

**Lecture 7:****SIBERIA, THE RUSSIAN FAR-EAST,  
AND THE "FUTURE LAND"****Topics -**

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**1. Early Russian Expansion into Siberia**

The theme for this week is **Siberia, Russia, and Far-East Relations**. We have already seen that Russia, Central Asia and Northeast Asia operate as an integrated **security system**, and to some extent as an **interlocked economic zone**. A brief note on terminology is required. The West tends to use the term Siberia for all of Russian territory east of the Ural Mountains and north of Central Asia, but Soviet and **Russian terminology usually speaks of three zones**. **West Siberia** is just east of the Urals, **East Siberia** includes much of the central Siberian plateau and the southern region around Lake Baikal, and the **Russian Far East** includes the Pacific coastline and the main peninsulas to the north east. I will use either the term Siberia to include all of these three regions, or speak of them separately as West Siberia, East Siberia, and the Russian Far East.

The first thing to note about this region is its **huge scale**: the entire region has an area of 13 million square kilometres, or one and a half times the size of the U.S.: the Far East sector alone is almost the size of Australia. The second factor to note is that though the southern regions do have sectors of temperate climate, most of Siberia is extremely cold, with much of the ground frozen in winter (in the north as permafrost), and turning into marshes and swampy land in summer. The Pacific coast-line is more temperate, but suffers from regular gale-force winds, as well as geo-tectonic and geothermal instability, earthquakes and tremors (Shaw 1987). For these reasons '**Pacific Russia**' cannot be considered comparable to California, and conditions are harsher than those found in British Columbia (Shaw 1987, p32).

As we saw in Week 2, **Russian expansion was driven eastward by several factors**, including **access to new material and resources** for an expanding population, as well as the **need to control a dangerous eastern frontier** from which numerous groups might have challenged the existence of the early Russian kingdom. Furthermore, as Russia expanded westward and became more deeply involved in European affairs, the

resources of the steppes, of the Ural Mountains, then of Siberia and Central Asia became extremely useful in **building up the power of the Russian state**.

Siberia was an important resource very early in this process, with the lucrative **fur trade** drawing Russian trappers and explorers further and further east as hunting regions became over-exploited. From the 1580s this was extended deeper into Siberia by a major company run by the influential Stroganov family, while in turn English merchants would export furs from the northern city of Archangel (McNeill & McNeill 2003, p174) During the 15-16th centuries, furs became one of the main exchange bases of the Russian economy with the state receiving 7-10% of revenues (Brobrick 1992, p68; McNeill & McNeill 2003, p175), and thus by the 17th century came to account for more than 10% of resources going into the state treasury (Brobrick 1992, p72). Alongside the Silk Road through Central Asia, there soon emerged a **Great Sable Road** linking the Far East via South Siberia to Byzantium (Brobrick 1992, p68), later Istanbul, as well as to Eastern Europe. Today, in **energy politics**, the region remains a crucial basis for the empowerment of the modern Russian state (see below).

Fur also had a role to play in **control of the native populations** east of the Ural Mountains. Alongside the blockhouses built for security purposes, the main method of control of the vast regions of the east was the imposition of the *yasak*, or **fur tribute**, whereby all native peoples were expected to produce a certain number of furs for the state treasury, thereby declaring their loyalty to the Russian head of state, the Tsar. This system had originally been imposed on the Slavs by the conquering Mongols during the 13th century. Now in turn it was imposed on Mongol and Tartar groups in southern Siberia (Brobrick 1992, p69; it must be remembered that Tartar raiders burned Moscow as late as 1571, Stephan 1992, p496),<sup>1</sup> and later on to more remote tribes in the north. By 1582 the Russian had attacked the Khanate of *Sibir*, opening up routes into Siberia in earnest (Wood 1987a, p36). The **Cossack leader Yermak** was involved in these activities, as well as in early probes east of the Ural mountains (Rasputin 1996, pp41-43).

The **treatment of native peoples was harsh and exploitative**: if they resisted the use of hostages and the punitive burning of villages were common methods of intimidation, (Brobrick 1992, p69; Wood 1987a, p45). However, this system had one advantage over the American reservation situation. It **left large remnants of the native peoples continuously on their traditional lands**, allowing them some continuing contact with their subsistence economic system, including fisheries and reindeer husbandry (Mandel 1985; Sobanski 2001; Schurr 2002). Although these lands have since become **exploited by Moscow, with ongoing environmental problems** damaging fisheries. Large dam projects and oil extraction has disturbed some of these homeland areas, though has been a limited effort to redress some of these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Tartar has been used in two senses. In a specific sense it refers to particular groups found associated with the Mongol expansion into Russian territories: it was also the term used loosely by Russians and European for invaders from the East. However, specific Tartar ethnic groups were found in the Crimea, in Kazan, and earlier on in parts of Mongolia. For Russian attitudes such groups, see Lowe 2000.

One of the key groups involved in the exploration and conquest of Siberia were the **Cossacks**, who often moved out ahead of official Russian government control. The Cossacks were a special group in Russian history: -

Cossack . . . is a Tatar word that translates as daredevil, bold spirit, someone who has severed ties with his social class. The Cossacks arose in Rus shortly after the Tartar yoke was thrown off and became a distinct group during the sixteenth century, when the Russian people were increasingly subject to feudalism and serfdom. Those who did not want to endure any sort of yoke, including a paternal one, fled to the White Field – the lower reaches of the Don and Volga Rivers – where they founded their own settlements, elected chieftains called atamans, established laws, and began a free new life that was not subordinate to any khanate or czardom. Later on the Russian Cossacks were still forced to submit to the czar's rule . . . (Rasputin 1996, pp37-38).

### Autonomous Areas in Russia



*'Autonomous' regions within the Russian Federation, 1996 (Map Courtesy PCL Map Library)*

Furthermore, in Siberia there was **considerable intermarriage between natives and Russians or Cossacks**, and from the 19th century native leaders were often integrated into the local administration (Wood 1987a, p46). It should also be noted that the institution of serfdom (there were perhaps a total of 35 million serfs, private and state-controlled, circa 1797, McNeill & McNeill 2003, p255) strongly used in Siberia - indeed, many Russians who migrated into Siberia were themselves liberated serfs who became peasant farmers. Early plans to set up some kind of slave-based economy also failed. These indigenous autonomous Republics, e.g. Yakutia, which though having a sizeable group of Russian ethnic citizens, were in the last decade able to **claim some financial independence from Moscow, though President Putin has sought to re-establish strong central control** of policies directed (see below).

At first powerful noble families, such as the merchant family of the Stroganovs, developed the Ural Mountains and provided the finance for expeditions into Siberia (Wood 1987a, p38). The first groups to penetrate all the way to the Far East were **Cossacks** led by Poyarkov and Khabarov during the 1640s and 1650s (Stephan 1992, p487). Although the Cossacks were often at the forefront of this expansion, and often the harshest in their raids against the natives, they were also **deeply affected by the new life they found in the east:** -

Even as the natives gave way, for example, the Cossacks found they often had to adopt native ways to survive. They emulated the manner of their encampments, native forms of shelter and dress, and their techniques of hunting and tracking game under local conditions, which they developed from experience over hundreds of years. The Russians, in short, had to become expert in wilderness survival, at which the peoples they subdued were already adept. (Brobrick 1992, p120).

The speed of Russian penetration into West and East Siberia can be demonstrated by **the founding dates of the future cities of the region:** 'Tyumen (1586), Tobolsk (1587), Mangazeya (1601), Tomsk (1604), Yeniseisk (1619), Bratsk (1631), Yakutsk (1632), Okhotsk (1647) and Irkutsk (1661)' (Wood 1987a, p39).

## **2. Farmers, Exiles and Dreamers**

Siberia is often conceived of in the Western imagination as a place of Tsarist exiles and then huge **GULAGS** (= GULag, Russian initials for Main Prison-Camp Administration, Wood 1987a, p51) or concentration camps created by the Soviet state from the 1930s through the 1950s. Although both were sources of labour in Siberia, in fact both systems never accounted for more than 10% of the total population of Siberia (only 6% in the 19th century, Wood 1987a, p48), which was mainly settled along its southern zone by **free Russian emigrants**, and later on by a wide and diverse group of Soviet citizens, including Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Armenians, Tartars, and Koreans.

