

PUBLIC ATTITUDE AND MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS: JAPAN AND RUSSIA

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Abstract

In an increasing globalized world, knowledge and perceptions of neighboring states has become of vital importance. The research proposed here is a preliminary attempt to investigate Japanese/Russian students' image of Russia/Japan. Of prime interest are university students, due to their potential income, capacity in policy formulation, and their resultant influence on general public opinion. The empirical data are based on polls conducted in 2007 and 2012 at the Universities of Japan and Russia, with the support of the Japan Foundation – Fellowship Program. The survey facilitates the identification of what are the main news topics and stereotypes students hold of their counterparts, and offer answers on how Japanese and Russian public opinion towards each other has changed within recent years. The popularity of an opinion, however pervasive it may become, as well as what sorts of opinions are formed, depends partly on the individual's immediate situation, socio-environmental factors, and partly on preexisting knowledge, attitudes and values.

Key words: image of the country, the opinion poll, students' representations, and changes

1. Introduction

In modern politics and business, knowledge about neighboring states and global events is increasingly important, and even necessary.¹ Public opinion in Japan and Russia has a strong influence in shaping bilateral policy in both countries.² It is highly believed that one of the main reasons for strained relations between Moscow

¹See Michael Kunczik, *Images of Nations and International Public Relations* (Mahweh, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997); *Regional Communication Programme 2012-2014 (EU Neighbourhood area)* [database on-line]; available at <http://eunighbourhood.eu/>; Jaroslaw Cwiek-Karpowicz, *Public opinion on fears and hopes related to Russia and Germany* [database on-line]; available at <http://pasos.org/wpcontent/archive/Public+Opinion+Russia+and+Germany.pdf>

²See Yoshikatsu Suzuki, *Prospects for Japan-Russia Relations After Putin's Return to Power*. [database on-line]; available at www.nippon.com/en/genre/politics/I00006/; *Russians about Japan* [database on-line]; available at <http://www.ru-jp.org/iab12.pdf>; *View from Japan* [database on-line]; available at http://www.eri-21.or.jp/russia/treaty/100qa/100qa_7.shtml; Larisa V. Zhilina, "Japan and Russia: Ways of the Creation of Public Opinion on the Counterpart Country," *Annual Japan* (2013): 135-153.

and Tokyo is the long-standing territorial dispute³, however the real reason seem to lie much deeper⁴: relations between the two countries rest on a mutual mistrust that has been inherited from previous generations. The history of bilateral Russo-Japanese relations provided much empirical evidence in the construction of historical narrative, which constituted an integral part of the “othering” discourse.⁵ The “other” is perceived as fundamentally different from “us”. The concept of the “other” appears in cases where there exist linguistic and cultural differences involved in the definition of one’s identity. In most everyday relationships, we do not perceive the “other” as “evil.” The “other” can simply imply the “foreigner,” or the “outsider,” that is, the “other” is spoken about in neutral terms.⁶

In recent years, bilateral cooperation between Russia and Japan have been maintained at the level of visits by foreign dignitaries, exchange meetings and contacts on security, in particular between the Security Council of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Regular contacts at these level serves as a platform for generating dialogue on bilateral cooperation as well as finding solutions to a number of issues, including the problem of a peace and security. With Russia and Japan establishing partnerships in the Asia- Pacific region, the conclusion of a peace agreement will contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in the region, and would give a new impetus to regional diplomacy, including the development of relations with other regional powers such as China, India, and Republic of Korea, etc.⁷ The history of relations between the two countries has ranged from periods of cooling down to even direct confrontation.⁸

³ See Jōji Harano, *Relations with Russia: Remembering the Past*. [database on-line]; available at <http://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00094/>; Yoshikatsu Suzuki, Putin and the Northern Territories—A Reality Check. [database on-line]; available at www.nippon.com/en/column/I00023/

⁴ Vasilij Molodyakov, *The image of Japan in Europe and Russia in the second half of XIX - early XX centuries*. M.: Tokyo, 1996; Alexander Bukh, “Russian Perceptions of Japan and China in the Aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution: A Comparative Case Study of Boris Pil’niak’s Travelogue,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* Vol. 26, Issue 3 (2011): 345-355.

⁵ Alexander Bukh, Japan’s National Identity and Japan-Russia Relations. [database on-line]; available at

www.eisa-nets.org/be-bruga/eisa/files/events/turin/Bukh-RusJapan-Turin.pdf

⁶ Alben V. Simeonova, “Japan through Russian eyes (1855-1905): Intellectuals’ viewpoints” (Ph.D.diss., Waseda University, 2007).

⁷ See Alexandr Ilyshev, *On Some Approaches to Solving Problems in Russian-Japanese Relations*. [database on-line]; available at

http://japanstudies.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=341&Itemid=72

⁸ Akaha, Tsuneo, “A Distant Neighbor: Russia’s Search to Find Its Place in East Asia.” *Global Asia*, June 20, 2012. [database on-line]; available at www.globalasia.org/Issue/ArticleDetail/206/a-distant-neighbor-russias-search-to-find-its-place-in-east-asia.html

Yet each time, both sides managed to bridge the gaps and restore interaction.⁹ Moreover, a strong commitment to mutual understanding and trust apparently prevails among the peoples of the two countries. In this connection it seems that the use of “soft power” may make it easier to find solutions to difficult issues in Russian- Japanese relations rather than reliance on pressure or of any kind of force.

The research project “Student’s Representations of neighboring countries - Russia and Japan. Comparative studies,” was supported by the Japan Foundation – Fellowship Program in 2012 and 2007.¹⁰ The main aim of the project was to examine the changes in public attitude and perceptions of Japanese/Russian students towards Russia/Japan over the past five years.

This study does not concentrate on political developments, but rather on changes and variations in Japanese/Russian students’ perceptions, images, and attitudes towards Russia/Japan from 2007 to 2012, as well as on the latest events that provoked these perceptions and reactions. While most studies of Russo-Japanese relations from that period focus mainly on the history of diplomacy or the naval history of wars¹¹, this study explores the evolution of Japanese/Russian perceptions of Russia/Japan at a non-formal level. In so doing we have not ignored the fact that globalization raises other issues when trying to answer the question of world representation and of the feeling of belonging¹². In this situation, geopolitical orientations represent a relatively volatile element of political culture and identity and can change under the influence of media. It is equally important to note that other factors such as mass culture, communications and social mobility, all contribute to political socialization.¹³

The past decade has seen a growing recognition of the importance of youth’s¹⁴ participation in decision-making. Efforts by governments to engage youth have also

⁹Shigeki Hakamada, *Relations with Russia: An Economic Upper Hand for Japan*. [database on-line]; available at www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00084/

¹⁰The author is grateful to Prof. Kira Yoshie (Japanese Women’s University, Japan), Prof. Petr Podalko (Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan) and Reiko Oomura (Instructor of Inter-Cultural Institute, Japan), Manga Bessem Elizabeth (Counsellor Embassy of Cameroon in Paris); Tafawa Williams (Political Affairs Adviser at Commonwealth Secretariat, London, United Kingdom) for constructive comments during the writing of this article.

¹¹Rotem Kowner, “Becoming an honorary civilized nation: Remaking Japan’s military image during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05,” *The Historian* 64 (2001):19-38.

¹²Vladimir Kolosov, “High and low geopolitics: the images of foreign countries in the eyes of Russian citizens,” *Geopolitics* 5 (2003):121-148.

