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Misperceptions
Between Japan and
Russia

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Japan and Russia: Misperceptions and Bilateral Relations

Preface

The twentieth century has witnessed repeated occasions when Japan and Russia have taken each other's measure and decided on policy accordingly. In the years 1985 to 1999 such mutual testing occurred again amidst adjustments in the direction of each country's global role. As has often been the case, the Russo-Japanese relationship was not the main event on the world stage. Both countries placed higher priority on relations with the United States and with China. But to rank this bilateral relationship below two others is not to belittle the stakes involved. For Russia, Tokyo's strategy to look east or west and within Asia to focus in the northeast or the southeast has throughout the century made a great difference in war or peace, in development or isolation. For Japan, Moscow's strategy to balance west and east, and in the east to concentrate on China or Japan, has had telling consequences for other foreign policy choices. At stake in this bilateral relationship have been the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East; the security environment in Northeast Asia including Korea; the prospects of triangular or quadrangular relations with China and the United States; and the balance of power among the world's great powers.

One factor that makes Russo-Japanese relations exceptional is the frequent identification of perceptions as a decisive factor. Especially in the period from the mid-1980s, Japanese and Russians have often mused that if they could clear up misperceptions between their two nations a breakthrough in relations would result. In other words, rather than national interests, something psychological has been holding up these relations. In the years of strained relations when Andrei Gromyko neglected Japan, in the years of "new thinking" when Eduard Shevardnadze struggled to normalize relations, in the years of Yeltsin's pro-Western inclinations when Andrei Kozyrev could not figure out how to deal with Japan within the framework of the West, and finally in the years of Evgenii Primakov (first as foreign minister, then as prime minister) when the question arose about how to accompany a new balance between East and West with an appropriate balance between China and Japan, Russian foreign ministers have not had much success in improving relations with Japan. In turn, Japanese cabinets and foreign ministers have found themselves befuddled in their goals toward the Soviet Union and Russia. Over and over again analysts blame missed opportunities on problems in perceptions. On the one hand, they see Russians focused too expansively on the struggle between superpowers or great powers,

failing to appreciate the benefits of bilateralism. On the other, they picture Japanese as narrowly centered on the territorial dispute over four islands, neglecting to envision a wide-ranging partnership with Russia. The two sides have not been able to develop a shared image of the future.

The struggle continues for normalizing the bilateral relations and balancing the great power linkages of both Japan and Russia. In June 1997 Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto proposed to President Yeltsin annual summits beginning with a meeting later in the year in the Russian Far East. Again analysts scrambled to measure popular reactions as officials gave new thought to shaping reactions in support of possible agreements. While the Japanese public remained more dubious of the other side, the more serious barrier to a relationship built on trust and welcoming investment and interpenetration came from the Russians. From November 1997 when the first of two “no-necktie” summits was held in Krasnoyarsk to November 1998 when Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi went to Moscow for a formal summit, hopes ran high. Yet, fundamental discrepancies in the way each side interpreted the other’s motives doomed these negotiations from the start. By early 1999 a mood of disillusionment had followed. Promises to hold an early summit after Vladimir Putin’s election as president in March 2000 tried to revive some hope.

The authors of these essays have studied Russo-Japanese perceptions and relations from many angles. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa followed these topics closely while teaching at Hokkaido University in the second half of the 1980s and then after moving to the University of California at Santa Barbara. As a specialist on Russia as well as on Russo-Japanese relations, he has delved into both sides of relations, and as an active participant in Japanese debates he can shed special insight into public and elite opinion in Japan. Semyon Verbitsky served as the managing editor of the Soviet yearbook *Iaponiia* until he left for the United States in 1992, where he has continued his research. As a specialist on Japanese foreign relations and Russo-Japanese relations, he too can shed insight into questions of perception. Gilbert Rozman began his research on Japanese and Russian mutual perceptions and relations in 1986, traveling often to the two countries for interviews and materials. Hasegawa and Verbitsky served initially for him as trusted sources who helped to initiate him into this field.

This volume began as three presentations to a panel at the 1996 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. Hasegawa organized the panel and recruited the others to join him in preparing papers. Aware of how little has been written on this subject and its continuing importance, the three authors agreed to revise their papers. Rozman assisted Verbitsky in translating and editing his paper. Together, the three essays provide

a sustained view of mutual images that should be useful to specialists on Russo-Japanese relations in the postwar era and in the transition to a new era. They supplement two recent books, one by Hasegawa, cited in his chapter, and one edited by Rozman, *Japan and Russia: The Tortuous Path to Normalization, 1949–1979* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), to which all three authors contributed.

March 2000

Chapter One

Perceptions of Japan in the USSR During the Cold War and Perestroika

Semyon Verbitsky

It is widely recognized that, during the final years of the Soviet Union, and in Russia since 1992, popular perceptions of Japan limited the options of national leaders interested in normalizing relations or applying the Japanese model of development. Russo-Japanese relations continue to be held back in part by mutual suspicions and negative stereotypes. But in contrast to Japanese perceptions, which grew more negative from the 1960s to 1980s, Russian perceptions showed signs of moderating. In the tumult of the 1990s they have been both stirred by nationalist passions against Japan and aroused by hopes of closer ties and the benefits they promise. The pattern of changes in perceptions prior to this recent flux offers insight not only on the evolution of the Soviet era worldview but also on the prospects for a breakthrough in relations. The first part of this essay reviews the evolution to 1985, and the second part concentrates on the impact of “new thinking” on images of Japan.

The significant transformation of perceptions of Japan that took place in the USSR after the start of perestroika is usually presumed to be a consequence of “new thinking” and “glasnost.” Of course, widespread exposure of the straightjacket of communist ideology led to the Soviet people forming a more adequate notion of the outside world. But images of other countries and peoples had been evolving over a long time. In the case of Japan, imperial and ideological stereotypes had been weakening, while positive images were appearing. These images, often expressed indirectly, became preconditions for the more forthright views of the late 1980s.

This essay focuses on the factors that influenced this process, then treats some effects of the process. The background for notions of Japan in the USSR in the postwar period was formed over more than two centuries of contacts between the two countries. The struggle between Russia and Japan for influence in the Far East, and especially the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–1905, resulted in the formation of an image of Japan as “a military rival” and “a yellow peril.” At the same time, positive images of Japan were also formed such as “feelings of compassion to the common Japanese people,” “a country of exotic, unique

culture,” and “a possible trade and political partner in the Far East.”¹

As the USSR was changing after the revolution into a totalitarian state, Soviet ideologists during the interwar period began to introduce into the consciousness of the Soviet people stereotypes about Japan as an aggressive imperialist power and the most probable adversary of the USSR in the future war.² Both the legacy of pre-Soviet stereotypes and the rise of Japanese militarism just beyond the USSR’s eastern borders gave credibility to the negative coverage. It was manipulated too by Stalin’s penchant for branding targets of the Great Purges “Japanese spies.” Despite the neutrality treaty that operated from 1941 to 1945, the large battle with Japan on the eve of World War II and the hasty Soviet campaign to conclude the war fueled more hostility.

The Cold War Era

Three levels of perceptions of Japan existed during the cold war. The first level was the ideological conception of the Soviet leadership, which proceeded from the assumption that Japan was an imperialist country and an important member of the anti-Soviet balance of power in the Pacific region. The second level was the view of the party, ideological, diplomatic, mass media, and academic nomenklatura, which prepared information and analysis for the Soviet leadership and shaped the stereotypes about Japan available to the public. The third level were the images of Japan that actually formed among the Soviet public. On the one hand, they could not escape the influence of ideological manipulations by the Soviet leadership and nomenklatura. On the other hand, increasing contacts between the two countries and improved information resulted in changing perceptions of Japan by the Soviet people.

An important tendency of the cold war period was a growing gap between the perceptions of the Soviet leadership and the upper strata, and between the upper strata and the Soviet public. In the 1980s some narrowing of these gaps touched part of the Soviet leadership and nomenklatura and exerted a degree of influence on the formation of “new thinking” in the period of perestroika concerning Japan.³

Perceptions of Japan in the Soviet Leadership

During the cold war the leaders of the USSR considered Japan a potential enemy and a definite obstacle on the path to the consolidation of Soviet influence in the Far East. They regarded Japan first of all in the light of the Japanese-American Security Treaty, seen as a military alliance, and did all in their power

to discredit and abolish it. Three features of these perceptions deserve emphasis. First, these leaders did not consider Japan to be a priority in their foreign policy. Second, the Soviet leaders could not conceive of Japan as a new world power because they associated such a status with a country that possessed a huge military potential, significant natural resources, a large territory, and ample manpower; they viewed Japan from their own position as the winner in World War II and a great nuclear power. Third, they kept counting on Japanese political opposition forces that, as it turned out, did not have any influence on policy making in that country. One of the initiators of perestroika, Aleksandr Yakovlev, who worked during the cold war in the Central Committee of the CPSU, noted that for decades the views of the Soviet people and the Japanese about each other as potential enemies were firmly established. Relations between the USSR and Japan were not considered a vital question for either country, with each taking it for granted that “big policy was not made” in this field.⁴

Naturally, it would be an oversimplification to think that perceptions of Japan by the Soviet leadership during the cold war always remained the same. Different factors, such as changes in the Kremlin and the international situation, the increasing economic potential of Japan and the state of bilateral economic ties exerted an influence on these perceptions. But among the top leadership, including Andrei Gromyko, it is remarkable, given the momentous developments over thirty years, how little change did occur.

The main reasons that drove Stalin to enter into war with Japan in August 1945 were imperial thinking and his desire to whitewash the shame of Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Viacheslav Molotov, who was minister of foreign affairs, recalled an episode when Stalin, looking at the map of the USSR, after World War II, said with satisfaction: “What do we have here? . . . The Kuril Islands are now ours. Sakhalin is completely ours. Look how nice!”⁵

Stalin was very interested in occupying the northern part of Hokkaido. The firm opposition of President Truman was one of the main reasons for worsening relations between the allied countries at the start of the postwar era. Once the cold war was under way, Stalin considered American imperialism to be the main enemy of the USSR. From that time on, Soviet ideological and international activities were directed toward weakening American occupation forces in Japan. In newly declassified archives of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a projected Soviet peace treaty with Japan was discovered, with comments by Stalin.⁶ The goal of Stalin’s policy toward Japan was to force the United States to withdraw its troops and military bases from Japan. Stalin believed that without U.S. forces Japanese communists would increase their subversive activity and create a “revolutionary situation” for the seizure of power.⁷ Nikita Khrushchev in his memoirs blamed Stalin for not signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty

with Japan in 1951: "He never asked for anybody's advice. He was too cocky, particularly after the defeat of Hitler's Germany."⁸

After Stalin's death, perceptions of Soviet leaders concerning Japan underwent some changes. Khrushchev began to understand the necessity for the USSR to break out of full isolation from the capitalist world where it had been driven by Stalin. His views of Japan were influenced on the one hand by his common sense and on the other by his naive belief in Marxist dogmas. He began to realize the importance of improving relations with Japan, which, in his opinion, had rapidly come out of the postwar crisis and would become an important trading partner of the USSR. But at the same time he considered the Japanese-American alliance as a major threat to the socialist camp in the Far East and sought to undermine it even at the cost of economic ties to Japan.

How did Khrushchev explain his reasons for opening negotiations with Japan in 1955? He tried to address this question in his memoirs: "Americans," he wrote, "were masters in Japan. They built bases. They waged an anti-Soviet policy. They were seized with hatred against the socialist camp, primarily against the country that first raised the Marxist-Leninist banner of the working class and achieved great successes." He recalled strongly worded discussions with Molotov, who categorically refused to make any compromise with Japan. In his usual emotional manner, Khrushchev stated: "I told Molotov that the biggest favor we would do to the Americans would be to stubbornly reject contacts with Japan. That would give them a chance to exercise absolute power there and turn Japan steadily more against the Soviet Union."⁹

Khrushchev continued to be Stalin's follower. His main aim was to bring about the strengthening of Japanese "democratic forces" in order to weaken U.S. authority. He really believed that only the appearance of the Soviet embassy in Tokyo would give the USSR access to Japanese public opinion and influential circles. "As soon as our embassy reopens in Tokyo, it will act like a magnet, attracting all those who are dissatisfied with Japan's current policies. These elements will begin to exert some influence on Japanese politics."¹⁰ He believed that the Japanese people and some Japanese political leaders were interested in making Japan a "neutral" and "independent country," and the main task of Soviet policy was to help the Japanese people to achieve these goals.

Khrushchev lifted, a little, the veil over the policy-making process in connection with Soviet-Japanese negotiations. After Stalin's death he spoke to Mikoyan, Bulganin, and Malenkov about relations with Japan, and they agreed that it would be necessary to find a way to sign the treaty and end the state of war with Japan. Only Molotov "repeated all the same arguments that Stalin had used to refuse signing the treaty."¹¹

How did Khrushchev explain his intention to return the two Kuril Islands to Japan? He stressed that “in these days of modern military technology, the islands really have very little value for defense; nor have the islands ever had any economic value.” At the same time, in regard to the main islands of Japan, he wrote, “Japanese friendship with the USSR and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the islands would create an opportunity to use human resources to develop our economy and to raise the standard of living of the Japanese as well. . . . We would be getting some of the highest quality technology in the world.”¹² Only after the collapse of the communist regime was it revealed that Khrushchev’s initiative evoked strong dissatisfaction among a significant part of the nomenklatura taking part in this process.¹³

In all the postwar period, only during the beginning of the Khrushchev regime was there a real possibility of solving the territorial dispute. At that time he was a strong but also a popular leader, the last Soviet leader who could make decisions independently, without fear of opposition. Japanese leaders lost a historic chance to gain the return of two of the northern territories, while solidifying a symbol around which their country could rally and continue to make the United States Japan’s indispensable ally.

No wonder that Khrushchev’s reaction to the revision of the American-Japanese Security Treaty in 1960 was very strong and emotional. The Soviet government declared that the revision created a new situation which nullified the promise made in the Joint Declaration of 1956 between the USSR and Japan: the Kuril Islands would now be used by American troops.¹⁴ G. Kunadze, prior to his appointment as deputy foreign minister of Russia, tried to explain why the Soviet leadership had come to such an obvious violation of international law by renegeing on the 1956 Joint Declaration. He noted that leaders were sure that there existed a classic revolutionary situation in Japan at that time; therefore, from their point of view, it would be useless to deal with an unpopular and puppet Japanese government.¹⁵

During Brezhnev’s rule, which coincided with the decline of the anti-American movement in Japan, the economic rise of that country, and the rapprochement between the Japanese and Chinese Communist parties, revolutionary romanticism reflecting Khrushchev’s belief that Japanese “democratic forces” would be victorious steadily declined. It was a time of the triumph of socialist bureaucracy in all fields including foreign policy. The Soviet leadership perceived Japan first of all from the point of view of confrontations between “East and West” and between Moscow and Beijing. Although Soviet ideologists continued to exaggerate the role of “democratic forces,” in contrast with Khrushchev they did not believe in the possibility of these forces coming to

power.

The USSR's tough policy toward Japan was usually associated with Andrei Gromyko, who was nicknamed in Japan "Mister Nyet."¹⁶ Having served more than twenty-eight years as minister of foreign affairs—and since 1973 as a member of the Politburo—Gromyko officially defined the basis of Soviet foreign policy, including policy toward Japan. He noted in his memoirs that the Soviet people had negative stereotypes of Japan and doubted Japan's good intentions. The roots of these feelings, in his opinion, lay in such historical events as Japan's treacherous attack on Port Arthur in 1904, the incidents at Lake Khasan and on the Khalkhin-Gol River in the late 1930s, and the sudden Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.¹⁷ Gromyko's own negative feelings toward Japan stemmed from his suspicions about the true goals of Japanese policy, as that country was not entirely free to choose in which directions to construct its politics. For instance, after once meeting with Prime Minister Nakasone, Gromyko concluded that Nakasone's speech sounded too good to be true. "How is it possible," he warned, "not to take into account who is in front of me?"¹⁸

From time to time Gromyko sensed a change in the Kremlin and adapted to it. It happened during the Soviet-Japanese negotiations in 1955–1956 and again after Yuri Andropov came to power. One last time Gromyko tried to adapt at the beginning of perestroika.

Newly declassified documents show that there were some differences of opinion inside the Politburo on the territorial problem during Andropov's tenure in office. Gromyko held a compromise position. On May 31, 1983, he reported to the Politburo that the Southern Kurils "are not of particular importance" to Moscow and could in principle pass to Japan. Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov agreed, with only one correction—"not to hand over Kunashir to Tokyo" as it had strategic military importance to the USSR. General-Secretary Andropov opposed Gromyko and suggested a joint development of the Southern Kurils with Japan under the continuous jurisdiction of the USSR. In his opinion, such a compromise "would make Japan soften its position" concerning the USSR and move it a little away from the United States. However, the record of the proceedings shows that Andropov agreed with Gromyko that the Southern Kurils "are not of particular importance" to Moscow.¹⁹

This document gives us reason to think that at the end of the cold war part of the Soviet leadership began to understand Japan's important role in the contemporary world and consequently the need to search for a compromise with this country. Although the top leadership had obstructed serious consideration of Japan for a long time, the fact that it was contemplating a shift suggests that it was not totally out of touch with changing views within the Soviet Union.

The Role of the Nomenklatura in the Formation of Japanese Stereotypes in the USSR

The Soviet nomenklatura exerted a powerful influence on perceptions of Japan by both the Soviet leadership and the Soviet people. It was the nomenklatura that supplied the leadership with information and analysis concerning Japan and informed the populace of the images and stereotypes they were supposed to accept. The most active role in this process was played by the International Department and some other departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In charge of this process, the party ideological apparatus formulated the party program concerning Japan and specified interpretations of different aspects of Japanese political life for the Soviet mass media. Without “approval” by the International Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no articles related to Japan’s political and foreign policies could be published.

From the beginning of the 1950s the Japanese section of the International Department was headed by Ivan Kovalenko, who during the entire course of the cold war exerted a dominant influence on the formation of ideological images concerning Japan. When Kovalenko was nominated deputy chief of the International Department, A. Senatorov became the new head of the Japanese section. Many books and articles reflecting party views on the political situation in Japan and the Pacific region were published under the names of these two men or their pseudonyms: Kovalenko and Senatorov sat on the editorial boards of many journals and edited various collections of articles relating to Japan.²⁰ In the late 1970s a specialist on Japan’s economy, Y. Kuznetsov, was invited to work as a consultant for the Japanese section. Although his publications were based on Marxist postulates, they provided a better understanding of the social system of Japan. Not long before perestroika a younger specialist, V. Saplin, also appeared in the Japanese division. His perceptions of Japan already reflected the new thinking of the coming Gorbachev epoch. Differences among these four—Kovalenko, Senatorov, Kuznetsov and Saplin—revealed the weakening of ideological dogmas and of party control over the media and academic scholarship at the end of the cold war. With the united front close to the top crumbling, control over diversity of thinking became more difficult.

The diplomatic nomenklatura played an important role in the process of policymaking concerning Japan, especially after Gromyko, already minister of foreign affairs, became in 1973 a member of the Politburo. The official statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the main source of information for the Soviet people concerning the foreign policy of Japan and especially Soviet-

Japanese relations.

The majority of Soviet diplomats, for reasons of self-preservation if no other, always possessed an inherent sense of conformism and “party discipline.” However, it is possible to distinguish among three groups of diplomats during the period of the cold war: (1) former party officials, who were usually sent to honorary exile as ambassadors; (2) bureaucrats, who clearly understood that their careers depended on the support of the party bosses; and (3) a small group of diplomats with background in Asian studies, who expressed a real interest in improving relations with Japan.²¹ During perestroika this third group of better informed diplomats played an important role in changing the views of the new Soviet leaders and of Soviet society about Japan and Soviet-Japanese relations.

After World War II, Asian studies declined severely in the USSR. Repression of the most talented scholars in the late 1930s actually led to the elimination of Japanology.²² In their place, students of the interwar communist academies — former Comintern and party officials, and former military officers — filled the Asian institutes of higher education and research centers. They in every possible way declared their adherence to Marxist-Leninist theory and actively fought against what they considered to be bourgeois heresies.²³

From the early 1970s a new generation of Japanologists began to gain a dominant position in academic fields. After graduation from special Asian institutes and, in some cases, work in the Soviet embassy or as correspondents for the Soviet media in Japan, they were trusted to play leading roles in the field.

One of the principal Japanologists of that period was I. Latyshev, who worked as head of the Japanese Department of Moscow’s Institute of Oriental Studies and later served as a correspondent for *Pravda* in Tokyo. He was the most typical representative of the academic world of the Brezhnev epoch and continued to be faithful to it after democratic changes in Russia.²⁴ Characteristic of Latyshev’s scholarly and management style was his blind faith in Marxist dogma. On the one hand, he exhibited excessive vanity and ambition, reveling in the power he had to command areas of Soviet Japanology and repress heterodox views; on the other, he was frightened of party bosses and their opinions. The possibility of publishing any work, depended to a considerable degree, on the supervisors who served as chiefs of institutes or departments. Two basic works by Latyshev were dedicated to the Liberal Democratic Party and the Japanese bureaucracy. They were full of Marxist dogma and gave a distorted impression of the Japanese political system.

Despite the controls exercised by officials like Kovalenko on foreign policy and Latyshev on domestic politics and even culture, diverse information seeped into coverage of Japan. Staff at academic institutes approached Japan from more varied perspectives. There was much positive news to present even if supervisors

sought to prevent any support for the thesis of a Japanese “economic miracle.” Soviet Japanology could take some pride in acquainting the Soviet people with Japan, to the point that much of the continuing propaganda seemed empty, and ideological stereotypes of Japan were losing their grip. Quite a number of talented works were devoted to Japanese economy, history, culture, and religion. Often they left an indirect impression about politics and foreign policy, as writings directly on those subjects were themselves becoming more informative, if still restricted. Clear thinking Japanologists, especially representatives of the new generation, made a valuable contribution to a more objective view of Soviet-Japanese relations before 1985. When glasnost began, they grew sharper and more specific in their observations.