The **exile system**, however, had been widely used by the Tsarist government to remove criminals, political prisoners and the unemployed (in fact all troublesome elements) from European Russia (Wood 1987a, p44). One of the few positive aspects of this policy, aside from aiding Russian expansion in the east, was that it reduced the use of capital punishment (Wood 1987a, p49). At the beginning of the 19th century only 2,000 exiles were sent each year, but by the end of the century this had risen to 19,000 a year - altogether **more than 1 million exiles were sent out during the 19<sup>th</sup> century** (Brobrick 1992, pp272-286).

This rugged new environment, with its great opportunities and great dangers created its own kind of **frontier mentality**, just as some thinkers suggest occurred on the American frontier (Rasputin 1996, p48). Although conditions were harsh, central control from Moscow or St Petersburg was always slow, and police and administrators were very thin on the ground. Many people found Siberia a land 'of escape and freedom from the constraints of serfdom, officialdom and religious persecution' (Wood 1987a, p51). As a result, Siberians gained a reputation for civility, independence, and a growing trend towards a democratic way of life (Brobrick 1992,

p348). These trends have left a strong impact on the social culture of modern Siberians which is only being eroded now under the impact of adjusting to a capitalist Russia (Rasputin 1996, pp50-56). Likewise, there has been **considerable religious diversity** in Siberia, tending towards a less general adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church (leading to persecution of groups such as the 'Old Believers' in Tsarist times), and more recently to state effort to control new religions or revivals in the 1990s (see Filatov & Uzzell 2000).

In this environment, intellectuals and political prisoners from 1864 began to dream of independence for Siberia, even of a United States of Siberia, and created the *oblastnichestvo*, or **Siberian regionalist movement** (Brobrick 1992, p348, p348; Wood 1987a, p54). There was even an abortive uprising of 'Polish political exiles around the shores of Lake Baikal' (Wood 1987a, p54). Ironically, Siberian born Grigory Potanin would find himself exiled to the north of European Russia for supporting the idea of Siberian autonomy (Brobrick 1992, p307; Stephan 1992, p498). Before Russia discarded her Alaskan, Aleutian and Californian interests, Russian pioneers during the period 1849-60 acquired the Amur region, and even dreamt of the creation of a United States of Siberia and America (Stephan 1992, p498). In the post-1992 period there have been **some calls for greater economic autonomy** in the Far East, though this has been moderated by the need for ongoing private and state investment into the region (see below).

In spite of these flows of diverse settlers, we should not dismiss the **indigenous peoples of Siberia**. Though they found themselves soon outnumbered by Russian emigrants (they comprise only 4% of total Siberian population, Wood 1987a, p47), many tribal groups managed to continue elements of their independent and/or nomadic life down into the 20th century. This was the case of the **Koryaks**, with their large herds of reindeer (Brobrick 1992, p324). We can sense some of their independence of thought from a story of their encounter with an American expedition early this century. An American Major on an expedition tried to impress them with tales of his wealth and power. 'The old Koryak . . . listened . . . without moving a muscle of his face; but finally, when the interpreter had finished, he rose slowly, walked up to the Major with imperturbable gravity, and with the most benignant and patronising condescension, patted him softly on the head.' (Brobrick 1992, p324).

Likewise, the **Buryats (near Lake Baikal)** managed to keep their **Buddhist religion** though most of the non-Moslems of Siberia eventually converted to Christianity. As noted by Brobrick ". . . the Buryats were swept during the eighteenth century by a Buddhist revival generated by missionaries from Mongolia and Tibet. The monastic temples of the lamas (or priests) were known as *datsans*, or lamaseries, where the sacred white elephant was worshipped, . . . . In the early nineteenth century, the great lamasery at Goose Lake, with its Sino-Tibetan architecture, lama orchestra, images, and so on, was an exotic tourist attraction. Located near Selenginsk (a garrison town founded in 1666 on the far side of Lake Baikal), it had an impressively large library of sacred books, and was the residence of the Grand Lama of Eastern Siberia." (Brobrick 1992, p326).

Other **important groups** include the Chukchi in the north-east, the Mansi and Khanty peoples, as well as the Evenk, Tuvan, Nenets, Nanay, Nivkhi, Komi and Selkup groups (see Mandel 1985; Sobanski 2001). The Nivkhi and Yakut peoples have been particularly active in pressing claims for **regional cultural control**, and for improved environmental standards (*TED* 1996a & 1996b). The Khanty, however, have had a much harder time in asserting consistent claims to their oil-rich land, even though land documents were given out to some of them (*Ecologist* 2000). In fact, in spite of Russian ethnic dominance, Siberia came to include Ukrainian, Korean, Chinese, European, Central Asian, and for a time, Japanese minorities. Along with indigenous groups like the Chukchi (who during the early 20th century might speak English rather than Russian and sometimes sent their children to American schools in Alaska), this resulted in a rather **cosmopolitan flavour to the Far East** during the early 20th century (Stephan 1992, p498, Stephan 1987, p217). We can also sense this in the Republic of Sakha (previously known as Yakutia), which is situated in the north-east of the Russian Federation and 'is the biggest region and occupies one fifth of the total territory of Russia' Over the last decades mining industries have begun to change the demographics, with the Yakut group being around 38.88% in 1996 and some Russian out-migration leading to a drop down to 46.8% (Argounova 2000).

From the international relations point of view, one of the most interesting peoples in the Arctic region are the **Inuit people**, who live in the most remote parts of north-east Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. After serious declines in population and self-rule under the impact of Europeans, they have in recent decades begun to rebuild their cultures and their economic bases. They have recently made successful **claims for partial autonomy or at least shared control of Arctic resources** (in Canada, Alaska and Greenland, to a much lesser extent in Russia), and have created their own international organisation for shared help and information across national borders, the **Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)**, which has an ongoing role in sharing and promoting Inuit views (see Mastny 2000). Likewise, there has been a trend for indigenous groups around the world to share (via Internet communications) approaches to land and resources rights, and ways to challenge both government and corporate interests (see Colchester 2005). This would also form some **partial protection of the environment through traditional patterns of land usage**, and limited resource extraction, e.g. the **creation of a nature reserves** by indigenous leaders in Altai region of Siberia including the Karakol Ethnic-Nature Park as well as the Chui-Uzy, Argut, and Katun nature parks, though new land-laws from Moscow could undermine this process (Cutting 2005). More recently, the Inuit have also become intensely involved in the **debate over global warming, and the impact of any further break up of the Arctic ice sheets**: -

. . . global and regional cooperation are key features in development strategies for promoting sustainable development in the Arctic.

For those of you not familiar with the Arctic Council it is a high level Ministerial forum for dialogue among the Arctic States including Canada, the U.S.A - which includes Alaska - Russia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark (which includes Greenland and the Faroe Islands), and Iceland. What makes the structure and membership of this international forum unique - is that indigenous peoples play a full role at all levels of the Arctic Council. The Council is also made up of northern indigenous peoples from each of these Countries including Inuit from Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Russian

Siberia, as well as Dene, Gwich'in, Saami from Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia, and other indigenous peoples from Russian Siberia. Global and regional cooperation are of paramount importance to this Forum.

Take, for example, the emerging controversies over sovereignty in Arctic waters, with predictions of an ice-free Northwest Passage conjuring up images of a shipping free-for-all.

Canadian sovereignty over Arctic islands and waters rests very heavily on the unbroken history of Inuit use and occupation. Yet to date, the discussions pay little attention to the views or potential contribution of the Canadians who actually make up a large part of the Arctic; the Inuit.

Inuit have much at stake in these debates. Internationalization of the Archipelago could mean a reduction and even collapse of Canada's ability to ensure safe and efficient Arctic navigation upon which northern communities depend. The Inuit homeland could be opened to a new risk of under-regulated tanker traffic and therefore pollution.

The legal and political reliability of various land claims provisions dealing with the rights and responsibilities of the Crown and Inuit to co-manage lands and waters could be compromised.

Next on my list is human capital. Northern demographics have been described as a 'ticking time bomb'. Over 55% of the Inuit population is under the age of 25. (Simon 2007)

In Soviet Russia, the Inuit and Chukchi, found largely in the remote Chukotka region near the Bering Sea, were forced to settle into villages, and were integrated into employment schemes in fisheries and reindeer farms. However, **after 1992 they were struck by a great reduction in investment in the region** from 2% of GDP down to 0.1% and a population decline from 185,000 to 85,000 on Chukotka, as well as by pollution problems and growing evidence of climate change (Mastny 2000). Likewise, many indigenous groups in remote regions have **major problems in maintaining their language and culture**, e.g. the Selkups in Tomsk province (Sobanski 2001). The **languages, and numbers, of more than 41 indigenous groups** (e.g. the 'Saami, the Nganasan, the Itelmen, the Ulchi and the Tuvianian Todzhins') in Siberia and the Far East are in **serious decline** as young people move into towns and are influenced by Russian education dominance (Arnold 2007). More generally, finding regular employment in remote areas remains highly problematic, with traditional hunting, farming and herding unable to generate strong regular wages (see Sobanski 2001).

