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Analysis of the Motivations for the Introduction of Mongolia's Permanent Neutrality Policy

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Abstract **Review Article**

Following the introduction of the "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy and the "third neighbor" policy, in September 2015, Mongolia officially launched a permanent neutrality policy. The motivation behind Mongolia's adoption of the permanent neutrality policy has sparked discussions in academic circles. However, most relevant discussions remain at the level of perceptual knowledge and lack a theoretical framework. Overall, neutrality theory posits that there are two motivations for small countries to choose permanent neutrality: first, to avoid being involved in future (military) conflicts in order to maintain important economic relations with relevant countries; second, to enhance autonomy without provoking major powers. Based on this, regarding the motivation behind Mongolia's adoption of the permanent neutrality policy, two research hypotheses can be proposed: first, Mongolia seeks to avoid being involved in future (military) conflicts in order to maintain economic relations with relevant countries; second, Mongolia seeks to enhance its autonomy without provoking major powers. Both of the above research hypotheses have been well empirically verified. The research results show that, from the perspective of neutrality theory, the motivation for Mongolia's adoption of the permanent neutrality policy is to avoid being involved in future (military) conflicts in order to maintain economic relations with relevant countries and enhance autonomy. For Mongolia, seeking permanent neutrality to enhance autonomy mainly refers to being free from the pressure of taking sides politically and security-wise, rather than being economically independent of China and Russia.

Keywords: Mongolian diplomacy; neutrality policy; permanent neutrality; great power relations; autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

Mongolia is a neighboring country of China and has deep historical ties with it. It is the second-largest inland country in the world after Kazakhstan, situated between China and Russia. Therefore, its foreign policy has attracted much attention. The core of Mongolia's foreign policy is the "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy proposed in 1994. In 2011, to adapt to new circumstances and address over-reliance on its two big neighbors, Mongolia put forward the "third neighbor" diplomacy. What is even more noteworthy is that in September 2015, Mongolia introduced a permanent neutrality policy [1]. Mongolia adopted various means to introduce the permanent neutrality policy. First, it was publicly and solemnly announced by national leaders. On September 7, 2015, Elbegdorj Tsakhia, then President of Mongolia, first proposed the idea of Mongolia becoming a permanently neutral country in a speech. He believed that although Mongolia had not legally declared itself a permanently neutral country before, its diplomatic practice had long followed the principle of neutrality [2]. On September 29, 2015, President Elbegdorj Tsakhia

[1]The policy of permanent neutrality can refer to the foreign policy based on the status of a permanently neutral country, or it can refer to the relevant policies adopted in domestic and foreign affairs in order to obtain the status of a permanently neutral country. The permanent neutrality policy of Mongolia discussed in this article mainly refers to the domestic and foreign policies adopted by the country in pursuit of its status as a permanently neutral country.

[2]Zhang Wei, "Seeking Permanent Neutrality Mongolia Plans to Become 'Swiss in Asia'," October 17, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com//world/2015-10/17/c_128327041.htm.

officially announced at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly that Mongolia would pursue a permanent neutrality policy [3]. Although he emphasized that this policy was still in progress, domestic and international commentators interpreted it as a declaration of permanent neutrality [4]. At the same time, Mongolia also initiated relevant domestic legal procedures for the permanent neutrality policy. On September 8, 2015, the National Security Council of Mongolia, composed of the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the State Great Hural, discussed and supported the proposal put forward by Elbegdorj Tsakhia in his speech the previous day. Members of the National Security Council agreed that Mongolia should declare itself a permanently neutral country, implement a peaceful, multi-pillar foreign policy, build balanced diplomatic relations, and safeguard its core interests through political and diplomatic means. The National Security Council decided that the President was responsible for formulating and improving relevant draft laws such as the "Law on the Permanent Neutrality of Mongolia"; the State Great Hural was to support the status of a permanently neutral country and provide legal basis; and the government was to promulgate executive decrees on the status of a permanently neutral country and strive for the support and recognition of countries and the international community [5]. On October 20, 2015, Oyungerel Tsedevdamba, Advisor on Human Rights and Legal Policy to the President of Mongolia, submitted the draft "Law on the Permanent Neutrality of Mongolia" to Speaker of the State Great Hural Enkhbold Zandaakhüügliin, marking the official launch of the legal process for Mongolia's neutrality policy [6]. "In addition to legal guarantees, the Mongolian government also plans to establish a National Neutrality Day for nationwide celebration and commemoration." [7].

The policy of permanent neutrality is not only highly related to the power balance ideas of realism theory in international relations, but also closely associated with the anti-war and peace-seeking ideas of idealism theory in international relations; it is not only a matter of political diplomacy, but also an issue of international law. At the same time, Mongolia's unique geographical location makes the study of its policy of permanent neutrality significant for promoting peace and security in Northeast Asia and maintaining stability in the region. The research objective of this paper is to analyze the motivations behind Mongolia's adoption of a policy of permanent neutrality.

In academic circles, research on Mongolia's foreign policy mostly focuses on its "multi-pillar" diplomacy and "third neighbor" diplomacy. Regarding Mongolia's permanent neutrality policy, there is relatively less existing research, and the studies by Chinese scholars are representative. Dr. Odkhuu's relevant research focuses on the relationship between this policy and Mongolia's "third neighbor" diplomacy, believing that this policy is in line with the "third neighbor" policy [8]. Dr. Dashnyam focused on examining the historical background of Mongolia's foreign policy that gave rise to this policy. Some scholars have focused on analyzing the reasons for the introduction of Mongolia's permanent neutrality policy. They analyzed from perspectives such as geopolitics [9], the effective maintenance of Mongolia's "multi-pillar" diplomacy [10], and threat perception [11]. The views they reached are largely similar. To sum it up, it is for autonomy and security.

Although the above research provides support in terms of evidence and viewpoints for this study, it generally only conducts analyses at the level of perceptual knowledge and lacks a certain theoretical framework or relevant theoretical conclusions. Although some scholars (see the above text) have adopted the core concept of international crisis studies—threat (perception of danger)—to analyze the reasons for Mongolia's declaration of permanent neutrality, Mongolia was not in a state of crisis when it declared its permanent neutrality policy, and this policy itself is not a crisis-response policy. A reasonable approach would be to choose theories about "neutrality" as the basis for the theoretical framework. This paper attempts to use "neutrality" theory to construct an analytical framework to analyze the reasons behind Mongolia's declaration of permanent neutrality.

