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The Northern Territories:  
130 Years of Japanese Talks  
with Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union

Fuji Kamiya

The territorial dispute between Japan and the Soviet Union over the four islands, that is, the Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu, that lie off the northeastern tip of Hokkaido has been one of the principal stumbling blocks in the relations between the two countries since the end of World War II. To gain some perspective on what is likely to be the future of Japanese—Soviet relations, it is necessary to review the evolution of this dispute in some depth, to assess the prospects for some eventual compromise, and to discuss the constraints on Japanese-Soviet relations in the absence of any compromise. This is what I propose to do in this chapter.

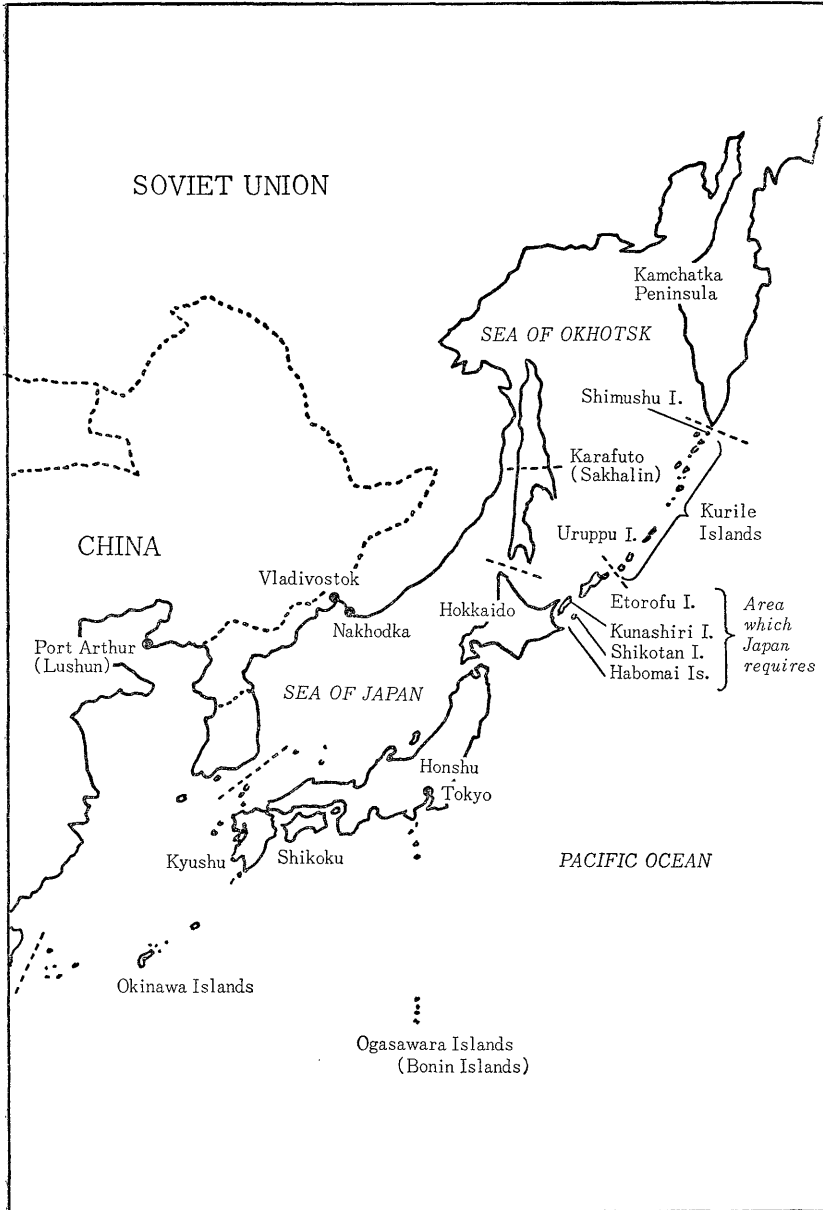
In the spring of 1951 General Omar Bradley, then chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, criticized General Douglas MacArthur's proposal to expand the Korean War into China as "the wrong war against the wrong enemy in the wrong place at the wrong time." In a similar way things seem generally to have been wrong with Japan's approach to the Northern Territories.

The first "wrong" thing is Japan's protagonist in the negotiations: the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is a tough bargainer on any question but on territorial issues it has shown a toughness unlike that of any other major power. Alone among the Allied powers, the Soviet Union gained territories through World War II. It went along with the Allies in disclaiming territorial ambitions and suggested that it might relinquish its occupied territories after the war. But whereas the other Allies did eventually give up their territories, if belatedly—it was not,

for example, until 1972 that the United States finally turned back the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands and Okinawa to Japan—Moscow distinguished itself by disregarding the Allied declarations and holding firmly onto the vast bulk of territories it took. Indeed, the Soviet Union has shown conspicuous intransigence on all territorial questions. Although it appeared somewhat conciliatory on certain territorial questions at different times, in general the Kremlin has seemed to consider nearly every piece of land acquired as vital to Soviet strategic security.

Japan, by contrast, has shown (by international standards) a very timid attitude about security matters. For the past fifteen years it has staunchly refused to permit its defense budget to rise above 1 percent of its gross national product. It has been extremely reluctant to build up the weaponry of its 240,000-man Self-Defense Forces. It has tended to put a low strategic value on disputed territories, particularly the Northern Territories. The growing interest Japan has shown in regaining the Northern Territories has been for entirely different reasons, which are historical and political. The two countries have thus approached the territorial question from opposite perspectives.

Timing has also been wrong in the Northern Territories dispute. There have been periods—as immediately after World War II, after Stalin's death in 1953, after the Cuban missile crisis in the early 1960s and Khrushchev's ouster soon after, and even until 1968—when the Soviet Union was politically vulnerable or militarily weak enough so that it might possibly have been pressured into negotiating on the issue. There have been periods—notably, in the mid-1950s, for a time in the 1960s, and during the heyday of détente in the early 1970s—when the Soviet Union showed a certain willingness to negotiate over at least some of the Northern Territories. There have been times when the Soviet Union wanted something from Japan, and an exchange of some sort might have been struck. Each time, however, either Japan has been caught ill-prepared to seize the opportunity to strike a bargain, or, for some other reason, the moment when negotiations might have been fruitful has passed without resolution of the dispute. The two countries have been consistently out of kilter, one might say, on the Northern



"A border yet unresolved": Japan's Northern Territories.

Territories issue. And, as time goes on, the possibility of resolving the issue in Japan's favor is lessened, if indeed it ever existed.

There is another wrong thing one could mention about the issue. It is that Japan and the Soviet Union have not alone controlled the outcome of the dispute, which has been affected by other powers as well. The United States, China, and Europe have all, at different times and from different perspectives, played a role in the Northern Territories dispute, complicating the issue and helping to prevent it from being resolved.

The Northern Territories issue remains, therefore, extremely contentious. There is no doubt that Japan has a traditional claim to the four islands, and most Japanese regard them as Japan's inalienable lands. It is also clear that the Soviet Union has physical control of the islands, and Japan does not possess the means to secure its claim. With these basic difficulties in mind, I would like to provide a brief history of Japan's negotiations with Czarist Russia and later with the Soviet Union on the Northern Territories before making some observations about the likely outcome of this dispute.

#### Before The Pacific War

Japan and Russia concluded two treaties in the pre-World War II period that bear directly on the Northern Territories issue. The first, concluded in the Tokugawa period, was the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation signed in 1855. The second, signed in the early Meiji period, was the Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kurile Islands of 1875.

Article 2 of the first treaty reads:

Henceforth the boundary between Japan and Russia will pass between the islands Etorofu and Uruppu. The whole island of Etorofu belongs to Japan and the whole island of Uruppu and the other Kurile Islands to the north constitute possessions of Russia. As regards the island Karafuto (Sakhalin), it remains unpartitioned between Japan and Russia, as has been the case up to this time.<sup>1</sup>

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1. *Hoppo Ryodo Mondai Shiryo Shu (Documents on the Northern Territories Problem [henceforth Documents.])* (Tokyo: Hoppo Ryodo Mondai Taisaku Kyokai, 1972), p. 1. Unless otherwise indicated, page citations in the text refer to *Documents*.

Thus, by the treaty Russia acknowledged the islands from Etorofu southward as being exclusively Japanese.

