



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 173 – August 14, 1984**

## **China – Mongolia Boundary**

**(Country Codes: CH-MG)**

**The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 173

## CHINA – MONGOLIA BOUNDARY

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<b>I. Boundary Brief.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. Background.....</b>	<b>2</b>
A. Historical.....	2
B. Geographical.....	6
C. The Nomonhan Incident.....	9
<b>III. Boundary Analysis .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. The Western Sector (the Altai).....	10
B. The Gobi.....	10
C. The Eastern Mongolian Plain.....	11
<b>IV. Treaties and Related Materials.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>V. Notes .....</b>	<b>14</b>

# CHINA – MONGOLIA BOUNDARY

## I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The China-Mongolia Border Treaty of December 26, 1962, delimited a boundary from the western China-Mongolia-Soviet Union tripoint in the Altai Mountains to the eastern tripoint of the three nations at the northeaster margin of the Mongolian Plain. A Joint Sino-Mongolian Border Demarcation Committee in 1964 completed the demarcation of the boundary, whose length was given as 4,673 kilometers. The boundary has been demarcated by 639 pillars. Added to the Sino-Mongolian Border Protocol of June 30, 1964, is a "Boundary Atlas Between the People's Republic of China and the Mongolian People's Republic." The atlas contains 105 plates with boundary maps represented at a scale of 1:100,000. The atlas also contains six plates at a scale of 1:10,000 for the boundary located in the Halhin Go1 (Halaha) region (Plate 93).\*

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. Historical

The delimitation of a Chino-Mongolia boundary in 1962 and the boundary demarcation of 1964 closed a chapter in bilateral relations that dated from 1911: The agreement demonstrated to all nations that Mongolia had revoked any vestige of Chinese suzerainty. But Mongolia remains fettered politically to a second suzerain—the Soviet Union. After its 1911 declaration of independence, Mongolia's inchoate efforts to create a cultural and political destiny free from China led it to accept Tsarist Russia as a counterbalance. Under quiescent political circumstances the Mongolian buffer state might have survived. The demise of both Tsarist Russia and the Chinese Empire, however, provided Mongolia only a few years to mature. The time was insufficient: By 1921 Mongolia's political destiny was closely tied to the Soviet Union, and so it remains.

For Chinese purposes the Mongolian tribes had been divided into two Classes—the Inner or Nei [内], and the Outer or Wai [外], Mongolians.<sup>1</sup> Inner Mongolia was divided into six "Leagues" containing as many as eight tribes, and each tribe had as many as seven military units or "Banners." From the first half of the 17th century, some 49 Banners acknowledged Manchu (Qing) suzerainty. Outer Mongolia, comprising the Khalkha, Kalmuk, and other tribes, had paid tribute to China since 1691 A.D. It "testified its allegiance" to Manchu rulers by the annual presentation to the imperial court of eight white horses and one white camel.<sup>2</sup>

Russian exploration and settlement along the margin of the Xinjiang-Outer Mongolia-Manchuria frontier which started in the 17th century required a Manchu diplomatic response. The Sino-Russian Treaty of Kyakhta (1727) began the demarcation of the Outer

---

\* Atlas on deposit at the U.S. Library of Congress.

Mongolia-Russia boundary. Thereafter, a series of treaties (see Part IV) contained the placement of guard posts (karum) and markers (obo) along the frontier.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of Imperial Russia's expansion, the Manchu presence in Outer Mongolia—generally limited to a resident at Urga (Ulaanbaatar) and military governors at Kobdo (Hovd) and Uliastay—was at best a minimal response. In contrast to Chinese Turkestan (as Xinjiang, incorporated as China's 19th province in 1884) and Manchuria's Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces (incorporated in 1907), Outer Mongolia was neglected. Chinese officials there were asked to do little more than supervise the trade that passed between Kyakhta (Russian Siberia) and Kalgan (Chang-chia-k'ou [Zhangjiakou], located northwest of Beijing).

Through an 1881 Sino-Russian treaty, Russia gained Manchu approval to trade in Mongolia. Ostensibly, the agreement settled the problem of Russia's southern boundary with Outer Mongolia. In fact it did little to reduce the threat of Russian penetration. By 1900 Outer Mongolia seemed a likely place for competing Sino-Russian policies to collide. The physiographically daunting China-Mongolia frontier and the residual historical artifacts of a Mongol-dominated China no longer deflected Han (Chinese) penetration from the southeast. Thus, by the early years of the 20th century the boundary between Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia-Manchuria had blurred. The movement of Han populations north of the Yellow River and the purposeful Han settlement of western Manchuria threatened occupation of Mongol pastures once thought sacrosanct.

