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THE TRANSPORT POLICY MAKING IN MONGOLIA AND POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR RUSSIA IN THE FRAMEWORK OF FOREIGN POLICY INPLEMENTATION IN THE NORTHEAST ASIA

ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ТРАНСПОРТНОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В МОНГОЛИИ И ВОЗМОЖНЫЕ ВЫГОДЫ ДЛЯ РОССИИ В РАМКАХ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В СЕВЕРО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ АЗИИ



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The paper deals with geopolitical processes in Northeast Asia (NEA), which includes among others the Russian Federation (RF, Russia), Mongolia and the People's Republic of China (PRC, China). There is some interesting information in the paper about geopolitical interests which the United States of America (U.S.) utilizing in this region through Mongolia – RF's closest neighbour, and how it can be used in Russian interests. The center of global political and economic activity is shifting in this region. The research has shown that in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, trade between the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and Europe will become the most dynamic global market. Significant benefits will be received by those countries which will be able to attract transit Euro-Asian cargo and passenger traffic to their transport communications.

In this regard, the scientists examine Mongolia's political initiatives in the field of transport communications management, its impact on the internal environment of Russia, and also consider the political and economic benefits for Russia in implementing joint transport projects with the Mongolian side.

Russia's policy in the NEA is aimed at protecting the national interests and ensuring the country's security, using the economic and political potential of the NEA states.

Russia's geographical position allows it to be a link for the countries of Europe and Asia, acting as a transit territory, including Mongolia, which is looking for opportunities to increase exports through Russian transport corridors. In this regard, the Russian government provides for the modernization of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal-Amur Railway and the Pacific ports.

At the same time, there is a struggle for geopolitical influence between the United States and China in the region. To contain China's economic expansion, the United States seeks not only to attract its long-time allies, Japan and South Korea, but also to use other countries, in particular Mongolia, which in turn can be used to promote Russian interests in the region

Key words: transport policy making; economic policy of Russia; Northeast Asia; national security; Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy; transit transport corridor; Mongolia; USA; benefits; foreign policy

Рассматриваются геополитические процессы в Северо-Восточной Азии (СВА), куда входят Российская Федерация, Монголия и Китайская Народная Республика. Отражена информация о геополитических интересах, которые Соединенные Штаты Америки продвигают в указанном регионе через Монголию – ближайшего соседа РФ, и о том, как это может быть использовано в интересах России.

В данном регионе смещается центр мировой политической и экономической активности. Исследование показало, что в первой четверти XXI в. торговля между странами Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона и Европы позволит создать наиболее динамичный мировой рынок. Значительные выгоды получат те страны, которые смогут привлечь транзитные евроазиатские грузовые и пассажирские перевозки к своим транспортным коммуникациям.

В этой связи ученые изучают политические инициативы Монголии в области управления транспортными коммуникациями, их влияние на внутреннюю среду России, а также рассматривают политические и экономические выгоды для России при реализации совместных транспортных проектов с монгольской стороной.

Политика России в СВА направлена на защиту национальных интересов и обеспечение безопасности страны, а также использование экономического и политического потенциала стран региона.

Географическое положение России позволяет ей быть связующим звеном для стран Европы и Азии, выступая в качестве транзитной территории, в том числе для Монголии, которая ищет возможности для увеличения экспорта через российские транспортные коридоры. В этой связи правительство России предусматривает модернизацию Транссибирской магистрали, Байкало-Амурской магистрали и Тихоокеанских портов.

В то же время в регионе идет борьба за геополитическое влияние между США и КНР. Для сдерживания экономической экспансии Китая Соединенные Штаты стремятся привлечь не только своих давних союзников, Японию и Южную Корею, но и другие страны, в частности Монголию, что, в свою очередь, может быть использовано для продвижения российских интересов в регионе

Ключевые слова: формирование транспортной политики; экономическая политика России; Северо-Восточная Азия; национальная безопасность; стратегия «свободного и открытого Индо-Тихоокеанского региона»; транзитный транспортный коридор; Монголия; США; выгоды; внешняя политика

Introduction: Mongolia is landlocked country, located between with its eternal neighbours RF and PRC. Being landlocked presents more challenges, associated with foreign policy and economic initiatives. Among them are those increasing the influence on the global stage and using resources to accelerate economic diversification.

