

## **KHAZARIA: LESSONS LEARNED FOR MONGOLIA?**

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***Abstract:*** *A millennium ago the Turkic Khaganate of Khazaria on the Northern shores of the Black- and Caspian Seas detached itself from its neighbours by following a 'Third Way'. This resulted in destruction of the empire. The lesson learned for present-day Mongolia: stay close to your neighbours, but do this in different issue areas: spread the dependencies. At the same time: employ a consistent and professional diplomacy in order to deal with the Near Abroad, as well as with the Far Abroad: the world at large. Combine regionalization with globalization on the basis of well-managed internal political and economic structures in order to safeguard the de-facto and de-jure independence and sovereignty of the Mongolian State.*

In the fifth century AD people called Khazars (probably meaning nomads, like Kazakh and Cossack, and still used today in the connotation 'hussar') entered history. By the thirteenth century they had disappeared, their remnants inundated by a flood of Mongols. Why are these semi-nomads, who reigned from the seventh till the tenth century over territory between the Caucasus and the Urals, running from the Caspian (Khazar Sea in Farsi, Turkish and Arabic) to the Dnieper, of interest to students of Eurasian history?

First of all because they were one of the three countries that served as a dam against the tide of Islam, threatening Europe from three sides. As the Franks stemmed this current in the West, and the Byzantines in the Centre, the Khazars blocked the Muslims in the East. A second important element is the nature of the Khazarian Empire. On the one hand it was constructed like so many other nomadic empires of the Asian heartland, on the other hand it had a very particular dual structure of government. Thirdly their realm

exerted an enduring influence on its neighbours, some of them migrated to Europe, like the Bulgars and Magyars, who in a way still bear some imprints of Khazar culture. And being allies of the Greeks for the major part of their history, they contributed to the ongoing existence of the Eastern Rome. Fourthly, but certainly not lastly, it is the religious character of their society that draws our attention, shedding light on topical issues we are struggling with in our times.

### **The Khazars**

The Khazars were, like other nomadic people, tolerant in religion, but their most important feature is that they held Judaism in high regard. Though many Khazars were Muslim or Christian, the leading clans adopted the Mosaic laws. This poses the question of Jewish ethnicity and of Ashkenazim roots. In this short paper we look at Khazar history, politics, economics, religion and law, and we ask ourselves the question of the significance of Khazaria in past and present.

Khazaria is a relatively unknown subject, even for Turcologists and Mongolists. However it raised a lot of interest in - especially - Jewish circles (see <http://www.khazaria.com>, an extremely interesting file) as some argued that the presence of so many Jews in Central and Eastern Europe might be explained by the rise and fall of the Khazar empire. The American Centre for Khazar Studies and the International Centre of Khazar Studies in Kharkiv try to stimulate the interest in Khazaria. They are obviously successful as scientific research is now developing, exhibitions on Khazaria are organised and novels on Khazaria are published (Pavic: 1987). Some research was done in the nineteenth century and more serious attention was raised after the establishment of the state of Israel. In 1999 Jerusalem hosted the first symposium on Khazaria, bringing together Israeli, American and Russian scholars. For a quick understanding of Khazaria's place in Eurasia, one might look at the Penguin Atlas of Medieval History, depicting the Khazar history over four hundred years in eight maps (McEvedy 1968: 32, 36, 38, 46, 48, 50, 52).

One of the older sources on Khazaria is from half a century ago: 'The History of the Jewish Khazars' by D.M. Dunlop (Dunlop 1954). It is interesting to ask ourselves if the Khazars can indeed be called 'Jewish'. This

depends on the question if we see Jewish as a religious, or as an ethnic connotation. The Khazars were not Jewish in the ethnic sense, they were probably from Turkic stock, though in the steppes of Asia one of the predominant features is the mingling of nomadic people. But whatever they are, they are not from ethnic Jewish origin, though a major part converted to Judaism and there has been an influx of Jewish merchants and refugees to Khazaria for hundreds of years. Probably it is more correct to speak of the Judaic Khazars, as Orest Subtelny did in his history of Ukraine (Subtelny 1990: 52). Even then it will have to be remembered that a very substantial part of the Khazar tribes converted to Islam and a less numerous part to Christianity. Many clans remained loyal to their shamanist past and as we might postulate that even the converted kept elements of shamanism alive. But the fact remains that the leading tribes, as well as the royal family, adhered to Judaism.

