ed.): Mongolia in Transition: Old Patterns, New Challenges. Curzon Press, p. 219.

> the USSR itself, Mongolia experienced the full brunt of Stalinist terror than no other nation in the bloc had. In spite of the Soviet support that maintained the nation's economy viable throughout the decades, by 1990 Mongolia embarked on its transition with the lowest standard of living in the Communist world [matched only by Albania.] … The termination of total dependence on the Soviet Union sparked a degree of economic trauma unusual even by post-Communist standards.[64]

On the apologetic side of the cosmopolitan identity, several positive developments can be mentioned. While Mongolian statehood counts at least some eight centuries or even more of tradition, as a nation-state (in Westphalian terms) modern Mongolia has a relatively short history.[65] Soviet influence, cemented by the Communist government in Mongolia, created a viable, civic national identity, the legacy of which remains a vital prerequisite in Mongolia's successful quest for democracy. Close ties with the most liberal-minded Communist nations, such as Poland, (the former) Czechoslovakia and Hungary may have been part of the Soviet strategy of driving Mongolia apart from its cultural heritage; but nonetheless the impact benefited Mongolia when it became the only Asian Communist nation to go through a peaceful revolution toward democracy. A decade after the fall of the socialist system, Mongolia boasts its place among the high-ranking performers in political and civil liberties among the post-Communist

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[64] M.Steven Fish (1999): "Mongolia: Democracy Without Prerequisites," in Journal of Democracy. No. 9/1999, p. 127.

[65] Christopher Kaplonski (1998): "Creating National Identity in Socialist Mongolia," in Central Asian Survey. No. 17/1998, p. 43.

nations.[66] Hence, it can be said that the integration with East European nations – while being guarded from feasible contacts with the most notorious Asian Communist regimes, like North Korea - is the most valuable legacy of the Soviet domination.

Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the Mongolian elite and society no longer identify themselves in terms of this quasi-"Eastern European-ness," but the same mentality remains persistent in a renewed cosmopolitanism – this time, reflected in the liberal internationalism. Proponents of this identity stress the nationwide acceptance of the Western-style democratic practices and the Anglo-Saxon model of free market economy as a result of the "uniqueness" of Mongolian identity and its difference from the East Asian paternalistic cultural traditions.[67] This phenomenon has been equated to modernization and portrayed as a precondition for successful integration into the global political and economic trends. For the purpose of democratic consolidation in domestic politics and successful transition into the market economy, this perception indeed serves as a viable pathway; however, as a factor in foreign policy, it creates ambiguity, which further is defined as the "identity trilemma."

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[66] Paula L. W. Sabloff (2002): "Why Mongolia? The Political Culture of An Emerging Democracy," in Central Asian Survey. No. 21/2002, p. 19.

[67] Sabloff argues that the individualism attached with the nomadic heritage is one of the factors behind Mongolian governance traditions reminiscent of the democratic practices; see Sabloff (2002), pp. 19-20.

## 2. The "Identity Trilemma"

By virtue of its unique geographic location, historical developments and numerous external influences Mongolia emerges as a nation with divergent identities at the threshold of the 21st century. Its Central Asian primordiality, East Asian cultural crystallization and cosmopolitan socio-political construction continue to shape the nation's political thought and foreign policy orientation.

Romantic nationalism, based on the Central Asian identity, cannot realistically offer a substantial foreign policy agenda and even a solid domestic policy platform other than the preservation of the indigenous lifestyle and/or gradual development of pastoralism - what David Sneath identifies as "Mongolia's socio-ethnical system."[68] Despite its minor impact on political thought, this type of identity continues to serve in two capacities – as an intellectual pathway for the Mongolian version of "isolationalism," or as a framework for coping with Russian, Western and possibly Turkish interests in post-Soviet Central Asia.

On the contrary, the legacy of the constructed cosmopolitan identity was the most far-reaching for the reasons described in the previous section. In answering the question whether continued assertion of "cosmopolitanism" serves well the other national goals – security assurance and economic development via integration into the global economy, the argument has usually been in the favor of this

[68] David Sneath (1997): "Mobility, Technology, and Decollectivization of Pastoralism in Mongolia," in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman, ed. (1999): Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan. M. E. Sharpe, Inc., p. 232.

approach. It is generally accepted in the Mongolian political and academic community that the preservation of the "balanced" relations with both neighbors and the quest for partnerships across the globe is a rational, sound foreign policy agenda.[69] This viewpoint is stated in the founding document of Mongolian foreign policy.[70]

The argument I make in this research is that the East Asian approach to identity can serve the two above-mentioned goals with no less success than the cosmopolitan one. As a matter of fact, despite the rhetorical declaration of "balanced" relations, East Asian nations dominate in Mongolia's post-Cold War trade and economic relations, and the country is increasingly becoming acquainted with the existing regional mechanisms for common security and cooperation. Appeals to the Asia-Pacific, or Northeast Asian regional identification have been made; however, the divergence of identity is causing certain ambiguity in the acceptance of this fact.

Thus, Mongolia is an example of a country with divergent identity, all three types of which provide a different causal pathway in formulating the nation's policy. However, as ideas by themselves cannot define the foreign policy without reference to national interest, identification of Mongolia's foreign policy orientation will be incomplete without analyzing its second causal factor – the interest.

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[69] For further elaboration on this concept, see Guudain Tumurchuluun (1999): "Mongolia's Foreign Policy Revisited: Relations with Russia and the PRC into the 1990s," in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman, ed. (1999): Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan. M. E. Sharpe, Inc., pp. 277-289.

[70] Batbayar (2002), p. 37.

## C. INTEREST AS A FACTOR IN MONGOLIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

### 1. Historical Patterns and Contemporary Pathways

The national interest of Mongolia is largely derivative of its peculiar status as a landlocked small state, geographically situated between two major powers, and as a nation with divergent identity. Mongolia's interest is therefore defined in terms of the amalgam of national, societal and individual interests and covers a wide spectrum of definition – from physical survival (as with any small state, this connotation primarily means the demographic survival) and preservation of its culture to acceleration of its economic development (the latter is understood in terms of both a goal by itself and a necessary guarantee for securing its international status).

#### *a. The Russo-Chinese Tangle: "The Two-Neighbors" Paradigm*

Historically, the struggle for survival has been conducted by means of balancing the powers in the immediate adjacent regions. Throughout the past century the "two neighbors" policy, stressing balancing Russia and China off against one another in order to preserve its independence and demographic composition, has prevailed. The importance of state survival, based on the persistent official, semi-official and unofficial claims by China on Mongolian sovereignty and the lack of the latter's sufficient defensive capabilities was the major causal factor behind this policy. In addition, the balancing approach was also caused by the idea of demographic survival, e.g. the preservation of the Mongolian ethnocentric nationhood and its protection from assimilation by the numerically predominant Han Chinese, which had been the key factor in

Mongolia's security thinking and has contributed to the construction of Sinophobic attitudes, and therefore, exerted influence over the emergence of the identity divergence discussed in the previous section.

Russia's interest in Mongolia vis-à-vis China began in the mid-19th century with the Governor-General Muraviëv's report, where he stated the future strategic importance of this region to Russia.[71]

Decades after, taking advantage of China's turmoil and with Russian backing, Mongolia declared its independence from the Qing Empire in 1911. The new Chinese government refused to recognize Mongolia's independence but was too preoccupied with internal discord to enforce its sovereignty.[72] As a result of the Tripartite Russo-Sino-Mongolian Treaty concluded in 1915, the international status of the self-declared monarchy was reduced to that of an autonomous state under Chinese suzerainty. Russia, however, retained its support and maintained its political and economic influence. Occupied with revolution and restrained by ideological innovation, the Bolshevik government that took power in Russia in 1917 was unable to continue implementing the Asian geopolitics of its predecessor, the Russian Empire. Meanwhile, China demanded from Mongolia to surrender its autonomy, when the country had expected little, if any, help from outside.[73] While

[71] J. V. Davidson-Houston (1960): Russia and China: From the Huns to Mao Tse-tung. Trinity Press, p. 79.

[72] George G. S. Murphy (1966): Soviet Mongolia: A Study of the Oldest Political Satellite. University of California Press, p. 4.

[73] Ye. Belov (2001): "Kak Byla Likvidirovana Avtonomiya Vneshney Mongolii," (Rus., "How Was the Autonomy of Outer Mongolia Liquidated") in Kollektsii Luchshikh Dissertatsii (Rus., "The Collection of Best Dissertations"). URL: <http://www.asiapacific.narod.ru/countries /Mongolia/avtonomia_v_ Mongolia.html>

Mongolian rulers were in a panic stage, a Chinese warlord seized the moment and executed a military invasion of Mongolia in 1919, followed by the surrender of Mongolian autonomy to the direct rule by China.[74] In October 1920, Russian counter-revolutionary troops invaded from Siberia. Three months later, after a fierce battle, they drove the Chinese out of the capital and occupied it.[75]

These events greatly stimulated Mongolian nationalism. The Soviets' desire to actively support the leftist nationalists and transform them into Marxists was dictated by the geopolitical priorities of the Russian state, formulated in Vladimir Lenin's 1916 thesis:

> We Great Russian workers must demand that our governments should get out of Mongolia, Turkestan, and Persia. But does that mean that we proletarians want to be separated from the Mongolian, or Turkestanian, or Indian worker or peasant? Nothing of the kind. We shall exert every effort to become friendly and to amalgamate with the Mongolians …, i.e. we shall help them on towards democracy and socialism.[76]

As the Bolshevik power consolidated in Siberia, Moscow responded to the appeals of the Mongolian nationalists. On July 11, 1921 the People's Government of Mongolia was declared, while the state continued to be nominally headed by the monarch. In November 1921, a bilateral agreement recognizing the Government of Mongolia and facilitating the exchange of diplomatic representatives

[74] Murphy (1966), p. 5.

[75] Robert L. Worden and Andrea Matles Savada, ed. (1991): Mongolia: A Country Study. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, p. 39.

[76] Murphy (1966), p. 17.

was signed. Beginning in 1924, when the monarchy was abolished and as right-wing elements were eliminated from the government, the domestic politics in Mongolia turned further to the left. This shift had deep roots in the international scene, namely in the Sino-Soviet relations.

From the Soviet perspective, when Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party (KMT), had broken with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and consolidated its rule over eastern China in 1927, Mongolia's leftist turn was necessary to Soviet control over the Asian buffer zone. By 1945, concerned about Chiang Kai-shek's strong pro-American position and motivated by the interest of weakening China and maintaining the political buffer, provided by a now loyal satellite, Joseph Stalin convinced the Allied leaders that China must concede its claims on Mongolia.[77] The Nationalist government of China reluctantly accepted Mongolian independence and agreed to exchange diplomatic representatives. However, in 1949 Mongolia first broke this agreement by recognizing the new People's Republic of China. Hence, Mongolia emerged out of the post-war world order as a legitimate nation-state, as a result of the Soviet strategy of creating feasible client states alongside its borders.[78] As Mongolia seized the opportunity to extend formal recognition and diplomatic relations to the new regime in China, the same act was reciprocated by the Communist Chinese side. But there was another aspect in Chinese recognition of Mongolia - Beijing was forced by Moscow to accept this term in order to sign a security

[77] Michael Yahuda (1997): The International Politics of the Asia and Pacific (1945-1995). Routlege Curzon, pp. 22, 165.

[78] Edward N. Luttwak (1983): The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union. St. Martin's Press, p. 102.

treaty against the United States.[79] Thus, the Sino-Soviet alliance facilitated the deterioration of the overall strategic importance of Mongolia in the USSR's policy.[80] As the Soviets secured their eastern frontier with the world's most populous Communist regime, Mongolia had to play its own politics vis-à-vis the neighbors. Mongolia's leaders had to become "more cautious about the aspirations of China" – in policy terms it meant that the dependence on the USSR was still a necessary tool for survival.[81]

During the Sino-Soviet split, the initial Mongolian support for the Soviet criticism of Maoism was not as stalwart as that of the East European satellites.[82] According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, this position most probably reflected Ulaanbaatar's concern about any form of retaliation from Beijing.[83] By the beginning of June 1960 the USSR withdrew support from China[84] and invested into the Mongolian economy and provided assistance in the country's industrialization and urbanization efforts.[85] In 1966 the renewed bilateral treaty including a defense clause was signed.[86] In accordance with its provisions, Soviet troops entered and Mongolia, more than ever, had become a front line of Soviet defense against China. In addition to basing

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[79] Yahuda (1997), p. 193.

[80] Murphy (1966), pp. 200-202.

[81] Robert A. Rupen (1979): How Mongolia is Really Ruled: A Political History of the Mongolian People's Republic (1900-1978). Hoover Institution Press, p. 76.

[82] Zbigniew K. Brzezinski (1967): The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict, Revised Edition. Harvard University Press, p. 408.

[83] Brzezinski (1967), p. 409.

[84] Vladislav Zubak and Constantine Pleshakov (1996): Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchëv. Harvard University Press, p. 233.

[85] Warden and Savada, ed. (1991), p. 51.

[86] Warden and Savada, ed. (1991), p. 52.

its military presence, Mongolia offered the USSR a potentially useful political instrument in pressuring the PRC – as a viable nation-state, it could compete for the ethnic loyalties of the Mongol population in China's Inner Mongolia.[87] Mongolian loyalty was also exploited in expanding the Soviet influence among other Asian states with Communist or pro-Soviet regimes and preventing them from entering into the Chinese orbit of Communism.

