

Japan's Security and the Russian Far East

Nakano Junzo

Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, as a result of its military defeat at the hands of the British and French coalition during the Crimean War, Imperial Russia became clearly aware of its own decline. With the onset of reforms directed towards capitalism, the vector of Imperial Russia's aspirations shifted to the Far East. Around the same time, Japan was being forcibly opened to the outside world by US gunboat diplomacy. This resulted in Japan being set on the road to modernization under the auspices of the Meiji Restoration. It was a coincidence that both Japan and Russia began to modernize around the same time as a result of strong pressure from the Western Great Powers. For a weak but independent Japan, Russian expansion in the Far East was felt to represent a profound threat. Actions like Russia's development of its Far East infrastructure, the laying of the Trans-Siberian Railway and building of port facilities at Vladivostok were all seen by Japan as tangible expressions of this threat.

In the period following the Russo-Japanese War, both countries signed a series of four Russo-Japanese Treaties with the common aim of blocking American influence in Manchuria. In less than 10 years, however, the cooperative relationship between the two countries was terminated by the collapse of Imperial Russia. Considering this, if the short period covered by the treaties is ignored, it could be argued that for approximately 100 years through to the end of the twentieth century, Japan viewed Russia as a threat. Moreover, there was an ongoing consciousness that the source of this threat lay in the Russian Far East. From the Russian point-of-view, events such as Japanese imperial

expansion on the Korean Peninsula, the annexation of Manchuria, Japanese intervention in Siberia and the post-WWII US-Japan alliance all created an atmosphere of threat towards Russian Far East territories.

These feelings of mutual distrust and hostility between Japan and Russia have undergone a thaw with the demise of the cold war as Japanese attitudes towards the Russian Far East have changed. Due to the transformation of Russia that has occurred as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse, and changes in the posture adopted by Russian Far East military forces, awareness of the Russian Far East threat to Japan has been downgraded on both an official government and general population attitude level. At a minimum, it is very unlikely in the foreseeable future that Japan will be re-confronted with a threat originating from Russian Far East military forces.

In the post cold war environment, one immediate issue facing Japan's security is the development of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Medium-term issues that could make or break Japan's security are the anxiety associated with peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula and peaceful evolution of Chinese-Taiwanese relations. Furthermore, the rising power of China is one area of long-term concern for Japan. No longer does Japan consider the Russian Far East as a source of threat, however, for Japan's security, as a region the Russian Far East is closely related to areas in which Japan has a security interest.

Below follows a discussion of three topics: Japanese perception of the Russian Far East, Sino-Russian Relations in the Russian Far East and Japan, and Russian Policy towards the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Japanese Perception of the Russian Far East

As is widely known, at a summit meeting in December 1989, President George H.W. Bush of the United States and President Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR officially announced the end of the cold war. Three months before this historic announcement, the Japan Defense Agency's Defense White Paper (entitled "Defense of Japan") showed the following understanding of cold war relations: "The East-West relations, the reality, in which military confrontations exist, has not yet

basically changed.” Continuing on to comment on military developments in the region surrounding Japan, the White Paper cited both the ongoing strengthening of Soviet military power in the Far East and its increased operational activity. It also stated that Soviet Far East military forces continued to represent a “potential threat” to Japan, and considered these forces to be a “source of the increased military tensions” in the Far East.¹

In September 1989 (the same year in which the Defense White Paper was published), after a meeting between Japanese and Soviet Foreign Ministers, a plan was announced regarding a state visit to Japan by President Gorbachev sometime during 1991. In line with this, with the aim of creating an environment in which the Northern Territories dispute could be successfully resolved, Japanese foreign policy became more active. In July 1990 at the G7 Houston Summit, Japan was successful in having references to “The importance of the resolution of the Northern Territories dispute” included as a condition written into announcements made about economic support provisions to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union displayed their displeasure with Japan, because Japan persisted with a doctrine that stated “economics and politics cannot be separated” in order to develop Japan-Soviet relations. At the same time, however, Kaifu Toshiki, Japan’s Prime Minister, instructed the Japan Defense Agency to remove all references to a “potential Soviet threat in the Far East” from the 1990 edition of the Defense White Paper. In issuing such orders, Kaifu was not merely showing consideration of Gorbachev’s visit to Japan in 1991; rather it was more that Japan was attempting to catch up with the other G7 members in terms of evaluating changes in the Soviet Union.² From then on, the references to a “potential Soviet threat in the Far East” that had appeared in the annual Defense White Paper since 1980 disappeared.³

1 Boeicho [Japan Defense Agency], *Nihon no boei [Defense of Japan]*, 1989, pp. 46-47.

2 Hasegawa Tsuyoshi, *Hoppo ryodo mondai to nichiro kankei [The Northern Territories Dispute and Japan-Russia Relations]* (Chikuma Shobo, 2000), pp. 183-184, 190.

