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**Independent but Isolated “Buffer” & Decolonized but Divided
Peninsula: Comparison of Cold War Reflections in Mongolia and
Korea¹**

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INTRODUCTION²

The end of the World War II has resulted in the collapse of colonialism. This gave the opportunities to have newly founded many countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, proclaimed their independences and began to reinforce their selected regimes. However, as a result of the beginning of the Cold War, the “hidden” war, the world politics was divided into two antagonist extremities.

Hence nations and countries became to be separated and diverged according to their ideology-political regime-military and political coalition rather than the religious-traditional-cultural or regional-geographical identities. With the end of the Cold War, this divergence which covered most of the time of second half of the XX century, generally came to its end and “the end of history” (Fukuyama 1989) of the war of ideology which was the deviation of two systems, was ceased as well. Countries of the World after the Cold War quit diverging by their ideology, politics or economy and only cultural divergence has been left (Huntington 1996).

Nevertheless, global politics which is implemented in a broad scope of keeping balance of powers and therefore protecting security in regions by military-political-economical super powers who are the main players of the Cold War and the winner of the World War II, has influenced directly on contemporary East Asian countries which are in their similarities of politics, economy and socio-culture.

Currently Mongolia has a good relation with those countries which are connected by their interests and situated in the North East Asia. In this paper, the author would like to share his opinion on political changes in East Asian regional settings since Cold War Era especially in Korean peninsula and Mongolia. Have political changes in East Asian region been influenced by the

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beginning of Cold War, then ideologically divided world politics as well as world super-powers' geopolitics?

GREAT GAME BY SUPER POWERS AND BUFFER COUNTRY

In the 20th century world history, Cold War places with its Era and its Lords. If we set new term as “Cold War-Lords”, those should be USA and USSR. The Lords were describing and drawing the world map after WWII. Asian continent as a whole especially certain part of Asia became a piece of the map.

At the Yalta summit in February, 1945, merely Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin not only dealt with how to “draw” the map of Europe but also made a decision on how to end the war in Asia. In order not to drag out the war between the USA and Japan, the USA was in an inevitable need to have the USSR as its ally. It created conditions for the USSR to conduct their own politics with “favourable” rules for themselves specifically in later East Asian region. One condition suggested during the military cooperation of the USA and the USSR against Japan (Clubb 1971: 337-338) was strategically and geopolitically very important, which there was, *de jure*, a necessity to announce Outer Mongolia independence keeping its status-quo as before. Mongolian status quo (*de facto* independence) which later in October, 1945 was approved by the referendum in Mongolia and internationally guaranteed was *de jure* recognized as an independent country. Thus, Mongolia became the real reflection of each political interest which the main gamers of the Cold War would be able to regulate the world politics and in one hand, it was a new setting to keep powers' balance in Asia and on the other hand, it became a buffer country for the USSR.

During the Cold War, it is obvious that the significance of the buffer country – “gasket” territory which had been increasing so that the USSR could reinforce its influence on Asia, more clearly, to have politically

rewarding relations to the countries such as Japan and China which had been dominating with their military, economy and culture in Asia.

In spite of the fact that Yalta summit caused the beginning of the Cold War, Mongolia, the country which was a reflection of relations of super powers – the USSR, Japan, China as a result of a deal on a preliminary condition the USSR to make war against Japan while the summit was being held (Baabar 1996: 513), managed to approve its independence on the crossroads of global politics of super powers.

The push of the third wave of democracy (Huntington 1991), the collapse of socialist system and the end of the Cold War caused changes in world political relations entirely. It has brought a new atmosphere not only to the divergence of culture and value of the region but also to the political-economical and socio-cultural relation of the countries in the region. 'So far the developmental and democratizing trends of Asia have been noted to break out from stagnant and autocratic Asia. Once developmentally and democratically thriving Asia has come about, the next rising trend is newly regionalizing Asia' (Inoguchi 2005: 2).

As a consequence of Soviet Union collapse at the end of the 20th century, a lot of countries under the Soviet Union claimed their sovereignty. Specially, with some Muslim countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan claiming sovereignty, the understanding of the Central Asia with Muslim community has appeared in a political sense. Although Mongolia was a country with full sovereignty and independence, Mongolia as being a Soviet Union "satellite" country, the matters on foreign policy basically were conducted under the direct instruction and recommendation by the Soviet Union. As a result of Soviet Union collapse Mongolia started to conduct its independent foreign policy. However, since then Mongolia has been considering themselves as equal to the North East Asia but not the Central Asian region which is closer in its geographical setting. Since 1990s political, economic and cultural foreign policy has been intensively directed to the countries of the North East Asian region (see more on Janar, 2009: 336-338).

