

Japan's Quest for Dokdo and the South Kurile Islands: A Sub-State/Non-State Actors Analysis

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Japan's quest for two territories it lost after its defeat in the Asia-Pacific War: the South Kuriles (known as Northern Territories in Japan) Russia and Dokdo (Japanese name: Takeshima) currently administered by Russia and South Korea respectively. Focusing on the role of non-state actors, it explores the processes that led to the emergence of the two issues as the main building blocks in the discursive construction of Japan's identity. The paper specifically examines the role of sub-state actors such as municipalities and civil society in propelling the 'Northern Territories' and 'Takeshima' to the fore of Japan's identity discourse. It argues that while both of the final constructs are quite similar in terms of their historical narratives and symbolism, the processes that brought about the two constructs have some very important differences. This paper's main argument is that the interests of the sub-state actors had little in common with the final, national-level, identity constructs. The latter it is argued, have emerged as a result of a complex interaction between the sub-state/non-state actors and the ruling elites.

Keywords

Dokdo, Northern Territories, territorial disputes, non-state actors, national identity

The historical arguments forwarded by Japan, Russia and South Korea to support their respective claims as well as Japan's negotiations with the two countries have been thoroughly discussed and analyzed by other scholars. Thus for lack of space I will refrain from repeating these facts and arguments (e.g. Stephan, 1975; Koo, 2009). For the purposes of this paper it suffices to note that in both cases, the roots of the disputes can be traced to the politics of early Cold War. Namely, increasingly complicated relations with the Soviet Union, the Korean War and other early Cold War events, resulted in the various bodies of the US government (the main architect of the peace process with the defeated Japan) issuing a number of contradictory statements and decrees in regards of the scope of Japan's territory, with the final draft of the Peace Treaty being rather brief and ambiguous. This combined with multiplicity of documents and statements that preceded the signing of the Treaty enabled the parties to the disputes to produce interpretations supportive of their respective claims to the islands in question (Hara, 2006).

This paper's main focus is on the various sub-state actors that participated in the domestic activism related to the two disputes, their interests and actions. In particular, it will focus on the role of local governments (*chihō jichitai*) and grassroots groups. In a nutshell, the paper argues that at the formative stages of their territorial dispute related activism, all of the actors have pursued their rational (maximization of material utilities) goals. These goals, I argue had little to do with nationalism but can be traced to other, more pragmatic interests of the actors. Appeals that referred to the nation, national territory and national rights were used by the actors mainly as a means to attract public and governmental attention to their plight. Over the years, however, the original economic interests behind territorial disputes related activism have disappeared while the disputes themselves got elevated to the level of national mission, intrinsically linked to Japan's nationalism.

Grassroots Groups

The Kuriles

The grassroots movement for the return of Soviet occupied territory sprung up on Hokkaido immediately after the completion of the Soviet occupation of the Kurile Islands in September 1945. The numerous groups consisted of former residents of the occupied territories and residents of Hokkaido proper with vested interests in the territories. Reflecting the background of their members, some of the groups demanded the return of all of the Kurile chain, others focused on the four islands known today as the 'Northern Territories,' some only on Habomai and Shikotan,

and some hoped for the return of southern Sakhalin as well (Kuroiwa, 2009). Besides the variety of the geographical scope of the territory, the various groups varied in terms of their interests related to the territory in question. Some were interested in the islands per se due to property rights. Other groups that included not only former residents but also fishermen from villages on Hokkaido or Northern Honshu had more interest in the fishing areas located in the waters adjacent to the islands (Kajiura, 1989). The analysis below will focus mainly on the movement formed in the city of Nemuro which is considered to be the spiritual origin of the irredentist cause.

The first appeal to reverse the Soviet occupation appeared almost immediately after its completion in the town of Nemuro. Prior to the Soviet occupation, Nemuro was the center of the economic zone that encompassed the islands and the eastern part of Hokkaido. It was also the place where most of the former residents of the disputed islands had settled after the Soviet occupation. The movement was led by Andō Ishisuke, the mayor of Nemuro. Andō and his followers formed an organization called the Commission to Petition for Returning Islands Attached to Hokkaido (*Hokkaidō fuzoku tōsho fukki konsei iinkai*, hereafter the Commission). Most initial members of the movement belonged either to the local administrative elite or held senior positions in the local fishing industry. All of them had clear personal stakes in the islands. Andō for example, owned a farm on Shikotan and was involved in running a crab cannery on Etorofu prior to the Soviet occupation (Kushiro Shimbunsha, 1988). Later however, probably as the result of the Soviet expulsions of the remaining residents from the islands, the movement expanded to include other members of the community.

