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The Korean War in Asia

A Hidden History

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Chapter Three

From One Divided Country to Another

The Korean War in Mongolia

Li Narangoa

The little-known role of Mongolia in the Korean War highlights long-forgotten dimensions of this conflict. Mongols on both sides of the Sino-Mongolian border participated in and made important contributions to the Korean War. Both provided assistance to North Korea. The Socialist united front in the post-World War II international order provided the common ground for this historical collaboration of Mongols, and the role of the independent Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) in the war laid the basis for an ongoing close relationship between the MPR and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea). This story also reminds us of the important role that animals, particularly horses, played in a war that was the site of one of the world's last significant military cavalry actions, and sheds light on the complex movements of animals and people across Northeast Asia precipitated by the Korean War. But confusions surrounding the role of the MPR and Inner Mongolia in the war deepened the MPR's diplomatic isolation from the rest of the world. In this sense, divided Mongolia's role in the war had consequences that affected East Asian international relations for decades.

The Mongolian People's Republic was established in 1924 as the second Socialist country after the Soviet Union. Inner Mongolia also aspired to follow the Socialist system within the larger political framework of China that established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The DPRK joined the Socialist front in 1948. The Korean War was understood as a war against the American imperialists and their associates who threatened peace and the Communist world, especially in Northeast Asia. The Soviet Union, the MPR, and the PRC built a united front to help their Socialist brothers in

the Korean Peninsula. The Soviet Union provided weapons and military equipment both to China and North Korea to help the war effort; the MPR offered food and horses, and the PRC offered soldiers to the combat. This chapter examines the contribution to the Korean War of Mongols on both sides of the China-MPR border, and explores the political challenges and legacies created by the support they gave to the war.

The political status of Mongols on the opposite sides of the border differed in terms of their international standing. The MPR had been a de facto independent country since 1921, and its full independence was officially confirmed through a national referendum in 1946. Its assistance to North Korea was provided within the framework of its own foreign policy, however much it may have been influenced by the Soviet Union. North Korean leaders had requested help from Mongolia, which had horses and other important resources for a war in the harsh winter weather of Northeast Asia. The slogan of the MPR was to help its “heroic Korean brothers” and to work for world peace. By contrast, Inner Mongolia, which was unable to obtain independence, became one of the five autonomous regions of China in 1949 and did not have its own foreign policy. Mongols here participated in the war within the framework of China’s policy of *kangmei yuanchao baojia weiguo* (Resist America, aid [North] Korea, protect our home, and safeguard the nation). This phrase, and the way it was propagated, were intimately linked to the interests of the Chinese nation. Apart from the political fear that the Americans might really invade China, there was also a need to unify the still divided peoples of the newly founded PRC. Solidarity against an external threat would help to achieve this national unity. Inner Mongols who had been incorporated into the new Chinese nation merely half a year before the outbreak of the Korean War were no exception.

The forms of the assistance provided by the MPR and Inner Mongolia to North Korea also took different forms. While Mongolians north of the border supported the war solely by providing food and animals, Inner Mongols not only made donations, but also participated in combat as part of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (CPVA). Not only individual Mongols in Chinese army units but also Mongol cavalry units were sent to the front, resulting in detrimental losses. These differences in political status and in forms of support for the war, coupled with their common culture and language, led to ongoing international confusion about the Mongolian presence in the war.

THE MPR’S AID TO THE “HEROIC KOREAN BROTHERS”: THE LONG MARCH OF THE ANIMALS

Both the MPR and the DPRK are states that were born as a result of collapse of empires in East Asia: first the Chinese, then the Japanese empire. They

shared the experience of rising from a history of colonization with the support of the Soviet Union. Soon after World War II, the MPR and the DPRK entered into diplomatic negotiations, recognizing each other's independent and Socialist status and establishing official diplomatic relations from 1948. Following the outbreak of the Korean War, the MPR established a diplomatic office in the DPRK, and an ambassador was sent to Pyongyang in August 1950.¹ The exchange of diplomatic offices greatly helped communication between the two countries and thus efficiently channeled the MPR's assistance to the DPRK during the Korean War.

Mongolian assistance to the DPRK's war effort was mostly humanitarian in nature. As a pastoralist society, Mongolia was best placed to provide livestock and animal products. The Mongolian government sent one hundred thousand head of livestock to the Korean Peninsula between 1951 and 1955,² and if we consider the huge amount of animal products that were sent to North Korea, the number of the livestock used for the aid to Korea is much greater. The Mongolian government, for example, agreed to send fifty thousand sheep, twenty thousand goats, and five hundred cows in 1953. Initially the North Korean government wanted to receive these animals live, but it later decided to take them as meat and skin, and requested the Mongolian government to process the skin as well.³ This was possibly to meet the immediate needs for food and leather and also due to lack of industrial capacity to process the skin quickly.

The story of the mass overland transfer of horses and other livestock from Mongolia to Korea highlights the neglected part that living animals played in warfare, even in the 1950s. Although (as we shall see) mounted cavalry charges were by now powerless in the face of modern weaponry, horses played a vital role in the transport of equipment, and other livestock were essential as sources of food and clothing for troops who were constantly on the move. The tasks of animal transfer not only contributed to diplomatic relations between Mongolia (the donor), North Korea (the recipient), and China (the transit facilitator), but also increased the people-to-people interaction between these countries.

Horses were the most valued gifts in Mongolian culture, and the Mongolian government provided nearly thirty thousand head of horses to North Korea during the war. These were used for transport as well as for battles. The first group of horses had been sent in early 1951 at the request of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung himself for the Korean People's Army. Kim wanted to have seven thousand horses and the Mongolian government agreed. The selection of horses was a serious matter. The horses were to be used for military purposes and so they needed to be healthy, and to be between four and ten years old, tamed, and trained. Most of these horses were to be bought from herdsmen, or from districts and military units from Choibalsan Province (today's Dornod aimag) which was located close to the

Chinese railway station where the horses would be transported by train further to the Korean front. Knowing that it would be an enormous challenge for herdsmen to provide their best horses, even in exchange for payment, the government set up a committee consisting of ministers and top-ranking government officials to be in charge of choosing and collecting horses. This included Deputy Prime Minister Lamjav (head of the committee), the minister for defense, the deputy minister for internal affairs, and the deputy chairman of the Central Committee of Cooperative and high-ranking officials from Choibalsan Province,⁴ which provided all the horses. The money to buy the horses was provided by the government through the donations from individuals and institutions.⁵ It seems that there was political and customary pressure for the Mongolian government to offer the best horses to its allies to show the wealth of the new nation.

