

JAPAN'S NORTHERN TERRITORIES :
From an Impasse to Building a
North Pacific
Regional Security System*

(「北方領土」問題解決への道
—北太平洋地域に非核安全保障機構を形成するための
出発点とするために米ソの協力が必要—)

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SUMMARY IN JAPANESE :

日ソ間の交渉をみる限り、北方領土問題にはあいかわら
ず出口が見えないようである。本稿はその出口を探しだすだ
けでなく、北方領土問題を米ソの協力を得て日本が積極的に
新しい安全保障機構の構築のために貢献する出発点とするこ
とを提唱する。

本稿は北方領土の運命は 1945 年 12 月のモスコウ外相会
議における米國務長官 James Byrnes とソ連外相 Molotov と
の一種の取引によって定まったという一つの秘められた事実
を発掘する。大西洋憲章に鑑み、領土の併合をいっさいしな
いと決めたローズベルト大統領の理念にもかかわらず、アメ
リカの軍部、特に海軍は、戦争中に軍事占領したミクロネシ
アをその戦略的重要さのゆえに手放すつもりはなかった。ロ
ーズベルトの死後、トルーマン大統領の下で、國務長官とな
ったバーンズは二律背反の主張と立場を見事な妥協外交で両
立させることに成功した。

すなわち日本の北方領土はソ連領とし、代わりにアメリ
カは日本の旧連盟委任統治領（ミクロネシア諸島）をアメリ
カの国連戦略信託統治領として軍事的にも自由に使用でき
ることとしたのである。このように北方領土問題にはこれまで
忘れられてきた起源があるのである。してみれば米ソの協力

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なくして日本にとっての北方領土問題の解決の道はないのも明白である。

では、この際日本はどのような解決策をとることができるか。その一つは、アメリカにとって未解決のパラウ共和国との問題とリンクすることにある。アメリカがこの共和国との信託統治領関係を解消できずにいるのは、この国の非核三原則憲法のためである。日本はこのアメリカの問題解決に、北太平洋の非核地帯化への主導的立場をうちだすことで大きく貢献することができる。すなわち、ソ連の武器弾薬を含み、北方領土にあるいっさいの軍事施設（それは東シベリアの他地方からそのために運びこまれたものでもよい）を普通の社会施設などと共に買いとるというかたち（前例は沖縄返還のときあった）で、ソ連の経済的ニーズに応えつつ、そのように獲得したものは、たとえば日米加ソの国際監視団の監視のもとで一定期限内に廃棄処分にする。そして同時進行的に、1986年に発効した南太平洋非核地帯（SPNFZ）に連続する非核地帯を構築する。こうして、日本は悲惨な戦争体験から学んだ日本国憲法の平和主義と非核三原則をポスト冷戦下の新秩序の形成に積極的に生かしてゆくことができる。それはすでに欧州安保協力会議（CSCE）のメンバーである米ソ加に日本が加わる一つの実際的な方向性であり、やがて、中国そして統合されるであろう朝鮮半島の国の参加をみすえた未来図である。

The Return of the Old Concept of “East and West”

When we refer to “East-West confrontation” in the Cold War context, there is no need to explain its political and geographical connotations. However, when Canadian Foreign Minister Joseph Clark, in his July 24, 1990 speech at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan, stated that the Cold War “has ended in the West, but there are many problems yet to be solved in the East...” a completely

new division of "East" and "West" suddenly seemed to come into existence. On second thoughts, however, we realize that this new concept coincidentally touches on the old geographical division of the Orient and the Occident. Foreign Minister Clark's speech continued as follows :

The Cold War is over in Europe. It is not clear, however, if the Cold War is over in Asia.... The fact that the Cold War is over in Europe is a reason to intensify the search for peace in the Pacific. I believe there are several reasons for this. First, if the new Soviet foreign policy has now led to real peace in Europe, we must press forward to see if it also means peace for the Pacific. It is not at all clear if Mr. Gorbachev's sincerity in dealing with *the West* finds a parallel in his dealings with *the East*. But we must test that sincerity, probe its intentions, match proposal with counter-proposal. It is possible, of course, that we will be disappointed. But disappointment without having tried is indefensible....¹ [*italics mine*]