¹³See Kirill G. Kholodkovsky, “Some questions of the development of political mass consciousness,” *World Economy and International Relations* 6 (1979): 125–35.

¹⁴There is no generalized definition of the term “Youth”. According to the United Nations definition (United Nations, 1992), youth comprises young people aged between 15 and 24 years - in general terms, youth can be defined as the stage in the life cycle before adult life

led to better policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Youth are not a homogenous group as they confront diverse realities. Differences in age, sex, experience, marital status, interests and preferences, family background, income, and religion to list a few, create a wide gap between the needs, aspirations and expectations of youth all over the world. In this study, University students will be of interest to us because of their opinions and values, which constitute a vital element of political culture that can be compared with interest in mainstream politics, media consumption and action.

Taking into consideration that popular usage and universal confidence are the main qualities of public opinion stereotypes, the understanding of values attributed to stereotypes would be simple, clear and easily perceived by people of varied educational levels, cultural and social backgrounds, are but part of the several contributory reasons why our questionnaire/opinion poll was conducted at the Universities.

University level education for Japanese and Russian students represents an all-round fundamental and cultural edification. Communication skill is an important factor that is improved through university education. Persons with more formal education are expected to have higher reading and comprehension abilities necessary to occupy public offices or attain scientific knowledge on diverse issues. More so, it maintains relevant social networks. Education generally indicates a broader sphere of everyday activity, a greater number of reference groups and more interpersonal contacts, which increases the likelihood of discussing public affairs topics with others. In the case of my study, a public opinion poll was used to ascertain the possibility that views and opinions may have been specific to certain groups – university students. In addition, University attendance has been shown to lower prejudice levels and increase global issue awareness. For these reasons, the opinions of University students must be an important consideration for the research.

Conducted twice with an approximate five years interval using a similar questionnaire, the opinion poll outcomes were useful in discerning the changes in public attitude towards Russia/Japan relations. The standard length of studies for the bachelor study program at the University in Japan and Russia is 4 years. The time period allowed us to see how new a new generation of students' views and opinions might have changed with time. We wanted the students to challenge what they see and hear with valued judgments, solid arguments supported by sound evidence. This ability required the consideration of a broad range of perspectives and sources of knowledge.

begins. The definition that countries adopt is probably affected by factors such as the average age at which people are expected to play adult roles in the community, as a result of the progressive acquisition of civil, economic and social rights.

2. Methodology, Sample Composition, Size and the Questionnaire

To represent the possibility that views and opinions may have been specific to certain groups, a stratified random sample was considered the most logical choice for this study. Further, having the enrolment list of the university, for practical purposes, it was easier to implement a quota system in determining the sample for enquiry. The method of random stratification essentially allocates quotas to specific identifiable characteristic groups and is very convenient for small population sets. For research on large populations, the sample size averages 400-600 respondents. If we needed to form credible conclusions with plus or minus 5% margin of error or a 0.95 "level of confidence" - from general population of 5000 – the sample size should be at least 370 persons, 10,000 persons – a sample of 385 persons is needed and, any population above 10,000 – 400 person sample size is needed.¹⁵

The opinion survey on Russia was conducted in June 2007 at JWU and June 2012 at AGU (Tokyo, Japan), and on Japan in June 2007 and 2012 at F.M. Dostoevsky State University (Omsk, Russia). Following established methodological principles, the optimal sample size for research was determined to be 400 students. We selected respondents within given parameters on each faculty and year of program. The method of quotas was convenient for small population sets. Although the age variance range within the universities is relatively small, it is deemed important to attempt to chronicle how students' views and opinions may evolve throughout the time spent at university. In other words, how education affected their views of the world, more specifically, Russia and Japan.

The face-to-face interviews, conducted in 2007 and 2012, followed a similar scheme.

The questionnaire was divided into two groups as follows:

A: Questions- Multiple Choice answers. There were three questions in this group.

1) What is your main source of information about Russia/Japan?

Response Choices:

1 - Newspapers 2 - Journals 3 - Radio 4 - TV 5 - Books 6 - Lectures 7 - Speaking with friends 8 – The Internet

2) Do you think the available information on Russia/Japan is sufficient (enough for you)?

Response Choices:

1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Difficult to answer

3) Do you know about an improvement of the economic situation in Russia/Japan?

¹⁵Vladimir I. Dobrenkov and Albert I. Kravchenko, *Methods of sociological research* (Moscow: MSU, 2004).

Response Choices:

1 - Know 2 - Heard something 3 - Hearing for the first time 4 - Difficult to answer

We did not want closed ended questions by asking, "Are you "in favor" of or "against", rather we included open ended questions in our questionnaire.

B: The open-ended questions assumed the original narrative answer in the form of a word, or several words. The answers to open-ended questions have a natural character. It gives a maximum of the information on the theme of research that is very important for our research. These questions allowed respondents to state their opinions in their own words. There were 3 questions in this group:

- 1) What words first come to your mind that you would associate with Russia/Japan?
- 2) What characteristics or traits would you say accurately define the Russian/Japanese people (the national character)?
- 3) Can you explain why there has been an improvement of the economic situation in Russia/Japan over the last few years?

With regards to this topic, the diversity of words chosen by the students was quite large and the ranking of the words was analyzed according to their frequency, in order to classify the content. In order to understand the visions of the students we analyzed the questionnaire, whose questions gave the explanation of the Japanese/Russian students' representation of neighboring countries and its people.

We suggested that although all individuals, irrespective of cultural group, are able to form stereotypes as previously described, those who are part of cultural groups that appears specially likely to perceive groups as social agents (i.e., collectivist cultures) may develop and apply stereotypes more readily, compared to societies in which social groups are perceived as less argentic (i.e., individualistic cultures). Stereotypes take on special importance to the degree that cultural norms require individuals to behave in ways that are consistent with group expectations.¹⁶ Thus, perceived images of nations can be identified as the pictures of other nations in the minds of people from the perspective of social psychology. Such an image is inextricably linked with the attributes of the object, and those of its beholders.

As previously mentioned, in order to understand the visions of the students we analyzed the questionnaire. The analysis proposes to demonstrate that the difference of perception of countries has to do with the student's socioeconomic status and personal experiences.

¹⁶Melissa J. Williams and Julie Spencer-Rodgers, "Culture and Stereotyping Processes: Integration and New Directions," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* Vol. 4, Issue 8 (Aug., 2010): 593.

3. Sources of the information and its sufficiency

The mass media is the main channel through which people perceive the world and impose their own construct on a series of perceived attributes projected by a remote country.¹⁷ As active participants in the global information flow, media audiences are heavily exposed to messages accruing directly or indirectly from varied amounts of images, sounds and news bites. So much so that, very little of what media consumers believe constitutes the global social reality of people, events, and issues.