In July 1911, with Chinese settlers "crowding" into Mongolia, Mongol princes and lamas met at Urga to consider a response. The Mongol leaders complained that Chinese settlement of Mongolian lands violated historic agreements—agreements that justified Chinese suzerainty. In December, "autonomous" Mongolia, ruled by the Living Buddha of Urga, declared itself independent from any form of Chinese rule. Some chance of success was assured in that the declaration occurred when the demise of the Manchu Dynasty was at hand.

In 1912 the Republic of China was born, and its leadership was quick to initiate efforts to reassimilate Outer Mongolia. The republic's "Regulations Concerning the Treatment Applicable to Mongols" declared: "Hereafter, Mongolia should not be treated as a dependency, but should be placed on equal footing with other provinces."<sup>4</sup> Such efforts were almost predestined to fail. Indeed, in the chaotic times that followed the fall of the Manchu Dynasty, the republic was fortunate that Chinese Inner Mongolia's efforts to unite with Outer Mongolia had been unsuccessful.

Given China's fissiparous regional tendencies and the political anarchy that followed the founding of the republic, Russia was able quite easily to assume the role of Mongolia's suzerain. The tsarist guardianship—incorporated in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement of November 3, 1912—was a complicated affair. In 1913 it appeared that a Sino-Russian convention had reestablished China's suzerainty over Outer Mongolia. But the following year Russia ensured its paramountcy through the control of Mongolia's railroads. A few

months later, in 1915, a tripartite agreement held that neither China nor Russia would interfere in the internal administration of Outer Mongolia; however, under Article II of the treaty China agreed to consult with Russia and Outer Mongolia on regional questions of a political or territorial nature. In essence, China was acknowledged as suzerain; in reality, Outer Mongolia became a protectorate of both Russia and China with Russia being *primus inter pares*.

The demise of the Russian monarchy, followed by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, resulted in a momentary distancing of Russo-Mongolian relations. With Soviet forces preoccupied in their own civil war, Chinese forces reoccupied Outer Mongolia in 1919. Nevertheless, the Chinese, along with elements of the Russian White Army, were able to hold Outer Mongolia only until July 1921 when they were defeated by a combined Mongolian and Soviet military force. Thereafter, a Provisional Government, controlled by communists, assumed all state power.

After 1921, the Soviet Union rarely bothered to disguise its role as Mongolia's suzerain. In 1924 any pretense to unfettered independence was dropped with the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic. In effect, China was too weak to counterbalance Soviet policies; consequently, the survival of what might well have become a quintessential buffer state was doomed. Although "Soviet Russia twice recognized China's sovereignty over Outer Mongolia" (first in 1924 and second in April 1936, when "Litvinov [was] Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs"), the effect was more cosmetic than real.<sup>5</sup>

From 1921 through 1962, the only portion of the China-Mongolia boundary subject to a delimitation agreement was in the east, in the region of Lake Buyr (Buyr Nuur). After Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, a Mongol-Manchoukuo [Manchuria] Joint Boundary Commission was created. Its successes were limited, because beginning in 1935 a series of border incidents threatened the peace along the eastern frontier. It seemed inevitable that Soviet and Japanese forces would clash; when they did, in 1939, the Japanese Kwangtung Army was soundly defeated. Following the combat, a part of the Mongolia-Japanese Manchoukuo boundary was demarcated. In the west, where China sought to enhance its very tenuous control of the Altai frontier, the region became a center of a Sino-Mongolian dispute both during and after World War II.

During World War II western Mongolia was rumored to be the center of Soviet-sponsored, anti-Chinese agitation that sought to carve Xinjiang from China.<sup>6</sup> Politically, the independence of Outer Mongolia seemed resolved by the February 1945 Yalta accord. At Yalta, the USSR informed the United States and Great Britain (China did not attend) that among its conditions for entry in the war against Japan was that "the status quo in Outer Mongolia (the Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved." The U.S. and Britain agreed to the condition.<sup>7</sup>

China eventually was forced to accept the Big Three agreement on Mongolia. In Sino-Soviet talks held in Moscow in June–July 1945, Chinese statesman T.V. Soong held that Chinese recognition of the Outer Mongolia's independence would threaten China's hold on

Tibet and Xinjiang. Sino-Soviet accord was reached after China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek agreed that, if a Mongolian plebiscite were held to determine the question of independence or reincorporation into China, the Soviet Union would be required to: 1) recognize China's territorial and administrative sovereignty over Manchuria; 2) assist China in the suppression of local rebellions in Sinkiang; and 3) provide material and moral support to the Republic of China. Stalin agreed to the three points, and a plebiscite was held in January 1946. The Mongolian vote for independence led to China's (momentary) recognition of the Mongolian People's Republic.

