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Changing Factors in Recent Soviet-Japanese Relations

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I Developments Since Gorbachev's Ascent to Power

The 5-year period since Gorbachev's ascent to the top leadership can roughly be divided into four phases as far as Japan-Soviet relations are concerned.

In the first phase (March 1985-autumn 1986), foreign ministers Eduard Shevardnadze and Shintarō Abe visited each other's country and agreements were made on such pending matters as tax, trade-payments, cultural exchange, resumption of the science and technology committee, and grave-visitations on the Northern Islands. After these agreements were made, it was expected that Soviet-Japanese relations would show a smooth upturn trend. Soviet spokesmen gave assurances that a visit by the CPSU's General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to Tokyo would be scheduled in the near future. The second phase (fall 1986-fall 1987), however, was a period of stagnation and perhaps even a slight cooling in Japan-Soviet relations. This phase in Japan-Soviet relations appeared to be influenced by the deterioration in Soviet-U.S. relations, following the "rupture" of the U.S.-Soviet summit meeting at Reykjavik. Gorbachev's visit to Tokyo, which had seemed about to materialize, was postponed. Japan-Soviet relations were also adversely affected by Japan's participation in SDI research, "the Toshiba case," "spy" incidents, and the mutual expulsion of diplomats. However, both sides made efforts to minimize the damage in view of the importance of Japan-Soviet relations, and in the summer of 1987 visits by Japanese to graves on two of the Northern Islands (the Habomais group of islets and the Shikotan island) were able to take place as they had the previous summer. Also in September the Japan-Soviet foreign ministers' semi-formal talk was conducted as usual, taking advantage of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Owing to such restorative efforts, Japan-Soviet relations resumed their upward trend (the third phase: fall 1987-fall 1989). This phase was marked by a *de facto* recognition by the Soviets of the existence of the territorial issue. This change in attitude became clear after the spring of 1988, raising expectations for an improvement in Japan-Soviet relations. A fuller Soviet recognition of the existence of the territorial dispute has evolved gradually in the following fashion.

At first the Soviet Union allowed Japanese spokesmen to use the Soviet media to inform the Soviet people that unsolved territorial issues exist between the two countries. Examples include the televised speech by Japanese Ambassador Toshiaki Mutō on the Emperor's birthday (April 29, 1988); the speech by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO); and the publication of the same speech in IMEMO's major organ, *World Economy and International Affairs*(MEiMO), as well as in an unedited television interview (July, 1988).¹ Some Soviet scholars and think-tank people began to argue that, facing continued Japanese insistence on the unresolved territorial issue, the Soviet Union should at least acknowledge that the problem

exists. Some examples of such acknowledgement are statements by Dmitrii Petrov (head of the Japan department of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies) in *International Life* (July, 1988)²; Yuri Bandura (deputy editor) in *Moscow News* (October 30, 1988)³; and Leonid Mlechin in the *New Times* (November 4, 1988)⁴, and so forth.⁵ Moreover, those people who are considered to be Gorbachev's brain-trust and whom I call "semiofficial" policy-makers, began to make similar statements. One of the best example is an article by editorial writer Alexandr Bovin of the Soviet government organ *Izvestiia*. Bovin insisted that "It is necessary for the Soviet Union to acknowledge the existence of the territorial issue and announce that we are ready to discuss it."⁶ During his second visit to Tokyo in December 1988, Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze agreed on establishing a peace-treaty working group at the vice-foreign minister level for discussion on a peace treaty between Japan and the USSR.⁷ Considering the Soviet Foreign minister's visit to Japan as a watershed in the Soviet attitude toward the Northern Territories issue, Sergei Agafanov, *Izvestiia's* Tokyo correspondent, wrote about a year later; "If we call the things by their names, then a year ago the Soviet side agreed for the first time in recent years to discuss the territorial question with Japan, *departing from the thesis that such an issue does not exist at all.*"⁸ (italic-added)

In 1989, some Soviet radical reformists began to propose that the Soviet Union should return all of the islands to Japan. In the September 6, 1989, issue of *Izvestiia*, Bitautus Lamdsbergis, then chairman of the *Sajudis* and later chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Republic, made the following statement in an interview with a Japanese newspaper; "We share a common goal and common hope with those Japanese social organizations which have been requesting the return of 'the Northern Territories'. If we work together in cooperation, it could be beneficial to both parties. The USSR government should be aware that there is an opinion (within the Soviet Union) that it should cease occupation of the territory and return it."⁹ During his visit to Japan in late October, 1989, not long before his death, Dr. Andrei Sakharov, Nobel prize laureate, indicated that these islands belong to Japan.¹⁰ Iurii Afanashev, rector of the Moscow State Historical Archive Institute and one of the most outspoken crusaders for radical reform of the Soviet system, proposed a three-stage formula for returning the four islands to Japan.¹¹ When this proposal was made at a meeting of the "Inter-Regional Group (MRG)" on November 5, 1990, it reportedly received a big applause from an audience of about 15,000.¹² Despite the criticism made against such a view on *Pravda*,¹³ Afanashev maintained this opinion during his visit in Japan in November of the same year.¹⁴