[3] UNDOC. A/70/PV.16, September 29, 2015.
[4]Oxford Analytica, "Mongolia's 'Permanent Neutrality' May Prove Ephemeral," *Expert Briefings,* November 13, 2015.
[5]Odeka, "Research on the National Security Policy of Mongolia in the 21st Century", Doctoral Dissertation, Jilin University, 2016, p. 65.
[6]Yang Tao, Lin Meilian, Wang Jiabo, "Why Mongolia Wants to Be a 'Permanently Neutral Country' and Whether It Will Be Recognized Remains to Be Seen", *Global Times*, October 22, 2015, Page 6.
[7]Yang Tao, "Mongolia Introduces a 'Permanent Neutrality Policy'", *World Knowledge*, No. 22, 2015, p. 33.
[8]Odeka, "Research on the National Security Policy of Mongolia in the 21st Century", Doctoral Dissertation, Jilin University, 2016.
[9]Zhang Kai, "Analysis of Geopolitical Factors of Mongolia's Permanent Neutrality Policy", *Public Diplomacy Quarterly*, No. 2, 2016, pp. 55-60.
[10]Li Chao, "Analysis of Mongolia's Permanent Neutrality Policy Conception", *Journal of Northeast Asia*, No. 2, 2018, pp. 31-36.
[11]Khurelbaatar S, "Neutrality Strategy and Mongolia's Choice of Foreign Security Strategy", *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No. 2, 2017, pp. 64-75.

I. Core Concepts and Theoretical Framework

As can be seen from the above literature review, one of the current research problems regarding Mongolia's policy of permanent neutrality is: How to analyze, through an appropriate theoretical framework, the main research question-what are the motives behind Mongolia's adoption of the policy of permanent neutrality? To solve the main research question, an ideal step is to first answer the following sub-questions: What is "permanent neutrality"? What are the reasons for a country to pursue a policy of neutrality? Next, the author will examine the theories related to "neutrality" to answer the above sub-questions.

(I) Neutrality and Permanent Neutrality

"Since conflicts among states have occurred, neutrality has always existed. Sometimes this stance is described as impartial, non-aligned, or maintaining balance." [12]. The concept of neutrality is always closely linked with conflict; neutrality refers to the impartiality of the neutral party towards the conflicting sides. This article discusses neutrality in international relations, so the neutrality referred to here is related to the subject of neutrality, indicating a state's policy or strategy of neutrality. Therefore, neutrality can be defined as a "foreign policy principle aimed at maintaining the independence and sovereignty of small states by not participating and remaining impartial in conflicts" [13]. A state that adopts a policy of neutrality through certain procedures is called a neutral state.

The laws of neutrality stipulate three fundamental obligations for neutral states—restraint, impartiality, and prevention—but these are limited to wartime and only apply to conflicts between states [14]. Therefore, neutral states must not provide military support to belligerent countries, whether direct (troops) or indirect (mercenaries). They must treat all belligerent countries equally in the export of weapons and military technology, meaning they must apply the same rules to their relations with all belligerent countries as they do with their own. Finally, neutral states have an obligation to maintain their territorial integrity and defend their sovereignty by all available means to prevent belligerent countries from using their territory for war purposes.

The most important right arising from a state of neutrality is the right to territorial integrity. Belligerent parties must not use the territory of a neutral country as a base for operations or conduct hostile activities within it. This right applies not only to the territory and waters of a neutral country but also to its airspace. According to the 1923 Hague Rules of Air Warfare (which never had legal binding force), a neutral country has the right to defend its airspace and prevent the passage of military aircraft from belligerent nations. However, the emergence of ballistic missiles and space satellites as tools of war has raised questions about the extent of a nation's upper boundary. "The right of neutrality was first recognized in writing by the international community in the Hague Conventions signed in 1907. For a country to be neutral means that it must not participate in the wars of other countries, is permitted to possess armaments for self-defense purposes, but must not initiate wars, cannot sign treaties of war alliances, nor can it participate in economic sanctions against other countries." [15].

The nature of neutrality is determined by the nature of the conflict, and generally, the type of conflict is classified according to its nature. Therefore, it can be inferred that the type of conflict determines the type of neutrality. In terms of extension, "the most obvious types of conflicts, when classified at the national level, include international wars and domestic wars, revolutions, coups, terrorist activities, riots, demonstrations, sanctions, etc" [16]. For the convenience of discussion, this article divides international conflicts into: hot wars (ongoing large-scale military conflicts), cold wars (various forms of mutual suppression by the main conflicting parties other than direct armed confrontation), and potential future wars.

As described above, the nature of a conflict determines the nature of neutrality, and thus the types of conflicts, as categorized according to their nature, inevitably determine the types of neutrality. Regarding the relationship between the classification of international conflicts by the author and the types of neutrality, this is indeed the case: if a state adopts a policy of neutrality, then in response to hot wars, states often adopt a temporary neutrality policy; in the case of cold wars, states often adopt a non-aligned nature of neutrality; in response to potential future wars, states often adopt a permanent neutrality policy. This can be represented by the table below:

[12] Michael of Liechtenstein, "The Case for Neutrality," December 21, 2022, https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/neutrality/.

[13]Jean-Marc Rickli, "Neutrality Inside and Outside the EU: A Comparison of the Austrian and Swiss Security Policies after the Cold War," in Robert Steinmetz, Baldur Thorhallsson, and Wivel Anders (eds), *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010, p.185.

[14]Dietrich Schindler, "Changing Conceptions of Neutrality in Switzerland," *Austrian Journal of Public and International Law*, Vol. 42, 1992, pp. 77–88.

[15]Yang Tao, Lin Meilian, Wang Jiabo, "Why Mongolia Wants to Be a 'Permanently Neutral Country' and Whether It Will Be Recognized Remains to Be Seen", Global Times, October 22, 2015, Page 6.

[16]Ni Shixiong, *et al.,* Contemporary Western Theory of International Relations, Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2001, p. 269.

Table 1: Correspondence Table of Neutrality Types and Conflict Types

types of conflicts	types of neutrality
hot war→	temporary (wartime) neutrality
cold war→	non-aligned neutrality (political concept)
potential war→	permanent neutrality

"Compared with the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the concept of neutrality has changed. It has become increasingly vague, less based on law, and more politicized." [17]. Neutrality, even in Switzerland, is not a static concept. In 1986, Swiss voters rejected joining the United Nations by a vote of three to one. One key reason was that its voters believed that joining the UN would endanger Switzerland's neutrality. However, 15 years later, in another referendum, Swiss voters decided to join the United Nations by a very close margin. Apparently, at this time, people no longer considered membership in the United Nations incompatible with neutrality.