For most of the socialist period Mongolia was oriented towards the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After the collapse of the Socialist Bloc, Mongolia had followed the path of democratic transformation. And one of priorities of Mongolia's foreign policy is integration with Northeast Asia, witch in close touch with the development of transport infrastructure.

Mongolia's geographical location, far from the seas and surrounded by two large neighbours, makes external transport links via these countries very significant in terms of Mongolia's international trade.

The transport infrastructure development will facilitate to the diversification of the economy and sustainable development of Mongolia.

Mongolia currently uses the Chinese port for almost all of its overseas imports and exports and there is also some small movement by via Russian Pacific ports for freight traffic to and from North America.

To maximize Mongolia's benefits stemming from this geographic advantage, regional cooperation and integration of transport routes is a primary national objective.

At the same time, the United States of America, which has a variety of interests in the Asia Pacific region with national security and economic considerations, wants to involve Mongolia in the sphere of its own influence to confront China.

In the connection with these facts the article substantiates the hypothesis about the benefits and interests of Russia in the region against the background of the US-Chinese contradictions, primarily from the point of view of the increasing interaction between the US and Mongolia to curb China's economic growth.

The relevance of the topic is revealed in the novelty and timeliness of the problem under consideration. The solution of this problem has an applied nature and can be used by Russian state authorities to make geostrategic decisions within the framework of the country's domestic and foreign policy. The subject matter of the study is geopolitical processes in NEA, the scope of the research – Russia's policy initiatives in the region that allow for benefits.

The purpose of the research is to prove the hypothesis that the American Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy has loopholes that Russia can use to its advantage in the NEA within the framework of Russian-Mongolian cooperation in the field of transport communications.

The objectives of the study are:

- to bring out to light Mongolia's foreign policy and economic initiatives in the NEA in the field of transport communications management that concern Russia's interests in the region;
- to disclose the priorities of US foreign policy in the NEA as a part of their national strategies to contain Chinese initiatives in the region;
- to rationalize the prospects and benefits for the Russian side that it can receive from the US-Mongolian cooperation against the Chinese economic expansion in the NEA.

There are theoretical and empiric, which helps to make a conclusion of the research:

- deduction as a result of the study of the foreign policies implemented by the United States and Mongolia in the NEA, their particular goals of economic policy in relation to the PRC are determined;
- synthesis the study of the transport and communication sector of Mongolia, its development and use, have given a general understanding of the geostrategic tasks facing the Mongolian side to ensure the national security of the country;
- observation monitoring the official statements of individual representatives of the political circles of the United States and Mongolia allowed to determine their political views and related to it initiatives towards the PRC;
- text analysis the analysis of the sources of information of the state authorities of the United States and Mongolia provided an opportunity to identify promising areas for the implementation of Russia's foreign policy in the NEA in the field of international transport communications.

The degree of the problem's scientific development. Most of the research works are devoted to Mongolia's political initiatives in the NEA, the country's development of transport infrastructure, as well as general issues of cooperation between Mongolia and the countries of the region. The novelty of this study is determined by its practical significance and can be considered

when building Russia's foreign policy course with the NEA countries.

Research results. This article is devoted to the study of the issue of ensuring the economic policy of Russia in the region and its benefits from international transit traffic and the loading of national ports.

Specifically, landlocked Mongolia is trying to develop equidistant relationships with NEA's countries to counterbalance the influence of Mongolia's two giant neighbours. Due to the lack of other opportunities, Mongolia is forced to develop its economic ties with the NEA countries only if it uses transit through Russia and China.

During the socialist era of 1921-1989, when Mongolia's foreign and economic policies were influenced by USSR and the People's Republic of China, Mongolia was often distant from Northeast Asian regional neighbours. In the spring of 1990 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union there was the beginning of a peaceful democratic revolution in Mongolia.

It ended with the Communist government resigning and the end of the 70-year period of socialism in Mongolia, and it's followed by Mongol policymaker's decision to renounce communist philosophy and open up the nation.

That is why in the 1990s Mongolian thinking about Northeast Asia included not only political cooperation, but also boosting economic ties. Mongolia had hoped that economic integration with other Northeast Asian countries would secure its sovereignty and economic development, withal counterbalance the influence of Mongolia's two giant neighbours – Russia and China.

In order to reach other regional markets such as in Japan and South Korea, Mongolia now calculates that obtaining the required foreign direct investment and achieving a trade diversification strategy are dependent upon developing additional transport routes to both Russia and China which allow Mongolian access to additional seaports.

