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# THE STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AT THE BORDER PORTS BETWEEN MONGOLIA AND CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

Effective management of border port road transport is crucial for enhancing trade and economic potential at border ports and free zones. This involves long-term, medium-term, and short-term planning, as well as the implementation of integrated development policies to ensure sustainable and accessible improvements. By connecting border ports with railways and paved roads, enhancing transport and logistics competitiveness, optimizing cargo flow, and laying the groundwork for future transit capabilities, economic relations and cooperation between Mongolia and China can flourish, fostering the sustainable development of both nations. To boost trade turnover and establish free economic zones and road ports, it is imperative to enhance the management of border port road transport in alignment with Mongolia's regional development strategy. Currently, the concentration of the economy on only four ports leads to goods shortages, price hikes, and hindered business operations. Therefore, enhancing the type, quality, and availability of road transport services at border ports is essential to increase the throughput capacity of these crucial transportation hubs.

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## KEYWORDS

Border Ports, Border Road Ports, Road Transport, Road Transport Management, Regional Development, Road Transport Legal Framework

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## Introduction.

The Government of Mongolia's "Vision-2050" long-term development policy spans 10 years and includes the "New Revival Policy". A key aspect of this policy is the revitalization of ports, known as "Port Revival". The primary objective of this initiative is to enhance trade facilitation through ports, enabling businesses and individuals to maximize profits. The aim is to strengthen the port's infrastructure and capacity to support national production, ultimately driving significant economic growth. Additionally, there is a need for coordination among various sectors to align domestic regulations and standards with international trade practices, including distribution, transportation, logistics, and settlement. Connecting all ports via road networks in line with regional development strategies is also crucial for the success of the port revival efforts. Mongolia currently has a total of 39 ports located on its borders, with 25 ports operating regularly. This

operational pattern is influenced by Mongolia's landlocked geography and the international agreements and treaties it has with neighboring countries regarding border issues.<sup>1</sup>

There are:

- 6 air ports
- 16 ports on the border with Russia
- 17 ports on the border with China

Mongolia is working towards connecting the border ports with railways and paved roads as part of the "New Revival Policy" to enhance transport and logistics competitiveness, improve freight traffic, and lay the groundwork for becoming a transit country in the future. Currently, 90% of export cargo is handled by 3 ports (Gashuunsuhait, Shiveehuren, and Zamin-Uud), while 90% of import cargo goes through 2 ports (Altanbulag and Zamin-Uud). Research by the World Bank shows that transportation costs account for 30% of Mongolia's GDP.<sup>2</sup>

Improving road transport management at the border ports between Mongolia and China is a key focus of the new revival policy.

This research aims to analyze the legal framework of border port road transport in Mongolia and China, assess the current state of road transport management at border ports, and propose ways to enhance it.

### **The Legal Environment of Road Transport at Border Ports of Mongolia and China.**

The transport sector in Mongolia is crucial for economic and social development. With the country's vast territory, the demand for road transport is on the rise. Statistics show that road transport accounts for 98% of passenger transport and 65% of cargo transport. Additionally, road transport at border ports handles the majority of cross-border passengers and cargo.

The Constitution of Mongolia affirms that the country's borders are to be protected by law and are considered inviolable. This principle was established in 1992 and has been upheld through various legal measures, including the Independent Law on the Border of Mongolia passed in 1993. Mongolia is also a party to international treaties and conventions related to border security, as outlined in the National Security Concept of 2010 and a resolution passed by Parliament in 2002. The government's border policy and the revised Law on Borders from 2016 further support these efforts. Agreements with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, along with relevant laws and resolutions, govern the relationship between the Mongolian government and border ports. Compliance with key international agreements, laws, and resolutions is a priority for border port operations.

