

第47回 国際軍事史学会大会の概要

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2022（令和4）年度の第47回国際軍事史学会大会は、8月28日から9月2日までの6日間にわたり、ポーランド共和国ヴロツワフ市にて開催された。本大会は当初、2020（令和2）年度に「ヴィスワ川の奇跡」（ポーランド軍のソヴィエト軍に対する勝利）100周年を記念して開催される予定であったが、新型コロナウイルス感染症の感染拡大のために中止となり、本年度に内容を一部変更して開催された。合計28カ国から約120名が参加して、日本からは筆者が参加した。

本年度の共通テーマは「軍事史のなかの国境防衛：中世から現代まで（The Defense of Borders in Military History, from the Middle Ages to the Present Day）」であり、20のワーキングセッションと2つのPh.D.ワークショップにおいて、合計68の発表が行われた。開会式典では、マッシモ・レオナルディ国際軍事史学会会長、トマス・チェシエルスキ大会委員長（オポーレ大学歴史学部長兼ポーランド軍事史学会副会長）らが祝辞を述べた。また、ヴロツワフ大学のトマス・グロウインスキ准教授が「国境防衛軍：ポーランド第二共和国における東部国境での軍編成1924年～1939年」と題する基調講演を行った。

全体を通して、両世界大戦期及び冷戦期における欧州諸国の国境防衛・領土併合に関する発表や、中東・北アフリカ地域や南米諸国での国境紛争をめぐる歴史認識問題（「記憶の政治」を含む）に注目した発表などが目立ち、活発な質疑応答が見られた。また、ポーランド開催ということから、中・東欧諸国からの参加者が多く、戦間期のポーランド第二共和国（1918年～1939年）の国境防衛や、シロンスク（シレジア）の歴史に焦点を当てた発表も見られた。

本大会は、ポーランド軍事史学会の全面的支援のもとに開催され、史跡研修ではヴロツワフ市の軍事史博物館や市立博物館を見学できたほか、オシフィエンチム市のアウシュヴィッツ・ビルケナウ強制収容所跡（博物館）も見学することができた。ナチ・ドイツが設置した最大規模の「絶滅収容所」の跡地では、100万人を超えたとされるユダヤ人のホロコーストの歴史を概観することができた。

今後の開催地として、2023年度はトルコ（イスタンブール）、2024年度はポルトガル（リスボン）が予定されている。

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The Japanese Army's Border Defense against the Soviet Union and the Nomonhan Incident during the Interbellum

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【要約】

シベリア出兵後、ソ連は日本陸軍にとって最大の仮想敵国となった。関東軍は、関東州及び南満洲鉄道の防衛任務を帯びながら役割を拡大し、満洲事変後は対ソ国境防衛の中心的役割を担った。また、満洲国建国後に創設された満洲国軍は「国内の治安維持」及び「国境周辺・河川領海の警備」を任務とし、関東軍とともに国境防衛を担った。さらに、日本陸軍の参謀本部は、正規軍同士の大規模な武力衝突を避けるため、東欧・ユーラシア諸国とのインテリジェンス協力を推進し、反ソ・反共ネットワークを形成した。

しかしながら、1930年代にソ連の対日強硬姿勢が確立すると、日本とソ連、満洲国とソ連との間で満蒙権益をめぐる絶え間ない国境紛争が続いた。こうしたなか、第二次世界大戦の開戦直前に起きたノモンハン事件は、双方の動員兵力、死傷者数、国際的影響力に鑑みて、20世紀における重要な局地紛争の一つとなった。

Introduction

This paper analyzes the Japanese Army's border defense against the Soviet Union during the interbellum (interwar period), focusing on the border defense system of the Kwantung Army and the intelligence cooperation with East European and Eurasian countries. It also clarifies the historical impact of the Nomonhan Incident (Khalkhyn Gol War) between the Japanese-Manchurian Army and the Soviet-Mongolian Army, that respectively mobilized more than three divisions from May to September 1939.

Since the Japan's Siberian intervention in 1918-1922, the Soviet Union became the greatest hypothetical enemy of the Japanese Army, and in Lushun was founded the Kwantung Army in 1919. At first, the Kwantung Army was responsible for the protection of Kwantung Province and the South Manchurian Railway, and after the foundation of Manchukuo in 1932, it played a central role in the border defense against the Soviet Union. And in the Manchukuo was established the Manchukuo Imperial Army and their main missions were to "maintain the domestic security" and "guard border areas, rivers and territorial waters."