Following World War II, it became impossible to delimit a China-Mongolia boundary pending the outcome of the Chinese civil war. In August 1947, the matter was further complicated at the U.N. Security Council when China protested that Mongolian troops had intruded at least 100 kilometers into China in the region of the Baytik Mountains (Pei-t'a [Bei] Shan) where Chinese and Mongolian troops had clashed.<sup>8</sup> This undemarcated region was thought to be rich in precious metals including gold (Altai means "gold" in Mongolian) and uranium.<sup>9</sup> At the time, the Mongolian People's Republic was being considered for United Nations candidacy; the Soviet Union responded at the U.N. that in the 1946 plebiscite the people of the Baytik region had voted for Mongolian independence. The U.N. was unable to resolve the issue. As a result, Nationalist China no longer felt bound to respect the sovereignty of the Mongolian People's Republic.

Ironically, even as civil war raged, it was difficult to determine if China, Nationalist or Communist, would ever respect the territorial integrity of the Mongolian People's Republic. The Nationalists were reluctant to admit Mongolian sovereignty, and the Communists seemed ambivalent when confronted with the reality of Mongolian independence. Edgar Snow had written, and other authors had taken note of, Communist leader Mao Zedong's statement that, "When the people's revolution has been victorious," Outer Mongolia would "automatically become a part of the Chinese federation, at its own will."<sup>10</sup>

After the defeat of the Nationalist army in 1949, it took Beijing more than a decade to address the issue of the undelimited China-Mongolia boundary. A warming of Sino-Mongolian relations seemed apparent following Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai's May 1960 visit to Ulaanbaatar, where a Sino-Mongolian treaty of mutual aid was celebrated. This era of good friendship reached its zenith with a boundary delimitation agreement in December 1962. (In the early 1960s China was obviously determined to resolve existing territorial issues; prior to the Sino-Mongolian agreement it negotiated boundary treaties with Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>) At a banquet for Mongolian Chairman Tsendenbal, held in Beijing on December 27, Chou En-lai held that:

"The speedy settlement of the Sino-Mongolian boundary question and the smooth conclusion of the boundary treaty between our two countries not only mark the further consolidation and development of the friendship and cooperation between China and Mongolia, but also constitute a good example of the handling of relations between socialist countries."<sup>12</sup>

This area of friendship was not to last. Although the border was demarcated in 1964, the meeting of a Sino-Mongolian boundary inspection team—provided for in the protocol—did not take place until February–April 1982. The hiatus clearly reflected an acute Chinese preoccupation with the dovetailing of Soviet-Mongolian concerns. In Mongolia's case it demonstrated concern with China's Cultural Revolution and the possibility that China might once again press its claim to Outer Mongolia.

It is surprising that boundary meetings were held in 1982, for they occurred at a time when Mongolia was in the midst of an anti-Chinese (Huaqiao) campaign designed to force the repatriation of Chinese residing in Mongolia. Indeed, in July 1981 Mongolia had complained that in spite of the 1962 treaty China had initiated a series of dangerously aggressive actions. The Soviet Union added its voice: "For the period since 1969 alone, the Chinese troops violated the border of the MPR more than 400 times."<sup>13</sup> A year after the meeting, *The New York Times* (May 27, 1983:A6) headlined: "Mongolia Reported To Be Expelling Thousands of Chinese Workers." In effect, the meeting of the boundary commission resulted in no visible change in Sino-Mongolian relations, and the boundary talks seem to have had little extrinsic political meaning.

## **B. Geographical**

Prior to 1962, various technical reasons accounted for the lack of precise mapping of the China-Mongolia frontier. Most importantly, the physical landscape provided a near insuperable challenge until modern transportation methods could be employed. Along Mongolia's southern rim, precipitation is sparse and settlements are virtually nonexistent. With few exceptions, population averages fewer than 2.5 persons per square kilometer. The immense uplifted basin known as the Gobi Desert historically showed so little economic potential that boundaries seemed relatively unimportant except to autochthonous tribes or individuals. Then, too, as the 1962 boundary agreement makes clear, in the Gobi region east of the Altai Range surveyors can find few useful physical features to facilitate boundary demarcations.

It was not until the 20th century that a Mongolian boundary (whether for Inner or Outer Mongolia) assumed importance to Russia, China, and the Mongolians themselves. Owing to population growth (actual and potential) in the Manchuria-Mongolia triborder region, Tsarist Russia became the first government to prepare modern large-scale maps of Mongolia's eastern frontier. General Staff Manchurian map sheets at 1:84,000 (published between 1901 and 1906) included most of the borderlands separating Heilongjiang province and eastern Outer Mongolia. Following Mongolia's declaration of independence in 1911, Russian cartography began the depiction of a Mongolia-Russia boundary that best suited the purposes of Mongolia's new suzerain. On certain maps (e.g., the *Aziatskaya Rossiya*, prepared by the Russian Resettlement Administration and published in St. Petersburg in 1914), the boundary stretched from 52(E to 90(E, and the Mongolian land mass included much of northern Xinjiang, southern Manchuria, and Chinese land located south of the great bend of the Yellow River (Huang He).