The Treaty of 1875 lists, in its article 2, eighteen islands of the Kuriles from Uruppu north to Shumshu, making it clear that they would be transferred to Japan. In exchange, Russia was to get all of Sakhalin. The four islands—the Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu—were not mentioned (p. 10). The Japan-Russia Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation therefore remained in force on the Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu. These four islands were evidently to remain Japanese.

Two other treaties concluded in the pre-World War II period should be mentioned. Although they do not deal directly with the Northern Territories as defined here, they do deal with nearby Sakhalin and they serve to mark the twists and turns in the fortunes of Japan and Russia.

The first of these is the Portsmouth Treaty, which marked the end of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Negotiated through the good offices of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, this treaty changed the status of Sakhalin: by its article 9 the treaty divided the island between Russia and Japan at the 50° north latitude (p. 17). Russia thus lost the southern half of Sakhalin as a result of its ignominious defeat in the war.

Russian rights to northern Sakhalin as well were threatened by a development that took place during Russia's Civil War. In the summer of 1918, taking advantage of the turmoil in Russia, Japan intervened in the struggle to occupy northern Sakhalin, along with parts of the Soviet Far East. The Russians thereby lost physical control even of that part of the island accorded to it under the Portsmouth Treaty.

The second Russo-Japanese treaty, concluded in 1925, merely reversed this new development. In 1925 Japan formally recognized the communist government of what had become the Soviet Union. The same year, the two nations signed a treaty setting out fundamental rules to govern their relations. Article 2 of the treaty says:

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics agrees to continue honoring in its entirety the Portsmouth Treaty of September 5, 1905. (p. 27)

In other words, the status quo ante—whereby Japan controlled all of Sakhalin south of the 50° latitude and the Russians controlled Sakhalin north of that latitude—was to prevail.

By these various agreements, then, Japan and Russia acknowledged Japanese claims to the four islands of the Habomais, Shikotan, Kuna-shiri, and Etorofu and to southern Sakhalin, while they agreed that the northern part of Sakhalin should be Russian. A division of territory had been arrived at. All this was to change dramatically with Japan's defeat in World War II.

### World War II and the Peace Settlement

Preparations for the postwar settlement in the Far East may be said to have begun with the Cairo Declaration, signed by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), Churchill, and Roosevelt in November 1943. It announced the Allies' intention to "restrain and punish the aggression of Japan," which was to be "stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of World War I in 1914" and "expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed" (p. 35). This would have covered the northern half of Sakhalin, but not the Kuriles that Japan acquired by peaceful means in the above-mentioned Treaty of 1875.

The Soviet Union was not represented in Cairo but Stalin had hastened—as soon as the Soviet Union joined the Allies in Europe—to press Soviet territorial claims there. Thus, when Stalin agreed at the Teheran Conference in December 1943 to enter the Pacific War, the Allies assumed he had a price. This price emerged in late 1944. The Russians wanted southern Sakhalin and all the Kurile Islands. And at Yalta, in February 1945, the United States accepted this price. President Roosevelt agreed that the southern half of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands would be handed over the Soviet Union at the end of the war (p. 35). The U.S. State Department had in fact prepared a memorandum for Roosevelt's use at Yalta, saying that the Russians had no legitimate claim to the four islands, although they did have a claim to the eighteen ones north of the four islands. Unfortunately, FDR did not read this

memorandum: he assumed that the Russians had a legitimate claim to all the Kuriles and apparently misunderstood that the four islands were part of it. The United States also agreed, at Soviet insistence, to keep this part of the Yalta agreement secret.<sup>2</sup>

The Yalta agreement was confirmed at Potsdam, in July of the same year. With the concurrence of Jiang Jieshi, Winston Churchill and Harry S. Truman, who had acceded to the U.S. presidency at FDR's death, declared that "Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kusu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine."<sup>3</sup> Japan was to be reduced virtually to the Japanese homeland. Its "unconditional surrender" was to be made clear.

Japan's actual surrender took place at a ceremony aboard the U.S. battleship *Missouri* on September 2, 1945, at which time the United States accepted Japan's surrender in behalf of the Allies. The same day Joseph Stalin issued the following statement:

On this day, Japan has admitted defeat and signed an unconditional surrender. This means that Southern Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands pass into the hands of the Soviet Union. Henceforth, the Kurile Islands shall not serve as a means to cut off the Soviet Union from the ocean or as a base for a Japanese attack on our Far East, but as a means to link the Soviet Union with the ocean and as a defensive base against Japanese aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Stalin thus made clear his conviction that the Allied agreements covered the four islands of the Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu and southern Sakhalin, and his determination to retain control of the new Soviet acquisitions.

Stalin's conviction was doubtless strengthened by two subsequent developments. In 1951 the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed. By this treaty Japan abandoned claims to certain territories. Its article 2 (c) said:

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2. For details, see John J. Stephan. *The Kurile Islands: Russo-Japanese Frontier in the Pacific* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), chap. 5.

3. *Documents*, p. 37.

4. See Shigeto Yuhashi, *Senji Nisso Kosho Shoshi (A Short History of Japanese-Soviet Negotiations during War)* (Tokyo: Kasumigasaki Shuppan, 1974), p. 228. See also Tsuguo Togawa, "Hoppo Ryodo no Rekishi (History of the Northern Territories)." in Hiroshi Kimura, ed., *Hoppo Ryodo o Kangaeru (Thinking on the Northern Territories)* (Hokkaido: Hokkaido Shimibun Sha, 1981), p. 68.



Japan renounces all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands, and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 5, 1905.<sup>5</sup>

The Soviet Union was not a party to the San Francisco Treaty and in fact was highly critical of it. The treaty does not specify to whom Japan should relinquish its claim over the territories. Furthermore, even at the time, the Japanese raised doubts about some of the treaty provisions. Japan's chief delegate at the San Francisco conference, Shigeru Yoshida, said:

Whereas the Japanese people accepted cheerfully the terms of this treaty, it is undeniable that we feel some anguish and concern with regard to a few of its provisions. This treaty is just and magnanimous to a degree rarely seen in history, and we dutifully acknowledge the position we find ourselves in. Nevertheless, in view of the responsibilities vested in me by the Japanese people, I must take the liberty of inviting your attention to a few points.

First, the territorial issue. . . It is more difficult for us to acquiesce in the allegation by the chief Soviet delegate that Japan seized the Kurile (Chishima) Islands and southern Sakhalin by force. Upon the opening of Japan to foreign intercourse, Imperial Russia took no exception whatsoever to Japanese ownership of Etorofu and Kunashiri. Only the Kurile (Chishima) Islands north of Uruppu and southern Sakhalin were at that time areas of mixed habitation by Japanese and Russians.

On May 7, 1875 the Russian and Japanese governments agreed through peaceful diplomatic negotiations that Japan would get the northern Kurile Islands in compensation for southern Sakhalin, which would be Russian. Whereas compensation was the term used, the Kuriles were received in return for concession with regard to southern Sakhalin. Southern Sakhalin itself became Japanese as a result of the Portsmouth Treaty concluded on 5 September 1905 through the mediation of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Then, upon Japan's surrender on September 2, 1945, the Kuriles and southern Sakhalin were unilaterally taken over by the Soviet Union.

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5. *Documents*, p. 118.

Moreover, the islands of Shikotan and Habomais, which form an integral part of the Japanese homeland, were similarly occupied by Soviet forces because they happened to have Japanese military forces stationed on them. (pp. 113-14)

As a representative of a defeated nation, however, Yoshida spoke at the very end of the conference. Without further comment by the other delegates, therefore, the treaty was signed the following day.

The famous *Yoshida Memoirs* and other written materials detail the period from preparation of documents for the treaty by Yoshida's staff to his final speech.<sup>6</sup> They indicate that the Japanese side prepared explanatory materials amounting to seven volumes on the territorial issue alone in order to substantiate the Japanese claims to everything south of Iturup Island and to southern Sakhalin. These Japanese efforts bore no fruit.

Japan's pleas at the time to the U.S. chief negotiator were also in vain. The United States had decided upon a so-called one-sided peace, which excluded the Soviet Union from the postwar settlement in the Pacific. But the Americans also had to preserve the appearance of a general peace. The United States therefore felt constrained to accommodate the harsh anti-Japanese sentiments of other Allies, such as Britain and Australia. Understandably, U.S. negotiators did not award high priority to Japanese claims to the Northern Territories. The Japanese, for their part, keenly aware that their surrender was unconditional and that their most likely means of recovering sovereignty over disputed territories lay through the United States, did not press their claims. Japan contented itself with entering Yoshida's speech in the record.

