

A Review of Chinese Academic Research on the Strategic Role of People's Republic of Mongolia During World War II

Rina Na^{*}

Researcher, (Ph.D), Northeast Asia Studies College, Jilin University,
Northeast Asia Research Center, Jilin University, Changchun, CHINA
vnarnaa@126.com

Shuo Zhang[□]

Research Assistant, Northeast Asia Studies College, Jilin University,
Changchun, CHINA
zhangshuo@whu.edu.cn <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4807-5829>

Abstract: The strategic significance of People's Republic of Mongolia during World War II has long occupied a marginal position in Chinese academic research concerning the history of war and regional politics. The existing literature on this subject is characterized by a lack of independence and systematicity in analysis. This paper utilizes a systematic approach to reviewing and analyzing extant Chinese academic literature to establish a link between the overall structure and the detailed research. It also assesses how Chinese academics recognize the functional role of People's Republic of Mongolia in the Soviet Union's military-strategic system, starting from three representative wartime scenarios. First, in the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, although People's Republic of Mongolia was not the main attacking force, it provided key support at the level of tactical coordination and strategic pivot. Secondly, within the context of the wartime material and personnel support system, People's Republic of Mongolia established a logistical support system encompassing material resources, financial logistics, human capital, and institutionalized assistance. This system functioned as a critical component for the Soviet military to sustain its combat depth. In the North Chahar Campaign, People's Republic of Mongolia's military forces exhibited notable mobility and efficiency in their coordinated advancement. This

* Corresponding author

[□] <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4181-6379>

© The Author(s), 2025



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License,
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Received: 30 July, 2025

Accepted: 22 September, 2025

paper posits that, despite the preliminary findings in the research on the role of People's Republic of Mongolia in Chinese academia, there are deficiencies in the sources of historical materials, analytical perspectives, and regional subjectivity awareness. In light of these limitations, this paper attempts to propose a systematic research framework to promote the advancement of the study of the strategic role of People's Republic of Mongolia in World War II.

Keywords: *People's Republic of Mongolia, World War II, Chinese academia, Battle of Khalkhin Go,; wartime logistics, Far Eastern Front*

Research Background and Academic Concerns

World War II stands as a monumental anti-fascist conflict, whose victory represented a collective triumph of global anti-fascist forces that fundamentally transformed the world order (Li T, 2005). As the most devastating global military confrontation of the 20th century, it exerted profound influence on reshaping the contemporary international order and national configurations. People's Republic of Mongolia, by virtue of its distinctive geopolitical position, political structure, and social mobilization mechanisms, played multifaceted roles within both the Soviet-German war and the Pacific War strategic frameworks in World War II. These roles manifested not only in wartime military coordination and logistical support operations but also in the subsequent geopolitical restructuring during the postwar period. Nevertheless, within Mainland China's research paradigms on wartime history and World War II studies, analyses of People's Republic of Mongolia's wartime role have long been relegated to peripheral status, lacking both an independent scholarly perspective and systematic evaluation.

Historically, People's Republic

of Mongolia gradually emerged as a significant buffer zone for the Soviet Union's border security strategy in East Asia following the establishment of the "People's Government" under Soviet leadership in 1921. By the eve of World War II, its strategic location between the Soviet Union and Japan had already implied significant strategic implications (Peng C, 2009). The Battle of Khalkhin Gol in 1939 marked People's Republic of Mongolia's entry into international military conflicts as a substantive military theater (Ba Y, & Zhang Y, 2005). Subsequently, the extensive personnel and materiel system established during the Soviet-German War, as well as its direct military deployment in joint operations with Soviet forces against Japan in 1945, should all serve as fundamental references for understanding People's Republic of Mongolia's strategic role within World War II. Yet Chinese academic research has mostly focused on the strategic context of major powers, such as the Battle of Khalkhin Gol and the Soviet Far East Campaign. There has been a long-standing lack of systematic research on People's Republic of Mongolia's

agency, battlefield practices, and logistics system as a participating party. As this paper points out, relevant research remains largely embedded within the narrative framework dominated by Soviet diplomatic and military perspectives.

Specifically, Chinese scholarship on People's Republic of Mongolia's participation in World War II primarily appears in two research approaches: First, historical analyses of the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, which emphasize its strategic significance as the prelude to Soviet-Japanese conflicts. Second, studies reconstructing the 1945 Far East Campaign, particularly examining the Soviet-Mongolian joint operations in northern Hebei and their tactical organization during the Chahar campaign. While these studies provide substantial empirical materials for understanding People's Republic of Mongolia's wartime role, they exhibit notable limitations in three aspects: methodological approaches, problem consciousness, and discursive construction. The literature demonstrates heavy reliance on Soviet archival materials while making insufficient use of Mongolian local historical sources. Moreover, the research content remains fragmented, lacking both a macro-level perspective and a systematic framework, consequently failing to present a comprehensive understanding of People's Republic of Mongolia's evolving strategic logic throughout World War II.

In light of these considerations, a re-examination and systematic integration of the research findings of Chinese scholars on the strategic role of People's Republic of Mongolia in World War II emerges as

both a reflective response to prevailing academic traditions and a necessary step in deepening research on regional war history. This paper is predicated on the aforementioned problem awareness and endeavors to construct a multidimensional analytical framework encompassing tactical coordination, logistical support, and strategic functions through a literature review. The present framework aims to systematically outline the cognitive logic and evaluation system of Chinese academia regarding the role of People's Republic of Mongolia in World War II. In order to address this objective, the present paper will concentrate on three particular issues: First, the tactical coordination role of People's Republic of Mongolian forces in Soviet-led operations, and their significance as strategic footholds, will be analyzed, with the Battle of Khalkhin Gol serving as the point of departure. Second, the paper will examine the material, human, financial, and institutional assistance functions carried out by People's Republic of Mongolia and analyze the systemic structure through which it was embedded in the Soviet war system, focusing on the period from the Soviet-German War to the war against Japan. Thirdly, the present paper will examine the operational paths of the Soviet-Mongolian allied forces during the 1945 North Chahar Campaign. The focus will be on the tactical performance and organizational status of People's Republic of Mongolian forces in high-intensity mobile assaults and multi-point coordinated advances.

