The New Soviet Defensive Policy: Khalkhin Gol 1939 As Case Study

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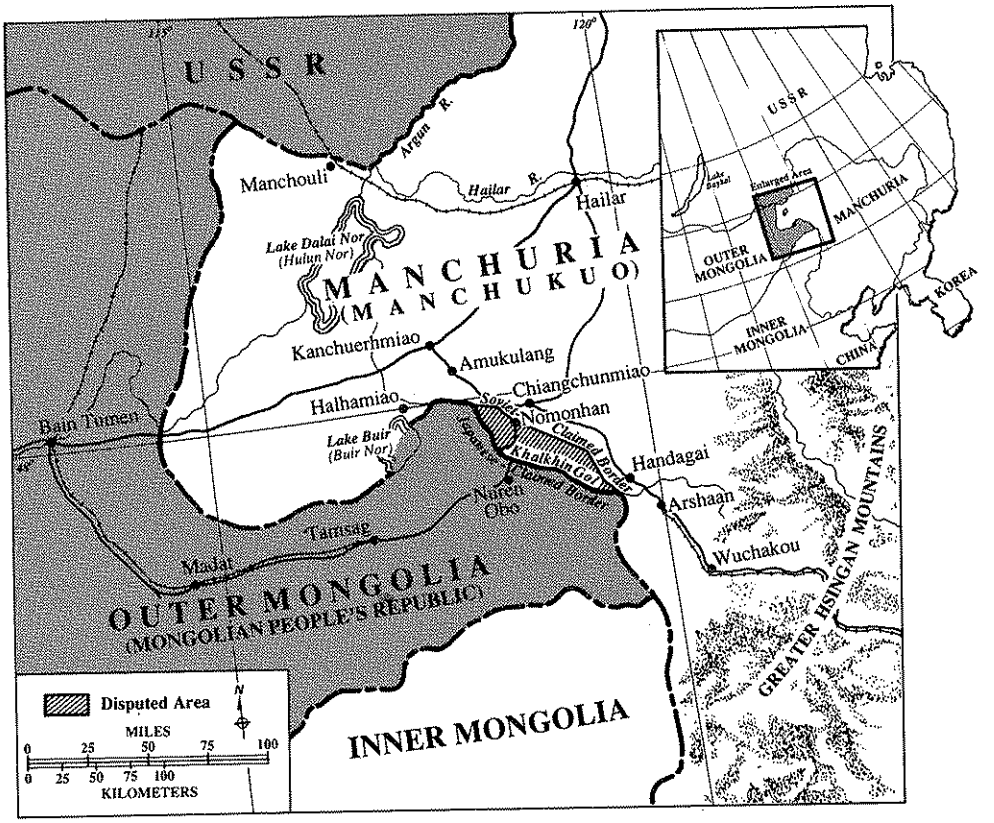
Mikhail Gorbachev's dramatic changes in the Soviet political and military scene often raise more questions than they answer. One such problematic change to Soviet strategy and operational techniques is the new emphasis on defense. Discussion centers on whether defense in this context means defensive defense or offensive defense.

Soviet analysts have identified four models for a defensive strategy, and in every case historical analogies are used in their discussion. These are (1) an immediate counteroffensive following an enemy attack (the forces for the counteroffensive would in practice be indistinguishable from offensive forces); (2) an initial defensive phase to draw in the enemy and weaken him prior to a counteroffensive *into enemy territory* (e.g. the Battle of Kursk); (3) a counteroffensive that does *not* enter enemy-held territory; and (4) a highly defensive model, renouncing all offensive action above the tactical level, using fortifications, strong points, and small local counterattacks.[1] There are reliable indications that option three is the front-runner, and the Soviets have claimed that the outstanding example of this option is the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, involving Soviet and Mongolian forces against Japanese and Manchukuoan troops, which was fought in August 1939.[2]

There is certainly much to commend this battle for an important place in Soviet and general military history. It produced a key Japanese defeat which protected the Soviet Union from a two-front war after the German invasion. At Khalkhin Gol the Soviet Union tested many of the operational precepts that matured successfully in the later periods of World War II. It is recognized as an important formative experience for Marshal Georgi Zhukov, arguably the preeminent Soviet commander in World War II.[3]



Map 1: Disputed Area, Northwest Manchuria

The Khalkhin Gol incident is best approached within the context of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The Japanese, having long sought to replace the Chinese and Russians as the dominant power factors in Manchuria, succeeded in establishing a puppet state there in 1931 which they called Manchukuo. With the advance of Japanese imperialist ambitions in the late 1930s, the Soviet's own satellite state—the Mongolian People's Republic—began to feel the pressure.