In addition, the Japanese Army General Staff formed an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist intelligence network with East European and Eurasian countries to avoid the large-scaled

skirmishes between regular forces. After the end of WWI, many Japanese military attaches were dispatched to Afghanistan, Finland, Hungary, Iran, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, and Turkey as if encircling the Soviet Union from the east and west. Their secret missions were not only to collect and analyze the military information about the Red Army, but also to promote “political turmoil” in the Far East with support from East European and Eurasian countries. In particular the Japanese Army learned an importance of military code-breaking from the Polish victory in “the Miracle on the Vistula” in 1920. It is notable that the Anti-Comintern Pact concluded in 1936 between Japan and Nazi-Germany was a military agreement based on intelligence cooperation of both countries.

However, as the Japan and the Soviet Union establishing a hardline policy each other in the 1930s, intermittent border conflicts continued between Japan and the Soviet Union as well as Manchukuo and the Soviet Union to ensure rights and interests in Manchuria and Mongolia. The international impact of the Nomonhan Incident in the Far East that happened just before the outbreak of WWII were so tremendous to bring about advanced modern military technology, development of tank-aircraft warfare, and much more casualties. In this aspect the Nomonhan Incident can be regarded as one of the most important regional conflicts in the 20th century, and the author shows why this conflict suddenly happened and widely escalated from a small-scaled armed clash at the beginning.

From these points of view, this paper addresses the Japanese Army’s border defense system against the Soviet Union during the interbellum and its dissolution because of the defeat of the Nomonhan Incident and the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. The author reveals this regional conflict in the Far East using the Japanese and Soviet military archives, and points out the historical lessons on border defense to contribute to the academic progress of international war history.

1. The Japanese Army’s Border Defense System

The Japanese-Soviet relations during the interbellum were strongly influenced by military and diplomatic history. In particular after the Manchurian (Mukden) Incident and the foundation of Manchukuo, incessant disputes continued in the border areas of the Far East. According the historical records in “*Senshi Soshō: Kanto Gun (1)* [Military History Collections on the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy during the Greater East Asian War: the Kwantung Army (1)], there were 176 skirmishes along the Manchukuo-Soviet land and river borders in 1935 (including the Battle of Khalkhyn Temple), 152 in 1936 (including the Chang-lingzi Incident), 113 in 1937

(including the Kanchazu Island Incident), 166 in 1938 (including the Changkufeng Incident, or the Battle of Lake Khasan), and 159 in 1939. It means that they broke out at a high frequency, every two or three days at average.¹

Such military clashes were reflected in the Japanese Imperial National Defense Policies revised in June 1936 in which the United States and the Soviet Union were regarded as greatest hypothetical enemies along with the Republic of China and the United Kingdom. Also, according to the Standards of National Policies determined by the four ministers conference (held among the prime, foreign affairs, army and navy ministers) in August of the same year, the military preparations to the north were “to be used to counteract military strength that could be utilized by Russia in the Far East,” and “to enhance Japan’s military strength in Korea so that it would be sufficient to deal a blow to the Soviet Union during the first stages of a war.” In other words, in order to respond to the heightened military threat of the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People’s Republic, it was determined that the basic military strategy would be the first-strike principle and short-term military operations.²

Meanwhile, the Soviet Military leaderships demonstrated an intense sense of caution toward the Manchurian Incident and the subsequent foundation of Manchukuo. On account of that, they paid great attention to the defense of the Far East in order to prepare for a military incursion by the Kwantung Army, making heavy troop reinforcements and improving the technical capacity of the Special Red Banner Far East Army, based on the Second Five-Year Plan. Also, the Red Army incrementally modernized itself through the large-scale construction of military infrastructure in the Far East.³

The operational plan of the Japanese Imperial Army in August 1932 reflected the changing military situation between Japan and the Soviet Union in Manchuria, and called for “being ready to destroy the Soviet armed forces one by one in the Primorsky Krai,” and eliminating the Soviet air bases in this area that will be a future threat. This strategic change called for “concentrating the main forces in South Manchuria under the defense of the Kwantung Army and defeating the Soviet armed forces invading Manchuria from the Siberia.”⁴ In the river border area was

¹ The Military History Division of the National Institute of Defense Studies, Defense Agency of Japan, *Senshi Soshō: Kanto Gun (1)* (Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1969), p. 310.