After discussing "neutrality," it is relatively easy to explain "permanent neutrality." Permanent neutrality is a status where a country undertakes the legal obligation to remain neutral in the event of an armed conflict between two other countries during peacetime. This status requires the neutral country not to accept any military obligations in peacetime and to avoid actions that could prevent it from fulfilling its neutrality obligations in the event of an armed conflict. It is necessary to distinguish this legal obligation to maintain neutrality from a policy of neutrality [18]. Although the United States has had tendencies towards adopting a policy of neutrality at certain moments in its history—especially at the beginning of World War I—consistently pursuing neutrality (permanent neutrality) is usually a diplomatic and security posture of smaller nations.

Generally speaking, the formation of a permanently neutral country must meet two conditions: first, a sovereign state voluntarily undertakes the obligation of permanent neutrality; second, other countries recognize and guarantee the status of that country as a permanently neutral state. The obligations of a permanently neutral country are mainly manifested in the following aspects: except for self-defense, it shall not wage war against other countries; it shall not conclude treaties or agreements that conflict with its neutral status, such as military alliance treaties; it shall abide by the rules of neutrality in the wars of other countries; it shall not take any actions that would involve it in war [19]. Therefore, the meaning of permanent neutrality can also be expressed as follows: "A country undertakes the international obligation of not joining any military alliance and will not participate in any wars between other countries in the future. This position is referred to as permanent neutrality." [20].

The concept of a permanently neutral country, which does not join military alliances, is often associated with non-alignment or military non-alignment. However, historically speaking, unlike neutrality, non-alignment is not a legal concept but a political one, meaning the adoption of a policy aimed at avoiding entanglement in the conflicts between the superpowers during the Cold War era. This understanding was formally established when the Non-Aligned Movement was created at the Belgrade Conference in 1961 [21].

(II) Theoretical Framework

After answering the first sub-question (what is permanent neutrality), the next step is to address the second sub-question—why does a country adopt a policy of neutrality? The response to this question introduces the theoretical framework of this article. Since the core concept in this sub-question is neutrality, the author will attempt to find the answer within relevant neutrality theories.

Pascal Lottaz [22], pointed out three types of reasons for a country to adopt a neutral policy. The first type of reason is "institutional requirements." Due to institutional reasons, some actors must maintain a neutral stance. For example, institutions such as the United Nations often cannot take sides in conflicts. For countries, the form of legal confirmation of neutrality in their own countries often affects the implementation of their neutral policies. For instance, an important reason why Sweden and Finland were able to abandon their neutral status easily is that there has never been a "hard" neutrality clause in the constitutions of these two countries. In contrast, Switzerland, Austria, and Malta

[17]Pascal Lottaz, "Evolving but not Disappearing: Neutrality after the Cold War," November 15, 2022, https://europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/evolving-but-not-disappearing-neutrality-after-the-cold-war/.

[18]Michael Bothe, "Neutrality, Concept and General Rules," October 1, 2015, https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e349.

[19]Yang Tao, "Mongolia Introduces a 'Permanent Neutrality Policy'", World Knowledge, Issue 22, 2015, p. 33.

[20]Heribert Franz Koeck, "A Permanently Neutral State in the Security Council," *Cornell International Law Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1973, p. 139.

[21]Thomas Greminger and Jean-Marc Rickli, "Neutrality after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: The Example of Switzerland and Some Lessons for Ukraine," *PRISM*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2023, p. 29.

[22]Pascal Lottaz, "The Future of Neutrality," *GCSP Policy Brief*, No. 4, 2023, pp.1-14.

still retain their neutral policies because they have binding neutrality laws at home. The second type of reason is "internal interests." These internal interests include two aspects. The first aspect is to avoid being involved in wars and maintain economic relations with important partners. The second is to balance domestic political forces (the forces of different ethnic groups). For example, during World War I, there were significant differences in the sentiments towards the belligerents among the German-speaking and French-speaking groups in Switzerland. This prompted the Swiss government to regard neutrality not only as a legal obligation to other countries but also as a political means to avoid domestic division. Turkmenistan's neutral policy also aims to balance internal political forces. The third type of reason is "external necessity." This external necessity includes three aspects: First, neutrality can be stipulated in the form of agreements reached among external powers (so-called "neutralization"); second, lack of viable alternatives: a country is in a situation where other countries are unwilling or unable to establish meaningful alliances (having to act alone); third, increasing one's autonomy relative to major powers without seriously provoking one or more dominant powers. This was the case with Finland and Yugoslavia during the Cold War.

Although Pascal Lotaux pointed out three reasons for a country to adopt a neutral policy, the first reason - "institutional requirements" - actually refers to the institutional factors that affect the stability of a neutral policy for a country that has implemented such a policy, rather than the factors that prompt a country to adopt a neutral policy. Therefore, it is not applicable for examining the reasons why Mongolia has declared permanent neutrality. As for the second category of reasons, since Mongolia is generally a single-ethnic nation, the motivation for its declaration of a permanent neutral policy cannot be "balancing domestic political forces." Regarding the third category of reasons, countries such as China, the United States, and Russia have not attempted to "neutralize" it, meaning they have not tried to stipulate its neutral status through treaties. Moreover, Mongolia certainly does not lack alliances it could join. This means that the two reasons within the third category - facing "neutralization" and "lack of alternative options" - are also not applicable for examining the reasons why Mongolia has declared permanent neutrality.

In this way, only two general reasons for neutrality remain applicable to examining the reasons for Mongolia's declaration of permanent neutrality: avoiding entanglement in wars and maintaining economic relations with important partners (conflicting parties); and increasing one's autonomy relative to major powers without seriously provoking one or more dominant powers.

Ryszard M. Czarny examined the reasons for neutrality from the perspective of international relations theory and believed that "the most important goal of neutrality is to ensure political independence while not getting involved in armed conflicts." [23]. Similar to the above two reasons, this also explains the subjective reasons for a country to implement a neutral policy from the perspective of "purpose," and the meaning of this reason has already been encompassed by the above two reasons. In short, there are two purposes, or subjective reasons, for a country to implement a neutral policy: to avoid war and to maintain autonomy. The status of these two subjective reasons, avoiding war and maintaining autonomy, is different; avoiding war is the direct purpose of neutrality, while the purpose of avoiding war includes maintaining autonomy. That is to say, if we look at it from the perspective of purpose and means, avoiding war is the purpose of neutrality, but it is also a means to achieve autonomy. In summary, the direct purpose of neutrality is to avoid being drawn into (potential) wars, while the purpose of avoiding war is to enhance autonomy and maintain economic relations with relevant countries (especially the parties in conflict).

