

Mutually hurting or mutually thriving?

The Russo-Japanese conflict of the Kuril Islands



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Table of Contents

<i>Summary</i>	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Literature Review	5
1.2 Research Question	7
2. Methodology	9
2.1 Ontology and Epistemology	9
2.2 Empirical considerations.....	9
2.3 Choice of theory	10
1.3 Delimitations.....	12
1.5 Clarifications and definitions.....	12
3. Theory	14
3.1 Ripeness Theory	14
3.2 Neoclassical Realism	17
3.3 Operationalization	19
4. Analysis	21
4.1 Proposition 1.....	21
4.1.1 The Diplomatic Bluebook under Shinzo Abe’s administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019)	21
4.2 Proposition 2.....	24
4.2.1 Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019).....	24
4.2.2 Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations 2007-2008 & 2013-2019	27
4.3 Proposition 3.....	29
4.3.1 Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its objective elements.....	30



4.3.2 The Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its objective elements.....	32
4.4 Proposition 4.....	34
4.4.1 Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its subjective pain. 35	
4.4.2 The Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its subjective pain	37
4.5 Proposition 5.....	38
4.5.1 Fifth proposition (A).....	38
4.5.2 Fifth proposition (B)	39
4.6 Proposition 6.....	40
4.7 Synthesizing of propositions	40
5. Discussion	42
6. Conclusion	43
6. Bibliography.....	45



Summary

The Russo-Japanese war ended in 1905. However, some researchers still regard the two nations in a war with each other. Since the second world war a territorial dispute between the two states has been ongoing. Surprisingly few are aware of this ongoing dispute, that has lasted for over seventy years, and yet to be resolved. The conclusion of a peace treaty has not yet found place, and it can be argued whether there will ever be a right time.

The aspect of timing seemingly plays an immense role in the pursuance of a resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute. William Zartman, professor and researcher within conflicts, mediation and negotiation, suggest the theory of ripeness. In the perspective of Japan, active initiations have occurred since Shinzo Abe's two administrations. Shinzo Abe's proactive foreign policy strategy including defense has too been influenced by the aspect of timing. In the two Abe administrations the aspect timing has played a role in terms of steering the way forward in the pursuance of a resolution between Japan and Russia. Neoclassical realism aims to explain how a foreign policy is formed. The Japanese foreign policy is formed by systemic and internal incentives, including economy and military actions. The internal incentives are mainly rooted in national interest. Although the two nations have experienced ups and downs through Abe's two administrations, the timing can be argued to be ripe for the two to actively involved in negotiations, which could lead to a conclusion of the Kuril Islands dispute. However, this research takes point of departure in the Japanese view, and discusses how this perspective alone, may not be sufficient to establish the position of ripeness.

The thesis presents an in-depth analysis of the foreign policy strategy and its pursuance of a resolution to the Kuril Islands dispute by looking at the official documents of the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs and ministry of defense. Moreover, the aspect of timing and its role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy is thoroughly examined through the Japanese stance towards a resolution of the territorial dispute.



1. Introduction

Since the Second World War, Japan has been object to ponderous challenges. In fact, for Japan the war is technically still ongoing. Evidently, some of the actions of the Second World War, have left Japan in an unresolved territorial dispute with their northern neighbor, Russia. Territorial disputes are a global phenomenon, and for Japan, a familiarization with this phenomenon has developed. At present, Japan is engaged in territorial issues with respectively; China, Russia and South Korea (Iwashita 2016: 5-9). The notable element of each one of the disputes, is that all are yet to be resolved. The dispute regarding the Kuril Islands, situated north from Japan, between Japan and Russia, is particularly fascination due to its long undergoing conflict, yet to be resolved. (Ibid: 7)

The approach of Japan has been pacifist since the objective end of the Second World War, when their “Post-war constitution”¹ was developed. The constitution was written in relation with the allied occupation namely; leaded by the United States (Ota 2006: 60). This matter has made it particularly difficult to engage in any form of war or international conflict. However, Shinzo Abe has gained a vast amount of attention as Prime Minister, due to his proactive stance towards defense and foreign policy (Akimoto 2018: 140; Nikkei 2017; JFIR 2014 3-4). In spite of Abe merely holding the title as Prime Minister for one year, before resigning his first term, significant developments occurred. A mere three months after his election as Prime Minister, the Abe administration established the first Ministry of Defense, since the second world war. The current Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe from the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has served as Prime Minister of Japan one time before now. In September 2006, Abe was elected Prime Minister for the first time. He resigned in 2007 due to health issues. In 2012, Abe was re-elected as Prime Minister and has served as the leader of the nation since (Cabinet of Japan 2020). Japan, and the Abe administration presented the core belief of the foreign policy and the defense policy to be proactive (Akimoto 2018: 140). Hence one could wonder whether this initiation would make it possible for Japan to engage more actively in ongoing conflicts.

It is puzzling how The Kuril Islands dispute has not yet been concluded in form of a peace treaty, establishing to whom the islands belong. After what has been perceived by Japan, as an illegal intrusion of the islands by Russia over seventy years ago, timing makes for a potential

¹ 戦後憲法 (Cabinet of Japan 1947)



significant role in the ongoing dispute. Timing has previously been connected with conflict resolution in regard to other territorial disputes and wars. The theory that has been applied in particular concerning the aspect of timing, is the ripeness theory by William Zartman, whom attempts to determine whether or not a moment has been ripe for resolution between two parties. (Zartman 2000: 225-6)

The territorial dispute concerning Japan and Russia dates back to the treaty of Shimoda in 1855. This treaty regarded Japan full ownership of the two southern Kuril Islands. The islanders who then lived on the islands, were of Japanese descent and spoke the Japanese language. Only 20 years later, in 1875, the treaty of Sct. Petersburg was signed, providing Japan full disposal over all of the four islands. To clarify, the islands in question are four islands, located of Japan's northern island - Hokkaido (Kuroiwa 2011: 285-6). However, the Soviet Union ravaged Japan on the 8th of August 1945, occupying the islands and the 50.000 Japanese military troops. The ones who were able to flee, escaped fast to the Japanese mainland (ibid 288). This resulted in a full occupation of the islands, leaving no Japanese inhabitants. What would formally end the Second World War, was the signing of the San Fransisco Peace Treaty in 1951. Russia did however refuse to sign the treaty, leaving the occupation of the Kuril Islands steady. In 1956, Japan and Russia came together in the signing of a joint declaration of the islands. Nevertheless, the declaration did not entail whom would be the rightful possessor of the islands. Japan continues to claim that the Soviet occupation in 1945 was an illegal action, on the backdrop of post-war records. Since 1956 talks has been held over the Kuril Islands rightful belonging, and the possibility of a peace treaty. Nonetheless, to this date the resolution has yet to be concluded (Pedrozo 2016: 1-5).

1.1 Literature Review

When we turn to existing literature in connection with the topic of the Kuril Islands dispute, and the stance of Shinzo Abe, several stances can be found. That being said, limited new research exist on the topic. Different approaches to the research on the Kuril Islands territorial dispute have been taken. The history of the conflict is scrutinized by Kimura (2008) and Iwashita (2016). The intention in the research of Kimura, is to tell the story of Japan and Russia, with a focus on the Russian treaties and administrations of Yeltsin, Gorbachev and Putin, until 2008. Throughout the book the aim of Kimura is furthermore to emphasize the significance of studying territorial disputes. Kimura shows five important findings as to why the dispute in 2008, was not yet solved. Those major findings are: Low



priority, the difference in value the two nation states give the four islands, the domination and priority of national politics, mismatch of approaches, their already dynamic relationship, and lastly changes on the international scene (Kimura 2008: 142-52). The findings are based upon a Russian based political stance, therefore lacks a Japanese perspective. Moreover, the identified findings of why the territorial dispute has not yet been solved, can arguable be interpreted as farfetched, due to the lack of theoretical use of analysis.

Iwashita (2016) and Kuroiwa (2011) focus on both the Japanese, as well as the Russian stance in the conflict. Iwashita explains the positions historically and argues that the signing of the peace treaty would give Japan ownership over the islands. The Soviet Union failed recognize that Japan should have all of the islands. The Japanese expressed a wish of receiving ownership of two, out of the four islands, which the Soviet Union after consideration concurred to. However, the new US-Japan mutual corporation and security treaty was just signed. This resulted in the United States secretary of state pressurizing Japan to decline the treaty. The United States did not see the Soviet Union as being responsible for two of the islands, advocating Japan to keep their four islands or nothing mindset (Iwashita 2016: 33-4). Kuroiwa suggest that Japan and Russia should both “re-examine” their behavior historically before attempting to reach a settlement. In order for this settlement to happen, they also ought to take the indigenous people into consideration (Kuroiwa 2011: 293-4). Many existing scholars focus merely on the possibilities of a settlement, rather than looking at how a conflict resolution has been pursued up until now. This makes for a gap in the scholarly research. The suggestions of possible settlement issues are mainly based upon historical acts. One could wonder why the role of the government, has not been taken more into consideration. In “The Abe doctrine” from 2018, Daisuke Akimoto analyzes the Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe’s strategy towards peace and security. This is the most thorough and recent contribution to the Japanese defense and security policy under the Abe administrations. Akimoto mentions Abe’s attempt of proactively pursuing peace in an agreement with Russia in 2016 (Akimoto 2018: 142). In Akimoto’s book the basis of defense and security is mainly linked in regard to the Japan-US relationship and neglects the Japanese stance towards Russia to some extent. Akimoto does however emphasize that although Russia does not pose a direct threat to any East Asian countries, it does make up a threat towards Japanese military, in for example interrupting Japanese airspace without permission (ibid: 177). Besides, Russia still has around seven thousand nuclear warheads, and thereby remains a nuclear power in the region. Contrary to the former scholars, Pajon (2017) shows the topic in a new light with focus on external actors, namely; the United States and China. Pajon is not the first to talk about the



vast influence of these two nation states. They are also mentioned by Akimoto (2018) Kuroiwa (2011) and Iwashita (2016). The point of view presented by Pajon, is the outbreak of the Crimea crisis, where Japan became stuck between Russia and the United States. The three countries are all members of the G7 group. Russia saw Japan as supportive of the United States to a larger extent, than the support Japan offered Russia. This resulted in an unwilling stance from Russia. Pajon argues that Russia on the result of the Japanese neglect, did not want to give back Japan the Kuril Islands in negotiations in 2016. At the same time, both states are being driven to support their somewhat more important friends, in the case of Russia, China. In the case of Japan, the United States (Pajon 2017: 22-24). While the literature above is focused mainly on the dispute until the start of the 10's, this paper aims to bring forward a contemporary aspect of the conflict. The Abe Doctrine is using official documents, to show the development of the Abe administration, and the Japanese stance in the conflict. However, the purpose of Akimoto's research is not to highlight territorial disputes or foreign policy, as much as defense policy. Until now, the aspect of timing, which seemingly plays a role in conflict, is furthermore lacking in the existing literature. The current main gaps of research in regard to the Kuril Islands dispute, includes a lack of what has been pursued up until now, the aspect of timing as well as an up to date description of the situation.