² Hanada Tomoyuki, “The Nomonhan Incident and the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact,” Tsutsui Kiyotada edited, *Fifteen Lectures on Showa Japan: Road to the Pacific War in Recent Historiography* (Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture), 2016, p. 178.

³ Hanada Tomoyuki, “The Soviet Far Eastern Strategy and International Order,” *2020 NIDS International Forum on War History: Proceedings* (2022), pp. 84-87.

⁴ Nakayama Takashi, *Kanto Gun* [The Kwantung Army] (Kodansha, 2000), p. 164.

founded the *Kobo Kantai* (Rivers Defense Fleet) to “guard border areas, rivers and territorial waters” in 1932, and deployed around the Songhua River and the Ussuri River.

In addition to these border defense forces, the intelligence cooperation with East European and Eurasian countries played an important role in Japanese Army’s border defense against the Soviet Union. The Special Service Agencies located in Blagoveshshensk, Harbin, Manzhouli and Suifenhe were central bases for intelligence activities against the Soviet Union,⁵ and they functioned (1) to promote political turmoil in the Far East; (2) to use subterfuge against ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union; (3) to lobby East European and Eurasian countries adjacent to the Soviet Union; (4) to destroy transportation and communications facilities, especially the Trans-Siberian Railway, and (5) to prepare for sabotage against the Soviet Union in Japan’s spheres of influence (Manchuria, Korea, and South Sakhalin).⁶

In particular the military attaches dispatched to East European and Eurasian countries contributed to collect and analyze the military information about the Red Army, and it is notable that the Japanese army officer Hyakutake Haruyoshi who studied in Warsaw to learn an importance of the military code-breaking from the Polish victory in “the Miracle on the Vistula” in 1920. He was appointed the Chief of Harbin Special Service Agency in 1931 and continued the intelligence activities to be a specialist of Soviet military intelligence. Also, the Japanese army officer Kasahara Yukio who was the military attaché in Poland investigated to write the document about the Soviet intelligence and propaganda, recognizing an importance of information warfare. In this document he pointed out that “in situations where it is difficult to control the enemy in the Far East, it is important to lead the neighboring countries of the USSR into war against the USSR by means of intrigue and propaganda, and to use the different anti-Soviet ethnic groups inside and outside the USSR to cause their internal collapse”.⁷

2. The Nomonhan Incident in 1939

It was the Battle of Khalkhyn Gol which the Kwantung Army and the Red Army faced a full-scale direct confrontation over a roughly four-month period between May and September 1939. The main cause of this conflict is considered to be the clashing perceptions between Japan and the Soviet Union about the Manchurian-Mongolian border; the Japanese-Manchurian army

⁵ Nishihara Yukio, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan* [All Records of the Harbin Special Agency] (Mainichi Shimbun Publishing, 1980), p. 38.

⁶ Tajima Nobuo, *Nihon Rikugun no Taiso Bouryaku* [The Japanese Army’s Strategy against the Soviet Union] (Yoshikawa Koubunkan, 2017), pp. 47-48.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

regarding the Khalkha River as the border and the Soviet-Mongolian army regarding a line approximately 13 km east of the river as such. As two different names suggest, both camps deployed large-scale military forces with more than two or three divisions. However, as neither the Japanese nor the Soviet governments made an official declaration of war, the conflict did not escalate into a full-out war.

Due to the influence of judgements of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (known as the Tokyo Tribunal), there has been a strong tendency until now to regard the Nomonhan Incident as a Japan's one-sided crushing defeat. This defeat has been largely recognized as the failure of the Kwantung Army's strategy to ignore the Army General Staff's non-expansionary policy and across the Manchurian-Mongolian border on the pretext of a punitive expedition to stir up and expand the conflict, during which they suffered a counterattack from the Soviet mechanized troops. For this reason, it is described as a "recurrence" of the Battle of Cannae, which was a major battle of the Second Punic War that took place in Apulia on the southeastern part of the Italian peninsula in August, 216 BC. However, the recent research revealed that many casualties were suffered on both sides. According to Grigori F. Krivosheev, a former professor at the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, the estimated number of casualties on the Russian side increased significantly to 25,655 soldiers following the declassification of historical archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁸ This greatly exceeds the number of casualties on the Japanese side, shown to be in the vicinity of about 18,000 to 20,000 soldiers according to the analysis presented by a modern Japanese historian Hata Ikuhiko.⁹