In this context Mongolia adopted trilateralism foreign relations strategy between Russia, Mongolia and China and it was motivated by Mongolia's limited options to find a way towards trade partner diversification.

The «Millennium Development Goals-Based Comprehensive National Development Strategy of Mongolia» informs that «besides developing the infrastructure in line with the population and consumer needs and economic demand, more focus will be given to export energy,

integrate into the regional grid and develop road and transportation while making them a bridge and transport intermediate that connected Asia and Europe and support private sector participation in the infrastructure sector» [3].

The transport sector in Mongolia is divided over four modes – railway, roads, air, and inland waterway. Given the poor condition of the roads, the high cost of air transport, and the limited range of the waterways, the railway has had little competition in freight transport from other modes [2].

In June 2010, the Government of Mongolia approved the «State Policy in the Field of Railway Transport» [9]. The goal of the policy is to promote transit potential, economic and social growth through exports.

The development of transport corridors in the NEA carries the idea of integrating international relations among the countries of the region. Mongolia's participation in the transport network of the region is a strategic task for the country, the implementation of which allows expanding contacts with the outside world, not limited to relations with Russia and China. Entering the NEA market through Russian seaports not only promotes the competitiveness of Mongolia's foreign trade, but also allows for an independent cost policy with China.

In general, the Mongolian initiatives are in line with Russia's national security and spatial development strategies and take into account Russia's interests in the region.

In accordance with the Strategies, to ensure economic security, the main efforts are focused on the development of transport infrastructure, the formation of a new geography of economic growth.

The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union has opened a new stage of integration in the Eurasian space. The Russian Federation contributes in every possible way to the strengthening of the Union to further integration, stable development, comprehensive modernization, cooperation and increase the competitiveness of the economies of the member States of the Union within the global economy¹.

The basic transport network of the Russian Federation is a basis for ensuring foreign economic relations. The main directions of spatial

development of the Russian Federation are development of international transport corridors West-East to ensure the effective access of Russian enterprises and organizations to foreign markets, increasing the volume of cargo transit between Asia and Europe on the territory of the Russian Federation².

At the same time many foreign observers saw Mongolia's push for trilateralism with China and Russia as a worrisome phenomenon. The United States government was not supportive of the concept of a Sino-Russian-Mongolian trilateral cooperation. This was a non-public position held not only by U.S. but also by its close allies, especially Japan. In response to this unease, Mongolian foreign policy strategists called for the formalization of another form of trilateralism – among the United States, Japan, and Mongolia.

This informal trilateralism has existed since the early 1990s, when the U.S. encouraged and coordinated Japanese leadership in the donor assistance policies devised for Mongolia to make its transition to democracy and the free market.

Although the U.S. was only the third largest provider of donor assistance (which was given entirely as grants with no loans) to Mongolia, in reality there was the donor perception by Mongolia and others in the international community that the U.S. set the agenda.

As for Japan's participation in the formation of the so-called Mongolian democracy, Japan organized for Mongolia broadbased assistance programs as early as 1991 and offered to host regular international donor coordination conferences in Tokyo. For 2015, Japan became Mongolia's largest international donor, totaled \$US 507 million.

During the pandemic of COVID-19 the United States and its allies has stepped up international donor assistance for Mongolia, as they say, to solve its economic problems. By some means or other, the total financial assistance from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Major Non-NATO Allies in 2020 amounted to \$ 217 million.

More importantly, is the fact that the Mongols were not convinced that Mongolia's security could be guaranteed by economic means alone.

¹О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации: Указ Президента Российской Федерации [от 31 декабря 2015 г. № 683]

² Стратегия пространственного развития Российской Федерации на период до 2025 года: Распоряжение Правительства Российской Федерации [от 13.02.2019 г. № 207-р].

That is why in addition to so to say "supporting" Mongolia's economic stability, the United States also focused on developing military-political ties. One of the most significant aspects of the growing bilateral defense relations has been in cooperation for military education and training to modernize the Mongolian armed forces.

U.S. sees the strengthening of cooperation with Mongolia, as deterrent against RF and PRC in the region. For that purpose, U.S. towards Mongolia utilizes «soft power» policy, which includes economic assistance and strengthening military-political cooperation.

According to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2017) «China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity» [7].

