



The Genron NPO

ANALYSIS PAPER:

The 16th Joint Public Opinion Poll

Japan-China Public Opinion Survey 2020

In Cooperation With:

Japan: Public Opinion Research Center

China: The China International Publishing Group (CIPG),

Horizon Research Consultancy Group

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Chinese point finger at US, while Japanese look for solutions in international cooperation

The Genron NPO worked with its counterparts in China to conduct a joint survey of public opinion in Japan and China in September 2020. The survey revealed that 86.2% of Chinese citizens believe that the US is behind the worsening US-China relationship, and almost half believe either that the conflict will continue long-term, or that it will continue to worsen until it takes on the form of a new Cold War. It also uncovered that the number of Chinese people who see the US as a military threat has increased.

However, many Chinese people are still optimistic about the effect this conflict will have on the international order, with only 5.2% believing that the global economy will become fragmented.

Under the looming presence of the US-China conflict, more Chinese people recognize the importance of Japan-China relations and have high expectations for a new, more collaborative relationship between the two countries. A total of 75.2% of respondents (up from 62.2% last year) believe that China should work toward building a new cooperative relationship with Japan to ensure stable global economic growth and peace.

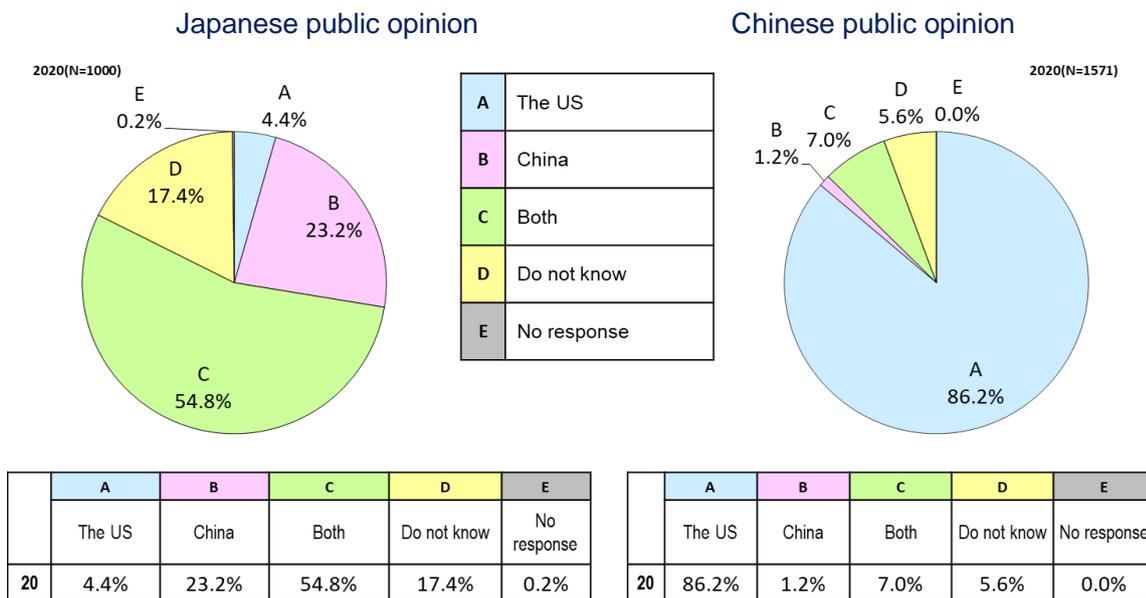
Due to recent actions on the part of the Chinese government and the deepening of the rift between the US and China, Japanese impressions of China and the current state of the Japan-China relationship have deteriorated in the last year. However, a majority of respondents agreed that Japan should not take sides in the US-China conflict, but should work toward developing international cooperation. This was well above the 20.3% of people who feel that Japan should prioritize its relationship with the US.

This public opinion survey is conducted annually in collaboration with China International Publishing Group, and this year's survey was the 16th conducted thus far.

Chinese citizens may blame the US, but few see global fragmentation in the future

Chinese citizens strongly believe in countering US actions made under the Trump administration, with 86.2% of respondents stating that they believe the US to be at fault for the currently worsening conflict between the two countries.

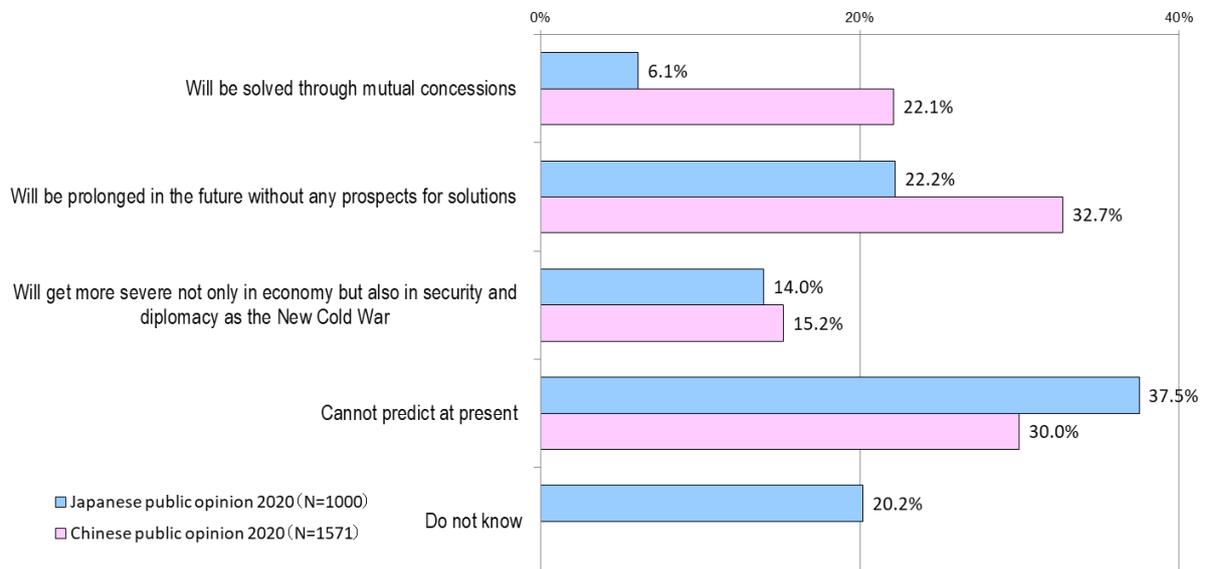
Graph 1: Which country is more responsible for US-China confrontation?



