

The politics of global energy security politics essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Since the collapse of Soviet Union, and the end of cold war has brought significant political and economic changes to the Northeast Asian region. For instance, the concept of security has switched to non-conventional factors such as energy security and enlarging economic interdependence to a great extent. In other words, Mongolia, Japan and China are seeking diversified, environmentally friendly and reliable supplies to support their enlarging domestic needs of energy. Within this context, as a small player of the region, Mongolia always seeks to participate in the security mechanism of the Northeast Asia, particularly with its two giant neighbors Russia and China. To illustrate, Mongolia's landlocked location between two super powers requires Mongolia to ensure its energy security through pursuing favorable foreign policy and multi beneficial relations with Russia and China by all diplomatic and economic means. Despite the energy security problems associated with its geopolitical history, Mongolia has recently discovered strategically important uranium deposits that it can use with other super powers such as Japan and the USA to reduce its high dependency on oil and gas imports from Russia and its energy supply commitment to China. This paper will focus on Mongolia's renewed energy reserves in relation to improving its energy security as an independent player in the Northeast Asia. Finally, essay is expected to argue that uranium is a potential energy alternative for Mongolia to decrease its reliance on energy from Russia.

For centuries, Mongolia has been a geographical buffer zone between Russia and China with its huge land, for that reason country's national security has been dominantly influenced by its geographical location which is defined as landlocked developing country by the United Nations Office of the High

Representative for the Least developed countries, Landlocked developing countries and Small island developing states (UN-OHRLLS). According to the definition by the UN-OHRLLS:

“ Landlocked countries[1], i. e. countries without direct coastal access to the sea and thus also to maritime trade, face very specific challenges as tranship through one or more country to reach sea port” (UN-OHRLLS et al, 2007).

Furthermore, in order to address advantages and disadvantages of landlocked developing countries, UN-OHRLLS outlines that the LLDC countries have specific problems which have much negative influence on their foreign trade, poverty reduction and economic security such as lack of territorial access to sea, remoteness from major world market, poor infrastructure, inadequate policy and high transit transportation cost (Millennium Project Report, 2005). As an illustration, the vast majority of LLDC countries are the poorest countries as a disadvantage of their geographical location. For instance, the annual economic growth of those countries is expected to be 0. 7 percent less than coastal countries (Millennium Project Report, 2005). As a landlocked developing country, the closest seaport to Mongolia is 1724 km to Tianjin, China or 3500 km to Vladivostok, Russia (ESCAP, 2003), which can help explain that the foreign trade of Mongolia is heavily dependent on its transit neighbors as time and cost consuming issue. On the whole, Mongolia’s foreign trade turnover is highly limited within market range, and the transport cost undermines the stability of economic diplomacy in terms of external trade. Finally, Mongolia’s sandwiched and landlocked location decreases the return of capital to the country that makes country’s economy weaken in terms of security.

To exemplify more, Brenda Shaffer argues that energy consumption of any countries results interdependency in economic growth since energy demand affects price and supply access of oil for almost all consumers.

Correspondingly any countries dependant on energy resource should enlarge their energy storage capacity or seek energy efficiency solution or energy diversification (Brenda Shaffer, 2009 pp4-5). Her idea supports my argument that any oil price increase in the world energy market could influence greatly to landlocked countries' economy through difficulties faced by energy dependent landlocked countries. For instance, Russian Gazprom Company increased petroleum price for 90 cents per liter results 8% increase inflation to the economy of Mongolia. In short, difficulties of landlocked situation and high independence of fuel and gas from Russia make Mongolia as one of the weakest country in terms of economy and energy security in the Northeast Asian region - currently Mongolian energy sector /electricity, heating etc./ consists of 45 percent coal, 6 percent of renewable energy sources and 45 percent of gas petroleum which is almost 100 percent dependent on Russian petroleum export (O. Altansukh p5).

As it has been pointed out above in the essay, the Northeast Asia is the home of largest economies in the world such as Japan and China as well as India which expected to be the second largest energy consumer after China by 2020 (Ram Sachs et al. pp3, 6), as it is shown below that due to economic boom energy demand of these countries are likely to be increased by 4-5 times (Jinwoo Kim, p22) by 2030. Mongolia's most important trading partners in energy sector are its two giant neighbors, Russia and China, although the United States of America and Japan has recently become a major export in

newly discovered uranium deposit. In this regard multilateral cooperation dialogues between Mongolia, Japan, Russia and the United States has been intensifying in recent years.

