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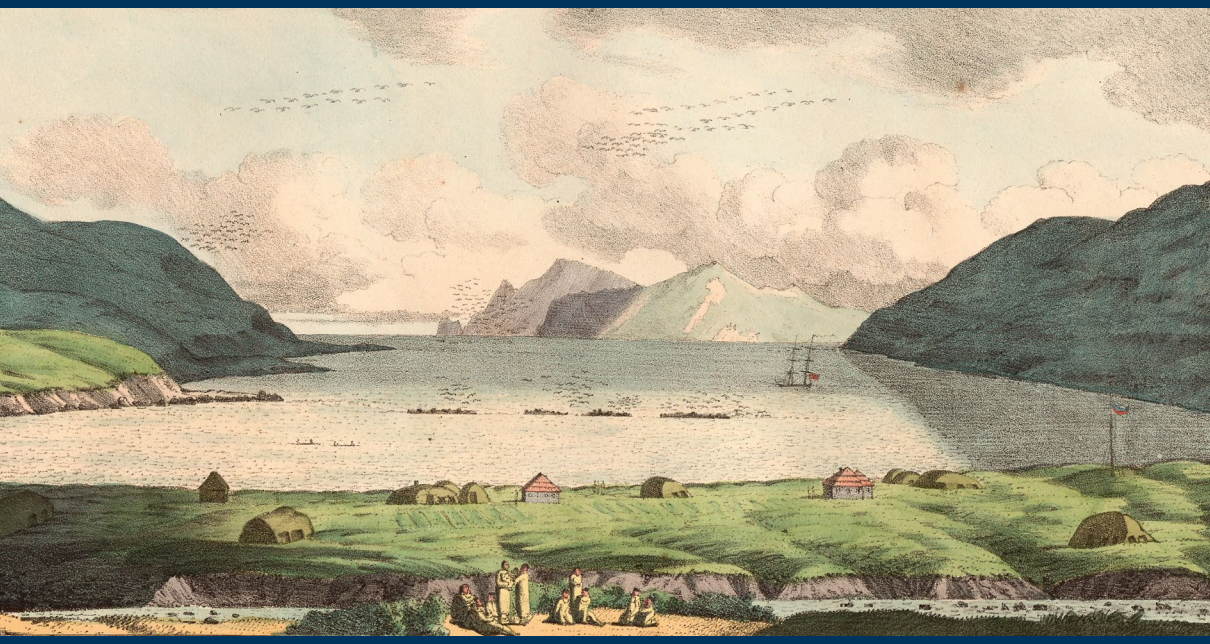

Russia's North Pacific

Centres and Peripheries

HEIDELBERG
UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING

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1
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Table of Contents

1 From the Editors 1
Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, Andreas Renner

2 Russia's Pacific: The End and the Beginning of Russia *7*
Paul B. Richardson

Environment and Resources

3 Troubled Waters: Russo-Japanese Resource Conflicts as a Challenge for Imperial Rule in the Northern Pacific, 1900–1945 23
Robert Kindler

4 International Fisheries Conflicts in the Bering Sea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Soviet–US–Japan Triangle Relationship 43
Kaminaga Eisuke

5 Urban Air Pollution and Environmental Engagement in the Russian Far East: Developments from Late Soviet to Post-Soviet Times (1970s–2010s) 65
Benjamin Beuerle

Migration and Transfer

6 Vladivostok and Intourist: Refugee Flows to the North Pacific, 1940–1941 91
David Wolff

7 Life in Ruins: Forced Migration and Littoral Persistence in Chukotka 111
Tobias Holzlehner

8 Post-Soviet Memory Politics of the Forgotten Victory over Japan in 1945 135
Joonseo Song

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Representations and Norms

9 Poison Money: The Chinese Ruble Zone in War and Revolution 161
Yuexin Rachel Lin

10 The Advanced Special Economic Zones: Over-Politicised Anti-Politics Machine 185
Natalia Ryzhova

Tensions and Conflicts

11 Blagoveshchensk Massacre and Beyond: The Landscape of Violence in the Amur Province in the Spring and Summer of 1900 211
Sergey Glebov

12 Afterword: Of Squids, Truffle-Hunting, and Complicated Relationships 229
Willard Sunderland

About the Authors 239

1 From the Editors

Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, Andreas Renner

Since the middle of the seventeenth century, when Cossacks built their first forts on the eastern shores of Eurasia, Russia has bordered not only on Europe but also on the Pacific. Long before Tsar Peter the Great broke through his famous *window to the West,* his predecessors had broken through to the East. Yet historians, at least those with Western eyes, have mostly preferred to look at Russia through Peter's window, studying it almost exclusively in comparison with or as part of European history. Even researchers within Russia, "Westerners" and "Slavophiles" alike, have more often than not turned to Europe for a template to explain their country's history—though orientalists and scholars influenced by so-called Eurasian notions of Russia as a non-European culture have proposed an Asian perspective. Only with the disintegration of the Soviet Union has the dominance of the Eurocentric perspective been seriously challenged, in particular by the new imperial history. In recent years, since John Stephan's pioneering work on the Russian Far East, more and more scholars have (re)discovered Russia's history in the Asia-Pacific region.[1]

The new interest in the region clearly follows two related shifts in the political tectonics of the world: accelerated globalisation after the dissolution of the Soviet block and the reemergence of China as a first-class geopolitical player. As a consequence of these shifts, the Asia-Pacific has become one of the world's most dynamic economic regions. During the last twenty years, the Russian Federation has been striving to integrate into it by establishing closer political and economic ties not only with China but also with other countries and international organisations, such as APEC and ASEAN. With the progressive deterioration of relations with the West even before Russia's annexation of Crimea, Moscow's Asia-Pacific strategy has come to play a key role for Russia's geopolitical agenda. On several occasions, leading politicians—among them, President Vladimir Putin—have announced a "pivot to the east."[2]

1 Stephan, *Russian Far East;* Kotkin and Wolff, *Rediscovering;* Renner and Urbansky, *Zeichen*.

2 Blakkisrud and Wilson Rowe, *Russia's Turn;* Bordachev et al., *K Velikomu*.

Beuerle, Benjamin, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner. 2023. "From the Editors." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 1–6. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16371

The German Historical Institute in Moscow (GHIM) has decided to support studies of this pivot and Russia's entanglement with the Asia-Pacific in general. In the spring of 2017, in cooperation with the chair of Russian-Asian Studies at Munich University, the GHIM created a new platform, which was dubbed *Russia's North Pacific*.[3] The objective was, and is, twofold: first, the endeavour aimed to complement the research on the Asia-Pacific region (which had largely been concentrated on the US and East Asian countries) with a Russian Far Eastern perspective; second, we intended to build an international and multidisciplinary network for the exchange of research ideas between scholars of all career levels and to promote new collaborative projects. During the last four years, international scholars, many of them from Russia and her European and Pacific neighbour states, have been meeting at workshops and conferences or simply online. To present the results of past and future collaborative research and to create an outlet for excellent monographs, we created a new book series, *Russia and the Asia-Pacific*, with Heidelberg University Publishing, the first volume of which we are now happy to launch. It is based on papers presented at the project's first international workshop held at the GHI in Moscow in March 2018.

Imperialism and globalisation in the Far East, the central keywords from this meeting's agenda, encompassed a wide range of topics and experts. Over the course of two days, participants discussed almost a century and a half of Russia's role in the Asia-Pacific realm, from the opening of China and Japan in the 1850s to the present "pivot." The workshop brought together papers on four broad areas of interactions between Russia and its North Pacific neighbours that are mirrored in the structure of this book[4]—processes of entanglement and disentanglement, of cooperation and conflict. Speakers analysed manifold political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental contacts and processes—but they all did so without focusing on traditional international relations with "big" political and military protagonists. Instead, the papers posed questions such as: how were / are directives and decisions from a centre situated thousands of kilometres away perceived and (possibly) implemented by actors in the Russian Far East? To what extent was / is the centre successful in integrating a region as far away from it as the Russian Far East in its state structures? But also, to what extent are "centre" and

3 https://www.dhi-moskau.org/de/forschung/20-bis-21-jahrhundert-die-udssr-und-russland-in-der-welt/russlands-nordpazifik.html#c57784; https://www.gose.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/ls-russland-asienstudien/index.html.

4 See below under "Aims and Scope of the Book Series and the Present Volume."

"periphery" fixed attributions or, rather, fluid terms, if we adopt the perspective of Far Eastern actors?

The GHIM's interest in Russia's Asia-Pacific exceeds the broad scope of the first "kick-off" workshop in several respects. This stems from the nature of the growing network, which aims to build five bridges:

First, it connects specialists from several different countries, academic cultures, and disciplinary backgrounds. Although the focus is primarily a historical one, not only historians are involved in the project but also geographers and anthropologists as well as political, economic, and environmental scientists. Especially welcome are graduate students and early-career scholars.

Second, Russia is the main, but not the exclusive, focus of the project. The network links the study of Russian history, which in Germany has been a sub-discipline of the historical sciences since the late nineteenth century, with East Asian area studies, which developed outside the history faculties. As a rule, these disciplines have not counted the Russian Far East as Asian, while from many Muscovites' perspective, the region has been a remote and backward Asian periphery. The project wants to overcome this double marginalisation,[5] at least on the level of scholarship.

Third, and connected with the interest in area studies, the network includes a still somewhat unusual maritime view of Russian history. Historians have studied the tsarist empire and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union as almost archetypical land empires; however, since the eighteenth century, Russia has been a maritime power, or at least a power with maritime ambitions. For the tsars' transcontinental dominion, the Pacific Ocean was more suited for imperial visions than the Baltic Sea.[6]

Fourth, as hinted above, a central idea is to historise the "pivot to the East" Russia's leaders have been demanding for about a decade. The ambition to transform the Pacific periphery into flourishing landscapes and to strengthen relations with East Asian neighbours is by no means new: it is in line with earlier geostrategic and economic projects dating back to the eighteenth century. Not surprisingly, historical buzzwords such as "To the Great Ocean" from the construction period of the Trans-Siberian Railway have reemerged in the current debate.[7]

Finally, focusing on the Russian Far East does not mean ignoring the European West. Rather, the project is about interweaving the Asia-Pacific

5 Kuhrt, "Russian Far East."
6 Bassin, *Imperial Visions*.
7 For example, Blakkisrud and Wilson Rowe, *Russia's Turn;* Bordachev et al., *K Velikomu*.

history of Russia as an equal subject with the established historiography of Russia as part or mirror of Europe. The current "pivot" to Asia may again serve as an example. Like its historic predecessors, it aims not only to strengthen the Russian state at its Far Eastern end but also to establish a new, global role for Russia as a hub between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

From these five perspectives, the region under investigation cannot be defined as a naturally given space but, rather, as a temporary result of region building—a moving target. Russia's North Pacific can be neither defined as specifically Asian or European nor as a region with clear boundaries; these were almost completely absent, for example, for international Porto Franco merchants of the 1870s, but a century later, they were most sharply demarcated for Soviet inhabitants of a virtually sealed military zone. Today, the region still appears different if viewed from Moscow or Vladivostok and different again from Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, or San Francisco. Though there are 6,500 kilometres between Vladivostok and Moscow, still any visitor will notice that many Far Eastern cities look like any Russian town east or west of the Urals; the transition to Siberia is blurred. It is true that the political border in the south is clearly defined, as is the Pacific coastline in the east; but the border, extended in the age of imperialism and disputed in war and revolution, has been porous in different ways and has connected the spaces on this side and on the other as much as it has separated them.[8] The same can be said about the Great Ocean as a sphere of Russian influence and source of income.[9] Such connections, real and imagined, have played a role for both the mental construction of a Russian Far East (maritime province or Pacific region) and the functions these spaces should fulfil.

As experts of regionalism argue, regions are best defined by, on the one hand, political (or economic, security, or other) programmes that are more or less successfully implemented from above and, on the other hand, by processes from below, such as cross-border migration of people, goods, or ideas.[10] These processes can overlap or contradict. Ultimately, different types of regions develop differently, as can be best exemplified with the politically grounded region of the Russian Far East and the more vaguely, though basically economically, defined Asia-Pacific. Finally, if regions are shaped by political, economic, or environmental cooperation, they also lose shape through obstacles and restrictions. The GHIM network addresses all these processes

8 Urbansky, *Beyond*.
9 See exemplarily Robert Kindler, chapter 3 in the present book.
10 Cf. Dent, *East Asian*.

of entanglement and disentanglement. It welcomes colleagues dealing with any Russian aspect of the history (and present) of the Far East, from Peter the Great's little-studied fascination with his East Asian neighbours over Pacific whaling and Stalin's Asian politics to air pollution in the Northern Pacific.[11]

Aims and Scope of the Book Series and the Present Volume

The aim of the book series Russia and the Asia-Pacific is to promote multidisciplinary research on entanglements and disentanglements between Russia and its neighbours in the Asia-Pacific in a global context from the early eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries and to overcome national boundaries with regard to different scholarly cultures. The objective of bringing different perspectives, academic traditions, and disciplines together is mirrored in the composition of the series' advisory board. We are very grateful for the efforts of its members as well as of a number of competent external peer-reviewers who act together as custodians of the excellence and innovativeness of the series.

Each section of this first volume of our book series deals with one important area of research relevant for our network project. The chapters by Robert Kindler, Eisuke Kaminaga, and Benjamin Beuerle highlight interactions and policy approaches in the realm of *environment and natural resources; migration and transfer* are the focus of David Wolff's and Tobias Holzlehner's chapters; *representation and norms* play key roles in Joonseo Song's and Yuexin Rachel Lin's texts; and Natalia Ryzhova's and Sergey Glebov's contributions bring into focus socioeconomic and ethnic *tensions and conflicts* between centre and periphery as well as within the Far East. Two commentaries—one by the geographer Paul Richardson, who also undertook to introduce each chapter, and one by the historian Willard Sunderland—help contextualise the contributions and connect them with broader research questions. This applies not least to the further volumes in this series, each of which will be devoted to a more specific topic.

In general, each volume consists of texts that are thoroughly peer-reviewed (double-blind) by board members or external reviewers. Subsequent volumes may also include a discussion forum, which allows us to publish shorter thought-provoking or informative articles. We are equally open to publishing pertinent collaborative volumes by other editorial teams as well as outstanding monographs. We explicitly encourage younger scholars to submit their PhD

11 Renner, "Peter der Große"; Demuth, *Floating Coast;* Wolff, *Stalin's;* Benjamin Beuerle, chapter 5 in the present book.

and equivalent theses, as far as these suit the thematic scope of the series. In general, publications in English, German, and Russian will be possible.

Interested parties are asked to check the network's web presence, send information about ongoing projects, or apply for one of the workshops. Suggestions and ideas for workshops and thematic issues are welcome.

For more information, updates, or to join our network, please visit the network website pacificrussia.hypotheses.org.

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Please note: The introduction and all chapters in this volume were written before Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. They thus do not mirror developments since the start of this war, though the publication of the book has been much retarded by it.
If not indicated otherwise, all weblinks cited in the chapters of this volume were accessible as of 19 December 2022.

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2 Russia's Pacific: The End and the Beginning of Russia

Paul B. Richardson

From the hills of Vladivostok, the sun both rises and falls over the sea. The city is located on a peninsula, with the Amur Bay (Amurskii Zaliv) to the west and the Ussuriy Bay (Ussuriskii Zaliv) to the east. In summer, the sun lingers long in the evening sky over the Amur Bay. My first night in the city coincided with the city readying itself for the Day of the Russian Navy. The city was the headquarters of Russia's Pacific Fleet, and it embraces the holiday with gusto every year. On that first evening, a row of vessels—from submarine to destroyer—were lined up for the public displays and manoeuvres on the big day, which takes place on the last Sunday of July. It was a dramatic scene, with the late evening sun silhouetting these vessels. Over the pride of the Pacific Fleet, and over the hills across the bay, the sun slowly set. It changed from an ever-deeper shade of orange to red before forming a halo over a distant hill, and then disappeared into refracted and radiant shafts of light.

Over many summer and autumn evenings, I would watch the sun set over these hills, each night bringing with it a subtle change in colour and atmosphere. It was a moment of evening calm that could take your breath away. And so, too, was the immensity of Russia that was captured in this scene, as just beyond these hills, where the sun was setting, was China. On Russia's Pacific coast, the whole of China stretched out to the west. Ten time zones from London and seven from Moscow, Vladivostok is an East beyond the Orient. As the sun went down over China each night, the points of the compass and the imagined geographies of East and West, Orient and Occident, and Europe and Asia would flicker and shimmer in the evening light.

Russia's Pacific and its distant Far Eastern territories have long generated vivid imaginaries and illusions on the other side of Eurasia. The character and possibilities of this region—and of Russia itself—have been predicated by an immense and diverse geography but also by the hopes and fears for this region in the capitals of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, thousands of miles to the west. It is a region that has always been held in relation to this centre by innovations in technology and communication, which, alongside physical

Richardson, Paul B. 2023. "Russia's Pacific: The End and the Beginning of Russia" In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 7–19. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16372

and imagined geographies, have shaped "the political possibilities it was thought to contain".[1] No technology was more dramatic in reshaping these possibilities than the completion in 1904 of the Trans-Siberian railway, which cut across Manchuria to Vladivostok. The completion of this railway not only revolutionised the potential of the Russian Far East—and of Russia—but also stirred geopolitical anxieties as far away as London.

The railway's completion compressed distances and time between metropole and periphery. With it came the idea of a resurgent Eurasian heartland that could be controlled and exploited by Russia and that was presented in certain quarters as a rival to the pre-eminent imperial power of the day, the British Empire. The politician, imperialist, geographer, and founding father of geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947), delivered his thesis on the Trans-Siberian railway, and its transformation of the territory of Eurasia into a geopolitical pivot of history, in a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in January 1904. While Mackinder's lecture was revealing of a geopolitical vision shaped by anxiety over the possibilities for Russian control over Eurasia,[2] Tsar Nicolas II quickly became preoccupied with other challenges to the Russian Empire.

Barely a year after the completion of the railway, rather than mastering Eurasian space, Russia suffered a catastrophic and devastating defeat at the hands of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). The next phase of imperial mega-projects oscillated from connectivity towards fortification and the commitment of vast resources to upgrade Vladivostok's defences. "Utopian in their grandiosity", these fortifications were constructed between 1910 and 1916 and included eleven forts, which were estimated at the outset to cost around ninety-eight million imperial rubles in 1910. Even after the onset of the First World War, an additional amount of almost fourteen million rubles was allocated for their continued construction in 1915.[3]

The chapters that follow play out against just such extreme oscillations between the poles of opening and closure, resource and burden, anxiety and opportunity, hope and fear. Each oscillation brings with it dramatic reconfigurations of geographical space, both material and imagined. It is a story full of tensions and contradictions, with innovations of technology and communication cutting through time and space to render possible a panoptic gaze of the centre on this region. However, at the same time, it is also a

1 Bell, "Cyborg Imperium," 4–5.
2 Mackinder, "Geographical Pivot," 298–321.
3 Kasyanov, "European Fortifications," 20.

story revealing the limits and distortions of this gaze. While new systems of colonial exploitation and influence could be opened up,[4] these new forms of connectivity and flows of people also brought ideas, means of resistance, and revolution. The chapters in this volume demonstrate how the territory of the Russian Far East expanded and contracted, how modernisation effaced the spatial logics and knowledges of indigenous communities, and how the region's location can be understood by the centre to be simultaneously its greatest asset and liability. Today, administrative and technological innovations continue to both empower and disenfranchise the local population while starkly revealing the memories of a violent and turbulent past that cling to this region.

In this sense, space is the medium and the message. As Keller Easterling has observed: "Like an operating system managing activities in the background […] space is a technology, a carrier of information, and a medium of polity."[5] However, like all such operating systems, it also carries an abundancy of bugs, glitches, and viruses that distort this space, continually subverting the inputs of the user. The chapters in this volume capture some of the frustrations of imperial rule and its social designs for the region. They trace how the dynamism and disruptions of this space shatter the illusions, ambitions, and longings of central planners, bureaucrats, and political elites in the centre. Each contribution offers a fragment that makes up part of a larger and intricate mosaic, which is intimately bound to technological change, to inter- and intra-state relations, and to a space that exists—in different ways—in the minds of state elites in distant Moscow as much as it does in the quotidian realities of the Russian Far East and its inhabitants.

In the complex patterns and shades of this mosaic, there are multiple themes and contrasts. However, across all these chapters, three cast a prevailing shadow. The first relates to the perennial yearning of an imperial centre to maintain territorial integrity, authority, and control over its most distant periphery. The second—often antagonistic to the first—relates to Russia's Pacific and its Far Eastern territory as a space of experimentation, entrepreneurship, and encounter. It is a set of conditions that can fuel anxiety and consternation in the centre, which in turn stimulates a reactionary response. The third involves tracing how memories have become absorbed in the landscapes and urban fabric of the region, revealing a past that is complex and full of contradictions. These three themes are not mutually exclusive but co-constituted, and they are held

4 Bell, "Cyborg Imperium," 3.
5 Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*, 239, cited in Bell, "Cyborg Imperium," 4.

in relation to each other through tensions, conflicts, and subtleties. These are neither exhaustive nor closed themes but, rather, geographical lenses that can help expand and refract our field of vision on this region. They can help us to capture the fluidity and dynamism of the spatio-time configurations that make up this highly complex and contested region.

2.1 Conquering, Consolidating, and Controlling Space

The first of these three themes is engaged with in the opening chapter by **Robert Kindler,** who presents an insightful introduction to a territory that is at one moment an El Dorado—a place of fantastical material and geopolitical riches ripe for exploitation—but also a place over which the centre's grip is always tenuous and insecure. Drawing on rivalries with Japan, Kindler charts a persistent anxiety over Russian control of a far-away margin that is acutely exacerbated by the proximity of a rising power. It is a distance from Moscow and Saint Petersburg that cultivates a "cartographic anxiety",[6] which frames virtually all representations of the region produced in the imperial and state centre. Such an anxiety belies a host of preoccupations and obsessions with control over the periphery and the iconography of the frontier.[7] However, in the Russian Far East, rather than being an anxiety that is always projected onto the Other, it is one also directed at the Self, with the centre represented as its own threat to the region. This was a trajectory heightened by the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, an anxiety briefly made real by the short-lived Far Eastern Republic (1920–22), and one that endures up to the present in claims by Japan on the Southern Kuril Islands and a proposal in 2004 by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to transfer some of these islands.[8] For many on Russia's Pacific seaboard, much of this preoccupation is reflective not of an anxiety about Russia's neighbours but over the vagaries and vicissitudes of the centre.

These cartographic anxieties are also not restricted to land. **Eisuke Kaminaga's** contribution reveals how the seas of the north Pacific could also become a stage on which relations between the Soviet Union, the United States, and Japan played out in the late 1920s and 1930s. As the technological capabilities of fishing fleets developed, testy standoffs between vessels and

6 Krishna, "Cartographic Anxiety," 508.
7 See also Richardson, *Edge of the Nation*, 94, 119.
8 Richardson, "Geopolitical Cultures," 7–27.

interests in these waters assumed an increasing regularity and significance. Kaminaga demonstrates how actions on the high seas became proxies in a struggle between rising powers and their efforts to assert influence on regional geopolitics. In this competition, Japan was prepared to antagonise the United States by expanding its fishing activities in 1936 and 1937. However, for Kaminaga, these activities in Alaska were primarily designed to bolster Japan's position in its negotiations on a new fishing treaty with the USSR. It is a convoluted tale of distant and isolated fishing grounds being transposed by new technologies into the centre of debates on geopolitical control over land and sea. As empires of radically different content and contexts collided, access to fisheries became injected with the heat and fire of assertive nationalism fused with a highly combustible great-power geopolitics.

Just a decade and half before the mettle of these rising powers was being tested in the North Pacific, **Rachel Lin** brings to life a different dilemma in the contingency and relativity of the sovereignty of competing powers in the Russia–China borderlands. After the onset of revolution, the legitimacy and destiny of the powers vying to control Siberia and the Russian Far East was determined by the exchange of currencies as much as it was on the battlefield. Lin explores how competing imperial rivalries, nascent nationalist projects, and geopolitics were bound up with the everyday collection of wages and exchange of labour. Her chapter on the "currency conflict" in the Far Eastern ruble zone reveals a frontier wracked by confusion and uncertainty. In those testing times, local and migrant workers were finely attuned to the fluctuating fortunes of White Russia in determining the ruble variant into which they should place their faith. It was a ruble zone of competing currencies backed by different factions and interests that also co-existed alongside the Japanese yen and a wide array of Chinese currencies. In this environment, the amount of confidence in each currency became a proxy of power, and when the ruble zone lost its pre-eminence in northern Manchuria by the end of 1920, it was a critical blow to any lingering hopes of White Russia prevailing.

2.2 Experimentation, Entrepreneurship, and Encounter

The fluctuations in the ruble zone highlight a region that has long been finely and pragmatically attuned to wider trends and movements. **Benjamin Beuerle's** chapter also charts a remarkable and prescient awareness of a climate and health emergency in the late Soviet period. This movement was focused on remedying air pollution in Primor'e, centred on Vladivostok, with local

environmental activists playing an effective and prominent role in the coordination and implementation of environmental regulation. Initially, the local enthusiasm for environmental campaigns towards reducing car emissions was high. However, as economic crisis took hold in the last years of the Soviet Union and in the early days of the new Russian Federation, these initiatives slipped down the agenda in a region that was hit particularly hard by this crisis.

Public transport in Vladivostok was also decimated—most symbolically with the pulling up of tramlines in the city—just as the port was being opened to foreign trade in 1992. This opening to Asia was followed by a surge in the importing of second-hand cars from Japan. By 2008, it had reached more than half a million a year, with many of them passing through Vladivostok on the way to other parts of Russia. The import, repair, and maintenance of these vehicles was one of the few success stories of a regional economy shattered by de-industrialisation, depopulation, the end of subsidies and incentives, and the drawing down of the military–industrial complex in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union.[9]

However, this nascent economic success story was abruptly snuffed out. This was not the result of a clean air campaign but of Moscow's imposition in 2008 of prohibitive import tariffs on foreign second-hand cars over five years old. Within a year, imported foreign cars, mainly from Japan, had dropped from half a million to merely 80,000. (79) In response to the new measures, Vladivostok was gripped by a wave of social protests and street demonstrations in the winter of 2008. It was a movement swiftly put down by an OMON special police force corps flown in from outside the region to deal with the trouble. Moscow had proved ignorant of the local economy and then fearful about the implications of its policies. As for Vladivostok, a city once at the vanguard of addressing an emerging environmental crisis became a portent of the violence and repression of an increasingly authoritarian state.

Tobias Holzlehner also offers a take on the disasters wrought on local populations by the centre, though this time far beyond the region's major towns and cities. Holzlehner follows the rebuilding of a community in the aftermath of the failed Soviet experiment to re-order society and economies on the Chukchi Peninsula. This is the furthest point in Russia from Moscow, and also a terrain where the fantasies of a utopian discourse of Soviet modernisation could play out across every last inch of the USSR. It was a programme that ended with a tragic reality and the local destruction of a native settlement. However, in the post-Soviet era, the region has witnessed

9 On the significance of this trade, see Tabata, "Economic Relations," 422–441.

the shoots of a revival of traditional knowledge and indigenous logics with the reestablishment of hunting camps that involve the passing on to a new generation of "the intricacies of maritime hunting" as well as providing an "escape" from the shattered utopia of Soviet modernisation. (128, 126)

Such camps are reappearing along the Chukchi coast and are positioned according to local stories, knowledge, and encounters, which are forever missing from the imagined geographies and cartographies of Moscow. The absence of such knowledge in the centre is what ultimately dooms to failure many of the centre's perennial experiments in trying to order this periphery in its own image. Holzlehner reveals a landscape that is not immune to the whims of the centre, but where "local sentiments and subsistence strategies" (129) co-exist and co-create a world that is shaped by centralised development strategies and technological and economic change as well as by the incompleteness and absences of the state. It is a landscape reflective of an ebb and flow of lofty ideals, cynical exploitation, and myopic misreadings of local conditions.

Russia's engagement with its Asia-Pacific neighbours has also been characterised by a cyclical opening and closing, from the free-port status that was established in Vladivostok in the early 1860s (then abolished in 1900 and restored in 1904) to the autarchy and authoritarianism of Stalinism. It was a cycle reset under Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who twice visited the region and who heralded Soviet engagement with the Pacific, as well as overseeing blossoming trade relations with Japan and even short-lived efforts at decentralisation.[10] However, it was not until decades later that the winds of change fully blew open Russia's window on Asia, and in the final years of the Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev, the modernised port of Nakhodka became a free-trade port in 1989.

One of the most recent iterations in this cycle has been Russia's programme of Territories of Advanced Social and Economic Development (Territoriia operezhaiushchego sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia; TOR) in the Far East and Siberia, which operate alongside the reinstation of Vladivostok as a free port. However, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia's isolation by the West has been mirrored by South Korea and Japan imposing sanctions.[11] Well before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a fraught relationship with the West had already resulted in certain absurdities for the regional economy whereby no European states, nor Canada or the United States, were eligible for expedited e-visas, whereas North Koreans, Mexicans, and

10 Stephan, *Russian Far East*, 90, 262–263.

11 Al Jazeera, "In Rare Stand"; Park and Lies, "Japan Announces."

Moroccans were. It is indicative of a wider contradiction whereby geopolitical rivalries and securitisation agendas continue to stymy the opening of borders to foreign investment, competition, trade, and tourists.

Natalia Ryzhova critically engages with recent experiments in regional administration. Ryzhova reviews the centre's long-standing desire to control and "master" space—an imperative that has often contravened all economic logic. The latest act in this drama is the eye-catching development of the TORs, within which "a special legal regime for carrying out entrepreneurial activities" has been established.[12] However, Ryzhova's interviews and encounters outline how these TORs are skewed in favour of big business rather than local entrepreneurs at the same time as vested security interests work to thwart certain developments. For Ryzhova, it is not a keen understanding of the complexities of local conditions or development needs that have driven the centre's creation of TORs. Rather, for the centre, a permanent context behind the regional development agenda is a logic of insecurity around "emptiness"—an imagined geography of vast, undeveloped spaces. It is a factor behind the introduction in 2016 of the Far Eastern hectare initiative, whereby every citizen of the Russian Federation was granted the right to receive a free plot of up to one hectare of land in the Far East. Aimed at attracting Russian citizens to move to the region, these small plots have proved difficult to convert into profitable agricultural enterprises, while many lack connections to utilities, let alone road access.[13]

The centre's desire to flood this supposed "emptiness" with new strategies, actors, and infrastructures—which arrive with inherent "corruption, non-transparency, and all that is known by the term 'bad governance'"—ends up countering the teeming activity of local entrepreneurs. Rather than expanding the space for development, it brings closure to the "grey, invisible, informal niches" carved by locals, who were forced to become entrepreneurial by the absences of the state in the 1990s. During this period, the region's inhabitants "mastered not only natural resources (gold, fish, coal, forest […]) but also closeness to Asian countries". (202–203) Ryzhova laments that, until the appearance of these new development agents, locals were able to thrive and prosper. As this chapter vividly illustrates, the entrepreneurial spaces of the people of the Russian Far East have been closed by the arrival of new state actors and instruments, capturing the resources that were once theirs.

12 Russian Far East and Arctic Development Corporation, "Advanced Special Economic Zone."

13 Luxmoore, "Russia's Far Eastern Frontier"; Zuenko, "Russia's Far East."

2.3 Nation, Memory, and Migration

The TORs are but the latest innovation in developing a territory that was once a zone of exile and internment for both the Soviet and Russian states. However, as well as exporting what the centre regarded as undesirable, the Russian Pacific could also be a route to escape and freedom. In the summer of 1940, with the world descending into ever-darkening spirals of repression, murder, and destruction, **David Wolff's** chapter charts the region's role in a tale of life hanging by the most delicate threads of fortune and fate. This story begins in the summer of that year in Kaunas, Lithuania, where Japan's acting Consul, Sugihara Chiune, is working around the clock to grant transit visas. It was to become a "deportation to life" that "brought thousands of Jews from the valley of the shadow of death to the North Pacific". (97) It is also a story with an unlikely cast of saviours, including figures from the depths of the Soviet totalitarian state. Wolff traces how the fate of hundreds of these lives rested on the stroke of the pens of bureaucrats, both in Tokyo and Moscow, before and even after they made it to Vladivostok. On their journey of escape, these refugees would also have passed through Vtoraia Rechka on the edge of Vladivostok—the site of a transit camp where, just two winters earlier, another Polish Jewish émigré, the Silver Age poet Osip Mendelstam, had passed through, only to die of cold and hunger on the way to the Gulag. Mendelstam was one of the countless victims of a murderous regime whose bureaucrats had just permitted these Baltic refugees to escape from the clutches of another.

The Russian Far East also serves as an intriguing footnote in the history of World War II, as it was here that the tide of violence unleashed in Europe finally abated, with the region playing host to some of the last battles of this total war. **Joonseo Song's** chapter recounts how, within days of the Soviet Union entering the Pacific Theatre, Japan signed an unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945. When news reached Moscow, the Soviet government immediately issued a decree that a Holiday of Victory over Japan would be observed on the following day, September 3.[14] However, the holiday did not take hold as a permanent fixture in the Soviet calendar, and, despite some isolated regional memorialisation, the Soviet Union's war against Japan largely became a "forgotten victory". (137)

In the post-Soviet period, the memory of the Second World War began to assume a renewed significance in the search for unifying symbols and ideas

14 Pravda, "Ukaz."

for a multinational federation. While much emphasis has been placed on remembering this conflict by Russia's current President, Vladimir Putin, it was his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, who signed a decree in March 1995 establishing the Russian Federation's Days of Military Glory. However, the date of September 3 was omitted from this list, and it was not until the Presidency of Dmitri Medvedev (2008–2012) that a decree was issued in July 2010 designating September 2 as a memorial day. This Day of the Ending of World War II was initiated with an inaugural ceremony celebrating its sixty-fifth anniversary in Victory Park in Moscow. (146)

However, the belated commemoration was not sufficient for some local campaigners on Sakhalin, who wanted the date of commemoration returned to the Soviet tradition of September 3 and to include in the name of the commemoration a specific acknowledgement of victory over "militarist Japan".[15] It is a movement that strives to connect an inviolable memory of the Great Patriotic War (1941–45) with the immutability of Russia's borders in the Far East. In this, it connects to Japan's claims over the disputed Southern Kuril Islands and a more recent memory of Putin and his Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, offering to concede some of these islands in 2004.[16]

Sergey Glebov's final chapter draws attention to another largely forgotten memory, this time on the Russo-Chinese border. Glebov's paper demonstrates how ideas and ideologies from the centre could play out with devastating consequences on this distant periphery. This chapter recalls the massacre of Chinese migrants living and working in this borderland at the turn of the twentieth century. It is a story of violence and discrimination that also has a troubling resonance with contemporary debates on migrant labour. In his chapter, Glebov notes that, on the Russo-Chinese border in this period, "a complex, diverse society […] emerged in the context of settler colonialism and imperial borderland". (212) It was a borderland—with crossings of the "border in multiple ways"—that also presented an awkward challenge to the agenda of Nicholas II's nationalising empire and moves to Russify the colonial borderland.

The shift in atmosphere that accompanied this Russification set in motion the conditions for the Blagoveshchensk massacre of July 1900, in which thousands of Chinese dwellers of the city perished, many of whom drowned after being forced to cross the Amur River to the Qing side of the border. However, this mass violence was not committed in the name of many

15 Ponomarev, "Den' Pobedy nad Iaponiei," cited in Song, this volume, 141, 144.
16 Richardson, *Edge of the Nation*; Richardson, "Geopolitical Cultures."

local representatives of officialdom, merchants, industrialists, landowners, or even Cossacks. Members drawn from these communities had formed a commission and, on the eve of the violence, they were at work reporting on various aspects of Chinese trade and labour in Blagoveshchensk. Their report concluded that the Chinese presence was "useful and necessary", even arguing that the fees for the right to live and work on the Russian side of the border should not be raised and that some of the money raised from these fees should be spent on organising hospitals that could treat Chinese workers. (224–225)

As Glebov explains, the commission and its members was made up of the interests of particular stakeholders who were largely dependent on the Chinese labour, while the perpetrators of the violence were town dwellers, peasant settlers, new arrivals, reservists, and some Cossacks, who "likely saw Chinese workers and traders as direct competitors for jobs and markets". (226) A combination of the inadequacies of effective regional government, a swelling ethno-nationalist superiority, and the inherent inequalities and hierarchies of empire contributed to the appalling massacre at Blagoveshchensk. The level of violence was a harbinger of the brutality that would characterise the later revolutionary transformations of 1917 and the Civil War. However, neither the excesses of revolution nor the ethno-nationalist pogrom at Blagoveshchensk could rupture for long the dynamics of a mutual dependency with China on this colonial frontier, which remains intact to this day.[17]

2.4 The End and the Beginning

The chapters in this collection reflect a rich diversity of material, approaches, and findings, yet they also combine to reveal something special about Russia. For a Russia without its Pacific is no longer Russia as we know it. So much is bound to the destiny of the territories furthest from Moscow that the parameters of Russia's economy, modes of governance, sense of identity, geopolitical status, and national destiny are profoundly shaped by this region. Despite such significance, it is also a region that continues to be limited by the centre's tendency to override local particularities, needs, and knowledges. In doing so, the more that the centre seeks to exert and consolidate its control, the more its ambitions for the region move further out of reach. For all the region's economic, geopolitical, and ideational potential, it can never quite

17 Pulford, *Mirrorlands*.

be realised in the centre's image. This central paradox was rendered strikingly visible to all who were able to log on to the official Far Eastern hectare website, where Russian citizens could peruse the high-definition satellite imagery and choose their very own piece of the Far East to own and to cherish. However, in this vision, for all its pixels and sharp resolution, each distant sweep of the satellite offered little more than a crude digital composite that was missing the essence of this region and its richness of local, indigenous, and non-human knowledge and ways of seeing.

The chapters in this collection offer corrective lenses to the pixelated, static, and illusory images of this region that can proliferate in Moscow and elsewhere. Each lens brings the ever-finer grain of this region into focus, and, by combining them, new fields of vision are revealed in which the sinews of power binding centre to periphery are seen to strain and stretch. It is a multi-dimension view that is forever absent from the panoptic gaze of the centre, whose vision penetrates but does not see. These chapters tell a story of imagined geographies colliding with messy realities, of technologies of communication and connection creating and annihilating space, and of a regional memory that reveals constant cycles of opening and closure, opportunity and violence, and control and resistance. Each phase of these cycles has proved ephemeral and reversible – part of a tidal motion of contradictions and multi-dimensional forces that are always hinting at new possibilities. It is in these possibilities that we uncover the essence of a region that is both at the end and the beginning of Russia.

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Environment and Resources

3 Troubled Waters: Russo-Japanese Resource Conflicts as a Challenge for Imperial Rule in the Northern Pacific, 1900–1945

Robert Kindler

Abstract The article deals with Russo-Japanese conflicts over maritime resources at Russia's Northern Pacific periphery. It argues that this particular history should be understood in the larger context of the Russian Empire's fragmented authority in the region. The chapter explores how, in the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese fishermen played a dominant role along the coasts of Kamchatka. Neither Russian Imperial elites nor their Soviet successors were able to match their economic superiority in the region. Conflicts over maritime resources influenced local affairs and constituted an important continuity between Tsarist and Bolshevik rule.

3.1 Introduction

The American businessman Washington B. Vanderlip was playing for high stakes. In the autumn of 1920, he travelled to Moscow to propose a gigantic business idea to the Bolsheviks: he wanted to lease a territory in the Far East of around 400,000 square kilometers for sixty years and to obtain the exclusive rights to all resources and raw materials of the region. The peninsula Kamchatka was to be the heart of his imagined empire. In return, the Soviets were to receive a certain percentage of his profits, and Soviet Russia was to be diplomatically recognised by the US. Even compared to the highflying plans that the Bolsheviks were used to, this was an extravagant project. Nonetheless—or perhaps precisely because of that—Vanderlip (who had in Moscow at first been mistaken for the billionaire Frank A. Vanderlip) received a warm welcome in the Kremlin. Lenin gave him ample reason to hope that the deal would come to fruition. However, beside the fact that Vanderlip did not have the necessary financial means, there was one grave problem: the Bolsheviks

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did not control Kamchatka. Lenin was well aware of this. In December 1920, he stated: "I don't know whom Kamchatka belongs to. Actually, the Japanese are in possession […]."[1] However, what one did not own, one could lease without having anything to lose: "We are willingly giving away what we do not need ourselves, and we shall be no worse off for the loss of it neither economically nor politically."[2] For Lenin, however, Kamchatka was only a token in his strategic deliberations. He believed that the revolutionary cause would benefit from a potential clash between the US and Japan over the peninsula.[3] The Bolsheviks were hoping for such a conflict, as Japanese companies dominated Kamchatka's economy and controlled the local fishing industry, by far the most important industry in the region.[4] Therefore, Japan had an incredible amount to lose should American companies try to gain a foothold in the region.

Lenin's statement marked, in many ways, the peak of a longstanding development. Imperial elites and their Soviet successors had always conceptualised the empire's borderlands as contested spaces that had to be defended against "foreign threats," but what had always been a difficult endeavour at the imperial land borders was next to impossible on the shores of the Northern Pacific. Established strategies to secure both lands and people from foreign influence were of little use in this maritime environment.

The region's "littoral societies"[5] were well integrated into transnational trading networks and relied on them, whereas connections to the imperial "motherland" were fragile and contested. This had been the case since the eighteenth century, when British and American fur traders operated along the coasts of Kamchatka and the Sea of Okhotsk, and the situation had changed only gradually after the Alaska purchase of 1867, when the Russian Empire sold its North Pacific colonies to the United States.[6] In the late nineteenth

1 Lenin, "Speech to the R.C.P.(b) Group at the eighth Congress of Soviets during the debate on the report of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars concerning home and foreign policies, December 22", in *Collected Works*, vol. 42, 256.

2 Lenin, "Reply to the Debate on Concessions at a meeting of activists of the Moscow organization of the R.C.P.(b), December 6, 1920," in *Collected Works*, vol. 42, 234.

3 Koshkareva, "Peregovory sovetskogo, pravitel'stva," 15–25; Parry, "Washington B. Vanderlip," 311–330; Siegel, *Loans and Legitimacy*, 118.

4 Arov, "Inostrannoe brakon'erstvo."

5 For the concept of "littoral societies," see Pearson, "Littoral Society."

6 There is a vast literature on trans-Pacific connections. See, for example, Bockstoce, *Furs and Frontiers;* Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 99–126.

century, American companies dominated along the coast of Kamchatka.[7] With few Russian officials in the region and almost no coast guards, foreign traders, hunters, and fishermen could interact with local populations as they pleased and freely extract resources such as fish and furs. A few decades later, large parts of Kamchatka's coasts were basically controlled by Japanese fishing companies, which thereby threatened the very existence of Russian statehood in the region. That Russian territory could turn into a space of (colonial) exploitation from outside did not really feature in the self-image of imperial or Soviet elites.

This article deals with this history of entanglement and conflict at Russia's Northern Pacific periphery. It argues that Japanese dominance on Kamchatka represented the normality of the empire's fragmented military and political authority in the region.[8] It will show how conflicts over maritime resources influenced local affairs and that they constituted an important continuity from the tsarist empire to its Soviet successors. The Japanese dominance of Kamchatka resulted from the decades of expansion of Japanese fishermen to the north. This process had gained momentum after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and was even further reinforced after Russia's governmental structures collapsed completely in the aftermath of 1917. Neither the Russian nor the Soviet state was able to match the economic superiority of the Japanese on Kamchatka. Japanese companies were able to do what Russian officials and experts had only ever dreamed of: they effectively exploited the enormous maritime resources of the region, they possessed the means to process their catches immediately, and year after year, they brought a large working population to the only sparsely populated peninsula. The success of the Japanese and the simultaneous failure of Russian or Soviet attempts to create competitive structures repeatedly sparked massive conflicts between the Japanese, the Russians, and Kamchatka's indigenous population.

This article is divided into three parts. The first explores the historical context and the origins of transnational resource conflicts in the North Pacific in the late nineteenth century. The second chapter analyses a period of fragile stability in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. The third section is devoted to the discussion of Japanese influence on Kamchatka in the early Soviet Union.

7 Kindler, "American Russia."
8 For a detailed treatment of this argument, see Kindler, *Robbenreich*.

3.2 Rising Conflicts

In 1867, the Russian Empire sold its North American colony to the United States. This deal has sparked heated debates among historians that last to this day. Among the main reasons for Tsar Alexander II to seal the deal were economic considerations: the maintenance of the colony had incurred higher costs for the empire than the exploitation of maritime resources and the fur trade could generate.[9] However, the end of Russian America also precipitated the collapse of large parts of Russian infrastructure on Kamchatka and along the coasts of the Sea of Okhotsk because the Russian American Company (RAC) had not only governed the empire's colonies overseas but also the lands and islands on the "Russian" side of the ocean. When the RAC quit its operations after 1867, Kamchatka, the Commander islands, and the Okhotsk region were largely left to fend for themselves.[10] The governor general of Eastern Siberia stated emphatically in 1868 that these areas were "deserts" without a future.[11] By contrast, the Amur region, which had only been conquered by Russian forces a couple of years previously, seemed like a land of unlimited possibilities.[12]

It was in this situation that Japanese fishermen in the last third of the nineteenth century started to open up new fishing grounds as the seas around Japan began to show signs of overfishing. From the northern island Hokkaido, they worked their small ships along the Kuril Islands towards Sakhalin (in Japanese, Karafuto) and eventually further up to the north.[13] In the process, they repeatedly clashed with Russian fishermen and, subsequently, with Russian officials.

In several treaties, Russia and Japan tried to delineate their spheres of influence and to resolve the emerging resource conflicts. Above all, the Treaty of Saint Petersburg (1875), which granted Russia the island Sakhalin and conceded the Kuril Islands to Japan, was of outmost importance, as it allegedly provided clarity about the territorial possessions.[14] The question of the region's resources was, however, an entirely different matter. All intergovernmental treaties and agreements turned out to be useless when there was no one who

9 Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 181–188.
10 On the consequences of 1867 for Russian regions, see Remnev, *Rossiia Dal'nego Vostoka*, 399–438.
11 Kindler, *Robbenreich*, 9.
12 Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Rising Sun*.
13 Kaminaga, "Maritime History," 259–273; Howell, *Capitalism from Within*, 150–170.
14 Yamamoto, "Dual Possession."

could enforce them. The Russian state had neither the means nor the personnel to prevent Japanese fishermen from fishing in those coastal regions that were officially off limits to them, and as long as Japanese subjects were encountered outside national territorial waters, there was no legal way to take action against them.[15]

The relative absence of Russian statehood and the gigantic abundance of fish just off the coasts of Kamchatka meant that Japanese fishermen became increasingly active in the region after the turn of the twentieth century. The risks that they had to take seemed low compared to the expected gains. At first, Russian authorities ignored this trend; one official still stated in 1901: "We do not expect that a (commercial) fishing industry will develop on Kamchatka." However, while the Russians still did not want to believe in it, Japanese companies were already creating a fait accompli.[16] At the same time, they received financial support and tax reductions from the Japanese state if they were active "in the North," since the Japanese had a major interest in having many small businessmen involved in this area and, therefore, refrained from leasing entire regions (such as the Kuril Islands) to just one company, as the Americans and Russians were doing.[17] Not only fishermen but also Japanese sealers, who hunted for fur seals on the high seas, benefited from this situation. What the Russians saw as "piracy" or "poaching" they believed to be their right.

The disputes about this question between the Japanese and the Russians were part of a larger conflict, in which the U.S., Great Britain, and Canada were also heavily involved: the transnational conflict over the Northern fur seal. At the end of the nineteenth century, sealskins were among the most coveted furs in the world and guaranteed large profits. Therefore, the states concerned fought bitterly over the question of who could kill the animals under which conditions. This was not a trivial problem, as the fur seals spent most of the year on the high seas but stayed several months on shore in the summer in order to procreate and rear their young. By far the most important seal colonies were on the Pribilof Islands (part of the US since 1867) and on the Commander Islands, which had remained Russian territory after 1867. Both states, therefore, insisted that only they had the right to hunt the animals.

15 See, for example, Egorov, "Ekspluatatsiia."

16 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Dal'nego Vostoka (hereafter, RGIA DV), f. 1005, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 34–43.

17 Japanese authorities had an interest in promoting small companies from the northern island of Hokkaido that faced severe problems in the late nineteenth century due to overfishing. Howell, *Capitalism from Within*, 150; Yamamoto, "Balance of Favor," 157–165.

Both Russia and the US had given away exclusive leases for the killing of the seals (until 1890, even to the very same American company, the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC)). By contrast, Great Britain and Japan cited the "freedom of the seas," which allowed everyone to hunt and fish on the high seas.[18] Each animal that did not arrive on the islands but was killed at sea decreased the profit of the concessionaire. In the case of the "seal islands," the fur seals were not just any source of income but the sole livelihood of the local population and that the animal population was threatened with extinction due to hunting at sea and on land. Whenever the Russian or American coast guards got their hands on a "poacher," the consequences were, therefore, severe: ships and catch were usually confiscated by the authorities. However, in most cases, the officers had to let the poachers go because they were unable to prove that they had killed the seals in territorial waters.[19]

The conflict over fishing off the coast of Kamchatka intensified as more and more Japanese moved to the north. The political tensions between Russia and Japan and the ensuing war between the two countries (1904/5) further escalated the conflicts. One event, which caused a stir in both countries and even attracted the attention of the tsar, was indicative of the extreme readiness to use violence. In the summer of 1906, in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese war, Japanese fishers shot the Russian fishing inspector Sotnikov and several of his aides (two Russians and at least six Kamchadals). Sotnikov had caught the Japanese fishing illegally in an estuary and had allegedly already received a large bribe from them. When he then also wanted to confiscate their vessel, they took up arms. The issue turned into a political affair not just because of the unusually large number of fatalities but also because Sotnikov had been a Russian "hero" who had distinguished himself during the defence of Kamchatka against the Japanese in 1904.[20] In addition, in the aftermath of Russia's military defeat in the war against Japan, the northern Pacific periphery had increasingly garnered the attention of the Russian elites, after hardly anyone had taken any interest in the region for more than four decades.[21]

18 For disputes on the pelagic fur seal hunt, see, for instance, Busch, *Seals*, 123–160; Gay, *Fur Seal Diplomacy;* Dorsey, *Conservation Diplomacy*, 105–164; Mirovitskaya, Clark, and Purver, "Fur Seals."

19 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereafter, RGIA), f. 1287, op. 7, d. 1101, ll. 19–20. For a general discussion of the problem, see, among others, Liapustin, *Kreiserstvo;* Busch, *Seals*, 123–160.

20 RGIA, f. 398, op. 68, d. 21798, ll. 84–85, 86–87; Vasil'ev, "U podnozhii sopok," 33–38.

21 The years after 1905 saw an increasing interest in the Empire's "forgotten" regions at the Northern Pacific shores. See Remnev, *Rossiia Dal'nego Vostoka*, 439–469.