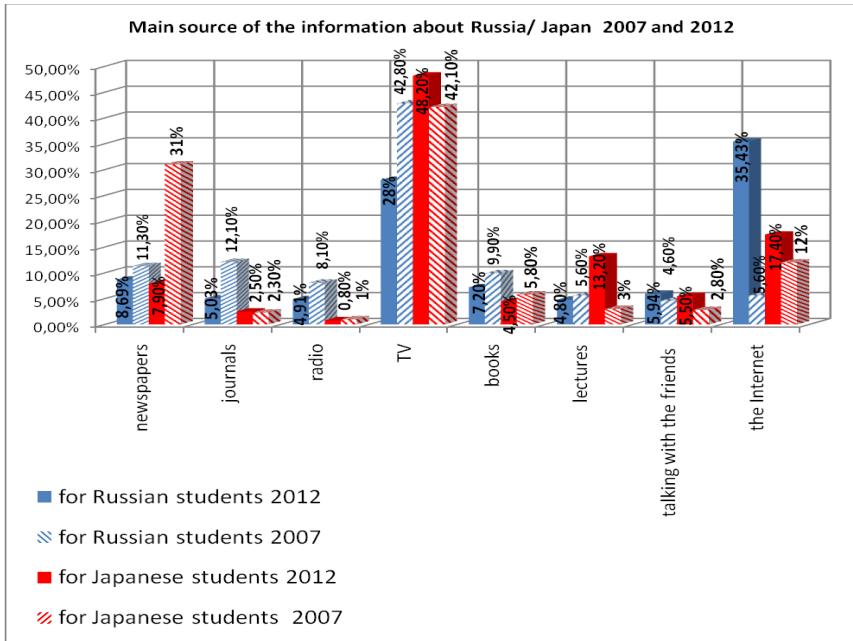
By examining the impact of news sources on Japanese/Russian students' knowledge about respective countries, we could deduce that television emerged as the dominant source of information for 48.2% of Japanese students in 2012 (see Fig.1). Approximately half of the Japanese students got information on Russia mainly from TV rather than publications, and this trend is by far more evident than ever in the present.

If we compare findings of 2012 and 2007 - it is clear that the Japanese youth prefers TV and other media with video-images rather than printed materials like newspapers or books. Television remains the most widely used source for international news for 48.2% of Japanese students, but that is up from 42.1% five years ago.

Thus the role of TV in the Japanese students' everyday life is quite large, but we cannot always say that the position of it is likewise high in the social information environment of Japan - currently, 17.4% of Japanese students get most of their news about Russia from the Internet, which has changed over the past five years (2007-12 %). The Internet is slowly closing in on television as main source of international news for Japanese respondents - it is easier to keep up within a world where news is updated constantly and easily accessed.

As for the Russian students, in comparison with 2007, when the Internet took only fifth position (after TV, journals, newspapers and books), in 2012, the Internet became the most popular source of information about Japan (35.43%) and the preferred choice for news ahead of television, newspapers and books. One of the newer realities of this environment is that Russian students have greater ability to get material on the subjects that most matter to them and not bother with those they don't. The next significant source of information on Japan for 28% of Russian respondents is TV (2007- 42.8%).

¹⁷Don D. Smith, "Mass communications and international image change," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17 (1973): 115-129.

Figure 1. Main source of the information about Russia/Japan for the students (2007, 2012)

In 2012 8.69% of Russian students chose Newspapers as the third source of information on Japan. Of course it is a good thing that the newspapers are read by so many students, however, that number declined (2007-11.3%).

For Japanese students, the information about Russia obtained from “lectures” was at the penultimate position (2012-13.2%). More Japanese students continued to cite newspapers rather than journals as the main source of information about neighboring countries, but we can indicate the decline in newspaper readership from 31% (2007) to 7.9% (2012).

These findings reveal that the Japanese students don’t read as many newspapers when compared to the time spent watching TV. The number of the students watching TV for news has not changed so much for the past five years – TV-news coverage of foreign countries exerts a greater influence on Japanese public opinion about Russia than the Internet and newspaper coverage.

In 2012 "Talking with the friends" shared the fifth positions as a source from which 5.94% of Russian and 5.5% of Japanese students learned about countries (2007: 4.6% and 2.8% respectively). Here we can see that social talk is actually likely to be one of our most important sources of social information. This means that social talk is instrumental in keeping track of the behaviors of the individuals and groups in our social environment¹⁸ and will thus form the basis of many of our social beliefs.¹⁹ In other words, social information that is particularly communicable will tend to be shared repeatedly through communication chains, thereby becoming part and parcel of a society's beliefs about individuals and groups.

The number of Russian students, who named TV as a main source of information on Japan, dramatically declined from 42.8% (2007) to 28% (2012). At the same time, we should emphasize that the number of Russian students who mentioned the Internet as a main source of information drastically increased from 5.6% (2007) to 35.43% (2012). Trust and confidence seems to be one of the reasons why they choose the Internet as the most reliable source of information about Japan. For most Russian students, the media provide the primary source of information about Japan, although there is some evidence of skepticism about its nature. So they try to get the information from sources they most trust. The Internet allows the students to seek information from thousands of blogs, aggregators and social networks. The information received may originate from the same old media, but it is wrapped in designer packaging that matches personal tastes and ideologies. It is however impossible to know how much of the independents' attitudes are based on how they interpret what they see in the media. News and information environment is changing in ways that most young people believe makes it easier for them to get information they want when compared to five years ago. With its ability to sort data quickly and assimilate large numbers of consumer reviews, the Internet is gaining as a way to give students information that is personal and particular. Most of the young people of both countries who get news online forage widely, exploring a variety of different news topics online. But in 2012: 36.2% of Russian (2007-55.5%) and 77.5% of Japanese students (2007-73.7%) said that available information on respective countries had been insufficient for them (See Fig.2).

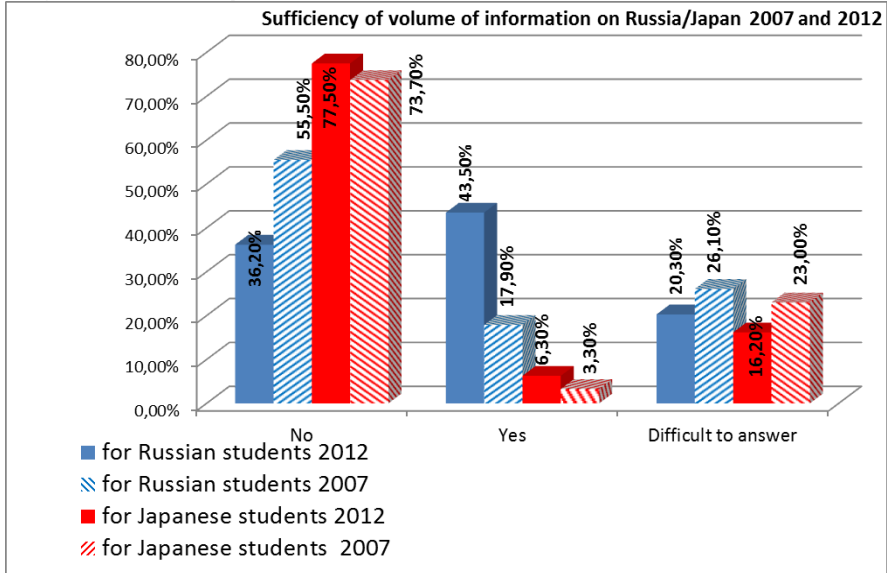
However, 43.5% of Russian students (2007-17.9%) are satisfied with the volume of information available on Japan. And only 6.3% of Japanese students (2007-3.3%) are satisfied with volume of information on Russia. This nonetheless clearly suggests that Japanese students are interested in

¹⁸Francis T. McAndrew & Megan A. Milenkovic, "Of tabloids and family secrets: The evolutionary psychology of gossip," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32 (2002):1064–1082.

