

Japan's Territorial Issues and the Historical Understandings of the Concerned Countries

-Case Studies on the Senkaku Islands, Takeshima and the Northern Territories-

March 2014

Preface

This report is a summary of the results of research activities conducted as one of the research projects of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA) during fiscal 2013.

International order based on the rule of law is essential to secure the safety and prosperity of Japan. However, the conditions surrounding Japanese territory are becoming increasingly severe. The Northern Territories and Takeshima Island are occupied by Russia and the Republic of Korea (ROK) respectively. While Japan and Russia agreed to resolve the Northern Territories issue based on “the principles of law and justice” in the Tokyo Declaration on Japan-Russia Relations signed in 1993, in the case of Takeshima Island the ROK does not recognize the very existence of the dispute, refuses legal resolution, and continues occupation. As for the Senkaku Islands, China has repeatedly made dangerous provocations threatening Japan’s legitimate and valid control, based on China’s own assertions with no grounds in international law.

This survey research addresses the cases of the Senkaku Islands (China and Taiwan), Takeshima (ROK), and the Northern Territories (USSR and Russia) as confrontations and issues concerning Japan’s territory, analyzes how the assertions and viewpoints of the concerned countries in these cases are related to the underlying historical understandings, and considers the implications for policies to preserve the integrity of Japanese territory.

This paper also gives an overview of Japan’s 70 years of post-war history with its diplomatic principle of “a peace-loving nation” and its diplomatic emphasis on Asia in explaining Japan’s position concerning its understanding of historical issues.

We sincerely hope these research findings will contribute to improving foreign policy research in Japan, bring territorial disputes back to calm discussions, and assist proper political responses toward peaceful resolution.

Finally, please note that this research report is entirely the responsibility of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA)’s task force on Japan’s territory and maritime issues, and is not an expression of the position or thoughts of the Japanese government, related organs, or the individual researchers.

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Location Map of the Senkaku Islands, Takeshima and the Northern Territories



(Source : Japan Coast Guard website)