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Japan declares propaganda war on China, Korea and Russia

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For many decades, Russia and Japan have been unable to resolve their territorial disputes. The Kuril Islands are a stumbling block in the relations between the two countries. Time passes, presidents and the governments change, various programs are being created, but the problem remains. What is preventing the neighboring countries from solving this problem once and for all?

Japan is planning to engage in propaganda of its position in disputes with Russia, South Korea and China. To implement this, the Government established a special unit that includes 15 officials and independent experts. Their task is to study and thoroughly analyze the positions of other countries on the territorial disputes. Observers note that Tokyo announced the information war, first of all, against Beijing and Seoul. "Russia should be more active in communicating its position on the Kuril Islands to the world community," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga.

Japan for years has been claiming the four southern Kuril Islands: Kunashir, Iturup, Habomai and Shikotan. Moscow, in turn, insisted that the Southern Kuriles became part

of the USSR after World War II and Russia's sovereignty over them should not cause any doubt.

Japan has a hard time in the foreign policy because it has territorial disputes with nearly all its neighbors in the Asian region. In addition, these countries, especially China, deployed serious anti-Japanese campaigns that emphasize that Japan is a belligerent country that has captured the Senkaku Islands as a result of aggression on the mainland. China argues that the claim to these islands is without any historical or legal justification.

South Korea is also conducting an information war with Japan. This is what caused the desire of the Japanese authorities to resist anti-Japanese campaigns and communicate its position to the international community. Japan does not need such propaganda within the country as it firmly believes that the country's position in all these disputes is the right one.

According to experts, Japan will use all available means: political, diplomatic, informational, and even economic. The specially designed unit will work through the media, diplomats, and will use "soft" power. A researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Takushoku University, professor Vasily Molodyakov, doubts that the Japanese will come up with some new moves because they tend to underestimate and even ignore the positions of other countries. This is particularly evident in territorial issues.

The Japanese believe that their position is the only right one. If you disagree with them, they will try to explain their position again, forgetting that it has long been known to their partners. Vasily Molodyakov assumes that the target audience of Japan is youth, which means a possible use of manga, anime, and other "soft" means. A significant part of the Japanese firmly believes that Russia is currently going through the Japanese boom. They believe that if the Russian public is told once again that the South Kurils is a "native land of Japan," they are likely to take these arguments to heart and appeal to President Putin asking him to hand over those territories to Japan. This expectation, however, is on the verge of fiction.

Active propaganda began in the late 1980s, but fully unfolded in the 1990s. Japan produced a number of publications describing how the Soviet Union illegally took away the Japanese land. In the 1990 the thought that the Kuril Islands was the native land of Japan has been actively discussed in the Russian press. This view was supported by many observers in the Russian Federation and some scientists studying Japan. It was then suggested to return the island to Japan. The Japanese promised that after the signing of a

peace agreement investments will rush into Russia from their country. But it was relevant only in those years when many countries considered Russia a poor country that would do anything for money.

The times have changed, and now the Russian society has a different point of view. Public opinion polls show an interesting fact - Russians generally have positive feelings towards Japan, but in the border areas - Sakhalin and Primorye - the percentage of people with negative attitude towards Japan is very high. This target audience will not be easy for Japan.

Russia's leadership recognizes the territorial problem because since 1956, the Soviet Union and Japan have been living without a peace treaty. Japan constantly comes up with various demands and engages in anti-Russian campaigns. Is this a right situation for a normal dialogue? The Russian Embassy in Japan does not conduct an information war, and Russian diplomats are trying to establish a dialogue on this issue.

Instead of confrontation, Moscow on many occasions suggested that the two countries jointly develop the area. However, in response Japan said that such cooperation would be possible only if it does not harm the country's legal position on the territorial issue.

However, Russia is interested in Japan and is always ready to come to aid. In the devastating earthquake of 2011, Russia immediately sent food aid and rescue teams to the affected regions. In addition, Russia has made some steps towards Japan. It introduced simplified visa regime, allowed economic activity on the islands, etc. This once again confirms the readiness of the Russian Federation to discuss the issues of the territorial dispute with Japan in a peaceful format. Japan's position cannot be called constructive. Numerous protests have to do with "unacceptable", according to Tokyo, visits of the Russian leadership to the disputed territory, refusal to join in a peaceful dialogue on bilateral relations, relying on history to bypass international agreements - this policy of the Japanese authorities cannot yield good results.

Director of Moscow Carnegie Center Dmitri Trenin believes that the presence of a frozen territorial issue strongly poisons bilateral relations between Moscow and Tokyo, and places obstacles in the way of strengthening economic ties. Neither Russia nor Japan can get the desired result from the relationship. According to him, the political circles of Russia and Japan are convinced that the current situation in the long term is not acceptable for anyone.

"Japan is cooperating with a very few countries, and it is interested in strengthening the relations with Russia, and Russia also needs a strong economic partner in the Asian region," said Dmitry Trenin.

The leaders of the two countries have no choice but to jointly define a solution for this issue. After the signing of a peace treaty the Russian-Japanese relations must become an Asian analogue of the Russian-German relations. Both countries should benefit from a compromise, and it should become a turning point in the relations between Moscow and Tokyo.