From the viewpoint of Japanese side, the central General Staff and Kwantung Army Headquarters did not have any aggressive intension to intrude the Mongolian People's Republic over the Manchurian-Mongolia border then. So as had been discussed in the Soviet era, the so-called "Prime Minister Tanaka's Memorandum" declaring the Japanese aggressive policy to occupy Manchuria and Outer Mongolia following the Korean Peninsula and mainland China, was absolutely fabricated, and also *Otsu-Ann* (Operational Planning No.8) that was drafted in the second half of 1938 to aim to invade the territory of the Soviet Union from the west, was not accomplished at the end.

After all, the Japanese official principle about military strategy was shown in the *Manso*

⁸ *Кривошеев, Г.Ф.* Россия и СССР в войнах XX века. Книга потерь. М., 2010. С. 159.

⁹ Hata Ikuhiko, *Mei to Ann no Nomonhan Senshi* [The War History of the Nomonhan in Light and Dark] (PHP Institute, 2014), p. 347.

Kokkyo Funso Shori Youko (Principle for the Settlement of Soviet-Manchurian Border Disputes, Operations Section Order No. 1488) that Ueda Kenkichi, Commander of Kwantung Army, ordered to all his corps on April 25, 1939. Its strategic principle was allegedly drafted by his (warlike) operational staff Tsuji Masanobu and implied that Kwantung Army's "basic policy was neither committing itself nor allowing others to violate the Soviet-Manchurian border," but "may commit resolute and thoroughgoing *Yocho Katsudo* (Punitive Actions) against any transgressions to prevent the aggravation over the Khalkha River" to defend the Soviet-Manchurian border. Besides, "to accomplish our missions, or trap or lure Soviet troops into Manchurian territory, it is permissible to enter Soviet territory temporarily." According to this principle, General Komatsubara Michitaro began the "punitive" military movements including the patrols for surveillance and warning in the Nomonhan area.

Against such a military backdrop, the armed clash broke out in the right bank of the Khalkhyn Gol. According to the *Senshi Soshō* (military history collections on the Imperial Japanese army and navy during the Pacific War), Mongolian cavalry "cross-borderers" were witnessed on May 11 and 12, General Komatsubara dispatched an armored unit (headed by Azuma Yaozo) that belonged to the 64th Infantry Regiment. The punitive actions were successfully accomplished, and the result was soon reported to the Chief of the General Staff in Tokyo. In *Komatsubara Shogun Diary* dated on May 15, he wrote that "as the sign of the enemy to retreat was witnessed, I ordered the Manchurian Army to be stationed in the Nomonhan area for patrolling and the troops for punitive actions to go back to Hailar city."

On the other hand, on May 20, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, made a statement to Togo Shigenori, Ambassador of Japan in Moscow, and protested that "the Japanese-Manchurian Army should immediately retreat from the Nomonhan area if those Japanese-Manchurian troops invaded the Soviet-Mongolian territory."¹⁰ In the end of this month the Soviet General Staff appointed and dispatched to the Far East General Georgy K. Zhukov, Commander of the 57th Special Army Group, as successor of Nikolai V. Feklenko to resolve the military situation "to defend the Outer Mongolian nation under by the Protocol for Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and Mongolian People's Republic," concluded on March 12, 1936.

In his memoirs, General Zhukov wrote about the "undeclared border conflict" and criticized that "realizing the attempt of military invasion over the border of Mongolian People's

¹⁰ Togo Shigenori, *Jidai no Ichimen* [An Aspect of the Times] (Hara Shobo, 1967), p.140.

Republic, the Japanese government entrusted the Kwantung Army with this mission. And to conceal the true purpose of border invading into the Mongolian People's Republic, they decided to arouse international public opinion that these (punitive actions: the author mentioned) were for the border dispute, not for the aggression of their own. In addition, they dispatched specialized small troops at the beginning of the armed clash, and gradually increased troops in number with the development of military conditions to ensure the conviction of accomplishing their object. They assumed to withdraw from the battlefield to their territory if they fall into unfavorable conditions as a result of the raids of the Soviet Red Army.”