Similarly to the Northern Territories related grassroots organizations today, the Commission activities involved submission of petitions to the occupation authorities and the Japanese government and organization of rallies. Like other civil society organizations that emerged in Japan in the aftermath of the defeat, they positioned themselves in opposition to the government and campaigned against the policy pursued by the authorities. Thus it is not surprising that some of the activists were occasionally detained and questioned by the US Occupation authorities (Kushiro Shimbunsha, 1988). As the main purpose of this activism was to improve the livelihoods of its members, the rationale behind their demands was dominantly economic. Overall, the ultimate purpose of this activism was the reinstatement of the pre-1945 local economic zone that included eastern Hokkaido and the southern part of the Kurile chain. The existence of this economic zone which had Nemuro as its center, was interrupted by the Soviet occupation as well as the imposition of the so-called 'MacArthur line' that severely restricted the areas where Japanese fishermen could engage in fishing activities. Thus the

early petitions submitted to the Occupation Authorities emphasized the economic importance of the waters adjacent to the Soviet occupied islands and urged the authorities to place them under the US occupation (Nemuro City Office, 1997).

Similarly to the later discourse on the Northern Territories, the petitions submitted by the Commission did champion the return of the four islands of Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu by appealing to historical facts and international justice. The petitions also argued for a deep national (*minzokuteki*) connection of the islands to the city of Nemuro. In their attempt to attract attention they positioned the territorial issue within the broader question of postwar national revival (Nemuro City Office, 1997). Importantly however, these arguments can be seen as means in mobilizing governmental and public support for the irredentist cause and providing it with broad legitimacy rather than ends in themselves. As the main parts of the petitions as well as the internal debates of the Commission show, the return of the islands was seen as a matter of economic life or death for the city of Nemuro and hence carried a local and pragmatic agenda (Nemuro City Office, 1997).

To summarize the information above, the movement for the return of the Soviet occupied islands in Nemuro was propelled by the severe aggravation of the local economy caused by the disruption in the economic zone of eastern Hokkaido. Thus it can be argued that the perceived value of the islands was dominantly economic and appeals to history and references to the nation in the early discourse were made based on strategic calculations in an attempt to draw a broad public and official support to their cause.

The Commission was not the only citizens group that sought the return of the Soviet occupied islands. Other groups formed by the former residents and local fishermen also pursued a pragmatic agenda that reflected their economic interests and the feasibility of their demands based on their interpretation of broader political issues that shaped Japan-USSR relations. In 1953, another significant grassroots group was formed in Nemuro. The group was called the 'Nemuro Area Peace Preservation Economic Revival Alliance' (*Nemuro chihō heiwa iji keizai fukkō dōmei*) and its members were mainly local fishermen and common residents. Headed by Togashi Mamoru who later became one of the local leaders of the left leaning civil movement protesting US war in Vietnam and Japan's complicity in it (Honda, 2006), this Economic Revival Alliance championed the return of only two islands, perceived as the most pragmatic solution to the territorial dispute and subsequent alleviation of local fishermen livelihoods (Matsuura, 1954).

Dokdo

The first organized citizen's group devoted to the 'return of Takeshima' emerged

only in 2004 and will be discussed in the final section of this article. However civil activism did exist in Shimane Prefecture starting from the early 1950s. Before proceeding further with analyzing the causes of this activism, it is important to briefly outline the international situation in the early 1950s in relation to Dokdo.

The Dokdo islets were incorporated into Japan's Shimane Prefecture in 1905. The rocks did not have any permanent residents but administratively they became part of Goka village located on the Shimane Prefecture's Oki Island. After Japan's defeat, the above-mentioned MacArthur Line imposed by the Occupation Authorities precluded Japanese vessels from engaging in fishing activities in waters adjacent to the islets. In July 1952 due to its location and lack of permanent residents, the islets were designated by the US-Japan Joint Commission in charge of implementing the security arrangements as a special area used as bombing target practice area for US aircrafts engaged in the Korean War. Thus, while certain individual fishermen conducted trips to Dokdo and adjacent waters, officially, Japanese fishing and other vessels were prohibited from approaching the islets until March 1953. However in January 1952, South Korea's Syngman Rhee government issued a 'Presidential Proclamation of Sovereignty over the Adjacent Seas' under which Korea declared national sovereignty over the seas within the designated line, known as the Peace Line or Rhee Line. The purpose of the line was to replace the Mac Arthur Line and establish Korean sovereignty over what the Rhee government saw as Korean territorial waters. This move by the Korean government significantly increased the tensions in Japan's relations with its neighbor, led to heated diplomatic exchanges, seizures of Japanese fishing vessels and clashes between Japanese and Korean fishermen.

