

RUSSIAN MIGRANTS IN NIIGATA AND HOKKAIDO: A RESEARCH UPDATE

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Introduction

In August 2002, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried in vain to prevent a Japanese NGO-organized delegation of Japanese citizens, Koreans from Sakhalin, and Ainu representatives from landing on Kunashiri Island.¹ The leader of the NGO “Peace Boat” protested, “Why aren’t Japanese citizens allowed to visit the territories that our government says belongs to Japan?”² The ministry’s objection to the NGO mission was reported to be that the visit to the disputed island would jeopardize the official Japanese-Russian framework for visa-free exchanges between Japanese and Russian citizens.³ The Russian side permitted the landing of some 530 members of the delegation on the disputed island without a visa.⁴ Some local Russians welcomed the largest group ever received from Japan, while others were perplexed as to what the visitors’ purposes might be.⁵ The incident highlighted the dissonance between the state-to-state and people-to-people diplomacy involving the two countries.

In recent years Japan’s internationalization has taken on a human dimension, in addition to the trade and investment dimensions, for which the nation’s international profile had been well established. Increasing numbers of foreign nationals are entering Japan and growing numbers of Japanese are going overseas. Japanese nationals traveling overseas outnumber foreigners entering Japan by a large margin. In 2001, for example, 16,215,657 Japanese went overseas and 5,286,310 foreign nationals entered Japan—a ratio of roughly 3 to 1. Nonetheless, the number of foreigners coming to Japan has grown significantly—from 2,985,764 in 1989.⁶

Among the foreign visitors in Japan are the Russians who come in search of economic opportunities and for other purposes. They are still a relatively small presence in the country, particularly in comparison with South Korean, Chinese, and other Asian nationals. They also represent a recent—post-Cold War—phenomenon. As such, their presence in the country has yet to attract serious academic attention.⁷ They are conspicuous by their absence in the growing literature on migrant communities in Japan.⁸

The significance of the Russian presence in Japan is several-fold. First, the Russians represent a fairly recent presence, catching many host communities unprepared and causing some social and cultural frictions. Second, the cultural gap between Japanese and Russians is far wider than that between Japanese and “older” migrant populations from Asia, posing interesting questions about the prospects of social accommodation and cultural assimilation. Third, the presence of growing numbers of Russians in Japan may have a potentially important impact on future Japanese-Russian relations, which are currently in an abnormal state due to the seemingly intractable territorial dispute.⁹ A related issue is whether human contacts between the “distant neighbors”¹⁰ can bridge centuries of estrangement, apprehension, suspicion, and hostility. The vast majority of present-day Japanese has never met a Russian and yet stubbornly holds negative views of Russians, as evident in all public opinion polls about Japanese attitudes toward Russia.¹¹ On the other hand, a good majority of the Russians polled for their opinions about Japan express favorable opinions about their neighbors to the east.¹² Finally, there are as yet no serious studies of the present-day Russians in Japan.¹³

The present study is motivated by the above considerations. More specifically, we ask: What impact if any is the growing Russian presence in Japan having on the Japanese public’s views of Russia and Japanese-Russian relations? What opportunities and problems do the Russians in Japan present in those areas of the country, such as Niigata and Hokkaido, where they appear in fairly large numbers? What is the nature of the Russians’ experience in living in those communities? What cultural barriers might exist between the Russians and the host communities? How is Japan’s policy toward Russia reflected in the local administrators’ and citizens’ views?

We will examine the above questions through a case study of two prefectures, Niigata and Hokkaido. We have chosen these regions because of the significance their leaders attach to their communities’ ties to Russia and the salience Russia holds as a focus of attention among the local citizens. These provinces have

invested many years and many resources in developing ties with their Russian counterparts since the Soviet era and the Russian presence in their communities is having some significant impact on the local economic and social life.

The current study uses three sources of information. First, to obtain background information about the two prefectures' experiences with Russia and Russians, we consulted several publications and other information supplied by prefectural and city government officials. Second, to gauge the range of experiences and views of local citizens, we conducted small surveys in Sapporo and Wakkanai, Hokkaido. Although our survey samples are very small and are by no means representative of the local citizenry as a whole, the respondents' answers proved very useful in canvassing the range of views that exist in their communities. Many of the views expressed in the surveys also appeared in the series of interviews we conducted, which is the third source of information we have employed in this study. In order to get a better understanding of the views of the local citizens and the sources of those views, we interviewed local government officials, journalists, business people, university professors, and private researchers in the cities of Niigata, Sapporo, Otaru, and Wakkanai. We also interviewed some Russian residents in Niigata, Sapporo, and Otaru and obtained useful information about their experiences in their host communities.

The Growing Russian Presence in Japan

Russians are a very small minority among the foreign resident community in Japan. Japan's Aliens Registration Law requires all foreign nationals who stay in Japan for 90 days or longer to register with the local cities and municipalities where they reside. In 2001, as many as 632,405 North and South Koreans were thus registered, representing 35.6% of the total registered foreign nationals in Japan. The second largest group was the 381,225 Chinese citizens (including both PRC and Taiwan Chinese), who represented 21.4% of the total. In comparison, the number of documented Russian residents in the country was 5,329—a mere 0.3% of the documented foreign residents in Japan.¹⁴

The Russian community in Japan is also a very recent presence in Japan. Soviet citizens' entry into Japan was strictly controlled during the Cold War. There were a small number of Soviet diplomats but their movement in certain areas of the country, such as port cities in Hokkaido, was strictly prohibited.

Out of the 5,286,310 foreign nationals that entered Japan in 2001, the largest number came from South Korea (1,342,987, or 25.4% of the total number of foreign visitors in Japan), followed by Chinese from Taiwan (ROC) (838,001, or 15.9%), Chinese from PRC (444,441, or 8.4%), and Filipinos (186,262, or 3.5%). In comparison, far fewer Russian nationals—33,772, or 0.6%—entered Japan.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the number of Russians entering Japan has steadily grown since the mid-1990s. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. The Number of Russian Nationals Entering Japan

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Number	24,232	26,349	30,120	26,896	23,064	30,290	33,772
% over previous year		8.7	14.3	- 10.7	- 14.2	31.3	11.5
% of total foreigners	0.65	0.62	0.65	0.59	0.47	0.57	0.64

Source: Statistics on Immigration Control 1999, Tokyo: Japan Immigration Association, 2000, p. 14; Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, Tokyo, 2002, p. v.

What are the purposes for which the Russians come to Japan today? Table 2 shows the breakdown of newly arriving foreign nationals by purpose of visit. These statistics are not entirely accurate, as it is well known that many foreign nationals, including Russians, engage in activities other than those for which they have been granted entry into the country. Moreover, these numbers do not include Russians who come ashore briefly on special landing permits while their ships are anchored in Japanese ports, such as in Niigata, Otaru, and Wakkanai. Still, it is clear that among the longer-term Russian visitors in Japan, "entertainment"¹⁶ is by far the most popular purpose of stay, with 4,944 Russians entering Japan for that purpose. This compares with the 2,991 South Koreans and the 3,730 PRC Chinese that came to Japan for the same purpose in 2001. The largest number of foreign entertainers in Japan came from the Philippines—71,678 that year.

Among the Russians visiting Japan on a temporary basis in 2001, the largest segment (10,539 people) came as sightseers, followed by 8,490 who came on business and 2,472 for cultural activities. The number of Russian tourists nearly doubled since 1999, when 5,989 Russians came to Japan for sightseeing. The number of businessmen also increased from 6,713 in 1999. (Table 3)

Table 2. The Number of New Russian Entrants by Purpose of Entry, 2001

Total	Diplomat Official	Professor	Artist	Journalist	Business investor/ manager
29,353	225	134	36	-	3
Researcher	Instructor	Engineer	Specialists in humanities/ international services	Intra-firm transfer	Entertainer
52	2	12	27	7	4,944
Skilled labor	Cultural activities	Temporary visitor*	College student	Pre-college student	Trainee
17	71	23,039	136	17	54
Visiting family	Designated activities**	Dependent of Japanese national	Dependent of permanent resident	Long-term resident	
187	8	92	1	35	

*See Table 3 below for a breakdown.