Geographically, Mongolia is located in the heart of Central Asia, between Russian Federation (bordered by 3485 km to the north) and People's Republic of China (bordered by 4673 km to the east, west and south). Both Russia and China bordering with Mongolia are the world strongest powers one of which is with a large territory and other one is with most population. What is more, neighbouring two countries have a large and broad influence in terms of its participation on world politics, economics and finance, troops and techniques. Thus, Mongolia is striving to develop an equal and balanced cooperative relationship with the neighbouring countries, with respect to the defense sector. With a view toward implementing this policy Mongolia concluded a "Treaty on friendly relations and cooperation", first with Russia in 1992 and then with China in 1994.

Mongolia has declared its territory a nuclear-weapons-free zone and has obtained the support of all permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, including its two neighbours as well as the support of the international community as a whole. Thus Mongolia has been taking concrete measures to ensure its security by political and diplomatic means.

In terms of foreign policy, Mongolia is taking a lot of supportive diplomatic actions directed to strengthen its status and protect its independency and sovereignty. In this frame, Mongolia gives an importance to develop active cooperation with other influential countries in the Asia-Pacific region such as USA, Japan as well as South Korea in order to create a new national security environment.

IS MONGOLIA IN CENTRAL OR EAST ASIA?

Mongolia has been having a very good relation to Japan in the fields of politics, economy, art, culture and so on since 1990. Japan as the most immense donator for Mongolia is contributing heavily to its innovation of shift to democracy and market economy. In addition, the world's powerful country such as the USA has started to express officially that they will have an

interests relation with our country as same as both our neighbouring powers. During his official visit to Mongolia, as the U.S. President, G.W. Bush noted that 'America is proud to call Mongolia the third neighbour'³ (U.S. President, Conference Hall Government House Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2005).

Moreover, as a country that enjoys good and stable relations with both Koreas, Mongolia will contribute to enhancing stability and peace in the North East Asia. Importance is given to the heightening of our relations in political, economic, social fields with the Republic of Korea. Particular significance is attached to the stable development of long-standing relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

When the President of the Republic of Korea paid an official visit in Mongolia in May, 2006, both countries reciprocally maintained their positions on "the third neighbouring country" or "direct relation of two sides". In the note taken during this highest state visit, both heads of state expressed that they understood "the third neighbouring country" as a country which directly borders with its relation. During the official talks in Ulaanbaatar, President Roh Moo-hyun expressed his satisfaction with the bilateral good neighbourhood and mutual trust partnership relations, which are promoted in all the social and economic spheres of the two countries. At the time, President of Mongolia, Enkhbayar N. pointed out a significance of mutually making efforts to successfully carry out the good neighbourhood and mutual trust partnership ties between Mongolia and the Republic of Korea.

Mongolia, who has two big neighbours, has included the USA, the Republic of Korea and Japan into the frames of such an understanding as "the third neighbour". These countries are able to exert an important influence on Mongolia's future development. In this way, Mongolia is becoming a country of the North East Asia in terms of its political setting and foreign policy; however, geographically it is situated in the region of the Central Asia.

³ *Remarks by U.S. President G. W. Bush* (2005), Conference Hall Government House Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051121.html (accessed 23 November 2005).

THE COLLAPSE OF COLONIALISM, DIVIDE AND REGIMES

With the collapse of imperialism and colonialism in Asia, however, Korea became again an independent country, the shadow of ideological “hidden” war caused the separate political systems and separate regimes in Korean peninsula. According to the Potsdam declaration,⁴ Korea was set free from the 36 years of colonialism, and the nation was recovered its liberty on August 15, 1945. National liberation and its political assurances were not worry-free for Korean people at that time.

The agreement among the three powers such as United States, Britain, and China, through President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Generalissimo Chiang stated that “Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands ... as we⁵ determine”⁶. If Japan did not surrender, it would face “prompt and utter destruction”⁷. The Allies were determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union and the United States military rule were fixed up in Korean peninsula. As Pak who was an assemblyman in the Constituent Assembly noted:

... the nation was occupied by the United States forces in the south and the Soviet forces in the north respectively along the thirty-eighth parallel “for the sole and only purpose” of disarming the Japanese forces in Korea. The occupation of the two

⁴ *The Potsdam Declaration or the Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender* was a statement issued on July 26, 1945 which outlined the terms of surrender for Japan as agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference.

⁵ The Potsdam Declaration was issued by Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek.

⁶ *Potsdam Declaration: Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender*, 1945: Article 8.

⁷ *Ibid*, Article 13.

powers, however, has resulted in dividing the country into two halves. (Pak 1976: 115).

After three years of those powers' troops rule, the Republic of Korea (ROK) or South Korea was founded in the southern half of the peninsula as well as Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or North Korea was established in the northern half.

