

NEGOTIATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL STATES IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

*Paul Meerts**

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to speak to you today on the question of small state negotiation power and options in a world of growing interdependency. After an analysis of globalization and small state negotiation advantages, I dare to share with you some recommendation concerning the future of Mongolia's international politics. As an old friend of the Mongolians and the Mongols, reading about Chinggis Khan in the sixties and working with Mongolians in and outside your country in the nineties, I take the opportunity to add observations to the ones I made in Altan Argamj last year (1).

Globalization has never expressed itself more clearly, and more negatively, than by the attacks on the globalizing hegemon, the United States of America, on September 11th of this year. It is an expression of anti-globalization forces made possible by globalization itself. It has been said that this event marked the historical beginning of the third millennium. However, saying this is already speaking the language of globalization and of the dominant force in globalization up till now: the Western World. After all, for Muslims we are still in the second millennium, while for the Jews we have already passed it by two millennia.

This simple saying illustrates the rifts in the world that have always been there but never came so much into the open as in times of growing interdependency, a shrinking world in terms of communication and transport, and an expanding world in terms of technology and opportunities. All people have opportunities, but some of them they are more opportune than for others. And the others can watch this day by day on their television screen. They see the beneficial effects of globalization that are unequally spread over the world. It confronts them with the things they have in common with their fellow world citizens and the things they are excluded from. This creates a sense of belonging and exclusion at the same time. An extremely dangerous mixture people and their state structures will have to address, if they want it or not.

For sure, we know the world is not a uniform whole, and should never be one. It is a blessing from heaven, or better from Tengri, that people and civilizations have common and opposing features at the same time. As this does not only create not only clashes, but progress in civilization as well. It is true: without common ground no growth. But we also have to remember: without diversity no balanced growth. Biased growth will lead to degeneration like in in-breeding. We have an abundance of examples in our natural environment we are destroying day-by-day in the name of human civilization. But we can also point to organizations like the European Union. The Union can only exist if

* Deputy Director of the Netherlands
Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'

there is enough common ground between its members. But it can only be a successful if there are enough differences between these members in order to make them complementary and thereby create the necessary synergy that makes the Union tick.

The phenomenon of the clashes between civilization is not a new feature, not even after it has been 'discovered' by famous authors like Samuel Huntington. Cultures with a more advanced technology have always clashed with other cultures which lagged behind in certain areas. The success of the Mongols in history is largely due to the triumph of their new organizational technology, based on a strong and warlike populace, over the surrounding tribes and states. The states might be more advanced in cultural refinement, but they lacked the new mobile management of armed forces. Armed forces that fought against each other until Chinggis Khan arrived as a medieval Chief Executive Officer.

It should be noted, however, that Chinggis could never have been so successful if he would not have borrowed certain know-how and technological devices of his adversaries. Tools he used against them, like the terrorists of the eleventh of September used the technological weapons of their opponents to inflict damage upon them. This does not mean however, that I would dare to call Chinggis Khan a terrorist, although there might be certain victims who held this view. The hero of the one, can be the wrath of God for the other. In that sense it is interesting to analyze the different perceptions of the population of countries in the Middle East to people like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.

Thanks to the highly successful organization of their 'company' the Mongols managed to dominate their Chinese, Persian and Russian 'friends'. Why they were not successful with their Egyptian and Japanese new neighbours is another matter. It probably had to do with overstretching: the technology works, but has its limits. At the end of the day the Mongols found themselves unprotected in Mongolia itself against the Ming dynasty.

In my own country, The Netherlands, we overstretched at sea, in stead of on the landmasses of Asia. For us the limits of our modern seafaring technologies, which brought us the hegemony of the so-called 'mare liberum' (another term for Dutch freedom and therefore dominance at sea, were made clear when Louis XIV of France invaded us and found our land borders largely unprotected. Our priorities were the ships, but they did not work against the armies of the French who wanted to have the predominance in Europe.

The Americans have learned from Vietnam and from the Soviet experiences in Afghanistan and were careful not to overstretch in their 'management' of the Taliban government, I will avoid the word regime, and worked closely together with the Northern Alliance and other internal and external allies. It is interesting to note here that they asked their Atlantic allies to invoke article five of the treaty of the North-Atlantic Alliance, but never used the opportunities NATO might have provided them with. Why not? Because they wanted to keep their hands free. Afghanistan shows that using allies is an important tool in being successful and avoiding overstretch, but it also has its

disadvantages. Allies violated human rights in Afghanistan. Here Afghan 'civilization' clashes with US 'civilization'. Having the same interests, having the same anti-Taliban values, does not mean that different values do not exist anymore underneath. A dominant value, a dominant civilization, is only dominant because there are other civilizations underneath.

Cooperation and confrontation have always been the buzz-words in the relations between states. International relations are just that: trying to cooperate notwithstanding, or better because of, opposing interests and emotions. International politics is about the convergence of interests and about the handling of emotions. Let us not forget that even the state has its emotions as embedded in the national symbols and heroes. A side that has been often overlooked by Western cultures, while it is a central feature in Eastern cultures. Having as a consequence that the relations between the representatives of states from West and East have often been damaged by the lack of respect for the integrity of the other state or the honorable representative of that state.

Confrontation can be materialized in many ways, but to tackle the combination with cooperation can only be managed in a few - mainly peaceful - ways. Ever since Adam and Eve, who negotiated on the apple but found that negotiations with the supreme power were not effective in reaching a mutual satisfactory solution on the question of Paradise, man has used negotiation as one of the tools in settling conflicts. International negotiation is the rule in conflict situation today and the use of violence is seen as an exception to that rule (note: before the nineteenth century war has been the rule and negotiation the exception in settling problems between states).

