

**An Inquiry for New Thinking
on the Border Dispute:
Backgrounds of “Historic Success”
for the Sino-Russian Negotiations**

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Introduction

It is clear from examples all over the world that the most delicate and touchiest of problems between any two countries are territorial issues. Even now that the cold war is over and a new world order is beginning to emerge, this truth remains utterly unchanged. It also applies to territorial issues involving Russia. At all times and in all places (and, of course, not just in Russia but in Japan as well) such issues have been used as weapons in political disputes and have become a source of scandal. There are views that serious thought should be given to resolving territorial issues, but sensationalist-loving mass media like *Izvestiia* and a few self-styled “experts” play up such views in a distorting way.¹

1 I was also a “victim” of mass media sensationalism. *Izvestiia* published the following title in February 5, 2004: “A New Proposal for Resolving the Island Dispute with Japan”. “According to our sources, the Japanese government is working on a new – and rather unexpected – option for resolving its territorial dispute with Russia. This plan was developed at the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University – Japan’s most authoritative research center for Russian issues. The Slavic Research Center’s research is funded and coordinated by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The author of Japan’s new plan, Professor Iwashita Akihiro from the Slavic Research Center, discusses the details in this interview.” I immediately protested against the distorted headline because the proposal is not official and has no relation with the Japanese government. *Izvestiia* accepted my protest, deleted the headline from the web, and issued an “objectively” changed headline in its Far Eastern version. It also published an announcement for the



--- Present Border Border in the Aigun Treaty - - - - - Border in the Beijing Treaty

a  Area Excluded from the 1991 Agreement (Bol'shoi Island)

b  Area Excluded from the 1991 Agreement (Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii and Tarabarov Island)

correction on February 10, 2004. *Izvestiia*, however, never touched on its own responsibilities and only stated “Professor Iwashita refined his position.” Even the Vladivostok correspondent who interviewed me was unaware of the ruse being carried out by *Izvestiia*'s Moscow editor of the international section, Maksim Iusin.

The exploitation of territorial issues has been going on for a long time. The most conspicuous example in the 1990s would probably be the reports on the various border demarcation problems between Russia and China. To be sure, with the announcement of the implementation of a border demarcation agreement in November 1997 (the agreement concluded in May 1991), 98 percent of the problems along the eastern Sino-Russian border became a thing of the past. On the other hand, however, the return of three islands in two places excluded from the agreement was left unresolved. Of these, the dispute over Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island and Tarabarov Island at the juncture of the Amur and Ussuri rivers near Khabarovsk is particularly well known. Reports exploiting these islands for political ends have been notable until just recently. Ridiculous rumors like the one about China stealthily trying to take back territory by filling in the river have been repeated until quite recently in *Izvestiia*² and dispatches from Kyodo News.³

Such baseless rumors, however, were recently disproved. A summit meeting between China and Russia on October 14, 2004 put an end to their remaining territorial disputes over the “three islands”: Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii and Tarabarov Islands, and Bol'shoi Island on the Argun River.⁴ China and Russia hailed the day when they could boast to the world that their territorial problems had finally been resolved. How a solution to the “three islands problem” could ultimately be reached was partly made public just after Putin and Hu Jintao's historic declaration of a “win-win” situation for finalizing all the territorial

2 *Izvestiia* reported on July 19, 2002 as follows: “The Chinese are filling in the Kazakevich channel which runs between their own territory and the island; they are dropping rocks into it and are sinking barges containing sand,” *Izvestiia* was told by Iurii Efimenko, chairman of the public committee for the retention of the Russian status of the islands. “They are linking their own territory with the islands and so they will have considerably more grounds for claiming the islands....”