### **3. Imperialism - Early Relations with the East**

By 1650, small groups of Russians had penetrated most of Middle and Eastern Siberia, and reached the south part of the Far East, at last reaching the **Amur River**, known to the Chinese as the Black Dragon River, which the Chinese administration claimed as their own territory (Brobrick 1992, pp81-3). Early conflicts occurred over control of land in the Amur region (the Russians had seized territory on some of the northern inland stretches of the river), as well as on Russian rights to trade with China.

There were certain ironies and **misunderstandings** in this period. The Russians had developed some knowledge of China via Mongolia, but had no reserve of Chinese linguists. The situation in the early 17th century is described by Benson Brobrick: -

They <The Russians> also knew that the Chinese had an appetite for such luxury goods as satins, velvets, and silks, wore gold and silver, and cultivated fields of wheat, barley, and oats. In pursuit of the commercial bounty that might flow from relations with such a highly developed state, Ivan Petlin, Russia's first envoy to China in 1618, had returned with a letter of invitation to trade. But unfortunately the Russians were unable to find anyone able to translate it until 1675! That lapse in linguistic competence within the Russian foreign service had such drastic consequences for their later relations that seldom has the lack of a little academic knowledge means so much. For even as hostilities arose, the negotiation of a bilateral trade agreement - the Kremlin's original objective - remained the principle motive behind Russia's bellicose acts (Brobrick 1992, pp83-4).

For their part, the **Chinese claimed control of large parts of Mongolia and southern Siberia via tribute relations**, but soon adapted their policies to the fact that they had little ability to project power far into the north. After conflicts over control of the Amur River proved costly to both sides, talks were held in Selengisk, in 1687, with protocol according equal status to both sides (Brobrick 1992, p90-2). This led to the **first treaty** with a European power by China, made in August 27, 1689. This was **not an unequal treaty**, with Benson Brobrick suggesting that the Chinese came out slightly better in the terms than the Russians (Brobrick 1992, p93). The Russian lost control of the mouth of the Amur River, but de facto recognition was given to their presence in the Far East as well as control of the Buryat people of Transbaikal (Brobrick 1992, p94; see lecture 5). The treaty was also successful in **allowing 170 years of peace between these two great empires, as well as in promoting extensive trade** (Brobrick 1992, pp94-5). Russians exchanged furs for imports of silk, gems, gold, silver, porcelain and tea (Brobrick 1992, p221). Early Russia-China trade would structure the nature of ethnic contacts in parts of Siberia, as well as develop Nerchinsk as a major Siberian entrepot (see Stolberg 2000).

**Russian relations would become more negative with China in the second half of the 19th century**, when the weakness of the Manchurian dynasty (Seagrave 1992) encouraged both Russian and Japanese interests to expand into Manchuria and Korea. **The Russians from this time on also began to fortify the coast of Siberia**, with the region between the Ussuri River and the Pacific Ocean down to the coast of Korea being ceded to them by the Chinese (This was in return for the successful mediation between the aggressive British and French stance over the siege of their embassies in Beijing, Brobrick 1992, p2610. In 1860 the Russians founded the port city of **Vladivostok, whose name literally means the Lord of the East**. Thereafter, **Russia sought to gain access to Manchurian resources along the North China railway** which branched off from the Trans-Siberian railway. The significance of these financial interests made it an issue of international concern: -

To the south, Manchuria (China's northernmost province) emerged as a "rich economic and strategic prize." It had the ice-free ports of Port Arthur and Talienwan, which the Japanese had almost gained, but also gold, iron, and coal, grasslands with thriving cattle, and a fertile soil. By means of the proposed railway (which would shorten the Trans-Siberian by 350 miles) Russia therefore began the takeover of Manchuria "by commercial subterfuge." Having appeared (in conjunction with

Germany and France) to defend Chinese territorial integrity, Russia now offered Peking a loan towards the payment of its indemnity obligations (which it was too impoverished to meet without outside help) in return for a railway concession through northern Manchuria 900 miles to Vladivostok. This concession, however, which included the right to secure and defend the railway with armed guards, was not granted directly to the Russian government but to the Russo-Chinese Bank . . . (Brobrick 1992, pp360-1)

However, this strengthening of the Russian position in the Far East would have the result of encouraging a British-Japanese agreement to limit Russian expansion (Brobrick 1992, p365). **Britain, fearful of a Russian Great Game of Eurasian domination, tried to contain Russian influence in Northeast Asia.**

**Russia, following the American lead, had tried to force the Japanese to open their doors to trade.** In 1855 the Japanese signed the Treaty of Shimoda, which opened several ports to the Russians, recognised the equal division of the Kuril Islands (later disputed), and the joint possession of Sakhalin (Brobrick 1992, p260). From 1859, continuing **Russian-Japanese disputes** over the effective administration of Sakhalin led to an exchange in 1875 whereby Russia took all of Sakhalin, while Japan received control of all the Kuril Islands. Thus 'the Japanese repossessed a group of islands they regarded as their own, thus delaying a dangerous confrontation with a mightier power, and gaining time in which to find their own direction and strength' (Brobrick 1992, p261). Japanese fears were further heightened by Russian 'adventurers' seeking timber concessions on the Yalu River in north Korea (Brobrick 1992, p366).

Likewise, **Russia for a time expanded her fur and trading interests into Alaska and down the Pacific American coast** as far as northern California, but by 1825 realised that she had dangerously **over-reached herself**, and risked conflict with both the British and the Americans in the north Pacific. She gave up her Californian interests in the 1840s, and in 1867 sold Alaska to the United States for \$7.2 million (2 cents an acre), partly to create a buffer against British interests in Canada (Brobrick 1992, p265).

By the late 19th century Siberia as a whole came to be viewed as more than a ready resource of furs and a threatened border which needed protection. From 1891-1905, with the building of the **Trans-Siberian Railway**, Russia seriously began to conceive of **Siberia as an integrated part of her economy** and of her geopolitical global quest for power. Just as the Russians had seen the United States become a two-ocean country, **Russia began to conceive of itself having a unique European and Asian role.**

However, the building of the Trans-Siberian railway also had direct **strategic implications for the Japanese**, who feared an immediate Russian build up in the far east (Brobrick 1992, p359; Dziewanowski 1989). These and other tensions (noted above) led to the outbreak of **war between Russia and Japan (1904-1905)**, with the Japanese launching a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur on February 8, 1904 (Brobrick 1992, p372). The result was a rush to complete the Trans-Siberian railway, with some 300,00 Russian troops conveyed to the Far East in 1905 (Brobrick 1992, p373). The Russians may have viewed a victory in this war as a matter of

maintaining international prestige as well as protecting regional interests in the Far East.

**However, the Japanese quickly gained control of the sea, and achieved sizeable victories in southern Manchuria.** After notable naval victories, the Japanese, fearing a war of attrition in which Russian reinforcements along the Trans-Siberian would soon tip the odds against them, led to an acceptance of U.S. mediation led by President Theodore Roosevelt (for which he won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1906). A treaty was signed September 1905 (Treaty of Portsmouth) which recognised Japanese control of Korea, the Liaotung Peninsula and the southern half of Sakhalin Island in return for dominant Russian influence in northern Manchuria (Brobrick 1992, p374). This war **showed that an industrialised Asian nation could defeat a powerful western state.** Thereafter, secret agreements between Japan and Russia in 1907, 1910 and 1912 allowed the Japanese influence in southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, with Russians claiming influence in northern Manchuria, outer Mongolia and Xinjiang (Brobrick 1992, p374). The Russians and Japanese formed a short-lived alliance in 1916, and **in 1941 signed the Soviet-Japanese Non-aggression Pact** (Stephan 1992, p494).

Meanwhile, the **Russians refortified Vladivostok** with heavy artillery and garrisoned the East Siberia and the Far East with some 200,000 men (Brobrick 1992, p376). Some 7 million Russian peasants **migrated** into the southern fertile areas of Siberia between 1823 and 1914 (Brobrick 1992, p380; Wood 1987a, pp52-3), many of them ex-serfs. For this reason ethnic Russians came to form 86% of the Siberian population (Brobrick 1992, p380).