By the early 1980s changes occurred in the Sino-Soviet relations. Limited exchange was allowed and talks at the ministerial level began in 1981-82.[88] First signs of normalization between Mongolia and China also began to occur during this period, but were largely subordinated to the Soviet directives.[89] In 1986 Mikhail Gorbachëv spoke about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia and Afghanistan as part of the *rapprochement* strategy vis-à-vis China and the United States.[90] Meanwhile, the Communist leaders of Mongolia - by now its reformist wing that took the power in 1984 - were increasingly concerned about these new geopolitical arrangements and began taking its own advantages in the situation. Ultimately, events in Eastern Europe in 1989-1990 echoed in Mongolia by resulting in the only "velvet revolution" in Asia up to these days. This brought about radical shift in Mongolia's relations with the still-existing Soviet Union and its successor, the Russian Federation, as well as with China.

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[87] Luttwak (1983), p. 99.

[88] Gerald Segal (1985): "Sino-Soviet relations After Mao," in Adelphi Papers, No.202 (1985), pp. 10-12.

[89] Segal (1985), p. 24.

[90] Yahuda (1997), p. 95.

The period from 1990 through the present is marked by rapprochement between Russia and China, evolving into a strategic partnership. Despite the new Russo-Mongolian treaty of 1993 that declared a completely new type of bilateral relations on an equal, "mutually beneficial" basis,[91] the actual economic and political ties remained stagnant, which was primarily caused by the severe economic challenges faced by both countries. A similar treaty with the same spirit was signed in the following year with China, on the background of increasing trade volume and economic cooperation. From 1996 Russo-Chinese bilateral relations accelerated and a full-fledged strategic partnership was forged.[92] Now bound by a partnership with China, Russia's consideration of Mongolia as a country of strategic significance diminished rapidly.

Still, the stage of Sino-Russian strategic partnership is far from being idyllic. Observers see it as a "marriage of convenience" rather than a long-term commitment. Russian analysts and political leaders are also aware of the implications should China adopt a more assertive stance in the future.[93] Dmitri Trenin argues that over the next 10-15 years "the relative weakness of Russia and strength of China will become clearer."[94] However, it should not be forgotten that as an alternative to full-fledged bilateralism, Russia and China began to launch a more multilateral approach in power balancing in Northeast

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[91] Sanders (1996), p. 220.

[92] Thomas E. Remington (2001): Politics in Russia. Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, p. 420.

[93] Jennifer Anderson (1997): "The Limits of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership", in Adelphi papers, No.315 (1997), p. 75.

[94] Dmitri Trenin (1999): Russia's China Problem. Carnegie Moscow Center, p. 173.

Asia. In Trenin's view, "as China becomes the pre-eminent power in the region, Ulaanbaatar will have to navigate carefully between Moscow and the much closer Beijing."[95] This "careful navigation" does not necessarily mean the repetition of the old power-balancing politics or that Russia will renew its full strategic interests in Mongolia vis-à-vis China; it is more likely that Central Asian states are receiving the buffer role that Mongolia used to play during the Cold War. Hence, Mongolia's policy is no longer expected to be that of a buffer state; instead, it will try to find other niches in the international scene and other patterns of engagement with its two neighbors based on its own national interest.

#### ***b. The United States, Japan and Others: "The Third Neighbor" Paradigm***

Another preferred means of power balancing in 20th century politics was the "third neighbor" paradigm. Although this orientation and subsequent policies stem from the earliest date of the declaration of independence in 1911, the very term only is derivative of a rather rhetorical statement made by the then-U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III during his first visit to Ulaanbaatar in 1990. Therefore the United States, after only four years following the establishment of diplomatic relations, has joined, and in many instances seemingly acquired the leading position in, a group of Western and Third World countries that Mongolia has been attempting to "court" for counter-balancing both Russia and China ever since the 1910s.

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[95] Trenin (2001), p. 326.

Initially, the most suitable country for that role was Japan, which, along with Russia, carved up its spheres of influence in Inner Mongolia. Japanese involvement grew after the Bolshevik takeover and by supporting the anti-Bolshevik factions that seized power in Southern Siberia, Japan indirectly encouraged the rise of the Pan-Mongolist movement. It backed the so-called "Semënov clique" in establishing an alternative Pan-Mongolian government and pushed through to establish a unified Mongolian state, comprising Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Buryat Mongolia. This regime even attempted to send its delegation to the Versailles Conference.[96] However, considering preservation of the autonomous government as a priority over risking its de facto independence by pursuing the near-utopian vision of "Greater Mongolia", the monarchist government of Mongolia refused not only to join this self-proclaimed entity, but to extend recognition to it as well.[97] Thus, as Dmitri Trenin evaluates it, "the specter of pan-Mongolism, historically seen in Russia as a vehicle for Japan's policy aimed at weakening both Russia and China, however, was very short-lived."[98]

Even after the unsuccessful launch of a Pan-Mongolian state, the Japanese pressed ahead with efforts to take advantage of the chaos caused by the Russian civil war. A large Japanese force, nominally part of an anti-Bolshevik Allied Expeditionary Force intervening in eastern Siberia, had taken over much of the Trans-Siberian Railway

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[96] O. Edmund Clubb (1971): China and Russia: The Great Game, Columbia University Press, pp. 175-177.

[97] Clubb (1971), p. 176.

[98] Trenin (2001), p. 210.

between Vladivostok and Lake Baikal.[99] Japanese funds were provided to anti-Bolshevik elements, in order to prevent the Soviet government from establishing control in eastern Siberia and from obtaining too much influence in Mongolia.[100] Still, the Japanese could not extend their presence due to the neutralist attitude of United States elements of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and Soviet forces gradually established control over Siberia.[101]

After the Bolshevik victory in the Russian civil war, Japan resorted to its relative isolationism. Domestically, it was the period of the "Taisho Democracy," with little emphasis on expansionism. The militarization of Japan in the late 1920s-1930s gave a new impetus for its expansionist policies in East Asia, camouflaged by such anti-imperialist ideological formulations, as "Asia for Asians," and the so-called "Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." After securing the annexation of Manchuria and establishing the puppet state of Manzhouguo (Manchu-Kuo), Japan began to appeal to Mongolian nationalism as the puppet "Mongolian Federated Government" was inaugurated in Inner Mongolia.[102] However, by this time Mongolia was a full-fledged Soviet satellite and showed little, if any, response to such initiatives by the Japanese.

During the Second World War the Mongolian army was maintained intact and served as a buffer force in the

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[99] Warden and Savada, ed. (1991), p. 40.

[100] Warden and Savada, ed. (1991), p. 40.

[101] Warden and Savada, ed. (1991), p. 40.

[102] Tsedendamba Batbayar (1999): "Mongolia and Japan in 1945-1995: A Half Century Reconsidered," in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman, ed. (1999): Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan. M. E. Sharpe, Inc., p. 163.

Soviet Far East defense system. Moreover, in accordance with the 1941 Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, Japan committed to respect Mongolia's territorial integrity. As a result of the Yalta arrangements that designed the post-war world order, Mongolia gained its formal recognition by China, and more importantly, informal recognition of its status quo by the United States and Great Britain. Secure in its status, Ulaanbaatar expanded its other international ties. Diplomatic relations were established with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the new Communist governments in Eastern Europe. The pattern of non-recognition by non-Communist countries was broken in December 1955, when diplomatic relations were established with India, with which Mongolia shares a Hindu-Buddhist cultural tradition.[103] India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru relentlessly lobbied for Mongolia's admission to the United Nations, which was blocked for fifteen years after 1946 due to the Cold War power struggle and opposition from the Nationalist government representing China in the UN Security Council.

In the meantime, a significant number of Western nations recognized Mongolia, with the United Kingdom being the first in January 1963, followed by France in April 1965.[104] Cultural and educational ties with Britain were very intensive given Mongolia's isolation from the Western world. In fact, Britain was probably the only "true capitalist" nation to maintain the official relations with

[103] Sanders (1996), p. 220.

[104] Sanders (1996), p. 218.

Mongolia at the highest level and operating an embassy in Ulaanbaatar on a full scale.[105]

Nevertheless, Mongolia's search for a "third partner" was highly limited in success due to the Soviet-dictated foreign policy: under Soviet pressure Mongolia's leaders had to abandon their initiative to establish formal diplomatic relations with the United States and Japan, and many other states. With regards to Japan, given its past records of promoting Mongolian nationalism, the Soviets were especially concerned about possible ties. However, Japan and Mongolia formally exchanged diplomatic relations in February 1972, slightly before the Sino-Japanese normalization, itself caused by the "Nixon shocks," and the cultural exchange has since elaborated.[106]

The United States presented a different story. It was not until January 1987 when Ulaanbaatar and Washington exchanged diplomatic relations, though some significant drives to do so were undertaken by both sides in the past. The first high-ranking foreign dignitary to ever visit Mongolia, and the only one to do so until the 1950s, was the U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace in July 1944, who stopped for two days in Ulaanbaatar during his fact-finding mission in China and the USSR.[107]

In the early 1960s Washington was seriously considering extending official recognition to the then-Mongolian People's Republic within the context of promoting

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[105] Alan J. K. Sanders (1968): The People's Republic of Mongolia: A General Reference Guide. Oxford University Press, p. xi.

[106] Batbayar (1999), p. 173.

[107] Robert P. Newman (1992): Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China. University of California Press, pp. 107-121.

contacts with "non-bellicose Asian communist countries."[108] The initiative, started by the Kennedy Administration, was repealed by JFK himself after meeting harsh opposition by the so-called "China Lobby," which represented the interests of the Nationalist Government in Taipei that withdrew its recognition of Mongolia 1952, and which had influence over American conservative politicians affiliated with the U.S. Republican Party.[109] The U.S. involvement in Vietnam also may have "contributed" to this turn of events. The Soviets finally gave approval to establish the diplomatic relations with the United States, which occurred in 1987, and to intensify Mongolian-Japanese relations, which, prior to that, were restricted to some limited cultural exchange.

Two years later Mongolia took another step as an independent actor in the region. It became the third Communist state - after Hungary and Poland - to establish diplomatic exchange with South Korea, a country with which it previously had no contact in any sphere; thus launching the strong Asian accent in its policy.[110]

The search for third partners did not only mean individual countries but a community of nations as well. This trend has become more apparent during the post-Cold war era, while before 1990 Mongolian multilateralism was confined to the Soviet bloc and the Third World's non-aligned nations.

With regard to other Communist states, even there the Soviet dominance was obvious. Mongolia had restrained

[108] Yahuda (1997), p. 183.

[109] Senator Everett Dirksen (R-IL) was a key opponent of the U.S. recognition of Mongolia; see in Newman (1992), p. 507.

[110] Ginsburg (1999), p. 264.

relations with some of the "unorthodox" members of the Soviet bloc, such as Nicolae Ceauşescu's Romania and Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh. Moreover, Mongolia was carefully guarded by Moscow from any type of contacts with the most "heretic" Communist states, such as relations with Yugoslavia and Albania, let alone China. In addition, Mongolian-North Korean relations heavily depended on those between Moscow and P'yŏngyang: Ulaanbaatar simply had to reflect Moscow's unstable and shifting policies toward Kim Il-sung's regime of "Juche socialism" balancing between Moscow and Beijing. Except for Ulaanbaatar's loyalty, other Communist capitals elsewhere in Asia, such as Hanoi with its balancing behavior and P'yŏngyang with its preservation of "freedom of action", were disappointing the Soviet diplomacy.[111] It can be said as well that by virtue of its alliance with the USSR Mongolia had become one of the players in Cold War's tri-polarity in East Asia.[112]

In the post-Cold War period, the "third neighbor" paradigm was elevated to the status of semi-official conduct of behavior. Besides Russia and China, who share common physical borders, the two most important factors in Mongolia's foreign policy (at least from the Mongolian point of view) have become the United States and Japan. In addition, robust ties to South Korea appear as another complementing factor. These countries and international organizations, such as the UN, where Mongolia has traditionally been active, and numerous regional institutions in sum constitute what the Mongolian academia refers to as the "third neighbor." Therefore, at present

[111] Luttwak (1983), p. 100.

[112] Yahuda (1997), p. 79.

this term connotes a metaphorical vision of a virtual neighborhood and not any real-world political alliance.

### 2. The "Security Dilemma"

With regards to its security, Mongolia is currently trapped in identifying its primary security concern. On the one hand, the interest of survival remains the top priority. However, the amalgamation of national, societal and individual security concerns provides a broader perception of it. In addition, the international context differs much from the Cold War era. State survival is no longer a primary concern for the reason that no direct threat to the nation's independence and sovereignty is perceived from any of the neighboring or proximate states. This is facilitated by Mongolia's amicable relations with the immediate two and the virtual "third" neighbors. But the notion of demographic survival (deriving from a population pressure from neighboring China), coupled with ideas of preserving the cultural individuality, makes the security perception flip. Therefore, the interest of survival is still prevalent within the academic and policy-making community.

On the other hand, because the interest of a small state is amalgamated in nature, the interests of those constituencies - individual and group – include the need for economic well-being, which is an unalienable interest of the state, too. Survival mentality may drive the policy toward either isolationist or globalist directions, but in neither case will the developmental objectives be properly met. Instead, they might risk being neglected or even sacrificed. This constitutes Mongolia's current security dilemma – between the Scylla of self-preservation (or self-

conservation) via power balancing and the Charibdes of accelerated development via regional cooperation and acceptance of the dominant position of one of its neighbors. These interests seem mutually exclusive, therefore competing, but a prudent policy of identifying the areas of dissent and reconciling them can turn them into mutually complementary interests.