### **Foreign Policy**

The Khazars were known to the Chinese as Kosa Turks who were driven westwards by other Turkic tribes. Initially they were under the suzerainty of the powerful Western Turkish Empire (Kuk Turks). In the seventh century A.D. the Empire disintegrated and the Khazars freed themselves from the yoke of their Turkic brethren while living at the Northern shores of the Caspian and of the Black Sea. Their external relations were with neighbouring tribes, like the Bulgars and Magyars who became their vassals, and with the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Russians and to a lesser extent with the Ostrogoths and the Vikings. The Khazars had a decisive influence on the world history - apart from their major role in stemming the Arab tide in Eastern Europe - through people like the Bulgars, Seljuks and Magyars. They split the Bulgars in to two confederations, one of which moved West and conquered present-day Bulgaria, the so-called proto-Bulgarians. Arpad, leading his people to present-day Hungary, was a Khazar-nominated Khan. Seljuk who took his Turks to present-day Turkey, was the son of Timuryalik, an officer in the service of the Khazars (Legg 1970: 164, 178, 184).

Till the ninth century Khazaria was an ally of the Byzantines. Apart from certain incidents in the Crimea at the time of Justinian II at the end of the seventh century, the relationships between Byzantines and Khazars were good and friendly, both in terms of politics and trade. In the seventh

century the Khazars supported the Byzantine wars against the Persians with 40.000 men. In the eighth century a Khazar princess made it to empress in Constantinople and her son, the emperor Leo, was called 'The Khazar'. In the ninth century the Byzantines supported the Khazars in the construction of Sarkel, a fortress designed to keep the Magyars under control. In the tenth century the emperor (Khagan or Kaqan) of Khazaria was held in higher esteem than the pope of Rome or the successor of Charlemagne, as can be derived from letters of the Byzantine imperial chancellery to their foes and allies (Dunlop 1954: ix).

But at that time the relations were already turning sour and in that century the Byzantines contributed to the downfall of Khazaria. The reasons for this are not quite clear. It might have to do with the waning power of the Arab Empire, and therefore a lesser need for Byzantium to have the Khazars as their allies. But it could also be that the conversion of the ruling elite of Khazaria to the Jewish faith annoyed Constantinopolis. It is known that the Byzantines were not too happy with this and their attitude towards the Jews, for example those within their own realm, has not been very forthcoming. This is one of the reasons while so many Jews fled the Empire and sought refuge in Central Europe and in Khazaria.

The story is different when we talk about Arab-Khazar relations. Although much more Khazars were Muslim than Christian, the history of Khazaria has been riddled by wars with Arab invaders. As the faith of Islam was spread over Asia, Africa and South-Western Europe, clashes between the Caliphate and the Frankish, Byzantine, Khazar and Chinese empires were unavoidable. Khazaria defended the Caucasus and gave the invaders a hard time. Often the Muslims suffered in the hands of the war prone Khazar nomads, sometimes the Arabs were successful in their battles against the fierce horse riders of the steppes. Arab forces at one time made deep incursion into Khazar territory, conquering the Caucasus, destroying the former Khazar capitals of Balanjar and Samandar and even threatening the capital Khazaran-Itil (Atil) at the lower stretches of the Volga river.

### **Khaganate Khazaria**

Khazaria can be regarded as the country that prevented the islamisation of Eastern Europe, while Constantinople delayed the islamisation of

Southern Europe. Several centuries later the Golden Horde, the most Western Mongol Khanate took Islam as its religion, as did other tribes and rules, but these conversions were not linked to the expansion of the Caliphate. On the contrary, it were the Islamised Black and White Sheep Turks - and later the non-Islamic Il-Khan Mongols - that conquered Baghdad, destroyed Arab power and paved the way for the Ottoman Turks to dominate the Arab world till the twentieth century.

With the rise of the Kievan-Rus state in Ukraine a new enemy arose at the end of the tenth century. At the beginning the Khazars worked together with Russian forces, both from Kiev and from the Northern principalities in fighting the Muslims around the Caspian. But as the Russians grew stronger, Khazar power dwindled. In 965 AD Russian forces under Svyatoslav destroyed the important stone fortress of Sarkel (its citizens fled and rebuilt the city at a totally different place in 1117) and two years later they razed the capital city of Itil to the ground. It was not until Genghis Khan's grandson Batu built his capital Saray-i-Batu close to the spot of the Khazarian capital, that Itil was - in a way - revived. Because of these events Khazaria's power waned, though it is not correct to take 965 as the end of the Khazarian Empire (done by Grekov 1961: 23). The downfall came in the eleventh century as a consequence of combined Byzantinian and Kievan actions.

