



Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies

in collaboration with

**School of Politics and Diplomacy, New Vision
University, Tbilisi, Georgia**



**Webinar Proceedings on:
India-Mongolia Relations: Beyond Greater Central Asia**

Special Issue IV: Preface

Historical and economic conditions in both Mongolia and India have played a crucial role in fostering their vibrant relationship evidenced today. Geopolitical developments in their neighborhood and the forces of globalization will play ever larger roles than they did previously in shaping this relations. Such factors may differ in varying degrees from one state to another, but there also may be relevant similarities in the situations of both of them.

In view of the dramatic changes that have taken place in international politics and in both South and North-East Asia since the 1990's, interaction between and among the states of this wide region have developed opportunities to fashion ties with countries within and beyond the former Communist bloc. Also, diverse circumstances and trends in the world outside the boundaries of the former Communist bloc, particularly the expansion of the European Union, the future of NATO and emergence of China as a global player have all impacted on the bilateral relations of Mongolia and India.

Keeping in mind the developments in the Indo-Pacific and India's Look East and Look North Policies, both the mentioned institutions came together to host a webinar that has three specific goals:

1. The webinar sought to identify the factors that have affected and will affect the relations of Mongolia and India, as well as any or all of the states that are located in Greater Central Asia and the Turkic world to foster discussion of these factors by exchanging ideas and differing viewpoints.
2. The webinar included within the scope of its scholarly concerns the policies of national governments, international organizations and non-governmental groups which have a bearing on Asian international relations. The intent was to combine the interests of scholars from a variety of methodological perspectives and traditions, drawing on broad range of schools of thought as diverse as great power realism, national security studies, intelligence studies, and a number of different approaches.

The Editors believe that there are increasing opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions with a growing number of scholars from Eurasia which includes the Turkic world, Russosphere and Indosphere. Through their efforts, the Editors hope to facilitate the development of vigorous

networks of communication and collaborative research among scholars working in the foreign policies of the post-Communist states.

Ten academicians/research scholars from New Vision University (Georgia), Murdoch University (Australia), BITS Pilani Goa Campus, SIAS Jawaharlal Nehru University, Goa University, Vivekananda International Foundation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council of World Affairs, Central University of Jharkhand and Gujarat University presented papers, addressing various dimensions of the theme for the webinar.

EJSSS is happy to bring out a SPECIAL ISSUE containing SEVEN papers presented in the webinar by these emerging scholars in the hope that these thought processes will stimulate further research and exchange of scholarly communications.

Proceedings of the Webinar

The Webinar was inaugurated by **Dr R Srinivasan**, Editor-in-Chief, Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies with a welcome address.

Ambassador Anil Trigunayat, India's first Deputy Ambassador to Mongolia, and currently the Distinguished Fellow at Vivekananda International Foundation New Delhi delivered the Special Address. He pointed to the inherent spiritual connect that India and Mongolia enjoy, especially cemented by India's first Ambassador Rinpoche Bakula. The text of the Special Address is at Appendix to this Editor's Note.

Air Marshal M Matheswaran AVSM VM (Retd), Ph.D, Founder President of The Peninsula Foundation, a Chennai based leading Think Tank, delivered the Keynote Address. Outlining the historical connection between India and Mongolia, the Air Marshal pointed to the importance of improving our diplomatic and trade relations with Mongolia and Greater Central Asia in the light of emerging challenges in Indo-Pacific and China's outreach through Central Asia. He called for synergetic, multidimensional approach to engage with this region.

Prof. Sureyya Yigit of New Vision University delivered the Opening Address outlining the purpose of the webinar and the necessity for deeper engagement amongst the scholarly community to engage with the region.

The papers presented by scholars in two sessions are as per details below:

Session I

1. *Closing the Blind Spot between India's Look East and Look North Policies: Recent Developments in Indo-Mongolian Relations* by Dr Stephen P. Westcott, Murdoch University.
2. *Perspectivising India-Mongolia Ties in Greater Central Asia: Shaping Equilibrium in the RIC-QUAD Dichotomy* by DR Dattesh D. Parulekar, Goa University.