The committee's responsibility included taking measures to explain the political importance of sending horses to the Korean People's Army, purchasing horses, and checking their quality. It also gave local authorities the right to take "necessary measures in order to complete the task" by the due date of February 28, 1951.⁶ But it seems that the people received no real explanation of what their horses were to be used for. The official explanation was rather vague and stated that the horses were for "special national needs" (*ulsin onchgoi keregcheend*) and thus people should support the nation by selling or donating their best horses. Some herders, however, were not willing to sell their horses without knowing the real purpose, and demanded a clear explanation.⁷ The reason for the officials' vague explanation may partly have been that if the herders had known that their best horses were to be taken to the war front, they might not have been willing to sell them, and it may also have reflected concerns that the international community might have criticized Mongolia for helping the DPRK with military horses. Even when the newspapers began to promote donations to assist the DPRK in the Korean War against imperialists and reported news about the war in detail, describing donations and pledges made by individuals, groups, and institutions, they were resoundingly quiet about donations and deliveries of horses to the war front.

The delivery of horses and other livestock was a much more complicated, labor-intensive, and costly undertaking than other aid. The transport and delivery process of the first group of horses in 1951 illustrates the complexities involved in livestock delivery. These horses were collected from many districts and bought in different collecting stations in Choibalsan Province, and then they were gathered at Avdarkharaat som (district), 205 km to the east of the provincial center and close to the Chinese border station of Manzhouli. At the collection stations to Avdarkharaat, the horses were divided into groups, each with three hundred horses that were looked after by six soldiers and experienced herders. They moved 20–30 km per day at a slow

pace so that the horses were not too tired and maintained their condition and strength. In order to reach Avdarkharaat, a distance of ten kilometers was kept between each group and a lookout kept for good grassland along the way to feed the animals. Between February 22 and 25, however, there was a snowstorm for three days and three nights. One hundred and two herders guarded the horses in the snow, day and night; their clothes were soaked and almost all of them suffered from frostbite.⁸

From Avdarkharaat the horses were delivered to Manchuria by one hundred selected soldiers and civilians (including thirty-six herders). The horse-men were paid 20 *tögrög* per day if they had their own horses to ride and 10 *tögrög* if they were riding government horses. They arrived in Manchuria around March 12–13. The Mongolian government paid special attention to the appearance and behavior of the people accompanying the animals across the border. These herders and soldiers were given detailed instructions on how to behave and how to dress when they went beyond their own border. In addition, a seminar for political understanding on the importance of aiding the DPRK was held for them before they crossed the border.⁹

Seventy-seven soldiers and herders from the DPRK came to Manzhouli to receive the horses. A total of 7,378 horses plus nine thousand bridles and one thousand hobbles¹⁰ were delivered to Andong, on the border between China and Korea. The journey from Manzhouli to Andong took forty-eight hours by train.¹¹ The quality of the Mongolian horses and the skills of the Mongolian herders were admired by both Korean and Chinese officials. Even at the front during the war, the Korean soldiers had been impressed by the reliability and quality of Mongolian horses. Officers of certain divisions of the Korean army wrote to the Mongolian people to show their appreciation for sending horses:

The horses sent by the Mongolian people have been contributing to the war against the American invaders. With these horses we have been successfully accomplishing our duties in the war. Just to mention a couple of examples: during an attack by the American air strike, we lost all of our horses. But after the strike when the airplanes disappeared, our horses returned to us by themselves. Although the horses cannot talk, they are our close friends. . . . One early morning we were woken up by the sound of a horse neighing that warned us that our enemies were in their sight. Remembering the fierce battles that we had fought along with our hardworking horses, we would like to express our thanks again for the warm hearted assistance of the Mongolian people. . . . We promise to destroy all the invaders.¹²

The Mongolian government sent more than twenty thousand more horses between 1952 and 1953 to Korea.¹³ The last major collection of horses for aid started in June 1953, but by the time the horses were delivered in August the war had ended and, as a result, these horses were sent to the celebration of the liberation of the North Korean people.¹⁴ While the first collection had

been transported during the winter and the horsemen faced snowstorms and suffered from frostbite, this time they faced thunderstorms and rain for several days and several hundred horses strayed across the Chinese and Russian borders during a storm. Some horses were found and returned, but altogether 145 remained missing and the horsemen had to take responsibility for them. Moreover, due to the prolonged wet weather, many horses were infected by foot rot and 906 horses were weakened by the disease while they were waiting for the train transport in Manzhouli and were returned to Mongolia. Those that could not walk back to Mongolia were put down or given to herders for consumption. But still 17,438 horses, more than the originally planned number of 16,000, were handed over to the Koreans, and the Koreans were happy to see “many young healthy horses amongst . . . and a large number of horses that can be used for breeding.”¹⁵

Mongolia provided horses not only to the Korean People’s Army but also to the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (CPVA). At least five thousand horses from the MPR were sold to China, and one of the Inner Mongolian cavalry units was responsible for collecting these horses and training them for the battle purposes on the Korean front in 1951.¹⁶