3 Impacted by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and a hardening of US policy toward the Soviet Union, during an address to the Diet in January 1980 Prime

However, within the 1990 White Paper, the references to Soviet Far East military forces being a “source of the increased military tensions” remained. Furthermore, in the 1991 edition, a similar reference was made.⁴ With regard to Soviet Far East military forces immediately prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japan’s defense establishment continued to view them harshly. However, with changes in the strategic environment in Northeast Asia as a result of the end of the cold war, Japan’s threat perception began to change. In the post-Soviet collapse White Papers issued by the Japan Defense Agency during 1992-1995, while analysis pointed to a tendency of quantitative reduction in force numbers, it was noted that Russian Far East Forces retained a massive war-fighting ability. Furthermore, due to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), it was assessed that Russian Far East forces were modernizing as Russia shifted more of its modern weapons systems from the European Theater to the Russian Far East. Within the White Papers published in these years, Russian Far East military forces were described as a “cause of instability” within the region. Compared to the earlier “contributing to military tensions within the region,” “cause of instability” represented a subtle change in assessment.

For the Defense White Papers published in the early 1990s, one area of interest was the analysis sections written regarding the military situation around Japan. The first section of analysis had been “The Posture of Soviet (Russian) Far East Military Forces” until 1993 when it was replaced by an analysis entitled “Military Developments on the

Minister Ohira Masayoshi became the first postwar Japanese leader to publicly state “The Soviet Union represents a threat to the safety of our country.” Refer to Kimura Hiroshi, *Toi ringoku: Roshia to Nihon [The Distant Neighbors: Russia and Japan]* (Sekai Shisoshu, 2002), pp. 314-320. Incidentally, the Defense White Paper 1978 described the contemporary international military situation in the following terms: “The international situation has transformed greatly from that of the mid-1950s Cold War era. A sense of coexistence between the US-Soviet Union has become firmly entrenched as one of the basic principles that govern US-Soviet relations.” (Boeicho, *Nihon no boei*, 1978, p. 3) To wit, it could be said that changes in Japanese government attitudes towards the Soviet Union, both in recognizing the Soviet “threat” and reappraisal as a non-threat, reflect changes in US policy towards the Soviet Union.

4 Boeicho, *Nihon no boei*, 1990, pp. 5, 46; 1991, pp. 43, 45-46.

Korean Peninsula.” Since the 1994 Defense White Paper, this analysis has been the first section on which most focus has been placed. Reasons for the change include the following. On one hand, the Tokyo Declaration on Japan-Russia Relations (October 1993) resulted in improved Japan-Russia relations. Both sides promoted discussions on security and military exchanges while hopefully working towards a formal peace treaty. On the other hand, North Korea's declaration of withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (March 1993) heightened military tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

In the latter half of the 1990s, Japan's Defense White Papers described future tendencies among Russian Far East Military Forces as “non-transparent,” in part due to the uncertainties that Russia faced domestically. In the Defense White Paper 2001, reference was made to changes in posture of both the entire Russian military and its Far East components in the following terms: “Within the foreseeable future, there is little possibility that the Russian military will revert to a cold war Soviet-type force in terms of size or posture.”⁵ With regard to the background of changes in the Russian military, the White Paper referred to Russia's financial situation and the easing of tensions in the Russian-Sino and Russian-US relationships. It could also be said that through Japan-Russia security dialogues, the Japanese defense establishment obtained a deeper understanding of tendencies for change within the Russian military.