3. *Historic relationship between Mongolia and the Russian Federation*, Professor Sureyya Yigit, School of Politics and Diplomacy, New Vision University, Georgia
4. *Small is not vulnerable: India in Mongolian Third Neighbor Dilemma*, Professor RP Pradhan, Department of Humanities & Social Science, BITS-Pilani, Goa Campus
5. *The United States and Mongolia Relations: The Underrated Partnership*, Sanchana Srivasatava, Central University of Jharkhand

Session II

6. *Indo-Mongolian Relations in the Present Era*, Dr. Mukesh Khatik, Dept. of Political Science, School Of Social Sciences & Ms.Upasana Lal, Research Scholar, Gujarat University
7. *India's Connect Central Asia Policy*, Dr. Athar Zafar, Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi
8. *Situating Tajikistan in India's Central Asia Policy: A Strategic Dimension*, Dr. Pravesh, Research Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi
9. *The role of soft power diplomacy in Indo Mongolian relations*, Anagha Babu, Asst Prof, Kumaraguru College of Liberal Arts and Science, Coimbatore, India
10. *India-Tajikistan Relations: From Civilizational Friends to Strategic Partners*, Narendra Sharma, Research Scholar, School of Inner Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi

The Sessions were chaired by Professor Sureyya Yigit and Professor RP Pradhan respectively. Respective Chairs summarized the papers presented and shared their perspectives with the presenters/audience.

The Webinar came to an end with Prof. Sureyya Yigit presenting his overall perspectives and conveying his appreciation to the scholars for wholesome presentations. Dr R Srinivasan moderated the Sessions and conveyed the Vote of Thanks.

Editor's Note

This Special Issue is a collation of the papers presented during the webinar by mentioned scholars. Editors of the Special Issue duly note that at least two of the papers are more in the form of scripts for presentation in the webinar than in the form of a standard research paper, even though they carry citations for sources consulted.

Together, these seven papers present the debates that engage the minds of emerging scholarship in India and abroad relating to economic, strategic and international order concerns for India-Mongolia relations and Greater Central Asia. Editors hope that publishing these thought processes,

in the manner in which they were presented, as a compilation of Conference Proceedings in this Special Issue will promote further research and greater interaction amongst the scholarly community.

Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies (EJSSS) aims to bring out similar special issues pertaining to other topics of relevance to the concerns of our contemporary world. Scholars and researchers interested in contributing to focused issues on political, social, cultural, economic dimensions are welcome to mail the Managing Editor at submission.ejss@gmail.com with their proposals.

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Acknowledgement

EJSSS wishes to place on record our gratitude to Prof. Sureyya Yigit of New Vision University, for his enthusiasm and exceptional cooperation to co-host the event. We are delighted to have him as a Special Editor for this Issue. We acknowledge and thank Ambassador Anil Trigunayat and Air Marshal Matheswaran for sharing with us their important insights on a dimension that has profound strategic implications for both India and Mongolia. We also wish to convey our appreciation and gratitude to Professor RP Pradhan for chairing a Session and presenting his incisive insights.

Professor Sureyya Yigit
Special Editor

Dr R Srinivasan
Editor-in-Chief, EJSSS

30 August 2021

Appendix

Special Address by Ambassador Anil Trigunayat, IFS (Retd)

Excellences, distinguished Speakers, dear friends,

I am indeed most grateful to my friend Dr R Srinivasan, Editor-in-Chief, Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies, India and Professor Sureyya Yigit, New Vision University, Georgia, for organising this very important interaction about a country I really hold dear and where Indians are liked the most in the world. Reason was and remains historic and religious connect with Buddhism and being an integral part of larger Asia.

As for Georgia being the initiator of this conference allow me to add that we recently had the Indian Foreign minister Dr S Jaishankar visiting and handing over some of the remains, holy relics and artefacts of 17th Century St. Queen Ketevan of Georgia to the Government and people of Georgia reviving Georgia's "Goa Connect". He also unveiled the newly installed statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the city of Tbilisi.

I would like to extend my heartiest felicitations to my Mongolian friends for electing a new President a well-known politician whom I met in Moscow. Congratulations to HE. Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh on his election as President of Mongolia.

As we have illustrious speakers analysing nearly every strategic dimension of Mongolia's external relations including with India, I would like to share only some of my personal experiences. I was posted as Deputy Ambassador to Mongolia during the most momentous period (1990-92) in its history when with the Soviet Union's disintegration Mongolia achieved a non-violent transition to democracy. The memories of clarion call for democracy and quiet protests are fresh even after three decades - when in -30 to -40 sub-zero temperatures people formed the human chains and the communist party led government conceded.