** Includes working holiday and other activities.

Source: Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, Tokyo, 2002, pp. 54 and 56.

Table 3. The Number of New Temporary Russian Visitors in Japan, 2001

Total	Sightseeing	Business	Cultural activities	Visiting relatives	Other
23,039	10,539	8,490	2,472	490	1,048

Source: Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, Tokyo, 2002, pp. 100-101.

The Growing Russian Presence in Niigata and Hokkaido

The Russians' presence is increasingly being felt in local communities, particularly in the provinces located along the Sea of Japan (East Sea). Niigata and Hokkaido are particularly interesting cases. Both prefectures have invested much time and effort in developing ties with Russian regions.¹⁷

As of the end of 2001, there were 423 Russians officially registered in Hokkaido and 190 in Niigata Prefecture, representing 7.9 percent and 3.6 percent of the total registered Russians in Japan. The Russians in Hokkaido were the second largest Russian community in Japan, next only to that in Tokyo, where 1,322 Russians were registered. Niigata was the seventh most popular place of residence among the Russians in Japan.¹⁸ (Table 4.) As of the end of September 2001, there were 105 and 233 Russian nationals registered as residents in the cities of Niigata and Sapporo, respectively.¹⁹

In addition, growing numbers of Russians visit these and other areas of the two prefectures on a temporary basis—thus not registered as residents. In 2000, for example, 831 Russians entered Japan through the port city of Wakkanai, 533 through Nemuro, and 1,064 through Otaru in Hokkaido, not counting those who obtain a special landing permit while their ships were anchored in those ports, typically for 2-3 days at a time.²⁰ The numbers changed somewhat the following year: 505 through Wakkanai, 214 through Nemuro, and 2,030 through Otaru.²¹

Table 4. The Number of Registered Russians by Prefecture, 2001

Total	Hokkaido	Aomori	Iwate	Miyagi	Akita	Yamagata	Fukushima
5,329	423	70	12	85	21	12	66
Ibaraki	Tochigi	Gunma	Saitama	Chiba	Tokyo	Kanagawa	Niigata
248	42	93	194	333	1,322	382	190
Toyama	Ishikawa	Fukui	Yamanashi	Nagano	Gifu	Shizuoka	Aichi
99	71	100	11	33	87	137	174
Mie	Shiga	Kyoto	Osaka	Hyogo	Nara	Wakayama	Tottori
37	14	124	165	104	6	19	3
Shimane	Okayama	Hiroshima	Yamaguchi	Tokushima	Kagawa	Ehime	Kochi
19	45	84	35	38	14	24	20
Fukuoka	Saga	Nagasaki	Kumamoto	Oita	Miyazaki	Kagoshima	Okinawa
174	16	89	22	40	4	7	21

Source: Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, Tokyo, 2002, p. 166.

These port cities have become very important points of entry into Japan. As many as 58,723 foreign nationals were granted special permits to land at Wakkanai Port in 2001. Another 27,771 came into Otaru Port, and 22,693 into Hanasaki Port close to Nemuro under the same regime. Unfortunately, we do not have a breakdown of these statistics by nationality, but according to the local officials we interviewed, the largest segments were Russian.²² These numbers far exceeded the 4,749 foreigners, including 99 Russians, who landed at Chitose Airport, the largest airport in Hokkaido. In comparison, 1,056 Russians landed at Hakodate Airport, which has regularly scheduled services to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk.²³ In contrast, Niigata Airport serves as a more important regional airport, with regular services to foreign destinations, including Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Vladivostok, Seoul, Shanghai, Harbin, Guam, and Honolulu. In 2000, a total of 225,391 Japanese and foreign passengers used this airport for international travel. Of these, 19,196 traveled to and from Vladivostok, 17,001 to and from Khabarovsk, and 1,784 to and from Irkutsk.²⁴

Larger ports in Hokkaido have become important ports for Japan's trade with Russia. In Wakkanai, there were only 40 Russian residents in 2000, but there were as many as 58,473 Russians who were granted special permission to go into the city that year. For a city with a population of only 43,000, this is a huge number. Most of these Russians were crewmembers on ships making port calls. In 2000 alone, there were as many as 3,780 Russian ships coming into Wakkanai Port. Most of them were fishing boats carrying crab and other marine products to Japan. Wakkanai also has a ferry service to Korsakov during the May-September period. In 2001, a total of 3,028 Japanese and 1,177 foreigners (mostly Russians) used the service.²⁵ Many Russian ships also visit the Port of Otaru. In 2000, there were 1,291 Russian ships calling in the port. They carried 1,064 Russian nationals, who entered Japan at Otaru, and another 26,040 who were permitted to land temporarily while their ships were anchored in the port.²⁶ As we will note below, the brief visitors from Russia are having a visible impact on the local Japanese residents' attitudes toward Russians.

Niigata, Hokkaido, and the Russian Far East

There is a well-known division of labor between Niigata and Hokkaido with respect to their economic partners in the Russian Far East, Niigata focusing on the continental Far East and Hokkaido on Sakhalin. This is quite visible in the way the two Japanese regions have established sister-city or friendship-city ties in Russia and the way they have developed transportation links to the Russian Far East. While Hokkaido has developed direct air and shipping routes to Sakhalin, Niigata has opted for air and shipping links to points in the continental Far East.²⁷

Niigata is a pioneer in the internationalization (*kokusaika*) movement that has been going on throughout Japan in recent decades. The prefecture's efforts to establish international transportation links to the neighboring countries date back to the 1960s. The public sector in Niigata has played a pivotal role in

this prefecture's growth as a regional hub for international transportation. Its geographic location—the proximity to both Russia and the Korean Peninsula—and the considerable size of its population give it a clear advantage over most other prefectures facing the Sea of Japan (East Sea). The postwar governors of Niigata Prefecture and mayors of Niigata City have eagerly sought closer ties with the neighboring Northeast Asian countries, including Russia.

Hokkaido occupies a special place in Japanese local initiatives toward Russia in general and toward the Russian Far East in particular. Historically, the island played an important part in defining Japan's territorial, security, political, and economic interests vis-à-vis Russia (and the Soviet Union).

In October 2001, we conducted a series of interviews in Niigata and the Hokkaido cities of Sapporo, Otaru, and Wakkanai.²⁸ We met with a total of 30 individuals, including Niigata and Hokkaido prefecture administrators, officials of the four city governments (including the mayors of Otaru and Wakkanai), Japanese journalists and researchers, Japanese and Russian businessmen, and Japanese and Russian NPO (not-for-profit organization) representatives. We also met Russian diplomats (including the consul general and deputy consul general in Niigata), and the Sakhalin дума chairman, who was visiting Sapporo.

We also distributed a questionnaire in these cities and received 60 completed surveys. The questionnaire for Japanese subjects was in Japanese and the one for Russians was in Russian. Because our sample is very small and is not necessarily representative of the larger community of Sapporo, we offer our observations as if we had conducted interviews with a limited number of individuals.

Interviews with Japanese and Russians in Niigata

In the city of Niigata we interviewed eight individuals, five of them Japanese and three Russian. One of the Japanese was a city government official in charge of international cooperation and exchange. Another interviewee was a leader of a non-profit organization called “Habatake 21” (Spread Your Wings 21), which was promoting international exchange among local and Russian children. One Japanese was a senior reporter/writer for the regional newspaper *Niigata Nippo*. The two other Japanese interviewees were engaged in research and consulting on Russia-related issues of interest to the local community, including the business community. Their company published a monthly newsletter covering developments in Russia and the Russian Far East. The following are the findings from these interviews.