While horses were useful for military purposes and transport, other livestock such as sheep, goats, and cows were more important food sources¹⁷ and production sources to build a sustainable economy. Therefore, the Mongolians paid attention to the gender balance of herds that they sent to Korea. Throughout their history, Mongol warriors always took their herds along as a sustainable food source. They paid attention to the sex balance and strength of the herds in order to provide optimal food supplies and reproduction. Based on this historical and indigenous knowledge, the Mongolian government gave explicit instructions about the male-female ratio of the livestock to be sent to the DPRK to provide this kind of sustainability. Sheep and goat herds to be sent were to consist of 30 percent male and 70 percent female and young animals, as well as one sire for every twenty to twenty-five female animals. For horses, 70 percent should be working horses, 10 percent mares, and 20 percent foals, with one stallion for every ten mares.¹⁸ Clearly, the horses were needed mainly for transport and military operations, whereas sheep and goats were more for long-term food production.¹⁹

The livestock aid continued well after the war. The North Koreans were thankful for the livestock and assistance that they received. The need for livestock—especially for sheep and goats—increased, while the need for horses dropped. In 1954–1955 the Mongolian government pledged to provide twelve thousand horses to the DPRK, but the North Korean government requested thirty thousand goats and sheep instead of horses to improve the livelihood and economic base of the farmers. More than thirty thousand sheep were delivered in 1955 as requested.²⁰ In 1955, Shandurseren, an official of the Mongolian embassy, made a study tour around North Korea to

see how Koreans were utilizing the Mongolian aid. It was reported that whenever he went, he was warmly welcomed and shown how many livestock local people had received and how well the animals had been cared for.²¹

These gifts or aid were all backed by energetic fund-raising campaigns. The Mongolian newspaper, *Unen Sonin*, became the major source for publishing information on campaigns as well as reports of donation and pledges that individuals, groups, and organizations had made. Articles and pledges were related to nationwide campaigns to donate to the Korean people who were fighting for their liberation and for world peace. The newspaper reports would intensify before each aid shipment was sent to the DPRK. For example, for the gifts that were brought to Korea for the occasion of the May 1 celebration in 1952, the newspaper published a report at least every other day during the month of April on pledges of money and livestock that had been made by citizens in support of the aid shipment. At the beginning of each campaign, the government or the Central Committee of Fund for the Korean People would put a huge announcement about helping North Koreans on the front page of the newspaper, and at the end of each campaign there would be a news article dedicated to reporting how much was delivered and how thankful the heroic North Korean public was to the Mongolian people. The fund-raising campaigns often involved large-scale gatherings at certain institutions, followed by donation and pledges by individuals or groups to offer part of their salaries as donations to assist the Korean War. The salary sacrifice ranged from five days to two months of the donor's wages.²² The total cost of the donation to the DPRK reached more than 200 million *tögrög* by 1955.²³ This is an impressive sum considering that the country's average annual revenue between 1950 and 1955 was just about 400 million *tögrög*.²⁴

MANZHOU LI AS THE TRANSIT STATION AND A NODE OF THE SOCIALIST FRONT

All the animals and aid goods from Mongolia transited at Manzhouli, the Inner Mongolian town located at the trans-Siberian railway line near the triangular juncture between China, the Soviet Union, and Mongolia. As we saw in chapter 2, all goods and livestock from the MPR and weapons, airplanes, and other military equipment from the Soviet Union, as well as assistance from other Eastern European countries, went through Manzhouli by train to be transported to the Korean Peninsula.²⁵ Manzhouli also became a key node in the relationship between Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and the Korean War. While chapter 2 focuses on the transformation of social life in Manzhouli during the Korean War, here I consider the role of Manzhouli as a place of wartime multinational interaction.

Manzhouli had been the most important trade point between China and the Soviet Union ever since the Russian Revolution. All the heavy military weapons and airplanes that were imported from the Soviet Union went through Manzhouli Station, while the grain and agricultural products that the Chinese government sent to the Soviet Union in exchange for military equipment were also transshipped there. The Korean War dramatically increased the flow of transport and imposed a huge burden on the small country station that had neither the modern equipment to handle all the goods and supplies flowing through nor the manpower to do it efficiently. As a result, there was stagnation and delay in transport, affecting the war supplies to the Korean front. The Soviet Union complained and the Chinese central government intervened, placing the railway station under military administration of the Northeast military, who had the command role in the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. The idea was that military goods should take priority over everything else. The slogan was "military first, trade next."²⁶ This was not enough, however, and soon the entire town administration was put under military control, in order effectively to manage the human, technical resources and to put war needs ahead of everything else. This little Inner Mongolian country town was now directly managed by the Chinese central government via the Northeast government and the Northeast Army command, and remained so until April 1953, shortly before the end of the Korean War.²⁷

The Korean War turned Manzhouli into a hot spot for meetings and communications between the Socialist countries, especially between Chinese, Mongolians, Soviets, and North Koreans. In general, the goods from Mongolia and Russia were handed over to the DPRK here. Although the aid handovers appeared to be only a transaction between the aid givers and receivers (the DPRK, this case), they were in fact also occasions for multilateral diplomatic interactions. The diplomatic envoys who brought the aid to Manzhouli from each of the donor countries would generally be welcomed not only by the Korean representatives but also by representatives of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Soviet representatives. Often the town's mayor would throw a reception or dinner for these foreign delegates. The people of the town were mobilized to provide accommodation, food, and monetary assistance to Koreans who came to or were passing through Manzhouli. About seven hundred DPRK soldiers and officials were deployed to Manzhouli during the war to manage the transport of goods and livestock to the Korean Peninsula. The leaders stayed in a hotel, but their subordinates stayed in school classrooms and offices. Blankets, sheets, and crockery were provided by local families.²⁸ Considering that people did not have much to spare, this involved a major local mobilization of resources.

As a town located in the steppes of Inner Mongolia, Manzhouli was especially suited for animal transit because it had the advantage of being able

to pasture large herds of livestock in its vicinity, and local Inner Mongols helped to provide pasture and hay as well as assisting in loading livestock onto trains. Inner Mongols also acted as interpreters between Mongolian and Chinese. As mentioned above, in general, Mongolian officials and herders would bring their livestock and other aid to Manzhouli Station to be handed over to DPRK officials for transport to the Korean Peninsula. Often, a number of the Mongolian herders would accompany them to the border. Some members of the Inner Mongolian cavalry were involved in protecting the train during its journey from Manzhouli to the North Korean border.