It is imperative to underscore that this review does not seek to reinterpret

historical events or make political judgments on the international legal status of People's Republic of Mongolia during the war. Instead, it endeavors to adhere to the principles of historical materialism and empiricism. Through the sorting and logical integration of a substantial corpus of published literature, it elucidates how the academic community in mainland China comprehends and presents the

functional role of People's Republic of Mongolia during World War II. This study offers an academic reference that facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the history of Sino-Soviet-Mongolian relations, post-war changes in the Northeast Asian geopolitical landscape, and the historical politics of border regions.

The First Strategic Role—Tactical Synergy and Geographical Fulcrum Force in the Battle of Khalkhin Gol

The Battle of Khalkhin Gol (also known as the Battle of Nomonhan) a decisive pre-WWII clash between the Soviet Union and Japan, erupted in May 1939 and lasted 135 days, involving over 200,000 combatants with both sides committing more than 200,000 men to the battle, which ultimately ended in a crushing defeat for the Japanese (Meng Y, 2022; Zhang Y et al., 2024), compelling its fundamental strategic reassessment, halting imperial expansion towards Soviet territories. People's Republic of Mongolian forces, fighting as integrated components of the Soviet-Mongolian coalition, demonstrated significant operational synergy despite their limited scale and non-primary assault role. Their contribution unified tactical coordination, such as cavalry reconnaissance and flank security, with strategic pivot functions that anchored Soviet logistics and territorial control. This dual significance extended beyond battlefield effectiveness to institutional frameworks, ultimately influencing post-1945 regional power realignments (Wang J, 2013; Wu Y, 2015). Scholarly consensus within

mainland China affirms this assessment, grounded in archival military records and operational analyses of the campaign

Firstly, based on historical materials, Chinese scholars generally concur that the Mongolian armed forces exhibited active and effective tactical coordination during combat operations led by the Soviet Red Army. The Mongolian armed forces primarily undertook dual tasks of mobile containment and encirclement counterattacks within the deep penetration assault system. Regarding this historical fact, Wang Junjia employed a deep operations theory framework to analyze the Battle of Khalkhin Gol. During the large-scale counteroffensive phase of the battle, multi-service coordinated forces, including cavalry, executed deep penetration operations. The Mongolian cavalry, operating within the echelon formation, executed flanking maneuvers on the right wing, thereby assuming a pivotal role in providing flank support and neutralizing retreating enemy forces (Wang J, 2013). The success of this operational system relied not only on the Soviet Army's technical and

numerical superiority but also on the People's Republic of Mongolian local forces' familiarity with the terrain and high mobility, especially the Mongolian cavalry, which formed an effective complement to the Soviet armored forces in rapid maneuver operations, providing crucial deep maneuver support for the annihilation of Japanese forces in the Battle of Khalkhin Gol. According to declassified archives, the Soviet-Mongolian allied forces engaged in a frontal confrontation with the Japanese and Pseudo-Mongolian armies in the counteroffensive phase. The Soviet-Mongolian forces comprised approximately 57,000 troops, 498 tanks, 542 artillery pieces and mortars, 385 armored vehicles, and 515 aircraft (Gao P, 1994; Liu Z, 2017). In contrast, the Japanese and Pseudo-Mongolian armies fielded 75,000 troops, 500 artillery pieces, 182 tanks, and more than 300 aircraft (Liu Z, 2017). The battle's aftermath revealed that the casualty rate of the Japanese 23rd Division reached a staggering 73%, resulting in a loss of over 12,000 personnel (Wang C, 1998; Lv C, 2023). Similarly, the Soviet-Mongolian forces experienced significant losses, with nearly 10,000 casualties (Zhang Q, 2020). These empirical data substantiate the pivotal role of the Mongolian cavalry in the battle's final stages and counterattacks. In retrospect, Dulik observed that the Mongolian cavalry effectively constructed a pontoon bridge across the Khalkhin Gol under the protection of Soviet artillery fire, thereby providing essential tactical support to the Soviets (Wu Y, 2015). This operation, characterized by its warlike nature, further underscored the

significance of tactical synergy.

Secondly, Chinese scholars emphasize that People's Republic of Mongolia served as a strategic foothold for the Soviet Union, with its vast territory forming a crucial "strategic depth" during the Battle of Khalkhin Gol. This strategic location provided a robust foundation for the Soviet Army's logistics deployment, troop mobilization, and firepower deployment. It functioned as a rear base for the Soviet Army's deep operations and the concentration of supplies. As Ye Shuzong observed, the Soviet Union regarded People's Republic of Mongolia as a "security barrier in the Far East," a pivotal reliance for its strategic countermeasures against Japan (Ye Shuzong, 2005). General Zhukov was instrumental in the execution of the initial large-scale coordinated operations involving Soviet tankers, infantry, artillery, and air forces (Zhao L, 2019). The effects are particularly evident in Mongolia: The topography, characterized by its flatness and openness, facilitated the dispersal of Soviet armor clusters and artillery fire, thereby allowing for their efficient deployment in a wide-area offensive strategy (Wang Y, 2024), relied on the utilization of field airfields and transportation hubs in Mongolia, including Tamsag-Bulag and Sambes (now Choibalsan), to ensure a continuous and effective offensive operation (Wu Y, 2015). A review of post-war statistics reveals that on August 20, the Soviet and Mongolian Allied Forces initiated a general offensive. This attack was launched in three directions, with the Southern Cluster executing the primary

assault. By August 31, the Soviet and Mongolian forces had successfully encircled and destroyed the majority of the Japanese army (Liu Z, 2017). These examples demonstrate that the Mongolian People's Republic not only provided geographic space and logistical conditions, but also assumed the role of the actual pivot point in the operational tempo and transition between offense and defense.