Already in the summer of 1951, however, representatives of the Oki fishing unions submitted two petitions, one to the Prefectural Assembly and another to the central government. Both of the petitions argued that resulting from the massive repatriation of soldiers and civilians to Japan's mainland from former colonies that followed Japan's defeat, Oki has experienced a sudden increase in overall population and in the number of fishermen (Oki Fishing Union, 1951). This, the petitions argued, brought the urgent need to develop new fishing areas in order to be able to sustain the economy of the island that was completely dependent on maritime products. The petitions argued that the MacArthur Line restrictions aggravated the economic situation on the island and asked for the 'removal of restrictions on fishing activities in waters surrounding Takeshima' (Oki Fishing Union, 1951). The conclusion of the San Francisco Treaty in September of the same year and the subsequent abolition of the MacArthur Line were met with high expectations by the local residents and manifested in a number of festive activities celebrating the expected 'resumption of fishing on Takeshima' (Sugihara, 2011).

Thus at a first glance it may seem that the plight of Oki's fishermen was identical to that of the Nemuro area activists who sought to reestablish the local economic zone interrupted by Japan's defeat and the subsequent occupation. These parallels between the two movements can indeed be drawn, however with an important caveat. Namely, in the case of Dokdo, the Oki fishermen's view of the islets as their rightful fishing zone was not only a result from prolonged utilization of the islands but, in a somewhat paradoxical fashion, was also facilitated by the defeat, the occupation and related reforms.

This paradox can be better understood if we briefly examine the economic activities on and around the islets during the pre-1945 years. In early 20th century it was an important ground for seal hunting and to a lesser extent for abalone gathering. These two activities were monopolized by the Takeshima Fishing and Hunting Company established in 1905 and the successors of its three original owners. In 1908 the extent of Company's monopoly was extended to include fishing rights to adjacent waters. The company employed Oki locals for seal hunting and Korean female divers for abalone gathering. In the late 1920s, these exclusive rights were leased to a Japanese colonial entrepreneur based on Korean Ulleung Island who continued to monopolize the abalone gathering and fishing activities on and around Dokdo until Japan's defeat and his return to Japan proper (Hayamizu, 1954). In 1953, in line with the broad reforms initiated by the Occupation Authorities, Shimane Prefecture abolished this monopoly and granted the rights to 'fishing' (actually abalone, sea urchin and seaweed gathering and octopus catching) on and around the islets to Oki Fishing Union. Thus the celebrations of the Peace Treaty on Oki and the petitions were spurred not only by the memory of the colonial economic subzone that included Oki, Dokdo and Ulleung Island and where members of Shimane elite controlled the economic activities but also by the reforms initiated by the Occupation Authorities that enabled Oki fishermen to perceive the islets as their collective fishing grounds.

Oki fishing unions and the municipal authorities continued their petitioning activities in the 1950s and 1960s. Overall the arguments and the perceptions of the territorial issue were similar to those espoused by the prefectural authorities.

Regional Governments

Hokkaido Prefecture and the 'Northern Territories'

In 1950, the Hokkaido prefectural government under the leadership of the Socialist Governor Tanaka Toshifumi fully embraced the irredentist cause. Hokkaido Prefectural government under the leadership of Tanaka played an important role in

establishing another major non-governmental organization called the Alliance for Petitioning the Return of the Chishima and the Habomai islands (*Chishima oyobi Habomai henkan konsei dōmei*) (hereafter the Alliance). In an attempt to establish it as representing Hokkaido as a whole, the board of directors included the mayors of all of the main cities and towns in the prefecture. Its funding was coming mainly from the prefectural government. The active involvement of the prefectural government in the 'Northern Territories' cause and the formation of the Alliance which was dependent on the prefecture for funding signified the beginning of a process of a gradual appropriation of the cause and its institutionalization on the prefectural level.

The main explicit reason that drove Tanaka's administration to engage in the territorial issue was the fear that despite the heavy investment of resources into the development of the Kuriles since the 19th century, the central government may give up the Soviet occupied territories during the peace settlement (Tanaka, 1950). Tanaka's prior career as a public servant at the Department of Forest Management of the Hokkaido Prefecture as well as his vision for an overall development of Hokkaido also probably played an important role in arousing his interest in the islands that included the timber rich Kunashiri. At the same time however, it is important to remember that in 1950, the year the prefectural government embarked on its active participation in the 'Northern Territories' movement, Tanaka's administration engaged in a fierce conflict with the central government over the establishment of the Hokkaido Development Agency within the Cabinet Office. The rationale behind the creation of this administrative body, whose responsibilities overlap with those of the prefectural administration, was generally understood as a conservative attempt to wrestle control over Hokkaido from the influence of the Socialists and fiercely contested by Tanaka (Hanno, 2003). Thus, the irredentist cause provided another platform for Tanaka to criticize the central government and to enhance his own legitimacy in the eyes of Hokkaido residents. In line with the general focus on economic development espoused by Tanaka, his rationale for championing the return of the islands was similar to that of the grassroots organizations. Namely, the islands were argued to be the main source of protein for Japan and constituting an integral part of Hokkaido economic zone (Tanaka, 1950). Unlike the grassroots organizations that pursued an improvement of their livelihoods however, the struggle with the central government played an important role in shaping the prefectural agenda and the agenda of its affiliate, the Alliance for Petitioning the Return of the Chishima and the Habomai islands. Thus, in opposition to PM Yoshida's government which, however reluctantly, renounced Japan's rights to the Kuriles at the San-Francisco Peace Conference, Tanaka and the Alliance followed the position of Japan's Socialist Party and advocated the re-

turn of all of the Kurile chain as well as the Shikotan and the Habomais.