Customs Law of Mongolia, 1991

- Border Ports Agreement between Mongolia and Russia, 1994
- Government Policy on Border Issues, 2002
- Mongolia-China Border Port Agreement, 2004
- Agreement on Border Regime between Mongolia and the Russian Federation, 2006
- Mongolia-China Border Regime Agreement, 2010
- Mongolian Border Law, 2016
- Protocol Amending the Border Ports Agreement between Mongolia and Russia, 2021
- New Revival Policy, 2021

Border control agencies must adhere to various rules, regulations, and standards while implementing the laws and agreements. As per the Border Law of Mongolia, a "border port" is a designated place for inspection by border control authorities for various items entering from the state border.<sup>3</sup> Mongolia has a total of 39 ports, including 27 road ports, 6 railway ports, and 6 other ports, with 25 currently operational. Among these, 17 ports are located on the border with China.<sup>4</sup>

Road transport activities at the Mongolia-China border are conducted based on the "Agreement of 2004 between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Mongolian-Chinese border ports and their regime."

1. The Zamiin-Uud Road Port was established on April 1, 1992, in the Zamiin-Uud Sum area of Dornogovi province. It is situated 650 km from Ulaanbaatar city, 210 km from Sainshand (the capital of Dornogovi province), and 4.5 km from Zamiin-Uud Sum in Dornogovi province. It shares a border with the

<sup>1</sup> <https://bpo.gov.mn/content/56> - A brief introduction to the border ports of Mongolia

<sup>2</sup> <https://nrpa.gov.mn/mn/recoveries/ports> - Revival of the Port

<sup>3</sup> Border Law of Mongolia. 2016. 3.1.12&

<sup>4</sup> <https://eagle.mn/r/120591> - B. Tulga: 25 of Mongolia's 39 border ports are active.

Ereen road port in Inner Mongolian territory of the Republic of China. As per the agreement between the Governments of Mongolia and the People's Republic of China, this border port holds international status and operates under a permanent regime.

2. The Gashuunsuhait border road port was established on July 21, 1992, in the Hanbogd sum area of Mungogov province. It is located 800 km from Ulaanbaatar city, 342 km from Dalanzadgad (the capital of Ulaanbaatar province), and 130 km from Hanbogd Sum in Ulaanbaatar province. It shares a border with the Gantsmod Port in the Urd Middle Cape of Bayannuur Province, Republic of China. According to the agreement between the Governments of Mongolia and the People's Republic of China, this border port has bilateral status and operates under a permanent regime.

3. The Border Bulgan road port was established on April 10, 1989 in Yarant, Khokh Uzuur Bag, Bulgan Sum, Khovd Province. It is situated 1556 km from the capital Ulaanbaatar, 400 km from the center of Hovd province, and 45 km from Bulgan Sum of Hovd province. It shares a border with Takashiken Port in Chingel Cape, Altai Province, and Xinjiang, China. As per the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, this border port holds international rank and permanent regime status.

4. Khiliin Baitag road port was established on June 1, 1992 in the Baitag Bag area of Bulgan Sum, Hovd Province. It is located 1600 km from the capital Ulaanbaatar, 505 km from the capital of Hovd province, and 135 km from Bulgan Sum of Hovd province. It shares a border with Uliastai port in Chitai County, Tsonj Province, and Xinjiang, China. According to the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, this border port has bilateral status and temporary regime.

5. The Khiliin Havirga road port was established on June 24, 1992, in the Choibalsan Sum area of Dornod Province. It is situated 795 km from the capital Ulaanbaatar, 135 km from Choibalsan, the capital of Dornod Province, and 85 km from Choibalsan Sum in Dornod Province. This port borders Arkhashaat Port, located in the Western Cape of New Barga, Khulun Bur Province of the Republic of China. As per the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, this border port operates under a bilateral status and temporary regime.

6. The Khiliin Bichigt road port was established on July 1, 1992, in the Erdenetsagaan Sum area of Sukhbaatar Province. It is positioned 850 km from the capital Ulaanbaatar, 295 km from West-Urt, the capital of Sukhbaatar Province, and 75 km from Erdenetsagaan Sum in Sukhbaatar Province. This port shares a border with Zuunkhatavch Port, located in Zuun Uzemchin Khoshuu, Shiliin Gol Province, and Inner Mongolia, China. According to the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, this border port holds an international rank and operates under a permanent regime.