3 See *Kyodo News*, July 21, 2002.

4 Because of their close proximity on the Amur, the Chinese often group Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island (320 square kilometers) and Tarabarov Island (40 square kilometers) together into one island called Heixiazi. Along with Bol'shoi Island (50 square kilometers), which the Chinese call “Abagaitui,” originally a Mongolian name, some Chinese scholars claim that the problem was never a “three islands” problem, but a “two islands” problem.

problems: the remaining disputed islands will be divided between Russia and China on the basis of a “fifty-fifty” approach. This result seems natural and rational if we cautiously analyze the past negotiation process over the Sino-Russian territorial disputes during the 1990s. Many observers, having very little knowledge about the process itself, were astonished to hear the “sudden” declaration. The key to the solution is not all that hard to find if we examine closely how territorial issues along the 4,300-kilometer Sino-Russian border have been resolved previously. This paper aims to focus some principles that have been formulated and applied to this seriously disputed territory during behind-scene negotiations for resolving the long-standing Sino-Russian border problems.⁵

A “Fifty-Fifty” Approach Formulated: The Spirit of Khasan on the River Border

An important point to remember about Sino-Russian relations is that, despite the various difficulties facing their governments in the 1990s, China and Russia amicably completed the task of defining their borders except for a few problematic areas; in short, the fact that they successfully resolved 98 percent of the most challenging problems along their entire border and the process by which they did so need to be emphasized. More importantly, we need to stress the significance not only of this fact but also of the constructive engagement between diplomats from both countries in pushing this process ahead, without being caught up in the kind of political propaganda and sensationalism mentioned earlier. Here the wisdom of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian foreign policy seems to have been concentrated on resolving its territorial issues with China.

A typical case is the approach used to solve the Khasan problem in Primorskii krai. Like the problem of the “two islands” near Khabarovsk, the territorial issue in Primorskii krai became general

5 The territorial disputes dealt with in this paper are discussed in greater detail in the following book: Iwashita Akihiro, *A 4,000 Kilometer Journey along the Sino-Russian Border* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004).

knowledge at the beginning of the 1990s as a result of a “no transfer of territory to China” campaign by the media and by Primorskii krai experts, foremost of whom was the then-Governor, Evgenii Nazdratenko. I will not go into much detail here, but the important point is that ultimately China and Russia evenly divided the 300 hectares of the Khasan region, which had been a point of contention right up to the end. This was not a legal solution but was entirely the result of a political compromise. As a result, 140 of the 300 hectares that Russia was supposed to hand over under the 1991 agreement remained Russian territory, allowing Russia to claim a diplomatic victory. At the same time it was also possible for Primorskii krai to claim it as a victory. The image of this problem-solving approach (dividing the disputed territory in the spirit of a “fifty-fifty” approach does not necessarily mean equally dividing the disputed territory in “half”) was also great for the political effect it had in producing a “win-win” situation. In any event, as a result of this compromise, it was possible for both sides to claim that their interests had been preserved, and this gave fresh impetus to the border demarcation process.

The important point here is that the “fifty-fifty” approach was in fact not confined just to the 300 hectares of Khasan. Actually, the really hard problem in demarcating the Sino-Russian border has not been the land border but the river border. Although very little is known, the “fifty-fifty” approach was how several thousand islands were apportioned between Russia and China. According to documents I obtained, the apportionment of islands in each river is as follows:

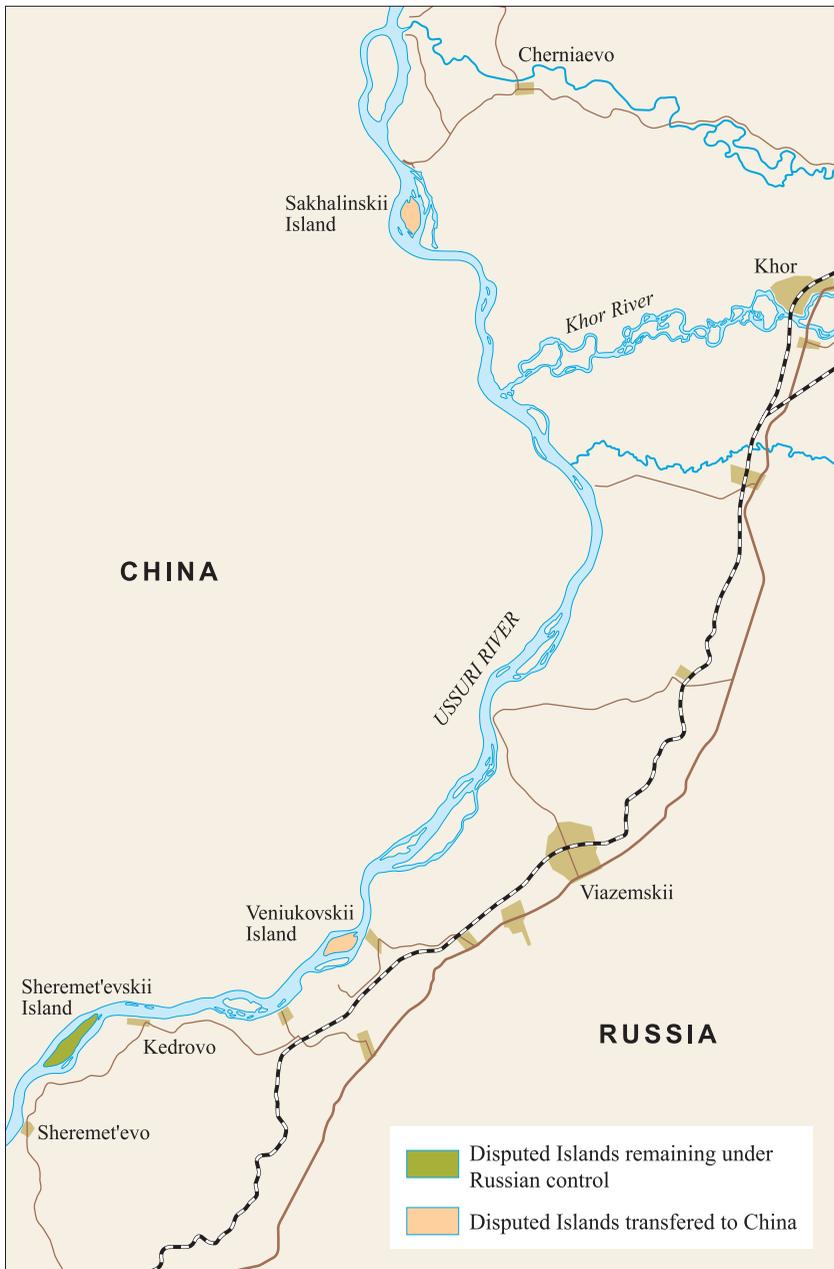
| | Total | Ussuri River | Amur River | Argun River | Other |
|--------|-------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Russia | 1,163 | 167 | 778 | 204 | 14 |
| China | 1,281 | 153 | 902 | 209 | 17 |
| Total | 2,444 | 320 | 1,680 | 413 | 31 |

The image of the Sino-Russian border talks, as these figures suggest, is one of fairness and rationality. Then again, that is one of the magic properties of numbers. It is well known that many of the disputed islands along the river border had been under the effective control of Russia. The image of a peaceful resolution, then, is only superficial. In fact, Russia is said to have handed over several hundred islands to China. Nevertheless, this “win-win” image was very important in pacifying nationalist sentiment and any potential backlash over Sino-Russian territorial issues. In short, the approach shown at Khasan was not confined to 300 hectares but applies to the entire Sino-Russian border.

There is more to the Khasan approach than its appeal as a “win-win” situation; it suggests that solutions to Sino-Russian problems were ultimately made as the result of political decisions. This seems to apply to the river border as well. Although the apportionment of most of the islands along the river border is explained as having been “technically determined,” a number of cases appear to have been resolved through political deals (e.g. the exchange of islands).

Several islands were left in Russian hands that, judging from maps, one would have thought would become Chinese territory if the Thalweg principle, which is used to define the water boundaries between two states, had been applied. An example from the Ussuri River is Sheremet’evskii Island. This four-square-kilometer island had been under the effective control of Russia, but the Chinese insisted it belonged to them. As a result of the negotiations, however, it has remained Russian territory. On the other hand, the reverse happened in dealing with Sakhalinskii Island, eighty kilometers downstream from Sheremet’evskii. Although China had not demanded that Russia give it back, one result of demarcation was that it was handed over to China. To make a long story short, it is possible that a deal was negotiated here as well. In other words, isn’t it likely that a political settlement was reached in which Russia handed Sakhalinskii over to China in exchange for Sheremet’evskii Island? I think a political settlement was reached on the Ussuri River in the same spirit of “compromise” that led to a revision of the 1991 border agreement and gave rise to a “win-win” solution in the Khasan region.