—

Chinese imperial maps covering part of the modern China-Mongolia boundary were prepared as a result of a 1907 Manchu decision to incorporate Manchuria into the Chinese administrative system. An atlas comprising 28 sheets, prepared by the Manchu official Chang Kuo-kan, was delivered to the court in 1911—on the eve of the disintegration of the Manchu Dynasty. The atlas (specifically, the sheets depicting the provincial boundary between Outer Mongolia and Heilongjiang province) later was used by Japan in an effort to prove Chinese sovereignty to land it then occupied (Manchoukuo) and which was also claimed by Mongolia.<sup>14</sup>

Mongolian maps were of questionable validity well into the 20th century. A 1920 British Foreign Office publication titled *Manchuria* noted: "The western [Manchuria-Mongolia] boundary is for the greater part undefined in any reliable document or map, and is political or ethnical." A 1923 Wall Map of China, prepared by the China Inland Mission, depicted "new administrative areas bordering on the north of China proper, and including large portions of Inner Mongolia...." Here too, however, the boundaries depicted on this popular map were of questionable reliability. As the atlas served in succeeding years as a primary cartographic reference on China, boundary errors were repeated again and again.

In 1928 the cartography of the Mongolian frontier was further complicated by the division of Inner Mongolia into four separate provinces—Jehol, Chahar, Suiyuan, and Ninghsia. The new provincial boundaries paid little attention to Mongolian tribal territorial claims. This political reorganization was thought to have been a conscious effort to weaken Mongol unity and thus facilitate Chinese absorption. The Republic of China's Commission on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, shortly after its founding in 1929, seemed to reflect a change in policy when it began to prepare new maps depicting League and Banner boundaries. The effort to provide modern maps of China's frontiers was truncated after Japan's invasion of China in 1931. Thereafter, the cartographic depiction of provincial boundaries and the international boundary between the Chinese provinces and Mongolia remained highly speculative.

In 1931 the General Staff's Central Land Survey published a set of maps at 1:100,000 which portrayed most of the China-Mongolia borderlands. Nearly all inland locations were inaccurately sited. The boundary rivers—Yalu, Tumen, and Amur—were located from 10 to 40 miles from their actual courses. Longitudinal coordinates were especially unreliable. In a sense the maps reflected the state of geographic knowledge of both Inner and Outer Mongolia; in 1932 the geographer George Cressey felt that one of the principal contributions to the study of Inner Mongolia's Ordos Desert was his publication of an accurate regional map. Cressey claimed: "Previous maps [had] contained large errors, in cases amounting to nearly a degree of longitude, and considerable uncertainty still exists as to the exact position of the Great Wall and the Hwang Ho [Yellow River]." <sup>15</sup>

Politically, the problem of inaccurate Mongolian boundaries was recognized in an important treatise titled *Chinese Government and Politics*, published in 1934. The author recognized, as did the republic's leadership, that: "In the absence of a clear boundary line,

the division [between Inner and Outer Mongolia] is 'purely political and artificial,...being the result of tribal agreements and the work of Chinese rulers.' " <sup>16</sup>

More accurate regional maps followed the 1931 Japanese occupation of Manchuria. In 1932 Manchuria was renamed Manchoukuo, and by February 1933 the Japanese invaders had occupied the Inner Mongolian province of Jehol. By March 1934 the Republic of China was forced to recognize the existence of a Japanese-sponsored Government of Inner Mongolia. From that date until the close of World War II, the Republic of China had little or no influence along the southern and eastern China-Mongolia frontier. Consequently, the 1938 Chinese provisional map series (scale of 1:1,000,000) and a 1943 revision of the provisional series are in parts highly unreliable.

The 1943 revision incorporated a significant portion of the Mongolian Altai into China's Xinjiang province, thereby laying claim to land located well to the eastern side of the Altai Range where grazing land and water were abundant. It is possible that this "walking" frontier reflected Xinjiang Military Governor Sheng Shih-ts'ai's shift of allegiance from the USSR to Nationalist China. It is also possible that the change reflects nothing more than a Chinese challenge to Soviet cartography. When comparing Soviet sheets produced in 1927 and 1940, it can be noted that the latter edition pushed the China-Mongolia frontier as far south as need be to incorporate the Altai Range within the Mongolian People's Republic. When the 1940 Soviet series and the 1943 Chinese provisional series were compared, analysts could reckon that in the Altai at least 86,000 square kilometers were in dispute.