For this, the identity factor is brought back into our analysis. In the situation with divergent triple identity and competing dual interests, single policy equilibrium is difficult to attain. Identification of overlapping dimensions among the variations of identity and interest is conducted in the next section.

### 3. The "Buffer" Mentality

There is another aspect of the view of the "two-neighbors" vs. the "third neighbor" paradigms. These are often misinterpreted as the competing schools and practice in Mongolia's strategic thinking. My argument is that both paradigms are variations of the realpolitik: balance-of-power vs. bandwagoning. Though these options do not necessarily correspond to the two paradigms, historically the attempts to balance power were conducted by "courting" the possible "third neighbor," and the bandwagoning was the usual pattern of Mongolia's subordinance to Russia/Soviet Union in its interactions with China. Therefore both trends dramatically deplete from the notion of a "virtual third neighbor" and reflect what can be labeled as the "buffer mentality," based on the self-assertion of a strategically important country and tightly interconnected to the primordial Central Asian identity.

Traditionally, Sino-Russian borderlands that served as a natural buffer between the two political entities are divided into the three geographical sectors: Middle, or Central Asia, Mongolia and the Far East.[113] Of these, until the five Central Asian republics obtained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, only Mongolia used to serve as a political buffer between the two powers, due to its independent status, however nominal it was under the Moscow protectorate. Throughout the 20th century Mongolia was politically dependent on the successive Russian regimes as a counterbalance and territorial buffer to the Chinese state, while receiving Russian/Soviet protection from the former.

However, events of the late 1980s and the 1990s brought enormous changes in these triangular relations. Normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, disintegration of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the current regime of bilateral ties between Russia and China serve as the factors minimizing Mongolia's geopolitical role. This situation is becoming even more complex as Mongolia normalized its own relations with China and embraced an entirely new, independent foreign policy for the first time with "balanced" relations with both of its neighbors. The evolution of triangulating relations between the major powers in the region and Mongolia's current defense and economic capacity potentially excludes the role of buffer either between the two neighbors or between them and the others. Therefore, the understanding of the "third neighbor" paradigm based on power-balancing behavior is not

[113] William Arthur Douglas Jackson (1962): Russo-Chinese Borderlands. D. Van Hostard, p. iii

the timely and correct one; instead, its initial connotation of multilateralism must be asserted.

## D. CORRELATION OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST

### 1. Conflict of Identity and Interest: The Three Parameters

The triple identity and dual security interest of Mongolia cause mutual conflict in the following three parameters: the weakness (size and leverage capacity) of the state that makes the power-balancing behavior inefficient, the risks associated with the so-called doctrine of "irreversible minimum" that is conducted by the great powers, and the lack of interdependence that might lead to a failure of the state.

#### *a. The "Realpolitik Trap": Weak for Balancing and Cautious for Bandwagoning*

Small states do not inherently possess leverage against the surrounding powers. The very notion of the balance of power refers to at least relatively equal distribution of power and wealth among the players, and if lacking thereof, the small state conducting this policy must obtain other advantages over its neighbors: strategic geographical location, assets of valuable natural resources and/or a rival political ideology and economic system that could challenge existing order in the neighboring states. Mongolia, as was discussed in the previous section, is losing its buffer role to the new independent states of Central Asia, which in sum (as a region) possess much more strategic and economic leverage than Mongolia does. In terms of the systemic difference, Mongolia offers no competitiveness in the economy (market transformation in both Russia and China makes their economic system not

significantly different from that of Mongolia, albeit with much greater size and attraction). In terms of political development, the position of an island of stable democracy landlocked between Communist China and unstable Russia with strong resurgence of the old ideas offers some comparative advantage. However, the overall systemic difference between Russia and China is minimal, which underscores the possibility of Mongolia's political buffer position between the two. In addition, the interests of major outside powers do not seriously conflict with those of Russia and China and therefore undercuts Mongolia's quest for a buffer position between the two neighbors and the third ones. Ironically, Mongolia's foremost achievements – stable democratic governance, steady development, predictable international behavior and lack of domestic problems that directly affect international and regional security (such as the links of certain constituencies to terrorist organizations) – are the factors behind its lack of substantial leverage in dealing with other nations.

While recognizing its relative weakness in the balance of power, Mongolia is nevertheless too cautious of bandwagoning, largely due to the mentality set as a legacy of the period of Soviet domination. The communist past is reflected in the two forms of phobia, which, though they have credible merits, must be challenged in order to reflect the realities of the contemporary period. The same key determinants of Mongolia's stance through the Sino-Soviet tug-of-war point to the current cautiousness. First is the will to reassert maximum independence, as a nation having been dominated by a foreign power for decades. Second is the fear of losing the demographic, cultural and

economic independence to a powerful neighbor. A well-respected Mongolian statesman of pro-democracy orientation stated in 1997 at the VIII International Congress of Mongolists that "we have experienced being in the Soviet-led COMECON, and [should be] cautious about the China-led APEC."[114] Such cultural phobia, again, has its merits but mostly is a political construction developed during the intra-Communist "Cold War" and therefore the identity politics aimed at the reconciliation of it to the interest is needed.

#### *c. The Risk of Great Power Politics: "Irreversible Minimum" Revisited*

One of the world's most prominent Mongolists, Owen Lattimore, described the differences between a colony and a satellite by defining the latter as "a country under the influence or control of a protector that requires and often forcefully coerces restructuring of the satellite country in the protector's image," while the former is "prevented from these assimilating duties."[115] During the Soviet control, Mongolia presented a very unique case by both being restructured in the Soviet image yet having its nominal independence preserved and not forced into assimilating into the Russian culture at large.

Lattimore also introduced the "doctrine of the irreversible minimum" to describe how protector countries like the Soviet Union could establish and maintain control of border countries while not actually annexing them. In regards to creating a Mongolian satellite, Lattimore refers

[114] I was present at the panel when the former Prime Minister Dashiin Byambasüren said these words. The quote is not documented, and therefore the translation is my own and relies on memory recall.

[115] Owen Lattimore (1955): Nationalism and Revolution in Mongolia. E.J. Brill Leiden, p. 44.

to the Soviets' desire for a cushion to protect its Siberian frontier from invasion by the Chinese. In offering the Mongolian government an opportunity for independence coupled to economic support and tied to a promise of protection against the Chinese and Japanese, the Soviets gained an irreversible advantage requiring minimum expenditures of resources, secure in the knowledge that the Mongolians would not reverse the agreement recognizing that their country was better under Soviet protection.[116] The Mongolians did profit from this arrangement, not just in the receipt of protection but also through an increase in trade opportunities.

The "irreversible minimum" did not cease to exist with the end of Mongolian subordination to Moscow. Russia's contemporary policies toward Mongolia can be described as bordering between negligence and awareness of the necessity to apply the age-old "irreversible minimum" if needed. With one eye on China's expanding economic and political presence in its own far Eastern backyard while pursuing the politics of the "strategic partnership," Moscow will have to pull Mongolia's identity gravity to Eurasia/Central Asia.[117] However, Moscow will be unlikely to consider Mongolia strategically to be as important as its former constituent republics of Central Asia. The basis for such an approach is the same reason that helped Moscow to "spend" minimum investment for its strategic interests vis-à-vis China: it is the nearly guaranteed awareness that Mongolia will depend on any power to minimize its connections with China. It is true of not only Russia, but

[116] Lattimore (1955), p. 44.

[117] Trenin (1999), pp. 76-77.

of the other so-called "third neighbors," most notably, the United States. The notion that Mongolia can exploit the systemic (political and economic) differences between the United States and China and benefit from it in the form of a security guarantee from the latter is merely an illusion that can best be defined as irrationality in pursuing interest. According to an anonymous American official source, in 1996-97 "the Mongolian government even approached Washington with a plan for new military security pact," but "this proposal was dismissed as unenforceable and unacceptably provocative towards Beijing."[118] An American diplomat commented: "It's not going to happen. No one on the planet can guarantee the security of Mongolia."[119]

What Mongolia needs to understand is that this attitude of the American government is easily justifiable from the three major schools of foreign policy thought persistent in the American political spectrum. By "spectrum" I connote mostly the cross-partisan worldviews, although certain generalizations can be made in the policy orientations of the Republicans, the Democrats and other groups, such as the Libertarians. For political conservatives and realists in the international relations field, the basic premise is that the United States pursues its own security and economic interests, mostly in dealing vis-a-vis regional powers, as China. Unless Mongolia possesses significant leverage vis-à-vis China and/or Russia (which it, according to the findings of this thesis, does not), no other power would be interested in investing

[118] Nate Thayer (1997): "Forward Steppes," in Far Eastern Economic Review, March 27, 1997, p. 20.

[119] Thayer (1997), p. 20.

a security guarantee. The best expression of the U.S. strategic thinking based on the conservative realism can be found in Henry Kissinger's words:

> [F]or the foreseeable decades, the United States possesses diplomatic, economic, and military advantages allowing it to shape the future without resorting to preemptive confrontation with China … The issue is not whether to oppose Chinese attempts to dominate Asia. If they occur, they must be resisted. But at a moment when the capacity for its does not exist, what is the purpose of a confrontational strategy conducted for its own sake? What is to be the strategic goal? In what way does America gain by conducting relations with China by analogy to the Cold war unless Beijing gives the United States no other choice? … A prudent American leadership should balance the risk of stoking Chinese nationalism against the gains from short-term pressures.[120]

For liberals, the idea of United States investing in the security of small states at the expense of antagonizing large partners in trade and international institutions is also absurd. Some libertarian analysts also advocate forms of strategic disengagement that could limit the opportunities for Mongolian-U.S. strategic cooperation.[121] The main objective of such a conservative policy is that a disengaged United States, and regional powers in Asia, namely China and Japan, must find out a way

[120] Henry Kissinger (2001): Does America Need A Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century. Simon & Shuster, p. 148.

[121] For further references on the libertarian viewpoint, see Edward A. Olsen (2002): US National Defense for the Twenty-First Century: The Grand Exit Strategy. Frank Cass Publishers and Ivan Eland (2001): Putting "Defense" Back into U.S. Defense Policy: Rethinking U.S. Security in the Post-Cold War World. Praeger Publishers.

of cooperative, and at the same time, power balancing interaction with each other that is based on a U.S. military presence to sustain a more stable order for regional security and economic development. For Mongolia, such a development would mean more opportunities rather than an increased threat. If, hypothetically, Mongolia could attract the U.S. involvement on a similar scale to that of the USSR during the Cold War, and then the United States were to strategically disengage after some time, the country would risk repeating the situation of the same unfamiliarity with, and marginalization from, the Asian security and cooperation practices, as happened in the immediate wake of the Cold War.

Thus, the whole notion of a security guarantee provided by a superpower, though based on rational concerns for political independence and demographic survival, nevertheless reflects the state of Sino-Mongolian relations prior to the normalization. In addition, certain "myths," socially constructed during the Soviet domination, have turned out to be very durable and persist within segments of Mongolia's civil society up to these days. They remain the major obstacle in the full-scale identification of the country as an East Asian nation.

#### *d. Independence – Interdependence = Failing State*

The third parameter is that of independence vs. interdependence. As the process of globalization is underway, the idea of "strict" or "perpetual" neutrality ceases to be a plausible solution for the maintenance of a state's sovereignty. Nations without well-defined identification with regional institutions, or those

pursuing isolationist policies are becoming more labeled as the "rogue" states. If their international behavior is odious, and even if they behave not as odiously, the risk of state failure threatens them. The only successful story of a maximum sovereignty outside regional developments could be Switzerland, but even there, the identity is firmly and convergently European; and this nation has accumulated enough capacities to project itself as a respected actor in world politics. In nearly all other situations, the rules of the "golden straitjacket" push states to adopt and to be co-opted into the process of globalization via the means of regionalization.[122] While this does not connote the destruction of identity, it enforces the necessity for stepping ahead from exclusive nationalism as a prerequisite for not only the economic incentives, but for the security guarantee as well. The path to undertake this transformation lies in the reconciliation of these conflicting areas of identity and interest, and in doing it by the means of identity politics.

### 2. Reconciliation of Identity and Interest: Dichotomy of Construction and Deconstruction

Identity, being a cumulative set of national and societal ideas about a country's place in the world, matters in foreign policy. So does interest, as the key factor behind any rational decision by the state as a single actor. While identity can shape the interest and serve as the policy pathway in an absence of a single equilibrium with regards to the interest, interest, too,

[122] For further references on the "Golden Straitjacket" paradigm, see Thomas L. Friedman (2000): The Lexus and the Olive Tree. First Anchor Books, pp. 101-110.

can narrow the policy-making pathway for a state with divergent identities. The methodology for their mutual complementarity is choosing the overlapping areas of identity and interest, and prioritizing them in terms of policy orientation. As this chapter stipulates, Mongolia faces the trilemma in terms of the identity and dilemma in terms of the security interest.