Not long after the San Francisco conference a second development occurred, which was to weaken the Japanese case. A Japanese government official, speaking during a Diet interpellation, stated with some confusion that the term *Kurile Islands* in the treaty referred to both the southern and northern islands.<sup>7</sup> Other Japanese officials may well have

6. Shigeru Yoshida, *Kaizo 10-nen (Memoirs: Ten Years in Retrospect)* (Tokyo: Shincho Sha, 1957), pp. 23-41.

7. Research Office of the Foreign Affairs Committee of House of Representatives, *Territorial Problems of Japan* (Tokyo: House of Representatives, 1971), p. 77.

differed with this interpretation or at least had doubts about it. But—stunned by Japan's defeat and chaos for the first time in its history—they did not dare to speak out in opposition to it. Furthermore, Japan would not have had the clout to make good on any claim it might have made at this point. This ambiguous attitude was permitted to stand for years while the Yoshida government bent its efforts toward regaining Japanese independence and developing stronger relations with the United States.

It was, in fact, not until after peace negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1955–56 that an official Japanese interpretation emerged that the “Kurile Islands” renounced in the peace treaty included only the eighteen islands north of Uruppu, while the Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu remain inherently Japanese.

#### The 1955–56 Peace Negotiations

Throughout Stalin's lifetime the Soviet Union remained intransigent on the disputed islands. But with the thaw in East—West relations that developed after his death, the new Soviet leaders showed an interest normalizing relations with the countries defeated in World War II. They also showed some flexibility on territorial issues to the extent that they sought to gain reconfirmation of the boundaries established at Yalta in the name of peace.

Toward this end Moscow took diplomatic initiatives aimed at countries on the dividing line between East and West. Thus, in April 1955 the Russians suddenly declared their willingness to sign a peace treaty with Austria, and one was signed in May. In September of the same year, they had discussions with West German Chancellor Adenauer and they recognized his country. The Japanese-Soviet negotiations of 1955–56 on restoration of diplomatic relations and settlement of the territorial issue were part of the same process. The Russians initiated these talks. Their initiative, unfortunately, caught Japan, now led by Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama, totally unprepared.

Hatoyama himself wanted to follow up Yohida's pro-American policy with a normalization of Japanese relations with the Soviet Union. But a

realignment of political parties then seemed imminent in Japan. Many Japanese leaders expected a radical shift in Japanese policies. This expectation induced them to concentrate their energies on strengthening their positions against domestic rivals rather than attempting to increase Japan's bargaining power with Moscow.

In addition the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in a poor position to deal with Soviet overtures. Ministry officials were confused by the transition from the "liaison diplomacy" practiced under the American occupation to the more autonomous diplomacy appropriate to an independent country. The ministry also appears to have been divided on Soviet policy. Some officials, such as Prime Minister Hatoyama, evidently were willing to engage in talks with the Russians at this time; they looked toward a restoration of relations and settlement of outstanding issues in the near future. A "mainstream faction" in the ministry, however, remained very fearful that an early settlement with Moscow might produce an unfavorable outcome for Tokyo.

As a result of these differences Japan was drawn into negotiations but it then vacillated throughout the 1955-56 talks, only to end up in the end with a semi-"Adenauer formula" that shelved the major issues for future negotiation while establishing diplomatic relations through a joint declaration. But let us look at these talks more closely.

The talks began in London in June 1955 with Shunichi Matsumoto negotiating for the Japanese side and Yakov Malik for the Soviet. At the outset, the Japanese side presented a seven-article memorandum as a basis for the negotiations; the Japanese also pressed for a separate solution, on a priority basis, of the problem of returning Japanese internees in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, for its part, offered a twelve-article peace treaty draft and advocated combining the question of a peace treaty with that of the internees.

On the territorial issue, the Japanese memorandum said:

The Habomais, Shikotan, the Kurile Islands and southern Sakhalin are historically Japanese territory, but upon the restoration of peace we propose a frank exchange of views regarding future disposition of those areas.

The intention of this wording, according to Matsumoto, was not to achieve complete reversion of all territories to Japan but rather to negotiate with flexibility.

By contrast the Soviet draft said, predictably:

Japan recognizes that southern Sakhalin, the Kuriles, and all adjacent islands and straits are completely under the sovereignty of the U.S.S.R., and renounces all sovereignty and the right to claim the above territories. The boundary between the U.S.S.R. and Japan is . . . the midline of the Nemuro [Habomais] Straits and the Goyomai Straits. (p. 184)

This Soviet position put the Habomais and Shikotan on the Soviet side, along with all the rest of the Kuriles and southern Sakhalin. Moreover, the Soviet position was forcefully presented, along with Soviet opposition to the U.S.-Japan security pact signed in 1951, and the Russians remained firm on both points for number of weeks.

Suddenly in August 1955, however, the Soviet Union shifted ground. Its delegation said then that Soviet Union would cede to Japan the Habomais and Shikotan—that is, the islands closest to Japan, which Yoshida had described as part of the Japanese homeland. The Russians also made a statement to the effect that they would not continue to insist on a draft article demanding the dissolution of the Japan-U.S. military alliance formed in 1951.

“I could hardly believe my ears at first,” Matsumoto recalls. “I thought that once both sides had come this far, a little more compromise would bring the negotiations to an early end.”<sup>8</sup> Matsumoto obviously had not expected that the Soviet Union at that time would agree to cede any islands and thought negotiations would proceed apace.

However, at the end of August Tokyo instructed Matsumoto not to agree to a compromise that provided for the return of the Habomais and Shikotan alone. The instructions specified that the Habomais and Shikotan were part of Hokkaido while Kunashiri and Etorofu were in-

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8. This quotation and the extracts cited above are from Shunichi Matsumoto, *Moskwa ni Kakeru Niji (Rainbow toward Moscow)* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun Sha, 1966), pp. 43, 184, and 30, respectively.

alienable lands of Japan; as to the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin, the states concerned should determine their disposition at an international conference. Matsumoto had to proceed on the basis of these instructions. The Soviet Union responded by hardening its position. The room for compromise narrowed, and the talks recessed in September, not to reconvene until January 1956.

The situation did not improve when talks resumed in Moscow at that time. For, in November 1955 Japan's two conservative parties merged to form the Liberal Democratic party. The new ruling party then advanced so strong a demand that the talks could only fall through.

The 1956 negotiations were like a two-act play. Act 1, extending from January to August, was performed on the Japanese side by a delegation with two heads: Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and Matsumoto, now ambassador to the Soviet Union. This delegation was invested with full powers to negotiate and sign a peace treaty. Shigemitsu, formerly a hardliner on Soviet policy, at first adhered to Japan's previous tough bargaining position. Subsequently, however, he moved toward a more conciliatory stance that would have allowed return of only the Habomais and Shikotan to Japan while temporarily deferring settlement of the other territories. Then, in the face of Soviet stubbornness, Shigemitsu went further; he decided to accept the Soviet proposal for a peace treaty in which Japan would recover the Habomais and Shikotan but relinquish its claim to the other territories. Shigemitsu planned to take personal responsibility for signing the peace treaty.

But at the last minute Matsumoto intervened and solicited new instructions from Tokyo, where government officials, the ruling Liberal Democratic party, the press, and the public were all against precipitous acceptance of the Soviet terms. The Hatoyama government did not have the courage to defy this climate of opinion. Accordingly, Tokyo rejected Shigemitsu's move. Sorry end of Act 1.

Act 2 was only minimally more productive. It took place in October 1956, when Prime Minister Hatoyama visited Moscow. Hatoyama wanted to visit the Soviet capital himself so as to negotiate a peace treaty. The Liberal Democratic party was ready to endorse the visit if

five conditions were met: (1) the end of a state of war were announced, (2) a fishery treaty went into effect, (3) embassies were established, (4) the Japanese internees were immediately returned, and (5) the Soviet Union agreed to support Japan for membership in the United Nations. But opposition developed within the party from hardliners who disapproved of a Hatoyama visit, and the party was finally unable to agree to endorse the visit. In the end the cabinet had to appoint a delegation that lacked formal party backing.

By September Hatoyama's leadership of the Liberal Democratic party was so weak that four influential big business organizations called on him to resign, and he did announce his resignation. This evidently helped persuade party hardliners to permit him to go to Moscow as his political swan song. This agreed upon, the party leaders turned their main attention from fretting over the impenetrable wall of Soviet intransigence to deciding who would be the next prime minister. Hatoyama was already a lame duck.