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Doubts that China and Russia reached an agreement on the apportionment of all the islands as a result of “technical operations” can also be raised if we look at the results of the reversion of islands in the Amur River. Here too several islands that China had stubbornly demanded still remain in Russian hands. Some representative places are the archipelagoes located on a river between Qike and Konstantinovka; islands north of each of these archipelagoes have been confirmed as Russian territory.



-  Disputed Islands remaining under Russian control (with Chinese "joint use")
-  Disputed Islands transferred to China

Since the islands in these archipelagos are widely scattered, it makes it difficult to determine which stream constitutes the main channel of the river; thus, it seems to have been hard to decide to which country they belonged. Violent fluctuations in water levels along this part of the river are also thought to have caused difficulties for the demarcation talks. Thus, it is hard to imagine that these archipelagoes could have been partitioned in a strictly technical sense following the

Thalweg principle. The Chinese in particular had given names to each of these groups of islands collectively and seem to have felt quite a strong resistance to even a part of them being recognized as Russian territory. It is conceivable that in the end here too Russia and China reached a political agreement and divided the islands in the spirit of the “fifty-fifty” approach. Particularly, this was true for resolving the problem on the Wangamuhe archipelago, where Russia could keep its northern part (Verkhne-Konstantinovskii Island in Russian) under its control.

The Chita Initiative and “Joint Use”

Ranking along with Verkhne-Konstantinovskii Island as an example of the rough going in dealing with the Amur River islands until around the summer of 1997 is Ol’ginskii Island, which is located upstream at a point where the Amur and Ol’ga rivers converge. In addition, places like Menkeseli region upstream on the Argun River in Chita oblast faced local resistance to a handover and continued to provoke debate. This time, along with the “fifty-fifty” approach just mentioned, another idea was put forward to resolve the deadlock in the border demarcation process. This idea was the “joint use” of the islands.

In complete contrast to the early 1990s when Nazdratenko of Primorskii krai was campaigning against the 1991 agreement under the slogan of “no transfer of territory to China,” the task of drawing up the border in Chita oblast proceeded quietly. In fact the first session of the Sino-Russian border demarcation commission to be held outside of Moscow and Beijing was held there. The Russian plenipotentiary Genrikh Kireev cited Chita oblast as a model compared to the local governments of the Russian Far East at the time, and one of the reasons he did so was that Chita oblast itself proposed an idea that would speed up the demarcation of the river border, which was then causing serious difficulties for the border talks.

At the time, Chita oblast held a 175-square-kilometer tract of the Argun River called Menkeseli, which under the terms of the 1991 agreement would have to be handed over to China. Menkeseli is next to the long disputed Bol’shoi (Abagaitui) Island. From 1994 to 1996, when residents of the Amur oblast and the Jewish Autonomous oblast



began to voice their anger and suspicions over a possible handover of river islands, the Menkeseli problem became a focal point in Chita oblast as well, but the oblast authorities were swift to respond. After consultations they and the Border Guard proposed a compromise that would allow local Russian villagers to use the islands in exchange for Russian recognition of the islands' transfer to China. Although a final decision was put off until the beginning of 1997, China endorsed the idea at an early stage, and the proposal to make joint use of several islands after their reversion led to the conclusion of the agreement between the two governments in November 1997. The Menkeseli formula is said to have had a great impact on speeding up the task of demarcating islands in the Amur and Ussuri rivers, which were

becoming major points of contention between Moscow and other local governments. The decision to hand Ol'ginskii Island over to China, which I mentioned at the beginning of this section, was also based on the premise of joint use. The compromise plan that Chita oblast put forward – giving up the islands of their own accord and proposing joint use – pacified residents of the river basin who had originally opposed the transfer and, at the same time, was the breakthrough that led to the finalization of an international agreement between China and Russia. An island north of the disputed islands mentioned at the end of the preceding section (which the Chinese regard as a part of Wangamuhe and the Russians call Verkhne-Konstantinovskii) was designated by Russia as a “joint use” area accessible to Chinese (see the map on page 102); China responded in turn by opening up Menkeseli and Ol'ginskii Island to “joint use” by Russians. In short, in promoting the transfer of some of the most hotly contested islands in the Amur and Argun rivers, the joint use plan had a great impact in preserving the interests of both the Chinese and the Russian sides and “saving face,” as well as in pacifying public opinion opposed to a handover.