The Formation of Public Opinion about Japan in the Totalitarian State

Is it possible to speak about the existence of public opinion in the USSR concerning foreign policy problems during the cold war? A priori, it was assumed that the Soviet people completely supported the peaceful foreign policy of the Communist party and the Soviet government. Any publications critical of Soviet foreign policy were regarded as anti-Soviet fabrications of bourgeois propaganda.

The main sources of information about Japan for the majority of the Soviet people were newspapers, radio, and television. It was, above all, the Soviet mass media that created stereotypes about Japan.²⁵ The majority of publications about that country contained official declarations of the Soviet government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, information about meetings of the Soviet leaders with delegations of Japanese “fraternal parties,” articles on the threat of the Japanese-American Security Treaty, the militarization of Japan, and the struggle of the Japanese people against monopolistic capital. The mass media in every possible way avoided publishing any data concerning Japan’s postwar success in the economic and social fields. No wonder that in such conditions the Soviet ideological apparatus was able to inculcate in the consciousness of the people stereotypes about Japan as an “American springboard in the Far East,” “a militaristic country,” and a society of unceasing struggle between “labor” and “capital” and “democratic” and “reactionary” forces.

It would be an exaggeration, however, to accept without qualification the influence of ideological factors. After the reestablishment of Soviet-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1956, economic and cultural cooperation and contacts between the two countries resulted in the appearance of unofficial sources of information about Japan. There were economic and cultural exhibitions, movies and theatrical performances, translations of Japanese literature, and essays on

Japan by Soviet writers and journalists. These sources of information stimulated the formation of some positive images such as the “Japanese miracle” and “Japan — country of a unique culture.” Some of these images filtered into television shows, popular books, and mass magazines. They reinforced the awareness of Japanese technical wizardry and cultural ingenuity spreading from direct or indirect contacts with the material products of Japan.

By the beginning of the 1980s the attitude of the Soviet leadership and the mass media to Japan had become more critical. It was in some respects the most negative period of the entire postwar era resulting from Japan’s participation in the “anti-Soviet sanctions of American imperialism.” However, it was also the time when Japan became one of the most popular foreign countries among the Soviet people. A closed poll of Soviet students, conducted in 1977 by *Sankei shimbun* and the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, showed that more than 70 percent of the Soviet respondents regarded Japan well or satisfactorily.²⁶ Such positive images seem to have been gaining ground. An observer of *Asahi shimbun*, Mitsuko Shimomura, after visiting the USSR in 1984 and meeting with representatives of different strata of Soviet society, was amazed by the admiration of the Soviet people for Japan’s economic and technological successes as well as for its traditions and culture.²⁷

Perceptions of Japan in the USSR were often ambivalent, however; they combined strongly negative and positive images. Naturally enough the questions arise: Why did some perceptions fail the test of time despite the persistent support of the party ideological machine? Why did other perceptions survive and form the basis of new views of Japan during perestroika? The study of the process of formation of the main stereotypes and images of Japan during the cold war gives us a possible answer to these questions.

“Japan as a Threat” and the “Japanese Peace-Loving People”

Soviet ideologists attached great importance to inculcating an image of Japan as a potential adversary of the USSR. This image was the basis of different negative stereotypes about Japan, first of all such clichés as “Japan—military springboard of American imperialism in the Far East” and the “remilitarization of Japan.” Soviet society was in fact deprived of objective information about the real character of the security treaty and the true nature of Japan’s postwar defense policy.

The mass media severely criticized the security treaty as the main threat to peace and security in the Far East. Depending on the foreign policy and the ideological task at hand, Moscow concentrated attention on different aspects of

the Japanese-American alliance. After the conclusion of the security treaty in 1951, Soviet propaganda considered Japan “a semioccupied country.” At the time of the Korean and Vietnam wars clichés of Japan as “a country which is following the course of American foreign policy” and “the stronghold of aggression of the United States in the Far East” were drummed into the consciousness of the Soviet people.

No wonder that the reaction of the Soviet leadership to the revision of the security treaty in 1960 was strong and emotional. The mass media published many official statements and commentaries on the dangerous character of the new military treaty and the nationwide struggle of the Japanese people under the leadership of the communists and socialists against the “reactionary government and American imperialism.” Changes also took place in the interpretation of the Japanese-American alliance. Above all, the mass media began to emphasize the active role of “Japan’s ruling circles” in the American strategy in the Far East.

After the signing in 1965 of the Japanese-American communiqué, which stated that the United States would defend Japan from any attack including a nuclear one, the Soviet media actively began to push the thesis about “involving Japan in the American nuclear strategy.” They dealt broadly with questions about American submarines calling at Japanese ports and the stationing of medium-range F-15 bombers on American bases in Japan. From the start of the 1980s the image of Japan in the Soviet media was closely tied to the participation of Japan in the American “star wars” program. An especially sharp reaction was provoked by the decision of Prime Minister Nakasone to sell to the United States a new technology that would be used in some of the space weapons. Such propaganda was an important pretext for the Soviet leadership to increase its militarization of the Soviet Far East and to extend the activity of the Soviet Navy in the Pacific Ocean. At the beginning of the 1980s the Soviet government issued a statement that “the USSR was obliged to take extra measures of a defensive character for neutralization of a new danger emanating from Japanese territory.”²⁸

Soviet ideologists paid especially close attention to the intentions of Washington and Tokyo to expand the American-Japanese alliance. Newspapers constantly published information about the creation of an “alliance among Japan, South Korea, and the USA” and the strong military coordination developing between Japan and NATO. After Japan signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with China in 1978, Soviet propaganda declared that Japan and the United States were trying to draw China into an “anti-Soviet balance of power in the Pacific region.” In the first half of the 1980s, in reaction to toughening sanctions against the USSR after its invasion of Afghanistan and interference in Polish events, the

mass media popularized a cliché about the “participation of Japan in the global anti-Soviet strategy of American imperialism.”

The Soviet leadership’s interest in forming an image of the Japanese-American military alliance as a threat to the USSR could be explained by the cold war and the persistent confrontation between the two great powers. As regards the cliché about the “remilitarization of Japan,” the Soviet ideological apparatus first of all considered its ideological and political aspects. According to Marxist dogma, the existence of a highly developed country like Japan without powerful military potential and a military-industrial complex was impossible. Furthermore, an image of a Japan that “is heading toward militarism” was necessary in order to justify the development of the Far East into the most militarized region of the USSR. Soviet ideologists were also interested in supporting the “Japanese democratic forces,” which considered the struggle against the militarization of Japan as one of their main tasks. Soviet diplomacy tried to arouse anti-Japanese feelings in Asian countries, whose leaders actively used fears among their people of the possible remilitarization of Japan for their political purposes.

In the postwar period no problem concerning Japan produced so many publications:— articles, popular brochures, and books—as the “remilitarization of Japan.” In ideological circles such publications always received a green light, raising among the Soviet public hypertrophied notions about the scale of Japan’s military activity.²⁹ The Institute of Military History prepared the “conceptual approaches” to this problem. In academic institutes spokesmen for this stereotype were usually retired military officers. They authored many newspaper articles about Japan’s ultramodern weapons, its huge military expenses, and the possibility that Japan would become a nuclear power. At the same time the Soviet public was unaware of the postwar Japanese constitution and its “three antinuclear principles.” D. Petrov noted that the Soviet ideological apparatus devoted to creating stereotypes of Japan as a militarist country used means such as a double standard in the appraisal of the policies of Japan and other countries, broad and arbitrary interpretations of the declarations of Japanese leaders, and misrepresentations of the real policies of the Japanese government in these fields.³⁰

Of course, such propaganda exerted a certain influence on the consciousness of the Soviet people. The historic memory of the Russian people about the war of 1904–1905, the interventions of the Japanese army in the Far East in 1918–1922, and military conflicts near Lake Khasan and the River Khalkhin-Gol continued to underlie the image of a “Japanese threat,” especially among the interwar generation. There were some factors, however, that restrained this process. Only Soviet ideological propaganda could form and support such

contradictory stereotypes as “Japan is heading down the road of remilitarization” and the “peaceful Japanese people.” Antimilitary demonstrations by the Japanese with white kerchiefs around their heads, pacifist processions of Buddhists, flotillas of small boats around American warships at the entrance to Japanese ports—such images constantly appeared on Soviet television and came to symbolize political life in postwar Japan for the Soviet people. Undoubtedly, the “Hiroshima complex” played the main role in the formation of the image of the “peace-loving Japanese people.” Soviet ideologists were interested in creating an image of the “barbarian character of American imperialism.” The Soviet people thus felt compassion for the Japanese—the first victims of the atomic bombs. In their eyes, Hiroshima was associated first of all with mushroom clouds covering the city; with the warped frame of the building at the epicenter of the explosion; with permanent reports of the deaths of Japanese who were irradiated during the atomic tragedy; with thousands of paper cranes which were sent by Soviet children to a Japanese girl in the hope of prolonging her life.

The image of the “peace-loving Japanese people” itself undermined stereotypes about Japan as a potential enemy and a militaristic state.³¹ No wonder that after the end of the cold war when more objective information appeared about Japan’s real defense policy, a view of Japan as a “peace-loving country” spread rapidly.

“Reactionary” and “Democratic” Forces

The Soviet ideological apparatus, using the mass media and academic institutes, tried to establish the notion that Japanese society was divided into two antagonistic camps: “democratic forces” and “reactionary forces.” Political parties, trade unions, and various other organizations that had declared their anti-imperialist and anti-American positions were considered “democratic” and “progressive.” In the first decade after World War II only the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and organizations closely associated with it were reckoned to be “democratic forces.” From the 1960s, however, in connection with worsening relations between the Soviet and Japanese Communist parties, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) also began to be identified with the “democratic forces.” But the socialists who had left the JSP and joined the new Social Democratic Party were considered “reactionary forces.” Soviet propaganda bitterly blamed Japanese Social Democrats for the betrayal of “class interests” and servility to the reactionary forces. The same was true of the trade union movement. Soho, the General Consul of Japanese Trade Unions, which was connected with the JCP and JSP, was regarded as “a militant detachment of the democratic forces.”

Soviet mass media regularly showed the so-called spring offensive of the Japanese working people and, in every way possible, underlined their militant, class behavior. In contrast, trade unions that supported the rightist socialists were reckoned to be “reactionary forces,” traitors to the interests of the Japanese working people. The mass antiwar organizations that were under the influence of the JCP and JSP were declared to be “forces of peace,” yet the same organizations when acting under the aegis of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) garnered no such honors. The mass media constantly popularized programmatic declarations of the democratic parties and their appeals in the struggle against monopolistic capital, and the Japanese-American Security Treaty. All publications about the approved “democratic” parties had to convey only positive information; any criticism directed against them was possible only with the permission of the party’s ideological apparatus.”

The clichés used to refer to the “reactionary” forces included “monopolistic capital,” bourgeois and social-democratic parties, reformist trade unions, and nationalist organizations. In the postwar period the following interpretation of the Japanese political system was promoted: The real boss of Japan was “monopolistic capital” which possessed not only all absolute economic power but also political power. From the point of view of Marxist dogma it was “monopolistic capital” that made decisions on domestic and foreign policy. The ruling LDP was only an executor of the will of monopolistic capital. It was not easy for Soviet ideologists to explain the reasons for the LDP remaining so long in power. The Marxist answer to this question usually came down to assertions that it won elections only due to financial contributions from monopolistic capital and the absence of unity within the democratic forces.

Various ultraright nationalist organizations were considered to be an especially dangerous part of the “reactionary forces.” Significant attention was paid to the rebirth of “tennoism” or the cult of the emperor as a “main source of postwar nationalism.” Only during perestroika did publications explain that nationalism was inherent to all strata of Japanese society, including the “democratic” parties.

Widespread ideological propaganda and the absence of objective information exerted some influence on the formation of the views of the Soviet people about the postwar political system of Japan. Accordingly, a closed public opinion poll conducted among Soviet students in 1977 showed that the majority of them could not correctly answer the question whether Japan was a republic, an empire, or a totalitarian state.³² At the same time, awareness of significant growth in the Japanese economy, as well as of tremendous improvements in social conditions, undermined the Soviet people’s confidence in ideological

clichés about Japan. During perestroika, when censorship was weakened and objective information about Japan's political life appeared, the perception of Japan as "a democratic country" became more and more popular.

"A Problem Already Solved"

Many books and articles about the territorial problem—the question of control over the Southern Kuril Islands—had been published during the cold war. They covered different aspects of this problem except one—how the Soviet public perceived it. While this issue to a significant degree defined the attitude of the Japanese to the USSR, for the Soviet people the question in fact did not exist. This can be explained by several factors. First, Soviet foreign policy was made by the party leadership without concern for public opinion. Knowledge among the Soviet public about the territorial problem was scanty. It remembered those islands only in connection with the typhoons or tsunami that from time to time came through the region.

When for the first time an official declaration about the possible return of some of the Kuril Islands appeared in *Pravda* on November 24, 1955, Khrushchev was reported to have said during a conversation with a Japanese parliamentary delegation that although this question was solved by postwar treaties, "we think that because these islands are so near to Japan it is necessary to consider the interest of the Japanese state and the development of our relations with that country in a friendly direction."³³ In the spirit of this declaration Soviet propaganda explained to the Soviet public the ninth article of the Joint Declaration of 1956 that provided for the transfer Habomai and Shikotan to Japan after the signing of a peace treaty. But after only four years the Soviet government at the beginning of 1960 declared that because of the new security treaty it would be impossible to fulfill the Soviet promise to return to Japan two of the Kuril Islands. This declaration became the basis of the clichés: "no problem" exists, and this was "a problem already solved."

The majority of the Soviet people prior to perestroika were convinced that the Joint Declaration of 1956 was not a real treaty, not knowing that it was ratified by the parliaments of both countries and that its contents and formal features were characteristic of a full-fledged, state-to-state treaty. Soviet propaganda accused Japan of reluctance to keep its promise not to conclude a new military agreement with the United States, neglecting to mention that the Joint Declaration affirmed that both states have the right to individual and collective self-defense.

From the beginning of the 1960s the perceptions of the Soviet people about the territorial problem were defined primarily by the ideological decision not to

discuss the issue in the mass media. To publish any information or article about this question, permission was required not only from the usual overseers of censorship but also from the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to any international conference, party officials warned the Soviet participants against entering into a discussion of the territorial problem; if avoidance became impossible, Soviet participants were required to state the official point of view.

In order to justify the refusal to return any of the Kuril Islands to Japan, Soviet diplomacy and Soviet academic science were obliged to prepare arguments that would support the official position: (1) Russians had discovered these islands; (2) the Russo-Japanese War and further aggressive actions of Japanese militarists deprived Japan of any historical and moral right to refer to the treaties that were concluded in the last century; (3) the Yalta and Potsdam declarations were the juridical basis for returning the Kuril Islands to the USSR; (4) Japan itself declared at the San Francisco conference in 1951 its agreement to abandon claims to the Kuril Islands; and (5) the claims by Japanese diplomacy that the southern islands are not included in the Kuril chain are unsubstantiated.

Soviet propaganda strengthened the Soviet case by insisting that the progressive Japanese people supported the position of the USSR and by connecting Japan's demands to return the Kuril Islands with the rebirth of a militarist and revanchist program. All Japanese and every organization that adhered to such a position were reckoned to be "revanchist forces." At the same time, the Soviet mass media avoided informing its readers that the JCP and JSP had demanded the return not only of the southern islands, but of all the Kuril Islands. In those rare instances when some reference to these parties occurred, Soviet propaganda tried to explain their position as an accommodation with the growing nationalistic feelings of the Japanese voters. The Soviet people were not informed about the results of Japanese opinion polls that showed that the main reason for the negative attitude of the Japanese to the USSR was the existence of the territorial problem.

Given the information available to them, the majority of Soviet citizens thought that it was natural for the USSR to annex the Kuril Islands after its victory over Japan. After all, more than half of Soviet territory had been acquired by conquest, by Russia or the USSR, and incorporated into the imperial state. At the same time nobody would have protested if Khrushchev or another Soviet leader had decided to return two of the islands to Japan, as had occurred with the transmission of some small islands to Finland or of Port Arthur to China. No wonder that the majority of the Soviet people supported the official position, and the first open Soviet-Japanese public opinion poll, conducted at the beginning of 1988, showed that only 2.5 percent of respondents had any doubt that the

Kuril Islands belonged to the USSR.³⁴

In the period of glasnost and “new thinking,” new information began to discredit the clichés about this “solved problem.” This important aspect of Soviet-Japanese relations became the subject of an active national discussion and even of a struggle among different political forces and interests. If at first the reformers appeared to have the upper hand because they were countering misinformation and bringing hope of a breakthrough that could draw the Soviet Union into the successful world capitalist economy, their prospects were far from secure because they did not have a solid base in public opinion, and Russian nationalism was on the rise.

“The Japanese Miracle”

Undoubtedly Japan’s postwar economic development exerted the most significant influence on changing the perceptions of that country among the Soviet people during the cold war. Soviet propaganda tried to explain that success from the Marxist point of view as a temporary phenomenon that resulted from certain factors favorable to Japanese monopolies, such as cheap and skilled manpower. It was a time when the stereotype of the “hard-working” Japanese was very popular in the Soviet mass media. The Soviet people were constantly reminded that only the socialist model of economic development could lead to successful modernization—in Japan or any other country. In addition, Eurocentric tendencies that considered European civilization to be the sole source of real cultural and technical progress had always been popular in Russia and later in the USSR. The word Asian denoted regression or backwardness to educated Russians.

What factors formed the background of the Soviet perception of the “Japanese miracle”? Cooperation between the USSR and Japan in the economic field began to develop in the middle of the 1960s. In that period the thesis about the “complementarity of the Soviet and Japanese economies” was actively propagated. In reality trade and industrial relations between the two countries took on a distinctly colonial character and demonstrated the backwardness of the socialist economy. Soviet people, and first of all the technical intelligentsia, became increasingly aware of Japanese superiority in the different fields of modern technology. Some ministries issued special publications with translations from Japanese technical journals. Enterprises were even interested in Japanese “quality circles.”

In the 1970s Japanese industrial exhibitions were held in Moscow and other big cities, and thousands of citizens waited many hours in long lines to enter

them. Everybody seemed to be saying: "Did you see the Japanese exhibition? It was great!" For the majority of the Soviet people the "Japanese miracle" was connected first of all with domestic electronic machines: transistor radios, tape recorders, television sets, and so forth. They were a status symbol not only for the nomenklatura, who were the first to gain special access, but gradually for other strata of the population too.

From the mid-1970s some works containing more objective analysis of the reasons for Japan's postwar successes began to appear. To make use of certain international advances in technology and management, Soviet censorship was relaxed in some cases; translations from Western and Japanese books about different aspects of the Japanese industrial system were published and aroused significant interest. The wide popularity of the image of the "Japanese miracle" can be seen as a reaction of the Soviet people against the ineffectiveness of the socialist economy. During my lectures about Japan to different audiences I always heard the same question: "How could the Japanese do it, and why can't we?" Other specialists lectured around the country and came back with similar stories: fascination with Japan was widespread and comparisons with Russia could not be avoided. The image of the "Japanese miracle" that formed during the cold war stimulated significant interest in the Japanese model of postwar economic development at the time of perestroika.

The Country of Unique Culture and Tradition

Japan's unique culture and traditions and the "mysterious" national character of the Japanese have always aroused the interest of Russians, especially the educated stratum, from the time when Japan was "discovered." After the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Japan in 1956, a "second acquaintance" (the first was in the 1920s) with Japanese culture began in the USSR. In 1958 tours of a well-known kabuki theater and the national puppet show won great acclaim in Moscow and Leningrad. Very popular were the exhibitions of Japanese art, which became memorable events in the cultural life of Moscow and other Soviet cities.

Films exerted the most significant influence on Soviet notions about contemporary life in Japan. Many were awarded high prizes at the Moscow International Festival, and, in accord with the rules, they had to be shown in all the theaters of the country. So millions of people saw the movies of Akira Kurasawa, Kaneto Shindo, Kirio Kuroyama, Tadashi Imai, and others.

In contrast with the Stalin period, when translations were usually of so-called proletarian literature, from the beginning of the 1970s the Soviet people

could read the works of modern Japanese writers, including Kobo Abe, Yasunari Kawabata, and Kenzaburo Oe. It gave them the opportunity to better understand specific national traditions and the character of the Japanese as well as the complicated process of their adaptation to Western culture.

A significant contribution was made by certain Soviet writers and journalists. Essays about Japanese culture by the well-known Russian writers Ilya Ehrenburg and Konstantin Simonov after the Second World War were very popular in the Soviet Union. In the first half of the 1970s the essay *Vetka sakura* [Branch of the cherry blossom] by a journalist, V. Ovchinnikov, appeared in bookstores. This book played an important role in the growing interest among the Soviet people in Japan's traditional values and national character. The author described such Japanese characteristics as self-respect and respect for one's seniors, modesty, love for nature, and acute sensitivity to beauty. Although this book followed Soviet biases in certain subjective appraisals and obscured some aspects of Japan's realities, the author succeeded in evoking an emotional reaction among readers. An important part of its impact was to make educated people ponder the communist regime's handling of culture; by permitting mostly a so-called socialist culture, it had deprived Russians of their own historic memory and traditional values.

In the 1970s and early 1980s quite a few popular and academic works were published about Japanese traditional art, theater, religion, and national character. In contrast to books devoted to political and military problems, they did not remain long on bookstore shelves. Interest in Japanese culture promoted the popularity of Japanese traditional arts among different strata of the Soviet population. After an exhibition of *ikebana* in 1968 in some Soviet cities, women developed an enthusiasm for the Japanese art of flower arranging. Young people began to show a keen interest in Japanese national sports and games, including go, judo, and especially karate. Karate schools were opened at many colleges, but that evoked negative reactions from the "big chiefs." Under the pretext that karate methods could be used by criminals those schools were forbidden. Some continued underground.