However, the three versions of identity and the two dimensions of interest do not have equal weight on policy. From the identity perceptions the East Asian and cosmopolitan ones have visible priority over the indigenous Central Asian one, e.g. it is the triumph of cultural crystallization and socio-political construction over primordiality. As for the national interest, the real dilemma is that between openness to the West (both values and assurances) by balancing the powers and openness to East Asian regional dynamics, including those of China (developmental incentives), which seems often a too contradictory choice from a Mongolian perspective. The next logical question is, is the idea of a security guarantee provided by the "third neighbor(s)" a rational interest, or is it a form of the small states' irrationality and wishful thinking? And should or should not the identity enter within this tug as a tiebreaker or should the interest defined first act as a roadmap to make a preference in the politics of identity? My argument is that the three parameters of the conflict between identity and interest provide us an initial step of defining the priority in national interest. A simplified formulation of such correlation would be that, being a small state without sufficient self-defense capabilities and much attraction

for the real incentives of the "third neighbors," Mongolia should recognize regionalism in East Asia as its foreign policy priority, as the factor that will guarantee the security assurance and economic acceleration. This should be conducted by stressing the East Asian identity and prioritizing this over others, regardless of the inherent phobia that causes large segments of domestic constituencies to retain pessimism. Many of the factors that contributed to the Sinophobia derive from the traditional hostility between the two nations, but much were nothing but the constructed "myths" that served the justification for Soviet military and political presence in Mongolia during the Cold War. The effects of this thorough indoctrination can be found within numerous informal statements made by the officials, academics and citizens. An example is seen in the words of (an anonymous) journalist in Ulaanbaatar:

> The hostilities between Mongolia and China, we cannot forget. Ties between Mongolia and China have been nonexistent. The end of the Cold War in Europe was also the end of the Cold War in Mongolia, and we have chosen this path to the future – democracy and capitalism instead of the Chinese way.[123]

Though the last portion of his/her statement raises no doubt, the reference toward the Sino-Mongolian relations is disproportionately exaggerated. At this point, reconciling Mongolia's divergent identity perception to its security and economic interests requires the deconstruction of some mythicized aspects of identity and construction of a

[123] Thayer (1997), p. 20.

regional identity. However, for a democratic society, such a task cannot be single-handedly performed by any government institution. The best solution might be finding and implementing certain policy orientations that can help constructing a new (renewed) identity. The final chapter will address some examples of the attitudes among the East Asian states toward one another, and will look at some possible models for deconstructing the "mythical" perceptions.

## E. CHAPTER FINDINGS

In correlation with the findings of the first chapter, I come to the following conclusions on Mongolia's current geopolitical situation through the prism of identity and interest:

- Mongolia is a nation with divergent identity, thus faces the "identity trilemma";
- Being a small state with divergent identity, Mongolia risks the outcome of marginalization from the core areas of the major civilizations, thus being isolated from the global developmental and security trends;
- Its national interests are mutually conflicting between security (survival) and economy (development), with strong overtones of irrational interests (maximum independence from the neighbors' influence by enlisting a third power's guarantee), thus constituting the "security dilemma";
- The three parameters of the conflict between identity and interest, namely the "*realpolitik*

trap," the "irreversible minimum" and the "independence minus interdependence" plus an exaggerated self-perception of a buffer state might hinder the nation's successful self-realization in the age of globalization;

- Sinophobia is the key factor causing ambiguity in identity construction and interest formulation;
- Therefore, taking the mutual causal impact between identity and interest into consideration, Mongolia's optimal choice for foreign policy could be that of the East Asian orientation, deriving from its cultural identity and rational interests.

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# IV. REGIONAL POLITICS THROUGH THE PRISM OF IDENTITY AND INTEREST

## A. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter is designed to look at some regional trends within Asia through the prism of identity and interest. The objective of the chapter is two-fold: to identify the prevailing tendencies in intra-regional interactions with regards to the two factors of foreign policy, and to provide the cases that can serve as lessons or recommendations for Mongolia's policy-making. First, in relation to the primordial identity and the "buffer" mentality that Mongolia possesses, Central Asia's current problems and future prospects are addressed in some detail. This section would answer the question of how much identity construction is going on in that region and why do the Central Asian states gradually replace Mongolia as a buffer zone between Russia and China. Second, in relation to Mongolia's civilizational identity, East Asia's intra-regional politics is examined.

For that purpose, the chapter looks at the two sub-regions of East Asia separately and analyzes the construction of a common identity (or lack thereof) in each, and how it leads to (or impedes) the shaping of common security and economic interests. Here I again turn to the neo-liberal school as the provider of a common ground between the constructivist view of the primacy of identity and the realist view of the primacy of interest. Finally, the chapter puts forward a question about what

would be the priority in Mongolia's foreign policy in coming years and how it could be best achieved.

## B. CENTRAL ASIA: A WESTWARD SHIFTED BUFFER

### 1. Background

Central Asia is geographically and culturally linked to four important sub-regions – East Asia (through China and Mongolia), South Asia (through Afghanistan and Pakistan), Eurasia/Europe (through Russia and Turkey) and the Middle East (through Iran) and has a unique position among them. Five states comprising the region – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic - obtained independence on December 25, 1991, immediately following the dissolution of the USSR.[124] Thus, Central Asia has not previously been considered a separate region in world politics and, therefore, most of the policies of the five states located in the region are in the formative stage, as are the policies toward them of its immediate neighbors and outside powers.

The states of Central Asia represent an anomaly among nearly all the former Communist states and former member states of the Soviet Union. At present, all five states lack democratic governance; the regimes vary from totalitarian[125] to autocratic pseudo-democracy.[126] Market-oriented reforms were conducted in all of the states; however, reforms were aborted in Tajikistan[127] and

[124] The actual dates of each country's formal declaration of independence vary from state to state.

[125] As the regime of Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan; see Larry Diamond (1999): Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation. Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 279-280.

[126] As the regime of Askar Akayev in the Kyrgyz Republic; see Diamond (1999), pp. 279-280.

[127] Primarily caused by devastating civil war in the mid-1990s.

Turkmenistan.[128] Kyrgyz economic reforms, despite an initial promising start, have likely failed due to incompetence of the state apparatus and a weak financial situation.[129] Hence, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be named as countries vying for regional leadership politically, economically and demographically.

In addition, the foreign policy choices and priorities of these states are not common to those of one another. The policies of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are considered the most Moscow-oriented, while Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic hosted the air bases for U.S. operations in Afghanistan. Most recently, Uzbekistan strongly supported the U.S.-led coalition war against Iraq. These relations are further complicated by the very intensive and increasing degree of cooperation between the Kyrgyz and Chinese militaries.[130] Turkmenistan follows a highly rhetorical policy of "perpetual neutrality" and remains isolated from the rest of the world, with its rich oil and gas resources compensating for the disadvantage of lacking an open foreign policy.[131]

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[128] Though Turkmenistan possesses the greatest asset of natural resources, the economic stagnation is caused by the increasingly autarkic nature of economic policy.

[129] Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, ed. (2002): Strategic Asia 2002-2003: Asian Aftershocks. National Bureau of Asian Research Publishing, p. 233.

[130] The Kyrgyz Army and the People's Liberation Army of China conducted a small – scale exercize in the Kyrgyz territory in 2002, but the significance of this event was in the fact that it was the first exercize of the PLA outside of Chinese soil.

[131] Filip Noubel (2002): "Golden Century of the Turkmens": A Bleak Picture of Village Life in the Desert. URL: <http://www. eurasianet.org/departments/culture/articles/eav102502. shtml>

## 2. Current Geopolitical Situation

The current geopolitical situation in Central Asia is characterized by the problems the states in the region face and the interests major outside powers vested in them.

### *a. Existing Issues*

Ironically, serious issues that are present in Central Asia create concern among major powers and cause them to pay increased attention in order to prevent the exacerbation of those issues, categorized as follows:

- Religious Extremism: Radical Islam has the potential of becoming an increasingly influential force in Central Asia. Traditionally, Central Asians are Muslims, though some, like the nomadic Kazakh and Kyrgyz, are relatively late converts to Islam, whereas the Uzbeks and Tajiks are considered the heirs of great medieval Islamic civilizations of Bukhara and Samarkand.[132] Most of the region's population follows the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, perceived to be the most moderate brand of this religion.[133] In addition, a significant influence is attributed to the Sufi Brotherhood, a Muslim mystical movement, and the Ismaili branch of Shiism.[134]

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[132] Oliver Roy (2000): The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations. New York University Press, pp. 7-8.

[133] The main threat in Central Asia, although traditionally not influential, is the growth of Salafi Islam, which preaches total rejection of modernity, of culture and the arts. Salafi beliefs are similar to those advocated by al-Qaeda and are also linked with Wahhabism. Among the five states, Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan face serious problems with illegal radical Islamist movements, some which have links to various Afghan warlords of the same ethnic decent across the border. For further details see: Ahmed Rashid (2002): Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia. Yale University Press, p. 26.

[134] Predominantly among the Badokhshoni (Pâmiri) Tajiks. The Ismaili sect, founded and led by Aga Khan Dynasty, is seeking to increase its influence in the region by such measures, as opening the Ismaili-

- Ethnic conflicts: Another issue of concern is inter-ethnic conflicts of various scales throughout the region that would seriously threaten regional stability. The Central Asian states are populated with many ethnic groups, of which four prominent groups are Turkic-speaking peoples of common descent.[135] Indo-Iranian Tajiks and the Slavic Russians constitute significant population groups.[136] Conflicts among these groups, varying from local clashes (in the Kyrgyz Republic) to all-out civil war (in Tajikistan) often employ religious sentiments among the population. In addition, lack of civic national identity in many parts of the region promotes tribalism and clan-based interest conflicts that have potential to undermine the fragile framework of dialogue.[137]

- Poverty: Issues such as population growth and poverty must be immediately addressed. From the Soviet period the region has known unprecedented population growth despite also having a very high infant mortality rate. Most of the societies are predominantly rural; with unsuccessful or initial market reforms living standards of the average citizens remain very low. These factors contribute to social upheaval and dissatisfaction with government policies, which at present is oppressed by authoritarian regimes.

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sponsored University of Central Asia in Khorog, Autonomous Province of Quhistoni Badokhshon of Tajikistan; see: Victoria Panfilova (2002): "Ismaility Smotryat v Budushcheye." (Rus., "The Ismailis are Looking at the Future") Nezavisimaya Gazeta, October 21, 2002. URL: <http://ng.ru/courier/2002-10-21/12_award.shtml>

[135] Roy (2000), pp. 2-5.

[136] Roy (2000), pp. 15-17.

[137] Roy (2000), pp. 23-24.

- Human Rights: The political situation in general and bad human rights records in particular are the major concerns of any Western government in dealing with Central Asian states. According to the Human Rights Watch and Freedom House survey of the last decade, none of the regimes qualify as fully "free" and "democratic" government.[138] The Kyrgyz Republic, the only country rewarded with initial optimism for political and economic liberalization by international financial institutions, has reverted back to authoritarian rule, although its regime remains the most open and least oppressive one in the region.[139] In all republics, political oppositions are fragmented and weak – through both oppression as well as their own misconduct of political affairs. No credible alternative and/or platform have ever been presented to the population. In addition, governments accuse the opposition that they established links with underground Islamist movements threatening to destroy the secular state. Reports in Central Asia say the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has merged with other regional radical Muslim groups and with China's Uighur separatists to form the Islamic Movement of Central Asia.[140]

- International rivalries: Although the Soviet dominance left Central Asia with no directly conferred territorial disputes, the current international boundaries are inherited from artificially-carved internal administrative borders of the former USSR. Coupled with

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[138] Diamond (1999), pp. 279-280.

[139] Ellings and Friedberg, ed. (2002), p. 232.

[140] Ibragim Alimbekov (2002): IMU Reportedly Expands, Prepares to Strike Western Targets. URL: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav102902. shtml>

clan-based sentiments, border clashes are not unlikely in the future if the political and economic situation will destabilize. At present, mutual accusations and distrust have already become part of the relations between these five states.

- Environmental damage: Drying of the Aral Sea and a shortage of water supply caused by canalization projects during the Soviet period are primary issues of concern in the environmental field. Though no short-term solution is possible, foreign direct investment and projects are vital in solving this long-term problem.

#### *c. Outside Interests*

In response to the potential threat of radical Islam in Central Asia, the United States, Russia and China are emphasizing security assistance and engagement with regional governments.[141] Even though human rights records show that Central Asian states further elaborated domestic repression, "since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. policy is directed by the engagement."[142] This strategy hopefully will encourage the five national governments to conduct gradual liberalization. There are four areas of primary interest of all three major powers with regards to Central Asia:

- Strategic: Central Asia is the outermost frontier of the Islamic world. Its proximity to Russia, China, Afghanistan and Iran in particular - and the Islamic world, in broader terms – make this region a natural buffer

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[141] Ariel Cohen (2002): U.S. Officials Relying on Engagement Strategy to Promote Change in Central Asia: URL: <http://www.eurasianet.org/ departments/insight/articles/eav111402.shtml>

[142] Cohen (2002).

among the powers seeking hegemony in Asia. Central Asia offers one of the basing areas to the U.S. forces within the context of the War on Terrorism. The same arguments, though with the connotation of the anti-drug operations and border security, can be made about Russia's interest in the region.

- Economic: The region, especially its western frontiers adjacent to the Caspian Sea, is abundant with oil and natural gas. Other areas within Central Asia are rich with gold, uranium and silver. Economic integration with the outside world will promote development in this impoverished region.

- Political: Continued political and economic exchange between the United States and the Central Asian governments may assist in the liberalization of the regimes. The region, therefore, can be crucial in promoting democracy in Asia and the Muslim world. For Russia and China, maintenance of the secular regimes serves their interest in containing the rise of radical Islamism and spillover into their own frontiers.