The transit of a huge number of animals not only strengthened the interaction between Mongols from both sides of the border, but also made the overloaded little border station town even more buzzing with activity and increased the demands for infrastructure. The handover of the livestock to the Koreans at Manzhouli Station normally took a few days because of the time needed to examine the livestock for disease and then load them onto trains. Loading livestock turned out to be a very time-consuming endeavor because no one had any prior experience of this task. Horses, for example, were all handled by expert Mongolian horsemen who would individually load the horses and tie them to the wagons. Eight to twelve horses were loaded into each wagon, and there were about thirty-seven wagons in each delivery. Since train transport was limited to three hundred to eight hundred horses per day and there was no pasture to feed the horses around the town of Manzhouli, the horses were gathered around Zuun Ukhert Lake in the local Inner Mongolian pasture lands, which was about 70 km from Manzhouli. Each day a certain number of horses were delivered to Manzhouli for further train transport. For the first round of horse handovers in 1951, seventy-seven Korean soldiers and herders came to Manzhouli to collect the horses from Manzhouli.²⁹ The Mongolian delegates who handled the handover of the livestock sometimes also provided food to the DPRK soldiers and civilians who came to Manzhouli to pick up the horses or livestock.³⁰

In this international transit station, local people came up with creative ways to meet the needs of livestock and human transit. For horse transport, the train wagons were not covered, but high fencing was quickly rigged up around each wagon to ensure the safety of the horses during transport. The improvised responses to unexpected demands are illustrated by the story of a high-ranking official and his followers from Mongolia who made the journey to deliver thirty train wagons of food and cloth aid to North Korea to celebrate Labor Day (May 1) 1952. They traveled via Russia, arriving in Manzhouli on April 22, and stayed there overnight while the goods were transhipped from Russian to Chinese trains. In Manzhouli they also met with Korean representatives and Chinese representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The chief Mongolian official asked for a sleeping wagon to be attached to the train transporting the goods, but Manzhouli Station did not

have a sleeping wagon, and so a normal passenger wagon was exclusively reserved for him and his delegation, and the seats were put together to make a bed; the representative of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought some bedding and prepared candles for him because the wagon did not have an electric light or heating system. Two people from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs accompanied the Mongolians in the train.³¹

The North Korean government asked the MPR to cover the transportation expenses when delivering horses and other aid. The Mongolian government agreed, and so all the expenses within the Mongolian border as well as the transport from Manzhouli to the Korean border were paid by the Mongolian government until well after the end of the war.³² The Chinese railway company would send the bills to the Mongolian embassy in Beijing to pay the transport. Between October and December 1952, for example, Mongolia sent livestock, horses, and meat three times, and the total transport fees through China were 3,958,187,501 yuan (around 152,000 U.S. dollars).³³ The Chinese railway company not only charged the actual transport costs but also requested the Mongolians to do such things as building fences on the train to extend the height of the wagons to ensure the safety of the horses.³⁴

Manzhouli served not only as a transit place for livestock and aid from other countries to the Korean Peninsula, but also as the gateway for Koreans to go to Mongolia, the Soviet Union, and other Eastern European countries. Many young Korean War orphans went to these countries via Manzhouli. In 1952, the MPR received 197 Korean orphans via Manzhouli.³⁵ Mongolia cared for these children until they were returned to Korea in 1958.³⁶ While some Korean orphans remained in the MPR, in the first half of 1953 alone, 1,922 children also passed through Manzhouli on their way to Eastern Europe. Often the train connection was late and these children had to stay overnight in Manzhouli. Since the Korean government did not have money to pay for accommodation and food, the citizens of Manzhouli would provide accommodation for the children free of charge. On July 1, 1953, a group of 714 children who were traveling to Czechoslovakia had to wait for the train for several hours at the station, and the local representative of foreign relations offered them food and provided shoes for those children who did not have them.³⁷

Because the town was the main transport point for war assistance and equipment, its security became an issue of national importance, and the removal of suspected spies and counterrevolutionaries was high on the political agenda. In October 1951, the military government of Manzhouli decided to move foreigners from the town.³⁸ At the end of World War II there were about three thousand Russians living in Manzhouli. Most of them came to Manzhouli to escape from the Russian Revolution of 1917, and thus had been living there for more than thirty years, and were working in all sections of industry and business. They were moved to an agricultural area in the interior

of Inner Mongolia and to other remote places. With the help of local people, within seventy days, 290 rooms were erected in Hingan League,³⁹ Inner Mongolia, and by August 1952, about six hundred Russians were moved there. However, there was not enough arable land there to produce food for several hundred extra people, and the Mongolian steppe did not provide wood for heating. One year later, the Inner Mongolian government conducted a field study, confirmed the unsuitability of the area for the new settlement, and allowed these new settlers to move away and find other places to live. The local government helped to organize their “repatriation” by buying their goods, properties, and livestock, and provided some travel assistance to a small number of people to promote the departure of the Russians. By 1954, a total of 5,714 households comprising 24,805 Russian settlers (including 1,413 Russians from Manzhouli) had passed through the frontier post at Manzhouli to return to the Soviet Union.⁴⁰

After the war, in August 1953, the Korean officers in Manzhouli returned to North Korea. The North Korean government sent a high-ranking government official to thank the people of Manzhouli and the Inner Mongolian government for their help. Sulin, the mayor of Manzhouli, was awarded the Third Rank National Flag silver medal and a silk banner was given to Manzhouli Station by the North Korean government.⁴¹

INNER MONGOLIA'S AID TO THE KOREAN WAR

If the Korean War offered a platform for a unified Socialist front against American imperialism and strengthened the MPR's status as an independent nation, it was also an important catalyst for Inner Mongolia to be molded into the new Chinese state. Inner Mongols not only supported the MPR in its aid to the Koreans in the DPRK by assisting the livestock transit through the region, but also provided their own financial aid by making huge donations of livestock, money, and food to sustain the Chinese People's Volunteer Army on the Korean front. Soldiers and cavalry divisions were also sent as part of the Chinese Volunteer Army. As in the MPR, so also in China many donation collection stations were set up at the local level. These stations were all run by the Resist America, Aid Korea Committee. An Inner Mongolian branch of the Resist America, Aid Korea Committee was set up in 1950, followed by league, banner (county) level and even village-level branch committees to mobilize people to donate money, grains, cloth, livestock, and other goods. By early 1952, Shilingol League alone, which had a total population of fifty thousand people, had donated 4,274 head of livestock, 13,352 kg of dried meat, and other food and goods that had a total value of nearly 300 million Chinese yuan.⁴²