1.2 Research Question

As former researchers discuss, it is puzzling why Japan and Russia has yet to find a resolution to their ongoing territorial dispute. Scholars have attempted to explain what has happened historically in this territorial dispute, in particular the years around the post Second World War era, as well as proposing why a settlement between the two countries has not been reached yet. The main researchers have proposed factors as to why a settlement has been difficult to reach (Akimoto 2018, Iwashita 2016, Kimura 2008, Kuroiwa 2011, Pajon 2017). However, these proposed factors have shown speculative and ambiguous due to a lack of theory. It is puzzling that the scholars who have been researching the topic of the Kuril Islands dispute have lacked an explanation in how the negotiations to a resolution has been pursued, as well as the question of timing. In addition, research has not proposed as to what measures have already been taken on a political level. Although the question of timing is taken into consideration in previous questions, through the doubt of why the dispute has not yet been resolved. Actual research on timing, and why time might play an important role, has yet to be analyzed in this regard. Furthermore, within the last ten years a limited amount of research has been conducted regarding the dispute, and its historical, and political development. As a result of the above findings,



and with the purpose of expanding the existing knowledge gap the literature review has identified, the thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How does the aspect of timing play a role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy under the Abe administrations, in its pursuance of a resolution on the Kuril Islands territorial dispute?

The main focus of the thesis is to examine how timing plays a role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy under Shinzo Abe's administrations, in the administrations implementations towards a settlement of the Kuril Islands dispute. Thereby, the thesis provides a detailed overview of the Japanese standpoint within the conflict. In order to carry out this examination, the thesis will make use of the 'Defense of Japan', the Japanese yearly defense strategy, in regard to Russia, as well as the foreign affairs 'Diplomatic Bluebook', the Japanese foreign affairs strategy. The goal of the thesis is to investigate how a resolution to the territorial dispute has been pursued, under the Abe administrations 2006-2007, and 2012-now, and the role of timing here within. The aspiration is to how the role of timing is performing a function in the Japanese foreign policy strategy, in the duration of the Abe administrations in relation to the Kuril Islands dispute by using the ripeness theory (Zartman 2000) that examines time as an important component. Moreover, the ripeness theory will be supplemented by neoclassical realism (Rose 1998) in order to analyze the Japanese foreign policy strategy actions.

Following the detection of a knowledge gap on the basis of previous research on the topic of the Kuril Islands dispute, together with the detection of a problem, the thesis will introduce the methodological considerations. The considerations include the ontology and epistemology, empirical data, choice of theory, delimitations and clarifications. Second, the theoretical framework, and an operationalization hereof will be presented. Third, an analysis of the main research question will be examined, following a discussion. Lastly, the thesis will present the main findings of the research conducted in a conclusion.



2. Methodology

2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The thesis believes that the nature of reality is heavily objective. The belief can further be described as reality operating independently from the understanding of it. However, it regards a social explanation to this reality. The epistemological standpoint of the thesis will take point of departure in the notion that aims to explain; what mechanisms and structures are involved in creating a certain type of phenomena. These notions are closely linked to critical realism developed by Roy Bhaskar (1978). Critical realism believes that the world can be experienced in two levels. Level one is where you see your object, and the feeling the object comes with, and level two is the mental processing that happens after experiencing the feeling (Saunders 2011: 115). The underlying factors of critical realism can be interpreted as an infusion of positivism and interpretivism. More specifically this epistemology takes both constructivist and realist notions into consideration (ibid: 114-6). This standpoint allows the thesis to go beyond a pure subjective viewpoint, which is crucial in order to answer the research questions wish to analyze the aspect of timing, within the pursuance of resolution, through foreign policy strategy. The position can furthermore enable the use of more theories, and in particular the use of theories with underlying structures of division between behaviors and structures, which both of the theoretical frameworks that will be used in the thesis entail.

2.2 Empirical considerations

The primary empirical data used in the analysis of the thesis, is official documents from the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs, as well as the ministry of defense. More specifically the documents used in the thesis are “*The Diplomatic Bluebook*” published by the Ministry of foreign affairs from the years 2007-2019. This document entails detailed diplomatic relations of the previous calendar year, of all published reports. This document is especially beneficial for the thesis because of its ability to highlight major foreign policy strategies, by outlining the actions, and thoughts of the Japanese government. Moreover, the thesis will make use of the “*Defense of Japan*” published by the Japanese ministry of defense likewise from the years 2007-2019. The advantage of using official documents as empirical data, is obtaining the accurate perception of the Japanese administration, which corresponds to the goal of the thesis. Due to the authors background, with a bachelor’s degree in Japan studies, the official documents will be analyzed in its original language. In order to produce



the most valid and reliant possible analysis, the author will translate the quotations into English from Japanese, when necessary.

The reason for the specific timeframe, is the relationship with the Abe administration, as put forward in the research question. As beforementioned, Shinzo Abe became Prime Minister of Japan in 2006. His first term lasted until 2007, and his next term continued in 2012 until now. The reason why the Abe administration is particularly interesting, is due to his proactive stance in Japanese foreign, defense and security politics. Abe is the one who established the ministry of defense, as well as the annual Defense of Japan papers. Hence the interest of Shinzo Abe, the thesis will have a time and data gap, which will not be analyzed between ultimo 2007 until 2012, because Abe did not act Prime Minister of Japan during the time. The limitations of using the official documents is the lack of public opinion of the Japanese general public, notably the previous inhabitants, or descendants hereof. Moreover, the official documents will not provide the personal perspective of certain individuals.

2.3 Choice of theory

Various assumptions constitute the basis of the research conducted for this thesis. The main assumption is based in the aspect of timing. The assumption follows the thought “*the question of how the Kuril Islands territorial dispute had yet to be solved, consists of timing*”. The hunch derives from the previous literature conducted in relation to the topic, as well as knowledge of conflict resolution theories in an international setting, obtained through courses on war and mediation.

When it comes to conflict resolution, various theories exist. David Cunningham (2011: 5-19) proposes a set of factors which will determine whether a compromise between the actors can be reached. These factors include: Information, economic explanation, indivisible factors, terrain, number of combatant groups, spoilers or veto players and lastly the security dilemma. These factors aim to describe why a certain duration may be needed, and the possibility for resolution. Cunningham’s conflict resolution theory is difficult to apply to the case of the Kuril Islands. This reason for this is the use of the parameters of combatant groups, indivisible factors and terrain would be inoperable. These parameters are particularly used when applying them to international war with more countries involved and civil war, rather than territorial disputes. Another scholar within conflict resolution is Barbara Walter (2002). Walters conflict resolution is based on why an international agreement is difficult to attain, and focuses on the involvement of a third party, or international organizations and their involvement in leading to a good compromise (Walter 2002: 336-9). Walter’s



conflict resolution theory can be applied in most cases of territorial disputes. However, the theory is best applied when a larger number of combatant groups are involved, just as Cunningham. In the case of Walter's theory, it has mainly been applied to economically unstable countries, as well as undemocratic regimes, where a mediator is mostly needed to obtain a compromise. Moreover, the theory is rather speculative than applicable in terms of conflict resolution. There is no specific framework that help characterize how or when a third-party organization, or mediator is needed. When relating her theory with the Kuril Islands dispute, it is therefore difficult to operationalize without the result becoming nontransparent, or ambiguous.

Furthermore, none of the previous theories has the focal point of timing. In contrast to Walter (2002) and Cunningham (2011), the theory of ripeness introduced by William Zartman (2000), is a more accessible conflict resolution theory, when applying it on the Kuril Islands dispute. Firstly, the notion of timing is the main focal point of the theory, which aims to examine when timing is right between states, for a negotiation to take place (Ibid). Zartman is a leading professor, with a Ph.D. obtained at the University of Yale within negotiation and mediation in conflict resolution (Clingendael 2020). His theory of ripeness will enable the thesis the answer the aspect of timing within the Kuril Islands dispute. The purpose of involving Zartman is his propositions, that propose how to identify how timing plays a role in a conflict. Thus, it will be applied as the primary theoretical framework of the project. However, the question aims to identity not only the aspect of timing within the Kuril Islands dispute, but the role it plays within Japanese foreign policy strategy.

Analysis of foreign policy have often been explained by major international relation theories (Lobell, Ripsman, Taliaferro 2009; He, Feng 2012; Brummer, Opperman 2018; Hudson 2013). The reason as to why the thesis aims to answer the research questions aspect of foreign policy, through neoclassical realism as opposed to classical realism or neorealism, is because of its ability to explain the creation of foreign policy based on systemic (external) as well as internal incentives. In the case of Japan, the realist school will have the ability to explain the foreign policy, as well as the Japanese defense policy to a greater extent than other major international relations theories. Constructivism focuses mainly on individuals, which would make it an obstacle when analyzing the foreign policy paper (Wendt 1992). Although liberalism, likewise realism would be able to analyze the foreign policy and defense policy of Japan, liberalism would lack the explanation of conflict, due to its optimistic view about cooperation in the world (Rose 1998: 148). Neoclassical realism can be seen as a hybrid between classical realism, and neorealism, where both external system variables as well as internal domestic variables are taken into account, and both have abilities to effect foreign



policy. He and Feng (2012: 7) describes neoclassical realism as one of the leading realist theories, when researching foreign policy. Where neoclassical realism differentiates itself from neorealism is explicitly that neoclassical realism focuses on the decisions of foreign policy, rather than broad systemic general patterns in the international system (ibid: 8).

1.3 Delimitations

In order to avoid misinterpretation, a delimitation section of the thesis, is essential. As for any topic, potential sub-questions may follow, and the topic of the Kuril Islands territorial dispute is no exception on the rule.

The thesis does *not* aim to explain the Kuril Islands dispute in any manner from the perspective of the Russian federation, or its people. The thesis does, however, aim to accentuate the Japanese governmental perception. Due to the background of the author, the thesis will entail a more valid vision of the situation, than it would, in the event that the author did not possess the specific knowledge of Japan. Although the thesis holds the perception and perspective of the Japanese state, the author does not seek to involve in a discussion of rightful belongings of the territory of the Kuril Islands.

The author notes that the research could have benefited from other evidence. The thesis has delimited itself from using various methods, and sources, although these elements could have led to a more thorough assignment. The methods could for example have been qualitative methods in terms of interviews with government officials, or previous islanders of the Kuril Islands. However, as a consequence of the given timeframe provided, and the current global conditions, the author has focused on the creation of an in-depth research, with a clearly established field of research.

1.5 Clarifications and definitions

In the attempt of avoiding any misunderstanding, a few clarifications will need mentioning.

The thesis will make use of the term “*territorial dispute*”. According to Huth a territorial dispute is broadly defined as “[a territorial dispute] involves either a disagreement between states over where their common homeland or colonial borders should be fixed, or, more fundamentally, the dispute entails one country consisting the right of another country even to exercise sovereignty over



some or all of its homeland or colonial territory” (Huth 1996: 19). Historically no clear global law that defines the rules of a border, which is a challenge when two different states have two different views on what defines a boundary. Territorial dispute can have various incentives. Territorial disputes are historically seen as the beginning of breaking into war. argues that the motivation behind big wars in history was based on territorial claims. The motivation of the Cold War was not directly by territorial claims. However, it could be the foundation to the beginning of the conflict that was all rooted in the second world war (Huth 1996: 4). It is further argued by Huth that territorial disputes are rarely the center of analysis within existing literature. Moreover, that the lack of attention on the matter is due to the assumptions the scholar presents, where it becomes presumed that the reader understands the motivation of territorial disputes (Ibid: 9).

Furthermore, the thesis will work with the term conflict resolution. For this notion to make sense, the thesis agrees with the definition of Bercovich and Jackson (2009: 20) of what defines a conflict. Bercovich and Jackson define conflict as “*A perception of incompatibility between two or more actors and the range of behavior associated with such perceptions*” (Bercovich, Jackson 2009: 20). Thus, conflict resolution holds the main goal of changing the incompatibility between the actors, into a compatibility. The reason why conflict resolution is applied regarding territorial disputes is the possibility examining how to achieve a common ground between the actors involved.