Lying adjacent to and immediately to the west of Manchukuo, the Mongolian People's Republic—seconded by the Soviets—disputed Manchukuon dynastic claims to a 25-kilometer-wide strip of land lying between the Khalkhin Gol (the Halha River) and the town of Nomonhan to the east. In other words, Manchukuo, backed by Japan, claimed that the Khalkhin Gol marked the border between the two states, while the Mongolian People's Republic and the Soviets insisted on a border lying farther to the east, on a line running generally southeasterly through Nomonhan. The situation came to a head in May 1939 when Soviet troops occupied the disputed territory between the Khalkhin Gol and Nomonhan. The Japanese attacked with a reinforced division and were initially successful. Thus the stage for Khalkhin Gol was set.[4]

If Khalkhin Gol evinces the Soviet Union's current views about defensive concepts, it should answer several questions as a litmus test. The distinctive feature of this option is that the action remains confined *within the territory being defended.* But what is the legitimacy of the claim that the battle occurred only as a result of a Japanese incursion into the recognized territory of a Soviet ally, specifically the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR)? That is the first question. Second, how did differences in organization, equipment, and national commitment affect the battle's outcome? Third, what is peculiar to the Soviet operational techniques used in the battle which gave it a defensive nature? Last, what does Khalkhin Gol as part of the Soviet-Japanese conflict of 1939 tell us in general about the Soviet Union's view of limiting conflict?

Whose Side of the Wire?

Conflict between Japan and the USSR in the 1930s was almost inevitable. Severe fighting between the Soviets and Japanese had already taken place a year earlier (11 July-10 August 1938) at the site of a dispute over a poorly defined border area at the junction of Manchukuo, Korea, and Siberia. The boundary dispute regarding the Khalkhin Gol was over 200 years old.[5] Disputes among warring Mongol factions to secure a scarce water source for their herds led to an acceptance of a transparent border in the Khalkhin Gol basin. Imperial Russian incursions into an increasingly fragmented China became exacerbated by the two even more dynamic and expansionist powers: Imperial Japan and Soviet Russia.

Though the Soviets had good cause to worry about their interests, the open hostility to the Soviets manifested by Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchukuo was diametrically opposed to the attitudes of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The Japanese central government had no intention of provoking war with the Soviet Union in any circumstances and wished at all costs to limit the

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damage done to their relations by disputes over historically ill-defined borders. What the Japanese civil government wanted desperately was a set of recognizable and set boundaries between the Soviet Far East and Manchuria. To that end the Japanese government embarked on a policy of seeking negotiations to demarcate the border regions from 1935 onward. The lack of success in these negotiations implied that the border disputes would be solved only by force of arms.

This puts the question, "Whose side of the wire?" into a different context, making fixing the location of the wire an issue. Several factors, such as the control of the Khalkhin Gol drainage basin and its flow into Lake Buir, fueled the conflict over this semi-arid stretch of Asian steppe. Sensitivity of the Soviet Union to its own border integrity and the Mongolian political situation also played a role; the MPR's position as a new fraternal socialist country and its internal instability created a climate which invited the Soviet Union to take an active interest.

The Soviet assertion that they fought the battle in August 1939 to repel Japanese invaders can therefore more properly be characterized as a determination on the Soviets' part to settle a dispute over an undefined border by force of arms. The Soviet Union was defending its client's border claim based on its own interests, as against competing and similar Japanese claims.