With the birth of the Russian Federation, Japan-Russia security dialogues and military exchanges continued to develop. As mentioned above, Japan's harsh attitude towards Russian Far East military power also began to ease. The Japanese security establishment reached an understanding that “in the foreseeable future, Russian Far East military forces will not pose a threat.” Against this backdrop, general relations between the new Russia and Japan have alternated between increasing closeness and stagnation. One issue that has contributed to these shifts

5 Defense White Papers for the years 1992-1995 can be found at the Japan Defense Agency homepage:

http://jda-clearing.jda.go.jp/hakusho_data/1992/w1992_01.html

http://jda-clearing.jda.go.jp/hakusho_data/1993/w1993_01.html

http://jda-clearing.jda.go.jp/hakusho_data/1994/w1994_01.html

http://jda-clearing.jda.go.jp/hakusho_data/1995/ara12.htm

has been the ongoing differences of opinion regarding the Northern Territories (the issue of the possession of four islands off the north coast of Hokkaido: Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai). When this issue is raised, Russia tends to emphasize the strategic importance of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Southern Kuriles island chain (the Northern Territories).

In September 1992, the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, was placed under severe pressure by domestic conservative political forces who became alarmed that he might reach some sort of compromise with Japan regarding the Northern Territories. In the same month, a mere four days before he was scheduled to visit Japan, he took the very unusual diplomatic step of canceling his State Visit. Two months before the cancellation, in July the Russian Supreme Council held open hearings on "Russia-Japan Relations and Territorial Integrity." Military participants at these hearings offered comments against the "handing over of the Southern Kuriles" because of its impact on the survivability of Russian Strategic Ballistic Nuclear Submarines (SSBN) operating in the Sea of Okhotsk.⁶ After rumors in March 2002 that the Russian government and Japan had reached agreement over the "handing over of the Southern Kuriles," the Lower House of the Russian Parliament (Duma) opened public hearings on the "Southern Kurile Problem." Then in April 2002, General Kvashnin, Chief of the Russian General Staff carried out an inspection tour of Sakhalin and Etorofu islands.⁷ Simultaneously, a thesis written by a military retiree stressing the strategic importance of the Southern Kuriles appeared in "Military Thought," a military theory publication put out by the Russian Ministry of Defense.⁸

As operational waters for SSBN, during the cold war, Soviet strategy imagined the Sea of Okhotsk to be a bastion into which American anti-submarine warfare (ASW) forces would not be allowed

6 *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, July 30, 1992, pp. 1-2; *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, August 14, 1992, p. 4. With regard to opposition to Yeltsin's Japan visit within the Russian military, refer to Kimura, *Toi ringoku*, pp. 607-612.

7 *Asahi Shimbun*, March 19, 2002 (morning edition) p. 2; April 20, 2002 (morning edition) p. 5.

8 A.F. Klimenko, "O roli Kuril v obespechenii bezopasnosti Rosii," *Voennaia mysl*, No. 4, 2002, pp. 69-71.

to enter or operate. In post cold war Russia, the general view was that this state of affairs would continue. However, due to continued nuclear force reductions and financial considerations (the huge amounts of money required to build SSBNs and units to defend them), there were some military analysts within Russia who commented that it would be more rational to limit SSBN operations to one area only – namely the Arctic Sea.⁹ Furthermore, in an environment that has seen planning for the next generation of Russian SSBNs greatly delayed and an overall tendency towards reduction of Russian naval power, one subject of interest is whether Russia could maintain its persistence regarding operating SSBN in the Sea of Okhotsk.¹⁰

During the cold war, Russian military forces stationed in the Northern Territories had been increased from the late-1970s into the 1980s. These forces represented an issue of great concern to Japanese security. Currently, however, as part of the Japanese interest in negotiating the Northern Territories return, one issue is whether or not the withdrawal of Russian forces commenced in the 1990s will actually be total. As mentioned previously, during public hearings held by the Russian Parliament in July 1992, the Russian military stressed the “strategic importance of the Southern Kuriles.” In contrast, as a result of advances in Japan-Russia relations due to President Yeltsin’s state visit to Japan at the start of 1994, some attention was gained by an article that appeared in “Military Thought” that stated the following: “A military strategy stressing total defense in protecting the Sea of Okhotsk and surrounding coastal regions from American attack is anachronistic, and it is a fallacy to consider the border disputes with Japan against such a backcloth.”¹¹

With regard to the strategic importance of the Northern Territories, among Russian military experts, there are two schools of thought. One supports the cold war argument that adheres to the idea of the Sea of

9 Aleksei Arbatov and Boris Makeev, “The Kurile Barrier,” *New Times*, No. 43, 1992, pp. 24-25; Boris Makeev, “Kuril’skaia problema: voennyi aspekt,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 1, 1993, p. 58.