Lastly, a concept that will be mentioned throughout the thesis is “*relative power*”. As the concept of power is understood differently by different scholars, a clarification of the concept is needed. The thesis concurs with the definition presented by Gideon Rose as “... *the capabilities and resources with which states can influence each other*” (1998: 149) These capabilities and resources are ultimately decided by influence of the systemic dimension.



3. Theory

The following chapter will introduce the main theoretical framework, rooted in the ripeness theory by William Zartman (2000) and the supplementary theory, neoclassical realism by Gideon Rose (1998). Thereafter, an operationalization of the theory's use in the analysis of the thesis will be presented.

3.1 Ripeness Theory

Timing is a concept that is used in various settings. In relation to conflict resolution, timing often show to play an important role, as proposed by Zartman (2000: 245). This is explained thoroughly by William Zartman in his contribution to the book of "International conflict resolution after the cold war" where ripeness theory in practice, as well as the components, and identifications of ripeness are introduced.

The understanding of ripeness is all connected to the question of timing, and since the territorial dispute between Japan and Russia has lasted over seventy years timing makes the dispute notably interesting. The moment is ripe, when the timing is right. When one party begins to reflect upon its actions, timing will be set into theory and practice. The theory of ripeness has been acknowledged by various scholars agreeing that certain actions must take place when the time is right. Henry Kissinger (1974) is one of the individuals who concurs to the notion of ripeness as one of the utmost essentials of diplomacy. Nevertheless, ripeness is only a condition of conflict resolution, and therefore not necessarily the sole reason to a successful negotiation. Ripeness has to be captured by the two parties that have been situated in the position of mutually hurting stalemate, or by an outside mediator. The concept known as the mutually hurting stalemate, is the most prominent factor of ripeness. This is a particularly interesting concept in regard to the Kuril island conflict, because of the many years of non-resolution. The mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) concept belongs to conflict resolution and was developed by William Zartman in 1985 (Zartman, Touval 1985), before he explained it within his theory of ripeness. The definition of mutually hurting stalemate, is defined as *"...when the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degrees or for the same reasons), they seek a way out."* (Zartman 2000: 228) However, the parties do not search for an exit before the moment is ripe. Although the mutually hurting stalemate occurs between two parties, a mediator can intervene the process of resolution. This mediator can be either an outside group, such



as the United Nations, or another state. An additional noteworthy aspect is that the negotiation process does not always begin on the grounds of a ripe moment. Negotiations are also able to begin without the moment being ripe. Does this happen, is it not always the case of a valid negotiation. The negotiation can in the case of a nonvalid reason to negotiate rather be a strategic move, in order to obtain more time, or confuse the other party to create an advantage. Zartman (2000) emphasizes that although false events are able to occur, a real negotiation of settlement cannot find place unless the time is ripe (226-8).

As a result of understanding the reason of why ripeness and timing is significant in ripeness theory, the components of ripeness will now be introduced. In the components of ripeness, it is important to understand the components of which the mutually hurting stalemate is built upon. The first component lies in each party's own attitude towards being in a mutually hurting stalemate position. Whether one party has the upper hand or not, can change from the attitude of one party to the other. Another attitude could for example be military power. Component number two of ripeness is the hope of an escape, or a way out of the conflict. A particular settlement is not needed at hand, but the ability to imagine a chance of freedom from the conflict, and at the same time sharing this view with the other party is a component of ripeness. When a party find themselves in the position of mutually hurting stalemate, the premise that they will want to get out of the check they have been placed in, and search for alternate options, arise. This notion concurs to other assumptions of negotiation derived from Brams and Taylor (Brams, Taylor 1996). The third component which has been mentioned previously is the chance of a mediator, or a third part involved. *"If the parties do not recognize clear evidence in someone else's view, that they impasse, and Mutually Hurting Stalemate has not yet occurred"* (Zartman 2000: 228-31). The position of mutually hurting stalemate is a subjective view from either respective party. Hence its occurrence at any stage in the conflict. Either from the beginning, or towards the end of a conflict is the mutually hurting stalemate able to occur. In some instances, it takes a long time for the mutually hurting stalemate to show for each party. In identifying the components of a ripe moment, Zartman describes low level of conflict in contrast to high level of conflict, as an indicator of when the position of mutually hurting stalemate occurs (Ibid: 231). The difference between a low and a high level of conflict, exist in the damage and attention around the conflict. Identifying whether or not both parties want to escape the conflict is easier. This is often identified by the head of the nation, either verbally or by his or her actions. When the feeling arises of both parties wanting to enter into a compromise a *requitement* occurs. This implies that both sides are ready to give up something in order for a compromise to happen. It is the need of the parties



or mediator involved, to in fact identify some of the components for ripeness and acknowledge the position of mutually hurting stalemate, in order for a negotiation to commence. 'Figure 1', visualizes the components of ripeness.

Within these components the following six propositions are presented by Zartman (2000: 227-243) These propositions are what makes up the components of ripeness.

Proposition 1: *Ripeness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the initiation of negotiations, bilateral or mediated (227).*

Proposition 2 (Definitional): *If the (two) parties to a conflict (a) perceive themselves to be in a hurting stalemate and (b) perceive the possibility of a negotiated solution (a way out), the conflict is ripe for resolution (i.e., for negotiations toward resolution to begin) (228).*

Proposition 3: *An MHS contains objective and subjective elements, of which only the latter are necessary and sufficient to its existence (229).*

Proposition 4: *If the parties' subjective expressions of pain, impass, and inability to bear the costs of further escalation, related to objective evidence of stalemate, data on numbers and nature of casualties and material costs, and/or other such indicators of an MHS can be found, along with expressions of a sense of a way out, ripeness exists (231).*

Proposition 5: *(a) Once ripeness has been established, specific tactics by mediators can seize the ripe moment and turn it into negotiations; (b) If only objective elements of ripeness exist, specific tactics by mediators can bring the conflicting parties to feel/understand the pain of their mutual stalemate and turn to negotiations (232).*

Proposition 6: *The perception of a mutually enticing opportunity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the continuation of negotiations to the successful conclusion of a conflict (243).*

Various studies have tested the notion, and application of ripeness (Touval 1982; Haass 1990, Aggestam and Jönson 1997). The general notion is that the ripeness theory has been useful, however some scholars have suggested clarification to the theory. Zartman (2000) is aware of some lacks within the ripeness theory. One of the lacks mentioned is the missing condition of leadership. Leadership change is suggested to have grave impact of ripeness, but is in Zartman's revised theory, not suggested as a condition for ripeness. Other scholars have criticized the theory for being too complex, when distinguishing between ripeness and resolution (Hass 1990). Ripeness theory cannot explain how states go from a ripe moment into fully flexed conclusions of a conflict.



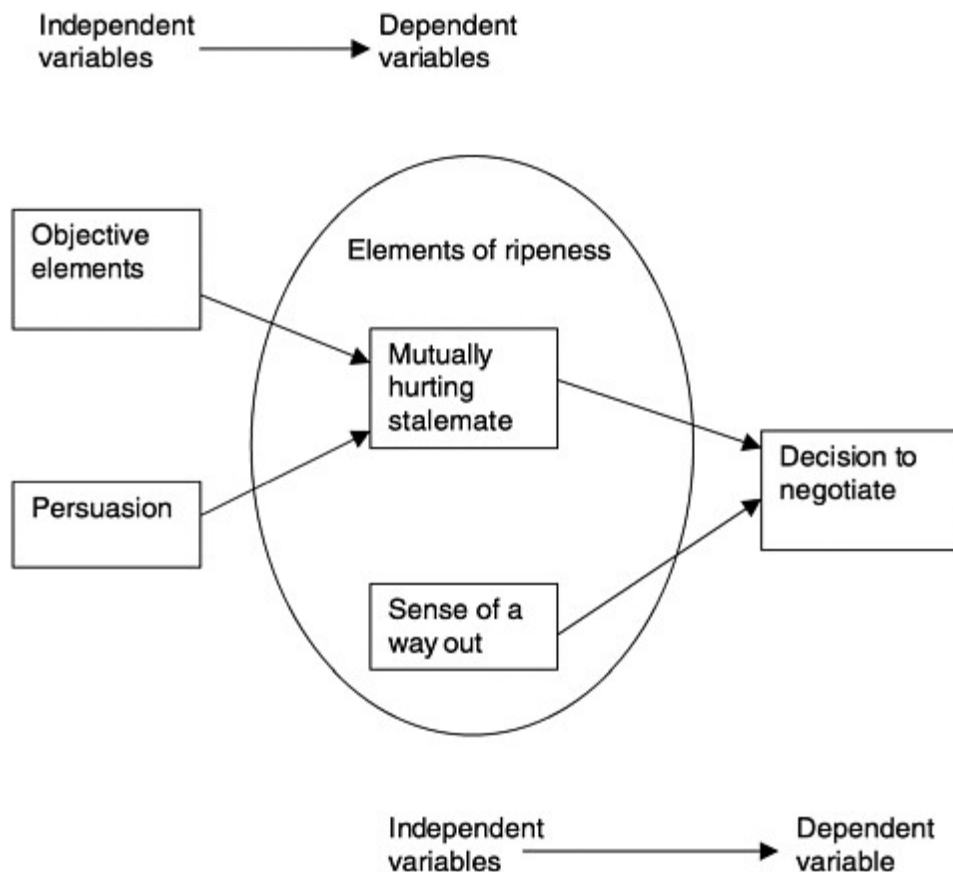


Figure 1: Visualization of the conditions of ripeness as proposed by Zartman.

Source: William Zartman 2000 p. 230

3.2 Neoclassical Realism

When analyzing a state's foreign policy and the formation hereof, the main theory of ripeness, is not seen as sufficient in explaining the foreign policy. As suggested in the methodology chapter, many theories have the ability to better analyze these actions.

The theory of neoclassical realism is developed by Gideon Rose (1998) in his work "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy". According to Rose (1998) the essence of a state's foreign policy derives from relative power amongst states, especially relative material power. Rose points out, these two components are the essential reason as to why they are realist (Rose 1998: 145). The focal point of neoclassical realism is to explain how the international system and its relative power, as well as underlying structures and motivation shape the foreign policy of a single state. In



neoclassical realism both external levels, also known as systemic level, as well as internal level, also known as unit levels, are incorporated (Ibid: 144-172). There are not one single neoclassical realist theory existing, rather various neoclassical realist theories, that are all build up upon the basic assumptions of realism. The core assumptions of realism, that is shared by the neoclassical realist theories include; states as the principal actors within the international system, an anarchic international system leading to self-help, and that all states pursue power because power is needed in order to gain influence, and in order to secure goals of the state. This does not differ, whether the aim is status-quo or a revisionist aim. The neoclassical realist notion believes that politics is controlled by the international system and the security environment surrounding states, and the ability to reach power in this system. In a state's behavior, neoclassical realism supposes increasing power result in a state seeking more influence out of the country, and when their relative power decreases their actions will be reduced (Ibid: 150). The most similarities, and where the theory of neoclassical realism mainly derives from is defensive realism introduced by Kenneth Waltz (1979). Moreover, is it believed that anarchy is the predominant root to difficulties that a state might encounter (Firoozabadi, Ashkezari 2016: 96).

