

The Moscow Declaration, the Year 2000 and Russo-Japanese Deadlock over the “Four Islands” Dispute

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Introduction

On 12-13 November 1998 Japanese Prime Minister (PM), Keizo Obuchi, paid an official visit to Russia. This represented the first such visit to Moscow for 25 years¹, and was therefore also the first official trip of Japan's premier to post-Soviet Russia.

During this visit, the *Moscow Declaration* was signed by Obuchi and Russian Federation (RF) President Boris Yeltsin. This joint document was a successor of the *Tokyo Declaration*, signed in October 1993 during Yeltsin's official visit to Japan. The November 1998 summit was preceded by two informal meetings between the former Japanese PM Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Yeltsin, held in Russia's Krasnoyarsk in November 1997 and Japan's Kawana in April 1998.²

The Moscow Declaration is significant in that it for the first time ever advanced the concept of a Russo-Japanese ‘creative partnership’, with the 1993 Tokyo Declaration indicated as its basis.³ Russia's PM Evgenii Primakov explained the essence of this new concept as the “*organic joining of our cooperation in the economic sphere with the striving of [both] sides to resolve those issues which remain unresolved in our relations.*”⁴

The “*unresolved issues*” imply primarily the signing of a bilateral peace treaty, as stipulated in the Tokyo Declaration, on the basis of defining the sovereignty status of the islands of Habomais, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu commonly known as the disputed ‘four islands’, ‘Northern Territories’ or ‘southern Kuril Islands’.⁵ However, in the political sphere, Primakov's interpretation of the creative partnership concept means that cooperation between the two countries remains virtually blocked as a result of the impact of the territorial dispute. This, in turn, devalues the overall meaning of the creative partnership considerably and undermines its potential application. Indeed, the peculiar ability of the ‘four islands’ dispute to penetrate deeply into almost all possible areas of bilateral relations might be regarded as one of its unique features.

In the Moscow Declaration, the territorial dispute is dealt with in detail in Article 2. According to its

terms, the two sides agree to make determined efforts “*in order to conclude a peace treaty by the year 2000.*”⁶ Relevant references to the Tokyo Declaration and to the agreements reached in Krasnoyarsk and Kawana indicate that the signing of the peace treaty is perceived as conditional upon defining the sovereignty status of the disputed ‘four islands’.

Further, Article 2 stipulates that, as part of the efforts to conclude the peace treaty, the two sides decided to form a sub-commission on border line determination within the already existing *Joint Working Commission on Issues Pertaining to Conclusion of a Peace Treaty*. In addition, a sub-commission on “*joint economic activity*” on the disputed islands was also to be established. It has been assigned to determine, while “*acting parallel*” with the other sub-commission, possible types of joint economic activities which would not be “*detrimental to the legal positions of both sides.*”⁷

On 9 December 1998, Vice Foreign Ministers Minoru Tamba and Grigorii Karasin, representing Japan and Russia, respectively, were jointly appointed as top supervisors for both sub-commissions.⁸ The formation of the joint economic activity sub-commission might be viewed as promoting the proposal made by Primakov, then Russia's FM, during his official visit to Japan on 14-17 November 1997.⁹ In particular, Primakov requested the Japanese side to consider the possibility of the disputed islands' joint development as the “*new stimulus*” towards resolving the peace treaty issue.¹⁰ Moreover, the formation of this sub-commission might also be viewed as a further step toward implementing Primakov's early support for the so-called ‘Senkaku formula’ territorial solution, dating back to his appointment as Russia's FM in January 1996.¹¹

Concerning the boundary line determination sub-commission, this might be regarded as representative of the specific policy line chosen by Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in December 1997.¹² Since that time this policy has become commonly known as the *kokkyosen kakutei*



hoshiki (boundary line determination method) territorial solution. In contrast to the *ryodo henkan hoshiki* (return of the territory method), this was intended to invite a more sympathetic response from Russia.¹³

Speaking at a New Year press conference in early January 1998, PM Hashimoto stressed that “*there is no peace treaty without boundary line determination.*”¹⁴ During the informal Kawana summit, Hashimoto presumably made a boundary line determination type proposal, details of which has not been disclosed.

The Moscow Declaration indicated that the Russian side had offered a reply to Japan’s Kawana proposal but that its content was not disclosed, either.¹⁵ Speaking immediately after the near two hour meeting between Obuchi and Yeltsin on 12 November, the Russian FM Igor’ Ivanov remarked

only that “*the essence*” of the Russian proposal favoured “*the establishment of an atmosphere conducive to joint economic and other types of activities on the [disputed] islands without detriment to the national interests and political positions of [both] sides.*”¹⁶

In what may be an indication of the details of the proposal, an early version of ‘Yeltsin’s reply’ suggested the formation of a detached “*special zone*” incorporating the disputed islands as a strong possibility.¹⁷ It is worth noting that, on 19 November, Igor’ Farkutdinov, Governor of Russia’s Sakhalin Region (SR), which contains the disputed islands, protested against the formation of such a zone, suggesting instead the inclusion of the whole of the SR in it.¹⁸

This statement was made on the eve of the signing of the *Friendship-*

Economic Cooperation Alignment between Japan’s northernmost district of Hokkaido, which is commonly designated to incorporate the disputed islands, and the SR.¹⁹ On 4 December, Farkhutdinov again protested against separating the ‘four islands’ as a special zone distinct from the SR.²⁰