The fourth distinct phase in Soviet-Japanese relations began with the announcement of Gorbachev's planned visit to Tokyo in 1991, which was made public by Shevardnadze during a meeting with his new Japanese counterpart Tarô Nakayama in New York on September 27, 1989. The Soviets have since been undertaking some preparatory measures in order to make the visit successful. In November, 1989, the Number Two man in the Kremlin, Aleksandr Yakovlev, was sent to Tokyo to try and gauge the degree of consensus behind the Japanese demands for the return of the islands. In January 1990, the Soviets established a Japan/Pacific Center within the IMEMO, Soviet Academy of Sciences, the presti-

gious “think tank” which until very recently had been headed by such currently influential advisors to Gorbachev as Yakovlev and Evgenii Primakov.¹⁵ In February of the same year the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) was also reorganized and now includes two departments on Japan—one dealing with Japanese domestic affairs and the other, exclusively with Soviet-Japanese relations.¹⁶ In March of the same year, in appointing his Presidential Council, the highest policy-making institution under the new Soviet political system, Gorbachev chose the majority of the 15 members from his close reform-oriented aids, including those foreign policy advisors who are frequent visitors to Tokyo, such as Shevardnadze, Yakovlev and Primakov. In July of the same year it was announced that the Soviet MID would appoint Ludvig Chizhov, director of the MID’s Pacific-Southeast Asian Nations Bureau and a veteran Japanologist, as the new ambassador to Tokyo, replacing Nikolai Soloviev, who will move to Beijing as the new ambassador to the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

As the great opportunity for breaking the ice in the longstalemated relations between two neighboring nations appears to be at last approaching, some Japanese politicians have started to show an interest in playing a role in the breakthrough process. Some of them, however, appear only to be seeking to take advantage of this opportunity in order to pursue their own political ambitions. These politicians may indeed all be serious in their intentions to solve the territorial dispute which has continued since the end of World War II. However, certain Japanese politicians are aiming at playing a key instrumental role in the historical moment in the hope that their name will be remembered in their electorate. The following are a few examples in which such suspicions seem difficult to deny.

During his meeting with Gorbachev in the Kremlin in January, 1990, Sinterô Abe, the former General Secretary of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and foreign minister, did not dare to use the term “Northern Territories.” Instead, he simply urged Gorbachev to make an effort to solve “difficulties” between the two countries. Furthermore, Abe’s eight-point proposal hinted that he may not adhere to the cardinal principle of Japanese foreign policy toward the Soviet Union: non-separation of economics from politics.¹⁷ In February of the same year, Ichirô Ozawa, LDP’s current General Secretary, also made a statement, which gave a stronger impression that he does not stick to that principle any longer.¹⁸ It is not surprising that Gorbachev has extended an invitation to Ozawa to visit Moscow. Shin Kanemaru, one of the LDP’s most influential senior politicians, also made a misleading statement. In his April 23, 1990, speech at Fukuoka city, he caused quite a sensation by his statement: “When the Soviets finally decide to return the islands to Japan, it is not appropriate for Japan to ask them how many islands—two or four—they are willing to return.”¹⁹ These statements cited above can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, they may be deliberately sending an encouraging message, in which the Soviet leadership would find an incentive to make a bold decision. The Soviet favor would be rewarded by Japan’s favor (a “warm wind” strategy in an Aesop’s Fable.) On the other hand, however, a strong criticism can be made by pointing out that these statements by LDP politicians have deviated from Japan’s traditional Soviet policy which regards the solution of the territorial issues as the *sine qua non* for improvement in other fields (a “cold wind” strategy). It is interesting to note that Vladimir Ivanov and Georgii

Kudnadze, two Japan specialists at the IMEMO, differ in their assessments of, for example, Abe's behavior and statements. Ivanov highly praises Abe's eight-point proposal, considering it as a very "constructive" approach.²⁰ In contrast, Kudnadze expressed great disappointment in Abe, who, he feels has sent Gorbachev a misleading message as if Japan were not necessarily firmly united on the islands issue. Abe's ambiguous statement was a blow to Kudnadze and other Soviet specialists who otherwise have been trying hard to persuade Gorbachev that there was no other alternative for improving Soviet-Japanese relations except the return of the entire four islands.²¹

While some zigzagging took place, with the ascension of Gorbachev to the Soviet top leadership, Japan-Soviet relations can basically be said to have started off in a direction favorable for their improvement. There are five grounds that warrant such a view. First, the Gorbachev regime has greatly improved the Soviets stance toward Japan which used to be one of contempt. This is clearly exemplified in the statements by General Secretary Gorbachev himself. In his very famous speech at Vladivostok in the summer of 1986, he described Japan as "a power of front-rank importance."²² Judging from the context of his speech he was showing respect for Japan as an *economic* superpower. In his interview with the *Merdeka* magazine in the summer of 1987, he emphasized that Japan was beginning to "play an increasingly more salient role in international *politics*" as well.²³ Moreover, in his Krasnoyarsk speech of September, 1988, he stated that while the defense expenditure by Japan of one percent of its GNP is fairly modest, Japan retains the potential of transforming itself into a greater *military* power, and the Soviet Union hopes that it does not.²⁴ In short, the present Soviet perception of Japan is as follows. Japan is not only an *economic* superpower, but is also becoming a *political* power in the international scene, and also possesses a potential, which the Soviet Union hopes it will never use, for becoming a *military* superpower.

A second ground which supports the view of improving relations is that in the five years since the inception of the Gorbachev regime, although imperfectly and at irregular intervals, the two countries have held six regular foreign ministerial meetings and six additional foreign ministerial get-togethers. Vice-foreign ministerial level talks have also been held on a continuous basis. The permanent working group for the conclusion of a peace treaty at the vice-foreign ministerial level has already held five meetings. Third, through such foreign ministers' meetings held six times in the past, the outstanding issues between the two countries have mostly been resolved, agreed upon, or signed—with the exception of the difficult problem of a peace treaty. In addition to the five foregoing agreements, a migratory-bird agreement and an earthquake disaster cooperation accord were signed. A fourth example of favorable efforts is the announcement of Gorbachev's visit to Japan in 1991 and its recent confirmation. If realized, it will be a historically unprecedented event in Soviet-Japanese relations. Fifthly, we can also point out the fact that Japan-Soviet trade has been growing at an encouraging rate. The bilateral trade volume of U. S. \$4.1 billion (1985), \$5.1 billion (1986), \$4.9 billion (1987), \$5.9 billion (1988), and \$6 billion (1989) has been by far the largest in the Asia-Pacific region. Among the Western countries, Japan is the Soviet Union's largest trading partner, following West German and Finland.