Even after establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Chinese and Soviet maps continued to depict differing boundaries between China and Mongolia. China's Pocket Detailed Province Maps, published in 1950, 1951, and 1952, and the Shanghai Map Publishing Company's Mongolia map, published in April 1953, all showed substantial Chinese claims to Mongolian frontier regions. In August 1953, however, the fourth revision of China's Province Maps depicted a Mongolian boundary that substantially reduced China's claim to territory. The Chinese map thus resembled somewhat the boundary depicted on Republic of China maps published in 1938. (At the same time the PRC's cartographic claims to territory along other frontiers was reduced.) Still, sizable territorial differences appeared when Chinese and Mongolian/ Soviet maps were compared, particularly in the Altai and the Nei Monggol-Mongolia frontiers.

In the early 1960s the PRC undertook a series of initiatives with neighboring countries to resolve longstanding boundary issues. In Mongolia's case, a boundary agreement was signed on December 25, 1962. The boundary demarcation was completed by a Joint Boundary Commission in 1964. Throughout, the agreement favored the traditional Mongolian version. Thus, it can be said that the PRC was quite generous in its treatment of the boundary. The Commission provided an incredibly detailed account of the boundary; a "Boundary Atlas," appended to the protocol, consists of 105 multicolored map sheets at 1:100,000 depicting a 10-kilometer swath the length of the border. It also contains six

sheets at 1:10,000 that cover islands in the Halaha river (Chalchyn Gol) in the eastern sector.<sup>17</sup>

Within months of the boundary demarcation, the Soviet Union's Pravda editorialized (September 2, 1964) that Mao Zedong continued to regret the loss of Outer Mongolia. The article claimed that in 1954 Mao had asked the USSR to agree to a Chinese reincorporation of the region. In essence, the article signaled that there was to be no real thaw in either Sino-Soviet or Sino-Mongolian relations.

### **C. The Nomonhan Incident**

In 1931 Japan occupied Chinese Manchuria and soon thereafter created the puppet state of Manchoukuo. Within Manchoukuo the Nomonhan region (located south of the Chinese border town of Manzhouli; see Boundary Atlas sheets 90–96) was a region where Mongols seasonally moved herds to pastures located east and west of the Halaha River. By 1935, however, the Japanese occupiers objected to the seasonal movement of Mongols into Manchoukuo from lands located to the west of the Halaha River.

Eventually, Japanese pressure along the frontier and a disagreement as to boundary alignment led to conflict. Under Article 2 of the 1936 Soviet-Mongolian Protocol of Mutual Assistance, the USSR was empowered to come to Mongolia's aid in case it came under attack. This the Soviet Union did in 1939 following a number of sharp skirmishes along the Nomonhan frontier. Only after the Japanese Kwangtung Army was decisively defeated east of Lake Buyr by elements of a combined Soviet and Mongolian force was a truce reached in November 1939.

The demarcation of a boundary in the Nomonhan region began in September 1940. Boundary demarcation documents "between Manchoukuo and Outer Mongolia were signed by plenipotentiaries of the two countries on October 15, 1941."<sup>18</sup> By that date, the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact of April 1941 had helped defuse the territorial issue. With neutrality, the USSR pledged to respect the territorial integrity of Manchoukuo; in return, Japan pledged to respect the territorial integrity of Mongolia.

Many unsuccessful efforts have been made to locate maps prepared by the Manchoukuo-Mongolia Border Demarcation Commission. In Checklist of Archives in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, Japan, 1868–1945, microfilmed following World War II for the U.S. Library of Congress, various treaty texts dealing with the boundary in the Nomonhan region are listed and microfilmed copies can be obtained. But a search of the Archives of the United States provides no clues as to the whereabouts of the attendant boundary maps prepared by the Manchoukuo-Mongolia Commission.

The Manchoukuo-Mongolia maps were submitted as evidence during the post-World War II Japanese war crimes trials, but after that presumably were lost or destroyed. For years they were of historical interest because Nationalist China claimed that it would not accept any Chinese boundary that resulted from negotiations by or with Japan. Without reference

to the Mongolia-Manchoukuo maps it is impossible to determine just how the PRC managed the boundary issue in the Lake Buyr region.

### **III. BOUNDARY ANALYSIS**

#### **A. The Western Sector (the Altai)**

In the west the China-Mongolia boundary begins in the Kuitun (K'uei-t'un) spur of the Altai Mountains at the Taban Bogdo Ula tripoint with the Soviet Union. The Mongolian Altai is a rugged mountain chain of north-facing, steep-fronted fault blocks. The westernmost boundary follows the main crests of the Altai chain, where elevations range from 3,000 to 4,000 meters. Farther east, elevations are reduced and the Altai is broken by intermontane basins interspersed along the frontier; these gateways, trending northeast to southwest, permit travel from Mongolia into the Chinese Dzungarian lowlands and the Tarim Basin. In the lower mountain steppeland, good grazing lands are common.

