

# JAPAN'S NORTHERN TERRITORIES

For A Relationship of Genuine Trust



# For Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia



More than 60 years have passed since the end of World War II, but Japan and Russia (the former Soviet Union) have not yet concluded a peace treaty. The reason is that an unresolved territorial issue exists between Japan and Russia concerning the Northern Territories (the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai). These four islands are inherent territories of Japan, having been handed down from generation to generation by the Japanese people, without ever being territories of other countries.

The settlement of this unresolved issue of the Northern Territories remains the main pending issue between Japan and Russia. Building a real strategic partnership between these two neighbors by resolving the issue of the attribution of these four islands and concluding a peace treaty is in the interest of not only Japan but also Russia.

In accordance with the "Japan-Russia Action Plan" adopted by the leaders of the two countries in January 2003, Japan-Russia relations have developed across a wide range of fields. But it cannot be said that the level of progress is sufficient. For example, although trade has been steadily growing in recent years, considering the fact that Japan is the second largest economic power in the world and Russia, its neighbor, has rich natural resources and technological strength, it must be said that the value of trade is still at a low level. Furthermore, in view of the situation in Northeast Asia, where both countries are located, building a real strategic partnership between Japan

and Russia by resolving the Northern Territories issue would contribute not only to the interests of Japan and Russia but also to the peace and stability of the entire region.

The Tokyo Declaration of 1993 signed by the leaders of Japan and Russia on a state visit to Japan by the first president of the new Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, affirmed the common principle of peace treaty negotiations: namely, concluding "a peace treaty by solving the issue of the attribution of the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai." Furthermore, it established clear guidelines for negotiations, stating that the territorial issue should be resolved on the basis of historical and legal facts, based on the documents to which both parties have agreed, and based on the principles of law and justice. Future negotiations should be conducted in accordance with these clear guidelines established by the two countries.

Japan's position is that if the attribution of the Northern Territories to Japan is confirmed, Japan is prepared to respond flexibly to the timing and manner of their actual return. In addition, although Japanese citizens who once lived in the Northern Territories were forcibly displaced by Joseph Stalin, Japan now wants to forge a settlement with the Russian government so that the Russian citizens living there will not experience the same tragedy. In other words, after the return of the islands to Japan, Japan fully intends to respect the rights, interests and wishes of the Russian residents on the islands.

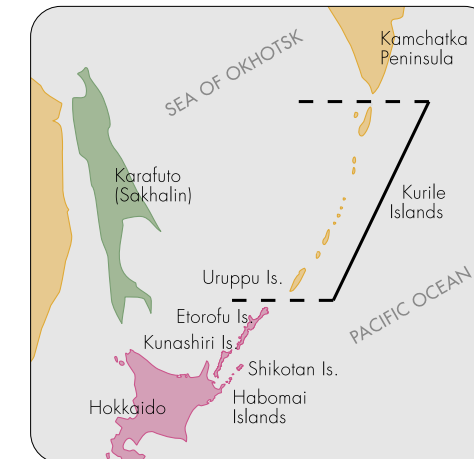
## Before World War II

### Up to the Early 19th Century

Japan discovered and surveyed the Northern Territories before Russians arrived there, and by the early 19th century at the latest Japan had effectively established control over the four islands. In the first half of the 19th century Russia also recognized that its southernmost border was Uruppu (an island just to the north of Etorofu).

### Shimoda Treaty (1855)

Under the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation between Japan and Russia (the Shimoda Treaty), Japan and Russia confirmed that, just as had been established peacefully until then, the boundary between the two countries lay between the islands of Etorofu and Uruppu.



A border line drawn on the basis of the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation of 1855



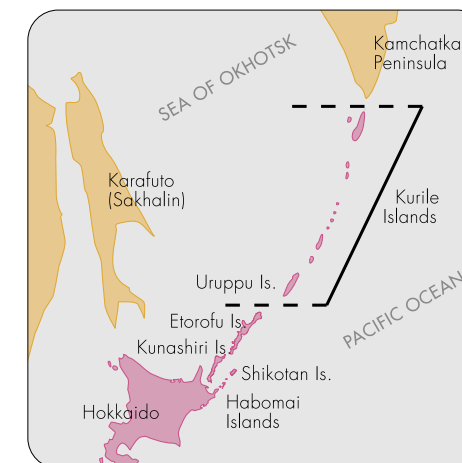
The ratification instrument in Russian of the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation of 1855

1855

1875

### Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kurile Islands (1875)

Under the Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kurile Islands, Japan ceded all of Sakhalin Island to Russia in exchange for the Kurile Islands (listed in the treaty as 18 islands from Shumshu to Uruppu).