And some statements in a bill H.R.2219 «Mongolia Third Neighbour Trade Act» of the United States Congress cannot but cause concern: «Mongolia shares land borders with only the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China... and Mongolia's sovereignty is thought to be at risk from the overwhelming influence of its much larger and more populous neighbours... Mongolia's success as a democracy, strategic location, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ability to pursue an independent foreign policy are highly relevant to the national security of the United States» [5].

As we know, in 2019, the United States introduced the Free and Open Indo—Pacific (FOIP) strategy to defend its influence and interests in that region [4]. A month later, the US National Security Strategy prioritized the Indo—Pacific region over other regions in the United States' global politics and acknowledged the return of the great power competition in this region.

Mongolia emerged as an important country in the Trump administration's geopolitical strategy for the FOIP. The strategy takes a position against Mongolia's powerful neighbours, China and Russia. But first of all, the United States of America needs to implement this strategy primarily in order to balance the strengthening of China in East Asia.

In the National Security Strategy, among the main rivals of the United States, the document first names China, and only after it is Russia. And the overall message of the document, in which the challenge posed by China is portrayed more clearly than the "Russian threat", confirms the priorities of US strategic planning.

The record US trade deficit with China of \$ 375 billion and China's deployment of military bases in the South China Sea were a symbolic push for the US to begin forming a policy of FOIP.

The expansion of the geopolitical struggle beyond the East Asian region and its shift towards the Indian Ocean allows to introduce new players who will weaken the influence of China. It is also noteworthy that the Indo-Pacific region almost exactly corresponds to the area of responsibility of the US Pacific Command.

In this regard, when Americans talk about a free and open Indo-Pacific, they mean rejection of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and freedom for American and friendly naval and air forces to operate in the Pacific and Indian Oceans in accordance with the principle of freedom of navigation [8]. China's actions in the South China Sea are seen by the United States as undermining the principles of freedom and openness.

At the same time the FOIP strategy aligns with Mongolia's security and foreign policy objectives. In addition to prioritizing equidistant relations with its two neighbours, the revised National Security Concept (2010) and the Foreign Policy Concept (2011) stress the importance of developing close political, economic and cultural ties with "third neighbours" (such as the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and the United States) and active involvement in the Asia–Pacific region in general and East and Northeast Asia in particular [1; 6].

Of course, another US document should also be noted. In 2017, the US National Security Strategy, a long-term defense planning document, identified China and Russia as revisionist powers seeking to change the existing international order ("China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders"); therefore, the United States needs to establish a «networked security architecture capable of deterring aggression, maintaining stability and ensuring free access to common domains».

Conclusion. As we can see Mongolia's overall goal has been the strengthening its position in the Asian region, to intensify bilateral relationships with other regional countries, to engage to a dialogue on political, security and economic cooperation of the region and to participate in the regional integration processes. It has chosen to work through existing mechanisms such as United Nations (UN) multilateral organizations.

But Mongolia's dependence on foreign donor assistance, which increases every year, has put its development and security future in the hands of Americans and its allies to a degree which should be of concern to national leaders.

The expanding of military cooperation also imposes certain obligations on Mongolia. At the same time, its economic dependence on the above donors can be used by the United States as a lever of political pressure. The United States, in its national security strategy, has identified Russia and China as the main enemies, while Mongolia is seen as a bridgehead for containing these two countries.

Mongolia's participation in global and regional processes is a (understandable) natural desire of any country that cares about the development of the economy and ensuring the security of its state. Taking into account the historical past and geographical position of the Russian Federation and Mongolia, Russia has a positive attitude towards Mongolian initiatives that pursue the principles of mutually beneficial, equal

and trusting relations. At the same time, Russia is interested in a stable Mongolia neighbouring country.

However, we should not forget two facts:

- the FOIP posits that China aims to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific area, promote a state-driven economic model and reorder the region in its favour. This project was created to compete with China's Belt and Road Initiative by investing in global infrastructure connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region;
- Mongolia is considering the Russian transport corridor to enter the NEA market as an alternative to the Chinese one, in order to reduce economic dependence on China by balancing transit transport costs.

Thus, both Mongolia and the United States have common goals to curb China's economic expansion in the region. Taking into account the strategic partnership between the United States and Mongolia, it can be concluded that the American side, holding common interests, will not oppose the initiative of the Mongolian side to use the Russian corridor as an alternative to the Chinese one. In turn, Russia will have benefits from international transit traffic and the loading of national ports.

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