In summary, the motives for a country to adopt a neutral policy include: avoiding involvement in (military) conflicts to enhance autonomy and maintain economic relations with potential belligerents. Based on this, we can propose two hypotheses regarding the question of what the motives are for Mongolia to declare a permanent neutral policy: First, to avoid involvement in (military) conflicts to maintain economic relations; Second, to avoid involvement in (military) conflicts to enhance its own autonomy. The verification of the above hypotheses will be the main content of the subsequent sections of this paper.

II. "Motivation" of Avoiding Involvement in Potential (Military) Conflicts to Maintain Economic Relations

This section mainly verifies the first research hypothesis regarding the motivation behind Mongolia's adoption of the policy of permanent neutrality: avoiding involvement in potential (military) conflicts to maintain important economic relations. To verify this research hypothesis, it is necessary to examine whether there were potential (military) conflicts when the "policy" was introduced and whether there were important economic relations that required Mongolia to safeguard with its status as a permanently neutral country. The fact is that around 2015 when the "policy" was introduced, Russia's relations with the United States and the West had intensified due to its annexation of Crimea, China and

[23]Ryszard M. Czarny, "Neutrality in the Theory of International Relations," in Ryszard M. Czarny, *Sweden: From Neutrality to International Solidarity*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018, p. 13.

the United States were also on the verge of military conflict over issues such as the South China Sea, and at the same time, there were important economic relations between Mongolia and countries such as China and Russia.

(I) The Real Possibility of Interests Contradictions and Wars among Major Powers around 2015

After the Cold War, the fundamental strategic goal of the United States in its foreign relations was to maintain its status as the sole superpower. Therefore, preventing and containing potential challengers has been the focus of its foreign policy. In the eyes of the United States, the countries most likely to pose a severe challenge to its hegemony are China and Russia. Thus, the United States regards China and Russia as strategic opponents and, together with its allies, takes measures to prevent, contain, and even suppress them. Meanwhile, China and Russia have also adopted means such as promoting their own development (internal balance) and strengthening the strategic cooperative relationship between the two countries (external balance) to counterbalance the pressure from the United States and the West. As China develops and Russia's strength is restored, the contradictions between China and Russia on one side and the United States and the West on the other have become increasingly intense. Because the stronger China and Russia grow, the more the United States and the West feel the "threat" to their collective hegemony, and thus the greater the intensity of containment. This intensification of contradictions was particularly prominent around 2015.

During this period, the strategic competition between China and the United States has escalated comprehensively. First of all, the competition for dominance in international economic rules has intensified. China and the United States have engaged in fierce rivalry over the formulation of new international economic and trade rules. China has expanded its influence through mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), while the United States has strongly promoted the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) in an attempt to consolidate its dominant position [24]. The two sides also have strategic differences in the "Post-2015 Agenda": China emphasizes the equal participation of developing countries, while the United States tries to take the lead by resetting norms [25].

Secondly, confrontation between China and the United States in the security field has intensified. The United States has advanced the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy, frequently conducting close-in reconnaissance and military provocations in the South China Sea, resulting in frequent maritime frictions. The issue of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan continues to undermine Sino-U.S. mutual trust, and the U.S. actions are accused of blatantly violating the three joint communiqués. [26]There are significant differences in military perceptions. The United States believes that China's proposal of a "new type of major-country relationship" is to gain time for its rise, while China views U.S. actions as a containment strategy. [27]The contest between China and the United States in the South China Sea region has also become increasingly intense due to incidents such as those involving Huangyan Island, and in 2016, a naval battle was narrowly averted. At the same time, institutional competition has also intensified. The U.S. strategic community has determined that the policy of engagement with China has failed, and the voice advocating tough containment has become mainstream, deepening the "security dilemma" and trust deficit between the two countries [28]. China, on the other hand, has promoted reforms of the international governance system through platforms such as the APEC summit and climate negotiations, forming institutional competition with the United States [29].

During the same period, Russia's geopolitical competition with the United States and the West intensified. First and foremost was the spillover effect of the Ukraine crisis. Russia's annexation of Crimea

[24]Policy Research Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2015", Current Affairs Report, No. 3, 2016, pp. 7-13.
[25]Zhang Chun, "Analysis of the Possibility of Cooperation between China and the United States under the Framework of the 'Post-2015 Agenda'", Collaborative Innovation Center for a New Type of Major Country Relationship between China and the United States, Fudan University, *Research Report on a New Type of Major Country Relationship between China and the United States*, No. 9, 2015, pp. 7-13.
[26] Zhang Fang, "China-Us Military Relations in 2015", Collaborative Innovation Center for New-Type Major Country Relations between Fudan University, *Research Report on New-Type Major Country Relations between China and the United States*, No. 16, 2016, pp. 6-7.
[27]Zhang Yunling, Ren Jingjing, "Assessment Report on China's Peripheral Security Situation (2015-2016)", *Journal of China's Peripheral Diplomacy*, No. 1, 2016, p. 13.
[28] Zhou Chao, "On the Generation and Response of the Strategic Competitive Relationship between China and the United States as Major Powers: An Explanation Based on the Misaligned Mechanism of Economic and Security Linkage in Major Power Relations", *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No. 1, 2022, p. 80.
[29]Ji Mingkui, "China-Us Relations and the Direction of Major Powers in 2015", January 12, 2015, http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/201501/12/t20150112_4314106.shtml.

triggered sanctions against Russia by the United States and Europe. Russia retaliated through military exercises and energy diplomacy, making Central and Eastern Europe a frontline in strategic confrontation. NATO's eastward expansion and Russia's demand for security guarantees have created a structural contradiction, leading to significant cracks in the European security architecture. [30]Russia's direct military intervention in the Syrian Civil War disrupted the post-Cold War Middle East security order dominated by the United States and the West, resulting in a "second land power competition" between the US and Russia. [31]The incident where Turkey shot down a Russian military aircraft highlighted the risk of proxy conflicts. Although the Iran nuclear deal eased tensions, the United States and Russia remain opposed on issues such as counter-terrorism cooperation and regime change, especially with continuous friction between their armies in Syria [32].