The downfall of Khazaria has, beyond doubt, internal reasons first of all as the Russians were not extremely powerful at the time, divided as they were between numerous principalities who late on became an easy prey for the Mongol forces some two centuries later. Though it should be noted that the Russians were supported by the Byzantines in their final attack on Khazaria in 1016, a date that can be taken as marking the end of the Khazarian Empire (Gilbert 1993: 25, Legg 1970: 195). Some remnants of the Khazar state survived for some time in the relative sheltered environment of the Crimean peninsula. The Khazars were scattered all over Central and Eastern Europe (Davis 2002: 91) and they were so influential in Hungary that for a long time the Magyars are said to have been bilingual, speaking their own language as well as Khazarian (Dunlop 1954: 262).

To destroy Khazaria was a tragic miscalculation of both the Russians and the Greeks. The weakening of Khazaria strengthened Pecheneg and Oghuz tribes, who were to become extremely dangerous enemies of both

Kiev and Constantinople. It is, by the way, interesting to note that Khazaria has never been seriously threatened by other Turkic tribes, coming from the East. Only towards the end, when they were severely weakened, did tribal incursions help to finish the Khazar power off. But even then, Khazaria might well have brought these tribes under their yoke, as they did with the Bulgars and the Magyars, were it not for the internal weakening of the Empire. So let us turn to the political, economic and religious situation in order to look for systemic factors that might have contributed to the fading away of Khazaria.

### **Political System**

The political system of Khazaria is as interesting as its economic and religious features. It might be that it is in politics that we find the key for the downfall of Khazaria, be it that the country would probably have faded away two hundred years later under the hoofs of the Mongol cavalry. Like the other Turkic people the Khazars had a system of tribal and clan rule. Of the many tribes that made-up the Khazarian empire, there were one or two who dominated the others. Within these dominant tribes there existed clans who were the leading forces and within the clan there were some families who were more equal than others. It was from the leading clans that the royal family came from. These, partially Judaized clans, were called the White Khazars (Ak-Khazar) or Khazars proper, the clans and tribes at the fringes were named Black Khazars (Kara Khazar). But this did not necessarily mean that the Ak-Khazar held the de-facto power in the country. On the contrary. The real power was not in the hands of the Kaghan, but was wielded by a Beg (Bey), who could be best described as the great-vizir, or shogun, or hofmeijer.

The real power struggle was about this post, and so it were the strongest generals who normally had the reigns of power in his hand. They were not always from the 'correct' families. The Beg took the real decisions, he was in charge of the treasury, he lead the army against the enemy, thereby assisted by Tarkhans (generals) and Tuduns (local rulers). This was the 'republican' element in the state of Khazaria. But the Khagan remained the formal head of state and in a ceremonial sense the Beg was his underling, his servant, though the Khagan was left out of all the business of the state. He was only allowed to deal with the problems of his court and he lived in

a special quarter of the capital Itil, confined to a Volga island in the centre of the city. At times he was killed by his own people if they found him a stand-in-the-way for state affairs. It was his duty to give way to his successor if he became a burden to the country. At times the division of power between the formal and the de-facto power centre was fuzzy and this unclear distinction, the absence of a clear-cut unambiguous focal point, might be the first reason for the downfall of Khazaria. There was a de-facto double kingship in the Khazar realm.

### **Foreign Trade**

The economic system was special in the sense that, unlike the regular steppe empires where cattle breeding was the dominant source of income, Khazaria also depended heavily on trade and agriculture. Cattle, rice, fish and wheat were the most important products from Khazaria. The country was situated at the cross-roads, for example as a part of the silk-route, but more importantly it had an open outlook to the world. Unlike other steppe empires it functioned as a bridgehead, in stead of a stumbling block. The tolerant attitude of the Khazars attracted many traders, among them Greeks, Arabs and Jews. This was facilitated by the political situation of the Crimea. The peninsula was under Byzantine and Khazar control and had an number of important Greek and even Gothic trading posts like Bosporos and Cherson (Sebastopol). Besides the trade with Byzantium, the Caspian offered numerous possibilities for exchanges with the Persians and the Arabs. This oriental trade was supported by the raw materials found in the Caucasus, like gold and silver. The Caucasus was shared by Khazars and Arabs who counterbalanced each other which lead to occasional wars and peaceful times as well.

