

Some Alternatives of Resolving Naming Controversies: Seeking for An Agreeable Naming of the Sea between Korea and Japan

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Abstract

Diverse groups of actors respond to naming controversies with different degree of interest and strength. An examination of their responses, differently identified by governments and people concerned, third party governments, international organizations and private sector map-makers and publishers, conveys the status quo related to naming controversies. The actor groups want to look for some global standards at some relevant international bodies, expressed by resolutions, but there are several restrictions that they cannot support any side. Given the request to draw an agreement between concerned parties, especially for the sea between Korea and Japan, there are four alternatives for an agreement; using dual names, continue to use one name in the main map with note on the other name in an appendix or footnote, adopt a new name for international use with use of current names for domestic use, use preferred name within each country's exclusive economic zone. The most crucial would be to bring each concerned party with open minded and initiate talks to break the parallel realities.

Responses to Naming Controversies

Confronted with controversies in general, diverse groups of actors may show different responses with different degree of interest and strength. A group may support, explicitly or implicitly, one of the parties concerned. Another group may suggest a solution be found on some rules and principles generally accepted in the given context. Still another group may take a more neutral position and request concerned parties to reach an agreement and reconcile. Of course, the most active groups will be the concerned parties who pour out strong arguments and attempt to persuade outsiders and win them over to their side.

The same will be applied to controversies in regards to place names, in either intra- or inter-national level. Four groups of actors can be identified who play in the game in the international scale.

Firstly, there are governments and peoples who are directly concerned with the name. Governments, normally led by foreign affair ministries, represent their countries in international organizations and take action for bi- or multi-lateral talks to discuss the naming. They make every effort to disseminate arguments for their name and persuade players of the world geographical naming..

Diverse groups of people express their interests in various ways. Academics carry out research and develop logical frameworks to support their name. Activists perform international marketing of the name by advertisement or musical or sports performances. Volunteer groups, e.g. VANK (Voluntary Agency Network of Korea), promote their name through e-mails, SNS and other activities in the cyber space. People's interests diffuse out of the concerned area to all over the world through their ethnic network. Ordinary people's expectation, however, could be sometimes so high or out of the track that it may form an unwanted public opinion.

Secondly, governments in the third party should in any way respond to naming controversies. Some of them may adhere to their naming principle, e.g. "one feature, one name" or "adopting the most conventional name in their language." This principle sometime evokes an uncomfortable feeling to the people whose name is not adopted as the conventional name.

Some governments positively consider arguments from the side of "unconventional" name and take a more balanced position in its naming. This could follow the form of treating the other name by slash, e.g. recent recommendation of using *Japanese Meer/Ostmeer* by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names for its educational media, by parenthesis, e.g. recent decision of endorsing *Keleti-tenger*, meaning East Sea, by the Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names, or by footnote, e.g. note on Korea's argument in the world map produced by the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany.

A third party government sometimes creates a new name. The US government uses *The Gulf* for the controversial names of *Persian Gulf* versus *Arabian Gulf*, even though the former is listed as the conventional name in its official names database. Likewise, the German government adopts *Der Kanal* for the water known as *English Channel/La Manche*.

Thirdly, there are international organizations at play who have to work with naming controversies as higher authorities; United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) and its expert group United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), and for sea names, International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). UNCSGN and UNGEGN have very limited scope when facing controversies between countries, because they were established to "provide technical recommendations on standardizing geographical names at the national and international levels." They just make recommendations to consult each other and find a solution acceptable to all the parties concerned, as shown in the previous meetings.

IHO, however, does have to adequately deal with controversies in regards to naming world seas and oceans, in any way, under the mission to publish *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, or so called S-23. It has so far succeeded in resolving controversies by adopting dual names, e.g. *English Channel*(*La Manche*), *Dover Strait*(*Pas de Calais*) and *Bay of Biscay*(*Golfe de Gascogne*), by agreeing on a single name, e.g. *Persian Gulf*, or by adding a new name, e.g. *Southern Ocean*, but not yet for the sea between Korea and Japan, even after three-year's operation of a special working group.