Finally, from the perspective of post-war impact, Chinese scholars concur that the Battle of Khalkhin Gol served to underscore and fortify People's Republic of Mongolia's pivotal role in the Soviet Union's Far Eastern strategic defense system. During the battle, the Soviet Union implemented a strategy of deploying substantial military forces and exercising direct command and control over Mongolian forces (Wu Y, 2015). This approach effectively countered Japan's plan to invade the Soviet Union via the Mongolian border, thereby successfully containing Japan's "northward advance" (Zheng Z, 2008). According to archival data, the casualty rate of Japan's participation in the war was upwards of 80% (Lv C, 2023). Postwar statistics confirm that there were more than 40,000 Japanese casualties (Xu Y, 2015). This fiasco forced Japan to shift its strategic center of gravity southward (Lv C, 2023). The situation in the Pacific

was profoundly affected by this (Zhang Y, 2024). In the meantime, The Soviet Union significantly strengthened its military presence and military infrastructure in People's Republic of Mongolia (Wang G, 2008), gradually gaining control over its transportation, border, and intelligence systems. It integrated these systems into the military integration process promoted by the Soviet Union (Hao S, & Du S, 2007), and made Mongolia a key node in the Soviet Union's Far Eastern defense system (He Y, 2015). Wang Yuquan posits that the success of the campaign and Mongolia's geopolitical significance enabled the Soviet Union to establish an eastern defense network which was anchored by "People's Republic of Mongolia as the outpost, the Far Eastern Railway as the axis, and the coastal regions as the strongholds" (Wang Y, 2009). However, both Lu Jiyu and Wu Qirui contend that this strategic layout, bolstered by the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, transformed Mongolia into a "concrete political pawn" in the U.S.-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalry under the post-war Yalta system (Lu J, 1987; Wu Q, 2021). The Battle of Khalkhin Gol not only directly determined the Mongolian People's Republic's strategic dependence on the Soviet Union, but it also established the long-term historical basis for the Cold War-era geopolitical landscape of East Asia (Tang C, 2013).

The Second Strategic Role—The Soviet Union's Rear Security Base in the Wartime Logistics System

In the logistical system of the Far Eastern battlefield of World War II, the role played by People's Republic

of Mongolia has far exceeded the traditional geo-buffer zone of a frontier region. Indeed, its economic and human

resources were almost fully embedded in the deep rear of the Soviet war mechanism. According to the extant studies in mainland Chinese academia, from political statements to manpower and material support, the autonomous region of People's Republic of Mongolia has established a more systematic rear-guarantee function in multiple domains. This includes material transportation, personnel support, financial assistance, military equipment construction, basic industrial reconstruction, and even the active undertaking of the pension system of the Soviet military dependents. The function in question was not a transient political gesture; rather, it persisted throughout the war. Consequently, People's Republic of Mongolia played an irreplaceable role in the Soviet Union's war against Germany and the subsequent war against Japan. This role significantly augmented the overall combat power and material security capacity of the Allied forces on the Eastern Front (Xinhua Current Affairs Press, 1950).

First, People's Republic of Mongolia established a systematic national mechanism to organize the wartime aid system, mobilizing the entire population to engage in material production and aid expenditures. This resulted in the formation of a rear-area material supply system characterized by widespread public participation and hierarchical management. According to the analysis of Chinese scholars of official Soviet historical records, on June 22, 1941—the day the Soviet-German War broke out—People's Republic of Mongolia convened a meeting of its highest

national leadership under the direction of Khorloogiin Choibalsan. At this meeting, the participants declared that the German fascist invasion of the Soviet Union constituted a threat to People's Republic of Mongolia's national security. They also announced a full transition to wartime support status (Wang G, 2008). This action satisfied the obligations of the 1936 Mongolian-Soviet Mutual Assistance Agreement (Hao S, & Du S, 2007). Subsequently, People's Republic of Mongolia established the "Central Committee for Aid to the Red Army" and its local branches to coordinate and implement the entire process of collecting, allocating, and transporting supplies from across the country to the front lines. For instance, between November 1941 and 1945, People's Republic of Mongolia deployed multiple special trains to transport relief supplies to the Soviet Union. These supplies included substantial quantities of winter clothing, food, essential daily items, medicines, and livestock. The four special trains dispatched in November 1942 alone were valued at over seven million tugriks (Peng C, 2009). During this period, People's Republic of Mongolia's annual fundraising for the Soviet Union already amounted to about 2 percent of its government budget (Wu Y, 2015).

Secondly, with respect to the types of materials and forms of assistance, People's Republic of Mongolia exhibited a discernible trend toward diversification and systematization. This not only ensured the fulfillment of fundamental wartime material requirements but also entailed active engagement in the

production of military equipment and the provision of support to reorganization units. Peng Chuanyong's research on Soviet archives indicates that the People's Republic of Mongolian government initiated a "national donation campaign" in 1942 to raise funds for the acquisition of gold, foreign currency, and tugriks. The primary objective of this campaign was to establish the "Revolutionary Mongolia" tank brigade and ensure its full equipment and supplies throughout the war. In 1943, the organization raised funds to establish the "Mongolian Arat" aviation squadron, providing it with fighter jets, fuel, uniforms, and rations in full. Horses, as a special and vital resource, played a significant role in People's Republic of Mongolia's assistance to the Soviet Union. Statistical evidence indicates that throughout the war, People's Republic of Mongolia supplied over 485,000 equines to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These equines were utilized not only on the front lines but also for the economic reconstruction and agricultural production in Soviet-liberated regions. The existing research results have repeatedly concluded that the targeted material supplies provided by People's Republic of Mongolia to the Soviet regular forces exhibited distinct "Military specialization" logistics support characteristics (Niu H, 1985; Peng C, 2009).

