

# **Application of the Multiple Streams Framework to the assessment of bilateral environmental relations: a retrospective on the origins of Russian-Japanese environmental cooperation**

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## **1. Introduction**

The period from 1985 to 1991 in the USSR, known as "Perestroika," was marked not only by significant socio-economic and political changes but also by the beginning of profound transformations in environmental protection. During this time, public movements gained momentum, and new environmental protection institutions were established, leading to the emergence of ecological cooperation in international discourse. The new foreign policy direction of the USSR, which coincided with the end of the Cold War, brought the country closer to Western bloc nations, including Japan. On April 18, 1991, the Joint Soviet-Japanese Statement was signed, expressing both parties' intention to develop constructive cooperation, resulting in several agreements on various issues, including environmental protection (MOFA, 1991). This raises the question of why environmental cooperation, still seen in the late 20th century as secondary to political and economic agreements, was initiated between countries without a peace treaty. What factors, processes, and individuals contributed to the emergence of environmental discourse in Soviet-Japanese and later Russian-Japanese relations?

## **2. Methodology**

This article uses the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to explain why certain ideas capture the attention of policymakers (Herweg et al., 2017). The empirical literature suggests that the MSF (or Multiple Streams Approach (MSA)) can bridge the gap between domestic and foreign policy (Zahariadis et al., 2017). The study's methodological framework includes an analysis of secondary literature – such as academic articles and newspaper publications – and a qualitative content analysis of political documents and reports (both domestic and international). Additionally, the research incorporates a series of semi-structured interviews with Russian and Japanese individuals who worked in government positions related to foreign policy and environmental protection between 1985 and 1999, as well as with experts in this field.

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### 3. Results

The incorporation of environmental discourse into Soviet-Japanese (and later Russian-Japanese) dialogue was influenced by multi-level factors. On the international stage, the late 20th century saw a surge in global environmental awareness, marked by the establishment of organizations like the WWF in 1961 and Greenpeace in 1971, and the convening of the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (the Stockholm Conference). Concurrently, within the Soviet Union, grassroots environmental activist movements gained traction, especially after the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986, which turned these movements into a mass phenomenon. This groundswell allowed a group of policy entrepreneurs – politicians and scientists – to emerge within the government. They took advantage of the opportunity to develop not only domestic environmental policies but also bilateral cooperation on environmental issues. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, Japanese Prime Ministers Nobuto Takeshita, Toshiki Kaifu, and Kiichi Miyazawa actively incorporated environmental concerns into the country's bilateral and international foreign policy agendas (Ivanov et al., 1999).

### 4. Conclusion

The convergence of factors at the international, interstate, and local levels opened a window of opportunity that environmental policy entrepreneurs seized to integrate environmental discourse into the 1991 Soviet-Japanese agreements. Even after the collapse of the USSR, the foundation laid by President Gorbachev and Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu remained robust enough for Russia and Japan to continue cooperating on environmental protection at both bilateral and international levels. This cooperation extended to issues such as climate change, marine pollution, nuclear waste disposal, and more.

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