Thus, in the early 1950s the Hokkaido prefectural government went against the conservative government's policy and advocated the return of all of the Kuriles, Habomais and the Shikotan. Tanaka admitted the renouncement of Japan's rights to all of the Kuriles in the Peace Treaty and at the same time argued that this action did not reflect the wish of the people of Japan (Kuwabara, 1965). By following this line of argument the Alliance and Tanaka's administration engaged in an implicit critique of Yoshida's government for its lack of adherence to the democratic principles. Just like when the conservative government brought the struggle with the left to Hokkaido by establishing the Development Agency, Tanaka and his affiliates utilized the territorial dispute in their attempt to bring their struggle with the central government to Tokyo. Thus for example, a mass rally sponsored by the Hokkaido Governor, Hokkaido Assembly and the Alliance was held in Tokyo on 19th of July, 1953. The declaration issued by the rally contested the secession of the Kuriles in San-Francisco. Appealing to the 'instinctive desire' shared by all humans to protect a territory which was developed by shedding 'sweat and blood,' it called for the correction of this injustice and demanded the return of all of the Kuriles as well as the Habomais and Shikotan (Pamphlet, 1953). Bearing in mind the importance of the broader rivalry with the conservatives dominated center, it can be argued that despite the nationalistic rhetoric, the symbolic value of the islands for Tanaka's Hokkaido administration was mainly in their delegitimizing effect on the Yoshida led central government.

During the 1955-1956 peace treaty negotiations between Japan and the Soviet Union, many on Hokkaido believed that it would result in a return of at least parts of the occupied territories. In February 1956, taking advantage of this widely spread belief the prefectural administration established a new department named Headquarters for Countermeasures Related to Reversion of Territory and Fisheries within its General Affairs Division. The official purpose of this department was to collect data and to plan the reconstruction and development of the territories that will be returned by the Soviets but also to engage in 'nurturing' and 'guiding' related grassroots organizations (Hokkaido Prefecture Website, 2013). Thus this further institutionalization of the territorial cause on the prefectural level can be seen as an attempt to capitalize on the possible return of the two islands and to consolidate the local public opinion under the banner of 'return of all of the Kuriles.' Three years later, however, the Socialist candidate lost the gubernatorial elections and a former LDP Diet member Machimura Kingo, became the new Governor of Hokkaido. This meant that from now onwards, the prefectural policy on the territories will be in line with that of the state and that the various institutions established under Tanaka will now serve the policy of the central government.

Shimane Prefecture and Dokdo

Shimane Prefecture's Dokdo related activism started in early 1950s and was spurred by petitions that emerged from Oki. On the 10th of March, 1953 a week prior to lifting of the 'special area' measures that restricted Japanese access to the islets, the Shimane Prefectural Assembly adopted a resolution on the issue. The unanimously adopted a resolution that argued that the islets are an integral part of Oki Island's Goka village administrative area and are in need of further development under the forthcoming Remote Islands Development Law. It called on the central government to 'recognize the importance of Takeshima as a fishing area and to take all possible measures to protect it' (Shimane Prefectural Assembly, 1958).

Unlike the case of Hokkaido Prefecture, the confrontation with Tokyo was not among one of the factors that spurred Shimane Prefecture's engagement with the territorial issue. There are no reasons to doubt the sincerity of the prefectural authorities' belief that the islets belong to Japan and the ownership of the rocks had little to do with Japan's colonial rule over Korea. Furthermore, Korean seizures of Japanese fishing vessels and the detainments of fishermen further prompted the prefectural authorities to engage the issue and appeal to the state to take measures. To a certain extent the importance attached to the uninhabited rocks by the prefectural authorities can be located within the context of the colonial rule and its interruption. Namely, as the result of the defeat and the loss of colonies Japanese fishermen lost access to fishing grounds in waters adjacent to the Korean Peninsula. Along with the already mentioned sudden increase in population and natural calamities in preceding years (Tamura, 1955) this was one of the factors behind Shimane Prefecture's sense of urgency to establish its rights to Dokdo and develop new fishing grounds in adjacent waters (Shimane Prefecture, 1965). Thus the initial attention paid to the issue by the prefecture stemmed directly from the collapse of the Japanese Empire.