In these respects, at least, we can say that today's Japan-Soviet relations are normal.

On the other hand, it can also be said that Japan-Soviet relations have not exhausted the potentials for improvement. First, there are still possibilities for enlarged trade and economic exchanges between the two nations. The economic systems of Japan and the Soviet Union and certainly different and the degree, to which their economies can complement each other is decreasing. Still, in view of the fact that Japan's trade with the PRC aggregates as much as U. S. \$15.6 billion, there should be no reason why trade with the Soviet Union should not increase closer to the level of that with PRC. An area which has greater potential for improvement than the economy is that of politics and diplomacy. It is not normal and even abnormal that the two countries have yet to sign a peace treaty forty-five years after the end of the second World War. In this respect, Japan-Soviet relations certainly cannot be categorized as normal. Despite the fact that both countries acknowledge the necessity, a peace treaty has not been signed. Naturally both sides maintain different opinions as to why a conclusion of a peace treaty has not been possible. The Japanese side has maintained that the obstacle has been the Soviet attitude of refusing to consider the return of what Japan claims is its inherent territory. The Soviets, for their part, assert that the bottleneck has been Japan's intransigent attitude in making the return of the islands the precondition for improvement in bilateral relations.

II Changing Soviet Policies Regarding Soviet-Japanese Relations

Based on the recent developments thus far discussed in Japan-Soviet relations, I would like to discuss next what I regard as a salient feature of Gorbachev's Japan policies. Some of them represent a significant departure from his predecessors'.

[1] *US-Japanese Security Treaty*

The first is a changing view on the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty. The U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty constitutes the core of relations between Tokyo and Washington. It symbolizes the close relationship between the two countries, linking the national security of Japan closely with that of the United States. The Soviet attitude toward the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty has remained unchanged up to now but has recently shown some signs of change. In the past the Soviets were uncompromisingly opposed to such a security arrangement. With recent changes taking place in the world, particularly the rise of Japan's clout, however, the Soviets now appear to be reconsidering the significance of the Treaty, assessing in a more sober fashion the role which it actually plays. Let me briefly explain such change and its background factors behind it.

When the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty was first signed in San Francisco in 1951, the Soviet Union under Stalin opposed its signing as bitterly, as it boycotted the peace treaty with Japan. Such a Soviet reaction was quite understandable and even natural, because the Treaty was obviously a part of the U. S. efforts to formulate a military alliance network against the USSR. It did not take long, however, before Moscow started to consider it very inconvenient not to have any

diplomatic relationship with Tokyo. In the wake of the demise of Stalin, the Soviet Union under Khrushchev normalized its diplomatic relationship with Japan in 1956, yet was unable to conclude a peace treaty, due to the dispute concerning the Northern Territories, —the Habomais group of islets and the islands of Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu off the north-eastern coast of Hokkaido, which were seized by the Soviet troops at the end of World War II but claimed by Tokyo as Japanese sovereignty. In the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration in 1956 Moscow went only so far as to promise to hand over the Habomais and Shikotan upon signing of a peace treaty.

In 1960, the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty was revised so that it became more equitable and hence advantageous to Japan. Yet, such a revision was not sufficient enough to soften the Soviet attitude. On the contrary, under Khrushchev the Soviet Union was infuriated. Infuriation over the revision even led to the withdrawing of the Soviet's previously-made offer concerning the Habomais and Shikotan islands. Khrushchev sent a memorandum to Tokyo, stating: Unless Tokyo abrogates the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty and gets rid of all the U. S. military bases on Japanese territory, the Soviet Union will withdraw the offer to hand over Habomais and Shikotan to Japan. This was an unprecedented action, violating international laws and regulations. To begin with, it was an interference in the foreign and defense policy of Japan which is an independent state. Moreover, it represented an unilateral attempt on the Soviet side to impose a new, additional condition on the reversion of the two islands, which had been stipulated in article 9 of the 1956 Joint Declaration that was signed and ratified by the both Japan and Soviet Union. I am not arguing here whether such a Soviet memorandum is legally valid or not. What I want to underline in the current context of this Chapter is how seriously the Soviet Union at that time took the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty.

An important question to be raised is whether or not there is a possibility for improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations as long as Japan remains a close ally of the United States. In recent years the Soviet leadership has regarded as a cornerstone of its conduct of foreign relations the policy of peaceful coexistence with those countries which have a political-economic system different from the Soviet Union. Starting from the early 1970s the Soviet Union has also embarked upon a policy of promoting closer economic cooperation with advanced capitalist countries, most of which have more or less military-strategically allied relations with the United States, including the NATO-member states. Under such circumstances, if the Soviets reply negatively to the above-raised question, it would mean an almost automatically closing of the door for improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations, simply because it is very hard and even almost impossible to expect Tokyo to give up its close defense relations with Washington. It would be utterly unrealistic for the Soviets to envisage that the Japanese government will take such a course in the foreseeable near future. It would be much wiser, then, for Moscow to try improve its relations with Japan as much as possible, accepting Japan's close ties with the U. S. Precisely such a view seems to be appearing and gaining popularity now among Soviet Japan specialists.

