

# Japan's Lands and Waters

## The Northern Territories

**Takeshima**

**Territorial Sea**

**Contiguous Zone**

**Exclusive Economic Zone**  
Including Contiguous Zone

**Extended Continental Shelf**

Areas of the Sea under Article 2, item(ii) of the Act on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf

## The Senkaku Islands

**Easternmost Point**

Minami-Tori Shima Island

**Southernmost Point**

Okino-Tori Shima Island

Yonagunijima Island  
**Westernmost Point**

**Northernmost Point**

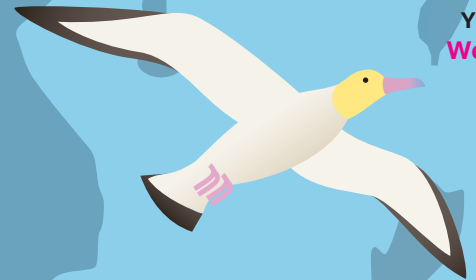
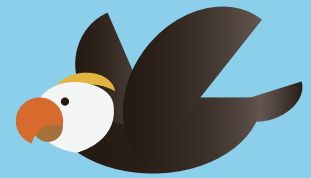
礼文島  
Kunashiri Island  
Etorofu Island  
Shikotan Island  
The Habomai Islands

隠岐諸島  
島根県  
対馬  
肥前島  
村西島  
南西諸島  
沖繩県  
南大東島  
沖大東島

日本国

八丈島  
伊豆諸島  
鳥島

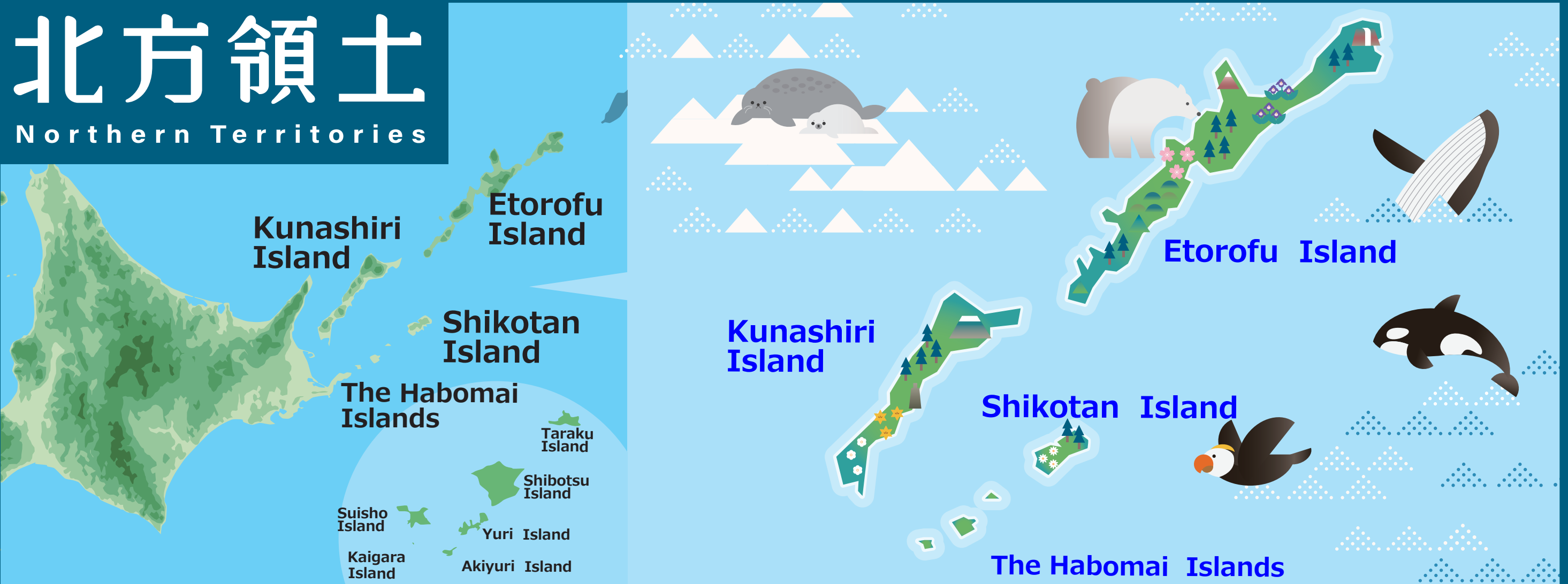
小笠原諸島  
父島  
硫黄島  
南硫黄島



For illustration purposes, this map shows geographical intermediate lines in waters in which borders with neighboring countries have yet to be demarcated

