TITLE: BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE: ORIGINS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES DISPUTE AND RUSSIAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS UNDER GORBACHEV AND YELTSIN

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TITLE VIII PROGRAM

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NCSEER NOTE

This report describes a 835-page monograph with the same title and author. It contains (1) a brief description of the research and of the monograph (pp.1-4); (2) a Table of Contents of the monograph (p.5); and (3) an Executive Summary of Part III "Russian-Japanese Relations under Yeltsin," Chapters 12-15 (pp.6-7). The Introduction, each of the fifteen chapters, and the Bibliography are available from the National Council upon request by mail or telephone (202) 387-0168, The monograph has been submitted to the University of Washington Press

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1 The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author(s).
FINAL REPORT

Summary of research activities:

In the original application I proposed to examine the history of Soviet/Russo-Japanese relations from 1985 to the present by analysis of the following seven subjects: (1) the evolution of bilateral relations; (2) the Northern Territories question; (3) the role of public opinions; (4) dimensions of economic relations; (5) exogenous factors; (6) security relations; and (7) role of regions. The funding requested was to complete a monograph based on the data I had collected during my research in Japan and Russia in 1994-95.

I have successfully completed my proposed task except for a number of minor tasks which I plan to complete this summer. Although I have shifted the emphasis somewhat, as I will describe below, I have examined all of the above seven subjects, and produced an 835 page monograph that consists of 3 Parts, 15 chapters plus Introduction and Bibliography.

This manuscript attempts to answer the question: why have Russia and Japan failed to achieve rapprochement under Gorbachev and Yeltsin? Part I examines the origins of the Northern Territories question through historical background with emphasis on three crucial events: the Soviet-Japanese war in 1945, the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and the normalization negotiations in 1955-56. Part II describes how bilateral relations evolved under Gorbachev, focusing on the different approaches taken by Gorbachev and the Japanese government to resolve the territorial dispute. Part III deals with Russian-Japanese relations under Yeltsin, examining the process that led to the cancellation of Yeltsin's trip to Japan in September 1992 and his subsequent trip to Tokyo in October 1993. Chapter 14 is devoted to the analysis of contentions advanced by both sides to justify their claims over the disputed islands. Chapter 15 makes suggestions for Russia, Japan, and the United States to go beyond the Northern Territories question in order to forge a new stable international environment in Northeast Asia.

I have submitted a copy of the manuscript to the University of Washington Press for publication.

Changes from the Original Proposal:

--The title of the manuscript has changed to: Between War and Peace: Origins of the Northern Territories Dispute and Russian-Japanese Relations under Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

--The Northern Territories question has become a focal point of the manuscript. This does not mean that I have excluded other aspects. Rather, other aspects have been incorporated into the narrative
as "variations" to support the general "theme." The length of the manuscript has necessitated this change. Had I followed the original format that gave each aspect equal attention and space, the manuscript would have been too long for publication.

--The introductory chapter was expanded into five chapters. These chapters are essential for to understand the origins of the Northern Territories Dispute, and relevant to contemporary issues.

--Unfinished work: Minor bibliographical and editorial work must be done such as checking footnotes, incorporating additional information, revising the manuscript in view of criticisms of the referees and others.

Uniqueness of this book:

1. Comprehensiveness: This book examines Russian-Japanese relations not merely as bilateral relations, but in the context of international relations and linkages with domestic politics in both countries. Moreover, it attempts to analyze the role of public opinion as well as the role of regions in these relations. No other books have examined these issues as meticulously as has this book.

2. Richness of sources: This book is based on a wide array of both Russian and Japanese sources. It utilizes many unpublished materials and the information derived from numerous interviews with policy makers involved in the process. It incorporates the most recent scholarly monographs and new sources that have only recently been made available into syntheses, constituting the state of knowledge on a number of issues.

3. New Interpretations:

--This book takes a critical approach to claims on the territorial issue advanced by both sides. In its analysis of historical background, the difficulty of the Northern Territories question is seen in the complicated political and moral balance between Stalin's expansionist policy and Japan's responsibility for the Pacific War. It also makes a new interpretation of the U.S. role by asserting that the Northern Territories problem was largely a creation of John Foster Dulles.

--The "Northern Territories" dispute has presented itself as the most important obstacle to rapprochement, as has been generally argued. But it would not have been impossible to resolve this question had both sides displayed determination, foresight, and good judgment. In retrospect there have been only three good chances since 1985 to make a major breakthrough toward concluding a peace treaty: in the fall of 1986, the Gorbachev-Kaifu summit in 1991, and the Yeltsin-Hosokawa summit in 1993. But these good chances were not exploited fully by either side.
On the Russian/Soviet side policy toward Japan has been given a lower priority than policy toward the United States, Western Europe, and China. Both Gorbachev and Yeltsin exhausted their leverage to placate the domestic opposition by the time they came around to dealing with Japan. The lower priority given to Japan irritated the Japanese, and led to the intransigent position that Japan presented to the Russian/Soviet side.

The Japanese leadership, particularly its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underestimated the radical nature of transformation that the Soviet Union underwent under perestroika. This resulted in the fatal delay in changing its policy toward the Soviet Union. On the whole, what I call "the Northern Territories syndrome" clouded the Japanese sense of judgment, and contributed to the inertia with which the Japanese approached the Soviet Union and Russia. This did not mean, however, that the Japanese were inflexible in their approach to the Soviet Union/Russia. They made two basic adjustments in their policy toward the Soviet Union/Russia. Unfortunately, these adjustments were made too late.

I emphasize the importance of diplomacy in addition to substantive foreign policy in the failure of both countries to extricate themselves from the impasse in their relationship. Bad timing, misperceptions, wrong signals, misjudgments, inertia, public relations errors, and a lack of determination played a crucial role in the stalemate.

