



Northeast Asia

Status of Japanese-Soviet Relations

The Japanese Government is trying a new approach to the Soviet Union but is having some difficulty in formulating a coherent policy. On 10 December, Tokyo announced it had accepted a Soviet proposal to resume talks between working-level Foreign Ministry officials. These talks—in Moscow on 20-21 January—will be the first since the invasion of Afghanistan. Depending on the results, Foreign Minister Sakurauchi may meet with Gromyko in Tokyo later next year.

Tokyo does not want to lag behind the United States and Western Europe in resuming contacts with the Soviets, but even so the talks probably will not lead to a significant improvement in relations. Tokyo distrusts Moscow and is concerned about the Soviet military buildup. More important, the government has committed itself to the recovery of the Southern Kuriles and insists it will not sign a peace treaty with the Soviet Union until it relinquishes the islands. This stance, however, causes a dilemma for Tokyo. The decision to reopen an official dialogue in order to improve the atmosphere for bilateral relations will attract support from the many Japanese who are uncomfortable with the tense relationship with their powerful neighbor. But, at the same time, Tokyo risks raising doubts about its determination on the territorial question if it appears overeager.

Govt. trying to improve relations with USSR - Ambassadors