In sum, Central Asia can be considered a new buffer, shifted from Mongolia westwards following the end of the Cold War. The region has greater importance than Mongolia in any bilateral or triangulating relations among the major powers by virtue of both its opportunities offered and problems demanding immediate attention. For any one of the three most interested powers (Russia, China and the United States), Mongolia does not provide a central geopolitical position approximate to the three factors of concern – the two others plus the Islamic world. It is less endowed with valuable resources, and however ironically,

does not face the same problems in such great scales that may trigger the instability, so that the major powers have to pay attention. In addition, there are no visible signs of building a common identity and shaping the mutually benefiting interests. Therefore, from both the constructivist and the realist view, Central Asia cannot be regarded as a serious option for Mongolia's foreign policy.

## C. EAST ASIA: A DYNAMIC SOUTH AND A RELUCTANT NORTH

### 1. Intra-Regional Diversity

In sharp contrast to Central Asia, East Asia offers Mongolia a viable arena for multilateral and bilateral cooperation and is not considered to be a buffer zone of the major players. Mongolia's foreign policy behavior has been opportunistic toward this region.

In 1994 Junichi Goto and Koichi Hamada analyzed the short- and mid-term projections for intense regional cooperation and identified three causal factors determining that preconditions for regional integration were "favorable":

> Compatibility of the degree of confluence in macroeconomic variables in selected countries of Asia to those of Europe; the magnitude of the possible gains from trade liberalization among Asian countries that would constitute a strong incentive to create free-trade agreements; and high degree of factor mobility among East Asian countries as serving as rationale for creating a common currency area in East Asia.[143]

[143] Junichi Goto and Koichi Hamada (1994): "Economic Preconditions for Asian Regional Integration," in Ito Takatoshi and Anne O. Krueger, ed. (1994): Macroeconomic Linkage: Savings, Exchange Rates, and Capital Flows. University of Chicago Press, pp. 359-385.

After nearly a full decade since this research was conducted, efforts by nation-states to foster East Asian cooperation were rewarded with certain achievements. Expressing a commitment to free-trade agreements has become an increasingly attractive move for the region's national leaders:

> ASEAN's reaffirmation of ASEAN + 3; … ASEAN + China proposal, and … plan for a Japan - ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership are all signs that nations are looking to trade to inject spark into their economies… China's entry into the World Trade Organization and the shift in foreign direct investment to China spurred all the talk about cooperation[144]

However, there are several limitations to both Mongolia's satisfactory participation in the East Asian regionalism, and to the evolution of the latter as such. Unlike Western Europe or North America, East Asia has no strong institutions to facilitate the process of regional dialogue. Even in the economic sphere there is an obvious incompatibility. Despite the suggestion of favorable preconditions, Goto and Hamada have also concluded that "close interrelation of the East Asian countries, like those of the European Community … does not necessarily lead to an economic justification of East Asian free trade area."[145] In terms of identity, cultural and political bonds are not as strong as in the above-mentioned regions. The Cold War still continues in the region, and a major

[144] Frank-Jürgen Richter (2002): "Prospects for An Asian NAFTA," in Far Eastern Economic Review, April 18, 2002.

[145] Goto and Hamada (1994), pp. 359-385

conflict (the Korean War) has technically never ended. Political and economic systems vary greatly from one country to another. Above all, the diversity – not as much among the states – but between the two distinct geographical and geo-economic sub-regions of the broader region of East Asia seems to be a decisive factor in affecting the regional integration. Hence, the patterns of construction of regional identity within Southeast and Northeast Asia are examined in the following two sections.

### 2. Southeast Asian Regionalism: An Exemplar Case

Southeast Asian regionalism represents a unique case study. It reveals several trends of special interest for this research. First is the construction of a common identity from among a conglomerate of crystallized identities, the former being closely related to a primordial identity of all states in the region. Second is a reconciliation of the security and economic interests of the respective states. Third is an emerging model for reconciliation of identity and interest for the Northeast Asian states, which began to gravitate if not toward Southeast Asia *per se*, then toward the pattern of interaction that the region exemplifies. Fourth, an example of a post-Cold War identity construction and interest evaluation by a formerly Soviet satellite state, Vietnam, can represent a possible prescription for Mongolia's search for its identity and place in Asian politics.

### *a. Amalgam of Cultures and Regimes*

Southeast Asia, as opposed to Northeast Asia, had and has much more opportunity for relatively even multilateral cooperation, with already existing structures that are flexible enough to accept regional countries with different political, cultural and socio-economic systems. The sub-region encompasses ten nations representing four major religious traditions and a wide range of political regimes. The faith adhered to by the majority of population, and consequently, the dominant religious and cultural tradition in Thailand, Myanmar[146], Laos and Cambodia is Buddhism; whereas in Vietnam it shares this function with Confucianism. In Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia Islam has played that role, while in the Philippines it was Christianity (Roman Catholicism). Singapore represents a multiethnic and multicultural state, where all the aforementioned traditions plus Hinduism exist as cultural factors. The latter also remains a factor in parts of Indonesia.

As for the types of government, Southeast Asian nations include many variations. There are authoritarian regimes of two types – military junta (Myanmar) and one-

[146] The name of this country is an issue of controversy. The military regime called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC; prior known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, or SLORC), which seized power in the 1988 coup d'etat has renamed the official English version of the country's name from Burma to Myanmar. The democratic opposition and the U.S. Government does not recognize this name and continue to refer to Burma; this is based on Washington's non-recognition of the regime. However, disconnected from the political context, the word "Myanmar" appears to be (as is claimed by the regime) a more accurate phonetic transliteration of a local name for the country. Herein I follow this tradition, also based on the fact that the Mongolian Government, as well as the UN uses this term for reference. For further information on the name issue, see David Steinberg (2001): Burma: the State of Myanmar. Georgetown University Press, pp. xi-xii.

party states (Vietnam and Laos).[147] Though in July 2003 it held a multi-party election, Cambodia is also categorized as a "non-democracy" due to the influence of its military in the politics.[148] Other nations can be labeled as democracies, but in accordance with the Freedom House classifications, "electoral democracies" that practice the "partly free" environment for political and civil liberties constitute the majority.[149] Only Thailand and the Philippines are classified under the category of "liberal democracy" with the status of "free" nation.[150]

In terms of systemic variety in national economies, with the possible exception of Myanmar there is no clear-cut statist/autarkic economy in Southeast Asia, but at least two different variations of market economy remain in the region. Vietnam and Laos apply the Chinese-style limited marketization, and in all other countries a blend of free market and statist capitalism prevails.[151]

These nations with otherwise "uncompromising" variety in cultural, political and economic systems they possess, nevertheless were able to create the most viable regional institution within East Asia and continue to act as a driving force behind the intra-Asian dialogue. ASEAN and its broader regional forum, the ARF, have been able to bring the Northeast Asian states into a mechanism for promoting mutual security and cooperation. The phenomenon

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[147] Huntington (1996), p. 132.

[148] Freedom House Country Rating Survey (2002). URL: http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/countryratings>

[149] Freedom House (2002).

[150] Freedom House (2002).

[151] For further information on the economic systems of Southeast Asian states, see Ashok K. Dutt, ed. (1985): Southeast Asia: Realm of Contrasts. Westview Press.

of such capability despite the compelling differences is, perhaps, what has been both praised and criticized vividly in Western academic circles – the so-called "ASEAN Way" and the related principle of non-interference.[152] For a number of scholars, these two are identical terms and represent strength of an Asian social and political construction based on the cultural heritage. Jürgen Rüland argues that "ASEAN's collective identity [is] crystallized in the revered principle of non-intervention," however, he does not give much credit to the adherence to this principle by respective national governments by calling it "a pious myth."[153] Amitav Acharaya shares this point of view and attributes the principle of *musyawarah,* originally tested among Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia as "the basis for setting differences among members, [which] would later form ASEAN's central approach to regional interaction and cooperation."[154] Catharin Dalpino and David Steinberg, on the contrary, see a certain confluence between the two and point out this strength as simultaneously being the manifestation of the weakness of Western-orchestrated security mechanisms:

> The United States chafes at what it sees as the turgid pace of the ASEAN process, but this irritation masks a larger reality: attempts by Washington to introduce its own vision of a regional framework for Asia have historically been doomed. ASEAN was

[152] Amitav Acharaya (2001): Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order. Routledge, pp. 57-60.

[153] Jürgen Rüland (2000): "ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: Theoretical Implications and Practical Consequences for Southeast Asian Regionalism," in The Pacific Review, Vol. 13, No. 3/2000, p. 439.

[154] Amitav Acharaya (2000): The Quest for Identity: The International Relations of Southeast Asia. Oxford University Press, pp. 82-83.

> established a few years after the collapse of the U.S.-led Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which failed from the beginning to follow the model of its European counterpart. As recently as the mid-1990s, Asian leaders, even democratic ones, rejected a U.S. attempt to form an Asian human rights network modeled after the Helsinki Accords … Washington is in no better position to launch its own version of regional cooperation on counterterrorism. Political constraints on both sides of the Pacific prevent the duplication of the Philippines quasi-combat joint "training exercises" elsewhere in Southeast Asia.[155]

Other researchers stipulate that the two are very separate phenomena; for instance, Gillian Goh identifies the "ASEAN Way" as a "viable strategy for global conflict resolution" and having some contradiction with the non-interference.[156] The latter, perhaps, is the reflection of the acceptance of varying political and economic systems within the regional organization, and absence of strict criteria to be a member state thereof. However, it should be noted that ASEAN has evolved throughout the last three decades into a more solid, vibrant regional institution that can be at least loosely compared to the EU and the Organization of American States (OAS), which cannot be said about the ARF and other emerging mechanisms. Thus, the "ASEAN Way" may not be identical to its founding principle of non-interference within the ASEAN 10, but the same pattern is very consistent with the aforementioned

[155] Catharin Dalpino and David Steinberg (2002): "The U.S. Should Support an "ASEAN Way" to Fight Terrorism," in PacNet Newsletter, No. 13, March 29, 2002. URL: <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0213.htm>

[156] Gillian Goh (2003): "The 'ASEAN Way': Non-Intrevention and ASEAN's Role in Conflict Management," in Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs, Vol. 3, No. 1/Spring 2003, pp. 113-118.

principle within the broader framework of the ARF, ASEAN+3 etc. Hence, Southeast Asian regionalism, while being far from perfect, nevertheless represents a model for the regionalization processes in Northeast Asia.

However, as is stated above, ASEAN is not a perfect organization, nor do its member states possess ultimate security assurances and developmental incentives from one another and abroad. The common identity is still under construction. Southeast Asia's security is a complex and somewhat vulnerable issue. According to Mr. Sidharto Suryodipuro of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, "security [in Southeast Asia] is related closely to the region's open maritime access and the presence of all the major powers, combined with a complex history. No common and clear-cut security perception exists, and as a result a number of regional countries prefer neutrality to address the politics of the great powers, others seek to engage and maintain balance among these powers, and some favor regional freedom of action."[157] He also suggests that "the staunchest supporters for regional freedom of action are Indonesia and Vietnam."[158] Of these, the post-Cold War adjustment of Vietnam into the complex regional security and economic cooperation mechanism is used as an example and addressed in detail in the following section.

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[157] This quote is directed from an interview with my fellow NPS student, Mr. Sidharto Suryodipuro of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. March 05, 2003.

[158] Suryodipuro (2003).

### *b. Post-Cold War Adjustment: Vietnam*

Vietnam represents an interesting case of the post-Cold war identity construction and interest evaluation. Vietnam's behavior of interactions with the USSR and the PRC during the Cold War was characterized by a gradual shift from the Chinese sphere of influence to the Soviet one. Vietnamese policy toward, and relations with the two major Communist powers underwent several shifts.[159] From its establishment in 1945 the new Vietnamese government ruled by the Communists was subject to strong Chinese influence but had restrained relations with the Soviets. Strong cultural ties of the Vietnamese people and state to China and the fact that during the First Indochina War the PRC was an important ally of Vietnam, served as positive factors for Sino-Vietnamese cordial relations.[160] Since the earliest days of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), when the party's primary mentor was the Comintern, the Soviet Union had played a complex role in VCP affairs.[161] Historically, however, the relationship between the two nations has been characterized by strain, particularly on the Vietnamese side, and the record suggests several instances of Soviet neglect or betrayal of Vietnamese interests.[162]

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[159] Ronald J. Cima, ed. (1989): Vietnam: A Country Study. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, p. 222.

[160] On Sino-Vietnamese ties, see William J. Duiker (1983): Vietnam: Nation in Revolution. Westview Press, p. 16.

[161] Cima, ed. (1989), p. 221.