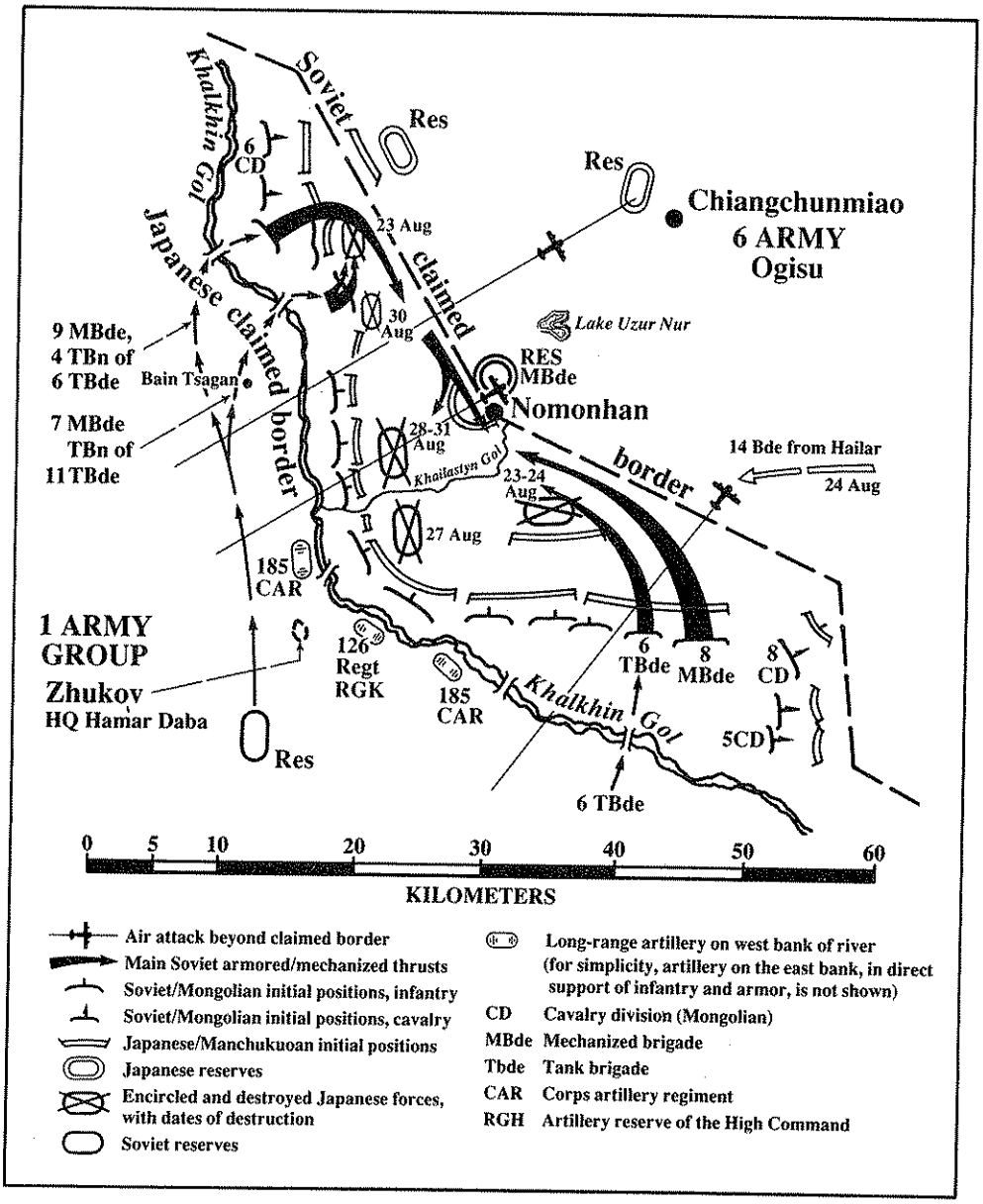
General Strategic Situation

The Far Eastern USSR prior to and during World War II, which formed a strategic horseshoe around Japanese-occupied Manchukuo, remained critically dependent on the trans-Siberian railroad. The Soviets had never deployed the main body of their army in the Far East, and the Japanese considered it inconceivable that they would do so. Therefore, it was impossible to defeat USSR power by operations on the Far Eastern front alone. Having decided that they could not win a full-scale war against the Soviets by themselves, the Japanese could not allow any armed clash to escalate to this level. The conflict would be constrained politically and geographically to the uncertain frontier.

Hostilities began at a time when the situation in Europe was itself about to boil over. Soviet attempts to conclude an alliance with Britain and France had failed, but the Nazi-Soviet Pact (23 August 1939) would provide temporary security against German attack. The German-Soviet invasion of Poland was imminent.

It was against such a backdrop that the consummate Soviet counter-offensive was launched at Khalkhin Gol on 20 August 1939 against a self-limited Japanese force. By so doing, the Soviets would discourage Japanese aggression against the USSR, removing the specter of a two-front war. Another factor was the early Mongolian winter, during which the Soviet-Mongolian soldiers and equipment would have a decisive advantage.[6] Khalkhin Gol offered the Soviets a unique window of opportunity in time and circumstance.

Soviet sources date the sequence of events leading directly to the Khalkhin Gol campaign from an alleged Japanese border violation on 28 May, although parties of Mongolian horsemen had occupied positions on the Bashagal Heights, near the Nomonhan cairn which marks the MPR-claimed border, on 4 and 11 May. Both sides assert that the other fired first.[7]



Map 2: The Khalkhin-Gol Operation, 20-31 August 1939.

On 28 May a Japanese force of reinforced-regiment size endeavored to encircle a Soviet-Mongolian task force to the east of the Khalkhin Gol. This failed, but highlighted a number of Soviet weaknesses. In June major air battles occurred over Bain Tsagan. On 22 June, for example, 95 Soviet aircraft reportedly engaged 120 Japanese. The nature of aerial warfare is such that it is difficult to respect boundaries: Japanese bombers ranged over territory west of the Khalkhin Gol and Soviet fighters pursued Japanese well into Manchukuo. Having reinforced substantially, the Japanese attacked Soviet-Mongolian forces with a division-size force, intending to strike across the Khalkhin Gol to cut off their escape. On 3 July, the Japanese crossed the Khalkhin Gol in the vicinity of Bain Tsagan, the only time during the entire campaign that ground forces of either side crossed what they claimed to be their border. This force beat back counterattacks by Russian armor until 5 July, but after losing about a third of its strength withdrew to the east bank of the river. The Japanese unsuccessfully endeavored to push Soviet-Mongolian forces to the west bank with a sizable effort on 23-25 July. The Japanese reserves, 20-30 kilometers to the east, were unable to influence the battle owing to intense air attack. These preparations gave the Russian-Mongolian forces a useful screen and bridgehead for the decisive August counteroffensive.[8]