The newly founded PRC had not yet recovered from its war against Japan or the civil war against the Nationalists, and thus relied on donations to support the war front. The PRC had to ask for loans from the Soviet Union to rehabilitate its economy and military industry, but due to the Korean War, these loans were mainly used to pay for the weapons and military equipment that the Russians provided. Between 1950 and 1955, the Soviets provided a total of 66,163 billion rubles of low-interest loans to China, but 95 percent of these were used for the Korean War.⁴³ China's military expenditure made up 38.19 percent and 45.64 percent of the national budget in 1950 and 1951, respectively.⁴⁴ Even this was not enough to supply its military adequately. The PRC was so short of military equipment that some airplanes and weapons were paid for by money donated from the public.⁴⁵ A huge campaign to donate airplanes and cannons (*juanxian feiji dapao*) was conducted. In Inner Mongolia, each banner, county, town, or city was encouraged to collect money that would be used to buy one or more aircraft or cannon. On June 7, 1951, the PRC Resist America, Aid Korea General Committee issued outlines on how to make donations for weapons to support the Chinese People's Volunteer Army: donating 15 billion yuan would be the value of one fighter aircraft; 50 billion yuan would be equivalent to one bomber aircraft; 25 billion yuan would equate to one tank; 9 billion yuan would equal one artillery weapon, and 8 billion yuan, one antiaircraft gun. The Inner Mongolian Committee aimed to collect money for twelve fighter aircraft, but in the end the people of Inner Mongolia donated over 462 billion yuan to buy thirty-one fighter aircraft, well beyond the original plan.⁴⁶

The donation campaign's success was probably thanks to the land reform that was still in full force in Inner Mongolia, as well as to the vigorous patriotic campaign. During the land reform, the property and livestock of well-off farmers and herders were confiscated and distributed to those who did not possess any land, or who submitted to the common purpose. This meant that those who received land and livestock were happy to share, and those who had some extra were compelled to contribute as part of the reform. The aid collection campaign was also accompanied by vigorous propaganda. The slogan *kangmei yuanchao baojia weiguo* (Resist America, aid Korea, safeguard home, serve the nation) was very effective, as it spoke directly to people's hearts about the fear of being invaded by yet another imperialist country. While the MPR goods and livestock were sent directly to help the Korean people and the Korean People's Army, most of the Chinese donations (including those from Inner Mongolia) were designed to assist the Chinese People's Volunteer Army, which was fighting in support of North Korea and to defend their own country at the same time. Inner Mongolia was one of the regions close to the Korean border. Women were mobilized to make shoes for the soldiers and schoolchildren received school bags adorned

with the Chinese characters for *kangmei yuanchao baojia weiguo*, and learned to sing war songs.⁴⁷

The new Chinese government was presented as the liberator from the Japanese imperialists and now the protector from the American imperialists. Newspaper and other reports often cited statements said to be made by ordinary people, such as “The Chinese Communist Party liberated us and gave us new life and now it is time for us to pay them back,”⁴⁸ and there were always reports of the shedding of tears to show the emotional attachment of the people to their nation. Many reports described how herders donated their sheep or horses to help the “most lovable people” (*zui ke ai de ren*), that is, the soldiers of the People’s Volunteer Army.⁴⁹ So, in this sense the Korean War was presented in China, not a war of Koreans against Koreans and Americans, but rather a war intimately linked to their own family and national safety. According to this line of reasoning, it could be described as a Chinese war against American imperialists on Korean soil.

Inner Mongolia not only delivered many horses and other livestock to the Chinese Volunteer Army, but also sent Mongol cavalry as part of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army. The Inner Mongolian cavalry contributed to the Korean War in many different ways. Some regiments were responsible for the safe transport of goods and weapons from the border stations to the Korean Peninsula; some regiments helped in the General Logistics Department of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army, or were responsible for training military horses both for the Chinese Volunteer Army and the Korean People’s Army on the front line, and other regiments were sent to the Korean front.⁵⁰

The Inner Mongolian cavalry was created on the basis of the cavalry armies of the Manchukuo Mongol army and the army of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government (which had attempted to create an autonomous Mongol government west of Manchukuo with the support of Japan in the late 1930s). By the time Inner Mongolia joined the PRC in 1949, the Inner Mongolian cavalry had grown to five divisions (with about 9,500 men in each division) of the Chinese Liberation Army. One cavalry regiment was sent to the Korean war front in 1950, but horses and riders had little hope of survival against air raids and modern machine guns, and putting them on the front line resulted in great losses. As a result, they were later shifted to help with the transport and supply of munitions. Some eighty members of the Inner Mongolian cavalry were engaged in training and taming the horses that were sent by the MPR for the Korean People’s Army. Two regiments (Sixteenth and Thirty-Second) of six thousand men were dismounted and trained as infantry and one regiment (Thirty-First regiment) of three thousand men was trained in artillery techniques for the Korean war front.⁵¹

Joining the infantry was challenging for those who were accustomed to fight on horseback, but it was even more challenging for those units who had

to join the artillery regiment. This artillery regiment, which was renamed the 210th Artillery Regiment, was divided into two weapons battalions (with about 850 men each), one command battalion, one rocket battalion, and one transport battalion. The officers of the cavalry had a very short period of training in the new military technology, learning how to use the new Chinese-made 506 rocket cannon. The officers in turn trained their soldiers within a short period of time before deployment to the war front. They were dispatched to the front in October 1951, during the most intense fighting of the Korean War. They were not horseless. They could ride their horses, but they no longer had swords and light guns, and their horses were used to pull the big machine guns that the riders would use against the enemy airplanes. By the time they reached the front they had been attacked from the air and many soldiers and horses had been lost. They participated in battles between December 1952 and the end of the war in July 1953, especially to secure two tactically important hills: Hill 281.2 and Hill 394.8.⁵² During the heat of battle, the officers did not have time to use Chinese code words; instead they just used Mongolian to communicate with each other, confident that this would not be understood by the enemy.⁵³ They thus contravened the Chinese military code, but then some of them probably could not speak much Chinese anyway. Inner Mongols contributed both material and military aid to the Korean War to defend their “home” in a new China, but since their contribution was as part of the new Chinese state’s endeavor, their stories and identities were not visible in general history.