The battle with the censors never ended. Although some questionable publications were permitted, studies of the national character of the Japanese were considered by Soviet ideologists to be propaganda for Japanese nationalism. Only in the middle of the 1980s did they allow the first publications fully dedicated to this problem.³⁵ At the beginning of perestroika the first opinion poll of the Soviet people about the main features of Japanese national character was conducted. In their opinion the Japanese exhibited first of all such qualities as diligence, efficiency, a high level of culture, and aestheticism.³⁶ Appreciation of

such positive qualities had spread through publications over many years.

Conclusions for the Cold War Era

Several principal conclusions can be drawn at this point.

1. The Soviet leadership did not consider Japan an important subject of international relations. While the existence of a powerful, militarized, communist empire near the Japanese islands defined the postwar foreign policy course of Japan, the USSR's one-sided coverage dismissed Japan's concerns.³⁷ As Japan began to be considered in the USSR as one of the leading world powers, its role in Soviet global and regional conceptions changed significantly. At the same time, the end of the cold war and the weakening feelings of danger from a Soviet threat led to changing interest in the USSR among Japanese leaders.

2. In both the USSR and Japan, authorities were interested in the formation of certain stereotypes about each other to achieve their internal and international purposes. Owing to a powerful propaganda machine, the Soviet leadership could inculcate some negative ideological stereotypes into the consciousness of the Soviet people, but they turned out to be unstable and were gradually eliminated. The gap in the perceptions of different strata of the Soviet population concerning Japan was one of many signs of the failure of propaganda and the spreading disintegration of Soviet society. In Japan perceptions of the USSR by the government and society were largely identical, based on fear of the Soviet threat, hatred of the totalitarian communist regime, disdain for an ineffective economic system, and opposition to the occupation of the disputed southern Kuril Islands. A public survey conducted in Japan in 1984 showed that 30 percent of respondents considered the communist totalitarian regime as the main reason for unsatisfactory relations with the USSR.³⁸ (It should be noted that the Soviet people were not acquainted with results of such public opinion polls in Japan, and for a long time they were sure that the "Japanese common people" favored the USSR.)

The image of the USSR as a totalitarian state increased the meaning of democratic values in the opinion of the majority of the Japanese and the importance of cooperation between Japan and the Western democratic countries for restraining communism. The totalitarian, closed, and secretive nature of the Communist party's dictatorship gave most Japanese a negative impression of the Soviet Union.

3. The gradual weakening of the ideological stereotypes and the appearance of positive images about Japan throughout the cold war period became an important precondition to the boom in thinking about Japan at the beginning of the 1990s.

New Thinking

The most significant change in perceptions of Japan in the USSR occurred after the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power and should be seen in the context of events during the perestroika period. Of first significance were the end of the cold war, the democratization of the political life of Soviet society, and the interest of the leaders of perestroika and the broad public in economic modernization. The end of the confrontation between East and West contributed to the dissipation of the principal historical stereotype that Japan was a potential enemy of Russia. This created favorable conditions for transforming views of the role of Japan in the contemporary world and improving Soviet-Japanese relations. With the advent of public opinion surveys of the Soviet population, a new dimension was added to understanding and shaping perceptions of Japan.³⁹

The transformation in the views of the Soviet leadership led the way in changing perceptions of Japan. The leaders of perestroika (above all, Gorbachev, Aleksandr Yakovlev, and Eduard Shevardnadze) viewed Japan as a world power which was in a position to support the reform of the Soviet economy and the entry of the USSR into world and regional economic and financial structures.⁴⁰

Gorbachev's speeches in Vladivostok in 1986 and Krasnoyarsk in 1988 were widely publicized in all the mass media as an important aspect of "new thinking" with regard to Soviet policy in Asia. For the first time the Soviet people heard from their leader that Japan was a first-order world power which had achieved great successes in industry, trade, education, science, and technology. The assertion by Gorbachev that Japan based its foreign policy on three nonnuclear principles and an antiwar clause in its constitution was, no doubt, a revelation for the majority of Soviet citizens. No less shocking for public opinion was his declaration that Japan had demonstrated the possibility of becoming a world power without the militarization of its country. He raised the question: Is it not worthwhile to make use of this unique and valuable lesson, and not continue to increase military expenses? Without doubt, Gorbachev's speeches broke down ideological stereotypes about Japan. One important consequence was the willingness of the new Soviet leadership to end the taboo on discussing the territorial problem and to begin negotiations with the Japanese government on signing a peace treaty.

The liberal attitudes of his advisers and consultants significantly influenced Gorbachev's views of Japan.⁴¹ Preparation for Gorbachev's visit to Japan in April 1991 stimulated a sharp increase in interest in that country. Academic experts and journalists broke one taboo after another. Almost daily articles on different aspects of life in Japan and Soviet-Japanese relations, constant coverage of films

on Japan's unique culture, and the successes of Japan in various fields of modern technology created among the Soviet people a somewhat idealized image of the Japanese. Never before had the rating of Japan been so high. At the same time, most people linked the improvement of bilateral relations with the active participation of Japan in the reform of the Soviet economy and the use of Japan's postwar development as a possible model for the modernization of the USSR.

Changes in interpretations of Japan during perestroika did not proceed smoothly. Party control over ideology, which continued almost to the end of the 1980s, had entrenched an imperial mentality in the consciousness of the people, and rising Russian nationalism restrained "new thinking" toward Japan. The rapid positive changes in images of Japan carried the seeds of future disillusionment.

Japanese politicians were unprepared for the rapid changes occurring in the USSR and pursued only one aim—the internal political goal of retrieving the Northern Territories. Not surprisingly, after the fall of the USSR, Russians' reactions were increasingly shaped by feelings of nationalism and ultrapatriotism. Before the image of Japan as a peace-loving and democratic power had become embedded in the minds of Russians, the old stereotype of a reactionary, militaristic power achieved a kind of reincarnation in the focus on Japan's territorial demands.

Japan: A World Power

In contrast to the Soviet leadership's image of Japan during the cold war as a second-rate nation dependent on the United States and not having its own foreign policy, in the late 1980s it became popular to see Japan as a rich financial power and a leader in modern technology. The 1988 joint Soviet-Japanese survey showed that 97.9 percent of the Soviet respondents regarded Japan as an "economically developed country."⁴² M. Berger, the economic observer for *Izvestiia*, wrote, "Japan today is the greatest holder of free capital, the scale of which is more than double the possibilities of all the international financial organizations."⁴³ The public gained an objective understanding of Japan's economic successes and her active participation through mutual interdependence with the United States in international industrial and financial organizations. By the end of the Gorbachev era the idea had become popular among Soviet political scientists and economists that Japan would emerge as a leader. In some studies the term Amerippon appeared, signifying the creation of a new political-economic entity in which national boundaries were reduced to a minimum or even, as in the European Community, largely liquidated.⁴⁴

Soviet leaders came to understand that Japan had become an important

player in global and regional economic and financial organizations, on which to a great degree depended Moscow's chances for obtaining the assistance and credit necessary for economic reform. From the end of the 1980s propagandistic clichés jumped from the pages of Soviet newspapers about the statements of the leaders of the seven most powerful industrial countries of the world, about Japan as one of the G-7. On the one hand, Japan's growing role in this organization was highlighted. On the other, attention was paid to its harsh opposition to financial assistance to the USSR. V. Ovchinnikov, the *Pravda* observer, commenting on Japan's position at the London G-7 talks in July 1991, pointed to Japan both as the country with the greatest financial resources for assisting the USSR and as the one with the most negative position. The reason, he asserted, is the principle of the "inseparability of politics and economics," and Moscow's refusal to satisfy Tokyo's territorial pretensions.⁴⁵

From the end of the 1980s, both in the mass media and in academic publications, the attitude toward integrationist processes in the Asia-Pacific region and the activities of Japan in creating various economic structures, which had been interpreted as "neocolonialist," began to change. A new image of Japan emerged as the informal leader of the Asian countries. This shift in the perception of Japan's role in the contemporary world prompted Soviet leaders to reconceptualize the factors that normally were seen as criteria for state "power." It became ever more popular to see the position of the state in the world arena as defined not only by military power, but, above all, by the intellectual potential of the society, the level of development of the economy and technology, and the standard of living of the people. The *Pravda* observer underscored this new approach to state power, pointing to Japan and Germany: "Having lost the Second World War, they after only several decades again became world powers, not through military might. . . . It is necessary as fast as possible to make our foreign political ambitions correspond to our real socioeconomic possibilities."⁴⁶ The new image of Japan as a "world power" was linked to expectations of a large increase in bilateral trade, the creation of joint economic zones in the Far East, and access to assistance and cheap credit. The crushing of these hopes, especially after the cancellation of Boris Yeltsin's visit to Japan in September 1992, led to negative perceptions of Japan as an "egoistic power" with which it is difficult to do business.

The Japanese Model

In the perestroika period the Soviet mass media frequently discussed which foreign model of industrial and social development was most relevant. In accord

with the Western orientation of the Russians, principal attention was given to European, especially Scandinavian, models, containing “socialist elements.” However, at the end of the 1980s the continued economic rise of Japan and the appearance of the “Asian tigers” drew interest toward Asia. Academician Stanislav Shatalin, one of Gorbachev’s economic advisors, asked whether there existed an economic model suitable for Russia or whether Russians were doomed to search eternally for their own unique path, asserted: “I think that it is time to unite the Slavophiles and Westerners and to turn our face to the East. We could be more attentive to the experience of Japan, South Korea, China.”⁴⁷ Articles and books appeared, in translation, which gave an objective account of those complex factors that had facilitated the transformation of Japan into a leading economic power. If the emphasis had previously been placed on the temporary character of Japan’s successes amidst the greedy exploitation of the hard-working Japanese working class, attention now turned to the American reforms, the successful guidance of the LDP, and traditional Japanese values—that is,— the very factors that contradicted Marxist dogma.

Leonid Abalkin, in an article entitled “Will the Japanese Experience Help Russia?” noted that in the heated discussions about the path for Russia’s revival many were citing the experience of Japan, but some stressed the role of the state, others the significance of competition and the scale of “small business,” others the organization of labor and the quality of production, and still others the factor of “human relations.” Of late, in Abalkin’s opinion, thinking had turned to noneconomic elements of the Japanese miracle—the presence of a great national idea that unites society, the use of informal relations among people, a high level of education, ingrained diligence and responsibility.⁴⁸

Prior to Gorbachev’s trip to Japan, newspapers and television commented almost daily on the successes achieved by the Japanese in the most diverse areas of social and economic life. One article on Toyota reported a manager saying that the main difference between a Japanese and a foreigner is that for the former work is first, and for the latter it is family.⁴⁹ Another article applauded the “planned character of the Japanese economy. . . . Given a concrete idea, or project, Japanese know how to mobilize both financial means and scientific potential, as well as the necessary cadres, in the shortest possible time. Long-range, valuable research comes forth from government agencies, then is handed to firms—to the producers. It is worthwhile for us to learn from this approach.”⁵⁰ Japanese farmers also drew praise. “I think that our kolkhoznik can envy the Japanese cooperative farmer. A financial system and numerous state subsidies facilitate a solid monetary accumulation among both the cooperatives and the farmers. Let’s recall: our village was able only, like a bottomless pit, to eat up billions of rubles,

leaving behind empty shelves in the stores.”⁵¹ As before, Japanese industrial exhibitions produced a hullabaloo among the Soviet people. At this time concepts such as management and quality control circles were associated above all with Japan.

At the beginning of the 1990s Soviet Japanologists played a significant role in acquainting the Soviet people with various aspects of the Japanese model of postwar political and social development.⁵² A series of monographs, edited books, and articles shed light on questions linked to the possibility of using the Japanese experience in Soviet enterprises. While many argued for studying aspects of the Japanese achievement, the prevailing view was that mechanical copying was simply not possible since it depended on the complex ethnocultural and sociopsychological characteristics of the Japanese.⁵³

The successes of the Japanese in the postwar development of their country in some degree heightened the belief of the Soviet people in the possibility of successfully modernizing the USSR. However, to the extent that market reforms were unsuccessful and Russians felt inferior, interest in the Japanese model of development waned. Soon Russians were saying that their country was too far behind Japan in technological development and would be better off orienting itself to the experience of the Asian tigers.

Japan: A Peace-Loving Country

In the perestroika era one of the most widely propagated ideological stereotypes—that Japan was a bridgehead for American imperialism—was dispelled. As late as 1988 more than 30 percent of those queried declared that they did not consider Japan a peace-loving country.⁵⁴ The change in stereotypes on Japan was complicated. After concessions to the United States and Western Europe, those in conservative circles began to insist that it was necessary to hold firm in the Far East. Some military officers, including Marshal Sergei Akhromeev and Colonel-General Albert Makashov, decided to draw attention to the possibility of a military threat to the USSR in the Far East. At the end of the 1980s the mass media and most academic publications continued to claim that “the foreign policy of Japan has not undergone substantial change and, as before, its strategic task is to raise its international role, leaning on the military alliance with the USA.”⁵⁵ Specialists on the militarization of Japan, chiefly former officers, strenuously opposed efforts to dispel the stereotype of Japan as a military threat. But as the cold war ended and “new thinking” took hold, objective information on Japan’s military policies began to spread. The official propaganda campaign in the mass media on Japanese militarism and the threat to the USSR of the Japanese-

American military alliance stopped by the end of the 1980s. The Soviet government officially declared that it had rejected the concept of a Japanese military threat. Critics began to write about the primitivism of the accepted methodology for studying militarism, where preordained conclusions dictated the research. The new approach was most fully set forth in G. Kunadze's "Militarism in Japan: Questions of the Methodology of Analysis," which argued that Japanese reality bore little resemblance even to accepted Marxist indicators of militarism.⁵⁶ V. Rosin challenged older publications that had tried to prove the existence of a military-industrial complex in Japan by including almost all indicators of economic and technical development; he produced evidence that only 0.5 percent of industrial production was in the military sector and argued that this was an important reason for Japan's economic success.⁵⁷ A. Bogaturov and M. Nosov stated openly what had been discussed only at closed meetings, that the Japanese-American alliance was in the interests of the USSR since neither the United States nor the USSR was interested in Japan having an independent military or above all, nuclear potential.⁵⁸ In reaction to the stereotype about the growing centrifugal tendency among the imperialist states, authors pointed to the close coordination between Japan and the United States not only in military matters, but also in other spheres.

If in 1988 only 30 percent of Soviet respondents had considered Japan a peace-loving country, in 1990 the figure had risen to 60 percent. But the old thinking was not dead. As Russia's internal and international situation had changed, there were still those who revived the cliché about the militarization of Japan in the cold war; they insisted that the tendency was continuing and strongly criticized those who opposed this conclusion.⁵⁹

Japan: A Democratic Country

For many years, stereotypes depicted Japan as a society of class contradictions, of constant struggle between democratic and reactionary forces. At the end of the 1980s objective articles presented the reality of the political isolation of Japanese communists and negative aspects of the activities of the "democratic forces." "In the new conditions," wrote A. Zagorskii, "the methods and forms of the labor movement, which had taken shape in the fifties and sixties, have become out of date and are rejected, not only by the majority of the population, but also by a significant part of the organized labor movement. . . . The labor movement had made a pragmatic choice."⁶⁰

For the first time Soviet Japanologists examined objectively the reasons for the LDP's long monopoly of political power. In the past, successes of the

governing “reactionary” party in elections had been explained through Marxist dogma: skillful policies of social demagoguery, vast financial resources, manipulation of the mass media, and so forth. Conservative successes were now linked above all to the fact that the LDP could sensitively time the demands of the socioeconomic development of Japanese society. From the end of the 1960s the party had extended its influence to many strata—managers, office workers, and also to a portion of the workers. One source noted that support for the LDP among workers organized into unions exceeded the level of support for the socialist party, JSP.⁶¹

At the end of the 1980s Soviet society began to show an interest in processes of democratization in various countries, including Japan. In early 1991 leading Japan specialists participating in a roundtable discussion agreed that Japan had achieved significant successes in democratizing its political system. At the same time, they concluded that Japanese democracy has its distinctiveness, connected to the historical development of the country, its political culture, and traditional values.⁶² The public came to associate democracy with the successes Japan achieved in the economic and social spheres. If in the 1988 survey the majority of respondents did not consider Japan a democratic country, in the 1990 survey more than 50 percent did (against 15 percent who did not).⁶³

Recognition of the Territorial Problem

As censorship slackened and it became possible to discuss foreign policy questions openly, interest in the territorial dispute with Japan rose. The transformation of views occurred at three levels: the Soviet leadership, the emerging political elite, and the public. The leaders of perestroika welcomed public interest, underscoring especially in meetings with Japanese politicians that not only in Japan but also in the USSR public opinion exists and must be taken into consideration.

The transformation in Gorbachev’s attitude toward the territorial problem was typical of the Soviet leadership as a whole. His consultant on international affairs, A. Cherniaev, remarked that after coming to power Gorbachev was open to dealings with Japan, but as soon as the subject of territory arose he tried to switch to other issues. He followed his predecessors in accepting that the problem of the islands had been settled long ago as a result of the war. Prior to his visit to Japan there was some change in his views. He wrote in his book: “In the mass media in Moscow positions were quite starkly divided. Some were in favor of giving the islands away and not delaying. Others would not under any circumstances give them up. Both sides had their own weighty arguments.”⁶⁴

At this time the Soviet nomenklatura began to be transformed, bringing to the fore a "second echelon of authority," which gave its views on state problems. It began to use the territorial problem as an important weapon in the internal struggle for power and influence over public opinion. In particular, deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR became "spokesmen" for public opinion regarding the territorial issue. Politicians of a democratic orientation demanded either a full or a partial return of the islands on the basis of the Joint Declaration of 1956; self-proclaimed patriots spoke against any compromise with Japan. Information about the visits of various notable democratic deputies to Japan was widely circulated in the mass media. An especially stormy reaction from conservative forces was evoked by the speech in Tokyo of Iu. Afanasyev about the need to abolish the entire system of the Yalta accords, which had created the territorial problem.⁶⁵

Soon the democratic circle of Yeltsin, who had been elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, feared that Gorbachev could use negotiations with Tokyo to strengthen his position inside the country. The Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR proceeded to pass a resolution that not one inch of Russian land could be transferred to another state without the approval of the highest legislative body of Russia. In the Supreme Soviet of the USSR some Communist deputies proclaimed themselves defenders of the territorial integrity of the USSR and started actively to speak out against any concessions to Japan. They turned Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands into a kind of prism for manipulating public opinion in order to stir up ultrapatriotic feelings. V. Fedorov, the governor of Sakhalin, voiced for the first time in the history of the USSR the threat that if any territorial concession were made to Japan he would advocate the separation of the Far East from the USSR.

During the preparations for Gorbachev's visit to Japan, the mass media also became a field of confrontation between the supporters and opponents of compromise with Japan. Articles in the procommunist weekly *Literaturnaia Rossiia* and the liberal journal *Ogonek* testify to the intensity of the discussion. The former called on the Soviet people to defend their homeland from internal and external enemies, even to the point of taking up arms. Any participation by Japan in the economic development of the Kuril Islands was seen as a betrayal of the national interests of Russians, the selling of Russian land.⁶⁶ Well-known Soviet political scientists and Japanologists answered this ultrapatriotic manifesto on the pages of *Ogonek*. They gave an objective analysis of the history of the territorial problem and stressed that preservation of the status quo benefits only the conservatives on both sides who want as before to perceive each other as "perfidious samurai" and "evil bears."⁶⁷

The academic community, above all the new generation of Japanologists, played a decisive role not only in informing the Soviet people about the territorial problem, but also as analysts and consultants for the president and the Supreme Soviet. They proposed various solutions, including joint economic zones on the Kuril Islands, transfer of them to the aegis of the United Nations, and return to Japan.⁶⁸ The generation of dogmatists was then in disarray, and only when Yeltsin was preparing to visit Japan in 1992 did they begin to go on the offensive again.

The Soviet people were torn between their interest in improving bilateral relations and their continued dependence on the opinions of political leaders and the existing Soviet mentality of imperial and patriotic feelings. Letters of readers in the pages of newspapers and journals testified to these views. A writer from Sverdlovsk advised the Japanese not to get excited and stir the emotions of the politically immature, but to follow the example of the Baltic peoples who, thanks to their good sense and patience, achieved their aims.⁶⁹ A reader from Tula said that "Japan should thank its fate that more land had not been taken. The destiny of the defeated is subordinate to the will of the victor. . . . Not a centimeter of our land to the Japanese samurai."⁷⁰ In contrast, a retired captain from Rostov-on-Don asserted that the role of these islands in the Soviet economy is minuscule and that the USSR should guarantee the return of all four islands and sign by the end of 1991 a peace treaty with Japan.⁷¹

The most valid surveys of public opinion were probably the joint Soviet-Japanese studies that point to substantial changes in public views in the Soviet Union regarding the territorial problem. In February 1988 when people were asked if they considered the borders between Japan and the USSR established after World War II just, only 2.5 percent of Soviet respondents disagreed, whereas 72 percent of Japanese respondents answered no. But *Pravda*, which published the results of this survey, did not include these figures since the taboo on the territorial problem still was sacred for the Soviet press.⁷² However, when TASS and Kyodo Tsushin repeated the survey in October 1990, only 20.7 percent of the Soviet respondents were in favor of maintaining the current situation on the Soviet-Japanese border, and more than 37 percent supported a compromise approach in order to resolve the territorial problem at the same time as bilateral relations improved.⁷³ In February 1991, before Gorbachev's visit to Japan, a Gallup poll also demonstrated a quite broad spectrum of views among the Soviet public. On the question of the sequence of steps for resolving the territorial problem, 13 percent answered that the territorial issue should be resolved first, 37 percent said it would be best to begin with an improvement in bilateral relations, and just as many supported simultaneous resolution of both issues.⁷⁴ The results of Gorbachev's visit were on the whole well received in the press and by the public and did not lead to any substantial changes in perceptions of Japan in the USSR.

