

The strong negative public perception of the old Soviet Union by the Japanese and, in the current global resource supply situation, the lack of interest by the business community in Siberian development leave only a small (if growing) domestic Japanese constituency pressing for improved bilateral relations. Gorbachev's early arms reductions initiatives enjoyed relatively little credibility in the face of massive Soviet conventional and nuclear forces deployed near Japan,<sup>17</sup> including the deployment of conventional forces to the Northern Territories.<sup>18</sup> At the core of this hostility lay the seemingly insolvable problem of the Northern Territories.

Japanese and Soviet initiatives in the late 1980s to resolve the territorial issue were designed to convince Japanese domestic opinion that progress was possible. Such exercises benefitted both the Soviets - who continued to court Japanese investment and economic assistance, and the LDP governments of Prime Ministers Takeshita, Uno, and Kaifu - which had staked their reputation on the eventual reversion of the islands to Japan.<sup>19</sup>

The boundary dispute was, however, directly related to the USA-USSR strategic balance of power, over which the Japanese had very little influence (and which still effects how Moscow, Washington and Tokyo approach the issue). The Northern Territories provided the Soviet Union with naval and air facilities necessary for defending Soviet ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) bastions in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan.

While the size and number of Russian/CIS forces in Asia Pacific have stabilized - and in some areas have been reduced - in the last four to five years, the experience during the Brezhnev years had been one of inexorable quantitative and qualitative expansion. The JDA has suggested that there is, as yet, no convincing evidence that Russian military doctrine and defence planning in Asia Pacific differs from that of the old Soviet Union. Soviet military doctrine considered Asia Pacific to be a major potential area of conflict, and defence plans called for force deployments designed to defend the USSR and to allow the concentration of forces in other regions for offensive purposes. Secondary military objectives included:

- protecting strategic strike capabilities (specifically SSBNs);
- conducting strategic and theatre-nuclear strikes;
- neutralizing Japan and South Korea to prevent them from supporting American forces;
- controlling ocean areas contiguous to the USSR,;
- interdicting American naval forces;
- containing China;