I challenge the conventional wisdom that, had Gorbachev's hands not been tied by domestic opposition, he could have resolved the territorial dispute by making substantial concessions to the Japanese. On the contrary, I would argue that ultimately Gorbachev himself proved to be a stumbling block for the resolution of the "Northern Territories" question. He viewed any concessions to Japan's territorial demand as dangerous to world peace and to the preservation of the unitary state. For this reason, to the last day, he was not prepared to accept even the Joint Declaration of 1956.

Yeltsin was prepared to go further than Gorbachev, but the domestic opposition, not merely from the conservatives but also from the radical reformers, confronted him. The bungled diplomacy on Japan's part also contributed to the cancellation of Yeltsin's trip to Tokyo in September 1992. Yeltsin's abrupt decision not to go to Tokyo represented the first sign of a major reorientation of Russian foreign policy that signaled the end of the euphoric stage in which Russian foreign policy was uncritically identified with the interests of the West.
--With regard to the contentious issues of the Northern Territories question, on the basis of critical examinations of the justifications advanced by both sides for their claims to the disputed territories from historical, geographical, and legal standpoints, I conclude that neither side has a monopoly of "law and justice." The only realistic solution would be to conclude a peace treaty on the basis of the 1956 Joint Declaration, while shelving the question of the ultimate sovereignty of Kunashiri and Etorofu for the time being. Also the examination of the economic and the security aspects of the Northern Territories question lead one to conclude that the two-island plus alpha solution based on the 1956 Joint Declaration would be the best scenario for both countries.

--Given the uncertainties of domestic politics both in Russia and Japan, even this scenario is not within the realm of possibility in the near future. It is reasonable to expect that the resolution of the territorial dispute will take a long time. Yet, the continuing stalemate of Russo-Japanese relations will not contribute to the establishment of a stable international order in the Asia-Pacific region. Particularly, the economic and ecological crisis and political instability of the Russian Far East will cast a dark shadow on future prosperity and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. I argue that a more active role by the United States is necessary for ultimate rapprochement between Russia and Japan. Contribution to scholarship and primary audience:

By filling gaps in Russian and Japanese studies, this book contributes both to the understanding of Russian as well as Japanese foreign policy, and their linkages with their respective domestic politics. In addition to scholars and graduate students in these two fields, this book will attract the attention of specialists in international politics and Asian studies as well as policy makers and analysts in the United States, Russia, and Japan.
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Executive Summary

Part III: Russian-Japanese Relations under Yeltsin

The Introduction for Part III discusses the general framework of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin. It divides the evolution of Russian foreign policy into two stages: the first euphoric stage, when Russian policy-makers defined the goals of Russian foreign policy as identical with those of the West, and the second more realistic stage, when they elevated the pursuit of Russian national interests to the first priority. The cancellation of Yeltsin's trip to Japan marked the turning point from the first to the second stage.


This chapter examines the evolution of Russian-Japanese relations after the failed August coup to the cancellation of Yeltsin's trip to Japan. Despite the initial optimism for the possible resolution of the territorial dispute, there were a number of factors that impeded it. The two island solution proposed by Georgii Kunadze was opposed by a number of diverse groups in Russia: the conservative nationalist-patriotic group, the military, inhabitants on the disputed islands, and parliamentary opposition to the president. These oppositions gained momentum, as they appealed to the sense of humiliation felt by many Russians about the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the territorial issue was exploited for power struggle by some of the powerful advisors within Yeltsin's inner circle. The Japanese government failed to appreciate the complexity of the Russian domestic situation, and did not change its intransigent irredentist demand. It made the mistake of internationalizing an essentially bilateral dispute by bringing it to the G-7 summit in Munich, further alienating Yeltsin. The Kuril issue became the hottest issue in Russia's domestic politics in the summer of 1991. Until the last moment, Yeltsin waited for some signal from Japan of change in its position. When no such signal came, Yeltsin decided to cancel his trip to Japan.

Chapter 13, Yeltsin's Tokyo Visit and the New Stalemate

The cancellation of Yeltsin's trip shocked the Japanese government. In reacting to this crisis, however, the Japanese government did its utmost to limit the damage by displaying measured restraint. Nevertheless, no fundamental reorientation of Japan's policy toward Russia took place. Rather, its policy can be characterized as schizophrenia: it elevated support for Russian transition to democracy and the market economy as one of the pillars of its policy toward Russia, while it continued to hold the resolution of the Northern Territories question in its central role. On his part,
Yeltsin was embroiled in a fateful struggle with his parliament, ultimately resorting to the use of force to destroy that opposition. The Hosokawa-Yeltsin summit that happened in the wake of the October events was marked only by the unwillingness of either side to touch on the crucial question. After Zhirinovskii won the Duma election in December 1993, the possibility of resolving the territorial dispute well-nigh disappeared.

Chapter 14. The Northern Territories Problem

This chapter examines the historical, geographical and legal arguments advanced by both sides to justify their claims for the disputed territories. Critically evaluating both arguments, this chapter concludes that neither side enjoys a monopoly of truth, and the only possible solution is a political compromise. In addition, this chapter examines the economic and national-security importance of the Northern Territories. It argues that in these aspects as well, a compromise solution will bring benefits to both sides.

Chapter 15. Beyond the Northern Territories Problem

Summarizing the findings of the entire book, this chapter examines the implications of the continuing stalemate of Russian-Japanese relations in the new power configurations in Northeast Asia. It argues that the continuing stalemate between Russia and Japan will impede the formation of a new stable international environment in this area. But left alone, Russia and Japan will not be able to reach rapprochement by resolving the territorial dispute. The only way to achieve this would be through active involvement of the United States in mediating between the two powers.