Meanwhile, Mongolia's rear support functions were also reflected in the "war-service oriented" nature of its overall economic system. Scholar Peng Chuanyong, through research on Soviet archives, concluded that starting in

1941, Mongolia and the Soviet Union established a "wartime integrated economic relationship." With technical and organizational support from the Soviet Union, Mongolia constructed and renovated numerous military-industrial, food processing, and transportation facilities, such as wool-washing factories, leather factories, cream factories, railways, highways, and bridges. Most of these projects were either equipped with Soviet machinery or assisted by Soviet engineers, with products directly shipped to Soviet front lines or rear areas. Amid the Soviet Union's reduction of exports of consumer goods to People's Republic of Mongolia, People's Republic of Mongolia began implementing an agricultural self-sufficiency policy starting in 1942, expanding grain cultivation areas to over 70,000 hectares, with vegetable production increasing fourfold by 1945 compared to pre-war levels. The light industrial sector also expanded rapidly, covering sectors such as clothing, shoe manufacturing, woolen textiles, and dairy products, significantly enhancing its ability to meet the wartime supply needs of the Soviet military (Peng C, 2009). According to statistics, from 1942 to 1943, People's Republic of Mongolia supplied the Soviet Army with over 1,000 tons of various meat products, cream, candies, cigarettes, and other materials; among these, sausage products alone exceeded 70,000 kilograms, highlighting its critical role as a key node in the food supply chain.

Moreover, People's Republic of Mongolia's support for the Soviet Union is evident not only in the recruitment of

personnel for the Soviet army, but also in the institutionalization of the initiative to assume the Soviet Union's due functions on military dependents' support. Scholar Peng Chuanyong has noted that between 1942 and 1944, the People's Republic of Mongolian government issued three legal decrees to provide compensation to the families of Soviet soldiers conscripted from People's Republic of Mongolia. Furthermore, the national budget was amended to incorporate living allowances for disabled demobilized soldiers and the dependents of fallen soldiers. These measures effectively supplanted the social welfare functions that the Soviet Union should have fulfilled in the Far East theater, thereby demonstrating a political awareness that "transcended the scope of its sovereign responsibilities" (Peng C, 2009). According to incomplete statistics, People's Republic of Mongolia expended over five million tugriks on compensation for Soviet military personnel and demobilized personnel during the war. This indicates that People's Republic of Mongolia functioned not only as a material rear base but also as an extended support function within the human resources system.

Finally, People's Republic of Mongolia established a quasi-military national support network through organizing a military reserve mobilization

system. Scholar Niu Haiyu's research indicates that the Mongolian Defense Support Association, under the leadership of the Mongolian Ministry of Defense, was formerly known as the People's Volunteer Self-Defense Corps. It oversees four major military sports clubs (aviation, motorcycles, shooting, and radio) and covers 4,000 grassroots organizations, with a total membership exceeding 350,000 people, accounting for more than two-thirds of People's Republic of Mongolia's young and able-bodied workforce (Niu H, 1985). This organization plays a pivotal role in facilitating the connection between the national logistics system and social mobilization initiatives. During wartime, the People's Volunteer Self-Defense Force was responsible for the training of military personnel, the organization of transportation units, and the assistance in equipment maintenance. In addition to these primary functions, the People's Volunteer Self-Defense Force also played a crucial role in the government's logistics operations, specifically in the packaging, classification, and loading of war zone support supplies for transportation. This initiative established a "quasi-military-civilian integration" wartime structure in People's Republic of Mongolia, significantly enhancing the efficiency and breadth of nationwide war mobilization.

The Third Strategic Role—Maneuver Assault and Combined Arms Elements in the North Chahar Campaign

The North Chahar Campaign constituted a pivotal element of the Soviet Transbaikal Front's southern offensive, representing a critical component of

the western flank's offensive against Japan during the Far East Campaign. In this series of operations, mechanized formations composed of Soviet and

People's Republic of Mongolian forces were tasked with critical assault missions. The strategic objectives primarily entailed the encirclement of the main forces of the Kwantung Army from the western front, severing the Kwantung Army's connections with Japanese forces in North China, and the provision of substantial support for the Communist Party of China-led Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei (晋察冀) Military Region in the capture of strategic locations such as Zhangjiakou. The North Chahar Campaign is regarded as a paradigmatic instance of the effective implementation of modern mobile warfare strategies by the Soviet-Mongolian Allied Forces in the waning stages of World War II. Its military and historical ramifications merit meticulous examination and analysis. In general assessments, Chinese scholars concur that the People's Republic of Mongolian forces exhibited effective mobile assault capabilities, noteworthy combat spirit, and effective battlefield coordination during the North Chahar Campaign. Despite comprising a relatively small percentage of the total Soviet military force, these units were instrumental in crucial operations such as breakthrough assaults and flanking maneuvers on specific tactical fronts, which underscores their indispensable role within the Soviet-Mongolian joint campaign system (Zhou L, & Liao X, 1997; Wang Y, & He M, 2008).

Firstly, examinations of historical analyses conducted by several scholars indicate that the tactical actions of the People's Republic of Mongolian forces exhibited exceptional mobility and field combat capabilities. Xu Yan has

noted that the North Chahar campaign commenced on August 9, 1945, following the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan and the subsequent launch of its offensive by the Soviet Army. A combined cavalry and mechanized formation, consisting of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army and Soviet forces, departed from Mongolia and rapidly executed a deep-penetration, wide-front maneuver assault toward the Duolun-Zhangjiakou (多伦-张家口) direction. This was a surprise attack that the Japanese forces had failed to anticipate. The Soviet-Mongolian allied forces, operating at an average daily pace of 60 to 90 kilometers, rapidly traversed the arid expanse of the Gobi Desert, penetrating deeply into the enemy's rear lines (Xu Y, 2015). This maneuver exhibited remarkable endurance and field combat capabilities. Following their entry into Chinese territory on August 11, the forces rapidly divided into two columns. One column proceeded along the Pang-River route, swiftly occupying Huade County (化德县), while the other column rapidly advanced toward Sonid Right Banner, passing through Shangdu County (商都县) and closing in on Zhangbei (Ren L et al., 2018). These units demonstrated agility, responsiveness, and proficiency in desert and grassland terrain, enabling them to circumvent enemy frontal firepower deployments. In a span of just a few days, the forces advanced 300 kilometers, swiftly capturing the strategic town of Zhangbei. They launched a surprise attack from the northwest, causing the Japanese and puppet forces' defenses to collapse rapidly (Wang Y, & He M, 2008). This effectively disrupted