After Gorbachev came to power, the Soviet view on the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty has changed clearly into more realistic acceptance of the security

arrangement as a *fait accompli*. In 1987, Konstantin Sarkisov, head of the Japan Section of the Institute of Oriental Studies, told the author of this paper during a private conversation that: "We believe that even with the existence and continuation of the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty there still exists considerable room for improvement in our relations with your country." To my question as to whether he considered it an appropriate action for the Soviet Union to send the aforementioned memorandum in 1960, protesting the revised U. S.-Japan Security Treaty, he advised me to forget completely about that memorandum as if the Soviets had not done such a foolish thing. A year later, stating in a conference, whose proceeding was published in the *MEiMO*, Sarkisov made it clear: "Our attitude to the Japanese-U. S. military-political alliance is essentially obsolete. The alliance is aggressive and is directed against us. It adds to confrontational elements in the region. But our attitude to it—an attitude formulated in the 1960s—is morally outdated. It is out of keeping with today's political realities."²⁵ The Gorbachev government's official position on the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty was articulated in May, 1989. In a foreign-ministerial level meeting Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze said to his Japanese counterpart at that time, Sôsukey Uno: "The Soviet position on the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty has remained unchanged. We are opposed in principle to the stationing of foreign troops in any country. What is important at the same time, however, is that, insofar as Soviet-Japanese relations are concerned, the Soviet Union considers it possible to start negotiations on a Soviet-Japanese peace treaty and conclude the treaty, *even under such circumstances that the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty exists.*"²⁶ (italic—added) A year later, in May, 1990, four Japan specialists, including Sarkisov, in the Soviet Union expressed the view that the memorandum issued by Moscow in 1960 to Tokyo is to be nullified on the grounds that no country has a legal right to cancel unilaterally an official legal agreement which has been signed by two governments.²⁷ In a similar vein, Mikhail Titarenko, director of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, stated that "the memorandum is to be canceled, as it was a wrong decision made by the overestimation of the threat (to the USSR) from the U. S.-Japanese Security Treaty."²⁸

Going one step further, can one dare to speculate that the Soviets may even perhaps prefer a Japan controlled within the framework of the U. S. military-strategic system to a complete free, independent, and perhaps militarily strong Japan, which could be more harmful to Soviet interests. Lilita Dzirkals, a senior researcher at the Rand Corporation, for instance, argued as early as 1977 that "some Soviet spokesmen" do not necessarily advocate abolishing the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty or talking Japan out of the U. S. military-strategic system."²⁹ Their basic assumption seems to be that "U. S. control over Japan would be guided by the primacy assigned by the United States to its relationship with the Soviet Union and hence could constitute a restraining influence on Japan."³⁰ Instead, they [some Soviet spokesmen] suggest possibilities for enhancing Japan's autonomy *within the framework of her alliance with the U. S.*"³¹ (italic—added) As long as one continues to read Soviet official writings in their literal sense, one can never find the right answer to this extremely sensitive question. The Soviet attitude toward a unified Germany and its position with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) may help us understand the Soviets true feelings on this

question. Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and their official spokesmen have until now adhered to the position that the USSR is opposed to the idea of a united Germany being a full-fledged member of NATO. Major General Geli V. Batenin, a military expert at the CPSU's Central Committee, however, considers it more realistic for a united Germany to join NATO, arguing that a "neutral, non-allied, unified Germany will not fit well in with the security interests of Europe."³² It seems that, while Gorbachev and Shevardnadze and their spokesmen simply convey the Soviet's official position, Batenin may be disclosing the true Soviet feelings. It appears to me simply to be a matter of time before the Soviet leadership will eventually adopt Batenin's view. What Batenin is advocating is not simply an accommodation with realities but also an expression of policy preference of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union wants a merged Germany to be embedded in, and controlled by, the security framework of NATO, the institution that channels U. S. influence into Europe, rather than to become a neutral and militarily independent power. The Soviet leadership may, in my judgment, view Japan in a similar light.

[2] *Desire for Full-Blooded Relations*

The next question I would like to discuss is what kind of Soviet-Japanese relations the current Soviet leadership wishes to develop. Also, related to this, what kind of diplomatic concessions would the Soviet Union under Gorbachev be prepared to offer regarding the territorial issue in order to establish such a relationship?

Insofar as the current Soviet leadership maintains the *status quo*, without making any positive initiative from its side to break the stalemate, it is almost certain that the Japan-Soviet relations will create more or less the same locus as in the Brezhnev-Gromyko period. The Soviet Union will not be able to hope for major changes in such areas as economic, scientific, and technological exchange and the improvement of mutual images. Therefore, if the Soviet Union wishes to improve its relations with Japan it will have to adopt policies that differ considerably from those which presently exist. The first thing that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev is expected to do in this regard is withdrawal of its military troops from the Northern Territories. If the Soviet Union does so—whether precipitately or by degrees—this would be a great step forward in reducing the Soviet threat as perceived by the Japanese. If the Soviet Union wishes drastically to improve its relations with Japan, however, it must return the four Northern Islands. A makeshift compromise of returning only two of the islands will not significantly improve relations. To illustrate this last point, let me examine the Soviet options specifically regarding the territorial issue.

(1) The first is what I call *the zero-island option*. Starting approximately from July, 1988, "private" scholars and *mezhdunarodniki* in the Soviet Union have sounded out the Japanese side in a manner similar to sending up observation *ballon d'essai*, by suggesting such possibilities as (a) joint possession over the islands,³³ (b) their leasing,³⁴ (c) the "Senkaku Islands" formula of shelving the issue,³⁵ or (d) turning them into a "special economic zone."³⁶ All of these look like compromises to be made by the part of the Soviets. To the extent, however, that the Soviet Union will retain sovereignty over the four islands, they are formulas that

are more disadvantageous to Japan than having two of the islands returned, and hence will never be accepted by the Japanese. (2) *Intermediate formulas which are akin to returning only two of the islands.* There might include variations, such as first returning two of the islands and then jointly developing the rest.³⁷ For the same reasons as not accepting the proposal to return only two of the islands, the Japanese side would not accept this idea.