Japanese Forces

The Japanese realized they would be generally outnumbered, their working assumption of roughly three to one according well with today's estimates of 65,000 Soviet-MPR troops against 28,000 Japanese-Manchukuoan. In terms of larger tactical units, the battle was ultimately fought by three Soviet divisions and five armored brigades against the reinforced Japanese 23d Division. Local Japanese superiority could be obtained only by nimble tactical massing, weakening other sectors temporarily, and then repeating the process. Some sources indicate that Japanese assessment of the Russians was based on the relatively poor showing of the Russian Imperial Army in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.

Japanese staff planners, however, were more realistic, apparently assigning a Soviet division a value of 0.8 as against 1.0 for a Japanese division. Soviet materiel was expected to be superior in quantity and in some cases quality, but the materiel actually fielded by the Soviets exceeded Japanese expectations in both respects. The Japanese would have to rely on superior morale and esprit.[9] In this respect, too, they underestimated the Soviet-Mongolian forces.

Soviet Forces

The principal Soviet force in Mongolia was the 57th Special Corps. Overseeing Soviet military activity was Army Commander 1st Grade G. M.

Shtern, who had commanded at Lake Khasan in August 1938 and then commanded the Red Banner Army of the Far East. On 5 July he was appointed to head the Far East Front Directorate, based at Chita, "coordinating [all] Soviet and Mongolian forces' activity" in the Far East.[10]

On 2 June, Georgi Zhukov was summoned to People's Defense Commissar Voroshilov in Moscow and ordered to proceed to Mongolia to report on the situation. He was selected specially by Voroshilov, with Stalin's agreement. He arrived at 57th Special Corps Headquarters at Tamtsak (Tamsag) Bulak on 5 June. Zhukov was appalled by the great 120-kilometer distance of the headquarters from the front and refused to accept the lack of telegraph lines and airfields as an excuse.[11] Zhukov concluded that 57th Special Corps alone was not sufficient to hold against a major Japanese attack and presented a plan to seize and hold a bridgehead on the east bank of the Khalkhin Gol and launch a counterattack "from Mongolian territory."[12]

It therefore appears that the operational plan to trap and encircle the Japanese within the claimed borders was formulated by Zhukov on his arrival at the scene on 5 June. Following the plan's acceptance by Stalin the next day, Zhukov assumed command and requested reinforcements consisting of aircraft, three rifle divisions, a tank brigade, and much artillery. On 15 July, the reinforced 57th Special Corps was redesignated 1st Army Group under Zhukov. Although Shtern was involved in the planning, it appears that Zhukov's new command was not subordinate to Shtern, but reported directly to Moscow.[13] Political and geographical circumstances dictated that this reinforced corps, having drawn on resources from across the Soviet Union, and with a special mission warranting control direct from Moscow, would be acting very much in isolation, severed from other friendly forces by desert and distance. For the Soviets, this was a corps battle.

The proposed operation would take place some 650 kilometers from the nearest Soviet supply railhead. First Army Group Headquarters staff set up a conveyor-belt arrangement with motor vehicles over the 1,300- to 1,400-kilometer round trip, shifting all supplies from the railhead to a depot near the front in five days. Every available vehicle was used, including artillery tractors. Had the Soviets been subject to attacks on this supply line, or had they been involved in fierce fighting at the front, this huge logistical movement would have been impossible.[14] This effort dwarfed the logistical preparations of the Japanese; indeed, it dwarfed anything the Japanese believed possible.

Maskirovka

The 20 August counteroffensive was planned under conditions of tight security by a small team within Army Group Headquarters. Now that Zhukov had the go-ahead for his operation, he worked with a tight-knit group reporting only to Stalin. The chiefs of supporting arms each worked only

within the confines of their specialty. Only one typist was used to prepare the orders. Machines were used to fake the sounds of tank engines (to get the Japanese used to "armor" movement) and construction work, and conspicuous quantities of timber and other defensive materials were brought up. Leaflets supposedly aimed at friendly troops were distributed, stressing the *defensive* nature of the preparations; and false information concerning Soviet intentions was transmitted by telephone and radio in a code difficult enough to be convincing but easy enough for the Japanese to decipher. By 15 August, the 10 or 15 Soviet radio receivers were handling only about 20 transmissions a day. The Japanese were dealing with 230 to 250. By 17 and 18 August, Soviet radio traffic was virtually zero, thus giving away nothing.