Another factor that turned the hardliners around was the so-called Gromyko-Matsumoto letter. This letter, sent by Soviet First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko to Ambassador Matsumoto, held out the prospect of a peace treaty and resolution of the territorial issue as soon as diplomatic relations were normalized. It said specifically that after such relations were established, "negotiations on conclusion of a peace treaty would be continued, including territorial problems."<sup>9</sup>

The letter gave Hatoyama ammunition for his argument that Japan should not yet give up hope of settling the Northern Territories issue and that he himself should go to Moscow to negotiate. Accordingly, Matsumoto twice went to Moscow to pave the way for the prime minister's visit. It finally took place in October, at which time Japan and the Soviet Union signed a joint declaration. The declaration provided for diplomatic relations between the two countries; in fact, in the absence of a peace treaty it still is the sole basis for diplomatic relations. In addition, in a watered-down version of the Gromyko statement the

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9. *Documents*, pp. 168-69.

declaration said that "negotiations on conclusion of a peace treaty will be continued" (pp. 174-75). Japan continued to maintain that a peace treaty should be concluded only in conjunction with resolution of the Northern Territories issue. The Soviet Union still refused to give any commitment on the territorial issue, except for the Gromyko promise that negotiations on a peace treaty would include talks on the territorial question.

### Marking Time in The 1960s

In August 1961 Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Khrushchev sent a letter to Prime Minister Ikeda that showed new Soviet interest in normalizing relations with Japan. The letter said:

The Soviet Union desires to completely normalize relations with Japan, resolving through discussion all outstanding issues. Regrettably, however, the full opportunity for cooperation and improvement of relations is not adequately being utilized. Your Excellency Mr. Prime Minister, I would be less than sincere in this connection if I failed to point out that . . . [the reasons are] Japan's military alliance with the United States of America and continued maintenance of foreign military bases on Japanese soil. (pp. 230-31)

Prime Minister Ikeda replied to this "domestic interventionist language" by pointing out that the Japan-U.S. security alliance was already in force at the time of the Japanese-Soviet joint declaration of 1956, and that the joint declaration itself affirmed the right of individual and collective self-defense enunciated in article 51 of the UN Charter. It was not the Japan-U.S. Security Pact that was impeding normalization of relations, Ikeda said, but the Sino-Soviet alliance, which was directed against Japan, and the mutual aid treaty just concluded between the Soviet Union and North Korea. Ikeda went on to link the questions of a peace treaty and the Northern Territories once more:

Your Excellency has alluded to the complete normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, but that requires a peace treaty. The position of the Japanese people is that the way to conclusion of a peace treaty will be cleared when the Soviet government returns to Japan its own native territory. (p. 231)



There followed another exchange of letters on the territorial issue. Khrushchev's letters (dated September 29 and December 8) said that "the territorial issue was solved a long time ago by a series of international agreements." The Soviet leader referred to the Cairo Declaration, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, and the San Francisco Peace Treaty (pp. 232, 234-36). Ikeda responded by referring (in a letter dated November 15) to the same conventions, saying they prove that "it is all too clear that territorial issues outstanding between Japan and the Soviet Union have not already been solved" (pp. 233-34).

Letters were again exchanged between Khrushchev and Ikeda in 1964, but no fresh arguments were put forward on either side and both the Russian and the Japanese governments seemed to have lost interest in the issue for a time (pp. 241-44). People outside the governments, however, did begin participating in the debate. For example, a Japanese Socialist Party delegation to the Soviet Union discussed the matter with representatives of the Soviet Communist Party. Then in October 1964 a group of Japanese Diet members visiting the Soviet Union met with Khrushchev, who explained the Soviet position on the Northern Territories issue. Because the Sino-Soviet conflict intensified at this time, China began to take a vocal part in the controversy on Japan's side. Mao Zedong himself brought it up during a meeting with a visiting Japanese Socialist Party delegation in July 1964. Meanwhile, the Japanese government remained relatively quiet about the territorial issue.

It was not until the latter half of the 1960s, with the government of Eisaku Sato, that official Japanese interest in the Northern Territories question was revived, and then it was an offshoot of the Okinawa issue. As the government pressed for the United States to return Okinawa to Japanese control, it also began to think again of the Northern Territories. The prime minister and foreign ministers began to refer to the Northern Territories in their speeches at the UN General Assembly. The Diet dispatched a commission charged with investigating the issue to Hokkaido.

Sato's central concern was always over Okinawa, which was a mat-

ter of lively concern to the Japanese largely because Japanese live there, whereas no Japanese live in the Northern Territories. There is keen attention to the Northern Territories issue by people, especially fishermen, in the neighboring area of Hokkaido. But the effort to regain the Northern Territories was at this stage more a government-sponsored issue than a popular one. Still, concern over Okinawa did serve in the late 1960s to spark new interest in the Russian-held islands to the north.

This interest was reflected in July 1967 in a visit by Foreign Minister Takeo Miki to Moscow that caused something of a flurry in Japan. For halfway through a meeting with Miki, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin observed:

As the Japanese side is well aware, the Soviet Union also hopes for conclusion of a peace treaty. This is only my personal view, but I feel that neither side is yet quite sure how to approach the matter of a treaty. Therefore, how about exploring through diplomatic channels the possibility of concluding an interim measure?<sup>10</sup>

Kosygin was speaking exclusively about a peace treaty, as seems clear from the fact that the joint statement issued at the end of the Miki-Kosygin talks made no reference to the territorial issue. But the Japanese inferred that the term *interim measure* might suggest a more flexible Soviet policy on the islands and that therefore some movement on that question might be possible. This served to keep Japanese hopes alive as the two countries entered the 1970s.

#### The Issue Becomes More Complicated

As Japan and the Soviet Union entered the 1970s two developments seemed to augur well for Japan on the Northern Territories issue. For one thing the Soviet Union was pursuing détente with the West. Second, Japan was making an effort to maintain "equal distance" in its relations with Moscow and Beijing. It had an interest in normalizing its relations with the Soviet Union in order to balance a developing dia-

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10. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (henceforth *YS*), July 23, 1967.

logue with China. So, on its side Japan might have been ready to resolve the territorial problem.

Unfortunately, these two conditions were offset by a series of other developments that complicated Russo-Japanese relations and prevented the two sides from finally coming to terms on the issues outstanding between them. First, the period of *détente* coincided with a Soviet effort to build up militarily, to reach nuclear parity with the United States. This reach for military power was accompanied by a grab for territory. In the nineteenth century, when colonialism was rampant, territory was high among the stakes in the game of power politics. In the postcolonial 1970s it no longer commanded the interest of other major powers, but the Soviet Union still seems to see territory as an important status symbol. In this respect it is not yet a "developed" country. So, it has adopted a naked policy of expanding influence into Eurasia and Africa, seeking and gaining "colonies," in Vietnam in 1975, in Angola in 1976, in Ethiopia and South Yemen in 1977, and in Afghanistan in 1978. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 merely capped a process that was already under way.

But the invasion prompted the United States to wake from its post-Vietnam lethargy and adopt a harder line toward the Soviet Union. By the spring of 1980 the United States was going even further, showing a desire to "punish" the Soviet Union for its misconduct in Afghanistan. Americans were talking of the "end of *détente*" and a second "cold war," if not worrying about the possibility of World War III. And they were attempting (with some success) to pull Japan along in a campaign to combat Soviet expansionism. This deterioration in the general international political environment was one factor undermining the resolution of Soviet-Japanese issues. In such a climate neither side could be flexible about the territorial question.

Second, the developing Sino-Japanese rapprochement and, with it, the threat of a Chinese-Japanese-U.S. alliance aroused Soviet fears, further undermining the chances of Soviet-Japanese negotiation. In September 1972 Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka visited China to normalize Sino-Japanese relations. This did not go down well with Mos-

cow, by then acutely if prematurely concerned about the potential Chinese military threat on its eastern borders and Chinese political attacks on Moscow. Relations between Japan and the Soviet Union began to show increasing strain.