First, there was much local interest in Russia, particularly in the Russian Far East. As we just noted, Niigata had a long history of relations with the Russian Far East and Niigata citizens prided themselves on being at the forefront of Japan's relations with the Russian Far East.

Second, the city of Niigata devoted a good amount of resources to the development of ties with the Russian Far East. The city hired five new foreign nationals each year as international interns for three years, including Russians. In the city's International Exchange and Cooperation Department, there were 21 staff members. Five of them spoke Russian, two had taught Japanese in Vladivostok, and three worked directly on projects related to Russia, which was one more than the staff focused on China projects.

Third, there was also sustained, if not overwhelming interest among the citizens of Niigata to gain international experiences and to develop opportunities to meet with foreigners for children. “Habatake 21” is an example of volunteer citizens who devote time and money to hosting Russian children and sending their children to Russia for a cultural experience. The NPO depended for its activities on the 200,000 yen the city provided annually as well as corporate contributions. The most interesting program the association conducted was the hosting of Russian children from the cities of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk. When the local media reported on their activities, many citizens called and inquired about opportunities for them or for their children to be involved. This group was unique in that, according to its representative that we interviewed, it was the only Japanese NGO solely focused on the Russian Far East. However, they had just decided to invite Chinese children to Niigata as well, forcing them, for financial reasons, to reduce the number of children they can bring from Russia.

Fourth, Russian visitors to Niigata had become much more open over the years, as had the Russian authorities in charge of visa issuance and other official functions. In earlier years, bureaucratic hurdles were very high for inviting Russians to Japan or for Japanese to visit Russia, but the situation had improved in more recent years.

Fifth, the local media were much more positive about relations with Russia than the national media, but still there was much attention given to unfortunate incidents involving Russians and this tended to project

a negative image of the Russians in the city. For example, when a Russian man in Niigata murdered a Japanese man, the media paid more attention to the fact of the murder than the fact that the victim used to beat his Japanese wife who, reportedly, had her Russian friend kill the Japanese.

Sixth, the actual contact between the local Japanese and Russian residents or visitors appeared quite limited, thus accentuating the importance of media coverage of Russian issues. There was no uniform view of the Russians in the local community, but stereotyping happened. In some corners, for example, there was the impression that most Russians were poor because the media depicted only very rich Russians or very poor Russians but rich Russians went to Tokyo and other places in Japan. One of the researcher/consultants noted that the Japanese tended to “gravitate toward the average,” toward conformity, and most of them did not understand that there were important differences among the Russians. Frequent contact was limited to those local people who lived or worked in or around the “entertainment district” in the city or Higashi Port where many Russians were seen, including crewmen from Russian ships anchored in the port.

Seventh, there were a number of educational exchange opportunities between local schools and universities and those in Russia.

Eighth, there was disagreement on whether the territorial dispute had any impact on the interaction between Russian and Japanese citizens and groups at the local and regional level. On the one hand, the two researcher/consultants we interviewed said that the territorial dispute and the economic situation in Russia since the early 1990s and now in Japan were obstacles to expanded relations between Japan and Russia. They also said that many Russians they had met, both in Niigata and inside Russia, behaved as if they were superior to the Japanese. The one newspaper reporter we interviewed concurred. On the other hand, the representative of the Japanese NPO said the territorial problem had no impact on her group’s activities or on the relationship between the Russians and the Japanese who came into contact with each other through those activities.

Our interviews with Russians in Niigata were with one researcher and two consular officers, including the consul general. We offer the following brief observations from these interviews.

First, there was very little that the Russian residents did as a community. They led and preferred to lead a rather independent life in Niigata, coming together only when there were some official functions, such as those organized by the Consulate General.

Second, there was little contact between Russians and Japanese outside of the work environment. The Russian researcher we interviewed said Japanese co-workers did not appear interested in knowing much about the Russian’s personal interests. Nor, in his view, did they appear interested in socializing with him or his family. Consequently, there was very little contact outside of the work environment. The same individual also noted that local Japanese assumed all Caucasians that they saw on the streets were Americans. According to him, when they discovered that they were Russian, they did not show any interest.

Third, the local people in Niigata did not show any outward sign of discrimination against Russians, but in Higashi Port, where many Russian ships and sailors came in, local authorities tended to look at Russians with suspicion. Local storeowners also treated Russians with suspicion. These behaviors were influenced by the reports of thefts and other incidents allegedly involving Russians.

Fourth, Russian sailors that came into the city posed a problem because some of them committed crimes, such as drug smuggling and petty thefts. The local media reported on Russian sailors, cars, dealers, drunkenness, and theft, creating a negative image of Russians. There were some restaurants that displayed signs saying, “Russians are not welcome.”

Fifth, the number of Russians residing in Niigata had increased in recent years, particularly women who were married to Japanese men. Often these marriages were marriages of convenience, for Russian men and women to be able to stay and work longer terms in Japan than they could if they were not married to Japanese citizens. Sixth, many Russian women felt isolated or rejected by their Japanese husbands because the husbands did not show much intimacy. When relationships turned sour, Japanese men typically wanted to divorce Russian wives, but the wives wanted to be separated, not divorced, so that they could remain in Japan. The husbands, however, were anxious to officially terminate their marriage so as not to bear the burden as legal guarantors for their Russian spouse. This comment echoed the observations offered by two Russian interviewees in Sapporo.

Seventh, many more Russian women than men were coming to Japan, and Niigata had become an important transit point for many of these Russians. Many Russian women were engaged in illegal activities

for money, and there was a public perception that a large percentage of the women were engaged in illegal or semi-illegal activities. Currently there were about 100 officially documented Russian residents in the city, about 50 of them married to Japanese locals. About 80% of them were women. Eighth, when a child was born to a Japanese and Russian couple, typically the child adopted Japanese citizenship because there was no bilateral treaty allowing dual citizenship. Russian children who went to local schools did not experience discrimination.

Interviews with Japanese and Russians in Sapporo

We conducted interviews with eleven individuals in Sapporo, seven of them Japanese and four Russians. Among the Japanese, two worked in the Russia Section of the International Exchange Department of Hokkaido Governor's Office, one was an official in the International Exchange Department of the Sapporo City Government, two were in the marine product distribution business, one held a senior position in the *Hokkaido Shimbun*, and one was a researcher in the Information Institute of the same newspaper. We offer several observations from our interviews with the Japanese.

First, the Japanese interviewees all agreed that Russia—particularly Sakhalin and the Russian Far East—had a special importance to Hokkaido. They clearly saw Russia as their neighbor with whom they needed to develop closer ties.

Second, the interviewees agreed that Hokkaido was ahead of all other Japanese prefectures in developing relations with Russia, particularly Sakhalin. The two officials of the Governor's Office proudly stated that Governor Horie was personally enthusiastic about expanding relations between Hokkaido and Sakhalin.²⁹ Third, the prefectural government had led the development of Hokkaido's ties with Sakhalin and other regions of Russia. The prefectural administration hoped that the private sector interest would grow and that the government's burden could be reduced. Similarly, the city government of Sapporo had been taking the initiative in and bearing the brunt of the cost of developing a sister-city relationship with Novosibirsk.

Fourth, Hokkaido's interest in forging economic ties with Russia peaked in the early 1990s. It was also noted that due to numerous difficulties involving bad business experiences and commercial losses suffered by private businesses located in Hokkaido, the public's interest shifted toward private citizens' exchanges and contacts in the cultural and social fields, including humanitarian contacts. This, however, had not caused the prefectural government to lose sight of their long-term interest in promoting business ties with Russia. Fifth, rather than immediate material benefits, the officials of the public sector stressed the importance of improving mutual understanding between the Russians and the Japanese through direct human contacts. They noted, however, that the Japanese were not very eager to go to Russia, seeing Russia as a "distant neighbor."