This incident, however, also revealed what officials and experts had long criticised: the resource-rich region was completely and utterly at the mercy of Japanese fishermen. After Sotnikov's death, even Tsar Nicholas II demanded that similar events should not be allowed to happen again and that the protection of the Russian coast should be intensified.[22] However, the conditions for that were more than unfavourable. In a report from December 1906, the governor general of the Priamur region had to admit that, until 1895, there had been no ships available to control the fishing grounds off the coasts of Kamchatka, and, therefore, no one had monitored the situation. Ever since, local authorities had repeatedly asked for cutters and small cruisers to better control the gigantic region. Now, the governor had finally heard that ships were being send to the Far East. But all this was no more than a drop in the ocean. The only thing that would really help, according to him, was the consistent use of warships. In the meantime, the Japanese fishermen were arriving with "entire fleets."[23] By contrast, off the coasts of Kamchatka and the Commander Islands, located approximately 175 kilometres east of Kamchatka, one lonely Russian naval vessel was tasked with controlling the entire region.

3.3 Fragile Stability

The Sotnikov incident attracted attention all the more because it happened in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, when the resource conflicts were still not settled. In the Peace Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), both sides had agreed to handle these questions separately. This created the preconditions for several agreements and treaties that would have sweeping consequences for the relations between the two states.[24] Among them was an agreement that has received relatively little attention in the literature, although some contemporaries had hailed it as the biggest success of the Japanese: The Russo-Japanese Fisheries Convention from 1907. This treaty detailed the more generalised principles of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which had provided equal rights to Japanese and Russian subjects fishing off the Russian Pacific

22 RGIA, f. 398, op. 68, d. 21798, l. 84.
23 RGIA, f. 398, op. 68, d. 21798, ll. 89–91.
24 Shulatov, "Economic Relations," 100–111.

coast. The diplomats fought for months about the details, exceptions, and special provisions.[25]

Once the negotiations had come to an end, the Russians at first believed that they had achieved a tremendous success.[26] But the reality looked very different: an onslaught of Japanese fishermen towards the north ensued that dwarfed everything that had happened previously. Now, the Japanese were, after all, able to legally lease coastal sections and fish there. Because Russian companies had neither the material nor the human resources to compete with the numerically and financially superior Japanese, the latter were able to secure most sections of the coastal waters leased out by Russian authorities. By 1910, 127 sections of the Okhotsk-Kamchatka region were leased to Japanese companies, and only twenty-two to their Russian competitors. However, one report claimed that most of the latter were either not exploited or had been re-let to Japanese fishermen. The Japanese not only caught large amounts of fish but also built the necessary infrastructure for the processing and conservation of their catch on "their" coastal sections. By contrast, Russian companies were far from such dynamic developments. A report from 1910 stated that most of them were still in the process of "adapting" to local conditions, whereby the "lack of sophistication" (*nekul'turnost'*) of the region was seen as the biggest obstacle to entrepreneurial success.[27] In addition, the Japanese navy patrolled Russia's coasts in order to protect their subjects—usually outside the empire's territorial waters but, nevertheless, providing a strong symbol of Japanese power. Russia was unable to match these efforts. By 1912, only thirty-five Russian fishing inspectors were stationed on Kamchatka to oversee more than 4,000 kilometres of coastal region and to document treaty violations.[28] A futile endeavour.

The Treaty of 1907 had explicitly left fur seals aside because this problem could not be solved bilaterally. Therefore, the situation around the Commander Islands did not ease up. Japanese sealers' ships lay on roadstead off the islands and encircled them for months in a sort of siege. They not only killed the seals at sea but also attacked them on the beaches and engaged in skirmishes with the guards stationed there.[29] In some ways, the war continued

25 Arkhiv Vneshnoi Politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (hereafter, AVPRI), f. 148 Tikhookeanskii stol, op. 487, d. 1256.

26 AVPRI, f. 148 Tikhookeanskii stol, op. 487, d. 1256, ll. 108–109. Leading Russian newspapers were equally satisfied with the results: Mikhailova, "Representations," 52–53.

27 Geineman, *Rybnyi promysel.*

28 Pushkov, *Rybnye promysly*, 3–6.

29 See for example: AVPRI, f. 148 Tikhookeanskii stol, op. 487, d. 1129, ll. 12–17.

here for some time;[30] but the Commander Islands were also the only place where the disputes could be laid at rest, at least for some time. In 1911, the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Russia signed a convention that banned the hunt for fur seals and sea otters on the high seas.[31] This suddenly put an end to the siege of the islands.[32] However, the agreement changed nothing about the general situation in Russia's northeast.

From a Russian perspective, the Japanese dominance was far more than simply an economic problem. In fact, it was a threat to Russia's territorial integrity and an attack on the loyalty of the indigenous population. Already in 1903, the commander of the gunboat "Mandzhur" had warned about the unhindered expansion of the Japanese; as a result, he claimed, rumours would spread among the population that Kamchatka had been sold to the Japanese just as Alaska had been sold to the United States.[33] After the conclusion of the Fisheries Convention of 1907, many Russian observers became even more convinced that Japan might plan not a military but an economic detachment of Kamchatka from Russia. In his book about Russia's "forgotten regions," the journalist and explorer Boris Gorovskii claimed that maps were already circulating in Japan that marked Kamchatka not as Russian but as Japanese territory; and, he warned, the "mistakes of 1867" should not be repeated.[34] Equally threatening to the Russians was the fact that the Japanese were not only seasonally in the majority in the region but many of them attempted to stay there indefinitely, as Russian authorities feared.[35]

What impact would their economic and military superiority have on the indigenous inhabitants of Kamchatka? Some observers warned that the loyalty of the Kamchadals could, under these circumstances, not be taken for granted. One report by the physician Vladimir Tiushov, who had spent several years on Kamchatka, noted that the local population "does not know, if it has real friends and who they are, Russians or Japanese? To whom shall they go with their needs? During our 200 years of reign over Kamchatka, we, the Russians, have taught the *aborigenov* of this land to fear us *kul'turtregerov* like poachers. Indeed, what we have done to Kamchatka during this period is enough to judge our rule of this country. We have emptied it, brought

30 RGIA DV, f. 702, op. 1, d. 651, ll. 2–12.
31 Dorsey, *Conservation Diplomacy,* 154–159.
32 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota (hereafter, RGAVMF), f. 418, op. 1, d. 4942, l. 32.
33 RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2627, l. 34.
34 Gorovskii, *Zabytiia Russkiia Zemli,* 129.
35 Pushkov, *Rybnye promysly*, 80.

diseases to the region, destroyed […] the fur bearing animals."[36] Other sources supported such depressing observations and warned that more and more locals were actively turning towards the Japanese.[37] When Japanese soldiers arrived on the Commander Islands during the Russo-Japanese war, these concerns seemed to be validated. Some inhabitants openly expressed that they considered themselves from now on Japanese subjects.[38]

These and many more disturbing events and observations translated into several energetic and vocal demands for a stronger Russian presence in the region. Kamchatka's belonging to Russia should be made visible with imperial flags and guns and, if need be, would also be defended. However, in the face of the enormous costs and the seemingly infinite obstacles connected to an effective control over the fishing industry, nothing much came of these demands. The example of the Russian navy illustrates this clearly. Its representatives, on the one hand, repeatedly warned about the imminent "dishonouring of the Russian flag"; on the other hand, they were simultaneously shooting down all calls for additional ships and patrols that were being made by other ministries and agencies, arguing that naval vessels were not built for "police work" and that patrols along the coast contradicted the fleet's "strategic goals" in the Pacific.[39] Until the collapse of the empire, nothing much changed about this conflict between the state's desire to defend its borders and the lack of means to improve this situation.

Despite all these problems, the situation somewhat improved after 1910. A relatively functional fishing inspection was created, which—although still chronically underfunded and badly equipped—was increasingly better able to fulfil its tasks.[40] At the same time, Japanese companies expanded their influence constantly, and those companies that had, at the beginning of the century, operated in the Amur Region now also shifted their business to Kamchatka, while a Japanese consulate opened in Petropavlovsk.[41] Only few Russian companies were able to share in the wealth of the region and only on a modest level. In the shadow of the First World War, a balance developed, not least because a reliable income mattered more to the Russian state than the fears about a "yellow peril." However, as the Russian Empire

36 RGIA DV, f. 1005, op. 1, d. 8, l. 42.
37 For similar observations on other parts along the Russian North pacific coast: Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 85–92; Sokolsky, "Fishing, Settlement, and Conservation."
38 RGIA DV, f. 1046, op. 1, d. 2, l. 139.
39 RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 3919, ll. 9–10; ibid. ll. 11–12; ibid. ll. 21–210b; ibid. ll. 51–510b.
40 Pushkov, *Rybnye promysly,* 64–93.
41 Howell, *Capitalism from Within*, 169; RGIA DV, f. 702, op. 7, d. 85, l. 4.

collapsed after the revolutions of 1917, the Japanese businessmen were in a better position than ever.

3.4 Japanese Dominance

During the Civil War and the first years of Soviet rule, Kamchatka was de facto a Japanese colony. During the fishing season, Japanese citizens far outnumbered Kamchatka's Russian and indigenous population and dominated in almost every coastal region.[42] Japanese companies could do as they pleased, and they made the most of this opportunity. The alternating governments in the Far East were unable (or unwilling) to do anything against it, as were the enemy camps fighting each other on Kamchatka. Here, civil war was fought primarily to control the centre of the peninsula, the city of Petropavlovsk.

Hardly anyone here took note of what happened in the faraway regions of Kamchatka. Only occasionally would splinters of information reach the different authorities in Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok[43] or the still-existing imperial diplomatic representations in Tokyo and Hakodate, which were powerless for different reasons. If at all, the Russian resistance was communicated through protest notes and declarations that were just as wordy as they were helpless.[44] The Russian embassy in Tokyo shied away even from those measures, allegedly from a fear of attracting even more Japanese fishermen to the region.[45] At the same time, the Japanese navy increased its presence in the region; sure enough, without attempting a full-scale military invasion of Kamchatka (which had been feared by many and was accepted as a fact by some others), "Japan deals with Russia's Far Eastern territories as with occupied territories," declared the Chamber of Commerce of the Far East in May 1922.[46] In any case, the presence of a Japanese man-of-war in the harbour of Petropavlovsk was the only guarantee of victory for Kamchatka's White authorities.[47]

On the Commander Islands could be observed the consequences of maritime resources being exploited without limits and even international

42 Arov, "Inostrannoe brakonerstvo."
43 On the history of Kamchatka during the Civil War, see Pustovit, "Protivostoianie." For the Far East in general, see Sablin, *Far Eastern Republic, 1905–1922*.
44 RGIA DV, f. R-4411, op. 1, d. 2, l. 2000b.
45 RGIA DV, f. R-4411, op. 1, d. 52, l. 23.
46 RGIA DV, f. R-4411, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 200–2010b.
47 Protokol sekretnogo soveshchaniia, 31 March 1922. Boris Aleksandrovich Kriukov Papers, 1917–1923, Box 1, Kamchatka 1921–1922, Hoover Institution Archives.

agreements being ignored. In many ways, this was a return to a "normality" that had simply been suspended for a couple of years after the Fur Seal Convention of 1911, when the killing of the seals had been severly restricted. Japanese seal hunters repeatedly killed seals and sea otters on the beaches. The inhabitants of the islands, who knew exactly how fatally such practices would affect the already severely decimated animal populations, were torn. Sometimes, they attacked the sealers; more often, they cooperated with them. They did not really have any other choice, since the regular supply of the islands with foodstuffs and coal from Russia had been suspended after 1917, and the locals were often left to fend for themselves.[48] Under these conditions, the Aleuts ignored all restrictions regarding the fur seal killings and offered their support to any party interested in taking furs from the islands. Many Japanese sealers used the opportunity and, with support from the indigenous population, literally slaughtered the herds on the islands.[49]

Sometimes, even Japanese naval officers took part in these formally illegal dealings. A report about the arrival of two Japanese warships on the islands stated: "The crew and the officers from the men of war have never asked the permission to land and have been engaged in purchasing furs from the Aleuts who have been hunting unlawfully. In exchange for the furs the Japanese offer cheap chintz and alcohol. […] It was impossible to confiscate the furs because the Japanese exceeded in number the Russian guards. After the departure of the transport "Kanto" from the Island Bering there died suddenly three persons from the use of alcohol in the village."[50] The administrators of the islands, who could expect support neither from Vladivostok nor from Petropavlovsk, took hold of every straw in order to protect themselves from the Japanese. When the American zoologist Leonhard Stejneger came to work on the islands in the summer of 1922, they at first hoped that "his presence, as a scientist who has a thorough knowledge of the fur seal industry, will be of great use as well as his being a member of the American nation with which the Japanese reckon very much. In his presence the crews of the Japanese men of war will refrain from the impudent purchase of furs."[51]

48 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter, GARF), f. 946, op. 1, d. 9, l. 5. See also Stejneger, "Fur-Seal Industry."

49 Khabarov, *Kotikovoe khoziaistvo,* 45.

50 Smithsonian Institution Archives Record Unit 7074, Leonhard Stejneger Papers, Box 14, folder 14, Report from Khranoff, 1 August 1922 (translation).

51 Smithsonian Institution Archives Record Unit 7074, Leonhard Stejneger Papers, Box 14, folder 14, Letter from Koltanovsky, 24 August 1922 (translation).

For the entire population of the region, the Civil War was a time of great challenges. After more than four years of fighting and violence, neither the Whites nor the Reds could hope to find enthusiastic supporters among the inhabitants of Kamchatka and the Commander Islands. Now, many people preferred to live under foreign occupation. The Aleuts from Bering Island asked Stejneger to support their claim to become American citizens,[52] whereas some Kamchadals voted for a future under Japanese rule. A report from August 1922 stated: "The inhabitants [of Kamchatka, RK] openly explained to me that they wanted neither the Whites nor the Reds. Nobody had brought order but all of them had only marauded and looted. Under these circumstances the *inorodtsy* are prepared to call for an intervention by the Japanese, who strongly support this and spend millions of yen on presents and travel through the villages and agitate for the autonomy of Kamchatka under a Japanese protectorate."[53] Since the Japanese intervention troops retreated from the Russian Far East in 1922, this never came to pass. At the same time, the days of the Whites in Petropavlovsk were numbered. Isolated and detached from the rest of Kamchatka, they had hoped for a miracle but gave up in November 1922.[54]

Now it was the Bolsheviks' turn to reassert order and to obtain control over the region. In the first years of Soviet "rule," they were unable to assert control over the majority of the region apart from some bigger localities and the isolated Commander Islands. By contrast, Soviet officials had to overcome the individual interests of a population that was, in many cases, fighting for economic survival. Among the indigenous population, Soviet institutions in general and the Bolshevik party in particular were highly unpopular and had only very few followers. An internal report from the Kamchatka branch of the Communist party from 1924 stated, for instance, that the party had only seventy-eight members on the whole peninsula, among them not a single native. According to the report, many Soviet officials had a "dark" past, and the Japanese were seen by many locals as agreeable trading-partners.[55] The badly organised Soviet administration was as unable as its predecessor to control the exploitation of resources and to monitor foreign fishermen and traders.[56]

52 Smithsonian Institution Archives Record Unit 7074, Leonhard Stejneger Papers, Box 14, folder, Special Report by Stejneger, n.d.
53 GARF, f. 944, op. 1, d. 229, l. 40b.
54 GARF, f. 3756, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 1–2.
55 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kamchatskogo Kraia (hereafter, GAKK), f. P-19, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1–73.
56 Ibid.

Matters were made worse by the fact that many Soviet officials liked to hold out their hands and close their eyes: bribery and corruption were ubiquitous.[57]

Responsible authorities had to admit that the cooperation between the Japanese fishermen and the Japanese navy "resembled a well-organised enterprise."[58] The Soviet fishing inspection was powerless in the face of this alliance. Authorities were unable to force the Japanese "poachers" to act in accordance with legal procedures. Rather than paying for concessions, fishermen relied on the protection of Japanese navy vessels that intervened on their behalf with armed violence. Sometimes, Japanese soldiers even tried to arrest Soviet officials working on Kamchatka. In one instance, a military detachment spent several days in a coastal village, searching for a fisheries inspector whom they thought to be hostile to Japanese fishing practices.[59]

There could be no quick way out of this situation for the Soviet Union. The passing of the "Soviet–Japanese Basic Convention" in January 1925 was a first step towards stabilising the situation. In the following years, both states agreed on a new fisheries convention (1928), and the Soviet Union again granted concessions to Japanese companies. Now, one corporation secured almost ninety percent of the sections and became the undisputed monopolist of the region.[60] For some Japanese observers, this dominance of Japanese fishermen on Kamchatka was justified by history. For example, an op-ed in the newspaper "Hakodate Simbun" from January 1929 stated: "The coast of Kamchatka belongs to Japan and it is strange that Russia […] has the possibility to allow or to forbid Japanese to fish at those coasts that have been cultivated for fishing for the first time by Japanese fishermen."[61] Over the course of the 1930s, tensions between the Soviet authorities and the Japanese companies remained high, and armed clashes ensued regularly. Despite all these conflicts, both sides prolonged their agreement again and again. A last deal was signed as late as 1944.[62] It was only after World War II that the presence of Japanese fishing companies along the Soviet Far Eastern coast came to an end.

57 "Dokumenty i materialy," 236–7.
58 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (hereafter, RGAE), f. 478, op. 1, d. 1876, ll. 2–20b.
59 RGAE, f. 478, op. 1, d. 1876, ll. 91–95.
60 Mandrik, Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti, 124–135.
61 Quoted after: Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti*, 131.
62 Sokolsky, "Fishing for Empire"; Sudzuki, "Otnosheniia." On the situation during the Second World War, see "Otchet diplomaticheskogo agenta."

3.5 Continuities

When the first Japanese fishermen reached Kamchatka in the late nineteenth century, they seemed to be just another group of foreigners who tried to exploit the region and its people. But within a few years, it became clear that the Japanese presence had a different quality than the regular visits of American traders. First, the number of Japanese fishermen operating annually off Kamchatka far exceeded that of the local population. Second, they built bases along the coasts to process the fish. Finally, until the 1930s, there were significant voices in Japan calling for Kamchatka's incorporation into the Empire of Japan. In the logic of the advocates of the Japanese "pelagic empire," the conquest of Kamchatka seemed to be a logical step.[63] What was more, in the eyes of the indigenous population and Russian officials alike, Japanese economic superiority was often equalled with political dominance. However, whereas most Russian observers perceived this situation as a threat to the empire's integrity, some locals reacted far more positively to the presence of foreigners, which, in turn, heightened officials' anxieties. Even if the Russians never accepted it, they needed to find ways to rationalise Japan's economic—and sometimes political and military—dominance and to deal with it.

Therefore, the history of Russo- / Soviet–Japanese conflicts over maritime resources is a history with various continuities. Over the course of more than four decades, narratives in Russian and Soviet sources remain basically the same: we are weak. We cannot compete. We are being overrun. Finally: we will lose Kamchatka. Imperial and Soviet views of reality regarding these issues differed, at most, only gradually. In this context, the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War primarily mark an escalation of a development that had begun much earlier and lasted much longer. By no means do they represent a discontinuity but, rather, the pinnacle of Japanese domination in the region.

No later than the agreement of 1907 had Japanese companies taken on such a dominant role in Kamchatka that many Russians believed that Kamchatka was de facto a Japanese colony. All attempts by the empire to prevent the appropriation of the peninsula had turned out to be futile. With the collapse of state order in Russia after 1917, this extensive Japanese presence turned into total dominance. Now, there was no one left who could stop Japanese companies acting in the coastal regions. At first, this did not really change after the Bolsheviks won the Civil War. Eventually, the Soviets were able to regulate the exploitation of resources, albeit only with difficulty. The

63 Tsutsui, "Pelagic Empire," 21–38.

conflictual relation between Soviet authorities and Japanese fishing companies lasted well into World War II.

Another continuity becomes apparent when looking at the Russian and Soviet reactions to the perceived threat: both Russia and the Soviet Union operated from a defensive position of imperial weakness. They had only scarce means to counter the many extralegal methods of the Japanese fishermen (which were partly legitimised by the Japanese state). Large parts of the resource-rich regions were de facto under Japanese control. More importantly, the officials of the Russian Empire, but also Soviet officials, insisted—understandably—that the sanctions that had been agreed by contract or that were accepted by international law be applied. But since there was no one to enforce these laws, this insistence on legal norms turned out to be a blunt instrument.

With Japanese companies becoming stronger and stronger, the status of the peninsula as "Russian" or "Soviet" was considered doubtful for decades and was repeatedly challenged. This had also been the case in the immediate aftermath of the Alaska purchase of 1867, when Russian voiced concerns that the "Americanisation" of the region was imminent.[64] However, the Japanese threat was much more dramatic because it was not "only" limited to the economic exploitation of the region: political control seemed to be also at stake. Taken together, these continuities made the Russo-Japanese conflicts over maritime resources in the Northern Pacific a remarkable case of empire building at the periphery—a case that illustrates the fragmentation of authority of Imperial Russian/early Soviet statehood in the region.[65]

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64 Voloshinov, Otchet po komandirovke, 85; see also: Kindler, "American Russia".
65 Kindler, *Robbenreich*, 14–16.

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4 International Fisheries Conflicts in the Bering Sea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Soviet–US–Japan Triangle Relationship

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Abstract In the early 1930s, both coastal and offshore Japanese fisheries in Kamchatka caused strong tensions between Japan and Soviet authorities. Japanese salmon fishery companies then turned their attention to the East Bering Sea near Alaska. The Japanese government operated its experimental salmon fishery in the international waters of Bristol Bay in Alaska in 1936–1937. The operation immediately triggered massive protests from the US side. Even though the Japanese government was seriously concerned about the situation, Japan could not step back easily, as a compromise with the USA would weaken Japan's position in its negotiations on a new fishery treaty with the USSR. By examining several conflicts concerning the Bering Sea between Japan, the USSR, and the USA, we come to a fuller understanding of the rivalry between Japan and Russia regarding fisheries in Russian Far East waters in the 1930s.

4.1 Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese fisheries began exploring to the north for fishery resources, which caused fierce diplomatic conflicts with Russia and its successor, the USSR, with regard to fisheries, especially in Kamchatka. At the same time, increasing numbers of Japanese salmon fisheries in the Bering Sea caused serious diplomatic problems with the USA in 1936–1937, when the Japanese government operated an experimental salmon fishery in the international waters of Bristol Bay in Alaska.

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Earlier studies in Japan discussed the escalation of the conflict in 1937 and its background mainly from the viewpoint of the history of the Japanese fishery industry.[1] However, few studies made use of Japanese diplomatic documents, so how the Japanese government coordinated fishery policies over the issue and how the problem was related to long-lasting conflicts between Russia and Japan remains poorly understood.

The first goal of this study was to clarify how the conflict in Bristol Bay was related to Japanese fisheries in Kamchatka, checking historical facts and showing an outline of the history of Japanese fisheries in Soviet waters. Interestingly, we found that Japanese policymakers justified their salmon fishery in Alaska in 1936 using the same rhetoric that they had applied to Japanese fisheries in Soviet waters. We will also focus on these rhetorical expressions.

The second goal of this study was to determine why the Japanese government started the project in Alaska in 1936 despite expecting strong opposition from the USA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan anticipated that the US would object strongly to Japanese salmon fishery in Bristol Bay before commencement of the project in 1936. In fact, their concerns soon became a reality when some US fishery journals and newspapers on the West Coast published reports on Japanese experimental salmon operations in Alaska and expressed serious concerns in the autumn of 1936. However, the Japanese government continued the project even in 1937, when it confronted the spreading backlash from the US. The project was finally cancelled at the request of the US government at the end of 1937. We will also clarify the historical facts regarding this process.

This conflict in Bristol Bay was not only an issue between the USA and Japan but was also an issue between the USSR and Japan. The government of Japan faced difficulties in diplomatic negotiations with the USSR with regard to their new bilateral fisheries convention. Escalation of the conflict in Bristol Bay between Japan and the USA resulted from Japan's difficulties in negotiations with the USSR. To have a solid understanding of long-lasting fishery problems between Japan and the USSR, we will focus on the escalating conflict in the East Bering Sea (Fig. 1).

1 Onodera and Hiroyoshi, "Nichibei Gyogyō," 13–29.

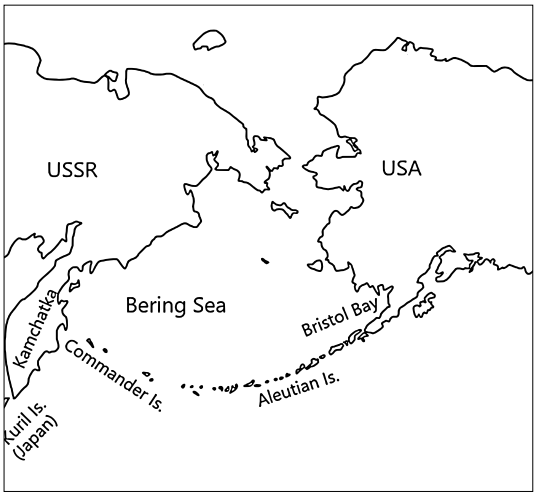

Fig. 1 Map of Bering Sea (1930s)

4.2 Japanese Fisheries in Kamchatka in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Japan acquired lasting fishery rights on the Russian Far East coast in the Peace Treaty of Portsmouth after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Japanese salmon fisheries began to occupy fishing areas on the coast of Kamchatka, competing with their Russian counterparts after the Russo-Japanese Fisheries Convention of 1907 established fishery procedures based on the Treaty of Portsmouth. Japanese salmon fisheries adopted the latest cannery technology from the USA in the early 1910s and outcompeted their Russian rivals during the height of the Russian Revolution, Civil War, and Allied Intervention in Soviet Russia.[2]

The Soviet local authorities organised annual competitive bidding for onshore fishing areas in the Soviet Far East every year. Only Soviet and Japanese fishery operators took part in the bidding and could acquire or renew their rights to operate in fishing areas. The Russian authorities originally began this bidding system based on the Russo-Japanese Fisheries Convention of

2 With regard to how Japanese fisheries developed in Kamchatka, see Kaminaga, *Hokuyō no Tanjō*. See also Robert Kindler's chapter in the present book.

1907, and their successors, the Soviet authorities, continued this system in the 1920s.[3]

The Russo-Japanese Fishery Convention of 1907 was a de facto concession for Japan. Although the convention only ensured equality of treatment for Japanese and Russian fishery operators, the terms were advantageous for Japanese fishery operators, especially with regard to securing a workforce. The fishery convention allowed subjects of the Japanese Empire to operate fisheries in Russian Far East seas under the same conditions as subjects of the Russian Empire. It was more advantageous for Japanese fishery operators to do their business in Russian Far East seas than their Russian counterparts because Japanese operators could bring their workers from Japan and export their products to Japan at lower cost. Japanese operators could recruit low-wage, skilled, and experienced fishery workers with relatively little effort, and there was constantly strong demand for various fishery products in Japan.[4] It was more difficult for Russian operators to ensure a Russian workforce and materials for fisheries in Kamchatka, which was barely populated and is very far not only from European Russia but also Primorie, the central region of the Russian Far East.

Japanese salmon fisheries in Kamchatka flourished in the early 1920s. They bid successfully for many excellent fishing areas every year and even rejected the bid by Russian authorities under the auspices of Japanese military forces remaining in the Russian Far East in the early 1920s.[5] Although there were no unclaimed fishing areas for newcomers on the coast of Kamchatka, they could not expand their fields further to the north at that time. Operations in far northern areas were not economically viable because it would cost too much to transport workers to the sites and return their products to Japan.

Fishing areas on west and southeast Kamchatka were initially more popular among Japanese fisheries than other areas in Kamchatka. Bidding prices for fishing areas in west Kamchatka were usually higher due to the relatively greater production per fishing area.[6] Later, however, operations in northeast Kamchatka on the Bering Sea rose in importance. The Japanese operated 102

3 Kaminaga, *Hokuyō no Tanjō*, 83–85. Regarding the operation of the concession system in the 1920s, see also Robert Kindler's chapter in the present book.

4 With the decline of fishing in Hokkaido in the 1920s, more and more poor and unskilled peasants in North Japan had worked aboard on Japanese factory ships in Soviet waters and onshore in Kamchatka. See Howell, *Capitalism from Within*, 143–145.

5 Ogino, *Hokuyō Gyogyō*, again, see also Robert Kindler's chapter in the present volume.

6 Nōrinshō, *Hokuyō Gyogyō*, 14–15. Because of the high cost and technical sophistication of refrigeration, diesel engines, and larger ships, overseas fisheries did not develop

fishing areas in Karaginsky district and thirty-two in Olyutorsky district, with a total catch of salmon and other fish amounting to 13,476 tons in 1934.[7]

Naturally, the freshly created Soviet Union showed reluctance to take over the convention that the Russian Empire had agreed with Japan in 1907. After the Soviet–Japanese Basic Convention of 1925, which established diplomatic ties between the two countries, talks on their new fishery convention proceeded with some difficulty.[8] Finally, the Soviet Union and Japan concluded the new Soviet–Japanese Fishery Convention in 1928. They agreed to keep several conditions of the old conventions on the principles of the fishing areas and fishing rights (Article 1 and Article 2, etc.). At the same time, they agreed to make an exception for Soviet state-owned corporations' and several Japanese companies' fishing areas in the annual bidding (Final Protocol, Part I), which had become a main point of issue in their negotiations.[9]

The Soviet leadership worked to gradually eliminate Japan's influence on Soviet Far East fisheries from early on in the process. For example, as early as 1921, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) planned to conduct the competitive bidding for fishing areas in its Far East Region by the RSFSR and the Far Eastern Republic. Although they did not carry out separate bidding, it was clear that the Soviet leadership intended to decrease the number of Japanese fishery operators, allowing American fishery operators to take part in the bidding.[10]

In 1927, a year before both countries concluded the new Soviet-Japanese Fishery Convention, the USSR established the large state-owned corporation, Kamchatka Joint-Stock Corporation (AKO: *Aktsionernoe Kamchatskoe Obshchestvo*). The Soviet leadership organised AKO to develop the Kamchatka region.[11] AKO was not merely a fishery company: the Soviet authorities empowered it not only to exploit natural resources, such as fish, fur, and minerals, but to supply food to the local population, provide transportation in its administrative areas, accept domestic immigrants, and improve the

extensively before the mid-1920s. See Smith, "Japan's High Seas Fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean," 68.

7 Nōrinshō, *Hokuyō Gyogyō*, 6, 14.

8 Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho: Showa-ki I, Dai 2-bu, Dai 3-kan,* 246–272.

9 Kaminaga, *Hokuyō no Tanjō*, 86–87; Chōsho, JACAR, B10070043700 (eleventh–fifty-first pictures).

10 Frolova, "Sovetskaia kontsessionnaia diplomatiia," 125.

11 Gosudarstvennyi Komitet, *Voprosy istorii rybnoi promyshlennosti Kamchatki,* 8–10, 12.

livelihood of indigenous people.[12] A Russian historian in Kamchatka, V. Il'ina, wrote that AKO was "Soviet's answer" to Japan.[13] AKO acquired many fertile fishing areas at good prices in annual bids from 1929 and soon become a threat to Japanese fishery operators.

That year, 1929, was the first year of the first five-year plan and also "the year of the Great Turn" for fisheries in the Soviet Far East. First, Soviet companies bought thirty-six percent of all fishing areas in the annual bidding, compared to fourteen percent in the previous year.[14] Second, the 1929 Soviet investment in fisheries had grown to 18.8 million rubles, compared to 5 million rubles in 1928.[15] Third, the production of fishery products amounted to 40 million rubles (153,000 tons) in 1928, 49.5 million rubles (171,000 tons) in 1929, and 87 million rubles (317,000 tons) in 1930.[16] Of course, AKO contributed a great deal to the rapid growth of this industry. AKO's annual catch increased by twenty percent in 1929, 182 percent in 1930, 161 percent in 1931, and 298 percent in 1932 compared to 1928.[17] These figures may be exaggerated, but statistics by the Japanese government also confirmed the rapid growth of the production and catch by Soviet companies to some extent.[18]

Soviet fishery companies, including AKO, employed thousands of Japanese workers in Kamchatka until 1930 because of the shortage in labour,[19] but the demand for Japanese workers decreased rapidly, and Soviet seasonal workers were substituted for Japanese ones in the early 1930s.[20] In October 1932, the local party organisation in Kamchatka concluded that there was no need to ensure Japanese blue-collar workers for AKO in the period of the second five-year plan and that, instead, they had shortages of management-level employees and technical workers, that is, Soviet domestic white-collar workers.[21]

On the other hand, Japanese fishery companies faced several difficulties. First, the cost of purchasing fishing areas in annual competitive bidding increased compared to before AKO came into being. AKO had become a

12 Il'ina, "Itogi khoziaistvennogo," 24–26; Kamchatskii Okruzhnyi Ispolnitel'nyi Komitet Sovetov, *Postanovleniia v plenuma Kamchatskogo*, 8–9.
13 Il'ina, "O formakh khaziaistvennogo," 89.
14 Voronchanin, *Iaponiia i SSSR*, 62.
15 Ibid. 60.
16 Ibid. 60; Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi*, 44.
17 Bol'shakov, Rubinskii and Zhurid, *Kamchatskaia oblast'*, 62.
18 Nōrinshō, *Hokuyō Gyogyō*, 9.
19 Mandrik, *Istoriia Rybnoi*, 50–51.
20 Gosudarstvennyi Komitet, *Voprosy istorii rybnoi promyshlennosti Kamchatki*, 44; see also Kurmazov, "V kakom napravlenii," 410.
21 Kamchatskii Okruzhnyi Ispolnitel'nyi Komitet, *Postanovleniia v plenuma Kamchatskogo*, 10.

powerful competitor to Japanese companies in biddings in the early 1930s. It sometimes bought fishing areas operated by Japanese operators for years, benefiting from its deep pockets and the more favourable exchange rate fixed by the Soviet authorities. Second, the Great Depression from 1929 on adversely affected sales of their products, most of which were destined for North America and Europe. Third, they were concerned about the possibility of a decline of pink salmon resources. They found that they had good catches in odd years and poor catches in even years in Kamchatka from 1925 on.[22] Consequently, they were concerned that their long years of overfishing had caused a decline in the population. It is true that Kamchatka pink salmon resources experienced this biennial cycle, but according to recent studies, the beginning of that cycle had nothing to do with the depletion of biomass of pink salmon.[23] Japanese fishery operators at that time, however, took the situation seriously.

To address these difficulties, Japanese fishery companies decided to merge to survive. First, unincorporated enterprises merged with each other into a single incorporated company, and then in 1932, the largest leader, *Nichiro Gyogyō*, absorbed smaller competitors to strengthen its management bases, avoiding rivalry among Japanese companies and allowing competition with its real rival, AKO.[24] This consolidation of industries was done under the leadership of the Japanese government, which promoted corporate mergers in all areas of industry in Japan to come out of the depression.[25]

The Soviet leadership did not necessarily aim to exclude Japanese operators from Kamchatka thoroughly even in the mid-1930s. Although Stalin and his allies adhered strongly to the Fisheries Convention of 1928 and insisted on the principles of the traditional competitive bidding system which had already favoured AKO then, they were usually willing to make temporary compromises to maintain a stable relationship with Japan.[26] For example, even in November 1936, at the conclusion of the German–Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, the Soviet leadership agreed with Maxim Litvinov, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, who insisted that they should not suspend negotiations and the conclusion of a new Soviet–Japanese Fishery Convention. According to the protocol of the Politburo of the Communist

22 Nōrinshō, *Hokuyō Gyogyō*, 6, 14.
23 Ruggerone and Irvine, "Salmon in the North Pacific," 158.
24 Kaminaga, *Hokuyō no Tanjō*, 166–167.
25 Ibid.
26 Adibekov, Wada, and Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv, *VKP(b)*, 73.

Party, they aimed to reinforce the position of soft-liners towards the USSR in the government of Japan, such as the prime minister and foreign minister of Japan at the time, Hirota Kōki.[27]

In the early 1930s, Japanese fishery companies also approached the problem from another direction: they developed offshore salmon fisheries in the open sea off Kamchatka. Using newly developed effective drift nets, many groups of ships began to catch various kinds of salmon approaching Kamchatka from the outer seas. Some groups of ships came from Japan proper, while others came from the northern Kurils, which at that time belonged to Japan.[28] Not only Japanese companies but also AKO advanced the development of offshore and open sea fisheries in the period of the second five-year plan.[29] Even in this respect, AKO and Japanese competitors were in rivalry with each other.

In the mid-1930s, Nichiro even succeeded in absorbing these offshore fisheries with its financial power under the guidance of the Japanese government. Nichiro completed a monopoly on fisheries on and off Kamchatka in Japan and became the only rival of AKO.[30] In short, bitter rivalry between AKO and Nichiro pushed other Japanese companies out of Kamchatka fisheries. Under these circumstances, the government of Japan had no alternative but to support AKO's only rival, Nichiro. In spite of an increasingly autarchic tendency in the Japanese economy in the mid-1930s, Japanese fisheries at that time were still orientated considerably toward exports to Europe and North America because fishery products were seen as an important source of foreign currency for Japan.[31]

Of course, some companies did not obey Nichiro and the government's line readily. Some subsidiary companies of other major Japanese fishery companies, e.g., Nippon Suisan and Hayashikane, endeavoured to develop new fisheries in the open Bering Sea: trawl fishery and salmon fishery near Alaska, a new frontier for Japanese fisheries in the mid-1930s.[32] Several rapid technological innovations also enabled Japanese fishery companies to operate fisheries even in the international waters near Alaska in the Bering Sea at a lower cost than in the late 1920s.

27 Adibekov, Wada, and Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv, *VKP(b)*, 180–181.
28 Regarding the large business combination of these fishery companies, see Nichiro Gyogyō, *Nichiro Gyogyō Keieishi*, 166.
29 Shmidt, "Nauchnoe issledovanie," 249.
30 Kaminaga, *Hokuyō no Tanjō,* 167.
31 Tsutsui, "The Pelagic Empire," 25.
32 Kashiwao, "Hokuyō Gyogyō," 279; Kataoka and Kameda, "Kisen Trōru Gyogyō," 52.

The important thing is that Japanese fishery operators regarded both the international waters near Kamchatka and those near Alaska as Japanese "Northern Sea (*Hokuyō*)." The ideological concept of Japanese "Northern Sea" was an imperialistic view that all undeveloped open seas of the North Pacific were destined to be exploited by Japanese people, a self-acknowledged "seafaring race," but it was also based on their own convenient interpretation of *mare liberum*, freedom of the high seas.[33] When Japanese fishery companies developed offshore salmon fisheries in the open sea off Kamchatka in the early 1930s, they justified their operation on the ground of *mare liberum*. Later, in the mid-1930s, they justified their operation in the international waters near Alaska in the same way as they did in the open sea off Kamchatka.

4.3 To the "North" of the Northern Sea: The High Seas of Alaska

The Manchurian Incident of 1931, in which the Japanese Kwantung Army commenced a military operation without permission from the government of Japan, was a challenge to the multilateral regime based on the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922 and its treaty. Japan's military operation in Manchuria, however, did not cause irreconcilable damage to US–Japanese relations because Japan claimed that the campaign was a defence of its "traditional" concessions in Manchuria, for which the Western powers showed some understanding.[34] On the other hand, the USA was sensitive to military actions by Japan outside of Manchuria. The US government promptly dispatched the US naval fleet to Shanghai in 1932, when the *Shanghai Incident* (the January 28 Incident) broke out.[35]

Diplomatically, Japan had several alternatives after it withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 and decided to renounce the Washington Naval Treaty in 1934.[36] Among these alternatives, the foreign minister of Japan in 1933–1937, Hirota Kōki, promoted the plan to make an economic bloc for the Japanese Empire not only in Manchuria but also in the rest of northern China, collaborating closely with his vice minister, Shigemitsu Mamoru. Their

33 As to the ideological concept of Japanese "Northern Sea," see Kaminaga, *Hokuyo no Tanjō*.

34 Nester, *Power*, 113; Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 114.

35 Nester, *Power*, 107; Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 114; Kitaoka, *Monkokaihō*, 47. For terms in italics, see the glossary at the end of this chapter.

36 Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 117.

diplomacy did not necessarily mean antagonism against the USA, but it obviously tended to exclude influence of the USA and UK from northern China.[37] After Hirota resigned as prime-minister-doubling-as-foreign-minister due to the domestic situation in February 1937, the new Japanese foreign minister, Satō Naotake, changed the policy toward China, emphasising a cooperative relationship with the USA and the UK. Specifically, Satō announced a policy of seeking cooperation with the USA and the UK for economic development in northern China.[38] This change achieved recognition from the US ambassador to Japan, Joseph Clark Grew, and the UK foreign secretary, Robert Anthony Eden.[39]

These improvements in US–Japan relations, however, were only temporary. With the *Marco Polo Bridge Incident* in July 1937, the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War considerably worsened the feelings of the American people toward Japan. The US government had a negative attitude toward economic sanctions against Japan for a while because domestic public opinion in the USA opposed involvement in armed conflicts abroad, but US–Japan relations progressed from bad to worse.[40]

In the early 1930s, increasing numbers of Japanese fishery companies made applications to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Japan (MAF) for offshore salmon fishery in the international waters of the Bering Sea. Newly equipped fishery vessels enabled the operations there, farther from Japan than in Kamchatka, to be commercially viable. Both the MAF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) maintained a very cautious stance with regard to this ambitious project and did not permit these companies to operate salmon fisheries in this region.

Japanese entrepreneurs had given attention to the potential of salmon fishery in Alaska even before the Russo-Japanese war and made applications to the Japanese government to open such fisheries.[41] The government at the time also expected opposition from the US and rejected these petitions, and in 1906, the US Congress passed a bill prohibiting foreign citizens from operating fisheries near the US territorial coast of Alaska.[42]

In the 1930s, fishery was one of the main industries in Alaska, with salmon fishery being the most important. The total catch of salmon in 1935

37 Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 117. Kitaoka, *Monkokaihō*, 50.
38 Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 132.
39 Ibid.
40 Nester, *Power*, 119–121; Hosoya, "Shinjuwan," 133–134; Kitaoka, *Monkokaihō*, 252.
41 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B11091798900 (second–fifth pictures).
42 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B11091896000 (seventeenth–twenty-sixth pictures).

was more than 73 million fish, most of which consisted of pink salmon and red salmon.[43] Most of the salmon were processed by canning. Ninety-nine canneries, including seven floating canneries, were operated in Alaska in 1935. The total pack of canned salmon exceeded 5 million cases, valued at more than 25 million dollars,[44] and this industry employed 17,529 people.[45]

Some Japanese fishery companies already had experience with operations in the international waters off Alaska in the early 1930s, with backing from the prevailing regime of freedom of the seas in international waters.[46] Their fishing vessels, however, did not cause any disputes with the US because they were cod and crab fishing boats, floating crab canneries, and trawlers for fishmeal, with a small total catch. Furthermore, they only caught fish and crabs on the sea floor and did not compete with salmon fisheries, which operated in coastal areas. Most Japanese crab fisheries with floating canneries operated in the international waters near Kamchatka, so only a few vessels ventured close to Alaska.[47] At this time, the major concern for the Japanese government was to develop effective regulations toward increasing crab fishing vessels in Kamchatka, to conserve crab resources, and to avoid conflicts with Soviet authorities.[48]

The Japanese government promoted trawling with floating fishmeal factories in the international waters of the Bering Sea.[49] The first Japanese experimental trawler operated there in 1929.[50] The Japanese government submitted a bill for promotion of the fishery to the Diet, which passed in August 1932. According to the law, the government granted subsidies of 200,000 yen[51] to two fishery companies to build trawlers and floating factories in 1932 and granted a 150,000-yen subsidy for operating in Bristol Bay of Alaska in 1933.[52] One of these companies, Shinko Suisan Co. Inc., began operating in 1933. It achieved solid results in 1934–1937, operating a floating factory with between five and thirteen trawlers. They produced not only fishmeal but also canned crab, canned cod, salted cod, and frozen cod. In 1936, the company partnered

43 Bureau of Fisheries, *Alaska Fishery*, 24.
44 Ibid., 30.
45 Ibid., 30–31.
46 Smith, "Fisheries," 71.
47 Kaiyō Gyogyō Kyōkai, *Hompō Kaiyō Gyogyō*, 51–54. See also Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042015300 (twelfth–eighteenth pictures).
48 Kaiyō Gyogyō Kyōkai, *Hompō Kaiyō Gyogyō*, 54–55.
49 Ibid., 150–151.
50 Ibid., 150.
51 200,000 yen was worth about 49,500 dollars in August 1932. See Ōkurashō Rizaikyoku, ed., *Kinyū Jikō Sankōsho*, 44.
52 Kaiyō Gyogyō Kyōkai, *Hompō Kaiyō Gyogyō*, 151–152.

with a US fishery company from San Francisco, Union Fish Inc., for help through a Japanese giant general trading company, Mitsubishi Corporation, and began to sell raw fillet cod on site to Union Fish vessels in Bristol Bay.[53]

Increasing numbers of Japanese fishery companies made applications to the Japanese government for salmon fishery in the international waters of Bristol Bay in Alaska from 1933.[54] We have no concrete data regarding why such applications increased from 1933, but it was presumably somehow related to the commencement of Japanese floating crab cannery operations there in 1930 and of trawler operations in 1932. We assume that they gradually discovered the tremendous potential for Japanese salmon fisheries in this area.

As mentioned above, the MAF did not allow Japanese fishery companies to operate salmon fisheries on the high seas of Bristol Bay. However, it presented the project to operate an experimental salmon fishery there in 1936. The Diet approved the budget bill in May 1936,[55] which amounted to 240,000 yen for this three-year project in Bristol Bay. At the same time, on May 24, 1936, the lower house of the Diet adopted a recommendation that the Japanese government should develop a solid policy on "salmon fishery in the Eastern North Pacific."[56]

The recommendation was worded vaguely, but it is possible to read between the lines by examining the discussion on it in the Diet: coastal salmon fishery and offshore salmon fishery in Kamchatka have less potential because of excessive competition not only with Soviet companies but also with other Japanese companies. Therefore, the Japanese must exploit "the Eastern North Pacific," where Japanese trawlers and floating crab canneries have already begun to operate. The international waters are open to everyone. However, the Japanese must choose a careful path because new salmon operations by Japan could generate protests from the US; and so on. "Eastern North Pacific" is an intentionally vague expression representing a paraphrasing of "Bristol Bay of Alaska," as had been done previously by referring to Soviet Kamchatka waters as Japanese "Northern Sea (*Hokuyō*)." Thus, Soviet–Japanese fishery issues became involved in US–Japanese fishery issues in Alaska.

53 Kaiyō Gyogyō Kyōkai, *Hompō Kaiyō Gyogyō*, 152.

54 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (twentieth–twenty-fifth pictures).

55 Teikoku Gikai, Dai 69-kai Teikoku Gikai Shūgiin Honkaigi, no. 10, May 16, 1936, 265. See also Teikoku Gikai, Dai 69-kai Teikoku Gikai Shūgiin Yosan Īn Dai 5 Bunka, no. 3, May 16, 1936, 1.

56 Teikoku Gikai, Dai 69-kai Teikoku Gikai Shūgiin Kengi Īn Dai 2 Bunka, no. 2, May 19, 1936, 1–4; See also Teikoku Gikai, Dai 69 kai Teikoku Gikai Shūgiin Honkaigi, no. 16, May 24, 1936, 477.

In addition, rhetorical expressions similar to those used by contemporary Japanese people when justifying exploitation of colonial Manchuria were used. The policymakers who submitted the recommendation explained that the fishery was a project of national importance and its purpose was to save poor Japanese fishery workers. This was reminiscent of similar arguments that Manchuria was a national lifeline and that Japan had to exploit Manchurian land with the labour of poor Japanese farmers.

Japanese fishery companies had already justified their operations in Soviet waters, claiming that the "Northern Sea" was a national lifeline for Japan and the Japanese had to exploit its national resources with the labour of poor Japanese fishery workers to save them from poverty.[57] The "Northern Sea" was enlarged to encompass Alaska in 1936.

4.4 Conflict in Bristol Bay, 1936–1937

The MAF officially launched its research project in Bristol Bay in June 1936 after receiving funding from the national budget. However, the MAF had already begun preparations for the project before the official launch and submitted a detailed plan to the MOFA in April 1936.[58] Although the MOFA expressed some concerns,[59] it did not stop the project from being carried out.

Two fishing vessels conducted this research voyage. The mother ship belonged to a major Japanese fishery company, Hayashikane, which was one of the predecessors of the current major Japanese food company, Maruha Nichiro Corporation. The fishing ship belonged to a Japanese offshore salmon fishery company, Taiheiyō Gyogyō Corporation, which was a subsidiary company of Nichiro and was also one of the ancestors of Maruha Nichiro.[60] These ships left Japan proper in early June 1936. They joined each other near the northern Kuril Islands in the middle of June and left for Alaska.[61]

They began their research activities in Bristol Bay at the end of June 1936, investigating the climate and sea currents, operating experimental salmon

57 The term "lifeline" was on everyone's lips then in Japan, and the images of the lifeline successfully bound Manchuria to Japan within an organic definition of empire. See Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 95.

58 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (first picture).

59 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (thirty-sixth–thirty-seventh pictures).

60 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (fortieth picture).

61 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (thirty-ninth picture).

fishery with drift nets, and trawling for cod, halibut, and red king crab in the international waters of Bristol Bay from 160° west longitude to the west for more than a month.

The US government obtained information on this research voyage from a Japanese newspaper in late May 1936 and immediately made inquiries to the MOFA through the US embassy in Tokyo on June 3, 1936. On the same day, the MOFA answered that the purpose of the voyage was only to make an investigation. A week later, the MOFA gave the US embassy additional information on this research voyage. The US government accepted these replies and did not raise objections in this instance.[62]

As will be described below, the MOFA and the MAF had talks about this matter in April and May 1936. At that time, the MAF explained that this research voyage was nothing more than a conciliatory gesture to Japanese fishery companies, and the MAF would never permit them to operate salmon fisheries in Bristol Bay. In response, the MOFA expressed understanding of the MAF's explanation, stating that this voyage was inappropriate for current US–Japanese relations.[63] Thus, the research voyage was put into action.