the integrity of the Japanese front lines. This highly mobile operational approach disrupted the enemy's defensive rhythm, effectively severing communication between the Kwantung Army and Japanese forces in North China (Liu Z, 1995). In regard to this historical period, Li Na observes that "the right wing of the Soviet-Mongolian mechanized cavalry group, under the command of Marshal Choibalsan, entered Erenhot on the 11th, liberated Huade County on the 13th, and advanced to within 30 kilometers northwest of Zhangbei on the 14th" (Li N, 2018). In just five days, the People's Republic of Mongolian mechanized forces demonstrated their remarkable battlefield adaptability through a penetrating advance that traversed hundreds of kilometers. Wang Yuyan and He Ming also observe that under the Soviet unified campaign deployment, the Soviet-Mongolian cavalry mechanized group, under the command of General Pliyev, advanced continuously for 300 kilometers in depth toward the Zhangbei direction. This advance demonstrated exceptional mobility during the crossing of grasslands, deserts, and saline-alkali regions (Wang Y, & He M, 2008). Representing the cavalry forces of the grassland type, the Mongolian cavalry advanced along this route with unstoppable momentum, reaching Zhangbei and executing a tactical pincer movement against Japanese forces.

Secondly, in several pivotal battles of the North Chahar Campaign, the People's Republic of Mongolian forces exhibited remarkable bravery and demonstrated an exceptional degree

of combat spirit. This viewpoint has garnered significant recognition within Chinese academic circles. Along the Langwogou defense line, which is located to the north of Zhangjiakou, the People's Republic of Mongolian forces collaborated with Soviet troops to execute intense assaults on Japanese positions, leading to extremely intense combat. In the final analysis, the forces breached the Japanese army's extensive fortified defenses, thereby creating a pivotal window of opportunity for the Eighth Route Army to expeditiously seize control of Zhangjiakou (Political Department of Zhangjiakou Military District Hebei Province, 2005). Liu Jianhua's research indicates that during the Langwogou campaign, the People's Republic of Mongolian forces collaborated with the Soviet Red Army to execute a series of intense attacks, resulting in the successful capture of the Langwogou North Road Bridge and the repulsion of numerous Japanese counterattacks. Ayush, a combat hero of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army, made the ultimate sacrifice during this campaign. His bravery and tenacious fighting spirit serve to illustrate the exceptional performance of the People's Republic of Mongolian forces throughout the campaign (Liu J, 1991). Pei Huanli and Ren Bing researched that the Soviet-Mongolian Allied Forces engaged in fierce battles with Japanese forces in the Langwogou area, bravely fighting under heavy fire, and ultimately captured the Japanese main stronghold at Yehuling (野狐岭) in Zhangbei County. The Mongolian forces demonstrated their formidable combat capabilities, resulting in the death

or injury of over 860 Japanese soldiers and the capture of a significant quantity of military supplies (Pei H, & Ren B, 1993). Zhao Yu'e has noted that in this battle, 54 Soviet Red Army soldiers and 6 Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army soldiers lost their lives, and over 300 officers and soldiers were wounded. This figure serves as a testament to the Mongolian forces' immortal contribution to the cause of China's liberation (Zhao Y, 2008).

A comprehensive strategic assessment by Chinese scholars has revealed that the People's Republic of Mongolian forces were not a mere "supporting force" with a minor role in the North Chahar campaign. Instead, they were a highly institutionalized and organized force within the Soviet-Mongolian joint operational system. This force possessed the capacity to carry out complex, coordinated combat missions. Their seamless coordination with Soviet forces at critical junctures, including multi-pronged breakthroughs, deep flanking maneuvers, and encirclement and annihilation operations, served as the organizational guarantee for the success of the North Chahar Campaign (Liu J, 1991; Political Department of Zhangjiakou Military District Hebei Province, 2005). Especially in the context of complex terrain conditions and intense fire suppression, the People's Republic of Mongolian forces demonstrated a notable degree of combat efficiency during transitions in the pace of battle and effectively supported the Soviet army in achieving an encirclement posture. From the perspective of operational planning

and execution, during the deep flanking maneuver by the Transbaikal Front, the Mongolian cavalry and mechanized forces led by Marshal Choibalsan were integrated into the Soviet Army's right-wing cavalry-mechanized cluster. This cluster was tasked with severing the connection between the Kwantung Army and Japanese forces in North China, blocking their southern escape route, and safeguarding the security of the main force's right flank (Liu Z, 1995). Ren Liang et al have indicated that during the campaign along the Zhangbei-Duolun-Langwogou line, this force engaged in a campaign of "independent raid-style warfare", employing flexible and swift tactics to deliver a swift and decisive blow against Japanese and puppet Mongolian cavalry. This effectively supported the battlefield situation of the Soviet main attack direction (Ren L et al., 2018). From the perspective of troop organization, Wang Yuyan and He Ming posit that during the North Chahar campaign, the People's Republic of Mongolian forces, operating under the unified command of the Soviet Army, engaged in close coordination with Soviet cavalry, motorized, and artillery units to form a highly integrated combined arms combat system. This effectively contained and weakened the western defensive line of the Japanese Kwantung Army, ultimately facilitating the breakthrough of the Zhangbei front (Wang Y, & He M, 2008). From the perspective of specific tactical coordination, Chinese scholars generally concur that the People's Republic of Mongolian forces in the North Chahar direction were not merely executing auxiliary combat tasks

but directly participated in the main battlefield operations of the right flank offensive under the unified command of General Pliyev. For instance, at the Langwogou position north of Zhangbei, the 27th Mechanized Division of the People's Republic of Mongolian forces, the 7th Armored Brigade, and Soviet units such as the 30th Motorized Regiment and the 3rd Artillery Regiment

were collectively organized to execute successive fire suppression and infantry-tank coordinated advances. Through motorized deep flanking maneuvers, these forces effectively destroyed the “steel defense line” that the Japanese had constructed for many years (Political Department of Zhangjiakou Military District Hebei Province, 2005).