The **Bolshevik takeover in 1917** did not result in direct control of the Far East until 1922 - after the end of the Civil War and the intervention of foreign troops, including Japanese forces, which retained 300,000 men in the Amur region down to 1922, and a large presence on Sakhalin Island down to 1925 (Stephan 1992, p496). During this interim period, the Bolsheviks recognized that they could not effectively control events in the east from Moscow, and created an independent Far East Republic government, a factor which has also fed into the Siberian sense of independence from the centre. In this period the Far Eastern Republic had independent missions in China, Japan and the United States, and in the 1930s Far Eastern leaders came to have massive power in the USSR, including high officials in the party, army, navy and security services, a fact which Stalin distrusted (Stephan 1992, p491, p500) and soon solved (by purging many of them, especially in the great purge of the army after 1937). After **1932 Stalin also took severe measures to seal the borders of the Soviet Union** - a control zone several miles in width with free fire zones was created, while 25% of the KGB special border guards were used to patrol the Far Eastern borders (Stephan 1992, p497). Likewise, Stalin was quite happy to move minorities if he thought they might fraternise with those across the border: in 1937, a total 250,000 Soviet Koreans were moved from the Far East to be resettled in Central Asia (Stephan 1987, p220).

**Military concerns over borders continued down to the late 1980s.** Sensitivity over air space in the region was demonstrated by the shooting down of a South Korean Airliner which had strayed over Sakhalin Island in 1983. The airline was probably

mistaken for a U.S. surveillance plane. Since that time, air controllers in the Russian Far East have been tied into civil air administration system of the north Pacific (Stephan 1987, p223). **Most remaining border disputes with China were solved by the 1996-1998 period, though tensions continue over Chinese economic penetration of the Russian Far East** (see lecture 6). Thus, **Chinese enclaves** exist within Siberia, but are not well integrated into local communities, e.g. within Vladivostok (for efforts to reduce tensions, see Malpas 2003). Likewise, **Koreans** remain in large numbers (up to 80,000, with a further 10,000 on work contracts), and may be a source of labour and large-scale immigration in the future as Siberia needs to increase its workforce, a possibility encouraged by the governor of Primorye region from late 2003 who said up to 200,000 North Korean refugees (some living 'clandestinely in northern China' might be accepted, though this might alarm Moscow (Brooke 2003).

#### **4. Reserve, Resources and Bastion**

Stalin was deeply afraid of the prospect of a war on two fronts, against Germany in the west and Japan in the east. As a result he was forced to allow a **massive build up of forces in the Far East between 1931-1941** (Stephan 1992, p488; Erickson 1987, pp178-181). Aside from brief clashes in 1938, in which the Japanese suffered massive losses, this policy indeed stopped Japanese expansion into Russian territory during World War II.

**The strategic importance of Siberia became evident once Germany invaded The Soviet Union in 1941.** As the German War machine smashed through much of Belorussia, through the Ukraine and into the Caucasus, the Soviets moved much of industry eastwards past the Urals, creating a **huge build-up of industry in West Siberia**. More than 300 entire enterprises and factories were moved eastward, creating a huge industrial base, e.g. 59,000 fighter planes were built in Siberia during the war (Wood 1987a, p57). Unfortunately, this trend of regional industry and manufacturing did not continue after the end of World War II, with the exception of specialised military manufactures, which came to dominate the local economy.

At the same time, it was during this period that the true **economic resources of Siberia** became apparent (Shaw 1987). Siberia resource estimates show that it remains one of the **main reserve resource areas globally** through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries: -

\* Enormous reserves of **oil** (over 80% of Russian reserves, see Wilson 1987), with two thirds of all Russian oil production coming from Siberia in the mid-1990s (Kryukov 1996). Through 2002, major projects have been planned for exporting this oil via pipelines, including major projects that would supply northeast China, or more in the long term a possible pipeline down the Korean peninsula (see Spector 2001). At present, a feasibility studies are looking at plans for a \$1.7 billion pipeline that would take oil direct from east Siberia into northeast China, possibly boosting bilateral trade to \$35 billion over a six year period (*Pipeline & Gas Journal* 2002). Alternative proposals, suggested by Russian state-owned pipeline company Transneft, suggest a pipeline eastwards from Siberia onto the Pacific Ocean, then by tanker to several East Asian markets, with a total project cost of around US\$4.5

billion, but high export capacities (900,000 bpd) (*Pipeline & Gas Journal* 2002). As we saw in week 1, major debates have emerged about whether to route major pipelines from east Siberia into North China, or first route them eastwards onto the Pacific with more direct access to Japan (see *Strategic Comments* 2003a). Through 2004-2005 **Russia was leaning towards the Japanese proposal**, with pipelines to reach Nakhodka (*Kyodo News* 2004a; Giragosian 2006). This seems to be part of a wider energy diplomacy **that would bypass sovereignty disputes through a new energy policy** that would make **Japan and Russia partners** in a wider Asia-Pacific energy supply 2006 (*Strategic Comments* 2003b) network, with pipeline construction in the Russian Far East continuing through early 2006. By late 2006 Putin had confirmed that **both the Chinese and Japan projects would proceed**, though there may be delays until 2008 until proven reserves can support enough supply into the Pacific (Moscow Times 2007).

\* Enormous reserves of **gas** (over 90% of Russian reserves, though this may be influenced by new gas discoveries in the Arctic region), with **Siberia now set to be a major source of gas for northern China, the Koreas, and Japan**. From 2004 Gazprom has been negotiating with South Korea for gas exports, with a future program being designed that 'envisages creating a single system of gas production and transportation in Eastern Siberia and Far East' (*Business CustomWire* 2004a)

\* Large **coal resources**, of varying quality, some used for export, some for the production of electrical power (90% of Russian reserves).

\* Main sources of **gold**, with resources in the remote Chukchi Peninsula being developed from the 1960s onwards (Louis 1992, p29).

\* Considerable **diamond** sources (representing 21-29% of world diamond production during the 1980s, Chon 1989, p1178)

\* large **tin** resources.

\* Some alumina resources, plus large hydro-electrical plants which provide the electricity needed to make **aluminium**.

\* **Platinum** and platinum group metals.

\* A wide range of **other metals** including titanium, nickel, copper, chrome, manganese, mercury, tungsten, cobalt, silver, lead, limited amounts of iron.

\* Minerals used in the nuclear industry, including **uranium**, boron, lithium and beryllium are also found in Siberia (Shadad 1987, p88).

\* **Mineral resources** including mica, boron, salt, asbestos, fluorspar etc.

\* Considerable **hydro-electrical resources**, which along with the use of lignite, gas and nuclear power for electrical production, provides west and east Siberia with cheap and abundant electricity. The Angara-Yenisy River systems in particular are a major source of hydro-electricity (Shadad 1987, p79). Problems exist however, with providing baseline power due to seasonal water variations in the hydroelectric systems (Shadad 1987, pp79-80).

In fact these resources make Russia one of the few countries in the world which could in theory supply itself with all the materials needed for a modern, industrialised economy. It has **all strategic materials**, with the exclusion of natural rubber, which can be replaced with artificial rubber.

The Soviets had chosen to develop these resources by **the use of intensive, large-scale projects on a certain sector or region**. These are called **Territorial Production Complexes (TPC)** and usually focused investment on a major project, e.g. particular oil and gas fields, or particular coal fields. In some case coal fields were

linked either to electrical power production (lignite from the Kansk-Achinsk Basin), or joined to iron-ore resources. In the case of Urals-Kuznetsk Basin scheme, iron-ore from the Ural mountains was linked to Kuznetsk coking coal via a 1,400 miles rail shuttle operation (Shadad 1987, p64). Coal has been exported to Japan since 1985 (Shadad 1987, p70), though Japanese policies in energy conservation and diversification have made this a less lucrative export market than was hoped.