The Menkeseli formula played an important role when the task of demarcating the river border was at its most difficult point. Because of it, the two sides succeeded in keeping the complicated territorial issues along the rivers that make up more than 3,500 of the 4,300-kilometer-long eastern border separate from the territory issue that Nazdratenko had politicized in Primorskii krai. The Menkeseli formula was an important factor which clearly led to the declaration in Beijing in November 1997 that the border demarcation process had been completed.

A Proceeding Framework for the Border Negotiation

We pay considerable attention to the framework on which the border issue was negotiated. The framework was set according to the following agenda: 1) All concerned parties should confirm to the following basic set of principles for the proceeding negotiation process: a negotiable border should first be demarcated with talks on the disputed islands coming later; 2) according to the principle, a border agreement is to be signed and implemented except in the

disputed territory; 3) on the remaining disputed territory, the concerned parties seriously negotiate and seek a “mutually accepted compromise” for guaranteeing both countries’ interests. When a compromise is reached, the concerned parties finally declare the “win-win” results, and sign and implement a supplementary border agreement on the disputed area.

The reason of adopting the three stage process framework for the Sino-Russian border negotiations seems to rely on past experience. It is well-known that Nikita Khrushchev in the 1960s prepared to transfer some disputed islands, including Damanskii Island where Sino-Soviet military forces clashed in March 1969, over to China based on the Thalweg principle. On the other hand, he strongly claimed Bol’shoi Ussuriiskii Island and kept it under Russian control. Then, negotiations were suspended and China rushed to take Damanskii Island back through force, causing acute tensions all along the border area. China successfully controlled the island de facto after the battle. Boris Vereshchagin, a simultaneous observer of the Soviet Foreign Ministry and Sino-Soviet negotiations over territorial disputes, described how the Soviet side prepared to recognize the seizure of islands in the 1930s on the river and to revise the border according to Thalweg. It seems he missed a chance for a peaceful resolution of the border issue in the mid-1960s.⁶ In short, a dispute over just a small piece of territory could cause the whole border stability to seriously deteriorate. This historic lesson seemed to make the Sino-Soviet negotiations in the late 1980s pertinent to the three stage process framework.

This framework was put to the test during negotiations between China and the former Soviet Republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The formula of “four (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) plus one (China)” was created in 1992.⁷ Within this

6 Boris N. Vereshchagin, *V starom i novom Kitae: iz vospominanii diplomata* (Moscow: In-t Dal’nego Vostoka, 1999), p. 169.

7 The formula developed into the “Shanghai Five,” a predecessor of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization established in 2001. For details on the border negotiation within the “four plus one,” see Iwashita Akihiro, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications for Eurasian Security: A New Dimension of ‘Partnership’ after the Post-Cold War Period,” in Tabata Shinichiro and Iwashita Akihiro, eds., *Slavic Eurasia’s Integration into the World Economy*

framework, three Central Asian countries dramatically proceeded to negotiate with China over the disputed territories. Kazakhstan cleared the first stage in April 1994 and resolved all the remaining problems in July 1998; Kyrgyzstan signed the border agreement in July 1996 and added a supplementary document in August 1999. Tajikistan showed some progress in the first stage in August 1999 and declared all the other territorial disputes finished in May 2002.

