

Opinions on Domestic and International Communications on Territory and Sovereignty

January 19, 2023

Advisory Panel on Communications Concerning Territorial Integrity

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(Names after the Chair in order of Japanese syllabary)

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The Advisory Panel on Communications Concerning Territorial Integrity (Chairperson: Nishihara Masashi, Vice Chairman of the Research Institute for Peace and Security) released policy recommendations titled “For Practical Initiatives to Strengthen Communication based on Changes in the Domestic and Overseas Environment” on July 29, 2019.

On November 15, 2022, and December 15, 2022, the Advisory Panel held follow-up meetings to evaluate the Japanese government's efforts to disseminate information on territory and sovereignty and make and compile further recommendations on policy directions and priorities. The opinions of the Advisory Panel members were submitted to Tani Koichi, the Minister of State in charge of Territorial Integrity by Chairperson Nishihara Masashi on January 19, 2023, and made public on the same day.

The following is the background information on the discussion in the Panel, the Panel’s recognition of the current state of affairs, its review of the government actions so far, and its opinions on policy priorities and directions based on the review.

I Background and Challenges Related to the Initiatives on Domestic and Overseas Communications Concerning Territory and Sovereignty

Since the first appointment of a Minister of State in charge of Territorial Integrity in December 2012, the Government of Japan has been taking initiatives to strengthen domestic and overseas communications concerning the territorial integrity of Takeshima and the Senkaku Islands, in addition to the Northern Territories, which had already been addressed under a cross-governmental framework. In July 2013 and June 2015, the Advisory Panel submitted a report and recommendations, respectively, on such initiatives to the Ministers of State in charge of Territorial Integrity. Taking into consideration the direction of policies suggested in these documents, the Government has taken measures related to overseas communications, domestic awareness, and archival research. In January 2018, the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty (hereinafter referred to as the "National Museum") was established as an institutional hub for public communication, both domestically and internationally, and later expanded and moved to Toranomon, Tokyo, in January 2020.

The Advisory Panel held meetings from May to July 2019, where its members discussed changes in the domestic and international environment surrounding Japan’s territory and sovereignty, examined government initiatives at the time, and compiled recommendations titled “For Practical Initiatives to Strengthen Communication based on Changes in the Domestic and Overseas Environment” (hereinafter referred to as the “Previous Recommendations”). The Previous Recommendations were presented to the Minister of State in charge of Territories Integrity and made public on July 29, 2019.

Concerning the developments after the issuance of the Previous Recommendations, since

FY2020, textbooks based on the new National Curriculum Standards have been introduced in schools step by step. As for the National Museum, exhibitions on the Northern Territories, Takeshima, and the Senkaku Islands have expanded, and new initiatives, such as special exhibitions and exhibition tours to regional cities, have been implemented. Three years have passed since the relocation of the National Museum as of January 2023.

Meanwhile, the situation concerning Japan's territory and sovereignty has become even more severe with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, persistent attempts by Chinese Coast Guard vessels to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and the continued illegal occupation of Takeshima by South Korea.

II The Follow-up Meetings of the Advisory Panel

In light of the developments mentioned above, the follow-up meetings of the Advisory Panel were held twice under the auspices of Tani Koichi, the Minister of State in charge of Territorial Integrity. At the Meetings, the government explained the measures that had been taken to implement the Previous Recommendations covering four areas of related policies, including the “Overall Matters” and 14 items. In the meetings, the members of the Advisory Panel discussed the policy priorities and directions. In addition, prior to the follow-up meeting, some of the members of the Advisory Panel visited the relocated National Museum.

III Opinions of the Advisory Panel

1. Review of the government’s measures that have been taken to implement the Previous Recommendations

As a result of the deliberations in the follow-up meetings, the Advisory Panel concludes that, despite the spread of the new coronavirus and various movement restrictions, the government has taken various measures, and some progress has been made.

The review of the Advisory Panel on the four main areas of government actions (overseas communications, domestic awareness, the National Museum, and archival research on documents and materials related to Takeshima and the Senkaku Islands) is summarized as follows:

(1) Overseas Communications

The progress that has been made: Through the publication of pamphlets and the launch of the multi-language Research and Commentary Website, the government has disseminated information to overseas on the grounds of Japan’s territorial rights based on objective facts such as historical documents and materials.

The areas for further action: The current affairs surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty are one of the universal challenges in the sense that the free and open international order based

on the rule of law is being challenged. From this perspective, Japan should strengthen its overseas communications vis-a-vis the current state of affairs surrounding its territory and sovereignty. Furthermore, it is also necessary to enhance capabilities to respond to various changes, including those of the arguments of other countries and those in the internal and external environment.

(2) Domestic Awareness

The progress that has been made: Some progress has been made on the diversification of PR tools, including the use of social media and the provision of materials on the website. Some efforts have also been made to appeal to younger generations, including children.