Through 2000-2007, **the Russian economy relied heavily on the export of oil, gas and other primary resources** to sustain economic growth and to help balance its federal budget. GDP growth through 2001-2006 was 5-7% GDP per annum (DFAT 2006), but as we have seen this was based heavily on energy exports rather than deep structural reform internally within Russia (Antonenko 2001, p56; DFAT 2004). It has been claimed that **Russian oil fields and infrastructure still need further injections of capital**, and that most Russian pipelines and delivery systems are at full utilisation, limiting how far Russia can set regional and global energy policies (see Giragosian 2006). Economic and developmental imbalances have also effected parts of Siberia and the Far East. The **Far Eastern region of Primorye** apparently suffered a 7% contraction in its economy, with a 15% reduction in industrial production in 2001, though some of this may be due to economic under-reporting by companies avoiding taxation (*Vladivostok News* 2002; Sokolova 2003b). Nonetheless, there was some improvement in the economy and government budgets through 2002-2003, the Primorye, with the local governor Sergei Darkin claiming 5% growth, in part based on oil processing, and some improvements in the local coal production, machinery construction, and chemical industries (Sokolova 2003b). In such a context, population outflow helped **reduce Primorye's population by 13.7 percent** through 2006 (*Vladivostok News* 2007a). Likewise, in Siberia as a whole, though major new oil and gas pipelines are being planned, some of these have been **challenged on environmental grounds**, as well as their possible negative impact on local, indigenous communities, e.g. the original plans to build a pipeline from Irkutsk to Daqing (China), which would pass through Tunkinskii National Park and not far from Lake Baikal (*Environment* 2003).

One of the major debates since 1986 through to 2007 has been **whether the large state investment in the production of Siberia as a whole is really warranted**. In spite of rhetoric by Gorbachev and Yeltsin through the late 1980s and 1990s, there was evidence that Russia is investing less in Siberia as a whole than before. Certain key areas, e.g. oil, gas, diamonds, gold, which either earn foreign hard currency or are an essential industrial component have continued to be developed. The development of strategic metals like nickel, cobalt and platinum led to development of one of the largest cities in the world within the Arctic Circle, **Noril'sk** (Shadad 1987, pp81-2). However, other resources, which are comparatively expensive to develop in the harsh conditions of Siberia, and where world commodity prices are more fluctuating, have received much more limited attention, e.g. tin and aluminium production, though private investment has recently been boosted in aluminium production. With the Russian economic crises of the last ten years, there has been **some overall withdrawal of Russia ethnic groups from the far north**, and certain sectors along the Arctic coast and in Siberia have been run down or partly abandoned. There have also been reports of **major problems in supplying remote towns and settlements**

with food, power, heating, and regular contact with major transport routes, especially during exceptionally bad winters and flooding as occurred in 2001, and with only partial recovery through 2003-2007.

Siberia also has some **agricultural resources**: -

- \* A grain growing belt along the southern side, though the growing season is short.
- \* In the southern sectors, dairy farming has been introduced.
- \* Reindeer-herding in the north, a major source of local meat.
- \* **Large fisheries** exist throughout the region, especially useful commercially along the Kuril Islands.
- \* **Very large reserves of timber** (more than 75% of Russia's forests), though the forest closest to railways and roads have often been over-exploited, more remote ones little touched (for inefficiencies and environmental damage caused by the Russian forestry industries, see Pelkki et al. 2001). These count as a major 'carbon sink' in global terms, and their over-exploitation would influence global green-house gas emissions.
- \* Fur industry, in part based on free hunting, but more often on 'fur-farms'.

At the same time, Siberia does not produce all of its own **consumer needs**, and still is a **net importer of food** and many manufactured and commodity goods. Ironically, **energy security is not ensured at the local level**, especially for remote communities.

Development of all these resources, of course, involved the **improvement of communication across one of the longest land-bridges in the world**: Vladivostok is almost 10,000 kilometres from Moscow and almost 4,000 from the nearest large industrial centre, the Kuznetsk Basin (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993). Though the Trans-Siberian railway was completed in 1905, subsequent work improved bridges and sidelines. Two other sections north and south of this railway were added in Western Siberia, yet **the Trans-Siberian still remains the most intensely utilised long-haul rail system in the world**. In the east, a new **Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)** was added to the north of the Trans-Siberian. This BAM line represented a major engineering achievement through very difficult terrain, and became partially operational in 1984 (see Conolly 1987), though work continued through the 1990s to upgrade this line, as well as adding a Little BAM branch line (830 km) which provide rail access to Yakutia (Conolly 1987, p167).

At the same time, the Russians have used nuclear icebreakers to open up a **section of the Arctic Sea route** on a year-round basis, and the western sector of this route is very important, giving access to northern oil and gas fields, e.g. in the middle and northern reaches of the Ob River. An all year eastern linkage through the Arctic Sea to the Pacific, however, has been too difficult and expensive to maintain. However, all these routes are very expensive to build and maintain, and to date Russia is only now developing a **comprehensive transcontinental road system**. Large sections of the hinterland of Siberia remain cut off to normal transport during several months of the years, either due to ice-ins, or due to the difficulty of building all-weather roads in swampy summer terrain. **Efforts have been made to improve this state of affairs** in the Far East, and 'Russian officials are hoping that the whole 7,200-kilometer Moscow

to Vladivostok trek will become a part of the international highway from Paris through Berlin to Russia's Pacific coast by the year 2008' (*Vladivostok News* 2004a).

## 5. The Cold War: From Bastion to an Indo-Pacific Strategy

We can see, then, **that Siberia took on a unique role both as a resource centre and strategic asset** for the USSR during World War II. These roles were exacerbated during the growing tensions with the West after 1946. Not only was Siberia the largest reserve of strategic resources including oil, gas, coal, gold, uranium, and strategic metals for the Soviets, it was also the **main access point to the Pacific Ocean**. It was partly for strategic reasons that the Trans-Siberian was built early in the century, while the newer BAM line has a major strategic role (Conolly 1987, p160) in that large military stockpiles are located alongside it, as well as missile and military sites. The question we can ask in the early twenty-first century is whether Siberia remains a strategic asset for Russia, or whether it has something of a look of a liability as well.

From the 1960 the Russians began rapidly expanding their **Pacific fleet**, with a major challenge to U.S. naval superiority being established during the 1960s and 1970s. The Pacific Fleet became the largest naval command, and the 1980s received the newest surface ships and submarines (Erickson 1987, p171). As well as hunter subs, bases in the Far East also had number of nuclear missile submarines which could sortie in the Sea of Okhotsk 'bastion' during times of crisis. In turn, America in the 1980s developed a theory of naval intervention and superiority on a global basis, a strategy which she effectively achieved by the mid-1980s (the Lehman doctrine). The Russian navy as a whole went through a **massive operational decline through the 1990s**, but **President Putin has sought to revive a smaller and more modern Russian fleet** over the last several years.

In the 1980s this Soviet naval build up might have seemed inherently aggressive. However, the Russian navy had emerged as a major European force since the early 19th century, and **Russia had always been obsessed with gaining access to the sea**, whether via the Baltic, the Black Sea, the north Pacific, or by opening routes through the Arctic Ocean (or even trying to push towards the south to gain access (diplomatically at least) to the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean. In fact, 'Russia had a naval facility on the Pacific thirty-six years before the United States came into existence' (Stephan 1992, p494), and at one time even considered colonising one of the Hawaiian Islands. What was new, however, was that as part of their **fears of containment** by U.S. forces and their allies (in Europe and in Asia), the Soviets had developed powerful surface and submarine forces which might 'break out' and represent a real threat to US forces on the high seas. This was also a part of a wider strategy in which Russia had allies in North Korea, Vietnam (with a major base developed at Cam Ranh Bay after 1975, see Smith 1988, which was only slowly wound down in operations after 1988), and positive trade and military-trade relations with India.

As we saw in week 5, **Soviet forces were also deployed in major depth along the Chinese-Soviet border as relations with China worsened after 1958**, reaching their

lowest point with an armed clash in 1969. This resulted in a doubling of army forces in the Soviet Far East from 15 and then up to 30 divisions. Even as late as 1986, conditions in the Far East remained extremely tense, with 26 missile fields for ICBMs located north and south of the Trans-Siberian railway, and with the deployment over 171 SS-20 medium range, multi-warhead missiles located in Central Asia and the Far East, with ranges suggesting possible targets in China (including oil fields and nuclear installations), as well as possible targets in South Korea and Japan (Erickson 1987, p184-5). The very high tensions generated by these medium range missiles would only be reduced once treaties were made with the West concerning the elimination of medium range nuclear weapons (The Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, INF, signed and ratified in 1987-1988 and covering weapons in the 500-5,000 km range), as well as treaties reducing strategic missiles (START I and II treaties). Likewise, long range Soviet surveillance and bomber aircraft were also located in the Far East, along with 1,700 other aircraft in the late 1980s (Erickson 1987, p186).

In fact, **the military had always had a large presence in Russian expansion into Siberia**: only in the 18th century did peasants equal the military presence (Wood 1987a, p42). As of the late 1980s, military personnel comprised a large group in Siberia, perhaps as large as 10% of the civilian population, with at least 500,000 men available for combat in the Far East. Civilians have often complained that Vladivostok was virtually treated by the navy as if they owned it, and the city only became fully open until 1992.