¹⁹Ralf D. Sommerfeld, Hans-Ju"rgen Krambeck, Drik Semmann, & Manfred Milinski, "Gossip as an alternative for direct observation in games of indirect reciprocity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104 (2007): 17435–17440.

learning more about Russia, and this lack of information represents an opportunity for policy makers to address.

Figure 2. Sufficiency of the volume of information for the students (2007, 2012)



4. Words associated with "Russia" / "Japan"

If asked to name the things associated with Japan and Russia, what are the first words that come to mind? A variety of elements will probably be pointed out depending on who is asked. Official and non-official, propagandistic and stereotyped, linguistic and cultural symbols play an important role in formation of a country and a nation's image - they build up its **recognition**. The visual representation of a State and its national culture is interesting not only to professionals, but also to ordinary people. Creating these vivid symbols and images, and its perception is not an objective process, but, a social construction, "we are taught to see, so that what is known is mediated through a series of cultural filters (social, political, academic) which refract reality and condition or pre-condition what we see. The result is that sight and knowledge, perception and conception are interwoven and determined by the value or belief system into which we are born, spend our formative years and to which we subsequently subscribe."²⁰ A country's image can be defined as "a representation of a country's positive

²⁰Douglas Charles David Pocock, "Sight and knowledge," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. N.S. Vol.6 (1981): 386.

or negative standing in media, in terms of historical, political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious context.”²¹ In journalistic terminology, “image of a country can be defined in the terms of political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious relations in the changing domestic, regional and international scenario and its effects on the thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and inclinations of the owners of the media organizations.”²²

A country's image develops from the stereotypes that people hold. Stereotypes of an image or place develop over time and extend from the premises of the familiarity with images of instance of famous people and knowledge with products of a given country etc. However, it is widely argued that the images held by a group of people might differ from stereotypes, as an image is more of a personal interpretation. Thus, the images held by different groups of people about the exact same place can differ depending on the person's own needs, motivation, prior knowledge and preference.²³ As we could see, globalization raises other problems for the question of world representation. The ranking of the words was analyzed according to the gaps between frequencies in order to classify the issues.

In 2012 Japanese and Russian students indicated the respective countries through *geographical associations' key words*: 13.8% - Japanese and 8% - Russian students (2007: 9.7% and 6% respectively). The world geopolitical vision is created in the process of socialization by the national system of education but especially by TV and media. Russian respondents described Japan as “islands in the ocean”, “isolated archipelago”, and “closest neighbor”, just to name a few.

Russia's image for Japanese students is one of “the biggest country in the world”, “It occupies a huge territory”, “Northern country”, “Siberia” and “Country near Hokkaido”. Students mentioned not only in terms of civilization but also politically and economically that Russia - “distant neighbor” (it's opposite to Russian students' imaginations), “neither European nor Asian”, “Geographically, Russia is very much a part of East Asia.” As we could see geopolitical imaginations were the prevalent images for Japanese respondents. Such geopolitical orientations represent a relatively volatile element of political culture and identity that can change under the influence of media and other factors of conjuncture and “with the development

²¹Ahmad Mian Hanan, “The media-foreign policy relationship: Pakistan's media image and U.S. foreign policy” (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2006), 8.

²²Saleem Noshina, “Editorial treatment of U.S. image in the two English dailies, “The Pakistan Times,” and “the Dawn”, with special reference to the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan 1979-88” (Master's of Philosophy thesis, Punjab Lahore, 2000), 6.

²³Asuncion Beerli & Josefa D. Martin, “Factors influencing destination Image,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 31:3 (2004): 653.

of mass culture, communications and social mobility, the importance of political orientations is growing, worked out through the process of socialization.”²⁴ Students’ perception of places and regions is not uniform. Rather, their view of a particular place or region is their interpretation of its location, extent, characteristics, and significance as influenced by their own culture and experience. It is sometimes said that there is no reality, only perception. In geography there is always a mixture of both the objective and the subjective realms, and that is why the geographically informed person needs to understand both realms and needs to see how they relate to each other.

The ranks of other values associated to respective countries are also quite similar. Students associate *national cuisine* with the image of the country: 11.7 % - Russian and 7.1% - Japanese students (2007: 13.5% - 6.3% respectively). In general, many words used by the students are related to national cuisine. Some national foods and drinks are familiar stereotypes. They are actually more tied to the general area instead of a country; so calling foods national icons is a bit misleading. But people will continue to think of countries based on their culinary offerings. The Japanese students named – “alcohol”, “caviar”, “pies” and “borsch”. In connection with national cuisine 47.5% of Japanese students mentioned “vodka” (2012). It naturally leads to the conclusion that for Japanese students, image of Russia and the Russians is closely connected with vodka.

The Russian students on the other hand listed - “sushi”, “sashimi”, “rice”, “miso soup”, “green tea”, “sake” in their perception of Japan and the Japanese. In Russia nowadays, Japan’s popularity is rising in the areas of food and culture, including a sushi boom. Alcohol features high for both Japanese and Russian students perceptions and may yet be another subject of more pleasurable study.

Every nation has a number of symbols or emblematic elements associated with it that are intrinsic to its identity and heritage. The students: 4.4% - Japanese and 2.7% - Russian (2007: 5.7% and 12.9% respectively) associated the countries with *national symbols*. The Japanese respondents often mentioned “Matryoshka”, “Hats” and “Caps made from fur” as ~~associative~~ words with Russia.

Japan is a country with a long history, rich culture and varied topography. Therefore, many symbols of Japan have developed over the years and are recognized worldwide. One of the most popular “mount Fuji” was declared by Russian respondents. “Red sun” (Japan's flag), “Cherry blossoms”(“cherry trees”) are also well known among the Russian students. Cultural items such as “kimono”, “tea ceremony”, “geisha”, and “temples” - traditional symbols of Japan were mentioned by 2.7% of Russian students (2007 - 12.9%).

²⁴ Kirill G. Kholodkovsky, “Some questions of the development of political mass consciousness,” *World Economy and International Relations* 6 (1979):125–35.

Russian students associated Japan with historical *events and facts* (2012-7.4%, 2007- 2%). They mentioned: “the Second World War - Hiroshima, Nagasaki”, “Meiji restoration”, “and Meiji revolution,” “the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905”. Students also named “shogunat Tokugawa” and “bushido”. Here we could see that the national image of Japan for Russian students is essentially a *historical* image, which extends through time, backward into a supposedly recorded or perhaps mythological past and forward into an imagined future. The more conscious a people are of its’ history, the stronger the national image is likely to be. Wars and hostilities among nations also formulate national images as do geographical space. We can note that this research provides a base for a further discussion on Russia’s images of Japan since historical memory and stereotypes turn to be persistent through generations unless challenged by grand historical events.

Japanese students associated Russia with *historical and political figures* of Russia (2012-7.2%, 2007- 8.9%). In this context, respondents recalled the names of President Putin, Gorbachev, Lenin, Stalin, Yekaterina-II and Tsar Romanov. A large majority of students surveyed answered “Putin”. Vladimir Putin was mentioned by 70.7% of respondents, thus associating political figures with Russia. Russia’s images began to improve however, following Putin’s election as president. The personification of the official emblem of a nation has widely been recognized as was observed, special part in the overall image of the country and the nation as declared by the Japanese students played political and historical roles. In fact, the majority of Japanese students paid greater attention to Russia’s historical and political figures’ position associating them with Russia.