The confrontations caused by each nation's principles still persist, or rather, have become even more acute in the Asian-Pacific area. Due to the disappearance of the superpower rivalry, regional conflicts by other minor nation-states have come more clearly into view. We must not forget, however, that "a freedom to open new disputes can be a freedom to cooperate." That point was also made in Foreign Minister Clark's speech, and he pursued it by presenting eight concrete examples of such conflicts, namely:

- (1) the guerrilla warfare which still grips the Philippines;
- (2) the Iron Curtain which still exists between North and South Korea;
- (3) the dangerous conflict over Kashmir;
- (4) the Sino-Soviet confrontation;
- (5) the tragedies which persist in Cambodia and Afghanistan;
- (6) the unrest in Myanmar and Sri Lanka;
- (7) the tension between Vietnam and China;
- (8) the unresolved territorial dispute between Japan and the Soviet Union.²

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Here I would like to stress that the Canadian Foreign Minister included the Japanese "Northern Territories" issue in the list of international conflicts in the East where ideological competition is still acute, in contrast with the West where the Cold War has already ended.

After citing those conflicts in the East, Mr. Clark continued, "The reduction in superpower tension presents the prospect of superpower co-operation in solving regional conflicts. Unhelpful intervention can be replaced by helpful co-operation." When we turn to the Japanese Northern Territories issue, this could mean that the United States may cooperate with the Soviet Union in resolving this Soviet-Japanese bilateral dispute. What kind of cooperation would it be?

One possibility is the establishment of a permanent institution for dialogue in the Asian-Pacific area, following the example of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in which the United States and Canada participate. This particular idea was proposed by Foreign Minister Clark himself, together with the Australian Foreign Minister, at Jakarta, only four days after his speech in Tokyo. If such an institution were to come into existence, the Soviet Union would be expected to participate in it. Perhaps because of that, the immediate US response to the two foreign ministers' proposal was restrained, if not negative, according to *Asahi Shimbun*, the leading quality newspaper in Japan, as reported on July 29.

But however negative the initial response might have been, recent US-Soviet relations have shown great progress toward mutual confidence building, and there is no reason to assume that what has happened in Europe will never happen in Asia. In the following part, I would like to discuss this matter further, in the context of the new US policy toward Micronesia, and the Soviet Union's proposal that the Japanese Northern Territories should become "trusteeship territory" under the United Nations.

Back to 1945: The Asian-Pacific Area

The Soviet Union has the largest territory of all Asian countries, and its Pacific coastline is also the longest. The country which shares the

longest border with the Soviet Union (although we usually do not call it a “border”) is Canada, which adjoins the USSR in the Arctic Circle. Canada is a member of NATO as an Atlantic nation, and is also an outside member of the CSCE. At the same time, Canada has strongly identified herself as a Pacific nation. This tendency is evident, as early as 1978, in a book by Canadian historian Arthur Lower, entitled *The Ocean of Destiny: A Concise History of the Northern Pacific, 1500-1978*, in which he clearly envisaged the establishment of a cooperative organization of northern Pacific nations. Lower proposed that the organization should consist of three endogenous nations, which are Japan, China and Korea, and three exogenous nations, which are Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union.³

Moreover, Canadian foreign policy has been based upon the notion that the Canadian People place their own nation as a “middle-power.” A middle-power originally meant a nation positioned within the “middle class” in the world system of national power, or a nation which played the part of a buffer state or even a mediator between the competing superpowers.⁴ However, this “middle-power” has also recently come to connote “geographical neutrality”; that is, a nation being both Pacific and Atlantic at the same time, and being adjacent to the Soviet Union in the Arctic zone.