The western mountain boundary terminates with the Baytik Range, which is located at the southwestern foot of the Mongolian Altai chain. China and Mongolia once disputed an area of roughly 15,000 square kilometers within this region (Boundary Atlas sheets 16–26, map 1). The area was occupied by Mongolia in 1932 and, as noted previously, assumed some importance in 1947 when Chinese and Mongolian forces clashed in the Hujirtayn River valley (45°, 21' N, 95°, 06' E) located within the Aj Bogd Uul spur of the Baytik Range. Boundary Atlas sheets 25–26 depict a modern boundary well south of the site where Chinese-Mongolian hostilities were said to have occurred. Farther to the east, at the foot of the Baytik Range, barrenness begins to predominate. Thereafter, rivers are ephemeral, and mountain steppe gives way to "Gobi."

#### **B. The Gobi**

The Gobi Desert boundary stretches for more than 1,500 kilometers from the Baytik Shan to east of the Ulaanbaatar-Beijing road. The Gobi, often called the "dry sea" (han hai) in Chinese, is part of a larger desert system that wends its way from eastern Mongolia through Central Asia and includes the Dzungaria, Lop, Tsaidam, Iran, Sistan, and Balkash Deserts and the Aral and Caspian Basins. The Gobi is a relatively flat surface covered in large part by gravel plains ("desert pavement") where surface water is rarely found and only sparse vegetation is encountered. Climatically, extreme continentality prevails, and average winter lows (minimums) and average summer highs (maximums) have a range that can exceed 40 degrees centigrade.

The Gobi frontier is only occasionally broken by rocky hills or shallow salt depressions. Although dunes may be found in the drier parts, gravel plains predominate. They are, however, no real barrier to modern cross-country travel. Nevertheless, owing to extreme aridity, human settlement is rare. The Mongolian analyst S. Tsegmid divides the Gobi region (which ranges from approximately 91(E) to 116(E)) into four regions.<sup>19</sup> From west to

east they are: 1) Trans-Altai Gobi (Boundary Atlas sheets 22–38); 2) Edzguy Gazar Plain (sheets 39–43); 3) coniform hill country of the Ochni-Hyar Massif (sheets 44–53); and 4) Dzamin Uud Peneplain (sheets 56–79). At the Gobi's eastern margin the Erenhot and Dzamin Uud entrepots of the Beijing-Ulaanbaatar railroad impinge on the monotony of the desert landscape. Historically, this region has been of great significance to China because its physical geography provides no real barrier to the military penetration of northern China.

### **C. The Eastern Mongolian Plain**

From the eastern fringes of the Gobi, proceeding eastward toward China's Great Khingan Mountains (Da Hinggan Ling), one first enters open steppe country and then the Dariganga flatlands (average elevation 1,150–1,300 meters). The Dariganga is an important grazing land which from 1688 through 1924 formed part of Chinese Inner Mongolia; it is now joined to Mongolia's Suhu Baatar Aimag.<sup>20</sup> The Dariganga (Boundary Atlas sheets 72–78) gives way to the gently sloping (1,500–1,700 meter) spurs of the Khingan Range, where the eastern boundary first bends to the north and then doubles back to the west (sheets 79–90), meeting the Herlen-Halhin Peneplain. This plateau forms part of the much larger Eastern Mongolian Plain and is sandwiched between the Herlen and Halhin Rivers that debouch into Lakes Buyr and Hulun. Near the eastern tripoint with the Soviet Union, salt marshes and bogs exist and pasture is of poor quality.

## **IV. TREATIES AND RELATED MATERIAL**

1. Nerchinsk Treaty of Peace and Boundaries; Nerchinsk, August 27, 1689. (Hertslet's China Treaties, Harrison and Sons, London, 1908, Volume I:437.)

Although Manchu forces defeated the Russians and forced them to abandon their posts on the Amur, Russia managed to gain title to approximately 230,000 square kilometers of territory in the Far East.

2. Boundary Protocol; Abagatuy, October 12, 1727. (Hertslet, *ibid.*, p. xi.)

This Sino-Russian protocol delimited a boundary southeast of Lake Baikal. Sixty-three markers (obo) were implanted, with the first being located near Kyakhta and the last at the headwaters of the Argun River.

3. Treaty between Russia and China Respecting the Reestablishment of Chinese Authority in the Country of Ili; St. Petersburg, February 12, 1881. (Hertslet, *op. cit.*, p. 483.)

Following a Muslim revolt against the Manchu Dynasty in 1871, Russia occupied the Ili valley. Through the Treaty of Livadia, negotiated in 1879, Russia gained control of the valley. The Chinese Emperor refused to ratify the treaty, but eventually the 1881 Treaty of

St. Petersburg was negotiated and replaced the former treaty. (See International Boundary Study No. 64, "China-Soviet Union" for a review of the boundary issues to the west of the China-Mongolia-USSR western tripoint.)