In spite of the MOFA's warning, the MAF was convinced that their research vessels would not receive any objections from the US because some Japanese trawlers and floating crab canneries had already operated in Bristol Bay for several years without any major protests.[64] According to a report of the Japanese consul in Seattle on September 22, 1936, however, the US fishery journal *Pacific Fisherman* reported that salmon fishery by Japanese vessels in Bristol Bay threatened not only US coastal salmon fishery in Alaska but US national security. In addition, it insisted that the US government should immediately start diplomatic negotiations to force Japan to enforce a continued ban of their salmon operations in Bristol Bay. A similar report arrived in Tokyo from the Japanese consul general in San Francisco on September 1936.[65] These Japanese diplomats pointed out that these articles included some exaggerations and may have misled their readers.[66] Seemingly, the Japanese research voyage in Bristol Bay had not become such a big issue yet. In fact, a Japanese

62 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (forty-first–forty-eighth pictures).
63 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (second–third and thirty-fifth–thirty-eighth pictures).
64 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (second–third pictures).
65 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (fifty-eighth–fifty-ninth pictures).
66 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (sixty-first picture).

acting consul in Chicago addressed a telegram to Tokyo stating that "Alaska fishery" had not been recognised as a problem there in late November 1936.[67]

However, opposition mounted in the early 1937.[68] On March 15, 1937, a Japanese consul general in San Francisco also sent Tokyo a telegram stating that legislators and others in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington had begun talking about countermeasures from late January to early March of 1937.[69]

It is likely that a conference triggered the spreading backlash in 1937. In early February, several representatives of the Japanese can-manufacturing industry approached the salmon-canning industry in Seattle with a proposal of a joint American–Japanese exploitation of the Alaska salmon by off-shore fishing and floating canneries. On February 23, 1937, these Japanese representatives had a conference in Seattle to invite opinion from persons concerned in Alaska: several executives of salmon-canning companies in Alaska, agents of the Alaska Fishermen's Union, and the owner (and publisher) of the fishery journals *Pacific Fisherman* and *Western Canner and Packer* in San Francisco. Naturally, the Japanese businesspersons faced fierce opposition from their guests, and soon after, the conference withdrew their plan.[70]

The April issue of *Pacific Fisherman* reported this conference and further details about opposition movements, with the headline "Japanese intention to invade Alaska salmon fisheries is openly declared."[71] According to the journal's report, a senator from the state of Washington, Homer T. Bone, proposed a resolution to the Senate on March 24, 1937 and asserted that the State Department should immediately begin talks with Japan to stop Japanese fisheries' "invasion" of Alaska.[72] On the same day, the resolution was resolved that "the Secretary of State is requested to take all necessary steps as quickly as possible to safeguard from aggression by Japanese fishermen, and to secure recognition of the special rights of the United States in the salmon fisheries in Alaskan extraterritorial waters."[73] In June 1937, a resolution calling for the US jurisdiction over Alaskan salmon in the entire eastern half of the Bering Sea

67 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208500 (eighteenth picture).
68 Barnes and Gregory, "Alaska Salmon," 47; Leonard, *Fisheries*, 132–133.
69 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208900 (fifty-third–fifty-sixth pictures).
70 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208900 (thirty-eighth–forty-fifth pictures).
71 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208500 (second and sixteenth–nineteenth pictures); Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208900 (twenty-third–twenty-fifth, thirtieth–thirty-second pictures).
72 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208500 (fourth–fifth pictures).
73 "Congressional Record. 75th Congress, 1st Session," 2670.

was submitted both to the House and the Senate at the same time. It pressured the US government to take necessary actions, but it was not resolved.[74]

Nevertheless, the MAF went ahead with this research in Bristol Bay in June 1937. Of course, research in this year also triggered fierce opposition, including a call for a boycott of Japanese goods.[75] In fact, the Alaska Fishermen's Association adopted a resolution to boycott Japanese goods on and after November 15 unless all Japanese fishing vessels illegally operating in Bristol Bay were immediately withdrawn.[76] However, the outbreak of war between Japan and China in July 1937 had already caused the widespread boycotting of Japanese goods by American consumers.[77] Finally, on November 22, 1937, the US government sent a memorandum to the Japanese government to ask for the implementation of necessary measures. The US government announced that salmon fishery in international waters could block various efforts for protection of salmon resources in Alaska.[78] In response to the memorandum, the Japanese government decided to cancel the three-year project in December 1937.[79]

Why did the Japanese government continue the project in the spring of 1937? One reason is that the research was an excuse to continue rejecting fishery companies' requests. On April 28, 1936, before the project was officially launched, the director of the Fisheries Supervisory Division of the MAF came to the MOFA and stated that the research was merely an excuse to Japanese fishery companies.[80]

The MAF conducted their project to buy time. This intention on the part of the MAF can be confirmed by another document from the administrative vice minister of foreign affairs to the administrative vice agricultural minister on May 21, 1936, showing that the MOFA understood that the MAF was confronted with a difficult domestic situation.[81] Of course, the MOFA did not convey these explanations to the US government. The Japanese government officially stated

74 Ito, "Contesting Alaskan Salmon," 189.

75 Barnes, "The Clash of Fishing Interests," 52; Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, *Showa-ki III, Dai 3-kan*, 1780, 1782.

76 Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, *Showa-ki III, Dai 3-kan*, 1782, 1790–1791; Ann L. Hollick, *Law of the Sea*, 24; United States Department of State and United States Congress, *The Far East*, 760–761.

77 Becker, "The Anti-Japanese Boycott in the United States," 49–50.

78 Bingham, Report on the International Law of Pacific Coastal Fisheries, 11–15, 60; Leonard, International Regulation of Fisheries, 130–131; Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho, Showa-ki III, Dai 3-kan,* 1783–1790.

79 Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho, Showa-ki III, Dai 3-kan,* 1792–1796; Leonard, International Regulation of Fisheries, 130–131.

80 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (second–third pictures).

81 Senzen-ki Gaimushō Kiroku, JACAR, B09042208400 (thirty-fifth–thirty-eighth pictures).

that it would continue research in Alaska but that it would continue to reject applications from Japanese fishery companies for salmon fisheries in Alaska. Presumably, these statements raised doubts in the US government.

The other and more important reason is that Japan was negotiating with the USSR on their new fishery treaty. Briefly, Japan could not show weakness on fishery issues in international waters to the USSR. As the treaty expired at the end of 1936, Japan and the USSR were negotiating for extension of its validity. Japan operated its fisheries on the shore of Kamchatka under the expired convention of 1928 in 1937.

On December 7, 1937, the minister of foreign affairs, Hirota Kōki, informed the Japanese ambassador in the USSR, Shigemitsu Mamoru, that he was considering when to provide a response to the US government regarding its memorandum for salmon fishery issues in Bristol Bay in November 1937 because "this was a very sensitive period then" over the new Soviet–Japanese Fisheries Convention.[82]

Hirota also notified Shigemitsu that he would not accept a proposal from the US government to make a multilateral framework treaty on fisheries in the Bering Sea for the time being. Hirota was concerned that the USSR, which did not have a stake in the issue, would take part in the negotiations. Hirota requested that the USA should not make any proposals for fisheries in the Bering Sea to the USSR without prior consultation with Japan.[83]

Prior to Hirota's notice, on October 9, 1937, Shigemitsu sent Hirota his opinion that they had no alternative but to maintain their tough stance when negotiating their concessions with the USSR. In this telegram, Shigemitsu wrote that a tough stance toward the USSR meant preparing to operate massive offshore fisheries in Kamchatka.[84] Based on relevant diplomatic documents regarding this issue, it seems that the minister shared his thoughts with the ambassador in 1937. It is likely that Japan continued the research in Bristol Bay in 1937 to maintain an unyielding stance on offshore fisheries in international waters at the USSR.

82 Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho, Showa-ki III, Dai 3-kan,* 1790–1791.
83 Ibid., 1791.
84 Ibid., 271–272.

4.5 Conclusion

Both coastal and offshore Japanese fisheries in Kamchatka caused strong conflict with Soviet authorities in the early 1930s. Japanese salmon fishery companies then turned their attention to the East Bering Sea near Alaska, where Japanese trawlers and floating fishmeal factories had already operated. However, the Japanese government did not permit Japanese companies to operate salmon fisheries there because it expected opposition from the US.

The Japanese government announced that it would operate its experimental salmon fishery in international waters of Bristol Bay in Alaska in 1936. However, the project was a conciliatory gesture to the Japanese fishery industry. The project triggered massive protests from the US. The Japanese government was seriously concerned about the situation but could not concede easily and needed to maintain an unyielding stance on offshore fisheries in international waters because it was negotiating a new fishery treaty with the USSR. It continued the project in 1937 and provoked stronger backlash from the US. Finally, the Japanese government decided not to continue the project in the winter of 1937 in response to the US government's memorandum. The Japanese experimental salmon fishery in Bristol Bay resulted only in bad feelings toward Japan from many people on the West Coast and in Alaska.

The Japanese government had no choice but to maintain a tough stance on fisheries in the international waters of Alaska in 1937 because of its negotiations with the USSR at that time. As is usual with diplomacy, its hardline stance was merely a bluff, and the Japanese government was under increasing pressure not only from the US but also from the USSR as well as Japanese public opinion.

In the mid-1930s, rhetorical expressions justifying Japanese fishery concessions in Soviet Far East waters became prevalent in Japan. Using this rhetoric, Japanese fishery companies and several policymakers repeatedly demanded that their government should hold a firm stance toward the USSR in diplomatic negotiations regarding their fisheries. Their claims seldom faced opposition because the rhetoric evoked public memories of the Russo-Japanese War effectively. Therefore, the government of Japan had reduced options for the negotiations in 1936–1937. Under these conditions, Japan faced strong opposition from the USA regarding the project in Bristol Bay in 1936–1937. However, Japan could not step back easily, as a compromise with the USA would weaken Japan's position in its negotiations with the USSR.

For the government of Japan in 1936–1937, the fishery conflict with the USA in the East Bering Sea was deeply involved in the long-lasting conflict with the USSR. We can see the whole picture of rivalry between Japan and

Russia regarding fisheries in the Japanese "Northern Sea," i.e. Russian Far East waters, in the 1930s by examining several problems around the Bering Sea between Japan, the USSR, and the USA.

To see the whole picture of long-term international relations over natural resource development in the North Pacific, it is necessary to understand fishery issues in the Bering Sea of the mid-1930s as a Soviet–Japan–US triangle relationship. Boats went over the waters easily to explore resources, and later governments sought solutions acceptable to all sides. There were already conflicts between the USA, Russia, and Japan regarding the exploitation of natural resources in the North Pacific in the late nineteenth century. Then, American sealers who operated near the Kuril Islands, Kamchatka, and the Aleutian Islands were common threats to Russia and Japan. These conflicts led them to the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention of 1911 as a political solution.

After World War II, the USA and Canada contained postwar Japanese pelagic fisheries in the northeast Pacific by means of the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean when Japan recovered its independence in 1952. Similarly, the USSR also restricted Japanese pelagic fisheries in the northwest Pacific with the bilateral fishery convention when they normalised their relations in 1956. These solutions can be traced to their experiences in Kamchatka and Alaska in the 1930s.

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Terms and Abbreviations

AKO: *Aktsionernoe Kamchatskoe Obshchestvo* (Kamchatka Joint-Stock Corporation).

Diet: Japan's bicameral legislature (1890–present). It was officially called the Imperial Diet until 1947.

MAF: The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Japan (1925–1943). It held jurisdiction over fisheries at that time.

Marco Polo Bridge Incident: A battle between China's National Army and the Imperial Japanese Army in July 1936. The full-scale Second Sino-Japanese War is widely considered to begin with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

MOFA: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (1869–present).

Nichiro: *Nichiro Gyogyō* Corporation. It was one of the largest fishery companies in twentieth-century Japan. Its predecessor company was established in 1906 and enjoyed huge success in Kamchatka inshore fisheries in the 1910s.

Shanghai Incident (the January 28 Incident): A battle between China's National Army and the Imperial Japanese Army in January–March 1932. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, China and Japan signed the Shanghai Ceasefire Agreement in May 1932.

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5 Urban Air Pollution and Environmental Engagement in the Russian Far East: Developments from Late Soviet to Post-Soviet Times (1970s–2010s)

Benjamin Beuerle

Abstract Though the density of cars was still considerably smaller than today and than in most Western countries at that time, urban air pollution caused by cars was, in the late Soviet Union, already considered to be a serious environmental problem and health risk. This chapter sets out to demonstrate how environmental activists from the semi-state All Russian Society for Nature Protection together with various functionaries tried to tackle the problem in Far Eastern Primorskii Krai, notably via the yearly Operations Clean Air that were organised from the early 1980s throughout the Soviet Union. It then shows how the massive influx of Japanese second-hand cars completely altered the situation from the early 1990s. Due to its Asia-Pacific location, Primorskii Krai has become the region with the highest density of cars in Russia, with environmental concerns relegated to the backseat and air pollution growing worse despite reduced emissions per car. However, it is also this Asia-Pacific context that has given the region the chance to become a frontrunner in hybrid and electric car transport within Russia in recent years.

5.1 Introduction

In recent years, Soviet and Russian environmental history writing has vastly developed.[1] However, despite an impressive and rising number of insightful studies on a wide array of topics, many questions still remain, at best, partly

1 It would be impossible to do justice to this historiography in one footnote. The works by Arndt and Coumel, Breyfogle, Bruno, Brain, Bekasova, Doose, Josephson, Moon,

Beuerle, Benjamin. 2023. "Urban Air Pollution and Environmental Engagement in the Russian Far East: Developments from Late Soviet to Post-Soviet Times (1970s–2010s)." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 65–87. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16376

answered: to what extent did the 1970s witness an "environmental turn" in the Soviet Union, as has been asserted by several historians for Western countries?[2] To what extent have new environmental policies and legislation in Moscow been followed by practical steps on the ground? What has been the place of environmentalism in this regard, and how did it develop in the very last years of the Soviet Union and beyond?[3] These are big questions that cannot be answered with the help of one single case study. However, it is regional case studies that are needed if we want to arrive at a better understanding of late Soviet and post-Soviet environmentalism and environmental policies.[4]

The present chapter traces in its first part the remarkable story of approaches to reducing car emissions in towns in late Soviet (Far Eastern) Primorskii Krai, starting from the late 1970s. In the second part, developments in post-Soviet times are dealt with. As will become clear, the story of the first part is to be seen in the context of a new Soviet-wide environmental legislation and agenda, albeit with peculiarities due to the engagement of regional actors. By contrast, the story of the second part is closely related to the peculiar Asia-Pacific context of the Russian Far East, which was able to become influential once the formerly closed system was replaced by an open market economy.[5]

Earlier literature has stressed the devastating environmental record of the Soviet Union and a Soviet ideology conducive to this, propagating nature's domination by mankind.[6] While there is an undeniable truth in both assertions, on closer examination, it becomes obvious that Soviet decision-makers were aware of many environmental problems and tried to tackle them in a systematic way, starting at the latest in the second half of the 1970s.[7] Thus,

Obertreis, and (Maya) Peterson cited in this chapter show exemplarily how vibrant the field has become while constituting only a small part of recent publications worth mentioning.

2 See Obertreis, "Naturbeherrschung," 119. For the ecological turn (or "revolution") in the West and Japan, see, e.g. Radkau, *Ära,* 124–164.

3 Some important insights on these questions can be found already notably in Coumel, "Student Corporatism" as well as in Henry, *Red to Green*.

4 For a similar plaidoyer and a number of important steps in this direction, see Arndt and Coumel, "A Green End."

5 Minakir, "Russian Far East."

6 Peterson, *Troubled Lands;* Feshbach and Murray, *Ecocide;* Gestwa, *Großbauten*.

7 It should be noted that, in recent years, an increasing number of authors have already insisted on a revision of the purely—and exceptionally—negative picture of the Soviet Union's relation with the environment and called for a contextualisation of the latter. See e.g. Brain, "Environmental History"; Moon, "Curious Case."

the new Soviet constitution of 1977 contained (for the first time) a number of provisions that stipulated measures to protect and enhance the environment "in the interest of the current and of future generations" as well as the duty of various authorities and of the citizens themselves to act towards this end.[8] Concerning the topic of air pollution, which was arguably one of the most urgent ones for many Soviet citizens and will play a prominent role in the present chapter, barely three years after the abovementioned new constitution took effect, an all-Soviet law for the protection of clean air was passed, followed two years later by a Russian one.[9] The question is, of course, to what extent these laws were followed by practical steps to reduce air pollution. The present chapter contributes to the answering of this question.

Within the growing field of Soviet/Russian environmental history, it can also contribute insights into several aspects largely neglected in the last two decades. In recent years, we have come to gain valuable knowledge about Soviet dealings with water management, irrigation and draughts, fishing, and soils as well as societal and environmentalist responses to big infrastructural projects and to environmental disasters—both natural and man-made.[10] By contrast, the handling of air pollution in the Soviet Union has been mostly neglected by recent research efforts,[11] and while much of the research on regional aspects of Soviet environmental history has focused on Russia's Northwest, the Caucasus, and Central Asia,[12] so far the Far East has not been at the centre of attention, at least for the late Soviet period. In both regards, the present chapter can help to enlarge our picture of environmental developments and societal responses in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. As will be seen

8 See Art. 18, 42, 67 and 147 of the Soviet constitution of 1977 (passed on 7 October 1977).

9 See the Zakon SSSR ot 25.06.1980 "Ob okhrane atmosfernogo vozdukha" [Soviet Law for Air Protection] and the Zakon RSFSR ot 14.07.1982 "Ob okhrane atmosfernogo vozdukha" [RSFSR Law for Air Protection].

10 For important examples, see Gestwa, *Großbauten;* Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams;* Peterson, *Pipe Dreams;* and the contributions in Breyfogle, *Eurasian Environments* as well as in the Forum "The Green End to the Red Empire," 105–235.

11 Even in an important new publication on urban mobility in late-imperial Saint Petersburg and Soviet Leningrad, it does not play any role: Bekasova, Kulikova and Emanuel, "State Socialism." As of late, the new EnviroHealth project led by Klaus Gestwa and Marc Elie (started in 2021) promises to shed more light on aspects of air pollution in the late Soviet Union.

12 See, e.g. Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams;* Peterson, *Pipe Dreams;* most of the chapters in Breyfogle, *Eurasian Environments;* Bruno, *Nature;* Josephson, *Conquest;* Doose, *Tektonik*.

in the chapter, there are also particular reasons to pay special attention to the Far East regarding the topic of exhaust emissions: attempts to reduce these emissions in Primorskii Krai in the late 1970s preceded the nation-wide trend; after 1991, that region became the one with the highest density of cars; and in recent years, it has become a frontrunner in e-mobility in Russia.

The chapter will also contribute to shed light on a particular aspect of the aforementioned question about Soviet environmentalism: beyond informal environmentalist networks consisting of scientists, technocrats, and writers, and before the widespread and heterogeneous bottom-up environmentalist movement(s) coming into being in the wake of Chernobyl,[13] was there an effective state-driven—or loyalist—environmental movement in the outgoing Soviet Union? While the existence and a considerable number of activities of the All-Russian Society of Nature Protection (VOOP—*Vserossiiskoe obshchestvo okhrany prirody*) as well as its nominal multi-million membership are well known from Douglas Weiner's seminal work and some other studies, the picture emerging from these studies depicts it from the 1970s either as dominated by functionaries without real interest in the environmental cause or as a group of "strawberry breeders" or "bird breeders," which, at best, "helped to spread information" on some environmental issues and to address "certain isolated problems."[14] Coumel shows a different picture for the Nature Protection Brigade (at Moscow State University), a student VOOP organisation, underlining their vigilantist mode of operating as an auxiliary to the authorities. He makes clear, however, that before Perestroika, this was largely confined to fining "poachers" and refrained from taking action against economic lobbies, notably pollution.[15] While these judgements and insights are doubtlessly grounded in sources and facts, it is again necessary to look at the regions in order to verify to what extent these judgements can be generalised.

The current chapter deals in the first instance with a specific case study from the Soviet Far East that can contribute to the answering of these questions. Behind this, last but not least, there is also the question of how regional and local actors in the Far East dealt with environmental laws and rules passed thousands of kilometres away in the political centre in Moscow, and how their actions were influenced by the specific context of the aforementioned region.

13 Gestwa, "Ökologischer Notstand," 366–381; Arndt and Coumel, "A Green End," 112–121; Josephson (et al.), *Environmental History*, 274–284.

14 Weiner, *Little Corner* (notably chapters 18 and 19); Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams*, 397–400.

15 Coumel, "Student Corporatism."

Developments after the breakup of the Soviet Union will take centre stage in the second part of the chapter. The relevance of the Far East's location in the Asia-Pacific, including for environmental matters, will then become clear.

5.2 Fighting Emissions in the Late Soviet Far East (1978–1990)

5.2.1 Car Exhaust Emissions and Climate Change in the Far East and Beyond

Efforts to reduce emissions in the late Soviet Far East were not confined to car emissions. As one might expect, factory emissions and, notably, emissions of the regional coal-fired power stations played an important role. Indeed, millions of rubles were spent during the last Soviet decade on reducing emissions from these sources in Primorskii Krai (Primor'e), the most densely populated and utmost southwestern part of the Far East.[16] However, considerably more time and energy was spent on campaigns to reduce emissions from car traffic. This might be surprising in view of the notoriously polluting factories in the USSR and the relatively small number of cars on Soviet streets, but only at first glance. In fact, the number of cars had been increasing quickly since the 1970s.[17] Already in the 1980s, cars were the main source of toxic emissions in Primor'e's towns, being responsible for more than half of them (today, cars account for more than eighty percent of toxic emissions in Russian cities).[18]

Reducing car emissions was and is of high interest to climate change mitigation efforts: by 2009, cars accounted for some twenty-five percent of Russian CO_2 emissions.[19] Since then, this share has doubtlessly grown as the number of cars in Russia has grown faster than industrial output. As elsewhere, traffic thus plays an increasing role in Russia's contributions to climate change. Remarkably, the danger of "an undesirable climate change of the Earth" was already stressed in a 1985 leaflet by Primor'e's Regional State Inspection for Air Protection; it was addressed to car drivers and explained the urgent need

16 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Primorskogo Kraia, Vladivostok (hereafter, GAPK), f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 25–26.

17 Siegelbaum, *Cars*, 238.

18 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, 65; ibid. op. 1, d. 349, l. 26. Cf. Josephson et al., *Environmental History*, 308.

19 Bitiukova, *Sotsial'no-ekologicheskie problemy*, 235–236.

to reduce emissions.[20] Shortly beforehand, Iu. P. Kovtaniuk, who headed the same agency, had warned in an internal document that global warming was already happening and risked "a second worldwide deluge" unless emissions were reduced.[21] This kind of argument did not appear often in internal documents of that time and was, arguably, not the main motivation for those engaged in the fight for reducing emissions. The main concern was the disastrous health effects of air pollution, which was responsible for pulmonary diseases, cancers, and other illnesses. The link between car emissions and climate change was, however, already clear to a number of decision-makers, including on the regional level, in late Soviet times; in view of the mentioned numbers, this link has grown ever since.

5.2.2 Problem and Pressure Group(s)

In the 1970s, concerns for the environment and the devastating environmental impacts of the Soviet economic model were on the rise in the whole Soviet Union.[22] As mentioned before, in the new Soviet constitution of 1977, this heightened concern found its expression in several articles. In 1980, a Soviet law on the protection of clean air entered into force and was followed two years later by a corresponding RSFSR law. Both laws underlined the need to take measures to reduce air pollution at various levels. The question, however, is how these laws were interpreted and implemented by actors in the regions and to what extent they had practical results. Little is known so far about practical actions following these laws in various regions of the Soviet Union. In the case of Primorskii Krai, sources point to the fact that the necessity of acting to reduce air pollution was taken seriously by a number of actors, who seized on the provisions of the aforementioned laws as an opportunity for engaging in this fight.

There are a number of indications that Far Eastern developments in this respect preceded the nationwide trends. From 1978, Primor'e's branch of the VOOP saw its Section for the Protection of Atmospheric Air get into action.[23] Hence, there was a semi-official pressure group whose members took it upon themselves to lobby the issue. In May 1979, a report on the

20 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, l. 120b.
21 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, ll. 21, 25.
22 Cf. Bruno, *Nature*, 202–213.
23 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 187, ll. 1–10.

situation concerning air pollution in Primor'e exposed troubling results: in the administrative centre Vladivostok, in eighty-five percent of measured cases, the concentration of noxious substances in the air (such as carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide, and fine dust) exceeded the maximum allowed by the sanitary norms; the situation in other towns of Primor'e was similar. Regarding the main emitters of these substances, the report differentiated between the various towns; generally, it named above all the big coal-fired power plants, a number of industrial enterprises, and—in all cases—car traffic.[24]

After preliminary small-scale experiences in the town of Spassk-Dalny in 1979, the first region-wide month-long action (*mesiachnik*) for reducing car emissions was held in Primor'e in 1980. Following the recommendations of those involved in the operation, in 1982, Primor'e's *Kraiispolkom* (the regional executive governance body) decided to organise such operations from then on annually under the title of Clean Air.[25] It should be noted that, at that stage, Primorskii Krai was no exception. The 1982 Clean Air Operation was, in fact, a Soviet-wide one that was under the auspices of the Soviet Minister of the Interior—with its State Car Inspections (GAI)—and the Hydrometeorological Agency (*Goskomgidromet*) with its sub-agency for supervision of pollution and the environment.[26] However, from the data available so far, it appears that actors in Primor'e were doing more and earlier than what was prescribed from the centre: with their 1980 region-wide *mesiachnik,* they preceded the Soviet-wide trend by two years. Interestingly, the 1982 Clean Air Operation was deemed to last from May 25 until June 10, while the operation in Primor'e was held two weeks longer, from May 15 until June 15. Moreover, the focus of the Soviet-wide action was obviously on controls at companies with a substantial vehicle fleet, while the operation in Primor'e also included controls for thousands of private cars on the road. Clearly, more research in other regions is needed to put the results from Primor'e into a broader comparative perspective. The case of Odessa shows, for example, that controls on the road took place elsewhere as well.[27] However, it is, at least, apparent that the actors involved in Primor'e were proactive and serious in their engagement for reducing noxious exhaust emissions.

24 Ibid. 11.

25 Ibid. 14–16; GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 2–5, 18; GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, ll. 3–6.

26 See the report on the Soviet-wide 1982 "operation" in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Khabarovskogo Kraia, f. R-757, op. 1, d. 167, ll. 7–160b.

27 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Odesskoi Oblasti, f. R-7859, op. 1, d. 385, ll. 18–19; f. R-8002, op. 1, d. 104, II. 32–33.

While the first impetus was obviously given by members of the Clean Air section of Primor'e's VOOP, it becomes clear here that activists of this section, party functionaries (as represented in the *Kraiispolkom*), and state functionaries (represented by members of the Regional State Inspection for Air Protection and the State Car Inspection) worked hand in hand for the goal of reducing air pollution. Moreover, there was a partial personal overlap, as Kovtaniuk, the aforementioned head of the Regional State Inspection for Air Protection, was at the same time the head of the Clean Air section of Primor'e's VOOP.[28] This important position of state functionaries and experts, dealing often with environmental questions both in their profession and in Primor'e's VOOP Clean Air section, was a general characteristic of the section. By 1987, including Kovtaniuk, the section counted fifteen members (eleven men and four women); among them were another representative of the Regional State Inspection for Air Protection, a leading VOOP functionary, two professionals of the State Car Inspection, two of the State Epidemiological Service, three of Vladivostok's Centre for the Research and Control of Pollution of the Environment (VTsKZPS), and one representative each of the military court (GVS) and Primor'e's main car transport trust (Primavtotrans), energy trust (Dal'energo), and main ship building factory (Dal'zavod).[29] Thus, the industry that was concerned by the anti-pollution actions pushed forward by the section was represented in it but was clearly in the minority.

Already, the seven-headed commission dealing with the organisation of the first month-long action (*mesiachnik*) for the reduction of exhaust emissions in the town of Spassk-Dalny, which was started in December 1979, had shown a similar composition, though it also included two (female) representatives of the regional media: a radio reporter and the head of the letter section of the newspaper *Maiak Kommunizma* (Beacon of Communism). Both media had been instructed to "elucidate systematically the progress of the *mesiachnik* in the press and the radio." This first clean air action in Primor'e had been decided by Spassk's municipal Council of People's Deputies (*Sovet Narodnykh Deputatov*) at the instigation of Primor'e's VOOP and of the leadership of the regional State Car Inspection.[30] Again, both the composition of the aforementioned commission and the decision process for this first action testify to a close cooperation of regional state actors, professionals, and the VOOP's Clean Air section regarding this environmentalist cause.

28 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, l. 33.
29 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, l. 3.
30 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 187, ll. 14–15.

It can be assumed that this close cooperation and engagement of environmental activists with state and party functionaries (who were, in fact, partly the same persons) was an important reason, if not a precondition, for the relative vigorousness and seriousness of the anti-air-pollution actions in late Soviet Primor'e.

Several provisions of the Soviet and Russian laws for clean air protection provided the conditions for this kind of collaboration: they stipulated the establishment of maximum norms for (among other things) air pollution for each mode of transport, including cars; these had to be established on the regional level (therefore, by regional authorities) depending on the overall pollution in the given district (*raion*). The latter was to be regulated by Soviet-wide maximum norms. For enforcing these norms and regulations, societal organisations such as the "societies for nature protection" were, by virtue of the abovementioned laws, explicitly expected—and thereby authorised—to contribute and to work hand in hand with state organs in various respects. State organs were legally obliged to take these societal organisations' considerations into account in the fight for reducing air pollution.[31]

5.2.3 An Ambivalent Story: Operation Clean Air in Primor'e (1980–1990)

Each of the month-long operations that were held in the towns of Primor'e during the last decade of the Soviet Union entailed basically the same elements: selective controls of cars directly on the streets by members of the State Car Inspection and the Air Protection Section of Primor'e's VOOP branch; controls of cars, equipment, and procedures at road hauliers and other companies with substantial car fleets; lectures and other agitation measures for the employees of these companies; the (partly temporary) withdrawal from circulation of cars with excessive exhaust emissions; admonishments and administrative punishments for drivers of these cars and for management personnel at the respective companies; and an active propagation of the operation and its goals through the media (newspapers, radio, and television).[32]

31 Cf. Art. 5–9, 11 of the Soviet Law for Air Protection (25.06.1980); Art. 6–13, 20–22, 26, 45, 47–48, 51–53, 55 of the corresponding RSFSR law (14.07.1982). As a matter of fact, the nature protection law of the RSFSR, passed in 1960 under Khrushchev, had already authorised VOOP to take an active part in the enforcement of the law: Coumel, "Student Corporatism": IV.

32 E.g. GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 2–5; f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, ll. 39–44.

An essential assumption of these operations was that car emissions depended in large part on driving style and on the regulation of motors.[33]

It would be easy to write a story of failures and frustration in the fight against air pollution from traffic in late Soviet Primor'e. Throughout this decade, in the reports on the annual Clean Air Operations, a number of elements remained unchanged: a substantial double-digit percentage of controlled cars had emissions above the prescribed maximum levels (often as high as four to six times these levels); air pollution from car traffic remained substantial in the towns of Primor'e despite all measures and controls; in many cases, companies and the local GAI agencies did not have the measurement tools needed for effective regular controls; measurement instruments for diesel vehicles were lacking altogether throughout the decade, although local and regional agencies asked for them time and again; and, in many cases, the drivers and the management staff at companies, operating under economic constraints and suffering (as expressed in the reports) from "economic short-sightedness," obviously lacked the motivation and competence to reduce emissions.[34] A report on the 1987 Clean Air Operation in the town of Nakhodka was symptomatic in this respect: not only were there no specialists for reducing emissions at any of the big companies with substantial car fleets in the town, but none of these companies were ready to invest any time for a lecture on that topic by an external specialist that was offered to them during the operation.[35] With such attitudes prevailing among a large part of professional drivers and their superiors, notwithstanding all efforts to propagandise the necessity for reducing toxic emissions, it is no wonder that the fight for clean air remained an uphill battle.

Nonetheless, it would be misleading to reduce this fight to a story of failures: regional and local authorities and volunteers were obviously very serious in their endeavour to reduce harmful car emissions. During the first, region-wide operation in 1980, almost 7,300 cars were tested, of which more than 2,100 were withdrawn from further circulation because they had excessive emission levels. In 1982, some 4,000 were controlled and 914 banned from further use (more than 600 drivers were fined); one year later, more than 2,400 out of a total of 4,236 controlled cars (thus, almost fifty-seven percent) were withdrawn from circulation—a clear sign that inspectors had hardened

33 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 367, ll. 15a–15v.

34 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 41, 47; f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, ll. 59–60, 64–67; f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, ll. 31–32, 37a–37b, 47–49.

35 Ibid. (d. 349), l. 36.

their stance. While in 1985, for reasons unspecified in the sources, the number of controlled cars fell to just over 200, a five-year comparison for the years 1985–1989 testifies to a big increase in the number of controlled cars and a considerable decrease in the percentage of cars with excessive emission levels (from two thirds in 1985 to slightly less than one third in 1989).[36]

It should be stressed that the withdrawal from circulation—sealed by the taking off of the number plates—concerned, at times, not all controlled cars with excessive emissions but just those where this excess was especially high. Whereas in the 1980 and 1983 Clean Air Operations in Primor'e, all cars that were found to have excessive emissions appear to have been banned from circulation, in 1982 this applied to just 914 cars out of 1,744 with excessive emissions; in 1989, it was the case for 3,029 out of some 7,300 cars with emissions above the norm (from a total of 23,625 cars controlled during that year's operation in Primor'e).[37]

This reservation notwithstanding, hidden behind these figures and unaccounted for in the sources at our disposal so far, one can only imagine the conflicts and the frustration of drivers concerned by excessive emissions and effective withdrawals of their cars—all the more so given the years-long waiting times and high prices for receiving a new car as well as the lack of service stations still usual in the USSR of the 1980s.[38]

However, it is important to bear in mind the guiding assumption that exhaust emissions depended mainly on the behaviour of drivers. Thus, a 1985 leaflet from the Regional State Inspection for Air Protection addressed to drivers contained detailed advice on how to lower emissions. Apart from standard advice to switch off their motors at long stops and to plan their routes in a way that avoided unnecessary decelerating and accelerating, the leaflet admonished drivers to regularly adjust the fuel injection systems and, above all, the carburettors of their cars, as an insufficiently adjusted carburettor would result in up to double the amount of noxious emissions. Likewise, it was necessary to keep spark plugs in good condition and to avoid underinflation of the tyres, as otherwise, considerably more fuel consumption and, therefore, emissions would be the consequence.[39] Another (internal) VOOP document about the

36 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 3, 26, 41, 48; f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, l. 19; d. 349, l. 64; d. 367, ll. 14–15.

37 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 3; 26; 41, 48; ibid, d. 367, ll. [14–]15.

38 See Siegelbaum, "On the Side," 6–7; Gajetel, "Appealing," 122–123, 133–137. The sources at my disposal unfortunately do not shed light on the reaction of the drivers to the withdrawals of their cars.

39 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, ll. 12–14.

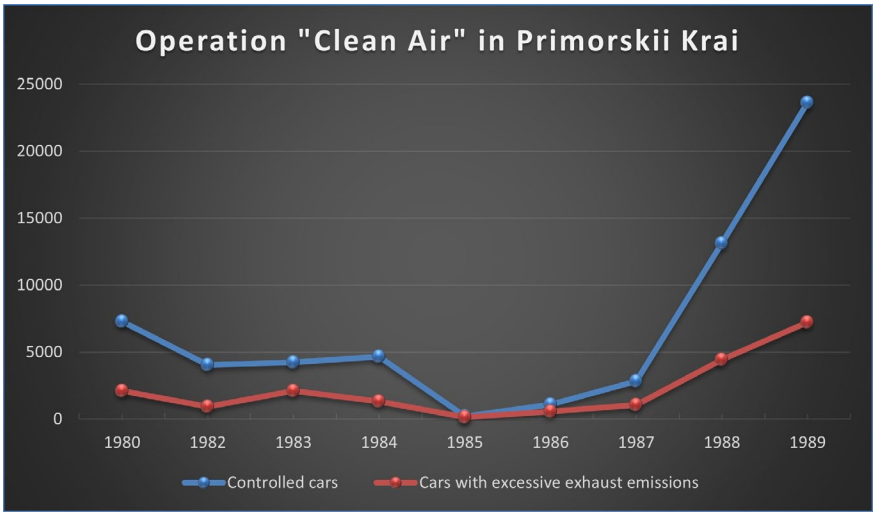

Fig. 1 Operation Clean Air in Primorskii Krai (B. Beuerle).

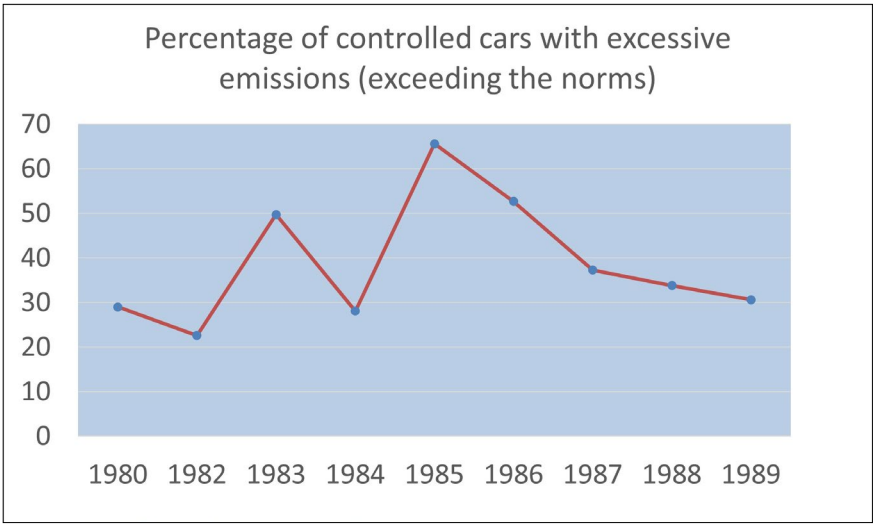

Fig. 2 Percentage of controlled cars with excessive emissions (B. Beuerle).

results of the 1984 Clean Air Operation in the region had stated that many drivers were tuning up their motors themselves to improve their performance and were ignoring the fact that this was leading to a sharp increase in emissions.[40] If excessive emissions were the result of such tuning up or of omitted adjustments of carburettors or tyres, this also meant that withdrawals of cars from circulation did not have to be definitive but were obviously, at least in part, temporary—valid as long as the necessary adjustments were not undertaken and the cars thereafter presented to another inspection.[41]

As the adjustments of carburettors and fuel inspection systems demanded a certain technical knowledge that, notably, could not be expected from all private car drivers (whose numbers were growing steadily),[42] it was of apparent help—and explains at least partly the lowering of the percentage of cars with excessive emissions—that, from 1987, responsible authorities of some towns adopted what might be called a more constructive approach: instead of just banning cars from circulation, fining drivers and responsible companies, and lecturing drivers how to reduce emissions, they arranged technical support for reducing emissions. During the Clean Air month, garages were to offer drivers emission controls in the framework of the yearly technical inspection and, if needed, were to regulate the motors—most often, this concerned the carburettors—in order to lower the emissions of carbon monoxide and other harmful substances.[43] In addition, a number of recommendations made in previous reports were put into place later in the decade: the equipment of town agencies and companies with measurement instruments improved substantially over time, environmental protection units were established at big companies, and at some companies, drivers got "passes [*talons*] of toxicity" in order to keep an account of emissions from their cars. All this led to a substantial decrease in the share of cars tested with excessive emission levels and of the traffic's share in overall air pollution in Primor'e's towns.[44] The least

40 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 299, l. 18.

41 The sources at my disposal are not very explicit in this regard, but it is possible to find at least some hints to this in part "temporary" character of withdrawals from circulation: F. 1488, op. 1, d. 367, [14–]15: "[…] Temporarily, 3,029 cars were banned from further use [*ekspluatatsiia*] […]" [translation BB]), [16–]17: "[…] During the inspection [*proverki*], more than sixty number plates were taken off; after an additional adjustment, the drivers of these cars will represent their cars for another inspection. […]" [translation BB]).

42 The Far Eastern town Spassk-Dal'nii for example, with some 55,000 inhabitants, already counted in 1982 more than 16,000 private "cars and motorbikes" and an "intensive increase of car traffic": GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 219, l. 23.

43 GAPK, f. 1488, op. 1, d. 349, ll. 34, 37aob, 49, 50.

44 Ibid. ll. 37, 64; f. 1488, op. 1, d. 367, ll. 11, 24.

that one can say is that the fight for reducing emissions in late Soviet Primor'e significantly exceeded the symbolic realm and had some palpable results.

However, in the last years of the Soviet Union, from 1989, reports on the Clean Air Operations in various towns of Primor'e struck a new tone of frustration and disillusionment. For example, inspectors in Nakhodko stressed that, because of new administrative rules, cars with excessive emissions were not withdrawn from circulation any longer and drivers not fined. More and more drivers were reported as complaining that they had to operate overaged cars and that the necessary spare parts for regulating the motors in the right way were lacking; even more alarming, those rare new cars that were delivered exceeded the emissions norms from the start and could not be regulated in the right way. Company personnel refused to take part in the respective environmental protection units and to pay membership fees. A severe lack of adequate petrol objectively contributed to the pollution; diesel measurement tools were still not delivered; and inspectors as well as environmental activists stressed that, for the fight against air pollution to be more effective, it would have to be undertaken on a constant basis instead of being limited to month-long actions—a demand that remained unfulfilled.[45] Overall, it appears that, with market mechanisms introduced and the economic crisis intensifying,[46] the fight for reducing car emissions lost momentum and support—an omen of developments in post-Soviet times.

5.3 Developments in Post-Soviet Times

5.3.1 The Asia-Pacific Comes In: Japanese Cars in the Russian Far East

During these very last years of the Soviet Union, formal economic ties and subvention schemes disintegrated due to the worsening economic crisis, market elements were introduced, and formerly closed-off parts of the Soviet Far East opened up for external ties and business. The Far East's location in the Asia-Pacific gained a new importance that has grown ever since.[47] This was the case for cars and air pollution as well, in various respects: already

45 Ibid. (d. 367), ll. 11–13, 16–18, 27–29, 31.

46 Cf. Hildermeier, *Geschichte*, 1022–1025, 1032–1033, 1042–1047.

47 Minakir, "Russian Far East"; for a cautious report and outlook on the consequences for the region itself, see Troyakova, "Primorskii Krai."

from the late 1980s, second-hand Japanese cars had started to appear in Vladivostok's streets, initially imported in, at best, semi-legal ways by sailors who were employed in the trade business with Japan. From the early 1990s, this business, now legal in principle, became a mass phenomenon in Vladivostok and, subsequently, in the whole Russian Far East. Early in 1992, the port of Vladivostok was officially opened to foreign trade by a decree of Boris Yeltsin. The first second-hand car market in Vladivostok had its place in a stadium and was replaced in 1993 by a new location, the by-now-famous Zelenyi Ugol (Green Corner).[48]

The number of second-hand Japanese cars—much more popular than Russian brands and often very affordable—that was sold at this location grew from then on in spectacular ways. By 2008, more than half a million foreign cars were imported to the Russian Far East—nearly all of them second-hand Japanese cars. Following a number of new tariff obligations (which provoked wide-spread protest in the Far East), regulations, and the financial/economic crisis (2009), this number dropped to merely 80,000 in 2009 but recovered to some 132,000 by 2012. For Japanese car drivers, this has been a convenient way to get rid of their old cars, which are expensive to maintain due to Japanese security and registration regulations.[49]

Following this large influx of Japanese second-hand cars, by 2008, Vladivostok had the status of the Russian city with the highest density of cars per 1,000 inhabitants by far (566—against 384 in Krasnoiarsk, which ranked second) and has retained this status ever since. At the same time, by 2017, Primorskii Krai was the region in Russia with the second-oldest cars (right after Kamchatka), with an average of more than twenty years—compared to less than thirteen years in Russia as a whole.[50]

5.3.2 Environmental and Social Consequences and Developments

As a consequence, today, Vladivostok's streets are overcrowded with (over)aged second-hand cars, and daily traffic jams are the rule. The city's location on the sea notwithstanding, you can smell the *gazovannost'* (pollution with exhaust

48 Primamedia, "Avtorynku."

49 Brooke, "Japan's Used Cars." In 2008, Japanese second-hand cars accounted for more than fifteen percent of overall Japanese exports to Russia and almost one third of overall foreign imports to Russia's Far East. Tabata, "Russo-Japanese Economic Relations," 433–435; Devaeva and Kotova, "Vneshniaia torgovlia," 1–2, 7–8.

50 Zhurman, "Pochemu."

emissions) in the air. On average, cars in Vladivostok today most certainly emit less than in the 1980s, but their numbers have grown so much that air pollution from car traffic has hardly decreased since then. Indeed, experts at the regional hydrometeorological office (*Primgidromet*) have confirmed more than once in recent years that Vladivostok has a substantial pollution problem, which is notably related to car transport.[51]

It should be stressed that, at least since the late 1990s, environmental standards and regulations are, in principle, at least as ambitious as in late Soviet times; concerning the most recent years, they are certainly considerably stricter regarding emissions per car (immission standards might be another matter). In fact, Russian regulators have chosen to adopt the Euro norms in this regard, although they come into effect with a delay of several years compared to the EU.[52] What has changed is that, in late Soviet times, environmentalism and the fight against air pollution in Primor'e's street had a lobby—the regional VOOP section, the engaged members of its Clean Air sub-section, and the state and party actors backing them—whereas in post-Soviet times, the position and morale of environmental activists appear to be much weaker so far when it comes to car transport.

Most people in the city seem either not to notice the problem ("we are saved by the wind"—*nas spasuet veter*) or to be fatalistic about it: "it's a car drivers' city" (*gorod avtomobilistov*) is a frequent dictum, insinuating that there is nothing one can do about it. An environmental activist told me that anyone who would dare to propose measures for regulating and reigning in car traffic would be chased from the city.[53]

In accordance with these dictums, environmentally friendly public transport services—notably trolleybus and, most drastically, tramway lines—have been considerably reduced since the early 1990s under budgetary constraints and to make additional room for cars.[54] Apart from the inner city centre, streets are often without proper pavement, which, together with air pollution, renders walking unattractive and, at times, dangerous.[55] In recent years, there have been promises and initiatives for turning Vladivostok into a bicycle-friendly city, but in contrast with cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg, so far, concrete steps for creating an infrastructure for bicycle

51 VL Novosti, "Ekologi otsenili"; Polyakova, "Spetsialisty."
52 Therefore, the Euro 5 norm took effect in Russia early in 2016, seven years after the EU. Fomchenkov, "V Rossii."
53 Interview in November 2017 with representative of environmental NGO.
54 VL Novosti, "Ot omnibusov"; Rozaliev, *Tramvai*, 99–107.
55 Izmailovskaia, "Trotuary."

riders in Vladivostok have been largely missing.[56] All these factors contribute to the streets' overcrowding with cars and are thereby, in some sense, part of a vicious circle.

It can be assumed that, with an average age of more than twenty years, many of the cars on Vladivostok's streets do not adhere to the official exhaust emission norms. According to Russian media reports, notwithstanding the legally mandatory regular inspection, a majority of car drivers in cities like Vladivostok have, in practice, been simply buying the vehicle inspection certificates without any real inspection.[57] In the same time, much like in Western countries, effective on-the-road controls by state inspectors—let alone by environmental activists—seem to be quasi-non-existent. A number of ecological NGOs and organisations exist and are active in the region, dealing with important issues like deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution through coal-mining and -shipping (to name but some). In contrast, the fight against excessive exhaust emissions has not played a prominent role on their agenda so far. They also lack not only the political backing and lobby but the legal possibilities for such actions, as, contrary to the Soviet laws of 1980–1982, the current Russian law for the protection of clean air (dating from 1999) does not assign any concrete role to societal organisations in the fight against air pollution.[58]

It would be tempting to remind the Far Eastern public that there was a regional (late Soviet) tradition of fighting car emissions, which could be resumed.[59] However, the prospects of having similar measures adopted any time in the near future—let alone withdrawing thousands of cars from circulation because of excessive emissions—are certainly slim. Whether it would be desirable is yet another question. As in other contexts, the enforcement of ecological rules would probably lead to social tensions and protests, as the Japanese second-hand cars are much cheaper and more affordable than any new car that complies with the latest ecological standards.[60]

As a matter of fact, Vladivostok already experienced a wave of social protests in 2008, when the import tariffs on foreign second-hand cars more than

56 Petrachkov, "150 tysiach"; Livshits, "Velosipednaia revoliutsiia."

57 VL Novosti, "Avtovladel'tsy"; Barshev et al., "Vse te zhe osmotr"; for the average age of cars see Zhurman, "Borozdy ne portit?"

58 See the rather vague Art. 26 of the Federal'nyi zakon ot 04.05.1999 g. N° 96-F3 "Ob okhrane atmosfernogo vozdukha."

59 So far, I am lacking information on what has become of those actors engaged in this late Soviet fight after 1991. Further research would be needed in this regard.

60 Brooke, "Japan's Used Cars."

five years old were drastically heightened. While the protests were famously struck down by an OMON corps, which was flown in from Moscow, for some time, inventive car dealers in the Far East resorted to importing old Japanese cars in the form of low-tariffed component parts, which were reassembled on Russian soil. Once this loophole was closed by the authorities—with a decision that reassembled cars would not be registered any longer—sales shifted to slightly less aged Japanese cars. From 2015, the economic crisis, the devaluation of the ruble, and the introduction of new technical rules and standards seem to have considerably reduced the influx of Japanese second-hand cars sold in Vladivostok. However, by 2018, a new upswing was apparent.[61]

5.3.3 The Asia-Pacific Context and Prospects for Emission Reductions

While the abundance of Japanese second-hand cars has made cars more available for everybody in the Russian Far East, the closeness of Japan—and, therefore, the Far East's location in the Asia-Pacific—has, so far, been more curse than blessing for the ecological and sanitary situation in Vladivostok and for its overcrowded streets. However, there is a chance that this will change in the future. To begin with, as long as the dominance of Japanese second-hand cars in the Far Eastern car market prevails, the current and future levels of car emissions in the Russian Far East depend on the present development and composition of Japanese cars, and this implies that Japanese ecological standards for cars will start to apply de facto in the Far East with a delay of some 5–10 years. In fact, from 2017, a considerable increase has been reported in the number of second-hand Japanese electric cars registered in the Russian Far East.[62] As of 2019/2020, Primor'e was the region in Russia with the highest number (in *absolute* terms) both of plug-in electric cars and, by far, of hybrid cars—ahead of Moscow and other regions with a much bigger population.[63] Paying tribute to this trend (and in order to enhance it), in September 2019, the energy giant Rushydro started to install a net of express charging stations in Primor'e, hailed by the region's acting vice governor, Elena Parkhomenko, as a step for the development of "new ecologic transport" in Primorskii Krai.[64]

61 Primamedia, "Avtorynku."
62 Drom, "Dal'nii Vostok"; Farniev, "Dal'nii."
63 Primamedia, "Primor'e"; Savost'ianchik, "Gde v Rossii."
64 Primamedia, "RusGidro."

There were even hopeful plans to start production of electric cars in Primor'e with the help of Japanese know-how and investment.[65] Meanwhile, the overall ecological impact of electric cars depends very much on how the electricity is generated. In this respect, it is of interest that in recent years, Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese companies have started to invest in renewable energy projects in the Russian Far East.[66] If these developments continue, the Russian Far East's location in the Asia-Pacific can indeed, in this context, become a blessing for the air pollution situation in Far Eastern cities and for the regional impact on the global climate.

Whether as opportunity or as burden, the Asia-Pacific neighbourhood affects in various ways the amount of harmful emissions in the Russian Far East. It is, however, also clear that much of the future ecological developments in the region still depend on regulations set in Moscow as well as on attitudes among the regional population and decision-makers, and on urban transport policies in the Far Eastern towns themselves.

It appears that, in this way, a retrospective on the late Soviet period can, indeed, offer some examples for effective ecological engagement, which is worth keeping in mind when judging the environmental legacy and policies of that time.

5.4 Conclusions

More research will be needed in order to answer firmly and in a more general way the big questions asked at the beginning of this text. However, the case study that has been the subject of the present chapter indicates that, at least in parts of the Soviet Far East, the late 1970s and 1980s did, indeed, witness an "environmental turn."[67] The Soviet and Russian laws for the protection of clean air allowed for tangible ecological improvements on the ground. They presented a legal basis for the fight against excessive exhaust emissions, which was led by dedicated activists of the VOOP together with regional state and

65 Sidorov, "Druzhba s avtouklonom"; Far East Investment and Export Agency, "The Prometheus."

66 Davydova and Mudryi, "Solnce"; Fomicheva, "Na Dal'nem Vostoke"; Diatel, "Khevel"; Lossan, "Zarubezhnye."

67 For a similar conclusion regarding environmentalism in Soviet Central Asia—situating the "turning point" in the mid-1970s—see Obertreis, "Soviet Irrigation Policies," 115, 122. The new Envirohealth project led by Klaus Gestwa and Marc Elie (started in 2021) promises to shed more light on aspects of air pollution in the late Soviet Union.

party actors (many of whom were VOOP members themselves). At least in this case, the VOOP was certainly much more than a club of "strawberry breeders" and intervened from the early 1980s in a sphere where economic company interests were concerned. Their fight against excessive emissions was led in a concrete way and had palpable results. The damage done by pollution to human health and to infrastructure on a local level took centre stage in their motivation, but the arguments brought forward by engaged activists in the 1980s also included the necessity to mitigate climate change.