[162] This was caused by a number of reasons, among which: Moscow's indifference toward the VCP's founding in 1930; Moscow's "silent support" of France in 1930-40s; USSR didn't officially recognize DRV until 1950; USSR didn't support DRV bid for UN in 1948 and 1951; USSR supported Vietnam's partitioning in Geneva in 1954; USSR sponsored a proposal to admit both Vietnamese governments simultaneously into UN in 1956 etc. These examples of Soviet policy reminded the Vietnamese of

In the brief intermediary period following the war and unification of the country, Hanoi pursued the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States. This period was characterized by some void in Vietnam's bilateral relations with major powers – caused by deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations and still emerging alliance with Moscow. The Vietnamese leaders hoped to gain both diplomatic recognition from the United States and a friendship treaty with Moscow, as a double guarantee against future Chinese interference in a same manner that they "successfully manipulated Sino-Soviet tension to their advantage, obtaining substantial military and economic assistance from both."[163] However, this initiative did not result in immediate success.[164] Thus, through the late 1970s and the early 1980s Vietnam entered a full-fledged alliance with the Soviet Union. Domestically, this shift was facilitated by the decline of political influence of the figure who carried most sympathetic attitude toward Beijing, Truong Chinh, and rise of the leadership of a pro-Soviet statesman, Le Duan.[165]

However, in the late 1980s the Soviet-Vietnamese ties were affected by leadership succession and subsequent

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the peril inherent in placing too much trust in a foreign ally; see Cima, ed. (1989), p. 221; and Douglas Pike (1987): Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of An Alliance. Westview Press, pp. 100-102.

[163] John H. and Mae H. Esterline (1990): How The Dominoes Fell: Southeast Asia in Perspective. University Press of America, p. 59.

[164] Both sides had a number of unsolved issues. In the United States, the issue of normalizing relations with Vietnam was complicated by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, the continuing plight of Vietnamese refugees, and the unresolved MIA issue. In Vietnam, the war reparations in form of aid were raised frequently in the 1980s every time when the normalization issue was brought forward; see Cima, ed. (1989), p. 227.

[165] Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet (2001): "An Approach for Analyzing State-Society Relations in Vietnam," in Sojourn, No.2/2001, p. 254.

policy reorientations in the USSR. Despite the cordiality of relations, the Vietnamese distrusted Soviet intentions and resented Hanoi's dependent role; the Soviets in turn "distrusted the Vietnamese for not confiding in them."[166] Finally, Hanoi has taken a more moderate position toward China since 1986 and launched economic reforms based on the Chinese model, thereby returning to the policy of "equidistance."

Vietnam's relations to ASEAN have undergone considerable evolution. ASEAN's charter declares that membership is open to all states in the region. Before Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia in December 1978, integration of the three Indochinese states and ASEAN into a larger regional organization was discussed within the ASEAN community as a possible solution to regional problems. The proposal surfaced at an ASEAN summit meeting in January 1976, when, following reunification, Vietnam requested observer status at ASEAN meetings. It was understood at the time, however, that the inclusion of communist states within a grouping of free-market countries was unprecedented, and the idea was interpreted to be more a goodwill gesture than a serious proposition.[167] During the Vietnam War, each ASEAN state pursued its own Vietnam policy. Malaysia and Indonesia maintained strict neutrality, whereas Thailand and the Philippines assisted South Vietnam.[168] Indonesia and Malaysia viewed Vietnam as a buffer against Chinese expansionism.[169] Thailand, despite

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[166] Cima, ed. (1989), p. 228.

[167] Cima, ed. (1989), p. 229.

[168] David P. Chandler, William R. Roff, et. al. (1997): In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History. University of Hawaii Press, p. 443.

[169] Nicholas Tarling, ed. (1998): The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol. 4 – From World War II to the Present. Cambridge University

its tradition of "special anti-communism," turned to China for protection following the war's end and the subsequent withdrawal of United States forces from its territory.[170] The 1978 invasion of Cambodia drew the ASEAN nations to unite in their condemnation of Hanoi.[171]

The *Doi Moi* reform launched in 1986 marked a turning point in the development of Vietnam's new orientation of international relations. In the 1990s Vietnam continued moving toward deeper regional and global integration. This trend was reflected by mottos put forward in successive VCP Congresses: "more friends, less enemy" (1986); "be friend to all" (1991); "strive for regional as well as global integration" (1996).[172] Concluding of the Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia in 1991, in addition to Chinese-style gradual marketization reform policy, was a major step opening the possibility of Vietnam joining ASEAN. This new orientation in foreign policy, based on a broader concept of security, led to significant achievements in Vietnam's diplomacy in 1995, namely, becoming a full member of ASEAN and normalization of the relations with the United States. The main goal of Vietnam's foreign policy seems to be helping facilitate the process of modernization and development, its share in the process of globalization. Normalizing and strengthening relations with neighboring countries is declared a priority in Vietnam's foreign policy, because during the Cold War, Vietnam's relations with its neighbor countries were

Press, p. 233.

[170] Cima, ed. (1989), p. 228.

[171] Clive J. Christie (1998): Southeast Asia in the Twentieth Century: A Reader. Tauris Readers, p. 252.

[172] Duong Quoc Thanh (2001): Vietnam's Foreign Policy: Toward the 21st Century. URL: <http://www.focusweb.org/focus/pd/sec/duongquoc.html>

seriously affected and led to mutual distrust between Vietnam and ASEAN nations. Furthermore, Vietnam gained the reputation of one of the most stable countries in the region in the past years. In the multilateral cooperation arena, Vietnam realizes that its security and interests are closely linked with that of its neighbors, of the region and of the world and that it should not separate itself from this common trend but on the contrary must make full use of this trend for its development.[173] Vietnam's priorities include continued promotion of the policy of diversification and multilateralization of foreign relations, developing cooperative relations with other countries with priority given to neighboring countries in the region.

Vietnam's policy toward China is defined in the motto "good neighborliness, comprehensive cooperation, long-term stability and looking toward the future".[174] In many ways, Vietnam's post-Cold War domestic reforms are modeled after those of China, and in the absence of serious tensions between the two countries nowadays, the bilateral ties are expected to grow steadily. Relations between Vietnam and each member of ASEAN, and other East Asian and South Pacific nations have also undergone positive development. Much of these shifts can be examined within Vietnam's multilateral relations within ASEAN.

As a result of pragmatic bilateral and multilateral approaches, Vietnam not only enjoys trading and political relations, but receives crucial international aid from donor countries. Vietnam actively participated in

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[173] Thanh (2001).

[174] Thanh (2001).

regional and international economic integration. As a member of ASEAN and APEC, Vietnam seems to be fulfilling its commitments within the framework of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and the APEC.[175]

Vietnam supported a number of initiatives aimed at implementing ASEAN agreements focused on regional development, addressing drug addiction among the youth of the region, and promoting cooperation in tourism and culture. As proposed by Vietnam, ASEAN adopted the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), as well as reforms to ASEAN operations and procedures. Most recently, Vietnam served in the capacity as Chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee (ASC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (July 2000-July 2001) and the presidency of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (September 2001-September 2002). Within this framework, Vietnam has focused on implementing the Hanoi Plan of Action, aimed at cooperation and external relations of ASEAN, and the ASEAN Vision 2020 document.[176]

Vietnam has pushed the drafting of the Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing the Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration, which was approved at the 34th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi.[177] It has tried to promote peace and stability in the region by joining ASEAN's concerted efforts to turn the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation into a code of conduct that affects ASEAN

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[175] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2000): Some Features of Vietnam's Foreign Policy in 2000 and Directions for 2001. URL:<http://www.mofa.gov.vn:8080/Web%20server/ForeignPolicy.nsf/312c6cfc285b34aac72568cb0028c4b7/9f32b90d3f78930cc72569bd001714ac?OpenDocument>

[176] Ha Hong Hai (2002): Article on Vietnam in Christopher A. McNally and Charles E. Morrison, ed. (2002): Asia pacific Security Outlook: 2002. Japan Center for International Exchange, p. 183.

[177] Hai (2002), p. 183.

members and countries outside the region. Vietnam is also taking part in the promulgation of the Rules of Procedure of the High Council for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Treaty, and in the promotion of the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.[178]

In general, it can be said that Vietnam's identity construction was successful and the national interest was adequately evaluated and addressed.

### 3. Northeast Asian Interactions: A Distinct Pattern

In the light of the above-noted accomplishments within Southeast Asia, the natural question is whether Northeast Asia has increased its plausibility for a more intense regional cooperation, as expected of East Asia in general or Southeast Asia. On the one hand, the formation of sub-regional economic zones in Northeast Asia labeled as "one big, three small, and one heated" – i.e. general cooperation in the region, the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan Sub-regional Economic Zones respectively, and the Tumen River International Cooperation and Development Zone, are perceived as "prevailing geo-economic patterns" in the region.[179] Though a trend toward strengthening regionalism can be observed here, a fair degree of setback and stagnation has also occurred. The former Mongolian Prime Minister Rinchinnyamyn Amarjargal (1999-2000), stated in *The Japan Times*:

> We have to admit that, so far, existing instruments of Northeast Asian [economic]

[178] Hai (2002), pp. 183-184.

[179] Lü Zhongwei (1993): "Northeast Asian Economic Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Era," in ISGCC Policy Papers, No.06/1993.

> cooperation have not fully corresponded to the scale and dynamics of the economies in the region. … Criticism of the unsatisfactory mechanisms for economic cooperation comes from the business community of the region.[180]

Perhaps the logical interpretation for the relative modesty of Northeast Asian regionalism and efforts for integration as compared to those of Southeast Asian nations is that the Northeast Asian dynamics cannot be measured by the standards and evaluation applied to the entire Asia-Pacific and/or East Asia. The key characteristics of this sub-region are: (1) Systemic variety in terms of economic system – varying from socialist economy to transitional and full-fledged market economies; and heterogeneity in size and economic development, infrastructure, population density, as well as in natural resource endowment; (2) Predominance of major players seeking some forms of position within the emerging regional framework that undermines the existing drives toward integration; (3) As a geo-economic sub-region, Northeast Asia does not include the entire territory of the two major actors – Russia and China, but only their frontier regions, leaving the sub-region outside of the policy priorities of the respective national governments.[181] Of these, only the first one is identical to those of Southeast Asia and the two other factors are unique to Northeast Asia.

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[180] Rinchinnyam Amarjargal (2003): "Establishing Confidence in Northeast Asia," in The Japan Times, January 20, 2003. URL: <http://www.amarjargal.org/en/index.php>

[181] Hisako Tsuji (2001): "APEC's Northern Frontier: Northeast Asia," in ERINA, May 14, 2001.

The following logical question is whether Northeast Asia, possessing the above-listed features, can perform as a "developmental zone" operating on the basis of favorable preconditions for setting a common security institution. For the disadvantages of having a systemic variety of the region's economies, there are also the advantages in terms of mutual complementarities. A Chinese scholar stipulates that countries possessing diversified market size and development can set forth a precedent for a viable, beneficial cooperation:

> The Northeast Asian economic development and cooperation could well establish a new model of interest to both academics and practitioners. Serving as a model, it will facilitate cooperation among developing economies and promote cooperation between developed countries and developing countries as well… Large economic blocs with many participants must impose many restrictions under agreement. In the [Northeast Asian] program, with few participants, policy coordination can take precedence over policy restriction. This should encourage other sub-regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.[182]

There is certainly a common interest among the states in Northeast Asia. Emerging incentives for free trade agreements, and second, growing factor mobility within the region, if they continue to develop, can create two of the three preconditions selected by Goto and Hamada as critical for the regional economic integration. However, in terms of

[182] Han Feng (2002): The Chinese View on Northeast Asia Economic Cooperation: The Eurasian Railway and China. Report Delivered to the Helsinki Railroad Symposium, April 3-4, 2002. URL: <http://www.geocities.com/kaky_ry/symposium/hanfeng.html>

the third precondition, e.g. comparative confluence of macroeconomic variables, largely affected by such determinant factors as market size and infrastructure development, current diversity is not likely to diminish within the short- and mid-term perspectives. Therefore, the politics of identity that glues the rationalization of interests together must be analyzed in order to reveal the upcoming tendencies. Two cases of the three countries are selected within Northeast Asia to detect some similar patterns of identity construction that produced the diametrically opposed results – South Korea/Japan (in interrelation) and North Korea.

#### *a. From Antagonism to Alignment: Japan and South Korea*

An interesting dynamic has occurred in South Korea-Japan relations during the postwar period. The two nations, historically sharing hostile attitudes toward each other, which were exacerbated during Japan's colonial rule over Korea, were able to construct a new common identity and launch policies to pursue their common interests. From 1945 on, "Japanese and Korean emotions, openly articulated by the two sides, clashed," based on a number of issues, mostly related to Japanese colonial rule over Korea.[183] Some observers of Japanese-Korean relations, particularly "those in the West, have attributed the clash to President Syngman Rhee's truculent anti-Japanese attitude."[184] But the situation was to change soon thereafter, and the normalization, initiated by the efforts of the then-South Korean President Park Chung-Hee's administration in the

[183] Lee, Chong-Sik (1985): Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension. Hoover Press, p. 1.

[184] Lee (1985), p. 2.

1960s "under strong American pressure,"[185] has gradually evolved into what Victor Cha refers to as the "quasi-alliance, in which two states remain unallied but share a third party as a common ally."[186] For this section, I primarily rely on Cha's theoretical findings repudiating the classical realism and offering an additional dimension of social construction. The South Korea-Japanese relations appear to be a puzzling phenomenon, bordering between friction and amicability:

> This endeavor [of the South Korea-Japan quasi-alliance] yields two basic findings. First, the "normal" state of relations between Japan and the ROK is characterized by friction. This stems not only from historical animosity but also from a fundamental disparity in each state's perceptions of the surrounding security environment and expectations from the other. Despite the fact that Japan and the ROK are not allied, the friction they exhibit is a typical of an asymmetrical dependent alliance. Second, variations from this baseline of contentious behavior are a friction of the United States' defense commitment to the region. In particular, when there exists a weak (or what is perceived to be a wavering) American resolve, overarching security concerns compel Japan and the ROK to exhibit significantly less contention and greater cooperation over bilateral issues. However, when there exists an asymmetry in the two states' being "abandoned" by the United States, Japan-ROK relations return to their "normal" state of contentious interaction.[187]

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[185] Bruce Cumings (1998): Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History. W. W. Morton and Company, p. 330.