7. Shiveehuren border road port was established on November 1, 1992 in the Gurvantes sum of Umnugobi province. It is situated 955 km from Ulaanbaatar, 350 km from Dalanzadgad, and 90 km from Gurvantes sum. This port shares a border with Sekhee Port in Eznee County, Alsha Province, China's National Autonomous Region. The port operates under a bilateral status and permanent regime as per the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China.

8. Hangi border road port was established on December 11, 2002 in the Khatanbulag Sum area of Dornogovi province. It is located 770 km from Ulaanbaatar, 320 km from Mandalgovi, and 115 km from Khatanbulag Sum. This port borders Mandal Port in Darkhan Muu Myangan Union Cape, Bugat City, China's Central Autonomous Region. The port operates under a bilateral status and temporary regime based on the agreement between the two governments.

9. Burgastai border road port was established on November 4, 1991 in Shine Burgastai, Bugat sum farm of Gobi-Altai province. It is situated 1320 km from Ulaanbaatar, 320 km from Altai, and 80 km from Bugat Sum. This port shares a border with Laoemiao port in Barkhol Cape, Khami Province, and Xinjiang, China. The port operates under a bilateral status and temporary regime according to the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China.

10. The Dayan border road port was established on June 24, 1991, in the Sagsai sum area of Bayan-Olgii province, located 1890 km from the capital Ulaanbaatar. It is 212 km from the center of Bayan-Olgii Province and 182 km from Sagsai Sum of Bayan-Olgii Province. It shares a border with Hongshanzui Port in Khokhtokhoi Cape, Altai Province, and Xinjiang, China. As per the agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the People's Republic of China, the border port operates under a bilateral status and temporary regime.

11. The Bayankhoshuu border road port was also established on June 24, 1991, in the Khalkhgol sum area of Dornod province. It is situated 1000 km from Ulaanbaatar, 340 km from Choibalsan, the capital of

Dornod Province, and 60 km from Khalkhgol Sum of Dornod Province. It shares a border with Ovdog Port in the Eastern Cape of Shine Barga, Khulun Bur Province of the Republic of China. Similar to other border ports, it operates under a bilateral status and temporary regime based on the agreement between the two governments.

12. The Border Sumber road port, established on July 15, 2013, is located in the Khalkhgol sum area of Dornod province. It is 1135 km from Ulaanbaatar, 425 km from Choibalsan, and 85 km from Khalkhgol Sum of Dornod Province. It shares a border with Rashaan port on the Baruun Gariin cape of Kharchin, Hyangan Province, China's Central Autonomous Region. This border port also operates under a temporary international rank as per the agreement between the two governments.

Out of the mentioned border road ports, 4 have international status while 8 have bilateral status. A qualitative study of the legal environment of these border ports between Mongolia and China was conducted using document research methodology.

### **The Current Status of Border Port Management Between Mongolia and The People's Republic of China.**

To enhance the efficiency of border ports, Mongolia is focusing on developing their capacity to meet the demands of neighboring countries. This involves expanding border ports and improving road transport infrastructure to support economic growth and trade expansion in border regions. Under the "New Recovery Policy /Шинэ сэргэлтийн бодлого/" and its implementation plan, Mongolia has received significant international and domestic funding to increase the throughput capacity of each border port.

*Table 1*  
*Types of border road port regimes in Mongolia and the People's Republic of China*

| № | Road border ports regime       | Descriptions of the port   |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Port with permanent operations | A port that operates regularly as per the schedule specified in the international agreement with Mongolia  |
| 2 | Port with temporary operations | If there are temporary port issues, the port will operate in accordance with the international agreement with Mongolia   |
| 3 | International port             | As per the international agreement of Mongolia, regardless of nationality, the port allows entry of passengers, vehicles, goods, livestock, animals, plants, raw materials, and products into the country. |