The Pivotal Role in the Transformation of the War Effort - An Underestimated Contribution in World War II

In the grand historical narrative of World War II, the Mongolian People's Republic is often relegated to a subordinate role in the Soviet military system, and its contributions are often underestimated. However, if we consider the transformation of war results, we see that its function was not limited to participating in specific battles. Rather, it transformed local tactical victories on the battlefield, the flow of elements in the rear, and post-war institutional arrangements into a pivotal force that influenced the strategic choices of the great powers and the restructuring of the post-war order. The Mongolian People's Republic played a pivotal role in World War II, contributing much more than the mere functions of a “facilitator” or “auxiliary force.” Its geographic location, mobilization system, and organizational coordination played a pivotal role in the Soviet Union's anti-fascist war by connecting tactical victories with strategic gains, the logistical chain with the operational chain, and wartime coordination with postwar order. This kind of pivotal contribution is often not

presented in a single battle, but rather in the coupling and spillover of cross-time and cross-domain elements. Therefore, based on previous systematic reviews of operations in the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, wartime logistics, and the North Chahar campaign, the author proposes an explanatory framework. Taking the Mongolian People's Republic as a pivot, the author realizes the “triple transformation,” i.e., the transformation of strategic gains, capability structure, and order construction. This reveals the underestimated contribution of the Mongolian People's Republic to the pattern of the World War II.

First, the “transformation of strategic gains” refers to how the Mongolian People's Republic's geopolitical location and military practices made it pivotal in transforming battlefield victories into strategic gains. After the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, Japan's “northward advance” strategy failed, forcing it to change its expansion direction. This strategic turn of events gave the Soviet Union a valuable opportunity to concentrate its forces on the Western

Front against Germany. The geographical depth and battlefield space provided by the Mongolian People's Republic meant logistical convenience for the Soviet army and strategic tempo for the Soviet Union. This was also the case in the North Chahar campaign. The effectiveness of the Soviet Union's mobile assault and deep penetration destroyed the Japanese defense system in North China and created conditions for the Chinese and Soviet sides to take over and reshape the regional order after the war. In other words, the Mongolian People's Republic's role was to transform local victories into strategic dividends. This allowed the Soviet Union to exchange lower marginal costs for a higher tempo of battle and more stable rear security. This was its often-overlooked but crucial contribution to the evolution of the great power pattern.

Secondly, the "transformation of structural capabilities" refers to the transformation of the Mongolian People's Republic's wartime mobilization capabilities from "immediate support" to "structural capabilities," as well as the establishment of a sustainable transnational combat system. This indicates a shift in the Mongolian People's Republic's wartime mobilization capacity, from an initial state of "immediate support" to a more entrenched "structural capacity." Concurrently, a sustainable transnational combat system has been established. Wartime mobilization entails not only the immediate provision of material resources and personnel, but also the long-term transformation of support into a resilient network through

the implementation of institutional frameworks and the allocation of financial resources by the state. The assistance provided by the Mongolian People's Republic to the Soviet Union included a variety of military support, such as the deployment of armored and aviation units, the mobilization of supplies such as food, clothing, transportation, and specific animal resources, and financial support to military families and demobilized groups. This assistance was not merely a matter of providing large quantities of resources; it also involved the establishment of a novel cross-border capability structure through institutional integration and social mobilization. The logistical system established reduced the vulnerability of Soviet operations to supply shortages, enhanced the sustainability of campaigns, and enabled stable levels of combat intensity throughout successive operations. The spillover effect of this accumulation of capabilities is a central, yet underestimated, aspect of the war effort transformation process.

Finally, the "transformation of order construction" is a term used to describe the Mongolian People's Republic's geopolitical and institutional practices that integrated its wartime achievements into the post-war order. This transformation can be considered a shift from a temporary synergy to a long-term structure. The Mongolian People's Republic played a crucial role in the Soviet Union's Far East strategy, functioning not only as a strategic buffer militarily but also as an important node in the post-war regional security pattern, particularly in the areas of transportation,

intelligence, and border governance. The strategic corridor that was opened by the North Chahar operation did not disappear with the conclusion of the campaign; rather, it transformed, becoming the foundation for the postwar political takeover by China and the Soviet Union in North China. That is to say, the Mongolian People's Republic played a pivotal role not only in the battle of "winning the present," but also in the construction of the order of "arranging for tomorrow." In consideration of the historical ramifications, this transition from the wartime to the post-war era elucidates the manner in which the Mongolian People's Republic, as a diminutive landlocked nation, has exerted a profound structural influence on the reconfiguration of the global power dynamics, a phenomenon that transcends the confines of its military might.

In conclusion, the value of the Mongolian People's Republic in the Second World War should be measured by the pivotal role it played in the transformation of the war effort. From a counterfactual perspective, without the

depth and mobilization of the Mongolian People's Republic, the Soviet Union would have had to pay significantly more in terms of troop strength and cost, and the evolution of the war situation in East Asia would have been more complicated and delayed. At the level of post-war order, the border security belt would have been compelled to move southward or eastward, which would have increased the marginal cost of control and political takeover. For this reason, the Mongolian People's Republic is more concerned with the structural contribution of "reducing systemic risk and magnifying the spillover of victory" than with the comparison of military power. Consequently, the "pivotal role in the transformation of the war results" should become the core category and the measuring stick to understand the underestimated contribution of the Mongolian People's Republic in World War II. This is not only a re-examination of the historical facts, but also a new scientific and rational cognition of the role of the supporting attack force in the transformation of the system in the war.

Conclusion

A review of the current state of the Chinese academic research on the strategic role of People's Republic of Mongolia during World War II reveals that, although a systematic research framework has not yet been established, most existing studies are fragmented extensions of existing research on military history, diplomatic history, and military strategy. However, through the thorough examination of pivotal issues, including

the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, the wartime Soviet-Mongolian economic system, and the operations in the northern region of Chahar, Chinese academic circles to acknowledge the multifaceted strategic functions that People's Republic of Mongolia exhibited within the Soviet-led Far East theater of operations. These functions are manifested not only in explicit aspects, such as military offensives and tactical coordination, but