LEGACIES OF THE WAR: WHO IS WHO?

Both the MPR and Inner Mongolia provided large amounts of financial donations to the DPRK in food, livestock, and many other forms. While the MPR took pride in just offering humanitarian help and not participating in combat, the Inner Mongols were proud of taking part in the fighting and contributing to the “success” of the war as well, and thus to the security of the new state of which they were part. Those who survived and came back without being captured were hailed as national heroes and rewarded with medals and titles. They believed that they had done their best to protect the new state and their own people. Mongols both in the MPR and Inner Mongolia were encouraged to feel that they were strengthening their Communist brotherhood. But there was an unexpected outcome.

The MPR was accused in certain international circles of having participated in combat during the Korean War, and this became an important obstacle to the MPR becoming a member of the United Nations. Mongolia was one of the first countries to apply for membership of the United Nations in 1946, but it was not until 1961 that its application was accepted.

The accusation apparently came from pro-Nationalist Chinese prisoners of war who had been incorporated into the Chinese People's Volunteers, many of whom decided to go to Taiwan instead of returning to the Chinese mainland at the end of the war (for further information, see chapters 4, 6, and 7). Some of these Chinese POWs made statements about the Mongolian soldiers' involvement in the Korean front along the following lines:⁵⁴

1. A large number of "MiG" Soviet-made airplanes, fighting against the U.S. Air Force, had been flown by Mongolian pilots.
2. The Mongolian army had conducted air combat across the Yalu River.
3. Mongolian cavalry, tank brigades, and infantry units had participated in the Korean War on the Communist side.

These claims were used by Tsiang Tingfu, the Republic of China (ROC) representative, at the United Nations' Security Council's 703rd meeting (held on December 13, 1955) to reject Mongolia's submission to become a United Nations member. He questioned Mongolia's peace-loving nature. To depict Mongolia as an aggressor, he brought up the Pei-ta-shan Incident (or Battle of Baitag Bogd Mountain) in 1947⁵⁵ and claimed that Mongolia also participated in the Korean War against the United Nations:

We all know, too, that Outer Mongolia participated with the Chinese Communists and the Korean Communists in the war in Korea against the United Nations. Mongolian cavalry, Mongolian tank corps, Mongolian pilots fought against the United Nations in Korea. There are in Formosa 5,000 ex-prisoners of war who saw the Mongolians in action, who saw the Mongolians fighting side by side with North Koreans and Chinese Communists against the United Nations. I offer to welcome a commission of the Security Council in my country for the purpose of questioning these 5,000 witnesses. I offer, as an alternative, to bring here as many witnesses as members may desire to question and examine. The fact that Outer Mongolia has committed aggression against the United Nations is indisputable.⁵⁶

It is unknown if the United Nations sent any commission to Taiwan to interview these ex-prisoners of war, or if any ex-prisoners of war were brought to the meetings of the United Nations to verify Tsiang's statement. The intervention cited above was made at a very important moment in debates about Mongolia's possible admission to the UN. The UN General Assembly recommended considering the resolution of its 552nd plenary meeting on December 8, which proposed that eighteen states including Mongolia should be admitted as members. But the Republic of China used its veto for the first and the last time to vote against Mongolia's admission.⁵⁷ Tsiang's statement and his lobbying influenced other states' views on Mongolia as well. For example, at the 790th meeting of the Security Council, which

was held on September 9, 1957, the Cuban representative on the Security Council, who happened to be also the president of the council, made reference to Mongolia's being an aggressor state during the Korean War and said: "It has been abundantly proved that a large number of men from Mongolia took part in the aggression against Korea which the United Nations repeatedly condemned."⁵⁸

How did these claims come about? If we accept the Mongolian documents that show that the MPR was not involved in military action in the war, then the Chinese Nationalist soldiers must have been either misinformed or confused. How can we interpret their statements that MiG aircraft were flown by Mongolian pilots during the war and that the Mongolian army had been engaged in air combat across the Yalu River? Were these the product of a political stratagem?

The identity of the pilots during the Korean War was a sensitive and confusing issue. The Soviet Union did not want the world to know that its pilots were directly involved in air combat. Soviet pilots were restricted to flying within Communist territories to avoid being caught by their enemy. The pilots were even asked to use Korean or Chinese during air battles to avoid revealing their real identity, but it turned out to be very difficult for them to use a foreign language in the heat of intense air battles, and so they ignored the instruction. Apart from the Soviet pilots, many Chinese and North Korean pilots also flew the Soviet MiG-15s, which were made in the Soviet Union, to China and North Korea. China imported many Soviet airplanes. With Soviet help, the Chinese air force grew from nothing to a well-equipped force with one thousand combat planes within a year between 1950 and 1951.⁵⁹ As mentioned above, the entire nation was mobilized to collect money for buying airplanes and cannons. Three air bases in Manchuria—Andong, Tungfeng, and Miaogou—were shared with the Soviet air force, which was providing support in the Korean War. The Soviets withdrew this assistance from 1952, and thereafter most of the pilots participating in the war on the North Korean side were Chinese or Korean. These pilots were inexperienced and were given training in bases near the frontier.⁶⁰

Why then the insistence on Mongolian pilots? Was there any evidence that the pilots were speaking Mongolian? Or were they identified as "Mongolian" on the basis of their facial features? With the aircraft headgear on, it would have been hard to distinguish the nationality of the pilots, and particularly hard to distinguish between East Asian nationalities such as Chinese, Korean, Central Asian, or Mongolian. In the absence of other supporting materials, it seems likely that some observers assumed that Asian-looking pilots at the controls of Soviet planes were Mongolian, based on the view that Mongolia was a client state of the Soviet Union.