In addition to measures to deceive the Japanese, movement of forces into and within the area and training of assault troops were rigorously concealed. Reconnaissance was carried out as covertly as possible.[15] Soviet intelligence was very good, with Zhukov expressing operational interest "most of all in the exact location and numerical strength of the Japanese troops," a prerequisite for a successful encirclement.[16]

Preliminaries

Artillery duels and air battles raged during the run-up to the operation. The Russians fired at night to keep the Japanese awake, prevent them changing position, and cover the noise of their offensive preparations. By early August, the Russians were firing one round a second during light bombardment and two to three during intense periods, a luxury permitted by their heroic logistical preparations.[17] In contrast, after the Japanese offensive in late July, they were rationed to two or three shells per medium gun per day. The Japanese observed that the flat terrain and the extraordinary visibility possible in the clear Mongolian air gave the engagements some of the character of war at sea. The Russians, with their longer-range heavy guns and ample ammunition supplies, were at an advantage.[18] The image of war at sea is also relevant with regard to the difficulty of identifying and adhering to territorial limits.

In the air, the first Soviet priority was to keep enemy reconnaissance planes from observing secret movements. On 7 August, Tokyo authorized a Japanese air offensive against Soviet air bases in Mongolia, which were well west of the Japanese-claimed boundary, thus underlining the different rules applying in the air as opposed to the ground.[19]

Attack

The general timing of the Soviet attack was determined by the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the imminent invasion of Poland. The exact date of 20 August was chosen because it was a Sunday and many

Japanese generals and key officers would be away. The Japanese appeared lax and overconfident, clearly not expecting a Soviet operation on this scale. Japanese frontline troops seem to have sensed that something was up, but this perception was not shared by the higher headquarters that could have ordered an alert and other preparations. The deceptive signals, indicating that the Soviet-Mongolian forces were digging in for the defensive, were accorded greater weight than the tactical encounters consisting of aggressive probing attacks.[20] Zhukov had thought bigger than the enemy, and his rigorous logistic preparations had put everything necessary in place. The trap was ready to be sprung: "To win decisively, even spectacularly, would alone suffice."[21]

Soviet troops began pressing forward on both flanks on 19 August. At dawn on 20 August a thick mist hung over the Khalkin Gol. By this time, Zhukov had all his main forces, except for 6th Tank Brigade and the long-range corps and high command reserve artillery units, across the river to the east bank. Japanese forces extended along a 60- to 70-kilometer front, separated by the Khailastyn Gol tributary, which was of little significance as an obstacle but was the only source of water for the Japanese forces. The pattern of intense Soviet artillery and air support was to become standard for offensives; in operational terms, this was in no way a defensive battle. The Japanese responded vigorously in the air, mounting 160-aircraft raids against Madat and Tamsag, well into Mongolian territory. After two days, they realized they must conserve their forces to deal with the overwhelming concentration of all Soviet Far East air assets in direct support of ground operations. Soviet aircraft also attacked the Japanese reserve west of Chiangchunmiao, well beyond their claimed border.[22] Soviet tanks attacked and destroyed Japanese logistical facilities near Lake Uzur Nur in an action that may have involved crossing the claimed boundary.[23] The 9th Brigade from the north and 8th from the south made contact on 24 August, closing the ring around the Japanese while skirting but not transgressing the Soviet-claimed border.

The battle followed what was to become the classic pattern of Soviet encirclement: establishing an outer front of mobile forces to fend off attempts to relieve the encircled force, while an inner front, largely infantry in this case, worked to destroy the trapped enemy. The Japanese divisional commander and 400 survivors just managed to escape, reaching Chiangchunmiao on the morning of 31 August.[24]

Conflict Termination

On the evening of 30 August, the Deputy Chief of Imperial General Headquarters, Tokyo, arrived at Kwantung Army headquarters with Order 343 stating that, in order to prepare against a possible invasion of Manchukuoan territory by the USSR, and to maintain tranquillity in the north while the domination of China was secured, every effort should be made to terminate

operations in the Nomonhan area. The Kwantung Army was already planning a counteroffensive with three fresh divisions, however, and their generals sought clarification.

Then on 3 September the Kwantung Army, still in fighting mood, suddenly received Imperial Order 349: "Bring the border incident to voluntary settlement."[25] Because of the acute situation in Europe, the Japanese government sought diplomatic negotiations for an overall adjustment of relations between Japan and the Soviet Union.[26] The Emperor, the highest political and strategic authority, had spoken—mindful, among other factors, of the uncertain and dangerous situation now that World War II was two days old. A cease-fire agreement was signed in Moscow at 1530 on 15 September.