Under the command of General Zhukov, were deployed the new tank troops, artillery forces and three infantry divisions, and were strengthened the pillbox defense positions in the Far East. He also requested the reinforcement of garrisons in both banks of the Khalkha River, so increased one tank brigade and some heavy artillery squadrons. In Tamzag Bulag were stationed the 8th Cavalry Division of the Mongolian People's Army, 7th, 8th, and 9th Mechanized Brigades and the 36th Motorized Infantry Division. And for air forces, many veteran and elite pilots led by Yakov V. Smushkevich were dispatched to the Far East with more than one hundred aircraft. They had the war experience of actual fight in the Spanish Civil War.

Then Soviet Red Army and Mongolian People's Army prepared for Kwantung Army's next “punitive actions” and military invasion, and the Nomonhan Incident advanced to the next stage.

3. The Escalation of Conflict after Bombing in Tamzag Bulag

On June 27, Kwantung Army's air forces began to bomb the Mongolian air bases in Tamzag Bulag that was located inside the territory without a declaration of war. Although these surprised raids succeed in damages of enemy's bases so much, but the central General Staff in Tokyo relentlessly criticized the dogmatism of the Kwantung Army, especially Inada Masazumi, Chief of Military Operation of General Staff, was most sharply furious. On June 29, the General Staff gave to Kwantung Army *Tairikumei* (Imperial General Headquarters Army Order) No. 320 which stated that commander of Kwantung Army was not permitted to command the defense operations by his troops in the area of disputed border, and had to strive to limit the border conflict. On the same day, Nakajima Tetsuzo, Deputy Chief of General Staff, sent to Kwantung Army *Sanden* (General Staff Telegram) No. 827 which stated that he regarded the “Operations Section Order No. 1488” as dangerous for the Japanese troops to cross over Khalkha River without permission of the General Staff. However, the battle widely escalated from a small-

scaled armed clash in the Nomonhan area, the Japanese 26th Infantry Regiment (headed by Sumi Sinichiro) crossed over to the Khalkha River.

But in contrast to these criticisms of the central General Staff, Kwantung Army's operational staff Tsuji allegedly had an idea to achieve triumphs in the Nomonhan Incident without consulting the central General Staff. It may be argued that this difference in perception and misunderstanding between the central General Staff and Kwantung Army Headquarters should attribute to the structural defects of the Japanese Army which General Staff did not absolutely restrain military actions of Kwantung Army then.

On the other hand, on July 5, Kliment Y. Voroshilov, People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, ordered that all the Siberian corps and the Far East forces should be under control of the new founded "Front Group," which consisted of the 57th Infantry Corps, the First and Second Red Banner Armies, the Trans-Baikal Military District, and the Pacific Fleet, and appointed Grigory M. Shtern as this commander.¹¹ He was Chief of General Staff in the Far Eastern Front under the Marshall Vasily K. Blyukher and fought against the Korean (Japanese) Army during the battle for Khasan in 1938. From the viewpoint of the Soviet side, Voroshilov must immediately reinforce the defense forces in the Nomonhan area against the surprised raids of Kwantung Army.

According to the Russian archives which made a light after the collapse of Soviet Union, we can find out not only in the Japanese side also in the Soviet side the difference in perception between the commanders of battlefield and the central General Staff. Here is an interesting official telegram dated on July 12 that was sent by Boris M. Shaposhnikov, Chief of General Staff of the Red Army, and Voroshilov to the local commanders Zhukov and Shtern. This telegram implied that the central General Staff of Red Army criticized the local military operations that were carried out from July 5 to 9 in both banks of the Khalkha River.

"About the battle of the Khalkhyn Gol War we (Shaposhnikov and Voroshilov: the author mentioned) recognized that the Japanese Army fought more regularly and swiftly than ours, the Japanese soldiers were very strong, and their tactics were effectively functioned.....then the Japanese Army took the military initiative in this battlefield.¹² However, despite we had warned

¹¹ Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia 1939*, (Stanford University Press, 1985) p. 489.

