

Dokdo, Korean territory



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Basic Position of the Government of the Republic of Korea on Dokdo

Dokdo, the easternmost island in East Sea, is an integral part of Korean territory historically, geographically, and under international law. No territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo, and Dokdo is not a matter to be dealt with through diplomatic negotiations or judicial settlement.

The Government of the Republic of Korea exercises Korea's irrefutable territorial sovereignty over Dokdo. The Government will deal firmly and resolutely with any provocation and will continue to defend Korea's sovereignty over the island.



 *View of Dokdo from East Sea*



 *Springtime in Dokdo*



Geographical Recognition of Dokdo and Relevant Historical Evidence

A. Dokdo has been recognized geographically as a part of Ulleungdo.

On a clear day, Dokdo is visible to the naked eye from Korea's Ulleungdo (Ulleung Island), the island which lies in the closest proximity (87.4 km) to Dokdo. Given its geographical location, Dokdo has historically been considered to be a part of Ulleungdo.

This is well evidenced in early Korean documents. For instance, the Joseon (Korean) government publication *Sejong Sillok Jiriji* (Geography Section of the Annals of King Sejong's Reign), 1454, which provides a geographical record of Korean territory, states, "Usan [Dokdo]·Mureung[Ulleungdo]... The two islands are not far apart from each other and thus visible on a clear day."

While there are numerous adjacent islands around Ulleungdo, Dokdo is the only one visible to the naked eye from Ulleungdo on a clear day.



View of Dokdo from Ulleungdo



Distance between Dokdo & Ulleungdo and between Dokdo & Japan's Oki Islands

B. Korean government publications record that Korea has long recognized Dokdo as Korean territory and exercised effective control over the island.

In the Joseon (Korean) government publication *Sejong Sillok Jiriji* (Geography Section of the Annals of King Sejong's Reign), 1454, it is recorded that Ulleungdo (Mureung) and Dokdo (Usan) are two islands that are part of Joseon's Uljin-hyeon (Uljin prefecture). It is also recorded that the two islands had been territories of Usan-guk (Usan State), which was conquered by Silla (former kingdom of Korea) in the early 6th century (AD 512), indicating that Korea's effective control over Dokdo extends back to the Silla period.

Consistent records pertaining to Dokdo are also found in other government publications, including *Sinjeung Dongguk Yeoji Seungnam* (Revised and Augmented Survey of the Geography of Korea), 1531; *Dongguk Munheon Biggo* (Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea), 1770; *Man-gi Yoram* (Manual of State Affairs for the Monarch), 1808; and *Jeungbo Munheon Biggo* (Revised and Enlarged Edition of the Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea), 1908.



 *Sejong Sillok Jiriji*

Particularly noteworthy is the record in the volume “Yejigo” in *Dongguk Munheon Biggo* (Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea), 1770, which states, “Ulleung [Ulleungdo] and Usan [Dokdo] are both territories of Usan-guk [Usan State], and Usan [Dokdo] is what Japan refers to as Matsushima [the old Japanese name for Dokdo].” This passage makes it evident that Usando is present-day Dokdo and that it is Korean territory.



Ulleungdo Dispute and Confirmation of Korea's Sovereignty over Dokdo

A. Korea's territorial sovereignty over Ulleungdo and its ancillary island, Dokdo, was confirmed through the diplomatic negotiations between the Korean and Japanese governments (Ulleungdo Dispute) in the 17th century.

While illegally fishing in Ulleungdo, a territory of Joseon (Korea), the Ohya and Murakawa families of Tottori-han (feudal clan of Tottori) of Japan had a run-in with Korean fishermen, including An Yong-bok, in 1693.

The two Japanese families petitioned the Japanese government (Edo shogunate) to prohibit Koreans' passage to Ulleungdo. The Edo shogunate ordered Tsushima to negotiate with the Joseon government. Thus began the negotiations between the two countries referred to as the "Ulleungdo Dispute."

The Edo shogunate sent an inquiry to Tottori-han on December 25, 1695. Upon receiving Tottori-han's response that neither Ulleungdo (known then in Japan as Takeshima) nor Dokdo (known then in Japan as Matsushima) belonged to Tottori-han, the Edo shogunate issued a directive on January 28, 1696, prohibiting all Japanese from making passage towards Ulleungdo.

The dispute between Korea and Japan thus came to a close. Through the Ulleungdo Dispute, Ulleungdo and Dokdo were confirmed to be Korean territory.



B. Until Japan’s attempt at incorporating Dokdo in 1905 through Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No. 40, the Japanese government itself had consistently acknowledged that Dokdo was non-Japanese territory, as evidenced by the Dajokan Order of 1877 and other official Japanese government documents.

Up until the Meiji period (1868-1912), the Japanese government had consistently acknowledged that Dokdo was non-Japanese territory ever since the Ulleungdo Dispute, through which it was confirmed that Dokdo was Korean territory.

This is corroborated by the absence of Japanese government documents citing Dokdo as being Japanese territory prior to Japan’s attempt to incorporate Dokdo in 1905 through Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No. 40. In fact, there are even official Japanese government publications that plainly state that Dokdo is not Japanese territory.