Sixth, the Japanese interviewees agreed that the territorial dispute over the Northern Territories was an obstacle to state-level relations between the two countries but that this problem did not seriously affect the local and regional level contacts, including contacts between the citizens of Hokkaido and Sakhalin. One of the prefectural government officials said, "Irrespective of the territorial dispute, we want to continue to improve our relations with Russia based on our (local) interests." His colleague said, "The islands issue is left to the national governments to deal with and the lack of Japanese business presence in the Russian Far East is a result of economic difficulties. The Japanese government today keeps the territorial and economic issues separate." According to the two officials of the Governor's Office, when Hokkaido Government began actively promoting ties with Russia, particularly with Sakhalin, in the early 1990s, the local businesses community and many prefectural assembly members believed it was premature when Japanese businesses were experiencing difficulties with their Russian partners. The public's attention was also on the territorial issue and they were highly critical of the Soviet Union. More recently, however, their criticisms waned and their attention had shifted toward a wider range of issues, including business and cultural ties. As a result, the public's attitudes toward the regional government's effort to improve ties with Russia had become more favorable.

Seventh, the interviewees noted that local people's attitudes toward Russians were increasingly influenced by the growing number of Russians in their communities and by the increasing number of incidents involving Russians. On the one hand, they pointed out that human contacts were expanding and that this was a welcome development. On the other hand, they acknowledged that the media highlighted many incidents allegedly involving Russian sailors and mafia. An official of the Governor's Office said, "At

least one incident is reported daily in Otaru, Wakkanai, or Monbetsu.” In one incident, a Russian was gunned down by another Russian on a street corner in Wakkanai. In another incident, a public bathhouse in Otaru refused to admit Russians because many Japanese customers complained that the Russians did not know the proper way of using the *senzo*, public bathhouse. The interviewees added that the media also reported many cases of car thefts and burglaries involving Russians and that the involvement of the “Russian mafia” was often suspected in these incidents.

Eighth, there was general consensus that the current Russian Consul General and his staff had a very open attitude toward the local community and were doing a very good job promoting Russia’s ties to Hokkaido and Sapporo. The consul general’s activities had a real impact on the local community’s awareness of the Russian presence in the area. So, in the view of the Japanese interviewed, it mattered who the consul general was and how he conducted his affairs.

Ninth, and finally, our Japanese interviewees thought the people of Hokkaido generally had a higher interest in Russian affairs than people in other parts of Japan. They admitted, however, that their level of interest or understanding of Russia was still limited. The Hokkaido Shimbun editor noted, “The Japanese have some general ideas about Russia based on Russian music and literature, but they have limited knowledge about the Russian government, bureaucracy, or other specialized issues.”

We interviewed three Russians in Sapporo. One was a researcher with the Information Institute of the *Hokkaido Shimbun*. One was a businessman selling Russian marine products. One was a businesswoman from Novosibirsk who was working at the Sapporo International Plaza, providing visitors with information about Sapporo and Novosibirsk. We offer the following points from these interviews.

First, Russian children did not experience discrimination at school. Most of them spoke Japanese and behaved like Japanese children. Second, there was no such thing as an organized Russian community in Sapporo or organized activities among the Russian residents in the city. Our Russian interviewees in Niigata shared this observation.

Third, Russians felt that most Japanese they had met, including their co-workers, were rather superficial in their conversations with them, with limited interest in them. The Russians we interviewed in Niigata also shared this observation. According to the Russian interviewees in Sapporo, interest in Russia was particularly limited among the young Japanese. They even noted that the young Japanese were not very interested in the territorial dispute between with Russia.

Fourth, the number of mixed marriages between Japanese and Russians was increasing. Many Russian wives complained that their husbands showed very little sincerity and that they were not able to see them as friends. Russian women married to Japanese men felt deprived of the important traditional role of a Russian wife and mother, as the central figure in family life. As we noted earlier, we heard the same comment from our Russian interviewees in Niigata.

Fifth, Russians had the impression that Japanese lacked in originality, spontaneity, and passion, but that they were efficient when working with pre-established procedures and programs. Sixth, Japanese media coverage on Russia was not very penetrating or comprehensive. An exception was noted for NHK, which provided in-depth coverage of developments in Russia. There was some local media coverage about Russians’ wrongdoings in Hokkaido but the journalists did not seem particularly critical of the Russians. In Sapporo, “foreigners” typically meant Americans, but in port cities of Hokkaido, people assumed the foreigners they saw were Russians.

Sixth, the Russian interviewees agreed with the Japanese interviewees that the present Russian Consul General in Sapporo, despite his lack of resources, was doing a good job and quite active.

A Survey of Sapporo Residents about the Russian Presence in Their Community

The profiles of the 33 Japanese residents of Sapporo who returned completed questionnaires are presented in Table 5 through Table 8.

Table 5. Occupations/professions of Sapporo Respondents

Total	Business employee	Business owner/ executive	Service company employee*	NPO employee	University professor	Public servant	Interpreter

30	11	2	5	2	3	6	1
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* Includes restaurants and bars.

Table 6. Age

Total	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s
31	8	6	10	3	3	1

Table 7. Gender

Total	Male	Female
32	20	12

Table 8. Highest Level of Education Obtained

Total	High school	University	Graduate school
29	9	16	4

About half of the respondents reported having daily, weekly, or monthly contacts with Russians at or through work, and the other half rarely or never met Russians through work. Generally, those that had direct contacts with Russians had positive impressions of them.³⁰ As far as social interactions with Russians outside of work were concerned, only one Japanese respondent said he had daily contacts with Russians, while 28 respondents reported they rarely or never met Russians in a social situation.

The Russian residents in Sapporo (as well as in Niigata) that we interviewed shared a common regret that their Japanese colleagues and acquaintances rarely asked questions beyond those related to work. Furthermore, our interviews with Russians and Japanese in Sapporo, as well as in Niigata, also revealed that the contact between Russian and Japanese co-workers was generally limited to the work environment. The Russians we interviewed viewed the seeming indifference among their Japanese colleagues as a lack of interest.

Eleven Japanese respondents shared their impressions of the Russians they had met outside of their work, most of them favorably.³¹

Through work-related and very limited non-work-related contacts our Japanese respondents had formed generally favorable views of Russians. As we noted at the outset, our sample is not necessarily representative of the larger community of Sapporo. Indeed, our interviews in the city revealed, as we also noted earlier, that the general public's images of Russians tended to be rather negative. Two factors seemed to be at play here. First, the media coverage tended to focus on incidents involving Russian visitors that had a lingering impact on the local residents' images of Russians. Second, the average citizen's experience dealing directly with Russians was very limited or non-existent. Therefore, the media-generated impressions become doubly important in the formation of local people's attitudes toward Russians. This observation is corroborated by the finding that our survey respondents generally relied more on the mass media for information on Russia and Russians than on other sources, including personal contacts with Russians. The problem was compounded by the fact that the level of Russia-related knowledge among the general public was limited due to the lack of Russian contents in their school education. Even our respondents, many of whom had work-related contacts with Russians, acknowledged that their knowledge of Russia was not what it should be. Our respondents rated their knowledge of Russia conservatively, with 17 of them saying they considered themselves "somewhat knowledgeable" and 12 others acknowledging they had little or no knowledge about Russia. Not one person stated he considered himself very knowledgeable. The respondents' Russian language ability was even more limited or non-existent. Five of them said they considered their ability to use Russian as "fairly strong," eight as "weak," and 20 as "nonexistent."

What sources of information did the people in Sapporo use to learn about Russia or Russians? Our respondents were given seven choices—Japanese newspapers, Russian newspapers, TV and radio programs, magazines, Japanese government sources, Russian government sources, and personal sources of information. Japanese newspapers and TV and radio programs were the most important sources of information that our respondents used. Only one person wrote he used Japanese and Russian government sources for information on Russia.