It is noteworthy that no exact theoretical framework has been conducted in regard to neoclassical realism. Although this can be seen as a weakness, it can also be seen as a strength. The ability to have flexibility in analyzing the variables of both systemic and unit level in foreign policy, contributes to a deeper understanding. Kenneth Waltz (1979) proposes that the international security scene is in constant change, and the survival of states is sought through pure military actions. This notion can be interpreted as outdated on today's scene. He and Feng (2012) further propose that national interest and values are dependent on the state, and that the same values of national interest cannot be regarded as a general set (Ibid: 9). Both classical realism and neo-realism has been criticized for their lack of analytical application, when attempting to analyze foreign policy (Firoozabadi, Ashkezari 2016). Furthermore, the just-mentioned realist theories are strongly criticized for focusing merely on the systemic level of analysis, and thereby neglecting internal factors. Neoclassical realists believe that the domestic factors and underlying structures plays an equally important role. Neorealism does not consider domestic factors as a method of examining the role of a state in the international system, as neoclassical realism suggests. One of the aims of neoclassical realism is to explain the foreign policy of a single state, which is another reason why the thesis applies this theory in order to analyze the foreign policy strategy of Japan.



Another reason why neoclassical realist theory suits as a good supplementary theory, to the main theory of ripeness, includes its similar position towards the reality. *“The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must”* (Rose 1998: 146).

3.3 Operationalization

The operationalization will explain how the thesis understand and apply the presented theories. Based on the above-mentioned theory of ripeness, six propositions are provided. These propositions contribute to detect whether or not a moment is ripe for negotiation.

The main theory is the ripeness theory proposed by William Zartman (2000). The analytical framework will take point of departure in the six propositions. The propositions will be the basis for the structure of the analysis. Moreover, the assisting theory of neoclassical realism coined by Gideon Rose (1998) will focus on examining the foreign policy strategy of Japan. The two theories that were presented in the previous chapter, will be combined in order to most fully answer the research question. The propositions will be operationalized into an analytical tool, with the aim of answering the thesis research question. The analysis will go through each proposition one by one and apply them on the empirical data. It is understood that the propositions can be applied differently accordingly, wherefor an outline of how the propositions will be operationalized in the thesis will follow;

Proposition number one states that initiation of conflict resolution is to an extent a component of ripeness. Hence, proposition one will aim to find out whether or not any measures have been made in order to mediate this conflict. More specifically, this proposition aims to find out whether there have there been any initiation of conflict resolution? The way initiation is understood in the analysis will be regarded as: Various talks by government officials revolving the Kuril Islands territorial dispute, a direct statement of the need to negotiate, indicators which show an opportunity of reconciliation.

Proposition number two suggest that the moment is ripe for resolution when Japan perceives themselves in a mutually hurting stalemate position, and simultaneously sees the possibility of a way out. The way the analysis will find out whether Japan sees itself in a mutually hurting stalemate position, is by examining whether or not Japan feel locked. This can be expressed by a direct statement. It can also be detected when the viewpoint interpreted as ‘ the ability to win the territory back is simply not a possibility’ is obtained. Is Japan situated in a deadlock, where they



cannot get out? The deadlock can be seen as draw in chess, where you have elements that are valuable to you, that are too precious to lose. Have any resolutions been attempted already? And how? With these questions, it is aimed to find out whether Japan is in a deadlock and seeking a way out of the conflict. In the next proposition the thesis will look deeper into the components of the mutually hurting stalemate.

Proposition number three will aim to find out what subjective and objective elements exist for Japan. The subjective elements are elements based in the assumption of a subjective point of view of each state involved. In the case of the Kuril Islands dispute, the subjective view of Japan, is needed in order to verify the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate. Subjective elements will be found, by examining clear indicators of Japanese position. Is there a mediator involved? More specifically, the question is; whether Japan clearly states that the conflict cannot continue the way it has up until the current time. Lastly, are there any signs of an alternative route that Japan is leaning towards? This would call for a subjective way out.

Proposition number four states that ripeness exist if subjective pain is unbearable, coexisting with a feeling of a way out. The aim of this proposition is to find whether subjective pain exist from the Japanese side. Pain will in the case of proposition four be measured in military activities, and the economic relationship with Russia. The economic relationship can also include factors such as: raw materials such as oil, as well as fishing industry. The subjective pain will also be analyzed in terms of importance of geopolitical strategic position, and the importance of the relation to third-party actors or allies. In the case of Japan, will the relationship to the United States hurt Japan if weakened by Japan's relationship to Russia?

Proposition number five explains two possibilities of arriving at the negotiations. The first is: when it has been settled that ripeness exist, one actor can embrace the possibility of negotiating. The other is: if the mutually hurting stalemate is only built up on objective elements. If the latter is the case, then pain can be understood by the opponent and can lead to negotiation. This proposition will look back on the four previous propositions in order to determine whether ripeness exist, or whether the mutually hurting stalemate is only built up on objective elements.

Proposition number six proposes that the successfulness of a conflict is best reached when the parties both have an appealing solution to reach for. Since the thesis is analyzing from the view of Japan, only the Japanese point of view to this will be analyzed. This will be analyzed by attempting to find out whether Japan has made any proposals through their foreign policy papers, and the defense policy papers along with the expression of satisfaction with the solution.



The propositions will be answered by the way the propositions are operationalized. In addition, the questions that appear within each proposition will be answered through a content analysis of the empirical data, with the use of neoclassical realism introduced in the preceding chapter.

4. Analysis

In this chapter the foreign policy of Japan during the Abe administrations will be examined through the use of William Zartman's ripeness theory (2000), and neoclassical realism (1998) with the aim of analyzing how the foreign policy strategy has sought conflict resolution regarding the Kuril Islands dispute and the aspect of timing. The Japanese ministry of foreign affairs and the Japanese ministry of defense' official documents will be the main sources of data within the analysis.

4.1 Proposition 1

The first proposition states that: *Ripeness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the initiation of negotiations, bilateral or mediated (Zartman 2000: 227)*. Thus, the goal of this proposition will be to identify the initiation of negotiations between Japan and Russia, as demonstrated in the operationalization.

4.1.1 The Diplomatic Bluebook under Shinzo Abe's administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019)

The Diplomatic Bluebook from year 2007, describes the Japanese foreign affairs activities in the calendar year of 2006 wherefor the year of the Diplomatic Bluebook always refers back to the previous year. The Diplomatic Bluebook of 2007 dives into foreign affairs diplomacy between Japan and Russia in the year 2006. It is clearly stated that Prime Minister Abe and President Putin held discussions regarding the Kuril Islands dispute at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit meeting in November. *"Together an acceptable solution has been agreed, to actively negotiate better on a political and clerical level"*² (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007: 84). This

² “に受入れ可能な解決策を共に見いだすため、政治レベル、事務レベルで更に精力的に交渉していくことで一致した misun” (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007: 84) *Original text, translated by the author. All Japanese citations are translated by the author throughout the thesis.*



statement signifies that the Abe administration do believe that negotiation should find place. Furthermore, it is highlighted that Japan and Russia are interested in different matters in regard to a possible peace treaty. It is not specifically mentioned in the Blue book, what these exact matters are, implying that Japan does not want to publicly announce their preferences. The reason of this highlight within the bluebook, does however, point towards domestic influence since the matters are not published. Neoclassical realism argues that domestic factors have an influence on foreign policy, and the way that it is shaped. Furthermore, the foreign policy is highly influenced by whom is in control of it (Rose 1998: 147). Under the Abe administration, the foreign policy does already show to be somewhat restrained, by not letting out details of prominent matters. It could be argued that compromise is a factor of the strategy, as Japan show willingness to actively negotiate.

In the bluebook of 2008, the attitude remains unchanged. Indication of initiation is clear in both the bluebook of 2007 and 2008, when regarding talks on the political level, as an indication of initiation. Both Russia and Japan have shown in interest in the dispute by discussing it on a political level. Although an initiation is identified, and an element of ripeness can be seen, no written negotiations, or clear solutions have been proposed by either party, suggesting that the moment of ripeness has not been seized. This can be due to the fullness of the ripe moment missing more components. Perplexity can arise as the parties do not seize the ripeness, resulting in the reality that the moment simply was not ripe, although initiation is detected (Zartman 2000: 227).

In Shinzo Abe's second term, starting in 2012 the indication of initiation is still attainable. In the bluebook of 2013 and 2014 the attitude is unchanged, and the negotiations are not developing past small talks on the topic, and agreement that both states are keen on negotiating (Ministry of foreign affairs 2013; 2014: 87). The talks between Japan and Russia faced a steep halt in the year of 2014, due to the Russian behavior in Crimea. As previously emphasized one of the notions of neoclassical realism, is that the foreign policy of a state is influenced by the international surrounding environment. This evidence is recognized in regard to the Japanese foreign policy strategy, when Japan voluntarily show themselves reluctant to this behavior, and thereby influencing their foreign policy stance towards Russia. Russia too, was reneging on its scheduled meeting with Japan in 2014, and the counterreaction of Japan resulted in no new talks over the Kuril Islands (Ministry of foreign affairs 2015). It was not before 2016 that strong indications of initiation again took place. In the Diplomatic Bluebook of 2017, the importance of Russian relationship is highlighted in order to stay more secure in the geographical surrounding areas. The emphasis of the need for



security can be seen as a reaction to systemic forces. Furthermore, it indicates a willingness to control the security area surrounding it, and by that, shaping the way Russia should adapt to this strategy.

The ultimate indication of initiation becomes apparent in the foreign policy strategy of Japan when President Putin and Prime Minister Abe meet in December 2016. Deliberate steps were taken, and a joint economic activity pact was agreed. The content in the agreement should be further developed, after the meeting. Moreover, Japan highlighted that this agreement should entail the previous islanders right to be able to visit the islands, and that Japanese fishing boats should continue to sail the ocean surrounding the islands (Ministry of foreign affairs 2017: 96-7). The importance of previous islanders' rights, combined with economic gains for Japan, can be interpreted as a high priority in the foreign policy strategy. This signifies that the Japanese foreign policy actions, are rooted in internal factors. Nevertheless, this breakthrough did not come any closer to the actual question of whom the territory *de facto* belongs to, and since then, a resolution has yet to be found (Ministry of foreign affairs 2017:97; 2018:100).

Initiation can be identified through the Diplomatic Bluebooks of Japan since 2007. During the Abe administrations, various discussions about the territorial dispute, regarding military on the islands, history, as well as a conclusion of a peace treaty has been debated. In Abe's first term (2006-2007) clear initiations has been discovered during high-level summits. In the beginning of the second term the Japan-Russo relationship went through a hindrance, due to the Russian actions on Crimea, resulting in limited talks on the topic of the Kuril Islands. This is arguably an example of how the aspect of timing changes the actions of the foreign policy strategy of Japan. As emphasized when introducing neoclassical realism, power-balance is an important factor in order to survive in the international system. Hence the possible halt in negotiations. Moreover, countries with various capacity in different fields frequently have diverse structures, making them act different (Rose 1998: 147). It has been identified that initiations have been taken directly, given the agreement of the Japanese-Russian joint economic activity agreement on the islands. For initiation to take place Zartman (2000) notes that ripeness is a necessity. Nonetheless, does that not mean that ripeness is the only condition for initiation. Other conditions may also apply for an initiation to take place, and the initiation must be seized by the actors, or through influence of a mediator.

The foreign policy strategy in connection with initiation has been assertive in combination with a certain restrictiveness. The assertiveness can be viewed by the way of the many initiations pursued by the Japanese government. The restrictive strategy is noted by virtue of holding



back, in order to achieve greater national security. The strive for security is a reaction of systemic incentives, and the uncertainty that the environment around it brings. In case of the Abe administrations, initiation has clearly been identified. Thus, proposition one can conclude that ripeness exists in regard to the condition of proposition one in the perspective of Japan. It can therefore be assumed that timing has been right and seized by both states.