In October 1973 Tanaka went to Moscow in search of some epoch-making event to enhance his already strong domestic popularity. His visit was the first by a top Japanese leader since the Hatoyama visit of 1956, and it generated a great deal of enthusiasm in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the Japanese-Soviet talks, General Secretary Brezhnev apparently called for joint cooperation on development of natural resources in Siberia. Tanaka tenaciously pressed for the return of the Northern Territories. A subsequent joint communiqué was not exactly brimming with new developments. The first clause read as follows:

The two sides recognized that to conclude a peace treaty by resolving the yet unresolved problems remaining since World War II would contribute to the establishment of truly good-neighborly relations between the two countries and conducted negotiations on matters concerning the content of such a peace treaty. The two sides agreed to continue negotiations for the conclusion of a peace treaty between the two countries at an appropriate time during 1974.<sup>11</sup>

There are certain witnesses to the fact that the Soviet leader himself at that time orally acknowledged to the Japanese premier that the "yet unresolved problems remaining since World War II" included the four islands. But one can ask a couple of questions here.

Did the Soviets really agree that "yet unresolved problems" actually included the territorial one? The answer is yes. Several Japanese involved in the negotiations were clear and optimistic on this point, as were reporters covering the negotiations. The Japanese also made it clear from the beginning that without a reference to the territorial issue, Japan would not agree to a joint statement. It is true, furthermore, that the term *yet unresolved "problem"* in the draft communiqué

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11. *A Border Yet Unresolved: Japan's Northern Territories* (Tokyo: Northern Territories Issue Association, 1981), p. 110.

was subsequently revised to read *yet unresolved* "problems" in the final version. These considerations make it unlikely that the Soviet side did not understand where Japan stood on this question. They suggest that there might well have been an oral understanding that the Northern Territories issue would be included in peace treaty talks.

But there is a second question. Did the Soviet agreement to discuss the issue represent a change of their policy toward the four islands demanded by Japan? Premier Tanaka painted a hopeful picture on this point during a press conference held after his return to Tokyo. Other mass media coverage was similarly hopeful. Both gave the impression that there was movement on the Soviet side.

On this point I am more doubtful. Here, I think, one must give weight to what Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira said at a press conference soon after the talks. Recognizing Tanaka's accomplishment in going to the Soviet Union, Ohira went on to express regret over the failure of his visit to achieve a clear breakthrough on the territorial question (YS, Oct. 11, 1973). Moscow could also not possibly have felt friendly toward Tanaka, who, as noted above, had dared to normalize relations with its archenemy Beijing. It therefore seems unlikely to me that the Russians would have made any real concession to the Tanaka government.

Moscow did take an initiative with the Miki government that followed. In a personal message from General Secretary Brezhnev, handed by Soviet Ambassador Oleg A. Troyanovsky to Prime Minister Miki, the Russians proposed a friendship pact between Japan and the Soviet Union (YS, Feb. 14, 1975). The Miki government, however, promptly rejected this proposal, arguing that the conclusion of a peace treaty between the two states would, before anything else, strengthen the basis for friendly relations. Foreign Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's visit to Moscow in January 1975 served only to affirm the 1973 joint communiqué without bringing about any further progress toward a peace treaty.

By this time the issue of an "anti-hegemony" clause in the Sino-Japanese peace treaty had already appeared. The issue arose on November 13, 1974, at a preliminary meeting in Tokyo between Vice-Minister

of Foreign Affairs Fumihiko Togo and his Chinese counterpart, Nian-long Han. It was kept from the Japanese public until January 1975. Soon after, however, the mass media in Japan gave wide coverage to the Chinese demand for such a clause (*YS*, Jan. 26, 1975). On February 3, 1975, Ambassador Troyanovsky called on the vice-president of the Liberal Democratic party, Etsusaburo Shiina, to try to restrain the government from agreeing to the clause, which the Soviets saw as an anti-Soviet move engineered by China. They began a vigorous effort to check Japan's negotiations with Beijing. By mid-1975 Moscow was putting substantial pressure on Tokyo not to concede to the anti-hegemony clause.

On June 12 of that year Foreign Minister Gromyko handed an "announcement of the government of the Soviet Union" to the Japanese ambassador to Moscow, Akira Shigemitsu. It strongly opposed the inclusion of the clause in the prospective Sino-Japanese peace treaty and bitterly condemned Chinese efforts to put the clause in. "It is increasingly more apparent of late," the Soviet message said:

that the Chinese leadership is trying to exercise its influence on Japan in order to complicate its relations with third countries, including the Soviet Union. This is shown by its naked method of forcing Japan in every possible way to include a clause in the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty whose negotiations are currently going on. As a leader of China himself admits, this clause regards the Soviet Union with the deepest hostility. (*YS*, June 18, 1975)

The Soviet "announcement" expressed hope that the Japanese government would not take measures "detrimental to Japanese-Soviet relations." It went on to conclude that "it is the common interest of both the Soviet Union and Japan to make an appropriate counterattack against narrow-minded moves of a third country to obstruct an improvement of Japanese-Soviet relations." The Soviets thus made clear that Japanese accession to Chinese demands on this point would poison Japanese-Soviet relations.

On June 19, 1975, the Japanese response to the Soviet "announcement" was a visit from Ambassador Shigemitsu to Foreign Minister Gromyko. He said that it was the consistent policy of Tokyo to establish good-neighborly and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. He also emphasized Japan's position that the Sino-Japanese treaty was not aimed at a third country. Finally, he reiterated that it was Japan's fundamental policy that Moscow and Tokyo should solve their outstanding issues since World War II (meaning the territorial dispute) as soon as possible, and they should proceed to conclude a peace treaty.

Despite these disclaimers, Japan had been drawn, through the negotiations with China, into the Sino-Soviet controversy. Soviet-Japanese negotiations for a peace treaty came, during this period, to a complete standstill although two meetings were held between leaders of the two countries.

The first meeting took place when Foreign Minister Miyazawa and his Soviet counterpart Gromyko visited New York to attend the UN General Assembly in September 1975. The second meeting was during Gromyko's visit to Tokyo in January of the following year. On both occasions Gromyko expressed Soviet opposition to a Sino-Japanese treaty that included an anti-hegemony clause and repeated the Soviet proposal to conclude a treaty of good-neighborliness and cooperation while shelving the territorial issue.

In response Japan argued for an early resolution of the territorial issue. The Soviet Union then further hardened its attitude. In an article by Gromyko the Russians branded Japan's demand for the return of the Northern Territories as "groundless and unreasonable" (*YS*, Oct. 4, 1975). The following February General Secretary Brezhnev used the same phrase in his keynote speech at the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. This period saw also an increase of movements by the Soviet navy and air force north of Hokkaido in an apparent Soviet effort to intimidate Japan. The Sino-Japanese rapprochement undoubtedly aroused Soviet fears of a Sino-Japanese and perhaps eventually a Sino-American alliance against the Soviet Union while the

rapprochement may also have stiffened Japanese demands on the Northern Territories. As a result, relations between Japan and the Soviet Union cooled even more at this time.

In this situation Japan decided it needed to expand its flexibility by stepping back somewhat from China. On July 7, 1976, Foreign Minister Miyazawa criticized China in a House of Councillors foreign affairs committee session. Referring to a report that Chinese visitors to Hokkaido had criticized Moscow for refusing to return the Northern Territories, Miyazawa said:

The Northern Territorial issue is a purely bilateral problem between Japan and the Soviet Union. From any perspective, interference by another country will not prove beneficial. And it will not help provide an amicable settlement of the dispute. (YS, July 10, 1976)

The Soviet Union promptly responded. A political commentator of TASS analyzed Miyazawa's remarks over Radio Moscow. He remarked to the effect that

Foreign Minister Miyazawa made this comment of late in order to show domestic and international public opinion afresh that Japan is in need of no self-appointed advisers and intends to carry out independent diplomacy. (YS, July 21, 1976)

China then proceeded to make its own comments on the Miyazawa remarks. In a commentary by a New China News Agency reporter the Chinese criticized the Gromyko article, Brezhnev's February 1976 speech, and Soviet naval and air force exercises in the vicinity of Japan. They went on to attack Miyazawa, saying:

After the Soviet Union threatened Japan by a show of force in its large naval and air exercise, in order to curry favor with the Soviet Socialist Imperialists-Revisionists, Foreign Minister Miyazawa misleadingly called this hegemonic move of demonstration of force to Japan a "routine operation" and he further made the statement slandering people of China. (YS, July 19, 1976)

Again, the Soviets responded. In a *Pravda* article the Kremlin said:



[The] New China [News] Agency severely criticized the government of Japan and Foreign Minister Miyazawa, and in a form almost similar to an ultimatum demanded that Japan should adopt a policy line convenient to the Maoists. This is not the first time for the Chinese leadership to meddle in the internal affairs of other countries and instruct them on what kind of policy they should take. (YS, July 26, 1976)

Japan had been caught in the crossfire of Sino-Soviet polemics, with Miyazawa being praised by the Russians and condemned by the Chinese. Japanese ties with China were undermining relations with the Soviet Union. In such a climate any movement on the Northern Territories question was highly unlikely. Sino-Japanese talks stalled.