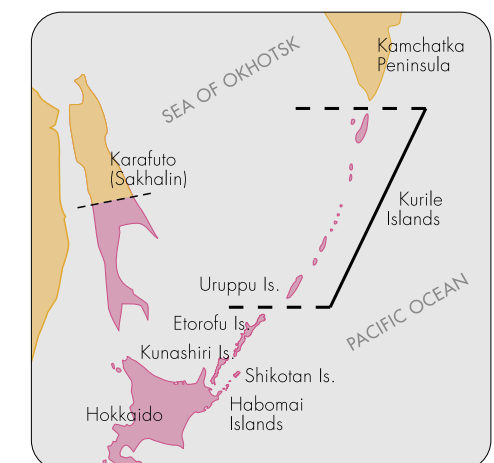


A border line drawn on the basis of the Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kurile Islands of 1875

1905

### Portsmouth Peace Treaty (1905)

Under the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, which ended the war between Japan and Russia, Japan took over the part of Sakhalin south of 50 degrees north latitude from Russia.



A border line drawn on the basis of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905



# World War II and Origins of the Territorial Issue

## Atlantic Charter (August 1941) and Cairo Declaration (November 1943)

In August 1941 the leaders of the United States and the United Kingdom issued the Declaration of Principles, known as the Atlantic Charter, that would serve as the guiding principles of the Allied countries in World War II. This document clearly set forth the common principle that these two countries sought no territorial expansion by means of war. (The Soviet Union proclaimed allegiance to the Charter in September 1941.) The Cairo Declaration of November 1943 affirmed this principle of the Atlantic Charter and stated that Japan would be expelled from the territories which "she has taken by violence and greed." However, in view of the historical background, it is clear that the Northern Territories do not constitute territories that Japan seized "by violence and greed."

## Yalta Agreement (February 1945)

The Yalta Agreement, signed by the leaders of the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom, stipulated that "the Kurile islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union" and that "the southern part of Sakhalin as well as all the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union." However, the Yalta Agreement did not determine the final settlement of the territorial problem, as it was no more than a statement by the then leaders of the Allied Powers as to principles of the postwar settlement. (Territorial issues should be settled by a peace treaty.) Furthermore, Japan is not bound by this document, to which it did not agree.



The Yalta Conference (February 1945)

Photo: KYODO NEWS

# Negotiations Between Japan and the Soviet Union/Russia

## Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration (October 1956)

Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama was the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the Soviet Union. As the difference of positions of Japan and the Soviet Union as to the attribution of the islands of Etorofu and Kunashiri did not provide any prospect for the signing of a peace treaty, the two countries signed the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration\* instead; this declaration officially ended the state of war and restored diplomatic relations between them. In Paragraph 9 of the Declaration, the two countries agreed to continue negotiations for the conclusion of a peace treaty, and the Soviet Union agreed to hand over Habomai and Shikotan to Japan. The actual handover of these islands was to take place after the conclusion of a peace treaty.



Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama and Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin signing the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration in Moscow (October 1956)

## President Gorbachev's Visit to Japan (April 1991)

In April 1991 President Mikhail Gorbachev became the first Soviet leader to visit Japan and signed the Japan-Soviet Joint Communiqué with Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu. This was the first time that the Soviet Union recognized in writing that the four islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai were the subject of the territorial issue.



Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev signing the Japan-Soviet Joint Communiqué in Tokyo (April 1991)

Photo: KYODO NEWS

\*The Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration was a legally binding treaty, ratified by both parties.



Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka visited the Soviet Union and conferred with Secretary-General Leonid Brezhnev that the issue of the four islands had not been settled (October 1973).

## President Yeltsin's Visit to Japan (October 1993)

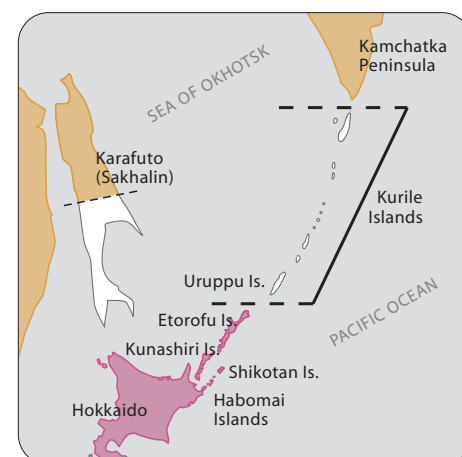
The Tokyo Declaration signed by Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and President Boris Yeltsin clearly defined the territorial issue as being an issue of the attribution of the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai. The Declaration clearly set out that Japan and Russia should conclude a peace treaty by solving the issue of the attribution of the four islands and thereby fully normalize bilateral relations. It also set out clear negotiation guidelines: the Northern Territories issue should be resolved (i) on the basis of historical and legal facts, (ii) based on the documents to which both parties agreed, and (iii) based on the principles of law and justice.



Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signing the Tokyo Declaration (October 1993)

## San Francisco Peace Treaty (September 1951)

Under the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, Japan renounced all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands, and to the southern part of Sakhalin which it had acquired by the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905. However, the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai are not included in the Kurile Islands. In addition, the Soviet Union did not sign the San Francisco Peace Treaty.

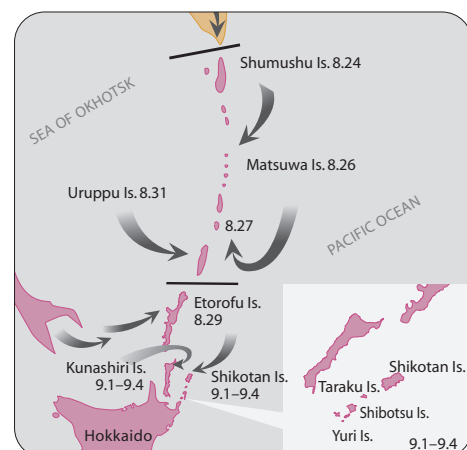


A border line drawn on the basis of San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951

## Potsdam Declaration (August 1945)

The Potsdam Declaration stated that the terms of the 1943 Cairo Declaration, which stipulated that Japan would be expelled from the territories which she had taken "by violence and greed," should be carried out and that Japanese sovereignty should be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as the Allies determined. In violation of the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact,\* which was then still in force, the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan on August 9, 1945, and continued its offensive against Japan even after Japan had accepted the Potsdam Declaration (August 14, 1945). From August 28 to September 5 of that year the Soviet Union occupied the Northern Territories without any legal grounds. (The Japanese army did not put up any resistance to the occupation, and it was carried out without violence.)

\*The Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact, signed in 1941, was valid for five years until 1946. It stipulated that the pact would be automatically extended for another five years unless either of the parties gave notification to the contrary a year before its expiration. The Soviet Union unilaterally announced its intention not to extend the pact in April 1945.



On August 9, 1945, the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan in violation of the Neutrality Pact of 1941. Soviet troops began aggression into the Kurile Islands on August 18, and demilitarized Shumushu Island on the 24th, Matsuwa Island on the 26th, Uruppu Island on the 31st, Etorofu Island on the 29th, and Kunashiri Island, Shikotan Island and Habomai Islands between September 1-4. By September 5 at the latest, Soviet troops had occupied not only the Kurile Islands but also the Northern Territories.



# Negotiations Between Japan and Russia

## Krasnoyarsk Summit (November 1997)

At Krasnoyarsk, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Yeltsin agreed “to make the utmost efforts to conclude a peace treaty by the year 2000 on the basis of the Tokyo Declaration” (the Krasnoyarsk Agreement).

## Irkutsk Summit (March 2001)

At Irkutsk, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and President Vladimir Putin defined the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956 as the starting point of the negotiating process to conclude a peace treaty and confirmed its legal validity in writing for the first time since 1960, when the Soviet Union unilaterally claimed to change the terms of the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration. They also reaffirmed their common recognition that, on the basis of the Tokyo Declaration, a peace treaty should be concluded by solving the issue of attribution of the four islands (the Irkutsk Statement).

## President Putin’s Visit to Japan (November 2005)

President Putin visited Japan in November 2005 and held talks with Prime Minister Koizumi. In order to bridge the gap in the positions of the two sides relating to the territorial issue, the two leaders agreed to continue their efforts to find a solution that was acceptable to both countries on the basis of agreements and documents created so far.



Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Vladimir Putin agreed to continue their efforts to find a solution to the issue (November 2005).

## Developments Since 2006

At the Japan-Russia summit talks held on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Hanoi in November 2006, the leaders agreed that Japan and Russia should build a “partnership based on common strategic interests” and conduct negotiations on the territorial issue energetically at the political and working levels.

At the Japan-Russia summit talks held on the occasion of the G8 Heiligendamm Summit in Germany in June 2007 and the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Sydney, Australia, in September 2007, the two leaders agreed that they would each give instructions to achieve concrete progress in peace treaty negotiations, which are an important pillar of the Japan-Russia Action Plan, and that the two sides would make further efforts from now on.

## Prime Minister Koizumi’s Visit to Russia (January 2003)

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Putin adopted the Japan-Russia Action Plan on the occasion of Prime Minister Koizumi’s visit to Russia in January 2003. The plan cited the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, the Tokyo Declaration of 1993 and the Irkutsk Statement of 2001 as the foundation for future peace treaty negotiations.



Japan made the Kawana Proposal for settlement of the territorial issue (April 1998).

## Kawana Summit (April 1998) and Moscow Summit (November 1998)

In April 1998, Japan made its proposal for the resolution of the territorial issue, the “Kawana Proposal.” In response, when Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi visited Russia in November 1998, Russia made its proposal, the “Moscow Proposal.” Having failed to reach an agreement, the two countries were unable to conclude a peace treaty by the end of 2000, as was stated in the Krasnoyarsk Agreement.