If we try to generalize about the opinions of Russians toward the territorial problem at the end of perestroika, then we can differentiate three main points of view. The first is that after the collapse of the USSR and the enormous loss of territory, to insist on the right to some godforsaken islands in the Pacific Ocean is meaningless, especially since restoring them to Japan would benefit Russia through friendship with a rich country advanced in technology. Second is the view that Russia and the USSR never returned land they had won and should especially oppose any reexamination of the results of World War II, in which millions of Soviet people had lost their lives. This viewpoint also reflected the reaction to the harsh demands of the Japanese side, which were seen by many as a kind of ultimatum toward the great Soviet power. The third view, which gradually became dominant, stressed the need to improve bilateral relations and to resolve the territorial problem simultaneously.

Perception of the National Character of the Japanese

Never had the ratings of Japanese in Russia been so high as in the perestroika period. Views formed over two centuries had largely been influenced by negative factors: the Russo-Japanese War, the intervention, military conflicts, the Second World War. Not surprisingly both official propaganda and Russian literature accentuated negative features of the Japanese: aggressiveness, fanaticism, cruelty, deception. In the cold war era the Soviet media focused on “reactionary forces” of Japanese nationalism, arrogance to the nations of Asia. Yet by the 1980s another image had formed: Japan as a hard-working and peace-loving nation. In Soviet Japanese studies there had been a taboo on research into the national character of the Japanese, their traditional values.⁷⁵ Harsh criticism was leveled against the popular theme in Japan and the West of *nihonjinron*, the theory of the uniqueness of the Japanese people, seen as a force for stirring nationalist sentiments. In the mid-1980s as this taboo was being relaxed, new books on the customs and beliefs of the Japanese sold quickly from bookstore shelves.

Reports on Japanese culture filled the pages of newspapers and television screens at the time of the preparations for Gorbachev’s visit to Tokyo. These were overwhelmingly laudatory accounts both of Japanese uniqueness and of the changing values of young Japanese who were becoming more westernized. In the eyes of many the main features of the Japanese national character were associated with the postwar modernization of Japan. The May 1988 survey of public opinion showed that Russians perceived Japanese as diligent and disciplined, but also as cultured.⁷⁶

We must consider psychological factors in the formation of Russian

perceptions of the Japanese. Despite a strong Western inclination, the Russian intelligentsia from the time of the Meiji reforms reacted to the success of the Japanese in modernizing while still preserving their national values with a mix of envy and exhilaration. Herein we find the roots of interest in the Japanese miracle, Japanese culture, and Japanese national character. During perestroika, this fascination even led to some idealization of the Japanese as a people who could succeed in democratization and modernization after a crushing military defeat and the collapse of the national economy.

Conclusions

In the postwar period of Soviet history some stereotypes of Japan stood the test of time while others could be quickly dispelled. The most stable were those with roots in the history of Russian-Japanese relations. These were, above all, images of Japan locked in the historical memory of the Russian people as a potential enemy, as a possible trade partner, and as a country with a unique culture. In contrast, stereotypes formed under the influence of ideological propaganda were readily transformed when censorship was weakened and the communist system collapsed. However, the absence of the ideological element did not guarantee a positive image of Japan in Russia. Affecting this process were such factors as the psychological consequences of the breakup of the socialist empire, the internal political and economic processes in Russia, the search for a Russian geopolitical role in Asia, and not by any means last, Japan's perceptions of the new Russia.

When hopes were not realized of a compromise with Japan and the involvement of this great economic power in the modernization of the Russian economy, self-doubts exerted a growing impact on thinking. They contributed to a heightening of nationalist sentiments. Patriots charged the "sale of Russian territory" and that "Japan is using Russia's weakness" to acquire "age-old Russian territory" and to "enslave the Far East," finding a receptive audience among nationalists and communists, and, more broadly, in the provinces.

The positive images of Japan, which had formed in-1985–1991 were to a large degree associated with Russian expectation of a "miracle" from Japan: assistance, credits, the creation of joint economic zones, and so forth. And when the miracle did not occur and illusions faded, a new stage in perceptions of Japan began. The failure of economic reform and the sharp decline in the social position of the nation led to a loss of interest in foreign models of economic development and even in belief in the possibility of the modernization of Russia. At that time a series of new stereotypes of Japan appeared. Among "new

Russians” it became popular to say that it was impossible to do business with Japanese businessmen and that the Japanese experience did not suit Russia.

To no small degree the Japanese side shaped the changes in Russian perceptions of Japan. The policy of strictly tying the territorial problem to economic assistance played into the hands of the nationalists. The main tendency in perceptions of Japan in Russia in the years following the September 1992 cancellation of Yeltsin’s visit was the absence of any expectations for rapid improvement in bilateral relations in the political and economic spheres. This resulted in a lowering of interest in Japan in the mass media, among politicians, and among the public as a whole.

Notes to Chapter One

1. S. I. Verbitsky, "Russian Notions About Japan," in *Contemporary European Writing on Japan*, ed. Ian Nish (Kent, England, 1988), 38–44.
2. S. I. Verbitsky, "Formirovanie predstavlenii o Iaponii v SSSR," *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia-1989* (Moscow, 1991), 129–50.
3. Persistent declarations by Japanese politicians about the absence of "new thinking" in the Soviet Union concerning Japan showed the limited awareness or even restricted range of international thinking among the Japanese elite.
4. Yakovlev wrote that the territorial question in both countries took extremely politicized and ideological forms. It was a "dialogue of the deaf" who paid little attention to each other and accepted no compromise. A. Yakovlev, *Muki prochteniiia bitia* (Moscow, 1992), 308.
5. Viacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago, 1993), 8.
6. *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, December 10, 1993.
7. In 1992 the memoirs of Ivan Kovalenko, formerly deputy chief of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, appeared in the Japanese magazine *Shukan bunshu*. Kovalenko described the activity of the Soviet spy network in Japan. He noted that the CPSU provided financial assistance to Japan for fifteen years and explained that the money was meant for terrorist purposes, subversion of the Japanese government, and demonstrations against the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. *Novoe vremia*, 1993, no. 21: 30–31.
8. *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, 1990), 85.
9. *Ibid.*, 85, 86.
10. *Ibid.*, 86.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, 90.
13. Academician S. Tikhvinskii, one of the influential members of the Soviet delegation in the Soviet-Japanese negotiations in London, wrote in 1996: "At present, forty years after the London negotiations, I continue to be sure that 'the reserve position' of the Soviet delegation, which provided concession of the islands of Shikotan and Habomai in case the Japanese side consented to the signing of the Peace Treaty, was an unreasonable 'voluntary' action of Khrushchev." "Poslevoennaia normalizatsiia otnoshenii s Iaponiei," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, 1995, no. 4: 113–14.
14. *SSSR i Iaponiia* (Moscow, 1987), 370.

15. G. Kunadze, *V poiskaz novogo myshleniia* (Moscow, 1990), 293
16. Igor Latyshev, a powerful figure in the Japan field, described the activity of Gromyko in high-flown words: "I am sure that the main role in the affirmation of such a tough and inflexible position of the USSR on the territorial conflict was played by A. Gromyko, who differed from others in Brezhnev's circle by his significant political experience and hardness of opinion. It was Gromyko who comprehensively considered the situation of that time and obviously defined the only correct line—not to let the Japanese have any stone of our territory and to make our position impregnable and thus convince the Japanese side of the senselessness of further pursuing territorial demands." I. Latyshev, *Pokushenie na Kurili* (Sakhalin, 1992), 51.
17. Andrei Gromyko, *Memoirs* (New York, 1990), 244.
18. *Ibid.*, 259.
19. The proceedings of this meeting of the Politburo were delivered to the supreme constitutional court of the Russian Federation and later were placed at the disposal of American University *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, June 27, 1995.
20. On the brink of perestroika in 1985, a book by I. Zaitsev (pseudonym of Kovalenko) and I. Tamginskii, *Iaponiia: snova put' militarizma* [Japan: Again the path of militarism] was published.
21. I. Latyshev described a meeting in the Soviet embassy in Tokyo in 1970: "two complaisant counselors. . . expressed the idea of the possibility of returning to the Declaration of 1956. . . . However, the upper echelon of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which better knew Gromyko's opinion, did not support such ideas." *Pokushenie*, 54.
22. See V. M. Alpatov, "Repressirovanie Iaponisti," in *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia 1989* (Moscow, 1991), 287–91.
23. The well-known Russian Japanologist, Y. A. Pevzner, in his interesting book *Vtoraia zhizn'* (Moscow, 1995), described the activities of some representatives of this generation of so-called scientists.
24. See *Pokushenie* and *Kto i kak prodaet Rossiuu*, (Moscow, 1994), both written after perestroika. To some degree, they became a catechism of the most ultra right and chauvinistic circles of Russia.
25. A public opinion poll conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the newspaper *Yomiuri* at the beginning of perestroika showed what Soviet respondents regarded as the main sources of their information about Japan: television, 93 percent, newspapers, 79 percent, radio, 47 percent, journals, 29 percent, and books, 16 percent. *Yomiuri shimbun*, May 15, 1988.
26. *Sankei shimbun*, August 23, 1977.
27. *Asahi shimbun*, November 24, 1984.

28. *SSSR i Iaponiia*, 370.
29. See for example I. Sergienko, *Vozrozhdenie militarizma v Iaponii* (Moscow, 1968); A. Markov, *Voenoekonomicheskii potentsial sovremennoi Iaponii* (Moscow, 1970); B. Ivkov (pseudonym of I. Kovalenko), *Iaponiia: snova po puti militarizatsii* (Moscow, 1980); M. Ivanov, *Rost militarizma v Iaponii* (Moscow, 1982).
30. D. Petrov, *Iaponiia i mirovoe soobshestvo* (Moscow, 1994), 195.
31. The poll conducted by TASS and Kyodo Tsushin at the beginning of perestroika showed that a minority, 35 percent of the Soviet respondents, considered Japan a peace-loving country. In late 1990 another poll showed that more than 60 percent of respondents were convinced that Japan was a peace-loving country. *Pravda*, March 11, 1988; *Izvestiia*, November 25, 1990.
32. *Sankei shimbun*, August 25, 1977.
33. *Pravda*, November 24, 1955.
34. *Yomiuri shimbun*, May 15, 1988.
35. In 1985 two collections were published: *Chelovek i mir v iaponskoi kulture*, ed. T. Grigoreva; and *Iaponiia: Kultura i obschestvo v epokhy NTR*, ed. L. Gramkovskaya. Dedicated to Japanese national character and traditional culture, both works were severely criticized by I. Kovalenko and I. Latyshev.
36. *Yomiuri shimbun*, May 15, 1988
37. Peter Berton wrote that the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower enhanced its importance as a critical factor in Japan's foreign and national security policy. Peter Berton, Paul Langer, and George Totten, *The Russian Impact on Japanese Literature and Social Thought* (Los Angeles, 1981), 135.
38. *Yoron chosa nenkan* (Tokyo, 1986), 100.
39. The first survey focused on Japan was conducted in May 1988 by the Institute of Sociological Research of the Academy of Sciences and the *Yomiuri shimbun*. It showed that Soviet respondents were interested above all in culture, art, and history (44 percent), science and technology (43 percent), politics and diplomacy (34 percent), and then nature and the environment (17 percent). *Yomiuri shimbun*, May 15, 1988.
40. See Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1995), 258–75; Yakovlev, *Muki prochteniiia bytiia*, 303–11; and Eduard Shevarnadze, *Moi vybor*, (Moscow, 1991), 257–84.
41. One of the biggest influences was the journalist V. I. Dunaev, who worked in Japan for many years. He became a kind of lobbyist, arguing that putting Japan on the backburner was a big mistake. A. Cherniaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym* (Moscow, 1993) Vasilii Saplin of the Foreign Ministry is also credited with playing a large role in educating Gorbachev by preparing

documents for the president's visit to Japan. S. Grigoriev, "The Evolution of the Soviet Leadership Towards Japan under Gorbachev," unpublished manuscript, Princeton, 1997. Gorbachev himself credited Yasuhiro Nakasone, the Japanese prime minister, with arousing his interest in the character of Japanese-Russian relations.

42. *Pravda*, March 11, 1988.
43. *Izvestiia*, July 22, 1991.
44. N. Shevchenko, *Iapono-Amerikanskie ekonomichskie otnosheniia na sovremennom etape* (Moscow, 1990).
45. *Pravda*, July 29, 1991.
46. *Pravda*, June 6, 1990.
47. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 10, 1989.
48. *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, June 20, 1992.
49. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 16, 1991.
50. *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 13, 1991.
51. *Izvestiia*, March 27, 1992
52. At the beginning of the 1990s two symposia took place in Moscow organized jointly by Harvard University and Japanese sponsors on "The Japanese experience for the USSR." Economists, politicians, and ministerial officials participated. At these occasions there were sharp polemics between Americans and Japanese defending their own models of development as most suitable for the modernization of Russia.
53. *Aktual'nye problemy politiki i ekonomiki sovremennoi Iaponii* (Moscow, 1991), 34.
54. *Pravda*, March 11, 1988
55. *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia-1990* (Moscow, 1991), 45.
56. G. Kunadze, "Militarizm i Iaponiia: Voprosy metodologii analiza," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, no. 2, 1989: 116-30.
57. V. Rosin, *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, no. 2, 1989.
58. *Novoe vremia*, no. 18, 1989: 8-9
59. V. P. Zimonin, "Iaponskii voennyi faktor v izmeniaiushchemsia mira," in *Evoliutsiia politicheskoi sistemy Iaponii* (Moscow, 1995), 196-211

60. A. Zagorskii, "Reorganizatsiia rabocheho dvizheniia v Iaponii," in *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia-1990* (Moscow, 1992), 83.
61. O. I. Nikolaeva, "Evoliutsiia sotsialnoi basy Liberalno-demokraticheskoi partii Iaponii" in *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia-1986* (Moscow, 1987), 98.
62. *Demokratiia v Iaponii: Opyt i uroki* (Moscow, 1991).
63. *Izvestiia*, November 15, 1990.
64. *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 2: 266.
65. The *Pravda* correspondent in Japan, I. Latyshev, took it upon himself to serve as the trumpet for the ultrapatriotic forces. In the tradition of the communist press he accused Afanasyev of selfish motives, of contradicting scientific truth, and of not reflecting the views of the Soviet people. Latyshev was the first to assert publicly the distortion that those politicians and scholars who were speaking out for the return of the southern Kuril Islands were in the pay of the Japanese. *Pravda*, October 20, 1988.
66. V. Eremin, *Rossiia — Iaponiia. Territorial'naia problema: poisk resheniia* (Moscow, 1992), 47.
67. "Interv'iu s chetyr'mia uchenymi V. Lukinym, G. Kunadze, K. Sarkisovym i I. Tyshetskim," *Ogonek*, no. 20, 1990: 16–19.
68. Eremin, *Rossiia—Iaponiia*, 47.
69. *Izvestiia*, no. 18, July, 1990, 3.
70. *Novoe vremia*, no. 15, 1992.
71. *Novoe vremia*, no. 18, 1990.
72. *Pravda*, March 13, 1988.
73. *Izvestiia*, November 25, 1990.
74. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, September 17, 1991.
75. M. Kornilov of the Institute of Scientific Information in the Social Sciences played a big role in getting around the taboo by issuing under the restricted circulation of "for critical use only" surveys of world thinking on Japanese culture, including "O tipologii Iaponskoi kul'tury (Iaponskaia kul'tura v teoriiakh 'Nikhondzin ron' i 'Nikhon bunka ron,'" in *Iaponiia: kul'tura i obschestvo v epokhu NTR* (Moscow, 1985).
76. *Yomiuri shimbun*, May 15, 1988.

Chapter Two

Japanese Misperceptions of the Soviet Union During the Gorbachev Period, 1985–1991

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa

The postwar history of Soviet-Japanese relations is an anomaly. From the end of World War II in 1945 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a peace treaty eluded these nations. Although they ended the state of war and normalized relations by ratifying the Joint Declaration in 1956, their relations were characterized by hostility and suspicion throughout the postwar period. The major cause of this animosity is the territorial dispute concerning the islands that the Japanese call the Northern Territories, but the Soviets prefer to call the southern Kurils. When the Japanese insisted upon the return of all the disputed islands as the precondition of full normalization of relations, the Soviets during the Brezhnev period even refused to acknowledge the existence of the territorial problem.¹

It was not until the Gorbachev period that realistic possibilities for the ultimate resolution of the territorial dispute presented themselves. Gorbachev's foreign policy, guided by his new political thinking, led to a series of cataclysmic changes in international relations, resulting in the end of the cold war. During the Gorbachev period the Soviet Union managed to achieve rapprochement with the major world powers, with one notable exception. While the world witnessed a fundamental change in the international system, unprecedented perhaps since the Russian Revolution, only Soviet-Japanese relations remained unchanged.

There are many reasons why the Soviet Union and Japan failed to achieve rapprochement during the Gorbachev period from 1985 to 1991. Some of the blame for this failure falls on the Soviet side. For instance, Soviet domestic politics tied Gorbachev's hands, leaving little leverage to maneuver a compromise solution for the territorial dispute. More important, throughout his tenure of office Gorbachev remained adamantly opposed to any territorial concessions to Japan as dangerous to international peace and domestic stability. Nevertheless, the cause for the failure of rapprochement should not be attributed solely to the Soviet side. Equally responsible was the Japanese strategy to push the territorial issue to the forefront of bilateral negotiations as the precondition for a peace treaty and economic cooperation. Moreover, throughout the Gorbachev period (and even beyond) Japan held the return of *all* disputed islands as the minimal

requirement for rapprochement. Gorbachev's adamant refusal to consider any territorial concessions is matched by Japan's intransigence in its territorial demand: neither side was prepared to even consider the possibility of a compromise based on the reaffirmation of the Joint Declaration of 1956 as sufficient requirement for the conclusion of a peace treaty.

The share of the responsibility for the failure of rapprochement is, however, not equal. Let us pose two counterfactual hypotheses. First, had Gorbachev been willing to compromise by reaffirming the 1956 Joint Declaration (by which the Soviet government pledged to return two smaller islands at the conclusion of a peace treaty) and to conclude a peace treaty on this basis, would the Japanese government have accepted it? The answer is no. In fact, throughout the Gorbachev period, the Gaimusho (the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs) did its utmost—and it succeeded in achieving its goal—to squash any possibility of the two-island alternative from being seriously considered in Japan.

Suppose that Japan had offered the reaffirmation of the 1956 Joint Declaration as the sufficient requirement for a peace treaty, would Gorbachev have accepted it? Given the domestic constraints within which Gorbachev had to operate, there was no guarantee that this softening of position itself would have induced him to change his adamant refusal to consider any compromise settlement on the territorial issue. And yet, it can be argued that Gorbachev had changed his fundamental position on a number of more important issues than the Northern Territories dispute: the INF treaty, the START treaty, German reunification, dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty organization, and the removal of the "three obstacles" set by the Chinese government as the precondition of Sino-Soviet rapprochement. In other words, Gorbachev proved flexible even on issues that touched his fundamental convictions and beliefs, when the situation required. One might argue, therefore, that if Gorbachev failed to alter his belief on the territorial dispute, it was partly because the intransigent Japanese government never gave him a chance. Moreover, even if neither side accepted the 1956 Joint Declaration as the sufficient basis for the conclusion of a peace treaty, one can make the argument that Japan's renunciation of the principle of the inseparability of politics and economics might have created a favorable environment for resolving the territorial question. But throughout the Gorbachev period, the Japanese government never repudiated this principle, consistently linking its economic cooperation to the resolution of the territorial dispute. In this sense, the Japanese government's intransigence can be considered more responsible for the failure of rapprochement than Gorbachev's unwillingness to consider a compromise.

Although the two aspects of Japanese policy toward the Soviet Union—

the subordination of all other issues to the Northern Territories question and the demand for the return of all the disputed islands as the minimal requirement for the conclusion of a peace treaty—remained unchanged throughout the Gorbachev period, it would be erroneous to characterize that policy as totally inflexible. In fact, there were subtle changes. One can recognize three distinct periods. (1) From 1985 to mid-1988 the Japanese government adhered strictly to the “principle of the inseparability of economics and politics”—a policy that made the resolution of the territorial question the precondition for economic cooperation with the Soviet Union—and adopted the “entrance approach” (*iriguchiron*) that required resolution of the territorial question before proceeding to full normalization (as opposed to the “exit approach,” or *deguchiron*, which placed the territorial settlement at the end of a gradual process of rapprochement), (2) In the second period, from the end of 1988 to the middle of 1989, the Japanese government adopted a policy of “balanced expansion” that allowed an expansion of economic cooperation commensurate with progress on the territorial question, (3) In the third period, from the summer of 1989 to Gorbachev’s visit in 1991, Japan frantically sought to utilize the visit as an occasion to achieve a major breakthrough on the territorial question.

In this article, I would like to trace how the Japanese government consistently miscalculated Soviet intentions and motivations at crucial points during the Gorbachev period and missed the chance to achieve rapprochement to the detriment of its national interests. Finally, I will examine deeper causes for the Japanese miscalculations and misperceptions.

Japan’s Misperceptions of the Soviet Union: The First Stage, 1985 to mid-1988

The attempt to improve Soviet-Japanese relations began immediately after Gorbachev’s assumption of power. Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone attended Konstantin Chernenko’s funeral and personally conveyed the message to Gorbachev that Japan would welcome a thaw in Soviet-Japanese relations which had been frozen during the Brezhnev period. Nakasone’s approach to the territorial dispute represented a new departure: he suggested that it be resolved concurrently with negotiations to conclude a peace treaty. He proposed a “comprehensive approach” in which he was prepared to consider the expansion of cooperation, including the conclusion of a treaty on cultural exchange and cooperation in the area of science and technology.² This meant the virtual abandonment of the “entrance approach” and represented a precursor to the

position that the Japanese government was later to call the “balanced expansion” (*kakudai kinko*) policy.