The areas for further action: The overall level of awareness of the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty in Japan is still far from satisfactory, and there are regional variations in understanding and interest. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen various efforts to increase "triggers" for people to think about territory and sovereignty as something close to them. In addition, as for education, the government should grasp how topics related to territory and sovereignty are handled in classes, including new subjects such as "Advanced Geography" and "Advanced History," and provide support to schools, if necessary.

(3) National Museum

The progress that has been made: Exhibits have been substantially enriched compared to those before the relocation, including those introducing the arguments by other countries and regions and those using new technologies. Due to the expansion of the exhibition space, the number of exhibits, especially those related to the Northern Territories, has increased. In addition, the museum has tried to appeal to various audiences, including young people (including children) and foreigners. In general, the National Museum has fairly cooperated with related facilities and organizations to implement their projects.

The areas for further action: The National Museum should provide visitors with easy-to-understand information about the severe situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty and the Japanese government's policies and responses. It is also necessary to increase exhibits that meet the needs of visitors and promote their understanding by using such tools as audio guides and QR codes. It is also important to strengthen the hub function of the National Museum among the related facilities and museums in Japan. It cannot be said that the National Museum is well known, and publicity for the National Museum itself needs to be further strengthened. The National Museum should provide an environment where young people, including children, feel free to visit and enhance awareness of the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty.

(4) Archival research on documents related to Takeshima and the Senkaku Islands

The progress that has been made: There has been substantial progress in the government's efforts to collect, organize, and analyze historical documents and materials related to Takeshima and the Senkaku Islands and to disseminate information on them in light of making Japan's position more objective and persuasive. Such efforts include the expansion of the Research and Commentary Website.

The areas for further action: The government should continue its survey of related documents and materials and add documents and materials that show China's attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force since the 1970s in the target of its research.

2. Policy priorities and directions based on the evaluation of the government's efforts

The following is a summary of the Advisory Panel's opinions on policy priorities and directions based on its review of the government's efforts.

(1) General Issues

(a) Promote an overall understanding of the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty

Currently, attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force are being made in various parts of the world, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. These attempts could destabilize law and order in the international community. The severe situation surrounding Japan's territorial integrity and sovereignty can be seen as part of this overall trend and is attracting increasing attention overseas. Therefore, it is important to make further efforts to communicate, both domestically and internationally, that the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty is a universal challenge, including through the exhibitions at the National Museum.

(b) Fundamentally enrich the exhibitions and strengthen the hub functions of the National Museum through the use of digital technology

The government should fundamentally enrich the exhibitions and strengthen the hub functions of the National Museum through the use of digital technologies. For instance, it would be helpful to create a database of documents and materials held by relevant institutions and local facilities and make it available to users, including researchers, and to create a digital space in which visitors can go around to see the exhibits of the National Museum and local facilities related to territory and sovereignty.

(c) Continue efforts to realize an easy-to-understand website

The government should continue its efforts to build websites that allow visitors to quickly reach the information they want according to their level of interest. In addition, reciprocal links with the websites of local governments and other public institutions and organizations should be promoted to increase the number of "entry points" for information on territory and sovereignty.

(d) Promote education on topics related to territory and sovereignty and strengthen awareness among young people

The domestic awareness of the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty is still far from sufficient. Moreover, there are regional variations in understanding and interest. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to promote domestic awareness by strengthening efforts to increase "triggers" for people to think about territory and sovereignty as something close to them. In this regard, the government should consider the following: optimizing the operation of exhibition tours, providing textbooks related to Japan's territory and sovereignty, dispatching lecturers, and promoting the use of the National Museum. Furthermore, regarding awareness-raising among young people, it is necessary for the government to consider and implement practical measures, including using social media.

(e) Consider effective communication methods and content for each target

The government should obtain advice from appropriate experts on effective communication methods and content for each target audience, such as the general public, the press, teachers, students, and experts, including those from overseas.

(f) Enhance capabilities to respond to various changes, including those of the arguments of other countries and those in the internal and external environment

In addition to continuing efforts to disseminate information on Japan's territory and sovereignty through the National Museum and the Research and Commentary Website based on analyses of the claims made by China, South Korea, and other countries/regions, it is also necessary for the government to enhance its capabilities to respond to various changes including those of the arguments of other countries and those in the internal and external environment. In addition, in order to prepare for changes in the internal and external environment, the Japanese government should organize its documents involving China's attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force since the 1970s, the

Japanese government's responses to these attempts, and its interactions with foreign governments regarding the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty.

(2) Overseas Communications

(a) Disseminate Japan's various views on territory and sovereignty

Diverse views and opinions in the form of research results and academic papers should be disseminated through various media by respective organizations. In particular, the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty is perceived as a universal challenge in the sense that the free and open international order based on the rule of law is being challenged. It is important to disseminate such views to the international community as a whole.