It was at this point that the Lockheed bribery scandal came to light, submerging all other issues in Tokyo. Factional struggle developed within the ruling Liberal Democratic party, culminating in the resignation of the Miki cabinet en bloc. Japan's U.S. ties thus intervened to distract the government's attention and prevent it from pursuing discussion of Soviet-Japanese questions.

At the same time, Mao Zedong's death on September 6, 1976, put China's internal situation into flux. These paralled developments in the two Asian capitals brought negotiations for the Sino-Japanese peace treaty to a temporary halt. Both countries became preoccupied with domestic politics.

A third factor complicating the Japanese effort to resolve the territorial issue was West European acceptance of the territorial status quo on the Soviet Union's western borders. The Russians had long sought to have their gains at Yalta and in the postwar period sanctified by Western Europe so as to stabilize their strategic and political position in Eastern Europe. To this end they wooed former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who responded with his "Ostpolitik." A Soviet-West German goodwill treaty was signed in 1970. More significantly, West Germany also agreed with Poland to accept its control of the territory east of the Oder-Neisse. It was the first lock, one might say, on the East European door. The other locks came later, in 1975, when the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe agreed at

Helsinki to legitimize the general Soviet position in Eastern Europe.

The territory east of the Oder-Neisse abandoned by Bonn is much larger in both area and population than the Northern Territories. But the two areas are comparable in that they were promised to Stalin at the Yalta Conference as spoils gained from those defeated during World War II. Japan maintains that the two are separate questions. Nonetheless, by renouncing its claim to the larger territory in the West, West Germany helped to undermine Japan's claim to the smaller territory in the East.

### Weakening Japanese Claims in the 1970s

As a result of these three factors—the deterioration of East-West relations, the developing Sino-Japanese relationship, and European settlement of outstanding territorial issues with the Soviet Union—talks on the Northern Territories question were not fruitful in the 1970s. On the contrary, during this period Japanese-Soviet relations sank to their lowest point since the normalization of 1956.

This was partly because an event suddenly occurred to worsen relations. On September 6, 1976, a Soviet MIG-25 pilot defected with his plane to Hakodate Airport on Hokkaido. He requested—and was quickly granted—political asylum in the United States while the plane was dismantled and examined by Japanese and American technicians.

The Soviet Union lodged repeated protests with Japan over its handling of the incident and pressed for the immediate return of the pilot and the highly secret MIG-25, under threat of retaliation. Instead, on September 9 the Japanese government permitted the pilot to go to the United States in accordance with his wishes and delayed returning the plane for two months, sending it back then in parts after the technicians had found the plane to be of a surprisingly low order of technology.

On September 28, 1976, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko met with Japanese Foreign Minister Zentaro Kosaka. In evident pique over the plane incident, Gromyko stressed that his country was not considering at all the conclusion of a Soviet-Japanese peace treaty with a prerequisite of return of the Northern Territories. He also flatly rejected Japan's

three-year-old invitation to Brezhnev to visit Tokyo, saying that such a visit could be contemplated only when relations between the two countries were friendly.

Two months later the Soviet Union unilaterally declared a 200-nautical-mile exclusive fishing zone. Subsequent negotiations between Tokyo and Moscow for an interim fishery agreement saw rough water. On February 24, 1977, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union made a formal decision to draw the 200-mile line; it included the disputed four Kuriles on the Soviet side, thereby giving the fishery negotiations a conspicuously political character.

There is no need here to detail the fishery negotiations, which lasted until the end of May 1977. But one point in them is relevant to the territorial issue. Article 1 of the proposed treaty defined the 200-mile zone in which the agreement was to apply, a zone that Japan acknowledged. But article 8 explicitly qualified article 1 by stating that the demarcation would not affect the positions or views of the contracting parties on other issues (*YS*, May 18, 1977). Japan read this as meaning the territorial issue. It maintained that the Soviet 200-mile zone applied only to fishing and did not undermine Japan's claim to the Northern Territories.

Nonetheless, at the final stage of bargaining in May Japan did permit a change that diluted its case. The draft of article 8 read to the following effect:

Any provision in this agreement shall not be interpreted in such a way as to injure the positions or the views of either government in regard to the issues being discussed in the Third U.N. Conference on the Law of the Sea and other issues in their bilateral relations. (*YS*, May 17, 1977)

On Soviet insistence, Japan agreed to eliminate the word *other* from the draft, leaving the article to read "issues being discussed . . . and issues in their bilateral relations." Japan had stepped back from the joint communiqué of 1973, which had said "outstanding issues," instead of the original "outstanding issue," while the Soviet Union had not moved an inch from its original position in the fishery negotiations. As a result

of the fishery negotiations, Japan was accepting what one might call a "creeping political jurisdiction" over everything in the economic zone. Meanwhile, Soviet control of the Northern Territories was tightening.

### Soviet-Japanese Trade Relations

Improved trade and economic relations between the two countries have not helped in the last decade, because both the Soviet Union and Japan have sought to keep their economic ties businesslike and to separate economics from politics. Development of the Soviet-Japanese trade relationship since 1974 is shown in table 5. 1.

The current legal framework for this trade is defined by two instruments. One is the Japan-Soviet Trade Treaty of 1957, which, *inter alia*, stipulates that the two countries grant each other most-favored-nation treatment. The other is the fourth Japanese-Soviet trade and payment agreement signed in Moscow on May 22, 1980, which covers the period 1981-85. Under these agreements Japan exports heavy industrial and chemical products such as steel, machinery, plants, and chemical items. The Soviet Union, on its side, exports raw materials and energy sources, such as oil, coal, lumber, platinum, palladium, and cotton. The trade has thus been complementary.

To put the Japanese-Soviet trade into perspective, one may usefully compare it to Japan's trade with China. Table 5. 2 shows recent figures

Table 5. 1. Development of Trade between Japan and the Soviet Union (\$ 1,000)

	Japan's exports	Japan's imports
1974	1, 095, 642	1, 418, 143
1975	1, 626, 200	1, 169, 618
1976	2, 251, 894	1, 167, 441
1977	1, 933, 877	1, 421, 875
1978	2, 502, 195	1, 441, 723

*Source*; Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Japan, *Tsusho Hakusho (White Paper on International Trade)*, 1977, 1978, 1979.

Table 5. 2. Development of Trade between Japan and China (\$ 1, 000)

	Japan's exports	Japan's imports
1974	1, 984, 475	1, 304, 768
1975	2, 258, 577	1, 531, 076
1976	1, 662, 568	1, 370, 915
1977	1, 938, 643	1, 547, 344
1978	3, 048, 748	2, 030, 292

*Source:* See table 5. 1.

for Sino-Japanese trade.

China's trade with Japan caught up with that of the Soviet Union around 1964-65. Since then, Japan's exports to China have surpassed those to the Soviet Union in value. Since 1975 Japan's imports from China have also exceeded those from the Soviet Union in value. For example, in 1978 Japan's exports to China amounted to \$546 million more than its exports to the Soviet Union; its imports from China were worth \$588 million more than its imports from the Soviet Union although neither communist country looms large in Japan's total trade picture.

By contrast Japan is a fairly important trading partner for the Soviet Union. Of all members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Japan ranked second only to West Germany in 1977 as an exporter to the Soviet Union. In imports Japan was third after West Germany and Italy.

Japan is even more important as a trading partner for China. Japan's share of the OECD countries' trade with China is by far the largest in both exports and imports. In 1977 Japan absorbed as much as 49 percent of China's total exports to OECD. Japan's share of China's imports was almost as high as 47 percent. Thus, Japan is more important to both the Soviet Union and China for trade than either country is to Japan.