10 Boeicho, *Nihon no boei*, 2003, pp. 28, 69.

11 A.V. Boliatko, “Voенно-politicheskaia situatsiia i problemy formirovaniia novoi struktury bezopasnosti v Severo-Vostochnoi Azii” *Voennaia mysl*, No. 2, 1994, pp. 5-6.

Okhotsk being a military bastion for Russian naval forces. Adherents oppose any “handing over of the Southern Kuriles.” On the other hand, there are those who believe that, from an arms control perspective, Russia would be better served by escaping from its cold war strategy and seeking to resolve the Northern Territories dispute.¹² For Russia, a country that has given up on its policy of strategic nuclear parity with the United States, cold war military strategy should not act as a barrier to successful resolution of the Northern Territories dispute.

Sino-Russian Relations in the Russian Far East and Japan

After the inauguration of the Gorbachev administration, China and Russia successfully negotiated demarcation of the border and military reductions along their eastern border prior to the birth of the Russian Federation. These actions calmed border tensions that had previously escalated to clashes between Chinese and Soviet forces. In April 1997, Russia and China signed the agreement on mutual reduction of armed forces in the border areas. This was followed in November 1997 by the announcement of demarcation of the eastern border between the two countries. This solidified the foundation of the “strategic partnership” announced by Russia and China in April of the previous year.¹³

12 Aleksei Arbatov and A.V. Boliatko believe in the latter.

13 Although both Russia and China have worked towards demarcation of the Eastern border in accordance with the agreement on the eastern section of the border between China and the former Soviet Union, signed in May 1991, discussions regarding the return of two islands in the Amur River and one island in the Argun River lapsed. As such, all three remain under Russian control (*Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, No. 6, 1997, pp. 20-21; *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 11-12, pp. 4-5). Negotiations on the mutual reduction of military forces in the border areas have been difficult. Because of this, the agreement regarding confidence building in the military field in the border areas was separated from the agreement on mutual reduction of armed forces in the border areas and signed in April 1996. The following five countries are parties to the agreement: the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China. The same five countries are signatories to “the agreement on mutual reduction of armed forces in the border areas.” Under the terms of this agreement, the four Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and China agree to limit ground forces, front-line air forces and air defense forces stationed within 100 kilometers of the border. Manpower numbers are limited to a

Furthermore, in a bid to both counter the unilateralism of US power and to stand firm against independence and secessionist factions within each country, both countries signed the Sino-Russian treaty of Good-neighbourliness, Friendship, and Cooperation of July 2001. The partnership between both countries seemed solid, coupled with expanded economic relations. However, as had been pointed out earlier, there was a subtle divergence between the interests of both countries, as Russia came to realize the potential non-military threat presented by China.

In May 1996 (the month following the announcement of the “strategic partnership”), the publicly-released “Russian Federation Security Draft Policy (1996-2000)” highlighted the following issues: the significant population drains from both the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia and the tendency of these regions towards separation from European Russia in favor of closer economic ties with immediate neighboring countries. The document also included the following quote: “The largest potential threat lies in China, which is beginning to exert both economic and population influence in the Far East. We cannot help being anxious about the stalling of political discussions with Japan and the lack of progress in the normalization of Russia-Japan relations.”¹⁴

maximum of 134,000 personnel for each side. While strategic forces such as strategic rocket forces, naval units, long-range air forces, air defense force's missile units and border guards are excluded from these manpower caps, there are upper limits on the number of border guard personnel and the types of weapons and equipment they can deploy (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, April 25, 1997, p. 1; *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, April 25, 1997, p. 3; *Krasnaia zvezda*, April 25, 1997, p. 1). According to *Izvestiia*, within the area specified by the agreement, Russia will not cut its stationed forces because they already fall below the upper manpower limits stipulated. It also reported that China continues to only deploy border protection units within the 100 km radius (*Izvestiia*, April 15, 1997, p. 3).