Military Lessons

Soviet and Japanese estimates of casualties are shown below. Irreconcilable though the claims are, the losses were clearly such as to sustain the conclusion of a Soviet study that this was "a real war."[27]

Personnel Casualties and Aircraft Losses

	Japanese Figures	Soviet Figures
Soviet Personnel	?	18,500
Soviet Aircraft	c. 1200	207
Japanese Personnel	18,000	61,000
Japanese Aircraft	149	660

Although Soviet casualties were high, the Soviets' meticulous operational planning, elaborate deception measures, purposeful integration of combined arms, aggressive maneuver, and use of the air component to achieve local air superiority and seal off the battlefield—plus the remarkably imaginative and diligent solution to their acute logistics problem—all contributed to a remarkable victory. And we should mention too the Soviet chief of signals, whom Zhukov praised for always providing adequate communications and thus troop control.[28]

Khalkhin Gol is above all the paradigm of the encirclement battle in modern conditions. Although cavalry played an important part in drawing the initial cords round the enemy, armor played the vital role. Shtern was quick to grasp its significance: "I think it will become the second perfect battle of encirclement in all history."[29]

A distinctive feature of the battle of Khalkhin Gol was the creation of inner and outer encirclement fronts: the inner front to trap the enemy, the outer to fend off attempts to rescue him. Soviet authorities assert that Khalkhin Gol was the first example in Soviet military art of this key pattern, a technique that later came to full fruition in the great encirclements at Stalingrad, Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy, and elsewhere.[30] Another feature replicated in later operations

Clausewitz's dictum on war as "an extension of politics" is illustrated by this group around the battle map. From left to right: N. N. Voronov, G. M. Shtern, an unidentified officer, USSR Ambassador to Mongolia I. A. Ivanov, Marshal of the MPR Kh. Choybalsan, and Georgi Zhukov.

(Stalingrad, again) resulted from the Japanese-Manchurian command decision to place the weakest troops—Manchukuoan cavalry—on the flanks, thus facilitating Soviet breakthroughs there and the consequent encirclement at relatively little cost. It was, in the Soviet view, the first use of armored and mechanized forces to achieve *operational*, as opposed to merely tactical, goals.[31] Zhukov had, indeed, glimpsed the shape of future war.

The operation also underlined the value of new equipment used *in concert with operational surprise* and *en masse*. Whereas previously the Japanese had encountered only light Soviet tanks, they now met large numbers of the excellent BT medium tanks with effective high-velocity guns.[32]

Conclusion

At the highest, politico-strategic level, in view of the unstable situation in Europe and the need to avoid a two-front war, one can argue persuasively that Khalkhin Gol had defensive aims. Indeed, from the Soviet perspective the operation merely restored by force of arms the status quo ante. At the operational level, however, the battle was anything but defensive. The Academy of Science's publication *Victory on the Khalkhin Gol* describes it unequivocally as the "August offensive operation"![33] The uncertain border at Khalkhin Gol gave the Soviets an opportunity to deliver a surgical strike against the Japanese without the entangling consequences of invading undisputed Manchukuoan or Japanese territory.

Border disputes can still occur, particularly in a Europe where the disintegration of the Eastern bloc can easily resurrect ages-old bones of territorial contention. Recent Polish concerns over whether a reunified Germany would reassert claims to the former German territories is a case in point. Chancellor Kohl, at Camp David on 25 February of this year, issued soothing statements on the matter, but declined on constitutional grounds to renounce entirely German concerns over the German-Polish border.[34] The parallel between the Soviet-Mongolian situation in 1939 and the Soviet-Polish situation is striking. Soviet forces have been quite disposed to act in concert with those of their allies in promoting those allies' interests as their own. While Chancellor Kohl has moved to defuse this potential impediment to German unification, other borders—Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, Moldavia/Romania, Lithuania, etc.—remain as potential crisis areas in Europe.

To return to our initial questions, it is clear that Khalkhin Gol cannot be regarded simply as a counteroffensive in response to an invasion of Mongolian territory. Thus Soviet claims that it is a paradigm for defense of its own borders need to be regarded critically. With the exception of the Japanese attack in early July, both sides held back from crossing their own claimed borders with ground forces, but ranged fast, far, and aggressively into the other's airspace. Russian numbers, equipment, logistics, deception, and imagination were all superior, and these, combined with limited commitment on the part of the Japanese High Command in Tokyo and the remoteness of Kwantung Army, consigned the reinforced 23d Division to destruction. The Japanese had signaled unwillingness to escalate, which gave the Russians a free hand, and after the Russian victory the Emperor decreed that enough was enough. There was nothing defensive about the conduct of the battle itself, or indeed about the plan to trap and destroy the Japanese forces (there was never any question of simply pushing them back: that would not have been a permanent solution and would not have had the required traumatic effect).