The other statement was that "Mongolian cavalry, tank brigades, and infantry units had participated in the Korean War with communist sol-

diers.”⁶¹ This is an interesting possibility but unlikely to be true, because there is no record of the MPR sending Mongolian cavalry to war, and such cavalry would have had to travel through China to the Korean Peninsula. This statement, however, had probably a firmer basis than the statement about Mongolian pilots. The theory that Mongolia had participated in combat most likely came from the confusion between Mongolians from the MPR and Inner Mongolia. As we have seen, the Inner Mongolian cavalry participated in the fighting. In the heat of battle, the officers did not have time to use code words, instead just using Mongolian to communicate with each other. Those who did not understand Mongolian and did not know about their background might well have assumed that they were soldiers from the MPR. It is likely that this was how the rumor arose that the MPR cavalry and infantry also participated in the front line combat.

Another factor would have been the self-identification of the Mongol soldiers from Inner Mongolia. In general, the term “Inner Mongolia” as a geographical and political term existed long before the Korean War, but Mongols in Inner Mongolia seldom referred to themselves as Inner Mongols, but just as Mongols, *Monggol hun* (in Mongolian) or *Menggu ren* (in Chinese) in the early twentieth century. These terms are identical to how the Mongolians north of the border identified themselves and how the Chinese referred to them. Moreover, most of the cavalry units that were sent to the Korean War originated from the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, which was incorporated into Manchukuo during the 1930s, and were thus people of the periphery even in the context of Inner Mongolia. Just one year after the foundation of the PRC, it is hard to believe that these soldiers would have changed their old habit of referring to themselves as Mongols (*Menggu ren*) when they had contact with the Chinese soldiers on the front. Therefore, it can be assumed that for outsiders with only limited education, and particularly for those who came from southern China, it would have been difficult to grasp the political differences between the Mongols who lived on opposite sides of the Chinese-Mongolian border. In this way, the Inner Mongols unconsciously contributed to the diplomatic predicament of their Mongolian brothers to the north of the border.

Another explanation for the statement by Chinese Nationalist soldiers could be a political one, rooted in the Cold War ideological struggle. Presenting the MPR as one of the countries that had participated in the fighting against the UN forces would devalue its credentials to become a member of the UN and limit Communist representation in the UN. In 1946, the Chinese Nationalist government had recognized the MPR as an independent country on the basis of a Mongolian national referendum and an agreement with the Soviet Union. Just a few months after that, Mongolia submitted its application for membership of the UN. The Nationalist Chinese representative at the United Nations at the time was supportive toward Mongolia’s application.

But the representative soon regretted this, especially after the Baitag Bogd Incident in 1947, when Mongolian and Chinese forces clashed in the border region of Baitag Bogd and the Mongolian army obtained territory under Soviet air support. Moreover, the Soviet Union did not keep the commitments it had made in the Sino-Soviet agreement of August 1945, in which it had promised not to support the Chinese Communists and to hand over the Chinese territory to Republican China at the end of the war with Japan, on the understanding that China would recognize the MPR's independence if this was supported by a national referendum. The Soviets, however, supported the Communist side during the Chinese Civil War, and the MPR and the PRC signed a friendship treaty in February 1950. Repeated rejection of Mongolia's request to join the United Nations throughout the 1950s may have been a form of diplomatic retaliation for this move.

The Korean War brought the Mongols together for the same cause, but also contributed to their long years of separation thereafter. The PRC's vision of the Korean War as a victory gave that nation confidence as a sovereign state, while the halfhearted support by the Soviet Union for the Chinese struggle in the war widened the gap between the two Socialist giants. China wanted to have close relations with the MPR in the hope that one day Mongolia would be incorporated into China, but the Soviet Union resisted this by tightening its control over the MPR. By the time Chinese and Soviet diplomatic relationships broke down from the end of the 1950s onward, the border between the MPR and Inner Mongolia was closed. The people on either side of the border shared the same Socialist political ideology, but they were still placed in a state of "cold war" with one another until the late 1980s, when the border was reopened. The Korean War, which both North and South saw as a war for the unification of the country, ironically not only affirmed the partition of the Korean Peninsula, but also contributed to the division of the Socialist front in Northeast Asia and thus to the ongoing partition of the Mongols.