4. Agreement in regard to Relations between Russia and Autonomous Mongolia; Urga, November 3, 1912. (J.V.A. MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919*, Oxford University Press, 1921, Volume II:992–993.)

This agreement held that Russia would assist Mongolia "to maintain the autonomous regime which she has established, as also the right to have her national army, and to admit neither the presence of Chinese troops on her territory nor the colonisation of her land by the Chinese." It was written into the arrangement that "the old relations between Mongolia and China thus came to an end," and this indeed was the case.

5. Declaration and Accompanying Exchange of Notes in regard to Outer Mongolia; Beijing, November 5, 1913. (MacMurray, *ibid.*, pp. 1066–1067.)

Russia recognized that "Outer Mongolia is under the suzerainty of China." China, in turn, was forced to recognize "the autonomy of Outer Mongolia." China agreed not to send troops into Outer Mongolia and not to station civilian or military officials in Mongolia other than a "Dignitary" who was to reside at Urga.

In a note accompanying the declaration, B. Kroupensky, Russian Minister at Beijing, recognized that "The territory of Outer Mongolia forms a part of the territory of China." However, questions of a political or territorial nature were to be resolved by the "three interested parties." Specifically, it was noted that autonomous Outer Mongolia comprised that regions of Urga [Ulaanbaatar], Uliassutai [Uliastay], and Kobdo [Hovd]. It was admitted, however, that: "Inasmuch as there are no detailed maps of Mongolia and as the boundaries of the administrative divisions of this country are uncertain, it is agreed that the exact boundaries of Outer Mongolia, as well as the boundary between the district of Kobdo and the district of Altai, shall be the subject of...subsequent conferences...."

6. Tripartite Agreement in regard to Outer Mongolia; Kyakhta, June 7, 1915. (MacMurray, *ibid.*, pp. 1239–1244.)

Article XI held that autonomous Outer Mongolia connected "with the boundary of China by the limits of the banners of the four aimaks of Kalka and of the district of Kobdo, bounded by the district of Houounbouis [i.e., Hailar] on the East, by Inner Mongolia on the south, by the Province of Sinkiang on the South-West, and by the district of Altai on the West." Article XI continued: "The formal delimitation between China and autonomous Mongolia is to be carried out by a special commission of delegates of China, Russia and autonomous Outer Mongolia, which shall set itself to the work of delimitation within a period of two years from the date of signature of the present Agreement." But no commission was ever created, and no boundary delimitation or demarcation documents can be located.

7. Agreement for Establishing Friendly Relations; Moscow, November 5, 1921. (L. Shapiro, *Soviet Treaty Series*, Georgetown University Press, 1950, Volume I:137–138.)

The formal establishment of relations between the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic. This followed the Soviet defeat of Russian White Army and Chinese troops in June–August 1921.

8. Agreement on General Principles for the Settlement of the Questions between the Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Beijing, May 31, 1924. (U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1924, Volume I:495–499.)

Article V stated: "The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics recognizes that Outer Mongolia is an integral part of the Republic of China and respects China's sovereignty therein." Through Article VII the parties agreed "to redemarcate their national boundaries at the Conference as provided in Article II of the present Agreement, which was to have been held within one month after the signing of the agreement and pending such redemarcation to maintain the present boundaries." Neither the question of Mongolia's status nor the issue of Sino-Soviet boundaries was resolved by this agreement.

9. Protocol of Mutual Assistance; Ulaanbaatar, March 12, 1936. (L. Shapiro, *Soviet Treaty Series*, Georgetown University Press, 1955, Volume II:162.)

This protocol established Soviet hegemony over Mongolia. It permitted military forces of one country to be sent into the territory of the other. The agreement thus justified the presence of Soviet armed forces in eastern Mongolia and their use during the Nomonhan actions of 1939.

10. Exchange of Notes between China and the Soviet Union on the independence of the Mongolian People's Republic; Moscow, August 14, 1945. (British Foreign and State Papers, 1947, Part III:359–360.)

China held that if a plebiscite confirmed a Mongolian "desire" for independence, the independence of "Outer Mongolia" would be so recognized.

11. Boundary Treaty Between the People's Republic of China and the People's Republic of Mongolia; Beijing, December 26, 1962. (Renmin Ribao, March 26, 1963; G. Rhode and R. Wheelock, *Treaties of the People's Republic of China*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1980:73–91; Ulaanbaatar's Unen, March 26, 1963, Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS] translation, Document 19729, May 17, 1963.)

The formal delimitation of the China-Mongolia boundary.