The Gaimusho was alarmed by Nakasone’s diplomacy. Unlike Nakasone, it minimized the importance of the change in Soviet leadership and concluded that due to Gorbachev’s inexperience in foreign policy, he would concentrate on domestic policy, leaving foreign policy under Gromyko’s dominant influence. After Gromyko was kicked upstairs and Shevardnadze became the new foreign minister, the Gaimusho recognized this as a sign of rejuvenation of Soviet foreign policy. Nevertheless, it continued to see Soviet foreign policy basically as the extension of Brezhnev’s: its major goal was to undermine the U.S.-Japanese alliance, but with a different tactic. With the rejuvenated policy, the Soviets would seek more actively to achieve this goal. Therefore, Japan’s response should be to fend off this expected offensive in the area of security and push the Northern Territories issue to the forefront of negotiations.³ As soon as Nakasone announced in October 1985 his willingness to make a second visit to Moscow to meet Gorbachev, an anonymous Gaimusho source castigated this proposal as being “utterly ridiculous” (*kotomukei*).⁴ When Evgenii Primakov, then head of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), was in Japan and sounded out the possibility of resolving the territorial dispute on the basis of the 1956 Joint Declaration, the Gaimusho decided to leak this proposal to the press immediately, before Nakasone could seriously consider it.⁵

If one peruses commentaries that appeared in the Soviet press, one must feel sympathetic with the Gaimusho. Most commentaries emphasized that the U.S.-Japanese alliance constituted the greatest hindrance to improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations and that the so-called territorial question was nothing but a red herring, artificially concocted by reactionary elements, to cover up Japan’s subservient following of U.S. military intentions. Nevertheless, there was a discordant note that somewhat deviated from the general tone. For instance, a Moscow Radio commentary on October 19, 1985, contained no disparaging remarks about Japan’s military alliance with the United States. This commentary specifically referred to the 1956 Joint Declaration and concluded that in order to develop further a positive momentum, “greater effort is required from both sides.”⁶ This was the first time since 1960 that the Soviet press had publicly acknowledged the existence of the 1956 Joint Declaration. Two commentaries by a TASS correspondent by the name of Anatoliev, presumably written by Gorbachev’s personal advisor, Anatolii Cherniaev, were also notable for insisting that the improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations “will not damage the interests of the third party.”⁷ Anatoliev’s articles actually indicated a significant change that was taking place under the surface. According to Konstantin Sarkisov, a noted

Japanologist in the Institute of Oriental Studies, Gorbachev was quick to solicit opinion papers on Japan from various research institutes. Japanologists welcomed this initiative with enthusiasm, and already in the fall of 1985 they began voicing their opinions at various closed conferences and sending secret recommendations that were clearly divergent from the conservative elite in the traditional decision-making bodies.⁸ These views all the more alarmed the Gaimusho as a sign of the sophistication with which Gorbachev would approach Japan with the intention to damage the U.S.-Japanese alliance. From the very beginning, therefore, the Gaimusho treated any reference to the 1956 Joint Declaration as a skillful manipulation designed to divide Japanese public opinion on the Northern Territories problem.

The Gaimusho's position insured that Shevardnadze's visit to Japan in January 1986 would occasion a major confrontation on the territorial issue rather than a constructive step toward rapprochement. The Gaimusho's specific goal for the foreign ministerial conference was to move one step beyond the 1973 joint statement issued by Brezhnev and Tanaka after their summit, in which both sides pledged to continue negotiations for a peace treaty by resolving the "unresolved problems since World War II," and have Shevardnadze acknowledge that the territorial issue should be included among the "unresolved problems." Although Shevardnadze personally was willing to go even farther than this by acknowledging the 1956 Joint Declaration, he was under the Politburo's strict instructions not to make any territorial concessions.⁹ Unlike Gromyko, however, Shevardnadze did not object to Japan's raising the territorial issue during the negotiations, but steadfastly refused to include the expression, "territorial question," in the joint communiqué.¹⁰

Although Shevardnadze's visit marked a major turning point for the improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations, the Gaimusho's failure to extract any concessions on the territorial issue had two negative consequences for Japan's perceptions of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. First, it reinforced the Gaimusho's view, shared by mainstream public opinion leaders, that despite the new leadership, Soviet foreign policy had not shown any signs of modification. Second, although the Gaimusho failed to achieve its goal, it unilaterally interpreted the joint communiqué as a victory simply because the Soviet side did not object to raising the territorial question during the negotiations. This interpretation gave the Gaimusho officials the illusion that the Soviet government had tacitly acknowledged the territorial dispute to be among the unresolved questions, although Shevardnadze made it clear in his news conference that the Soviet government's position on the territorial question had not changed. This illusion widened the misunderstanding between the two governments even further.

Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in July 1986 was an important landmark for Soviet policy toward Asia. It was an attempt to make a clean break with Brezhnev's Asian policy and seek more active and constructive engagements with the USSR's Asian neighbors. Nevertheless, in terms of Soviet-Japanese relations, the Vladivostok speech was disappointing, since it failed to mention the Northern Territories question. The Japanese public had three different interpretations of the Vladivostok speech. Nor surprisingly, the right dismissed it as merely an example of the Soviet global strategy designed to detach Japan from the alliance with the United States.¹¹ More important was the reaction of the right of center. For instance, Hiroshi Kimura believed that although the Vladivostok speech contained the seeds of a new policy, it also contained elements of the Soviets' traditional Asian policy. Kimura argued the following points as evidence of continuity with Brezhnev's approach to Asia in general and to Japan in particular: (1) an attempt to define the Soviet Union as an Asian power based merely on its geographical presence in Asia; (2) an emphasis on dealing with the United States in Asia; (3) a proposal to offer a multilateral conference on security patterned after Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), disregarding Asian peculiarities; (4) a warning of the danger of a U.S.-Japan-South Korean military alliance; and (5) the absence of any reference to the territorial question.¹²

Kimura's interpretation was questionable on some points, and he missed other important aspects. In the first place, Gorbachev's declaration that his country was an Asian power should not be taken in itself as evidence of the old thinking. He recognized the inadequacy of the past policy that had failed to make this geographical location truly interconnected with the Asian-Pacific region—a recognition that clearly set Gorbachev apart from Brezhnev. Moreover, accepting the United States as an Asian power was a positive departure from the Brezhnev line, which had basically viewed the United States as an intruder in this region and had aimed to reduce, if not to remove, U.S. influence.¹³ It was clear that the establishment of a new regional security environment would be impossible without coming to terms with the United States, and Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech was the first official recognition of this fact. Moreover, Kimura missed the importance of what Gorbachev omitted: the ritualistic denunciation of Japan's security arrangement with the United States and the warning against the revival of Japanese militarism. These omissions indicated the Soviet willingness to improve bilateral relations while accepting the U.S.-Japanese security alliance as a reality. Kimura's view closely reflected the Gaimusho's thinking; by narrowly focusing their attention on the Northern Territories question, they missed the broader significance of this speech. In retrospect Kimura and the Japanese

government may have overlooked the positive signs contained in the Vladivostok speech. This failure explains much of Japan's subsequent delay in responding to the need to improve Soviet-Japanese relations.

The third reaction to the Vladivostok speech came from two scholars who belonged to the center and the left of center: Mineo Nakajima and Haruki Wada. At the end of 1986, they separately published articles that broke the long-established taboo and openly proposed a two-island solution to the territorial question in response to the initiative of the new Soviet leadership.¹⁴ Nevertheless, what ensued was not a public debate, but rather a media blitz against Nakajima and Wada to destroy any two-island proposals. Ken'ichi Ito, a former Gaimusho diplomat, spearheaded the attack. Viciously assailing Wada for having "the face of a Japanese but the heart of a Soviet," Ito characterized Wada's article as representing Soviet interests. He also lashed out sharply against Nakajima, dismissing the two-island proposal as tantamount to Japan's complete capitulation to the Soviets' illegal occupation.¹⁵ The Gaimusho and the right of center intellectual community had reason to be nervous about open public debate on the territorial issue. A big question mark was Nakasone's own approach. It might be said that the vicious attacks against Nakajima and Wada were actually motivated to shoot down the two-island proposal before it was seriously entertained by Nakasone.

In retrospect, the Japanese lost a good chance to engage in a serious debate over the fundamental direction of Japanese policy toward the Soviet Union at that time. The momentum for improvement of relations was halted by Gorbachev's cancellation of a trip to Tokyo in the last half of 1986 and in the beginning of 1987. It is difficult to pinpoint what precisely led Gorbachev to cancel the visit Japan, but it appears certain that Japan's unwillingness to change its position on the territorial issue was a major contributing factor. In retrospect, the cancellation virtually eliminated the possibility of an early resolution of the territorial dispute. This would have been the only time when the Kremlin could have proposed some sort of settlement without encountering domestic opposition from below. The problem was not the opposition from below; rather it was the lack of consensus within the Kremlin leadership. Gorbachev did not have political authority sufficient to override the entrenched opposition within the Politburo to granting Japan any concessions on the territorial question. Nor was he convinced at that time of the need to open up negotiations with Japan on the territorial question. But once political reforms were implemented under the banner of democratization, the Politburo no longer enjoyed the luxury of deciding such important matters as a revision of territory without the consent of the newly organized Congress of People's Deputies, its Supreme Soviet, the soviet in

Sakhalin Oblast, and residents on the islands themselves. Moreover, the Northern Territories issue became closely linked with ethnic problems within the Soviet Union.

Had Gorbachev come to Japan in 1986, what concrete proposal on the territorial question might he have been brought with him? Clearly, the acceptance of Japan's demands for the return of all four islands was not an option. The most realistic option would have been to propose to honor the 1956 Joint Declaration in return for Japan's large-scale economic cooperation and some progress on security measures. Because the 1956 Joint Declaration was a diplomatic agreement ratified by the parliaments of both countries, this proposal would have been in conformity with Gorbachev's insistence that the Soviet Union should become a law-abiding state (*pravovoe gosudarstvo*). Nevertheless, there is no evidence to indicate that such a drastic proposal was even contemplated at the highest level at that time.¹⁶ It was not so much due to the conservative opposition Gorbachev might have encountered in the Politburo as to his own visceral opposition to any territorial concessions.

Could Nakasone have received Gorbachev without any territorial concessions? Given the opposition in the Gaimusho and in public opinion against any solution other than the return of the four islands, it is difficult to imagine how Nakasone could have accepted the 1956 Joint Declaration as sufficient for the conclusion of a peace treaty. Nevertheless, considering the personalities of the two leaders, it would not have been impossible for Gorbachev and Nakasone to turn the meeting, though without any resolution of the territorial dispute, into the first step toward drastic improvement of relations, as Reykjavik signaled the beginning of the INF treaty between Gorbachev and Reagan. It is conceivable that the two leaders could have produced a document similar to the joint declaration issued at the end of the Gorbachev-Kaifu summit in 1991 or even better yet, the abortive draft proposal for the basic principles of Soviet-Japanese relations that surfaced in the latter half of 1990. Had such a beginning been made in 1987, a major breakthrough on the territorial issue could have taken place before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. But clearly, such an interim solution would have been unacceptable to the Gaimusho, which would have made an all-out attempt to block such a course. In the end, this road was not taken. Nakasone's personal power had been eroded; Gorbachev was too preoccupied with the new stage of perestroika; and the Gaimusho's opposition, supported by mainstream opinion leaders, was too strong to entertain the possibility of a two-island solution. After the Toshiba incident in the spring of 1987, in which the Toshiba Machine Corporation was accused of having violated the COCOM regulations on trade with communist countries, Soviet-Japanese

relations plunged into a deep freeze.

This setback in Soviet-Japanese relations took place exactly at the time when Soviet commentators began to voice their criticisms of the government's policy toward Japan under the intensified glasnost campaign. Leonid Mlechin, Konstantin Sarkisov, Georgii Kunadze, Vladimir Lukin, Dmitrii Petrov, and others boldly called for the reassessment of Soviet policy toward Japan, suggesting a more flexible approach to the territorial question.¹⁷ The Japanese government and the Japanese public in general were slow to recognize the significance of this change. The Gaimusho tended to treat the emergence of divergent opinions as a reflection of the government's policy to manipulate Japanese public opinion, thus failing to situate this process in the context of the broader transformation of the Soviet Union under perestroika. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Japanese government at this point largely failed to note that the rapidly changing political landscape under perestroika was also creating political conditions not necessarily favorable for the settlement of the territorial question. Gorbachev's political reform, carried out under the banner of democratization, was creating a system in which popular sentiment could not be ignored even for the conduct of foreign policy.

And yet, changes in the Soviet Union exerted pressure on the Japanese government. Abroad, veritable anticommunist champions like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan began to make such statements as "perestroika is good for the West," and "we can do business with Mr. Gorbachev." Thanks to Gorbachev's reforms, the negative rating of the Soviet Union in Japanese opinion polls dropped by 10 percent in the three years after 1985. Clearly, the Gaimusho's top leadership could no longer dismiss Gorbachev's new political thinking as mere manipulation to deceive the West.

The Policy of "Balanced Expansion": December 1988–May 1989

Clearly, the Gaimusho began to realize that the stalemate in Soviet-Japanese relations was not in Japan's best interest as long as the process of détente was proceeding quickly on a global scale as well as in the Asian-Pacific region. It could no longer maintain its skepticism about the seriousness of Gorbachev's intentions to carry out systemic change. It also recognized the need to coordinate its policy toward the Soviet Union with its Western allies, lest Japan face the danger of international isolation. And yet, the intellectual inertia, the institutional restrictions, the climate of public debate, historical memory, the continued silence

of Japan's Soviet experts all conspired to make it impossible to remove the Northern Territories issue from the center of Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union. The solution to this dilemma was left to the Gaimusho alone, and it devised a policy of "balanced expansion."

The new approach was most actively promoted by Kazuhiko Togo, the Gaimusho's Soviet section chief since July 1988. In Togo's view, Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union consisted of three pillars. First, Japan should strive to establish normal relations with its heavily militarized neighbor. Second, Japan's fundamental principles should not be sacrificed for the sake of these relations; therefore, the settlement of the Northern Territories problem and the conclusion of a peace treaty should be essential elements of Japan's policy. Third, negotiations with the Soviet Union should be conducted in the context of Japan's comprehensive foreign policy, which was based on the U.S.-Japanese security alliance, economic and technological strength, political and diplomatic strength, and domestic public opinion. Togo noted that in view of Japan's relative strength in the international arena, which he judged could not be guaranteed to last indefinitely, and in view of Gorbachev's ascendancy in the Soviet Union, the next few years would provide a great opportunity for a major breakthrough in Soviet-Japanese relations.¹⁸ This was, indeed, a major departure from the characteristic rigidity of the Gaimusho's Soviet policy.

Togo's position raised the question of the relationship between the new approach and the traditional principle of the inseparability of politics and economics. In another speech, Togo explained that although it would be difficult for Japan to actively seek long-term economic cooperation without resolving the territorial issue, economic relations should not be ruled out entirely. Thus the inseparability of politics and economics would mean only that the territorial question should not be left behind when new economic ties were forged. Politics and economics should be developed in tandem on the basis of "balanced expansion" (*kakudaikinko shite hattensuru*). This was the first time that the expression was used.¹⁹ In another speech, Togo declared that relations with the Soviet Union consisted of "three baskets": first, the territorial question and a peace treaty; second, broader bilateral relations (including economic) other than the territorial question; and third, issues related to Asian-Pacific regional cooperation. The problem was how to prioritize these three issues. Using military parlance, Togo explained that since it was impossible to attack three targets simultaneously, the Gaimusho would concentrate its forces on the territorial issue in order to attain a breakthrough from which the other two flanks would eventually be taken.²⁰ There was an inherent contradiction between Togo's two speeches. In the first, political and economic relations were to be developed in tandem, but

in the second, the territorial breakthrough would have to come first, a position closer to the traditional entrance approach.

The policy of balanced expansion was at best the Gaimusho 's bureaucratic response to changing circumstances. The basic idea was to move forward, however slowly. It was, therefore, a major step in the evolution of the Gaimusho's policy toward the Soviet Union. However, as Togo's speeches clearly indicated, the Gaimusho's priority continued to be the Northern Territories issue, and cooperation would be dictated above all by Soviet willingness to meet Japan's demands on the territorial question. What the policy should keep in "equilibrium" was never clarified. Although it in essence contradicted the policy of the inseparability of politics and economics—and indeed its adoption was necessitated by the bankruptcy of the earlier principle—the old policy was never repudiated. In fact, it was presented as compatible with balanced expansion. This contradiction was perhaps necessary to reach a consensus within the Gaimusho. It was also dictated by the political necessity to satisfy all the disparate factions within the LDP. Despite this new policy, the Gaimusho continued to treat the resolution of the Northern Territories issue as the ultimate goal of Japan's Soviet policy. Here one can discern the origins of the problem that has plagued Japan's Soviet policy, as it swung like a pendulum between a desire to achieve rapprochement and a desire to resolve the territorial problem.

Shevardnadze visited Tokyo for the second time in December 1988. He no longer took the position that the territorial question did not exist, and for the first time in the history of bilateral relations, a working group was created for the conclusion of a peace treaty. These developments, however, did not immediately signify the softening of the Soviet government's position. In fact, during the foreign ministerial conference and at the subsequent working group meetings, the Soviet side began to justify its continued occupation of the disputed islands on thoroughly researched historical and legal grounds.²¹

The mixed signals sent by the Soviets puzzled the Gaimusho, which was already divided on the policy of balanced expansion. The new Soviet policy gave the hard-liners within the Gaimusho a sufficient cause to slow down, if not to derail, the process of rapprochement. According to Togo, the general consensus that emerged from the internal discussion was the fear that the Soviets would prepare Gorbachev's visit to Japan without making any sacrifices on the territorial issue. This suspicion that the Soviets might "eat and run" (*kuinige*) determined Japan's hard-line approach.²²

During his European tour in the beginning of 1989, Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno began pushing the Northern Territories question to the forefront of Japan's Soviet policy.²³ This sudden hardening of the Japanese attitude perplexed

the Soviet side, leading to the conclusion that Japan was attaching a precondition for Gorbachev's visit. According to Aleksandr Panov, then deputy chief of the Asian-Pacific Division of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this virtually killed any desire on the Soviet side to make preparations for Gorbachev's early visit to Japan.²⁴ In retrospect, the Gaimusho's decision to reverse its positive steps after Shevardnadze's December visit was a gross miscalculation that cost Japan the chance to bring Gorbachev sooner.

By then Japan's perception of the Soviet Union had diverged widely from that of the United States. This can be illustrated clearly by the Takeshita-Bush summit on February 2, 1989. In the nearly unanimous interpretation of the Japanese correspondents who covered the summit, the new American administration was nervous about the possibility of rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Japan. This putative nervousness manifested itself in the persistence with which Bush and Secretary of State James Baker questioned Takeshita and Uno about Japan's policy toward Gorbachev, changes in Japanese public opinion, and the influence of perestroika on Japan. To allay the American fears, Takeshita went out of his way to reiterate that the resolution of the territorial question was still a precondition for Japan's economic cooperation with the Soviet Union.²⁵

It is now clear that one of the major goals of the Bush administration was to end the cold war. Baker had already shared this sentiment with his adviser, Dennis Ross, who wrote a memo on December 16, 1988, which stated: "The President-elect says we should dream big dreams, and he's right. We're entering a period that is really unlike any we've seen through the whole postwar era, and this is not the time to put our thinking in a straitjacket. Perhaps we won't realize our dreams, but we won't even have the potential to explore them if we don't stretch our minds and accept the importance of thinking unconventionally."²⁶ In order to map out a comprehensive Soviet policy, the Bush administration was simply interested in learning about Japan's policy. However, Takeshita's response must have sounded like "straitjacket conventionality" rather than a "big dream." Eventually, the U.S. government was to steer its policy in a more conciliatory direction toward the Soviet Union under Baker's stewardship. Takeshita's (that is actually, the Gaimusho's) misreading of U.S. intentions was doubly costly. It led the U.S. government to the conclusion that given Japan's intransigence, the U.S. approach to the Soviet Union would have to be more carefully coordinated among its allies, while it certainly signaled to the Soviet Union that Japan was retreating from the goodwill it had displayed during Shevardnadze's second visit.

Uno's visit to Moscow in May 1989 did not change the situation much. Shevardnadze declared that he could not add anything new about the territorial

question to what had already been discussed at the working group, while Uno repeated Japan's position. Thus, the official presentation of "balanced expansion" did not have a promising beginning. When Gorbachev met Uno, the general secretary expressed his irritation at Japan's inflexibility on the territorial question.²⁷ Clearly, Japan's attempt to forestall a possible "eat and run" policy was counterproductive. What appeared to be a promising move forward at the time of Shevardnadze's second visit fizzled, if it did not come to a complete halt, by May.

Preparations for Gorbachev's Visit and the Gorbachev-Kaifu Summit

The domestic turmoil in Japan triggered by the Recruit scandal, a systematic bribery case in which powerful LDP politicians were implicated, led to the formation of a weak cabinet led by Toshiki Kaifu in August 1989. In this political vacuum, the entrenched conservative forces in the bureaucracy asserted themselves, shifting into reverse gear against the forward momentum for improvement. In April 1989, *Hokkaido shimbun* correspondents obtained Soviet visas and so became the first foreign journalists to visit the hitherto forbidden Northern Territories. In September the Kaifu cabinet adopted a resolution banning Japanese citizens from visiting the Northern Territories with Soviet visas, thus making an inauspicious start in its Soviet policy by signaling to the Soviets a hardening of its position precisely at a time when momentous events were about to unfold in Eastern Europe. The Defense Agency followed the Gaimusho's lead to reverse course. *The Defense White Paper*, published in September, stressed in even stronger language than any previous editions that the Soviet threat in the Far East was increasing. At the time when the prestigious International Institute of Strategic Study's journal, *The Military Balance*, stated that 1989 was to be recorded as the year that ended the cold war, Japan stood practically alone in clinging to the old idea of the Soviet military threat.²⁸

The Gaimusho did not expect any significant change in this frigid atmosphere. Unexpectedly, however, Shevardnadze dropped his bombshell. In a meeting with Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama on September 27, he revealed that Gorbachev would visit Japan in 1991, a strange and unusual announcement, since it was rare for any country to reveal a visit by the head of the state two years in advance. Presumably, the Japanese domestic situation was a factor: Gorbachev might have thought that in two years' time political turmoil in Japan would settle and Shintaro Abe, with whom he had established personal rapport,

would become prime minister.