(b) Enhance flexibility to respond to various changes

It is necessary for the government to enhance readiness to take actions required in response to various changes, including those of the arguments of other countries/regions and those in the internal and external environment. In addition, the government should continue strategically disseminating persuasive facts in domestic and international communications.

(c) Support institutions that promote discussions and cooperation with third-country experts

The government should deepen cooperation with experts and research institutions that promote discussions and cooperation with third-country experts on the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty and continue its efforts to support those experts and research institutions.

(d) Strengthen the dissemination of information in English on the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty

In order to gain a deeper understanding from the international community, Japan should strengthen its communications in English on the situation surrounding its territory and sovereignty, including attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in Japan's vicinity. In particular, the government should grasp the information demands of third-country experts interested in the situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty and disseminate their analyses and thoughts. The government should endeavor to disseminate as much relevant information as possible.

(3) Domestic Awareness

(a) Strengthen support for education on topics related to territory and sovereignty in elementary, middle, and high schools

In light of the fact that the National Curriculum Standards, with enriched contents on territory and sovereignty, have been implemented in elementary, junior high, and high schools step by step since FY2020, the government should grasp how topics related to territory and sovereignty are handled in classes including new subjects such as “Advanced Geography” and “Advanced History” and provide support to schools, if necessary. At the same time, it is necessary for the government to actively promote the use of the National Museum for educational purposes.

(b) Exhibit at events sponsored by related organizations

The government should actively exhibit panels and other exhibits at events organized by the Self-Defense Forces, Japan Coast Guard, etc., and promote the dispatch of staff who can provide commentary whenever possible.

(c) Strengthen awareness among young people

As the majority of visitors to the National Museum, including those for exhibition tours in regional cities, tend to be middle-aged and older, it is necessary to consider further measures, including social media and other means of communication, to enhance the awareness of younger visitors, and put them into practice.

(4) National Museum

(a) Add exhibits on the severe situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty and Japan's related policies

Exhibits on the severe international situation surrounding Japan's territory and sovereignty should be enhanced, including those on challenges to the law and order of the international community and the Japanese government's policies, and on-the-ground responses to this situation. In addition, visual exhibits, such as those showing how people live on the islands, should be introduced.

(b) Satisfy various needs of visitors

While the Advisory Panel highly appreciates the current exhibition in the sense that it is based on archival research and historical documents and the National Museum should maintain its academic approach for its exhibition, it is also necessary for the National Museum to strengthen efforts to satisfy the various needs of visitors, including those of

elementary and junior high school students on social studies field trips. In this regard, the National Museum should introduce exhibitions that use web-related technologies, apps, audio guides, QR codes, etc.

(c) Promote visitors' understanding by increasing interactive exhibits

While the current exhibits consist mainly of panel displays, in order to further promote visitors' understanding, visually appealing exhibits should be increased, including the use of dioramas, replicas, and exhibits utilizing new technologies. In this regard, the National Museum should refer to the excellent efforts of other museums and exhibition facilities. In addition, since there are limited opportunities to view authentic historical materials, it is necessary to consider displaying such materials, if possible, while improving the National Museum's environment for holding and storing them.

(d) Use the space of the National Museum more effectively

The National Museum should use its space more effectively. In particular, concerning the area mainly used for special exhibitions, the National Museum should consider using it for purposes other than exhibitions, including small-scale lectures and workshops.

(e) Make efforts to raise awareness of the National Museum

It cannot be said that the National Museum is sufficiently known among the general public. While introducing attractive content, as mentioned above, the public relations activities of the National Museum should be further strengthened, including appealing to universities, public facilities, and those involved in school excursions.

(5) Archival research on documents related to Takeshima and the Senkaku Islands

(a) Continue archival research projects and collect materials showing China's attempts to change the status quo by force

With regard to the archival research project that is being conducted with the advice of experts, in order to make Japan's position more objective and persuasive, and to better clarify the problems with the claims made by other countries or regions, the collection, organization, analysis, and dissemination of relevant materials, including materials from the pre-modern period, should be continued. Furthermore, it would also be helpful to add research materials that show China's attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force since the 1970s.

(b) Enrich the contents of the Research and Commentary Website and make it easy to navigate

The Research and Commentary Website should be further improved by enhancing links to primary sources and organizing the website's multi-layered structure so that it is easier for users to understand and access necessary information.

(6) Follow-up of the above-mentioned opinions

Approximately three years after the follow-up meetings, the government should ask a third party, such as this Advisory Panel, to evaluate the extent to which the contents of the Previous Recommendations, including the above-mentioned opinions, have been reflected in actual measures and how effective these measures are, and to propose new measures based on the results of the evaluation.