4.2 Proposition 2

The second proposition states that: *If the (two) parties to a conflict (a) perceive themselves to be in a hurting stalemate and (b) perceive the possibility of a negotiated solution (a way out), the conflict is ripe for resolution (i.e., for negotiations toward resolution to begin) (228).* The second part of the analysis will aim to find out whether Japan perceives itself in a mutually hurting stalemate position and aims to seek a way out. Therefore, any indicators that Japan find themselves in a locked situation will be explored, as well as alternative measures taken to seek a way out. The lock can be interpreted as losing something which is too valued too lose, and therefore 1) not giving up on the stance, and 2) fighting strongly back. What is possible to lose? This will be analyzed by using neoclassical realism; thus, it has the ability to identify both internal as well as external factors of a countries foreign policy. These factors are in particular made up of economy, military and geopolitical positioning. Through the Diplomatic Bluebook and the Defense of Japan, these factors will be explored.

4.2.1 Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019)

In proposition one, the initiation of negotiations was identified. However, as mentioned the positions of the two states did not show to be entirely unitary (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007). Granted that the positions were, the negotiations of a concluding a possible peace treaty, could have also taken place sooner.

In the beginning of Abe's first term as Prime Minister, the Japan-Russo economic relations were flourishing. The economic cooperation between the two expanded significantly in 2006, to the highest it had been since the end of the Soviet era. Japan explains this achievement as valuable, due to the strong growing economy of Russia in 2006. This shows evidence that the economic relationship with Russia, was of utmost importance to Japan, making it a valuable asset (ibid: 85). 'Figure 2' explains the Japan-Russian trade volume from 1987-2007 (Ministry of foreign affairs



2008: 81). The vast escalation of trade between Japan and Russia from a 2005 total trade value of approximately 15,000 million Japanese yen, to the 2007 total trade value of over 25,000 million Japanese yen, indicates an immense interest in Russian trade relations since the Abe administration took office. Influence from abroad is sought as the relative power of the state increases (Rose 1998: 151). This presupposes that the relative power of Japan is increasing, in this case the economic material power, and thereby seeking greater influence by its Russian neighbors. Moreover, this foreign policy strategy would not only increase economic activity between the two states but show value in the relationship between the two states. In the absence of Abe in office, the financial crisis of 2008 took place. The crisis resulted in a dip of over 50% of the trade volume. Inspecting the years in between, the previous trade volume had fortunately been caught up in the years of his absence to approximately 26 million yen (Ministry of foreign affairs 2013: 88). According to neoclassical realism a pursuance of economic growth, leads to a bigger amount of power within the international system, providing the state with more relative material power (Rose 1998: 147). When linking the neoclassical realist thought with the Japanese foreign policy, it would support an incentive of reaching more material power from the Japanese perspective, this being the power they gain from the Japan-Russia trade relations. In that manner the trade relations would contribute to a bigger loss of value, if the Japanese were to lose it. It can be argued that Japan has positioned themselves in a mutually hurting stalemate position with Russia, because they have made themselves dependent on Russia economically, at least within Abe's first term in office.

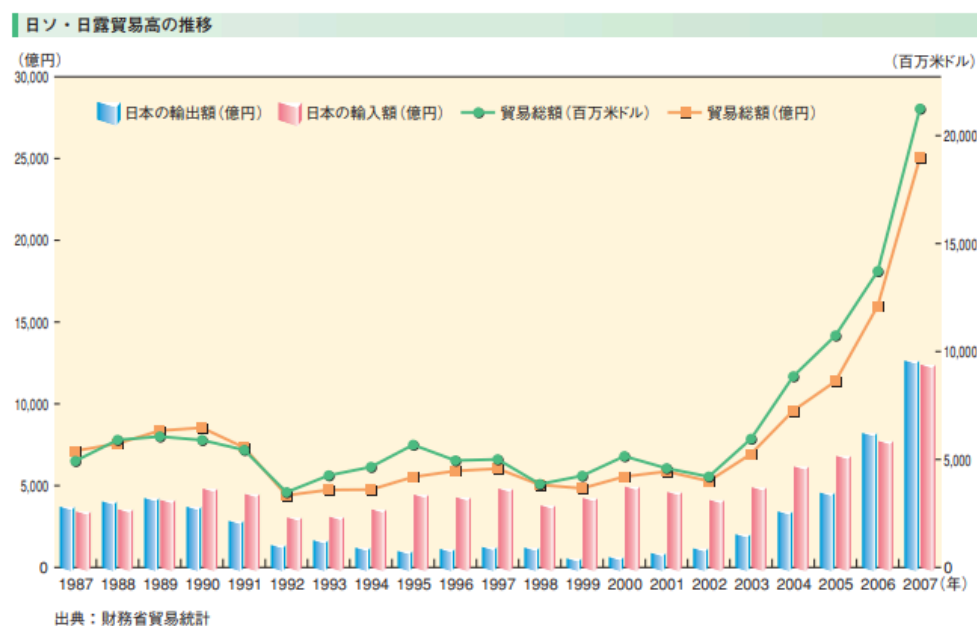


Figure 2: The Japanese-Russian trade volume

Source: Japanese ministry of finance trade statistics

In Shinzo Abe's second administration, the economic relations with Russia as put forward in the Diplomatic Bluebook of 2014, suggested that the inspiration towards the Russian economy was declining. The growth of the national economy in Russia was at a staggering 1.3% due to bad economic relations with the EU (Ministry of foreign affairs 2014: 89). The attitude towards the economic situation of Russia was described as a "*sluggish*"³ recovery (Ibid). The position held by the Japanese government towards the Russian economy worsened due to United States sanctions because of the situation in Ukraine (Ministry of foreign affairs 2015: 107). Presuming that Japan at this stage was in a stalemate position with Russia due to other elements, would explain why Japan chose the side of the United States. Nevertheless, after agreeing on joint economic activity on the islands in December 2016, Japan could find themselves in a deadlock with Russia. The Diplomatic Bluebook of 2017 describes the joint economic activity agreement decided by Japan and Russia. It was put forward that a special system would be taken into practice, which would allow for shared economic activity in areas such as, fishing. Further explanation of this "special system" is not deepened in the bluebook (Ministry of foreign affairs 2017:95-97). Provided that Japan behave assertive towards Russia following this agreement, Japan suddenly has a considerable amount to lose. Thus, Japan to an economic extent arguably are existing in a mutually hurting stalemate position. At least seen from the perspective of Japan. Furthermore, Japan cooperates with Russia in fields such as agriculture, healthcare and energy conservation. In terms of energy conservation, the production of oil and natural gas is exported to mainland Japan. One of the places where these raw materials are found, is in the sea of the Kuril Islands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016: 124). This notion commits further to Japan existing in a mutually hurting stalemate with Russia. For example, one could argue that if Japan seeks to occupy the islands, Russia will not receive the raw materials that the islands have to offer. This could potentially lead to an enraged Russian stance, following an escalation of the conflict. This would also be the case the other way around.

Zartman describes the possibility of a way out as when states seek for alternative options. The joint economic agreement can from a Japanese derived perspective also be classified as an alternative route for Japan. In order to advantageously position themselves within the international system, and live up to the systemic features of security, the joint economic agreement could contribute

³ "緩慢であり...にとどまった" (Ministry of foreign affairs 2014: 89)



to a search for a way out, or an alternative route, that would compete with a possible peace treaty leading to a definite resolution of conflict. The foreign strategy is de facto seeking alternative plans, which is put forward in the Diplomatic Bluebook of 2015. The plans are rooted in national interest. The main focus of the plans is for the previous islanders, or descendants here from, to visit the islands and potential grave visits. In addition, plans on disaster prevention and healthy ecosystems are expected (Ministry of foreign affairs 2015: 109).

4.2.2 Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations 2007-2008 & 2013-2019

Economic factors are not the only factor used, when determining the conditions of a mutually hurting stalemate position. Military factors are also compelling in this decision. The ‘Defense of Japan’, are the official yearly white papers of Japan. The interesting thing about Japan and its military, is the pacifist notion that the Japanese defense is built upon. The Japanese constitution prohibits the right to anything other than self-defense forces. Article nine of the constitutions explicitly states that Japan must not ever use force or threat “...as means of settling international disputes” (The cabinet of Japan 1947). Although Japan does not appear as a realist state on the grounds of its constitution, does not exclude the application of realist theory to explain the Japanese foreign policy strategy. Nevertheless, although Japan may not appear as a realist state, the first term of Shinzo Abe changed the course of to a peace-promoting foreign policy strategy, as previously noted. It can be debated whether the constitution already places Japan in a deadlock regarding conflict. The mere reason that Japan is not able, by constitutional law, to take back the islands with force, or threat puts them in a situation where military combat is no option. However, the Japanese military is heavily reliant, and in cooperation with the United States, and their military expansions are often in relation with the United States. In every Defense of Japan, a chapter is dedicated to the strengthening of Japan-US alliance (Ministry of defense 2007-2019). Hereby, the United States have the ability to some extent be regarded as equal to the Japanese forces. When applying this logic, the military competition suddenly adjusts.

The Defense of Japan during the times of the Abe administrations regards the Kuril Islands dispute as the most pressurizing problem, in the relation to the Japan-Russo relations (Ministry of defense 2007: 67). In contrast to the notion, elucidate information on the topic is not prominent in the Defense of Japan as it merely states, that it hopes that the issue will be resolved at an early date. “It is hoped the issue will be resolved at an early date”⁴ (Ministry of Defense 2013: 55).

⁴ 早期の北方領土問題の解決が望まれる。(Ministry of defense 2013: 55)



Despite realism takes point of departure in national interest. Neoclassical realist lays out a framework in which national interests can be pursued, when the international system is in balance. The strategy of the defense policy can be regarded as attempt to seek balance, by means of behaving unassertive towards a pressuring problem. This can be regarded as an indication, that Japan already perceives itself in a mutually hurting stalemate position, and therefore attempts to avoid an escalation in the conflict.

In 2013 Japan expands its defense budget for the first time in eleven years (Ministry of defense 2013: 119). In the Defense of Japan 2013, it is argued that the measures in increase are taking place, because of the global security environment progressively is becoming rougher. It is explained that in order for Japan to secure the people living on the properties of the country, these actions are needed (ibid). This statement contains the very basics of motivation to pursue power, in alignment with neoclassical realism. According to Rose (1998) power, is determined by the factors of what capabilities or resources a given state has, and how these factors can influence another state (ibid: 151). Given that Japan strives for power, by means of balancing itself in the international system, shows a foreign policy strategy dependent on good relationships with the surrounding states.