The country was not reunited for the rest of the century, until now, because two sides immediately moved to different and antagonist two ideological sphere toward different political regimes as well as economic system. With massive American aid, South Korea became capitalist one, and with Soviet Block's influence, North Korea became fare communist one compare to other former communist or Soviet satellite countries.

On May 10, 1948, under the supervision of the temporary U.N. Korean Commission, a general and democratic election was held in the area south of the 38th parallel, giving birth to the constituent National Assembly. However, it was not simple for the Korean people to hold a general election with a national consensus on the democratic way of building a new nation. As Pak pointed out, Koreans were:

confronting the challenge of the Communists while the country was being divided into two halves. It was a hard task to establish our own government in order to take over the transitory government from the United States command and to declare the national independence. Overcoming the hardships and terrorism, the Korean people had held successfully the general election to institute the constituent assembly (Pak, 1976: 116-117).

Among the elected were many patriots who had joined directly or indirectly in the independence movement and the fight for freedom against Japanese

colonial rule. This first Korean National Assembly established a Constitution for the first time on July 12, 1948.

In northern part of the peninsula, another Korea proclaimed its sovereignty, and maintained a Communist regime under the personal dictatorship. Supported by the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War period, North Korea has been isolated from the rest of the world and this became one of main reasons to advance in military power instead of economic as well as human development. In case of North Korea, a Constitution was adopted in 1948 as well.

From the beginning of the First Republic through the current Sixth one, South Korea has experienced a series of political alterations (see Table 1). Regime changes, constitutional amendments, economic developments are clarifying this country's political change history since its establishment.

Table 1. A Chronology of the South Korean regime changes

Republic	Regime Type	System of Government	Term
First	Authoritarian	Presidential	1948 – 1960
Second	Democratic	Parliamentary	1960 – 1961 (dissolved by the military coup)
Third	Authoritarian	Presidential	1963 – 1972 (dissolved due to martial law)
Fourth	Authoritarian	Presidential	1973 – 1980 (dissolved by the military coup)
Fifth	Authoritarian	Presidential	1981 – 1988 (curtailed due to pro-democracy protest)
Sixth	Democratic	Presidential	1988 – present

Scholars argue that South Korea is well on its way to democratic consolidation (Diamond and Shin, 2000). However, Korean democracy is not a mature liberal democracy yet (Lee, 2008: 333).

In case of North Korea, government type set as communist state one-party dictatorship. Not only military but also economic “self-reliance” policy makes this country more stagnant one and this peninsula more divided one. Another reason of peninsula’s divide was Korean War. In 1950, North Korea attempted to re-merge the peninsula by military force and occupied South Korea.

Thus, the end of World War II brought decolonization to Korean people, unluckily, the beginning of Cold War launched divide in the peninsula and this ideological war remains only this area of the world.

Accordingly, in this region the USA and the USSR came there as regional main players alongside to the countries such as Japan and China which had been dominating in East and North East parts of Asia and determining their political – economical and military policies there. It reflected as Westphalia principles were implemented in Mongolia and became a nation-state while it was seen in Korean Peninsula as the whole nationality divide – divergence of systems.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The East Asia is the most considerably influenced region by the World War II. In East Asia, Korean peninsula was divided into two, the Soviet Union became powerful in the world and PRC claimed its founding while Mongolia came under the influence of the Soviet Union as well as USA installed its troops in Japan and South Korea. Although there was turnover in the world politics after there was the Cold War, Korean peninsula has been paid considerable attention by the world since 1948.

Compared to other regions in the world, there is no atmosphere resulting serious armed clash caused by racial discrimination or religious

conflicts which can severely affect on the regional security in East Asia. Even there is almost no probability to cause conflict among native residents and non- native residents and/or conflict resulted from culture or language. The changes in the environment surrounding Mongolia and the future development trend since the end of the Cold War make it imperative that Mongolia consider its future development and security issues within the framework of the Asia-Pacific region, including North-East Asia (Institute of Strategic Studies 1998: 17).

At the end of World War II, the victorious Allied powers divided Korea for administrative purposes. Since then, Korea has long been a divided country, and the Koreans a divided nation. But there is a hope in mid future, I think, reunification is not impossible for the nation which has same *cultural* and *historical* values. Unification, however, should begin from *social* broad relationship between ordinary Koreans to foreign *economic* free trade between corporations and governments then toward *political* infrastructure based on participatory consensus between rulers.

Although Mongolia is geographically situated in the center of Asia, economic, cultural, scientific, technological and humanitarian interests of the country and its future perspectives are being determined with tight connection to East and North East Asian societies, the countries situated in east part of Asia. The country's buffer position between Russia and China remained geographically, however, its open foreign policy brings us even third neighbors, politically and economically, in East Asia. It is explained to have a mutual interrelation which includes an opportunity to own a stable position in every step of culture, politics for peace building and the progressive initiative of regional security.

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