However, as early as 17 November, an unnamed Russian government source disclosed that Yeltsin’s reply aimed at postponing the territorial solution by offering to admit in the *Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation* the obligation to determine the national boundary line while deferring its implementation. Justifying the postponement decision, the source referred to Russia’s unstable domestic situation as unsuited to “*even try*” to resolve the territorial issue.²¹

It was also reported in mid-November that Yeltsin's proposal offered the signing of a separate agreement on the territorial issue after the conclusion of the bilateral treaty.²² On 7 January 1999, Russia's Public TV, Channel 1, spread this version, referring to the Japanese media.²³ A possible attempt to downgrade the impact of the territorial issue, the proposal to sign a treaty of "*peace, friendship and cooperation*" had been first offered by Yeltsin during the Kawana summit.²⁴

Further, on 4 December the SR Governor Farkhutdinov said during a press conference held in Moscow that he had seen the full text of Yeltsin's reply during his meeting on that day with Russia's Vice FM in charge of Russo-Japanese affairs, Grigorii Karasin. The Governor declared that the reply clearly indicated that Russia would not assent to the transfer of the disputed islands in the future.²⁵

On 8 December Farkhutdinov stated that he had received a previously requested written reply from Russia's Foreign Ministry signed by Karasin which, allegedly, contained the text of Yeltsin's reply.²⁶ According to the Sakhalin Governor, the reply rejected Japan's offer to recognise its residual sovereignty over the disputed islands. Moreover, similar to the content of the mid-November leaks, it reportedly contained an offer to sign the bilateral treaty by the year 2000, while deferring the territorial solution.²⁷

In response to Farkhutdinov's allegations, unnamed Japanese Foreign Ministry sources reportedly promptly expressed appreciation for Hashimoto's 'Kawana offer', noting that "*the fact that Russia has consented to the formation of the 'boundary line determination sub-commission' is not unrelated to the 'Kawana proposal'*".²⁸ However, on yet another occasion, on 9 December, an unnamed high-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry official this time disclosed to the Itar-Tass news agency that Yeltsin's reply had flatly rejected Japan's proposal for the recognition of its residual sovereignty. The diplomat characterised Japan's proposal as reflecting "*the extreme position*." He also indicated that Yeltsin's reply had offered to sign a wide-ranging bilateral treaty stipulating the determination to resolve the territorial issue by the year 2000.²⁹

Similar ideas were reportedly expressed by Vice FM Karasin during the Vice FM level meeting of the bilateral Commission on peace treaty issues which was held in Tokyo on 9 December 1998.³⁰ On the whole, however, one gets the impression that the top level information leaks which occurred in Russia have pursued a certain consistent policy line.

Secrecy

The secrecy surrounding the concrete content of the negotiating process on the Russo-Japanese territorial dispute does not allow for a clear appraisal of it. The secrecy became evident for the first time in the wake of an informal – 'no-necktie' – summit between President Boris Yeltsin and the then Japanese PM Ryutaro Hashimoto which took place in a Japanese resort town of Kawana in April 1998.

On 19 April 1998, in the course of a final joint press-conference which was broadcast live on Japanese TV, Yeltsin suddenly remarked that, in the morning of that day, Hashimoto had offered an "*interesting additional proposal*" which "*requires serious consideration from our side*".³¹ It is worth noting that, in their introductory statements, neither Yeltsin nor Hashimoto mentioned an "*additional proposal*" by the Japanese side. Yeltsin was the first to mention it, while replying to a question of the *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper. As the conference went on, Hashimoto admitted that he "*indeed*" had passed on a proposal to Yeltsin. Although he called a proposal "*serious*", Hashimoto refused to shed any further light on its content.³²

All this raises the possibility that Yeltsin might have by chance failed to keep his promise of not informing the journalists about Hashimoto's "*additional proposal*." Incidentally, a Japanese expert on the territorial issue, Hiroshi Kimura, asserts that Hashimoto's proposal was delivered orally.³³ Yeltsin's extreme tiredness may have served as a reason for what happened: according to Yeltsin himself, during his two-day-long stay in Kawana, 18 hours were devoted to "*work*", while as many as 20 hours were needed "*in order to get here and get out*".³⁴

In this particular regard, the context in which Yeltsin indicated Hashimoto's "*additional proposal*" deserves attention. Before he referred to it, Yeltsin, somewhat vaguely, stressed the consistency between the 'five-stages plan' for the resolution of dispute which he had advanced in January 1990, and the Tokyo Declaration, which had been signed between Japan and Russia during his official visit to Tokyo in October 1993. Moreover, Yeltsin also indicated that the five-stages plan continued to constitute a basis for the bilateral negotiating process.³⁵

However, there are significant differences between the two documents. For example, according to Article 2 of the Tokyo Declaration, the conclusion of the bilateral peace treaty was conditional upon

resolving the issue of a national status of the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomais.³⁶ Yeltsin's five-stages plan, by contrast, envisioned the signing of the peace treaty between Japan and the Soviet Union on the fourth stage – in Yeltsin's own words, “*as if in the middle of the road*” – which was to precede the final fifth stage, at which final clarification of the islands' status was expected to occur. Proposed before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the plan also envisioned the possibility of a peace treaty between Japan and Russia (as part of the Soviet Union) at the third stage devoted to demilitarisation of the disputed islands.³⁷

