

Japanese - Russian Dispute about South Kuril Islands: The Enemy State Clause

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The Speaker of the Russian Lower House of Parliament (Duma), Sergey Naryshkin told the press that the Japanese - Russian dispute over the South Kuril Islands should not become an irritant in Japanese - Russian relations. Neither Russian nor Japanese politicians are touching the taboo issue. Japan, Germany and Italy are still designated as enemy states to the UN. Japan and Russia are not playing on a level playing field.

✘ After his visit to Japan the Russian State Duma Speaker Naryshkin noted that the status of the South Kuril Islands is “always present on the agenda of meetings” between Tokyo and Moscow.

Naryshkin added that considering the Kuril Islands as “pretext for Russian territorial claims” than the issue will only become an irritant and obstacle to developing cooperation in other spheres. Naryshkin added that Russia is always willing to discuss sensitive issues, even a peace treaty with Japan, provided that it would be done with mutual respect.

Russia occupied the South Kuril Islands and, for all practical intents and purposes annexed the Islands in the same fashion in which large swaps of Germany were annexed by Poland and Russia after WW II.

Moscow’s openness to discuss “sensitive issues, even a peace treaty brings to mind that Germany still has no peace treaty either”; A fact that prevents Germans from voting about a constitution and a fact that maintains the de-facto subjugation of Germany to Washington and London / NATO.

Moreover, the Charter of the United Nations still designates Japan, Italy and Germany as “enemy states to the UN”. In legal terms this means that “any UN member” can launch a “preemptive military strike or occupation” of these three countries at any time, without the need for a declaration of war. A “peace treaty” between Russia and Japan would not change that fact.

Japanese - Russian relations could, arguably, become far more positive if Russia took the initiative to actually level the playing field by actively taking steps to finally remove the enemy state clause from the Charter of the United Nations. The resistance against US bases in Japan is growing, and Moscow would, arguably, commit a strategic blunder by not assuring that Japan regains its full sovereignty as UN member. The move would, definitely, also improve Russian - German relations and weaken Washington’s and London’s sway over Germany and, by implication, over the EU.

Arguably, any one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council who took it upon themselves to carve the world up in hegemonic zones will have the advantage by gaining the sympathy, trust and cooperation of those States that, 70 years after WW II, still face the threat of being attacked or occupied in the case of a real or fabricated threat, without a declaration of war.

Japanese – Russian relations could, indeed, become far more fruitful if it was Russia that took the initiative. A peace treaty between Tokyo and Moscow is, arguably worth as much as the 2+4 treaty about Germany. It has not returned sovereignty to Germany and its people.

Peace treaties are a step in the right direction but a world that is based on victor's justice and victor's privileges to launch undeclared, preemptive wars of aggression will not help solve the dispute about the South Kuril Islands nor will it help to bring about a just, actual, enforceable, international system of law with equal standing before the law. Negotiations are most functional when they are being held between co-equals.

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