



## Current Lessons-Learned From the Battle of Kursk

**OE Watch Commentary:** Each issue of *Armeski Sbornik* features a special section of “Abstracts” designed to allow officers at the Russian tactical level (division and below) to use the material to conduct their own professional development events and impart current key themes to the armed forces. A core part of Russian military science and education is the study of World War II battles. In the accompanying excerpted article, authors Samosvat and Kurshev provide a succinct history of the battle of Kursk. The subject of innovation is noted as something extended from higher commands within the framework of formal planning: “In the realm of strategy, the Soviet Supreme Command showed a creative approach to the planning. . . . an out-of-the-box idea was that the side that had strength in numbers deliberately handed the initiative to the other side and assumed a defensive posture in the initial stage of the campaign. Later on, as part of the unified process, the plan was to launch resolute counter-attacks and all-out offensive operations.” Also, the advantage of mobility in defensive operations was emphasized in this journal-bound staff ride: “the Kursk battle enriched the domestic military art with experience of creating deep, multi-layered, active, and stable defense, conducting flexible and decisive maneuvers using capabilities in defensive and offensive actions” and also the operational art displayed at Kursk “solved the issue of establishing predetermined, positioned, impenetrable, and active defense. . . .” Some of the other lessons-learned that conformed to contemporary General Staff messaging included “Guerrilla war also contributed to the success at Kursk” and “Today, some Western historians are shamelessly trying to rewrite history by diminishing the significance of the Red Army’s victory near Kursk.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm, Vainer)**

**Source:** D. Samosvat and A. Kurshev, “Курская Битва. Её роль и значение в ходе войны (The Battle of Kursk. Its Role and Meaning in the Way of War),” *Armeski Sbornik*, June 2018, pp. 67-76.

*In the realm of strategy, Soviet Supreme Command showed a creative approach to the planning of 1943 Summer-Fall campaign. An out-of-the-box idea was that the side that had strength in numbers deliberately handed the initiative to the other side and assumed defensive posture in the initial stage of the campaign. Later on, as part of the unified process, the plan was to launch resolute counter-attacks and all-out offensive action. Also successful was the creation of impenetrable defense in the operational and strategic sense. It was supported by a large number of mobile units. It began with artillery shelling from two fronts, large-scale maneuvering by strategic reinforcements, massive bombings of enemy main forces and reinforcements.*

*Soviet Supreme Command was quite inventive in generating ideas of counter-offensives in each direction, determining the targets for major strikes and ways to defeat enemy forces. A fine example of this was the Orel operation where Soviet troops delivered concentric strikes in the same general direction with subsequent dissection of enemy forces, destroying them in separate parts. In Belgorod-Kharkov operation, the main attack came from adjacent front flanks, which allowed quick penetration of deeply fortified enemy lines of defense, splitting up their forces in two groups and going in behind enemy defensive positions around Kharkov.*

*“The Kursk battle enriched the domestic military art.”*



Monument near Prokhorovka, site of the Battle of Prokhorovka during the Battle of Kursk of the Second World War.

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