[186] Victor D. Cha (1999): Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle. Stanford University Press, p. 3.

The concepts of "entrapment" and "abandonment" fears are used by Cha to interpret the changing triangular relationships among the United States, South Korea and Japan, varying from cooperation to antagonism that were persistent from the 1960s until the early 1990s. Cha develops three propositions to clarify his concepts: (1) "When a state fears abandonment, one of the options it will choose is to show a stronger commitment to the alliance in order to elicit a reciprocal response by the ally," (2) "When a state fears entrapment, it will show a weaker commitment to the ally to prevent the ally from being intransigent toward the adversary," and (3) "The optimal strategy in the alliance game is to maximize one's security from the alliance while minimizing one's obligations to it."[188] These propositions lead Cha into an interesting theoretical interpretation:

> The quasi-alliance model of Japan-ROK relations also provides lessons regarding the explanatory power of the Realist view of international relations: the Japan-ROK anomaly highlights a broader concern that the East Asian region presents empirical cases beyond the explanatory domain of the international relations theories. Interaction among states in the region is grounded in history, culture, and value system that is distinctly Asian. By contrast, the Realist view generally assumes interest-based behavior drawn from Western experience. In analyzing the Japan-ROK case, [this book accepts] certain basic Realist tenets but also considers the role played by history, perceptions, and commitments.[189]

[187] Cha (1999), p. 5.

[188] Cha (1999), pp. 200-201.

[189] Cha (1999), p. 5.

This evolution from antagonism to alignment can theoretically be explained from varying perspectives. For instance, Lee Chong-Sik attributes the positive development in the Japanese-South Korean relations to a series of international developments and domestic political changes in both countries, such as the U.S. policy, increasingly aggressive posture of the Soviet Union, turmoil in China and the war in Vietnam.[190] It can be observed from such an analysis that either a common security threat or an obligation before a mutual ally obliterated the historical grievances; e.g. here both states' behavior is presented merely as responses to the international system. Koon Woo-Nam names the economic incentives both for the national development, as well as for Park's fraction to consolidate its political power, as the motivation behind normalization.[191] Despite this difference, both authors point at what Cha labels as "interest-based behavior."

On the contrary, Cha concludes "as deep as historical animosity and emotionalism may run, they are not in the long term all-determining in state behavior."[192] These statements lead to a form of interpretation what the author describes as a "more precisely defined version of Realism."[193] However, my argument is that while acknowledging the realist pursuit of self-interest by both states, the cultural and historic components of their relations must be drawn from the constructivist

[190] Lee (1985), pp. 68-74.

[191] Koon Woo-Nam (1989): South Korean Politics: The Search for Political Consensus and Stability. University Press of America, p. 33.

[192] Cha (1999), p. 232.

[193] Cha (1999), p. 5.

conceptualization. In a way, I enlist the metaphors used by Victor Cha as "dichotomy between Realism and reality,"[194] or the one by See Seng Tan and Ralph Cossa as "rescuing realism from Realists,"[195] e.g. rely on the interpretations of the states' behavior as based on realist interests, but influenced by factors that must be addressed via other theoretical propositions. The overall evaluation of the unique relations between South Korea and Japan is that the behavior of the two states has evolved from the realization of common interests, which in turn shaped their common identity as East Asian, non-communist, free market systems. Here the causal mechanism is that interest shapes identity, thus the reality was in essence a construction.

### *b. From Balancing to Brinkmanship: North Korea*

North Korea's behavior during and after the Cold war represents an interesting dynamic of an East Asian power-balancing tactic turned into isolation. During the Cold War North Korea was able to maintain balanced bilateral relations with the two Communist powers by shifting loyalties frequently yet moderately - a tactic measured by the criteria of benefit and aimed at reducing dependence from both.[196] P'yŏngyang, in some ways, was able to "play the Beijing card against the Moscow card."[197]

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[194] Cha (1999), p. 17.

[195] See Seng Tan and Ralph A. Cossa (2001): "Rescuing Realism from the Realists: A Theoretical Note on East Asian Security," in Sheldon W. Simon, ed. (2001): The Many Faces of Asian Security. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., pp. 20-21.

[196] Andrea Matles Savada, ed. (1994): North Korea: A Country Study. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, p. 257.

[196] Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis and Xue Litai (1995): Uncertain Patterns: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War. Stanford University Press. p. 14.

[196] Brzezinski (1967), p. 408.

[197] Quansheng Zhao (2000): "China and the Two Koreas," in Wonmo Dong,

Though formal diplomatic relations were established with all Communist-ruled governments of Eastern Europe and Asia, North Korea did not join the Warsaw Pact and the COMECON, while maintaining its membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. Bilateral relations with the Communist countries were restrained and shifted in accordance with turning points in the DPRK-USSR and the DPRK-PRC relations.[198] Throughout the period, cordial ties were maintained with Romania and Albania, the two Communist-ruled countries with strong nationalist components in official ideology.[199] This kind of policy, if other variables were successfully introduced following the collapse of the worldwide Communist system, could have made North Korea a viable post-totalitarian society in Asia.

However, today North Korea not only maintains its rigid dictatorship, but is considered one of the four core rogue states considered by the United States - along with Iraq (until April 2003), Iran and Libya – states that are hostile to the West, do not follow "normal" international behavior, have developed weapons of mass destruction programs and harbor terrorists. Even if North Korea did not enjoy a broad range of bilateral and multilateral contacts during the Cold War, its relations were not as isolationist as in the post-Cold war era. Relations with the two "former mentors" – Russia and China - remain undisturbed at the official level, but both countries have developed intensive and vibrant political, economic and humanitarian

ed. (2000): The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation. M. E. Sharpe, p. 136.

[198] On North Korea's relations with the USSR and the PRC during the Korean War, see Don Oberdorfer (2001): The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History. Basic Books, pp. 9-10.

[199] Brzezinski (1967), p. 408.

cooperation with South Korea following the recognition of the Seoul government by Moscow (1990) and Beijing (1992).[200]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991, North Korea has worked to build a relationship with Russia's new political leaders. Its efforts to recapture some of the previous closeness and economic benefits of its relationship with the former Soviet Union are seriously hampered by Russia's preoccupation with its domestic issues and new foreign policy priorities. Russia’s renewed “doctrine” on North Korea does not oblige its government to military assistance to it, with the possible exception that it is invaded by a foreign power.[201]

More out of economic necessity than ideological compatibility, North Korea sought to maintain good relations with China, despite the latter's increasingly close economic and diplomatic ties with South Korea. Throughout the 1990s, North Korea and China reaffirmed their commitment to socialism, but at the time China did not express clear signals for North Korea's other agenda.[202] Close Sino-North Korean ties continue, but Beijing is striving to maintain a balance in its relationship with the two Koreas. Although China remains a crucial trade partner for North Korea, Beijing's former willingness to assist P’yŏngyang economically by extending easy credit is increasingly giving way to no assistance and less and less extension of credit. Coincidental with the changing patterns in its relations with China and Russia, North Korea has moved to improve its strained relations with

[200] Savada, ed. (1994), p. 257.

[201] The latter provision is vague and abstract that is not taken seriously in Moscow; see Savada, ed. (1994), p.202.

[202] Savada, ed. (1994), p. 203.

Japan. P'yŏngyang's primary motives are relief from diplomatic and economic isolation and monetary compensation for the period of Japan's colonial rule (as was the case of Japan-South Korean normalization). These issues have not been solved, but contacts continue to modestly develop. [203]

Following South Korea's lead, Washington sought to reduce P'yŏngyang's isolation and to encourage its opening to the outside world and began facilitating cultural, scholarly, journalistic, athletic, and other exchanges with North Korea after 1988. By the early 1990s some exchanges were occurring in these areas between the two nations. Seeking economic help and greater international legitimacy, North Korea in recent years has sought to reconcile with South Korea by promising non-aggression, reciprocal cooperation, and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. But the regime has repeatedly violated such promises. In October 2002 North Korea confirmed that they were running a nuclear program, declared the Framework Agreement nullified, but has since stated that it is willing to negotiate issues over its weapons program, on the condition that the United States concludes a non-aggression treaty. On the U.S. side, there was reportedly a perception that when the United States signed the Agreed Framework, many in the administration expected the North Korean government to collapse before the

[203] Until the late 1980s, North Korea's post-World War II policy toward Japan was mainly aimed at minimizing cooperation between Japan and South Korea, and at deterring Japan's rearmament while striving for closer diplomatic and commercial ties with Japan. Crucial to this policy was the fostering within Japan of support for North Korea, especially among the Japanese who supported the Japanese communist and socialist parties and the Korean residents of Japan. Over the years, however, North Korea did much to discredit itself in the eyes of many potential supporters in Japan, including harboring of the elements of the Japanese Red Army, inability and refusal to pay its debts to Japanese traders and other issues; see Savada, ed. (1994), p. 203.

promised light-water nuclear reactors would be operational in 2003. Rather than a step toward normalization, the agreement functioned as a stopgap measure.[204] The North Korean government, however, has not collapsed. The economic embargo further severs P'yŏngyang from the capitalist world and reinforces the isolationist faction within the North Korean political elite. The motives behind its provocative acts, such as its missile launch and missile sales, remain controversial. Though perceived by Washington as military gestures, these steps may, given North Korea's severe crisis, represent a policy of "brinkmanship" with a sole purpose of obtaining a favorable bargaining position to meet its economic needs.[205] Despite signs of emerging contacts with South Korea and the United States in the early 1990s, bilateral relations remain minimal and did not improve at all by the year 2003.

On the multilateral front, the two achievements that stand out are the admission of North Korea (together with South Korea) into the United Nations in 1991 and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 2000. Involvement in other multilateral settings, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, of which North Korea was part since the Cold War era, remain stagnant both due to the evolving nature of these organizations and North Korea's isolationism. P'yŏngyang maintains involvement in a number of UN-sponsored development projects and takes part in second track settings designed at non-proliferation and developmental issues. In spite of these connections, at the governmental level the nature of North Korea's policy remains

[204] John Feffer (1999): "U.S.-North Korea Relations", in Foreign Policy in Focus, Vol. 4, No.15/May 1999.

[205] Feffer (1999).

isolationist even in the multilateral fora. The theoretical framework behind this case is that the combination of irrationality of interest perception and the construction of exclusive identity were the determinants of this state's unusual behavior.

## D. EAST ASIAN MONGOLIA: IDENTITY AND INTEREST RECONCILED

### 1. Conceptualization of East Asia: Construction of Identity and Interest

East Asia, in the three cases selected for this research, offers a unique pattern of state behavior, with some commonalities throughout the region. As a case study, the selected countries represent three different political and economic systems – democracy and market economy (Japan and South Korea), transitional one-party state and mixed economy (Vietnam) and a totalitarian regime and statist economy (North Korea). Their ideological commitments and alliances are utterly different. Yet the common thread is the construction of their identity, exclusive in one case and inclusive in the two others. The causal relations between identity and interest have been two-fold in each case: perception of interest shaping the identity, and the latter, in its own turn, narrowing the policymaking pathway. Irrational interest causes exclusive identity and a self-perception of "independence without interdependence," whereas rational interest (security and economy) leads to the realization of the need to construct a common identity. Rational actors do not seek confrontation with their would-be opponents. Thus, cooperation among the states emerges in the latter case.

This proposition follows closely the theoretical ground of the neo-liberal camp, providing that under

certain conditions "cooperation can emerge in a world of egoists without central authority."[206] But this can be explained by the realist approach, too as "a state will attempt [to challenge] the international system only if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs."[207] All these interpretations echo Morgenthau's claim that "the political realism considers a rational foreign policy to be a good foreign policy."[208] Thus, both a binding and a separating factor between realist and liberal approaches, especially in the case of East Asian statecraft, a construction of identity, which, though occasionally hampered by irrationality, has been steadily evolving. Whether the East Asian construction will evolve into a more robust regional organization or not, is a matter of time. Some authors suggest that it is not at all impossible, as does George Totten:

> How about considering a kind of North Pacific Treaty Organization (NPTO) or a Northeast Asia Treaty Organization (NEATO) (which might be easier to pronounce)? NATO started as an alliance directed against a supposedly expanding Soviet Union, but now it still exists, even though it has lost its original *raison d'être*. This means that a NEATO would not have to have an enemy, as such, either. If such an organization were to come into being, it could handle security concerns that might arise among its members by institutionalized regular meetings aimed at making military capabilities and any changes in them transparent for all members to discuss, so that when any single member began to get out of alignment with the original

[206] Axelrod (1984), p. 3.

[207] Gilpin (1981), p. 10.

[208] Morgenthau (1948/1973), p. 10.

> strengths which all members could live with, all the other members could exert pressure to bring that member back into line. It would thus work automatically to self-adjust not just the original constellation but consciously to work for simultaneous and gradual arms control and arms reduction among all of its members.[209]

However, this statement appears to be too optimistic for two reasons. First, there are a great number of disparities within the region, as addressed in this chapter. Second, a common identity for East Asian states is only going through the stage of construction, coupled with deconstruction of the historical prejudices. The social construction of East Asia as a region is being formed even these days, based on all three forms of identity. Some choose the identification with this region based on their primordiality, some on their cultural crystallization, and others even on their political construction. These choices of identity couple and create a mutually causal effect with the perceptions of interest, as the region becomes one of the most attractive in developmental terms. Perhaps the key asset in the identity construction and pursuit of cooperation is the "ASEAN Way" and the principle of "non-interference," that helps preserve the sovereignty of the states behind the curtain of regionalism.