From the early 1950s onwards, the Shimane Prefecture continuously lobbied for the government to establish territorial rights over Dokdo and to enable safe fishing conditions. During the final round of normalization negotiations between Japan and Korea in the early 1960s, the Shimane Prefectural authorities vehemently opposed the idea of joint ownership over the islets floated by one of the LDP heavyweights (Asahi Shimbun, 1963). In the same year local activists proposed to establish an Alliance for Securing the Territorial Rights to Takeshima (*takeshima ryōdoken kakuho kisei dōmei*). The purpose of the organization, which in the end was not created, was to act as an advocacy agent aimed at mobilizing residents of Shimane but also the broad public in Japan and exercise direct and indirect pressure on the government 'not to abandon territorial rights to Takeshima' in the process of negotiating with Korea (Shimane Prefectural Assembly, 1965).

After the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Treaty on Basic Relations which normalized the relations between the two countries and shelved the territorial issue, Shimane prefectural authorities continued their petitioning activities. In 1977 after over a decade of relative calm, the tensions around the territorial issue heightened again. Following the US and Soviet declarations of 200 miles exclusive fishery zones Japan and Korea declared 12 miles territorial waters and 200 miles of exclusive fishery zones. In this context the question of territorial rights to the islets surfaced again in the domestic debates in both counties and resulted in a number of heated exchanges.

During this period, the Shimane Prefecture made a number of attempts to revive the territorial issue and apply pressure on the government to bring it back to negotiations table with Korea. In April 1979, after over a quarter of a century of petitioning the central government to resolve the territorial issue, the Shimane Prefecture established an organization called the 'Shimane Prefectural Council for Facilitating the Solution of Takeshima Problem.' Its purpose was to coordinate the activities of the various bodies involved such as the prefecture, municipal authorities and fishing unions, and to engage in petitioning and enlightenment activities. This was the starting point for educational activities conducted by the prefecture. These activities that included publication of pamphlets and construction of road signs that called for the 'return of Takeshima,' were directed at the prefectural residents with the purpose of raising residents' awareness and 'deepening their understanding of the Takeshima problem' (Shimane Prefecture, 1983).

What accounts for this escalation in the prefectural government's activities and how can we explain their nature? One could argue that the damage suffered by Shimane's fishermen as a result of the Korean policy of excluding them from the radius of 12 miles zone around the islets enhanced the sense of urgency among the prefectural authorities. In June 1978, the prefecture published a report that estimated the losses from the exclusion of Japanese fishermen from waters around the islets at three hundred and twenty million yen (cited in Fukuhara, 2012).

However, statistical data shows that during the late 1970s the actual catch did not decrease and for some kinds of fish and squid it actually increased in 1979 and 1980 (Chugoku Regional Agricultural Administration Office, 1984). It could be argued that regardless of the actual damage to Shimane's fishing industry, simply a perception of damage drove the prefectural government towards intensification of its Dokdo related activities. To a certain extent, the perception of damage probably did play a certain role. This however does not explain the nature of the activities initiated by the prefectural authorities. In other words, one could expect enhanced demands from the central government but what is the rationale behind focusing on educating the prefectural residents about the territorial issue?

A different light can be shed on this issue if we examine the nature of the Shimane Prefectural authorities' relations with the central government in the late 1970s.

In 1972, newly appointed Prime-Minister Tanaka Kakuei published his famous 'Remodeling of Japan's Archipelago' plan which became the backbone of governmental policy under his leadership. It envisioned industrialization and economic alleviation of underdeveloped areas of Japan through improved infrastructure and connectivity. Shimane was one of these areas but the actual benefits it gained from the new plan were rather modest. One of the most important parts of the 'remodeling' plan was the construction of the San'in Shinkansen bullet train line that was supposed to connect Shimane's Matsue and other prefectures in the San'in area with Osaka. The plan however was put on hold and did not materialize.

Thus it can be argued that the territorial issue was seen as an important channel to express prefectural discontent with the overall disparity in the execution of the 'remodeling' plan and continuous economic disparity between Shimane and other regions, and simultaneously to draw the central government's attention to the economic plight of the prefecture. Furthermore, it is important to remember that from 1975 till 1987, the governor of Shimane Prefecture was Tsunematsu Seiji, a former economist and one of the most forceful advocates of domestic decentralization, arguing that regional governments should be given more independence that should eventually lead to establishing a federal system in Japan. Thus during Tsunematsu's governance, Shimane Prefecture was an integral part of 'progressive municipalities' (*kakushin jichitai*) who opposed the LDP led central government of a wide range of domestic issues. In this context, intensification in prefectural activism related to 'Takeshima' can be seen as an integral part of Tsunematsu led Shimane in legitimizing the claims about the ineffectiveness of central government and provide further support for federalism as an ideal political structure for Japan. Thus, in mid 1970s 'Takeshima' assumed a similar role in the Shimane Prefecture's politics as the 'Northern Territories' have played in Hokkaido Prefecture's confrontation with Tokyo two decades earlier.