There are multi - dimensional contradictions among international strategic forces in the reconstruction of the international order. First is the dispute over development models. Emerging countries such as China are promoting reforms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and demanding an increase in the say of developing countries, which conflicts with the stance of the United States and Europe in maintaining their existing privileges [33]. The "Thucydides Trap" theory has been instrumentalized by the US side in an attempt to shape the Sino - US competition into an ideological confrontation between "democracy and authoritarianism" [34].

Second is the divergence over global governance rules. On issues such as climate change and counter - terrorism, China adheres to the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities", while the United States tries to weaken the special treatment of developing countries. The TPP/TTIP negotiations deliberately excluded emerging countries or regions, which was criticized by Putin as a "closed economic alliance", exacerbating the fragmentation of global economic rules [35].

Third, there are conflicts in regional security architectures. The United States has strengthened the US - Japan military alliance and supported Japan in passing a new security law, creating frictions on issues in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. At the same time, China and Russia have strengthened strategic coordination, hedging against Western pressure through joint military exercises and energy cooperation [36].

Around 2015, due to the deepening contradictions between international strategic forces, especially between China, Russia and other countries on one side and the United States and the West on the other, proxy wars among nuclear powers, or even direct military conflicts, were not only within reach but had become a real possibility. Under the situation where the conflicts among international strategic forces intensified and there was an obvious trend of developing towards direct military conflicts, the diplomatic pressure faced by Mongolia, especially the pressure of choosing sides, also increased. This prompted it to introduce a policy of permanent neutrality.

(II) The Importance of Avoiding Potential Wars for Mongolia's Maintenance of Economic Interests

Although Mongolia was in a peaceful and secure environment around 2015, it still needs to make the necessary preparations to ensure its own security and development. The international situation is complex and volatile, with armed conflicts arising from territorial disputes. Major powers often resolve territorial disputes by force, such as the Russia-Georgia conflict and the Russia-Ukraine conflict that have occurred. Mongolia is located in Central Asia. As a country in East Asia, there are territorial disputes between China and Japan, Russia and Japan. A ceasefire agreement has not yet been signed between the two Koreas on the Korean Peninsula. There is a high possibility that the Russia-Ukraine conflict may escalate. The confrontation between China and the

[30]He Yiting, "International Situation in the Context of Great Adjustment, Great Reorganization and Great Pattern-On China and the World in 2015," *Study Times*, January 21, 2016, Pages A1 and A3.

[31]Xin Qiang, "World Politics: The Geopolitical Struggle between the Old Order and the New Forces", in Fudan University School of Development, *China View*, No. 6, 2016, p. 1.

[32]Liu Xu, "Year-end Review: Local Conflicts Affect the Effectiveness of Political Resolution of Major Country Relations", December 21, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/21/c_128553045.htm.

[33]Department of Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2015", *Current Affairs Report*, No. 3, 2016, pp. 7-13; Ji Mingkui, "China-Us Relations and the Direction of Major Powers in 2015", January 12, 2015, http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/201501/12/t20150112_4314106.shtml.

[34]Wang Yiwei, "The Thucydides Trap Does Not Necessarily Exist", April 17, 2016, https://news.cri.cn/uc-eco/20160417/20328879-c2d9-34c9-d9f9-cd835c41a278.html.

[35]Department of Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2015", *Current Affairs Report*, No. 3, 2016, pp. 7-13.

[36]Shao Jin, *et al.,* "From 2014 to 2015: Changes and Prospects in Major Country Relations", December 16, 2014, https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2014/12-16/6882925.shtml.

United States in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait is intense. If wars break out among the above-mentioned countries, it will be very difficult for Mongolia to stay out of it. It dares not take sides, and is even more afraid of choosing the wrong side. Therefore, it is very necessary for Mongolia to avoid getting involved in potential military conflicts among major powers. An important way to avoid military conflicts is to obtain the status of a permanently neutral country.

If Mongolia becomes a permanently neutral country, its military exercises with other countries will be restricted, and its direct use of force in United Nations peacekeeping operations will also be limited. According to international law, a permanently neutral country is defined as "one whose independence and integrity are guaranteed by treaties on the condition that it undertakes not to participate in military alliances (except in resistance to aggression) and does not assume obligations that could indirectly involve it in war." [37]. The relationship between countries involved in hostilities (belligerents) and those not involved in hostilities (neutral countries) is governed by the laws of neutrality. These laws require neutral countries to maintain peaceful relations with both belligerents, allowing them to continue diplomatic and economic relations with both sides (except for providing military assistance, such as through arms trade) [38].

At the same time, Mongolia has good economic relations with China, Russia and the "third neighbors", which also enhances the necessity for Mongolia to implement a permanent neutrality policy. Around 2015, China-Mongolia economic cooperation made remarkable progress in multiple fields. After the bilateral relations were upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2014, economic and trade cooperation was further deepened. In 2015, China and Mongolia signed a number of important economic and trade cooperation agreements covering infrastructure construction, energy development, agriculture and animal husbandry and other fields, and successfully held the first China-Mongolia Expo, promoting trade and investment cooperation between the two countries [39]. In terms of trade, the bilateral trade volume between China and Mongolia reached 7.3 billion US dollars in 2015. China continued to maintain its position as Mongolia's largest trading partner, accounting for 62% of Mongolia's total foreign trade volume [40]. In terms of investment, China's investment in Mongolia continued to grow. By the end of 2015, China's cumulative direct investment in Mongolia had reached 4 billion US dollars, with the number of investment projects reaching 2,166.[41]Chinese enterprises participated in a number of infrastructure projects in Mongolia, such as railways, highways and large-scale energy projects, and also had extensive layouts in fields such as mining and construction.

Around 2015, the economic cooperation between Russia and Mongolia presented a complex and multi-faceted development trend. In terms of the trade relationship between the two countries, Mongolia still had a significant trade deficit with Russia. In 2013, the trade deficit reached as high as $1.5 billion, accounting for 71.8% of the total trade deficit. [42]In terms of economic cooperation, the two countries implemented the "Mongolia-Russia Economic and Trade Cooperation Development Plan" from 2010 to 2015, aiming to promote bilateral trade and investment. [43]However, due to Mongolia's high economic dependence on Russia and the economic sanctions imposed on Russia, the progress of cooperation was slow, and the problem of the trade deficit remained prominent.In terms of infrastructure and energy cooperation, Russia played an important role in Mongolia's energy supply, with over 90% of Mongolia's oil imports depending on Russia. In addition, the two countries also had certain cooperation in railway modernization, energy supply, and infrastructure construction.

