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### **The Soviet-Japanese Declaration and the long shadow of 1956**

The year 1956 has a special resonance in Russia-Japan relations. On October 19, 1956, just days before the Hungarian Uprising, Japan and the Soviet Union signed a joint declaration, subsequently ratified by the Japanese diet and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. It marked the official end to the hostilities of World War II, the normalising of diplomatic relations, agreement to support Japan's entry into the UN, and the immediate repatriation of Japanese POWs detained in the USSR. Perhaps of most lasting significance was an agreement in this declaration to continue negotiations on a peace treaty, with the islands of Shikotan and the Habomai group to be transferred to Japan upon the conclusion of such a treaty. However, to this day a peace treaty between Japan and Russia has not yet been signed.

This paper explores the contemporary resonance of the 1956 Soviet-Japanese Declaration and its implications for territory, identity, and geopolitics in Putin's Russia. It will trace how, in the case of the Southern Kurils/Northern Territories, Putin can at one moment support the case for Russia's legal obligations for a transfer of territory according to the 1956 Declaration, and at another moment can invoke a national-territorial rhetoric which stresses the importance of territorial integrity and the inviolable results of the Second World War. This paper will explore the tensions in the leadership's vacillations between these two positions, the mobilisation of nationalist forces in the centre and the regions against the 1956 declaration, and how its legacies continue to shape Russia-Japan relations.