It was at the end of May 1990 that Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had a conference with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Ottawa. Presumably, they talked about the the Foreign Minister’s above-mentioned proposal at Jakarta. Naturally, the Japanese territorial issue might have come up in the course of their conversation. It was, of course, Canada that once helped internationally isolated Japan to retrieve step-by-step her status in the 1950s, by presiding at the Colombo Committee, by playing a leading role in Japan’s acceptance in the UN, the GATT, and the OECD. Furthermore, it was also Canada that encouraged the Western nations to give recognition to the PRC. In that sense, it is quite probable that Canada is willing once again to take the initiative, this time for radical improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations, which consequently would lead to stability and prosperity in the whole Asian-Pacific region. Such an initiative

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can be described as "middle-power diplomacy at its best."

Let us turn once again to US-Soviet relations. Recently they seem to resemble what they were from March through July 1945. At that time the United States tried to act as the "hegemon" in forming and maintaining the postwar international order, and tried to persuade the Soviet Union and China to side with the US. Particularly in the Asian-Pacific area, the United States was eager to contain the revival of Great Britain and France as colonial empires, by cooperating with the Soviet Union and China. In order to accomplish this goal, the US tried to apply the trusteeship system of the United Nations not only to defeated Japan but also to the prewar colonial territories of Britain and France. The idea that the Korean peninsula should be placed under the trusteeship of the US, the USSR and China was also proposed for Indochina.

The Micronesian Archipelago, which had been a Japanese-mandated territory under the League of Nations, was considered most suitable for administration by the United States, which had conquered this area militarily during the Pacific war, under the United Nation's trusteeship system. James F. Byrnes, who had become the first Secretary of State appointed by Harry S. Truman, tried to apply the trusteeship system in the settlement of postwar territorial disputes as far as possible without any new annexation, observing the principle espoused in the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and strongly endorsed by his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, US military interests, especially the Navy Department, were reluctant to give these islands away to any other wartime powers, stressing Micronesia's strategic importance.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union continued military action even after Japan's surrender, in order to secure what they had been promised as the fruits of Yalta and Potsdam, and occupied the so-called Northern Territories of Japan. Finally, in February 1946, the islands were unilaterally annexed to the Republic of Russia, only by the procedures of domestic law. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Byrnes, who was a masterful compromise maker in domestic politics when he was a Senator from South Carolina, was making a deal with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov at Moscow in December

1945. During that meeting, he made a proposal for placing the Japanese-mandated Micronesian Islands under US trusteeship as a strategic area to be approved by the security council. Hearing Molotov's rather negative response, Byrnes promptly said that the Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin too must be placed under the United Nations trusteeship and that at any rate, in spite of the Yalta accords, the ultimate disposition of those former Japanese territories would be decided at a peace conference. This remark took Molotov's breath away and he "quickly grasped the implications." In the spring of 1947, when the US trusteeship agreement on Micronesian Islands was voted upon by the Security Council, Molotov voted in favor of the proposal. Thereby the United States reserved the right to make use of the islands even militarily, and, in fact, has conducted hydrogen bomb experimentations several times there. In exchange for these islands, the Soviet Union's governance over the Northern Territories was acquiesced in as a *fait accompli*. Byrnes's "compromise-making" diplomacy achieved a result that was satisfactory both to the Soviet Union and even to the United States Navy.⁵

In other words, we cannot ignore that a cause-and-effect relationship existed in the Northern Territories issue, which was a child of American foreign policy aimed at establishing her hegemonic status in the postwar Asian-Pacific region in concord with the Soviet Union. They were exchanged for the United States' military preponderance over Micronesia.

Okinawa was also once expected to be put under the single "trusteeship" of the US at the time of the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1973. The Japanese government paid to the US \$320 million (or 115.2 billion yen, at the then fixed exchange rate of 360 yen per dollar). Alexis Johnson, then US ambassador to Japan, wrote in his memoirs that he tried to avoid the impression that Japan "bought Okinawa back," by clarifying that the money paid was for the "extensive public works" which the Americans were leaving behind and "relocating" US "military units and facilities."⁶ This will no doubt make a good precedent for both the Soviet Union and Japan for the restoration of the Northern Territories.