International negotiation is one of the most effective tools in problem solving for small (2) countries like Mongolia and The Netherlands. For sure, there are remarkable differences here. While Mongolia has to handle two big neighbours, The Netherlands has to handle three. It could be noted here that it is more easy to play off two countries against each other than three, but on the other hand two countries have more opportunities to ally against a third. In other words: short term there is a tactical advantage in dealing with two stronger opponents, but long-term it is strategically more difficult to sustain this. Apart from other factors this might explain why The Netherlands is seeking long-term alliances with its powerful friends (if you have such friends you do not need enemies anymore) in the form of the negotiation network called European Union, why Mongolia plays on ad-hoc coalitions. The Netherlands tries to limit the powerful by drawing as many small powers into the network as possible. Maybe this could be an option in the Asian heartland as well. It would mean drawing in Central and East-Asian states and the Shanghai arrangements might be a good starting point here.

As globalization progresses and world interdependencies grow, as cooperation is of ever greater importance and conflicts are more likely to occur as well, international negotiation is an ever more valuable tool for the small states in their confrontation with the more powerful. Stable negotiation networks are in the interest of the less powerful. After all, using military land or sea forces is no longer an option for Mongolia and The Netherlands. They will

lose for sure. So international negotiation is the main tool left over. Happily the application of this device is more effective for small powers than for big ones. A recent study of the Steering Committee of the Processes of International Negotiation (PIN) Network shows that negotiations between unequal powers are likely to produce more relative benefits for the smaller states. The lesser power gets more out of the process than one would expect on the basis of a comparison between the power resources of the contending parties. In other words: the situational power of the small state is often relatively of more relevance than the structural power of the bigger state.

Jeswald Salacuse, in a chapter in the above mentioned book of the PIN network on power and negotiation, draws some lessons for practice on the basis of nine - by coincidence the holy Mongolian number, case studies (3). He has ten lessons for 'the weak':

1. to increase your power, build relationships with appropriate third parties;
2. the importance of power in negotiation may not be so much its reality as its perception;
3. aggregate (overall) power is not as important as issue-specific (situational) power in a given negotiation;
4. getting the stronger side's attention at the highest level is often the first step to increasing power;
5. the stronger side's size and complexity offers opportunities for increasing power in the negotiation;
6. positions taken by the stronger party in other arenas can sometimes be used to increase power in a given negotiation;
7. the power value of a specific resource changes over time, so waiting for the appropriate moment to act can increase power;
8. power can be augmented by taking initiatives in negotiation;
9. power can be increased by understanding and exploiting the international context in which the negotiation is taking place;
10. power can be increased to the extent that you can foster in the leadership of the stronger side an increased commitment to a negotiated settlement of the dispute.

In other words, it is important for a small state as the Mongolian one to take the initiative (lesson 8) to establish (lesson 1,4,10) something like a durable Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Asia (OSCA in stead of OSCE, the counterpart in Europe that involves the United States and Canada as well) thereby creating a cooperative spirit in the Asian Heartland which is of the utmost importance to Asia as a whole (lesson 9). One might say this is the multilateral framework to be co-created and used by the Mongolia state to secure and develop its own position in Asia and in the world. But to be successful in this the Mongolian diplomats will have to be trained to be effective in their behavior to deal with procedures, processes, parties and positions. To conclude: Mongolia has to strengthen its capacity for training its diplomats and other civil servants working with the outside world. It should use the existing resources in Mongolia itself, for example those of the School of Foreign Service and the School of Management, and abroad, e.g. MGIMO and Clingendael.

Both multilaterally and bilaterally planning is important to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of Mongolia in the international arena and of the other party in a given situation (lesson 3). To study the structure (lesson 5) and the overall policy of the opponents (lesson 6), as well as the appropriate moments to start negotiations (lesson 7). One should always keep in mind that small countries have some advantages over big countries: they are often non-threatening (innocence power), which might foster a good atmosphere (relational power) and therefore the willingness of the bigger country to concede more than necessary (guiltiness power). The lines of communication within the small country are shorter (coordinative power) and the number of issues at hand might be smaller (transparency power) than in the big country. This will enhance the effectiveness of the smaller party. The smaller party might be willing to invest more, especially if a central priority is at stake, and could therefore be more successful in the end (mosquito power). To conclude on these issues that need thorough analysis it can be argued that the Planning Department of the Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be beefed up beyond the modest set-up we have today, as well as to support the creation of an independent think tank on international relations that should work in close cooperation with the already established institutions in Mongolia and abroad.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, more specifically the academicians who honored me with the title of doctor honoris causa of the School of Foreign Service of the National University of Mongolia, more in particular my good old close 'amigo' Professor Khereid Bayasakh. If there is any country close to my heart, then it is your country. Once, somewhere in 1992, Professor Bayasakh visited the Clingendael Institute in The Hague. This was one year before my first visit to Ulaanbaatar and two year before my Institute started the Course for Diplomats from Mongolia and Central Asia that trained up till now some twenty percent of the Mongolian Diplomatic Service and that has been an initiative of Professor Bayasakh and a honorary doctor of his School. Professor Bayasakh said, to his colleague professor who had just bought a wonderful Dutch coat: 'now you look like a real professor, but we both know there is a Mongol inside'. The Mongol inside of me, and the Dutchman of the outside, are extremely happy with the honors bestowed on me that gave me an opportunity to return to Mongolia, to meet with old and new friends and to continue with renewed energy our cooperation in the future. A collaboration that is in the interest of, not only Mongolia, but of my institute - and as it showed today of myself - as well.