

# Discussion

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## KOREA'S REPULSION TOWARDS THE NAME *JAPAN SEA* VS. JAPAN'S REPULSION TOWARDS THE NAME *EAST SEA*

It is natural for Koreans to acknowledge the name *Japan Sea* as being closely related to Japan's plunder in late 19th century and ruling of the Korean peninsula in the early 20th century. It is true that naming the sea that touches the Korean peninsula, Japan, and the Far East Russia altogether *Japan Sea* will give the impression that the sea is of Japan's. *Japan Sea* was justified in early 20th century when Japan ruled over the Korean peninsula. Moreover, Korea's claim that the name shows association to imperialism surely is thought to have universality. In other words, this claim cannot be considered to be solely from a nationalistic perspective of Koreans as the historical facts cannot be denied or ignore. *Japan Sea*, named from the imperialist period, can be seen as highly anachronistic from today's postcolonialist, anti-imperialist time that promotes international peace and equality. Although this claim is considered to be difficult to be accepted by the bureaucratic group within the Japanese government or the conservatives, the logic is considered to be rather convincing to pacifists and to those who promote international cooperation among neighboring countries.

However, the name *Japan Sea*/*East Sea* as an alternative to *Japan Sea* in Japan is still generally considered repulsive. The name *East Sea* especially is largely unheard of to the Japanese citizens. In Japan, *East Sea* is used to refer to Honshu's West Coast that has been used by the people from long ago. Therefore, the suggestion to change the name to another *East Sea* can seem illogically persistent. Although *East Sea* is a commonly used pronoun to refer to *Japan Sea* by the Koreans, it can feel geographically and directionally incorrect to refer to the sea west of them *East Sea* for the Japanese and hence arouse a sense of repulsion. Even though *East Sea* has been a pronoun to the Koreans for 2000 years, it is true that it means the sea east of the Korean peninsula. **Also, it cannot be denied that even the Chinese characters (東海) mean the sea in the east.** North, south, east, and west, necessarily refer to the geographical position of a location from the main agent's perspective.

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Therefore, from Korea's point of view *Japan Sea* is *East Sea*, while from Japan's the sea east of it would be the Pacific and 東海 (East Sea) would refer to the sea in the northwestern area of Japan. **It should be acknowledged that Japan might feel repulsed by the idea of calling the sea in its northwest "East" Sea. Just as Koreans feel uneasy calling the sea *Japan Sea*, Japanese feel uneasy calling the sea *East Sea*.** In Japan, the directional term 東海 (Tōkai) is used very often, not to mention it usually refers to the Eastern Pacific coast to Honshu. For reference, Tōkai Area in Japanese Wikipedia refers to the area near the Pacific in central Honshu, generally to the 4 main areas: Aichi, Kifu, Shizuoka, and Mie. For example, 東海大学 (Tōkai University) is a private university located near the seaside of Kanagawa which is the Pacific coast, east of Tokyo. Likewise, 東海道新幹線 (Tōkai-do Shinkansen) is the bullet train that runs between Tokyo to Shin-Osaka along the Pacific coast of Honshu.

### **INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF EAST SEA (CONSIDERING NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF KOREA AND JAPAN)**

North Korea's Stance: Insists on the name *East Sea of Korea*, making it difficult to reach a mutual agreement with South Korea's suggestion of *East Sea*. Russia's Stance: East Sea geographically from Russia's point of view is the one in the south, so there is a possibility of growing sense of incompatibility for the name *East Sea*. China's Stance: Considering that East China Sea already exists to refer to the sea east of China, Korea's claim for *East Sea* may cause confusion. Point of Concern: Great doubt that 4 nations, both Koreas, Japan, and Russia, sharing the sea would agree on the name *East Sea*. China's support for the name is also questionable.

\* North Sea: Should be considered an exception as the name also has strong directional implications yet is established as the international name upon agreement by all the neighboring nations, which are those in Europe that have gone past modernism and entered into postmodernism.

### **DOMESTIC NAME = EAST SEA / INTERNATIONAL NAME = KOREA SEA (SEA OF KOREA)**

Since *East Sea* in Korean is both a pronoun and geographically correct name, it should be used as is in domestically. However, internationally, *Korea Sea* may be more acceptable to neighboring nations than *East Sea*.

#### ***Difficulty:***

- The greatest difficulty in changing the claim from *East Sea* to *Korea Sea* lies in the inconsistency in logic. This may cause a negative effect to the ongoing effort on the claim of *East Sea* from 1992.
- It can be argued as contradictory to Korea's claim that it is inappropriate to name a territory shared by multiple nations after one specific nation.

**Advantage:**

- Can cite back to the Western ancient maps that refers to the sea as *Sea of Korea*.
- Can argue that all the names referring to the sea, East Sea, Chosun Sea, Korea Sea, Daehan Sea, etc. in the Eastern ancient maps are related to Korea.
- Looking at the delimitations of seas from the first edition of S-23 to the fourth edition's first draft, the East Sea and South Sea are included. If this is accepted as is, the problem of East Sea including both the East and South Sea arises. Considering this, there is a high validity for the sea to be named *Korea Sea*.
- Can argue in the same line with Japan by discarding the direction-oriented *East Sea* and using *Sea of Korea*.
- The Chinese translation of the East China Sea is 東海. Likewise, the international name does not need to be a direct translation of the domestic.
- The argument for 'East Sea = Korea Sea' can more easily find a mutual point with North Korea's argument for *East Sea of Korea*.
- In the short-term, *Japan Sea/Korea Sea* is achieved as a part of progress and in the long-term, pursuing *Japan-Korea Sea* (or *Korea-Japan Sea*) as the international name is believed to be more acceptable by Japan.

**DIRECTION OF KOREA-JAPAN RELATIONS STRATEGY**

Korea and Japan showing extreme antagonism towards one another on the issue of naming the sea in the international organizations and the global society is inappropriate. It is difficult to deny the exhaustion the member nations feel towards the issue. In order to reach an agreement over the issue, high-level talks should include the topic in the agenda and for this occasion, support of the professional groups is crucial. The renaming of the sea should be very careful not to involve either the historical issues between Korea and Japan or the territorial dispute over Dokdo. If they do, the issue can be misunderstood as manifestation of nationalism. Should develop logic in pursuing the renaming of the sea that also serves as a catalyst to reconciling historical disputes between Korea and Japan as well as a peace-building tool between the two well sympathized by Japan. Should acknowledge and appeal to Japan that this issue is, in basic, promoting peace and benefit for both Korea and Japan, distant from the vicious cycle of conflict and disagreement between the two.