Another related example is when the first revision to the US-Japan

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Security Treaty came on the agenda. The Japanese government pretended to take the initiative in commencing the negotiations, although in fact it was the Eisenhower Administration that was eager to revise the treaty and pushed the Japanese government to do so. However, according to the then US ambassador Douglas MacArthur II, US ambassador in Tokyo during 1957-61, this was because the US government feared that Japan might become neutralist if the Soviet Union offered to return the Northern Territories. That was a period when anti-American sentiment had been growing in Japan since 1955 because of the manoeuvre training site dispute, among other things.⁷

American trusteeship over the Micronesian Islands is said to have expired in December 1986, on paper. However, actually this is not correct in two regards. First, although enforcement or abandonment of *strategic* trusteeship (which is applied only by the United States to the Micronesian Islands), and is significantly different from ordinary trusteeship, is a matter for the U.N. Security Council to decide, the Micronesian issue has never been taken up in the Security Council. The Soviet Union once expressed an objection on this basis, but has never acted decisively to block the United States. The Soviets might have thought that it was better not to do anything and make the Americans feel that they would be in the Soviets' debt for any future negotiation concerning the Japanese Northern Territories.

Secondly, in contrast with the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth, the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Federal Micronesia, as far as the Republic of Palau is concerned, independence with a reservation of "free association" with the United States will not come into effect as long as the three principles against anti-nuclear weapons are stipulated in its Constitution of Independence.

The reason for US persistence in preserving the right of military use of the islands by "free association" even after their independence is that the US cannot find any other place to substitute for the bases in the Philippines. From the Soviet point of view, however, if we recall the bargaining done by Byrnes and Molotov at the very beginning of the postwar international order, even this problem might turn into a trump card in establishing a new favorable relation with the United States in the Asian-Pacific area. This is especially true with regard to the

Northern Territories issue, which is a hurdle to be cleared away in order to improve Soviet-Japanese relations today. It has been long since a dispute first developed over the relationship between the United States and Palau, as the only remaining trusteeship case, regardless of whether it is exceptionally categorized as "strategic" or not. Recently, the Soviet Union made a proposal that the Northern Territories should be placed under the trusteeship of the United Nations and also should be managed and controlled by a joint commission of Japan and the Soviet Union. This proposal was reported in *Asahi Shimbun*, on July 2, 1990, but the report never touched upon the government's response to that plan. In fact, the news was treated as of little importance. However, the July 4 edition of *The Asahi Evening News* (English) reported the comment made by a spokesman as the official response of the Japanese Foreign Ministry: "We insist that they do belong to Japan... and that subject should be cleared up first." It is curious to contemplate the reason why *Asahi Shimbun* did not take up the Japanese government's response. Were the news reporters overly careful not to offend the Japanese diplomats who were engaged in the Northern Territories affairs?

On July 5, *The Japan Times* reported that Soviet Vice Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev proposed the establishment of the "Asian-Pacific Forum," which would consist of the Soviet Union, the United States and Japan. This news came from Kyodo News Service, and *Asahi Shimbun* did not take up this information either. This forum, for the purpose of discussing "wide-ranging, fundamental problems," was to be joined by the People's Republic of China in the future. The Northern Territories issue would be included in the "fundamental" ones, as a matter of course.

It is not until we take the context of these proposals made by the Soviets into account that we can see the international bases of support for the Canadian proposal in the extensive conference of the foreign ministers of the ASEAN nations at Jakarta on July 28, 1990. Although, as mentioned earlier, *Asahi Shimbun* reported that the response from the United States (especially Secretary of State James Baker) to the Canadian plan was a rather negative one, we cannot say that there is no possibility that the United States, anxious to settle the

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dispute with Palau, may all of a sudden agree with the Soviet Union. It may take the form of the return of the Northern Territories on condition of demilitarization, following the US-Palau "free-association" on the condition that the non-nuclear Constitution is permitted. Change in Japanese foreign policy is very slow. Even so, we must not make too little of changes in other nations' foreign policy. In this sense, the Japanese mass media are to blame in part. For example, it was *Asahi Shimbun* that treated as a failure of US Soviet policy the expression "beyond containment" which appeared in President Bush's May 1989 speech welcoming the Soviet Union's return to the international community.⁸