Source: The Law of Mongolian Border Custody, 2016

*Table 2*  
*Types and operational hours of road ports along the Mongolia-China border*

| №  | Road ports in Mongolian Provinces | Mongolian names of the Road Ports | Names in Chinese Border | Types         | Working regime |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1  | Dornogobi                         | Zamiin Uud                        | Ereen                   | International | Permanent      |
| 2  | Sukhbaatar                        | Bichigt                           | Zuun khataavch          | International | Permanent      |
| 3  | Khovd                             | Bulgan                            | Takashikyn              | International | Permanent      |
| 4  | Dornogobi                         | Khang                             | Mandal                  | Two-way       | Temporary      |
| 5  | Umnugobi                          | Gashuunsukhait                    | Gants mod               | Two-way       | Permanent      |
| 6  | Umnugobi                          | Shiveehuren                       | Sekhee                  | Two-way       | Permanent      |
| 7  | Dornod                            | Khavirga                          | Ar khashaat             | Two-way       | Temporary      |
| 8  | Dornod                            | Bayankhoshuu                      | Uwdug                   | Two-way       | Temporary      |
| 9  | Dornod                            | Sumber                            | Rashaan                 | International | Temporary      |
| 10 | Bayan-Ulgii                       | Dayan                             | Khunishazui             | Two-way       | Temporary      |
| 11 | Khovd                             | Baitag                            | Uliastai                | Two-way       | Temporary      |
| 12 | Gobi-Altai                        | Burgastai                         | Laomyao                 | Two-way       | Temporary      |

As per the Mongolia Law of Border Custody /2016/, border control authorities such as border protection, customs, and related institutions have the authority to inspect and register passengers, vehicles, goods, livestock, animals, plants, raw materials, and products entering the state border. Currently, the management of road transport at Mongolia's border ports is overseen by the following organizations:



1. National Port Revitalization Committee: Responsible for planning, developing, approving, and organizing investment programs for the development and expansion of border ports.

2. Border protection port administration: Coordinates interstate transport, infection control, law enforcement, and border control organizations, as well as local government organizations, to ensure unified coordination on the export, import, and trade of minerals, oil, and goods.

Border Port Development Department: The department is responsible for studying international standards and operations of the port in order to enhance infrastructure and operations at the border port and port customs organization. It also develops and implements comprehensive and partial plans for the development of the border port.

Department of Border Port Development and Foreign Trade Port Free Zone Custody of the Ministry of Economic Development: This department oversees the implementation of organizational policies, coordinates branch activities, conducts research on policy and planning for the development of border ports and foreign trade port free zones, and establishes a unified policy. It also supervises operations, manages resources, and is responsible for providing policy guidance and methodology.

The International Agreements and Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for negotiating with neighboring countries regarding the opening, closing, and changing of policies at border ports in line with state policies. It is also responsible for overseeing bilateral agreements that regulate Mongolia's international border countries and ports, monitoring their implementation, and negotiating agreements on border issues in accordance with government policy and law. Additionally, the department submits proposals to relevant authorities for changing the status of permanent and temporary ports.

The General Directorate of Border Protection is responsible for enforcing procedures at border crossings, maintaining order in the border strip and port area, and ensuring the security of border crossings by implementing measures to check the passage of passengers and vehicles across the state border.

The General Department of Customs focuses on improving the infrastructure and operations of border ports and underground customs institutions. They study international port standards and practices, develop and implement general and partial plans for the development of border ports, and carry out the functions of the National Port Council.

Government agencies like the Office of Foreign Nationals also participate in arranging state-owned land and enterprise mine owning organization for the transportation of mineral exports.

The road transport sector is crucial for economic and social development, impacting product and service prices, efficiency, trade turnover, national production volume, living standards, and ecological balance across all sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, with the increasing market demand and expanding production and trade, there is a need to enhance the management of road transport at border port areas. This includes creating efficient transportation systems, advancing border port road transport management, organizing safe and timely transportation services, ensuring technical safety, minimizing negative impacts, expanding road transport infrastructure, and digitalizing road transport services.