To gauge the perceptual impact of the Russian presence upon the residents of Sapporo, we asked the respondents about how many Russians they thought were residing in their city. We gave them five choices—fewer than 50, between 50-100, between 100-200, between 200-500, and over 500. If we believe official statistics, only 5 respondents correctly estimated the number of Russians residing in Sapporo. As noted earlier, 233 Russians were officially documented as residing in the city in 2001. Most (25) respondents underestimated the size of the Russian resident community in Sapporo. Assuming that the actual number of Russians residing in the city is larger than the officially documented number, it appears that the Russian residents are not very visible.

Having more Russian residents in the community, therefore, does not appear to be problematic among our respondents. We asked our respondents whether they would welcome more Russian visitors in their local community. They were generally receptive to the idea. Twelve people said there should be more Russians in their area. Only one person answered there should be fewer Russians.

When asked what kind of impact the Russian presence had on their community, the balance of assessment was only slightly favorable, with 8 individuals thinking there was positive impact, 5 respondents believing there was some bad impact, and the largest number of people (12) seeing little or no impact. We should remind ourselves that our respondents appear more favorably inclined toward the Russian presence in Sapporo than the larger community of Sapporo. We then asked if more Japanese should visit Russia. As many as 13 of them said the number should increase a lot, and five answered the number should increase somewhat. Only two said the number should be smaller. Again, our sample does not appear to be representative of the larger community in Sapporo. Our sense is that the number of people in Sapporo who have a strong desire to visit Russia is quite limited.

When asked if they thought the relationship between their local community and its Russian counterpart should be expanded or lessened, most of the respondents said they favored more active promotion of ties between their community and Russian partner cities. Even the five respondents who offered a somber assessment of the current Russian presence in their local community supported expansion of ties with Russian partners. Of the 19 supporters of closer Russian ties, five specifically mentioned that Hokkaido and Russia (or Sakhalin) were geographic neighbors and should develop closer ties.

Surprisingly, only one respondent mentioned the conclusion of a peace treaty and resolution of the territorial dispute between Japan and Russia among his reasons for wanting expanded bilateral ties. In our interviews with individuals in Sapporo, Otaru, and Wakkanai, we found eagerness to forge closer ties with Russia, particularly Sakhalin, irrespective of the progress on the territorial problem. Very few of them believed the territorial impasse was or should be a barrier to closer ties with Russia.

We then asked our respondents if they felt friendly toward Russia. The same question has been asked in numerous public opinion surveys in Japan, including those annually conducted by the Japanese Prime Minister's Office (now the Cabinet Office) and occasional surveys conducted by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. These surveys consistently indicate low levels of affinity among the Japanese people toward Russia. For example, according to the Cabinet Office's survey in October 2001, only 17.9 percent of the Japanese polled said they felt friendly or somewhat friendly toward Russia and 76.7 percent said they did not feel friendly toward Russia.³² We wanted to find out if Sapporo citizens deviated from the national pattern. Eighteen out of 33 respondents (or 54%) said they felt friendly or somewhat friendly toward Russia, whereas 11 (18%) felt somewhat unfriendly or not friendly at all. Since our sample is quite small and is not representative of the Japanese living in Sapporo, much less Hokkaido, the most we can say is that there is a potential reservoir of goodwill in Sapporo toward Russia.

We asked another question frequently asked in nationwide public opinion surveys—whether they think the overall relationship between Japan and Russia is good. Eight of our 33 respondents said they thought the bilateral relations were good or somewhat good, whereas 12 people believe they were somewhat bad. Here again, our respondents are more positive about the bilateral relations than the Japanese public in general. According to the Cabinet Office's survey just cited above, about 30.3 percent of the Japanese thought that the bilateral relations were good and 57.3 percent said the relations were bad.³³ Asked to give their reasons for their assessment of Japanese-Russian relations, seven respondents to our survey specifically mentioned the territorial dispute. Another four individuals cited difficulties in economic relations. Three respondents cited limited contacts, including complicated and time-consuming visa procedures. On the positive side, five respondents stated that private-level ties were growing between the two countries.

We then asked what should be done to improve the relationship between Russia and Japan. As many as 18 respondents favored expansion of bilateral exchanges, including information exchange, and economic and cultural exchanges. Only three people answered that Japan and Russia should solve the dispute over the Northern Territories and another three stated the two countries should sign a peace treaty.

Sapporo has a sister-city relationship with Novosibirsk. Seventeen of our 33 respondents were able to name Novosibirsk as Sapporo's sister city. It appears that the city needs to publicize the sister-city ties more prominently. Eleven respondents said the sister-city ties were having a good impact on the overall relations between Japan and Russia, but eight individuals saw little or no impact. Only one person answered the relationship had a bad impact but gave no reason for his critical view.

Earlier we noted that our respondents depended on newspapers, TV and radio programs, and a few other sources for information on Russia and Japan-Russia relations. In addition, we asked them what had influenced their views of Russia and the Russian people the most. We listed six sources and asked them to rank-order them. The choices were newspapers and TV programs, experience of working with Russians, personal contacts with Russians, school history lessons, books and music, and preconceptions. Newspaper reports and TV programs were the most important influences. It is encouraging that eight people and five people formed their views on the basis of their experiences working with Russians or through private interactions with Russians, respectively. Among the second-ranked sources of influence, working with Russians and preconceptions were most frequently cited.

At the end of our questionnaire, we asked our respondents to write any comments they liked regarding Russia or Russians. Nineteen respondents chose to do so. Several dimensions were discernible in their comments.

First, all but four people noted that it was either desirable or possible to build mutual trust between the Japanese and the Russians through expanded contacts. Six people acknowledged that there was a great psychological distance or differences between the Japanese and the Russians. Four of them added, however, that it was desirable or possible for both sides to try and bridge those gaps. One of them wrote, for example, "Russians are compulsive and do not much like Japanese preference for moderation. They like deep personal relations. Japan can learn much from them through personal contacts." Another respondent wrote, "I do not feel close to Russians. I have very limited information about Russia compared with other countries. I feel a distance with Russia and Russians. But, I would like to deep my understanding of them."

Second, five respondents commented favorably on the characteristics of the Russians they had met through work or personally or found some similarities between the Russians and the Japanese and believed it was possible to develop better relations between the two peoples. One of them wrote, for example, "There are similarities between the Russians and the Japanese. Unlike with the contractual society one finds in the West, the Russians and the Japanese share subconscious spirituality, and I feel culturally much closer to the Russians." Another wrote, "I have met many compassionate and polite Russians. I feel friendly toward the Russians. But then, I am not a politician."

Third, there were only three respondents who made critical comments on Russia or Russians without any hint as to whether or how Japan-Russia relations might be improved. One of them wrote, "In Russia, the government has the power to change everything. There are corrupt fisheries officials and mafia, and there is no trust." Another wrote, "I only have average knowledge and my view (of Russia and the Russians) is based on preconceptions, but I do not have very good impressions of Russians. I know that the Russians have achieved great literature and art. Our political systems differ. I have no personal contacts with Russians."

Fourth, two people mentioned the difficulty of obtaining visas and traveling to Russia as obstacles to closer ties between the two peoples.

Finally, only one person mentioned the territorial dispute and wrote, "Russia should return the Northern Territories promptly and the two sides should conclude economic agreements. That would be good for Hokkaido's construction business."