Through the 1990s, the numbers of **effective naval forces in the Pacific were seriously reduced** (down by 70%), there have been reductions in nuclear weapons and military ground forces, though the Russian Far East still contains considerable fighter and fighter bomber forces at its command (with a total of close to 1,000 aircraft as of 1994). By 1999, this had been reduced to a still potentially strong fighter/fighter bomber force of 515 relatively modern aircraft (see Chipman 1999). The problem of military and former military control of bases and resources remains very real. Through 2001-2005 there has been some effort to continue to **reduce but also modernise these forces**, with the Russian navy taking up new missile destroyers, surface-to-surface missile capabilities, and designed for new submarines (Preston 2001), a policy strongly supported by President Putin. At the same time Russia has been able to pick up a peace-dividend through improving relationships with China, and a less militarised and more diplomatic approach to tensions with Japan, which remains a strong U.S. ally. Russia has also sought to capitalise on its new relationship as a partner to the U.S.'s war on terror, though this has created real tensions about a deepened American presence in Central Asia. Japan has also been keen to help clean up military pollution that has begun to affect the Sea of Japan, both due to the disposal of old Russian munitions and poor disposal of old nuclear submarines.

## **6. Contemporary International Relations: Friendships and Stalemates**

As we have seen, **Russia-Japanese relations**, although recognising the benefits of regional trade and diplomatic cooperation, were often swept into open conflict (1904-5; 1938; 1944-6; Cold War tensions after 1965). These tensions were made concrete by the **Kuril Islands dispute**. These issues indicate one of the **key**

**blockages in the regional development of Siberia**, with the sovereignty dispute over the Southern Kurile Island (from the Japanese point of view the Northern territories) not yet solved. However, a **pattern of indirect cooperation** has softened and reduced the tension in this dispute from the 1990s onwards (see Okuyama 2003).

The **historical context** includes: -

\* The **Japanese indigenous population was moved** from the islands at the end of World War II

\* Since that time, some 25-30,000 Russians had become inhabitants of the islands.

\* The islands have **sizeable fish resources** in the seas surrounding them, and with 1977 changes in the law of the sea (200 nautical mile commercial exclusion zones, see Kirby 1987, p201), this means that ownership of the inhabited islands give preferential access to these resources.

\* **Japanese and Russian use of fishing zones** in each others territories have been subject to tougher quotas from 1975 onwards (Kirby 1987, pp202-203), with conflict and harassment of Japanese fishermen leading to some deaths through 1995-2006. This dispute was widened in mid-2001 to the issue of whether South Korean fishing boats would be licensed to fish in these waters: Russia invited them to do so, but Japan stated that it would not license such boat to fish in other Japanese waters if they did so (Kirk 2001). **From 2006 it has been noted that Russian pressure on this issue has intensified**, with 'frequent seizures of Japanese boats in recent months; Russian authorities have stepped up patrols in and around the disputed territory, escalating tensions' (Pravda 2007).

\* In 1995, small groups of Japanese made their way to some of these islands, and engaged in **peaceful protests** concerning Russian occupation of them. Since that time, Japanese can apply to visit the islands.

\* Agreements in principle between Japanese and Russian leaders during 1997 and 1998 that the dispute will be resolved in the near future have not yet lead to a concrete treaty. At the same time, **Japan did support Russia's successful bid to join APEC** (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum) as a Pacific economy.

\* **Statements of positive intent** (1999-2006) in late 1999 and early 2000 by Russian acting President Putin have not created any breakthroughs in the diplomatic deadlock over the islands. Seminars and meetings through 2003-2004, however, **failed to arrive at an agreement that would be accepted by the leadership, parliaments and public of these nations** (see lecture 1).

\* **Again in 2007, the new Japanese leadership** (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe) has stated its intention to end the dispute, though new mechanisms have yet to be established beyond the **vice-foreign minister talks** held in January 2007: -

Japan's prime minister pledged Tuesday to regain four disputed northern islands from Russia, saying it was time to end the bickering between Tokyo and Moscow over the prime fishing grounds.

"The territorial issue is a matter of national concern, and it is important for each person to be interested in the problem to mobilize efforts," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said at an annual rally to garner support for the islands' return.

"Progress in Japan-Russia relations has a big potential to benefit both countries. It is crucial to make persistent effort to resolve the dispute over the Northern Territories, which is the long-pending problem," Abe said. (Pravda 2007)

To date, all **efforts to resolve the Kuril Island dispute by Russia without giving up sovereignty have been problematic**. Some softening of this position began in the late 1990s, with Japan and the U.S. concerned about the economic stability of Russia. Thus Japan, via direct aid and inputs in World Bank projects, became the third largest donor to Russia (Meyer 1999). Nonetheless, the level of direct investment from Japan into Siberia remained far less than its theoretical potential (see further lecture 2, lecture 4).

However, some **progress was made from November 1997** with a meeting between then President Yeltsin and former Prime Minister Hashimoto. It was agreed the both sides would negotiate a peace treaty by the year 2000, and initiatives were passed to boost Japanese investment, as well as greater 'cooperation in trade, energy, transport and personnel training' (Jones 1997). Japan also swung behind Russia's successful bid to join APEC. However, this 'Hashimoto Initiative', designed to greatly improve relations between the two countries, though it did intensify dialogue, failed to reach a real solution (see Zagorsky 2001). Reports out of Russia during late 1999 were rather contradictory, some politicians favouring some gradual hand over of the islands, others denying that Russia's sovereignty would in way be fragmented. It seems unlikely that President Putin would risk undermining his image as a 'strong leader' who will return Russia to its greatness. Through February 2001, President Putin and then Prime Minister Mori had agreed to try to make progress on this issue (the Irkutsk Communiqué of 2001). With up to eighty per cent of Russians opposed to returning the islands, as suggested by an April 2001 survey (*Japan Policy & Politics* 2001c), it is not surprising that Russian leaders found it difficult to compromise on this issue. Through 2002 various economic and political initiatives were raised but made little headway, in part because of the opposition of the Russian Duma to territorial negotiations, and also to turbulence within the Japanese Department of Foreign Affairs, with Prime Minister's Junichiro Koizumi's maverick foreign minister, Makiko Tanaka, soon involved in scandal, and with over 33 officials in the ministry demoted or fired over leaked plans concerning the islands and possible financial aid (see Rutland 2003). **Nationalism and key local interests were also at stake**, though economic cooperation was welcomed by most parties.

A solution of the problem would make it even easier for Japan to invest in Siberia, and for regional economic cooperation among the Siberia, Manchuria and Mongolia areas to continue. From November 2004 **another round of diplomacy was opened** on this issue by the Russian Federation: -

Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the RF Sergey Lavrov suggested that two South **Kurile** Islands pass to Japan. In such a way we'll put an end to a half-century of territorial disputes. Mr.Lavrov said that Moscow consents to the Soviet-Japan declaration of 1956 (which supposes the transference of islands Shikotan and Khabomai to Japan) and is ready to fulfill its conditions if Japan signs a peace treaty. (A & G 2004).

Through 2005-2007, however, this has failed to form the basis of a new agreement, though **regular talks between the two foreign ministries** have been established from 2007. The **energy politics of oil and gas investment through 2003-2010**, however, may begin to change the focus of this relationship between Japan and Russia. In general terms, Japan has begun to develop a **Eurasian hedging strategy**, with

investment flows into Central Asia and aid flow into Afghanistan, as well as an increased flow of trade with Russia. Here Japan might be seen as a balance to powerful Russian and Chinese influence, as well as entering into dialogue with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: -

Interestingly, Japan's activities in Central Asia reveal a subtle foreign policy that is able to accommodate both Eastern and Western value systems. In the eyes of the Central Asian regimes, Japan has come to represent a viable Asian role model and partner for their modernization program. For the West, Japan has come to represent their liberal-democratic values, as opposed to China and Russia who insist on an indigenous -- and usually authoritarian -- approach toward government. While the Central Asian regimes and the West may not see eye-to-eye on a range of issues, both nevertheless recognize Japan's contribution to the region especially because of Japan's potential to counter-balance Russian and Chinese influence in Central Asia.