# 北方領土

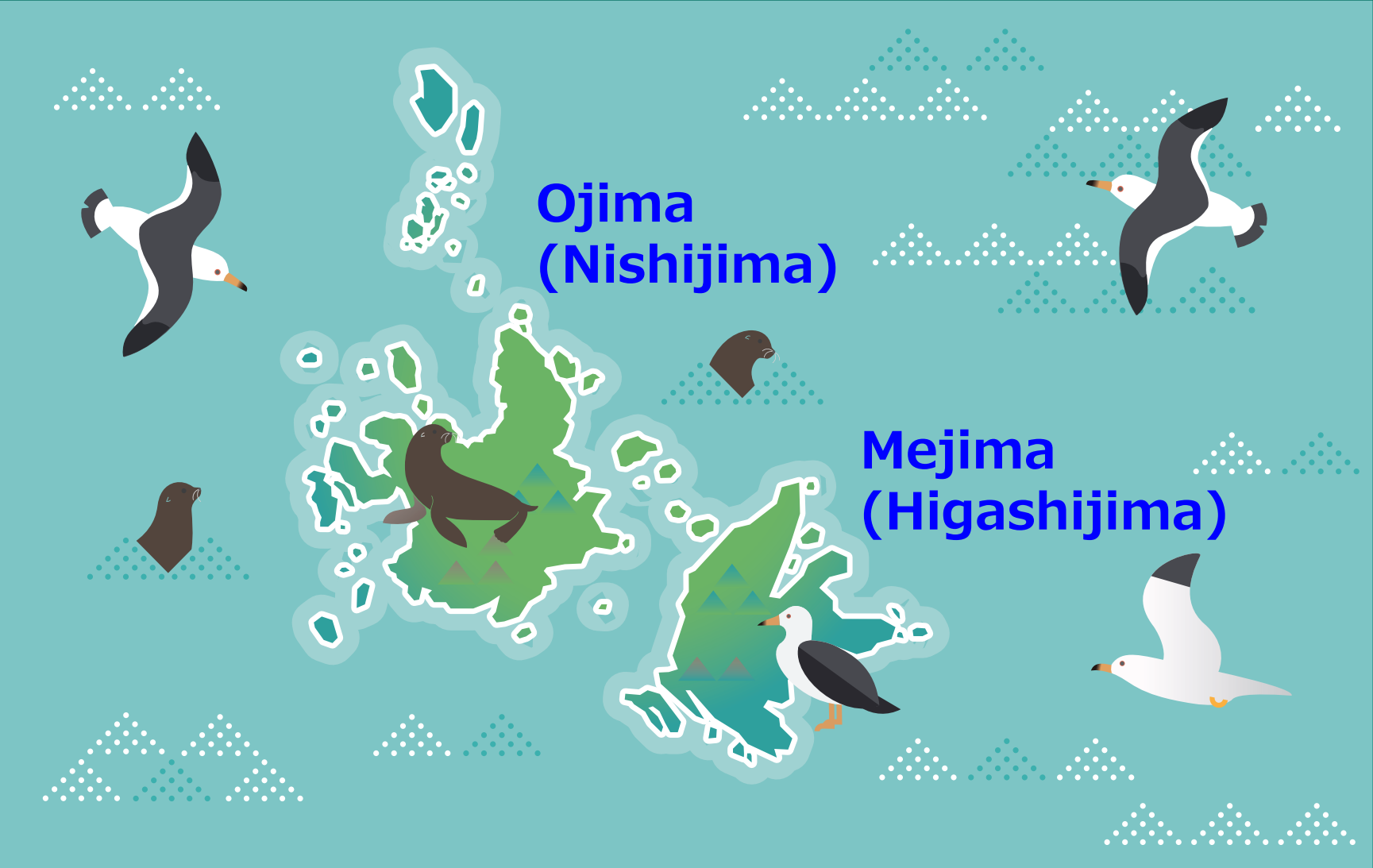
Northern Territories



The Northern Territories are inherent territory of Japan, which have never been part of a foreign country. The Northern Territories were occupied by the Soviet forces after Japan had accepted the Potsdam Declaration, and the Japanese residents in the islands were later forcibly deported. The Four Northern Islands have remained illegally occupied by Russia up until the present day.