### 2. Whither Mongolia?

In 1994 the Mongolian parliament adopted two pivotal documents – the Foreign Policy Concept and the National Security Concept. These documents are still in effect and

[209] George Oakley Totten III (2001): Book Review (of Victor Cha's "Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle.") University of Southern California Press. URL: <http://koreaweb.ws/ks/ksr/ksr00-11.htm>

serve as guiding principles of Mongolia's contemporary foreign policy, neutral in stance and balanced in its relations with the immediate neighbors. However, the so-called "balanced approach" is not expected to bear the desired results for a number of reasons, addressed in the second chapter. Nor can the pursuit of a "third neighbor" supplement the buffer role between the two major regional powers. Being a nation with divergent identity, Mongolia faces the challenge of defining the priority in its foreign policy that would best safeguard its interests. The entire decade of the 1990s has marked a decreasing role of Mongolia as political buffer between Russia and China. The latter was caused, in addition to the Russo-Chinese partnership relations, by the fact that five new independent republics of Central Asia now receive the buffer role between the two powers. Within this new geo-strategic environment, Mongolia faces enormous challenges in securing its democratic system and market reforms while elaborating the ties with the regional states. In terms of identity, Mongolia has two options for consolidating its efforts toward finding its rightful place in regional multilateralism. Of these, the Central Asian dimension will likely offer nothing more than a reasserted "bufferist" approach, whereas the East Asian direction can serve both the security and economic interests of Mongolia.

In today's Eastern hemisphere there are the two rims, which I name, for the lack of better terms, the "axis of prosperity." These are the Euro-Atlantic and the Asia-Pacific zones, each pursuing greater intra- and inter-regional cooperation. For that purpose, the construction of a more common, civilization-based identity is underway.

Continentalism (in our case - Eurasianism) can serve at best as an intellectual haven for social traditionalists, political isolationists and economic autarkists. Thus, the old competition between tellurocracy and tallasocracy is seemingly being resolved to the favor of the latter; and for the continental countries like Mongolia, the only choice, however controversial it might sound, is to bandwagon with the regional development. For that, the identity – construction of one and deconstruction of another – will play a crucial role.

Hence, it is my conclusion that the optimal direction for Mongolia's foreign policy priority is that of East Asia. From the very beginning of market-oriented reforms and systemic transformation of the national economy in 1990, the East Asian marketplace and cooperation were crucial for the survival and evolution of the emerging "capitalist culture" in that country. In particular, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and separation of Mongolia from the Soviet-led east European form of integration, the severe economic challenges were overcome not only by the generous aid and assistance from the donor countries, but also by the fact that there was a developing market economy in China and other robust partners within the region. Therefore, by all accounts the obstacles presented by the economic disparity should not affect Mongolia's interest in and identity with the East Asian region.

However, even there Mongolia is challenged by a number of factors. The country's population, market size and infrastructure development are far behind the other nations in the region. Located on the edge of Northeast Asia,

Mongolia is too minuscule to be seriously regarded as an integral part of the multilateral settings. All these factors make Mongolia's East Asian orientation more challenging, but do not deplete its interest and identity with the region. The obstacles, mentioned here, are real but not irresolvable and as our findings show, some forms of diversity, otherwise regarded as restraints to multilateralism, can be utilized for its benefit through the ideas and practices inherent in East Asia.

## E. CHAPTER FINDINGS

From the analysis of regional developments in Asia, conducted in this chapter, I select the following findings as relevant to the issue of correlation of identity and interest, and of interest to the direction in Mongolia's foreign policy:

- Central Asia, as a region, gradually evolves as a political, civilizational, and possibly an economic buffer located at the crossroads of interests of many powers – Russia, China, the United States, Turkey, Iran and other Muslim nations. Ironically, both due to its strategic location and the problems it faces, the region's importance thus increases in the eyes of the major players;
- Central Asian states, as individual nations, have done strikingly little to construct a common identity or assess their common interests. It makes Mongolia's primordial identity not a desired, rational interest, but an irredentism to eschew;

- East Asia provides a different picture, but here the two sub-regions differ much in both the states' behavior and formation of regional institutions. For historical and demographic reasons, culturally diverse Southeast Asia leads culturally rather monolithic Northeast Asia in the construction of a common identity and the suitable ways of cooperation;
- Examples of the region's states present an interesting picture. The two Communist-led states have chosen different strategies in identity construction, and thus, have seen different results. If Vietnam's post-Cold war adjustment can be described as a success, North Korea's can at best be labeled as a failure. The difference lies in the pursuit of irrational interests vs. rational, and the construction of exclusive identity vs. inclusive;
- Japan and South Korea, the two nations with emotional antagonism in the past, have gone through an interesting process, that can be described as an amalgamation of reactive, proactive and constructive policies – e.g. reaction to the challenges of the international system, pursuit of cooperation for mutual benefit and realization of the common plight within a common civilizational area;
- Mongolia, despite its location in the reluctant-to-cooperate part of East Asia, and in spite of its relative weakness, has its future identity, and thus, has vital interest in East Asia.

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# V. CONCLUSION

This thesis had explanatory, descriptive and prescriptive goals. Based on the findings of each chapter, the overarching conclusions can be summarized as: (1) evaluation of theoretical propositions, or defining the causal relationships between identity and interest in their varying types and proposing the primacy of one of them; (2) description of regional trends through the prism of identity and interest, e.g. determining key features of the current processes in Asia, based on the premises associated with the theoretical findings; and (3) provision of policy recommendations for the Mongolian government and foreign service based on the two aforementioned propositions, namely the theoretical generalizations and the description of regional trends.

## A. THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

The world is changing. This familiar statement connotes not only the rapid transformations that the world's nations are undergoing in the contemporary period, but also reflects the very nature of human society. The world, its constituent units – the states, and the system of their interactions – are not static in the sense that they have certain intrinsic characteristics attached to them. The acknowledgement of this fact makes us rethink many traditional premises. As I conducted this study on one country's international behavior and attempted to provide its rationalization, the realization of the dynamic nature of the world system led me to eschew any school of thought in its pure form. Instead, within this research, and this thesis as its materialized result, I made an attempt to

complicate my own way of looking at states, their behavior, and their motivations. In doing so, from among the speculative fusion of the realist, the liberal and the constructivist approaches, my findings favor a position with a strong tilt toward social constructivism. There is a common practice to draw an analogy between a state and an individual human in explaining the behavior of the former. If the realists rely upon the philosophical stream connoting the original sinful nature of a human being to put emphasis on the self-help system, the liberals, on the contrary, put stress on the original divinity of human nature that enables the harmony and cooperation among the states if the proper institutions are set. I tried to deny both, and instead speculate that human behavior is based on socialization and learning, and not on an inherent nature. Thus, the states' behavior, in my view, is based on the perceptions and reactions to them.

It is hard to challenge the two tenets of realism connoting the state as a unitary and rational actor on the one hand, and the anarchic nature of the international system, on the other. However, I start with a premise that a state in not a monolithic and static unit, but rather is a changing organism comprised of a sum of individuals with independent judgment and ideas. Therefore, identity, as a set of ideas and perceptions by a national community about the self, and interest, as a reflection of such identity, are equally important in foreign policy. Their causal interrelation is an interesting phenomenon. If, on the one hand, the former causes the construction of what is perceived to be the interest, then, on the other hand, the latter, too, can occasionally serve as the pathway of

shaping identity. The two seem to be in an inherent, but reconcilable conflict; and the reconciliation can be facilitated through the neo-liberal approach to regional identity and cooperative pursuit of interest. Thus, the theoretical proposition I have come to emphasizes the primacy of identity in making foreign policy.

## B. REGIONAL TRENDS

This thesis is focused on the region as the most important setting for small state's foreign policy. Herein I have made an attempt to approach East Asia through the prism of the two causal factors in foreign policy – identity and interest. Since in my theoretical generalizations I equated the two as having a mutual causal power and acknowledged the primacy of identity, the processes in the region, as well as in Central Asia, are approached from this point of view. In East Asia, the two sub-regions differ much in both the states' behavior and formation of regional institutions. For a number of reasons, Southeast Asia leads Northeast Asia in the construction of a common identity and means of cooperation. This originally very diverse region, in which the states have had little in common in terms of both identity and interest, has come to the construction of, however fragile and imperfect, a common identity and thus formulating the common interests. Thereby in many ways, as the scholars stipulate, the region resembles if not the balance of powers, then the "concert of powers,"[210] in which each state

[210] For additional information on "concert of powers," see Susan L. Shirk (1997): "Asia-Pacific Regional Security: Balance of Power or Concert of Powers?" in David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, ed. (1997): Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World. The Pennsylvania State University Press. pp. 265-268.

maintains maximum sovereignty and is guaranteed from its outright limitation.

Northeast Asia has a number of barriers to such a process, including its demographic, political-geographic and political features. However, through various mechanisms pioneered by Southeast Asian nations, the states in Northeast Asia are increasingly being attracted to such a manner of international behavior. As Tang and Cossa state, "a key social-communicative function of ARF and CSCAP as 'talk shops' may well be to develop a strategic culture in which cooperative security can take root; build trust, confidence, and reciprocity among member states, establish the norm of inclusivity; and socialize states lacking significant historical experience in regional security cooperation."[211]

In general, throughout East Asia there is a visible correlation between identity and interest – exclusive identity promoting irrational interest and vice versa, and inclusive identity promoting rational interest and vice versa. Overall, despite its incomparability to the European integration process, the numerous challenges it faces and flaws it maintains, the evolutionary tendency in East Asia toward the construction of a common identity and the pursuit of common interests is underway.

## C. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The primary objective of this work is academic. For that matter, I did not aim to justify or criticize certain policies of the Mongolian government with regards to its foreign policy. However, the thesis was also designed to

[211] Tan and Cossa (2001), p. 20.

apply theoretical propositions to a particular case, so it cannot avoid having real-world implication.

My motivation for such research is based on my personal attachment as a citizen and a patriot of my country. The search for what are the vital interests for the nation ultimately led to the realization that the national interest is a complex phenomenon that cannot be assessed as granted. According to my mentor, Professor Jigjid Boldbaatar, national interest is "a 'god' that helps to acquire a prudent stance for the sake of survival in, and adaptation to the inevitable process of globalization."[212] As the thesis tied interest with identity, the assessment of the latter played a rather dominating role in the work.

The thesis has come to a two-fold implication for Mongolia. On the one hand, it provided an explanation and a justification of the nation's current de facto policy priorities in East Asian multilateralism. On the other hand, it stresses the need for de jure affirmation and acceleration of such priorities, and calls for a more cautious stance in trying to "court" other powers. I attempted to predict the counter-productivity of the power balance that Mongolia traditionally has been trying in its relations vis-a-vis China, Russia, Japan and the United States. Contrary to the widely shared belief, I conclude that the "third-neighbor" paradigm is not an alternative

[212] Translation from Mongolian into English is my own. Jigjid Boldbaatar (2001): "Ekh Tüükh, Ündesnii Erkh Ashig" (Mon, "History and National Interest,") in Mongol Ulsyn Ündesnii Ayūlgüi Baidlyn Üzel Barimtlalyn Shinjlekh Ukhaany Ündeslel (Mon., "Academic Rationale for the National Security Concept of Mongolia"). National University of Mongolia Press, p. 59.

policy option, but merely a continuation of the power-balancing behavior, and that it realistically cannot result in security assurance or economic incentives. Thus, the most viable identity for the Mongolian nation, the East Asian cultural one, and the most pragmatic articulation of its rational interest lead to the pursuit of active participation in East Asia's emerging regionalism. If during the Cold War Mongolia experienced a trade-off in bandwagoning with the Soviet bloc, so does it expect difficult trade-offs from bandwagoning with regional powers and institutions today. The question is not whether or not to avoid any trade-off in foreign policy, but how to maximize the benefit from such a policy and minimize its risks. In sum, Mongolia has its identity and interest reconciled in the region. Although the country actively pursues this path, yet it still has to be accelerated.

There is another dimension to this implication. In accordance with the thesis' proposition that much depends on perceptions, the identity construction is not a task that can be simply executed by a state, especially for a democratic society. In current Mongolia, it is impossible for the state to launch the politics of identity, which is deeply confined within a civil society. Thus, the matter of time and evolution of public awareness is another variable that must be addressed. Given both the traditional and artificial phobia towards China, any de jure declaration of a "Sino-centric East Asia" as Mongolia's foreign policy priority would be a political suicide for any party or coalition in power. Therefore, the roles of academia and the media are more important and powerful than that of the government in the politics of identity.

Finally, by stressing the importance of East Asian regionalism and the principles of the "ASEAN Way," by no means do I propose any change in the existing domestic political and economic practices, which in many ways are much more progressive than in many other states in the region. Instead, I propose a policy of prudent regionalism based on a collective identity as the nation's foreign policy tool, and continuation of a non-negotiable commitment to political and economic reforms as its domestic policy agenda. Only then Mongolia can safeguard its independence and emerge as an integral part of an interdependent world.

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