Taking into consideration that understanding the “other” nation stems from the individual, and group visions and attitudes towards both it and the Fatherland, this study reviews Japanese and Russian students’ perceptions of Russia and Japan. What is different?

Firstly, Russian students indicated Japan as “a developed country” with “perfect automobiles” (2012- 8.2%, 2007-9.4%), “High quality of life and the economy” (2012-4.2%, 2007-3.6%), “high-quality video equipment,” “excellent technique” “high-quality computers” (2012-2.1%, 2007-6.9%) and “high-tech” (2012-9.3%, 2007-6.6%). In the economic realm, confidence in Japanese makers of automobiles and household electrical goods is quite high. In this context, respondents recalled the names of leading Japanese manufacturers such as “Lexus”, “Toyota”, etc. Here we can see that country-of-origin associations may refer to the economic stage of the country (macro) or products produced in the country (micro). Country image (similar to brand image) is a set of country-of-origin associations organized into groups in a meaningful way”.²⁵ In particular, a country’s equity is believed to be

²⁵Kevin L. Keller, “Conceptualizing, measuring and managing customer-based brand equity,” *Journal of Marketing* 57(1) (1993): 1–22.

derived from the association of the product with a country. For example, brands such as Toyota, could share certain associations for Russian students, such as 'reliability', because of their common home country of Japan. The positive macro and micro country images of Japan observed in the present study suggest that the performance of Japanese brands might have contributed to Japan's positive country images, and support the findings from previous research in 2007.²⁶ In other words, the majority of Russian students sensed Japan's great development compared to the "West" and even to Russia - Russian students seem to have significantly more positive views than Japanese in some aspects.

By contrast with Russian students, Japanese students linked their representations about Russia with "USSR, socialism, Communism and CPSU²⁷" (2012 -7.9%, 2007- 8.3 %) – "The strong image of socialism and the collapse of the Soviet Union", "The image of the country where the background of the socialism remains", "The Former Soviet Union". Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian images in Japan underwent transformation – relatively positive in the early stage, they became more negative towards the end of 2000's and reached the negative peak. This indicates a strong association between Russia and the USSR - Japanese students sensed Russia's complicated political position, as paying more attention to Russia's domestic than international position.

Secondly, strongest association with Japan for Russian students is that of a cultural space, based on a "long history" and "culture and traditions" (2012 - 5.2%, 2007 - 18.3%). Also respondents mentioned some nonverbal customs such as "gift-giving", "greetings", "introductions", etc. Japan was described by respondents as "a country with beautiful nature and old cultural traditions", "different customs and mental habits", but also mentioned "manga" and "anime". This means that instead of emphasizing the exotic aspects of Japanese culture, Japan had to present itself as a pioneer of postmodern culture. Anime, manga began to occupy an important role in Japan's international cultural activities and became a part of image of this country for Russian students. Russian images of Japan were refracted through their creators' cultural prisms, educational background and accumulated life experiences. For Russian students Japan is not only an economic superpower, but also as a nation with a unique culture.

But the strongest association with Russia for the Japanese students (2012-16.1%, 2007-25.9 %) is "cold climatic conditions", "image of cold country", "it's always cold", "severe, terrible winter", "low temperature", "strong cold", "snow country", "image of cold country, where the people wear fur caps and many clothes". Here we could see, that in light of climate and nature, this attributes influence the

²⁶Larisa V. Zhilina, *Representations of neighboring countries at the beginning of 21st century - Russia and Japan in students' imaginations* (Omsk: Omskblankizdat, 2008).

²⁷CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

creation of country image, to a large extent depending on the background of the person in question.

Thirdly, it is interesting to note that Japanese students associate Russia with a particular color “white-blue -red” (2012 - 2.6%, 2007 - 2.7%). Most countries have national colors that are used to represent the country outside of standard icons like the flag. Sometimes national colors are frequently part of a countries’ set of national symbols. As for Russian students – there was not one “color association” with Japan. What is striking is that the different point in Japanese student responses was the association with “the beautiful people with a white skin”(2012- 6.1%, 2007- 4.6%) and “show - performances” - national dances, ballet (2012- 1.7 %, 2007- 4.6%). Only Japanese students have such original visual perceptions of Russia.

In an era that is increasingly dominated by the flow of images, contemporary Japan has a high profile, producing manga, anime, video games, etc. This “visual culture” is formed by numerous relationships between people and images. Here it is important to emphasize Japan’s unique cultural identity. Russia, which might have been defined by their visual orientations and means to interact with their society in comparison to the opposite in Russia.

Lastly, but not the least, Japanese students associate Russia with “Sports and sportsmen”- (2012 - 3.7%, 2007 - 6.6%). But it is interesting to note that respondents have associations with Russia through the image of CSKA (Russian football-club), the Japanese football player Honda Kesuke and Russian football player - Arshavin. Obviously, these names were mentioned in connection with EURO-2012.²⁸ This Championship is one of the most popular and most watched events in Japan. It seems it was the main reason why Japanese students mentioned these names. These images of Russia function in combination with the individual preferences of students.

Some negative Japanese images of Russia were replaced by new positive images and vice versa, while some negative stereotypes remained unchanged. The number of Japanese students who associate Russia with “Negative incidents and facts” has decreased from 7.5% (2007) to 6.1% (2012). But negative Russia’s images were viewed by Japanese students as a serious threat to Russian security. According to the findings, it can be stated that Russia has been found to bear mixed image. Mixed image implies a country being perceived with positive and negative image which might derive through two or more contradicting factors, mainly positive and negative.²⁹ Despite the fact that Russia is renowned for its

²⁸Survey 2012 was carried out in June.

²⁹Mixed image implies a country being perceived with positive and negative image which might derive through two or more contradicting factors, mainly positive and negative.

touristic attractions, aspects such as crime are argued, to have perplexed the image of Russia. Notably, with the alarming increase of terrorist activities in most parts of the world, the issue of safety is ranked important when tourism is under discussion.

Also we should emphasize that the number of Japanese students who linked Russia's associations with the territorial disputes in the "Northern territories" has marginally increased from 2.8% (2007) to 5.2% (2012) – although the figure has doubled, it is too soon to extrapolate a trend and may warrant further investigation in 2017. In the Japanese press, which has come to serve as a lobby of sorts, certain continuing themes are heard in discussions of the Russian government's policy. The media's view is that the struggle between Japan and Russia revolves around two competing scenarios: the simultaneous return of all four island territories, or the return of only two islands. The media is focusing on what common ground Japan might find to resolve the Northern Territories issue, whether some sort of "quiet dialogue" could resolve the dispute, and also whether it would be better to accept a "two islands plus" compromise.³⁰

In 2012 5.2% of Russian students associated Japan with "Fukushima, catastrophe, explosion, radiation" and 1.5% - with "earthquake". It was quite predictable to see such answers in process of this poll. One year ago it was the first range news in all TV-channels and media of the World - almost twenty thousands lives were lost and many forever changed following a devastating earthquake and tsunami off the north coast of Japan.

5. What features are proper for Japanese / Russian people

National image can be defined as the cognitive representation that a person holds or believes to be true about a nation and its people. Of special importance to political action is the benevolence or malevolence imputed to other nations in the images, as well as the historical component of the image. In this context feelings about a country's future are important too.

As a measure of attitudes toward the Russians/Japanese, we followed the classic method by asking respondents for traits that they thought were typical of Russians/Japanese – that is, respective national characters. The responses were open ended free from any interview bias or leading suggestions. The reported characterizations are entirely those of the respondents.