- 14 Iurii M. Baturin, the presidential advisor on national security at the time, played a key role in the development of the draft. Among its analysis of military and political situations, the draft commented on the impact of the following three issues: 1) The impact of the West and neighboring Muslim countries on the Central Asia and Caucasus regions; 2) The eastern expansion of NATO; 3) The potential threat presented by China (*Nezavisimaia gazeta stsenerii*, May 23, 1996, p. 2). The draft analysis of the eastern expansion of NATO was used in the presidential address with some small corrections in the terminology. However, the

In the presidential address on national security (1996-2000) given in June 1996 by President Yeltsin, however, no similar references were made.¹⁵ If the evolution of Russian foreign policy towards Asia at the time is considered, it was very much skewed towards China. However, as the draft clearly shows, even at that time within Russian policy circles there was an awareness of the distortion in diplomatic policy towards Asia caused by the focus on China, as well as policy debates that stressed the importance of improving and strengthening Russia-Japan relations.

The Russia-China Joint Declaration in April 1996 announced a “strategic partnership.” In order to heighten the economic relations between Russia and China that started simply with direct cross-border trade and barter, it advocated promotion of large-scale projects such as energy, machinery manufacture, aerospace and transportation.¹⁶ Among these, cooperation in the energy sector that sought to realize linkage of China’s robust energy demand with Siberia’s vast oil and natural gas reserves seemed most promising. During the state visit of Jiang Zemin to Russia to sign the Sino-Russian treaty in July 2001, an agreement between the countries was signed regarding the plan to lay down an oil pipeline, and the research of related technical and economic issues. The agreement was signed in order to deliver 20 million tonnes of oil to China annually from 2005, and to increase this to 30 million tonnes from 2010.¹⁷ Considering that this agreement was

other two issues were not referred to in the presidential address (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, June 14, 1996).

15 As an issue of diplomacy, reference was made to increasing relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Specific reference was made to China and Japan. With regard to relations with China, the address included the sentence “Developing a dynamic strategic partnership as we move towards the 21st Century.” With regard to relations between Russia and Japan, the address included the expression “Coordinating a cooperative relationship that works towards the signing of a peace treaty.” The difference between these two expressions showed the difference in warmth between the two relationships. Relations with China were expressed in terms of continuation, while those with Japan were expressed in terms of improvement. It might be said that such wording towards Japan expressed the importance placed on the Japan relationship at that time (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, June 14, 1996, p. 8).

16 *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No. 5, 1996, p. 18.

17 *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No. 8, 2001, p. 30.

signed by the leader of China who executed a basic treaty with Russia, there could be little doubt that this project would be realized.

However, in April 2002, an article written by a Russian oil specialist outlining the problems associated with laying a pipeline from Eastern Siberia (Angarsk) to China (Daqing) appeared in a Russian newspaper. The article pointed out that laying a single pipeline between Angarsk and Daqing would effectively make China the single purchaser of Russian oil. As the single purchaser, the article argued that China could effectively control the Russian oil production industry by controlling the setting of prices. Considering this, the article suggested that in the interest of increasing the number of sales channels (potential buyers), the pipeline should be extended to Nakhodka on the Russian Pacific coast.¹⁸ Since the article was published, debate within the Russian press has been rather vigorous regarding whether the proposed pipeline route should end at Daqing or continue on to the Russian Pacific coast.

For the Russian government, energy policy represents an integral part of the national development strategy. It is not merely seen as another means by which to build foreign currency reserves. Through realization of the project, Vladimir Putin sees the East Siberia pipeline as an opportunity to genuinely develop the Siberia and Russian Far East regions. At a National Security Council meeting held to consider Russian Far East problems in November 2002, he clearly stated that the decision on the Eastern Siberia pipeline route must be made based on the interest of benefiting the Russian Far East.¹⁹ Furthermore, during Koizumi's visit to Russia in January 2003, the "Japan-Russia Action Plan" that was released stated the following: "In order to realize a project in the Russian Far East and the Siberian region to develop energy resources and construct a pipeline for transportation of such resources, both sides will promote specific cooperation."²⁰ Behind this statement lay the Japanese desire to diversify its sources of oil for

18 *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, April 2, 2002, p. 5.

19 Svetlana Babaeva, Oleg Zhunusov, and Mariia Ignatova, "Nef't poidet drugim putem," *Izvestiia*, December 9, 2002, <http://www.izvestia.ru/economic/article27560>.

20 http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/russia/kodo_0301.html.

security reasons. This desire matched the Russian national development strategy of diversifying its oil pipeline.