Apart from metal work, slave trade was an important factor here. Russians brought slaves from the North to the slave-market in Itil, who were shipped to the Muslim lands in the South. Furthermore the Russians and the Bulgars and Burtas brought in furs and fish. Finally tributes paid by vassal tribes and at times by the Caliph as well, added to the Khazar treasury, as did the merchants who were in transit and had to pay ten percent of the value of their goods to the tax collectors. But on the whole the economic basis of the country was relatively weak and very dependent on external sources. As the Khazars had strong neighbours, their control on these external sourc-

es was problematic from time to time. In other words they had to little internal economic strength, also because of the traditional lack of substantial cities in the steppes of Eurasia. Even though Khazaria was more sedentary than other steppe Empires, which can be one of the explanations for the fact that their state survived for so many hundreds of years, in the long run it could not match the institutionalised state formations that surrounded them. It was much more difficult to accumulate margins, like in the cities of the Baghdad and the Byzantine Empires. This internal weakness and external dependency as far as economic strength is concerned, might be seen as the second institutional factor leading up to the fall of the Khazar 'state'.

### **Third Way**

The third factor undermining - but in another way also strengthening - the power of Khazaria is its unique religious set-up. As has been said before, many of the leading clans were converted to the Judaic faith, while many others become Muslim, Christian or remained animist. This points the tolerant character of the Khazars, which is quite a normal feature among the Turkic and Mongol nomads. There were times that the Mongol Khagan in Karakorum wavered between Shamanism (the old belief in the ever-blue-sky or Tengri), Buddhism (which is not a religion in the true sense), Zoroastrism, Islam and Christianity. In the case of Khazaria the Ak-Khazars were converted by rabbi's and traders who were invited for disputes with mullahs and priests. In 860 AD Saint Cyril was sent by Byzantium to convert Khazars to Christianity, but he was only successful with the Slavic population, probably because Judansm had already taken root in the Turkic part of the population. The Khazar Khagan Bulan accepted the Jewish faith in the second half of the ninth century, his successor Obadiah established synagogues and Judaic schools. The reason for the conversion to Judaism might well be political. Conversion to Islam would have brought Khazaria under its arch-enemy, the Caliph. Conversion to Christianity would have made the country too dependent on Constantinople, though being its main ally, could never be fully trusted.

Judansm was an elegant third way out. On the other hand, this choice also meant a certain isolation and the danger to be crushed between two powerful monothentst movements, one from the South and one from the West. And so it happened. there was no brother-power to call to in the end.

On the other hand, the Christian faith did not save the Byzantines from oblivion, invaded as they were by the crusaders and left alone by the Pope when the Osmanli Turks gathered before their walls. In a way the religious tolerance strengthened Khazaria as the absence of religious repression created loyalty to the Khagan, enhanced the influx of Jewish, Muslim and Christian traders and therefore can be seen as a stimulant of Khazar economy. On the other hand Khazaria lacked a clear-cut overall religious identity and zeal and this can be seen as a factor weakening the chances for survival. And as we see in history, religion can be a very powerful binding factor. Secular affinities were cemented by religion (Legg 1970: 182). Maybe one of the reasons that the nomads of the Asian heartland lost the power they once had, while the nomads of the Arabic peninsula are still wielding today, strengthened by their economic power due to the oil revenues, of course.

In the rule of law religion, economics and politics came together. Because of the three main religious denominations, the law system was split-up into three different pillars. For example, the Muslims were under their own kadi's and the highest judge was a Muslim representing the Khagan himself. Only the Muslim judges can decide over the punishments for the Muslim citizens. In cases of state affairs, it was the Khagan himself who did the ruling. This could be a cruel procedure. It is said that when a general is defeated, he will be punished by sending their wives and children into slavery and distributing all his possessions to others. After the general had to be present at these events he himself would be cut in two or hanged by the neck (Dunlop 1954: 113).

Not much is known about the judicial system in Khazaria. It is likely that it resembled the systems used in Central Asia at the time, but with a special flavour because of the three pillars created by the existence of the three major religions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. A supreme court is known to exist of seven judges of whom two represented the Jewish faith, two spoke for Islam, two others were Christians and finally there was one judge on behalf of paganism (Gilbert 1993: 24). Like in other regions in the first millennium, the separation between the powers was non-existent, but in daily life it were the religious denominations who decided about the fate of the people in criminal and civil cases. Under exceptional circumstances it was the political leadership, but that had to do with 'crimes' against the

state, though we would not regard loosing a battle as a crime nowadays. On the other hand, in the twentieth century we could only hang generals from armies who lost their war.