Let us turn your attention to the fact that in 2012 there were zero instances were Russian students offered "no response" to any question on the questionnaire

³⁰Yoshikatsu Suzuki, *Prospects for Japan-Russia Relations After Putin's Return to Power*. [database on-line]; available at www.nippon.com/en/genre/politics/100006/

whereas in 2007 there was a 6.6% failure to respond. Whereas in 2012, 23.7% (2007 - 30.5%) of Japanese students did not answer the same question. Regarding this topic, the diversity of words chosen by the students was quite large and therefore the ranking of the words was analyzed according to its frequencies, in order to classify the content. In order to understand the visions of the students we analyzed the questionnaire, whose questions gave the explanation of the students' representation of neighboring countries' people. In assessing the students' knowledge of national traits or characteristics of citizens of neighboring countries, the following was found:

Based on responses of Russian respondents, it is plausible to conclude that most students consider the main character trait of the Japanese to be "diligence", "work-holism" and "persistence" (2012-22.8%, 2007- 23%). Among the positive associations with Japanese people, students listed: "hardworking", "disciplined", "organized and highly efficient".

In 2012 11.7% of Japanese students named Russian people within the descriptive or explanatory context - "they are drunkards, like to drink, dipsomaniac" – here we can indicate dramatically increasing (2007 - 3%).

The ranks of other values associated to national character are also quite similar:

Both: the Japanese and Russian students indicated such features as "hospitality and friendliness". 3.1% of Russian respondents mentioned "kindness" and "goodwill". 8.7% of Japanese students characterized the Russians as "kind, friendly, light" people. The popular students' belief is that cruel climatic conditions in Russia make its inhabitants more "hospitable and cordial". Here we could see, that Russian national characteristics, which are interchangeably referred to as national identity, or political culture, or patterns of behavior, are presented as historically consistent and static. Russian national character is seen as being shaped by the forest and the steppes, a geopolitical location that lacks natural barriers, the harsh climate and the history of invasions and conquests.

Japanese and Russian students noted such feature as "collectivism". Russian students mentioned Japanese "collectivism, unity, the prevalence of the social over the personal" (2012-1 %, 2007-3.3%). Japanese students defined the Russians as people of "socialistic formation" (2012- 4.5%, 2007- 3%), more reason for "Russian collectivism": they argue that "Russians are collectivists by nature", "they like to be in tight communities".

Both nations are seen as sharing certain cultural similarities, like the spirituality, prevalence of the communal interests over the individual, uniformity and harmony in the community as the ultimate values. However, these similarities are used to underlie the difference between the national essences of the two nations.

5.1 Positive traits

In 2012 78% of Russian students noted positive features of the Japanese and described them as: "diligent", "work-holics" (2012- 22.8%, 2007 - 23%); people with "mind and intellect" (2012-11.4 %, 2007 -5.3%); "disciplined, punctuality"- 9.1% ; "wise" people - 7.1% ; "polite" people - 6.5% ; people who "esteem traditions" - 4.7%; "purposeful" people - 4.6%; "hospitable and friendly"- 3.1%; "patient, humility, meekness" (2012-2.7%, 2007 -7.3%). It is the fact that images and attitudes tend to be formed at an early stage of encounter between two nations is also taken into account. Here we can see that for Russian students' images of Japanese as "workaholics" turn into stereotypes. Impressions usually have a strong power of preservation.

In 2012 20.6% of Japanese students noted positive features of the Russians and described them as: "kind, friendly, light" - 8.7% (new); "gentle and calm"(2012-3.2%, 2007 - 2%); "COOL" people (there is no single concept of cool: one of the essential characteristics of "COOL" is its mutability—what is considered cool changes over time and varies among cultures and generations) - 3% (new); "strong", "of great spirit" (2012-2.5%, 2007 -6%); "patriots " - 2.2% (new); "patient and enduring" (2012-1%, 2007 - 2%). We have been surprised by new definition of Russian national character - 3% of Japanese students found interesting national trait of the Russians - "resistant to cold"(2012). Also Japanese students named the Russians "beautiful people (girls) with white skin" listing this definition as a national feature. Here we can see that Japanese respondents pay more attention than Russian respondents to physical attractions which might be also attributed to Japanese culture that is more concerned with visual images.

5.2 Negative traits

It is well known that Russia and Japan had entertained for a long time a variety of images of each other—from neutral, to highly positive or negative.

In 2012 we could indicate that 27.8 % of Japanese students listed "conditionally" negative character traits of the Russians (2007- 18.3%): "drunkards, dipsomaniac"(2012-11.7%, 2007 - 3%); "coolness, composure"(2012-4.2%, 2007-8.25%); "strict, severe" (2012-3.7 %, 2007-10.5%); "uncommunicative, sullen and they don't laugh"(2012-3%,2007 - 4%); "persistent, resolute, categorical"(2012-2.5%, 2007 - 5.75%); "cock their noises" - 1.7% (new); "roughness, hardness, nervousness"(2012-1%, 2007-3.5%). For Japanese respondents the Russians are "too dominant", "too impatient", and "a know-it-all attitude, cold and egocentric". It means that Japanese students' images of the Russians varied at times, their negative images of the Russian people prevailed.

By contrast with Japanese students in 2012 only 3.1% of Russian students considered negative character traits of the Japanese to be “secretiveness”, “stealth”, “hypocrisy”, “tendency to suicide” and “personal isolation”. Other negative national traits, like innate aggression and cunningness are still a common feature of the images of the Japanese in Russian students’ imaginations.

In examining students’ knowledge about national features of peoples of neighboring countries, one clear conclusion cannot be ignored: 78% of Russian students assume that three forth of the Japanese are positive, whereas only 20.6% of the Japanese students perceive Russian as positive. The majority of positive features of the Japanese people as perceived by Russian students are traditional values (respect for traditions, politeness, diligence, national pride, patriotism). Furthermore, many students refer to the Japanese as “clever” and “well-educated” people with “great intellectual potential”.

To sum up findings mentioned above, the fact is that the Russians and the Japanese have traditionally entertained highly contrasting and volatile images of each other. Images of a nation are those stable enough, stratified, and dynamic images, which refer to the culture, history, politics, and economy of that nation. Those images comprise within themselves a set of symbols and social visions on the perceived nation’s position in the world, and its foreign policy orientation.

6. Discussion

Knowledge on foreign issues made available by the media brings close to reality what happens elsewhere in the world. Images of foreign countries, issues and happenings in a particular country abroad are likely to be influenced by the media to a much larger scale when impressions are created of a healthy or strained bilateral relation, for instance. Due to factors such as ‘cultural assumptions’ and ‘political beliefs’, it is believed that news carves out images and impressions of the world some of which are preferred over other images. Through informing and educating the citizenship on foreign policy issues, news media shapes mass perceptions and particular evaluative implications of how audience members judge other nations.³¹ International news can impact foreign policy³² and shape the

³¹Robert Albritton & Jarol Manheim, “News of Rhodesia: The Impact of a Public Relations Campaign,” *Journalism Quarter*6 (1983): 622–8; Christiane Amanpour, “Television’s Role in Foreign Policy,” *The Quill*,3 (1996): 16–17; David Perry, “The Mass Media and Inference about Other Nations,” *Communication Research* 4 (1985):595–614.