(3) *Returning two or four.* Today, returning only two of the islands is no longer a viable option. This is because this will not truly resolve the problem between the two countries and will leave a residue of ill feelings. The Soviet Union has promised to "hand over" to Japan the two islands of Habomai and Shikotan (only seven percent of the total area of the Northern Territories) in the 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration. Even at that time, Japan considered such an offer not sufficient and requested the return of all four islands. Since that time the controversy over the Northern Territories has revolved around the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu. Also, since that time, Japan's national strength has expanded phenomenally and the Japanese have become more confident in their bargaining position. One cannot ignore the quiet rise of nationalism in Japan. It is unthinkable that Japan can agree to today something it could not agree to thirty-four years ago.

Returning two of the islands is not necessarily a wise idea even for the Soviet side. In 1956 the Soviet Union wished to conclude a peace treaty by returning two of the islands. What it wants from Japan today, however, is not simply to conclude a peace treaty, but to improve relations through the treaty and to obtain the active, voluntary cooperation of the Japanese government, business community, and the general public, without which the mere signing of a legal document (a paper victory) would not be of much help to the Soviet Union's *perestroika* which is now facing a serious crisis. In the evening of December 18, 1988, when foreign minister Shevardnadze arrived for the second time in Tokyo, he stated that he wished to transform the Soviet-Japan relations into relations that are "full-blooded, good-neighborly, and large-scale (*polnokrovnyye, dobrososedskie, masshtabnyye*)".³⁸ In the press-conference of May 17, 1989, in Beijing Gorbachev also made it clear that what the Soviet Union wants to establish with Japan is "full-blooded [*polnokrovnyye*]" relations.³⁹ I believe that both Soviet leaders were sincere. More concretely, the Soviet Union today seeks from Japan cooperation in the form of financial investment of long-term, cheap-interest credits from semi-governmental and private banks as well as more active participation in joint ventures and in the "special economic zones" by large Japanese corporations, and transfer and training not only in technology but management know-how on a long-term, stable basis. The Soviet Union also expects Tokyo's endorsement of the USSR's entry as a full-fledged member in the Pacific Economic Cooperation Committee (PECC), the Asia Development Bank (ADB), and other international organizations. If, however, Moscow insists on returning only two of the islands, it will fail to motivate the government, business community and the general public in Japan into such active cooperation. As a practical issue, therefore, it will be difficult for the two countries to develop mutual trust by any other expedient. Of course, to do so the Soviet side must make a major political decision, but it appears that only then the Soviet Union can expect Japan to actively help it

succeed in its *perestroika*.

[3] *Exploring a Compromising Formula*

However, things are easier said than done. It is true that the Soviets have been increasingly showing that they realize the need to shift to a more flexible position on the Northern Territories issue in order to establish "full-blooded" relations between Japan and the Soviet Union. Yet, as this writing, they are still unwilling to give up all four of the islands. "A third way" approach provides a typical illustration of such hesitancy. The visit by Aleksandr Yakovlev, Gorbachev's closest confidant and the Number Two man in the Soviet hierarchy, to Japan in November, 1989, was an important event in Soviet-Japanese relations. During his meeting with Ichirō Ozawa, the LDP's Secretary General and one of the most future-promising Japanese politicians, Yakovlev stated that the Soviet Union would study whether there was a "third way" (*tretii put'*) to settle the territorial issue.⁴⁰ These words created quite a sensation in Japan, although they remain a mysterious with no clarification as to the exact meaning. At a press-conference Mr. Yakovlev himself, seemingly surprised by the sensational treatment that his remark evoked, asked Japanese journalists not to scrutinize these words as if they were "examining them through a microscope."⁴¹ Taking his request at face value what Yakovlev seems to be saying is, "the third way" is such a vague idea that even he himself could not clarify what it exactly means.

Why, then, was Yakovlev unable to provide the Japanese with any concrete substantial content of the "third way"? Two interpretations are possible. One may be the consideration that it would be not wise to disclose what it really mean before Gorbachev's visit to Tokyo. Personally, though, I do not believe this to be the correct interpretation. I regard Yakovlev's visit to Tokyo as a reconnaissance trip to try to establish the price of the "gift" his boss should bring to the Japanese people in 1991. If Gorbachev's basic policy line toward Japan had already been decided, Yakovlev could have disclosed a little bit more boldly the content of "the third way," and thereby test the response from the Japanese. However, Yakovlev was not in a position to do so. Another interpretation, which I subscribe to, is that both the domestic and external situations in which the current Soviet Union finds itself are so fluid and volatile that it is difficult for Gorbachev to formulate a Japan policy. Demands by national minorities for re-demarcation of their borders; a deteriorating economy, particularly shortages in foodstuffs and basic consumer goods; the membership question of a united Germany in NATO, disarmament and arms control in Northeast Asia, surrounding Japan: All these are closely linked with the question of how to respond to Japan's request for the return of the Northern Islands.⁴² If Gorbachev's policy had already been formulated, his visit to Tokyo would be possible in 1990, not 1991.

Let me move to more substantial discussion on the content of the "third way." The third way rejects the first and the second ways,—proposals which have been advocated by respectively the Soviet Union and Japan. The Japanese position demands the immediate return of the entire four islands without compensation, whereas the Soviet position negates entirely such a Japanese request. The third way thus means the compromising formula of these two diametrically opposing positions. If such an interpretation of the third way is appropriate, the following

three points can be made. First, Yakovlev himself now does not consider appropriate the Soviet's former position that a territorial dispute does not exist between the two countries. Secondly, he does not regard Tokyo's request as being acceptable to Moscow either. Thirdly, he is searching for a compromising formula which would include positions of both states. To recapitulate, what Yakovlev was proposing in Japan can be interpreted as a hint of a Soviet concession on the territorial debate and at the same time as a request for some compromises to be made by the Japanese side as well.