Moreover, the Soviet Union is especially interested in Japan's help in

developing Siberia although Japan's own interest in Siberia has waned. In this respect it may be noted that the Tyumen oil project in Western Siberia once drew substantial Japanese interest because Japanese participation in Siberian development promises access to a long-term, stable supply of essential raw materials and offers hope of significant and much needed markets for Japanese machinery and plants. But since the summer of 1975 Japan has shelved the Tyumen project and has paid scant attention to Siberian development generally. As the spirit of *détente* has dissolved, Tokyo has shown interest in additional joint Soviet-Japanese projects only if American capital is involved.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has remained quite interested (for several reasons) in obtaining Japanese help in developing Siberia. The Russians want to secure advanced Japanese technology so as to accelerate Siberian development for the raw materials they need for domestic purposes. They want to sell raw materials to the Japanese in order to develop a stable source of foreign currency. The Russians are interested also in freeing Soviet capital for other uses. For these reasons Moscow has not permitted its displeasure over the Sino-Japanese peace treaty negotiations to interfere with economic relations.

### The Signing of the Peace Treaty

Some observers were convinced that the settlement of the fishery question in May 1977 had for the time being reversed the deterioration of Soviet-Japanese relations in the wake of the MIG-25 incident and the Soviet declaration of a 200-mile zone that included the Northern Territories. But the resumption of negotiations for the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty in the fall of 1977 and the subsequent acceleration of Chinese-Japanese talks caused the Soviet Union to repeat its harsh warnings with ever increasing urgency. Moscow was intent on restraining Japan from signing what it regarded as a treaty of "anti-Soviet alliance" because of the anti-hegemony clause.

At a regular foreign ministers' meeting between the Soviet Union and Japan held in Moscow in January 1978, Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda once again proposed to proceed to conclusion of a Japanese-Soviet

peace treaty after the Northern Territories were returned. Gromyko repeated the Soviet position that there was no territorial issue to be discussed. Gromyko went on to press Japan to conclude a good neighbor treaty with Moscow while continuing negotiations for a formal peace treaty. The Soviet side presented its draft of such a treaty for Japan's consideration.

Sonoda took the draft, retorting: "We will keep it but cannot study it." At the same time, he presented a draft of a peace treaty to the Soviets to emphasize Japan's stand that the peace treaty should be at the top of the foreign ministers' agenda.

The Soviet side, in turn, refused to study Japan's draft. An apparent impasse had been reached. At a meeting between Premier Kosygin and Foreign Minister Sonoda, Moscow once again stated that no territorial issue existed between the two countries. The Russians then proceeded to press their idea of a good neighbor treaty to precede any other.

The following month the Russians presented their idea at a higher level. On February 23, 1978, Brezhnev sent a letter to Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda arguing for conclusion of a good neighbor treaty. The next day Moscow unilaterally published its draft of such a treaty in the government newspaper *Izvestiya* (Feb. 24, 1978). The draft, it should be made clear, makes no reference at all to the Northern Territories although it calls for the continuation of peace treaty negotiations, to which the territorial issue had previously been linked. The draft also clearly interferes with Japan's security policy inasmuch as its article 3 says that the Soviet Union and Japan "undertake not to allow the use of their territories for any actions which could prejudice the security of the other party." Article 5 then goes on to say:

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan shall maintain and expand regular contacts and consultations on important international problems affecting the interests of the two states, through meetings and exchanges of opinions between their leading statesmen and through diplomatic channels. If a situation should arise that, in the opinion of both parties, is dangerous to the maintenance of peace, or if peace is violated, the parties shall immediately contact

one another with the aim of exchanging opinions on the question of what can be done to improve the situation. (YS, Feb. 24, 1978)

The language shows that, in the final analysis, the Soviet Union aims to draw Japan away from the United States and place it under Soviet influence, because this draft article specifies that threats to the peace of both countries should be a matter for joint consultations, whereas under the Japan-U.S. Mutual Security Treaty of 1960 Japan is bound to consult with the United States.

The second sentence of the article, which refers to mutual "contact," is particularly worrisome to the Japanese. It could be interpreted to mean that some sort of joint action would follow. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 the Japanese have been very apprehensive about what form "joint action" might take and how it might be implemented. The Soviet draft treaty has therefore served only to intensify Japanese concern vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, a concern that was fed by other Soviet moves during this period.

On June 19, 1978, the Soviet government once more warned Japan against conclusion of the peace treaty with China (YS, June 19, 1978). At about the same time, in late May, Moscow carried out a military exercise around the Northern Territories on a scale never before seen in the area. Judging from its timing, the Soviet action was clearly meant as a blunt message to Japan not to sign the peace treaty with China.

The Soviet exercise had, however, the opposite effect, touching off considerable anti-Soviet sentiment in Japan. It is reported that after his trip to China in the spring of 1978, U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski strongly encouraged Japan to sign the peace treaty even with the anti-hegemony clause, and in any case Washington's eagerness to see the treaty signed is evident from the fact that the U.S. State Department welcomed the treaty before it had been formally signed (YS, Aug. 11, 1978). Combined with such U.S. persuasion to Japan to sign the treaty the maneuvers ensured that Japan would go ahead, and on August 12, 1978, Sino-Japanese talks were consummated with the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship.



The Soviet reaction was predictable. On August 23 Boris M. Zinoviev, chargé d'affaires at the Soviet embassy in Tokyo, visited Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Keisuke Arita and orally conveyed a notification on the Sino-Japanese treaty:

The Soviet Union cannot remain uninterested as long as the contents of this treaty go beyond the framework of bilateral relations between China and Japan. The Soviet Union will take necessary action to protect its interest. (*YS*, Aug. 24, 1978)

Arita replied by reiterating the Japanese contention that the treaty "does not affect Japan's relations with third countries at all."

The Soviets are not satisfied with this Japanese explanation. They have found particularly unacceptable Japan's argument on article 4, which stipulates that the treaty is not aimed at any third country. The Japanese say that this article cancels out the "danger" of the anti-hegemony clause. The Russians counter that the treaty may draw Japan into China's adventurous policy of anti-Soviet expansionism. They say they will assess whether Japan's Soviet policy has changed in terms of "specific and real actions." The Russians are obviously concerned that the signing of the Sino-Japanese treaty and the normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations that followed soon after will give rise to an anti-Soviet alliance in the Far East that would be a nightmare for the Kremlin.

Nonetheless, the Russians did not permit the signing of the Sino-Japanese treaty to interfere with their economic relations with Japan. It is true that in September 1978 a chilly atmosphere pervaded the foreign ministers' meeting held by Gromyko and Sunao Sonoda. But even then Gromyko made it clear that the Soviet Union desired to continue to have trade and other economic relations with Japan on the basis of mutual benefit. In view of the harsh criticism Moscow made of the peace treaty, this position was remarkable. It shows the heavy weight the Kremlin gives to Siberian economic development.

Soviet military actions have also proceeded on a track independent of the economic one. On January 29, 1979, Japan's Defense Agency an-

nounced that the Soviet Union had deployed about 2,300 ground troops on the two northernmost disputed islands, Kunashiri and Etorofu, and that full-scale bases were being constructed there (YS, Jan. 30, 1979).<sup>12</sup> Although the Soviet buildup had its own place in Soviet global military strategy and was certainly designed to strengthen the Russians' strategic situation in the Far East, it also represented a response to the conclusion of the Chinese-Japanese peace treaty.

Japan protested to Moscow about its activities in the Northern Territories. Moscow flatly turned aside the protests (YS, Feb. 2, 1979). It has since expanded its military facilities to Shikotan Island as well. Meanwhile, air, ground, and naval exercises have been conducted around Sakhalin, and the Soviet Pacific Fleet has been bolstered by a new helicopter carrier, *Minsk*, and an attack landing ship, *Ivan Rogov*. These Soviet actions have elicited new Japanese protests. The Soviet buildup has thus brought an additional irritant to Japanese-Soviet relations.

Yet in February 1979 Moscow sent a delegation headed by I.F. Semichastov, deputy minister of foreign trade, to Japan to propose some joint projects for copper mining, development of forests, and steel-building (YS, Feb. 26, 1979). The visit was consistent with Moscow's desire to have Japanese participation in Siberian economic development continue. But it indicated, too, that the Soviets wanted to keep the door open to improvement of their relations with Japan. They were trying to cool the "China fever" of the Japanese public and pull Japan back from its tilt toward China to forestall the feared "triple entente." In this situation, what are the prospects for resolution of the Northern Territories issue?