The term "road transport vehicles" encompasses various types of vehicles such as cars, trailers, and electric vehicles used for passenger and goods transportation. The management activities at border ports involve:

- Enhancement of cargo and passenger transportation through road transport vehicles;
- Transportation conducted by skilled drivers;
- Categorization of road transport service providers;
- Maintenance and inspection of road transport vehicles;
- Focus on establishing and advancing vehicle registration for road transport and ensuring the provision of secure and convenient services that cater to societal requirements;

In 2023, Mongolia is set to export 70 million tons of coal for the first time, marking a historic high in foreign trade. Compared to pre-pandemic levels or the same period in 2019, Mongolia's exports have surged by 90 percent, with export revenue surpassing \$15 billion for the first time. This remarkable export growth can be attributed to Mongolia's doubling of border port capacity. While coal was traditionally exported through Gashuunsukhait and Shiveehuren ports, in 2023, coal was shipped through 9 border ports, a significant milestone for Mongolia. <sup>1</sup>By 2023, 92 percent of coal exports were handled via road border ports, with the remaining 8 percent through railway ports.

<sup>1</sup> <https://itoim.mn/a/2024/03/22/economy/mhw-The port throughput became 9, and foreign trade reached a historical record.>

Currently, coal is exported through 9 ports: Bayankhoshuu, Bichigt, Bulgan, Burgastai, Gashuunsuhait, Zamyn-Uud, Hangi, Havirga, and Shiveehuren. Coal is transported to the border by road and AGV (Automated Guided Vehicle) through Gashuunsukhait and Shiveehuren ports, while transportation is carried out by roads and railways at Zamyn-Uud port and other ports by road. Infrastructure work is in progress to fully expand Gashuunsukhait Port to meet international standards, with comprehensive expansion and modernization being funded by Chinese grants and Mongolian government investment.

Over 70% of the construction work has been completed, with the project scheduled for completion in 2024. In 2023, Gashuunsukhait port road transport facilitated the export of 36.3 million tons of coal and 857.3 thousand tons of copper concentrate.

The AGV transport operation, initiated as a trial on July 16, 2022, at Gashuunsukhait port, will continue into 2023, with 2.7 million tons of coal already exported. Consequently, new AGV transport container areas are being constructed at Gashuunsukhait Port and Gantsmod Port, with the former already operational. Exporting coal through these areas will boost Gashuunsukhait Port's total throughput capacity by 10-15 million tons. Zam-Uud port underwent expansion and modernization of passenger and cargo transportation facilities. Furthermore, in late 2023, the 24-hour operation of the road port on the China border commenced for the first time, leading to increased cargo traffic and a record high.

Shiveehuren port is situated 400 meters from the state border and is home to three border control organizations and two enterprises operating in the port inspection area. A total of 2518 drivers and vehicles from 101 transport and logistics companies are involved in export operations from 9 coal mines in the Naryn Suhait and Tsagaan Dersen group deposits, as well as two mines extracting natural red stone at the port. In 2022 and 2023, the port was equipped with 15 RFID readers, automatic shutters, 8 LED TVs, and 15 control boxes.

The high-precision X-ray device used for inspecting goods and vehicles can scan up to 200 vehicles per hour. Starting in 2023, driverless automated guided vehicles (AGVs) will be implemented at the port in compliance with state border regulations. Currently, the port facilitates exports and imports through 6 exits and 4 entrances for road transport, as well as 1 exit, 1 entrance, and 1 emergency gate for AGV transport. With a daily volume of 1,600-1,700 vehicles, the port has the capacity to export 27.0 million tons of cargo annually.

The port's recovery is in progress, with infrastructure projects underway at Hangi, Bulgan, Bichigt, Burgastai, and Bayankhoshuu ports through a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

In the first quarter of 2023, the total import and export cargo volume passing through the Ereen-Zam Entrance Port, the largest land port of China and Mongolia, reached 4.58 million tons, marking a 72.3 percent increase compared to the same period last year. Of this total, railway transportation accounted for 4.22 million tons, a 64.9 percent increase year-on-year, while road transportation saw a significant rise to 369 thousand tons, up by 250.1 percent. During this period, approximately 156,000 individuals crossed the border at the Ereen-Zam Port of Entry, with an average of over 3,600 people entering and exiting the country.