Between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, the Shimane Prefecture continued to submit its annual petitions to the central government but otherwise the scope of prefectural activities related to the territorial issue was rather limited. The issue flared up again in the mid 1990s, when both Korea and Japan ratified the United Nation's Convention of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) and engaged in prolonged and difficult negotiations aimed at amending the fishing treaty without resolving the territorial dispute. In 2005, the Shimane Prefecture passed a prefectural ordinance that designated the 22nd of February, the day the islets were officially incorporated into the Shimane Prefecture in 1905, as the prefectural Takeshima Day. The fierce reaction from Korean authorities and public as well as the subsequent

use of the territorial issue by domestic politicians swiftly elevated 'Takeshima' from virtual oblivion to one of the most important issues in Japan's debates on South Korea. Thus for example a search on one of Japan's magazine articles searching engines, *Ōya Bunko*, gives only 65 hits for a search with 'Takeshima' and 'problem' keywords for the years 1951-2003 and 539 hits for a similar search conducted for the years 2004-2012. This intense media attention played an important role in the public's interest of the issues. For example, in a poll conducted by *Yomiuri Shim-bun* in 2006, 59% of the respondents said that they are interested in the 'Takeshima problem'-this while four years earlier only 13% believed that the territorial dispute is an important problem in bilateral relations (Nakajima, 2007, p. 23). There is little doubt that intensification in Japan's territorial dispute with China over the Senkaku/Diyaoyu islands played an important role in drawing public attention to Dokdo. At the same time the role of the Shimane Prefecture's 'Takeshima Day' ordinance should not be forgotten. Thus, while not ignoring other factors, we can plausibly argue that after over half-century of activism the Shimane Prefecture managed to elevate 'Takeshima' from obscurity to the fore of the public discourse.

'Nationalization' of Territorial Disputes

Northern Territories

'Nationalization' meaning the incorporation of the 'Northern Territories' dispute into national identity discourse, was achieved through intentional efforts of the LDP led government in a process that started in the late 1960s. In the 1950s and 1960s, both the Hokkaido based grassroots organizations and the Hokkaido Prefectural government failed in their attempts to spark a nationwide interest in the 'Northern Territories' issue and to draw attention to the plight of former residents and others affected by the dispute. In the mid 1960s, even on Hokkaido the interest in the territorial dispute was minimal. For example, a public opinion poll conducted on Hokkaido in 1966 shows that around 40% of the respondents did not know the geographical scope of 'Northern Territories,' more than half of the respondents did not know the historical justification for Japan's claims to the islands and less than 10% chose the 'Northern Territories' as an issue of interest among other international issues directly or indirectly related to Japan (Hoppō-ryōdo fukki kisei dōmei, 1966).

It must be noted that the government did not completely ignore the plight of the former residents and fishermen and did take a number of measures aimed at addressing their material needs in the 1950s and early 1960s. Government's interest in the dispute however, and in particular its domestic aspects increased

dramatically in the late 1960s. In 1969, the Association for Countermeasures related to the Northern Territories (*hoppōryōdo mondai taisaku kyōkai*), a new quasi-governmental agency in charge of the domestic activities related to the 'Northern Territories' was established. One of the main purposes of this organization has been to enhance and spread the knowledge of the territorial issue (meaning Japan's official interpretations of the history of the dispute and various documents that justify its claims) among the Japanese people.

There is no definite answer regarding the factors that caused the LDP led government to change its policy towards the fully fledged embracement and support of the 'Northern Territories' cause. The timing of this policy change however suggests that domestic political calculations played an important if not a decisive role in bringing it about. Namely, it has been argued that the rise in the LDP's interest in the 'Northern Territories' was directly related to Japan-US negotiations regarding the reversion of Okinawa. Japan's main opposition party, the Socialist Party of Japan, opposed the reversion of Okinawa with American bases and the ruling LDP was hoping to divert public attention away from Okinawa by intensifying its 'Northern Territories' related domestic campaign (Ikeda, 2003). The symbolic meaning of the 'Northern Territories' resided mainly in the association of the islets with the Soviet Union and by default with the domestic progressive forces that included the socialists and the communists. Importantly, in pursuing its goal of consolidating the nation under the 'Northern Territories' banner, the government embraced the terminology and the techniques deployed by the grassroots organizations. Government sponsored publications on the issue adopted such strongly nationalistic terms such as 'our inherent territory' and 'land inherited from our ancestors' (e.g. MOFA, 1978) that were initially introduced by the Hokkaido based movement. Furthermore, the enlightenment strategies such as distributing pamphlets, organizing 'people's rallies' and public events became an integral part of the government led campaign. The drive to 'enlighten' the public quickly spread in the society. Newspapers, magazines and even department stores quickly became mouthpieces of the 'Northern Territories' cause (Stephan, 1974).