### **Eurasian Significance**

Summa summarum we can conclude that Khazaria was quite an enigma in world history, especially because of its political, economic, but first of all its religious status. It was a powerful state stemming the flood of Islam in Eastern Europe, containing the most powerful empire of Christianity within its Northern delimitations. Even after one millennium we find words pointing to Khazaria, like in the name of the largest inland sea on Earth. Or '... the survival in popular memory (in Ukraine) of the long struggle in the past with the Judanic Khazars' (Subtelny 1990: 52). And maybe it has been one of the sources of the multitude of Jewish people living in Eastern Europe. On the other hand many a Khazar converted to Islam or Christianity or intermixed with other Turkic tribes after the break-up of their Empire. Modern DNA tests, in the meantime, are not very favourable for those who believe that a substantial part of the Ashkenazim are of Khazar, and thereby of Turkic blood.

Another matter are the pockets of Turkic people living in Central and Eastern Europe, in Israel and not before long in Cairo, who practice a variant of Judansm and who are called Karanm or Karant. Karanm communities are found in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania. Those living in Trakei today, the old capital of the Grand-Duchy of Lithuania, are regarded as descendants of the Kipchak Turks under the Khazar Empire and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were some thirty communities of them in Eastern Central Europe (Csaty 2002: 272). It is tempting to regard them as Khazar remnants, as they are of Turkic origin. However it is not proven that they are ethnically descendants of the Khazars, and their religious habits are not in line with the rabbinical convictions of the Khazars. They follow the Old Testament, but not the Talmud and the later rabbinical works. Some state that the so-called 'Mountain Jews' of the Caucasus are of Khazar breed, but this has not been underscored by DNA testing. As far as the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe are concerned, Kevin Alan Brook offers an interesting discussion on the question of their Khazarianess, concluding that most of them are not of Khazar blood (Brook 2003: 1-22).

The significance of the Khazaria lies in the fact that it had a substantial impact on world history by governing a crucial region at the Eurasian cross-roads for over three hundred years, while at the same time it had a society and state structure with peculiar traits that cannot be found easily elsewhere in the world. Unlike the other semi-nomadic Empires in Western Asia they did not convert to Islam, actually they spared Europe of the Arab invasions. The conversion to Judaism of their leaders and their main tribes might not be unique in history, it is nevertheless a fascinating event that stirred the imagination of many scholars. Unlike the other Eurasian Empires they survived for a substantial time, acting as a bridge between cultures, in stead of a hindrance. Like the many of the other steppe Empires they were tolerant on religion, but thereby they were out of tune with their neighbours in Europe. And like many of the realms of other horse riders their state withered away, but they left traces that can be seen even today. Not in the form of buildings or documents, as nomadic societies normally lack these material remnants. But in the fact that without Khazaria present-day Bulgaria and present-day Hungary might not exist in their current form, which is probably true for Turkey and Ukraine as well. In that sense the role of the Khazars in world history is yet not completely foregone. But indeed, the only visible trace of Khazaria on the world map is the name of that gigantic inland sea, the Caspian, an upcoming focal point of world politics.

### **Mongolian Policies**

Mongolia today is in a way in the same position as Khazaria one millennium ago. Khazaria had to deal with two systems threatening its survival: Christianity – that is the Greeks in Byzantium and the Russians - and Islam, being the Arabs in Baghdad and the Muslim Turkic tribes who came for Inner Asia. By choosing the Judaism as the third – or perhaps the first – monotheistic religion, it assured its independence from Christian and Muslim overlords, from Constantinopolis and Baghdad. As long as the Khanganate was powerful this worked well, but when it became weak this policy turned itself against Khazaria. There were no allies available when these two systems decided to crush the Khazar State. Only internal allies like the Magyar and the Bulgar but this was not enough to save the skin of the Khazars. .

Mongolia has likewise the dilemma of choosing either for one neighbour, for China as it did in feudal Manchu times, or for Russia as it did in revolutionary communist times. As there is no other near-broad neighbour available the country invented the so-called third neighbour policy, far-abroad powers like the United States, Japan, the Korea's, the European Union, Turkey, India, Iran, etc. Under this category one could also understand multilateral organizations like the United Nations, regional Eurasian international organizations or the Mongolian diaspora in China, Russia, Nepal, Afghanistan, Myanmar, etc. The Khazars decided to choose the far-abroad Third Neighbour option – being in a religious sense - having as a consequence that the country lost its independence when it became weaker.