also in implicit supportive roles, such as deep-rear logistics and institutional frameworks. During the Far East campaign of 1945, People's Republic of Mongolia played a pivotal role in the Soviet Red Army's advance into China. The region functioned as a vital corridor and strategic foothold, enabling the Soviet forces to advance and execute crucial operations, such as a breakthrough and coordinated suppression, on the North Chahar front. While extant research in Chinese academic circles is dispersed and follows diverse paths, a consensus framework has gradually emerged in the evaluation of key historical junctures: It is evident that People's Republic of Mongolia played a pivotal role as a strategic pillar force within the Soviet Union's eastern front strategic layout during the Far East theater of World War II. It is imperative to underscore that People's Republic of Mongolia functioned not only as the "first line of defense" against Japan's "northward advance" strategy but also as a pivotal showcase for the efficacy of the Soviet Union's institutional export and military cooperation mechanisms. Furthermore, the institution's political practices in areas such as its social mobilization system, wartime support mechanisms for the Soviet Union, and institutional safeguards for Soviet military dependents provide important case studies for examining the vertical expansion of state capacity during wartime. In this sense, People's Republic of Mongolia was not merely a subordinate ally on the battlefield but a strategic foothold with a certain degree of institutional self-awareness, organizational coordination, and tactical

execution capabilities.

From a methodological perspective, two prominent issues are currently facing Chinese academic research in this field. Firstly, the source structure of materials is overly reliant on Soviet war history archives, with extremely limited use of local historical materials in People's Republic of Mongolia. Secondly, research approaches are mostly subordinate to the reconstruction of military history or diplomatic history narratives from the perspective of major powers. This makes it difficult to independently construct a comprehensive explanatory framework for the role of People's Republic of Mongolia in the war. For this reason, this review, as a systematic review and methodological reflection on relevant research in mainland China, is significant not only for "rediscovering" the major historical role of People's Republic of Mongolia in World War II, but also for revealing shortcomings in academic cognitive structures and identifying the directions in which future research urgently needs to break through.

The year 2025 signifies the 80th anniversary of the victory of World War II and of the world anti-fascist war. The victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan and the world anti-fascist war together constitute a major turning point in the historical process of the Chinese nation. In a similar vein, the year 2025 holds significant historical importance for Mongolia, as it marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the "liberation war". The Soviet Red Army and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army fought side

by side and in coordination, ultimately achieving a decisive victory in the 1945 Far East theater. This victory resulted in the complete destruction of the strategic deployment of the Japanese Kwantung Army and the creation of conditions that were conducive to the fundamental transformation of the East Asian war situation. The smoke of history will eventually dissipate, but the memory of history will never fade. The heroic contributions of People's Republic of Mongolia in World War II must be acknowledged and fully recognized in the historical dimension. In the context of the

80th anniversary of the victory in World War II, a re-examination of People's Republic of Mongolia's strategic role in the war is imperative. This re-evaluation is not merely a restoration of historical facts but also a re-assessment of the historical position of supporting attack force within the war structure. For the academic community in China, further in-depth research on this topic will not only contribute to the expansion of academic boundaries in the field of regional war history but also provide significant historical references for the positioning of China-Mongolia relations in the New Era.

Authors' Contributions

Rina Na: writing – original draft (in Chinese), conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation. **Shuo Zhang:** resources, investigation, translation.

References

Ba, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2005). *Mongolian modern war history*. Liaoning Ethnic Press. (巴音图, 张亚成. (2005). 蒙古族近代战争史. 辽宁民族出版社.)

Gao, P. (1994). Re-understanding of Zhanggufeng and Nuomenkan events. *Military History*, 2, 44–46. (高培. (1994). 对张鼓峰和诺门坎事件的再认识. 军事历史, 2, 44–46.)

Hao, S., & Du, S. (2007). *Mongolia*. Social Sciences Academic Press. (郝时远, 杜世伟. (2007). 蒙古. 社会科学文献出版社.)

He, Y. (2015). *Soviet-Japanese foreign relations 1938-1941*(Master's dissertation, Jiangxi Normal University). (何艳. (2015). 1938-1941年苏日外交关系研究. 江西师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Li, N. (2018). *The United armies of the Soviet Union and Mongolia and emancipation of Zhangjiakou*(Master's dissertation, Inner Mongolia Normal University). (李娜. (2018). 苏蒙联军与张家口解放. 内蒙古师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Li, T. (2005). The sixtieth anniversary of the victory of the anti-fascist war in the world——Preface to the second edition of The Second World War. *World History*, 5, 4–12+143. (李铁映. (2005). 纪念世界反法西斯战争胜利60周年——《第二次世界大战史》再版序言. 世界历史, 5, 4–12+143.)

Liu, J. (1991). The symbol of the fighting friendship among the people of China, the Soviet Union and Mongolia——Memorial tower of the Soviet Union martyrs. *Cultural Relics Age*, 2, 89–91. (刘建华. (1991). 中、苏、蒙三国人民战斗友谊的象征—记苏蒙联军烈士纪念塔. 文物春秋, 2, 89–91.)

Liu, Z. (1995). *Documentary of Sino-Japanese-Soviet-Mongolia battle*. Sichuan People's Press. (刘翀霄. (1995). 中日苏蒙大决战纪实. 四川人民出版社.)

Liu, Z. (2017). The position and function of the Northeast Anti-Japanese battlefield. *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, 11, 13–18. (刘志青. (2017). 东北抗日战场的地位和作用. 炎黄春秋, 11, 13–18.)

Lu, J. (1987). Reconsidering history. *Mongolia Issues Research*, 5, 56–60. (卢纪雨. (1987). 历史的反思. 蒙古问题研究, 5, 56–60.)

Lv, C. (2023). *A study of "diplomacy" between Manchukuo and foreign regimes*(Master's dissertation, Harbin Normal University). (吕常乐. (2023). 伪满与国外政权“外交”研究. 哈尔滨师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Meng, Y. (2022). On status and influences of the Normenham battle in World War II. *Journal of Western*, 1, 45–48. (孟雨萱. (2022). 诺门罕事件在“二战”中的地位和影响. 西部学刊, 1, 45–48.)

Niu, H. (1985). Introduction of Mongolia Supporting National Defense Association. *Mongolia Issues Research*, 3, 81–87. (牛海鱼. (1985). 蒙古支援国防协会简介. 蒙古问题研究, 3, 81–87.)