# Cooperation Surrounding the Northern Territories

## Mutual understanding and trust have been deepening



Visits to graves



Young Japanese and Russians have an exchange dinner.



Children learn Japanese calligraphy.

## Non-Visa Visits

Under the premise of not harming the legal positions of either Japan or Russia regarding the Northern Territories issue, the two countries have established three frameworks for visits by Japanese citizens to the Northern Territories:

(i) The four-island non-visa exchange program: Under this program, until the resolution of the Northern Territories issue, Japanese citizens and Russian residents on the islands are able to engage in mutual visits without passports or visas. The aim of this program is to promote mutual understanding between them and contribute to settlement of the territorial issue.

(ii) Free visits: From a humanitarian perspective, visits to the Northern Territories by Japanese citizens who are former residents of the islands and their families are made as simple as possible.

(iii) Visits to graves: From a humanitarian perspective, Japanese citizens visit family graves on the islands only with an identification card.

Using these frameworks, there have been many mutual visits by Japanese citizens and Russian residents of the islands.

## Humanitarian Assistance for Residents

The Japanese government extends assistance that is truly needed from a humanitarian perspective to the Russian residents living on the islands. This includes accepting medical patients from the islands and providing humanitarian relief goods in accordance with local needs.

## Cooperation in the Neighboring Areas Between Japan and Russia, Including the Northern Territories

At the Japan-Russia summit meetings in July and November 2006, as a measure that would also contribute to creating a favorable environment for peace treaty negotiations, it was agreed that the two countries would cooperate in the field of disaster prevention, such as earthquake and tsunami countermeasures, in the neighboring areas between them, including the Northern Territories. Based on this agreement, on the occasion of Russian

Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov’s visit to Japan in February 2007, a program for cooperation between Japan and Russia in the field of disaster prevention was launched. In accordance with this program, such cooperation as visits to the Northern Territories by Japanese experts on seismology and volcanology is implemented.

Furthermore, in May 2007, the foreign ministers of Japan and Russia agreed that, like the cooperation in the disaster-prevention field, the two countries would hold consultations by experts in order to cooperate for the conservation and sustainable use of the ecosystem in the neighboring areas between Japan and Russia, including the Northern Territories. The further progress of this bilateral cooperation is expected.

## Until the Final Settlement ...

The Japanese government has requested Japanese people not to enter the Northern Territories without using the non-visa visit frameworks until the territorial issue is resolved. Similarly, Japan cannot allow any activities, including economic activities by a third party, which could be regarded as submitting to Russian “jurisdiction,” nor

allow any activities carried out under the presumption that Russia has “jurisdiction” in the Northern Territories. Japan takes appropriate steps to ensure that this does not happen.

# A Relationship of Genuine Trust

## Building a real strategic partnership is in the interest of both Japan and Russia

Since the Soviet Union occupied the Northern Territories following the end of World War II, there was a period when it did not recognize the existence of the territorial issue, even after the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries by the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new Russia abandoned the division between the victors and the defeated of World War II and adopted a position of settling the territorial issue based on "law and justice."

In view of the new changes in the strategic environment of the Asia-Pacific region, such as the issues concerning North Korea, the rapid growth of China, and moves toward the creation of an East Asian community, Japan and Russia are increasingly coming to share strategic interests. From now on Japan and Russia must fulfill their responsibilities in the formation of regional order in both bilateral and multilateral frameworks. In order to hold discussions on these common strategic interests, the Japan-Russia Strategic Dialogue between Japan's Vice-Minister for foreign affairs and Russia's First Deputy Minister for foreign affairs was launched in January 2007. Building a strategic partnership between Japan and Russia based on a relationship of genuine trust is in the interest of not only Japan but also Russia. For this purpose, it is essential to conclude a peace treaty as quickly as possible by resolving the issue of the attribution of the Northern Territories. In order to solve this issue and to conclude a peace treaty as soon as possible, Japan intends to energetically continue negotiations with Russia on the basis of the agreements and documents created by the two sides so far, such as the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, the Tokyo Declaration of 1993, the Irkutsk Statement of 2001 and the

Japan-Russia Action Plan of 2003.

Furthermore, in order to settle the Northern Territories issue and to conclude a peace treaty between Japan and Russia, in addition to governmental efforts, the understanding and cooperation of the citizens of Japan and Russia and of many others are indispensable. This pamphlet is meant to convey the basic facts relating to this issue, including Japan's position, to as many people as possible in the hope that it will promote understanding of the advantages of resolving the territorial issue, concluding a peace treaty, and thereby building a strategic partnership between Japan and Russia based on a relationship of genuine trust.