A Survey of Japanese Residents in Wakkanai

Wakkanai is a port city of 43,000 people, located at the northern end of Japan, directly across the Soya Strait from Sakhalin. It is home to an active but dwindling fishing industry. The city leaders see expansion of relations with Russia, particularly with Sakhalin, as very important to Wakkanai's economic vitality, indeed to its survival. The city established friendship-city (*yukotoshi*) ties with Nevel'sk in 1972,

with Korsakov in 1991, and with Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 2001. There is a scheduled shipping service between Wakkanai and Korsakov during the months of May-September. In 2001, 32 round-trip services carried 4,205 passengers and 1,075 tons of cargo. In 2000, as many as 3,760 ships came into Wakkanai Port and 3,730 of them were Russian ships, mostly small fishing and freight ships. As many as 58,473 Russian citizens landed in Wakkanai on special permit while their ships were anchored in the port. A more permanent Russian presence is very small. In 2001, only 59 Russians were registered in the city, but they constituted over one-fourth of the foreign residents in the city.³⁴

The city administration actively promotes human and economic ties with the friendship cities in Sakhalin. For example, it sent 62 Wakkanai citizens on two goodwill missions to Sakhalin in 2001 and funded their travel. In addition, the city dispatched one of its administrators to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk for a three-month stint in 2000 and received four administrators from the Russian city for two weeks each in 2000 and again in 2001. Wakkanai also sent two of its administrators to the Wakkanai Liaison Office in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 2001. Moreover, Wakkanai participated in a newly established exchange program between Japanese private organizations and Sakhalin Oblast in 2001. In this framework, various organizations in the city dispatched or received chamber of commerce members, junior chamber of commerce members, high school students and teachers, university students and professors, children, and tourism specialists. These exchanges involved people in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Korsakov, and Nevel'sk in Sakhalin. In 2001, the city budgeted about \$134,000 for various programs to promote economic exchange with the Sakhalin cities. In addition, the city spent about \$161,700 in subsidies for various citizen group activities to promote economic, business, cultural, and educational exchanges with various cities in Sakhalin and the Russian Far East.³⁵

Are these efforts having any impact on the local citizens' views of Russia and Russians? What other developments are affecting their views? In order to answer these questions, we conducted a survey of some city residents and students at a private university. Twenty-eight people responded.³⁶ We also conducted a series of interviews with several individuals in Wakkanai.

In the survey, we asked identical questions to those we asked in Sapporo. However, the two sets of surveys are not directly comparable because we did not use any sampling technique for either survey and the composition of the two sets of respondents is quite different, in terms of occupation, age and educational background. Nonetheless, there are some responses from the Wakkanai sample that either accord with our observations about the respondents in Sapporo or raise a number of additional questions that we need to investigate further.

First, we present the profiles of our respondents in Wakkanai (Tables 9-12).

Table 9. Occupations/professions of Wakkanai Respondents

Total	Business employee*	Business owner/executive	University professor	University student	Public servant	Newspaper reporter
28	1	2	2	21	1	1

* Includes restaurants and bars.

Table 10. Age of Wakkanai Respondents

Total	10s	20s	30s	40s	50s
23	12	5	1	2	3

Table 11. Gender of Wakkanai Respondents

Total	Male	Female
25	18	7

Table 12. Highest Level of Education Obtained

Total	High school	University	Graduate school
28	23	2	2

As many as 21 respondents were students at Wakkanai Hokusei Gakuen University, a four-year college with a student population of around 360 and one major, in information media. As we will note

below, their views of Russia and Russians are strikingly different from the views expressed by adult respondents.

The amount of contact between our Wakkanai respondents and Russians was very limited, except for the four adult respondents who either had visited Russia or met Russians at or through their work. Seven of our respondents, including 3 students, saw Russians at least once a week, one respondent saw Russians at least once a month, and the rest rarely or never saw Russians. Outside of their work environment, only four individuals said they met Russians on a weekly basis and one at least once a month. The other respondents rarely or never met Russians. Those that met Russians at or through their work described the Russians they had met with such favorable adjectives as “beautiful,” “studious,” “clever at work,” “jovial,” “kind,” “broad-minded,” “intellectual,” “compassionate,” “proud,” “eloquent,” and “serious.” Only one person offered negative characterization, saying the Russians he had met were “loose with work schedule.” Among the individuals who had little or no contact with Russians, the impressions were understandably more superficial, but they were largely negative. Five students used “scary” and three students “big” to describe their impressions of Russians. When it came to impressions based on contacts outside of the work environment, the three respondents who met Russians at least once a week offered the following adjectives: “warm,” “childish,” “gentle,” “beautiful,” “scary,” “fun,” and “kind.”

The above impressions suggest that, as we noted with respect to the survey in Sapporo, more frequent and more intimate contacts with Russian people tend to improve the impressions the Japanese hold of Russians.

The limited amount of contact the Wakkanai respondents have with Russians is compounded by the fact that their knowledge of Russia is very limited, as they acknowledge themselves. Only six respondents said they had some knowledge of Russia and one (a university professor who taught Russian and Russia-related subjects) said he was very knowledgeable. All others admitted their knowledge of Russia was either very limited or nonexistent. When it came to the ability to use the Russian language, the two university professors who responded to our survey were the only ones assessing their ability as “good.” All others rated their Russian ability as either very limited or non-existent.

As to the sources of information our respondents used about Russia, newspapers were cited by 15 respondents and radio and TV programs by 14 people. Seven individuals said they had personal sources of information.

The size of the Russian presence in Wakkanai cannot but have a visible impact in the city. Russians living in the city are small in number, but, as we noted earlier, there are a large number of brief visitors, particularly those who come into the city while their ships are docked in Wakkanai Port. Only fifty-nine Russians were officially registered as residents in Wakkanai in 2001. Nine of our respondents underestimated the number of Russian residents. Eight respondents guessed correctly that there were between 50 and 100 Russian residents in the city. Five people thought between 100 and 500 Russians were residing in Wakkanai. Six respondents—all university students—thought there were over 500 Russians living in their city. The Russians in the city appear quite visible in the eyes of the students who responded to our survey.

About one half of the respondents thought, correctly, that the number of Russians visiting Wakkanai had increased over the last two-three years, while only three people believed the number had declined, with four noticing little or no change in the number of Russian visitors.

The visibility of Russians is quite striking among our respondents. This contrasts sharply with Sapporo, where most people underestimated the size of the resident Russian population in their city. This is understandable in that Wakkanai is a substantially smaller city, with a population of only 43,000. The more than 50,000 Russians that come through the city each year while their ships are anchored in the port leave the local residents with the impression that there are many more Russians living in the city than there really are.

Asked if more Russians should come to Wakkanai, only seven respondents thought so. They said expanded contacts with Russians would improve mutual understanding and be in the economic interest of Wakkanai. Eight people said the current level should be maintained, while two people said there should be fewer Russian visitors in their city. Maintenance of “public safety” and control of “crimes” were given as reasons for their cautious views. Eight people said they would like to see more Russian visitors in their city but that they were concerned about increasing crimes.

Should more Japanese visit Russia than currently? Fourteen respondents answered this question affirmatively. Not one respondent said fewer Japanese should visit Russia. Four individuals preferred the status quo. As many as ten people said they did not know.

Asked what kind of impact if any the presence of Russian people in their local area had on their community, only four people said the impact was positive. In contrast, as many as 15 respondents said the impact was negative. Another two individuals said there were mixed impacts. Reasons for the negative assessments pointed to the growing incidents of shoplifting, bicycle thefts, and violent crimes. Several respondents recognized that there were indeed misbehaving Russian visitors. They cautioned against generalizing about all Russians and said that the local economy also benefited from the presence of Russian visitors.

Support for expanded relations between Wakkanai and its partner cities in Sakhalin was strong among our respondents, even among those who said the Russian presence in the city had bad impacts. Sixteen out of the 28 respondents said Wakkanai's ties with the Russian cities should be promoted. In contrast, only two individuals said the inter-city ties should be controlled. Among the reasons given for expanding friendship ties were economic benefits, geographical proximity, and mutual cultural understanding.

Do our respondents feel friendly toward Russia? As many as 15 individuals, including all university students in our sample, said they felt either not very friendly or not friendly at all. Nine people said they were either friendly or somewhat friendly. None of these were students.