A peculiar explanation regarding Yeltsin's unexpected remark in Kawana has been offered by Shinjiro Mori who was head of the Moscow bureau of Japan's *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper from 1992 until 1996. Mori claims that not only had both leaders agreed to conceal the “*additional proposal*” but that, in order to ensure the secrecy, the secretariats of both negotiating sides had gathered in the morning of 19 April to coordinate the press conference statements. According to Mori, Yeltsin may have broken the agreed confidentiality deliberately.³⁸

As early as 20 April, the alleged content of Hashimoto's “*additional proposal*” was disclosed by the Japanese media, reportedly through Japan's unnamed governmental circles.³⁹ However, in the evening of the same day, in the course of a ‘live’ national station (NHK) broadcast, Japan's Vice Foreign Minister Minoru Tamba, a key figure in the negotiating process, refused to provide any comments regarding either the mysterious proposal or its leaked popular version.⁴⁰ As a justification, Tamba referred to the reasoning given by Hashimoto, who had refused to disclose the content of his “*serious*” proposal because it was just about to be considered by both sides. Instead, Tamba advised TV viewers to “*quietly observe*” the negotiating process without interfering.⁴¹

Nevertheless, in the same program, NHK's political commentator, Kihiko Inoue, proceeded to disclose what was described as the content of Hashimoto's proposal while Tamba listened. According to Inoue, that proposal provided for the drawing the national boundary line between the islands of Uruppu and Etorofu, based on Russia's recognition of Japan's “*residual sovereignty*” [*senzai shuken*] over the disputed ‘four islands’. At the same time, Inoue pointed out that Japan was prepared to allow Russia to administer the islands' zone until their “*return*” to Japan at a future date. According to Inoue, this

was the first time that Japan had advanced such a concrete territorial resolution proposal.

Despite Tamba's comment to the effect that Inoue's description did not “*go beyond limits of conjecture*”, this interpretation of the additional proposal came to dominate various further analytical endeavours. However, Tamba's comment did serve to encourage various other conjectures as to the content of the proposal. Thus, Japanese commentator Keiya Osamu claimed that Hashimoto's secret plan envisioned drawing the boundary line between the islands of Uruppu and Kunashiri, with the status of Etorofu agreed to be left temporarily unresolved.⁴² Neither is there any reason to reject the information offered by Russian commentator Pavel Shirov in the course of a news summary broadcast by Russia's Channel 1 TV. Shirov asserted that Hashimoto offered Russia the possibility of recognising Japan's sovereignty over the islands of Habomais and Shikotan while retaining administrative rights “*for an indefinitely long term.*”⁴³

An illuminating detail was related by the head of the political section of Japan's prestigious *Sekai Shuho* weekly, Kiyotaka Kato. Referring to information provided by top level sources of Japan's Foreign Ministry, Kato claims that, upon hearing Hashimoto's proposal, Yeltsin seemed willing to approve it on the spot. He was, allegedly, prevented from doing it by interference of his press secretary, Sergei Yastrzhembskii.⁴⁴

It is known that on 20 April Yastrzhembskii arrived in Russia's Sakhalin Region for a two-day visit. During his stay, the press secretary visited, in particular, Kunashiri Island, one of the Habomais islands and observed Shikotan from a helicopter. This visit had been postponed twice during April, and had been initially scheduled to take place before Yeltsin's arrival in Kawana. During his stay on Kunashiri, Yastrzhembskii characterised Hashimoto's proposal as a “*Hong Kong*” variant, which was unsuitable for Russia. At the same time, the press secretary pointed out that President Yeltsin would respond to Hashimoto's proposal during the Japanese PM's official visit to Moscow in autumn.⁴⁵

Only a day before Yastrzhembskii's arrival in Sakhalin, on April 19, Vladimir Zema, Head of Administration of the SR's ‘Southern Kurils District’, which incorporates 3 of the disputed islands (Habomais, Shikotan and Kunashiri), in turn declared that the uncertainty of the geopolitical status of the ‘Southern Kurils’ would inevitably lead

to economic collapse of that area and cause its marine resources to be plundered.⁴⁶

Secrecy as a specific feature of the negotiating process has been noted in the media both in Japan and Russia, often in a critical context. Thus, the chief editor of Japan's *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper, Kunihiro Takaba, warned that prolonged secrecy would inevitably generate discontent among the Japanese public. Takaba appealed to both governments to "fully open" themselves.⁴⁷ In turn, Hiroshi Kimura also appealed to the Japanese government to disclose the content of Hashimoto's secret proposal. Kimura drew attention to the potential dangers for the diplomacy itself of the consequences of keeping secret "the content of the project which is deeply related to national interests."⁴⁸

Speaking of the Russian press in turn, Nikolai Kuchin, in particular, indicated that PM Obuchi's official visit to Moscow was "shrouded in mystery" as far as the territorial issue was concerned.⁴⁹ Georgii Bovt commented that "shrouded in mystery" were not only "the details of the President's counter-proposal on the territorial issue", but also the very procedure of the signing of the Moscow Declaration.⁵⁰ On the eve of the Moscow summit, Vasilii Golovnin observed "considerable anxiety among Japanese diplomats" about a possible "leaking to the press" of information regarding Yeltsin's expected reply to Hashimoto's proposal. Looking for an explanation, Golovnin pointed to the fear of a negative impact upon the Russian negotiating strategies by domestic opposition.⁵¹ Lost in the web of "devilish details", Dmitrii Kosyrev and Natal'ia Konstantinova regretted that "Moscow gave a secret answer to Tokyo's secret proposal."⁵²