Commenting on Yakovlev's visit to Tokyo, S. Agafonov wrote in *Izvestiia* of the necessity of hammering out "a mutually-acceptable (*vzaimopriemlemyi*) third way."⁴³ If one may assume that Yakovlev is against using the word "*mutually-acceptable*" before his own term "a third way", then he will lose his claim to be unique in his proposal, since almost all other Soviet officials and Japan specialists have also been using the same expression, i. e., *mutually acceptable*, when talking about a solution to the Northern Territories dispute between Japan and the Soviet Union. This includes officials at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) such as Igor' Rogachev,⁴⁴ and even such hard-liners as Vsevolod Ovchinnikov,⁴⁵ as well as those who are viewed as the most flexible scholars, such as Kudnadze,⁴⁶ Sarkisov,⁴⁷ Aleksei Vogaturov,⁴⁸ and others.⁴⁹

[4] *Economic Rationality v. s. Prestige*

Why, then, is the Gorbachev leadership still hesitant about giving up all four islands to Japan in exchange for financial, technological and managerial benefits? Are economic benefits powerful enough to serve as an incentive for the Gorbachev leadership to make a diplomatic concession? In order to answer these questions I must discuss another salient trend, which has surfaced under Gorbachev's Soviet Union.

Once negotiations start, a deal may be made in which the economically weak side, the USSR, will agree to hand over in exchange for economic benefits the disputed islands to the economically strong side, Japan. There is no doubt that at present the USSR under Gorbachev badly needs Japanese credit, consumer goods, and managerial techniques. From an exclusively economic vantage point, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that Gorbachev has no other choice but to give up all the Northern Islands. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, during unofficial talks at the U. S.-Soviet summit talks in Washington, D. C. on May 30-June 2, 1990, Gorbachev disclosed his intentions to a top U. S. official that he would be ready to make a deal with Japan over the Northern Territories if Japan was willing to provide immediate tangible assistance to the Soviet Union in the form of goods, investment and joint ventures.⁵⁰ Similarly, according to another source, when U. S. President George Bush brought up the Northern Territories issue during unofficial talks with Gorbachev on June 2, 1990, at Camp David, Md., the Soviet President said that it was a bilateral issue between the Soviet Union and Japan but added that "we cannot be sure about what Japan would have to offer in return."⁵¹ If it is correct that both or even either one of these remarks was really made by Gorbachev it would be the first time that a Soviet leader has linked the Northern Territories issue with economic assistance by Japan to the USSR. Previously, Anatolii Lukianov, one of Gorbachev's faithful aids and chair-

man of the USSR's Supreme Soviet, had been saying as follows: "The fact that the Soviet Union is anxious to obtain technology from Japan does not mean that it is willing to give political concession to Japan."⁵² Gorbachev now seems to hold a different view. Naturally, though, economics does not constitute the sole determinant of Soviet foreign policy behavior.

Currently, a debate has been taking place in the Soviet Union as to the question of whether it is appropriate for the Soviet Union to make an economic deal with Japan over the islands. Two opposing views seem to exist with regard to the question of Soviet reliance on economic assistance from Japan. One school of thought argues that the Soviet Union is not capable of helping itself, and so there is no other alternative but to cultivate Soviet resources with aid from Japan. The other group argues that it is better to remain in a materially poor situation rather than be exploited by the economic giant, Japan. This reminds us of the famous debate between Slavophiles and *Zapodniki* (Westernizers) concerning Russian thought of the 19th-20th century. Controversy, which has continuously appeared in *Sovetskii Sakhalin* since December, 1989, provides a good illustration of such a debate.⁵³ Vitalii Gulii, the peoples' deputy from Sakhalin *oblast'*, made a proposal that the Northern Territories be placed under Soviet-Japan joint possession and management so that not only these four islands but the entire Kuriles islands and Sakhalin can develop rapidly with economic and technological assistance from Japan. Since this proposal was made public, there has been a flood of letters to the editor of the newspaper, expressing both pros and cons to this proposal. The views opposing Gulii's are colored with very nationalistic tones, as in the following statements: "In the 'Northern Territories' issue the moral prestige of our nation in the world is at stake"; "Nobody can sell our sacred fatherland to the Japanese"; "We have to learn how to develop these areas by ourselves." Public opinion in the USSR on the Northern Territories issue appears to be deeply divided now, and it will take some time to reach any kind of consensus. And, in order to reach such a consensus, the political leadership must work very hard.

[5] *Yelstin Syndroms*

Recent changes and developments within and without the USSR have provided an impetus on the territorial disputes between Moscow and Tokyo. Their impetus are of both positive and negative kind to Japan.

Some developments *outside* the USSR appear to provide a favorable impetus to Tokyo. For a long time the Soviets have insisted to the Japanese that the international world order and the national boundary formulated at the end of the second world war must be preserved so that the stability and peace would be secured. The year 1989 witnessed that the cold war is almost over accompanying with the consequence of the collapse of the Yalta system of the post-world war II, the visible symbol of which is the fall of the Berlin Wall. The unification of the two Germanys has demonstrated that the national border drawn at the end of World war II is neither absolute nor final one, but can be amended without resorting to the military means.

The Soviets have indicated—not formerly though—that they are afraid that the return of the Northern islands to Japan would set a precedent of making

territorial border concessions. It appears, however, that the Sino-Soviet negotiations, and not the Japanese-Soviet negotiations, will set such a precedent for Soviet territorial concessions. During the too-wellknown speech at Vladivostok in 1986 Gorbachev stated that the Soviet Union follow the international practice of accepting the major river ship channels between the USSR and neighboring countries as the national border. Thanks to this Soviet recognition of international law, the Soviet Union and the PRC have reached an agreement on almost of all of their eastern borders with the exception of Heixiazhi island. It has been very recently reported that both states have also agreed at last that even Heixiazhi island, which the USSR has occupied for the past century, belongs to the PRC and that the Soviet Union will pull out its military installations immediately and civilians gradually.⁵⁴ Having set such a precedent, one may expect Moscow may do a similar territorial concession to Tokyo in the near future.