Historians have spoken about migration of some tribes from Kangra kingdom to Mongolian territory 4300 years ago. Mangaldev, son of the King headed the migrants and majority of them returned to India after staying there for about 2000 years though there is no historical evidence yet to prove this. In 1924, the then Prime Minister of Mongolia Mr. A. Amar mentioned in his book – "Short History of Mongolia" that Mongolian forefathers came from backside of Himalayan Mountains. Another interesting thing often quoted, is about 'Ganga Nuur' lake which according to many Mongolians derived its name after 'Ganga River' in India from where some Mongolian Lamas brought water and poured into the lake in Sukhbaatar Province and naming it so.

It is often said that the 3 Ds Democracy, Dharma and Development Partnership have emerged as the pillars of India Mongolia relationship.

I was in Mongolia during a very momentous period when Mongolia was trying to embrace democracy and get out of the Soviet era influence. Therefore, I was fortunate to have seen and witnessed the exceptional and indomitable spirit of our Mongolian brothers and sisters who fought for their rights and their hopes. Rest is history. Living through history for a diplomat is a highly rewarding experience as it also provides an opportunity to do something more for the people in that particular country. Mongolia was no exception for us.

I remember when I opted to go to Mongolia from Bangladesh my Ambassador, who later rose to be the Foreign Secretary, questioned my judgment. But apart from my exotic ideas about this beautiful land which generally was shrouded in mystery I was curious to work under the new ambassador Rinpoche venerable Kushok Bakula. It was indeed a most amazing experience a diplomat can possibly ask for. While Mongolia was going through the transition they needed the symbols of love and religious beliefs and practices and that is the reason that Ambassador Bakula was loved by the Mongolians virtually as a living God. I remember we used to have miles long queues in front of our embassy for his darshans. What we achieved by that was further strengthening the bonds of love, tradition, Buddhism, history and civilization for which the contributions of Ambassador Bakula who revived large number of monasteries are simply stupendous. I also remember that whenever we sought an appointment with any of the leaders at the time, they were more than happy to enjoy the blessed company and the masterful diplomatic interaction with the ambassador. It provided us a tremendous P to P advantage. I remember the American and the British ambassadors often commenting that India had done a coup in Mongolia. Let me talk a little more about this one man from my own experience – a saint and an Ambassador who cemented and etched India into the sub-conscious of every Mongolian and the people he came in contact with. This had a permanence that was unimaginable to many. His exceptional style of implicit soft power projection provided India a very unique and lasting impact.

I had read that over a century ago it was prophesied that Arhat Bakula will come to Mongolia to revitalise Buddhism which had turned into an ardent belief as the people were suffering disenfranchisement of their religion since 1930s when the Communist regime began to decimate and destroy the monasteries. I realised that belief and resolve of an average Mongolian was firm and that with the arrival of Rinpoche Bakula they considered the redemption complete.

Mongolia was going through a tremendous pain and suffering with the changing times and decimation of Soviet Union as far as daily requirements were concerned. However the balm that the mere presence of Rinpoche Bakula and his efforts to revive the monasteries and the religious pride of the Mongols provided can neither be measured not easily recounted or understood. Every life he touched became a story.

I remember once late in the evening the then Vice President and my dear friend Gonchigdorj called me to say that he had lost his father and his mother was highly disconsolate and he wanted to bring his mother for blessings by the Rinpoche. I knew well that by that time Rinpoche would have retired to his chambers which was also his bedroom, temple and meditation room and no one could disturb his Tapasya. I was in a fix as I also needed my Ambassador to avail such a wonderful

opportunity to oblige the Vice President. I called his personal staff Lama Dawaji who was only authorised to go in. Even he was also unwilling to disturb the Ambassador in the state of meditation. I could not enter the chambers. Sonam was away to Beijing but I had already promised Gonchigdorj and hence virtually pushed Dawa ji to inform the Ambassador which he very unwillingly did. As a diplomat you don't get such opportunities very often. We were waiting for Rinpoche in his drawing room as both Ambassador and I lived on the first floor of the Embassy itself. After about 15 minutes Rinpoche came down and without a word blessed the Vice President and his mother in the traditional Buddhist manner. While leaving he also gave me a look that I could not forget. But I believed that interrupting his mediation has actually served the national cause rather effectively as the Vice President Gonchigdorj often spoke to me about this. The bereaved family appeared to be at peace.