Opposition

Typically, the political opposition in both Japan and Russia have proved the most articulate critics of the 'behind closed doors' approach to the bilateral negotiating process. The fact is that to a considerable extent it was the suppression of opposition interference that accounts for the two governments' choice of procedure. It is worth mentioning, however, that while an activation of the opposition in Japan might be viewed as beneficial in terms of Russia's central government interests, the Japanese authorities are likely to regard the involvement of the Russian opposition as highly undesirable.

In Japan, the secrecy approach has been the target of virulent attacks by the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and the 'Japan-Eurasia Society', formerly the 'Japan-USSR Society', a civil organisation closely tied to the JCP.⁵³ On 17 November 1998, the JCP Presidium Chairman Tetsuzo Fuwa met with PM Obuchi and harshly criticised the Moscow summit results.⁵⁴ First of all, Fuwa appealed for a disclosure of the content of the negotiations, choosing to define them as "international secret consultations." In response, Obuchi simply referred to the needs of the ongoing process.⁵⁵

Secondly, referring to the popular version of Hashimoto's secret proposal, Fuwa criticised the boundary line determination method that was presumably employed. In particular, Fuwa considered the possibility of Japan's inability to ever gain control of the 'northern Kuriles', implying the Kurile islands lying to the north of Etorofu, as damaging to Japan's national interests.

The JCP's open involvement in appraising the negotiations can be seen as particularly undesirable from the Japanese administration's point of view primarily because the positions of the LDP and the JCP differ in regard to the crucial issue of defining the status of Kunashiri and Etorofu. Unlike the LDP, the JCP has consistently refused to recognise that the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu are not part of the 'Kurile Islands' to which Japan renounced "all right, title and claim" according to Article 2 (C) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty (SFPT).⁵⁶ For their part, Russia's political circles, opposing as they do any territorial concessions to Japan or, like the central authorities, tending to favour a long-term 'shelving' of the dispute, might find it highly advantageous to employ the absence of political consensus in Japan on the status of Kunashiri and Etorofu for the purpose of advancing their interests.

Having chosen to define the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu as not part of the renounced 'Kurile Islands', Japan's ruling LDP has attempted to match the two causes of 'returning' these islands to Japan's sovereign control while, at the same time, strictly observing the SFPT provisions. In contrast, ever since 1969, the JCP has appealed for the 'return' to Japan of all the 'Kurile Islands', including Kunashiri and Etorofu, and has demanded reconsideration of the relevant SFPT provisions.⁵⁷ Until March 1991, Japan's former main opposition party, commonly known as the Japan Socialist Party, raised demands similar in content to those of the JCP.⁵⁸

The LDP's position was expressed clearly in the following statement of Japan's Ambassador to Russia at that time, Sumio Edamura, in the course of an exclusive interview for readers of Vladivostok's *Utro Rossii* newspaper in August 1992:⁵⁹

A claim for the return of these territories [southern Sakhalin and the 'Kuril Islands' viewed as stretching from Etorofu northwards] would contradict the position of Japan's government based on this country's [Japan] constitution, which stipulates strict observance of once concluded international agreements.

The Kunashiri/Etorofu issue also has a direct bearing on relevant policies of all of the SFPT signatories, including the USA. It is worth recalling that in September 1956, at the closing stage of Soviet-Japanese normalisation talks, in its *Aide-Memoire* addressed to the government of Japan, the US State Department expressed support for Japan's 'four islands' claim, abstaining, however, from defining Kunashiri and Etorofu as not a part of the 'Kuril Islands'. The same document clearly defined the Habomais and Shikotan as "a part of Hokkaido."⁶⁰

Searching for a relevant policy line, on 24 August 1956 the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, requested that "the historical division make a study to see whether there is any plausible basis for considering the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu as not necessarily part of 'the Kuriles'."⁶¹ However, the resulting study made by Herbert Spielman and forwarded to the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs of the Department of State on 1 September, concluded that, "in most United States documents which deal with the subject, Kunashiri and Etorofu are recognized as being a part of the Kuriles."⁶² Moreover, Spielman indicated that Japan's PM Shigeru Yoshida speaking to the SF peace conference convened to sign the peace treaty, specifically referred to these two islands as being "of the South Kuriles."⁶³

Returning to the JCP's criticism, it is worth paying special attention to Fuwa's alarming remarks about the 'northern Kuriles'. This position reflects Fuwa's intention to considerably enlarge the JCP's opposition base by means of undermining the LDP's approach from within the ruling party's ranks, as well as attracting the support of various other concerned political forces.