### Conclusion

Clearly, Japan has a legal claim to the four islands. The peace settlement after World War II sometimes seems to undermine Japan's case for the Northern Territories. By the Allied agreement at Yalta the territories were conceded to the Soviet Union, and by the San Francisco

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12. As of 1980-81 Japanese defense specialists generally estimate that the Soviet Union holds approximately one division on the four disputed islands.

Peace Treaty Japan agreed to relinquish its claim to the "Kurile Islands." But, as noted above, Japan was not a party to the Allied agreement, the Soviet Union was not a party to the San Francisco treaty (which also did not specify to whom the territories should be relinquished), and Japan at the time raised doubts about how the term *Kurile Islands* was to be interpreted.

However, the Northern Territories question is not primarily a legal question but a political one. And here the Japanese case is less strong. The Hatoyama government entered negotiations with the Soviet Union before Japan was ready; it vacillated during the 1955–56 negotiations, possibly missing an opportunity to get the Habomais and Shikotan alone. The government finally consented to a vague formula that shelved the territorial issue while permitting diplomatic relations to be established through a joint declaration. It subsequently accepted a watered-down statement that said negotiations on a peace treaty would be continued without mentioning the territorial issue.<sup>13</sup>

Then, during the 1970s, Japan staunchly maintained that the four disputed islands are historically as well as legally part of Japan. Japan also consistently contended that the territorial issue cannot be separated from talk of a Japanese–Soviet peace treaty.

Unfortunately, during this period Japan's claims to the Northern Territories were complicated by the retreat from détente that began in the mid-1970s, the Sino–Soviet conflict, and the European settlement of outstanding territorial issues at Helsinki. These developments had the effect of involving others in the Japanese–Soviet dispute, weakening Japan's ability to make good on its claim to the territories, and—above all—hardening the Soviet position on the territories.

Nonetheless, twenty years of Liberal Democratic pressure for the return of the Northern Territories has made the issue an increasingly popular one in Japan. At present it would be very difficult for any Japanese government to abandon claim to the islands without paying a substantial price politically.

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13. *Documents*, pp. 174–75.

During these twenty years Japan has not been fully conscious of its economic position as a leading industrial power. As it becomes fully aware of its position as the most developed industrial country in the region, however, it could attempt to seek some sort of quid pro quo. For example, Tokyo has already moved back from cooperation in Siberian development as Japanese-Soviet talks on a peace treaty and other issues have flagged. The Soviet Union has proposed a long-term economic cooperation agreement to Japan. Tokyo, however, maintains that negotiation for a peace treaty that resolves the territorial issue should take precedence over such an agreement.

There is also the question of what policies Japan might pursue if it becomes militarily stronger. As indicated above, the conservative governments Japan has had since 1967 have staunchly refused to permit Japan's defense budget to rise above 1 percent of GNP, the lowest percentage for any major industrial power. These governments have also refused to consider equipping the Self-Defense Forces with certain kinds of modern weapons. They have been extremely reluctant even to talk about a Japanese role in the Asian-Pacific regional defense beyond its own self-defense, and this despite American efforts to get Tokyo to do all these things.

But the dissipation of the détente spirit after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and, more particularly, Soviet military activities just north of Japan in recent years, have fueled a debate over defense that has now broken into the open. It is likely that Japan's military strength will be beefed up in future and that Japan, as a major power in the North Pacific, will be called upon to play a larger role in the defense of that area. Just how it will approach the Northern Territories at that time is not clear.

As for the Soviet Union, it is questionable that the Kremlin would ever have given up the disputed islands after they were acquired at the end of World War II. Certainly, Stalin would never have willingly relinquished his newly won booty, and the sudden apparent offer of the Habomais and Shikotan (made during the thaw of the 1950s) was never renewed after Soviet-Japanese discussions aborted in mid-1956. Instead,

the Russians pursued a joint declaration to establish diplomatic relations rather than pressing for a peace treaty to which Japan had attached the territorial question.

During the 1960s the Russians began to try to separate the issue of the Northern Territories from any discussion of a peace treaty, insisting that the territorial issue was resolved long ago by the various agreements that settled World War II. They also broached at this time the possibility of some "interim measure" that might be taken short of a peace treaty (*YS*, July 23, 1967). All the while, however, the Russians sought to keep Japanese hopes alive that some resolution of the territorial issue might come about, much as a striptease artist seeks to keep her audience hoping that she will in fact divest herself of the last concealing item. Thus, as late as 1973 the Russians permitted the joint communiqué signed by Brezhnev and Tanaka to read "yet unresolved problems remaining since World War II," evidently knowing that Tokyo understood this to include the territorial issue (*YS*, Oct. 11, 1973). But whereas for Japan the Northern Territories were and remain an end of diplomacy, for the Soviet Union the islands had become by the 1970s merely a means to something else.

All along, the Kremlin has wanted primarily to normalize relations with Japan. It originally expressed willingness to talk about the territorial issue only in order to bring about its main goal: a peace treaty with Japan. At the beginning of the 1970s it began to try to separate these two questions entirely. Japan would not agree.

Accordingly, the Russians began to try to bypass the peace treaty issue by proposing an "interim measure," that is, a good neighbor pact. This was the theme struck in the mid-1970s by Brezhnev in his personal message to Prime Minister Miki (*YS*, Feb. 14, 1975). It has been presented periodically since. Japan has not been responsive to this proposal either, insisting that a peace treaty is the best way to establish friendly relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, Japan went ahead and—with U.S. support—assented to a peace treaty with China that included the reviled anti-hegemony clause, something the Soviet Union interprets as a directly anti-Soviet move portending a dual, if not triple,

alliance against itself in the East.

The Soviet Union proceeded, on the one hand, to try to drive a wedge into the U.S.-Japanese alliance by offering a good neighbor pact that provides for mutual "contact" between the Soviet Union and Japan in case of a threat to the peace of either country. On the other hand, the Kremlin moved aggressively, declaring a 200-mile economic zone that extends nearly to Hokkaido, expanding its military facilities in the Northern Territories, and building up its general military posture in the Pacific. At the same time, in November 1978 the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Vietnam, and it supported the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December and has since backed the Heng Samrin government there. Farther west the Soviet Union went on to invade Afghanistan.

Moscow is now attempting to turn the political and military balance in its favor in the Far East. Always supercautious about its security and fearful of the worst, it now seeks to consolidate its footholds in the Eastern and the Western Pacific and to bolster its overall strategic strength to counter growing U.S. cooperation with Japan and China. In this process it is helping to spur that cooperation, which in both cases has now taken on a military aspect as the United States conducts joint military exercises with Japan and agrees to make specific defense equipment sales to China. The Russians are thus helping to fulfill their own prophecy. But the point here is that in such a climate the Soviet Union will be less conciliatory than ever on territorial questions.

Previously, the Soviet Union has been willing to negotiate with Japan on the Northern Territories only if Japan would pay a price. This price has now gone up to abrogation of Japan's alliance with the United States. Such a price is clearly exorbitant in Japanese eyes, and even if a more "progressive" government should come to power in Tokyo in the 1980s, there is no chance that it would abrogate the U.S. alliance. The Russians should know this. Although they may harbor fleeting hopes that they can shake Japan loose from its American allies, it is unlikely that they think this will come about and that they will not have to negotiate on the Northern Territories at all.

On March 5, 1980, Soviet Ambassador to Japan Dimitri S. Polyansky had his first press meeting in four years (YS, Mar. 6, 1980). At that time he defended the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan, saying it is intended to protect the country against external threats. He also stated that Japan should not join the United States in economic sanctions against the Soviet Union. Polyansky then remarked: "In these four years, Japanese-Soviet political and diplomatic relations have experienced not a few periods of cooling and retreated." Polyansky brushed aside the charge that the Soviet military buildup in the Far East was directed against Japan. He said that worsening relations, epitomized by the prevailing apprehension in Japan over the Soviet threat, were due instead to the "unfriendly attitude of the government of Japan." He reiterated the well-known Soviet stance that the Northern Territories issue does not exist and that a good neighbor treaty should take precedence over a peace treaty.

Polyansky thus made it crystal clear that the Soviet Union has now abandoned even a pretense of acting on the territorial issue and is determined to lay the blame for worsening Japanese-Soviet relations at Tokyo's door. As long as the Soviets adhere to this new tougher-than-tough policy, it still seems that no one can expect resolution of the territorial issue for the time being at least. Finally, I just want to ask which country eventually gets more or loses more from this frozen state of affairs—the Soviet Union or Japan.