Let me also tell you about the first day of my arrival in Ulaanbaatar by a long train journey from Hong Kong and Beijing. After I paid my respect to the ambassador, my predecessor invited me for a lunch at his house and around 3:30 PM. He casually mentioned that there is a press conference of the trade minister at 4:00 PM. I asked him why we were not going. And, he said that nothing much might come out of it. But I insisted and we went there. Since we were a little late we met the Mongolian Trade Minister in the lobby. He was Mr P Ochirbat who eventually rose to become the President of the country. He had welcomed me and remained kind throughout his tenure and helped us enhance bilateral ties even more.

As for Rinpoche Bakula, it was indeed for his immense contributions to the motherland he was conferred with Padma Bhushan award- not that any awards mattered to him. On their part the Mongolian leadership and Mongolian people who loved Indians felt blessed with the most unique Indian Ambassador and a saint in Rinpoche Bakula who stayed there for almost a decade. In recognition of his exemplary and yeoman services to the Mongolian nation and people the Mongolian Government conferred upon him their highest "Polar Star" award. In fact President P Ochirbat, who was the first President of democratic Mongolia paid great tributes to Rinpoche and I quote "Ambassador Bakula Rinpoche was a statesman, a diplomat and Buddhist clergy who carved out his own niche in the history of Mongolia. He recognised the historic necessity to develop Mongolia's national culture to restore the glory of Buddhism- an inseparable part of its cultural heritage. He was a divine messenger at the time of peaceful transformation from communism to democracy and a source of inspiration to our people."

We only used to have two capacity building slots under the ITEC program for training in India. But within a very short time the Ministry of External Affairs made it open ended. It has gone a long way in nurturing the appreciation of modern India with modern Mongolia.

We also did not have any companies from India working in Mongolia. But after a few months of my arrival we had the first business delegation led by CEO CIMMCO International, a Birla group company and then we had many others. India for the first time also extended the line of credit to Mongolia beyond its immediate neighbourhood. Now we have even extended more than \$ 1bn in

Lines of credit for a refinery project. Today we have several major companies working in Mongolia in diverse areas.

We are indeed neighbours and that too spiritual neighbours which is far more potent than simply being within the geographies. James Baker III, US Secretary of State, often used to tell the liberated Mongolians that US was its 3rd neighbour after Russia and China. But then we are in a different orbit altogether.

At that time India also helped Mongolia draft its constitution and we had the privilege of having justice Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of the Indian Supreme Court, helping the Mongolian government and discussing with them the future course of their constitutional journey. Large number of delegations preceded in different areas to render whatever assistance was possible when the country was going through its very difficult transition.

I have not spoken about the trade and investment and other geo political and geo economic matters for the simple reason that we have an exceptionally brilliant and authoritative line up of the speakers who know the conditions much more than I would and the areas in which India can collaborate and the Indian companies can find useful partnerships as both our countries move towards an AI driven industrial revolution 4.0. In my view the possibilities are immense from trade to tourism to investment to technology to capacity building where we are yet to achieve the potential. Mongolia is one of the most exciting investment opportunities currently available in the world. With over \$10 billion USD already committed for deep mining and infrastructure projects, Mongolia remains the final frontier for investors to benefit from continual and rapid growth.

India herself is going through a tremendous change and economic upheaval and revival which has been necessitated by the fight against the pandemic. India has been the pharmacy of the world and a global vaccine hub. As you are aware India was probably the first country to provide medical assistance and the vaccines to the world when it needed these most. The fight is not over and India continues it locally and internationally in order to forge an international solidarity - an action plan without which the disadvantaged countries will not be able to recover from the ill effects of the pandemic. Pharmacy is also the bridge between India and Mongolia. India's gifting of 150,000 doses of Covid Vaccine on Feb 22, 2021 was billed as a "historic" moment by Mongolian Deputy Prime Minister, as it was Mongolia's first vaccine that came from India. The unique trust and potential between the two can lead us to much greater heights and depths of friendship, cooperation and collaboration in bilateral, regional and global context as it encompasses economic, political, defence and other strategic dimensions.

Once again, I would like to my express gratitude to the organisers and wish this conference a great success and actionable outcomes. I do look forward to be educated more from the distinguished presentations.