Only in the very last phase of the Soviet Union did the engagement for a reduction of exhaust—and, for that matter, CO_2—emissions lose steam and momentum against the background of the ever more severe economic and social crisis. Since then, the popularity and influx of second-hand Japanese cars has turned the Russian Far East into the Russian region with the most cars per inhabitant. Infrastructural policies one-sidedly favouring car transport and insufficient priority given to the enforcement of ecological provisions existing on paper have contributed to this development. While cars have become easily accessible to almost everyone, the region's location within the Asia-Pacific has, in this way, had rather detrimental consequences for the ecological situation in the Far East's cities so far. However, as of late, there are signs that a new engagement and investments by Russia's Asia-Pacific neighbours in new modes of transport and renewable energies could lead to substantial ecological improvements in the future. Due to this context, the Russian Far East has the potential to become a frontrunner of more sustainable car transport within Russia. It remains to be seen whether these opportunities and chances will be seized for real.

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Migration and Transfer

6 Vladivostok and Intourist: Refugee Flows to the North Pacific, 1940–1941

David Wolff

Abstract In 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev declared that he would like Vladivostok to become the USSR's "widely opened window to the East." The largest number of foreigners to pass through the city between 1922 and 1991 occurred in late 1940 and early 1941, and this article details how this happened. Having been granted visas by the Japanese consul in Kaunas, Lithuania, over 3,000 transit passengers crossed Siberia and took ship to Japan, saving their lives from the impending Holocaust. This paper greatly expands our knowledge of the central part played by the USSR in that transit, with Intourist, the national tourism monopoly, the Foreign Ministry, and the NKVD all playing significant roles. Materials are drawn mainly from Soviet and Japanese archives.

Vladivostok became very important in 1940. From a small border transfer point, from the ship to the railroad and from the railroad to the ship, it turned into a concentration point for large parties of transit passengers.
("Intourist Economic Overview for 1940," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 12)

The first half of the twentieth century was a mixed blessing for the city of Vladivostok, Russia's only significant port on the Sea of Japan at the time. As a bellwether of Russia's involvement with the North Pacific and the countries along its littoral, the various roles and functions enjoyed by Vladivostok at any given moment can also tell us much about capital intentions—first Saint Petersburg, then Moscow. As home to the Russian Pacific Fleet and the site where the first spike of the Trans-Siberian was driven by the Tsarevich Nikolai, soon to be tsar, Vladivostok was dominant in security matters until the end of the nineteenth century; but after 1901, when Vladivostok lost its central place in Russia's Pacific trade to the new city of Dal'nii, and after 1905, when

Wolff, David. 2023. "Vladivostok and Intourist: Refugee Flows to the North Pacific, 1940–1941." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 91–110. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16378

Admiral Togo sank almost the whole Russian Pacific Fleet, Vladivostok's star shone less brightly. Shelled in 1904, occupied and reoccupied under Red and White and multinational armies in 1918–1922, vulnerable Vladivostok would lose its status as the capital of the Russian Far East to Khabarovsk and only in the 1940s rise again to "rule the East" in accordance with its name.[1]

But even as Vladivostok, together with the collapse of Tsarist Russia's imperial dreams, lost much of its relevance for "ruling the East," it remained a valuable link in the Great Eurasian artery. Lost vistas on the Pacific led to increased travel and heightened control across the length and breadth of Siberia. In a historic drama that mainly involved Poles, Lithuanians, and Japanese, the USSR and the Soviet tourism monopoly—Intourist—would play a central role by operating and profiting from Eurasian transit. Below, I provide the necessary international relations background, East and West, for 1939–1941 before demonstrating how the world's only Eurasian power helped save thousands of Jews facing an impending Holocaust. The story of Sugihara Chiune's visas has been told many times, but the role of the Soviet Union in making it possible for the refugees to cross the USSR and be saved has yet to be told;[2] and this involved the USSR's special geographic role as a Eurasian transit corridor. As Intourist's annual report introduced the greatly expanded category of "transit tourism,"[3]

> Thanks to its geographic position and to the fact that the USSR stayed out of the war, its broad territory and roads, linking the Western borders with the Far East (China, Japan) and the Near East (Afghanistan, Iran, Greece, Turkey) became the most convenient and safest routes not only with these countries, but even with America across the Pacific Ocean.

1 For general treatments of the history of Vladivostok, see Hara Teruyuki, *Urajiostoku monogatori* and John Stephan, *Russian Far East*, in particular chapters 17–28 on the Soviet period.

2 For the Sugihara affair from many angles, see Sugihara, *Rokusennin;* Shiraishi Masaaki, *Choho no tensai;* Palasz-Rutkowska and Romer, "Polish–Japanese Co-operation" 285–316; Levine, *Sugihara;* Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats*.

3 "Ekonomicheskii obzor" (hereafter, "Economic Overview"), Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter, GARF), f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 12. Intourist was the Soviet national monopoly on tourism, run by the Ministry of Foreign Trade, but with close connections to the Foreign Ministry and security organs. For an overview, see Hazanov, "Porous Empire."

In the course of 1940–1941, Vladivostok would see more foreign visitors than at any time between 1922 and 1991, a brief and narrow opening to the Pacific.

In the spring of 1940, it became clear that the Soviet Union would take over the Baltic countries in a more direct manner: a direct administrative subordination, a process that would lead from enhanced military presence to full incorporation into the Soviet polity as three additional Soviet socialist republics. With Lithuania no longer independent and Kaunas no longer a capital, all embassies and consulates would close. As a corollary, Polish officers working for the Japanese consulate would no longer be welcome on Lithuanian, soon Soviet, soil. Such Polish citizens with political or military records had already been detained, deported, and many shot, at Katyn a few months earlier. Jews—refugees from Poland—would also be at risk as foreigners of uncertain affiliation with a bad reputation for "capitalistic" behaviours. Death or deportation loomed. It was also plain to see that the ultra-racist Nazis, with their evil intentions toward Jews and Poles alike clear enough, were just across the border and unsated after devouring Poland. The horrific killing ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz had already been created as the German leadership groped its way toward a final solution.

Against this background and following the zero-sum logic of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact's secret clauses, the Soviets took full control, violating the recognition of Lithuanian sovereignty in the Soviet–Lithuanian Treaty of 1920. Soviet troops were introduced; some minor resistance was put down; fixed single-candidate elections were organised to reconstitute three Communist-controlled governments that then asked for admission to the Soviet Union as newly-minted Soviet republics.[4] By the end of July 1940, three nations of Europe had disappeared. When the first round of arrests was made, acting Consul Sugihara Chiune, an intelligence officer with fluent Russian serving as Japanese representative to Kaunas, dispatched a telegram to the Foreign Minister in Tokyo:[5]

4 An almost identical process occurred almost simultaneously in Latvia and Estonia. For a fuller description of the takeover process, see Wolff and Moullec, *Le KGB*.

5 Telegram No. 50, 28 July 1940. Foreign Ministry Archive materials online at Japan Center for Asian Historical Records B04013208800 91.

Sent on 28 July and arrived 29 July 1940
Secret

To Foreign Minister Matsuoka
From Acting Consul Sugihara
No. 50

> The Communists' operation in this country is rapidly proceeding under the influence of the GPU's relentless and lightning terrorist attacks. With the Red Army advancing, the GPU began to assault the headquarters of Polish, White émigré, Lithuanian and Jewish political organisations and confiscated their membership lists. Three days before the election, the GPU began a mass roundup of the members on the list and continues to do so. 1,500 people in Vilnius and 2,000 in other regions have been arrested. Most of the arrested were former Polish army personnel and officials, White émigré officers […] socialist party members, Bundists and Zionist Jews. Former Prime Minister Antanas Merkys, and Foreign Minister Juozas Urbsys were sent to Moscow with their families. A week ago, 1,600 detained Polish military personnel were sent to Samara. […] Jews rushed to our consulate in order to get visas to the United States via Japan. The number of such Jews amounts to around one hundred every day.

What Sugihara did not mention in his telegram was that he had already begun granting visas to desperate applicants fearing the worst at either German or Soviet hands. Working with a few trusted helpers, Sugihara granted more than two thousand visas in short order, signing documents from morning to night, right up until the last days of his stay in Kaunas. Sugihara and his team mass-produced visas in just a few minutes each. Sugihara met many of the visa applicants, but not all. There just wasn't time. It also appears that Sugihara negotiated with the Soviet proconsul Dekanozov or his representatives to allow transit visas across Siberia, without which the Japanese transit visas would have been useless. Sugihara may not have realised how ready some authorities on the Soviet side would be to work with him to move the refugees out of harm's way. Intourist, the Soviet travel agency charged with handling all foreigner tourists, would actually provide the transportation and lodging along the way.

The motivation of the Soviet side is an interesting question and an important one. Intourist documents tend to present an economic logic, but

that is more a function of the institution rather than a reflection of the Soviet leadership consensus. Money was indeed made, but not a very large sum. Most of the Jews travelled in third class, the cheapest way to go. On the other hand, the American ambassador to Moscow reported that the NKVD was planting moles in the group transiting through Russia to new lives outside of Eurasia.[6] This would suggest another Soviet motivation for allowing several thousand people to transit out of Europe. Just as Timothy Snyder records the passage of Polish officers hidden among the masses of Jewish refugees, the NKVD might also have made use of this pipeline;[7] but there is no clear documentation on this question of motivation, so it remains an object for speculation. Similarly, Sugihara's motivation remains opaque. Motivation is the main theme of Hillel Levine's *In Search of Sugihara,* with a prelude, interlude, and postlude all devoted to trying to draw out the elusive intelligence officer. Levine, frustrated in his attempt, addresses Sugihara's shade: "I cannot tell, exactly, how you meant to be understood. Your old spy instincts are at work; I do not know what is the actual and what is the cover."[8]

But what is clear is that Soviet interest in providing transit predated the arrival of Sugihara in Kaunas. Already in April 1940, Deputy Commissar of the Foreign Ministry Vladimir Georgevich Dekanozov, who would soon be appointed Soviet plenipotentiary in Lithuania, petitioned Molotov (already a second time) to allow Intourist to handle the transit for 3,000–5,000 Jews from the Baltic countries.[9]

> In December 1939, "Intourist" placed before the NKID (People's Commissariat of International Affairs) a question about the organisation of transit through the USSR to Palestine of around 3,000 Jews, who are located in the Baltic Countries. "Intourist" indicated that by organising this transit, it calculates on receiving hard currency earnings of around 900,000 rubles.

6 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats*, 140, presents such claims in diplomatic correspondence, in particular, the American Ambassador to Moscow, Laurence Steinhardt, himself a Jew, who warned against issuing American entry visas.

7 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 143.

8 Levine, *Sugihara,* 203–204. Levine was sued for his representation of Sugihara in 2002. At the time, he told the *New Zealand Herald*, "I'm still at a loss as to how I find myself in this incredible situation." (Adams, "Family split by book on Japan's Schindler.")

9 Shchadrin, "Vladivostokskii transit," 131–132.

> During discussion of this question with the NKVD, Deputy People's Commissar Comrade Merkulov announced that there was no opposition on the part of the NKVD to the transit of the aforementioned Jews, since they will be conveyed across the territory of the USSR in special groups accompanied by guards.
>
> When this matter was reported to you in 1939, you suggested declining the organisation of transit.
>
> Recently the question about the transit of Jews through the USSR to Palestine has again arisen. The Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Lithuania communicated to us that the total number of Jews wishing to pass by transit through the USSR stands at around 3,000–5,000.

Intourist expenses would be covered by American and British Jewish philanthropic organisations, turning a black year for tourism into a profitable one.

Into this preexisting scenario, already under discussion among Soviet authorities, came Sugihara. In a brief interlude when Japanese relations with Germany were so good that, officially, Japanese officers could go anywhere in Germany and neighbouring areas, Sugihara held a series of postings at Japanese consulates along the Soviet Western border, classic observation posts. First came Helsinki in 1936, then Kaunas in 1939, then Prague, then Koenigsberg (now Kaliningrad), and finally Bucharest, where the Red Army detained him in 1945. As a diplomat-spy, Sugihara was expected to set up a network of informants.[10] Arriving in Kaunas on 28 August 1939, Sugihara soon settled in right next to the dismemberment of Poland. Yale historian Timothy Snyder describes his job as "to follow German–Soviet relations."

> Lacking a staff of his own, he used as his informers and assistants Polish military officers who had escaped arrest by the Soviets and the Germans. He rewarded them with Japanese passports and the use of the Japanese diplomatic post. Sugihara helped the Poles find an escape route for their officer comrades. The Poles realised that it was possible to arrange a trip across the Soviet Union to Japan with a certain kind of Japanese exit visa. Only a very few Polish officers escaped by this route […]

10 Shiraishi Masaaki covers Sugihara's background in intelligence in *Choho no tensai.*

> At the same time, Jewish refugees began to visit Sugihara. These Jews were Polish citizens who had fled the German invasion in September 1939 […] With the help of the Polish officers, Sugihara helped several thousand Jews escape Lithuania.[11]

In addition to the Polish officers, Sugihara was aided by the Dutch acting consul Jan Zwartendijk's annotation in many Jews' official papers that no visa was required to enter the Dutch Caribbean possession of Curaçao, home to the oldest standing synagogue in the Americas. Zwartendijk was made Righteous among the Nations posthumously for providing Sugihara with the figleaf of a "final destination" for his *tranzitniki*.

Most of all, Sugihara was aided by Dekanozov, who, on July 25, after learning of Sugihara's willingness to sign Japanese visas, wrote directly to the Politburo asking for permission to arrange transit in exchange for gold. Instead of 3,000 to 5,000, Dekanozov now foresaw transit for only 800 Jews, who would travel in groups of fifty to 120. They all had visas and money, added Dekanozov, but their religiosity or professions made it undesirable to keep them in the USSR.[12] On 29 July 1940, the Politburo approved, making the Foreign Minister Molotov and the security chief Beria responsible for carrying the project to a successful conclusion. These two were also Dekanozov's present and former bosses. Of course, there was only one real *"Khoziain."*[13] This is the top-down view on the Soviet side of the decision for "deportation to life" that brought thousands of Jews from the valley of the shadow of death to the North Pacific.

The years leading up to World War II are particularly difficult, with the tactical diplomatic manoeuvres of the immediate pre-war inexplicable as a product of ethics, values, or ideology.[14] As such, they were largely written out of the postwar history books in both Japan and the USSR. The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was only the most visible symbol of this time of troubles, with the Soviet Union unable to "find" its copy until the end of the Soviet Union. Right up until his

11 Snyder, *Bloodlands,* 143.

12 "Dekanozov and Pozdniakov to TsK VKP(b), 25 July 1940," Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-politicheskoi Istorii (hereafter, RGASPI), f. 17, op, 166, d, 627, l. 92.

13 "Reshenie Politbiuro, 29 July 1940," RGASPI, f, 17, op, 162, d, 28, l. 62. Others whom Stalin probably consulted included Foreign Trade Commissar A. I. Mikoian, the head of Intourist, and L. P. Kaganovich, the Transportation Commissar, in charge of the Trans-Siberian. They were all together in Stalin's Kremlin office on the evenings of July 25 and 27. Chernobaev, ed., *Na prieme u Stalina,* 308.

14 The following section on Japanese–German–Soviet diplomacy draws substantially on Wolff, "Chiune Sugihara."

death in 1986, Molotov refused to admit the existence of the secret protocols that had created spheres of influence between Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany, dooming the independent states in between. Only in 1993, with the Soviet Union extinct, would the secret protocols be published in Russian in Russia.

In hindsight and through the ideological lens, it was always clear that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany could only reach transitory moments of non-aggression. Hitler and Stalin were locked in psychological battle long before their armies met, making the twenty months that separate 23 August 1939 from 22 June 1941 into a kind of "pre-war."[15] It was this complex and secretive environment of temporary, tactical alignments that Sugihara was paid to monitor, since decisions made in the West would have important repercussions in the Far East. Most immediately, the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact had been a slap in the face for Japan. Thus, in the late summer of 1940, as Sugihara moved into Kaunas, Japanese–German relations were in a period of uncertainty as Japan licked its wounds after the defeat at Nomonhan and the betrayal that underlay the German–Soviet non-aggression pact. As Molotov put it many years later,[16]

> Stalin was a great tactician. Hitler indeed signed a non-aggression treaty with us without talking it over (*soglasovanie*) with Japan! Stalin forced him to do it. After that, Japan felt insulted (*obidelas' na*) by Germany and nothing came of their alliance.

Only the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940, shortly after Sugihara's departure from Kaunas, would give renewed momentum to Tokyo–Berlin ties. Thus, there was little reason for Sugihara to provide even lip service to Nazi ideology, since the anti-Comintern pact had been neglected by the German side for more immediate benefits that only Stalin could offer.[17]

15 V. G. Dekanozov was always on the frontlines. On December 19, 1940, after completing the absorption of Lithuania, Dekanozov presented himself to Hitler as the new Soviet ambassador. Hitler told him that negotiations on improving Soviet–German relations would continue. On December 18, the day before, Hitler had given the order to prepare Operation Barbarossa, the attack on the Soviet Union. This brazen lie set the tone for Dekanozov's tour in Berlin (Roberts, *Stalin's,* 59). Also on that day, the first group of fifty Sugihara refugees left Kaunas escorted by an Intourist guide and headed for Moscow and Vladivostok.

16 Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym*, 29.

17 Stalin mocked this irony at the banquet for Ribbentrop, offering a toast to "the new anti-Comintern man (*antikominternovets*) Stalin!" Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym*, 19.

Instead, Sugihara continued to gather information by cultivating his Polish contacts to infiltrate both Soviet and German positions.

Thus, we should keep in mind that Sugihara's brief year of residence in Kaunas, tasked to spy on Germans while aiding thousands of Jews and Poles on the side, was not a moment of friendship between Japan and Germany but one of relative mistrust. This provided him leeway for his own operations.[18]

After Molotov–Ribbentrop, anything seemed possible, and Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke argued for rapprochement with Moscow. Japan, having decided to focus on concluding the war with China while moving south to solve its resource problems, was now eager to conclude a non-aggression pact with the USSR. On November 15, Matsuoka invited the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Aleksandrovich Smetanin to his house for a heart-to-heart talk.

On arrival, Matsuoka immediately launched into a rhapsody on the similarities between the Russian and Japanese people. He then went on to prove his revolutionary credentials by showing how he had removed all those with sympathies for the Anglo-Saxon capitalists from positions of power inside the Foreign Ministry. But the Japanese were unwilling to hand back their concessions on northern Sakhalin, Stalin's minimum condition, so negotiations went no further.

Only in February, as data from the German ambassador suggested that Hitler was set on a course for war with the Soviet Union, did Matsuoka prepare for a trip to Berlin and Moscow. On the way, he stopped in Moscow, suggesting that further negotiations take place on the return trip. Once in Berlin, he must have been impressed both by the likelihood of the German attack but also Hitler's contradictory motives in encouraging a Japanese attack to the south, rather than keeping the Soviet's occupied in the north. With German blessings, he travelled back to Moscow to conclude a "neutrality" pact with Stalin, since an oral agreement recorded during the conclusion of the 1937 non-aggression pact between Moscow and Nanjing made it impossible for Stalin to conclude a "non-aggression" pact with Japan, which had been in a state of war with China since 1937.[19]

After three conversations with Molotov, the Soviet side remained non-committal, and Matsuoka went off to Leningrad to see the sights. On his return, a final meeting with Molotov resulted in no further progress. Only in the evening was Matsuoka summoned to Stalin in the Kremlin, where Stalin made clear that he understood this diplomatic act in its larger context:

18 In the spring of 1941, Sugihara was posted to Königsberg, where he wrote three telegrams stating the imminence of war between Germany and the USSR.

19 Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete*, 69.

"The USSR considers it permissible, as a matter of principle, to cooperate with Japan, Germany and Italy on big questions (*po bol'shim voprosam).*" But with Hitler's disinterest in "military aid" from other countries, there could be no question of a "quadripartite pact and cooperation with the Soviet Union on big questions," so a neutrality pact would be not only a "first step, but a serious one, toward future cooperation on big questions."[20]

Matsuoka, ready to depart in failure, had succeeded! He was overjoyed and was taken drinking by correspondents, who delivered him drunk to his departing train, a regularly scheduled train with the Japanese delegation already aboard in a special first-class car. And then, the unthinkable occurred. In front of the whole world, i.e. the correspondents, who had accompanied Matsuoka onto the platform, Stalin showed up at the Iaroslavakii station. Stalin, who never awaited arrivals and never saw off departures, had come to honour Matsuoka's achievement. The train's departure was delayed for an hour. Stalin plied the Japanese diplomat with more champagne, and then he and Molotov "all but carried him [Matsuoka] aboard."[21]

The year 1940 brought World War II to Western Europe, plunging the continent into the abyss and England into defiant isolation. Europe in flames was also bad news for Intourist, the Soviet government-directed company tasked with providing tourism and tourist facilities for foreign tourists and guests. The "Economic Overview of the Activities of the All-Union Stock Company Intourist for 1940" presents a dire view of what this meant for Intourist.

> The military situation encompassing almost the whole capitalist world had a negative effect on the main activity of Intourist: the acquisition of foreign tourists from abroad and tourist in the literal sense of that word, while in 1940, travellers wishing to get to know the Soviet Union or rest in the USSR simply didn't come. (*sovsem ne bylo*) […] In 1940, Intourist's offices in New York, Paris, and London were liquidated, as well as those in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, in connection with their incorporation into the Soviet Union.[22]

A page later, the same shattering fact is repeated. The military situation had ended the influx of foreign tourists, "including those with the goal of getting

20 Ibid., 92.
21 Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym,* 30.
22 "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 5.

to know the accomplishments of the first socialist country." Nor were there any "individuals, groups, sanatoria-lovers or cruise tourists" visiting the USSR.[23]

Amidst this general devastation, Intourist had only two continuing profitable lines. The first of these was business with Germany. That the Soviet Union would feed the German war machine was a *sine qua non* of the strange-bedfellows partnership between Bolshevik Russia and Nazi Germany. Huge quantities of petroleum products, grain, and metals travelled west from all over the USSR in large-scale trade operations organised by the Ministry of Foreign Trade.[24] The German businessmen, possibly doubling as spies, travelled all over the USSR as customers of Intourist, usually in first class. In 1938, only five percent of travellers had come from Germany, but in 1940, they counted for a full fifty-six percent.[25] The Trans-Siberian was an important route for the Germans, whether for business, spying or simply transit to China and Japan.[26] Over 3,000 Germans took this ten-day ride in 1940, as did twenty freight containers marked "steel objects" that turned out to be 2,000 Browning revolvers being sent to Japan and a mini-airplane broken down into components. This route was so important that, when the Soviets announced a tariff hike in spring 1941, the Germans complained bitterly and fought item-by-item for discounted freight rates.[27] The German business travellers also complained vociferously about being put in the same sleeping cars as Jews.[28]

And, indeed, there were many Jews to run into, since the other profitable line for Intourist in 1941 was the provision of transit trips for emigrants and refugees with "the second Trans-Siberian route to Vladivostok" taking off in 1940, for the first time accounting for more than half of Intourist's business as measured in "total days of visitor service." Among these, 1,472 persons took the ten-day train ride to Vladivostok in 1940; only fifteen had taken this route

23 A similar collapse of tourism had taken place in 1937 in the wake of the show trials and the first wave of the Great Purges. There was a sixty-five-percent drop in foreign tourists compared to 1936. David-Fox, *Showcasing,* 303.

24 Lists of the main trade items and their volumes as sent by the Minister of Foreign Trade Mikoian to Stalin and Molotov can be found in Sevost'ianov, ed., *Moskva-Berlin*, 438–439.

25 David-Fox, *Showcasing,* 310.

26 The Germans, like the Japanese, had a consulate at Vladivostok. In October 1940, the German consul was briefly detained by Soviet guards after penetrating a "forbidden zone" near the radio transmitter of the Soviet Far Eastern Navy. Stalin and all top security officials received copies of this report. Sevost'ianov, ed., *Moskva-Berlin*, 523–524.

27 Sevost'ianov, ed., *Moskva-Berlin*, 527, 577–578, 643–647. German traveller statistics in "Economic Overview" GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 49.

28 "Otchet za 1941 god" (hereafter, "Report for 1941"), GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 109, ll. 4–5, 10.

in 1939. Increasing slightly in 1941, the record was set for the largest number of short-term foreign visitors to Vladivostok between 1922 and 1991—indeed, for the whole Soviet period in the Russian Far East. Nonetheless, a leap from nothing to over a thousand visitors was a huge challenge for Vladivostok infrastructure, successfully met only in part, as we will see below. As Intourist's "Economic Overview for 1940" stated, "from a small border transfer point, from the ship to the railroad and from the railroad to the ship, Vladivostok turned into a concentration point for large parties of transit passengers."[29]

Who were these transit passengers, Intourist's new customers in 1940 headed for the North Pacific? They were the "Sugihara survivors," each carrying the precious visa for life, permission from a Japanese official to board ships in Vladivostok harbour and to land in Japan, ostensibly on their way to Curaçao. None of them would see the Caribbean any time soon, but they would all see 1942, unlike most of the Jews of Kaunas and Lithuania, who would be exterminated in 1941.[30]

The Israeli memorial Yad Vashem, dedicated to remembering individuals who made efforts to save Jewish lives during World War II, credits Sugihara with saving 2,100–3,500 lives.[31] Intourist statistics seem to support the upper end of this range, but without providing a definitive number for the first months of 1941, since record-keeping became secondary once the Great Fatherland War began in June. The "Report for 1941" states that "as many as 1,500 transit passengers" went through Vladivostok in the first two months of 1941.[32] Together with the 1,472 from 1940, this takes us close to 3,000. There were certainly more in March and April as well, as the boats to Japan held hundreds of passengers on each voyage. For example, as we will see below, the

29 "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, statistics on l. 6 and citation on l. 10. The "Report for 1941" states that transit was "approximately" (*primerno*) ninety percent of Intourist business in 1941. "Report for 1941," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 109, l. 3.

30 It is estimated that ninety-five percent of Lithuanian Jewry was killed in the Holocaust, with eighty percent dead before the end of 1941. The Kaunas massacre of October 29, 1941, also known as the Great Action, was the largest mass murder of Lithuanian Jews. On this, see Wikipedia, "Kaunas massacre of October 29, 1941."

31 Yad Vashem, "Chiune Sempo Sugihara."

32 "Report for 1941," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 109, l. 2; "Akt (April 1941)" (hereafter, "Akt"), GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 117, l. 4 states that 2,986 transit passengers took the Siberian direction in the first quarter of 1941. We do not know how many of them went via Vladivostok and how many via Dairen, but if they all travelled to Vladivostok, that would mean that over 1,500 refugees took the boat to Tsuruga in March, producing a grand total of almost 4,500 in 1940–41. Intourist data cannot support any interpretation greater than this number.

Amakasu-Maru left Vladivostok on March 2 with 416 passengers on board. Although we are still unable to say exactly how many people were saved by transiting across Siberia, all of them were delivered from death to the North Pacific by Intourist. The next section of this article presents the Intourist view.

In Intourist materials, the travellers are almost never referred to as refugees but, rather, as "transit passengers" or "emigrants." Their outstanding characteristic was that most of them travelled in third class all the way from the Soviet western reaches to its eastern seaboard. Although transit passengers had been a significant contingent on the Trans-Siberian railway already in 1938 and 1939, all traffic had travelled via Manchukuo rather than by the longer route to Vladivostok. In addition, the overall Trans-Siberian numbers increased steadily from 1,723 in 1938 to 2,511 passengers in 1939, peaking at 6,932 in 1940. Out of the total for 1940, 1,472 travelled to Vladivostok in third-class cars with open berths (not in enclosed compartments) for about fifty people.[33] Many, if not most, of these were emigrants with Sugihara visas.

Since all Trans-Siberian trains transited through Moscow, Intourist's first challenge was getting them from Kaunas to the Soviet capital. Since the Japanese visas were being affixed just as Lithuania was being absorbed into the Soviet Union, it took several months for Intourist to come to grips with the situation. In particular, the border points changed in October as former crossings from Lithuania to Russia or Belorussia became internal stations. There was also still sporadic violence as final sparks of resistance were mopped up by NKVD squads and Red Army units. This must have slowed down departures for those who had just received the Sugihara visas, but they knew the visas would still be valid for a while and waited for the promised exit.

We do not know at what point Soviet authorities and Intourist became aware that there was such a large group of potential transit passengers. It is not impossible that Sugihara, in the week between his final entry to the list of 2,139 names on August 26 and his physical departure from Kaunas on September 4, handed a copy to whomever he had previously consulted on the sufficiency of a Japanese transit visa to get a Soviet transit document. Whenever the Soviet side became aware of the issue, by December 14, Intourist had a well-developed Preliminary Plan to Transport Emigrants from Lithuania. The planned number of emigrants was 4,000, of which 2,500 were to go to Vladivostok heading for Japan and the remainder to Odessa with a connection to Istanbul.[34] Below, we will limit our discussion to the Far Eastern direction.

33 "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, ll. 70b, 10.
34 "Protokol Soveshchanie," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 59, ll. 159–161.

They had it all worked out. The trains that had been arriving late every day from Kaunas, unable to make the connection to Moscow, would now become through-trains to Moscow. Four Intourist employees travelled to Kaunas to set up an interim office and prepare daily departures of fifty emigrants, aiming at a total throughput of 1,250 persons per month. There, they sold pre-paid packages of train tickets, hotel accommodations, and boat passage in hard currencies. An additional four employees took turns escorting the daily trains to Moscow, where they were delivered from the Belorusskii Station to the New Moscow Hotel,[35] dedicated to third-class passengers, where hasty renovations were concluded the day the first group arrived.

The Trans-Siberian departed regularly from the Iaroslavskii Station, twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays. It could easily accommodate the arriving "Lithuanians" as soon as their paperwork was ready. The real bottleneck would come in Vladivostok, where only one boat, the "Osaka-maru," travelled thrice per month to Tsuruga, Japan's nearest port. The boat trip took three days and two nights.[36] The whole plan was discussed and approved by a special meeting on the subject held by the Intourist Director's Management Council. A member of the Intourist Board was sent ahead to Vladivostok "to create special conditions for sending the emigrants through Vladivostok."[37]

Year-end 1940 statistics for hotel occupancy show that 588 visitors stayed at the Novo-Moskovskaia, so almost exactly fifty per day coming from Kaunas.[38] Although the report noted that "transit passengers try to leave as quickly as possible," many either took a tour of Moscow, since it could be organised at any daylight hour, or visited "various museums."[39] They averaged two to three hotel nights in Moscow.

Third class on the Trans-Siberian was not a great experience. For ten straight days, the train went on and on. The first day out of Moscow, tea

35 Ibid. Although the New Moscow is clearly the lowest level, even the famous hotels came in for (self-) criticism: "The quality of the rooms and cleanliness of the public areas, etc. at the Metropol and especially in the Savoy left much to be desired. The Natsional was somewhat better than the Metropol, but also could not be called excellent."

36 Eventually, an additional Japanese boat, the "Amakusa-maru" operated by JTB, would carry many of the refugees on its weekly voyages between Vladivostok and Tsuruga. A book about one of the Japanese young men who provided service on the boat describes his brief friendships with some of the refugees. It also reproduces articles from the Fukui Shimbun newspaper based in Tsuruga describing the boats as having 300–400 passengers on each voyage. Kitade, *Visas of Life*, 17, 47–49.

37 "Predvaritel'nyi plan," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 59, ll. 159–159ob.

38 "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 16.

39 Ibid., ll. 110b–12.

ran out, and then wood to heat the conductor's stove, on which the kettle should be kept boiling day and night. Food was bad; the menu never changed; napkins were filthy; delivery of orders was slow; personnel were rude. On one train, there were no electric lights for five days. At the end of the road waited the Hotel Cheliuskin, with "dirty toilets, bedbugs and cockroaches."[40] Such was Intourist's internal report on its own service, which it pronounced "absolutely satisfactory" (*bezuslovno udovletvoritel'nyi*).[41]

Others were more critical. The American diplomat Charles Bohlen was transferred from Moscow to Tokyo and brought a box of books and a box of food items on board the Trans-Siberian. His memoirs note that there were seventy-five Jewish emigrants on board with him. He was also not impressed by the Cheliuskin.[42]

> I also got a good look at Vladivostok, a typical Russian provincial town, with many log houses and snow piled in huge hummocks. The snow, the cold, the biting wind, the lack of elementary conveniences.

The fullest description of the whole operation appears in the annual report for 1940, oddly under the section entitled The Odessa Route (*Odesskoe napravlenie*). Opening with a note that no statistical data has been received on nationality, the passage continues with the only mention in the sixty-page report that Jews were among the refugees.[43]

> At the end of December 1940 (from 18.XII), a flow of foreign transit emigrants began to go through Moscow from the Lithuanian SSR.
>
> These were almost all Jewish refugees from Poland with former Polish passports and Lithuanian safe-conduct papers, who had come to Lithuania during the German-Polish war and were waiting for a chance to leave. They are travelling mainly to Vladivostok and then on to the US, South American republics or Dutch colonies […] From Dec. 18 to 31, 421 people arrived.

40 Ibid., l. 28.
41 "Akt," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 117, l. 32; "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 36.
42 Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 106–108.
43 "Economic Overview," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 1, d. 66, l. 5.

This is the only place in the long document where the Intourist clients are described as either Jewish or refugees.

Finally, the long train reached the Trans-Siberian's terminus, Vladivostok, a city on hills with a perfect harbour, the Golden Horn of the Far East. As the number of transit passengers began to increase steadily, Intourist took over the Cheliuskin in order to increase quality and cleanliness while bringing in many necessary items for both the rooms and the restaurant.[44] In general, Intourist was pleased with its performance. Most encouraging of all was the bottom line. A disastrous collapse of tourism and a worldwide loss of sympathy for the USSR had been neutralised (for Intourist) by developing the sole escape route for Europeans, especially Jews, fleeing the scene of war. The 1941 Intourist Annual Report proudly announced that "the general financial results of Intourist's work on the operations described must be considered satisfactory."[45] Among all the "measures taken to increase hard-currency (*valiutnye*) income in 1941," the very first was "a/the organisation of the transport of emigrants from the Lithuanian SSR in whole groups, which gave additional hard currency payments and sped up the operation."[46]

Accounts of foreign currencies paid to Intourist, its main source of income, were compiled on 1 January 1942 and showed that the largest payment of the year was for $78,800, transferred to the State Bank from the US as an advance payment for "emigrants from the Baltic." Money for this purpose also was deposited in English pounds, Norwegian kroners, German marks, Swiss francs, and Lithuanian lits.[47] The 1941 Report states that nearly 1,500 transit passengers were transported in the first two months of 1941 but that "later Japanese authorities began to block the transit, not allowing in even those passengers with visas in their passports from the Japanese consul in Kaunas […]" The role of the Vladivostok transit began to recede, but not before the Soviets and Japanese faced off in a final test of wills.

In the months immediately preceding Foreign Minister Matsuoka's drunken victory, Sugihara visa groups moved out of Kaunas and across the Soviet Union, travelling a day to Moscow and ten days further to Vladivostok. Some went first class, some second, but most went in third class. They all understood that crossing the USSR was a matter of life or death. Those who did not

44 Ibid., l. 28.
45 "Report for 1941," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 109, ll. 4–5; "Akt," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 117, l. 42.
46 "Akt," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 117, l. 42.
47 "Vedomost'," GARF, f. R-9612, op. 2, d. 110, l. 102.

understand and stayed in Lithuania, with rare exceptions, were either deported by the USSR or murdered by the Nazis a few months later. All winter, Jews crossed Siberia. Most took ship for Japan, but still there was a backlog that kept Intourist in business housing hundreds of emigrants at a time.

A letter from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the Japanese Embassy on 1 February 1941 described the situation and requested transit through Manchukuo as well as direct trans-shipment to Japan from Vladivostok.

> I called SAIDO (sic) and communicated to him that during the next 2–3 months a group of refugees will leave the USSR.
>
> They are all heading to the Americas or Palestine and have refugee certificates, unexpired transit visas from the former Japanese consul in Kaunas and entry visas through Vladivostok and Manchuria.
>
> Their exit exclusively through Vladivostok port will considerably delay their departure.
>
> Wishing to meet the request of the refugees to quickly arrive at their permanent place of residence, we have a possibility to send them in two directions.
>
> The Moscow embassy wanted to know more about this matter and the Soviet consular section provided these short answers:
>
> 1. The emigrants travelling in transit to the Far East and further are of various nationalities, but the overwhelming majority are Jews.
>
> 2. The total number of emigrants, that we desire to send by transit through Manchukuo, stands at 700–800 people.
>
> 3. All will travel as groups consisting of 50–100 people in March-April.
>
> 4. They all have travel tickets or money for travel.[48]

48 Shchadrin, "Vladivostokskii transit," 132–135.

There were other Jews taking this route, since other Japanese consuls had also been active, but none was so active as Sugihara, referred to directly in this exchange undertaken five months after he had finished issuing visas. As these refugees reached Vladivostok, many were questioned by the Japanese consular authorities. Some were denied passage; others boarded boats to Tsuruga in Japan but were not allowed to disembark. These imbroglios brewed in frigid correspondence between Soviet and Japanese consular officials, with Moscow insistent on exporting those who had already been transported across Eurasia. This internal report from the Foreign Ministry shows the development of the matter into March.

> The Japanese consul in Lithuania, in August 1940, gave out a significant number of transit visas good for one year for Jewish refugee emigrants who were headed from Lithuania to America. Persons who received the Japanese visas headed to Vladivostok. From there, they were conveyed on ships to Japanese ports and then, after receiving American visas, were sent to America.
>
> On 2 March this year the Japanese ship "Amakusa-maru" picked up 416 refugees in Vladivostok for their subsequent departure to America
>
> On 13 March this year the ship "Amakusa-maru" arrived in the Port of Kobe where Japanese authorities did not allow ashore 74 passengers from the number of aforementioned refugees and ordered the captain of the vessel to send them back to Vladivostok. Meanwhile, in Vladivostok the instruction was given that henceforth such passengers not be sent to Japanese ports.
>
> In connection with the refusal of the Japanese authorities to allow ashore 74 emigrants and a refusal to accept on board the ship a group of 100 emigrants, on 19 March, Deputy to the Head of the Consular Affairs Department Beliaev, according to the instruction of Comrade Lozovskii, summoned the Third Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Moscow Hirooka and requested […] taking appropriate measures in order that all emigrants having Japanese visas be given the possibility to continue the journey to their destination.[49]

49 Ibid.

By April 9, the Japanese had backed down, and all émigrés had received passage to Japan as Matsuoka arrived in Moscow in search of Molotov's signature. At such a time, he would not have wanted to have any minor irritants, such as consular matters, interfere. It is this Moscow negotiation, Matsuoka's grand initiative and Stalin's dramatic agreement, that drove the final success of Sugihara's scheme linking Eastern Europe with the North Pacific in a mission of mercy.[50]

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7 Life in Ruins: Forced Migration and Littoral Persistence in Chukotka

Tobias Holzlehner

Abstract Like other regions of Russia's North, Chukotka (Chukotka Autonomous Okrug) was subjected to dramatic changes during the last century. With long-lasting societal impacts, the inhabitants of predominantly native coastal villages along the Bering Strait were subjected to relocation policies implemented by the Soviet state that left dozens of settlements and hunting bases deserted; yet extraordinary resilience and novel strategies of coping with Sovietisation, subsequent loss, and infrastructural collapse created new forms of communities in Russia's easternmost federal subject.

The chapter explores local reactions of North Pacific coastal communities to translocal forces through time. Focusing on individual strategies of resilience and place-making amidst a relocated population, the chapter thus addresses the central role of space, infrastructure, and ecology in relation to a shifting maritime landscape as well as the specific impacts of equally changing state policies in a North Pacific borderland.

7.1 Introduction

For Russia, the twentieth century was a time period of deep-seated changes, revolutions, and systemic collapse. Especially in the Russian North, centuries-old traditions and subsistence practices were replaced by new cultural and economic patterns, which accompanied and implemented the Soviet Union's master plan of a new society for all of its citizens. The industrialisation of the Soviet Union was a "total social fact,"[1] an interwoven societal phenomenon where various economic, legal, political, and religious relationships overlap, that fundamentally affected native and non-native communities in a long-lasting way. In Chukotka (Chukotka Autonomous Okrug), Russia's easternmost district, the inhabitants of predominantly native coastal villages

1 Mauss, *The Gift*, 76–77.

Holzlehner, Tobias. 2023. "Life in Ruins: Forced Migration and Littoral Persistence in Chukotka." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 111–133. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16379

at the Bering Strait were subjected to relocation policies implemented by the Soviet state that left dozens of settlements and hunting bases deserted. The state-enforced resettlement of native communities, which peaked during the 1950s and 1960s, led to a creeping depopulation of a coastline whose intricate settlement history traces back for thousands of years (Fig. 1 and 2). On the Chukchi Peninsula alone, more than eighty settlements were abandoned or closed in the course of the twentieth century.[2] The village relocations were part of a larger struggle over environment and space that exposed the fundamentally different spatial strategies and logics of the Soviet state and native communities.[3] Traumatic loss of homeland and the vanishing of traditional socioeconomic structures, which had replaced traditional ways of living, sent devastating ripples through the fabric of native communities, often with disastrous results for societal health.[4]

State-enforced resettlement policies intertwine political macro-processes, local communities, and cultural and ecological change in the uprooted landscape of relocation. Industrial impacts and forced relocation altered the ecology of and access to subsistence areas in a permanent way, ultimately leading to a major "social–ecological regime shift"[5] for the affected communities.

The forced relocations of native, coastal communities were part of the Soviet Union's larger agenda of mastering (*osvoenie*) the Russian North, a "high modernist"[6] tale of an unfinished utopia that ultimately ended in its infrastructural collapse. Infrastructural investments and their subsequent demise thus had fundamental impacts on "the notions of speed, distance and space"[7] in the affected communities.

However, extraordinary resilience and novel strategies of coping with Sovietisation, subsequent loss, and industrial collapse created new forms of communities. Community resilience, as the ability to respond to adverse situations and to bounce back after shock and disaster, plays a crucial role in the continued survival of Chukotka's native coastal communities in modern times. A community's flexibility and the resources it has available to actively respond to new challenges through new connections are key to minimising and recovering from socioeconomic disasters.[8] Revitalisation of traditional

2 Bogoslovskaia, "List of the Villages," 1–12.
3 Demuth, *Floating Coast*.
4 Holzlehner, "Something Broke," 1–16; Pika and Prokhorov, "Big Problems," xxix–xl.
5 Wrathall, "Migration," 584.
6 Scott, *Seeing*.
7 Schweitzer, Povoroznyuk and Schiesser, "Beyond Wilderness," 60.
8 Hastrup, "Arctic Hunters," 245–270.

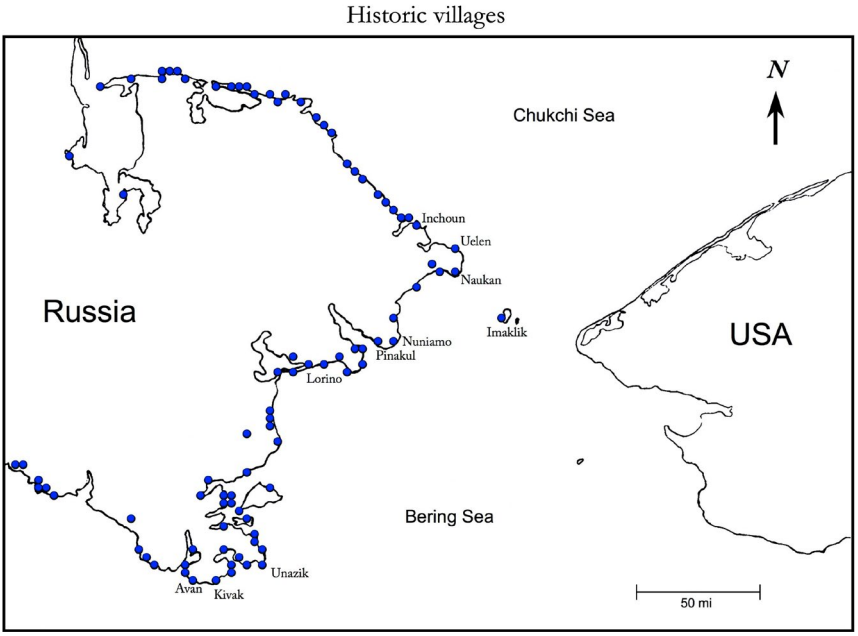

Fig. 1 Historic villages (T. Holzlehner).

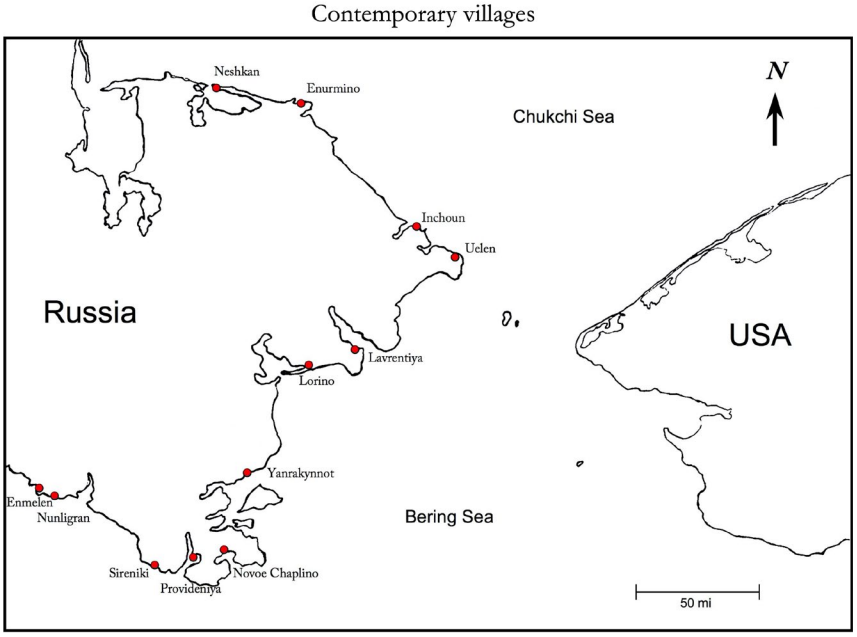

Fig. 2 Contemporary villages (T. Holzlehner).

hunting technologies and the resettlement of formerly abandoned native villages is only one aspect of the current realities that gave rise to new forms of habitation in the ruins of a volatile past. In what follows, I intend to explore local reactions of Arctic coastal communities to translocal forces through time (the Sovietisation of the High North, the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union). Focusing on individual strategies of resilience and place-making amidst a relocated population, I address thereby the central role of space, infrastructure, and ecology in relation to a shifting maritime landscape as well as the impacts of equally changing state policies.

7.2 Destruction of (Littoral) Space: Relocation

The native coastal population of Chukotka was subjected to a twofold loss in the twentieth century: the large-scale, state-induced and enforced closures of many native villages combined with the subsequent resettlement of the population to centralised villages; and the following collapse of the Soviet economy and infrastructure. Chukotka truly represents a "shatter zone" in the sense employed by J. C. Scott:[9] a region at the periphery of a nation-state characterised and shaped by the effects of state-making and unmaking. The village resettlements on the Chukchi Peninsula during the 1950s and 1960s coincided with Khrushchev's new economic policy that had as its central goal the strengthening and centralisation of local economies.[10] Reduction and amalgamation of individual villages to larger economic units were an intrinsic part of that strategy. Economic consolidation (*ukreplenie*) was the operative key term, a policy-driven concept that had as its stated goal the transformation of many collective farms (*kolkhozy*) to larger economic units in the form of state-owned enterprises (*sovkhozy*). These major transformations of the built environment had severe socioeconomic impacts, ranging from subtle strategies of "time–space compression"[11] to plain "infrastructural violence"[12] expressed in the demolition of house and the closing of villages.

The Soviet industrialisation of the Russian North was, on yet another level, a process of double ruination. In addition to the destruction and

9 Scott, *Not Being Governed*, 7–8.
10 Grant, *House of Culture*, 240.
11 Harvey, *Postmodernity*, 264.
12 Rodgers and O'Neill, "Infrastructural Violence," 401–412.

reordering of native space, accompanying processes of "cognitive enclosure"[13] profoundly changed native life-worlds.

Traditional subsistence practices in the Russian North were fundamentally changed by the large-scale collectivisation and industrialisation of embedded local economies. The mixed economies of indigenous coastal settlements were centralised and combined in processing plants, where shift work and predetermined catch quotas profoundly reorganised traditional subsistence activities on a temporal as well as a spatial scale. Thus, social, kinship-based ties were increasingly replaced by economic relationships.[14] In addition, the introduction of coal-fired heating plants in coastal villages severely disrupted walrus rookeries in the vicinity of historic settlements, and village closures removed many villagers from their traditional hunting and fishing grounds and relocated them to locations where direct subsistence resource access was often limited or scarce.[15]

Based on a fundamentally distinct logic of space usage, these new economic practices thus led to an antagonistic use of littoral space that regularly collided with local senses of place during the Sovietisation and industrialisation of native Siberia.[16] Historically, native coastal settlement sites in Chukotka were chosen according to their suitability for land-based maritime subsistence activities. Thus, maximum access to subsistence resources, such as drinking water, sea mammal migration routes, salmon runs, or plant gathering sites, were paramount in choosing the optimal place for a settlement site.[17] Diametrically opposed to the indigenous spatial logic, the Soviet economic planners and engineers valued maximum maritime infrastructural access to villages and state enterprises. The construction of deep-water ports, servicing facilities, and suitable terrain for house construction were thus one of the primary motives for the concentration of the native population in centralised villages.[18] Indigenous economic space was, therefore, replaced by an economy that was based on a fundamentally different utilisation of space.[19]

It is difficult to ultimately judge the costs and benefits of the relocations for the local indigenous population, as conflicting historic accounts and oral narratives represent different versions of the multifaceted resettlement history. Some Russian ethnographers have stressed in the framework of development

13 Habeck, "Be Seated," 155–156.
14 Schindler, "Rights in Chukotka," 57.
15 Holzlehner, "Social Engineering," 7.
16 Ssorin-Chaikov, *Subarctic Siberia*.
17 Holzlehner, "Social Engineering," 8.
18 Krupnik and Chlenov. *Yupik Transitions*, 251.
19 Holzlehner, "Engineering Socialism," 1970.

the positive effects of the relocations on living conditions, health and education,[20] or economic organisation and consolidation,[21] while others have highlighted the rather anomic effects on societal health.[22] Equally divided was the opinion among the affected population. For instance, the closure of the traditional Siberian Yupik[23] Settlement of Unazik (Chaplino) and the relocation of the population to the newly built town of Novoe Chaplino in 1958 was seen rather differently in terms of its necessity and its resulting positive and negative effects on the community, as the following local voices attest.