However, the incentive behind the increase, is arguably in possession of another motive as well. Because Japan is incapable, by its constitution to threat, or use force in regard to international disputes, other approaches might convey the same message as a threat. The increase of military power is in a neoclassical realist perspective a pursuance of power in the international system, of which the state is a part. The increase does not display a direct verbal threat, or any means of force, which may show as an indirect threat. Japan compares its military expenditure with the countries of China, Russia, United States, France, UK and Germany. In a graph from the Defense of Japan 2013, on Russian trends in military defense, it clearly shows the increase in Russian military expenditure. Russia has increased their defense budget 5.12 times, making Russia the country out of the six comparisons, the one to have increased its budget the most (Ministry of defense 2013: 69). Putin was re-elected in 2018 with a campaign emphasizing the words “strong nation” and “influential power”⁵ (Ministry of Defense 2019: 117). This is highlighted in the most recent Defense of Japan, suggesting that Russia sees themselves in a position of great power. The question is how these declarations are supposed to be interpreted by the international community. It can be argued that Japan of military capabilities are being pressured by Russia. However as beforementioned the cooperation with the United States is being strongly prioritized. In the most recent annual Defense of Japan, the chapter dedicated to the

⁵ 「強い国家」や「影響力ある大国」 (Ministry of defense 2019: 117)



strengthening of the Japan-US alliance clearly states, that in order to sustain security in the current global environment, the US alliance, is needed. (Ministry of Defense 2019: 304). It is furthermore emphasized that the United States according to Japan, holds the first place of dominant military in the world, and because of that, have secured Japanese security, not only in Japan but in their entire region (ibid: 303-5)

Summing up, the conditions of mutually hurting stalemate are established in the Diplomatic Bluebook, and in the Defense of Japan during the Abe administrations. In particular the factors of economy and military has contributed in identifying the requirements of an existing mutually hurting stalemate position, in the standpoint of Japan. What is putting Japan in a deadlock with Russia is the valuable economic relationship with Russia, which could potentially damage the economy of Japan if a conflict was to escalate. In addition, patterns can be detected when exploring the military stance of Japan. These patterns show that Japan commit to the international system, in order to secure its own position. Japan's military alliance with the United States enable them to posit themselves in a mutually hurting stalemate position with Russia in regards to military. Nevertheless, Japan seemingly balances itself against Russia to obtain a position of stalemate with the aim of achieving a power balance. The analysis suggest that Japan and Russia go in and out of stalemate position during the Abe administrations.

Notably, all these factors can be understood as objective factors. In order to wholly determine whether Japan is in a mutually hurting stalemate position, an identification of subjectivity has to be examined, which will be done in proposition three. The foreign policy strategy has in connection with proposition two, shown to be equally as assertive as identified in proposition one. In proposition two, the assertiveness is identified by the increase of military spending, along with an eager involvement in economic relations with Russia. Within proposition two, similar to proposition one the aspect of timing plays a role in the foreign policy strategy of Japan. The aspect of timing in the relation to Japans pursuance of a resolution can be recognized from external factors, such as the Russian economic relations with the EU, worsening their economic stance, changing the Japanese stance towards Russia because of that specific timing.

4.3 Proposition 3



The third proposition builds upon the second proposition and declares that: *An MHS contains objective and subjective elements, of which only the latter are necessary and sufficient to its existence* (229). Moreover, the subjective elements, are emphasized to be the most significant to the existence of the mutually hurting stalemate, are able to be manipulated by a third-party mediator. This is possible when the mediator or manipulator as it can be named, have the ability to make an increase in the size of investment at hand. These investments can be regarded as the valuables identified in proposition two; economy and defense. The manipulator can potentially supply one party with enough objective elements for the stalemate to arise (ibid: 244). The notion of proposition three is in accordance with the ontological standpoint of the thesis, critical realism. It is important to emphasize the perception of mutually hurting stalemate, and the perception of objective conditions that make up the position. The evidence can be thin, or unconvincing, but as long as it is there, a mutually hurting stalemate exist (ibid). Systemic factors are often easier to identify objectively than subjectively (Rose 1998: 147).

4.3.1 Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its objective elements

In proposition two, the factor of economic cooperation was introduced between Japan and Russia. For the reason that economic relations are in fact stated in the Diplomatic Bluebook, and because the economic cooperation is visible in various graphs, it makes the factor an objective element. Yet, whether this element is subjective to Japan will have to be examined closer.

In 2007, the economic relations between Japan and Russia prospered. An oil and gas project around the Kuril Islands, and other islands surrounding them had been initiated by the Russians. The new initiative incorporated Japanese businesses and would lead to a “[...] a guarantee of oil and gas supply to Japan”⁶ (Ministry of foreign affairs 2008: 81). The economic relationship may give Japan the benefit of a prosperous economy. Besides, it could benefit Japan with raw materials. This would be a great advantage for the reason that Japan as a group of islands lack raw materials. Given this statement an argument can be made that the economic relationship in the view of Japan is subjective by virtue of enhancing the benefit of raw materials, provided by the economic bond. Apart from this, six Japan-business centers opened in Russian cities for Russian companies to exchange regional economic exchanges, and visits to Japan to develop upon their neighborly

⁶ 日本への天然ガスの供給が確約されている。(Ministry of foreign affairs 2008: 81)



cooperation (Ministry of foreign affairs 2015: 109). It is striking, that this development is taking place, which could though be regarded as evidence that the states are indeed not in a stalemate position. Because there is no clear indicated, of a recognition by the state or others, that they are in a deadlock. In contrast, the Diplomatic Bluebook of 2019, expresses that, at the time of the agreement of joint economic activity, the two leaders both perceived it as “*abnormal*”⁷ that no peace treaty had been concluded in for more than seventy years (Ministry of foreign affairs 2019: 113). This is of course significant and suggests a definite subjective view towards the initiation of conflict negotiation, through the acknowledgement of the abnormality. Hence, the motivation behind the economic agreement can be regarded as subjective. Leaders are generally prone to show their position in regard to whether or not they feel able to negotiate with the opposed party (Zartman 2000: 231). A mutually hurting stalemate is built up on objective and subjective elements, where the economic element would be viewed as both an objective and subjective element.

Besides the economic factor, it has been identified that a priority for Japan is to feel secure in the international system. In accordance with previous literature on the topic, Akimoto (2018) explains that Shinzo Abe has changed the Japanese defense policy proactively since becoming the Prime Minister. Given that Japan is still a pacifist country according to the constitutions article nine, Akimoto describes Abe’s stance within the defense policy to be proactive pacifism. The proactive pacifism aims to secure peace and prosperity (Akimoto 2018: 24-7). Moreover, it was detected that one of the factors that makes it possible for Japan to have this security is a result of their tight cooperation with the United States of America. Investigating the relationship between Japan and the United States presented in the Diplomatic Bluebook of 2007, connote that Japan views the US as one of the main keys to its security. “...*Because the international community, which withal entails elements of instability and uncertainty, is pursuing a new international order for the 21st century, Japan is strongly developing on its foreign policy based on the Japan-US alliance, and international cooperation*”⁸ (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007: 130). Beforementioned, a third-party player can take the role as mediator, or manipulator. It can be argued whether the United States adopt the role as a third-party mediator in the case of Japan.

⁷ 状態は異常で (Ministry of foreign affairs 2019: 113)

⁸ このように依然として不確実、不安定な要素を内包した国際社会が 21 世紀の新しい国際秩序を模索する中で、日本は日米同盟と国際協調の基礎の上に積極的に外交政策を展開. (ministry of foreign affairs 2007: 130)



Firstly, good diplomatic relations with the United States enable Japan to gain more global power. Neoclassical realism suggests that as relative power increases, states will look for more influence abroad. In the event of Japan their strive for close ties with the United States is constant during both administrations of Shinzo Abe, as noticed in the Diplomatic Bluebooks since 2007. This evidence is presented, in the manner that the bluebook provides the Japan-US alliance with an entire chapter by itself (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007-2019). Against this backdrop, Japan can be argued to possess the ability of being persuaded by the United States to act as they would prefer, rather than acting out of complete national interest. Although it should be mentioned that the alliance arguably may be rooted in a national interest from Japan, to achieve prosperity and security. The alliance with the United States is classified as an objective element, such as the economic factor. It exists in reality, and it is enhanced in the foreign policy strategy. An objective element is an independent variable, which together with persuasion can make up a dependent variable. In the case of ripeness, the independent variable is the mutually hurting stalemate (Zartman 2000: 230).

Secondly, the means of which the United States holds the aptitude to act as a mediator, is for example by providing Japan the benefit of their security. The United States will live up to its complete operation of its security arrangements in Japan. (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007:130) The alliance provides a larger objective element in Japan's situation vis a vis Russia. This implies that without the United States, Japan could be in a position, where it would not be regarded as a stalemate. Without the alliance of the United States, Japan would possibly not have enough value to position themselves against the power of Russia. Provided that the alliance was not existing, the possibility of a defeat of Japan could occur. This may be likely, as there would be no grounds for Russia not to go against Japan, as Russia would not have anything to lose.

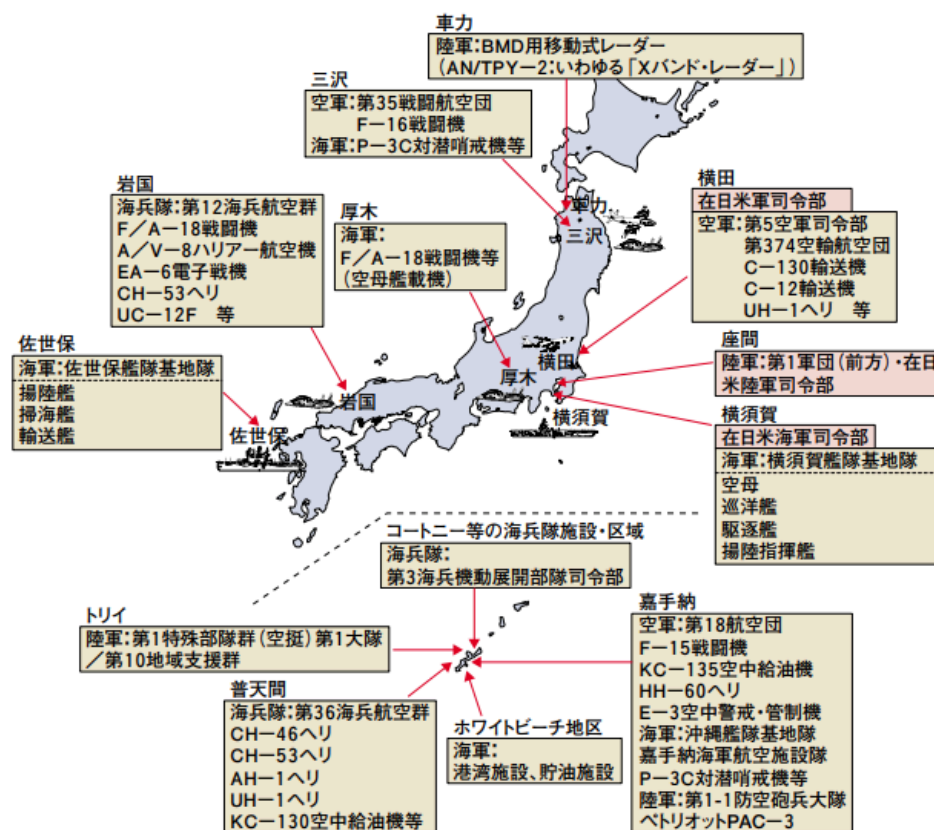
To determine whether or not the United States is in fact a mediator in the case of the Kuril Islands despite, further exploration of their alliance is required. The mention of United States meddling in the conflict has been noted by Iwashita (2016). As beforementioned, the United States has acted as an invader in the country, when the Secretary of State advised the Japanese to decline a treaty with Russia (ibid: 33-4). Historically, the United States has lacked trust in Russia, which could arguably be seen as a reason for the United States to avoid any mediation within the conflict.

4.3.2 The Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its objective elements



To follow up on the above-written matter, the military element plays a fundamental role in relation to the mutually hurting stalemate position. Japan's military cooperation with the United States is of great importance. Formerly determined economic and defense factors were involved in proposing how Japan could be in a mutually hurting stalemate. Defense strength is measurable for instance within arms capacity and military personal. As argued in proposition two, a mutually hurting stalemate position could arise when assembling the Japanese military with the military capacity of the United States. Contributing to whether or not a mediator-role is evident in the case of the Japan-US alliance is the aforementioned notion. The level of stations of the United States military in Japan is immense. To give an idea of the United States military landscape in Japan, figure 3 "Map of the US Japan-army locations in Japan"⁹ show the places in which the United States army are active in Japan in 2007. The thirteen bases are presented in the graph below. The red arrows indicate where in Japan, the stations are based, as well as the names of the stations. Furthermore, each station has a description that entail its military capacities, such as the number of aircrafts, helicopters, fleets, submarines etcetera.