Along with the process of nationalization of the cause, the domestic discourse on the lost territories and related events gradually became homogenized. In a somewhat ironic fashion, the institutionalization of the 'Northern Territories' activities on Hokkaido initiated by Governor Tanaka in the early 1950s as a tool of struggle with the central government came to serve the interests of his foes after the conservative victory in the 1959 gubernatorial elections. Along with the general demise in public activism in Japan, the abovementioned 'Nemuro Area Peace Preservation Economic Revival Alliance' which belonged to the progressive grassroots activism and received no support from the government, faded into

oblivion. Those organizations that survived till the present day are fully dependent on governmental assistance. The institutionalization of the activism both on the grassroots and prefectural levels contributes to the continuous reproduction of the illusion of a synergetic relationship among the central government, Hokkaido prefectural administration and the people. This creates a certain illusion of the governmental position on the islands as being dependent on public opinion or of a certain interest group. Today however the non-compromising stance can hardly be traced to any particular interests.

Dokdo

The process of nationalization of 'Takeshima' is strikingly different from the one described above. While nationalization of 'Northern Territories' can be attributed to the efforts of the LDP pursuing their domestic political goals, the emergence of 'Takeshima' as one of the central points of reference in Japan's domestic discourse on South Korea can be traced to the collapse of the LDP's internal control mechanisms. Before proceeding further however it is important to outline the LDP's long standing position on Dokdo.

In the early 1950s, the Japanese government vehemently protested the Korean de facto control of the islets and the territorial issue was one of the main stumbling stones in bilateral normalization negotiations. The situation however changed after the 1961 *coup d'etat* that brought Park Chung Hee to power. Park viewed Japan's financial assistance as vital to Korean development and he embarked on developing closer ties with Japan soon after seizing power. On the Japanese side, the rapprochement was driven by the so-called 'Korean lobby'-loose association of business executives and strongly anti-communist conservative politicians that formed around one of the LDP bosses, Kishi Nobusuke (Roh, 2008).

The negotiations eventually led to the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Treaty on Basic Relations that normalized the relations between the two neighbors and a fishing agreement that enabled the two governments to shelve the question of the territorial rights to Dokdo. According to Daniel Roh (2008), the two governments reached a secret pact according to which status quo will be maintained and domestically both sides will continue to make claims of sovereignty but will not contest the other side's claims internationally.

Roh does not provide any hard evidence in his book but Japan/LDP policy related to the dispute indirectly supports his argument. Throughout the years, references to the dispute in governmental and party publications were kept to a minimum or were simply omitted (e.g. Nanpō dōhō engokai, 1965). In the Diet interpolations in 1964 and 1965 that preceded the conclusion of the Basic Relations Treaty none of the LDP MPs, including those elected by the Shimane constit-

uency, raised the 'Takeshima question.' With only a limited number of exceptions, this policy of keeping the territorial issue on the back burner of domestic politics was maintained by the LDP throughout its years in power. This continued regardless of the changes in power relations among various factions the LDP.

What enabled then Shimane Prefectural Assembly dominated by the LDP members to pass an ordinance that went against the will of LDP heavyweights? Arguably, the political mechanisms that enabled the passage of the ordinance can be attributed to the collapse of the LDP's internal power relations that resulted from PM Koizumi's reforms.

Basically, until the election of Koizumi Junichiro as the chairman of the LDP in 2001, the power within the LDP rested with the Keiseikai faction. Keiseikai to which many members of the abovementioned 'Korean lobby' belonged, perceived good relations with South Korea as more important than the pursuit of the Dokdo islets. Thus it tried to keep the latter on the backburner of domestic politics and to maintain the status quo. This can be witnessed in the policies pursued by the faction's leaders. For example, its leader in the late 1980s and early 1990s was Takeshita Noboru, a native of and elected from Shimane. He was also one of the heavyweights in the so-called 'Korean lobby,' which attributed more importance to maintaining good relations with Korea over demanding the return of the uninhabited rocks. Takeshita's reluctance to engage in the territorial dispute and to follow the arrangements of the 'secret pact' discussed above can be seen in his attitude to the dispute in the Diet. During the four decades of his political career he referred to the dispute only twice and very briefly during the parliamentary interpolations—once as the Minister of Finance during discussions of the fishing issues between Japan and USSR in 1987 and once during his questioning over the Sagawa Kyubin bribing incident in 1992 (Diet Interpolations at National Diet Library, 1987 and 1992).