Like most of Chukotka's coastal settlements, the historic village site of Unazik was literally built on the shore along a narrow sand spit, enclosed by a fresh water lagoon on its landward side. These precautious settlement locations were frequently flooded, especially during fall storms, and the population had to temporarily retreat to higher ground, therefore requiring settlement mobility between shoreline and higher terraces further inland.[24] The village's role as a trading hub had already peaked at the turn of the last century with the demise of trans-Beringian trade.[25] Depleted sea mammal populations, largely an effect of over-harvesting by commercial whalers, exacerbated the uncertain subsistence situation and led to periodic famines along the coast. At first, many of the smaller villages and camps in the vicinity were abandoned, and people moved to Unazik, further attracted by stores, medical facilities, and a newly built school (the first Siberian Yupik school was opened in 1916). Despite the immigrations from neighbouring camps, by 1926, Unazik had already lost half of its population; 252 people remained.[26] Unazik itself was also affected by the famines, as Olga Mumichtykak remembered:

> My mother told me, when she was a child [around 1905–1910] lack of food was a big problem in Chaplino [Unazik]. A lot of people died of starvation and left for Uel'kal' afterwards. Probably half of Chaplino left, a long time ago, before we were born. But up to that

20 Krushanov, *Chukchei*, 186.
21 Bat'ianova and Turaev, *Narody*, 573–576.
22 Krupnik and Chlenov, *Yupik Transitions*, 286.
23 Siberian Yupiks, or Yuits, are a Yupik Eskimo people who live along the coast of the Chukchi Peninsula in the far northeast of the Russian Federation and on St. Lawrence Island in Alaska. They speak Central Siberian Yupik (also known as Yuit), a Yupik language of the Eskimo–Aleut family of languages.
24 Krupnik, *Arctic Adaptations*, 39.
25 Bockstoce, *Furs and Frontiers*, 357.
26 Ibid., 133.

> date Chaplino was a big village, like a city […] For me, the hunger started right after the war. Back then, all the men went in wooden boats [*vel'boty*] to Alaska for ammunition and did not return for a long time. The women stayed behind alone in Chaplino and we suffered a lot from hunger.[27]

In addition, Unazik's precarious location on two conjoining sand spits that expose the site towards the sea led to frequent flooding of the village, especially during the fierce, annual fall storms. During these storm events, people fled to the old settlement of Tyflyk, located on a small bluff four kilometres north of Unazik:

> One time I remember very well, I was very young [around 1910–1915], when they fled Old Chaplino. That fall the waves were so strong that all the *yarangas* [reindeer skin tent] and meat caches flooded. I was very young and they put me on a skin hide and ran with me. Everybody fled Chaplino to Tyflyk.[28]

Flooding was a frequent event, and imminent shore erosion was the official reason that the settlement was closed in 1958 and its whole population moved to the newly built village of Novoe Chaplino (New Chaplino), twenty miles further inland. Aivangu, a Siberian Yupik author and former inhabitant of Unazik, underscored the rationale in the optimistic language of the time:

> 1958, due to the presence of big waves and the hardship of our settlement, the collective workers accepted the decision to realise the relocation. And so, in 1958, at a picturesque site at the end of Tkachen Bay, started the construction of a new central building for the collective farm. They carried out the relocation largely in 1959 and had already finished in 1960. And now our village is renamed to New Chaplino. It is truly new because nothing is left of the old. All the Eskimo now live in beautiful, well-constructed apartment houses. The village looks striking.[29]

27 Olga Mumichtykak, in Krupnik, *Pust' govoriat*, 34–35.
28 Aleksandr Rachtika, in ibid., 27.
29 Aivangu, *Nash rodnoi Ungazik*, 52.

Geographic and infrastructural convenience was another rationale for the Unazik–Novoe Chaplino resettlement. The new village of Novoe Chaplino was located closer to the administrative centre of Provideniia, easily accessible by road and maritime transport, as a visiting Soviet ethnographer noted in the 1970s: "The new settlement is situated on the calm and deep bay, with easy access from the sea and road connection with Provideniia."[30]

State-induced village relocations are complex, multivariate events where a nation-state's developmental vision often collides with local sentiments and perceptions. Similar to the state's varied rationales for a village resettlement, the affected population's opinion and reaction is often equally heterogeneous. Another native author, Anatolii Sal'yka, paints a slightly different picture of the aforementioned relocation:

> Back in 1958 the authorities found a lot of arguments for the relocation. Apparently Unazik was about to be washed away by strong storms. Yes, once in a while the storms were severe, but that has always been the case and for many centuries our ancestor-hunters, who picked the place for a settlement, learned to retreat further back along the spit. But when the bad weather had calmed down the people from Unazik returned to their dwellings again. The people did not fear the sea they respected it as a neighbour and lived on its shore. They enjoyed the sea, which fed and dressed them […] Yet here, where our native Unazik was located, only a polar station and a border guard post remained—and nothing bad happened to them.[31]

The fundamentally different perception and conception of the environment in respect to Soviet attitudes is striking. Therefore, to trace the interaction between communities, local ecosystems, Soviet state-building, and collapse, I suggest here a political ecology approach to state-enforced community relocations, focusing on the unequal distribution and costs of changes in environmental conditions that led to an "accentuated vulnerability"[32] of the affected communities. Central to the argument is the observation that political forces play an important part in environmental access, management, and transformation.[33]

30 Leont'yev, "Indigenous Peoples," 21.
31 Sal'yak, *Ia uvidel*, 5.
32 Oliver-Smith, "Disasters," 25.
33 Robbins, *Political Ecology*, xvi.

The Sovietisation and industrialisation of the Russian North fundamentally changed the very constitution of native societies, and the village relocations played an intrinsic part therein. Relocated villagers suddenly found themselves in an urbanised environment that lacked the qualities and opportunities of their former settlement sites. Access to traditional subsistence sites was, in most cases, severely impeded, and the forced integration of native economies into the overarching Soviet economy led to deep-seated changes in work conditions, occupational structures, and systems of mobility.[34] Despite the idealistic developmental ideas and strategies of the Soviet planners, social and economic marginalisation of the native population and loss of traditional culture were some of the unintended results.[35]

Other forms of altering accompanied the spatial reorganisation of indigenous life-worlds that supplemented the village relocations. Native identity networks were replaced by an array of Soviet institutions (boarding schools, houses of culture, etc.), and indigenous economic networks were replaced by working brigades that created a new "difference of productive relations."[36] Many of the implemented Soviet policies were characterised by "differential access to different kinds of mobility."[37] Village relocations, temporary forced resettlement of indigenous children into boarding schools (*internaty*), and the movement of workers and administrators from the Russian heartland represented different aspects of a new, Soviet-made spatial mobility that was largely unequal in terms of the individual's ability to influence their own movement in space.

The double impact of state-building and state collapse on native cultures left its traces in the memories and practices of the coastal villagers. While I was travelling literally through the uprooted landscape of relocation with local informants, conflicting stories of the Soviet period regularly surfaced. While passing by boat or tracked vehicle past old settlements or abandoned Soviet military sites, my interlocutors often balanced memories of the negative effects of resettlements with remembrances of a working infrastructure and affluent transport possibilities. Although contradictory discourses in themselves, the uniting trope of movement through space, forced by the state and interrupted by the collapse of the Soviet state, surfaced in both perspectives. Stories of a golden age of transport and recounting of long-distance travels here

34 Campell, "Contrails of Globalization," 117.
35 Krupnik and Chlenov, *Yupik Transitions*, 258–259.
36 Koester, "Lost Villages," 275.
37 Gray, *Chukotka's Indigenous Movement*, 119.

complement stories of the lack of free movement, the coping with distance, and the detrimental effects of relocations on native traditions.

During ethnographic fieldwork in Chukotka in 2008, 2009, and 2013 on the topic of the relocations, I interviewed around thirty people who were personally affected by the resettlements in the Chukotskii Raion and around Provideniia. Most of the interviewees who were already adults during the resettlements remembered and emphasised the traumatic effects on their former lives. The slightly younger generation, who were mostly in their teens during the resettlement period, had in general slightly more positive memories, stressing new opportunities and improved facilities in the larger villages. Despite the different perceptions divided along age groups, three main themes characterise the conversations I had with people that were directly or indirectly affected by the relocations. First, the Soviet state is obviously strongly associated with the relocations. Despite a commonly understandable rationale of infrastructural improvement, the local perception of their execution first and foremost reflects on the infrastructural failure of an ill-prepared move. Second, the collapse of the Soviet state is seen as a total collapse of economic and transport infrastructure, yet the (physical) presence and absence of state agents (e.g. border guards) in different locations along the coast has very practical consequences for the everyday life of local sea mammal hunters. Third, to date, the state is perceived as exerting a strong and regulating influence on local subsistence practices (e.g. through hunting quotas). Therefore, a domestic focus, concentrating on village resettlements as a forced move from one settlement to the other, neglects the fact that the life-world of coastal villagers expands far beyond the confines of the village. Subsistence and travel space includes the coastal landscape in its totality. Consequently, the memory of forced resettlements and the nostalgia for a Soviet age of intact infrastructure fuses in a local discourse into a form of remembrance where the memory of an age of unrestricted movement through the coastal landscape plays a paramount role.

7.3 *Nuniamo:* A Place Destroyed and Rebuilt

Zhenia and I stared with binoculars into the hazy blue of a mirror-like Bering Sea. I had met Zhenia, a native hunter with mixed Siberian Yupik and Chukchi heritage, in Lawrentiia in 2008, when I was conducting a series of interviews on the effects of village relocations on the indigenous population of coastal settlements in northeastern Chukotka. As the brother of an old

acquaintance of mine from previous visits to the region, he not only agreed to extensively talk about the relocations and changing subsistence practices but also took me on a multi-day trip to a hunting camp several miles north of town. August had arrived with a spell of hot and calm days—perfect conditions for the walrus hunt. We were sitting on a steep bluff located in the northwestern corner of the former settlement of Nuniamo (Fig. 3 and 4) in a makeshift shelter, a wooden bench with a small roof that resembled a bus stop somewhere in the Russian countryside. Altitude above sea level matters a lot for maritime hunters, as sea mammal hunting heavily depends on the visual signs made by the breathing fountains and partial appearance of walruses and whales above the waterline. Hours of inactivity, consumed by ocean-gazing, are then suddenly interrupted by a rush of activity when animals are sighted, and the controlled panic of the hunt is channelled into the ensuing chase, kill, hauling, and butchering procedures.

Five cabins (*balki*) were built at this place during the 1990s. With old building materials salvaged from the abandoned houses of Nuniamo, the cabins are spacious and comfortable and sleep a whole family or hunting party. Two of them belong to Zhenia and his extended family. Below the cabins lie the remains of a former Soviet sea-mammal-blubber-processing factory that was built over a prehistoric settlement. Surrounded by traditional meat caches and scores of gasoline drums, the ruin of the village's economic backbone has faded back into history.

The adjacent settlement of Nuniamo was closed in 1977. At that time, Zhenia was ten years of age and was relocated with his family to Lorino, a settlement 20 kilometres to the south along the coast. As an adolescent, he later moved to Lavrentiia, the regional centre, where he works today as a marine boat inspector. For the last few years, he had been frequently visiting his former village during the summer months. It had become home to him again.

Nuniamo, a historic settlement site, was refitted with Soviet-style housing around 1958, when the Siberian Yupik village of Naukan, located at Chukotka's East Cape, was closed. As in other relocation cases, multiple rationales were brought forward by the Soviet authorities for closing Russia's easternmost Yupik settlement: it was too steep for modern housing, too close to the border with Alaska, or too small to be economically viable. Despite or probably because of Naukan's peculiar location on a steep slope surrounded by tall cliffs and within sight of Alaska—topographic characteristics that protected Naukan like a natural fortress and, historically, gave it importance as a Trans-Beringian trade hub—the predominantly Siberian Yupik population

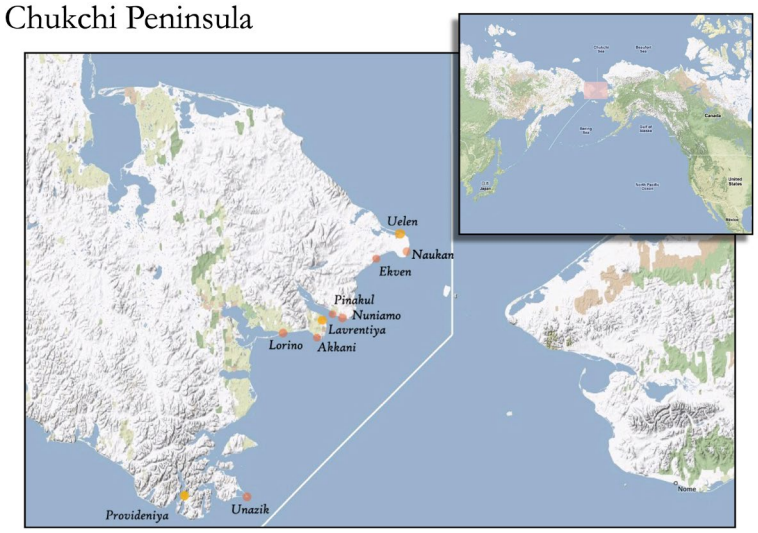

Fig. 3 Chukchi Peninsula (T. Holzlehner).

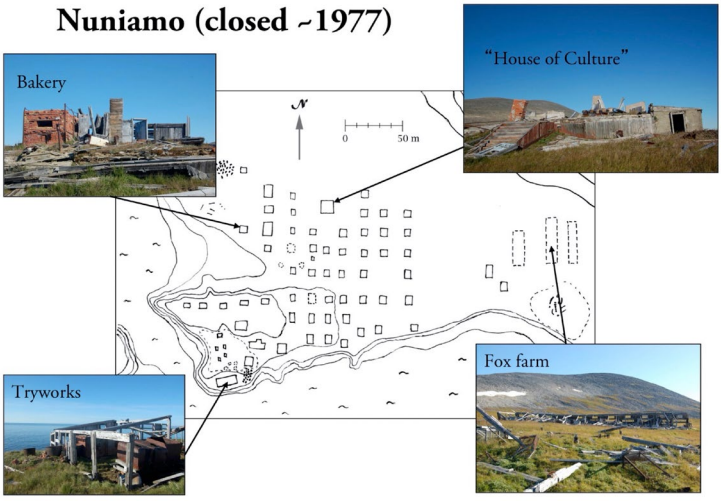

Fig. 4 Nuniamo (T. Holzlehner).

was scattered to several other villages, Nuniamo being one of them. Local sentiments and sense of place were secondary, as Zhenia remarked:

> It was very hard for the older generation to resettle. Especially the people from Naukan missed their place very much. Naukan was a very special place, it was very hot in the summer and the people around considered it an island. For instance, people traveling north along the coast carried their boats overland from Dezhnevo to Uelen, rather than passing by Naukan and around East Cape.

Chukchi[38] from the small settlements and camps of Pinakul and Chini and Siberian Yupik from Naukan were first resettled to Nuniamo, although the move was ill-prepared and houses still unfinished.[39] A newly built meat- and blubber-processing factory that supplied walrus meat to the reindeer herders inland provided some work for the recent relocates; but it was a different occupation and a different rhythm that dominated the resettlers' lives compared to the community-based sealing and walrus and whale hunting at the closed locations. In addition, in so-called combined farms, where reindeer breeding, sea mammal hunting, and fox fur production were part of the same enterprise, the Soviet planners tried to amalgamate different subsistence activities under one economic framework. Zhenia started first working in the Arctic fox farm and later in the local sea mammal hunting collective of Lorino, work he still remembered as exceedingly exhausting: "Compared to traditional hunting, where you work as a team on your own schedule, in the *kolkhos* seven to eight people worked each shift and had to bring in an equal amount of walrus. And each person worked individually on one of the animals. These were often very long shifts, lasting up to three o'clock in the morning. It was very strenuous work." Some of those enterprises were nothing more than flimsy economic experiments. As part of the economic consolidation that started under Khrushchev during the 1950s, individual settlement sites were identified in the region to host so-called combined farms (*sovkhozy*) that mimicked industrial factories. They were often planned without considering local ecological knowledge and the long-term sustainability of locally available

38 The Chukchi, or Chukchee, are an indigenous people inhabiting the Chukchi Peninsula and the shores of the Chukchi Sea and the Bering Sea region in the far northeast of the Russian Federation. They speak the Chukchi language (also known as Chukot), a language of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan language family.

39 Krupnik and Chlenov, *Yupik Transitions*, 275.

marine resources. One of the detrimental results was the severe reduction of walrus populations along the coast.[40] This seemed to have also been the case with Nuniamo, as the village's economic viability and the sea mammal hunter collective Lenin's Path (*Leninskii put'*) lasted only several years till its final closure nineteen years later, whereupon the people were moved again.

From our vantage point above the former settlement, we could see the remains of Nuniamo's houses, neatly arranged along several rows, still attesting to the geometry of its Soviet planners. Zhenia pointed out the different buildings of his past village to me: the school, the commons, the bakery, the store, the warehouse, and the house where he was born. Partially looted by the last generation, the houses had crumbled down to the foundations. Single supporting beams, pale from the salty and glaring sun, reached like erected whale ribs into the immaculate blue sky. Abode chimneys and rusty heating pipes that still connected individual buildings recalled the former human inhabitation; rusty bed frames, tea kettles, glass bottles, and vinyl wallpaper were the scant remains of their interior architecture. At the east end of the village lay the collapsed remains of a former fox farm. Once, the farm with its hundreds of small cages had sat on tall wooden poles to raise the floor level above the winter's snowdrifts. Everything was now crumbled to a scattered mass of weathered wood and mesh wire. Close by, a large pile of whale bones spread out across the tundra, demarcating the end of the village. Wild dogs and numerous ground squirrels were the former village's sole inhabitants.

Walking through the remnants of the former settlement marks the stark contrast between the utopian discourse of Soviet modernisation, expressed through a civilisational agenda that stressed the explicit development of infrastructure, housing, education, and health, and the on-the-ground reality of the local destruction of a native settlement. Strolling with Zhenia through the remains of his former village, our "conversations in place"[41] were inspired and evoked by individual objects, as well as framed by the architectural remains of the derelict buildings that we crossed in our wandering path. Immersed in the disrupted texture of his former village life, the materiality of relocation became hauntingly tangible. Razed by chains that were pulled by bulldozers, the wood-framed houses showed little resistance. The remaining ochre-coloured trunks of brick stoves and rusted heating pipes that once connected the individual houses can only remind one of the peculiar challenges of artic housing, destroyed by its own creators. Besides the bodily experience

40 Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 129.
41 Anderson, "Talking whilst Walking," 255.

of walking through a field of material excess spread out on the shores of the Bering Strait and producing a rich place narrative, the ghost town go-along provided material evidence of the forceful destruction of the village after its closure. The derelict site triggered comments of "critical awareness"[42] that brought Zhenia's memories of the forceful relocation to the forefront:

> They officially closed the village in 1976, we were the last who left in 1979. And we were the last ones who stayed behind, when they came with the helicopter and told us: "Faster, you are disturbing the plan!" First, they could chase us out, we couldn't leave that fast, we had dogs to take care of. During this summer the helicopter came and landed over there and picked us up, only a caretaker of the dogs remained. We later moved them too.

Yet Zhenia still harboured nostalgic feelings for the place where he had spent a good portion of his childhood. He especially remembered climbing on the cliffs and compared the surrounding landscape of Nuniamo with that of Lorino, the place he was moved to with his family after the closure of Nuniamo: "Do you see this?" he pointed to the steep cliff on the other side of the small natural harbour below the settlement, "There are no cliffs like that in Lorino. I really missed that. As a child I used to climb a lot in those cliffs."

Bluffs and cliff sites overlooking capes and bay entrances are preferred sites for hunting camps. At these places, the hunters sit for hours at a time and scrutinise the horizon for the scant reflections or breathing fountains of surfacing game. It is no coincidence that the remains of prehistoric settlements are located at the very same places. Nuniamo's elevated location is an ideal place for spotting migrating sea mammals. Moreover, walrus seek shelter from the fierce fall storms in the adjacent bays, which offer a natural stopping point for the animals in their annual migration along the coast, and the prevalence of local polynyas—areas of open water in sea ice—create perfect conditions for late fall or early spring hunt.

Later in the evening, we were sitting on the small porch of his cabin, outfitted with chairs salvaged from the movie theatre of the village's former house of culture, still scanning the horizon for walrus. The two young men who came with us to the camp had earlier spotted three adult walruses, but the ensuing hunt was abandoned as the team lost sight of the animals when they passed further north around Nuniamo Cape and a sudden wind picked

42 Edensor, "Walking through Ruins," 138.

up, making any further chase futile. Especially directed to his young fellow hunters, Zhenia tells a story of how he drank heavily in his former life: "I drank straight for three weeks and couldn't remember anything afterwards." He sneaks in some advice for the attentively listening young hunters: "You really have to want it by yourself! The people in former times didn't drink either!" In his opinion, a place like Nuniamo, a former historic settlement, first rebuilt and subsequently abandoned by Soviet planners, has an inherent capacity for healing the wounds sustained in the new settlements people were relocated to: "Here at this place you can draw energy from nature. In the village you only drink. If I am able to bring my children and grandchildren here to Nuniamo, everything will be fine."

7.4 Production of (Littoral) Space: Resettlement

Thus, the closed settlements are not only ruins and vestiges of a Soviet past but, rather, play an important role in today's maritime subsistence activities, as individuals and families have partially moved back to the formerly abandoned settlements. From the vantage point of a sea mammal hunter, these places offer an ideal ecology and topography for the maritime hunt. In addition, the remote hunting camps at the old sites allow for at least a temporary escape from the intrinsic problems—violence, alcoholism, and unemployment—of contemporary village life in Chukotka, as they increasingly become important sites of "material and social reconstruction."[43] Diametrically opposed to the grim realities in the villages, revitalisation of old hunting technologies, subsistence camps, and traditional forms of cooperation allow for alternative life concepts outside of the confines of the villages. Hunting camps are, in most cases, dry places in terms of alcohol, and traditional hunting and butchering technologies are actively passed on to a younger generation at these sites.[44]

The five cabins that constitute the contemporary hunting camp at the edge of the former settlement of Nuniamo were built by local hunters during the 1990s, a time for Chukotka that was characterised by chronic food and fuel shortages in the region but also by lesser restriction on personal coastal travel. As a consequence, several other hunting camps were opened in formerly closed villages along Chukotka's coast and partially resettled by former inhabitants from settlement centres in the proximity. For example, the

43 Oliver-Smith, "Communities after Catastrophe," 51.
44 Holzlehner, "Social Engineering," 8.

former Chukchi settlement and Soviet boat repair station of Pinakul (closed in the 1970s) is almost permanently re-inhabited by an extended family and individual hunters from Lavrentiia; the former village of Akkani (closed in the 1960s) is nowadays used as a permanent hunting base for members of the sea mammal hunting collective in Lorino as well as individual hunters; Chegitun (closed in 1958), a former historic village and prime subsistence site, is nowadays regularly visited by hunting parties from Uelen.

The newly established hunting camps and resettlement patterns share common characteristics that made them attractive for revitalisation. All of the camps are located at former village sites whose subsistence usage dates back to historic or even pre-historic times, as the specific coastal topography has created microecological zones that are favourable for various subsistence activities. The places are exclusively located on bluffs or small cliffs at the end of capes where ice breaks up early in the season, by which sea mammal migration routes closely pass, and from which walruses and whales can be easily spotted by the hunters. In several of the newly established hunting camps, the existence of polynyas, spots of naturally occurring warm-water upwelling that keep parts of the coastal bays from freezing, creates favourable conditions for walrus and seal hunting in the fall and spring. The proximity to walrus haul-outs and rookeries and the existence of sheltered bays for boat landing and butchering activities also play an important role, as does close access to a fresh water source.

However, the peculiar microecology that predestines many of the sites for sea mammal hunting is not the only reason for their revitalisation. All these places have witnessed during the last several years the construction of new houses and sheds, for which building materials were extensively salvaged from the adjacent, closed villages. In most cases, the new camps have been built by Chukchi or Yupik in close proximity to, but spatially removed from, the old settlements. Building and the creation of a (new) home are powerful and meaningful strategies of re-settling (old) places.[45] The camps at the old sites are filled with contemporary activities, ranging from house construction to traditional skin boat building, which tie people to each other and to the place they co-inhabit. The architecture of the new camp, characterised by the creative re-use of artefacts and building materials from the destroyed village, represents a case in point for the widespread use of "proximal design,"[46] a

45 Bolotova and Stammler, "North Became Home," 217.
46 Usenyuk, Sampsa and Whalen, "Proximal Design," 866.

phenomenon of creative, local adaptation of imported technologies in the constraining environment of the North.

Formerly abandoned and now partially resettled places thus play a central role in the restructuring and revitalisation of hunting traditions and alternative life concepts, where hunting, building, gathering, and communal work are dictated by an individual timeline. The hunting camps are places of active cultural reproduction, where a younger generation is practically introduced to the intricacies of maritime hunting. In addition, due to the spatial distance from regional centres, the camps are situated beyond the practical control of border guards, whose strict management of coastal boat traffic (which results in Chukotka having, in practice, a closed maritime border with adjacent Alaska) is seen by most of the hunters as a serious interference in day-to-day hunting activities. The absence of the state and its local representatives has, therefore, created new opportunities for a self-determined life beyond the strict supervision of state agents. Closed villages that have been turned into contemporary hunting camps represent places that are generative and regenerative at the same time.[47] Active participation in the creation of a new, inhabitable environment and family-based subsistence activities combined with the peculiar qualities of those places make them into social and economic spaces that bear the potential for community regeneration. After the failed experiment of large-scale social and cultural engineering, the depopulated coastal landscape with its abandoned settlements thus represents new points of anchorage for partial re-settlements and revitalisation movements.

7.5 Conclusion: Littoral Resistance and Adaptive Strategies

Politics interacts with landscapes and the bodies that inhabit them. The resettlement policies enacted by the Soviet Union initiated a struggle over environmental access and settlement space. Fundamentally different relations to space and environment were set against each other in the course of the village resettlements. Local voices, which expressed scepticism in light of changing subsistence regimes, were silenced by a State discourse of progress and development, which related to Chukotka's coastal space and maritime environment mostly in terms of infrastructural access and control.

47 Casey, "Space to Place," 26.

Chukotka's resettlement history is set in a contested landscape, where "local theories of dwelling"[48] collided with governmental ideas of proper housing and settlement structure. This is true even today, as the inhabitation of formerly abandoned village sites has created conflicts of interests with respect to land and subsistence rights between individual family groups and municipal authorities. With no official title to land, the new temporary inhabitants operate in a legal grey zone, often at the mercy of local authorities with their very own agenda.

T. Ingold has juxtaposed two essentially different forms of human dwelling, expressed by distinctive relations to the environment.[49] The distinction between a "building perspective," where worlds are made before they are lived in, and a "dwelling perspective," where buildings arise through human activity and interaction with the environment, sheds light on the fundamental differences between dwelling and environment in the case of native coastal cultures and the Soviet state. With the coastal village resettlements and economic consolidations, the Soviet development strategy inscribed a building and settlement plan into Chukotka's society with little consideration of local sentiments and subsistence strategies. Economic and infrastructural changes were planned and implemented from outside, and local communities had to comply with the newly made world. The opposite is true for the settlement and building structure of traditional villages, which evolved in close interaction with the environment, its peculiar coastal topography, and subsistence opportunities. The peculiar littoral culture of coastal villages, where proximity to the sea and its resources were principal in the location of a particular settlement, was superseded by a coastal culture of maximum infrastructural access and economic output implemented by the Soviet state.

Throughout its history, Arctic anthropology has heavily relied on an adaptive framework to theorise habitation patterns and procurement strategies—from Marcel Mauss' adaptive seasonal social structure of Canadian Inuit[50] to Igor Krupnik's "adaptation framework" to explain the changing settlement patterns of Arctic maritime hunting cultures.[51] Accordingly, various forms of mobility and adaptive strategies were constant partners of indigenous Arctic cultures. From this vantage point, the history of Arctic maritime cultures can be seen as a series of shifting adaptations, where populations

48 Feld and Basso, "Introduction," 8.
49 Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 186.
50 Mauss, *Seasonal Variation*.
51 Krupnik, *Arctic Adaptations*.

actively adjust to changing ecological conditions with alternating growth and decline periods. Various adaptation strategies play an important role therein by minimising risk and uncertainty, optimising flexibility of choice, maximising energy extraction, and rotating among seasonal procurement strategies. In the course of these shifts, long-term settlements were regularly abandoned and "uninhabited lands, lands belonging to migratory communities, or abandoned settlements together with their resource territories, played the role of unique temporal reservoirs."[52]

Political ecological approaches in anthropology have demonstrated that disasters do not manifest instantaneously but are, rather, produced in spaces and times that often exceed the geographic and temporal boundaries of the affected communities.[53] Consequently, resilience, as the "qualities or characteristics that allow a community to survive following a collective trauma"[54] and the subsequent ability to rebuild what was lost, must be equally framed within the broader political ecological relationships that expand beyond the confines of the community. Contemporary inhabitation and utilisation of formerly closed villages show how the coastal landscape represents not only a "reservoir" in an ecological sense but can also act as a littoral reserve by providing the space for alternatives outside of the constraints of village life. The creation of autonomous social space at these contemporary hunting camps is part of the "hidden transcript"[55] of practical resistance. The coastal landscape of Chukotka is not only a location where state forces inscribed their social and economic blueprint but also a regenerative space where hidden forms of resistance to state-enforced resettlement policies can find their very own place.

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52 Ibid., 268.
53 Barrios, "Resilience," 30.
54 Sherrieb, Harris and Galea, "Community Resilience," 228.
55 Scott, *Domination*, 191.

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8 Post-Soviet Memory Politics of the Forgotten Victory over Japan in 1945

Joonseo Song

Abstract Since the early 1990s, the local authorities of the Sakhalin region have used the victory in the Soviet–Japanese War in 1945 as a key tool for redefining their local identities and, furthermore, a regional identity. The local authorities have requested that the central government in Moscow commemorate the day of victory in the Far East at the national level, both by renaming it the Day of Victory over Militarist Japan and by rehabilitating the Soviet practice of celebrating it on September 3. The central government only partially accepted this request because, on the global level, it sought economic cooperation with Japan and, on the domestic level, it was pursuing the symbolic status of the "national" memory of the Great Patriotic War by keeping a balance between local war memories.

In the war memory of both the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, Victory Day (May 9) celebrates the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War, which Russians call the Soviet–German War (June 22, 1941–May 9, 1945). While this has been considered an important day, the memory of the Soviet victory over Japan in the Soviet–Japanese War (August 9–September 2, 1945) was largely forgotten, except in some regions of the Russian Far East, even during the Soviet years. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt agreed that the Soviet Union would enter the fight against Japan two or three months after Germany surrendered. In compliance with the agreement, the Soviet Union declared war against Japan on August 8, 1945. The following day, the Soviet Army, allied with the Mongolian People's Army, launched an attack on Japanese-occupied Manchuria, while other Soviet troops attacked the southern region of Sakhalin Island, the Kuril Islands, and the northern area of the Korean peninsula, which Japan had also occupied.

By early September, the Soviet troops had liberated those regions, having defeated the Japanese armies stationed there. Accordingly, on September 2, 1945, the Japanese delegation signed a document declaring unconditional surrender

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on the deck of an American battleship in Tokyo Bay, while the Stalin government issued a decree that designated September 3 as a "Holiday of Victory over Japan."[1] The following year, September 3 was celebrated as a national holiday in the Soviet Union, and the Stalin government organised mass celebrations and gunfire ceremonies in Moscow, the Soviet Republic capitals, and some regional administrative centres in the Far East, such as Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.[2]

However, the decree regarding the Holiday of Victory over Japan was never consistently observed, and as time passed, it was ignored by the Soviet government. There are several reasons for this. First, the Great Patriotic War was a total war that lasted nearly four years, compared to approximately three weeks for the Soviet–Japanese War. The former involved nearly the entire population, either as frontline soldiers or labourers on the home front. Most of the casualties of World War II (September 1, 1939–September 2, 1945) occurred during the Great Patriotic War, and the most heroic episodes took place against Nazi German forces. Although there were Soviet casualties from the military operation against Japan to recapture Japanese-occupied territories, the number was exceptionally small compared to those lost in the war against Nazi Germany.[3] As Dmitry Streltskov, a Russian expert in Japan studies, points out, "[u]nlike Nazi Germany, Japan neither attacked the Soviet Union nor caused great suffering to the Soviet people or extensive damage to the Soviet economy."[4]

Second, unlike the wartime propaganda against Nazi Germany, the Stalin government did not organise any propaganda that would cause "any hatred or even negative emotions toward Japan."[5] After the Soviet Union signed a neutrality pact with Japan in April 1941, Stalin did not want to provoke Japan to join Germany during the war, as this would have plunged the Soviet Union into a two-front war on the Western border and in the Far Eastern region. Thus, there was no strong anti-Japanese sentiment in Soviet public discourse.[6] Consequently, unlike the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany, the memory of its victory over Japan was not deeply rooted in its collective memory, mass culture, or public discourse among most Soviet citizens.

1 Pravda, "Ukaz. Prezidiuma."
2 Pravda, "V chest' dnia."
3 While the number of deaths from the Soviet and Mongolian armies totalled approximately 12,000, the death toll of the Soviet Army during the Great Patriotic War was 8,668,400, which is more than 722 times higher. Shishov, *Rossiia*, 571; Filimoshina, "Liudskie," 95–96.
4 Streltsov, "Russian Views."
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.

However, unlike most regions of Russia, which lost the memory of the victory over Japan, the Russian Far East and especially the Sakhalin region commemorated the victory throughout the Soviet period. This tradition of commemoration continued during the post-Soviet years because the memory was an inexpungible part of the Sakhalin history that defined local identity.[7] The postwar experiences of the Sakhalin region were distinguished from other regions, since southern Sakhalin first became Sovietised only after the war. During the postwar years, the region experienced intensive Sovietisation through Soviet identity-building politics.[8] Thus, the commemoration of the Soviet victory over Japan was a key part of Sakhalin cultural tradition.

Until the mid-1990s, the local authorities of Sakhalin *oblast'* commemorated the Soviet victory over Japan at the local level. Then, the trend started to change: local authorities, politicians, and scholars of the Sakhalin region sought to promote the historical significance of the victory on the national level by emphasising the fact that it led both to the end of World War II and to the reincorporation of the lost territories, including Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. They wanted to obtain recognition from both the central government and the rest of the nation for their region's contribution to the war efforts by rediscovering the historical significance of the forgotten victory.

A key Yeltsin government decision, which neglected crucial local memory, changed the attitudes of local authorities, elites, and veterans toward the commemoration. In early 1992, the new post-Soviet government announced its plan to attract Japanese economic support for and investment in the Far Eastern region by returning the two southernmost Kuril Islands to Japan. This announcement caused enormous grievance among the local communities in the Sakhalin *oblast'*. Local Soviet–Japanese War veterans deplored the idea that their sacrifices in liberating the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin were in vain, while the governor of the Sakhalin *oblast'* expressed his deep concern about undermining Russia's geopolitical interest in the Far Eastern region.[9] Local actors (e.g. local authorities, political elites, and veterans) further took the initiative to promote the victory over Japan from a local to a national one based on the decree, the Days of Military Glory, which the Yeltsin government issued in March 1995.[10] The government, which was struggling to find new,

7 For example, see Gubernskie Vedomosti, "Frontoviki" for a commemoration ceremony on September 3, 1992, hosted by the governor of the Sakhalin *oblast'* for local veterans.
8 Urbansky and Barop, "Red Star," 283–316.
9 Gubernskie Vedomosti, "Frontoviki."
10 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'nyi zakon ot 13 marta."

post-Soviet symbols and ideologies that could effectively unify the nation, created the Days of Military Glory, which designated fifteen key historic dates of Russian military victories in order to use war memory as a unifying tool. September 3 was not included among those dates, while five other dates related to the Great Patriotic War were.[11] Local authorities and veterans of the Sakhalin region did not accept the exclusion of the victory day over Japan from the list of the honourable days. Thus, since immediately after the announcement of the decree, the local politicians, elites, and veterans of the region have persistently requested the central government to promote the victory in the Far East to the national level by designating September 3 as a Day of Military Glory—the Day of Victory over Militarist Japan.

To date, the Russian government has not fully accepted the requests from local communities. In 2010, the Medvedev administration announced a new decree that designated September 2, rather than September 3, as the Day of the End of World War II, an official day of remembrance commemorating Japan's unconditional surrender. It was only in 2020 that the Putin government accepted—but still only partially—the requests of the Sakhalin region. The government changed the date from September 2 to September 3 and designated it a Day of Military Glory,[12] but not with the naming terms requested by the *oblast'*. Thus, it remains the Day of the End of World War II, rather than the Day of Victory over Militarist Japan.

These actions lead to the following research questions: why did the Russian government reclaim the forgotten memory of the war against Japan by creating an official day of remembrance more than half a century later while only partially accepting the request from the local communities? How do local authorities in the Far Eastern region strive to rebuild their local identities and, furthermore, a regional identity by using the memory of the victory? What are the dilemmas and limits of the commemoration of the victory over Japan for the central government? To answer these questions, I examine post-Soviet politics of memory and the way that the Russian government and local authorities have used the memories of the Soviet victory over Japan to pique national and local interests.

11 These five dates include January 27 (the day the siege of Leningrad was lifted), February 2 (the day of victory in the 1943 Battle of Stalingrad), May 9 (the day of the Soviet people's victory in the Great Patriotic War that ended in 1945), August 23 (the day the Soviet Army defeated the Nazi fascist army during the battle of Kursk in 1943), and December 5 (the day the Soviet Army launched a counter-offensive against the German Army in the 1941 Battle of Moscow).

12 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'nyi zakon o vnesenii."

8.1 Politics of Memory, Regional Identity, and War Memory

The key question regarding post-Soviet politics of memory of the Soviet–Japanese War is by whom and under what circumstances the Soviet victory over Japan is remembered or ignored. Ultimately, the post-Soviet Russian government's commemoration of the Soviet victory over Japan depends on the geopolitical situation, including the territorial dispute between Russia and Japan over the southern Kuril Islands. Thus, in this chapter, I analyse the disparity between the central government, local political elites, and communities in the way that they remember and commemorate the victory in the Far East in the context of "geopolitics of memory."[13]

Regional identity is another key concept used to examine the characteristics of memory politics regarding the Soviet victory over Japan. Identity is defined as "a person's or group's functional sense of who 'we' are,"[14] whereas "regional identity" is the feeling of belonging to an area, and it is grounded in local history or in other specific, regionally bound conditions. It is also a collective feeling that is geared towards a specific region or one that is formed by a region.[15] During the Soviet period, the central government and the Communist Party instilled Soviet ideologies and values throughout the country in a unifying manner. As a result, many prerevolutionary regional traditions and other unique features that distinguished specific areas were suppressed, and eventually, they faded away.[16]

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, regional authorities and the elite have persistently redefined and reconstructed regional identities.[17] They began to rediscover the local memories of historical events in their areas, and in that process, they emphasised the significance of their regional contributions to the nation's cultural and economic development as well as their patriotic exploits in certain historical events, such as wars against foreign invaders.[18]

For the regional authorities and elite of the Russian Far East, the Soviet victory over militarist Japan during World War II has a special meaning.

13 For an example of research applying the approach of the geopolitics of memory, see Zhurzhenko, "Geopolitics"; Antoshchenko, Shtykova, and Volokhova, "War," 465–493.
14 Clowes, Erbslöh, and Kokobobo, *Russia's Regional Identities,* 5.
15 Pohl, "Regional Identity," 12917.
16 Song, "Branding," 74.
17 Clowes, Erbslöh, and Kokobobo, *Russia's Regional Identities;* Song, "Branding."
18 For a case study on various Russian towns, see Petro, *Crafting Democracy,* 164–176; Song, "Olga gongwhuui," 299–323; Song, "Symbolic Politics."

During the first half of the twentieth century, the region experienced multiple conflicts with Japan, such as the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905), the Japanese occupation of South Sakhalin (1905–1945), the Japanese intervention in Siberia during the Civil War (1918–1922), and Soviet–Japanese border conflicts (the second half of the 1930s). Due to turbulent relations with Japan, the reincorporation of South Sakhalin into Soviet territory after their 1945 victory is one of the most important historical events for the communities of the Sakhalin region. For this reason, during the 1990s and early 2000s, as regional authorities and scholars rediscovered regional history for rebuilding post-Soviet regional identities, local scholars of the Sakhalin area developed a keen interest in Sakhalin's interconnected history with Japan. The *Kraevedcheskii Biulleten'*, one of the major regional-studies journals published in the Sakhalin region, provided a major platform for scholars to publish articles about the history of the Japanese occupation in Sakhalin, the Soviet–Japanese border dispute over the Kuril Islands, and the Russo-Japanese war.[19]

Thus, when the Russian government began to promote patriotism and unity throughout the nation by using memories of historic military victories against foreign invaders from the mid-1990s on, local actors started to invent "agents of memory" presenting memories of the 1945 victory in the Far East. The agents they used to promote this collective memory included the commemoration of victory day, flash mobs, and battle reenactments. Some local actors of the Sakhalin *oblast'* even made an effort to build a new regional identity based on the victory by spreading one of the agents (i.e. ribbons) throughout the Russian Far East.

8.2 Local Entitlement to the Far Eastern Victory

In response to the governmental decree of March 1995, which did not include September 3 in the Days of Military Glory, Valiulla Maksutov, a representative of the Sakhalin Oblast Duma (the executive body, *duma,* of this federal subject, *oblast',* of Russia that includes the island of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands), and Igor Farkhutdinov, head of the Sakhalin Oblast Administration, wrote letters in April and May 1995, respectively, appealing to President Yeltsin and a representative of the Russian government to include the day

19 For examples of these articles, see Kriukov, "Grazhdanskoe upravlenie," 7–44; Aiushin, Kalinin, and Ancha, "Pamiatniki," 3–65; Akidzuki, "Iapono-rossiiskie otnosheniia," 41–128; Shcheglov, "Uchastie SSSR," 51–70.

of victory over Japan in the Days of Military Glory.[20] They indicated that residents and veterans of the Sakhalin region were also sending letters to the local government administration, local *duma,* and local media to demand inclusion of this date. Maksutov claims:

> In the history of our country, this date entered as a memorable historical date associated with the end of World War II and the defeat of militarist Japan. […] One of the most important results of this victory is the return to the USSR of Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. […] On behalf of the residents of the Sakhalin Oblast, we ask you to consider inserting the following addendum to the federal law "On Days of Military Glory (victorious dates) of Russia" September 3, 1945—the Day of the End of the Second World War and the defeat of militarist Japan.[21]

Viktor Ustinov, chairman of the committee on geopolitics of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, reacted to the letter from the Sakhalin *oblast'* by pointing out that no one on the committee believed that "the victory [over Japan] was decisive, especially because it was not in the framework of the Great Patriotic War."[22] This implies that, at the time, few political leaders considered the war and resulting victory over Japan as historically significant in contemporary Russia. However, appeals from the local community in the Sakhalin region eventually changed the attitude of Moscow's officials and politicians. After the Days of Military Glory decree was announced, Ustinov implied that he had received letters from *frontoviki* (former frontline soldiers) and *dal'nevostochnikov* (people of the Far Eastern region). He urged Maksutov and Farkhutdinov to take further action by persuading Moscow's administrators to include September 3 in the Days of Military Glory list by amending the decree. Furthermore, in June 1995, the head of administration for the Ministry of Defence announced that the letter from the representative of the Sakhalin Oblast Duma, Maksutov, had received enough support for the ministry to send the request to the cabinet.[23]

20 Ponomarev, "Den' pobedy."
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.

Meanwhile, on September 18, 1997, the Sakhalin Oblast Duma accepted a decree that urged the government to add "September 3, Day of the victory over militarist Japan" in a declaratory note:

> [The local] community and war veterans especially, who participated in the battles in the Far East and liberated the Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands and remained in the islands, are counted at about 900 people. […] [T]hey expressed their confusion about the reason that the day of victory over Japan is not included in the federal decree. […] The day is no less significant in the history of Russia than any other day indicated in the decree. […] In the battle for the liberation of South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, 2,153 people died. For bravery and courage in defeating the Kwantung Army, 308,000 soldiers received orders and medals, and 93 people were bestowed with the title of "Heroes of the Soviet Union" […][24]

This decree indicates that the local community of the Sakhalin region strongly desires to have their role in the war recognised, especially as their war efforts with Japan in 1945 had been ignored and largely forgotten for a long time by the central government and the nation as a whole.

While most cities in Russia did not regularly organise ceremonies to commemorate September 2 before 2010, when the Medvedev government designated the date as a day of remembrance at the end of World War II, some cities in the Far Eastern region (especially those that were directly involved in the campaign against the Japanese army in August 1945) acted differently. Blagoveshchensk, one of the launching points for the Soviet attack against the Japanese Kwantung Army during the first days of the Soviet–Japanese War, has commemorated the victory since the 1990s.[25]According to Soviet tradition, the city administration of Blagoveshchensk, the capital of the Amur *oblast',* organised commemoration ceremonies on September 3, rather than September 2. For example, *Amurskaia Pravda*, a local news outlet, reported that on September 3, 2004, the local authorities of Blagoveshchensk laid a wreath on the monument of the Armoured Boat to commemorate the "victory over militarist Japan." On the same day, they also organised an event

24 Ibid.
25 Amur.info, "Blagoveshchentsy opustili."

of tossing wreaths into the Amur River, which the Soviet Army had crossed to attack Heihe, a fortified town where the Japanese army was stationed.[26]

Similarly, some Far Eastern cities that were liberated from the Japanese occupation during the war, such as Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, had already preserved the memory of the victory after the Soviet years by organising an annual commemoration for this specific event. The local administration of the Sakhalin *oblast',* comprising Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, observed September 3 as a memorable date long before 2010. In a ceremony commemorating the day of victory over Japan in 2002, Governor Farkhutdinov emphasised that the value of a "Great Victory" in the war of the Far East was not compromised by the short length of the war.[27] He also emphasised that "we should do everything in order not to have this territory transformed by any others."[28] The following year, more than a thousand people participated in the commemoration ceremony of September 3, held in Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, including Ivan Makhalov (the new Governor of the Sakhalin *oblast*), local politicians, local city officials, *oblast'* administrators, schoolchildren, students, and veterans.[29]

As the Sakhalin region's local media indicated, September 3 is another Victory Day, along with May 9, for the residents of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands.[30] Consequently, in June 2008, the Sakhalin *oblast'* decreed September 3 to be the "Day of the Independence of South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands from Japanese militarists," according to *oblast'* law.[31] Contrary to other regions of Russia, this designation implies that, for the local authorities and communities of the Far Eastern region that either experienced Japanese occupation or were directly involved in the battle against Japan, the memory of their victory is a crucial component of their identities.

8.3 Moscow's Geopolitics of Memory

How did the Moscow leadership respond to this local call for recognition and attention during the 1990s? President Yeltsin did not fully agree with the request from the Sakhalin Oblast Duma. Instead, in a letter to the Federal Assembly on November 22, 1997, Yeltsin suggested an alternative date and

26 Amurskaia Pravda, "Venki poplyvut"; Larina, "Blagoveshchensk."
27 Sakhalin.info, "Tret'e sentiabria."
28 Ibid.
29 Gruzdeva, "Zhiteli."
30 Sakhalin.info, "K piatidesiatipiatiletiiu."
31 Stoliarova, "Poiasnitel'naia zapiska."

name. Rather than suggesting September 3, which the Stalin government designated the Holiday of Victory Over Japan, Yeltsin called for September 2 to be named the Day of the End of World War II (as opposed to the Day of Victory over Militarist Japan).[32] Thus, the Russian government suggested a slightly different option, which entailed omitting the term "militarist" from the name of the day of remembrance while still accepting the requested date. However, opposition arose from the State Duma to decline the government's version. In a letter to the committee on the Defence of the State Duma dated November 17, 1997, Aleksey Mitrofanov, the chairperson of the committee on geopolitics, opposed declaring it a day of remembrance: "Japan did not surrender in front of the Soviet Union [but did so in front of the Allied powers]."[33]

Eventually, after discarding his initial suggestion to make September 2 a national day of remembrance celebrating the end of World War II, Yeltsin refused the proposal of the Sakhalin Oblast Duma in October 1998:

> It is necessary to consider the fact that the establishment of the day of victory over militarist Japan by the Federal Law will enter in contrast to the positive sentiments that have emerged in Russo-Japanese relations in recent years.[34]

In other words, rather than promoting patriotism among Russians through war memories, economic benefit was more important for the Yeltsin government during this time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the rehabilitation of the crumpled regional economy in the Far East was an urgent issue. In October 1993, Yeltsin announced a plan to solve the regional issue by selling the Kuril Islands to Japan after the Russo-Japanese summit that was held during his official visit to Japan, thereby attracting Japanese investment and financial reward. However, his plan was not realised due to fierce opposition from Sakhalin *oblast',* including local anglers, the State Duma, the military, and Russian intellectuals.[35]

In November 1996, after Yeltsin began his second term as the Russian president, the government urged Japan to develop economic relations with Russia during a meeting between the two countries' ministers of foreign

32 Ponomarev, "Den' pobedy."
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Park, "Russia," 197.

affairs.[36] Given the continued efforts of Moscow leadership to promote friendly relations with Japan, the Yeltsin administration decided to bury the memory of the Soviet victory over Japan in World War II by refusing the local authorities' request.

The priority of the Russian government and Moscow politicians did not change until 2010, even though the Sakhalin Oblast Duma continually requested that the State Duma adopt the bill.[37] Each time, the State Duma dismissed the bill, indicating that the Sakhalin Duma needed to have the central government agree first.[38] However, in July 2010, the Russian government announced the inclusion of September 2 in a list of "memorable dates," which the federal law defines as being "related to important historical events for the existence of the government and society."[39] Although the Russian government did not designate September 2 as part of the Days of Military Glory that "commemorate[s] the honorable victory of Russian troops that played a decisive role in Russian history," it was still a huge political change regarding war memories, which had previously aimed at not provoking Japan for the benefit of Russia's economic interest.

So, why did the Kremlin hastily make September 2 a significant date in 2010? Territorial tensions with the Japanese government over the Kuril Islands in the Far Eastern border region pushed Moscow's leadership to pay closer attention to the region. During the Cold War era, Japan had consistently requested that the Soviet Union immediately return four of the southernmost Kuril Islands that are close to Hokkaido. As an alternative, the Soviet Union suggested that it could return two of the four islands, but Japan repeatedly refused to accept this offer. They deemed the Soviet occupation of the islands unacceptable, since they only took control after August 15, 1945 (which is the date that Japan recognises as the end of the war, rather than September 2, when Japan signed the document of unconditional surrender).

After the Cold War ended, the territorial dispute between Russia and Japan was exacerbated. In July 2008, the Japanese government had announced a new guideline for teachers that specified Japan's sovereignty over the southern Kuril Islands in their textbook.[40] Furthermore, in May 2009, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso claimed that Russia had "illegally occupied" the territory.[41]

36 Nam, "Nam-kurilyeoldo," 128.
37 Birzhevoi, "Rossiia vpervye."
38 Ibid.
39 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'nyi zakon ot 23 iiulia."
40 RT, "Japanese Schoolbooks."
41 Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii, "V sviazi."

In the following month, the Japanese parliament approved amendments to the law with a provision regarding Japan's sovereignty over the four islands of South Kuril in June.[42] In response, the Russian government initiated a procedure to make September 2 a national day of remembrance.