Lastly, a group of map-makers and publishers, mostly from the private sector, exist out there as users and flexibly adapt to each government's decisions and recommendations on controversial names. Some may just ignore a "newly" suggested name, as their governments do, but many of them at least consider the background of the suggestion and try to accommodate it in their scale-variant maps.

Most of this recognition is expressed by dual naming. As already noted, there are several ways of dual naming; writing with a slash or conjunction 'or', putting in a parenthesis, or labelling each name in a more relevant part of the map. The most frequently appearing method seems to be putting the less conventional name in parenthesis in a small scale map, but writing the more relevant name first, e.g. Korean name for the map of Korea and Japanese name for the map of Japan, and the other in parenthesis in a larger scale map. This method makes sense, considering that private map publishers would move by commercial motivations. But it varies depending on publisher's or author's policies or preferences.

Depending on the Global Standard

These actor groups in naming games would very much like to find some global standards on which to depend their responses. These standards have been provided by international organizations as the form of resolutions.

One of the most frequently cited resolutions to be applied to naming controversies would be Resolution 20 adopted at the Third UNCSGN in 1977, so-called Resolution III/20, which recommends "that countries sharing a given geographical feature should endeavour to reach agreement on fixing a single name, and that when countries sharing a given geographical feature do not succeed in agreeing on a common name, the name used by each of the countries concerned will be accepted."

There is an argument that this resolution, contextually, resulted from discussions on shared land features and was not intended for maritime features, and "should not be invoked in support of a claim for dual nomenclature for the feature known alternatively as the *East Sea* and the *Sea of Japan* (Woodman, 2010). Along with counter-arguments to this, there are suggestions to develop a new resolution which applies to maritime features and respects sovereign rights to exclusive economic zones (Raper, 2011) or amend the current resolution to encompass both inland and maritime features (Atoui, 2011).

IHO's Technical Resolution A4.2.6 (1974) takes some examples of shared maritime features by noting "where two or more countries share a given geographical feature (such as a bay, a strait, channel or archipelago) under different names." It is argued that this resolution would not be applied to the sea between Korea and Japan because it is for the feature under the sovereignty of two or more countries, as noted in the examples, not for the high sea under discussion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2009). But an important fact is that IHO itself seriously considered adopting both names for the sea according to this resolution, as in the three cases of waters in Europe, when it prepared for a draft version of S-23 in 2000 before a final draft with blank pages for the sea.

It could not be expected that these international bodies speak something out or even comment on controversial names, especially when the issue has been raised for some long period and their members feel fatigue in listening the arguments from both sides. Given the situation that they cannot support any side, what they

could do would be to request concerned parties to continue talks and draw an agreement. This has been repeated conclusions for the sea name between Korea and Japan in the past few meetings of UNCSGN and UNGEGN, and even in the S-23 Working Group of IHO which was initiated to resolve the controversy in a multi-lateral context.

Agreement: Achieving the Impossible?

In intra-national level, it seems often feasible to reach an agreement from controversial names. One of the most convenient ways to agree would be to use both names, especially for new infrastructure facilities, e.g. Seattle-Tacoma Airport, Bonn-Köln Airport, 천안아산역(Cheonan-Asan Station). This combination sometimes gives a motive to create a new name, e.g. City of SeaTac. But in international level, would agreement be really possible between concerned parties?

There have been a few bilateral talks between the Korean and Japanese governments, exclusively in regards to the sea name between them. But they just confirmed their positions, dual naming of *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan* by Korea and single naming of *Sea of Japan* by Japan, and no further progress was made. For the recent meeting in November 2011, there were even many differences in understanding and interpreting factual situations of the meeting. No doubt, it could be called "parallel realities."

However difficult it would be to resume talks and ride on a stream to an agreement, we need to prepare what to agree regarding the name. Currently, the following four alternatives can be identified.