Around 2015, Mongolia faced severe economic challenges: a sharp drop in global mineral product prices, a slowdown in Chinese demand, a surge in external debt pressure (external debt accounted for 174.5% of GDP), and an expanding fiscal deficit to $327 million (January - July 2015) [44]. Against this backdrop, Mongolia accelerated the implementation of its "third neighbor" diplomatic strategy and deepened economic cooperation

[37] "Mongolia Aims to Be a 'Permanently Neutral Country'", Qilu Evening News, October 17, 2015, pages A15 and A16.

[38] Raas Nabeel, "The Changing Nature of Neutrality," May 26, 2023, https://www.dlpforum.org/2023/05/26/the-changing-nature-of-neutrality/.

[39] "Top 10 News on Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Mongolia in 2015", December 22, 2015, http://caijing.chinadaily.com.cn/finance/2015-12/22/content_22775567.htm.

[40] "China, Mongolia and Russia Join Hands to Build an Economic Corridor (Hot Topic Focus)", People's Daily Overseas Edition, September 17, 2016, Page 2.

[41] Li Yang, Tang Ke, "Promoting the Upgrading and Development of Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Mongolia", International Economic Cooperation, No. 4, 2020, p. 118.

[42] Li Chao, "Why the New President of Mongolia Made His First Visit to Russia", September 6, 2017, https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnK54Ca.

[43] Odeka, "Research on the National Security Policy of Mongolia in the 21st Century", Doctoral Dissertation, Jilin University, 2016, p. 90.

[44] "Economic Development Data of Mongolia in the First Half of 2015", July 29, 2015, https://china.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJNVId.

with the United States, Europe, Japan, and South Korea to reduce its dependence on China and Russia (China accounted for 62.6% of its total trade volume) [45]. In terms of its economic relations with the United States, Mongolia adopted a security-economic bundling model; with Japan, a resource-technology exchange model; with the European Union, a generalized system of preferences-sustainable development model; and with South Korea, an energy-technology synergy model [46].

An analysis of Mongolia's foreign economic relations reveals that Mongolia's foreign economy is highly dependent on China and Russia. Due to the lack of power to counterbalance neighboring major powers, a small country can only resort to other means to seek relative advantages, including its geographically strategic location with strategic value, scarce natural resources, and ideological or economic models that are distinctly different from those of its neighbors.[47]Some of Mongolia's relevant diplomatic policies are also based on this to a certain extent. "Mongolia shares a border with Russia in the north and is bordered by China to the east, south, and west. It is a country of great geopolitical and strategic importance on the Eurasian continent. In recent years, with the rapid development of Mongolia's economy, especially the discovery and exploitation of many large - scale mineral deposits such as copper mines, gold mines, coal mines, and uranium mines in the country, Mongolia's strategic status has been increasingly elevated." [48].

Mongolia is highly economically dependent on China and Russia. Mongolia has attempted to reduce this dependence through its "third neighbor" strategy, but it has not been easy to achieve. Meanwhile, the contradictions between China, Russia and the United States and the West are increasing, and there is even a possibility of direct military conflict. Therefore, in order to maintain its economic relations with relevant countries, especially China and Russia, to a certain extent in the case of intensified conflicts, and at the same time expand its economic relations with the United States and the West, Mongolia's choice of a permanent neutral policy is also a reasonable one. For example, when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, Mongolia faced a series of pressures, which formed the direct impetus for Mongolia to introduce a permanent neutral policy. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring the referendum on Crimea's secession from Ukraine invalid, with 100 countries in favor and 11 countries against. Mongolia was one of the 58 "abstaining" countries. Although facing pressure from the West, Mongolia did not join the ranks of the countries in favor but chose to abstain like China. Of course, when the United States and the West sanctioned Russia due to issues such as Crimea, Mongolia also faced pressure from Western countries to act in sync. However, Mongolia could not do so because, as mentioned above, Mongolia is highly dependent on Russia for energy, not to mention Russia's political influence over it.

III. "Motivation" of Avoiding Potential (Military) Conflicts to Enhance Autonomy

The main purpose of this section is to verify the second research hypothesis put forward in the theoretical framework: Mongolia introduced the policy of permanent neutrality in order to avoid getting involved in (military) conflicts and enhance its autonomy. The focus of verification is to examine the limitations on its autonomy, but also discuss the policy inertia of the country in enhancing its autonomy.

(I) Mongolia Has a Policy Basis for Avoiding Entanglement in Potential (Military) Conflicts to Enhance Its Autonomy

Due to scarce resources, small countries lack the power to set agendas, so their ability to influence or change the behavior of other countries is limited. Their ability to prevent other countries from influencing their own behavior is also limited. [49]It can be seen that for small countries, the goals of security and foreign policy are to minimize or make up for this power deficit. This is transformed into three broad security policy orientations: Small countries can focus on seeking influence, or pursue autonomy, or adopt a hedging strategy to take into account both at the same time. When a small country decides to give priority to autonomy in its diplomatic and security policies, it can adopt a defensive security strategy conducive to sovereignty. In this case, its security does not rely on the protection of major powers. This gives small countries more leeway in avoiding being drawn into other countries' wars, but the price is that they may be abandoned by major powers when their own security is threatened. The characteristic of this strategic choice is to pursue a neutral policy.

[45] "Overall Situation of Mongolia's National Economic Operation in 2015", January 27, 2016, https://m.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJTtXt.

[46] Mongolia, "Trade Policy Review," Wt/Tpr/G/406, 2021, p. 6; Yang Xinying, "The Current Economic Situation of Mongolia", July 28, 2016, https://www.eximclub.com.tw/innerContent.aspx?Type=Publish&ID=2730&Continen=1&Country=%E8%92%99%E5%8F%A4.

[47] Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder, *Correlation of Identity and Interest in Foreign Policy: Implication for Mongolia*, Naval Postgraduate School, 2023, p. 78.

[48] "Mongolia Aims to be a 'permanently Neutral Country'", Qilu Evening News, October 17, 2015, pages A15 and A16.

[49] Anders Wivel, "The Security Challenge of Small EU Member States: Interests, Identity and the Development of the EU as a Security Actor," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2005, pp.393-412.