In early 2010, Sergei Naryshkin, head of the Presidential Executive Office, called on the State Duma to proceed quickly with the lawmaking procedure. Following the Kremlin's request, Boris Gryzlov, a State Duma speaker and chief lobbyist, addressed the issue in the Duma.[43] On July 7, 2010, the State Duma accepted the change to the decree regarding days of remembrance, and it was signed by President Medvedev. On July 23, 2010, the Russian government issued a new decree under federal law that designated September 2 the Day of the End of World War II.[44] Consequently, on September 2 that year, the government organised a massive ceremony to celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of World War II's end at Victory Park in Moscow.[45]

This example demonstrates that the Russian government used the memory of war not only to commemorate it but also for geopolitical purposes (i.e. to integrate and secure the remote borderland in the Far East). Furthermore, this implies that the Moscow leadership changed its policy that prioritised economic interests over border security. Since 2010, the central government has continued to be vigilant concerning its Far Eastern borderland, and on November 1 of that year, President Medvedev visited Kunashir Island, the southernmost Russian territory of the Kuril Islands facing the Japanese border; this was the first time the Islands were visited by a state leader, including during the Soviet and post-Soviet years. His visit was a gesture that confirmed the disputed island as Russian territory.[46]

8.4 Local Politics of Memory and Building Far Eastern Identities

How did the local governments and communities of the Far Eastern cities respond to the central government's decree that designated September 2 as a national day of remembrance in 2010? They responded by rediscovering

42 Lenta.Ru, "Iaponskii parlament."
43 Birzhevoi, "Rossiia vpervye."
44 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'nyi zakon ot 23 iiulia."
45 Itar-Tass, "V den' okonchaniia."
46 RIA Novosti, "Medvedev vpervye"; "Iaponiia vremenno."

memories of their victory by inventing new ways to commemorate the war and highlight the victory's significance in the nation's history. First, local authorities began to redefine the historical significance of September 2 by emphasising the region's contribution to the war's victory. For example, in September 2014, Viacheslav Shport, the Governor of the Khabarovsk region, commemorated the day in his address:

> September 2—This is the date when the last period was set up for the long bloody war against the fascist invaders. […] And *that happened here in the Far East region* [emphasis added]. The one and a half million Kwantung Army was defeated thanks to the extraordinary dedication of *our fellow countrymen* [emphasis added]. Their achievements are worthily appreciated by the President and the Government of the Russian Federation. Khabarovsk was awarded the honorary title "City of Military Glory."[47]

In his address, the Governor redefined the Khabarovsk region's role, which has long been considered a home front of World War II in the official discourse. According to his explanation, the Khabarovsk region was the front region where local soldiers played a crucial role in ending the long, violent war.

Local politicians, scholars, and veterans of the Sakhalin *oblast'* also presented their strong desire for a more vivid presentation of the Far Eastern victory. In 2017, Sergei Ponomarev, a representative of the Sakhalin *oblast'* branch of the Russian Geographical Society, asked, "[i]s there Russia in it?" in reference to the current title of the "Day of the End of World War II." He complained that the title lacks information, such as "who fought with whom, who obtained victory over whom."[48] From Ponomarev's perspective, the Soviet victory over Japan in the Far East should have been more clearly indicated in its title so that it could be included in the list of Days of Military Glory, which are officially specified as days of "heroism and bravery of Russian armies, as well as might and glory of Russian arms,"[49] rather than merely remaining a memorable date. In this sense, he criticised the Yeltsin government's refusal to designate September 2 as part of the Days of Military Glory by claiming that it was "certainly an opportunistic exclusion" in favour of "an instant trend of

47 DVHAB.ru, "Den' okonchaniia."
48 Ponomarev, "Den' pobedy."
49 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'yi zakon ot 13 marta."

relations with Japan."[50] They had also defined the Soviet victory over Japan as Russia's "second Victory Day" after May 9, the first Victory Day.

In an open letter to President Putin in October 2017, ninety-seven regional *duma* members, veterans, academics, and museum directors requested that the President restore the "Holiday of Victory over Japan" as it was originally established on September 3 in 1945 by the Stalin government.[51] In the letter, they complained that the government had unlawfully deprived the Far East community of a day to commemorate their soldiers that were sacrificed to achieve victory. The government did this by designating September 2 as the Day of the End of World War II, while September 3 was labelled the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism.[52] The letter also stressed that the Soviet victory in World War II would not have been achieved if the Soviet Army had not defeated Japan in the Far East. The petitioners maintained that the celebration of the Soviet victory over Japan contains a "pan-national meaning."[53] They claimed that the Japanese occupation of both the southern Sakhalin Island (after the Russo-Japanese War) and the northern part of the island (during the Civil War) remained "painful memories in people's minds."[54] Accordingly, those petitioners, including regional veterans and elites of the Sakhalin *oblast',* urged Putin to designate September 3 as a national "holiday for the victory over Japan that the whole nation can celebrate."[55]

In addition to portraying the victory over Japan as a historical event that deserves to be commemorated at the national level, the regional communities of the Sakhalin region initiated an event in 2010 on September 2 and 3. They wore moiré ribbons (white-yellow-red ribbons) as a part of the "action for Far Eastern victory" (*aktsiia Dal'nevostochnaia pobeda*).[56] The three colours of the ribbons were identical to the ones used for the medal "For Victory over Japan," which the Stalin government awarded to 1,83 million soldiers on September 3, 1945 for participating in the war against Japan.[57] Following the popularity of wearing ribbons of St. George on Victory Day (May 9), the Sakhalin residents invented a symbol of the Far Eastern victory.

50 Ponomarev, "Den' pobedy."
51 Regnum, "Prazdnik pobedy."
52 The Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism was established in 2005, a year after the Beslan school siege.
53 Regnum, "Prazdnik pobedy."
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Vesti-Khabarovsk, "Muarovye lenty"; Sukhorebrik, "Dal'nevostochnaia pobeda."
57 Novosti Khabarovska, "Muarovaia lenta"; Regnum, "Prazdnik pobedy."

In 2011, the Sakhalin authorities began to spread the campaign of wearing moiré ribbons to neighbouring regions by allocating them to local veteran associations and authorities of Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsk for distribution to locals. In a meeting with veterans in Khabarovsk in August of the year, Aleksandr Bolotnikov, a deputy of the Sakhalin Oblast Duma, emphasised that the ultimate goal of the "action for Far Eastern victory" was to "remind all citizens of the Russian Federation, especially those living in the western part of the country, of the fact that World War II, the most dreadful war on earth, ended right here in our far eastern borderlands."[58] This indicates that, after the central government partly recognised the Far Eastern victory by designating September 2 as a memorable date, local actors of Sakhalin region—the most active in the Far East regarding the commemoration of the Soviet victory over Japan—strove to build a new post-Soviet *regional* identity by rediscovering and spreading memory of the so-called forgotten victory.

Khabarovsk authorities, like the Sakhalin ones, invented their own local symbol of the victory. On September 2, 2017, Khabarovsk's regional government, along with Khabarovsk's Committee on Youth Policy, organised a new event—a flash mob event called the Wall of Memory and Friendship (*Stena Pamiati i Druzhby*)—with the goal of raising interest in commemorating the Far Eastern victory.[59] They made a line that was 1,945 metres long, symbolising 1945, which consisted of more than 2,500 city residents, including many students wearing moiré ribbons. As part of the ceremony, participants passed down the line a copy of Stalin's announcement on September 2, 1945, declaring the capitulation of Japan. The line went all the way from the local park to the statue of Marshal Vasilevskii, where a veteran of the Soviet–Japanese War awaited the copy of Stalin's announcement.[60] Since 2017, the Wall of Memory and Friendship has been organised every year.[61]

Like the Sakhalin and Khabarovsk regions, the city authorities of Blagoveshchensk developed their version of the September 2 commemoration in addition to their preexisting traditions, such as *Svecha Pamiati* (Candle of Memory), which entails a nighttime candle vigil at the World War II monument. Another tradition includes *Tsvety na Vode* (Flower on Water), which involves tossing flowers into the Amur River for the fallen soldiers of the war.

58 Sakhalin.info, "Aktsiiu sakhalintsev."
59 Habinfo, "Zhivuiu stenu."
60 Viazankin, "Stena."
61 Panova, "Pamiat' zhertv."

On September 2, 2015, the authorities organised a new event: a battle reenactment between the Soviet Army and the Kwantung Army that occurred in August 1945 on the banks of the Amur River.[62] Blagoveshchensk's city authorities mobilised more than 160 people to act as Soviet and Japanese soldiers, including the use of various weapons and fighter planes for the reenactment. This is one of the few battle reenactments between the Soviet and Japanese armies performed in Russia, as most of the World War II battles conducted along Russia's western border were between the Soviet and German armies.[63]

8.5 The Limits and Dilemma of Memory Politics

The commemoration of the Far Eastern victory has not been shared very often at the national level. According to research comparing the frequency and usage of the phrases "Great Patriotic War" and "World War II," in the Russian media during the first two decades of the post-Soviet 1990s and 2000s, the memory of the Great Patriotic War and its victory remained dominant in the memories of Russian citizens in relation to World War II. The Soviet–Japanese War victory, however, which was not "directly related to the defence of the Motherland against fascist invaders and occupiers," is regarded as a minor achievement.[64]

Although the authorities of regional centres outside of the Far East have organised annual days of remembrance on September 2 since 2010, the events focused more on remembering the Great Patriotic War rather than the Soviet victory over Japan. For example, to commemorate September 2 in Smolensk *oblast',* located along Russia's western border, the local authorities arranged activities called the "Day of the Do-gooder," where volunteers participate in the cleaning and maintenance of war monuments and the graveyards of soldiers that fell during the Great Patriotic War.[65]

Commemorating the Great Patriotic War on September 2, rather than the Far Eastern victory of World War II, sometimes makes more sense even for some residents of the Far Eastern region, especially outside the Sakhalin *oblast'.* Indeed, there is a strong popular tendency in the public's perception

62 Port Amur, "Blagoveshchenskaia."
63 For an example of a Soviet-German battle reenactment, see Song, "Symbolic Politics," 223.
64 Kangaspuro and Lassila, "Naming the War," 396.
65 BezFormata, "V Smolenskoi"; Partiia Edinaia Rossiia, "2 sentiabria"; O chem govorit Smolensk, "V Viazemskom."

to consider the Great Patriotic War an overarching term that covers not only the patriotism and sacrifice shown in the war between the Soviets and Nazis but also that of the Soviet–Japanese War.[66] For example, Vasilii Orlov, the acting Governor of the Amur region, perceived the Soviet–Japanese War as an extension of the Great Patriotic War, as many locals participated in this fight. In Orlov's public address on September 2, 2018, he said, "100,000 soldiers from the Amur region participated in the *Great Patriotic War in the Far East* [emphasis added]."[67] In this case, therefore, the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War can be considered an inclusive action that includes the memory of the Far Eastern victory, as it belongs to the category of World War II. Consequently, the dominant perception of the Great Patriotic War inhibited the commemoration of the Far Eastern victory being turned into a *national* event and shared war memory of significant value.

In addition, the central government has been reserved in promoting and honouring the Soviet victory over Japan, and simultaneously, it has taken a pragmatic approach while implementing memory politics. While the Medvedev administration made September 2 a memorable date to commemorate the end of World War II, and the President independently visited the southernmost Kuril Island to reconfirm Russia's sovereignty, Medvedev also expressed his hope to develop economic ties with Japan. In December 2010, immediately after his visit to Kuril Island, he stated:

> This [Medvedev's and other government officials' recent visits to the Kuril Islands] does not mean that we are not willing to work with our Japanese colleagues. We are ready to implement a joint economic project. We are ready to work with them.[68]

This indicates that the Russian government wants to maintain open relations with Japan in order to take advantage of opportunities for increased investments and economic cooperation while also securing the disputed Far Eastern borderland.

Furthermore, since 2015, the Russian government has annually organised the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok and invited leaders of Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan, to promote economic cooperation.[69] At the

66 Kangaspuro and Lassila, "Naming the War," 397.
67 AmurNews, "Den' gordosti."
68 President of Russia, "Review."
69 Eastern Economic Forum, "About the Forum."

2017 forum, President Putin proposed a plan to build a bridge connecting southern Sakhalin to Hokkaido to build a global logistics network that links the Eurasian continent.[70] The Russian government's efforts to enhance economic cooperation with Japan are a possible reason that it has not accepted the request from political elites and veterans of the Sakhalin region to change the current title of September 2 (Day of the End of World War II) into one that includes terms such as "victory over (militarist) Japan."

It should be noted that, on April 19, 2020, the Putin government finally announced a decree that changed the Day of the End of World War II to September 3 while simultaneously designating the date a Day of Military Glory.[71] However, this does not mean that the central government eventually fully accepted what local actors have been requesting for nearly twenty-five years, since the central government did not change the title of the memorable day (Day of the End of World War II). Despite the necessity of further research about the reason for issuing the decree, one can, at this point, assume that the Putin government wanted to make the Far Eastern victory stand out to serve as a reminder for the rest of the world, as well as the nation itself, that the Soviet Union brought an end to World War II while emphasising its role as an Allied power in the war. The Russian government certainly had to take action against the European Parliament's resolution, adopted in September 2019, which criticises the Soviet Union for signing the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany, which was a significant factor that led to World War II.[72]

But, again, one can still see the dilemma in the central government's politics of war memory in that it decided to maintain a neutral title that includes neither terms like "victory," "militarist," nor "Japan," for the memorable day—presumably to avoid tensions with Japan. Following the government announcement, the Sakhalin politicians and veterans felt frustrated rather than welcoming of the central authorities' decision due to a missing word "victory," a source of the local communities' pride.[73] Thus, in early July 2020, the local *duma* of the Sakhalin *oblast'* reached a decision to send a petition both to the central administration and the State Duma, requesting a revision of the title of Day of Military Glory to Victory Day in World War II, a title that at least includes the term "victory," if not "militarist" or "Japan."[74] In response

70 President of Russia, "Plenary Session."
71 Rossiiskaia Federatsiia, "Federal'nyi zakon o vnesenii."
72 European commission, "Importance."
73 Sakhalin.info, "V oblastnoi."
74 BezFormata, "Sakhalinskie."

to the petition, the Russian government issued a statement of a negative review pointing out that the petition ignored the fact that the Soviet–Japanese war has a double character, i.e. one for the Soviet Union and another for the Allied powers, while treating the role of Soviet people in the termination of World War II in an unequal manner by emphasising the role of people who participated only in the war in the Far East.[75] The governmental statement indicates that "[the capitulation of Japan] is not an achievement of a single country, but that of many other countries." It also stresses that the establishment of a World War II commemorative day by legislation "should not single out the Soviet victory over an individual enemy country not to reduce the role of [entire] Soviet people in the termination of World War II."[76] The response of Senator Grigorii Karasin, who met delegates from Sakhalin in October 2020, clearly represents the government's position. Karasin stressed as follows:

> For the state of Russia, we have only one victory day, that is, the Victory Day on May 9, 1945. We cannot celebrate the victory day in the Battle of Kursk, the victory day in the Battle of Stalingrad, [and] the victory day in the Far East in a separate manner. The Victory Day in Russia is one.[77]

In conclusion, the tug of war between the central government and local authorities is continuing. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the local authorities of the Sakhalin *oblast'* sought to build a new postwar local identity by using a lost memory of a war victory and symbols of the victory while, at the same time, making efforts to promote local memory to a regional level in order to create a common and unifying regional identity. Furthermore, the local authorities of the Sakhalin region strove to promote the war memory to the national level. Certainly, the local and regional politics of war memory has sometimes not only conflicted with but also partially coincided with that of the central government, as the Moscow leadership has practiced the politics of war memory according to both changing geopolitical situations related to Japan and the memory war over World War II with European nations. Despite its partial success, the local government has not succeeded yet in attaining its final goal. For the Moscow leadership, which pursued both economic cooperation with Japan on a global level and symbolic status of the "national"

75 TASS, "Duma otkazalas'."
76 Ibid.
77 Iuliia Fraer, "Senator Karasin," October 15, 2020.

memory of the Great Patriotic War by keeping a balance among local war memories on a domestic level, the request from the local authorities of the Sakhalin region was too radical to accept.

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Representations and Norms

9 Poison Money: The Chinese Ruble Zone in War and Revolution

Yuexin Rachel Lin

Abstract Before 1917, Russia's imperial expansion into Inner and Northeast Asia drew large parts of the region together in a "ruble zone." A combination of tsarist monetary policy and grassroots commercial exchange allowed the ruble to dominate Xinjiang and Manchuria and displace Chinese currencies. Following the Russian revolutions and Civil War, however, currency mismanagement and the precipitous devaluation of the ruble severely undermined its viability. This chapter explores how the post-revolutionary currency chaos fed into long-standing Chinese grievances about Russia's economic imperialism, the growing rights-recovery movement, and wider questions about how modern states should organise their currency regimes.

When the Revolution of November 1917 swept across Russia, it inherited an empire of diverse peoples, ideologies, and interests. Russia's neighbours were also drawn into the upheaval, facilitated by porous borders and ethnically mixed frontiers. Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary actors had to contend with powerful cross-currents in Russia's borderlands, a challenge that was even more pertinent for the Whites, whose bases of power were located there. On the one hand, White movements sought legitimacy among Slavic Russian constituencies. On the other, they were obliged to draw on local sources of support, including from minority or migrant populations as well as from foreign interventionary forces. The two objectives were not necessarily compatible. White reliance on foreign assistance was not always appreciated by Russians. Their attempts to consolidate power were subverted by frontier groups. These tensions significantly undermined the White movement, especially when combined with the violence and misgovernment that characterised the Civil War. As much as certain White leaders may have advocated "Russia one and indivisible,"[1] translating this into effective control over fractious borderlands was a different matter.

1 Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 162, 326, 442; Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 224; Hosking, *Russia*, 453.

Lin, Yuexin Rachel. 2023. "Poison Money: The Chinese Ruble Zone in War and Revolution." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 161–184. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16382

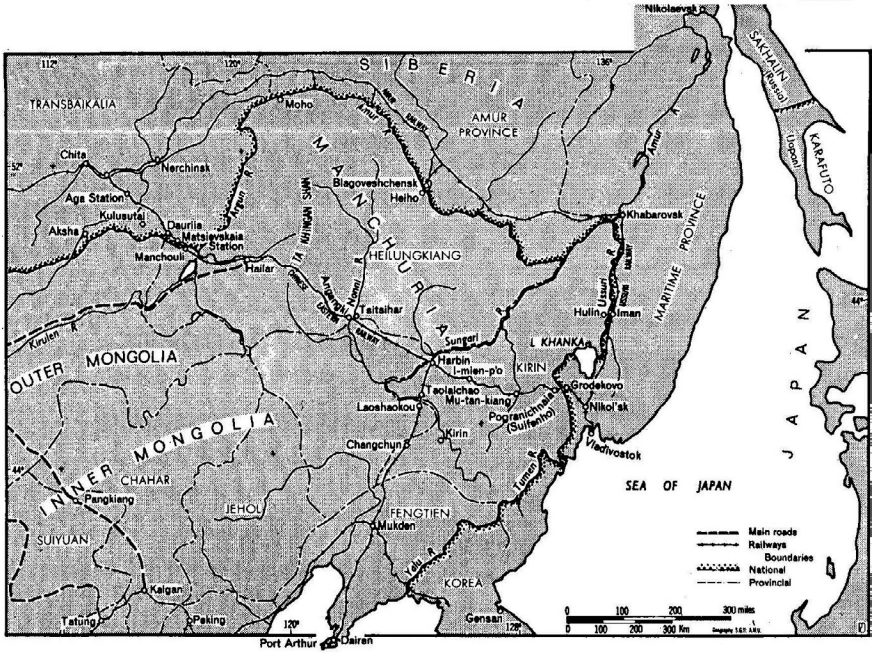

Fig. 1 Russian-Manchurian Border 1917–1924 (Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 5).

The trajectory of the 1917 Revolution and Civil War in the Russian Far East threw these problems into sharp relief. Here, as in other Russian peripheries, the conflict between Red and White encountered diverse populations and longstanding regional rivalries. Imperial competition among Russia, China, and Japan over this frontier had reached new levels of intensity in the 1850s and 1860s, with the transfer of the Amur region and Maritime Province (*Primor'e*) from Qing China to the tsars, and again in the 1900s, after Russia obtained the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) concession in Manchuria (Fig. 1). It had culminated in Russia's defeat by Japan in 1905, which brought southern Manchuria under Japanese control. Russia's own policies of colonial consolidation encouraged migration into the area. Chinese and Korean labour was employed to construct the Trans-Siberian Railway, extract gold from Amur mines, and man the port of Vladivostok. Burgeoning trade linked the Russian Far East to Northeast Asia, creating cross-border networks of Russian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese merchants. A 1910 regional census found around 100,000 Chinese living in the Russian Far East, or between ten and twelve percent of the population.[2] That same year, 8,300 trade and industrial establishments in the Far East were owned by Chinese, as opposed to 12,300 by Russians. These numbers

2 Benton, *Chinese Migrants*, 20–21; Larin, "Chinese Immigration in Russia 1850s–1920s," 850.

did not even reflect temporary migrants.[3] Japanese residents formed a far smaller community, but their commercial presence was strong, especially in the Maritime Province.[4]

In the Russian Far East, therefore, both Reds and Whites had to deal with Chinese and Japanese migrant communities that not only possessed significant size or wealth but also embodied wider imperial antagonisms. The Japanese case illustrated this most clearly: protection of the Japanese diaspora was used to justify the deployment of 72,000 troops in the Siberian Intervention and the occupation of the Maritime Province and Sakhalin.[5] Together with the Japanese army's support of Cossack warlords, this assertive policy undermined the legitimacy of the White movement and compelled the Bolsheviks to tread carefully.

Nevertheless, frontier subversion also took place in the transactions of everyday life. Before 1917, the high volume of cross-border trade and migration—coupled with Russian influence in the CER concession—had created an unofficial, transnational ruble zone that spanned the Russian Far East, northern Manchuria, and parts of Xinjiang.[6] Management of the ruble had direct implications for commerce, economic stability, and labour relations throughout this region. In fact, the very porousness of this ruble zone made it impossible for Russian authorities to enact domestic currency reforms without provoking a response from Chinese merchants and workers. Moreover, in the charged atmosphere of imperial competition, the circulation of currencies became associated with the relative power of the country that issued it. The ruble's presence in Manchuria and Xinjiang was perceived as an erosion of Chinese sovereignty, a symbol of its political fragmentation, and a manifestation of its inability to master its own monetary system.

Overt conflict could be avoided as long as the ruble remained stable and retained value. After 1917, however, the currency's precipitous fall led Chinese merchants and officials to question its desirability altogether. The White administrations of A. V. Kolchak in Omsk and D. L. Horvath in Harbin then attempted to stabilise the Far Eastern ruble zone but were undermined when Chinese communities moved to adopt alternative currencies, casting their actions as nationalist resistance to Russian power. In other words, the

3 Larin, "Chinese Immigration in Russia," 169.
4 Saveliev and Pestushko, "Dangerous Rapprochement," 29, 31.
5 Hosoya, "Origin of the Siberian Intervention," 103; Dunscomb, *Japan's Siberian Intervention*, 37, 67–68, 119, 127, 136–139.
6 Wang and Zhang, "'Qiangtie'," 78–80; Wang, "'Ha dayang juan' faxing shimo," 92–93.

immediate economic imperatives that accompanied the ruble's decline were framed in the rhetoric of currency nationalism, which, in turn, fostered merchant and official activism.

The currency conflict in the Far Eastern ruble zone therefore demonstrates the complexities of Russian control over a diverse and contested frontier. Until now, however, the role of currencies in the Russian Far East has not been well studied in the English-language historiography. Chia Yin Hsu's 2014 article "The Color of Money" is one notable exception; nevertheless, by focusing almost exclusively on Russian perspectives, it misses out on key post-revolutionary crises and the discourses of important Chinese actors. Chinese scholars have tended to adopt a nationalist approach, emphasising the ruble's role in tsarist imperialism and the harm its volatility brought to China.[7] They therefore come closest to capturing a key element of Chinese discourses at the time: that monetary policy and the use of currencies had implications not only for economic transactions but also for China's national sovereignty.

Here, I examine Chinese reactions to the post-1917 collapse of the ruble; Russian approaches to the ruble zone have been dealt with in Hsu's study. Drawing on Chinese-language sources from the Foreign Ministry (外交部, *Waijiaobu*) Archives in Academia Sinica, Taipei and the Harbin newspaper *Yuandongbao* (远东报, *Far Eastern News*), I argue that White attempts to manage the ruble triggered Chinese resistance and brought commercial and nationalist antagonism into alignment. Chinese merchants and officials framed the depreciation of the ruble and resulting economic losses in the language of national revival. The ruble became "poison money," a manifestation of Russian imperialism and duplicity introduced to cripple Chinese commerce. This resistance was not just rhetorical. Mirroring the anti-American boycott of 1905 and anti-Japanese boycotts of 1915 and 1919, a concerted effort to reclaim the ruble zone was undertaken by merchant societies and local officials. They were subsequently backed by the central government acting through the Bank of China (中国银行, *Zhongguo yinhang*) and Bank of Communications (交通银行, *Jiaotong yinhang*). Not only was White currency administration frustrated, the outcry over "poison money" represented the first step towards dismantling the Far Eastern ruble zone altogether.

7 The Chinese-language historiography of the Manchurian ruble zone is summarised in Shao and Ji, "Qingmo Zhong-E dongbei huobi chongtu," 135–136.

9.1 Coins of Competing Realms

A multiplicity of currencies circulated on the Sino-Russian frontier. Chief among these was the gold-backed ruble, which arrived in the late nineteenth century with the expansion of cross-border trade. Its position was significantly enhanced in 1903 with the opening of the Russian-dominated CER, which became one of the region's major landowners and employers and was supported by specie at its major shareholder, the Russo-Asiatic Bank (known in Chinese as *Hua-E daosheng yinhang* (华俄道胜银行, Sino-Russian *Daosheng*[8] Bank)). Procurement, railway accounts, salaries, and passenger and freight charges were paid in rubles. The CER's importance in regional trade secured the currency's influence within and outside of the railway concession:[9] at the beginning of World War I, more than 100 million in gold-backed imperial rubles (52 million USD at the 1914 exchange rate) circulated in Manchuria, with 40 million in Harbin alone.[10] In Xinjiang, the relative lack of metal specie undermined the viability of local currencies. Trade with Russia brought an influx of more stable rubles, again with the aid of the Russo-Asiatic Bank.[11] Finally, Japanese gold- or silver-backed "Korean" yen and bearer notes—issued by the Japanese-run Bank of Chosen and Yokohama Specie Bank, respectively—gained widespread acceptance in South Manchuria. As with the ruble, the yen's spread came primarily through Japan's South Manchurian Railway concession and the highly successful soybean trade.[12] Other local Chinese currencies tracked the fortunes of regional warlords such as Zhang Zuolin.

This heterogeneity extended not only to types of currency but also to the nature of money itself and its role in defining national sovereignty. Here, the various currencies had not yet completed the transition to pure fiat money. Instead, to be fully credible, notes had to be exchangeable for specie in banks. Users were able to engage in an ongoing "monetary plebiscite" to select the currency with the greatest and most consistent level of convertibility.[13] Hence, while the ruble dominated the Sino-Russian frontier until 1917 by virtue of its

8 "*Daosheng*" has been variously translated as "victory of the [rail]road" or "victory of virtue."

9 Hsu, "Color of Money," 87, 91.

10 Wang and Zhang, "'Qiangtie'," 78. The exchange rate between the ruble and US dollar comes from the *Congressional Record*, 6585.

11 Brophy, *Uyghur Nation*, 73; Yu, "Governorship of Yang Zengxin," 178–179, 183.

12 Ji, *History of Modern Shanghai Banking*, 145; Schiltz, *Money Doctors*, 167–168, 182–183; Gottschang, "Currencies, Identities, Free Banking, and Growth," 13–14.

13 Hsu, "Color of Money," 87.

stability and usefulness in facilitating cross-border trade, it was by no means the only currency that could be adopted. In addition to fulfilling the functions of money, therefore, the ruble, yen, and yuan became immediate, tangible symbols of their states' relative unity, power, and economic robustness.

Such complexity characterised China as a whole. Standardised copper cash had been minted under Qing government supervision, but different types of silver currency were produced by local authorities with varying regulations. International trade and the opening of treaty ports and concessions in the mid-nineteenth century introduced Western and Japanese banks to China. These also issued their own specie-convertible bank notes.[14] The lack of an integrated currency regime was thus associated with foreign encroachment into Chinese territory and the perceived national weakness that had enabled it. Already in the late Qing period, therefore, the Beijing government embarked on a series of currency reforms, including the establishment of state banks—the Bank of China and Bank of Communications—to issue currency on a unified, national level. Debates over the gold or silver standard were deeply influenced by nationalist considerations. A standard, silver-backed currency was seen as a means to prevent the circulation of foreign silver and allow China the sovereign right to determine the value of its coinage. Advocates of the gold standard took it as a marker of international prestige, the model for which was Meiji Japan. However, critics argued that it meant relying on foreign experts to control a currency reserve fund, relegating China to the status of colonial countries such as India and the Philippines.[15]

A unified currency regime had yet to be established when the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911. The Republican government that followed introduced a "national currency" (国币, *guobi*)—the silver-backed *dayang* yuan (大洋元)—in 1914, to be issued via the Banks of China and Communications. Due to initial shortages in supply, however, the *dayang* could not immediately dislodge the more than one hundred different currencies circulating in China. Ma Debin describes how, between 1911 and 1925, the exchange rates for eight to ten different currencies were listed in a major newspaper for Shanghai alone.[16] Furthermore, the country entered a period of internal conflict in the 1910s and 1920s, with power split between the Beijing government, local warlord factions, and Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang in southern China. Political

14 Ma, "Money and Monetary System in China," 6–10.

15 Dean, "Coin for China," 592–593, 597–598, 602–608; Kwong, "Finance and the Northern Expedition," 1701; Ma and Zhao, "Silver Transformation," 2.

16 Ma, "Money and Monetary System in China," 12.

fragmentation was accompanied by monetary autonomy. Warlords as well as foreign, private, state, and provincial banks printed their own paper money, facilitating the growth of a network of Chinese monetary institutions trading in these currencies and in silver according to fluctuating exchange rates. The driving force for currency integration was increasingly provided by the workings of the exchange and arbitrage markets, the activities of small- and large-scale Chinese banks, and the economic and political power of Chinese banking associations. Smaller Chinese monetary institutions, for example, were an integral part of a system of banknote exchange, pledging their reserves for an equivalent amount of Bank of China or Communications *dayang* notes and allowing them to proliferate. Chinese banking associations headed the drive to establish a single national yuan exchange market and monitor note-issuing banks. Civil and mercantile initiatives thus assumed a larger role in the integration of China's currency regime until the 1930s.[17]

Such activism linked the merchants of the ruble zone to their compatriots elsewhere in China. As discussed above, the identification of currency reform and economic success with national strength can be traced back to the late Qing reform period. This transformed merchants into an integral part of China's national vision, for their commercial expertise became essential for national revival. "Officially supervised, merchant-managed" (官督商办, *guandu shangban*) enterprises and chambers of commerce were established across the country to coordinate merchant activity and promote China's economic modernisation.[18] These chambers, as we shall see, became important interlocutors between merchants and the state. Merchants themselves embraced this role, acting as self-appointed advisors and civic leaders. Kwan Man Bun's study of Tianjin salt merchants has demonstrated their self-conscious adoption of nationalist language and fund-raising efforts to offset China's indemnities after the First Sino-Japanese War and Boxer Rebellion.[19] Chambers of commerce in the Lower Yangtze region led anti-foreign boycotts, organised companies to compete with foreign firms, set up free schools and libraries, and lobbied for greater political representation.[20] It was in this wider discursive field that ruble zone merchants operated and framed their opposition to Russian currency. Chairman of the Khabarovsk Chinese chamber of commerce Sun

17 Gottschang, "Currencies, Identities, Free Banking, and Growth," 5, 8; Ma, "Money and Monetary System in China," 12–14; Ma and Zhao, "Silver Transformation," 24–25.

18 Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation*, 176–178; Fewsmith, "From Guild to Interest Group," 634.

19 Kwan, *Salt Merchants of Tianjin*, 133, 154.

20 Chen, *Modern China's Network Revolution*, 202–206.

Guogao, for example, petitioned the Beijing government on revisions to the Sino-Russian trade treaties as early as 1911—before the ruble's collapse—and again in 1921. His recommendations, couched in nationalist terms, included a thorough denunciation of the ruble's presence in China.[21] After 1917, nationalist appeals to resist the ruble as Russian "poison" came from merchants as far afield as Henan, Shanghai, and Zhejiang.[22]

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the spread of the ruble was a marker of regional *connectivity* as well as conflict. In everyday life, Chinese merchants and workers in the ruble zone traded and profited in Russian currency. Its importance was reflected in the *Yuandongbao*, a Sino-Russian newspaper published in the CER hub city of Harbin, where the ruble's exchange rate was closely watched. Its chief editor, Russian sinologist A.V. Spitsyn, and his Chinese editor Yang Kai belonged to a "liberal" and "progressive" school that emphasised Sino-Russian mutualism.[23] Reports on ruble fluctuations were often accompanied by editorials explaining its volatility, condemning currency speculation, and assessing the merits of the ruble versus the yuan in economic terms.[24] Thus, as long as the ruble remained stable, its use was a matter of practical necessity and convenience. Once these conditions were lost, Chinese sought out alternative currencies and expressed their economic anxiety through the language of nationalist grievance. The upheavals that began in 1917 provided the impetus that pushed pragmatic acceptance of the ruble towards outright hostility.

21 "Shou lü-E Boli qiaoshang Sun Guogao cheng [Memorandum from émigré merchant in Russian Khabarovsk Sun Guogao]," May 5, 1921, in Wang, Tao, Li, Chen, and Jin (eds.), *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: Yiban jiaoshe, Minguo shinian* [*Historical Materials on Sino-Russian Relations: Routine Diplomacy, 1921*] (hereafter *YBJS*), 281–283.

22 "Shou nongshangbu zi [Inquiry from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]," January 11, 1921; "Shou Henan qudi Etie sunshi tuan cheng [Memorandum from the Henan League for the Suppression of Ruble Losses]," March 7, 1921; "Shou Zhejiang shengyihui han [Letter from the Zhejiang Provincial Assembly]," June 5, 1921, *YBJS*, 26–27, 128–132, 329.

23 Ng, "The *Yuandongbao*," 106–109; Grüner and Ng, "Borders in Daily Life and the Press," 34–35.

24 The *Yuandongbao* continually reported on ruble fluctuations. "Lubu you luojia [Ruble Falls Again]," May 10, 1917 and "Lubu tijia [Ruble Rises]," May 24, 1917, in Shi (ed.), *Yuandongbao* vol. 7, 595, 739; "Huiyi weichi shimian [Meeting to Stabilise the Market]," June 15, 1917 and "Lubu you diejia [Ruble Falls Again]," July 21, 1917, both in Shi (ed.), *Yuandongbao* vol. 8, 7, 366.

9.2 The Toxification of the Ruble

Already during the Provisional Government period, the ruble's volatility had inspired several Chinese merchants and chambers of commerce in Harbin to call for its replacement by China's national currency.[25] However, the ruble zone was not prepared for the precipitous and prolonged plunge in the currency's value immediately after the November Revolution.[26] The fall of Russian state authority, coupled with the unsettled state of the imperial gold reserve,[27] critically undermined the ruble's credibility throughout the Civil War. Successive Russian governments compounded the problem by issuing their own notes, often poorly backed, and enforcing their use by fiat.[28] Cross-border trade and migration then allowed the different types of ruble to spill over into the Sino-Russian frontier rapidly and in significant quantities. Table 1 lists the Russian currencies in the ruble zone during the Civil War.

Table 1 Russian currencies in use in China, 1917–1921.

Names	Chinese Names	Source	Period Introduced	Backing
Imperial ruble ("Romanov")	*Laotie* (老帖, "old notes") *Qiangtie* (羌帖, "qiang notes")	Russian treasury	Pre-1917	Russian gold reserve
Kerensky ruble ("Kerenskys")	*Datie* (大帖, "big notes")	Provisional Government	September 1917	Russian gold reserve/ government revenue
China Eastern Railway ruble ("Horvaths")	*Daosheng piao* (道胜票, after Russo-Asiatic Bank)	CER under D. L. Horvath	1918–1920	Specie in Russo-Asiatic Bank
Omsk ruble ("Siberians")	*Huangtiaozi* (黄条子, "yellow notes") *Xiaotie* (小帖, "small notes")	Kolchak regime	Late 1918–1919	Government revenue

25 "Cizhong yaoyan helai [Where Do Such Rumours Come From?]," July 6, 1917; "Lubu fubi quefa yuanyin [Reasons for the Shortage in Ruble Fractional Currency]," August 14, 1917; "Huiyi xingshi xiaoyang banfa [Meeting on a Means to Circulate the *Xiaoyang*]," September 15, 1917, in Shi (ed.), *Yuandongbao* vol. 8, 210, 544, 826. The *xiaoyang* was a fractional currency also issued by Beijing.

26 Hsu, "Color of Money," 93.

27 Smele, "White Gold," 1320–1322, 1334–1337.

28 Hsu, "Color of Money," 86–87.

The currency policies of the various Russian factions were largely determined by domestic economic objectives, but the effects of ruble depreciation and the proliferation of new notes could not be contained within Russia. The Russian ambassador in Beijing—Prince N. A. Kudashev, a tsarist-era holdover—and the Russian consul in Harbin were repeatedly obliged to issue assurances about the credibility of new types of ruble.[29] Nevertheless, complaints soon arose from Chinese chambers of commerce. The Harbin chamber, for example, reported on the depreciation of the imperial ruble and expressed suspicion at the Kerensky notes, despite Kudashev's promises;[30] in Heihe (Wade-Giles: Heiho), across the Amur River from Blagoveshchensk, the chamber wrote that Russian banks were no longer converting notes into specie, turning the ruble into "worthless paper";[31] and in Kiakhta, merchants refused to accept Kerensky notes until supplies of the imperial began to run low. They then agreed to circulate the Kerensky notes at a steep discount.[32]

Concern about Russia's currency problems reached the highest levels of Chinese government. Both Manchurian provincial authorities and Beijing were aware of the ruble's prevalence on the frontier and the significant economic threat that its instability posed. In January 1918, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce enquired whether new types of ruble note should be honoured due to diplomatic considerations. The Foreign Ministry's response demonstrated the uneasy balance between economic expedience and nationalist concerns:

> The circulation of Russian paper currencies in the region of Manchuria has become a deep-seated bad practice that cannot be easily reversed… As to whether merchants consider these new paper notes credible and are willing to accept them, this is purely up to the merchants. A single notice by the Russian ambassador cannot compel them.[33]

29 See, for example, "Fa nongshangbu zi [Inquiry to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]," January 16, 1918, in Wang, Guo, and Hu (eds.), *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: E zhengbian yu yiban jiaoshe (1), Minguo liunian zhi banian* [*Historical Materials on Sino-Russian Relations: The Russian Revolution and Routine Diplomacy (1), 1917–1919*] (hereafter *YBJS1*), 219.

30 "Shou nongshangbu zi [Inquiry from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]", January 7, 1918, *YBJS1*, 212–213.

31 "Shou Heilongjiang shengzhang Bao Guiqing zi [Inquiry from Heilongjiang Governor Bao Guiqing]", November 1, 1917, *YBJS1*, 171–172.

32 "Shou zhu Qiaketu zuoli zhuanyuan Zhang Qingtong cheng [Memorandum from Kiakhta assistant commissioner Zhang Qingtong]," February 20, 1918, *YBJS1*, 251.

33 "Fa nongshangbu zi [Inquiry to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]," January 16, 1918, *YBJS1*, 219.

By early 1918, as the ruble situation continued to deteriorate, there were signs that Chinese merchants had had enough of Russian promises. The National Association of Chambers of Commerce wrote to the Beijing government in March, calling on it to restrict the spread of rubles and establish a "proper" currency regime for a modern nation:

> The issuing of paper currency is a special right conferred by the nation on the Central Bank alone. No country can allow the paper currency of another country's bank to flood the market… Ever since the ruble was circulated in the trading ports of our country, who knows how many hundreds of millions have been issued. Now that its value has fallen, any business using rubles has lost money… Our government is concerned about protecting the people's wealth and in upholding sovereignty (力争主权) in its currency regime… If not, the guest will usurp the host (喧宾夺主).[34]

Economic and nationalist interests converged with a spirit of post-revolutionary opportunity. The Beijing chamber, for example, called on the government to take advantage of the ruble's falling value to buy up the currency, expand Chinese banks in Kulun (today Ulaanbaatar), and "cause the Mongolians to gradually trust our country's paper money."[35] Nevertheless, as long as the ruble's convertibility was roughly assured, it continued to circulate.

Ironically, it was two White attempts to stabilise the ruble that turned it from a tolerable foreign intrusion—albeit one with an increasingly unstable value—to outright "poison." The first was the April 1919 recall of twenty- and forty-ruble Kerensky notes by the Omsk government; the second, the invalidation of post-1917 currencies in the CER zone in October 1919. The Chinese backlash brought together economic and nationalist interests, thwarted Russian currency management, and pushed local officials and the Beijing government towards halting the circulation of the ruble and replacing it with the Harbin *dayang* yuan.

34 "Shou quanguo shanghui lianhehui cheng [Memorandum from the National Association of Chambers of Commerce]," March 11, 1918, *YBJS1*, 289.

35 "Shou caizhengbu zi [Inquiry from the Finance Ministry]," October 26, 1917, *YBJS1*, 161.

9.3 Siberians for Kerenskys, April 1919

Although the Kolchak regime possessed a significant share of the imperial Russian gold reserve, it was loath to use this to shore up its currency. Demand for currency was met by printing more unnumbered and unsigned Omsk notes.[36] The Kerensky notes circulating concurrently were also unnumbered and unsigned and, hence, forged in vast quantities.[37] To put an end to the monetary chaos that ensued—a decision made more urgent by a prospective White victory and the need to unify the currency regime in Russia itself—Omsk's Finance Minister, I. A. Mikhailov, decreed on 18 April 1919 that all twenty- and forty-ruble Kerensky notes should be handed in at authorised locations between 15 May and 15 June. In exchange, bearers would be given half the face value of their Kerensky notes in Omsk currency and another half in twenty-year government bonds, realisable after 1 July 1920. After 15 July, these Kerensky notes would be completely invalidated.[38] This policy also applied to the Sino-Russian ruble zone, with notes to be exchanged at branches of the Russo-Asiatic Bank.[39]

In Russia, the reform immediately resulted in a sharp fall in the value of the Omsk currency and rampant inflation. Kolchak's armies experienced a series of defeats soon after the announcement, which lent even less credibility to the Omsk notes and bonds. On the Sino-Russian frontier, the exchange was even more controversial. Just one month before the decree, Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin had forwarded a now-familiar message from the Fengtian (Wade-Giles: Fengtien) chamber of commerce complaining about the plethora of Russian currencies and asking for reassurance that they were all equally valid.[40] The Foreign Ministry duly consulted with Kudashev, who repeated that new rubles were backed by state revenue. Both the Foreign and

36 Smele, "White Gold," 1322; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 400–402; Pereira, *White Siberia*, 131.

37 Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 406; Pereira, *White Siberia*, 132.

38 Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 407–412; Pereira, *White Siberia*, 131–132.

39 "Shou zhu Wai Liu Jingren gongshi, Shao Hengjun zonglingshi dian [Telegram from Ambassador Liu Jingren and Consul-General Shao Hengjun in Vladivostok]," April 29, 1919; "Shou Haerbin shanghui, Binjiang xian shanghui dian [Telegram from the Harbin and Binjiang county chambers of commerce]," May 11, 1919, in Wang, Guo, and Hu (eds.), *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: E zhengbian yu yiban jiaoshe (2), Minguo liunian zhi banian* [*Historical Materials on Sino-Russian Relations: The Russian Revolution and Routine Diplomacy (2), 1917–1919*] (hereafter *YBJS2*), 203, 228.

40 "Shou Fengtian dujun jian shengzhang Zhang Zuolin zi [Inquiry from Fengtian Civilian and Military Governor Zhang Zuolin]," March 12, 1919, *YBJS2*, 89.

Finance ministries expressed serious doubts over the credibility of Russian currencies and Kudashev's ability to speak for any Russian government, but the Foreign Ministry was duty-bound to convey the ambassador's reply.[41]

News of Omsk's currency reform came only four days after the Ministry's message. It was greeted by a storm of protests in the ruble zone as merchants resisted the exchange of kerenskys for Omsk notes of even less value, to say nothing of Omsk government bonds. Emergency meetings were called by the Chinese and Japanese chambers of commerce in Vladivostok, demanding that the decree be rescinded and threatening to close shop. They were supported by the Chinese and Japanese consuls there.[42] The same happened in Harbin, where Chinese and Japanese chambers and officials also issued strong objections.[43] In Manzhouli (Wade-Giles: Manchouli), Chinese merchants struck in protest; along the CER, notices went up calling on Chinese to reject Omsk currency, and there were fears of a railway strike.[44] In Heihe, the chamber argued that the notes should be redeemed for their face value in specie, not government bonds of uncertain credibility. Moreover, the deadline was too short for all holders of Kerensky notes to travel to a branch of the Russo-Asiatic Bank.[45] This was especially problematic in Xinjiang, where there were only three branches of the Bank and nomadic populations could not make the exchange on time. To make matters worse, some parts of Xinjiang only

41 "Fa E Kudashefu shi jielüe [Memorandum to Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," March 26, 1919; "Shou Eguan han [Letter from the Russian embassy]," March 31, 1919; "Fa nongshangbu, Fengtian shengzhang mizi [Secret inquiry to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce and the Fengtian Governor]," April 23, 1919; "Shou caizhengbu, bizhiju huizi [Joint letter from the Finance Ministry and Currency Bureau]," April 24, 1919; *YBJS2*, 122–123, 132, 195, 195–196.

42 "Shou zhu Wai Shao Hengjun zonglingshi dian [Telegram from Vladivostok Consul-General Shao Hengjun]," April 27, 1919; "Shou zhu Wai Liu Jingren gongshi, Shao Hengjun zonglingshi dian [Telegram from Ambassador Liu Jingren and Consul-General Shao Hengjun in Vladivostok]," April 29, 1919; *YBJS2*, 200–201, 203.

43 "Shou Jilin shengzhang Guo Zongxi daidian [Telegram from Jilin Governor Guo Zongxi]," May 13, 1919, *YBJS2*, 230.

44 "Shou canmou benbu han [Letter from the General Staff]," May 16, 1919; "Shou Jilin shengzhang Guo Zongxi laidian [Telegram from Jilin Governor Guo Zongxi]," July 22, 1919; "Shou E Kudashefu E shi zhaohui [Note from Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," August 19, 1919; "Shou E Kudashefu E shi han [Letter from Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," August 29, 1919; *YBJS2*, 246, 399, 451–452, 474–475.

45 "Shou Heihe shanghui cheng [Memorandum from the Heihe chamber of commerce]," May 16, 1919; *YBJS2*, 243.

received the decree on 22 May.[46] The protests reached China's parliament, the National Assembly, which requested that the government withhold Russia's portion of the Boxer Indemnity as a countermeasure.[47]

Faced with this deluge, the Foreign Ministry repeatedly made representations to Kudashev, but the latter had no real authority with Omsk and simply replied that the currency reform was a domestic matter.[48] With no change in Russian policy forthcoming, chambers and local officials began reluctantly overseeing the exchange of Kerensky notes.[49] Once again, there were problems: in Kashgar and Ili, the Russo-Asiatic Bank ran out of Omsk notes, and more had to be imported at the end of June. The Russian consul in Ili insisted on exchanging the Kerensky notes for consular IOUs—which the Chinese considered even more dubious—while in Kashgar, the Bank insisted that merchants should bear the cost of shipping Omsk notes. This was accompanied by protests from Han officials and Uyghur merchants on how the ruble was sapping China's wealth.[50]

Merchant anger included a recognition that Russia's monetary chaos could be turned to China's advantage, allowing for the promotion of Chinese

46 "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," May 28, 1919; "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," June 8, 1919; "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," June 22, 1919; *YBJS2*, 273–274, 310–311, 339.

47 "Shou guowuyuan han [Letter from the State Council]," May 31, 1919, *YBJS2*, 284.

48 "Fa E shi Kudashefu jielüe [Memorandum to Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," May 8, 1919; "Fa Eguan jielüe [Memorandum to the Russian Embassy]," May 13, 1919; "Shou E shi Kudashefu zhaohui [Note from Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," May 16, 1919; "Daili zongzhang Chen Lu huizhao E shi Kudashefu shi wenda [Meeting between Acting Foreign Minister Chen Lu and Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," May 28, 1919; "Fa E shishu jielüe [Memorandum to the Russian Ambassador's Office]," June 14, 1919; *YBJS2*, 223–224, 232, 249, 277, 324.

49 "Shou Jilin shengzhang Guo Zongxi daidian [Telegram from Jilin Governor Guo Zongxi]," May 13, 1919; "Shou zhu Haishenwai zonglingshi Shao Hengjun dian [Telegram from Vladivostok Consul-General Shao Hengjun]," May 14, 1919; *YBJS2*, 230, 238.

50 "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," June 8, 1919; "Shou guowuyuan jiaochao Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Yang Zengxin copied by the State Council]," June 20, 1919; "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin dian [Telegram from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," June 22, 1919; "Shou guowuyuan jiaochao Yang Zengxin zi cheng [Memorandum from the State Council copying an inquiry from Yang Zengxin]," July 30, 1919; "Shou Xinjiang shengzhang Yang Zengxin zi [Inquiry from Xinjiang Governor Yang Zengxin]," August 4, 1919; *YBJS2*, 310–311, 334–335, 339, 420–421, 425–428.

currency. In May 1919, the chambers of commerce in the Russian- and Chinese-controlled sectors of Harbin wrote:

> Chinese should not bear the burden of Russian bonds, and the losses in future are unthinkable. Merchants' survival is at stake, as well as national sovereignty (主权)… We ask the Foreign Ministry to instruct the Bank of China and Bank of Communications to quickly send over tens of millions of yuan in national currency to remedy the situation.[51]

The Heihe chamber went further, asking Beijing to set up branches of these banks in Russia. They would facilitate Chinese remittances, allow Russians to change rubles for yuan, and bring China in line with Japanese best practice: "In this way the national currency will spread naturally and the banks will make great profit. The ruble will naturally be driven out and merchants will not be poisoned (不受流毒). This will kill two birds with one stone."[52]

Local authorities joined in the drive to dismantle the ruble zone. Heilongjiang (Wade-Giles: Heilungkiang) Military Governor Bao Guiqing called the issuing of currency a "national right (国权)" and the introduction of the ruble a "great mistake." As long as the ruble continued to circulate in China, merchants would suffer "pain" at the whims of Russian mismanagement and the "people's strength (民力)" would be "exhausted." If the Russians could "buy back" the Kerensky notes, Bao argued, China should do the same for all rubles in Manchuria.[53] Even Red propaganda targeting Chinese CER workers called for the adoption of the yuan. A pamphlet written by a "Union of Chinese and Russian Workmen against Japanese" stated:

> The salaries received from the Russians on the CER are nothing more than a few sheets of worthless paper. These notes were not issued by the all-Russian government, only a small group of usurpers that violate the people's will and over-issue currency arbitrarily. What is more, ambitious Japan is supporting them… Chinese

51 "Shou Haerbin shanghui, Binjiang xian shanghui dian [Telegram from the Harbin and Binjiang county chambers of commerce]," May 11, 1919, *YBJS2*, 228.