Most important among them is an 1877 directive issued to the Ministry of Home Affairs by the Dajokan (Grand Council of State), Japan’s highest decision-making body during the Meiji period. In it, the Dajokan assesses, “It was confirmed through the negotiations between the old government [Edo shogunate] and the Joseon [Korean] government that the two islands [Dokdo and Ulleungdo] do not belong to our country [Japan].” Thus the Dajokan sent a directive to the Ministry of Home Affairs stating as follows: “Regarding Takeshima [Ulleungdo] and another island [Dokdo]... bear in mind that our country [Japan] has nothing to do with them.”

The [Meiji] Ministry of Home Affairs had attached *Isotakeshima ryakuzu* (Simplified Map of Isotakeshima - Japan used to refer to Ulleungdo as Isotakeshima) as a reference in its inquiry to the Dajokan. Takeshima (Ulleungdo) and Matsushima (Dokdo) are shown together in the map, corroborating the fact that the “another island” aforementioned in “Takeshima [Ulleungdo] and another island” is Dokdo.



 Dajokan Order of 1877(Japan)



 Isotakeshima ryakuzu(Japan)



The Empire of Korea's Effective Control over Dokdo and Restoration of Sovereignty over Dokdo after World War II

A. Through Imperial Edict No. 41 in 1900, the Empire of Korea placed Dokdo under the jurisdiction of Uldo-gun (Uldo county), and Dokdo came to be administered by a county magistrate.

On October 27, 1900, the Empire of Korea issued Imperial Edict No. 41, proclaiming the renaming of Ulleungdo as Uldo and the elevation of the post of Ulleungdo inspector to county magistrate. In the second article of the same edict, it is provided that "all of Ulleungdo as well as Jukdo and Seokdo [Dokdo] shall be placed under the jurisdiction of [Uldo-gun (Uldo county)]."



Imperial Edict No. 41

On March 28, 1906, a Japanese survey team comprised of officials and civilians from Shimane Prefecture visited County Magistrate Sim Heung-taek of Uldo-gun and mentioned

during conversation with him that Dokdo had been incorporated into Japanese territory. Sim Heung-taek submitted a report to the governor of Gangwon-do (Gangwon province) the very next day, on March 29, 1906. The phrase "Dokdo, which is under the jurisdiction of this county" in his report clearly demonstrates that Dokdo was indeed a part of Uldo-gun as per Imperial Edict No. 41 of 1900.

On April 29, 1906, Yi Myeong-rae, the county magistrate of Chuncheon-gun (Chuncheon county) and the acting governor of Gangwon-do, reported the matter in the "Special Report" to the Uijeongbu (State Council of the Empire of Korea), Korea's top decision-making body at the time. Thereupon, on May 20, 1906, the Uijeongbu issued Directive No. 3, repudiating the claim that Dokdo had become Japanese territory.

This clearly demonstrates the fact that the county magistrate of Uldo-gun had continued to govern Dokdo and exercised Korea's territorial sovereignty over Dokdo pursuant to Imperial Edict No. 41 issued in 1900.



Special Report & Directive No. 3

B. Japan's attempt at incorporating Dokdo in 1905 through Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No. 40 was done in the process of and as part of its occupation of Korea. It was not only an illegal act, infringing on Korea's sovereignty over the island, but also null and void under international law.

Japan tried to incorporate Dokdo into its own territory in 1905 through Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No. 40.

At the time, Japan was at war with Russia over its interests in Manchuria and the Korean peninsula. Japan had forced the Empire of Korea to sign the Korea-Japan Protocol in February 1904 to secure unlimited access to Korean territory in the execution of the Russo-Japanese War. Japan's attempt at turning Dokdo into Japanese territory was also aimed at meeting its military needs in the face of possible maritime clashes with Russia.

Japan had also coerced the Korean government to appoint Japanese and other non-Korean nationals as advisors through the First Korea-Japan Agreement in August 1904. In effect, Japan had been systematically implementing its plan to take over Korea even before the forced annexation in 1910.

Dokdo was the first Korean territory to fall victim to the Japanese aggression against Korea. Japan's attempt at incorporating Dokdo in 1905 through Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No. 40 was not only an illegal act that infringed upon Korea's ancient and undeniable sovereignty over the island, but also null and void under international law.



C. Dokdo was restored as Korean territory after World War II, and the Government of the Republic of Korea has been exercising Korea's irrefutable territorial sovereignty over Dokdo ever since.

In the Cairo Declaration regarding Japan's unconditional surrender and Korea's independence, announced in December 1943, it is stated that "Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed." The Potsdam Declaration of July 1945 confirms that "the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out."

Futhermore, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers excluded Dokdo from those territories controlled and administered by Japan through its instruction in SCAPIN (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Index Number) 677 in January 1946 and in SCAPIN 1033 in June 1946.

Accordingly, Dokdo was restored as an integral part of the territory of the independent Republic of Korea after World War II, as was reaffirmed by the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951.

The Government of the Republic of Korea exercises Korea's irrefutable territorial sovereignty over Dokdo. The Government will deal firmly and resolutely against any provocation with respect to Korea's sovereignty and will continue to defend Korea's sovereignty over Dokdo.