Thus, in the course of a press-conference held in the wake of the Kawana summit, Fuwa, pointed out on 23 April 1998, that it was not only the JCP demanding the 'return' of all the 'Kuril Islands' but that inside the LDP "there also are different kinds of people", meaning those who intended "to think in the future about the northern Kuriles' problem as well" and who did not confine themselves exclusively to the 'four islands' issue. Fuwa proceeded to characterise the boundary line determination method, as opposed to that of claiming the 'return' of territories, as leading to complete liquidation of "such possibilities in the future."⁶⁴

This sort of subversive strategy by the JCP points toward yet another potential function of the secrecy approach to the bilateral negotiations: to put a limit on information access to contending factions or individuals within the LDP. In this particular regard, the intra-party differences within the LDP, concerning Japan's foreign policy matters, deserve particular attention. Russo-Japanese relations have continuously played a highly important role as a means of regulating Japan's major diplomatic strategies, including the relationship with Japan's military ally, the United States. Indeed, the secrecy approach to the Russo-Japanese talks might also perform the function of denying unlimited information access to concerned foreign powers.

In a relevant precedent, the secrecy approach was pursued by the LDP negotiators in the course of the Soviet-Japanese normalisation talks, in particular at their final stage in October 1956. At that time, Ichiro Kono, then Japan's Minister of Agriculture and principal negotiator, offered the Soviet side the condition of proceeding to bilateral discussions regarding the status of Kunashiri and Etorofu only after the return to Japan of the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, which were administered by the United States in accordance with Article 3 of the SFPT.⁶⁵

Kono considered it plausible to have that condition included in a bilateral agreement only if it appeared from the text that it was initially proposed by the Soviet negotiators. This original strategy was employed secretly by the LDP government, without prior consultations being held within the LDP, and was kept confidential thereafter.⁶⁶

Further, the desire to produce a favourable impact upon public opinion in Japan must have been seen by the country's central authorities as yet another major benefit of the secrecy approach. Familiar as it is with the 'four islands return' rhetoric, the public

at large might be inclined to react unfavourably to any plausible compromise proposals and could thus be seen as a potential source of negative interference. The secrecy approach might also be considered capable of providing unique opportunities for affecting public opinion by applying ambiguous methods of information delivery, of which the above-mentioned TV presentation on 20 April is a typical example.

As regards the Russian side of negotiations, suffice it to recall a recent precedent when it was precisely the secrecy approach of Russia's central authorities which caused the sudden cancellation of President Yeltsin's official visit to Japan scheduled for September 1992. It was reported that, on the eve of Yeltsin's cancelled visit, the number of the territorial dispute resolution projects which he had at his disposal (from various sources) amounted to 12 or 14, with not a single one of them having been made public.⁶⁷

The protests raised by parliamentary deputies even led to the holding of closed hearings in the Russian Federation Supreme Council (RFSC) on 29 July 1992. The report prepared for the hearings by, in particular, People's Deputy Oleg Rumiantsev, who at that time was Chairman of the RFSC Constitutional Commission, concluded that Russia's national interests had to be formulated on the basis of the will of the Russian citizens, not "*by individual officials in secret from the public.*" Nevertheless, the government's specific plans were not disclosed to the deputies, either.⁶⁸

According to Japanese media reports, one of Yeltsin's dispute resolution projects – the so-called 'Burbulis Scenario' – might have even envisioned the dissolution of the RFSC during Yeltsin's stay in Japan in early September 1992 as a means to stabilise presidential rule and secure financial aid from Japan.⁶⁹

Russia's parliamentary opposition to Yeltsin's administrative rule, which rests on the predominance in the Duma (Lower House) of nationalist Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) deputies, at the time of the signing of the 'Moscow Declaration' continued to be a major obstruction to the government's secrecy approach to the Russo-Japanese talks.

Accordingly, in the wake of Obuchi's visit, the *Sovetskaia Rossiya* newspaper closely linked to the CPRF, while warning through the article of its staff correspondent, Sergei Ivanov, that it "*will be absolutely hopeless to even breathe a word*" about

the territorial dispute resolution "*with any of Yeltsin's successors*", cast suspicion on the secrecy surrounding the Russo-Japanese negotiations. Reacting to "*leaked information*" that both sides were ready to agree on "*joint development of the territories*", Ivanov levelled sweeping criticism at that conception.⁷⁰

As a representative of the subnational interventionists, Igor' Farkhutdinov, the Sakhalin Region's Governor and a member of the bilateral Commission on peace treaty issues, an energetic opponent of territorial concessions, on 14 November appealed to President Yeltsin to disclose the content of the reply to Hashimoto's proposal and demanded that both newly established subcommissions should include representatives of his SR. On 18 November the Governor demanded the disclosure of Yeltsin's reply for the SR residents.⁷¹

On the whole, it seems appropriate to appraise the Russian government's secrecy approach as a highly risky endeavour in terms of the domestic political environment. It might be plausible that, to a certain extent, such a policy was accepted by the Russian side due to firm insistence of its Japanese counterpart. Relying primarily upon the presidential foreign policy authority, the Japanese negotiators are likely, as was fairly observed by Golovnin, to fear the involvement of the Duma-based nationalist opposition.

Concluding Remarks

The signing of the Moscow Declaration foreshadows a 'year 2000 crisis' for Russo-Japanese relations. To begin with, the reference to the year 2000 in this document threatens to devalue its content if both countries fail to sign the peace treaty based on the resolution of their territorial dispute by then. However, it is highly improbable that Japan and Russia will succeed in signing the treaty by that deadline. The bilaterally agreed formation of two sub-commissions only delineates the principal differences in the approaches both countries have chosen to apply.