As a limited war, judged in terms of the forces involved, the terrain traversed, its isolation from the heartland of the USSR, and the limited

objectives, this conflict is exemplary. As a theater action, wherein an operational venture serves as part of a strategic or grand strategic design, the operation is also exemplary. And it is a model too with regard to controlled escalation and conflict termination: directives from the highest level on both sides switched off the conflict as World War II began to unfold. On the Russian side, the surgical instrument, a reinforced corps, was controlled directly from the Kremlin, bypassing the theater command but drawing on the latter's resources as necessary. The operation provides a good perspective on General Yazov's warning that "the Warsaw Pact's defensive military doctrine . . . certainly does not mean that our actions would possess a passive character."[35] Above all, it is an illustration of the old saying, which applies equally to the battles of Stalingrad, Kursk, and maybe today, that there is nothing quite as dangerous as a Russian on the defensive.

NOTES

1. Extracts from *Problems of Preventing War* by A. A. Kokoshin and V. V. Larionov, *Mirovaya Ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* (*World Economy and International Affairs*) (1988), pp. 23-31. Kokoshin had earlier addressed option two in *Kurskaya bitva v svete sovremennoy oboronitel 'noy doktriny'* (*The Battle of Kursk in the Light of Contemporary Defensive Doctrine*) (August 1987), pp. 32-40.

2. Ibid. Option Three "envisages that the sides are capable only of routing an invading enemy formation on the territory they are defending, without going over to a counteroffensive outside their borders." This suggestion was also made by a member of the Soviet delegation to the 1988 Edinburgh Conversations held in December 1989. These informal talks among American, British, and Soviet scholars and diplomats are conducted annually, alternately in Moscow and Edinburgh.

3. For example, the Soviet film *Marshal Zhukov-stranitsy biografii* (*Marshal Zhukov—Pages from a Biography*) (Moscow: Central Documentary Film Studios, 1984), part 1, makes this point six times.

4. G. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Progress, 1985) is one of the prime sources on this important operation. The preeminent Western study is Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan Against Russia, 1939*, 2 vols. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985). Also Edward J. Drea, *Nomonhan: Japanese-Soviet Tactical Combat, 1939*, Leavenworth Paper No. 2 (Washington: GPO, 1981). Another essential study is the HQ USAFE and Eighth US Army (Rear) series *Japanese Studies on Manchuria*, 13 vols. (Washington: Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1956), hereafter cited as *JSM*. Vol. I, *Japanese Operational Planning Against the USSR*; Vol. XI, *Study of Strategical and Tactical Peculiarities of Far Eastern Russia and Soviet Far Eastern Forces*; and Vol. XIII, Part 3, Books A-C, *The Nomonhan Incident* are particularly useful. Saburo Hayashi, *Kogun, The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Association, 1959) also gives a Japanese view. The operation is described in John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military Political History, 1918-1941* (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 517-22. There are excellent Soviet sources on the operation. One is *Sovetskaya voyennaya Entsiklopediya* (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, hereafter *SVE*), Vol. 8 (1980), pp. 353-54. One of the best studies is S. N. Shishkin, *Khalkhin-gol* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1954), an edited version of which is translated as Appendix H to *JSM* Vol. XI, 3, C, pp. 563-634. The authors used the Polish edition of the original, S. Sziszkin, *Chalchin-gol* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ministerstwa obrony narodowej, 1956). E. Gorbunov, *20 Avgusta 1939* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1986) has excellent maps and photographs. The Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *Pobeda na reke Khalkhin-Gol* (*Victory on the Khalkhin Gol River*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1981) has some odd insights and is good on the influence of the battle on later military theory and practice. N. K. Kiryukin, ed., *Forpost Geroyev* (*Outpost of Heroes*) (Moscow: Khabarovsk, 1973) is a collection on the history of the Soviet army in the Far East, as is N. F. Kuz'min, *Na strazhe mirnogo truda, 1921-1940* (*On Guard for Peaceful Work*), History of the Red Banner Army of the Far East (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1959). N. N. Voronov, *Na sluzhbe voyennoy* (*In Military Service*) (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1963) has criticism of G. M. Shtern, the theater commander, as has I. I. Fedyuninskiy (commanded 149th Motorized Regiment), *Na Vostoke* (*In the East*) (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1985). Surprisingly, in view of its stated importance, P. A. Zhilin, ed., *Istoriya voyennogo iskusstva* (*History*

of Military Art) (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1986) with a highly Eurocentric perspective and beginning its scanty treatment of the Pacific War in 1941, has no specific treatment of this operation.