To enhance their influence, small countries can achieve this through alliances. Alliance policy, to be more precise, allows small countries to obtain protection and deterrence from larger countries, but at the cost of sacrificing their own autonomy. This is the biggest risk faced by small countries, as alliance commitments can make them subject to the policies of their larger partner countries, forcing them into wars that are not directly in line with their own interests. Moreover, the protection of a great power is never taken for granted, so alliance policy is also full of uncertainties. It is evident that the inherent risks for small countries that adopt an alliance-dependent diplomatic and security strategy are falling into the strategic traps of other countries and losing strategic autonomy. For Mongolia, before the end of the Cold War, it was allied with the Soviet Union for a long time, controlled by the Soviet Union, with very low autonomy in domestic, foreign, and national defense policies, which greatly limited the country's development and was a painful memory for Mongolia. Therefore, since liberation from Soviet control, Mongolia has been making unremitting efforts to enhance its own autonomy. One of the major threats to autonomy is being involved in conflicts between other countries, especially military conflicts. An important way to avoid being drawn into potential military conflicts is to neither join military alliances nor form alliances with any country. The main approaches to achieving this goal include non-alignment and permanent neutrality. As mentioned above, non-alignment is essentially a form of political neutrality, and Mongolia has implemented a policy of non-aligned political neutrality from the beginning. This policy also provided the basis for Mongolia's introduction of a permanent neutrality policy in 2015. For permanently neutral countries, international law defines them as "those whose independence and integrity are fully guaranteed by treaties on the condition that they undertake not to participate in military alliances (except for resistance against aggression) and do not assume obligations that could indirectly involve them in war." [50]Below, the author will provide a brief analysis of the political neutrality characteristics of Mongolia's foreign policy before 2015 to reflect the policy basis and inertia behind Mongolia's introduction of a permanent neutrality policy.

In the early 1990s, although Mongolia had shaken off the strong influence of the Soviet Union, its unique geographical position, tightly wedged between China and Russia, still naturally subjected it to the significant influence of these two major powers. In this sense, enhancing Mongolia's autonomy largely meant reducing its dependence on China and Russia and seeking to develop various relationships with other countries. Moreover, autonomy also meant balancing between China and Russia. In terms of specific policies, this was first reflected in Mongolia's change of its categorical identity, transitioning from a socialist economic system to a capitalist one, and altering its political system to what is known in the West as democracy, attempting to integrate itself into the Western family and differentiate from China and Russia, that is, enhancing its autonomy vis-à-vis China and Russia at the level of domestic institutions.

In its foreign policy, Mongolia has implemented a "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy with strong political neutrality from the outset. Its main characteristics include pursuing equidistant diplomacy with China and Russia, while actively developing relations with the US, Japan, Europe, and others. The neutral characteristic of Mongolia's "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy, which seeks to leverage other countries to balance the influence of China and Russia in order to gain greater autonomy, is more specifically reflected in its "third neighbor" diplomacy. The so-called "third neighbors" refer to countries other than China and Russia, primarily the United States, followed by Japan, Europe, South Korea, India, etc. In other words, Mongolia attempts to use "third neighbors" to balance the influence of China and Russia. To effectively implement the "third neighbor" policy, Mongolia has refused to join military alliances and is even reluctant to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, preferring to maintain observer status only. At the same time, it is a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and a NATO Partnership for Peace country, and has even participated in NATO-led military operations in Iraq, Kosovo, and Afghanistan [51]. Mongolia has even pursued ideological diplomacy. It successfully hosted the Community of Democracies conference from 2011 to 2013 and organized the seventh Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Ulaanbaatar from April 27 to 29, 2013 [52]. Another policy that reflects Mongolia's neutral stance is its becoming a nuclear-weapon-free country in 1992 and receiving security assurances from the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council [53].

[50] Zhang Wei, "Mongolia Seeks Permanent Neutrality, Analysts Say Strategic Changes May Be to Reduce Dependence on China and Russia", October 17, 2015, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1386041.

[51] Zheng Chuang, Gao Jie, Li Hong, "Planning for 'Permanent Neutrality': Does Mongolia Want All Citizens to Be Soldiers?" October 25th, 2015, https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJQSra.

[52] Embassy of Mongolia to the United States of America, "Foreign Policy," https://mongolianembassy.us/about-mongolia/foreign-relations-of-mongolia/.

[53] J. Mendee N. Soyolgerel, "Mongolia's New Foreign Policy Strategy: A Balancing Act with Central and Northeast Asia," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Mongolia & Mongolian Institute for Innovative Policies, 2022, p. 8.

(II) The Special Practical Necessity for Mongolia to Enhance Its Autonomy around 2015

Around 2015, the necessity for Mongolia to enhance its autonomy first stemmed from the increasingly intensifying contradictions among major powers at that time, with a clear trend developing towards indirect or even direct military conflicts. The outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the dangerous situation caused by U.S. intervention in the South China Sea were important indicators of the deepening contradictions among major powers. Contradictions in other issue areas were also intensifying (see details above). Among them, the Ukraine crisis had the greatest negative impact on Russia's relations with the West and also indirectly affected Mongolia's foreign policy.

In February 2014, Russia adopted "hybrid warfare" tactics and dispatched unidentified soldiers ("little green men") to take control of key facilities such as the Crimean parliament and airports, and supported a pro-Russian regime [54]. On March 16, a referendum was held in Crimea. The official results claimed that 96.7% supported joining Russia, but the United States and Europe believed that the voting process lacked international supervision and there were armed personnel present exerting pressure. [55]. Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution with 100 votes against and 11 votes in favor, declaring the referendum invalid. Russia defended its actions on the grounds of historical sovereignty, the right to national self-determination, and protecting the safety of Russian citizens. However, the international community generally believes that this move violates Article 2 of the UN Charter (prohibiting the use of force to violate the territorial integrity of other countries) and the Budapest Memorandum (Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons in exchange for sovereignty guarantees). The European Court of Human Rights clearly ruled that Russia constituted a "military occupation" and the referendum was carried out "under the threat of force" [56].

The United States has launched multi-dimensional sanctions against Russia. Sanctions on individuals and entities: freezing the assets of Putin's cronies, senior Russian officials, and Crimean separatists, and prohibiting entry (such as Executive Orders 13660 - 13685 in 2014) [57]. Industry restrictions: prohibiting the export of key technologies to Russia's energy, defense, and financial sectors, and restricting the supply of deep-sea drilling equipment; Financial isolation: severing some connections between Russian banks and the SWIFT system and restricting sovereign debt financing [58]. 77The European Union has also taken confrontational measures against Russia. Political isolation: suspending EU-Russia summits and canceling visa facilitation; [59]Economic sanctions: prohibiting investment in Crimea, restricting the export of energy technologies, and freezing the assets of 23 Russian companies; adhering to the principle of "not recognizing Crimea as part of Russia". NATO suspended all cooperation with Russia and launched the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), deploying rapid reaction forces in Eastern Europe and holding large-scale military exercises [60]. The garrisons of the Baltic states and Poland have been upgraded from battalion level to brigade level, and the proportion of defense budgets in GDP has risen to 2%. The Crimean incident marks the disintegration of the post-Cold War order, and Russia and the West have entered a "new Cold War" confrontation [61].