As U.S. influence diminishes within the Central Asian region and the S.C.O. consolidates and expands its membership, Japan will have an increasingly geopolitical role to play within Eurasia as a counter-balance to the S.C.O. Its engagement in Central Asia will ultimately sway the geopolitical direction of Eurasia depending on how successful it is in influencing the Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, to its way of thinking. (Len 2006)

Another key relationship which has been emerging recently are **vigorous trade relations with South Korea** (ROK, Republic of Korea). From the 1980s South Korea has been an importer of Russian raw materials, especially coal, with the Soviets keen for Korean commodities and textiles (see Chon 1989). With Russian reforms since 1992, a large number of other joint Korean-Russian or Korean investment projects have been suggested. This relationship has been able to develop once the Russians reduced their military and economic backing for the communist North Korean government. These **key developments and proposals** included (see Chon 1989; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993; Louis 1992): -

- \* The construction of a large-scale industrial complex in the Nakhodka area.
- \* The building of pipelines from the Yakutsk Gas to transport gas to Korea.
- \* Modernisation of oil refineries at Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk.
- \* The ability for the advanced and efficient South Korean shipbuilding industry to service Russian merchant and fishing ships.
- \* Construction of pulp wood and paper mills, e.g. on the Amur River.
- \* Construction of aluminium plants.
- \* Petrochemical plants in Western Siberia.
- \* Construction of equipment manufacturing plants.
- \* The development of a shared network of gas exports into South Korea (negotiated through 2003-2004).

**Major South Korean companies** involved in the early stage included Daewoo, Jindo, Lucky Goldstar, Samsung, Seungwha Group, and KFTA have been involved in planning such projects, though Hyundai has been among the most active (Chon 1989). A less positive aspect of relations has been the creation of large timber camps in Siberia using the **labour** of 16,000-20,00 North Koreans, not all of whom seem to wish to stay, and some of whom have tried to defect to South Korea by hiding in cargo ships (*Economist* 1994). Today, up to 10,000 North Koreans work in the Russian Far East as guest workers, and are closely watched by north Korean

authorities, while up to 40,00 ethnic Korean still reside within the Far East itself (Brook 2003). This has led to **some fears of 'de-russification' of Siberia** based on Asian ethnic inflows, a claim strong rejected by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanon through early 2004, who noted that cooperation with Asian neighbours was crucial for development of the region (Interfax 2004a).

To date, the South Koreans have gained a **strategic advance by their early penetration into the Siberian and Central Asian resource base**. However, South Korea by itself lacks the massive capital needed to fully develop the region, a trend slowed by economic downturns in 1997-1998 (though some improvement has been noted by early 1999). Of course, the relations between Russia and China have greatly improved, with considerable opportunities for joint deals along the Manchurian-Siberian border (see Kaye 1993). After stalling in 1997-1998, Russia-South Korean trade increased 60% in 1999 from the previous year. Improvements between North and South Korea in the long term might **open up the Korean peninsula** as a transit route for Siberian and Mongolian resources (see Calder 2001; Spector 2001): **aside from pipelines, proposals have also been put for improved rail linkages**. These hopes were outlined by Kent Calder: -

A glance at the map, and its geopolitical implications, suggests the power of the forces being unleashed by the Korean rapprochement. Korea is the strategic pivot of its region. With a hostile, communist North Korea lying between it and the rest of the Asian continent, South Korea has long been a geostrategic island. Yet peninsular cooperation could transform North Korea from a barrier into a bridge-to Russia, China, and the world beyond. A lack of domestic energy resources, coupled with rapidly rising demand for energy, gives North and South Korea a shared economic motive to develop common railways and pipelines northward to exploit Siberian gas and trans-Siberian shipment opportunities. In 1999, South Korea's primary energy consumption rose more rapidly than any other nation's, driven by heavily increased demand for natural gas. The country is eager to reduce its already heavy energy dependence on the Middle East by diversifying toward new suppliers, such as gas-rich Siberia. As North Korea's economy strengthens, its demand for Russian energy could also rise sharply. (Calder 2001)

**Russia had re-initiated strong interest in North Korea through meetings of leaders between 2000 and 2001**, with Russian support for infrastructure reconstruction through this period. However, these processes took a cruel blow through **2003-2006, with signs that North Korea was engaging a confrontationalist or 'leverage' approach** with its announcement that it had a secret nuclear weapons program, that it would run a small reactor that could produce weapons grade material, with its firing of a test missile, and its confrontation of a U.S. 'spy' craft, apparently in international airspace. On this basis, **hopes for a cooperative North Korea that will help the opening up of Northeast Eurasia have greatly declined**, though ongoing multilateral talks have suggested that the issue might be dealt with diplomatically in the medium term, though **six-way talks** (including North Korea, South Korea, Japan, the United States, China and Russia). **Limited progress** was made through 2004-2006, and only in early 2007 did North Korea seem ready to point to some future resolution (*Economist* 2006a; Eberstadt 2005; UPI 2004a). Thus through February 2007 **North Korea has signalled a possible freeze on nuclear weapons research**: -

The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog said Friday that North Korea has invited him to visit to discuss dismantling its nuclear facilities - a sign of the country's new willingness to subject its atomic program to outside scrutiny.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he and North Korean authorities would discuss how to "implement the freeze of (nuclear) facilities" and "eventual dismantlement of these facilities." (Jahn 2007)

On this basis, it has been suggested that though trade has grown greatly between Russia and South Korea over the last several years (bilateral trade has expanded over 50 times since 1992, with a 'record high of US\$9.7 billion' in 2006), that **Russia may have strategic reasons to re-engage stronger support for North Korea from 2007** (Chosunilbo 2007) .

Even as early as 1987 Gorbachev had declared a **Vladivostok Initiative**, declaring a new age of development for the USSR and **Russia as a Pacific** power. In fact, this was not new - other Russian leaders including Kalinin (1923), Khrushchev (1954, 1959) and Brezhnev (1966, 1978) had given speeches emphasizing the importance of the Far East (Stephan 1992, p494). Furthermore, both Gorbachev and Yeltsin wanted Russia enter more closely into the Asia-Pacific trade networks, and to enter APEC, which has been achieved. As of the early 1990s, the Soviet Union only accounted for 4% of Pacific Basin trade (Stephan 1992, p495). However, these initiatives should not be dismissed. As well as the desire **to link Siberia into the Pacific trade system**, there has been a serious reduction in military tensions in the region, as least as so far as any Russian and or Chinese threat is concerned. **Stability in North Korea and a slow rather than explosive transition are also crucial for these hopes**. To date, the main problem facing Russia is how she can make use of the resources of the Far East, and how she can boost trade into the Asia-Pacific region. By the mid-1990s, Japan, followed by China and then South Korea emerged as growing trade partners, but Pacific Russia's trade orientation 'remained relatively weak' (East Asian Analytical Unit 1996, p47; Meyer 1999). In summary, **Russia's Far East had not yet effectively integrated itself into the regional economic system of Northeast Asia, but plans to improve this through 2007-2012**.

## **7. Interrupted Development: World Resource or Delayed Prospects.**

In spite of the enormous potential of Siberia, there are **numerous problems that have delayed the development of this region**, which remains largely unintegrated into the world economy. These include: -

\* The difficulty of **retaining skilled labourers**. Most leave within three years, and much work must be done by short-term task forces. This is in part due to harsh conditions, poor housing, and the fact that even higher wages do not match the real cost of living, and due to a rather exaggerated negative perception of conditions in Siberia (Shaw 1987, p9). Over the last several, skilled workers in Siberian oil and gas fields are drawn from as far away as Malaysia, but usually on a seasonal, contract basis.

\* The **narrow economic base of Siberian towns**, which tend to become adjuncts to resource development or transport industries. This has begun to change in the last decade, but only to a limited degree.

\* **Limited civil manufacturing base**, which in the 1990s still accounted for less than 10% of the economy of the region. This means that Siberia still had to import most of its industrial equipment, machines, vehicles and commodities.

\* These factors mean that the **Siberian economy is unbalanced**, and reliant on continued connection with the manufacturing sector in European Russia. Efforts to move to 'greater preliminary processing' before transport westwards (Shadad 1987, p63) have only been partially successful, e.g. only a small number of petroleum refineries have been built in Siberia, and these mainly supply local fuel needs. It is hoped that side products from Sakhalin gas will also form the basis of a nitrogen fertiliser industry, while other Siberian plants in the West will also be opened, in order to boost Siberian agriculture (Shadad 1987, p75, p89). Intensive development of petroleum and oil resources using advanced technology (see Crook 2004), and the construction of new pipelines, as proposed through 2001-2005, will only partially offset this imbalance.