If we analyse the three options it is clear that the Third Neighbour policy looks nice but it isn't, simply because the far-abroad countries do not have enough interests in an independent Mongolia to support its survival if worst comes to worst. Also because the costs of such intervention would be relatively high as Mongolia will not easily be accessible, neither through land, through the air, let only over sea's. If we regard international organizations as a Third Neighbour category it won't work either as international organizations are by definition weak as its member states don't allow them to collect too much power and to be to effective in operational terms. Besides they are slow because of their inherent bureaucratic structures. The diaspora also does not pose an alternative instrument as the main Mongolian diaspora's are locked into China and Russia, the others are too weak and too far away.

A one-China policy meant the loss of independence of Mongolia, a one-Russia policy did allow for a de-jure independent state but meant de-facto complete dependence. The best foreign policy would therefore be to be as flexible as possible and to use all three policies at the same time: being close to China and Russia and to the world community at the same time, to play them off against each other if doable. In other words to have a pragmatic, if not opportunistic foreign policy. To be as flexible as the armies of Chinggis Khan. It is doubtful if recent proposals to declare the eternal neutrality of Mongolia, even to apply the status of nuclear free zone, would be sound ideas as they limit the aforementioned flexibility.

### **Mongolian Strategies**

While an opportunistic and perhaps even Machiavellistic, foreign policy could be regarded as the most effective strategy for Mongolian survival, it has to be seen if such a policy can be implemented in the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The People's Republic of China is trying to re-collect the territories it lost in the Manchu era and it anyway needs the natural resources of Mongolia in order to sustain its growth in the direction of being the strongest economy in the world. Thereby supporting its political aspirations to be the first world power. The Middle Kingdom, not only of Asia but of the globe. Already some seventy percent of the Mongolian economy is under Chinese control. It buys the Mongolian elite into its power structures, thereby separating it from its own population which is – to put it diplomatically – very suspicious of the Chinese. All this might lead to a divide inside Mongolia, fostering political instability which will China even more of a hold over the country thereby laming its foreign policy. How to deal with this existential problem if the Khazarian solution won't work either?

The best strategy for the Mongolian policy makers, both internally and externally, seems to be a very selective and decisive strategy for the coming decades, supported by a strong foreign ministry. An effective ministry of foreign affairs with a stable and well-educated diplomatic staff and a minister who will not be overly dependent on the president, the prime minister and the ministry of home affairs. At the moment the MFA is mainly focusing on protocol while – like with the other ministries – its staff is more or less replaced after every election. This has to stop, the bureaucracy of the MFA has to be continuous and work in the general interest of the state and not in favour of one of the political parties and its political and business interests. This also implies the development of long term strategies and a serious fight against corruption. This will be difficult in a high-context society still very much relying on networks of tribes, clans, families and business partners. Perhaps globalisation – notwithstanding its negative aspects as fostering extreme differences in welfare - might be helpful in this respect.

If these internal conditions are satisfied, what would then be the external strategy for survival? Obviously to spread risks as much as possible by selecting specific fields of close cooperation with China, Russia and the world community. For China it will be about the economy indeed. It is

thereby vital to see to it that Mongolia will not only be dependent on China, but China also on Mongolia by delivering commodities that will ‘enslave’ the Chinese economy to Mongolia’s natural resources. A boycott would not work anymore as China cannot do without Mongolia’s natural riches. At the same time the grip of China on the management of mines will have to be diminished further. The laws concerning this issue will have to be sharpened further.

For Russia it will be close cooperation on security, foremost on military matters but also on creating better conditions for Mongolian exports to Europe and East Asia through Russian railway systems and harbours. This will facilitate trade with the Far Abroad like the Korea’s, Japan, the US and the EU, without becoming too dependent on Chinese infrastructure. Concerning the world community at large it means an ever more active Mongolian diplomacy including sending Peace Keepers to crisis regions. By working closely together in the Near Abroad – while spreading this collaboration over different issue areas and infrastructures – and having an assertive diplomacy in the Far Abroad, Mongolia will avoid the ‘Khazar Trap’ of a one-dimensional strategy that will inevitably lead to de-facto loss of sovereignty. However, this can only be done if Mongolia manages its internal policies more effectively than it has done till now. After-all, successful external policies depend on efficient internal politics. Drastic internal reforms are essential (Meerts, Halbertsma and Bayasakh, 2017).

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