The Japanese boundary line determination approach relies to a large extent on the availability in Russia of a powerful presidential rule which is both sympathetic to Japan's claims and capable of making resolute decisions. Japan's Vice FM Tamba made this point frankly, while directly referring to President Yeltsin.⁷²

The fact is that, as far as Russia's parliamentary approval is concerned, for the time being neither the recognition of Japan's sovereignty over the disputed islands, nor the subsequently expected transfer of the administrative control to Japan may be viewed as plausible options. This has been confirmed, in particular, by the Duma's International Affairs Committee Chairman, Vladimir Lukin, one of the top figures in the 'Yabloko' party, which has tended to support Japan's territorial demands.⁷³

It is worthwhile drawing the analogy between Japan's negotiating approach and the relinquishing of administrative rights over the Ryukyus, including Okinawa, and the Daito Islands to Japan by the US in 1972. While eventually the Senate did vote for the ratification of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty on 10 November 1971, in August 1967, Legal Adviser Mark Feldman advised the State Department that there was "*no legal requirement that the formal consent of Congress as a whole or Senate be obtained.*" Feldman mentioned as a relevant precedent the reversion by the US to Japan of the Amami Islands, part of the Ryukyus, which was accomplished exclusively on the basis of a bilateral executive agreement as of December 1953.⁷⁴

In his memorandum, Feldman particularly stressed that John Foster Dulles, who on 6 April 1950, was appointed as Foreign Policy Adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State, advised both the SF Peace Conference and the US Senate that "*Japan retained residual sovereignty*" over the Ryukyus and other islands indicated in Article 3 of the Peace Treaty.⁷⁵ Indeed, it was J.F. Dulles, then US Secretary of State, who on 19 August 1956, advised Japan's FM Mamoru Shigemitsu that "*perhaps in dealing with the Soviet Union the best way would be to take the position that all the Kuriles enjoy the same status as the Ryukyus – i.e., foreign occupation with residual sovereignty resting with Japan.*"⁷⁶

Returning to the year 2000 theme, the presidential election in Russia occurring in the year 2000 and the resulting withdrawal of Yeltsin from national politics only emphasise "*lack of foresight*" in the Moscow Declaration.⁷⁷ In this regard, attention should be called to what might be qualified as 'ideologisation' of the declaration, which could cause serious damage to its stated goals in post-Yeltsin's Russia. Thus, the declaration's third paragraph explicitly contrasts the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods in favour of the latter by referring to the two countries' "*being [now] united*" on the basis of "*universal values.*"⁷⁸

It is only natural that, inside the ruling LDP, the opponents of the government's year 2000 policy are reportedly growing stronger.⁷⁹ The tension within the Japanese government was leaked to press. On 6 January 1998, the *Yomiuri* newspaper printed a front page article reporting that the government was considering the option of concluding a bilateral "*interim treaty*" providing only for the reversion of the islands of Habomais and Shikotan.⁸⁰

Typically, on the same day, the Japanese cabinet's Chief Secretary, Hiromu Nonaka, proceeded to call this information "*groundless and detrimental to [Japan's] national interests.*"⁸¹ On their part, on the same day, Russia's Vice FM Karasin and the Russian Foreign Ministry's official representative Vladimir Rakhmanin also referred to the report as groundless. Rakhmanin pointed out that no negotiations of that sort were ever conducted.⁸²

The arbitrary treatment in the declaration of the year 2000 deadline may not but cause anxiety. Nevertheless, optimism for the future might be identified in the welcoming reference to the formation of the 'Russo-Japanese Forum 21' in Japan and the 'Russian Committee for the 21st Century' as its Russian counterpart, clearly a 'track two' route.⁸³ Hardly by coincidence, the Russian organisation is headed by Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov, a strong presidential candidate. Luzhkov visited Tokyo on the Japanese organisation's invitation in the wake of the Moscow summit. As early as on 15 November, Luzhkov had a meeting with PM Obuchi. While in Japan, Luzhkov, typically, stated that the territorial dispute resolution was hardly plausible by the year 2000, possibly implying Yeltsin's remaining presidency.⁸⁴

Not only the presidential election, but also the elections of the SR Governor scheduled for March 2000 will have a direct bearing on the Russo-Japanese relations. A sharp split within the local media concerning Governor Farkhutdinov's re-election was already observable in late 1998. In the course of the local election campaign an intense campaign of nationalist propaganda directed against Japan's territorial claims is most likely to occur.⁸⁵

Finally, it is necessary to mention the disturbed legal standing of the Russo-Japanese peace treaty issue, primarily as concerns relevant provisions of the 1951 SFPT. That is why the evolution of the 'third power' interests, including those of the United States as Japan's military ally and major economic partner, might also be expected to affect the course of bilateral negotiations. In this regard, the year 2000 stands out as that of the presidential election in the USA.