- use dual names with a few methods, e.g. using slash or parenthesis, locating relevant names in each side
- continue to use one name in the main map, while noting on the other name in an appendix or footnote
- adopt a new name for international use, while continuing to use current names for domestic use
- use preferred name within each country's exclusive economic zone

The first alternative is the current position of the Korean government, on condition of using slash for equal treatment. This alternative is supported by Pokoly(2011) and Atoui(2011).

The second one is the current position of the Japanese government pronounced in the S-23 Working Group of IHO, "in a spirit of compromise." This alternative was adopted by the Chair-Group of the S-23 WG as "a way forward," but discarded as no consensus was drawn on this proposal within the WG.

Regarding the third alternative, several new names have been proposed by either Korean or non-Korean experts and politicians without distinguishing international from domestic use, e.g. *Blue Sea*, *Sea of Peace*, *Far East Sea*, *Sea of Whales*, *Sea of Harmony*. Woodman in this seminar suggests international use be distinguished from domestic use in the framework of "contextual naming" and proposes another new name, *Sea of Resolution*. This alternative is also supported by Smith(2011) who suggests that in order to find a new name, poets and/or songwriters be asked to list twenty words to describe or associate with this geographic feature and find the most overlapped shared values.

The fourth alternative of using preferred name for each separated zone was proposed by Choo(2009) as one of the possible solutions of the controversy. Webber(2011), with the concept of ecosystem based management, suggests Korean EEZ be considered as an ecosystem with a name. Raper(2011) expresses his opinion that two different halves of the sea may have romanized names, *Donghae* and *Nihonkai* or English names, *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan*, according to each country's preference.

Way Forward

The alternatives mentioned above could form a good menu for talks between Korea and Japan. What matters, however, would be to set the table, bringing each concerned party with open minded. It seems not easy to initiate talks with this nature, but the parallel realities should be broken in any way. We have to do everything available to find feasible solutions.

One possible way of seeking for an agreeable naming would be to have private level talks, along with government level ones. A range of discussions and activities at the levels of academics, NGOs, interest groups, students and youths would help build ways for a solution.

It seems likely that each party concerned cannot stop promoting its arguments to the players of geographical naming all over the world; continuous development of logical frameworks, persuading the third party governments and publishers, networking with experts of geographical naming. It is strongly hoped that the process may help build identity of each side, not being a war of attrition to both sides. To repeat, the issue of naming the sea between Korea and Japan does have fundamentally political nature (Choo, 2011), there is inevitable need for recognizing the structure of political decisions of each country.

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지명 분쟁 해결의 몇 가지 대안: 한국과 일본 사이 바다에 대한 합의된 이름을 찾아서

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요 약

지명을 제정하고 사용하는 다양한 집단은 지명 분쟁에 대하여 각각 다른 관심과 강도를 갖고 대응한다. 이들을 당사국 정부와 국민, 제3자 정부, 관련 국제기구, 그리고 민간의 지도제작사와 출판사로 나누어 그 반응을 조사해보면 지명 분쟁과 관련된 현재의 상황을 잘 알 수 있다. 이들 집단들은 관련 국제기구로부터 결의안으로 집약되는 국제적 기준을 찾지만, 여러 제약으로 인해 이들 기구들은 어느 한 편도 지지하기 어렵다. 당사국 간에 합의를 도출하라는 국제적인 요청에 대해 동해 수역의 경우 합의의 대상이 되는 네 가지 대안을 확인할 수 있다. 두 개 이름을 병기하는 것, 하나의 이름을 주로 사용하고 다른 이름을 부록이나 각주에 표기하는 것, 국내용으로는 기존의 이름을 사용하되 국제적으로는 새 이름을 채택하는 것, 그리고 각국의 배타적 경제수역 내에서 선호하는 이름을 사용하는 것이 그것이다. 가장 중요한 것은 당사국을 열린 마음으로 협상테이블로 끌어들여 평행선을 긋는 현실을 깨뜨리기 위한 대화를 시작하는 것이다.