52 "Shou nongshangbu zi [Inquiry from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]," May 31, 1919, *YBJS2*, 286. See also "Shou nongshangbu zi [Inquiry from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce]," May 24, 1919, *YBJS2*, 266–267.

53 "Shou Heilongjiang dujun Bao Guiqing dian [Telegram from Heilongjiang Military Governor Bao Guiqing]," July 25, 1919, *YBJS2*, 414.

> comrades must know that the Siberian government will soon be extinguished. The paper notes they issue will also soon be worthless… We sincerely hope that you will not accept these Siberian notes. You must ask the railway officials to pay all salaries in *dayang*.[54]

Confronted by such opprobrium, Omsk's attempts to promote its currency in the Chinese ruble zone by fiat ended in failure. Its notes began to circulate in the CER zone and among Chinese migrants in Russia by late June, although not in Harbin's Chinese-controlled district of Fujiadian. Acceptance was widespread mostly among CER workers, whose salaries were paid in Omsk notes, although the continued depreciation of these notes prompted a large-scale strike by Russian and Chinese railwaymen in August. A perfunctory survey of the Heihe region revealed that at least 2.4 million rubles in twenty- and forty-ruble Kerensky notes had not been exchanged by September.[55]

By contrast, active steps were taken to push China's national currency. The relative dearth of Chinese banks in the ruble zone and limitations in the supply of notes had undermined previous attempts to establish the yuan there.[56] On 13 May 1919, therefore, local officials in the Chinese-controlled sector of Harbin assembled representatives from the Banks of China and Communications, the chambers of commerce, and other financial institutions. The meeting agreed to introduce the Harbin *dayang*, to be issued by the local branches of both Banks beginning in October and November.[57] The national headquarters of the Bank of Communications was instructed to send 750,000 in yuan notes to the CER zone.[58] The ruble's dominance in economic transactions was challenged: Chinese officials proposed that Harbin's Chinese customs should now set fees in *dayang*. The Communications

54 "Shou E Kudashefu shi han [Letter from Russian Ambassador Kudashev]," August 29, 1919, *YBJS2*, 475.

55 "Shou Haishenwai Li Jia'ao laihan [Letter from Li Jia'ao in Vladivostok]," June 21, 1919; "Shou Heilongjiang dujun Sun Liechen dian [Telegram from Heilongjiang Military Governor Sun Liechen]," September 5, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing daidian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," October 28, 1919; *YBJS2*, 337, 484, 548–549.

56 "Lun shimian gaiyong xiaoyang zhi xianzai yu jianglai [On the Switch to Xiaoyang in the Market and its Present and Future]," September 18, 1917, in Shi (ed.), *Yuandongbao* vol. 8, 850; "Xin zhibi hezhi bu tongyong [Why is the New Paper Currency Not Used?]," November 3, 1917, in Shi (ed.), *Yuandongbao* vol. 9, 253.

57 Wang, "'Ha dayang juan'," 93–94.

58 "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," December 22, 1919, *YBJS2*, 650.

Ministry, which saw the ruble zone as a "violation of Chinese sovereignty," also suggested charging CER passenger fees in *dayang*.[59] This set the stage for a more wide-ranging assault on the ruble.

9.4 Chaos in the Railway Zone, October 1919

The dust was only just settling from the currency exchange affair when the looming collapse of the Omsk government brought about a sudden policy reversal. In October 1919, the CER management announced that it would no longer accept Omsk or large-denomination Kerensky notes. Beginning in November, only gold-backed, US-printed notes[60] and horvaths would be accepted. The result was an immediate price spike and widespread panic among merchants and workers in the railway zone: merchants because they had hoarded large-denomination kerenskys; workers because they had been paid in post-1917 rubles. Chambers of commerce in Fengtian, Heilongjiang, Jilin (Wade-Giles: Kirin), Harbin, and Binjiang all voiced strenuous objections. Merchant strikes were declared, and large crowds of workers gathered in the towns along the Songhua River in protest. Such was the consternation that the railway management eventually backed down, agreed to accept other Russian currencies at a rate of discount, and abolished the November deadline.[61]

59 "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," October 27, 1919; "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," October 31, 1919; "Shou jiaotongbu han [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," November 3, 1919; *YBJS2*, 547, 555–556, 559.

60 The American-printed notes were ordered in November 1918 and released to the Omsk government in June 1919. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 413–415; Khodjakov, *Money of the Russian Revolution*, 162–164.

61 "Shou Binjiang shanghui dian [Telegram from the Binjiang chamber of commerce]," October 23, 1919; "Shou Jilin dujun Bao Guiqing dian [Telegram from Jilin Military Governor Bao Guiqing]," October 24, 1919; "Shou Haerbin zongshanghui dian [Telegram from the Harbin general chamber of commerce]," October 24, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing daidian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," October 29, 1919; "Shou Haerbin zongshanghui cheng [Memorandum from the Harbin general chamber of commerce]," October 30, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing daidian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," November 6, 1919; "Shou Fengtian dujun Zhang Zuolin dian [Telegram from Fengtian Military Governor Zhang Zuolin]," November 7, 1919; "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," November 14, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban gongsuo daidian [Telegram from the CER president's office]," November 19, 1919; *YBJS2*, 542, 543, 543–544, 550, 552–553, 563–564, 567, 576–577, 588–590.

This initial concession was not enough to satisfy the Chinese. Chamber of commerce representatives walked out of the CER board meeting that set the discount rates.[62] Recognising that the CER was in financial difficulties, provincial officials, the CER board's Chinese president, CER General Manager Horvath, and the Inter-Allied Railway Committee then furiously negotiated an increase in freight and passenger charges instead while keeping kerenskys at parity with gold-backed currencies.[63] In December, Horvath agreed to abandon the discount rates in favour of a fee hike and a complicated formula by which romanovs, kerenskys, horvaths and Omsk notes would be accepted at parity, but in different proportions. The Chinese rejected this as far too convoluted. Moreover, it would legitimise the horvaths and Omsk notes that the Chinese had refused to officially recognise. Negotiations soon reached a deadlock.[64]

As the talks continued, Chinese merchants and officials kept up the pressure to replace the ruble with the yuan. The Harbin chamber condemned Horvath's October decree as a "poisonous plot, worse than snakes and scorpions (其毒害之计，甚于蛇蝎)," [65] resolved not to accept any new Russian currencies, and, on 3 November, issued public statements calling for the adoption of the *dayang*.[66] Even the *Yuandongbao* published editorials describing wealthy merchants reduced to penury and workers going from shop to shop,

62 "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban gongsuo daidian [Telegram from the CER president's office]," November 19, 1919, *YBJS2*, 588.

63 "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban gongsuo daidian [Telegram from the CER president's office]," November 19, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban gongsuo daidian [Telegram from the CER president's office]," November 21, 1919; "Shou guowuyuan gonghan [Letter from the State Council]," November 25, 1919; "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing daidian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," November 26, 1919; "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," December 12, 1919; *YBJS2*, 588–589, 596–597, 605–606, 606, 638–639.

64 "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," December 22, 1919; "Shou Li Jia'ao chao zhi Bao Guiqing duban diangao [Copy of draft telegram from Li Jia'ao to CER president Bao Guiqing]," December 30, 1919; "Shou Li Jia'ao chao zhi Bao Guiqing duban diangao [Copy of draft telegram from Li Jia'ao to CER president Bao Guiqing]," December 30, 1919; *YBJS2*, 648–650, 663, 663–664.

65 "Shou Haerbin zongshanghui cheng [Memorandum from the Harbin general chamber of commerce]," October 30, 1919, *YBJS2*, 553.

66 "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing daidian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," November 6, 1919; "Shou yuan chao fu jiao Haerbin diaochayuan baogao [Report from a Harbin inspector copied by the State Council]," November 19, 1919; *YBJS2*, 563–564, 591.

unable to buy food with their salary.[67] Military Governor Bao Guiqing once again took up their cause:

> Our countrymen have been harmed by Russian currency and been in deep pain for a long time… It is not because the people are ignorant and willingly drink poison like syrup (甘鸩如饴)… The Finance and Communications Ministries should instruct the Bank of China and Bank of Communications to issue national currency to make up for the dearth in the market. In this way, our country's merchants may yet revive.[68]

The Beijing government responded unequivocally. According to the Communications Ministry, the conflict over CER currencies was the "opportunity of a thousand years (千载一时) for China to introduce the *dayang*… Sovereignty over the finances of the CER will be in our hands, the introduction of limitless Japanese currency can be resisted."[69] The Foreign Ministry submitted its own opinion paper to the Chinese cabinet, the State Council, recommending the introduction of national currency to "naturally, gradually, and imperceptibly eradicate" the ruble.[70] The State Council, in turn, instructed the Banks of China and Communications to prepare for the concerted promotion of the *dayang* in the CER zone.[71]

Nevertheless, this policy could not take place overnight. Since CER workers were paid in rubles and preparations for the Harbin *dayang* were still ongoing, an immediate, wholesale shift to the yuan was impossible. In fact, disorder broke out in November 1919 among workers in Harbin over a misunderstanding that all trade would henceforth be conducted in *dayang*.[72]

67 Wang and Zhang, "'Qiangtie'," 82–83.

68 "Shou Dongsheng tielu duban Bao Guiqing dian [Telegram from CER president Bao Guiqing]," October 29, 1919, *YBJS2*, 550.

69 "Shou jiaotongbu gonghan [Letter from the Communications Ministry]," December 22, 1919, *YBJS2*, 649–650.

70 "Fa guowuyuan mishuting gonghan [Letter to the State Council Secretariat]," December 1, 1919, *YBJS2*, 620.

71 "Shou guowuyuan gonghan [Letter from the State Council]," December 8, 1919, *YBJS2*, 631.

72 "Shou Jilin dujun Bao Guiqing dian [Telegram from Jilin Military Governor Bao Guiqing]," November 6, 1919; "Shou yuan chao fu jiao Haerbin diaochayuan baogao [Report from a Harbin inspector copied by the State Council]," November 19, 1919; "Shou Jilin dujun Bao Guiqing dian [Telegram from Jilin Military Governor Bao Guiqing]," November 23, 1919; *YBJS2*, 566, 591, 603–604.

Instead, the introduction of the yuan became part of a larger movement to reclaim Chinese sovereignty over the CER zone in the spring of 1920. Taking advantage of a general strike, Bao occupied the CER offices in March, forcing the resignation of Horvath and assuming Horvath's role himself.[73] With the CER administration in hand, Bao announced in April that all Russian currencies would be accepted at parity. This, he hoped, would lead to a flood of rubles in the market, regardless of authenticity or backing, and render the currency worthless. In May, three types of Chinese silver coin were officially accepted, and, by November, the silver-backed yuan had become the de facto currency for the CER.[74] As one of the main drivers of the North Manchurian economy, the CER's switch to the yuan dealt a severe blow to the ruble zone in that region.

White efforts to shore up the ruble had unintended consequences, especially in a contested frontier zone where economic expediency coexisted with a lingering discourse of nationalist resentment. Even before the introduction of their ill-fated currency measures, the ruble's declining value had tipped the balance in favour of the yuan, justified in nationalist terms by merchants, officials, and the Beijing government alike. The high-handed imposition of Russian reforms only added to the argument that they wished to poison the Chinese economy and sap its wealth. Shared economic interest and nationalist rhetoric, in turn, allowed Chinese merchants and officials to mobilise against the ruble. Given the concerted resistance by Chinese actors, it proved impossible not only to force widespread acceptance of Omsk notes but also to maintain the ruble zone in the first place. By the end of 1920, Chinese merchant frustration, provincial initiative, and central government support combined to dislodge the ruble from its preeminence in North Manchuria.

In closing, it must be noted that this was not an unqualified victory for the *dayang*. The yen continued to be in widespread use throughout Manchuria and the Russian Far East, and the Harbin *dayang* circulated alongside other Chinese currencies, such as Zhang Zuolin's Fengtian yuan. Like the kerenskys and siberians, the Harbin *dayang* and other Manchurian currencies rose and fell with Zhang's fortunes in China's warlord conflicts, to be replaced by a unified, Japanese-issued currency in 1931.[75] In Xinjiang, it proved as yet impossible to unseat the ruble. However, this study has shown how the economic

73 Hosek, "The Hailar Incident," 107–108.

74 Hsu, "Color of Money," 98–99.

75 Wang, "'Ha dayang juan'," 96–98; Kwong, "Finance and the Northern Expedition," 1737–1739.

interdependencies and imperial rivalries that distinguished the Far Eastern frontier subverted attempts at Russian control. The ruble zone depended on routine Chinese acceptance. When—for both practical and ideological reasons—Chinese merchants, workers, and officials ceased to have confidence in Russian currency, no amount of administrative fiat could enforce its use. The White authorities in Omsk and Harbin fell victim to this, but it was as true for the Reds when they established their authority over the Far East in 1920–1922.[76] Even as the region's economy gradually recovered, the hardening of Chinese attitudes towards the ruble made it impossible for the Russians to fully revive the ruble zone.

Glossary

Bao Guiqing	Military governor of Heilongjiang Province until July 1919, then military governor of Jilin Province until March 1921. From March 1920, president of the CER.
Binjiang	Administrative name for the Chinese-controlled sector of Harbin.
Chinese Eastern Railway	Russian-dominated railway connecting the Transbaikal and Maritime Province branches of the Trans-Siberian Railway via Manchuria.
Fengtian (Wade-Giles: Fengtien)	One of the three provinces of Manchuria.
Fujiadian	Chinese-controlled sector of Harbin.
Heilongjiang (Wade-Giles: Heilungkiang)	One of the three provinces of Manchuria.
Horvath, Dmitri Leonidovich	General manager of the CER, 1903–1920.
Inter-Allied Railway Committee	Supervisory committee established by the Allied forces during the Siberian Intervention to oversee the operation of the Trans-Siberian and CER.
Jilin (Wade-Giles: Kirin)	One of the three provinces of Manchuria.
Kolchak, Aleksandr Vasil'evich	Leader of the White government in Omsk from November 1918 to January 1920.
Kuomintang	China's Nationalist Party, formed in 1911.
Zhang Zuolin	Military governor of Fengtian Province from 1916 and leader of the Fengtian warlord clique.

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76 Hsu, "Color of Money," 108–109.

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10 The Advanced Special Economic Zones: Over-Politicised Anti-Politics Machine

Natalia Ryzhova

Abstract The paper focuses on the Advanced Special Economic Zones (ASEZs), which should serve as growth engines for the Russian Far East (RFE). It may appear that, in launching this programme, lessening administrative barriers for businesses, and opening borders for capital and labour force, Russia prioritised a liberal, market-led method of regional development. However, experts doubt both 1) assumptions about liberalisation and 2) the contribution of the programme to the economic performance of the RFE. The article joins the choir of critics but, in contrast to them, does not try to answer the question of how to make this development programme work. Instead, it aims to reveal how the programme works and where it leads. The author argues that ASEZs work concurrently as a machine of depoliticisation and over-politicisation. Depoliticisation turns political issues of pumping resources out of the periphery into technical issues of regional development. At the same time, over-politicisation disguises problems of resource distribution with geopolitical threats, leading political content to be whitewashed and camouflaged.

Despite numerous projects and programmes for the development of the RFE,[1] implemented from the 1920s to the present day, the macro-region continued to be perceived and imagined by the central government, economists, and experts as underdeveloped, problematic, or even depressed.[2] In discussing the RFE as a *problematic space*, experts usually highlight, on the one hand, a lack of people and industries, and on the other, abundance of land and other resources. In numbers, this translates into the following. The total area of

1 Agafonov, *Osnovnye problemy;* Minakir, *Far East*.
2 Minakir, "Regions' Economics."

Ryzhova, Natalia. 2023. "The Advanced Special Economic Zones: Over-Politicised Anti-Politics Machine." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 185–208. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16388

the RFE (the geographical RFE/the federal district[3]) is 5.1/6.9 million km² and occupies 36/40.6 percent of Russia's area. However, the district remains the most sparsely populated (only 4.2/5.6 percent of the total population in 2018). By 2019, the share of GDP, investments in fixed assets, and the number of employees was inferior to the same indices of all other federal districts (except the North Caucasian). The economic model of the RFE has an export-raw character.[4]

Scholars and experts[5] have continuously—since the 1920s and to the present day—argued about whether and how the region could develop and why it has failed to do so. In Soviet times, all these discussions revolved around almost the same arguments: 1) the region does not have sufficient human capital and technological capacities to exploit its abundant natural resources; 2) its geographical proximity to Asia and distance from the political centre implies that the region could only develop if it integrates with neighbouring Asian states like China or Japan. However, such integration would a) require economically open borders incompatible with the Soviet system and b) lead to an invasion of foreign capital and people and create separatist tendencies, undermining the integrity and security of the Soviet state. As a consequence of 1) and 2), economic development was sacrificed. With the end of the Cold War and stabilisation of relations with China and Japan, these discussions did not stop. Liberalisation and opening of borders for Asian partners continue to coexist with a cautious attitude toward the East, with alarmist rhetoric of "Chinese penetration" and other conspiracy theories.[6] As before, security—territorial integrity—is nominated as the primary goal of the region's development, which is impossible without Asian partners.[7] At the same time, openness continues to be associated with the threat of the loss of eastern territories.[8]

In this paper, I focus on the latest development programme, namely, the ASEZs, which are a part of the territory of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation where a special legal regime for carrying out entrepreneurial

3 The Far Eastern Federal District was established on May 18, 2000. In addition to geographical region of the RFE, it includes Zabaikalskii Krai and Buriatiia Republic.
4 Prokapalo et al., "Ekonomicheskaia kon"iunktura."
5 Gamarnik, "Sovetskaia kolonizatsiia DVO"; Vashchuk and Savchenko, "Dal'nii Vostok RSFSR"; Minakir, *Regions' Economics*.
6 Ivanov, "Pragmatizm i konspirologiia."
7 Prezident Rossii, "Vstupitel'noe slovo."
8 Larin, "Vneshniaia ugroza."

activities is established (official information is available at the website).[9] It may appear that, in launching this programme, lessening administrative barriers for businesses, and opening borders for capital and partly for international labour forces, Russia has prioritised a liberal, market-led method of regional development by focusing on the export orientation of ASEZ residents and attracting foreign investment. However, experts cast doubts on these assumptions. According to Arai,[10] residents of ASEZs do not demonstrate explicit export-orientation, and hence, ASEZs still struggle, with little success, to become a tool for international integration. This observation is supported by Ming and Kang,[11] who claim that, so far, there is little optimism about the attractiveness of ASEZs. Blakkisrud[12] insists that Moscow is again using a "top-down model" of regional development that might lead to better integration with the rest of the country but not to international integration. Vakulchuk[13] also doubts that ASEZs are oriented towards foreign investors, and he does not believe in a new and better bureaucratic mechanism of ASEZs. Furthermore, Izotov[14] argues that ASEZs may stimulate implicit subsidies from some market players to others (and away from regional companies). Minakir and Prokapalo[15] emphasise that institutional preferences for geographically limited areas will not allow the RFE to be developed. In other words, experts doubt not only specific liberal instruments (in particular, openness to foreign partners) but also the success of the programme in terms of its positive impact on the region's development.

In this article, I will join the chorus of doubters of the ASEZs programme. Following J. Ferguson's[16] appeal to reject the politically naive question "how to make development programmes work?" in favour of a politically deeper one—"where do development programmes lead?"—I also ask the question "do programmes work the same everywhere?"

As a reminder, Ferguson has shown that development projects are machines to support and expand bureaucratic state power that take advantage of poverty as a point of entry and depoliticise the unfair distribution of

9 Russian Far East and Arctic Development Corporation, "Advanced Special Economic Zone."
10 Arai, "New Instruments."
11 Min and Kang, "Promoting New Growth."
12 Blakkisrud, "Asian Pivot."
13 Vakulchuk, "Asian Tilt."
14 Izotov, "Uskoreniye ekonomiki," 155–63.
15 Minakir and Prokapalo, "Dal'nevostochnyi prioritet."
16 Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*.

land, resources, and money. In other words, Ferguson's argument is that the "anti-politics machine" of state-sponsored development programmes turns political problems into purely technical ones. He also demonstrated that depoliticisation does not occur mainly because of the malice of the designers and participants but because of the neoliberal—in Foucault's sense[17]—logic bound into development programmes (see Section 1 for a more detailed theoretical framework).

Using the framework of neoliberal development critique, I reveal that ASEZs work as a machine for both depoliticisation and over-politicisation. Depoliticisation turns political issues of pumping resources out of the periphery into technical issues of regional development; at the same time, over-politicisation veils problems of resource distribution with geopolitical threats.

I suggest three main steps to unpack this thesis: 1) considering the activities of the political elite in establishing the Far East Development Corporation (FEDC) and the activities of ASEZs' technocrats, I reveal the neoliberal essence of the ASEZs programme; 2) by scrutinising the procurement of the ASEZs' infrastructure construction and procedures in some of the human resources departments, I unveil why ASEZs strengthen "bad governance" and unfair redistribution of resources in the RFE; 3) in analysing official discourse about the ASEZs' "achievements," I posit that the new development programme looks much more significant in political myths, much more interesting in political theatre than in actual economic life, and this over-politicisation causes the political content of the ASEZs programme to be whitewashed and camouflaged.

The empirical corpus of my research includes official documents (the president's message to the Federal Assembly, laws regulating ASEZs, etc.), government websites, mass-media publications, participant observations, and 135 interviews generated by two projects launched in the SEM FEFU[18] in 2016–17 and 2017–18 ("The Study of Rotational Labour in the RFE" and "Development Institutions in the RFE," respectively).[19]

The Human Capital Development Agency[20] commissioned the first project. It aimed to identify the supply of labour for ASEZs and included thirty-one interviews with businesses, five interviews with recruiting agencies, and

17 Foucault, "Governmentality."

18 School of Economics and Management of Far Eastern Federal University.

19 Hereafter, I will refer to the data collected within the first project as "1. Labour" and to the second one as "2. Institutions."

20 The Agency is located within the Russian Ministry for Development of the Far East (MDFE).

fifty-four with shift workers. As part of this study, we conducted interviews with representatives of both residents and non-residents of ASEZs (including several big companies, including Solovyevsky Mine, Dobroflot, RosAgro, Rimbunan Hijau, Zvezda Shipyard, and Vostochnaya Verf Shipyard). In the case of large companies, our interlocutors were the heads of recruiting departments, and in the case of small ones, usually directors. The duration of each interview was at least forty minutes. The second project was launched by the SEM and directly dedicated to the ASEZs as well as the Open Port of Vladivostok and the Far Eastern Hectare Programme. Together with thirteen MA students, we conducted thirty-seven interviews with businesses, including sixteen with ASEZ residents (five percent of the total number). The sample of sixteen ASEZ residents includes several enterprises that are the largest existing among the RFE's taxpayers. These interviews were used to analyse how ASEZs are discussed and assessed by both residents and non-residents of ASEZs.

Within the aforementioned projects, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews with personnel of the FEDC.[21] Several students who had been working with me on these research projects during their studies began to work at the Ministry. Half a year later, we unofficially met with these students again, so I was lucky to observe how young researchers changed their status from freshers to gatekeepers to technocrats. Also, as a principal investigator of both research projects, I participated in official discussions with the MDFE and FEDC representatives.

10.1 The World of Failed Development Projects and Neoliberal Logic of Development

The failure of economic development in catching-up countries is a global concern that has long been in the focus of different disciplines. Already in 1970–80, anthropologists[22] were focused on specific policies and projects toward particular groups of people living "outside the West" and revealed that all attempts to improve their social standards usually fail. This led anthropologists to doubt the utopian vision of a postcolonial future, linear economic and social "progress," the neutrality of the (neo)liberal agenda,

21 The Corporation is also located within the MDFE and serves as an operator of the ASEZs programme.

22 Belshaw, "The Contribution of Anthropology to Development."

and the concept of "development" itself.[23] Thus, instead of a "development vision," anthropologists turned to "post-development deconstruction." After that, anthropological critique was replaced by the ethnographic treatment of development as a category of practice. In the course of this, the focus shifted to some outliers or "positive deviants" who, despite all negative expectations, are doing well.[24] Hopes for ASEZs to become a positive deviant were in place in 2015–18, but now such expectations have faded away.

I will base my argument on post-development anthropological critique. This critique was founded on the assumptions that technocratic and market-based decisions should not be considered neutral. On the contrary, if outcomes are analysed, then it is becoming clear that technocratic decisions serve as a means of depoliticising and justifying otherwise hidden interventions of economically powerful states into peripheries, including former colonies. Anthropologists have shown how economic knowledge and such organisations as the World Development Bank, with their "developmental vision," marginalise the people they are supposed to help. For instance, Escobar,[25] in his famous collection, deeply criticises the possibility of economics being a foundational discipline for justifying development because it does not pay attention to culture. He also invites us to pay special attention to discourse that justifies "development." Ferguson[26] provides a convincing example of such discourse at work, comparing the differences in a description of Lesotho. This small African country appears "backward" and in deep need of "development" in the World Bank's documents. The contrasting view represents us as a "reservoir exporting wage labourers in about the same quantities, proportionate to the total population, as it does today."[27] Explaining the gap in perceptions of Lesotho, Ferguson uses Foucault's concept of governmentality. In so doing, he debunks the belief in the "neutral, unitary, and effective"[28] role of central authorities. Instead of intending to solve problems, powers are eager to control and dominate, including through the "interventions" proposed by developers. Ferguson also undermines preoccupation with development "failure." He claims that there is a hidden logic; specifically, a discourse of poverty is only a point of entry to depoliticise the distribution of power and wealth.

23 Cooper and Packard, "Introduction."
24 Roll, *Public Sector Performance;* Andrews, "Positive Deviance."
25 Escobar, "Development Encounter."
26 Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine.*
27 Ibid. 27.
28 Ibid. 72.

The post-Soviet space perhaps did not stand at the centre of anthropological discussion on development programmes, but it confirms its findings—and, of course, may further confirm them—empirically, as it comes out that, one by one, the projects of transition into the market (as well as various projects of national or subnational development in Russia and other post-Soviet countries) failed or did not deliver expected outcomes. As a result, the period of public enchantment with the "invisible hand" of capitalism has passed. The hope for democratic principles to take root is vanishing. However, neoliberal rationality has survived[29] and, as I hope to show with the example of ASEZs, is even flourishing.

Neoliberalism is by no means a simple concept, if it is used in the Foucauldian rather than the political economy version, for political economics, liberalism, and neoliberalism are models or practices of government. Liberalism is referred to as private property, economic freedoms, and limiting state intervention in the economy.[30] The fundamental innovation of neoliberalism is the rejection of faith in the market as a natural mechanism of self-regulation, which will inevitably reach its goal if there is no abuse by the central government. In neoliberalism, the market and competition should be planted and maintained, and any relations should be subordinated to them. Therefore, unlike the liberal *Homo oeconomicus,* which is natural and exists because this is how the market nature "prescribes," the neoliberal *Homo oeconomicus* must be created, orientated to maximise its usefulness.[31] The neoliberal government not only creates such a market entity but also seeks to turn everything (the army, school, church, the government itself, not to mention the family) into a universal form of organisation—a market enterprise.[32] Thus, if one follows the Foucault scheme, the neoliberal regime can be identified not by the state's policy and actions but by the practices of ubiquitous production of market enterprises and a person adequate to the market. Anthropologists, inspired by Foucault[33] and based on ethnographic data from around the world, have repeatedly shown how the market (social world matrix) fails because social relations do not fit into the matrix. Despite these failures, neoliberal regimes emerge again and again, even in totally un-liberal contexts. In the next two sections, I will analyse the project of the subnational development of ASEZs

29 Collier, *Post-Soviet Social*.
30 Mill, *On Liberty*.including Utilitarianism (1863
31 Burchell, "Liberal Government."
32 Rose, "Liberal Democracies."
33 Elyachar, "Neoliberalism"; Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*.

through attempts to implement "neoliberal enterprise logics" (the second part) and attempts to exclude "social relations" (the third part).

10.2 Neoliberal Logic: The Establishment of the Far Eastern Development Corporation as State Managing Company of ASEZs

Managing the Russian Far East as a "mega-corporation" began to be discussed in 2012. First, the media reported that the head of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, S. Shoigu,[34] had come up with such an initiative. Later on, Putin declared in his speech to the State Duma, "That is why I suggested establishing either a corporation or a separate body for the development of Eastern Siberia and the Far East."[35] The project presented by Shoigu repeated the traditional rhetoric of national (military) security. It used such wording as "buffer territory" in conditions of potential theatres of war in the Asia-Pacific region; "unprecedented growth of economic potential of geopolitical competitors near the eastern borders of Russia." It referred to negative trends: "outflow of population"; "reliance only on federal and tariff investments, dependency policy of subjects." Moreover, the project insisted on the "print-out" model of natural resources while conducting an "effective industrial manoeuvre." The "manoeuvre" was to be carried out through the establishment of the East of Russia Development Corporation, which the explanatory note called "a kind of analogue of the East India Company.[36]"

The *Kommersant* newspaper,[37] in several interviews with experts who participated in the project's design, suggested such justifications for the project: "Even the most liberal economists admit that without large-scale state involvement, these vast territories will continue to be depopulated."[38] The expert argued that the best approach to managing this economic "desert" was to establish an East Corporation: "This is what a state corporation is for. To put together the whole array of these huge promising projects and see—maybe we should abandon something, maybe we will not take it all out […] Why is this form invented—the East India Company: it is also a

34 Mel'nikov, Gudkov and Panchenko, "Vsia vlast' v Sibiri."
35 Putin, Vladimir. "Stenogramma vystupleniia."
36 Ostrovskii, "I trekhkratnyi rost VVP!"
37 Kommersant', "Razvitie vostochnykh."
38 Ibid.

public–private partnership, only in an early form."[39] Experts also stressed that the state corporation would allow the RFE to avoid "crime" that hinders business: "You come to Vladivostok. They start telling you about difficulties, and you can hardly interpret them as administrative barriers. One of the state corporation's ideas was to circumvent the problem of bad management at the regional level."[40]

The terms used in the project (especially the East India Company) have provoked an extremely negative discussion among regional experts: "Half the country will fall under the umbrella of one corporation" and "The keyword "East India Company" characterises the project. It was a purely colonial use of resources."[41] In 2013, *Kommersant* stated that the (political) "show is over":[42] regional leader V. Ishaev—one of the main politicians opposed to the East Corporation—had retired, the Far East Development Ministry appeared, and the FEDC was born. This time, the designers of the new corporation and the whole scheme of the RFE governance avoided colonial rhetoric, referring more to economic effectiveness, market competitiveness, and the experience of "special legal regimes for conducting business and other activities on the territories of special zones in South Korea, China, and Singapore."[43] Officially, the ASEZs programme was proposed in 2013 by President Putin's message to the Federal Assembly.[44] Only a year later, Federal Law #473-FZ was signed. The first nine ASEZs were selected, approved, and began to function within the following six months. All in all, the initiative was introduced with a remarkable swiftness that characterises all projects personally overseen by the president. Already in 2015, the first ASEZs were presented at the First Economic Forum in Vladivostok. The president emphasised the facilitation of various procedures, including passing the border.[45] The presidential plenipotentiary in the Far East federal district, Yuri Trutnev, started to be the ASEZs' political patron. Political patronage turns out to be a traditional way of state intervention, a way to make the "bad governance" of lagging and corrupt countries work like "good"—i.e. Western and (neo)liberal—governance.[46] In describing such "state intervention," researchers often turn to the experience

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Dobrysheva, "Proekt korporatsii razvitiia."
42 Netreba, "Dlia Dal'nego Vostoka."
43 SOZD, Gosudarstvennaia Duma, "O territoriiakh operezhaiushchego."
44 Prezident Rossii, "Poslanie Prezidenta."
45 Prezident Rossii, "Soveshchanie s chlenami pravitel'stva."
46 Bear and Mathur, "Introduction."

of special economic zones or other developmental projects. They discovered that, quite often, totally non-liberal states can surprisingly help markets to work or even create such markets.[47]

As the political patron of ASEZs, Trutnev was personally approving every established ASEZ. Moreover, many ASEZs applicants—even the smallest one—defended their project before a commission led by Trutnev and had a chance to ask for his protection from an ineffective state.[48] The news on the website of the Kamchatka government recounts the personal protection provided by Trutnev to a small business: "today we visited the ethnic village. Construction stopped there five times. They (bureaucrats—NR) were looking for fry in a lake that is isolated from the sea […] Well, you should ask how salmon live, how they migrate? They just cannot survive in such conditions. What is this? Is it incompetence or corruption? Then he promised that he would fire officials."[49] Thus, it confirms that the implementation of ASEZs matches the "top-down model."[50] The personal involvement of the top politicians in micromanaging regional and even local issues, resolving the smallest "failure,"[51] is discursively framed as the need for constant state tutelage over regional "infants" (local officials or regional business).

Interference of the highest political elite in the activities of regional businesses, an attempt to present ASEZs as a tool to create a market, is certainly not yet a proof of the neoliberal logic of ASEZs. According to Foucault, governmentality (managerial rationality of technocrats) is more important. This is because technocrats manage a large part of a vast region as a mega-enterprise, while businesses turn to appearing as more or less important sub-divisions of this enterprise. I discuss this rationality by addressing a) performance cults, b) the institutional context inside mega-enterprises, and c) differences in the value of subdivisions.

The logic of operating ASEZs as a mega-enterprise requires *a performance cult*. The success of ASEZs has been reported since the very first year of the project.[52] This success had come and still comes to every Eastern Economic Forum[53] in the form of billions of dollars in "agreements" signed. Most of these agreements are never implemented in practice. The FEDC reports on

47 Ong and Collier, *Global Assemblages*.
48 Interviews, "2. Institutions. ASEZ residents, 2017–2018."
49 Kamchatskii Krai, "Iurii Trutnev predostereg."
50 Blakkisrud, 'An Asian Pivot Starts at Home'.
51 Kamchatskii Krai, "Iurii Trutnev predostereg."
52 Eastern Economic Forum, "Agreements Worth Nearly."
53 Eastern Economic Forum, "Na poliakh VEF-2019."

the success of the ASEZs on its website, but the form of the reports does require attention. Only thirty pages of the 154 have quantitative data;[54] the rest are just photos of large infrastructure. Pages with data allow readers to make some, very superficial, conclusions all by themselves. No clear conclusions are drawn; no reasons are given behind the backlog; there is nothing but numbers. Moreover, only basic figures are provided. As a Japanese scholar, Arai, who attempted to analyse this report, stated, "the most significant deficiency" is "lack of information on the scale of business such as investment amount, number of employees, anticipated and actual output or sales volume and so on."[55]

The low quality of the data provided is probably because technocrats themselves understand that there is hardly anything significant achieved for economic development. According to the FEDC internal database, the total number of residents registered by April 2021 in the ASEZ was 428, of which twenty-nine were residents of foreign origin, including nine from China and five from Japan; other countries included South Korea, India, Australia, Cyprus, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Singapore. Four of these twenty-nine residents have not started projects at all—not even project documentation has been provided. The total amount of investments made by those residents was 36.48 billion rubles (while the declared amount was 843.4 billion rubles under the agreements concluded). Thus, less than five percent of the private investments received by the ASEZs came from abroad. Moreover, available data about residents with Russian capital origins also show that the ASEZ experiment is hardly progressing well. In April 2021, only 128 out of 428 residents had fully invested all the declared funds, created job placements, and started their operations. The gap between promises and reality is big enough. Of 13,110 declared job placements, only 8,917 (sixty-eight percent) were created. Of the declared investments (813.98 billion rubles), only 74.02 billion were made (more than ninety percent backlog).

Of the investments already made, 12.21 percent (125.93 billion rubles) are mining and quarrying. Hence, the extractive industries remain a priority, regardless of the stated goals of developing knowledge-intensive production. This volume of investment, incidentally, does not take into account the performance of the largest ASEZ residents. Most of those (LLC Gazprom Pererabotka Blagoveschensk, JSC Inaglinsky Mining and Processing Complex, Udokan Copper, and JSC Denisovsky Mining and Processing

54 https://erdc.ru/en/.
55 Arai, "New Instruments."

Complex), as well as most of the largest announced ones (additionally, LLC GDC Baimskaya, LLC Amursky Gas Chemical Complex, and JSC Eastern Petrochemical Co.), are also involved in using the natural resources of the Far East and Siberia.

Although a FEDC employee in 2019 confirmed that they "do not have a single commissioned object for all time,"[56] ASEZ residents agreed that FEDC works pretty well. That is, it still has not provided infrastructure for the most advertised, most valuable benefit for small and medium residents. Why, then, do residents still see the benefits of staying within the perimeter of the mega-enterprise? The main explanation is that the perimeter provides a different *institutional environment* than that outside. As both technocrats and the residents testify, the FEDC managers successfully cope with other officials, receiving from them permission to use water, gas, or land plots.

> I can give an example with the Department of Land and Property Relations. […] If you make an appointment to find out about your application, and why there is no flow of it, you are required to come on Tuesday. This is the only day. You come on Tuesday, register on a sheet of paper […] find yourself the thirtieth, stand in line […] As a result, you get to some representative by the end of a working day, and he says to you: "You know, your documents are not registered, come next week." That is, in fact, if you need to interact with this department, you should hire an individual to the position of "an awaiter" to attend the department on Tuesdays and stand in line waiting.[57]

Comparing FEDC managers and "usual officials," residents do confirm that ASEZs managers help them to avoid "hiring an awaiter." Managers mentioned the following markers of their success: "the number of residents over the past year has increased," "many schemes, templates are honed," "the number of employees has grown," "competencies have improved."[58] They also compared themselves with other structures and stressed their supremacy:

> The quality of the consultations that we give is higher than in the Agency for promotion of investment because, firstly, we provide

56 Interview, "2. Institutions. FEDC representative 18."
57 Interview, "2. Institutions. Prospective ASEZ residents, 2017."
58 Interview, "2. Institutions. FEDC representative 18."

> multilateral consultations, that is, we attract land planners, infrastructure specialists, and so on, and secondly, I would believe that the knowledge we have is somewhat fundamental.[59]

> The professionalism, while I do not believe we can call this in that way, is very low. They [officials in local municipalities] just illiterate paper scrappers.[60]

Having analysed interviews with entrepreneurs, I would say that most of them do perceive the FEDC as a structure and ASEZs as a means that can allow the overcoming of barriers associated with normal-for-Russia "bad governance," that is, corruption, red tape, and inefficiency. Contrary to my assumptions, the residents or potential residents never complained about the difficulties of acquiring residency status. Compared to other bureaucrats, FEDC employees are much more transparent and accountable; their income depends on the absence of any delays. Thus, FEDC provides better administration, lower bureaucracy, better transparency, and improved qualifications for ASEZ residents. The problem is that real outcomes are very modest, and most of insiders and outsiders understand this:

> When I hear that there are *n* thousand more jobs, I laugh. I have two more jobs, my colleagues […] seven, ten. Where are the thousands?[61]

Explaining why FEDC has not built the infrastructure yet, the interlocutor copied the logic of political elites:

> The previous [FEDC] CEO attributed this failure to the lack of (local) contractors capable of fulfilling large projects. Even if some large federal company, such as Stroygazmontazh by Rotenberg comes in, it still needs local subcontractors.[62]

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.

> This is primarily due to the long procedure for the transfer of land in remote areas, where municipalities should confirm the deal.[63]

> I was amazed at the way he [the previous CEO] knows how to work. All these modern project management techniques, Agile, you know how much backward I was […] very happy to learn from him.[64]

If ASEZs do not achieve expected outcomes, then technocrats are ready to blame local "subcontractors" who cannot perform large contracts or local authorities who cannot work in the new logic of project management. In any case, institutional inefficiency does not apply to everyone: large, key residents of ASEZs always receive better support. Their problems turn out to be more significant; they are solved despite any obstacles in the form of ineffective or incapable local authorities:

> Even though we observe deadlines, the signing of the agreement might be delayed. Sometimes, it is challenging to predict real timing. If it concerns the principal resident, let me say, "Zvezda," then the issues are solved quickly, even in two weeks. If there is a small resident, then it can take up to six months (but six months are officially established period for such procedures—NR).[65]

Zvezda, according to the technocrat FEDC, finds itself in the priority not only and not so much because it lies in the sphere of interests of the consortium of Rosneftegaz, Rosneft, and Gazprombank but because of its *"greater value":*

> (Why will everything be decided faster for Zvezda?) Zvezda is an anchor resident. The indicators of this ASEZ, in general, depend on it. If you fail the work on a small resident, but work well with the Zvezda, everything will be fine. Besides, everybody understands whose company it is and what the toys are doing there. The whole city depends on the success of this project. (pause) KPI also matters.[66]

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.

Thus, when establishing ASEZs, the political elites might have had any logic (even colonial). However, they have "sold" ASEZs to the public, narrating about effective special economic zones and the necessary government intervention in the market. The technocrats working at the FEDC became the most grateful "buyers" of the neoliberal idea: they supported a performance cult, they helped ASEZ residents to feel different institutional context inside the mega-enterprise, and they played with different qualities of different subdivisions. Framing ASEZs as neoliberal mega-enterprise, they also helped to hide that most of the businesses are, as usual, resource-orientated. As will be shown in the next chapter, neoliberal logic allows political elites to depoliticise the issue of pumping resources out of the region.

10.3 Social Relations "Beyond" the Neoliberal Logic of ASEZs

I have already mentioned that the ASEZ residents agree that within a "mega-enterprise," the conditions for businesses are better because of the reduction of what, in economic theory, is commonly referred to as transaction costs. However, does this mean that a bad external institutional environment does not affect or mix with a "healthy" internal environment? That all vices of Russian bad governance (nepotism, red tape, corruption) do not affect "happy" residents of ASEZs? That is, that ASEZs manage to get rid of social relations and achieve the perfect functioning of the market matrix? Or is the internal environment also deformed, adjusted, changed? If there are "bad," "unhealthy," "substandard" social "remnants" outside, organisations that are not described by the economic models and people that do not fit into the neoliberal *Homo oeconomicus,* what happens to them?

I answer these questions by looking at procurement procedures for ASEZs infrastructure and practices of labour force recruitment.

Procurement procedures: nepotism, red tape, and other manifestations of "bad governance." The survival rate of small and medium-sized businesses in ASEZs is not high. Out of 330 declared enterprises, only seventy-nine have become operational in 2018.[67] However, the real numbers of companies seem to be even lower. Just one example: the design of our research project in Yakutia required conducting expert interviews with all Kangalassi residents. According to official FEDC data, in 2018, ASEZ Kangalassi (Sakha Republic)

67 The official statements for the year of 2018.

included eighteen resident companies.[68] An official request to the Sakha government showed that only seventeen residents remained in the ASEZ. Nonetheless, we did not manage to find seventeen or eighteen; only seven companies were detected. All of them confirmed that all other residents had already gone. Moreover, two of our seven respondents were also ready to leave businesses.

According to Kangalassi residents, the main reason behind this failure is that the provision of infrastructure lags behind the timetable promised by the FEDC:

> There are problems with the engineering infrastructure […] It was assumed that we would be provided with the full infrastructure, but in fact, it turned out that the Kangalassi village does not have the technical ability to connect anyone to the central sewer networks. Any new business entity entering the territory of Kangalassi cannot be connected. That is, we are in the twenty-first century, and the solutions for sewer networks in our country are septic tanks. Very funny and sad at the same time, right? Of course, this also affects the amount of funding, the timing, the stages. We did not expect that we would encounter such a problem, but life dictates its own conditions.[69]

The timetable is violated, and not only in Kangalassi. In the local online media, an angry resident of the other ASEZ narrates the story of how he was led to bankruptcy. The exceptional interest is not even the article itself, but the discussion that unfolded after:

> FEDC has an excellent schedule for project implementations. The structure receives governmental funds. It can pay a generous salary of employees. Contrary to the current legislation, actually bypassing it, FEDC chooses those suppliers they wish.

The interlocutor then argues that the choice always falls on a limited number of companies located in Moscow. They further blame the FEDC for corruption:

68 The updated register is available at https://git87.rostrud.gov.ru/upload/iblock/b71/reestr_tor-15.12.21.pdf.

69 Interview, "2. Institutions. ASEZ resident, 2018."

> Technical supervision should ensure the quality of construction. If a builder can choose its own supervisor, it is just corruption. The scale of it is even difficult to recognise or overestimate. This is the same if the defendant would choose his own judge.[70]

Even if this angry resident exaggerates his story, his narration is in a way relevant to what we already know from FEDC managers, especially with regard to the choice of Moscow companies. Official websites, where public procurement has to be placed, confirm that a significant part of contracts, including the construction of infrastructure facilities, was carried out as a "purchase from a single supplier (earlier—when this paper was in the process of being written—information about all procurements was available at the https://zakupki.gov.ru to unregistered users. In 2022—by the time the paper went to print—the author could not gain access to previously analysed procurements)." There being a single supplier and, therefore, an uncompetitive purchase, is not a law violation in this case, as the ASEZ mechanism implies this and numerous other exemptions from the current legislation. The main problem, as many interlocutors believe, is that the supplier is usually located in Moscow. For example, the contract for the construction of infrastructure in Nadezhdinskaia ASEZ (around 11 million US dollars) was won by the non-commercial organisation Engineering Technologies Complex of the Kurchatov Institute. The primary activity is "research and development in the field of social and human sciences." It has zero authorised capital, and its balance sheet in 2018 amounted to a little over 5 million rubles. Of course, the Kurchatov Institute has no construction facilities (equipment and employees) in the Primorskii Krai and hires local contractors.

As a result, "Moscow" (the company located in Moscow) takes a significant portion of the resources, while local companies suffer from resource deficits. Consumption of half of the budget outside the region, lack of contracts with local construction companies, frequent bankruptcies of them—all this does not contribute to the main goal for which the ASEZs were officially launched and the FEDC was established.

"Unacceptable quality" of the local labour force. Studying a rotational shift work, our group surprisingly discovered that the heads of many personnel departments of the newly established companies within ASEZs see local labour force as marginalised, not qualified, and unwilling to work. Agricultural residents of ASEZs refused to hire locals not only as livestock technicians but

70 Rezident TOR "Nadezhdinskaia", "Ul'trakidalovo KRDV."

even as watchmen.[71] Companies suppose they can offer lower salaries to locals and are very surprised when locals refuse. To clarify the background, since Soviet times, all companies located in the Russian Far East must pay a special regional allowance (on average, fifty percent of a payroll[72]). This means that a Far Eastern worker hired by, let us say, Gazprom, should receive a salary one and a half times higher than someone who works for the company in Saint Petersburg, if he works in the RFE and has resided there for at least for ten years. For newcomers, not only these circumstances but also other local conducts seem rather strange:

> In some places, we hired only watchmen. In some, we could not find even them. Locals do not want to work for us. At all.—Maybe there are alternative, other positions?—No, only we offer workplaces. The only alternative is illegal fishing or poaching. Everyone there earns money in this way. They told us they could work only in winter. From May till October, all they are busy.—However, this means they have a bigger earning during the fishing season.—Not sure that more, but yes, they have money from this activity. Moreover, that is their habitual way of living.—How long these people live in those places?—They always live there. However, they started poaching predominantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, I think that ethnicity does not matter. Some of them may be the Evenki, other—the Russians, does not matter.[73]

This conversation unveils and explains everything. After the 1990s, when the state disappeared from many remote areas, people had to find a way to adjust to a new reality: no jobs, no donations, inadequate food supplies, a dearth of everything. People adjusted. In so doing, they developed grey, invisible, informal niches. They provided a variety of services, including teaching, taxi driving, and selling goods at the bazaars. They engaged in hunting, fishing, gathering, and mining.[74] They smuggled, exported timbers to China, or imported used vehicles from Japan. They mastered not only natural resources (gold, fish, coal, berries) but also closeness to Asian countries.[75] All these

71 Interview, "2. Institutions. FEDC representative 18."
72 Postanovlenie Mintruda RF ot 11.09.1995 N 49.
73 Interview, ASEZ resident.
74 Zhuravskaya and Ryzhova, "Calling on the State."
75 Ryzhova, "Informal Economy of Translocations"; Bliakher and Vasil'eva, "The Russian Far East in a State of Suspension"; Holzlehner, "Trading Against the State."

activities enable locals to survive and to live their way of life. The appearance of new development agents leads locals to a new crisis, if not a catastrophe—here is just one example:

> The most important requirement is the absence of home livestock. If you want to work for us, then you or your relatives should not have pigs.—Why?—Because pigs have particular immunity, a human being is a carrier of infection for them. The security service will check your house if you intend to work for us. The person is given the right to choose. Either you hold a pig, or you are an employee of a company.[76]

During the post-Soviet period, livestock for villagers was one of the main subsistence options. It is unlikely that both family members can be employed in a new company, which means the choice is very harsh. In Soviet times, households were allowed to have livestock, and total vaccination was carried out to prevent diseases. This and many other examples show that "new" companies and "old" ordinaries often compete for the same resources. The state supports newcomers, at least, because old economic agents exploited resources informally and, therefore, did not pay taxes.

The neoliberal idea often fails because "social relations" are unwilling to fit into a market matrix. Failure is, of course, much worse if the neoliberal idea is used only as a veil. However, depoliticisation works perfectly in these circumstances too. Unfair distribution of contracts between businesses close to the political elite and small local companies is explained by the lack of qualifications (size or required competencies). Unfair allocation of land and natural resources between "right" companies and "wrong" illegal firms is interpreted by fiscal logic. Unfair discriminatory recruitment practices are attributed to their poor quality, not fitting the standards of new businesses. Thus, ASEZs work as Ferguson's anti-politics machine.

But unlike Ferguson's anti-politics machine, ASEZs do not even aim to eliminate poverty. In fact, the political authorities still do not recognise that the result of "market" transitions has been a catastrophic impoverishment. More important than the problem of poverty, which only serves as an "entry point" for the ASEZs' development programme, is the problem of national, and even military, insecurity. Thus, the actual "point of entry" is veiled and

76 Interview, "2. Labour. ASEZ representative 16."

depoliticised. But, since national security is purely political, the game around ASEZs becomes over-political as well.

10.4 Conclusion: Over-Politicisation

As has been shown, the "performance cult" displayed by political leaders and FEDC managers exists regardless of the actual outcomes achieved in ASEZs. This confirms the neoliberal logic behind the RFE development programme. The technique of bravura reporting on the ASEZs outcomes reaches its pinnacle at annual Eastern Economic Forums. From the very first forum, "presentation of new conditions for investment and business in the region" was announced as one of the main objectives of the event.[77] Every year, the forums are built around a discussion of "exclusive opportunities and preferences" provided by ASEZs (as well as Free Port Vladivostok). Top leaders of Asian countries traditionally attend the events and admire stands, films, and presentations. Politicians report on billions of dollars invested, social conditions improved, and hundreds of thousands of jobs created in ASEZs.[78] Officials form a "pool of banks,"[79] launch "feeding energy centres,"[80] and perform other theatrical activities. Political performances are not separable from economic presentations, and vice versa. Many of these theatrical actions also involve ASEZ residents themselves, even those who do not believe in the bravura stories.

These myths of political discourse are disconnected from any kind of coherent reality, and it seems that everyone understands this disconnectedness. The only political issue that is being discussed as applied to ASEZs is their importance for Russia's national security. The Russian Far East is announced as a "national priority for the next century."[81] Appeals to national security are not accidental: every Russian politician seems to remember that the region is a potential theatre of military operations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thus, ASEZs are something more than Ferguson's machine because they include political theatre, a performance that is played out because of the state's reluctance to openly respond to the question of what ASEZs mean politically.