図表Ⅲ-2-1-2 在日米軍の日本における配置図



⁹ 在日米軍の日本における配置図 (Ministry of defense: 179)

Figure 3: US Japan-army stations in Japan

Source: Ministry of defense 2008: 179

As argued in proposition two Japan is capable of reaching a deadlock in military activity with help from the United States. Relevant to the determination of whether the United States contribute with enough military capacity, or objective elements and thereby achieve the mutually hurting stalemate. When connecting the compounds of alliance and defense capabilities, the thesis would argue that the United States possess role of mediator. From previous statements in the Diplomatic Bluebook, clear evidence is made that the military alliance with the United States is a subjective element, as Japan recognizes the strength the alliance provides.

Summing up, in agreement with Zartman (2000) the objective evidence strength leads to a stronger subjective perception of a stalemate position. The objective elements of Japan in relation to the mutually hurting stalemate position, can be classified as: economic elements, alliance elements, and military elements. The foreign policy strategy and its pursuance of resolution can, in connection with proposition three, be perceived through the alliance with the United States. The foreign policy strategy's high prioritization with the alliance with the United States contributes greatly to the pursuance of resolution. However, this strategy can arguably have tripped the path for themselves in order to achieve resolution. Proposition three proposes a further scrutinization of the mutually hurting stalemate, rather than determining the conditions of ripeness. By this reason, the aspect of timing in relation to the Japanese foreign policy strategy has been less clear to identify in this proposition.

4.4 Proposition 4

Proposition number four states that: *If the parties' subjective expressions of pain, impass, and inability to bear the costs of further escalation, related to objective evidence of stalemate, data on numbers and nature of casualties and material costs, and/or other such indicators of an MHS can be found, along with expressions of a sense of a way out, ripeness exists (231).* Subjective pain will take point of departure in the elements: economy, military activities and alliance. These elements were identified in relation to the mutually hurting stalemate in proposition two.



4.4.1 Defense of Japan under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its subjective pain

The Russian actions on the Kuril Islands have been complex and Japan has not had much influence on the actions. Japan exhibits that Russia have deployment of military on Japanese territory - in the perspective of Japan (Figure 4). The map shows that the Japanese defense paper separates its borders with Russia, at the edge of those islands it believes belongs to them, by employing small red curves. The map shows that Russia has one military division on the Kuril Islands. The development of this deployment has not been in the interest of Japan. This is being expressed as Russia being stationed in the northern territory, which is a “*unique*”¹⁰ territory to Japan (Ministry of defense 2007: 67).

図表 I-2-4-3 わが国に近接した地域におけるロシア軍の配置

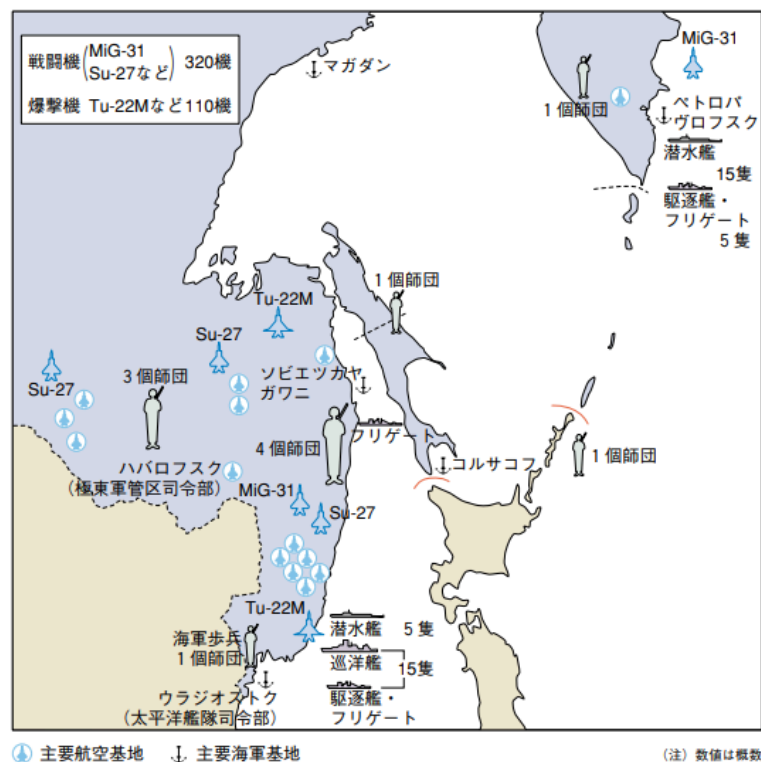


Figure 4: Russian military bases close to Japan.

Source: Ministry of Defense 2007: 65

Moreover, Russian military actions on the islands has contributed to a state of bafflement for Japan. Japan was promised by previous ministers of Russia that there would be a decrease in military

¹⁰ わが国固有の領土である (Ministry of defense 2007: 67)

personnel. However, the military personnel have stayed stagnant since 2005 (Ministry of defense 2007: 67). The fact that Japan does not show a more aggressive manner towards Russia and its stagnation of military personnel implies that the subjective pain impasse Japan. It signifies that Japan cannot afford escalation in the conflict at this moment in time. Since Japan does not have the same amount of military available as Russia (Ibid: 66-7). Although military aggressions have decreased since the end of the Cold War, and other measurements are being taken with the same goal of security, the assertive military behavior still has a significant share of threat (He, Feng 2012: 10). The foreign policy strategy of Japan can arguably be explained through a domestic political priority, since the Japanese attempts to protect themselves in the pursuance of a resolution.

A military exercise involving the Russian military personnel on the Kuril Islands took place. The activity increased the activity of military on the islands. This represents a direct threat to Japan. Japan shows concern and considers that it is important to keep attention to these activities (Ministry of Defense 2016: 77-78). Interestingly, the Japanese attitude did not counterattack this otherwise direct threat. One could wonder why Japan does not counter these actions by help from their alliance of the United States. According to neoclassical realism, this could indicate the relative power of Japan decreasing. The decrease implies that the search for influence abroad is scaled back accordingly. For the reason that Japan is not informed prior to military actions taking place on the islands, nor being informed about new increase of military personnel, the Russian actions arguably puts Japan in a deadlock beyond the mutually hurting stalemate position. Likewise, does military actions of Russia indicate a subjective pain on the grounds of the objective element – military actions. Japan perceives their relative power to be smaller than that of Russia, resulting in a tolerant position. Japan strongly opposes the Russian employment at a meeting in 2017, where the Russians admit to a vast increase in military actions on the islands (Ministry of Defense 2018: 132-3).

However, there is no mention of the Russians bowing down, leaving Japan overruled by the Russian military. In spite of the Russian threat, Japan does not hide their dissatisfactory feelings towards the behavior (Ibid: 133, 2019:126). The Japanese position is underlined by the message that “... *Japan has strengthened its awareness of territorial preservation in regard to Russia, against the backdrop of the Ukrainian crisis*”¹¹ (Ministry of Defense 2019: 126). Seemingly, Japan would have the relative material power to position themselves in a mutually hurting stalemate position with Russia based on Russia’s military power. However, the power of endangering the entire Japan-Russo relationship

¹¹ こうした動向の背景には、ウクライナ危機などを受けて領土保全に対する国民意識が高揚していることや (Ministry of Defense 2019: 126)



would potentially strengthen the Japanese ability to put Russia in check. Historically, states have the ability to shift between power balance and arrive at a stalemate (Rose 1998: 156). The formation of foreign policy is arguable possible to be shaped by this notion. Hence, it is discussable whether Japan's subjective pain when being faced with Russian military truly impasses.

4.4.2 The Diplomatic Bluebook under the Abe administrations (2007-2008) & (2013-2019) and its subjective pain

Japan has proven to be dependent on the Russian federation from a foreign policy perspective. Russia is described as an *important* neighbor with great potential for development (Ministry of foreign affairs 2007:84). However, measures of objective elements are visible namely within economic and military factors. The elements of economic relations and military actions can be measured in quantitative data. The measurement can be accomplished, by looking at the Japan-Russian trade volume, and the respective military spending and capacity. The economic relationship between Japan and Russia does not impose as high a level of value as the element of military. This can be seen in the trade volume with Russia in comparison to other countries; For example, Japan's biggest trade partner, China (Ministry of foreign affairs 2019: 44). In spite of the economic relationship between Japan and Russia remaining essential, it will arguably not contribute to a subjective pain with an outcome that Japan cannot bear. Although there is evidence that the economic relationship with Japan is subjective from a Japanese perspective. The subjective pain is not visible.

The purpose of determining whether ripeness exist in this proposition suggests the subjective pain must be linked with a feeling of a way out. An incentive towards an alternative route becomes apparent in the Diplomatic Bluebook. The element of geopolitical position has not been discussed yet. However, the geopolitical position shows to be an important element for Japan. The Japanese foreign policy openly changes its stance towards Russia in relation to how it perceives the territories of the Kuril Islands. The change of position in how the territories are mentioned, can arguably be seen as a pursuance of a way out. From 2007 to 2016 the Diplomatic Bluebook has not taken side and clarified to whom Japan believes as the rightful owner of the islands. However, the foreign policy output changed in 2016 to “*It is the Japanese standpoint that the [Kuril Islands] belong to Japan*”¹² The standpoint which is put forward indicates the Kuril Islands as Japanese territory. Not Russian or unknown, but rather a natural existing part of Japan's geography. Coupling this feeling of

¹² 方四島は日本に帰属するというのが日本の立場である。(Ministry of foreign affairs 2016: 84)



a way out with the subjective pain of military involvement from the Russians is arguably interconnected. In the Diplomatic Bluebook 2016 the Japanese standpoint became clear. Interestingly, this standpoint is only made clear after the dissatisfaction of the Russian military actions on the Kuril Islands. Moreover, the statement takes place after the Russian behavior in the Crimea. Pajon (2017) suggest that a peace treaty could have been initiated if Japan had not shown support in the United States sanctions against Russia, based on their actions on the Crimea (ibid: 22-23). This enables the possibility that Japan wanted to show the same determinations as Russia, to balance the position of the two states against each other.

Summing up, the condition of proposition four has been identified in the Defense of Japan and the Diplomatic Bluebook. It is argued that the condition of subjective pain is implied through the element of military activities as well as a search for a way out in a clearer stance of the Japanese position regarding the dispute. The foreign policy strategy and its pursuance of negotiation with respect to proposition four has been vague. It is less clear to identify how a resolution has been pursued through the aspect of timing. However, the aspect of timing can arguably be shown to play a role within the foreign policy strategy. By the timing of Russian military actions on the islands, the foreign policy including the defense policy, takes a change in the stance that was demonstrated until now. For the reason the mutually hurting stalemate position was further identified in proposition four.

4.5 Proposition 5

The fifth proposition holds that: *(a) Once ripeness has been established, specific tactics by mediators can seize the ripe moment and turn it into negotiations; (b) If only objective elements of ripeness exist, specific tactics by mediators can bring the conflicting parties to feel/understand the pain of their mutual stalemate and turn to negotiations (232).* Proposition five will be examined through the above findings, in the research question's attempt in examining how timing plays a role in the Abe administrations pursuance of a resolution in the Kuril Islands dispute.