\* **Communication difficulties** remain. The Arctic sea routes have been opened up on a year-round basis through the use of power nuclear-powered icebreakers, but this is an expensive exercise, and only the western link (from the Yenisy and Ob rivers to northern Europe) is really economically viable. In any case, the great river systems still freeze over during winter. This situation is being improved by the use of 'icebreaking lighter-carrier (LASH vessels) and ships with roll-on/roll-off capabilities' which can off load onto ice (North 1987, p151). There are also moves to **improve air routes**, especially through the adoption of heavy transport aircraft. Air-safety, due to bad weather and aging equipment, remains somewhat problematic, but has begun to improved from 2001 with new aircraft and the refurbishing of airports (Komarov 2001).

\* Although a large 'invisible' military production complex exists in Siberia and the Far East, accounting for some 70% of industrial production in the early 1990s (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993), this **military-industrial complex is in partial decline due to decreased military spending in Russia (though arms exports remain quite strong)**, and to only a **limited success in conversion** to civilian or dual-use industries (see Cooper 1993-4 for some of these strategies). Through 1997-2005, Russian has gained increased revenues through arms exports, especially to China and India, though not all Siberian plants have remained operational (Chipman 1999).

\* Although the Soviet Far East had build up a **large merchant marine**, with more than 400 vessels totalling three million tons, comprising about 25% of the entire Russian/Soviet fleet, (Kirby 1987, p210; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993), and although a brisk coast trade has developed since 1990, much of these fleet has run down or is not fully utilised. Conditions are such that ports in the Russian Far East have had to create new laws to effectively deal with the large number of hulks and abandoned ships that clutter their waterways. The Far Eastern Shipping Company had secured a \$93.5 million dollar loan from the European Bank of Reconstruction and development to allow it to purchase new container carriers and sell off older ships (Bratukhin 1997). Likewise, there has been some increased private interest and buy-outs of stock in Pacific port facilities (*Vladivostok News* 2002b).

\* Likewise, the sea areas between Japan and Russia represent areas which can be **readily polluted** by accidental spillage, whether by nuclear wastes or oil spills. Poor winter weather conditions can make rescue and clean up of sea disasters very difficult, e.g. the attempt in January 1997 to clean up spillage from the tanker Nakhodka, which split in two on January 1, 1997 (Syedain 1997).

\* Through late 1998-2004 there have been reports of **problems in administration, non-payment of state wages, equipment breakdown and a shortage of heating oil** which affected Vladivostok, and large parts of the Primorye region (Chernyakova 1999). Lack of secure electrical power and heating has also struck many small communities in parts of Arctic Russia and Siberia. In January 2001, across 'the region, power utilities are short of fuel, hot water pipes are crumbling, and hospitals face an influx of frostbite cases'. (*New York Times* 2001) Through 2003-2006 **plans have been made to upgrade local gas and energy networks** in the region, but have not yet been completed.

In large measure, these difficulties suggest that the Soviets had attached a great deal of **symbolic significance to the development of Siberia** as proof of the progressive potentials of the Soviet economy (Stephan 1992, p503). More realistically, Russian opinion was **split between optimists and pessimists** (Stephan 1987, p226). 'Optimists' argue that with suitable management and a possible international trade environment (particularly, a good market for energy resources and metals), that Siberia will be the basis of a future strong Russian economy. Another group of 'pessimists' feel that the difficulties of developing Siberia make it literally a **reserve zone for future development, and that aside from energy exports Russia would benefit much more from intensive development of its Urals and European sector**, particularly by linking into the European Union trade zone, and spin off from growth in Eastern Europe.

Nor can the region itself be taken for granted as a passive appendage of Russia. The **sense of Siberian independence** (discussed above) had resurrected under Gorbachev's reforms. In 1989 communist party elections, most of Gorbachev's preferred appointees were thrown out, with incumbents from local political groupings (Stephan 1992, p505). In 1989-90 once again there was intense political debate about the creation of an autonomous Far Eastern Republic (FER), with a Far Eastern republican Freedom Party being created in Vladivostok, and local newspapers generally supporting this trend (Stephan 1992, p505). Issues of regional economic autonomy were widely debated in 1992-3 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993). However, it must be stressed that this projected Republic would in any case still be an autonomous state within the Russian Federation - most **Siberians recognise that they still need Russian investment, technology, and guarantees** for their security, although regional elites have often been able to trade off local versus federal interests (see Melvin 1998).

It has also been important for regional governments to be able to **maintain foreign economic relations**, particularly with other Pacific Basin countries. Local leaders are also keen on following the Chinese model and **creating special economic zones** along the coast of the far east, e.g. around Vladivostok and on the island of Sakhalin, which has timber, oil production, and adjacent fisheries (Stephan 1992, p505; Shaw 1987, p19). Sakhalin was declared a special economic zone in 1988, and although some 5,000 private enterprises have been created (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1993), results have not been entirely successful. However, although there has been some opening of the Far East, e.g. Vladivostok, once a closed military town, is now open to traders, none of these Siberian centres has 'taken off' in the way that Chinese special economic zones have. However, **economic infrastructure has been**

**improving** with the creation of new port facilities (e.g. the port at Vostochnyi), the creation of container-handling systems on the Trans-Siberian railway (creating the Europe-Asia landbridge), and with the improvement of roads between Siberia and Manchuria. Nor has the huge, multinational **Tumen River Valley** project yet developed to the stage where it has achieved an economic 'lift off'. In future this massive project, involving cooperation among Russia, Japan, North Korea, China and Mongolia, and backed by the United Nations Development Program, however, may be extremely important for the entire region (see Ding 1996; Olsen 1995; Marton 1995; Dellios 1999). Put simply, **the international context of Siberia is crucial for its future development**, but also can act as an impediment. Complicating factors with Japan and North Korea are problematic, while there is an imbalance between the Russian Far East and the relative economic power of China.

A large **informal trade** has also flourished in the last decade. Large numbers of cars are being imported into Siberia, legally, 'informally', and illegally (see Smith 1993b), with some cars even finding themselves being transported in military ships and aircraft. This is part of a wider **wild east** syndrome which had disturbed many commentators during the 1990s. Alongside the fairly benign smuggling of cars, the smuggling of drugs, weapons, and illegal labour has also been reported, and mafia groups of various nationalities seem active in the cities and cross-border trade. Likewise, local politics can now be a dangerous occupation, with assassination attempts sometimes being made against local politicians who have made enemies. The city of Vladivostok, with some exaggeration, has been called a city with law and order problems like those of the gangster days of Chicago (Louis 1992, p1992). Smuggling remained something of an issue through early 2003, including claims of attempts to smuggle military information out of Siberia into China (Sokolova 2003a).

**The future of Siberia, then, remains in question.** As noted by Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy: -

Even though central planning has been abolished, its legacy remains – an almost unimaginably poor distribution of labor and capital that can neither be easily maintained or adapted to the market. Today, thanks to Soviet economic policies, Russia has a severely distorted economic geography. In particular, a huge portion of modern Russia – cities, factories, and people – is lost in the distance and cold of Siberia. (Hill & Gaddy 2003)

Yet the area has an excellent resource to population ratio - the entire region has only 28 million, with only 8 million in the Far East Sector. **In many ways, it is a region that will be likely to develop more rapidly in the following decades of the 21st century, so long as Russia key role as energy exporter into the world economy allows it to do so.** Preparations for such a bright future, however, must **ensure sustainability** even as new technologies are developed. Improved relations with Japan remains one of the keys to wider regional development, as does future stabilisation of the Korean Peninsula. Likewise, some further prioritisation of **Russian foreign policy towards the Asia Pacific Region** (CDI 2003) may be needed if Siberia is to flourish. Russia intends to set a further stamp on its claim to be an Asian economy when it **hosts the 2012 APEC summit** on Russky Island, near Vladivostok Ironically, the region may need to retain some of the 'pioneer' spirit if its potentials are to be sensibly and safely developed. At the same time, environmental, indigenous and cultural issues

will need to be given close attention if this development is to avoid heightened political and social conflicts.

## **8. Bibliography and Further Resources**

### **Resources**

A wide range of material will be found at the *Siberia WWW Virtual Library* via <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/link/index-e.html>

Local Russian Far Eastern news can be found in the *Vladivostok News*, located at <http://vlad.tribnet.com/>

The *Meeting of the Frontiers* project, with a range of history and ethnographical material on Siberia, will be found at <http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfhome.html>

Information on some regions of the Russian North and Far East can be found via The *Scott Polar Research Institute* (University of Cambridge) and their webpages at <http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/resources/rfn/>

The views of the Inuit (indigenous) people on regional and global politics can be found via *The First Perspective* webpage, located at <http://www.firstperspective.ca/>

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