# 竹島

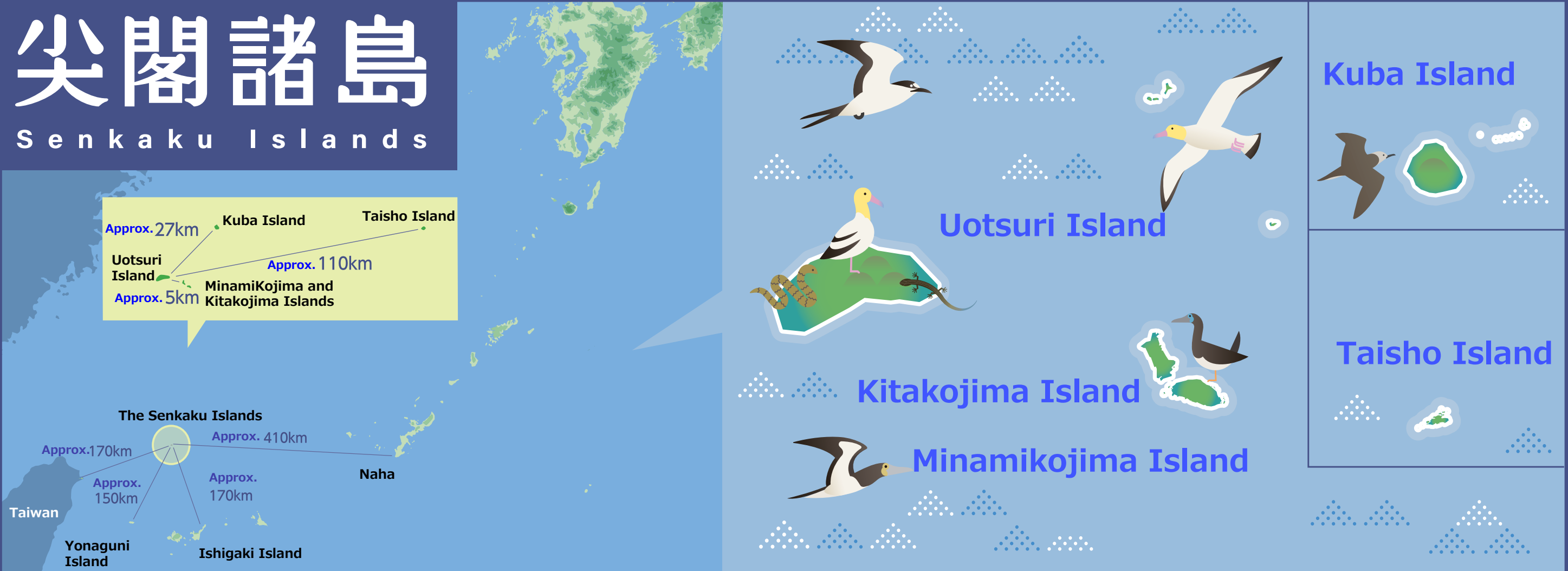
Takeshima



Takeshima is indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based on international law. However, since the 1950s, South Korea has continued to illegally occupy Takeshima by stationing security personnel on the island. Japan has proposed referring the issue to the International Court of Justice, but South Korea has rejected.