4.5.1 Fifth proposition (A)

Proposition five part (a) is only applicable in the case that ripeness can be established. On the grounds of analysis of proposition one to four, ripeness has shown to exist. One of the conditions of ripeness is initiation. In proposition one initiation was identified. The conditions of ripeness were moreover identified in proposition two and three in relation to the possibility of an existing mutually hurting



stalemate position. The mutually hurting stalemate position, which is a main component of ripeness, was identified in the way that Japan perceived their subjective and objective elements. In addition, Japan was shown to actively seek a way out, which also contributes to ripeness. However, proposition five proposes that once ripeness was established, tactics implemented by mediators can seize the moment and turn it into negotiations. One can wonder why Zartman (2000) does not propose tactics of the parties themselves in order to turn a moment into negotiation. This would suggest that in the case of Japan, the country would be dependent on the United States; as a mean of when negotiations were to begin. “[The United States] will support Japan closely in regional affairs, including an attempt to resolve issues with North Korea¹³” (Ministry of foreign affairs 2019: 15) However, the mention of Russia and the Kuril Islands is missing. Assuming that Japan would have to rely solely of the timing of the United States, suddenly makes the aspect of timing completely reliant on the United States. This results in an entirely separate analysis with an aim of determining if the time is ripe for the United States. This makes the pursuance of a resolution likely, but a step closer to a pursuance of negotiations rather unlikely.

4.5.2 Fifth proposition (B)

Proposition five part (b) presupposes that only objective elements of ripeness exist. In the light of proposition one to four, this does not indicate to be the case of Japan in the Kuril Islands dispute. The objective elements were identified in proposition two as: economic and military. This was further expanded by the element of alliance with the United States. These elements were further scrutinized in proposition three, where some elements were regarded as subjective. It should be mentioned, that it can be discussed what is truly meant by subjective. On the background of the findings, the proposition is not applicable in the case of Japan and Russia in terms of the Kuril Islands dispute.

Summing up, the fifth proposition is reliant on the discovery of an existing ripeness. As the previous propositions have made the discovery that ripeness exists. It is argued that negotiations are unlikely to take place at this stage due to the vast involvement Japan seemingly needs from their mediator the United States. If the ripeness was merely made up of objective elements, the case could be different. Nevertheless, as this is not the case of Japan, the notion of proposition five part (b) is not applicable.

¹³ 両国は北朝鮮問題を始めとする地域及び国際社会の諸課題の解決 (Ministry of foreign affairs 2019: 15)



4.6 Proposition 6

Finally, the sixth proposition proposed by Zartman (2000) states: *“The perception of a mutually enticing opportunity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the continuation of negotiations to the successful conclusion of a conflict”* (243). Similar to proposition five, proposition six does not aim to determine the conditions of ripeness. On the contrary, it seizes to examine whether or not negotiations are able to lead to successful conclusion of a conflict.

As previously mentioned, the two leaders both acknowledged the abnormality of the lack of a concluding peace treaty to the issue. However, this does not necessarily suggest an initiation of negotiations to a conclusion of a conflict. Or does it? Since the agreement of joint economic activities on the islands, further actions have taken place. In 2017 both countries conducted surveys on the islands. The aim was to explore a new legal framework of what actions could find place on the islands, with the basis of not taking for granted the position of one another (Ministry of foreign affairs 2018: 100). The initiative for both countries to explore basis of legal framework, signifies active engagement from both parties. It can be argued that the joint economic activity agreement is the base for a beginning of negotiations. In view of this, it would suggest that the moment was ripe at the time where the joint economic activity agreement was established. A full analysis of this proposition cannot suffice from the standpoint of this thesis. For the reason that the thesis has only been exploring the Japanese view, the validation of a mutually enticing opportunity would be somewhat murky. However, from the Japanese perspective, it shows that new initiatives are indeed transpiring.

4.7 Synthesizing of propositions

When all of the above analyzed propositions become interconnected, the aspect of timing in the foreign policy strategy under Shinzo Abe becomes apparent.

The aspect of timing has shown to play an immense role in relation to Japan’s foreign policy. Timing plays a central role with regard to the pursuance of a resolution of the islands. The pursuance of a resolution has proven to be interconnected with the concept of a ripe time. This implies that the role of timing shapes the foreign policy strategy. The former argument goes against the notion of neoclassical realism that states that foreign policy is shaped by systemic and internal incentives. Based on the analysis the thesis can settle in the case of Japanese foreign policy strategy systemic, internal and timing incentives is the manner in how timing plays a role in Japanese foreign policy strategy.



According to the ripeness theory, the moment needs to be seized, when the ripe time is determined to exist. “[...]a failure to seize the moment often hastens its passing” (Zartman 2000: 231) This statement is a prominent feature in exploring how timing plays a role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy's attempt to reach resolution. The statement could, when linked with the above propositions, explain the lack of resolution fully. Timing plays a role in the way that timing closely linked to ripeness decides when the moment is ripe for resolution.

The neoclassical realist notion that states seek more influence abroad at the time their relative power increases, can be identified in the case of Japan. Japan has sought to establish more influence from Russia while both of their economies were prosperous, as suggested in proposition two. At the same time, Japan has also refrained from seeking the influence of the United States when the relative power of Russia increased, as suggested in proposition three and four. Through the neoclassical realist analysis, relative power has appeared as the greatest force in the formation of Japan's foreign policy; more specifically the power of their economy, military activities and alliance with the United States. As noted by Rose (1998) finding a linkage between policy and power can be challenging. However, connecting capabilities and their historical developments will enable the link between policy and power. Japan's foreign policy towards Russia has mainly be driven by factors of security; namely the Kuril Islands dispute, economy and alliances. The United States has had grave influence and the manner in which the Japanese foreign policy is shaped. As neoclassical realism suggests, both systemic incentives as well as internal incentives shape a foreign policy. During the Abe administration, this notion concurs in shaping Japan's foreign policy.

Identifying the mutually hurting stalemate theory has been possible in terms of economy and military. In the element of military, the mutually hurting stalemate was less complicated to determine when connecting Japan with their allies, such as the United States. The foreign policy strategy becomes more assertive when including the alliance. The aspect of timing in relation to the relationship with the United States becomes clear when the relationship with the United states and Russia become in a fight during the Russian behavior in the Crimea. This clearly identifies that the timing controls Japan.



5. Discussion

The research question attempts to identify how the aspect of timing plays a role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy under the Abe administrations pursuance of a resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute. As discovered in the above sections, timing plays an important role in the foreign policy strategy. Although timing seemingly exists, how does the foreign policy strategy explain that the moment is ripe for negotiations?

The opening question can be answered by a discussion of the added value of applying the ripeness theory by William Zartman (2000). Through the analysis it becomes clear that Zartman lacks some clear explanation to how objective and subjective elements should be determined in the search for the mutually hurting stalemate position. Whether or not these elements are actually making up a mutually hurting stalemate, is difficult to validate. When seeing it from a neoclassical realist perspective, one could wonder whether or not the same factors would have been identified. On the contrary, due to the long stance of the conflict, timing would be assumed to have an impact. Therefore, the ripeness theory is relevant in terms of analyzing the aspect of timing as proposed in the research question. The ripeness theory furthermore enabled for an analytical framework structure, due to the six propositions. The structure would otherwise not have been the same, without the use of the ripeness theory. Nevertheless, the thesis would have benefited from clearer definitions within the six propositions. The concept of subjective pain is rather vague, and its details explained by Zartman are imprecise. However, the condition of subjective pain, can arguably say to have contributed to a more in-depth examination of the elements of a mutually hurting stalemate.

One of the findings of the analysis was that the mutually hurting stalemate position in regard to Japan, had the ability to come and go. Japan appear to counterbalance itself every time a subjective pain impasse. However, the critique belongs to a question of whether ripeness can ever be fully established, if the stalemate position is in constant change. The thesis argues, that this is one of the main reasons why a resolution has not yet been found despite the identification of ripe. Noteworthy to the ripeness theory is Zartman (2000) clear statement that ripeness is only a condition of beginning of negotiations, which does not entail that negotiations will be held due to the identification of ripeness.

Another question which is necessary to address, is in relation to the lack of the Russian perspective. Throughout the thesis the perspective that has been brought forward had been from the side of Japan. In the case of a mediator one could ask is the United States truly the mediator, and the state who would have the ability to initiate the negotiations between Russia and Japan. Arguably



would the United States have a grave impact of pushing the Japanese towards actively wanting to negotiate. Nevertheless, the question of whether the Russian would also be imposed by the United States to initiate in negotiations is questionable. Thus, the lack of the Russian perspective potentially leads to other results than what would have been found supposing that that perspective would have been included.

A final point that requires attention, is the empirical material used in the analysis. More specifically, the official documents of the Ministry of foreign affairs and the Ministry of defense. One should reflect critically upon whether or not these documents enable the thesis to portray the reality as it is. Although the documents are the main public sources of foreign policy, the documents do not regard personal, or public opinion. Therefore, it is arguable whether they will provide the thesis with the actual truth and outcome. Given that the documents are written from a Japan-based outlook, and that they are written from the Japanese perspective, the question of bias arises. On the contrary, the thesis aim is to present the Japanese perspective. Therefore, a bias in the documents does not necessarily address an invalidity of the results of the thesis. Could the Japanese government gain anything through either over or underreacting in terms of their statements regarding the Kuril Islands dispute or the relationship with Russia. Without including public sources such as the media, personal interviews, or even the Russian angle, the question remains unsolvable.

6. Conclusion

The Kuril Islands dispute remains to this date one of the most pressing issues in Japan-Russo relations. Through an analysis based upon the Ripeness theory presented by William Zartman, and through the application of neoclassical realism outlined by Gideon Rose, this thesis has answered the main research question ***“How does the aspect of timing play a role within the Japanese Foreign Policy Strategy, under the Abe Administrations, in its pursuance of a resolution of the Kuril Islands territorial dispute?”*** The thesis has revealed that timing has played a prominent role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy, through acting as the main factor of shaping the Japanese foreign policy strategy under the Abe administrations attempt to resolve the Kuril Islands dispute. More specifically, the main findings show that ripeness for resolution has been established in the duration of Shinzo Abe’s leadership in Japan. By analyzing six propositions proposed by Zartman (2000), ripeness was



established. The initiation of negotiations has been confirmed from the perspective of Japan. Moreover, the mutually hurting stalemate position has been identified in the standpoint of Japan. The mutually hurting stalemate position was detected as an existing variable, through the objective elements of economic relations and military activity. However, the analysis suggested that Japan went in and out of the mutually hurting stalemate position during the Abe administrations. In proposition three, the element of the Japan-US alliance was detected. Proposition four describes that ripeness was detected by the subjective pain led by the Russian military activities along with a Japanese sense of a way out through a swift in position in regard to the islands. Timing plays a role in the Japanese foreign policy strategy under the Abe administrations, in its pursuance of a resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute, through determining when to act all rooted in the notion of ripeness. The way timing plays a role is by determining when actions should happen based on external and internal factors.

The thesis argued that from the perspective of Japan, a resolution has not yet taken place due to the constant change in mutually hurting stalemate position. When the stalemate is not constant for a longer period of time, nor is the ripeness. Moreover, the United States role as a mediator will be difficult to achieve on the backdrop of its historical relations with Russia.

In addition, on the background of interconnecting the ripeness theory, and neoclassical realism the thesis suggested a new interpretation of the neoclassical realist original thought. The paper discussed the notion of neoclassical realism, where foreign policy is formed by systemic and internal incentives only. Albeit, the thesis proposes the link of timing in order to explain how a foreign policy is shaped. As timing can both sustain as a systemic and as an internal factor, separating the factor from the two would provide the theory with a more certain analysis of foreign policy.



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