What has been taking place *within* the USSR provides a mixed impact upon the Japan's claim over the Northern islands to the Soviet Union. Let us, first, point out some positive effect to Japan. Thanks to *glasnost*' policy, the varieties of views and opinions have appeared in the Soviet Union on the territorial issues. Late Andrei Sakharov, Yurii Afanasev and a few others have boldly proposed that the Soviet Union give up the entire four islands to Japan.⁵⁵ Bitautus Lamdsbergis, chairman of the *Sajudis* at that time and later chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Republic, made the following statement, as cited before: "We share a common goal and hope with those Japanese social organizations which have been requesting the return of 'Northern Territories'."⁵⁶ To be sure, these are still voices of dissent or at least minority group in the Soviet Union, which must not be overestimated. On the other hand, however, an announcement of such support for Japan is ominous for the Kremlin with regard to the issue of the return of the four islands because such support exposes the fact that Soviet opinion is no longer the intractable monolith that it once was. Until now, the Kremlin has derived maximum benefit from its strategy of making the most from subtly differing stances of various Japanese groups with regard to the territorial issue. Although the playing field is still tilted in the Soviet Union's favor, it is no longer true that Soviet opinion is a single, unwavering opinion with Japan having a variety of opinions.

There is, however, another side side of the coin, a negative impact of some domestic development upon the Japan's claim over the Islands. *Glasnost*' policy has helped the ethnic-nationalist movements and demands arise, which ironically, have made the solution of the Soviet territorial disputes with Japan more difficult and complicated matter than before. For instance, demand by many union republics and autonomous republics that comprise the USSR for revision of national boundaries, which were arbitrarily drawn up in Stalin's time, make the Japanese similar demand difficult to be met by Moscow. Submitting to the Japanese request would be dangerous for the Gorbachev leadership and may precipitate its downfall. A Soviet specialist on the Northeast Asia told me that "while the Soviet Union is concerned with the more serious problem of ethnic unrest, we cannot be concerned about territorial issue with Japan."⁵⁷ The election of Boris Yeltsin to the chairman of the RSFSR's Supreme Soviet also seems to have a negative impact upon a possible deal on the territorial issue between Gorbachev

and Tokyo. Yeltsin has made it public that the RSFSR conclude, quite independently from the USSR, a peace treaty with Japan. The Declaration of Sovereignty adopted by his Supreme Soviet stipulates that the territory of the RSFSR cannot be changed without the will of the people as expressed by the means of a referendum.⁵⁸ Yeltsin's own proposal for solution of the territorial dispute with Japan in the so-called "five-stage formula" does not favor the return of the Islands to Japan.

NOTES

- 1 Ia. Nakasone, "Zalozhit' osnovy novogo mezhdunarodnogo soobshchestva," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 10 (October 1988), pp. 73-77. Also for a report on Nakasone's visit to Moscow by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shows that it was still taking an uncompromising position on the Northern Territories issue, see "SSSR-Iaponiia: priem M. S. Gorbachevym Ia. Nakasone 22 iul'ia 1988 g.," *Vestnik ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR*, No. 16 (September 1, 1988), pp. 1-2.
- 2 "Vladivostokskie initsiativy: dva goda spustia," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, No. 7 (July 1988), p. 145.
- 3 Iurii Bandura, "Ostrye ugly 'kruglogo stola'," *Moskovskie novosti*, No. 44 (October 30, 1988), p. 5.
- 4 Leonid Mlechin, "SSSR-Iaponiia: politika—iskusstvo vozmozhnogo," *Novoe vremia*, No. 45 (November 4, 1988), p. 14.
- 5 More recently, V. Lukin and K. Sarkisov have made it crystal clear that "the Northern Territories question exists." V. Lukin, G. Kunadze, K. Sarkisov, I. Tyshetskii, "Nesushchestvuiushchii' vopros," *Ogonek*, No. 20 (May 12-19, 1990), p. 16.
- 6 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 22, 1988; *Mainichi Shimbun*, January 4, 1989.
- 7 For more detail, see Hiroshi Kimura, "The Soviet-Japanese Territorial Dispute," *The Harriman Institute FORUM*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (June 1989), 8p.
- 8 S. Agafonov, "Tokiiskaia zagadka, ili o pol'ze mezhp Parlamenskikh obmenov," *Izvestiia*, November 17, 1989.
- 9 "Strannoe zhelanie," *Izvestiia*, September 6, 1989.
- 10 *Asahi Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Hokkaido Shimbun*, October 27, 1989.
- 11 *Asahi Shimbun*, October 19, 1989; *Pozitsiia*, No. 4 (December 1989), p. 1.
- 12 *Asahi Shimbun*, November 5, 1989.
- 13 Igor' Latyshev, "Bezotvetstvennost'," *Izvestiia*, October 20, 1989.
- 14 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, October 22, 1989.
- 15 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 13, 1990.
- 16 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, February 1, 1990; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, February 2, 1990.
- 17 *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, *Hokkaido Shimbun*, *Izvestiia*, January 16, 1990.
- 18 *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, March 14, 1990.
- 19 *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 14, 1990.
- 20 His public oral statements made in the conference at Australia-Japan