¹² «Телеграмма Наркома Обороны СССР и Начальник ГШ РККА Командированием Фронтальной Группы и 57-го Особого Корпуса с Разбором Ошибок в их действиях в период с 5 по 9 июля 1939 г.» // Русский Архив: Великая Отечественная. Том.18 (7-1). С. 122.

not put the main regiments of the 82nd Infantry Division into the battlefield, you carried it out. Although you (Zhukov and Shtern: the author mentioned) had agreed to our operational plans, you did not obey our commands. We understood your desire to take the military initiative from the Japanese Army by force, but only desire of counterattack against Kwantung Army (you are sometimes writing so) did not resolve any problem.”

Also, Shaposhnikov and Voroshilov criticized that “it is thoughtless and unforgivable operation to put our tanks into the last battle. Tanks are powerful arms if you use correctly, but if you put the tank squadrons and battalions against the more powerful enemy, they became the prey easily soon. However, you had repeated to put our tanks into the battlefield many times. We didn’t have the ability to combine the operations of attack with those of defense, that is, combination of many small-scaled attacks to enemy’s weakness and defense our bases.” Moreover, in another official document dated on July 14, they sharply criticized that the main regiments of the 82nd Infantry Division withdrew from the right bank of the Khalkha River without consulting with the central General Staff.¹³ Now we can understand that the central General Staff of Soviet Red Army and local commanders had different perception of the military operations, and it may be argued that the central General Staff was more furious and warlike than the local commanders in contrast to the Japanese Army.

On this moment, the Soviet military leaders redoubled precautions against Kwantung Army’s military actions. As famous, in the 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party that was held on March 1939 after the Great Purge, Stalin mentioned for the outbreak of wars against the imperialism and aggressive policy of the Nazi Germany and Japan, which were concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact. Also, the General Staff of the Soviet Red Army had the experience of military actions which mobilized some mechanized troops during the battle of Lake Khasan in 1938.

On July 19, Voroshilov ordered to reorganize the 57th Infantry Corps in the First Army Group. General Zhukov was assigned to command this army group and General Stern supervised the Front Group including the mobilization and logistics. Particularly with regard to military logistics, the great success achieved in military transportation originating from Borzya Station along the Trans-Siberian Railway, approximately 650 km from Nomonhan-Bürd-Oboo, was an

¹³ «Переговоры по Прямому Проводу Начальника ГШ РККА с Командиром 57-го Особого Корпуса по Поводу Отхода Войск с Восточного Берега р. Халхин-Гол.» // Русский Архив: Великая Отечественная. Том.18 (7-1). С. 124.

important factor that contributed to the realization of military operations during the Nomonhan Incident.

4. The Soviet-Mongolian “August Attack” and a Cease-fire Agreement

On August 1, Voroshilov ordered that Zhukov and Shtern should fully arrange the combat-readiness for all air forces, the movement of fighter troops to the military airports while camouflaging, and “all the forces of the Front Group should prepare for attacks over the Soviet-Manchurian border under the control of its headquarters.”¹⁴ And the First Army Group led by General Zhukov, steadily prepared for the large-scale attacks to Kwantung Army, and until the middle of this month about 57,000 Soviet-Mongolian soldiers were concentrated in the Far East. Their main forces were three infantry divisions, three armored brigades, two tank divisions, and machine gun brigades. The Nomonhan Incident was advanced to the final stage.

On August 20, began the Soviet-Mongolian siege operation “August Attack” at last. It was Sunday then, and was rest day for most Japanese soldiers. According to the Nomonhan Operational Reports written by General Zhukov, at first some infantry troops attacked in the Nomonhan front area at 9 a.m., and as a result of relentless battles, in the evening they succeeded to occupy the Japanese main positions in the right bank of the Khalkha River. And the Southern Forces attacked to occupy big sand hills that were located in the Nomonhan south-eastern area, the 36th and 82nd Infantry Divisions squarely fought against Kwantung Army, and the Northern Forces began to advance to the Soviet-Manchurian border. On August 21, in order to complete the siege operation, the 6th Tank Brigade newly participated in the Nomonhan Incident and the 57th Infantry Division cut off the east escaped route of the Japanese Army. On August 22, the Soviet-Mongolian Army gradually annihilated the military bases by narrowing the ring of siege. Artillery troops are firing at close range and flamethrower tanks burned the Japanese Army. In *Zhukov Memoirs* he introduced the diary of the Japanese dead soldier described that “Rain of shells fall to us. We became horrible. Bombers began to attack our troops, and fighters to sweep. The enemy won over the entire fronts.”¹⁵

Against the Soviet-Mongolian large-scaled attacks the Japanese-Manchurian Army did not effectively defense and counter. According to the *Senshi Soshō*, Kwantung Army Headquarters

¹⁴ Приказ Наркома Обороны СССР Командированию Советских Войск на Дальнем Востоке о Приведении всех войск в полную боевую готовность. // Русский Архив: Великая Отечественная. С. 125-126.