### **Some Strategies for Enhancing Transportation Management at The Border Ports Between Mongolia and China.**

By enhancing the infrastructure of border ports and expanding their capacity, Mongolia aims to achieve a total export value of 14 billion US dollars by 2024, 17 billion US dollars from 2025 to 2028, and 20 billion US dollars from 2029 to 2030. This initiative aligns with the objectives outlined in Mongolia's "Vision 2050" long-term development strategy.

During the fifth Mongolia-China border port management meeting, 42 issues were addressed, with 33 of them being agreed upon and included in the official protocol. To elevate port cooperation between the two nations, the National Committee for Port Revitalization of Mongolia has tentatively agreed to establish a cooperation agreement with the National Port Administration of China. The implementation progress of the protocol stands at over 70%.

The parties agreed that the government and customs authority should collaborate closely to enhance the development of customs inspection areas, explore the possibility of introducing hazardous chemicals through the Hangi-Mandal port, and identify other ports with suitable conditions. Additionally, they decided to extend the operating hours of certain ports and accelerate the construction of border ports. To facilitate the 24-hour operation of the Uud-Ereen road port this year, a working group was established, and the port was transitioned to round-the-clock operation as directed by the Border Port Administration of Mongolia, the Customs Department of Khokh City, and the General Checkpoint Port of Inner Mongolia.

The development planning of the border port should take into account not only the situation in Mongolia but also the economic relationships with the world, regions, and neighboring countries. To enhance road transport management at the border port, the following steps can be taken:

- Coordinate the development planning of the border port with international projects and programs as well as the policy planning of neighboring countries. This coordination should align with both neighboring countries' policy planning and Mongolia's long and medium-term policy planning.
- Implement the general development planning through international tender to match the development of border ports in neighboring countries and ensure policy coherence.
- Learn from the experience of developing ports as cities, towns, or countries with large land areas to regulate cargo traffic effectively.
- Develop port cities, tourism, and free zones in Mongolia.
- Enhance and digitize the access capabilities of border crossings.

Through the development and expansion of ports, Mongolia aims to enhance its transport and logistics competitiveness by advancing industrialization, establishing free economic zones, and dry ports in phases. The implementation of the Port Revitalization Policy will lead to a threefold increase in port capacity, a doubling of the national railway network, the construction of 2,966 km of roads connecting the port, a doubling of active airports, and an increase in 4C airports to 4. Additionally, the plan includes the development of 4 land ports and 6 tourist ports.

### Conclusions.

In accordance with the agreement between the Governments of Mongolia and the People's Republic of China regarding Mongolian-Chinese border ports and their regulations, which was established on July 5, 2004, as part of the "New Revival Policy" initiated by the Government of Mongolia in October 2023, and in light of the formation of the National Recovery Committee, the "Agreement on the Establishment of the Mongolia-China Border Port Management Cooperation Commission" that was set up in 2014 to enhance cooperation mechanisms for border port management between Mongolia and China and to ensure the coordination of other working groups. Under the framework of the border port management cooperation agreement, efforts will be made to strengthen mutual port cooperation mechanisms, develop border ports in a coordinated manner, increase trade circulation, and create a conducive environment for passenger and cargo transportation.

We will enhance our collaboration on the significant port infrastructure development project, accelerate the progress of railway and road ports, and bridge facilities that have been previously approved. We will also introduce various new transportation methods, address operational and security concerns, and expedite the transportation of mining and agricultural products to suitable ports. Our joint efforts will focus on ramping up the construction of environmentally friendly entry points.

By effectively implementing strategies to enhance road transport management at border road ports between Mongolia and China, the following objectives will be achieved:

- Delivering secure, dependable, integrated, streamlined, convenient, and eco-friendly transportation services,
- Developing road transport infrastructure and transport logistics network in collaboration with the private sector
- Incorporating cutting-edge technology
- Implementing a research and analysis, verification, and control system.

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