

CONTINENTAL TRIANGLES IN ASIAN HEARTLAND

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Heart of World Mainland

Sir MacKinder, one of the founders of geopolitics, introduced an idea of "Heartland", in early XX century. His most famous article *"Geography of History"* tells the importance of the Heartland in world politics and history. Although, the era was named as "Pax Britannica" based on worldwide control of sea power, Sir MacKinder warned the Empire to pay an attention on Eurasian Heartland.

He proved that from viewpoint of geopolitics, Eurasia is a specific and all the world political history was about the Eurasian arena. America, Africa and Australia were far from geographic axis of history and little was said about them in history. Eurasia was regarded as the center of the universal mainland and an axis of geopolitics. All the World Empires were established in only way to conquer the Eurasia as a world Heartland. If one could get to conquer the Heartland, he could exercise enormous power in the world.

Mongol Empire was the first who conquered and controlled that Heartland. Reliable system of administration and communication set up all the corner of the continent was the essential to control the Eurasia, the Heart of World Mainland. Such system allowed the central government to administer and exercise power over all parts of the continent and to keep the country under the single authority. Horse was the advantage of Mongols in the battle as well as in administration. Horse relay-service system a crossed whole Mainland, established by Chinggis Khan and developed by Ogedei Khan, provided the best transportation and communication system of the days. The system was changed by modern auto relay-service "Mongoltrans" only in 1930's in Mongolia.

Sir MacKinder concluded in said article published in 1904 that Russian Empire is emerging as the second Heartland Empire of the world. The reason for this conclusion was Trans Siberian Railroad system, which allowed the modern communication system for Russians to govern whole Eurasia, the same as horse relay-service for Mongols. In that time, construction of this railroad system a crossed whole Mainland stepped into its second part.

Russian strategic interest in early XX century targeted harbors of Port-Arthur and Dalinyi to establish mighty fleet in Pacific Ocean. Russia needed these fleets to have an active part in competition among the big powers to conquer Pacific and East Asia. From this strategic goal, Trans Siberian railroad system was essential to supply the fleets from continental resources.

A part of the Trans Siberian railroad a crossed south of Baikal lake, in vicinity of border of Mongolia, which was under control of Qing dynasty in early XX century. Russian interest to prevent Chinese threat to Trans Siberian railroad and its strategic importance played an active role and was a main external factor of Mongolian re-independence in 1911.

But this is just one of many impacts of Trans Siberian railroad system that had changed whole strategic balance in the Northeast Asia, moreover North Pacific.

Sir MacKinder was right about emerging Heartland Empire. Soviet Empire was established and controlled whole Eurasia. Heartland became the Soviet Union and its soviet communist republics, and everything was under order of Soviet Union. After collapse of Soviet Union, idea of Eurasia and Heart of world Mainland arrived again due to strategic uncertainty in the region. Heart of world Mainland is under control of Russia, so, the discussions were mainly on either of "Central Asia" and "Northeast Asia".

From old Central Asia to Northeast Asia, a step to North Pacific

There is a question among some scholars whether Mongolia belongs to Central Asia or Northeast Asia.

"Central Asia" was the termini introduced by Russian scholars in early XX century, fixing the understanding about region from eastern Himalaya to northeastward including Tibet, East Turkestan and Mongolia (including Inner Mongolia, Tuva and Buriyat) on basis of their cultural, habitual and religious common identity. Region from western Himalaya to Caspean sea including Khazakhstan, Khyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, was named as "Middle Asia".

In my view, Russian determination was the best one, because it regarded all the aspects of historical cultural and religious.

All the semi-nomadic people, except the East Turkestan, practiced Mahayana sect of Buddhism and were under the Mongol-Tibetan cultural influence. Chinese cultural influence was relatively weak in Central Asia till the establishment of the PRC, and its control on southern part of the region.

All the Middle Asian people also were semi-nomadic, but practiced sunni sect of Islam and entire region belonged to the Muslim civilization. It was always under the Russian strategic interest.

After collapse of the Soviet Union and end of Cold War the geographic names of political interest began to change.

Post Soviet Middle Asian countries named themselves "Central Asia". Consequently, termini of "Middle Asia" died away and termini of "Central Asia" moved westward.

There was no protest from people who belonged to traditional name of "Central Asia". Because, there was no single independent nation, but Mongolia. Tibet and East Turkestan were under Chinese authority and Tuva and Buriyat belonged to Russia. They did not face any challenge to determine in which region they politically belong to.

But Mongolia did. Mongolia was only independent nation in the "old Central Asia", surrounded by trans-regional and trans-continental neighbors.

Mongolia located in the heart of "old Central Asia", east of Middle Asia and northwest of Northeast Asia. But termini of "Central Asia" has moved away and Mongolia had to determine itself in new way. Where does Mongolia belong? In which region? That was conceptual problem.

Mongolian foreign policy since 1990's has a course of Northeast Asia regarding the current international situation of the days.

The choice had many reasons and regarded strategic situation surrounding Mongolia. In the north, the Soviet Union was collapsed and newly reestablished Russian government

was instable. In the west, completely new nation Khazakhstan has declared its independence and was in ongoing of nation-building process. There is an emerging post-soviet new "Central Asia", a region that attracting eyes of great powers. This caused completely new strategic environment in the Heart of World Mainland and interests and powers of great and small, already existed and newly established states began to be redistributed. Mongolia as a small country still carefully observes the region-building process and makes effort to develop friendly relations with Central Asian countries on bilateral basis.

Europe, far of west, was not able to influence in Mongolia in early 1990's. Actually, they had enough problems with East European countries. European powers had to deal with new strategic situations derived from collapse of Warszawa Pact Organization and disintegration of Council of Mutual Economic Aid.