In the meantime, both governments are preparing for the first meeting of the newly-formed two sub-commissions, to take place in Moscow on 21-22 January 1999, and Russian FM Ivanov's first official trip to Tokyo in February 1999. President Yeltsin's official visit to Japan is tentatively scheduled for June 1999. During the 1999 Tokyo summit, the Japanese side is expected to offer its reply to 'Yeltsin's proposal'.⁸⁶

Notes

- ¹ The last being when PM Kakuei Tanaka arrived for a summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev in October 1973.
- ² *Hoppo Ryodo* monthly, Northern Territories Policy Association, Tokyo, 18/12/98; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Obuchi Sori-no Koshiki Horo-ni Tsuite* (On Prime Minister Obuchi's Official Visit to Russia), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/kaidan/>, 13/11/98; *Mainichi Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 7/4/98; *Izvestiya* daily, Moscow, 4, 12 and 13/11/98; *Rossiiskaiya Gazeta* daily (RG), Moscow, 13/11/98; *Krasnaia Zvezda* daily, Moscow, 13/11/98; *Segodnia* daily, Moscow, 13-14/11/98; *Moskovskie Novosti* (MN) weekly, Moscow, No. 45, 15-22/11/98; *Novoe Vremia* weekly, Moscow, No. 46/98, 1998, discusses strategic aspects.
- ³ For a full text in Russian see *RG*, Moscow, 14/11/98.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*; on the Moscow summit and relevant information see also *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* daily (NG), 16 and 20/10/98 and 11/11/98.
- ⁵ For a full text of the *Tokyo Declaration* in Russian see *Iaponiya 1993*, Year-Book, Moscow, 1994, pp. 203-205; the disputed islands' names in Russian are: Habomai (Ploskie), Shikotan, Kunashir and Iturup. In Russia all the disputed islands are officially considered to be part of the 'Kuril Islands'.
- ⁶ *RG*, 14/11/98.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Mayaku Tsushin* (KYODO), No. 1079, Tokyo, 10/12/98, p. 25 (further referred to as: KYODO); KYODO, No. 1080, 17/12/98, p. 22.
- ⁹ Zinberg, Y. (1998) 'The Kuril Islands Dispute: Towards Dual Sovereignty', *Boundary and Security Bulletin*, 5, 4 (Winter), Durham: International Boundaries Research Unit, pp. 90-92.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*; on 'Zaitsev's project' see *ibid.*, pp. 92-94.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ¹³ *Tokyo Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 20/4/98; *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, Tokyo, 1/1/98.
- ¹⁴ *Tokyo Shimbun*, 20/4/98.
- ¹⁵ *RG*, 14/11/98.
- ¹⁶ Russian Public TV, Channel 1 (Ostankino), News Summary, 13/11/98.
- ¹⁷ KYODO, No. 1076, 19/11/98, p. 16.
- ¹⁸ KYODO, No. 1077, 26/11/98, p. 19.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

- ²⁰ KYODO, No. 1079, 10/12/98, p. 25; Russia's 'reply' was reportedly not yet determined as late as 12 November. See *Segodnia*, 13/11/98; Yeltsin reportedly offered to form a jointly administered 'special tax-free zone' on the disputed islands, with Russian sovereignty retained. See *MN*, No. 45.
- ²¹ KYODO, No. 1077, p. 18.
- ²² *National News Service* (NNS), <http://www.nns.ru/chronicle/>, 20/11/98, Moscow.
- ²³ See <http://www.ort.ru/>, 7/1/99.
- ²⁴ *Tokyo Shimbun*, 20/4/98.
- ²⁵ *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 10/12/98; KYODO, No. 1080, p. 23; *Japan Times* newspaper, Tokyo, 10/12/98; KYODO, No. 1079, p. 25.
- ²⁶ *Mainichi Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 9/12/98.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 10/12/98.
- ³⁰ *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily, Tokyo, 13/12/98.
- ³¹ *Nihon Hoso Kyoku* (NHK) TV, Japanese National Broadcasting TV, Channel 1, Direct Transmission, 19/4/98.
- ³² *Ibid.*; *Mainichi*, 20/4/98.
- ³³ *Sankei Shinbun* daily, Tokyo, 18/11/98.
- ³⁴ NHK TV, 19/4/98.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Iaponiya 1993*, pp. 203-205.
- ³⁷ For the record of Yeltsin's presentation in the Tokyo Press Club on 16 January 1990, see Latyshev, I.A., 'Pokushenie na Kurily' (Encroachment on the Kuriles), *Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk*, 1992, pp. 109-109.
- ³⁸ *Sekai* monthly, No. 6, 1998, Tokyo, pp. 126-127.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- ⁴⁰ NHK TV, 'Kurozu Appu Gendai' program, 20/4/98.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Seikai* monthly, January 1999, Tokyo, p. 54.
- ⁴³ *Sekai Shuho* weekly, 15/12/98, Tokyo, p. 14.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ HIT: Russian Far East Daily (in Russian), <http://www.infosnow.jp/hit/>, 9, 15, 20, 23/4/98; *Hokkaido Shimbun* daily, Sapporo, 22/4/98.
- ⁴⁶ HIT, 20/4/98.
- ⁴⁷ *Tokyo Shimbun*, 17/11/98.
- ⁴⁸ *Sankei Shimbun*, 18/11/98.
- ⁴⁹ *Novoe Vremia*, No. 46, 1998, Moscow.
- ⁵⁰ *Segodnia*, 14/11/98, Moscow.
- ⁵¹ *Izvestiya*, 11/11/98, Moscow.
- ⁵² NG, 13/11/98, Moscow.
- ⁵³ KYODO, No. 1076, p. 22; *Nihon-to Yurajiji* (Japan and Eurasia) bimonthly organ, Japan-Eurasia Society, 15/1/99, Tokyo.
- ⁵⁴ Akahata Shimbun daily, JCP's newspaper organ, 17/11/98, Tokyo.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ See *Ryodo Mondai: Nihon Kyosanto-no Shucho* (The Territorial Issue: The JCP's Claims), JCP edition, pp. 68-74, 1986, Tokyo.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁵⁸ See *Hokkaido Shimbun*, 21/3/91, Sapporo; 'Wada Haruki, Hoppo Ryodo Mondai-o Kangaeru' (Thinking