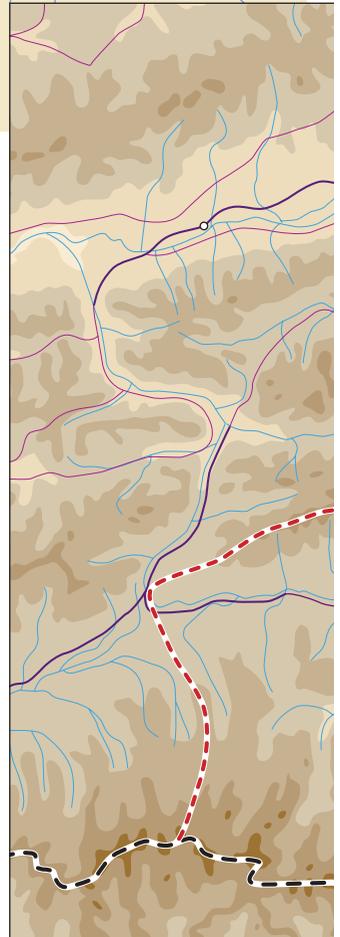
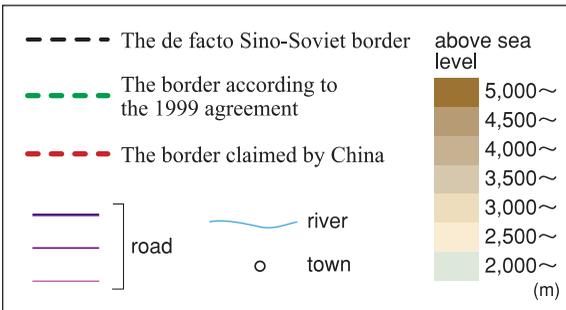
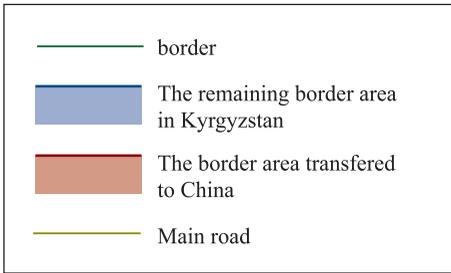
Here we focus on the third, or final, stage of the negotiations mentioned above: What is a “mutually acceptable compromise” for guaranteeing each country’s interests? The answer is again found in the “fifty-fifty” approach. It is natural that the details of the concrete division on the disputed territory were not necessarily a true “fifty-fifty” split. The results of the Kazakhstan case is a well-known example: 940 square kilometers – two areas of the disputed territory, Shagan-Oba and Saryshilde, that had remained after the 1994 agreement, was divided 56 percent for Kazakhstan and 44 percent for China (exactly speaking, the 56 percent remained in Kazakhstan and the remaining 44 percent was handed to China).⁸ The Kyrgyz-China final resolution also followed the “fifty-fifty” approach, while public reaction against the compromise was noticeably strong and fanned. At the signing of the border agreement in 1996, the four disputed places were settled. A vast disputed area in the Bedel region, was, however, complicated and had yet to be resolved. In 1999, Kyrgyzstan and China finally agreed to divide the area according to the map on pages 108 and 109.

This is a typical compromise according to the “fifty-fifty” approach, with 70 percent of the territory remaining in Kyrgyzstan while the other 30 percent (950 square kilometers) going to China.⁹ Some sensational movements against the Kyrgyz-China supplementary agreement, on which some of the disputed Bedel territory would be handed to China, aroused a lot debate in many cities in Kyrgyzstan. Although the ratification had been repeatedly postponed by parliament’s resistance to it, President Askar Akaev successfully passed it in May 2002.

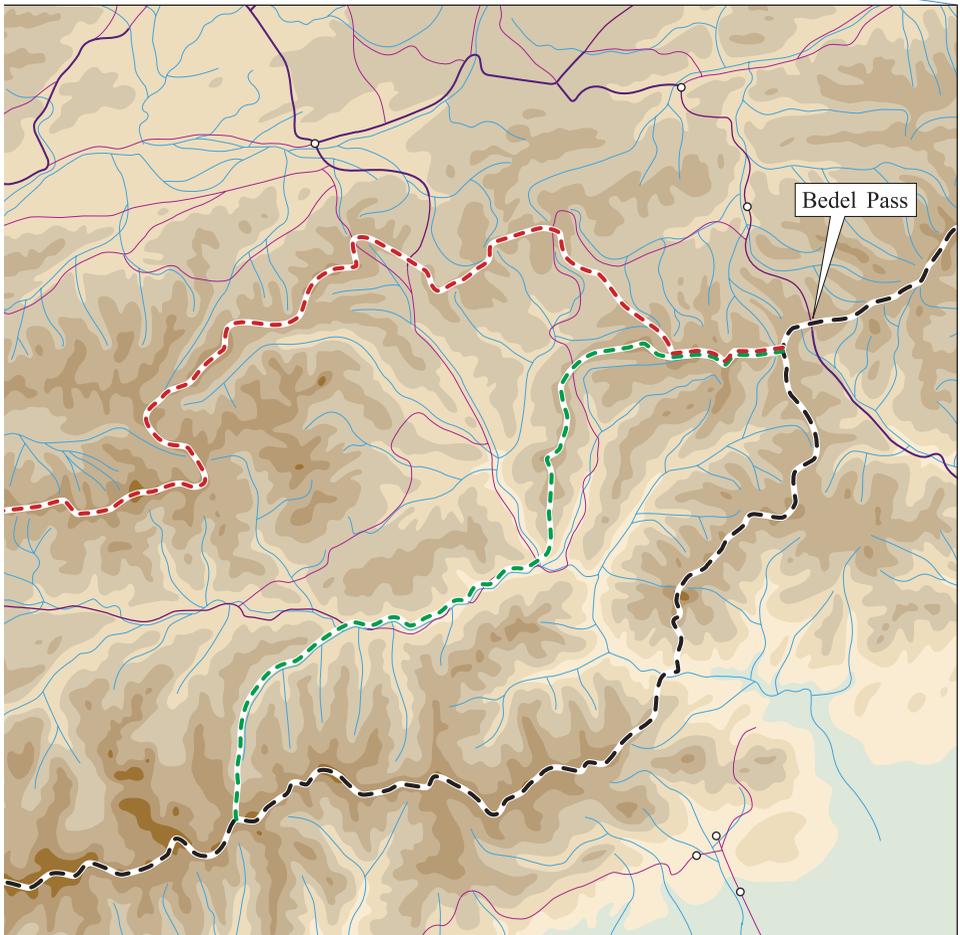
and Community (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004).