Toward a Multilateral Security System in the Pacific

Mongoloid soldiers comprised a great part of the Soviet forces who went into devastated Berlin in May 1945. They were fairly sturdy in physique, but still seemed inferior to German soldiers. Perhaps Stalin purposely used an "inferior race" in conquering Nazis who believed in the superiority of the Aryan race. Germans then must have felt even more disgraced. It was Kaiser Wilhelm II who impressed the idea of a "Yellow Peril" on the Russian Czar, not forgetting the "Tatar's Yoke" in the medieval age. Now that we have seen the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, a new European order, of which German-Soviet cooperation is a pillar, is about to be born.

On the other hand, the old concept of the "East" is now being revived. Also in the Asian-Pacific area, we can see a sign of a new US-Soviet cooperation, which seems to go back to the starting point of the postwar world. With all these new conditions at hand, does Japan still continue to think even today that disputes in Soviet-Japanese relations can be solved only by bilateral negotiation? One way to get away from this diehard habit may be to respond to the signals sent by Canada, which is trying to contribute to Japanese national interests, while acting as a lynchpin for US-Soviet relations. Since 1988, in Canada, a group of retired soldiers who had been defeated in the Battle of Hong Kong at the beginning of the Pacific War and put in prison and

forced labor camps on mainland Japan and elsewhere has been conducting a campaign requesting the Japanese government to pay a reparation of \$20,000 each to 60,000 British claimants, 9,000 New Zealanders, 10,000 Australians, 120,000 Dutch, and 25,000 from the United States, as well as 9,000 Canadian ex-prisoners, internees and family members (in sum, over \$4.6 million to 233,000 people). The group is submitting a petition to the United Nations Human Rights Subcommittee of the United Nations in August this year (1990).⁹

As we witness every once in a while in cases such as the recent textbook dispute, Japan has not yet completed its postwar "moral" settlement vis-a-vis the nations it fought against. Japan is also a "peace-loving" nation, which turns into a "persecution-maniac" annually on August 6 (the anniversary of the day an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima). Next year (1991) happens to be the fiftieth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor "surprise" attack. It will be a year in which every nation which was once aggravated by Japan in the Second World War will, as a citizen of the international community, carefully watch every step Japan takes. Each nation will be a voice in the world, which, in turn, will shape a world public opinion.

In addition, as discussed earlier, the old concept of "East and West" is now returning and spreading all over the world. I believe that history is leading us toward multi-lateral security in the Pacific, which Japan should embrace before it becomes a helpless orphan in the world. This wisdom points to the idea of regional cooperation, in which a middle-power, Canada, is now taking the lead.

Notes

- 1 Canadian Foreign Minister Joseph Clark, transcript of the speech at a luncheon meeting of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, in Tokyo, July 24, 1990, pp.1-2.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.
- 3 J. Arthur Lower, *The Ocean of Destiny: A Concise History of the Northern Pacific, 1500 - 1978*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978).
- 4 For diplomacy of Canada as a middle power, see Bamba Nobuya, *Canada: Niju-isseiki no kokka* [Canada: A Nation of the 21st Century] (Tokyo:

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- Chuokoron-sha, 1988), pp. 159-180.
- 5 James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1947), pp.220-21. John J. Stephen, *The Kuril Islands* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) refers to a "U.S. Trust Territory," but misses the import of "strategic" (p.156). Earlier Max Beloff, *Soviet Policy in the Far East: 1944-1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) did not quite explicitly state its import either (p.114).
 - 6 U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power*, (N.Y.: Prentice Hall, 1984), p.543.
 - 7 "NHK Special," broadcast on July 8, 1990.
 - 8 See criticism by Sase Masamori, *Chuokoron*, July 1989.
 - 9 *The Japan Times*, August 4, 1990.