# 尖閣諸島

Senkaku Islands



There is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands. However, In the 1970s, China suddenly began to make their own assertions over the Senkaku Islands after oil reserves in the East China Sea had been reported. Until then, China had never challenged Japan's sovereignty over the islands.



# The Northern Territories

Hokkaido Prefecture

Why do the Northern Territories continue to be illegally occupied by Russia?



The Northern Territories consist of Etorofu Island, Kunashiri Island, Shikotan Island and the Habomai Islands, located in the Sea of Okhotsk, close to the north-east of Hokkaido's Nemuro Peninsula.

The principality of Matsumae defined the Four Northern Islands as part of its own domain as early as the beginning of the 17th century, and had gradually established control over them. In 1855, the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation between Japan and Russia confirmed the border between the two countries as had been naturally formed between Etorofu and Uruppu Islands.

On August 9, 1945, the Soviet Union, currently the Russian Federation, in violation of the Neutrality Pact that was still in force between Japan and the Soviet Union, opened war on Japan. Even after Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and made clear its intention to surrender on August 14, Soviet forces continued its offensive against Japan and occupied the Northern Territories from August 28 until September 5, 1945. At the time, approximately 17 thousand Japanese resided in the Four Northern Islands. All of them were forcibly removed by 1948.

The illegal occupation of the Four Northern Islands by the Russian Federation continues still now. Due to this territorial issue, Japan and the Russian Federation have not concluded a peace treaty. The Government of Japan continues negotiations with the Russian Government to conclude a peace treaty through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue.



Map of the Soviet Union invasion

# Takeshima

Okinoshima Town, Shimane Prefecture

Why has Takeshima illegally been occupied by the Republic of Korea?



Takeshima is located in the Sea of Japan approximately 158km northwest of the Oki Islands. The total area of the islands is approximately 0.20km<sup>2</sup>. Japan had established its sovereignty over Takeshima by the middle of the 17th century at the latest and, in 1905, the Japanese government incorporated Takeshima into Shimane Prefecture by a cabinet decision, and reaffirmed its sovereignty over Takeshima.

Signed in September 1951, the San Francisco Peace Treaty states that Japan recognizes the independence of Korea and renounces "Korea, including the islands of Quelpart, Port Hamilton and Dagelet." A request made by the Republic of Korea (ROK) to include Takeshima to the territories to be renounced by Japan was unequivocally rejected by the United States on the grounds that Takeshima had never been treated as Korean territory and that Korea had at no point claimed sovereignty over Takeshima.

In January 1952, shortly before the Peace Treaty entered into force, the ROK issued a declaration concerning maritime sovereignty, with which it unilaterally established the "Syngman Rhee Line", encompassing the island of Takeshima in contravention of international law. Despite protests by the international community, the ROK did not withdraw the declaration. From 1953 to 1954, the ROK illegally occupied Takeshima by physical force, including firing on Japan's patrol vessels. The ROK has been illegally occupying it ever since.

In the Declaration. As regards the island of Dokdo, otherwise known as Takeshima or Liancourt Rocks, this normally uninhabited rock formation was according to our information never treated as part of Korea and, since about 1905, has been under the jurisdiction of the Oki Islands Branch Office of Shimane Prefecture of Japan. The island does not appear ever before to have been claimed by Korea. It is understood that

Letter sent from the U.S. Government to the Korean Government on August 10, 1951

# The Senkaku Islands

Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture

There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands.

Why did China start to claim the Senkaku Islands in 1971?



The Senkaku Islands are a group of islands, which include Uotsuri, Kitakojima, Minamikojima, Kuba, Taisho, Okinokita, Okinominami, and Tobise Islands, located approximately 170km north of Ishigaki Island.

The Senkaku Islands were incorporated into the territory of Japan in 1895 and have consistently been part of the Japanese territory since then. The Islands were occupied by the US Forces in the final stage of WWII, and placed under the US administration by the San Francisco Peace Treaty, while being treated as the Japanese territory.