12. Sino-Mongolian Border Protocol; Beijing, June 30, 1964. (JPRS translation, document 52218, January 1971.)

The formal demarcation of the China-Mongolia boundary. This is an exceptionally detailed (179 pages) document. Accompanying the protocol is a Boundary Atlas Between the People's Republic of China and the Mongolian People's Republic, consisting of 105 multicolored map sheets at 1:100,000 depicting a 10-kilometer-wide swath along the border. The atlas also contains six 1:10,000 sheets of the Halaha River region of eastern Mongolia.

## **V. NOTES**

- 
- 1 G.M.H. Playfair's revision of Mayer's *The Chinese Government*, Kelley and Walsh, Ltd., Shanghai (n.d.), provides an interesting pre-Republic of China overview of the Mongolia and Turkestan "dependencies."
  - 2 "Relations Between China, Russia and Mongolia," *The American Journal of International Law*, Volume 10, 1916:799.
  - 3 An interesting study of this region is found in R.H.G. Lee's *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History*, Harvard University Press, 1970. Essential historico-geographical material on the Mongolian frontier is found in the works of Owen Lattimore. In his *Mongol Journeys* (Doubleday, Doran and Co., New York, 1941), Lattimore made use of the *Mengku Yumu Chi*, a Chinese language guide to the tribes, boundaries, rivers, mountains, and antiquities of the Mongolian Banners.
  - 4 "Regulations Concerning the Treatment Applicable to Mongols (August 19, 1912)," "Constitution and Supplementary Laws and Documents of the Republic of China, Commission on Extraterritoriality, Beijing, 1924:113–14.
  - 5 G.M. Friters, *Outer Mongolia and its International Position*, Johns Hopkins Press, 1949:287.
  - 6 U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944, China*, pp. 765–775. It is noteworthy that a Chinese Special Delegate for Foreign Affairs, located in Tihwa (modern Urumqi), informed the U.S. Consul that the Soviet Union's V. Molotov had stated that "...as soon as China had improved its policy of dealing with the Mongols, the Soviet Union would offer no objection to the reassertion of Chinese sovereignty over Outer Mongolia." See also *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, China*, p. 389.
  - 7 Regarding the implementation of this element of the Yalta Agreement, note Tang Tsou's *America's Failure in China, 1941–1950*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, Volume I:270–280.

- 
- 8 United Nations Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members, 18th Meeting, Report S/C.2/SR.18, July 29, 1947, and the Committee's Special Supplement No. 3, 1947.
  - 9 A claim that uranium existed was made in July 1959, "State of Affairs in Hsin-chiang Uighur Autonomous Region" (in Japanese), Chua Chosakai, Tokyo.
  - 10 For example, Mao's statement was used by L. Nemzer in an article titled "The Status of Outer Mongolia in International Law," *American Journal of International Law*, 1939, Volume 33:464. (It should be noted that Nemzer held that: "For the family of nations, sovereignty over [Outer Mongolia] is vested in China.")
  - 11 See, for example, U.S. Department of State, Office of The Geographer, *International Boundary Study*, Numbers 42 (China-Burma), 1964; 50 (China-Nepal), 1965; 85 (China-Pakistan), 1968; and 89 (Afghanistan-China), 1969.
  - 12 *Survey of the China Mainland Press*, American Consulate General, Hong Kong, January 3, 1963, Number 2890:40.
  - 13 R. Pavlov, "Contrary to the Truth of History: Fabricated in Beijing," *Krasnaya Zvezda* (in Russian), Moscow, August 28, 1980.
  - 14 W. Seuberlich's "Amlitches Kartenmaterial von 1911 zu nordmandschurischen Grenzfragen," *Oriens Extremus*, December 1977, is an excellent study of the cartography and history of the 1911 atlas and, tangentially, the Nomonhan frontier.
  - 15 "The Ordos Desert of Inner Mongolia," *Denison University Bulletin, Journal of the Scientific Laboratories*, Article 4, 1933, Volume XXVIII:239.
  - 16 Chih-Fang Wu (T. F. Wu), *Chinese Government and Politics*, Commercial Press Ltd., Shanghai, 1934:314.
  - 17 The 1:10,000 sheets have not been located.
  - 18 *The Manchoukuo Yearbook*, Tao-keizai Chosakyoku, Tokyo, 1942:364–366.
  - 19 Tsegmid's works include "Natural Regions and River Run-off in the Mongolian People's Republic," JPRS translation, Document 21957, November 20, 1963, and *Geography of the Mongolian People's Republic*, JPRS translation, Document 8288, May 19, 1961.
  - 20 The historic importance of the Dariganga (Daliganya) grazing grounds was underscored by maps published in Taiwan. For example, Volume II, plates A17 and A18 of the *Atlas of the Republic of China* (National War College, Taipei, October 1960), depicts a China-Mongolia boundary that swings north of 46°N in the Dariganga region.