8 *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, February 2, 1999; March 12, 1999.

9 *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, May 22, 2001; July 17, 2001.



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In contrast, concrete results in the Tajik-China case were not officially confirmed. Previously, China had claimed 20,000 square kilometers over the Pamire against Tajikistan while Tajikistan acutely rejected its demands. As well as Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island, the disputed territory was said to be the most difficult to handle since the discussion in the Sino-Soviet period. Therefore, the declaration on the 2002 final agreement on the Tajik-China border was a shock to many specialists. The territories handed to China according to the supplementary document were reportedly less than 1,000 square kilometers, but the details and location are kept secret despite the ratification of the agreement being finished in June 2004. Though the exact details of the deal remain concealed, it is undoubtedly a "mutual compromise" which both sides found.

The framework serves for the Sino-Russian negotiations. Originally, the negotiations preceded the other ones between a Central Asian country and China. Russia, then the Soviet Union, and China signed an agreement on the eastern section of the border in May 1991, which excludes the "three islands," e.g. Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii and Tarabarov near Khabarovsk and Bol'shoi on the Argun. Russia and China also signed an agreement on the fifty-five kilometer western section of the border in September 1994. But implementation of demarcation works on the eastern border was delayed until the end of 1997 because local governors and administrations strongly opposed the handing over of territory to China on the basis on the 1991 agreement, as analyzed above. Sino-Russian negotiations turned out to be the last remaining hurdle, and the remaining problems seemed to make a compromise more difficult to realize though both Vladimir Putin and Jiang Zemin hoped to finalize the third stage before the Sino-Russian treaty of Good-neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of July 2001. As illustrated in the Introduction, disinformation on the remaining disputed islands remained widespread. Few experts on China or Russia firmly believed in the probability of the "three islands problem" being resolved in the near future.

Conclusion

When summing up the border negotiations between Russia and China, the secret to their success is clear. They succeeded because each side made a sincere effort to find a “mutually acceptable compromise” and then successfully projected the image that it had won. The two countries saved face and preserved their mutual interests by introducing political settlements based on a “fifty-fifty” approach and the “joint use” formula; these two points should be assessed highly as positive approaches by which Russian diplomacy brought the territorial issue to a solution.