NOTES

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2. "Mongolian Aid to DPRK 1950–1955," Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.25.
3. "Sangiin yamni said nuhur Molomjamch-d" [Letter to Mr. Molonjamchi, Minister of Department of Finance], November 3, 1953, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.48.
4. National Central Archive of Mongolia, 1-5-319.
5. "Report on Horses Delivered to DPRK," March 31, 1951, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03-01-07.
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16. Wang Dongxia, *Kang Mei Yuan Chao: 1950 Nei Menggu ji shi* [Resist America, aid Korea: Inner Mongolia in 1950] (Beijing: Zhonggong Dangshi Chubanshe, 2011), 214.
17. "Sangiin yamni said nuhur Molomjamch-d" [Letter to Mr. Moomjamch, minister of Department of Finance], March 3, 1953, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.48.
18. Jamiyan-i, *XX-Zunni Mongol ba Solongus-un Harichaa*, 76–77.
19. "Solongusin Ard Tumen Yalagdashgui," 1.
20. "Gadaad Yvdalin Yamni said Jargalsaikhan, ABNSA ulsin Elchin said Hon Don Cheiig huleen avch uulzsai tuhai" [Report on Foreign Minister Jargasaihan's meeting with DPRK's ambassador], Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.56.
21. "Report on Visit to Hamgyong and Ryangang," 1955, National Central Archive of Mongolia.
22. For example, *Unen Sonin*, January 8, 1953, February 4, 1953, February 7, 1953, February 12, 1953.
23. "Mongolian Aid to Korea 1950–1955," Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.25.
24. *Mongolia: An Economic Handbook* (Warrington, UK: Joseph Crosfield & Sons, 1963), 16.
25. For example, in 1953 alone, on top of weapons from the Soviets, from Mongolia five wagons of leader shoes, twenty-six wagons of hay for horses, and 17,444 horses; from East Germany sixty-two boxes of gifts; from Switzerland sixty-two boxes of household goods; from Bulgaria fifty-four boxes of medicine and 111 boxes of clothes; and from Czechoslovakia three locomotives went through Manzhouli Station. Xu Zhanxin, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng* [Manzhouli and the Korean War] (Hailaer: Nei Menggu Wenhua Chubanshe, 2006), 175.
26. Wang Tieqiao, *Manzhouli Waiyu Wushinian 1946–1996* [The 50 years of foreign transport in Manzhouli 1946–1996] (Hailaer: Nei Menggu Wenhua Chubanshe, 1996), 60.
27. Wang, *Manzhouli Waiyu Wushinian*, 55; Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 10–11.
28. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 181.
29. "Report on Horses Delivered to DPRK," March 31, 1951, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03-01-07.
30. For example, in August 1953, at the handover of the last major distribution of horse aid, realizing that the Korean soldiers did not have enough food, the Mongolian delegates offered ten cows, three sheep, and 609 kg of rice and other food to North Korean officials. ("Solongusin ard tumen yalagdashgui" [The Korean people are not defeatable], *Unen Sonin*, January 8, 1953, 1.)

31. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 178–79.
32. “Letter from the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing to the Ministry Foreign Affairs of Mongolia,” No. 53, March 11, 1954, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.56.
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34. “Letter from the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing to the Ministry Foreign Affairs of Mongolia,” No. 53, March 11, 1954, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 03.01.56.
35. National Central Archive of Mongolia 342-1; also see Zambyagiin, *XX-Juuni Mongol ba Solongus-un Harichaa*, 90–93.
36. A special kindergarten and school were set up for them. More than eighty local staff were involved in taking care of these children, and a few staff from Korea were employed to teach the Korean language. Korean and Mongolian languages were taught for three hours every day, and all other subjects were taught in Mongolian. The children all lived in a dormitory that was built for them, and they were looked after twenty-four hours a day by the staff. They had their own kitchen, cooks, and library.
37. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 181.
38. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 165–66.
39. A league is an administrative unit of Mongols. It is similar to a province. A league consisted of several banners, which is similar to a county.
40. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 167–72.
41. Xu, *Manzhouli yu Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng*, 182–83.
42. “Ximeng Kangmei Yuanchao Aiguo Juanxian Yundong Zongjie,” Inner Mongolia Archive, 309-2-123.
43. Shen Zhihua, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng* [Mao Zedong and Stalin and the Korean War] (Guangzhou: Guangzhou Renmin Chubanshe, 2003), 398.
44. Liu Guoguan, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jingji Dagan Ziliao Xuanbian 1949–1952 Zonghejuan* [Archival material collections on the economy of the People’s Republic of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Chengshi Jingji Shehui Chubanshe, 1990), 872, 891.
45. Wang, *Kang Mei Yuan Chao*, 108.
46. Wang, *Kang Mei Yuan Chao*, 108.
47. Interview with Mr. Sampuljab, in Hohhot, on August 10, 2014.
48. Inner Mongolia Archive, 309-2-125.
49. “Ximeng Kangmei Yuanchao Aiguo Juanxian Yundong Zongjie,” Inner Mongolia Archive, 309-2-123.
50. “Fenghuo Liaoyuan tieqibing” [The iron cavalry], in *Jiefang Zhanzheng Zhongde Neimenggu Qibing* (Houhehaote: Neimenggu Dangwei, 1997), 284–310; “Zai Zhandou Zhong Fazhan Zhuangda de Qibing Liu-zhidui” [Cavalry that developed and strengthened in battles], in *Jiefang Zhanzheng Zhongde Neimenggu Qibing* (Houhehaote: Neimenggu Dangwei, 1997), 358–404.
51. Wang, *Kang Mei Yuan Chao*, 213.
52. “Zai Zhandou Zhong Fazhan Zhuangda de Qibing Liu-zhidui,” 387–404.
53. Dong Qiwu, *Dong Qiwu Riji* [Dong Qiwu’s diary] (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2001), 91.
54. Robert Rupen, *Mongols of the Twentieth Century, Part 1* (Bloomington: Indiana University Publications, 1964), 342–43.
55. Battle of Baitag Bogd was a series of border incidents between the Republic of China and Mongolia from June 1947 and July 1948. Reportedly, the Soviet Union backed Mongolia by providing air cover. The Republic of China believed that Mongolia was acting under Soviet instruction and thus denied the independence of Mongolia that was granted about a year earlier by the Republic of China. See for the background, Sergey Radchenko, “Choibalsan’s Great Mongolia Dream,” *Inner Asia* 11, no. 2 (2009): 231–58.
56. United Nations Security Council Official Record, 703rd meeting, December 13, 1955, paragraph 56.

57. United Nations Security Council Official Record, 790th meeting, September 9, 1957, paragraphs 63, 64.

58. United Nations Security Council Official Record, 790th meeting, September 9, 1957, paragraph 77.

59. China wanted to build its air force in preparation for an anticipated conflict with the Nationalist regime in Taiwan and had requested the Soviet Union to provide airplanes, help with training pilots, and set up a proper military air base soon after the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. But before they were able to prepare for their attack on Taiwan, the Korean War broke out, and during the war China absolutely needed the air force to be able to support the advance of its infantry. Steven J. Zaloga, "The Russians in MiG Alley," *Air Force Magazine*, February 1991, <http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/1991/February%201991/0291russians.aspx>, accessed October 30, 2013.

60. Zaloga, "Russians in MiG Alley."

61. Rupen, *Mongols of the Twentieth Century*, 342–43.

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