In his annual state of the nation address in May 2004, Putin remarked that “Poor rail networks, oil pipelines, gas transportation systems and energy industry infrastructure represent serious impediments to economic development.” He also confirmed that including determining pipeline routes from oilfields in Eastern Siberia, it was important for Russia to diversify delivery of Russian oil. Decisions should be the realization of national tasks, and not the interests of individual companies.²¹

Realizing energy projects in Siberia and the Russian Far East can also benefit Japan as long as they are economically viable because they improve Japanese energy security. At the current time, construction of the Nakhodka route that supports building infrastructure in Siberia and the Russian Far East seems preferable. However, including the pipeline route issue, it is neither desirable for Russia or Japan that Japan and China get into a zero sum game regarding the overall development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. For various development projects, multinational cooperation including China, South Korea and the United States is desirable. Such cooperation does not just reduce the economic cost burden of such projects but also prevents the manifestation of distrustful feelings among Japan, China and Russia.

Russian Policy Towards the Korean Peninsula and Japan

From a security perspective, Japan and Russia share common concerns regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Within the Japan-Russia Action Plan, as part of the “promotion of activities and discussions within the strategic partnership,” it was announced that both countries would aim to form a framework that allowed for multilateral dialogues on Northeast Asian security. Both countries also agreed to increase high level dialogues regarding the Korean Peninsula due to their awareness that the non-nuclear status of the Peninsula was vital for retaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia.²²

21 *Rosiiskaia gazeta*, May 27, 2004, p. 4.

22 http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/russia/kodo_0301.html.

The problem of North Korean nuclear weapons development represents a direct and serious security threat to Japan. Meanwhile, because North Korean nuclear missiles are not aimed directly at Russia, it might be possible to say that North Korea's nuclear program does not represent a direct threat to Russia. However, in the summer of 2003, Russia convened a Civil Defense meeting to discuss the impact of radioactive fallout on the Russian Far East as a result of nuclear weapons usage on the Korean Peninsula. Military exercises were also held that simulated a large-scale exodus of North Korean refugees into Russia. Considering Russian territorial security, these actions indicated that Russia is not taking the threat posed by North Korean nuclear weapons development lightly.²³

More than anything else, for Japan a successful resolution of the North Korean nuclear weapons problem means the removal of a serious threat. For Russia, resolution offers an environment in which it could benefit from being able to participate in plans to reconstruct the North Korean economy. Within North Korea there is an infrastructure base built largely on economic support provided by the former Soviet Union. Russia would like to reconstruct this base using a combination of Japanese and South Korean funds and Russian technological support. Also, through multilateral cooperation, Russia would like to see a rail network that runs through the Korean Peninsula linked to the Trans-Siberian Railroad. It would also like a gas pipeline from Eastern Siberia laid into the Korean Peninsula. Such projects could result in genuine development of the Siberia and Russian Far East regions. In 2000, through direct discussions between the leaders of South and North Korea, and through negotiations held between the United States

23 If it is considered that the timing of the civil defense meeting and the military exercises was immediately prior the first round of discussions between North Korea and other members of the six Nation Group regarding North Korea's nuclear program (end of August of the same year), it is possible that Russia leveraged these activities to apply pressure to North Korea to ensure its cooperation in discussions. On the same day that North Korea signaled it would participate in the 6-way meetings (July 31, 2003), *Izvestiia* reported that, in order to prevent nuclear weapon usage by Pyongyang, there were discussions held among officers of the Russian Pacific Fleet regarding deployment of naval units for a preventative strike against North Korean nuclear facilities (*Izvestiia*, July 31, 2003, pp. 1-2).

and North Korea, there was some progress in reducing tensions. It was thought that these actions would lead to the promise of multinational economic cooperation on the Korean Peninsula. As everybody knows, however, revision of US policy towards North Korea by the Bush Administration combined with the subsequent North Korean backlash and its tendency towards diplomatic brinkmanship meant that tensions again increased and any hope of multinational economic cooperation was lost. For Russia, who is playing a role in diplomatic negotiations to remove the nuclear threat from the Korean Peninsula, there is some hope regarding the commencement of economic cooperative projects on the Korean Peninsula once stability is achieved.