- Research Center, the Australian National University, Canberra, on February 5-6, 1990, in which the author of this chapter also took part.
- 21 Based on informal conversation with Kunadze.
 - 22 *Pravda*, July 29, 1986.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, July 21, 1987.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, September 18, 1988.
 - 25 "Vladivostokskie initsiativy," p. 147.
 - 26 *Asahi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 4, 1989.
 - 27 Lukin, *et al.*, "'Nesushchestvuiushchii' vopros," p. 18. See also Georgii Kunadze, "V poiskakh novogo myshlenia: o politike SSSR v otnoshenii Iaponii," *Miravaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 8 (August 1990), p. 57.
 - 28 *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 31, 1990; See also Leonid Mlechin, "Chetyre ostrova i suverenitet Rossiia," *Novoe vremia*, No. 27 (July 1, 1990), pp. 13-14.
 - 29 Lilita Dzirkals, *Soviet Perceptions of Security in East Asia: A Survey of Soviet Media Comment* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1977), p. 40.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 - 32 G. V. Batenin, "Bevorzugte Variante: Ganz Deutschland in der NATO," *Berliner Zeitung*, May 4, 1990; *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 5, 1990, and *Asahi Shimbun* (evening edition), May 7, 1990.
 - 33 Georgii Kunadze, "Sostoianie i perspektivy sovetsko-iaponskikh otnoshenii," unpublished paper read at the Soviet-Japanese joint symposium held at the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA), Tokyo, on July 20-21, 1988 p. 9; Vitalii V. Gulii, "Tretii put'," *Sovetskii Sakhalin*, December 5, 1989. p. 2.
 - 34 *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, September 19 and 20, 1988; *The New York Times*, September 22, 1988. See also *Izvestiia*, September 28, 1988.
 - 35 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 26, 1988; *Sankei Shimbun*, October 29, 1988; *Pravda*, December 15, 1988; *Pravda*, May 6, 1989, p. 1.
 - 36 Gulii, "'Severnye territorii,'" *Novoe vremia*, No. 49 (December 1, 1989), p. 19.
 - 37 For example, Mikhail Titarenko proposed the formula of the return of two islands upon conclusion of a peace treaty and postponement of the decision on the remaining two for the next generation. *Asahi Shimbun*, February 8, 1988.
 - 38 *Pravda*, December 20, 1988.
 - 39 *Ibid.*, May 17, 1989.
 - 40 *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Hokkaido Shimbun*, November 14, 1989; *Izvestiia*, November 17, 1989; "Tretii put'—dialog (Interv'iu chlena Politbiuro TsK KPSS sekretaria TsK KPSS, Aleksandra Iakovleva)," *Novoe vremia*, No. 48 (November 24, 1989), p. 10.
 - 41 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 16, 1989.
 - 42 For more detail, see Hiroshi Kimura, "Recent Japan-Soviet Relations: Gorbachev's Dilemma and his Choices," in Peter Drysdale, ed., *Reforms in the Soviet Union and its Impact upon Asia-Pacific Region* (Canberra: Australia-Japan Research Center, The Australian National University, 1990) (forthcoming).
 - 43 S. Agafonov, "Tokiiskaia zagadka,..." *Izvestiia*, November 17, 1989, p. 6.
 - 44 I. Rogachev, "Pretenzii, lishennye osnovanii," *Izvestiia*, April 24, 1989.
 - 45 Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, "Ustupit' li Severnye territorii?," *Pravda*, April 22,

- 1990.
- 46 G. Kunadze, K. Sarkisov, "Razmyshleniia o sovetsko-iaponskikh otnosheniia-kh," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarognye otnosheniia*, No. 5 (May 1989), p. 93.
 - 47 *Ibid.*; Konsutanchin Sarukisofu, "Kaiketsu no tameno teishiki-zukuri o (Need to search for a formula for a solution)," *Sekai (the World)* (April 1990), pp. 144-145; K. Sarkisov *et al*, "Nesushchestvuiushchii' vopros," p. 16, 18, 19.
 - 48 Aleksei Bogaturov, "Diplomatiia pered vyborom: Sostiazanie v uporstve ili vzaimopriemlemyi pragmatizm," *Novoe vremia*, No. 32 (August 4, 1989), p. 20.
 - 49 B. N. Slavinskii, "Na puti k sovetsko-iaponskomu mirnomu dogovoru," *Problemy dal'nego vostoka*, No. 3 (1989), p. 144; Gulii, "Tretii put'," p. 1.
 - 50 *Yomiuri Shimbun (evening edition)*, June 8, 1990; *The Daily Yomiuri*, June 9, 1990.
 - 51 *Asahi Shimbun (evening edition)* and *Yomiuri Shimbun (evening edition)*, June 6, 1990; *The Daily Yomiuri*, June 7, 1990.
 - 52 *Sankei Shimbun*, October 20, 1988.
 - 53 Vitalii Gulii, "'Sovernnye territorii': Chto s nimi delat'?" *Novoe vremia*, No. 49 (December 1, 1989), pp. 18-19; V. Gulii, "Tretii put'," *Sovetskii Sakhalin*, December 5, 1989, p. 1, p. 3; M. Tereshko, "V otryve ot real'nosti," *Ibid.*, December 17, 1989; "Sakhalintsy o budushchem kuril", *Ibid.*, December 29, 1989, January 10, 1990, and February 2, 1990.
 - 54 *The Daily Yomiuri*, August 19, 1990.
 - 55 See footnotes (10), (11), and Viacheslav Chubarov, "Kogda slavalis' kamikadze ...," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, August 10, 1990.
 - 56 *Izvestiia*, September 6, 1989.
 - 57 Based on my private conversation with Dr. Mikhail G. Nosov, head of the Asian Section, the Institute of USA and Canada, the U. S. S. R.'s Academy of Sciences, in Moscow on September 9, 1989.
 - 58 *BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcast: Part I, USSR*, June 26, 1990, p. 83.