- About the Northern Territories Issue), *Iwanami*, 1990, Tokyo, pp. 220-239.
- ⁵⁹ *Utro Rossii* daily, 29/12/92.
- ⁶⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957 (FRUS), Vol. XXIII, Part 1, Japan, Washington DC, 1991, pp. 220-221.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Akahata*, 25/4/98.
- ⁶⁵ See Zinberg, Y. (1999) 'Okinawa-to Hoppo Ryodo' (Okinawa and the Northern Territories), *Kokusai Seiji*, JISA (Japanese International Studies Association), No. 120, 'Kokusai Seiji-no Naka-no Okinawa' (Okinawa in international Politics), February (forthcoming), Tokyo.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁷ *Kurily-ostrova v okeane problem* (The Kuril Islands in the Ocean of Problems), Georgiev, Yu.V., ed., ROSSPEN, Moscow, p. 337.
- ⁶⁸ NG, 25/7/92; *Kurily-ostrova*, p. 337.
- ⁶⁹ *Kurily-ostrova*, p. 437; Kato Akira, 'Kore-ga Eritsin "Usotsuki Gaiko"-no Shoko Da' (This is proof of Yeltsin's "Liar's Diplomacy"), *Shukan Bunshun* weekly, Tokyo, 22/7/93, pp.224-225.
- ⁷⁰ *Sovetskaiya Rossiya* daily, 26/11/98, Moscow; on 12 November the governmental Rossiiskaia Gazeta newspaper stressed considerable economic losses pertaining to the hypothetical transfer of sovereignty to Japan. See RG, 12/11/98.
- ⁷¹ NG, 19/11/98; KYODO, No. 1076, pp. 22-23; KYODO, No. 1077, pp. 18-19.
- ⁷² NHK TV, 'Kurozu Appu Gendai', 20/4/98.
- ⁷³ ORT TV, News Summary, 13/11/98.
- ⁷⁴ Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 92nd Congress, 1st Session 1971, Vol. XXVII, Wash., DC, pp. 371-372; US National Archives, Project Number: NND969000, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, RG59 General Records of the Department of State, Political and Defense, Washington DC; see the relevant text in Zinberg, Yakov, *Okinawa-to Hoppo Ryodo*.
- ⁷⁵ US National Archives, Project Number: NND96900; on Dulles' role in the peace-making process see Dunn, F.S. (1963) *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, Princeton, pp. 95-122. JCP Chairman, Fuwa, indicated that the 'boundary line determination' policy was enacted in order to emphasise the distinction between the concepts of "boundary" and "administrative control." See *Akahata Shimbun*, 25/4/98.
- ⁷⁶ FRUS 1955-57, p. 203.
- ⁷⁷ RG, 14/11/98; during their joint press conference in Kawana neither Yeltsin nor Hashimoto mentioned the 'year 2000 deadline', which seems to have escaped critical comments. It was reportedly expected that the 'year 2000' reference would be reconsidered during the Moscow summit. See NG, 12/11/98. Initially the 'year 2000 deadline' accord was reached during the Hashimoto-Yeltsin summit in Krasnoyarsk. It is unclear which side pressed for this deadline. In November 1997 *Izvestiya* reported that Yeltsin had to yield to Hashimoto's pressure, but the NG reported in November 1998 that it was Yeltsin who "initiated" the 'year 2000' proposal. See *Izvestiya*, 4/11/97; NG, 14/11/98; Zinberg, 'The Kuril Islands Dispute', p. 94.
- ⁷⁸ RG, 14/11/98; on 20/10/98, Yeltsin categorically refused to run for presidency in the year 2000. NNS, <http://www.nns.ru/chronicle/news/>, 20/10/98.
- ⁷⁹ *Mainichi Shimbun*, 9/12/98.
- ⁸⁰ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 6/1/99.
- ⁸¹ *Sankei Shimbun*, 7/1/99; the project of concluding the bilateral 'interim treaty' providing for the 'return' of the Habomais and Shikotan to Japan was offered by the JCP to Soviet leaders in 1979, see *Ryodo Monday*, JCP edition, pp. 7-9.
- ⁸² *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 7/1/99; ORT TV, <http://www.ort.ru./>, 7/1/99.
- ⁸³ RG, 14/11/98.
- ⁸⁴ NG, 19/11/98; KYODO, No. 1076, p. 23.
- ⁸⁵ *Saharin-to Nihon* (Sakhalin and Japan) newsletter, Japan-Sakhalin Society, No. 133, 11/1/99, Tokyo.
- ⁸⁶ KYODO, No. 1080, 17/12/98, p. 22; *Sankei Shimbun*, 7/1/99; KYODO, No. 1076, p. 16.

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