There is no direct evidence that *Keiseikai* leaders directly obstructed any Dokdo related initiatives of the Shimane prefectural assembly members prior to 2004. At the same time it can be argued that the emphasis on solidarity and strict top-down relations that characterized *Keiseikai* (Ferkov, 1997) as well as the importance of the party in mobilizing funding for politicians made an emergence of any local level initiative that went against its policy structurally impossible.

The rise of Koizumi Junichiro to chairmanship of the LDP and subsequently to premiership in 2001 however dealt an invincible blow to the internal governance of the LDP which was still dominated by the successors of *Keiseikai*. Besides coming from a rival faction (*Seiwakai*/Fukuda faction), Koizumi saw it as his mission to destroy the LDP which for him was synonymous with the dominance of *Keiseikai*. The concentration of policy-making in the Prime-Minister's Office (as opposed to the previous center of gravity that rested with the faction's leaders)

and the split of the old LDP during the debates over privatization of the postal service that culminated in the 'postal elections' of 2005 had probably its merits for Japan's politics but from the perspective of intra-party governance it eroded if not completely destroyed the existing mechanisms. Arguably this collapse of the intra-party governance can be seen as the key factor that enabled a group of Shimane prefectural lawmakers dominated by LDP members to pass an ordinance that went against the existing party policy and despite strong suggestions not to enact it that were given by a number of powerful party members.

The passage of the ordinance was mainly an act of rebellion against the central government and thus its broad implications were not anticipated by the prefectural assembly members that initiated the move (Nakai, 2012). The Korean side fiercely reacted to the ordinance, perceiving it as having central government backing. The exchange of rhetoric that followed, the symbolic gestures such as lifting the ban on domestic tourism to the islets by the Korean authorities and symbolic retaliations, the possibility of clash between the two countries' navies after Japan's decision to send survey ships in 2006 as well as the political usage of the territorial issue by both Japanese and Korean politicians, attracted intense attention from the media and propelled 'Takeshima' to the center of Japan's debates on Korea.

Nationalization of 'Takeshima' was further enhanced by a newly established citizen's group, called the 'Group to Protect Prefectural Territory-Takeshima' (*kendo takeshima o mamoru kai*). The Matsue (Shimane's administrative center) based group was established in May 2004, in the midst of exchanges between the Prefecture and the central government regarding the enactment of 'Takeshima Day.' The core of the group is comprised of local activists that initially became acquainted when collecting signatures for petitions related to people abducted by North Korea and it is headed by one of the local Shinto priests. The group is the first and only grassroots organization dedicated to the 'return of Takeshima.'¹ Since the rise in the domestic interest in the issue, this group which according to their own estimates, has about 1000 supporters nationwide, has played an important role in organizing related events and attracting local and national level politicians to participate in these events.² Initially largely unnoted, over the years the activities of the Group came to be covered by major newspapers and thus its existence became quite important in creating the semblance of a widespread citizens' interest in Dokdo.

1 For the purposes of this paper, I exclude the ultra right-wing organizations (*uyoku*) that have continuously used all of the issues (including territorial disputes) that exist between Japan and its neighbors when advocating their militant agenda.

2 Interview with Kajitani Mariko, Secretary General of 'Group to Protect Prefectural Territory-Takeshima' conducted on the 16th of December, 2012 Matsue, Shimane Prefecture

Conclusion

Today both 'Northern Territories' and 'Takeshima' function as important symbols in the construction of Japan's national identity. Through interpretations of the history of Japan's possession of the islands and the history of the dispute, personal stories and depictions of the actions of the Korean and Soviet/Russian 'others,' they unite the central government, the prefectures and the people of Japan in a national story of victimhood.

Focusing on the non-state and sub-state actors, this paper has argued that despite the similarity of the final discursive products, the processes that led to their emergence were fundamentally different in the two cases. Furthermore, it showed that during the formative years of the disputes, the non-state and sub-state were driven either by material or political interests but not by nationalism or other ideational factors. Over the years however both of the disputes turned into important symbols in Japan's nationalism. The processes that enabled this transformation however have been fundamentally different in the two cases. In the case of the 'Northern Territories,' the 'nationalization' of the dispute took place as part of an intentional policy of the LDP aimed at diverting Japanese national sentiments away from the US and its continuous military dominance on Okinawa towards the Soviet Union. In the process however, the LDP led government adopted the strategies originally developed by the grassroots organizations and Hokkaido prefectural authorities. Furthermore, the existence of these organizations and their selective nurturing enabled the prevalence of the semblance of a national mission with both the government and the people working towards achieving one goal. Contrastingly, in the case of Dokdo, the 'nationalization' of the dispute occurred against the intentions of the LDP and can be attributed to the collapse in its internal governance that resulted from Koizumi's reforms.

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