In December 1971, the People's Republic of China expressed its first ever international claims that the Senkaku Islands are the territory of China. There was no previous record of China asserting any such claims, which suggests that China was only driven to such action by the release of a UN report, in the 1960s, of potential oil reserves in the East China Sea.

China has been asserting that the Senkaku Islands historically belonged to China. However, it has never administrated them as a state nor does it provide any grounds for its claims based on international law. China's claims are unilateral and cannot be accepted in the international community. There is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan.



In 1971, Japan and the US signed the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, in accordance with which the administration over Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972. The Agreed Minutes of the Agreement provide for the geographic scope of the return, which includes the Senkaku Islands.

# Japan's Territory: Japan's Response Respecting Law and Order in the International Community

The **Northern Territories** and **Takeshima** are parts of Japan's territory. However, Japan cannot exercise a part of its jurisdiction therein in reality.

**The Senkaku Islands** are part of Japan's territory. The Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan and there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Islands. However, the situations in the maritime areas surrounding the islands have become complex.

Amid the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which is shaking the very foundations of the current international order, Japan is determined to uphold and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law, by taking actions based on rules, such as peaceful resolution of disputes, and encouraging other countries to do the same.

Japan has responded to various situations pertaining to its territory and sovereignty in an appropriate manner and in line with the nature of each situation, while respecting law and order in the international community.

## The Northern Territories

### Territorial Issue exists.

The Northern Territories issue is yet to be resolved even almost 70 years have passed since the conclusion of the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration in 1956, The Japanese Government consistently worked on the negotiations with the Soviet Union and Russia, upholding our basic policy of establishing stable relations based on true mutual understanding with our important neighbor by concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the territorial issue.

However, the Government of Russia, using the measures taken by Japan in relation to Russia's aggression against Ukraine as excuse, announced measures such as discontinuing negotiations on a peace treaty, suspending the Four-Island Exchange Program and free visits, and withdrawing from the dialogue on joint economic activities on the Four Northern Islands. In September 2022, the Government of Russia also announced a government decree suspending the validity of the agreement on free visits and the Four-Island Exchange Program.

**Although Japan-Russia relations are in a difficult situation due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Japanese government will firmly maintain its policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the territorial issue.**

## Takeshima

### Territorial Issue exists.

Takeshima is an inherent territory of Japan. As seen in the drafting history of the San Francisco Peace Treaty that the US government declined the South Korean request to add Takeshima as a part of "Korea" Japan renounced under the treaty, it is clear that Japan retains Takeshima under the treaty. However, from 1953 to 1954, South Korea illegally occupied Takeshima by physical force, including firing on Japan's patrol vessels.

Japan and the ROK expressed their respective claims to each other via diplomatic notes in the 1950s and 1960s. Takeshima has remained illegally occupied by South Korea up until the present day. With no bilateral solution forthcoming, Japan proposed to South Korea to refer the case to the International Court of Justice in 1954, 1962 and 2012. South Korea has continually rejected these proposals.

**Any measures or actions the ROK takes regarding Takeshima based on illegal occupation have no legal justification under international law. The Japanese Government will respond firmly with the determination to resolutely protect Japan's land, sea, and airspace.**

## The Senkaku Islands

### There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved.

Although the Chinese government did not contest Japan's sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands for approximately 75 years, in December 1971, it suddenly began claiming that China has historically held the Senkaku Islands since the 14th Century. China's claims are based on its unique interpretation of the relevant facts and laws, and not supported by any grounds based on international law. China has repeatedly intruded into Japan's territorial seas around the Senkaku Islands. The frequency of the incursions has sharply risen since 2012. China is maintaining and strengthening its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force.

**In response to attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force, the Japanese Government will respond firmly and calmly based on our policy of resolutely protecting Japan's land, sea, and airspace. At the same time, the Government will urge China to act with respect for the law and order of the international community, and explain the situation to the rest of the international community to gain their understanding.**