In moving towards a reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the Presidents of Russia and South Korea held a meeting in New York in September of 2000. At this meeting, a basic agreement was obtained on the construction of a railway that would connect South Korea and Russia via the Trans-Siberian Railroad, the development of the Siberian Irkutsk gas fields and the building of industrial parks within the Nakhodka Free Economic Zone. The meeting also agreed to consider North Korean and Japanese participation in these projects.²⁴ Russia showed some opposition to the idea of having a Korean Peninsula railway join the Trans-Siberian Railway via China. Instead, it proposed realization of a project that joined the Korean Peninsula railway with Khasan in the Russian Far East. Based on its evaluation of North Korea's domestic railway network, Russian experts felt that such a plan would need some \$2.5 billion in funding.²⁵

For both Russia and South Korea, there is some expectation that after any normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea, Japan will offer massive amounts of economic aid to North Korea. From the perspective of Japan's security, in order to bring stability to the Korean Peninsula after removing the nuclear threat, reconstruction of North Korea's economy is necessary to drag North Korea into a framework of multinational cooperation. Due to North Korea's economic size and its close physical location vis-à-vis the Russian Far

24 http://japan.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2000//09/09/20000909000002.html.

25 http://vn.vladnews.ru/Arch/2004/ISS403/News/upd19_2.HTM

East, most of its business and economic relations are tied to the Russian Far East. Because of this, the region of the Russian Far East represents the key for Japan in its attempts to participate in multinational cooperation with its interest in stabilizing the Korean Peninsula.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, in discussing the military situation around Japan, since 1994 the three major areas of focus of the Defense White Paper have been (in order) the Korean Peninsula, the Russian Far East and China. In the 2003 White Paper, the order of the Russian Far East and China reversed. As such, the Korean Peninsula was No. 1, China was No. 2 and the Russian Far East was No. 3. Furthermore, in terms of analysis report volume, reporting on the Russian Far East was approximately one-third of that posted on both the Korean Peninsula and China. Such White Paper analyses clearly show where Japan's military security interest lies. When discussing the objectives behind China's modernization of its armed forces, the 2003 White Paper stated that it was "important to keep an eye on China whether its military strength exceeds the level necessary for self-defense." On the other hand, it judged that there was "little possibility in the foreseeable future that the Russian military would return to the size or structure it had enjoyed during the cold war period."²⁶

However, as mentioned previously, it should be said that while from a security perspective Japan's level of interest in the Russian Far East continues to decline in comparative terms, its importance for external strategy continues to increase. During the cold war period, Japan saw the Soviet Far East as a "source of threat" and worked with the US simply to contain it militarily. On the contrary, the current approach to the Russian Far East is more complex for Japan. This is because the Russian Far East is related to Japan's external strategies such as the stability of the Korean Peninsula, constructive partnership with China, and energy security.

26 Boeicho, *Nihon no boei*, 2003, pp. 29, 64, 68.

Postscript

In June 2004, Vladimir Putin inspected a Russian naval base on the Kamchatka Peninsula. While there he declared that Russian Far East naval forces, including strategic nuclear maritime forces, should remain deployed in the region. However, considering the slow pace of Russia's naval construction and the increasing number of decommissioned units, it remains unclear as to whether Russia can carry on with its deployments of SSBN units in the Sea of Okhotsk (see *Krasnaia Zvezda*, June 25, 2004, p. 1; October 19, 2004, p. 3).

In October 2004 during a state visit to China by Putin, a border agreement was signed between the two countries. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russia agreed to cede control of one complete island and part of another island to China. While the Bol'shoi Island in the Argun River remains under Russian control, the Tarabarov Island and the western half of Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island in the Amur River were handed over to China (see http://www.interfax.ru/r/B/0/2.html?menu=1&id_issue=10720392).

Prior to this visit to China, Putin told Chinese media representatives that any decision on the route of the Eastern Siberia-Asia Oil Pipeline must take into consideration Russia's own interest in developing the Russian Far East (see <http://www.strana.ru/print/229530.html>).

The 2004 edition of Japan's Defense White Paper echoes the 2003 edition in its analysis of Chinese and Russian military forces (see Boeicho, *Nihon no boei*, 2004, pp. 58, 62).

On 31 December 2004 the Russian media reported that Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov had signed a directive on the construction of the Taishet-Nakhodka oil pipeline route (see <http://www.strana.ru/print/237179.html>).