³²Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1963); Christiane Amanpour. “Television’s Role in Foreign Policy,” *The Quill*, 3(1996): 16–17.

public's knowledge, perception and attitude towards foreign countries, as large-scale public opinion surveys indicate.³³

Table1. Generations divide on Russia – source <http://www.pewglobal.org>

	% Favorable			<i>Youngest-oldest gap</i>
	18–29	30–49	50+	
	%	%	%	
Japan	46	27	21	+25
Canada	59	45	34	+25
Turkey	33	15	10	+23
Philippines	46	34	24	+22
Brazil	47	32	25	+22
Germany	51	27	29	+22
U.S.	49	38	29	+20
S. Korea	67	52	47	+20
Italy	46	32	27	+19
Spain	48	42	30	+18
Senegal	46	46	29	+17
Tunisia	42	35	27	+15
Bolivia	31	17	18	+13
France	44	40	31	+13
Malaysia	55	44	42	+13
Mexico	32	28	22	+10
Lebanon	38	52	49	-11

Only countries with a significant, double-digit age gap shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q9e.

According to the latest survey on the image of Russia in the World – Global Opinion of Russia Mixed - done in 2013 by The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project³⁴, young people are more favorable toward Russia. Views of Russia vary significantly by age in many of the countries surveyed, with young people aged 18-29 often more likely to express positive views of Russia than people 50 and older (see Table 1).

The differences in views of Russia between the youngest and the oldest age groups is 20 percentage points or more in eight countries surveyed, including Japan,

³³David Perry, "News Reading, Knowledge About, and Attitudes toward Foreign Countries," *Journalism Quarterly* 2 (1990): 353–358.

³⁴Pew Research Center conducted public opinion surveys around the world on a broad array of subjects and important issues of the day. [database on-line]; available at www.pewglobal.org

Canada, Brazil, Germany, the U.S. and South Korea. Generational differences in views of Russia may reflect shifting perceptions of Russia's place in the world.

One cannot overestimate the importance of a country's image abroad. Our study seeks to assess peoples' perceptions of another country – whether they like, respect it, are interested in it and whether they wish to visit. This will affect the daily decisions they take about that country – be they of a political nature, business-related or more leisurely activities like tourism. These perceptions based on an image may thus have considerable positive or negative consequences for a given country. Russia's image abroad is very mixed - with the negative traits dominating. Of course, Russia's image varies from one set of countries to another suggesting the varying impact of the media and even the possibility to manage these external perceptions. What we should notice here is, however, that many of the responses are culturally specific: Japanese associations of "dark image" apparently connected to Russian-Soviet images that Japanese society of the 1980s held. Japanese respondents indicated Russia like "former Soviet Union", "CPSU", "Socialistic State", "The collapse of the USSR" (2012-7.9%, 2007 - 8.3%). Some young Japanese have image of Russia as "controlled daily life and social practice". It is therefore conceivable that, on the one hand, for young Japanese who has little concern about Russia, it is likely to be difficult to think of any words or phrases that would be connected to the Russians without contemplation. On the other hand, associations with Russia within a restricted number of words that appears relatively frequently in historical and/or media context. Both geographical and sociological factors define the vision of the world (in general) and Russia (in particular) for Japanese students.

It's difficult to ignore the fact that the percentage of respondents that associated Russia with "territorial dispute" has increased among the Japanese students from 2.8% (2007) to 5.2% (2012). As was predicted in this survey, there was an increase in the number of respondents who said that Russia was associated with the "Northern Territories Problem". I can't see any reason why for the past two years this problem has been actively discussed - Russia suddenly made her act of presence there in 2010 November.³⁵

³⁵President Medvedev's bold action was perceived in Japan as an unheard of provocation: on the 1 November 2010, Medvedev undertook a three-hour long visit to the island of Kunashir. This was indeed a highly symbolic move as Medvedev was the first Russian head of state ever to set foot on these territories. His calls to make living conditions in the Islands "like those in the very heart of Russia", as we will see later, hinted at something more than just a symbolic act. Japan's reaction, as it could have been expected, was vitriolic: the Japanese ambassador was temporarily recalled prompting the reaction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which considered such a measure unacceptable given that Kunashir was considered Russia's territory (Asahi 02.11.2010). Japan again recalled her ambassador when she considered that explanations given by the Russian side regarding the visit were not satisfactory. (Vedomosti 23.12.2010).

Results indicated that Japanese students acquire knowledge about the characteristics of Russia from hot-news in cosmopolitan print media and from attention to news from TV (often negative news) but the number of respondents mentioned "negative incidents and facts" has decreased from 7.5% (2007) to 6.1% (2012). Almost all of Japanese students mentioned "terrorism", "Chechen terrorists in Chechnya", "high crime situation" and "mafia" ("criminals", "crime", just like in most every city in the world). Such stereotypic beliefs can simply be added to the information that is otherwise available, or they may serve as a heuristic cue that provides a quick basis for making the type of judgment that is required given the situation. Respondents mention that Russian society is devoid of what we call "political freedoms": "people couldn't say and write what they were thinking", "time of troubles", "political instability". Japanese students often mentioned the "Chernobyl" incident in 2012! However this was quite predictable due of the problems caused by the March 2011 radiation tragedy in Japan.

It is worth recognizing that national image is not solely dependent upon media reports or policy speeches, but is also associated with a country's products and services. In this connection it should be mentioned that alcohol features high for both Japanese and Russian students' perceptions. The percentage of those students who said that Russians were "drunkards" or "dipsomaniac" dramatically increased from 3% (2007) to 11.7% (2012). Heavy drinking is well a recognized problem by the Russians themselves since traditionally it is considered to be a very bad behavior. Japanese students however tried to give explanations to this habit - "Here is the reason for drinking in Russia - not to catch cold"- it's not a national sin, it's not really a mood enhancer, it's simply an element of culture, working towards survival.

We also found out that a minority of Japanese students who have little or no contact with Russians or those who are studying Russian language already have a considerable knowledge of the country's geography, history and politics. However, they know very little about its literature and traditions. They may have had little or no chance to live in Russia, but they communicate with others who have been there or have Russian friends. They may be definitely weak on a vital factor in understanding character: namely, personal contact with the people, however, on an individual level, these students have the more favorable impressions towards Russia and Russian people. For description of national traits of the Russian people, these students used words such as "friendly," "honest," "kind," or "cheerful" to describe Russians, as opposed to those who only know Russians from the media, who more often use negative descriptions such as "roughness," "hardness," and "nervousness".

Thus, here we could see that a stereotype change may occur following the presentation of new category of social information (e.g., through intergroup contact), although the positive effects of contact depend on specifiable

conditions.³⁶ Intergroup (and, in our case, international) contact per se led to a change in the mutual attitudes held by the interacting groups and improved their relationships. Thus, we can conclude that, contact among individual members of different groups (Japanese and Russian students) creates conditions conducive to mutual acquaintance and positive attitude change. This approach has provided the foundation for policy decisions and applied projects in the areas of housing, work and education. On the international scene it fostered various international meetings within the frameworks of student exchanges, sport contests, conventions, etc.

Although positive attitudes of Japanese students towards their Russians counterparts have declined somewhat in the past few years, it should be noted that the image of the Russians as "COOL" people, "patriots who love their country", "kind, friendly, light people" has got relative advantage in its public image. Here we could see that some negative Japanese images of Russian people were replaced by new positive images and vice versa, while some negative stereotypes remained unchanged.