5. The thorny border issue is investigated in Coox, I, pp. 142-82. For an interesting Imperial Russian perspective see Prof. E. Yu. Petra, and Yu. M. Shokal'skiy, *Bol'shoy vsemirny Atlas Marksa* (*Mark's Great World Table Atlas*) (St. Petersburg: Marks, 1905, 1909). Plate 47, East Siberia, shows the boundary running southest of the Lake Buir Nor and then *south* of the river Khalkhin Gol. Also G. V. Glinka, ed., *Atlas Aziatskoy Rossii* (*Atlas of Asiatic Russia*) (St. Petersburg: Emigration Department, 1914), Plate 6, which shows the boundary running through the lake (Buir Nor) and then nothing, implying that the border ran along the river. Therefore, even Imperial Russian sources do not all support the Soviet claim. The authors are grateful to Mr. Francis Herbert of the Royal Geographical Society for his cartographic help.

6. See *JSM*, Vol. XIII, *Study of Strategical and Tactical Peculiarities*, pp. 9, 13-14, 90-92, 95-109; also Vol. 1, *Japanese Operational Planning*, pp. 99, 118.

7. *SVE*, Vol. 8, p. 353; Coox, I, pp. 189-91; Shishkin (Polish, p. 23) says that "reconnaissance engagements" occurred from 11 to 26 May, without giving details.

8. Shishkin, pp. 23-42; *JSM*, Vol. XI, part 3, B, pp. 305-19, fragmentary account of Lieutenant Colonel Kazuo Murasawa, confirms (p. 305) that this was "the only historical evidence of Japanese army river-crossing operations in combat against the Soviets."

9. Shishkin, *Khalkhin-Gol* (Polish), pp. 31-32, 47; Hayashi, p. 15; Coox, I, map. pp. 184-85, 568; *SVE*, Vol. 8, p. 353; *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, p. 373. On *esprit*, see Coox, I, p. 87.

10. *SVE*, Vol. 8, pp. 353, 538; Coox, I, p. 489.

11. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, I, p. 179.

12. Ibid., p. 180.

13. Coox, I, p. 489.

14. Zhukov, *Reminiscences*, pp. 185-86; Shishkin, pp. 43-44; Coox, I, p. 580; *JSM*, Vol XI, Part 3, C, Appendix F, Nomonhan Diary by Captain Sakae Kusaba, p. 521: "We had heard of the frightful Soviet artillery fire, . . . but the intense, around-the-clock pounding we received from the Soviet artillery far surpassed our imagination. Although their lines of communication were four or five times longer than ours, the Russians seem to have stockpiled a stupendous amount of ammunition at Nomonhan by using over 10,000 trucks."

15. Zhukov, *Reminiscences*, pp. 186-87.

16. Ibid., p. 189. On one occasion, the Russians opened fire on a black car which appeared to their front, and immediately afterwards reported the death of General Komatsubara, because they knew it was his car. *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, p. 490. On radio traffic, see Coox, I, p. 574.

17. *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, pp. 521-22.

18. Ibid., pp. 475-77.

19. Ibid., pp. 523-24; Coox, I, p. 583; *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, pp. 381, 524.

20. *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, p. 374.

21. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, p. 522.

22. Shishkin, pp. 54, 59, 62; Gorbunov, p. 206 and esp. map, p. 148; *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, B, p. 209 (trans. of Shishkin in *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, pp. 382, 611); Ogisu, *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, p. 379. Significantly, the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* (Vol. 8, between pp. 320-21) omits the deep strike by Soviet aircraft west of Chiangchunmiao.

23. Shishkin, p. 61.

24. Ibid., p. 62; *SVE*, Vol. 8, p. 353; *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, pp. 393, 399, 401-02.

25. *JSM*, Vol. XI, C, pp. 412-17; Coox, II, pp. 842-78.

26. *JSM*, Vol. XI, C, p. 421.

27. *SVE*, Vol. 8, p. 354; *JSM*, Vol. XI, C, 3, pp. 460-61; Coox, II, pp. 914-15; A. V. Berezkun, et al., *Istoriya vneshnei politiki SSSR, 1917-1945* (*History of USSR Foreign Policy*), 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), I, p. 388.

28. Zhukov, *Reminiscences*, p. 198.

29. Attributed to Shtern by Major General A. Vorozheikin, cited in Coox, I, p. 572. Shtern was comparing it to Cannae.

30. *Pobeda na reke Khalkhin Gol*, p. 70.

31. Ibid., and p. 63.

32. *JSM*, Vol. XI, 3, C, p. 393; *Pobeda . . .*, p. 63.

33. *Pobeda . . .*, p. 63.

34. John M. Goshko, "Kohl Offers Mild Assurance About Polish Border," *The New York Times*, 26 February 1990, pp. A1, A16.

35. Army General Dmitry T. Yazov, "*Voyennaya doktrina Varshavskogo Dogovora-doktrina zashchity mira i sotsializma*" ("*The Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Pact—Doctrine of the Defense of Peace and Socialism*"), *Pravda*, 27 July 1987, col. 5, last para.