Aforementioned paragraphs have discussed certain consequences of landlocked and small state challenges in geographical and economical aspect, thus the below paragraph will argue that The Concept of National Security of Mongolia fails to regulate energy sector. In order to analyze the national security concept, example is taken from "Energy Politics" by Brenda Shaffer (2009) which discusses:

"Energy is both a factor that influences a state's foreign policy outcomes and a potential tool of foreign policy. Enhancing energy supply security is part of the national security agenda of energy-importing states, while the goal of assuring stable market is on the policy agenda of exporting as well as importing states".

Given example shows that in order to intensify the energy security, it is highly important to adopt national policy and strategic document to regulate energy sector as nowadays, energy accessibility is the primary part of the national security of any countries, especially to small states like Mongolia. The National Security Concept of Mongolia[2] has underlined the needs to ensure the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia at the international level and make it an important element of strengthening the country's security by political means. But to be more critical, in the Concept of National security of Mongolia has overlooked to address means of ensuring energy security as a part of national interest. If mining is the largest industry of Mongolia[3](Ch.

Khashchuluun, p3) and the government gives significance to energy security, this issue needs to be addressed at the level of National Security Council[4]of Mongolia which led by the President of Mongolia as energy security is insurance for the future.

As it has been discussed above, following the global tendency of green energy and energy diversification, Mongolia has to deal with dependence or independence dilemma to secure its energy security in the 21st century. Since the mining sector, especially uranium and coke coal export is likely to be the pillar of Mongolian economy, the country has to achieve nuclear power-based electricity generation which could reduce the dependence on gas and oil imports and enhances energy security. Some people may argue that why not renewable energy alternatives can be the best solution for Mongolia?

First of all, Mongolia has huge territory with rich resources, nomadic way of life supports using the biomass (dried cow dung etc.) as a fuel however, uncivilized nomadic life style has much difficulties to develop an appropriate technology to supply electricity in some region of the country (Batryenchin. O, p12-14), renewable energy resource is limited and investment to this alternative seems unlikely to meet the domestic needs which cannot reduce the import dependence on Russian oil and gas. In the nearest 30 years, Mongolia doesn't have enough capacity to produce renewable energy such as windmill, solar energy or bio-fuel and export to other countries. For the reason that why does renewable energy sources cannot be the alternative solution, solar power causes imbalance of desert and steppe ecosystem, need of solar energy collector during cloudy days which costs much but less

<https://assignbuster.com/the-politics-of-global-energy-security-politics-essay/>

productivity etc. windmills impacts in decrease in number of fish, evacuation of nomads in the area and biggest factor is harsh climate which reaches -50 degrees in the winter time (O. Altansukh p14-16). Furthermore, China and Japan are the leading countries in the Northeast Asian region with its high technology and know-how of renewable energy sources and thus renewable energy alternatives cannot meet the government objective to decrease black coal consumption to 50 percent by 2020 most importantly, above mentioned alternatives cannot improve the country's energy security.

Being in a deadlock of further progress on energy alternatives, government of Mongolia has relied on its uranium ore which contains 1 percent of world uranium reserve (World Nuclear Association, p3). Mongolia's uranium resources are estimated at 62, 000 tons or about 1 percent of the world's reserves, though Mongolia has untested mineral deposits that have never been assessed. Including those untested reserves, researchers estimate Mongolia's uranium reserves could be as much as 1. 39 million tons, which would be the 9th biggest in the world after Australia, Kazakhstan and Russia (UPI Report, 2010). Since Mongolia-Russia's partnership in uranium has started in 1970s, governments of two countries have signed on strategic partnership agreement on uranium export in within the framework of official visit of Mongolia's prime minister to Russia (Altangerel. P, 2010). While Mongolian-Russian joint ventures are moving forward, Mongolia prefers multi-partnership collaboration in order to avoid reliance on any single party as Marubeni Corporation from Japan and Areva Group from France have expressed it interest in further cooperation to develop nuclear power plant in Mongolia. Except these monopoly players in the world energy market, China

and India are likely to race for Central Asian including Mongolian uranium resources. Every dollar in mining creates additional demand of 1.84 dollars in other sectors. (Ram Sachs et al p3-6).

In conclusion, if Mongolia decides to develop nuclear energy, the IAEA could provide appropriate assistance through its statute as well as by Article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as Mongolia has adopted new, competitive mining law /Law on Nuclear Energy, Law on Nuclear Free Zone etc/ provides security of tenure, transferability of title, clear and transparent procedures, complete access to mineral resources indicates that Mongolian uranium as strategic important location to Moscow and Beijing as a possibility of new race between Russia and China. In addition, the country's neutral pragmatic foreign policy as a landlocked small state and import substituted, export oriented economic development model will undoubtedly support Mongolia to build a small or medium size nuclear power plant could resolve most of the country's energy needs furthermore, developing the nuclear energy sector will contribute enormously to reduce the interdependence from Russian oil gas import and support the economy to export uranium to the regional economic partners.