As to the overall relations between Japan and Russia, only one person (a city government official) evaluated the relations as "good" and another (a student) thought they were "somewhat good." Five respondents chose "Don't know." The remaining twenty-one respondents were equally split between "not very good" and "cannot generalize." Among the reasons given for the negative assessments, the territorial dispute was cited by the largest number of respondents (8 individuals).

Asked what should be done to improve Japan's relations with Russia, two people said the two countries should conclude a peace treaty and another six people said the territorial dispute should be solved. Some of them demanded that Russia return the territories to Japan but others said both sides needed a spirit of compromise. Another eight individuals agreed that more contacts and more communication between the two peoples would build trust and more friendly relations.

About half of the respondents were aware of the friendship relationship that Wakkanai had established with Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. A slightly smaller portion of the respondents also correctly named Nevel'sk and Korsakov as Wakkanai's friendship cities. Eleven respondents thought these inter-city relationships were having a good impact on the overall relations between Japan and Russia, while six said they saw little or no impact, and eleven others said they did not know.

How were our Wakkanai respondents' views of Russia and Russians formed? Second-hand sources, including media, were the dominant source of influence on their views. Eight of them cited newspapers and TV programs as the most important source of influence.

Clearly, a larger sample is necessary to draw more reliable conclusions about the Wakkanai City residents' views on Russia and Russians. Nonetheless, the marked difference between the adult respondents and students in our sample is quite intriguing. It is disconcerting as well that the image of the Russians in Wakkanai is far from favorable, with the brief visitors in the city leaving quite a negative impression on the local residents, particularly among the young people. We only interviewed a limited number of people in the city, including city administrators, businessmen, and shopkeepers. All of them had fairly extensive contacts with Russians. They were also concerned that the behavior of Russian seamen had an undesirable impact on the local people's image of Russians in general.

Conclusions

Here we summarize the major findings from these surveys and interviews.

First, there is a noticeable difference of views about the Russians in Japan and Russo-Japanese relations between those who have had some level of personal or professional contact with Russians or experience in Russia on the one hand and, on the other, those who have had little or no such contact or experience. The former group is clearly more favorably inclined toward the Russians in their community and interested in promoting closer ties with Russia than the latter group.

Second, another difference is found between the local government authorities and others. Government officials from the areas closest to Russia realize that the two countries are geographical neighbors and that this fact will eventually bring their economies closer. They take pride in being in the forefront of ties with Russia and that the efforts and energy that they put into sustaining and expanding relations with their Russian counterparts will help modify the nation's policy toward the improvement of bilateral relations.

Third, the same officials believe that the current low level of visible local economic benefits from Russian ties should not be a reason for not proceeding with their effort to expand people-to-people contact between their citizens and the citizens of the Russian cities and municipalities with which they have established sister-city or friendship-city relationships. They are hopeful that eventually their efforts in the cultural and social fields will lead to more promising business opportunities than they have seen so far.

Fourth, the impasse over the territorial dispute between the two countries does not appear to be a deterrent against efforts to build commercial ties on the part of local businessmen and government officials. Some even expressed concern that a territorial settlement would terminate the advantageous position they currently enjoy in their dealings with Russians. They also fear that expanded Japanese access to fisheries and other resources on and around the disputed islands would be damaging to those resources, as well as to the natural environment of the hitherto underdeveloped areas.

Fifth, the most damaging in the current state of local-level interactions between Russians and Japanese is the largely negative reputation Russians have acquired because of the frequently reported crimes allegedly committed by them. The local authorities do not seem to have taken an active role in remedying the situation by, for example, offering an orientation program to the visiting Russians, particularly those who come onshore briefly. While individual Russians may not be able to influence the local mass perception, there may be a role that Russian consular officials can play, in cooperation with local Japanese authorities.

Sixth, despite the outward appearance of adjustment to the Japanese cultural environment, many Russians appear to exhibit pronounced behavioral and thinking patterns that reflect their Russian identity. They were disturbed by the lack of interest on the part of their Japanese colleagues to engage them not only on a professional but also on a personal level. At the same time, they were deeply appreciative of the few local Japanese who were quite interested in and engaged with them, breaking through the customary manner of relating to foreigners in Japan.

Seventh, for most Japanese in our study, the mass media is the main source of information on Russia and Russians. Local and even national media coverage of Russia in Japan shows two seemingly contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the media depict the glossy side of historical and contemporary Russia and it resonates well with many Japanese intellectuals who are familiar with Russian achievements in art, literature, and sports. On the other hand, the same media report repugnant manifestations of Russian behavior, such as thefts, murders, illegal drug and gun trafficking, and other types of crimes, as well as the impoverished local conditions in some areas of Russia. The dichotomy of two extremes is too much to bear for the average Japanese, who tends to gravitate toward the middle ground. So, many Japanese feel confused as to what the real Russia is, and with which Russia they are being asked to deal.

We posited at the beginning of this paper that the presence of growing numbers of Russians in Japan might potentially influence future Japanese-Russian relations. This study was motivated by the conspicuous absence of a serious study of the growing Russian presence in Japan. We noted that the Russians in Japan presented a fairly recent and small presence, but the wide cultural gap between Japanese and Russians posed interesting questions about the prospects of mutual accommodation. Our research suggests that as Russians and Japanese expand their interaction, Japanese attitudes toward the Russians are likely to become more positive, at least among those who are mutually engaged, while the general public's attitudes are unlikely to improve. On the other hand, the differentiated attitudes of the Russian residents in Japan toward the Japanese are likely to become less positive and more nuanced.

Contacts between any two cultures are bound to create both excitement and disappointment, both anticipation and anxiety. While we do not necessarily subscribe to the idea of an inevitable clash of civilizations, we do see a potentially disconcerting possibility in the growing Russian presence in the Japanese provinces we examined here. The "abnormal" relations between the two countries at the state level, combined with the lack of substantial grassroots-level contact, are restricting the potential for mutually

beneficial relationship between the neighboring societies. The limited contact that does exist shows signs of both accommodation and resistance toward the Russians in local communities. News reports of criminal or illegal activities by Russians in Japan have continued since we conducted our interviews and surveys. It seems unlikely that the generally negative public opinion in Japan about Russia or about Japanese-Russian relations will change significantly in the near future. However, the territorial dispute—the thorn in the state-level relations—does not appear to dampen the local initiatives to expand cross-border ties for the benefit of their own communities. Our study indicates that in Niigata and Hokkaido there is sustained interest in developing closer ties with their communities and their counterparts in the Russian Far East. Whether the interests of the provincial administrators can influence the political-strategic considerations in Tokyo and Moscow remains to be seen.

Notes

¹ The boat had visited North Korea and Sakhalin, where the visitors exchanged meetings with ethnic Koreans who were seeking compensation from the Japanese government for forced labor in coal mines during the Second World War. (New York Times, September 8, 2002 [<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/08/international/asia/08PEAC.html>]).

² Asahi Shimbun, August 24, 2002 (<http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0824/022.html>).

³ For a description of the visa-free exchange visits, see Nobuo Arai and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "The Russian Far East in Russo-Japanese Relations," in Tsuneo Akaha, ed., Politics and Economics in the Russian Far East: Changing Ties with Asia-Pacific, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 157-186.

⁴ Asahi Shimbun, August 27, 2002 (<http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/0827/001.html>).

⁵ Hokkaido Shimbun, August 28, 2002 (<http://www.hokkaido-np.co.jp/Php/kiji.php3?&d=20020828&j=0026&k=200208286845>).

⁶ These statistics are taken from Japan Immigration Association, Statistics on Immigration Control 1999, Tokyo: Japan Immigration Association, 2000 and Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002.

⁷ Correspondence with Professor Takashi Murakami, Director, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, September 2001.