Setting the date of his visit so far in advance turned out to be a fatal mistake. During the intervening years the world witnessed revolutionary changes that swept throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The Soviet outer empire in Eastern Europe collapsed like a house of cards, and German reunification was accomplished. Despite these momentous changes in the international environment, Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union remained immobile, inflexible, and lethargic. Ironically, these historic changes adversely affected Soviet-Japanese relations. For the entire year from the summer of 1989 through the summer of 1990, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were totally preoccupied, and once Gorbachev accepted the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and German reunification, he had exhausted all the leverage necessary to strike a deal with Japan on the territorial issue. All these factors indicated that Japan had missed the opportunity to resolve the territorial question. In fact, the issue should have been settled by the middle of 1989. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall signaled to the Japanese that their chance of recovering the lost islands had well nigh vanished.

The September 1989 foreign ministerial meeting confirmed that Soviet-Japanese relations remained hopelessly deadlocked. Something had to be done to find ways to shift the momentum of the relationship, and clearly a solution could be found only outside the official channels of negotiations between the two foreign ministries. For this purpose, Aleksandr Yakovlev visited Japan in November 1989. Although the Japanese supported Soviet perestroika, they indicated no softening of their position on the territorial issue.²⁹ In desperation, Yakovlev suggested in his informal meeting with Ichiro Ozawa secretary-general of the LDP, that a "third way" would have to be found to get out of this stalemate, although he did not seem to have any idea what this "third way" might be. In the end, Yakovlev's visit was disappointing, producing no tangible results, and ultimately reinforcing his doubts about Japan's willingness to go beyond the territorial issue.

After Yakovlev's futile visit to Japan, Shintaro Abe made an important visit to Moscow in January 1990. On January 16, 1990, Abe had a personal conversation with Gorbachev, during which he did not mention the territorial question, referring only to the "difficult question," which he suggested would have to be resolved by "wisdom" (*eichi*). This apparently impressed Gorbachev greatly.³⁰ During the meeting, Abe presented an eight-point proposal, that significantly expanded the realm of cooperation. But the most important point of Abe's visit was to move the momentum of Soviet-Japanese relations in a positive direction. Nonetheless, however positive his contributions may have

been, they turned out to be too little and too late, since the domestic politics that surrounded Gorbachev precipitously worsened in 1990.³¹

The Gaimusho had to respond to the quickly developing international situation. In May the Gaimusho composed a comprehensive policy for Gorbachev's forthcoming visit, which did not substantially depart from the previous framework of balanced expansion—with one notable exception. Regarding the territorial question, Togo emphasized the adherence to Japan's basic demand for the return of all four islands, but importantly, he dropped the word "simultaneous," signaling that Japan was amenable to the transfer of the islands in stages. Furthermore, Togo made it clear that the Japanese government was prepared to discuss security issues in the Asian-Pacific region, thus extending for the first time the realm of cooperation within the framework of balanced expansion to security issues.³²

It must be pointed out, however, that these subtle changes in Japan's policy paled beside the momentous changes taking place on the international scene. At the end of May 1990, at the Bush-Gorbachev summit in Washington, Gorbachev finally accepted German reunification, allowing united Germany to remain in NATO. At the end of this visit, Gorbachev also arranged a meeting with South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo in San Francisco, thus accelerating the pace of Soviet-South Korean rapprochement. Inevitably, Japan's minor change in its approach to the Soviet Union gave the impression of passivity, inertia, and intransigence, underscored by the government leaders' refusal to renounce the principle of the inseparability of politics and economics.³³

The Japanese government's failure to repudiate the principle of the inseparability of politics and economics had debilitating consequences for Soviet perceptions of Japan. In preparation for Gorbachev's visit, Japanologists in the Soviet Union were carefully examining any signals issued by the Japanese government that might indicate a change in its Soviet policy. During the economic summit in Houston the Japanese government successfully lobbied among the G-7 nations to convince them that Japan's economic aid to the Soviet Union was contingent upon the resolution of the Northern Territories issue. This activity was interpreted by the Soviet leadership as another negative move on the part of Japan.³⁴

Shevardnadze's third visit to Japan, on September 5–6 1990, yielded some positive results. At the foreign ministerial conference, he impressed upon Japan the need to expand their security dialogue. The Japanese agreed for the first time to discuss confidence-building measures at the joint consultative committee.³⁵ Shevardnadze also made it clear that any peace treaty should not damage the security of the other side, thus recognizing the existence of the U.S.-

Japanese security treaty. With regard to the territorial question, Kaifu omitted the term “simultaneous” from the demand for the return of the Northern Territories. Shevardnadze was not impressed by this change of policy, however, merely responding that this was a difficult, complicated problem, the resolution of which would be possible only by creating an environment favorable for mutual trust and goodwill. In substance, both sides remained far apart.

Public opinion on both sides became heated in the latter part of 1990 in anticipation of Gorbachev’s visit to Japan. It is interesting to note the parallel development. While the conservative wing in both countries stubbornly clung to its old positions on the territorial question, “new political thinkers” called for a major revision of their own government’s policy toward the other. They also understood the complexity of the territorial issue and treated the other side’s views with understanding, if not with agreement. They insisted that only a mutual compromise could lead to a resolution, while suggesting that Gorbachev’s visit would be only the first step toward such a compromise. The range of compromise suggested by “new political thinkers” on both sides was remarkably similar.³⁶ Public opinion polls indicated that at first glance the views held by the Soviets and the Japanese were diametrically opposed on the territorial issue. While an overwhelming number of Soviet citizens opposed any return of the disputed islands to Japan, an equally overwhelming number of Japanese supported the return of all four islands. Nevertheless, a close examination of these polls indicated that a significant segment of the population in both countries favored some sort of compromise.

Despite the convergence of public opinion, it was clear that formal diplomatic negotiations were still at an impasse; back-channel negotiations were needed. It was again Abe who came close to a workable agreement with the Soviet side. He was expected to lead an LDP delegation to Moscow in October 1990. In preparation, his office sent an old Soviet hand, Jun’ichiro Isomura, to Moscow in September. The Soviet side, particularly Aleksandr Panov of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had been deeply involved in the previous fruitless negotiations, must also have considered Abe’s forthcoming visit a great opportunity to break the stalemate. Panov and Isomura had several meetings, and finally came up with a tentative agreement on basic principles, which consisted of seven points:

- (1) The Soviet Union and Japan agree to cooperate for stability and progress in the international community, based on the ideals of the United Nations;

- (2) The Soviet Union and Japan agree to make preparations for the early conclusion of a peace treaty;
- (3) The Soviet Union and Japan affirm the principle of the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration concluded by both governments in 1956;
- (4) The Soviet Union and Japan agree to conclude a peace treaty within three years after the conclusion of this agreement;
- (5) The Soviet Union and Japan, recognizing the importance of the economic reform that the Soviet Union is undertaking for the stability of the international community, affirm that both countries will cooperate for its success;
- (6) The Soviet Union and Japan agree to expand human contacts in order to further mutual understanding; and
- (7) The Soviet Union and Japan, recognizing the importance of Abe's eight-point proposal and the Japanese government's ten-point proposal for the development of bilateral relations, agree to implement them.³⁷

This draft proposal could have been the basis for mutual agreement. With regard to the territorial question, the Joint Declaration of 1956 was used as a starting point, and other issues would be determined within three years without saying anything about the status of two of the islands, Kunashiri and Etorofu. Economic cooperation would expand in the meantime without the appearance of the selling of territory in exchange. Moreover, this document envisaged a new cooperative relationship based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. Even compared with the joint declaration issued by Gorbachev and Kaifu in 1991 and the Tokyo declaration by Yeltsin and Hosokawa in 1993, this simple document would have better served Japan's interests, since it imposed a time limit on the resolution of the territorial dispute and achieved rapprochement with the Soviet Union that had eluded Japan throughout the postwar era.

Nevertheless, this document failed to be adopted because of the Gaimusho's intervention.³⁸ Treating it as basically a "curve ball" thrown by the Soviets to obfuscate the Japanese, the Gaimusho reaffirmed its adherence to the

demand for the return of “all four islands.” Its upper echelons were particularly incensed by the attempt at back-channel negotiations that bypassed official channels. Togo flew to Moscow to force Panov to deny officially his part and the part of the Soviet ministry in this affair. Nagao Hyodo, the Gaimusho’s councilor, told Hiroshi Mitsuzuka of the Abe faction in no uncertain terms that the Gaimusho would not tolerate any interference from politicians in the negotiating process. The back-channel negotiations, which could have led to the best possible agreement, ended in fiasco.³⁹

While Soviet-Japanese relations were stuck in a rut, Gorbachev’s domestic popularity further eroded. Desperately attempting to salvage the sinking ship of the unitary Soviet state, Gorbachev made a right-wing turn in the fall of 1990, disavowing the radical economic reform plan. In December, Shevardnadze resigned in protest against the danger of a military dictatorship. Gorbachev’s swing to the right culminated in the use of force in Lithuania and Latvia in January 1991. All this deeply affected Soviet policy toward Japan. At the crucial moment, when the final foreign ministerial conference was to be held for last-minute summit preparations, Shevardnadze suddenly exited center stage. Moreover, Aleksandr Yakovlev, the vital link to Gorbachev, had been replaced as head of the team to prepare for Gorbachev’s visit by the newly elected vice-president, Gennadii Yanaev. The Yanaev commission eventually voted down the ministry’s first option, which advocated the reaffirmation of the 1956 Joint Declaration, and adopted a more conservative alternative, which recommended rejection of any territorial concessions.⁴⁰ It should be noted also that Gorbachev was under heavy pressure not only from the conservatives but also from the radical reformers. Boris Yeltsin, who had been elected chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, exploited to the hilt the “Kuril issue” to gain popularity at the expense of Gorbachev’s authority.⁴¹

At this delicate moment, Japan conducted itself in a manner that was most detrimental to the resolution of the territorial problem. The LDP’s powerful secretary-general Ichiro Ozawa visited Moscow on March 24–26 in an attempt to reach basic agreement on the territorial issue in order to avoid a total fiasco at the summit in April. At the unusual second meeting with Gorbachev, Ozawa reportedly made the proposal that in return for the Soviet recognition of Japanese sovereignty over Etorofu and Kunashiri, Japan would be prepared to give economic aid to the Soviet Union in the amount of \$26 billion.⁴² A few people on the Japanese side who had become acquainted with this document were aghast, since they immediately saw that the offer was based on fanciful speculation rather than on any carefully prepared, realistic, and government-approved plan. Some within the Abe faction, who prided themselves on being the major

organizers of Soviet-Japanese relations since Abe's January visit to Moscow, must have regarded Ozawa's gesture as a challenge to Abe's authority.

Nothing could have been more disastrous than Ozawa's proposal, since this was interpreted as putting pressure on the Soviet Union to "sell the islands."⁴³ This episode diminished any prospect of early compromise by placing Gorbachev in a position where he could not afford to seek Japan's economic assistance, either.⁴⁴ It is not clear what role the Gaimusho played in this episode.⁴⁵ But if some outside the Gaimusho felt a sense of crisis about the composition of Japan's aid package, the professional diplomats must have reacted with even greater alarm. Particularly in this case, when the deal was based on fanciful figures for which the Gaimusho could not be responsible and, moreover, were prepared by its rival bureaucracy, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), without having first consulted the Gaimusho, it required little imagination to surmise that the Gaimusho was adamantly opposed to this deal. It is not too far-fetched, therefore, to assume that the Gaimusho may have played a part in leaking this information in order to squash it.

In the end the Gaimusho played a most decisive role in formulating Japan's policy toward the summit. The Gaimusho's efforts were almost exclusively concentrated on the territorial issue. Hyodo judged that since Gorbachev would reaffirm the 1956 Joint Declaration, the Japanese goal at the negotiations should be to go one step beyond the return of the two islands and to place the question of sovereignty over Kunashiri and Etorofu on the negotiating table.⁴⁶ To anyone who followed the domestic situation in the Soviet Union, it should have been clear that there was no room for Gorbachev to make such concessions. Japan's negotiating strategy was constructed on a totally wrong assumption.

The summit took place in Tokyo from April 16 through the morning of April 19.⁴⁷ The major battle was waged on the issue of whether the 1956 Joint Declaration was to be reaffirmed. In the end, the Japanese government did not achieve its goal, since Gorbachev adamantly refused to do so. The joint declaration issued at the end of the summit merely stated that both sides "will continue constructive and energetic work [toward a peace treaty], making use of all positive factors that have been accumulated through bilateral negotiations over the years since 1956." Gorbachev was emphatic in his rejection of reaffirming the 1956 Joint Declaration at his press conference, while the Japanese government unilaterally interpreted this expression to mean Gorbachev's tacit recognition of this document. Clearly, the Gaimusho's initial miscalculation of Gorbachev's intention led to the failure of negotiations.

As disappointment with the consequences of the summit had sank in, the Japanese government quickly reverted to its previous intransigent position. Over

the issue of Western economic aid to the Soviet Union, Japan was once again isolated. Togo took umbrage at the press coverage that singled out Japan as a spoiler among the G-7 nations. He observed that Western nations' policies toward economic aid to the Soviet Union were driven as much by each country's specific national interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union as Japan's policy was. He justified Japan's cooler stand on economic aid as a natural outcome stemming from the different stage of its own reconciliation with the Soviet Union. As the London G-7 summit approached, the Gaimusho became concerned, however, with the possibility that the Bush administration might opt for a policy of more active support for economic aid to the Soviet Union. After receiving Gorbachev's new economic reform plans drafted by Grigorii Yavlinskii, the Gaimusho undertook the task of drafting Japan's own aid program to the Soviet Union in cooperation with MITI and the Ministry of Finance. This package was designed to demonstrate that Japan was not intransigently rejecting aid to the Soviet Union entirely, while still making massive financial aid conditional on the settlement of the Northern Territories question. To explain this position, the Gaimusho sent its highest officials to Britain and the United States. In addition, the Gaimusho had Kaifu send a personal letter to all the heads of the G-7 nations which emphasized the need to create the political context in which Japan would be able to extend truly serious economic assistance to the Soviet Union. In other words, the Japanese government continued to cling to the policy of the inseparability of politics and economics, serving notice, admittedly in a more sophisticated fashion, to the Soviet Union as well as the other G-7 nations that Japan's financial assistance would not be forthcoming without the settlement of the Northern Territories issue. Kaifu succeeded in persuading Bush and John Major to accept Japan's special problem. But Gorbachev's press secretary pointedly warned that if Japan tied the invitation to Gorbachev to the London summit to the territorial question, Japan would face international isolation.⁴⁸ The pendulum had swung back again.

On the issue of economic aid to the Soviet Union, the London summit was largely led by Japan's initiative. The Northern Territories question was mentioned in various statements issued at the summit. Japan prevented the G-7 nations from extending to the Soviet Union the massive financial aid that Gorbachev desperately needed to bolster his popularity. Togo considered this a clear victory for Japan's foreign policy. In fact, it was a victory if it aimed to derail Western attempts to inject massive economic aid to the Soviet Union. But it is a different matter if this victory is interpreted as having a negative effect on the stability of the world. One may argue that even if Gorbachev had received massive financial aid from the West, he could not have survived. And yet, it was also true that the G-7 nations' refusal to give him this desperately needed

assistance meant that yet another nail was driven into his coffin.

On August 19, one month after the London summit, the leaders of the conservative forces attempted a coup against Gorbachev, a catastrophic event that, contrary to the intentions of the plotters, sealed the fate of the Soviet Union. All the leaders of the Western nations took a strong stand against the plotters as soon as the coup was attempted; the Japanese remained noncommittal until the failure of the coup became clear on the third day, in order to see if the new government might be able to give Japan a better deal on the territorial question. The ignoble stand of the Japanese government during the coup was the symbolic expression of the failure of Japanese policy toward the Soviet Union, which, afflicted by the Northern Territories syndrome, lost a sense of balance.

Deeper Causes of Japan's Misperceptions of the Soviet Union

The analysis above indicates that the Gaimusho consistently misjudged and miscalculated Soviet policy toward Japan during the Gorbachev period. The subtle and yet important changes made in its policy toward the Northern Territories were too little and too late to produce a momentum for a breakthrough. One element of Japan's policy remained unchanged, however: throughout the Gorbachev period, Japan never deviated from the principles that the settlement of the territorial issue on its own terms—the return of all four disputed islands—was the most important goal of its policy toward the Soviet Union, and that rapprochement with the Soviet Union was possible only if this demand were accepted.

Clearly, no Soviet leader could have accepted such a demand. If Gaimusho officials truly believed that Soviet acceptance was a realistic possibility, their analytical ability should be seriously questioned. Moreover, the Japanese government adamantly refused to renounce the policy of the inseparability of politics and economics, although it was logically incompatible with the policy of balanced expansion. While the Japanese government continued to present an ultimatum that the Soviet government could not possibly accept, it failed to create an environment where the demand might have been understood and accepted by Soviet citizens.

Why did the Japanese government pursue such an irrational policy throughout the Gorbachev period? This leads to the conclusion that perhaps the Gaimusho actually did not desire the conclusion of a peace treaty and that the Northern Territories problem was used to prevent rapprochement with the Soviet Union. But this is only partially true. During the cold war, the territorial problem provided a convenient excuse for Japan to prevent rapprochement with the Soviet

Union. When Gorbachev came to power, the Gaimusho underestimated the potential of Gorbachev's perestroika, continuing to believe that his reforms represented mere window dressing. In particular, it doubted that Gorbachev's foreign policy, guided by the new political thinking, would fundamentally change the dynamics of international relations. When it did drastically change East-West relations, the Gaimusho took the position that Gorbachev's new thinking did not extend to Asia, where the cold war was not yet over. When Gorbachev accomplished rapprochement with China and South Korea, and helped to resolve the Cambodian conflict, the Gaimusho proclaimed that the new thinking was not applicable to Japan because the Soviet Union was not prepared to resolve the Northern Territories question. In the first stage, the Gaimusho's position on the Northern Territories was designed to prevent Gorbachev from pursuing the USSR's ultimate objective: decoupling Japan from its security alliance with the United States. In other words, the Northern Territories question served as a rational means to achieve what the Gaimusho considered to be Japan's strategic goals. From 1988 on, however, the territorial issue as a "means" to achieve Japan's foreign policy goal was transformed into the "end" itself. From then on, the Gaimusho brandished the territorial problem as the litmus test to judge the sincerity of Gorbachev's foreign policy. The metamorphosis of the Northern Territories question from a "means" to the "goal" was gradual, incremental, and inertial. Perhaps the Gaimusho officials could not extricate themselves from their own propaganda without realizing how this change had affected Japan's Soviet policy.

But the question remains: why and how could this irrational policy be perpetuated and justified for the entire Gorbachev period without encountering much opposition or causing domestic debate? In order to answer this question fully, one must understand the peculiar place that the Soviet Union occupied in the postwar history of Japan. Here, I would like to point out only three important factors.

First, there was a serious structural problem in Japan's Soviet policy. This policy was largely determined by the Gaimusho, which jealously guarded its policy-making monopoly. The Gaimusho, and particularly its Soviet desk, fought tooth and nail to maintain its exclusive right to conduct Japan's Soviet policy, believing itself to be the sole guardian of Japan's national interest, which was identified as the need to maintain the close security alliance with the United States. The Gaimusho's attempt to claim its exclusive right to determine Japan's Soviet policy was ironically too successful, since all other views were effectively muzzled and marginalized and did not filter into the decision-making process. Even powerful politicians like Nakasone and Abe, who attempted to broaden

the basis of bilateral negotiations beyond the narrow confines of the Gaimusho's official channels, failed to mobilize public opinion or other powerful institutional voices that might have challenged the Gaimusho's.

Second, the Gaimusho's position, reducing the entire Soviet policy to the territorial issue, was successful only because it corresponded to the overwhelming sentiment among the Japanese public that rapprochement with the Soviet Union would have little to do with Japan's vital national interests. A broad segment of the public believed that while the Soviet Union needed Japan's economic assistance, Japan would not gain anything from rapprochement except the return of the Northern Territories. Indeed, the Japanese debate on Soviet-Japanese relations throughout the Gorbachev era focused exclusively on the Northern Territories without touching on the fundamental question of how Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union should fit into a comprehensive foreign-policy framework.

This brings us to a more important issue: the role of the Soviet Union in Japan's postwar history. The Gaimusho's policy was successful only because it corresponded with the overwhelming consensus of Japanese public opinion on the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ The Soviet-Japanese war in August-September 1945 had a profound impact on Japanese perceptions of the Soviet Union. To the majority of the Japanese, the Soviets entered the war in violation of their Neutrality Pact, to take advantage of the desperate situation of Japan at the end of the Pacific War. In the Japanese perception, the Soviet-Japanese war was distinct from the Pacific War. The issue of Japan's war guilt in the Pacific War has been a hotly debated issue, but as far as the Soviet-Japanese war is concerned, the Japanese view has been unanimous. It was an unjust war declared against Japan, and Japan was the victim of Soviet aggression. The territorial problem thus came to represent the sum total of wrongs that the Soviets had inflicted upon Japan. The Northern Territories gave the Japanese a psychological outlet in which they felt that they, too, had been victims in the Pacific War. In addition, Japan's anti-Sovietism was further reinforced by the cold war. The image of the Soviet Union as Japan's primary enemy, nurtured by the Soviet-Japanese war, was further magnified and intensified by the cold war without going through the filter of Japan's responsibility in the Pacific War.