Meanwhile, around 2015, the contradictions between China and the United States and the West in aspects such as geopolitical order, development models, and international rule-making were also deepening. These contradictions laid the groundwork for conflicts such as the Sino-US trade war and technological decoupling after 2016, but also prompted China to accelerate the construction of a "dual circulation" pattern. The Western strategy towards China has shifted from "engagement + containment" to "systematic competition", while China has attempted to balance

[54] Kofman, M., & Rojansky, M., "'Little Green Men': A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013-2014," Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2015, p. 55.
[55] Jim Nichol, "Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and U.S. Interests," CRS Report RL33407, 2014, p. 1.
[56] European Court of Human Rights, "Case of Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)," Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18, Grand Chamber Decision, Strasbourg, 2021, p. 68.
[57] Ritt Keerati, "The Unintended Consequences of Financial Sanctions," September 14, 2023, Keerati_The-Unintended-Consequences-of-Financial-Sanctions.pdf.
[58] Matthew Parry, Marcin Szczepański, *Russia's War on Ukraine: US Response*, London: UK House of Commons Library, 2022, p. 1.
[59] Rui Lanceiro, "The EU Use of Restrictive Measures as a Response to the War on Ukraine–A Brief Overview," *e-Publica*, Vol.10, No.1, 2023, p.106.
[60] Yang Lei, Li Xia, "The Formation and Escalation of the Security Dilemma between Russia and NATO after the Cold War", Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, No. 2, 2023, p. 94.
[61] Steven van der Plas, "NATO's Past and Future: Why Returning to Cold War Capacity Is Not the Right Option," https://jasoninstitute.com/natos-past-and-future-why-returning-to-cold-war-capacity-is-not-the-right-option/.

cooperation and struggle with the framework of a "new type of major-country relationship" [62].

In the context of the sudden deepening of contradictions between China and Russia, especially between Russia and the West, Mongolia is facing increasing pressure from both sides in its diplomacy, meaning that its autonomy is becoming increasingly restricted. After the Ukraine crisis, the West has stepped up its efforts to court Mongolia, while Russia is even more worried that Mongolia will move closer to the West in terms of security under Western pressure. In 2015, China and Russia promoted Mongolia to become an observer country and required it to commit to "not joining an anti-China-Russia alliance." This situation constitutes the practical necessity for Mongolia to adopt a policy of permanent neutrality to enhance its autonomy. A permanently neutral country must not accept any obligations during peacetime that would make it unable to fulfill its neutrality obligations in the event of an armed conflict. This requires a permanently neutral country not to join military alliances, or even non-military organizations. For example, there was a lively discussion about whether the economic obligations involved in Austria's accession to the European (Economic) Community would be incompatible with its status as a permanently neutral country. Therefore, if Mongolia obtains the status of a permanently neutral country, it will not be subject to, and will have reason to reject, pressure from relevant major powers to join (military) alliances, as well as other forms of pressure with the color of taking sides, thereby enhancing its autonomy.

CONCLUSION

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Mongolian People's Republic was renamed Mongolia. Mongolia is the world's second-largest landlocked country, completely surrounded by China and Russia, two major powers. This geographical situation, coupled with a long history of being controlled by the Soviet Union, has greatly influenced the specific content of the country's foreign policy and its most important feature—the pursuit of enhanced autonomy. From the outset, Mongolia introduced a "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy with a notably neutral hue, implying that in addition to China and Russia as pillars, there are other pillars as well. Later on, the "multi-pillar" diplomatic strategy was further concretized into the "third neighbor" diplomacy, further demonstrating Mongolia's pursuit of autonomy. To a certain extent influenced by the Ukraine crisis and the overall intensification of contradictions between China and Russia and the United States and the West, in 2015 Mongolia adopted a policy of permanent neutrality and took concrete actions such as internal legislation and conducting publicity both domestically and internationally.

The question this article attempts to answer is: What are the motives behind Mongolia's adoption of a permanent neutrality policy? To address this question, the author has sorted through and analyzed relevant theories of neutrality and proposed two research hypotheses: First, to avoid being drawn into future (military) conflicts in order to maintain relevant economic relations; second, to avoid being drawn into future (military) conflicts in order to enhance autonomy. Empirical research shows that there is a realistic possibility of direct military conflict between China and Russia and the United States and the West, and avoiding future (military) conflicts is necessary to maintain Mongolia's relevant economic relations. Empirical research also indicates that for Mongolia, avoiding (military) conflicts to enhance autonomy has a profound policy basis, and at the same time, enhancing autonomy around 2015 also has special practical necessity. Thus, these two research hypotheses about "motives" have been verified, and the question of what the "motives" are has been clearly answered.

Existing research, when analyzing the motivations behind Mongolia's adoption of a permanent neutral policy, has concluded that Mongolia seeks to enhance its autonomy. However, it has not reached the conclusion that Mongolia is trying to avoid getting involved in conflicts to maintain economic relations with relevant countries. Since maintaining economic relations mainly means maintaining economic ties with China and Russia, and Mongolia is already economically dependent on China and Russia, the conclusion of "maintaining economic relations" seems somewhat implausible, as it appears to contradict the pursuit of greater autonomy. However, for Mongolia, maintaining economic relations with China and Russia does not conflict with enhancing its autonomy, because due to objective reasons, Mongolia cannot extricate itself from its economic dependence on China and Russia. If Mongolia were to significantly weaken its economic ties with China and Russia, its national development would become even more difficult. If national development were to falter, not to mention the question of autonomy, even national survival could become problematic, forcing the government to deal with domestic and international crises. Mongolia's adoption of a permanent neutral policy to enhance its autonomy is mainly about not taking sides politically and militarily under the strong pressure of hostile strategic forces.

Although Mongolia launched the permanent neutrality policy in 2015, the subsequent implementation

[62] Wu Jianmin, "Insights from the International Situation in 2014", *First Financial Daily*, December 12, 2014, P. 11.

of this policy has not been smooth. Its relevant internal legislative procedures have not been completed, and external major powers, especially China and Russia, have not shown clear and formal recognition of it either. In 2020, Mongolia's permanent neutrality policy was basically officially terminated. The reasons why Mongolia's permanent neutrality policy was abandoned halfway are worthy of detailed exploration in the future.