In this sense, the final resolution on the “three islands problem” is a natural result of the Sino-Russian negotiation process. The “fifty-fifty” approach serves well for it and the formula of “joint use” is to be applied to the former disputed area, though the details on the formula have yet to be announced. Although this result has not been widely publicized, except for a few leaks in the media made supposedly by opposition groups dead set against the “compromise,” out of consideration for nationalism and domestic opposition, it is a stunning, historic achievement that can be positioned as an example of a brilliant victory made possible by the development of a Russian diplomatic approach to solving border disputes.¹⁰

10 Among some of the available information, I particularly pay attention to two articles in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* (October 16, 2004) and in *Kommersant Vlast* (November 1, 2004). Both of them, agreeing that Tarabarov should be handed to China, published different variations on how Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island would be divided (see the map on page 112). But the figure that both the articles mention as would-be Chinese territory is not precise. If China acquires “337 square kilometers” on Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii and Tarabarov, almost nothing would be left for Russia (see footnote 4). According to a Chinese source, China would receive just “171” and Russia could keep “164.” Though the sum of these two figures does not exactly coincide with the ones quoted in footnote 4, the latter seems more persuasive. Concerning Bol'shoi Island in the Argun River, the article in *Kommersant Vlast* reported on the part handed over to China. But it was also not fully credible: Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, said, “Here is how they were divided: the Bol'shoi Island is on the Argun River and is not populated. The only thing that is interesting for us there is access for water intake, and it remained on Russian territory. The island was divided in half. Tarabarov Island, the one which is smaller than the other group of islands was given to China and



- - - - - The border claimed by *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*
- - - - - The border claimed by *Kommersant Vlast*

Objectively assessing the results, Russia could appeal, on one hand, for its own “win” on the final deal because some parts of the

the Bol'shoi Ussuriiskii Island was divided in such a manner that all that was built there, including an Orthodox church, and the so-called fortifications remained on Russian territory. In the end, all these three islands were divided approximately fifty-fifty” (*BBC Monitoring*, November 14, 2004; *Interfax*, November 14, 2004). According to his remarks, Bol'shoi Island should be also divided between China and Russia. The variation of the map published in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* may be close to the truth.

three islands, which should have been handed to China if Thalweg had been strictly observed, remain under Russian de jure control. Not only the Russian government but also local administrations could celebrate their win for the historic deals. On the other hand, silence on the Russian side should be fully understood: strong pains of the loss of territory controlled by Russia de facto for a long time and their prudent consideration of China's final decision on retracting its lawful claim to the territory for the benefit of Russian locals.¹¹

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the exploitation of territorial issues for political ends is certainly not easy to ignore. However, in the preceding framework for the three stage negotiation, the two approaches that Russia has brought to bear on its territorial issues with China – the spirit of Khasan (the “fifty-fifty” approach) and the Chita initiative (joint use after the border is determined) – produced a stunning achievement by successfully resolving all of the territorial disputes between China and the former Soviet Union. Although the problems involving the remaining two places along the Sino-Russian border were quite serious, as long as Russian foreign policy stuck to this sort of logical and rational approach and allowed it to develop

11 The real reason for China's compromise should be debated. In fact, many specialists tend to link it with a “Sino-Russian energy deal” without any persuasive grounds. The reason might as well be sought not only in Sino-Russian bilateral relations but also in recent Chinese foreign policy toward proceeding to resolution of border issues with neighboring countries. As far as I know, the compromise on the Sino-Russian remaining border problems had been thoroughly endeavored and engineered since 1998 just after the implementation of the 1991 agreement, and was already arranged through some “shuttle” meetings between Chinese and Khabarovsk leaders in May and June of 2004 (*Remin ribao*, May 26; June 30, 2004). Deals for the Sino-Russian border negotiations have been basically coordinated within a political framework of the territorial issue, not strongly affected by other outside factors, e.g. Sino-Russian economic cooperation or rivalry, and its international environment such as the appearance of a “monopolar” dominance by the US over the world (see Iwashita, *A 4,000 Kilometer Journey*, pp. 2-4, 196-197). In this context, concentrated attention to Sino-Russian energy problems, the topic of pipelines in Siberia and the Far East, served well to cover on-going behind-the-scenes border negotiations. Information on the “three islands problem” between January and the beginning of October 2004 was also difficult to find even on the Internet. The tight control on the problem should be considered as a secret for the “historic win.”

even further, there was no reason whatsoever to doubt that these issues would ultimately be resolved, too. As far as an objective examination of the Sino-Russian border negotiations is concerned, the reason territorial issues could be peacefully resolved is because the two sides compromised and made concessions with one another, but, above all, it is because Russian diplomacy sincerely wanted it and made it happen. The Chinese took these hopes seriously and responded in turn. Could these rational approaches be applied to other territorial issues that Russia has with a neighboring country?