It is worth paying attention to the significance of a more positive general image of Russia - it is associated with the following characteristics: "National symbols"- but it has fallen from 5.7% (2007) to 4.4% (2012); "Shows-Ballet- Performances" –this has decreased from 4.6% (2007) to 2.6% (2012); "Sport and sportsmen" – has decreased from 6.6% (2007) to 3.7% (2012). Based on these findings we can suggest, that Olympic Games 2014 (in Sochi) may be a good opportunity to improve Russia's image. It is evident that most host countries use the Olympics for cultural, social, political and national image promotion. The Olympic Games have become one of the most large-scale profitable global media events. That is why such newsworthy events have been used by many governments for the purpose of enhancing their national images as seen by foreign public.³⁷ The host countries became more visible in the international media, and the tone of the reports about them became more positive over time. Stories about the host countries published after the games depicted them as less threatening to the global status quo and to common values. Thus it can be assumed that media coverage will have a significant influence on how people build their image of the 2014 Olympics host country - Russia.

³⁶See Amir Yehuda, "The role of intergroup contact in change of prejudice and ethnic relations," in *Towards the elimination of racism*, ed. P. A. Katz (New York: Pergamon, 1976). 245-308.

³⁷Jarol Manheim, & Robert Albritton, "Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting," *The American Political Science Review* 78 (1984): 641-657.

It is difficult to explain the steady reduction of the negative and positive evaluation of people by means of situation factors that were mentioned by Japanese students. Stereotypic beliefs concerning social groups and categories often entail a high level of consensus in their contents. Likely sources of this concordance include social learning from parents, peers, and mass media.³⁸ Nevertheless, aggregation across a large sample of rates yielded a highly reliable rating that corresponds to the perception that is shared by the group as a whole (by University students). These might be considered implicit national character stereotypes, because they are accessible only by aggregating across multiple rates, many of which might not explicitly endorse the cumulative profile. Many prejudices about nations are carried forward through the generations, i.e. historical events of long ago can still be decisive to a nation's image. This way social information that is particularly communicable will tend to be shared repeatedly through communication chains, becoming a part of a society's beliefs about individuals and groups.³⁹ But the influence of novels, films in forming images of foreign nations and countries should not be underestimated.

Among Russian students the group that is well informed about Japan and interested in politics seems to be more optimistic than the less informed and less interested groups in Japanese Universities. Russian students see Japan as a "successful country" with "high quality of life as well as economy", associating Japan with "old customs and traditions". The percentage of those who responded that "the image of Japan was a harmonious combination of a unique culture and tradition combined with a modernized society, high technology" as well as an "image of a high-tech country" has increased from 6.6% (2007) to 9.3% (2012). Russian students consider the Japanese character to be the main factor of Japan's economic success.

The present research is an illustrative explanation - stereotyped images are long-lasting and durable. They are difficult to change and can be passed on as heritage from the past. It is fair to suppose that Japanese students' attitudes toward the Russians and Russia can be easily marked by the changing nature of the popular stereotype associated with Russians from Soviet epoch. The historical legacy is still strong and little has been done or reported on in the media to change these stereotypes.

For some Japanese students, their attitudes towards Russia is influenced by their fear of war and military aggression during the Soviet era and the suppression of human rights in Russia – popular opinion tends to view the Russian Federation as

³⁸Minoru Karasawa, Nobuko Asai and Yoshiko Tanabe, "Stereotypes as Shared Beliefs: Effects of Group Identity on Dyadic Conversations," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 10(4) (2007): 515–532.

³⁹Yoshihisa Kashima, "Maintaining cultural stereotypes in the serial reproduction of narratives," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 26 (2000):594–604.

the imperial successor to the Soviet Union. However, there exists a general perception of Russia as a political actor, which is influenced by historical relationships with some countries. As for Russian students – their attitudes about Japan have some changes over the past years. So we could see that on average, views of Russian students have moved to positives-neutral.

On the one hand - images of a nation are those stable enough, stratified, and dynamic images, which refer to the culture, history, politics, and economy of that nation. Those images comprise within themselves a set of symbols and social visions on the perceived nation's position in the world, and its foreign policy orientation.

On the other hand, Japanese students still have limited knowledge about Russia. Here I would like to cite President Putin: "Russia is beginning to fulfill the task to use "soft power" to improve its image abroad and promote its interests. The main efforts will focus on increasing the number of Russian science and culture centers and work with compatriots and foreign youth."⁴⁰ As students read, hear, observe, and think more about the world around them, they can add more detail and structure to their maps. As students get older, their mental maps accumulate multiple layers of useful information and this growth in complexity and utility can provide them with a sense of satisfaction as more places and events in the world can be placed into meaningful spatial contexts.

7. Conclusion

So far, in this research we have tried to analyze and trace the evolution of Japanese and Russian students' perceptions of their respective countries from 2007 until 2012, identifying those images, attempting to determine how they originated, why students shared them and why they differed.

This study attempted to examine the various sources of information from which students from Russia and Japan get the necessary information on problems they are interested in, the perception of the respective countries and their citizens as well as the various opinions about these countries. Important developments in this area of research over the last five years have witness significant changes amongst which are, firstly: the level of students' knowledge of other countries and cultures has been increasing. Secondly, through the Internet, television and other media, it has been easier to learn about other countries and cultures. Nowadays, the mass media plays a crucial role in the creation of stereotyped images of other nations and cultures.

⁴⁰ Russian press review (16.01.2013) Russia to improve image abroad. [database on-line]; available at www.itar-tass.com/c142/622415.html

Television is a medium of visual images. TV-news may also have a greater influence (in affecting the general evaluations of countries) than print coverage, but the Internet penetration rates continue to rise throughout the world, digital divides in the Internet access persist as central public policy challenges of the digital age. All these stereotypes are representations of groups, often used to describe, interpret, evaluate, and predict actions of individuals.⁴¹ As we can see, such standardized conceptions are held in common by the members of groups such as university students in Japan and Russia. Popular stereotypes are images that are shared by those who hold a common cultural mindset - they are the way a culture, or significant sub-group within that culture, defines and labels a specific group of people. The students have many narrow images of people, places, or things that are unique to their personal outlook. Students' opinions and values, as element of political culture can be compared with interest in politics, media consumption and action. The presented issues must be considered, to determine how they could help in creating of positive images of the neighboring countries and in turn it will help to improve relationships between our countries. It is not possible to extrapolate conclusions of the general population from the examination of University students, however, this study also serves as a window to an understanding of the process of forming of public opinion about neighboring countries and has highlighted some areas of opportunity where foreign policy may be directed to best cultivate positive attitudes and views that would rebound to closer economic and political ties. Moreover, a strong commitment to mutual understanding and trust apparently prevails among the peoples of the two countries.

Due to the significance of national images in this era of information which confer a form of soft power upon a State, greater emphasis in the study of it will be quite helpful to build a State's international reputation, and facilitate improved understanding and constructive relationships between Japan and Russia. The goal, as suggested is based upon the promotion of the idea that the youth are most affected by policy decisions, and therefore, active youth participation in policy formulation process represents an assured basis for improved relations and future dialogue between our countries.

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⁴¹See Daniel Bar-Tal, Carl F., Graumann, Arie W. Kruglanski, & Wolfgang Stroebe, ed. *Stereotyping and prejudice: Changing conception.* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989).

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