¹⁵ Жуков, Г.К. Воспоминания и Размышления. 14-е издание. М., 2010. Том.1. С. 196.

still underestimated the Soviet-Mongolian Army grounded on the traditional perception about the Russo-Soviet military power and the winning memory of Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905, and optimistically judged the upheaval of this battle situation.¹⁶ And in *General Komatsubara's Diary* dated on August 22, he wrote that the Japanese counterattack using the fire bottles (sider bottles) against the Soviet new tanks was not effective unlike the battles of July.¹⁷ It was well known that the Japanese 26th Infantry Regiment destroyed the Soviet BT tanks that were the gasoline powered vehicles.

On August 23, in Europe was signed the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and at the same day in the Far East the Soviet-Mongolian attacks continued. The 23rd Infantry Division received a devastating blow. On August 30, the Japanese General Staff gave to Kwantung Army *Tairikumei* No. 343 which stated that the Imperial General Headquarters did not permit to continue the battles in Manchuria during the Second Sino-Japanese War and kept the equanimity in the northern border of the Soviet Union. On September 1, the *Wehrmacht* (Nazi Germany forces) invaded the territory of Poland and was outbreak of the Second World War.

Although it was known that Kwantung Army Headquarters had an operational plan “September Attack” lead by the Japanese 6th Army (head by Ogisu Rippei), but in Moscow cease-fire negotiations continued between the Togo and Molotov. And the Soviet-Mongolian Army concentrated to defense in the Nomonhan area after the “August Attack.” On September 15, the Japanese-Soviet Cease-fire Agreement was signed and ended the Nomonhan Incident. After the sign of this agreement, the accommodation of corpses, the exchange of prisoners and the border demarcation were carried out.

Conclusion

My presentation addresses the Japanese Army’s border defense against the Soviet Union during the interbellum, focusing on the border defense system of the Kwantung Army and the intelligence cooperation with East European and Eurasian countries. It reveals that the Japanese Army formed anti-Soviet border defense forces and intelligence networks encircling the east and west to avoid the large-scaled skirmishes between regular forces. Also, it clarifies the historical impact of the Nomonhan Incident and the escalation of conflict and war leadership of both Japan and the Soviet Union.

¹⁶ *Senshi Soshō: Kanto Gun (1)*, p. 632.

¹⁷ “Teki no Yuuryo Sensha Gensyutu [The Appearance of the Enemy’s Excellent Tanks]”, *Komatsubara Shogun Nikki* [General Komatsubara Diary] (NDS Archives).

The author points out two historical lessons about the border defense. The first is the historical relationship between the Nomonhan Incident and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan (Soviet-Japanese War) in August 1945. In the end of the Pacific War, the Soviet Union established an international security environment based not only on the Yalta Conference's "secret agreements" with the U.S. and the U.K., but also on the dispute for rights and benefits in East Asia with the Chinese Nationalist Government. At the same time, it undertook preparations for military operations and logistics for the Strategic Offensive in Manchuria. In view of this military strategy and operations, the Nomonhan Incident can be regarded as a prelude to the Soviet Union's entry into war against Japan. The second is the Russia's characteristics as a continental nation, which has relevance to security studies not only on the Soviet Union, but also on the Russian Federation. In particular its mobilization capability based on land transportation, which harnesses the Trans-Siberian Railway from Europe to the Far East as the main artery, could be understood as the base of Russia's military strength.

Finally, the recent research revealed that the Nomonhan Incident brought about an immense number of casualties for both the Japanese-Manchurian army and the Soviet-Mongolian army, and that it had not been a one-sided crushing defeat of the Japanese-Manchurian army. However, it is very important to note that victory in war is not based on the number of casualties among officers and soldiers on both sides, but on the success in achieving the goal of the strategy. It is vital to bear this in mind when considering and understanding the Nomonhan Incident.