77 Prezident Rossii, "Pervyi Vostochnyi."
78 Eastern Economic Forum, "Itogi Vostochnogo Ekonomicheskogo Foruma – 2021."
79 Invest.primorsky.ru, "Na VEF-2019."
80 Ibid.
81 Prezident Rossii, "Plenarnoe zasedanie vostochnogo."

My answer to this question is that the ASEZs are one more machine for redistributing resources in favour of political elites; one that combines the tools of market, plan, and colonial governance with an ideology of the market and completely marginalises public voices and space for liberal discussion about the future of the Russian eastern outskirt.

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Tensions and Conflicts

11 Blagoveshchensk Massacre and Beyond: The Landscape of Violence in the Amur Province in the Spring and Summer of 1900

Sergey Glebov

Abstract This chapter discusses mass violence against Chinese in the valley of the Amur River in the summer of 1900, in particular in the context of settler colonialism and imperial management of populations. Unlike previous studies of the well-known Blagoveshchensk massacre of July 1900, the chapter casts this violence against the background of the debates on the presence of the Chinese in the Russian territory among various segments of imperial bureaucracy and society. It argues that, on the very eve of the violence, significant segments of that society favoured the presence of the Chinese merchants and workers. It was under the impact of the panic caused by the Boxer rebellion that the consensus was broken and mass violence erupted.

Mass violence erupted along the Amur River in the summer of 1900, an event that occurred in the context of the Boxer Rebellion in China and the subsequent invasion of Manchuria by the Russian imperial army. The Blagoveshchensk massacre of July 1900, in which thousands of Chinese dwellers of the city perished when forced to cross the river onto the Qing side of the border, remains largely underexplored in the broader context of the presence of Chinese labourers and merchants in the Russian Far East in the second half of the nineteenth century. These events have, so far, received relatively little attention from historians, and when they have, some studies of the Blagoveshchensk massacre (and all those in English) have been based on sources produced at least a decade after the events.[1] In this chapter, I want

1 For the most recent study in Russian (and the most exhaustive to date in any language), see collective monograph Diatlov, Guzei, and Sorokina, *Kitaiskii Pogrom*. For an English language study, see Zatsepine, "Blagoveshchensk Massacre." For the most recent and detailed study in English, see Gamsa, *Harbin*, 22–26.

Glebov, Sergey. 2023. "Blagoveshchensk Massacre and Beyond: The Landscape of Violence in the Amur Province in the Spring and Summer of 1900." In *Russia's North Pacific. Centres and Peripheries*, edited by Benjamin Beuerle, Sandra Dahlke, and Andreas Renner, 211–228. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.1114.c16385

to focus on the archival evidence that illuminates not just the ways in which violence itself erupted in the moment of crisis in the imperial borderland but also the discussions about the presence of the Chinese in the Russian Empire. Tellingly, these discussions occurred practically on the eve of the July 1900 violence, from February to May of 1900, and involved different players, from military officers to Russian merchants, Cossacks, and peasants. I argue that, instead of a simple dichotomy between Russians and Chinese on the Amur, this evidence suggests a complex, diverse society that emerged in the context of settler colonialism and imperial borderland.[2] The unravelling of the Boxer rebellion—itself a reaction to imperialist inroads by Europeans in Qing China—taxed the precarious balance of interests and accommodations on the Russian–Chinese frontier.[3] This balance, the product of imperial ad hoc policies, was broken when the pressure of war and mobilisation against the perceived threat of the Boxers combined with the nationalising messages of the Russian imperial centre. In some ways, the events on the Amur in the summer of 1900 foreshadowed the violence in the Western borderlands during World War I.[4] To present this argument, I will first discuss the context of the Russian colonisation in the Far East, explore the events in July 1900 in Blagoveshchensk, and then complicate the massacre by surveying discussions among the Russian bureaucrats and local society members that preceded the massacre.

11.1 Context: The Russian Far East before 1900

The left bank of the Amur, home to the events discussed below, was officially incorporated into the Russian Empire through the Treaty of Aigun in 1858.[5] The Amur province *(oblast')* was established at the same time, with the capital in Blagoveshchensk. The city was named after the Blagoveshchenskii cathedral

2 For a recent study of the Russian–Chinese borderland on the tribute of the Amur, the Argun, see Urbansky, *Beyond the Steppe Frontier*. For a similar argument about the complex society that emerged in the zone of the Russian–Chinese interaction in Manchuria, see Gamsa, *Harbin*.

3 On the Boxer rebellion, see Esherick, *Origins*, esp. 271–314, for the discussion of the events in the spring of 1900. For the history of the military campaigns, see Lensen, *Russo-Chinese War;* Datsyshen, *Bokserskaia Voina*.

4 For some recent scholarship on the violence during World War I, see Holquist, *Making War;* Lohr, *Nationalizing*.

5 Miasnikov, *Dogovornymi stat'iami utverdili*.

in Irkutsk, where Innokentii (Veniaminov), the Archbishop of Kamchatka and an active participant in the imperial politics of the Far Eastern borderlands, began his service. As was the case with the second Far Eastern province, the Maritime, initial colonisation of the region proceeded with the establishment of the Cossack stations along the Amur.[6] More intense colonisation began in the 1880s and, especially, in the 1890s, when the construction of the Trans-Siberian brought more peasant settlers to the area;[7] but as the railroad brought more people to the Amur region, it also pivoted the efforts of the Russian imperial state towards Qing Manchuria. Especially from 1898, when Russia leased Port Arthur for its military base and built Dalian (Dal'nii) for its commercial harbour on the Liaodong peninsula, the Amur province began to experience negative population growth.[8]

The Amur *oblast's* economy was based on two pillars. One, in terms of profit and volume the more important of the two, was gold mining. The second was agriculture, which was traditionally viewed by imperial administrators as the most important way to "Russify" the remote borderland. The gold mining industry took off in the 1850s, following the discoveries of gold deposits by the geologist N. P. Anosov.[9] The gold industry remained in private hands, with the gold industrialists *(zolotopromyshlenniki)* residing first in Irkutsk and then, increasingly, in Blagoveshchensk. The gold industry was fairly underdeveloped, and the industrialists who purchased the rights to work particular sites *(priiski)* lacked substantial capital. They also preferred to invest as little as possible in the mining operations, and so they primarily relied on semi-independent brigades *(arteli)* of workers, from whom they purchased the extracted gold and to whom they sold supplies. Only a minor faction of the industrialists relied on the so called "master's way" *(khoziainicheskii sposob)*, where the industrialists fully supplied the hired workers, provided them with equipment, and paid them salaries.

The agriculture was similarly underdeveloped. For one, Cossack stations along the Amur were located in such a way as to facilitate postal communications rather than their success as agricultural settlements. Another factor was that Cossacks were obligated to provide military service and functioned as border guards, which did not facilitate their farming enterprises. New peasant settlers were often unfamiliar with the local conditions and struggled

6 Ivanov, *Kratkaia Istoriia;* Veniukov, "Vospominaniia."
7 Marks, *Road to Power*.
8 *Vsepoddanneishii Otchet Priamurskogo*, 4–6.
9 Crawford, *Siberia,* 157–159.

to be self-sufficient, let alone supply the industry with food. A few highly successful farmers, mostly the followers of the Molokan sect, did not alter the general picture.[10]

The economic situation in the Amur province made transactions across the border with the Qing Empire a necessity. Not only did the Cossacks use pastures and forests across the river but they also bought supplies and hired labour there. The gold industry similarly relied on Chinese food and labourers. The cities, where the military garrisons were often the most important parts of the population, relied on Chinese merchants to supply them with necessities. While the Amur was notionally a border between the two empires, life along the Amur involved crossing that border in multiple ways. The Amur province, along with the Maritime, Transbaikal, and Iakut provinces in Eastern Siberia, was covered by the so-called *porto franco* regime of free trade. Moreover, according to the treaties of Aigun of 1858 and Beijing of 1860, trade in the fifty-mile-wide zone along the border between China and Russia remained duty-free. The imperial authorities considered the duty-free trade and the *porto franco* regime as key elements in the development of the remote and thinly populated areas.

Prior to 1884, the Amur province was part of the governor-generalship of Eastern Siberia, with the capital in Irkutsk. In 1884, the new Priamur governor-generalship was established. The governor general resided in Khabarovsk, at the confluence of Amur and Ussuri.[11] Following the administrative reform of 1884, the Russian authorities launched a campaign to document Chinese and Koreans in the Russian Far East. They began to demand national passports with visas and taxed Chinese workers and merchants by forcing them to acquire a permit to work or trade in Russia. While the enforcement of the regulations remained sporadic, it also gave local officials extensive powers over the Chinese workers and merchants. Moreover, the campaign solidified the anti-Chinese rhetoric, which depicted the Chinese workers and merchants as a harmful presence, albeit—for the time being—a necessary one.[12]

The situation in the Amur province was also unique in that it contained a Chinese exclave. Blagoveshchensk is located at the confluence of Zeia and Amur rivers and is on the left bank of the latter and the right bank of the former. On the left bank of Zeia (and on the left bank of Amur, downstream

10 *Vsepoddanneishii Otchet Priamurskogo*, 5; Kriukov, *Opyt Opisaniia;* Korzhinskii, "Otchet ob issledovaniiakh"; Argudiaeva, "Molokans."

11 Matsuzato, "Creation."

12 Glebov, "Between Foreigners and Subjects."

from the city) was the region of "Trans-Zeia Manchus" *(zazeiskie manchzhury)*, or, as the Qing authorities called it, the sixty-four villages. The settlements, populated by about 20,000 Chinese and Manchus, remained under Qing administration but on the Russian side of the border following the provisions of the Treaty of Aigun in 1858. In the course of the 1880s and, especially, the 1890s, Russian authorities tried to devise various ways to subject the Trans-Zeia Manchus to the Russian administration. These efforts were largely fruitless, and the Manchus remained under the Qing administration until the ethnic cleansing of July 1900, when they were forced to flee across the river or be killed.

The pan-imperial developments influenced the remote borderland in multiple ways. For one, the nationalising empire of Alexander II and Nicholas II sought to transform the imperial polity with its attending diversity into a Russian state. The presence of "foreigners" such as the Chinese was no longer the norm but a deviation. Instead of incorporation into the fabric of imperial polity as an estate, they were now seen as foreign subjects to be excluded from the system of mosaic subjecthood described by Jane Burbank as an "imperial rights regime."[13] For instance, in December 1899, Nicholas II as the chairman of the Committee of the Siberian Railroad personally intervened in discussions about peasant colonisation and resettlement and expressed his opinion that "in view of the desirability of strengthening the Russian fortress against the flood of the yellow race it should be possible to increase peasant colonisation."[14] The new rhetoric coming from the imperial capital saw the Priamur Krai, in the words of its first governor general, Baron A. N. Korf, as "not a colony but a part of the metropole with which it is connected by overland routes."[15] The Priamur Krai was supposed to become the domain of the Russians along with the rest of the empire.

In the economic sphere, the rhetoric of nationalisation was paralleled by the introduction of protective tariffs, the unification of the customs regime along the borders, and the privileging of the development of Russian commerce and industry. Although Sergei Witte's programme, which included the protective tariffs, was seen as a modernising initiative, it is important to realise that it was also an element of the homogenising and nationalising drive of the late imperial period. In the imperial Far East, discussions of protective tariffs and of privileging Russian commerce reinvigorated the already

13 Burbank, "Imperial Rights Regime."

14 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Dal'nego Vostoka (hereafter, RGIA DV), f. 701, op. 1, d. 339, l. 30.

15 *S'ezd Gubernatorov, 1885*, 1–2.

existing tensions. Beginning in the mid-1880s, likely as a result of colonisation by settlers from the Western borderlands who brought with them familiar mental maps of internal Other, Russian press and bureaucratic reports began to compare the Chinese in the Far East to Jews in European Russia, ascribing to them such features as cunning, hermetic communal life, and tendency to exploit the peasant.[16] This anti-Chinese rhetoric was likely influenced by the campaign in 1892–1895 to expel Jews who resided in the Russian Far East. Already in 1892–1893, Russian merchants were petitioning the authorities to limit Chinese commerce administratively because they were failing to compete with the Chinese, allegedly due to the unique racial characteristics of their competitors. Repeatedly in the 1890s, Russian authorities discussed limiting Chinese labour in the Russian Far East and privileging "Russian" workers, a task that was always complicated by the demographic feebleness of Russians in the Far East.

11.2 The Manchurian Expansion, the Boxer Rebellion, and the Blagoveshchensk Massacre

The construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad precipitated Russian expansion into Manchuria. As the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER) cut through Manchuria, Russian technical personnel and troops poured into Qing Dongbei (three northeastern provinces).[17] In 1898, the Russian Empire leased land in Liaodong peninsula and established Port Arthur as its military base and Dalian (*Dal'nii*) as its commercial harbour. The imperial encroachment by Europeans into China triggered the Boxer Rebellion, inspired by social protests against Qing authorities and foreign presence. Qing authorities wavered but supported the rebels and declared war on the intervening powers on June 21, 1900. Soon, the Russian authorities mobilised the reservists in the Priamur Krai and sent troops across the border into Manchuria, where Qing-loyal troops and the Boxers operated together. As the military intervention of the eight powers proceeded in Tianjin and Beijing, chaos reigned in Manchuria.[18]

On July 2, 1900, Qing troops or Boxers fired on Blagoveshchensk from across the river, at the location of the Manchu village Sakhalian (roughly,

16 Glebov, "Foreigners and Subjects," 114–115.

17 Wolff, *Harbin Station*.

18 A good overview of the military operations during the Boxer rebellion in Manchuria is Datsyshen, *Bokserskaia Voina.*

modern Heihe). The bombardment by grenades caused little physical damage in the city, but it did throw the population and the authorities into panic. The military governor of the province (the supreme official), General K. N. Gribskii, was not present in the city. At the head of the troops, he crossed the river to proceed down the Amur and attack Aigun on the other side. Although the civilian governor, S. N. Taskin, was in the city, it appears neither he nor the head of the city government, A. V. Kirillov, made any appearances. Some city dwellers fled the city and hid in the forested hills, while some remained and gathered in churches and with their neighbours. At that moment, the city was also home to about 1,300 troops, most of whom were the newly mobilised reservists who came from the city dwellers and peasant settlers. Among the city population were about 4,000 Chinese merchants, craftsmen, petty traders, and menial labourers.[19]

The archival trail present in a number of files on the retrospective investigation of these events allows us to fairly accurately reconstruct their sequence. The order to deport the Chinese dwellers of the city across the river must have been given by the military governor, General Gribskii, either because he suspected the Chinese of being disloyal or because he wanted to protect them from the wrath of the Russians. A newspaper account by N. P. Makeev, a co-owner and director of the Amur Steamboat Society, claimed that Gribskii was bothered by panicked members of the city *duma,* who requested that he recall the troops from Manchuria to protect Blagoveshchensk. According to Makeev, the members of the *duma* also demanded from Gribskii the removal of Chinese from the city, citing rumours about Chinese plans to set the city on fire.[20] In response to inquiries from the commander of the Priamur military district, S. N. Taskin, vice-governor of the Amur *oblast,* reported on July 30 1900 that "in light of acute animosity against the Chinese from the city dwellers there appeared a mass of requests to free the city from the Chinese who lived there, allegedly because the latter were planning to put the city on fire. As a consequence, the Governor ordered to gather all the Chinese and to send them across the Amur."[21]

The chief of Blagoveshchensk police, a certain L. F. Batorevich, reported that he had initially planned to send the group across the Zeia River to the region of Trans-Zeia Manchus, "where they could get help from their own and

19 A reliable (albeit politically charged against the Russian authorities) account is Deich, *Krovavye Dni*.

20 Makeev, "Blagoveshchenskaia Panika."

21 RGIA DV, f. 701, op. 1, d. 34, l. 11.

cross the Amur."[22] However, according to Batorevich, the governor rejected this plan (presumably, they were in communication), so the chief of police "assembled up to 1,500 Chinese" and sent them with the *pristav* Shabanov to the Cossack settlement Verkhne-Blagoveshchenskii near the city.[23] The party, accompanied by two Cossacks, volunteers Leveiko and Regishchevskii, and some eighty mobilised reservists, arrived in the settlement and conveyed to the Cossack settlement headman, a certain Kosyrev, the order of the Cossack administration to provide the party with boats to cross the river. Kosyrev refused to do so, claiming that no Cossacks would accompany the Chinese under the bullets from the other side and arguing that the boats could be used by the Chinese in the other direction to attack the Russian side. From the reports by Batorevich, Shabanov, Kosyrev, and others, it is not clear who decided to force the Chinese to cross the river by swimming, but someone did. As Kosyrev reported, they refused at first, but "after I applied stricter measures (*strogie mery*) they complied."[24] The group was forced into the river. According to multiple reports, the Cossacks then fired on the Chinese and forced them into the river, where most people drowned. The same operation, but with different participants and smaller groups, was conducted on July 8 and 10. Although the reports by officials claimed that "some Chinese may have drowned," investigations confirmed that most of the Chinese from the assembled party perished during the forced crossing. A few days later, a group of armed Chinese crossed the river from Aigun and attacked a Cossack post. In response, the Russian Cossacks and peasants attacked the Manchu villages on the Zeia and burned most of them. Some of the inhabitants of the villages fled, and some were killed by Cossacks and militia, ending the Qing exclave on the imperial territory.

Although the retrospective accounts, including the one by Lev Grigor'evich Deich, a socialist who lived in exile in Blagoveshchensk and worked for the newspaper *Amurskii krai*, blamed the violence against the Chinese in the city on the authorities, it appears that much of the violence was not organised or directly contradicted orders given by Gribskii (who, as early as June 14, issued a proclamation prohibiting violence against Chinese and Manchus).[25] Gribskii's proclamation specifically cited "rude violence against Chinese and Manchus living in Blagoveshchensk, especially at the hands of lower ranks of

22 Sorokina, "Blagoveshchenskaia Utopia," 137.
23 Ibid., 135.
24 Ibid., 132.
25 RGIA DV, f. 701, op, 1, d. 347, l. 2.

mobilised reservists."[26] As a matter of fact, eyewitnesses described scenes of violence both in Blagoveshchensk itself, where the Chinese dwellers of the city were rounded up and escorted to the point of the massacre, and outside the city, where Chinese passengers were attacked on the steamers embarking at Cossack stations, or on the roads when Chinese workers were returning from the gold mines. One eyewitness account, titled *Blagoveshchensk Diary* and published in the newspaper *Vostochnyi vestnik* in Vladivostok on August 27, 1900, described the following scene in Blagoveshchensk:

> I enter the embankment and see an acquaintance. He says: Well, gentlemen, hell knows what's going on! I walk on the Grafskaia street and see two appropriately dressed Chinese riding a cab and carrying two large parcels. At once two mounted Cossacks catch up with them, swearing and yelling, the cabman stops. "Where are you taking this scum?" yells the Cossack, and a thick rain of whips fell on the shoulders of the scared Chinese. The poor things tried to run but the Cossacks catch them and tie their queues together and take them somewhere. Where to? I don't know, but the parcels remained with the cabman, and the policeman ran up and they began to untie the parcels […]

The account in *Vostochnyi vestnik* described the process of removal of Chinese from the city:

> By the evening [of July 2] they marched somewhere towards Zeia all the Chinese who lived and worked in the city. The crowd of these Chinese was very large, sixty *sazhen* [about 120 metres] long and five *sazhen* [about ten metres] wide. They were accompanied by volunteers armed with all sorts of makeshift weapons, rifles, axes, iron forks, sticks, etc. It was a pity to watch this huge but, helas, powerless crowd timidly observing those Russians who passed by […] [Russian] crowds met them with militant yelling and with a kind of popular-cynical laughter. […] There was no compassion. Even children and teenagers were communicated this belligerent spirit. In a large dried up ditch by the Seminary they threw entire piles of blue Chinese jackets and pants […] Children, playing Cossacks, gathered in the ditch and began to frantically hit the clothes […]

26 Ibid.

Scenes of this kind, reported in multiple accounts, suggest the prevalence of popular violence during the panic days of the bombardment. Following the events of July, *Amurskii krai* published an article by N. P. Makeev, the owner of the Amur Shipping Company, who accused the local authorities primarily of panic and disorderly conduct during the eruption of violence. Makeev pointed out that, when the city was first bombarded from the Chinese side, the city mayor (*gorodskoi golova*) "was nowhere to be found." Makeev also described how the city *duma* decided to distribute the rifles from the warehouse to the population. Instead of giving them in an organised manner to the battalion of reservists, a certain P. P. Popov,[27] a member of the mayor's administration, distributed them to anyone, and consequently, 600 rifles and fifty pieces of ammunition per rifle came into the hands of city dwellers, reservists, and peasant settlers, all of whom were idle and riled up by the continued shooting at the city from the other side.

Challenging the argument that the violence was the result of the authorities' actions alone, the archival collection of the retrospective investigations reveals that, beyond what happened in Blagoveshchensk proper, Chinese became targets of attacks in the rural region along the Amur. For instance, on August 18, 1900, Kovalevskii, the procurator of the Irkutsk Justice Chamber, reported to Governor General N. I. Grodekov the disturbing facts he learned while passing through the Cossack station Poiarkova. The procurator explained that "according to the information that became known to me, allegedly in past July the local station headman demanded that 42 Chinese be taken off the passing steamer *Saratov.* They were mostly merchants who travelled with their merchandise to Blagoveshchensk. They were on the orders of the same headman taken to the edge of the station where they were shot by the local Cossacks. Allegedly the described murders were conducted following the orders from [the provincial capital] Blagoveshchensk."[28] When the governor general inquired of the Amur province governor Gribskii whether this information could be confirmed, Gribskii first dismissed the information as based on rumours but, following an investigation by the officer Tuzlukov, confirmed the account.[29]

News of the massacres on the Amur were reported and discussed quite freely in the regional press. Newspapers in Blagoveshchensk, Vladivostok, and

27 Petr Petrovich Popov (1857–1928), merchant and banker, member of various Orthodox religious societies. Member of the city administration (1884–1914), head of the city administration of Blagoveshchensk in 1911–1914.

28 RGIA DV, f. 701, op. 1, d. 347, l. 15.

29 Ibid., l. 18.

Nikol'sk-Ussuriiskii published accounts of the events with harrowing details. By late August, press in the capitals also noticed, and so did the imperial government. On September 2, 1900, Prince P. D. Sviatopolk-Mirsky, then deputy minister of internal affairs, telegraphed the governor general about an article in the newspaper *Novoe vremia*, which had alleged mass killings of Chinese in Amur province and claimed those killings resulted from the orders of a local sheriff. When the request for information reached the governor of the Amur province, he first denied the reports but then confirmed that a sheriff named Volkov had given orders to peasant militias formed in July to "annihilate all Chinese." The governor first argued that no consequences had resulted from the orders and that Volkov had explained that he only meant attacking armed and hostile Chinese. Further investigations, however, proved that sheriff (*pristav*) Volkov had been asked by the village elders in charge of peasant militia how they should deal with the Chinese who fell into their hands, and he had ordered them to "annihilate" (*unichtozhat'*) them.[30] This episode—one of the few we have on the situation in the region of Trans-Zeia Manchus—helps reconstruct the mechanisms of violence against the Manchus and their destruction. Peasant militias (a single one from Krasnoiarskii district numbered one hundred) were given orders by local officials to attack and destroy Chinese and Manchus.

But even if local administration was disorganised, displayed animosity towards the Chinese, or at times even gave orders to attack Chinese civilians, in many instances material interest also played a role. The ethnic cleansing of Chinese and Manchus left significant material wealth, from the warehouses in the city to harvest in the fields or other property in the countryside. For instance, the eyewitness account published in *Vostochnyi vestnik* described people pulling bodies from the river and robbing them.[31] *Amurskii krai*, which was based in Blagoveshchensk, mentioned new settlers harvesting the former lands of Manchus beyond Zeia in September. The same newspaper also mentioned a brick factory left by a Trans-Zeia Manchu owner with over ten thousand bricks in the warehouse, which were quickly appropriated by local peasants.[32] The war and chaos were viewed as a license to take possession of the property of the "enemy."

To sum up, the landscape of violence against the Chinese in July 1900 included attacking passengers of steamers on the Amur, city dwellers in

30 Ibid., 15–18, 51–52.
31 *Vostochnyi vestnik,* August 27, 1900.
32 *Amurskii krai,* August 13, 1900, 2.

Blagoveshchensk, Chinese living and working in villages next to settlers, and, finally, the inhabitants of the sixty-four Manchu villages beyond the Zeia River. The attacks were conducted by mobilised Cossacks and reservists in the city and by peasant militias and Cossacks in the countryside. It appears that these attacks were often conducted under the guidance of local officials, such as Cossack station headmen, sheriffs, and peasant elders, and thus involved more actors than just the authorities, as the liberal press in Saint Petersburg alleged a decade later. Rather, one can speak of an explosion of mass violence in a moment of crisis and panic triggered by the war, mobilisation, and fear. But was this violence a result of some long-brewing hatreds? In the following pages, I will focus on the discussions about the Chinese presence in the Amur province, which were conducted by the local authorities on the very eve of the violence.

11.3 On the Eve of the Violence

This eruption of violence against the Chinese in the Amur province raises a question about the relations between different groups of Russian settlers and the Chinese along the Amur. Was this violence evidence of massive tensions and interethnic conflicts? One remarkable source that we can consider comes from the debates about Chinese presence in the province that occurred in the spring of 1900, on the very eve of the killings in July 1900, and that included very different representatives of Russian settler society.

The debates themselves were the result of the initiative from the top to limit the Chinese presence. According to the logic of Nicholas II's nationalising empire, the colonial borderland was supposed to be Russified, and the Russians in the Amur province were the "bastion against the influx of the yellow race." In early 1900, Governor General Grodekov told the governors of the Amur and Maritime provinces to follow the emperor's will and introduce measures to limit the Chinese competition with Russians. In the Amur province, a commission was created with representatives from officialdom, merchants, industrialists, Cossacks, and even peasants (sic!) to discuss the role of Chinese in the region. Officially, it was named the Commission on the Question of Taxing Chinese and Koreans Who Are Arriving in Russia with Fees, and it first gathered on January 21, 1900. Chaired by Border Commissar Kolshmit, the commission explored various aspects of Chinese trade and labour.[33]

33 RGIA DV, f. 704, op. 1, d. 339, ll. 44–47.

According to the report presented by Kolshmit to the governor of the province, the commission established that in 1896, the Amur province had 16,410 Chinese and 1,531 Koreans; in 1897, 10,289 Chinese and 1,188 Koreans; and in 1898, 19,992 Chinese and 1,542 Koreans. It should be noted that in 1899, the population of the province was just over 126,000, with 38,000 people living in Blagoveshchensk. The commission pointed out that these numbers did not include Trans-Zeia Manchus "due to their special status" and that the numbers were likely lower than reality due to poor registration.[34] The commission suggested that two thirds of Chinese who arrived in the Amur province came to work at the gold industry sites, the next sizeable group was hired as agricultural labour by Cossacks and settlers, and the smallest groups worked as domestic servants, craftsmen, and traders. The income of Chinese workers was one ruble per day in agriculture and fifty kopecks per day in domestic service. Workers in the gold industry could earn 300 to 400 rubles a year selling gold at 2–2.88 rubles per *zolotnik* (4.26 grams). According to the commission's data, Chinese workers—undemanding, sober, and modest in their lifestyle—spent between fifteen and twenty-five kopecks a day to maintain themselves.[35] The commission similarly analysed the presence of Chinese businesses in the province and found that, in 1898 in Blagoveshchensk, there were 138 Chinese merchants (those with stores, as the commission was unable to count peddlers) with the volume of trade reaching 1,262,900 rubles per annum. Cossack stations housed seven Chinese stores with a volume of 38,000 rubles, and peasant settler villages housed eight Chinese stores with a volume of 18,800 rubles.[36]

The commission members, which included representatives of the trading houses Churin & Co. and Kunst & Albers, the two most important European retail companies in the region, argued that Chinese presence in commerce was undoubtedly valuable for the region. Members pointed out that the entire volume of Chinese commerce in the Amur *oblast'* was less than two million rubles, whereas Churin & Co. alone pulled 3.5 million rubles annually, which demonstrated that fears about unfair Chinese competition were groundless.[37] Participants from the gold-mining industry claimed that it was Chinese labour that made gold extraction feasible in the Amur province. In a report specifically prepared for the commission, gold industrialists claimed

34 Ibid., l. 41.
35 Ibid., ll. 42–43.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., ll. 49–52.

that, of 145 gold mining sites in the Amur mining district, 136 operated on the so called *"zolotnik* method" (when industrialists functioned essentially as buyers of gold mined by independent *arteli* of workers), and only nineteen had elements of the "master's method," where the industrialists fully supplied the workers and paid them salaries. At the *zolotnik*-method sites, in ninety percent of cases, the workers were Chinese. Accordingly, in 1899, out of 380 *puds* of gold mined in the Amur mining district, more than 230 *puds* were mined by Chinese workers. Any limits on Chinese labour, the industrialists claimed, would lead to a drastic contraction of gold mining in the region.[38] Cossack and peasant representatives, in their turn, argued that without Chinese labour, the development of agriculture was "unthinkable" and that, should Chinese labour be limited by state regulations, the amount of ploughed land would decrease by five to ten times. They argued that Cossacks currently hired about 1,200 seasonal Chinese workers and peasants hired over 2,000 of them annually. Since Russian workers demanded one and a half times as much payment and required more expensive maintenance, Chinese labour was crucial for the agriculture of the region.[39]

Overall, the commission agreed that "at the present time in a thinly populated province like the Amur the Chinese presence is useful and necessary." As the report to the governor argued, "after a series of lively discussions the commission found that […] the thinly populated Amur province receives inexpensive labour, peasants and Cossacks can work a larger amount of land, city population has a chance to find a cheap domestic worker, and the gold industry exploits larger areas and extracts more gold. Finally, in trade the Chinese lower the prices by influencing the Russian merchants due to their undemanding life."[40] The commission dismissed the arguments of P. P. Popov, a member of the mayor's administration (who would "distinguish" himself during the violence in July) who argued that the Chinese were engaging in unfair competition, misusing the free trade regime, and smuggling illegal substances across the border. In a stunning display of liberalism, A. V. Kirillov, the mayor of Blagoveshchensk, argued that "competition with the Chinese is even useful for the Russian worker as it helps develop in him those qualities that are particular to the yellow race and constitute its strengths, such as its hard-working habits, sobriety, and accuracy."[41]

38 Ibid., l. 56.
39 Ibid., l. 56.
40 Ibid., ll. 43–44.
41 Ibid., l. 45.

The commission argued as follows:

> The Chinese are the regulators of prices for the immediate life necessities which works well for the interests of the fairly numerous group of the population of the Amur province, such as employees of various state agencies, officers, clergy, physicians, and teachers […] This entire mass which in Blagoveshchensk forms a larger percentage of the population than elsewhere is no doubt interested in the cheap labour and low cost of various first necessity products since they help lower the cost of life in the province.[42]

Perhaps not surprisingly given that the commission itself was dominated primarily by state officers, this conclusion was also reflected in the commission's final request to the higher authorities. Members of the commission asked that the fees for the tickets for the right to live and work on the Russian side not be raised for the Chinese. Moreover, the commission requested that part of the proceeds from the fees be spent on organising hospitals that could treat Chinese workers.[43]

Given that the commission in Blagoveshchensk laboured practically on the eve of the eruption of mass violence against the Chinese in July of 1900, how can we explain its positive views of the Chinese and its enthusiastic endorsement of the presence of Chinese labour and commerce? Even more so, given the push from the top—from the monarch himself—to limit "the yellow race" in the Russian Far East, the commission's conclusions seemed to be especially out of sync with the discourses in Saint Petersburg. By way of conclusion, I would like to offer some suggestions as to how we can understand the violence of July 1900 in the context of the above rationalisation of the Chinese presence in the Amur province.

We can begin by noting that the commission that gathered in the winter and spring of 1900 represented the interests of particular stake-holders, who were in many ways dependent on Chinese labour. For instance, the large trading houses, such as Churin & Co and Kunst & Albers, were the last among the Russian mercantile community to feel the competition with the Chinese merchants. It was really those in small retail and craftsmen who had to compete and who often lost in competition with the Chinese merchants; it was the representatives of small retail who continuously petitioned

42 Ibid., l. 50.
43 Ibid., l. 46.

the Russian authorities to limit the presence of Chinese commerce and accused the Chinese of various transgressions. Similarly, the "peasants" invited to join the commission were not rank-and-file settlers who searched for cash jobs after arrival. For instance, A. V. Lankin, a member of the Molokan community, would have easily compared to a noble estate owner in European Russia. His landholding had 300 *desiatins* of ploughed land and twenty-two *desiatins* of fruit gardens, and he owned thirty-five horses and thirty-eight head of cattle. Lankin's estate—his official peasant status notwithstanding—hired dozens of workers annually, all of them Chinese.[44]

Most of the people who committed violence in the course of events in July 1900, on the other hand, were town dwellers, peasant settlers, Cossacks, and reservists (who were also mostly drawn from peasant settlers). Most of them likely saw Chinese workers and traders as direct competitors for jobs and markets. We know from petitions to the governor general of the Priamur Krai in 1892–1893 that a substantial number of retail merchants in the Amur region saw the Chinese as the main cause for the decline of their businesses. Their views of the Chinese presence thus differed from those held by the representatives of grand trading houses who took part in the work of the commission. Similarly, many new settlers who arrived in the Amur province in the 1890s were deeply disappointed. Expecting a limitless supply of good land, they found a region with very difficult climatic conditions and practically no good land in the vicinity of transportation routes. The land along the Amur was already allocated to the Cossacks. Described by a contemporary scholar as "the best and most desirable land in the area," the fertile steppe-like zone between the rivers Zeia and Bureia was occupied by Trans-Zeia Manchus. Newly arrived settlers either had to travel for hundreds of miles to the north or to hire themselves out to the old settlers in the hope of getting inscribed into an existing Russian peasant commune. Old settlers—wealthy landowners—preferred Chinese labourers, who demanded less in pay and moved away for the winter. It is probably not a surprise that, in 1897–1899, more peasants left the Amur province than came to settle in it.

These divisions within the Russian settler society were the products of colonial venture and generated multiple tensions. The sense of entitlement to land and state support that characterised the newly arrived settlers clashed with the realities on the ground. The eruption of hostilities during the Boxer rebellion presented an opportunity to display one's belonging to the "ruling people"—that "bastion of Russianness against the influx of the yellow race"

44 Smirnov, *Priamurskii Krai*, 103.

that Nicholas II was talking about—but also to acquire substantial material wealth. To be sure, following the eruption of violence and the ethnic cleansing of the Amur province, things got back to "normal" for almost two decades. The colonial project continued to rely on the massive supply of Chinese labour and on Chinese commerce until the revolutionary transformations of 1917 and the Civil War created an entirely new set of dispositions on Russia's colonial frontier.

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12 Afterword: Of Squids, Truffle-Hunting, and Complicated Relationships

Willard Sunderland

Rossia pacifica, also known as the stubby squid, is a humble creature. Just fifteen centimetres long, with eight pudgy tentacles, it spends most of its short life buried up to its googly eyeballs on the ocean floor waiting patiently for passing prey, mostly shrimps of one kind or another. When threatened, it emits an inky blast from a small funnel at the back of its mantle. The male and female mate just once and die soon thereafter.

In contrast to its physical tininess, however, *Rossia pacifica*'s distribution is vast, extending across much of the North Pacific, from the edges of the Sea of Japan in the east to the Bering Sea in the north and down the North American coast in the west all the way to northern California. In this sense, the squid's name is apt, for this is, indeed, the great expanse that one could describe as the "Russian Pacific," that is, that share of the greater Pacific Ocean that Russia has most influenced and that has most influenced Russia in turn.

During my time working on a Soviet fishing trawler off the coast of the northwestern US in the late 1980s, it was precisely this watery range that the fishermen and -women around me referred to as "their" Pacific, or as they put it, "*nash Tikhii okean*." (The fishing ship hailed from Nakhodka, some fifty miles north of Vladivostok.) The Russians appropriately call the squid the *Tikhookeanskaia Rossiia,* though with a stress on the "o" in *Róssiia,* pronouncing it as Ross-ee-ya to differentiate it from Rah-see-ya, the name of the state.[1]

1 The genus *Rossia* that appears in the first part of the squid's Latin name, despite sounding like "Russia," refers in fact to the British naval officers John Ross and his nephew James Clark Ross. Naturalist Richard Owen sailed with the Rosses on their Artic expedition of 1832 and named the genus in their honour two years later. For a peek at the squid, which enjoyed a moment of social media fame in 2016, click here: https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/08/20/490738084/googly-eyed-stubby-squid-captures-internets-attention.

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We rarely compare the ranges of squids and humans, but they aren't unrelated. Every animal has a territory. People have many; yet, like squids, we too gravitate to the spaces we know best. Following this logic, one way of thinking about the North Pacific is as Russia's easternmost continuance, a kind of eastern maritime addition, maybe even a maritime home.[2] The Pacific overall is not Russian, but this part of it is, or at least, Russian observers tend to imagine it as such. Beyond its territorial waters, the Russian state has no proprietary claim to this segment of the great ocean, of course; and most Russians, unlike the long-distance sailors I worked with, will never experience its awesome scale or power. Most will never even see it with their own eyes. But if they feel a connection, it's because they know that their country has a huge Pacific edge, a giant eastern littoral facing the sea. Indeed, the two domains go together. Pacific Russia—the Russia that sits along the ocean—creates the Russian Pacific—the Russia of the ocean—and vice versa. Each exists because of the other.

The origins of the relationship go back to the 1630s, when Russian Cossacks, along with their indigenous Siberian partners, reached the mouth of the Ul'ia River on the Sea of Okhotsk and established what became the first recorded Russian settlement on the Pacific—the humble outpost of Ust'-Ul'inskoe *zimov'e*. Further eastward ventures led, in time, to Kamchatka, the Kurils, the Commander and Aleutian Islands, and, by the late 1700s, to Kodiak and the Alaskan coast. Between 1804 and 1835, twenty-five Russian voyages crisscrossed the larger Pacific. In the 1810s, the Russian-American Company built forts in the Hawaiian Islands. By the 1850s, Russian navigators had charted the coasts of Sakhalin and the Tartar Strait, and over the next decade, even as Tsar Alexander II and his ministers let go of Alaska and the Aleutians with one hand, they grabbed hold of the Amur and the Ussuri with the other.[3]

Over subsequent decades, the Russians would gain and lose Pacific coastline (southern Manchuria, lost for good after the Russo-Japanese War; Sakhalin and the Kurils, lost then regained after 1945), but by the early twentieth century, the basic contours of the Pacific Russia of today were set: an

2 Though familiar in Russian-language literature, the term "North Pacific" remains less common in Western-language scholarship. On the complexities of the term, see Jones, "Running into Whales," 352; Winkler, *Seeotter*, 165–185.

3 For a selection of relevant histories, including a few "classics," see Kerner, *Urge to the Sea;* Pierce, *Eastward to Empire;* Barratt, *South Pacific;* Stepan, *Russian Far East;* Akimov, *Severnaia Amerika;* Vinkovetsky, *Russian America;* Winkler, "From Ruling People"; Douglas and Govor, "Russian Place Naming"; Bolkhovitinov (ed.), *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki;* and Miller, *Masters*. For a survey of Pacific history during the period of active Russian exploration in the early nineteenth century, see Igler, *The Great Ocean*.

enormous northeast bending arc stretching some 4,500 kilometres along the Pacific rim, split between three seas (the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the Bering Sea) and pressed up against two states (China and Korea (now North Korea)), with two more—Japan and the US—located just beyond the horizon.

This Pacific Russia is not a clearly delineated territory. Instead, it is a conceptual–physical space, a subset of the lands of Russia's vast Far Eastern Federal District, whose most obvious geographical limit is their frontage along the sea. In everyday parlance, the more common name for Pacific Russia is the Russian Far East (RFE). The latter term evokes East Asia; the former, the ocean. In truth, however, three elements—Russia, East Asia (more specifically, Northeast Asia), and the Pacific—mingle within both terms together.[4]

This ocean-hugging, Northeast Asian Russia that takes shape in the second half of the 1800s will be a bundle of contradictions. It will be a land of promise for migrants and a forbidding zone of punishment for criminals and exiles. It will be a *porto franco* open to the world and a "fortress Russia" wary of foreigners. It will drive Russia's emergence as a Pacific power and expose the country to new dangers and vulnerabilities. It will enrich some while losing millions for others (including the central treasury). It will unlock access to a stunning bounty of natural resources only to ravage this abundance in turn. As a territory of diverse peoples wedged within a competitive international neighbourhood, it will be fraught with recurrent ethnic and geopolitical tensions. As a coastal region, it will be deeply marked by the sea. Finally, for better and for worse, it will always be very far (over 6,000 kilometres) from either Moscow or Saint Petersburg, so far that when locals refer to "Russia," they will always mean that other Russia, the one on the opposite side of the map.

If the history of the region over the last century or so were a feature film, a pithy summary of the plot might go something like this: huge, undeveloped multicultural maritime frontier undergoes rapid and uneven change, at enormous cost, through alternating periods of war and domestic turmoil, with far-reaching consequences for every life form in the vicinity, including humans, tigers, pine trees, and squids. On the one hand, this dramatic transformation is a story of the absence of state power. Pacific Russia / the RFE is so

4 On the term "Northeast Asia" in academic discourse, see Narangoa and Cribb, *Northeast Asia;* and Diener, Grant, and Bennett, "Northeast Asia." Though less common than "Russian Far East," the practice of describing the region as "Pacific Russia" appears to be on the rise among Russian scholars, especially political scientists and geographers. For examples of recent titles, see Larin, "Tikhookeanskaia Rossiia;" Garusova, "Tikhookeanskaia Rossiia;" Baklanov, "Tikhookeanskaia Rossiia;" and Larin et al., *Tikhookeanskaia Rossiia*.

far from "Russia proper" and so enormous that the government never quite catches up. It regulates but can't control, promises but can't deliver. At the same time, it's also a tale of profound state intrusion, since, for all its obvious limitations, the state is more than powerful enough to wreak enormous damage. The Stalin-era gulag empire of Dal'stroi is proof of this, as is the near destruction by Soviet whalers of sperm, humpback, right, blue, and fin whale populations in the North Pacific during the 1960s and 1970s.[5]

Much of the story is also general, even universal, in its implications. At bottom, almost nothing about the historical arc of Pacific Russia is unique. The patterns that shape the region during the roughly 160 years since the founding of Vladivostok are the same ones that have left their mark on coastal zones across the world in the modern age—patterns of state-building and outsider colonisation; of the displacement, diminishment, and adaptation of indigenous cultures; of interstate competition over ports and sea lanes; of rapid technological change; of national and imperial imagining; and of environmental degradation and plunder.

That said, the essays in this book are valuable precisely because they are not general. If Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie is right and historians are either parachutists, who float high above the landscape to take in a larger view, or truffle-hunters (*truffiers*), who dig into a single patch of ground in search of special meanings, then this is a truffle-hunting collection.[6] The emphasis here is on the particular, with each essay offering a snapshot of a discrete moment or dimension of regional history. The result, upon reading the volume as a whole, is something unexpected—a view of Pacific Russia so varied and granular as to make one wonder whether, in fact, it even amounts to a coherent region. After all, what does the Anadyr district have in common with the Amur, or what do commuters in Vladivostok share with fisher folk in Kamchatka? Yet there is, indeed, a region in these pages; it's simply a complicated one, built, like all regions everywhere, out of a mesh of ambivalent yet persistent relationships with the various spaces and cultures that define and surround it, three of which stand out especially here.[7]

The first and most formative is the relationship to Russia, understood in this case as the Russia on the western side of the Ural Mountains, that

5 Shirokov, *Dal'stroi;* and Jones, *Red Leviathan*.

6 For an interview in which Le Roy Ladurie describes his famous categories, see "Grands entretiens. Paroles d'historiens: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie; Montaillou, la source de l'ouvrage."

7 On the complexities of regions in the Russian imperial context, see Sunderland [Sanderlend], "Vvedenie," 7–27.

is, European or Central Russia, or, in some contexts, simply "the mainland" (*materik*). Pacific Russia as we know it today is the product of centuries of outsider colonisation, starting most intensely in the late 1800s and then following through to the early twentieth century. European Russia is the homeland of the vast majority of the colonists, most of whom relocate via Siberia, sometimes by sea. It is only logical, then, that the connection to "Russia" would play a critical role in defining the region.

As the colonists come in, however, they never arrive alone. They bring ideas, goods, technologies, diseases, political structures, economic practices, fauna, flora; they import revolution, war, understandings of the past, visions of the future. They build, they destroy, they impose. Russia, in this sense, is the ever-influential, off-stage demiurge, the powerful hand directing and moulding the region from afar. At the same time, events that unfold in Pacific Russia, such as the fall of Port Arthur in January 1905, trigger momentous developments in the West that then return to reverberate in the Far East, and just as Ivanovo cloth, Tula gingerbread, and trainloads of soldiers from the European side of the country reach the Pacific, Chinese tea, Alaskan furs, and military convoys from the Far East leave their mark on the Volga and the Dnepr. The two sides of the state thus intertwine, and yet, at the same time, one of the abiding realities of the RFE is its palpable apparent disconnectedness from the rest of the country, its "island syndrome," the feeling one gets of it as a region apart.

The reason for this impression of separateness is distance, or more specifically, the complex "spatio-time configuration" (to quote Paul Richardson) that at once connects and separates "Russia" from the RFE and whose paradoxical effects appear in several essays here. On the one hand, distance helps define the RFE as a land of possibility, giving rise to a regional culture of innovation and relative independence from the norms of the metropole. On the other, it's a factor that also encourages less appealing practices, such as massive corruption and environmental depredation. Distance allows Jewish refugees to escape to safety from wartime Lithuania while, at the same time, exposing native societies in Chukotka to misconceived policies of social engineering imported from afar. It shapes separate histories of World War II and, flowing from this, disparate, sometimes conflicting collective memories. Finally, the huge remove and remoteness of the region stretches the writ of state authority, leading to ambiguous sovereignties. Kamchatka, for example, is so distant that the tsarist government grants Tokyo a de facto concession in 1907 that allows Japanese fishing companies to dominate the local economy. The central government will not regain exclusive control over the region until some twenty years later, during the era of the First Five-Year Plan.

The RFE's relationship to the ocean is also ambivalent, and these effects, too, run through many chapters. On the one hand, the sea resonates as a field of economic opportunity and national prowess. The alluring regional "mega-corporation" imagined by the technocrats of the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic rests on visions of a rosy future of ever-waxing shipbuilding, offshore drilling, commercial fishing, and seaborne trade, while commemorations of the Great Patriotic War in the region evoke a glorious past of island "liberations," from South Sakhalin to the Kurils; yet the ocean is also a source of threats and challenges. Long after the close of the Siberian Expedition of 1918–1922, Japanese nationalists continue to imagine Kamchatka as part of their "pelagic empire," and even as the Soviets displace Japanese fishing companies from the Bering Sea littoral in the 1930s, they have a harder time driving them off the sea itself. The ocean can also bear entirely unwanted gifts. During the early 1990s, for example, post-Soviet Vladivostok throws its doors open to world trade only to find its streets quickly clogged with tens of thousands of exhaust-belching, second-hand Toyotas and Mitsubishis. Vladivostokers want the *inomarki,* not the smog and the traffic, but they get all three.

The ocean, in other words, both giveth and taketh away, but more than anything, it abides. Always present, it ever forces responses and adaptations. The same is true of the third and arguably most recurring theme of the volume: the region's enduring reality as a borderland of diverse peoples located within a contentious international environment. The effects of this basic condition are also ambiguous. On the one hand, outsider colonisation profoundly reordered native societies, destroying the varied indigenous worlds that existed prior to the outsiders' arrival. On the other, colonisation itself gave rise to diverse "new worlds" of settlement, including concentrations, in cities such as early-twentieth-century Vladivostok and Harbin, of tens of different nationalities. Meanwhile, the proximity of foreign states and the ebb and flow of trans-border relations generates both accommodation and confrontation, rivalries and partnerships, interconnectedness and separation. In fact, the rhythms of regional life often shuttle between these opposing poles. Diversity is a constant, but its mark on the territory is multivalent and shifting.

Much as in other modern colonisation zones, racial and national violence and prejudice, as well as the destructive imposition of state power, are deeply implicated in the history of the region. It is, therefore, no surprise that their traces appear across the essays here, most obviously in the case of Russian settlers, who massacred Chinese migrant workers on the Amur in 1900; Chinese merchants in Manchuria, who denounced the Russians for both their

colonialism and their "toxic rubles" in 1919; and Soviet state planners, who forcibly displaced Chukchi and Yupik villagers in the name of collectivisation and industrialisation in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet members of different groups, including all the groups above, also cooperate, collaborate, intermingle, and intermarry, and their many interactions, even the occasionally unforgiving violence and prejudice between them, are proof of a changing yet continuous entanglement.

In fact, one of the revelations of the volume is not so much that the entanglements vary from the benign to the horrific—since this is to be expected—but that their history is so particular, defined by the changing politics of identity and, perhaps even more, by the shifting circumstances of time and place. In Kamchatka in the early 1900s, for example, Kamchadal fishers and seal-hunters seem to agree that they prefer working for the Japanese rather than the Russians and adjust their practices accordingly, alarming tsarist authorities. Similarly, Chinese merchants in Manchuria during the upheaval of the Russian Revolution watch the volatility of the ruble eat away at their profits and actively lobby the Republic of China's government to replace Russian money with the Chinese dayang. In each case, cross-cultural entanglements are part of the normalcy of everyday life, and as such, they are uncontroversial, unremarkable, to be expected. Yet the unspoken rules that structure these entanglements are conditional, subject to the pressures of *force majeure* developments such as the Russian Revolution or the Boxer Rebellion as well as smaller-scale and less momentous shifts in individual and communal attitudes and practices.

What, then, are we to take away from these varied perspectives on the past and present of Russia's far eastern extremity? The editors tellingly describe "Russia's North Pacific" as a "moving target." As they note, given its amorphous boundaries and changing meanings over time, the region is hard to pin down as a well-defined space and inevitably looks different when approached from different points of view. In his thoughtful introduction to the volume, Paul Richardson seems to agree, describing the region evocatively—and somewhat beguilingly—as "the end and the beginning of Russia."

Of course, one might assume that a volume like this would deliver a more precise characterisation of the region and its meanings, something more fixed, more cut-and-dried. Yet to my mind, the hard-to-define-ness is entirely to be expected. Most regions have something untidy about them because, like nations and other real-yet-imagined geospatial and cultural categories, they are the product of a complex combination of physical and imagined characteristics and relationships that can't help but tug in different directions. And this is very much the case here. Distant in the eyes of many outsiders, huge, diverse,

and contested, Pacific Russia/the RFE is both of Russia and a place apart, at once of Northeast Asia and not quite Asian, and simultaneously bound to the immensity of the North Pacific before it as well as to the vastness of Eurasia behind. The deeply researched essays in this book fill the gap between these seemingly contradictory postulates, offering a detailed view of finite historical moments and the varied, discrete relationships of politics, society, culture, and economics that lend the region its meaning and coherence.

The Russian equivalent of "Rome wasn't built in a day" is "Moscow wasn't built in an instant" (*Moskva ne srazu stroilas'*). The same can be said of Pacific Russia. The complexity of the region, its regionality, by which I mean the distinctive qualities that eventually coalesce to make it into a region, accrue over time through the layering and re-layering of relationships between outsiders and native peoples, first migrants and later ones, Russians and foreigners, old states and new political forms, and between human societies and their physical environments, including the watery realm of the humble stubby squid.

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