Pei, H., & Ren, B. (1993). Zhangbei Soviet-Mongolia allied martyrs cemetery. *Studies of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression*, 4, 219–221. (裴焕利, 任冰. (1993). 张北苏蒙联军烈士陵园. 抗日战争研究, 4, 219–221.)

Peng, C. (2009). *Political and economic relations between Russia(the S.U.) and the Outer Mongolia(1911-1945)*. (Doctor's dissertation, Jilin University). (彭传勇. (2009). 1911-1945年俄(苏)与外蒙古的政治、经济关系. 吉林大学博士学位论文.)

Political Department of Zhangjiakou Military District Hebei Province. (2005). The Soviet-Mongolian allied forces annihilated the Japanese invaders in Wolf Nest Ditch. *In The Great Wall Museum of China and the Great Wall Society of China excellent anthology*. (河北省张家口军分区政治部. (2005). 苏蒙联军狼窝沟歼日寇. 中国长城博物馆暨中国长城学会优秀文集.)

Ren, L., et al. (2018). *Red Chahar 1921-1949*. China Literature and History Press. (任亮, et al. (2018). 红色察哈尔1921-1949. 中国文史出版社.)

Tang, C. (2013). Analysis of the causes and effects of the Sino-Soviet border conflict in 1969. *Theory Research*, 9, 29–31. (唐淙. (2013). 浅析1969年中苏边界冲突的起因及影响. 学理论, 9, 29–31.)

Wang, C. (1998). A brief discussion on the words and deeds of Soviet Russia (Soviet Union) to China and Outer Mongolia from 1918 to 1945. *Journal of Shandong Open University*, 1, 29–34. (王春良. (1998). 简论1918—1945年苏俄(苏联)对中国外蒙古的言行. 山东电大学报, 1, 29–34.)

Wang, G. (2008). *The research on the USSR's policy toward Outer Mongolia during the Anti-fascist war*(Master's dissertation, Lanzhou University). (王国顺. (2008). 反法西斯战争时期苏联对外蒙古的政策研究. 兰州大学硕士学位论文.)

Wang, J. (2010). *A study of China and the world during the Anti-Fascist War Vol. 8: Wartime Soviet Union's policy towards China*. Wuhan University Press. (汪金国. (2010). 反法西斯战争时期的中国与世界研究第8卷：战时苏联对华政策. 武汉大学出版社.)

Wang, J. (2013). *Issues related to Nomonhan incident*(Master's dissertation, Northeast Normal University). (王军嘉. (2013). 诺门罕事件相关问题探讨. 东北师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Wang, Y. (2009). *The study on policy towards the middle forces between the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Kuomintang during the Anti-Japanese War period*(Doctor's dissertation, Northeast Normal University). (王玉全. (2009). 抗战时期国共两党外交政策比较研究. 东北师范大学博士学位论文.)

Wang, Y. (2024). Documentary of the visit to the battlefield of the battle of Nomonhan——An unforgettable history in Mongolian-Japanese relations. In Xi Rimo (Ed.), *Collection of research papers on Mongolia* (pp. 490–494). (王义民. (2024). 诺门罕战役战场故地参观纪实——蒙日关系中一段难以忘怀的历史. 载希日莫 (编), 蒙古国研究论文选集 (pp. 490–494).)

Wang, Y., & He, M. (2008). *The beginning and end of the Soviet Union's military deployment in Northeast China*. People's Press. (汪宇燕, 何明. (2008). 苏联出兵东北始末. 人民出版社.)

Wu, Q. (2021). *The National Government's observation and response to the conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union on the Northeast border of China*(Master's dissertation, Nanjing Normal University). (吴启睿. (2021). 国民政府对中国东北边境日苏冲突的观察与应对研究(1936-1939). 南京师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Wu, Y. (2015). *Study on the relationship between the Soviet Union and the independence of Mongolia*(Master's dissertation, Inner Mongolia University). (乌云. (2015). 苏联与蒙古国独立关系研究. 内蒙古大学硕士学位论文.)

Xinhua Current Affairs Press. (1950). *People's Republic of Mongolia*. Xinhua Bookstore. (新华时事报刊社. (1950). 蒙古人民共和国. 新华书店.)

Xu, Y. (2015). *The Soviet Union despatched troops to the Northeast China*. People's Liberation Army Press. (徐焰. (2015). 苏联出兵东北. 解放军出版社.)

Ye, S. (2005). The historical limitations of the victory of the Anti-Japanese War. *Exploration and Free Views*, 12, 4–8. (叶书宗. (2005). 抗日战争胜利的历史局限性. 探索与争鸣, 12, 4–8.)

Zhang, Q. (2020). *A probe into the causes of China-Russia (Soviet) in Outer Mongolia's independence*(Master's dissertation, Inner Mongolia Normal University). (张庆. (2020). 外蒙古独立中的中俄(苏)原因探究. 内蒙古师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Zhang, Y., et al. (2024). Standing on the border of Hulunbuir to see history. *China Exit and Entry Observation*, 4, 86–90. (张永强, et al. (2024). 站在呼伦贝尔边境看历史. 中国出入境观察, 4, 86–90.)

Zhao, L. (2019). The campaign of Nomonhan from the perspective of information war. *Military Digest*, 13, 73–75. (赵立业. (2019). 信息化战争视角下的诺门坎战役. 军事文摘, 13, 73–75.)

Zhao, Y. (2008). Red star shines wild fox ridge. *Local Accent*, 11, 47. (赵玉娥. (2008). 红星照耀野狐岭. 乡音, 11, 47.)

Zheng, Z. (2008). *The Japanese and Soviet factors in the U.S. China policy during the Anti-Japanese War*(Master's dissertation, Qufu Normal University). (郑志刚. (2008). 抗战时期美国对华政策中的日苏因素. 曲阜师范大学硕士学位论文.)

Zhou, L., & Liao, X. (1997). A war of great disparity in strength—Comment on the battle between the Soviet Red Army and the Japanese Kwantung Army. *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 4, 60–65. (周銮书, 廖信春. (1997). 一场实力悬殊的战争—评苏联红军与日本关东军之战. 江西师范大学学报(哲学社会科学版), 4, 60–65.)