Japan's anti-Sovietism was deeply linked with its pro-Americanism. The American security blanket was the essential ingredient of Japan's security, foreign, and economic policies. Its foreign policy makers attempted to avoid even the slightest danger of undermining the U.S.-Japanese alliance. Anti-Sovietism was a convenient, and sometimes artificially concocted, means to insulate the security treaty with the United States. The territorial question acted as a decisive factor

in this context. As long as the Soviets had no intention of returning any islands, the Japanese government could count on the “Soviet threat” to prevent any conflict with the United States from reaching beyond an acceptable level. The Northern Territories thus served as a safety valve for Japan’s foreign policy. From this standpoint, it was essential that the territorial dispute should not be settled, and this justified Japan’s adoption of a rigid stance, demanding the simultaneous return of all the islands. This psychological factor explains much about the Gaimusho’s lack of initiative in seeking rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Its myopic vision reflected the broader psychological makeup of the Japanese in general.

The end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union did not significantly change Japanese perceptions of Russia. Despite the two historic documents signed by both governments—the Tokyo declaration signed by Yeltsin and Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in 1993, in which Yeltsin acknowledged that all the disputed islands should be subject for negotiations, and the Krasnoyarsk declaration of 1997, in which both Yeltsin and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto pledged to make every effort to conclude a peace treaty by 2000 by resolving the territorial question based on the Tokyo declaration—the Japanese have continued to place the Northern Territories question at the forefront of its relations with Russia, thus insuring the continuing stalemate of bilateral relations.⁵⁰

Japan’s continuing obsession with the Northern Territories, despite the emerging consensus, shared by the Gaimusho itself, that in the post-cold war world rapprochement with Russia will serve Japan’s best interest, reminds us that it is not so much national interest and strategic thinking as perceptions and misperceptions that drive Japan’s policy toward Russia. In this sense, Japan’s ability to overcome its Northern Territories syndrome is a measure of the maturity of Japan’s independent foreign policy.⁵¹

Notes to Chapter Two

1. For the history of Russo/Soviet-Japanese relations prior to the Gorbachev period, see Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, vol. 1, *Between War and Peace* (Berkeley: International and Area Studies Publications, University of California at Berkeley, 1998).
2. *Hokkaido shimbun*, March 16, 1985; *Asahi shimbun*, March 16, 1985, my interview with Yasuhiro Nakasone.
3. See “Shufuku naruka Nissokankei,” *Hokkaido shimbun*, September 26, 27, 28, 1985; “Nisso taiwa eno shinten,” *Yomiuri shimbun*, January 9, 1986.
4. *Hokkaido shimbun*, October 29, 1985.
5. *Hokkaido shimbun*, December 22, 1985; *Yomiuri shimbun*, December 27, 1985; *Asahi shimbun*, December 27, 1985. After this leak, Primakov was visibly upset, denouncing it as a breach of confidence. Based on my interview with Konstantin Sarkisov, May 26, 1995. Sarkisov served as Primakov’s interpreter during this press conference.
6. Moscow Radio, October 19, 1985, quoted in *Soren geppo*, no. 508 (October 1985): 139–40.
7. Moscow Radio, December 15, 27, 1985, quoted in *Soren geppo*, no. 510 (December 1985): 105–07, 113–15. In the interview he granted me, Cherniaev denied that he had written these commentaries.
8. Based on my interview with Konstantin Sarkisov, May 26, 1995. Ivan Kovalenko, deputy head of the International Department, complained that as soon as Gorbachev became general secretary he immediately attempted to circumvent the International Department by relying more on his personal advisors such as Cherniaev, Aleksandr Yakovlev, Evgenii Primakov, and Georgii Arbatov. Based on my interview with Ivan Kovalenko, May 26, 1995.
9. Based on my interview with Mikhail Kapitsa, May 19, 1995.
10. For a detailed discussion of the Shevardnadze-Abe conference, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, vol. 2, *Neither War Nor Peace, 1985–1997*, (Berkeley: International and Area Studies Publications, University of California at Berkeley, 1998) 235–39.
11. Yamazaki Takio, “Tainichi sekkin o kakusakusuru Soren: rokotsuna Nichibei rihansaku to taiheijo shinshutsu,” *Jiyu*, no. 9 (September 1996): 84–89; Sono Akira, “Nakasone taiso gaiko ni keikokusuru,” *Kaikakusha*, December 1986, 6. Gilbert Rozman divides the Japanese commentators on the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev period into five groups: the right, the right of center, the center, the left of center, and the left. I use his definitions here. See Gilbert Rozman, *Japan’s Response to the Gorbachev Era, 1985–1991: A Rising Superpower Views a Declining One* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

12. Kimura Hiroshi, "Sorou: soren no Ajia taiheiyo seisaku no tenkai," *Soren kenkyu* 3 (1986): 22–24.
13. Aleksandr Senatorov (a Japan specialist in the International Department of the Central Committee) makes this point one of the important contributions of the Vladivostok speech. Based on my interview with Senatorov, May 26, 1995.
14. Nakajima Mineo, "Gorubachofu ga nageru tainichi senryaku no bukimina henkakyu," *Gendai*, December 1986, 206–21; Wada Haruki, "Hopporyodo mondai ni tsuiteno kosatsu," *Sekai*, December 1986, 150–61.
15. Ito, Ken'ichi, "Hopporyodo 'nitohenkanron' o utagau," *Shokun*, no. 2 (1987): 26–42. Also see, Irie Michimasa, "Hopporyodo mondai e no kosatsu," *Jiyu*, February (1987): 90–97.
16. Shevardnadze actually favored this option. Based on my interview with Kapitsa.
17. For more detailed discussion on Soviet public debates, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 264–70.
18. Togo Kazuhiko, *Nichiro shinjidai e no jyoso* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1993), 3–6.
19. *Ibid.*, 17–18. The policy of balanced expansion was launched officially during Uno's Moscow visit in May 1989, but from Togo's speech, it was clear that the policy was implemented before May 1989.
20. *Ibid.*, 81–82.
21. For Shevardnadze's second visit, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 289–95. For the debate at the working group, see "Osnovnoe sodержanie zasedaniia rabochei gruppy po voprosam mirnogo dogovora, g. Tokio, 20 dekabria 1988 goda," a mimeographed note prepared by I. D. Sharif; "Zapis' osnovnogo sodержaniia zasedaniia rabochei gruppy po mirnomu dogovoru, g. Tokio, 21 marta 1989 goda." For the translations of these documents and my commentary, see Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "Stalemate in an Era of Change: New Sources and Questions on Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Soviet/Russian-Japanese Relations," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 10 (March 1998): 192–95.
22. Togo, *Nichiro shinjidai*, 13.
23. During his meeting with Shevardnadze in Paris in January 1989, Uno made it clear that the Japanese expected Gorbachev's acceptance of Japan's territorial demands when he visited Japan. Shevardnadze resented this tone and reminded Uno that it would be unrealistic to reduce all issues to the territorial question. *Ibid.*, 14; *Hokkaido shimbun*, January 8 (evening), 1989.
24. Aleksandr Panov, *Fushin kara shinrai e: Hopporyodo kosho no uchimaku* (Tokyo: Simul, 1992), 33–34.
25. *Asahi shimbun*, February 3, 4, 1989; *Hokkaido shimbun*, January 26, 1989.

26. James Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: Putnam, 1995), 40.
27. *Pravda*, May 6, 1989; Panov, *Fushin kara*, 34.
28. Based on my interview with *Hokkaido shimbun* correspondent, Sato Masando; *Yomiuri shimbun*, September 19, 20, 23, 1989; *Asahi shimbun*, September 12, 13, 1989.
29. *Hopporyodo*, December 20, 1989; *Yomiuri shimbun*, November 14, 1989.
30. In the composition of his visiting team, Abe purposely excluded the Gaimusho and included the councilors of the MITI, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, based on my interview with Junichiro Isomura. I am also thankful to Isomura for the mimeographed copy of the meetings between the LDP delegation and Gorbachev, between Abe and Gorbachev, and a draft of the eight-point proposal.
31. For Soviet domestic politics, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 345–47. Abe's eight-point program was later supplemented by the ten-point program proposed by the Gaimusho.
32. *Ibid.*, 68–69.
33. See the Budget Committee discussion in the Diet in April 1990, *Hopporyodo*, no. 245 (April 20, 1990): 2.
34. *Mainichi shimbun*, July 13, 1990; Mizuo Osuga, "Ugokidashita hopporyodo mondai," *Sekai*, 22.
35. *Asahi shimbun*, September 1 (evening), September 6, 1990.
36. For detailed analysis of public opinions on both sides, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 356–64.
37. "Kihon gensoku ni kansuru kyotei kosshian," a draft proposal given to me by an anonymous Japanese source; "Nisso shinjidai e no mosaku, no. 2," *Yomiuri shimbun*, January 4, 1990; *Asahi shimbun*, October 7, 1990.
38. For a more detailed discussion, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 364–68.
39. *Hokkaido shimbun*, October 9, 1990, March 26, 1991; *Asahi shimbun*, October 9, 1990, March 23, 26, 1991; *Yomiuri shimbun*, October 21, 1990; my interview with Isomura.
40. Panov, *Fushin kara* 93–96. See also Lisbeth L. Tarlow, "Russian Decision-Making on Japan in the Gorbachev Era," *Japan and Russia: The Tortuous Path to Normalization, 1949–1999* G. Rozman ed., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 123–38. Tarlow uses an important document prepared by Vasilii Saplin of the International Department for Gorbachev.

41. For a detailed discussion of Yeltsin's role, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: 373–82.
42. For the Ozawa-Gorbachev meetings, see *Vestnik MIDa SSSR*, no. 8 (1991): 1–2; Anatolii Cherniaev, *Gorubachofu to unmei o tomonishita 2000 nichi* (Tokyo: Ushio shuppansha, 1995), 427–32; *Hokkaido shimbun*, March 26, 1991; *Asahi shimbun*, March 26, 1991; Andrei Kozyrev, *Preobrazhenie* (Moscow, 1995), 295–96. Cherniaev's memoirs are the translation of his Russian original, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym* (Moscow, 1993), but he added one chapter dealing with Soviet-Japanese relations in the Japanese edition.
43. Cherniaev, *Gorubachofu to unmei*, 432.
44. It should be remembered that this incident took place in the wake of another disastrous incident, the Tarasov Affair, in which Artem Tarasov accused Gorbachev of selling the Kurils in return for Japanese money. For further discussion on the Tarasov affair, see my article: "The Gorbachev-Kaifu Summit: Domestic and Foreign Policy Linkages," in *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma Between Distant Neighbors*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Jonathan Haslam, and Andrew C. Kuchins, (Berkeley: International and Area Studies Publications, University of California at Berkeley, 1993), 49–82.
45. Togo did not say anything critical about Ozawa's visit to Moscow; in fact, he praised Ozawa's meetings with Gorbachev as a demonstration of how the LDP and the government were united in their policy toward the Soviet Union. Togo, *Nichiro shinjidai*, 157–58. For Ambassador Sumio Edamura's somewhat negative comments on the Ozawa mission, see Edamura Sumio, *Teikoku kaitai zengo: Chu Mosukuwa Nihon taishi no kaiso 1990–1994* (Tokyo: Toshishuppan, 1997), 144.
46. *Asahi shimbun*, March 21, 1991; Yagi Tadashi, "Dokumentō: nisso shunokaidan," *Ushio*, no. 6 (1991): 108, Togo, *Nichiro shinjidai*, 84–87, 159–60, 163.
47. See my article, "The Gorbachev-Kaifu Summit: Domestic and Foreign Policy Linkages."
48. Togo, *Nichiro shinjidai*, 187–98; *Asahi shimbun*, June 17, 1991.
49. See my article, "Rethinking the Russo-Japanese Territorial Dispute," *Japan Echo* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 23–24.
50. For Russo-Japanese relations under Yeltsin, see Hasegawa, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations*, 2: part 3.

Chapter Three

Russia and Japan: Mutual Misperceptions, 1992–1999

Gilbert Rozman

More than thirteen years after the thaw heralded by Mikhail Gorbachev's July 1986 Vladivostok speech, relations between Moscow and Tokyo are still not normalized. Unlike Moscow's normalization with Beijing in May 1989 and the subsequent "strategic partnership," which overcame the strained legacy of the Sino-Soviet dispute, the fact that Russia and Japan remain mired in distrust seems puzzling. Indeed, there is a widespread impression that this lack of progress is due more to misperceptions of each other than to real national interests and that these mutual images are symptomatic of national psychologies with enduring implications for our world order. By examining recent mutual images of Japan and Russia in the face of efforts to transform them, we can look ahead to what more can be done and to the danger of further inaction.

Why are perceptions so important in a bilateral relationship between two such great powers? If during the cold war there may be some explanation for this, what accounts for its continuation to 1999 and the prospect that mutual distrust will shape Russo-Japanese relations into the next century? Are there forces at work—political, economic, or cultural—likely over the next five to ten years to transform the Russo-Japanese "image gap" and thus relations? Answers to these questions may shift our attention from a detailed chronology of what Japanese diplomat Kazuhiko Togo calls "catchball," where in 1989–1992 virtually month by month and later with lesser frequency first one side makes an offer sending the ball into the other side's court and then the ball is tossed back with a counteroffer or nuanced reply.¹ Instead we will search for deep-seated forces on both sides that have prevented a breakthrough in this pattern and consider whether they are likely to dissipate soon.

Of all great power relations, it has been recognized since the early 1980s that Japanese-Russian relations are most troubled by a lack of understanding. On the Russian side, experts in Japan find ignorance and misinformation everywhere. The absence or postponement of visits by Gorbachev until April 1991 and Yeltsin until October 1993 and the persistent suspicion of what is Japan's real intent in pressing for the return of the four Kuril Islands are but the most visible signs of this problem, often attributed to poor communications.

For the Russians, complaints about Japanese misinformation keep recurring too. In the first years of perestroika Russians asked why Japanese continued to dislike them, why Japanese were the most skeptical that change was real, and eventually why Japan was so slow to recognize the end of the cold war and the Soviet threat. In this bilateral relationship perceptions have long been recognized as crucial.² Both sides still argue that the other has a skewed picture of reality, and, what is more, respected analysts on each side readily recognize that their own public is blind to objectivity.

The vocabulary of Russo-Japanese relations seems odd in the field of international relations. There is much talk of behavior that is “rude,” of “arrogance,” of the need for an “apology.” Actions are assessed for their effect on “self-respect” or “pride.” Both sides refer to the responses of the other nation as “emotional.” Above all, they couch their requests to each other as steps for overcoming “misperceptions,” of building “trust.” Not only are Russo-Japanese relations grounded in domestic constraints, they are deeply embedded in national psychology.

From 1992 to 1996 both countries reexamined national priorities, debated how closely they should be tied to the United States and the West, and watched ambivalently as China grew confident about its growing power and produced a rise in nationalism worrisome to foreign nations. At the same time, each country behaved cautiously in the international arena, fearing a loss of patronage as well as the possibility of arousing an outcry among countries it had once occupied. Two differences, of course, were that even after the collapse of the bubble economy, Japan’s economy turned outward with capital and technology to spare while Russia’s had little to offer but natural resources with eventual export potential; and while Japanese remained largely confident of their identity and were hesitant to rock the boat, Russians were searching for a new one and angry enough to send out shock waves. Although a new, hopeful mood was established for a time in 1997–1998, it was based on a shaky foundation and did not address the fundamental differences in thinking that plagued relations. The result was a new impasse in 1999 reenforced by another wave of disappointment.

The critical period for Russia was late 1991 and 1992, when not only did Japan fail in its effort to transform Russian public opinion, but it lost ground in some respects. The critical time for Japan, I suggest, was late 1992 and 1993. Then the popular mood, which had been shifting toward a friendlier stance, turned against Russia again. This sequence tells us that Japanese opinion has been slower to react, waiting to respond to the Russian approach to bilateral relations. Until 1996 there was no notable reversal in the attitudes that hardened in these decisive years. Yet, there are forces that may gradually change perceptions, and

we can begin to see their impact in the political transitions of 1996 in each country and in the economic momentum of Northeast Asian regionalism. On both sides forces in 1997 struggled to find a wedge to achieve a breakthrough. This time the Japanese government took the lead and, for over a year, claimed that it was succeeding. Public opinion grew more optimistic. Yet, hopes were grounded on unrealistic premises: in Japan that President Boris Yeltsin was personally committed to returning all four disputed islands and that he stood a good chance of getting his way inside Russia; and in Russia that the Japanese government had decided to decouple economic assistance from the political issue of territory and even would be ready to sign a peace treaty and proceed with normalization without any Russian territorial concessions. The background to the fleeting hopes of 1997–1998 can be found in the deepening divide of 1991–1996 and the search for a way to overcome it.

The Failure to Improve Images: 1991–1993

For Russia, Japan has not become the priority that many expected in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although gradually in the 1970s and 1980s Russian intellectuals grew more interested in Japanese technological achievements, spiritual life, and even economic-centered foreign policy, they relied on partial and indirect information without gaining a deep appreciation of Japan.³ In the post-Soviet era there has been no interest group or political force presenting the case for Japan. We can point to at least four reasons. In the political arena, neither Far Eastern localities nor Moscow-based reformers embraced this cause; the most likely advocates turned their attention inward as Russian nationalism left little room for advocacy of Japan. In the economic system, the “new Russians” did not link their prosperity to Japan, and industrial managers doubted that Japan would help them with investments, conversion, or markets. The economic system proved too chaotic for Japanese capital to become a force. In the cultural world, despite local exchanges and humanitarian aid, Japan did not win much favorable publicity. Attention focused on problems, not on advances or generosity. Finally, there were alternative images, especially of China, that preoccupied Russians. Nonetheless, if, after an interlude of quite sympathetic coverage, Russian newspapers in late 1992 and 1993 turned mostly negative on Japan, they grew more positive by 1997 and all four of the above factors, for a time, were beginning to work to Japan’s advantage. Politically, many want to balance one-sided reliance on China or even the United States; economically, Japan offers the only hope of attracting large amounts of capital to the Russian Far East; culturally, Japan’s recent sustained encouragement of all-around relations offered more enticement

than earlier persistent complaints; and alternative national images had receded before the public eye. This turnabout helps explain the hopeful mood of 1998, but it was insufficient to overcome the spreading gloom after the August 1998 Russian financial crisis and the deterioration in bilateral relations when Japanese leaders finally realized that the Russian side would not return the islands. The explosion of Russian nationalism after NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and in response to the war in Chechnya in 1999 reinforced awareness that no meeting of the minds was likely.

The Japan specialist Semyon Verbitsky in 1992, before his departure from Moscow, offered a candid analysis of Soviet distortions of Japanese reality. He argued that they were widespread and that the lack of understanding of Japan had retarded Soviet internationalism. While recognizing that Japan also needed more internationalism, he worried that Russian national identity linked to military power would not readily grasp Japan's worldview nor support policies convincing to it.⁴ More desperate was Oleg Bondarenko's call for transferring the Kuril Islands to Japan not only out of respect for international law, but to gain respect for Russia and end the Japanese complex toward it. The author did not explain how Russian emotions could be assuaged, but he presumably hoped that his book would help to change consciousness in Russia on the disputed islands.⁵ In the transition from Soviet to Russian rule and identity, these authors sought to seize the window of opportunity when Russian identity was not yet fixed and nationalists had yet to capitalize on the carryover of Soviet identity.

A foundation of soft support for Japan did not crack from nationalist rhetoric. Despite the alarm raised by such rhetoric, especially in 1992, the Russian people reported mostly friendly attitudes. One article recording the results of a late 1992 poll jointly taken in both countries contrasted negative Japanese attitudes toward Russia to positive Russian attitudes toward Japan under the heading "unrequited love" (*kataomoi*).⁶ While 11 percent of Japanese respondents to the survey answered positively or very positively about Russia, 72 percent of Russians had a favorable image of Japan. This did not mean, however, that Russians favored a return of the islands; only 12 percent did. The challenge for Japanese diplomats was to convert this shallow sympathy with their country into enthusiastic support that would include some willingness to compromise on the islands in return for what Japan would offer.

Despite the more negative inclinations in Japan, Russians critical of Japanese images of their country do not normally propose any strategy to change them. This may be because they attribute Japanese thinking to fundamental causes, such as that the small size of the country creates a drive for control of territory and natural resources, or that the samurai militaristic tradition is being

reinvigorated by nationalist forces. Their concern centers mostly on Russians who dare to echo Japanese positions and who may be influenced by Japanese wealth to cooperate in weakening their own country. The battleground for both sides has been Russian attitudes.

In December 1990 Akio Kawato of the Japanese Foreign Ministry journeyed to Moscow to establish a Japanese cultural center with the goal of using public relations to change the way Russians think of Japan.⁷ Initially, circumstances seemed to work to Japan's advantage. With glasnost in full swing, coverage of Japan broke new ground month by month. In 1991 the Japanese model aroused perhaps its peak of interest. Nonetheless, within a year the excitement of such intellectual discoveries was fading. The effect on views of Japan quickly became apparent. President Yeltsin's decision to cancel the planned summit in Tokyo on short notice both reflected this change in mood and accelerated it. Russian intellectuals remained Eurocentric, while many others who rejected the Gaidar reforms found the Chinese reform model more appealing than the Japanese model.

As one of the centerpieces in their public relations blitz, the Japanese issued a brochure in Russian to assist the Russian people in understanding the historical facts and legal context of the territorial dispute. Ambassador Sumio Edamura gave an interview in June 1992 in which he introduced the brochure, explaining that the main obstacle on the road to resolving the territorial problem was the "negative public opinion of the Russians."⁸ Five months later, after Yeltsin had canceled his scheduled trip to Tokyo, Haruki Wada, a Tokyo University professor long critical of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, looked back at the brochure critically. He charged that its suggestions that the Japanese position is absolutely correct were heavy-handed. Furthermore, by making Japan out to be the victim of Soviet aggression and not saying a word about Japan's responsibility for starting the Pacific War or about the Soviet Union entering the war with Japan at the request of the United States and Great Britain, it irritated many Russians. Ignoring the nationalist sentiments of the Russian population, it angered patriots, concludes Wada.⁹ Public relations without a meeting of minds could not resolve the bilateral dispute.