⁸ For example, a 2001 book authored by a high-ranking Japanese immigration official concerning legal and other policy challenges presented by the growing influx of foreign nations into Japan since the 1990s failed to mention Russian migrants even once (Hidenori, Sakanaka Nihon no Gaikokujin Seisaku no Koso [A plan for Japanese policy toward foreigners], Tokyo: Nihon Kajo Shuppan, 2001). Similarly, several recent studies of international migration in Japan do not cite one study dealing with Russians. (See Katherine Tegtmeier Pak, "Towards Local Citizenship: Japanese Cities Respond to International Migration," The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, Working Paper No. 30, University of California-San Diego, La Jolla, California, January 2001; David Bartram, "Japan and Labor Migration: Theoretical and Methodological Implications," The International Migration Review, Spring 2000, pp. 5-32; and Vera Mackie, ed., Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity, London: Routledge, 1997.)

⁹ There are numerous studies on the territorial dispute. For an excellent study highlighting the symbolic and emotional dimension of the conflict, see Masao Kimura and David A. Walsh, "Specifying 'Interests': Japan's Claim to the Northern Territories and Its Implications for International Relations Theory," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1998), pp. 213-244.

¹⁰ The expression "distant neighbors" is from Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Jonathan Haslam, and Andrew C. Kuchins, eds., Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma between Distant Neighbors, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1993, and Hiroshi Kimura, Distant Neighbors, 2 volumes, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.

¹¹ For example, a 2001 opinion survey conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office (*Naikakufu*) revealed that 76.7 percent of the Japanese polled did not feel friendly toward Russia, as compared with 17.9 percent who felt friendly. This contrasts sharply with the high level of Japanese affinity toward the United States (76.5 percent feeling friendly as against 19.9 percent feeling no affinity). (*Naikakufu Daijinkanbo Seifukohoshitsu*, ed., Gekkan Seronchosa Gaiko [Monthly public opinion __ diplomacy], Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002. See also Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations, 2 volumes, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1998.

¹² A 2001 survey in Russia showed that 45 percent of those polled said they liked Japan and another 24 percent stated they had both likes and dislikes about Japan, with only 2 percent indicating they disliked Japan (Foreign Ministry, Roshia ni okeru Tainichi Seron Chosa" [Public opinion survey in Russia regarding Japan], August 2, 2001, Foreign Ministry's website: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/russia/chosa02/index.html>).

¹³ There are a few recent publications that include studies of the presence of Russians in Japan, but they are mostly concerned about pre-war periods. Examples include: Mitsuo Naganawa, Nikolaido no Hitobito: Nihon Kindaishi no naka no Roshia Seikyokai (People in the Nikolai cathedral: the Russian Orthodox Church in Japan's modern history), Tokyo: Gendai Kikakushitsu, 1999; Mitsuo Naganawa and Katsuhiko Sawada, eds., Ikuyo ni Ikiru: Rainichi Roshiyajin no Ashiato (Life in a foreign country: Footprints of Russians in Japan), Tokyo: Seibunsha, 2001; J. Thomas Rimer, ed., A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868-1926, Stanford, CA: Stanford University and Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1995, pp. 1-14; and Haruki Wada, Hopporyodo Mondai: Rekishi to Mirai (The northern territories problem: history and the future), Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1999.

¹⁴ Judicial System Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002, p. xiv.

¹⁵ US citizens entering Japan in 2001 numbered 715,036 and were the third largest group, representing 13.5% of the total number of foreign nationals entering Japan.

¹⁶ The immigration law defines “entertainment” as “activities related to entertainment such as theater, variety entertainment, music performance, and sports.” (Sakanaka, p. 264.)

¹⁷ For general background information on the development of Niigata’s and Hokkaido’s relations with Russia, particularly the Russian Far East, see Tsuneo Akaha, “Local Diplomacy in Northeast Asia: The Case of Hokkaido and Niigata and Their Ties to the Russian Far East,” a paper presented at the 2001 Hong Kong Convention of International Studies, Hong Kong, July 26-28, 2001.

¹⁸ In comparison, as many as 5,797 Koreans (both North and South) and 4,417 Chinese were officially registered in Hokkaido, and 2,564 Koreans and 3,532 Chinese were in Niigata Prefecture. (Judicial System Department, Minister’s Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002, pp. 164-165).

¹⁹ These numbers compare with 1,000 Koreans and 1,042 Chinese living in Niigata and 2,710 Koreans (both North and South) and 2,332 Chinese registered in Sapporo. The information was supplied by the city administrators of Niigata and Sapporo.

²⁰ The information was provided by the city administrators of Otaru City.

²¹ Judicial System Department, Minister’s Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, ed., Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants, 2002, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002, p. 7.

²² The information was supplied by Hokkaido Prefecture administrators. “Special permits” are issued to ferry passengers and crew members who wish to come ashore while their ships are calling in Japanese ports, those who use these ports as transit points, those requiring emergency landing, and others rescued by Japanese coastal authorities.

²³ The information was provided by Hokkaido Prefecture administrators.

²⁴ The information on Niigata Airport was supplied by Niigata City officials.

²⁵ The information was provided by Wakkanai City officials.

²⁶ The information was supplied by Otaru City officials.

²⁷ For an account of Niigata’s experience in international exchange and cooperation, including in the Russian Far East, see Masao Ichioka, *Jichitai Gaiko: Niigata no Jissen-Yukokara Kyoryoku e* (Local autonomous bodies’ diplomacy: From practice-friendship to cooperation in Niigata), Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyoronsha, 2000.

²⁸ For a full report on the project, see Tsuneo Akaha and Anna Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Niigata and Hokkaido: Preliminary Analysis of Surveys and Interviews,” a paper presented at the international seminar “Human Flows across National Borders in Northeast Asia,” organized by the Center for East Asian Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California, November 2-3, 2001.

²⁹ The governor was born in Sakhalin and spent the first six years of his life there.

³⁰ The favorable adjectives the respondents used to describe their impressions of the Russians they encountered included: “easy to befriend or friendly” (noted by 4 respondents), “honest” (3), “simple” (*soboku*, a positive Japanese concept) (3), “kind” (2), “cheerful” (2), “logical” (2), “able” (2), “sturdy,” “hardworking,” “serious,” “artistic,” “clean,” “warm,” “persevere,” “gregarious,” “open,” “passionate,” “positive,” “intelligent,” “have own opinion,” and “fond of Japan.” Six respondents used only 7 adjectives generally seen in a negative light in Japanese culture. They used such expressions as “inexact” or “not detail-oriented” (3 respondents), “dirty,” “noisy,” “sloppy,” “have no risk management skill,” “stubborn,” and “authoritarian.” Two respondents referred physical characteristics and noted the Russians they have come into contact with in their work were “big.” Three respondents answered they could not generalize, they had no lasting impression, or their impressions varied from one Russian to another.

³¹ The respondents were asked to use three adjectives. Their choices were: “sturdy, honest, and kind to friends,” “kind, Japanese-like, and reliable,” “friendly, cheerful, and inexact,” “good-natured, loyal, and sensitive,” “cheerful, joyful, and friendly,” “intelligent, serious, and broad-viewed,” “good-natured, cheerful, and talkative,” and “simple, Japanophile, and open.” Two individuals just used one adjective, “good-natured” and “big”, while one respondent wrote, “varies from one Russian to another.”

³² Naikakufu Taijinkanbo Seifu Kohoshitsu, ed., *Seron Chosa, June 2002*, Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2002, p. 11. In contrast, the same survey showed an overwhelming majority (76.5%) of the Japanese feeling friendly or somewhat friendly toward the United States (*ibid.*, p. 6).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 13. A year earlier, only 17.8 percent said Russian-Japanese relations were good and 69.3 percent said they were bad (*ibid.*).

³⁴ This information was supplied by the Wakkanai city administration.

³⁵ This information was also supplied by the Wakkanai city administration.

³⁶ We acknowledge with appreciation the assistance of Mr. Yukihiro Okazaki of Hokkaido Shimbun and Professors Kazuhiko Iwamoto and Chihiro Tsukamoto of Wakkanai Hokusei University in conducting the survey, as well as for agreeing to be interviewed by us.