

STEPS Students Report

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(i) My research topic is the northern territory in Japanese (Kuril Islands in Russia). I tried to find a new possible approach to this problem, which has not been solved more than 70 years from views of students among Japan, Russia and other countries.

(ii) There are three things that I did in St. Petersburg regarding the research. First, on ordinary days, I usually study in a library in the campus. Then, I examined the articles regarding the research and also read books on the northern territory by accessing the SPbU library websites. Second, I attended four classes, 6 periods per week, since my supervisor Prof. Seruginin recommended to take classes. Actually, attending the classes are very interesting not only to acquire the knowledge on international relations, but also to see the differences of classes between Japan and Russia. For example, usually in Japan at a class, professor speaks more or less 90% during a lecture. On the other hand, in St. Petersburg the ratio is almost fifty-fifty. This means recognitions to a lecture differ between Japanese and Russian students, and I was very impressed by the attitudes of the classmates. Taking lectures here is a precious experience and I do recommend doing that during the stay.

The biggest achievement on my research is that I did a presentation on the northern territory in front of my classmates and discussed the problem among my classmates. I asked Prof. Sergunin to give me a chance to discuss this problem with Russian students. Then, he asked Prof. Pavlov, who held a class of international security, which I participated in, and he could give me a chance to have a discussion with the classmates, almost half of them are Russian, during the class. To prepare the presentation, I had two meetings with a Russian PhD student, who studied this topic during her bachelor degree, to elaborate my understanding to this problem. Thanks to proper modulation by Prof. Pavlov, a simulation game of the territory problem was conducted successfully, and I took part in the part of Japanese side of the discussion. I did about 15 minutes' presentation on the problem from a view of MOFA of Japan. The class itself has lasted for about 2.5 hours and the simulation and discussion were very fruitful.

An interesting finding from this discussion was that nuances of importance of the territory between Japan and Russia seems different. MOFA of Japan insists the

importance of the islands mainly from the aspects of (i) natural resources and the EEZ and (ii) people who used to live there. On the other hand, the importance of the islands for Russia mainly attributes to the military aspect. I also searched by myself and some article says it is not often broadcasted in Japan, but the territory is essential for the Russian government when they consider a war with the US by nuclear weapons. From the reason, the Russian government will never give up all the four islands to Japan. Therefore, to build a good relationship and economic cooperation with Russia, some compromises to this problem or putting it away from the discussion can be possible solutions to this problem so far, and currently the Prime Minister Abe has promoted the discussion with Russia on economic cooperation in the latter way.

In the end, the stay in St. Petersburg was amazing thanks to a lot of interesting opportunities. After I came here, my view to Russia has been radically changed. Before coming to Russia, I inquired to myself whether Russia belongs to Europe, Asia or others. My answer to this question after the stay is that "Russia is Russia" and people in Russia, at least who I met, seem to think in that way.