For Mongolia, relatively better option to lean on was the east, the Northeast Asia.

China is still in communist regime and Korean peninsula is the "last piece of ice" of Cold War yet, however, whole Northeast Asian situation, regarding Chinese economic growth, South Korean development and Japanese capacity, promised Mongolia stability and investment.

There was also historic reason. Mongolian history of XX century was always a part of Northeast Asian history and its strategy was dependent on the regional strategic balance.

As mentioned before, one of the positive factors of Mongolian re-independence in, 1911 was change in Sino-Russian and Russo-Japanese relation, caused by Trans Siberian railroad system and its impact in Northeast Asian strategic balance. Since that every development of Northeast Asia as well as North Pacific had the impact in Mongolia.

Continental and See triangles in North Pacific

There is a question what is the Mongolian geopolitical importance in the Northeast Asia as well as North Pacific?

Classics of theories, so called geopolitics, tell a legend about the fight between Continental Heartland and World See. The legend says; Anakonda, a big snake lives in oceans, always attacked and tried to swallow Heartland.

It is very interesting if to examine the theory in case of Northeast Asia in context of North Pacific.

There is no certain boundary limit in Northeast Asia. The USA deemed as a Northeast Asian country, however it is not even an Asian country. Reason to see it as a Northeast Asian country is its global importance as well as political interest supported by strong military bases in Japan and South Korea. Because of US strong presence, understanding of Northeast Asia usually expands to North Pacific. In this context, Canada was not less active actor of the region. Let me remind the case that Canada sent its troops to Korean peninsula under banner of UN Forces.

In North Pacific from viewpoint of classic geopolitical theory, there are three continental countries and three see countries; and rim land; the battlefield of those powers, where there are disputes, conflict and problems still waiting for the solutions in era of globalization.

Continental triangle consists of Russia, Mongolia and China; two big powers and one small. Mongolia is the buffer state between Russia and China. Because of this structural specifics, which great power will have advantage over another is depend on position of

Mongolia. The fact that Mongolia belonged to Qing dynasty, caused disadvantage to Russia, threatening the Trans Siberian railroad system, and political interest in Northeast Asia supported by the railroad. During the Cold War Mongolia supported Soviet Union threatening China. Continental two great powers always compete for gaining advantage over another.

See triangle has in contrast the relatively united. It consists of the USA, Japan and Canada, in terms of North Pacific. Structure of one great power and two medium, is specific. They form strong alliance based on their close economic relation and coordinated by common political goal. Security agreement between Japan and the US can be bright example of it.

Rim land, where clash continental and see powers' interest, begins from Kamchatka, through the Kuril islands, Korean peninsula and Taiwan island. Kuril island is disputed territory between Russia and Japan. Korean peninsula is the most danger spot of the world from where a war can be launched. Korea was divided due to struggle of Continental and See powers during Cold War. Taiwan straight is not yet resolved problem of China. There is no hope to resolve this problem in the near future.

But everyone agrees that the solution must be peaceful, A peaceful solution will be produced in stabile and secure condition. Whole system of North Pacific must be well balanced to provide stability in the region, from viewpoint of classic geopolitical realism.

II Now it can be concluded that Mongolia is a balancing point of continental triangle in ! Asian Heartland in the system of North Pacific strategic balance.

Policy of Mongolia: balance between neighbors and seek of third one

There is another question what can be Mongolian contribution to maintain such stabile and well-balanced system in the North Pacific, as a small axis of continental triangle in Asian Heartland?

Mongolia always was a buffer zone and balancing factor of Continental triangle. Depending on historical situation, Mongolia supported one of its two neighbors providing advantage to one over other. In this way, it ensured its security by protector's power. This kind of policy is widely observed in small countries during Cold War.

New world order emerging after end of Cold War, gave Mongolia a chance to abandon this policy.

"National security concept" and "Foreign policy concept" of Mongolia, adopted in 1994, declared that Mongolia will have a balanced relation to its two neighbors and neutrality till to face real threat to its independence and sovereignty. This principle derived from the above mentioned geopolitical nature, and function of balancing factor of continental triangle as well as whole security system of Northeast Asia and North Pacific.

Mongolia is landlocked and surrounded by its neighbors. In other words, Mongolia is country locked by their continental neighbors in deep of Mainland far away from see. However, the warm tendency in international relation, observed after end of Cold War, allowed Mongolia to overcome its locked disadvantage through multiplier foreign policy. Some researcher call this policy as a "third neighbor policy".

But Mongolia understands that any policy in frame of "third neighbor policy" concept, must not be violate the vital security and strategic interest of the neighbors.

Mongolia is a big country that has territory half of whole Europe, but small because of its power in both term of contextual and relative. As a small country, Mongolia is not able

to influence in world politics. Moreover, it is vulnerable from and dependent on big powers' foreign policy. But it does not mean that Mongolia has weak and passive foreign policy.

In 1992, Mongolia declared itself "nuclear free zone". There is no precedent that a single country did so. "Nuclear free zone" was usually made about regions, by the group of countries. It causes the wide dispute among the scholars and diplomats how to legalize the Mongolian single-country nuclear free zone status, according to international law. However, this Mongolian initiative was widely supported and appreciated by the international community. Neutral and nuclear free zone between two big nuclear powers will certainly promote.

Instability and balance in the continental triangle in Asian Heartland. Its importance is growing in: today's circumstances, where North Korean nuclear program is in process again. In sum, as a buffer zone and balancing factor between the great powers, Mongolia is not able to influence the system.

In this way, Mongolia hopes that its foreign policy initiatives will promote positive results for peace and security of the international community.