In the political arena we find Russia's reform intellectuals and bureaucrats on the defensive from the second half of 1992 and in retreat as first Yegor Gaidar and later Andrei Kozyrev were sacrificed by Yeltsin. Outside of Moscow the idea of compromise in the territorial dispute with Japan could not even get an airing, and in Moscow it came to be seen as a radical view, best not repeated lest it arouse more nationalist opposition. Vladimir Zhirinovskii, whose popularity was at its peak in December 1993, threatened Japan for even raising the question

of territory. Gennadii Zyuganov, who gained strength in 1994–95, sought to combine communism with patriotism, rejecting Japan's claims. Among intellectuals, some vocal reformers looked for a middle ground after witnessing the effects of the breakup of the Soviet Union in lowering Moscow's global influence. Their call for balance between East and West, for a new Eurasian identity unique to Russia, and for limiting the power of the United States led to China rather than Japan. At best Moscow's reformers cautioned realism in the face of worrisome internal Russian factors. Rather than try to shape public opinion, as they had earlier, most passively accepted it. Indeed, in their choice of priorities they catered to the idea that Japan was not of great consequence.

Negative remarks by leaders on each side wounded the pride of the other. For instance, Seiroku Kajiyama, secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic party (LDP), told a party meeting in April 1993 that he "distrusts and hates" the former Soviet Union. This coupled with a remark by Koko Sato, chairman of the LDP Executive Council, that Russia "will not return to a normal track in 10 or 15 years," was interpreted by a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman as "loaded with a charge of unfriendliness aimed at Russo-Japanese relations."¹⁰

In Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and other cities of the Far East the press reported critically on Japan's territorial ambitions. Local researchers, whose careers and material conditions were in decline, found Japan-bashing an outlet for their anxieties that provoked little open rebuttal. They charged that pursuit of the islands represented nothing less than Japanese expansionism and a reexamination of the results of the war that would place Russia's geostrategic and economic position at risk.¹¹ There were few specialists who knew Japanese, and those who did were diverted because they could take advantage of opportunities in Japan or in working with groups funded from Japan. Leaders in the region urged decentralization, but not open borders and regional integration.

With the total population roughly 5 million in local areas in the accessible southeastern corner of the Russian Far East (where another 2.5 million were scattered in the north or inland), Japanese firms could easily have become a dominant force in the urban economies of the region. Yet, they could not buy land, and their investments were subject to virtual confiscation through taxes and legal procedures. They had trouble finding partners who would not deceive them. After being cheated in some visible joint ventures in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, Japanese investors knew better.¹² The "new Russians" living ostentatiously in these cities proved unreliable or too lacking in influence. In turn, these nouveaux riches did not hitch their harness to Japan. Power to get things done was elsewhere.

While the Japanese government often found itself frustrated in changing

Russian thinking, it settled for modest improvements in the hope of gaining momentum. Guiding its actions has been a belief in the importance of trust in this bilateral relationship. The logic, repeated over and over, is as follows. If Russia or earlier the Soviet Union made bad decisions slighting Japan, they were to a large degree a result of distorted understanding. This, in turn, stemmed from misinformation or ignorance about Japan. It follows that the key to a breakthrough in relations is to develop networks for transmitting objective information and to supplement them with a balanced approach to relations so that a foundation for an open mind toward Japan will be built. Beginning with the slogan "balanced expansion" in 1989 and accelerating with humanitarian aid in late 1990, the foundation was supposed to be taking shape. As mentioned above, in 1990 the appointment of Kawato to lead a public relations blitz in Moscow gave hope that the Russian people would hear Japan's case. These dual forces of aid and publicity reached a high pitch in preparation for Gorbachev's visit to Tokyo in April 1991, gained momentum after the failure of the August 1991 coup, and operated in a quite optimistic atmosphere during the first half of 1992 in hope of a breakthrough when Yeltsin visited Japan. They continued in the form of countermeasures to avert a rising tide of Russian nationalism directed against Japan from the last months of 1992.

In the fall of 1991 Japanese officials, and to a lesser degree the public, became overly optimistic that Russia would seriously pursue a compromise on the territorial question. Contacts with Ruslan Khasbulatov and Aleksandr Rutskoi, then allies of Yeltsin, offered high-level confirmation of the overtures coming from friendly officials in the Russian Foreign Ministry. The Japanese expected Yeltsin "to speed up the process of settling the territorial dispute."¹³

In fact, the public relations blitz and economic initiatives failed to reach their objectives. To be sure, there were some successes in restraining the Russian media from repeating negative stereotypes, for example, by calling Japan's decision to send peacekeeping forces to Cambodia a revival of Japanese militarism.¹⁴ Also some Russians came to accept the distinctiveness of Japan's outlook; in 1993 when Japanese strongly criticized Russia's dumping of radioactive waste in the Sea of Japan, Russians began to appreciate the fact that the Japanese people since 1945 carry a severe nuclear allergy and are not just looking for an excuse to be anti-Russian. But these little victories stood against the background of nationalistic allegations that wounded Japanese pride.

It is widely recognized that the Japanese people are driven by deep-seated emotions regarding Russia as well as China, with contrasting effects.¹⁵ Although the rising military and economic power of China may be reducing the goodwill rooted in guilt, the post-Soviet transition to democracy and demilitarization has

made little impact. Japanese are less impressed with the trappings of democracy than with the chaos of divided rule. Japan and Russia play to each other's negative stereotypes. While many Russians do not admire a militarily weak state without a strong leader, a majority of Japanese do not admire a chaotic state without conscientious workers and efficient economic management. The negative Japanese attitudes are more widespread and run deeper than the doubts on the Russian side. If Russian nationalists in mid-1992 swung the tide against Japan by insisting that territorial demands were aimed at weakening Russia, then Japanese nationalists responded to Yeltsin's rudeness with sustained accusations against Russian disrespect for Japan's economic power. Negative public images became more deeply fixed.

In March 1994 the Japanese Foreign Ministry sent a team to the cities of the Far East to investigate what happened after it delivered humanitarian aid in the form of monetization. Foodstuffs were sold in selected cities and the proceeds given to hospitals and the poor. Although the official assessment insisted that the Russian side greatly appreciated this aid, there were concerns that many of the funds were diverted, that Russians knew little about the effort, and that some Russians were actually humiliated rather than grateful.¹⁶ Japan was finding it hard to manage the public relations of humanitarian aid. As part of the backlash, Japanese opponents of aid became quite vocal.

Starting Anew: Images in 1993–1997

In the aftermath of the "shock" from Yeltsin's abrupt cancellation, without a conciliatory explanation, of a planned trip to Tokyo in September 1992, Japanese public opinion had been left with a bitter aftertaste. Whereas for the first eight months of 1992 the Japanese Foreign Ministry concentrated on persuading the Russian people of the merits of Japan's case, through most of 1993 it became preoccupied with overcoming the recalcitrance of the Japanese people toward granting aid and gaining their acquiescence to a gradual process of negotiations. It was not only that negative opinion limited Japanese initiatives toward Russia or, in the case of harsh remarks from LDP leaders, forced the Japanese Foreign Ministry to respond to Russian complaints, but it even put Tokyo on the defensive before its G-7 partners for succumbing to nationalism when global responsibility was on the side of helping Russia. A veteran negotiator with Moscow and later Japan's United Nations representative, Hisashi Owada, urged that Japan provide aid, warning that the Japanese people were too attached to viewing the world from the sidelines.¹⁷ In the midst of the heated debate over whether Japan should assist Russia, one academic expert, Shigeki Hakamada, called both on Russia to

alleviate the distrust of the Japanese people and on Japan to avoid hurting the Russian people's national pride. He noted that Japanese did not have the same attitudes as westerners toward democracy and human rights. While recognizing that the Russian people feel that their country is a beggar in the world and will not change their views simply because of Japanese aid, he proposed steps that could be taken including the development of informal, trustworthy channels between Tokyo and Moscow.¹⁸

As relations began to improve in mid-1993, Japanese leaders assured Russia that a visit from Yeltsin would not bring any pressures for concessions. When Yeltsin came, his apology for the Soviet Union holding Japanese prisoners of war for a long time as forced laborers received a favorable press. Moreover, the wording to which Yeltsin agreed in the October Tokyo declaration, calling for a resolution to the territorial dispute on the basis of "law" and "justice," drew praise in Japan as an indication that Russia would agree to the return of the four islands. After his visit, however, the discovery of dumped nuclear waste in the Sea of Japan and Russia's nationalistic swing in the December elections reduced public approval.¹⁹

Regardless of the public's attitudes, the Japanese Foreign Ministry clearly had changed its priorities. It deemphasized the territorial question to the extent that in mid-1994 some critics suggested it secretly aimed at allowing this problem to die a natural death.²⁰ One explanation is that the Japanese government came to attach more importance to other objectives, including Russia's support for Japan becoming a permanent member of the Security Council. Under these new circumstances, it was feared that public opinion would put a drag on assistance to Russia and improved relations. A more likely interpretation, however, is that experts had convinced Japan's leaders to take a more gradual approach, convincing Yeltsin personally of Japan's goodwill before pressing for the islands again. The Foreign Ministry grew concerned that the Japanese people and media had little good to say about Russia, and it decided as part of the new atmosphere to accentuate the positive. Eventually, an upbeat mood could prove contagious for the Russians too.

Fundamental images held by the Japanese people did not change quickly, nor did Boris Yeltsin's rhetoric about Japan improve perceptions. Whether accusing Japan of giving no aid at all when in fact it was providing assistance,²¹ insisting that Russia did not want humanitarian aid from Japan after an earthquake on Sakhalin because it came with strings attached, or charging that his personal security could not be guaranteed in Japan, Yeltsin did not help Russia's case with the Japanese public. These provocations to the Japanese psyche reenforced the view that Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, is an arrogant country.

When First Deputy Prime Minister Soskovets visited Japan in late 1994, the Japanese Foreign Ministry offered the most positive spin on the visit's significance. Kazuhiko Togo argued that not only had Yeltsin's October 1993 visit proved successful, but this follow-up visit represented the first step in a breakthrough in diplomacy toward Russia. Yet, his positive spin on the fact that one of Russia's powerful politicians saw Japan with his own eyes and was able to deepen his understanding of Japan was hardly persuasive.²² The difficulty of rallying the Japanese people behind aid to Russia without insisting on a quid pro quo was becoming transparently obvious.

In 1995–1996 forces were at work with the potential to improve Japanese perceptions. The situation in Russia stabilized somewhat, and Boris Yeltsin's reelection offered some grounds for hope. Gradually, inside Russia there was a shift from criticisms of Japan for territorial expansionism to acknowledgement that Japan's slow pace of investment in Russia was due more to shortcomings inside Russia than to a pressure strategy in Tokyo. One sign of hope was a transformation in the attitudes of the residents on the disputed islands themselves. Whereas in 1992 they were considered hostile to Japan to the point that their resistance could be invoked as justification for charges that Moscow was plotting to betray them, by 1995 their positive images of Japan suggested that travel without visas and direct trade could indeed alter opinions.

After a Japanese business delegation in the summer of 1995 agreed to assist in four projects in the Russian Far East, the startup at last in June 1996 of Sakhalin-2—a huge multinational energy project—provided evidence that at last the two economies were becoming interlinked. To those who argued for building a floor of working relations and operating projects to establish the trust needed for a breakthrough in relations, these were promising steps.

The improvements were duly noted in Moscow. Whereas analysts had previously faulted Tokyo for trying to pressure Russia, treating it like a fallen power or even a beggar country, by 1996 they were acknowledging a change. For instance, Mikhail Titarenko, director of the Institute of the Far East, in an interview in August 1996 with a Russian newspaper asserted that in Japan old stereotypes were already being reexamined by many leading political figures. Now they understood that for Japan to play a role in the world adequate to its economic power it should establish good relations with Russia.²³

Despite these signs of movement, it was not yet clear that anything fundamental had changed in Japanese or Russian thinking. There still was a dearth of sympathy toward Russia in the LDP, which in October 1996 strengthened its hold on power. If the Japanese public no longer feared Russia, they also did not respect it. Meanwhile, Russia plodded ahead with China as its strategic

partner, valuing that relationship above ties to Japan. The Russian public had low expectations of what Japan was willing to offer and its potential for extricating their nation from its rut. Before a major improvement in relations could occur, Russian leaders had to find a way to appeal to their own citizens as well as the Japanese public with a message of a breakthrough ahead; Japanese leaders also needed to make a dual appeal.

Given the virtual stagnation in relations during the first five years of the post-Soviet era, it is not surprising that few expected much progress in the near future. Whether blame was directed at Moscow for overlooking Tokyo while concentrating on Beijing, or on Tokyo for pressuring Moscow too hard, the conclusions of Russians, Japanese, and Americans overlapped in predicting no major improvement soon.²⁴ Yet, few believed that the national interests of the two countries set them far apart. On the contrary, when Russian or Japanese interests in Asia were evaluated, analysts saw improved bilateral relations as important for balance among the great powers and for a division of labor conducive to economic regionalism. In 1996–1997 as Japanese concerns about China rose and Russian interest in Japanese economic assistance gained a new life, there was new awareness of common interests. These were sufficient to boost bilateral ties in 1997–1998, but they made little impact on public opinion.

Potential for Improved Relations

To transform bilateral relations, the Japanese and Russian governments must address public perceptions. This means starting with explanations of why the public in each country underestimates the other country. It also requires media respect for the power and promise of the other country. Any negotiating strategy should include these elements.

Why do Japanese underestimate Russia? When Akio Kawato returned in 1993 after three years in Moscow in charge of Japan's public relations, he found it necessary not only to explain what he had been doing to convince the Russians, but also to complain about the disinterest of the Japanese people and the persistence of old images fed by the bad news coming from Russia.²⁵ One explanation he offered, was that the reality of Japan is different from that of Western countries. Although the Berlin Wall fell, the occupation of the Northern Territories continues, he observed. The postwar process has been different in the Far East and Europe, accounting for a more cautionary outlook in Japan, according to another diplomat, Kazuhiko Togo, writing in 1989.²⁶ But this response itself suggests a confidence about Japan's objectivity in judging the global significance of the disputed islands and the Soviet military presence in

the Pacific that few foreigners would share. It even goes to the extreme of equating the Northern Territories with the Berlin Wall. Of course the reality of Japan is distinctive but, burdened by an inability to reexamine the war years and their impact, Japanese leaders need to take a fresh look at that reality if their worldview is to become realistic and persuasive to the Russians.

Another explanation is that Japan and the Japanese people lack a sense of global responsibility. When weighty issues affecting the global balance of power are at stake, Japan remains focused on four islands of modest significance, constantly viewing the Soviet Union or Russia through the lens of bilateral issues rather than through a global lens. Perhaps, at critical junctures when it was pressed, Tokyo did approach Moscow in accord with other great powers, but the Japanese public's way of thinking about Russia never shifted toward internationalism. Such global reasoning would likely increase appreciation for Russia's current predicament.

Alternatively, one may conclude that Japanese perceptions are colored by a focus on economic power, technological competitiveness, and industrious national character. By these standards, Russia hardly appears to be a great power. Japanese need to be reminded that Russia still carries a lot of weight in world politics and that Russia's natural resources open vistas for an expanded Japanese role in a newly dynamic Northeast Asian region.

Just as Japanese have failed to strike an acceptable balance in apologizing for excesses in their wars and occupations in Asia prior to 1945, they have demanded too much too soon in seeking justice and vindication for the Soviet role in the conclusion of the war against them in 1945. These are two sides to the problem of linking a historical worldview to a strategy for long-term cooperation with states on the Asian continent. Instead of standing alone, Russia should be placed along with China and Korea in Japanese historical consciousness of completing the postwar era.

In 1995–1996, when Japanese relations with China deteriorated, and especially when the image spread of China as a potential threat, a new realism about Russia was gaining ground. Although this was not a positive image of Russia itself, the focus on great power political balance cast Russia in a new light. In October 1996 Shigeki Hakamada contributed an article to a Russian newspaper insisting that Russia and Japan are capable of understanding each other and resolving twentieth-century problems before the century is over.²⁷ Japanese took advantage of every official meeting with Russians to convey this message, culminating in the call by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the Denver G-8 meeting in June 1997 for annual summits beginning with a meeting later in the year in the Russian Far East with Boris Yeltsin.

Through the next eighteen months the Japanese media insisted that relations were dramatically improved. They cited the Krasnoyarsk agreement between Hashimoto and Yeltsin aimed at signing a peace treaty by the year 2000, and the April 1998 Kawana summit that gave added momentum to this process. Usually omitted was any reference to what Russians thought of Japan's understanding of the nature and purpose of these accelerated negotiations. There was a deliberate effort to highlight signs of progress, while downplaying or ignoring completely the clashing perceptions in the background. If the Russian public was showing no inclination to make the concessions expected by Japan, it became a matter of convenience to ignore them in the assumption that Yeltsin's personal commitment would suffice. Only after the unsuccessful Moscow summit of November 1998 did it become clear that the Japanese side had once again not understood what the Russians were thinking.

Russian failure to understand the Japanese also has a long history. Why do Russians underestimate Japan? Although in the 1970s and 1980s there was rising appreciation in some Russian circles for Japan's technological wonders and cultural riches, the mainstream view remained that a country with so few natural resources and so little military might and independence did not rank as a great power. In Russian calculations, Japan had not yet risen to great power status or, if it had, it paled before China as a rising power. Further complicating appreciation for Japan's role in Russia's revival is the neglect of the importance of foreign partnerships as a topic for analysis of steps in economic restructuring. Even if Russians are vaguely positive about Japan, they have yet to recognize just how important Japan could be to the future of their own country.

But some groups in Russia were beginning to appreciate Japan's significance. Boris Yeltsin had proclaimed in April 1996 a presidential program for the development of the Russian Far East and Transbaikal, and in May 1997 he named First Deputy Premier Boris Nemtsov to head the commission to implement the program as well as to improve economic relations with Japan. Some financial circles in Moscow and increasing numbers of local governments in the Far East were growing conscious of the indispensable role of Japan for the success of this program. Once Japanese leaders launched their campaign to demonstrate goodwill, Russians most concerned about economic priorities were prepared to listen. For about a year they battled not to rebuff Japan with an outright rejection of territorial compromise, hoping that the momentum of improving relations would lead both sides to a more gradual timetable. Yet, at home their position remained weak and then collapsed following the August 1998 financial crisis. Meanwhile, the reality of the Japanese side's preoccupation with territory resurfaced. The interlude of relative optimism did little to improve

Russian understanding of Japanese thinking.

The problems between Japan and Russia require public involvement and reassurance. The Japanese have tried public relations, but with insufficient substance in dealing with contentious matters. They have tried humanitarian aid, but with little response since Russians are more concerned about rebuilding. Locally, Japanese have promoted grass-roots exchanges, which usually proceed without acrimony at the price of excluding thorny problems supposedly best handled by the center. While helpful, none of these efforts by Japan is likely to transform Russian thinking. Nor was the 1997–1999 approach of pretending that negotiations are advancing smoothly without seriously addressing clashing perceptions.

Lessons from the past decade suggest that misperceptions are best countered by new perceptions of what matters most. Seen from the grand scheme of world history and great power relations, the disputed islands are not so important. Some Japanese speak as if they are the Berlin Wall or at least Okinawa, and some Russians as if they are Alaska. But on neither side do most people take them so seriously except for their symbolism. When opinion makers lower their voices about this issue and raise them about other issues that really matter to lots of people, then there may be a way to solve the dispute in a broader context approved by the majority. A short-term timetable is unrealistic.

Japan and Russia can search for causes to bring them together. They could take tangible steps to recognize each other's overall power and to help to expand it with safeguards for global security. Russia can assist Japan in raising its political power, above all on the Security Council, and Japan can assist Russia in raising its economic power, through large projects to develop energy and natural resources and the creation of new organs of Northeast Asian regionalism. The two countries could also create showcase tourism. Japanese could vacation more cheaply in the Russian Far East than at home if facilities existed and safety was assured, while Russians in the Far East could enjoy the attractions of a rich country in numbers that could generate real excitement.

Able diplomats now serve in each other's capitals, working hard to upgrade relations. They proved in 1997–1998 that they can cooperate well. Hashimoto and Yeltsin also demonstrated that leaders can change the mood, if not so much the substance, of negotiations. Only if the public recognizes the stakes involved, however, can such leaders make deals that will work. In turn, only if the media focus on successes and gains from future cooperation is the public likely to make its voice heard. Leaders must devise negotiating strategies to engage the media and awaken the public. Vladimir Putin faces this challenge.

Leaders and the public must also become more wary of the alternative to

strained bilateral relations. This is unlikely to happen as long as the Japanese public dismisses Russia as a second-rate power or as long as the Russian public fails to make industrial rebuilding and large-scale energy development with foreign assistance an urgent priority. Perhaps, both countries will come to appreciate each other more as powers in the shadow of a rapidly rising China. Although Russia has opted for a close strategic partnership with China, many Russians have reservations about China and would feel more comfortable if ties to Japan were also improving. Concern about dependency on China is especially intense in the Russian Far East, where a positive image of Japan could be easier to develop.

What is missing, above all, is trust on both sides. In 1991–1992 Russians were asked to trust Japan, but were not given enough reason to do so. In late 1992 and 1993 Japanese lost much of the trust they had slowly been building toward Russia. Too little progress has been made in overcoming the concerns raised in those years to eliminate many of the misperceptions that exist. The strategies adopted to reach a breakthrough in relations at the highest level in 1997–1998 tried to substitute a facade of progress for any serious attention to what was bothering people on both sides of the Japanese-Russian divide. When next the two sides get serious about normalization, let us hope that at last they will recognize the need for new strategies to increase trust.

Notes to Chapter Three

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