Public opinion is still mixed between pessimism and optimism regarding the future of the US-China relationship.

The number one answer regarding the future of the US-China tension found 32.7% of respondents agreeing with the statement that the conflict will continue, with there being no current prospects for resolving it. Another 15.2% believe that the conflict has evolved from an economic one into a conflict on national security and diplomacy, and that it will continue to develop into what will be seen as a New Cold War. Adding these responses shows that nearly half of respondents, or 47.9%, are pessimistic about the future.

Meanwhile, 22.1% of the Chinese public believe that the conflict will be resolved, while 30% responded that the future is currently unpredictable. These numbers illustrate that their overall public opinion is still without a strong consensus.

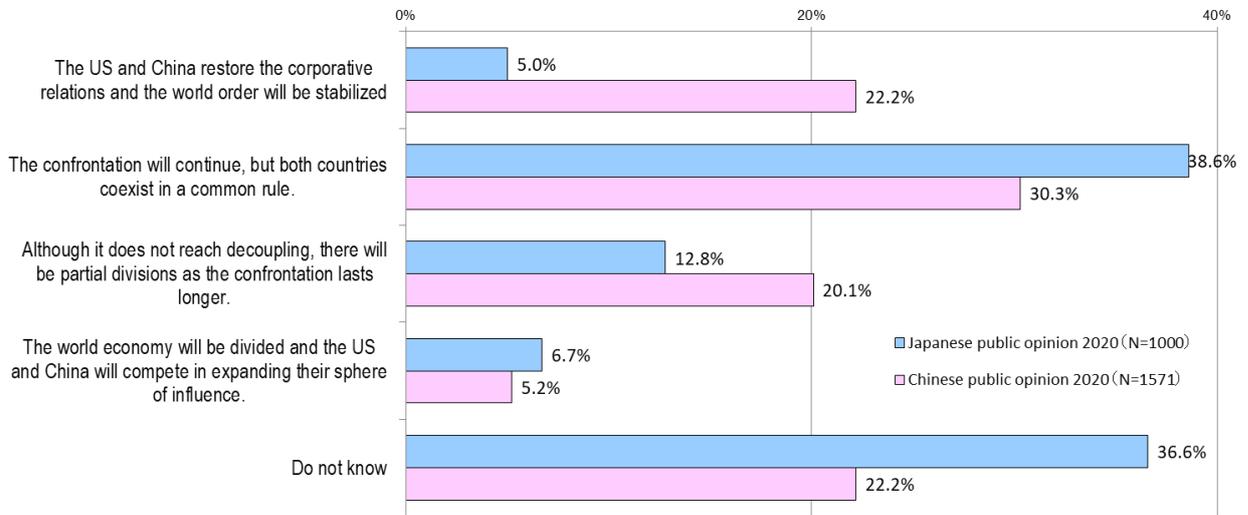
Graph 2: The future of the US-China tension

However, the Chinese public is still optimistic enough that they believe the US-China conflict will not affect the international order so adversely that it results in global fragmentation.

The number one response found that 30.3% agree that even if the US-China conflict were to continue, it would do so under the mutually accepted rule framework. Add that to the 22.2% who believe that if the US and China can restore their cooperative relationship it will stabilize the international order, and we find that more than half of Chinese people believe that the international order will remain stable even with the conflict currently ongoing.

Strictly speaking, these responses stand in contradiction to the responses regarding the direction of the US-China conflict, but this sort of contradiction is common in opinion polls. At least on the level of the general public, Chinese people see China as the victim of the US-China conflict, and while they worry about the future, they believe in the stability of the international order.

That being said, it should be noted that 25.3% of Chinese respondents expressed concern regarding global decoupling and partial economic fragmentation. Depending on how the US-China conflict evolves in the future, there is a possibility that more Chinese people will begin to worry about the potential for global fragmentation.

Graph 3: How the US-China confrontation impacts on the Global Order

Japanese opinion: Both sides at fault, pessimistic expectations for fragmentation

Japanese opinion about the US-China conflict is opposite that of China.

First, only 4.4% of Japanese people think the cause of the conflict is the US. The majority of respondents (54.8%) believe that both countries are at fault. Moreover, 23.2% feel that China is the cause of the conflict. (See graph 1)

Evaluating the direction of the US-China conflict is dependent on the future relationships between the great powers. As long as no improvements are made there, the Japanese public feels it has no option but to take the pessimistic view. That is reflected in the opinion poll results, and it is the reason why 37.5% of Japanese respondents believe that the future is currently unpredictable, with only 6.1% expressing the optimistic perspective that the conflict will be resolved soon. (See graph 2)

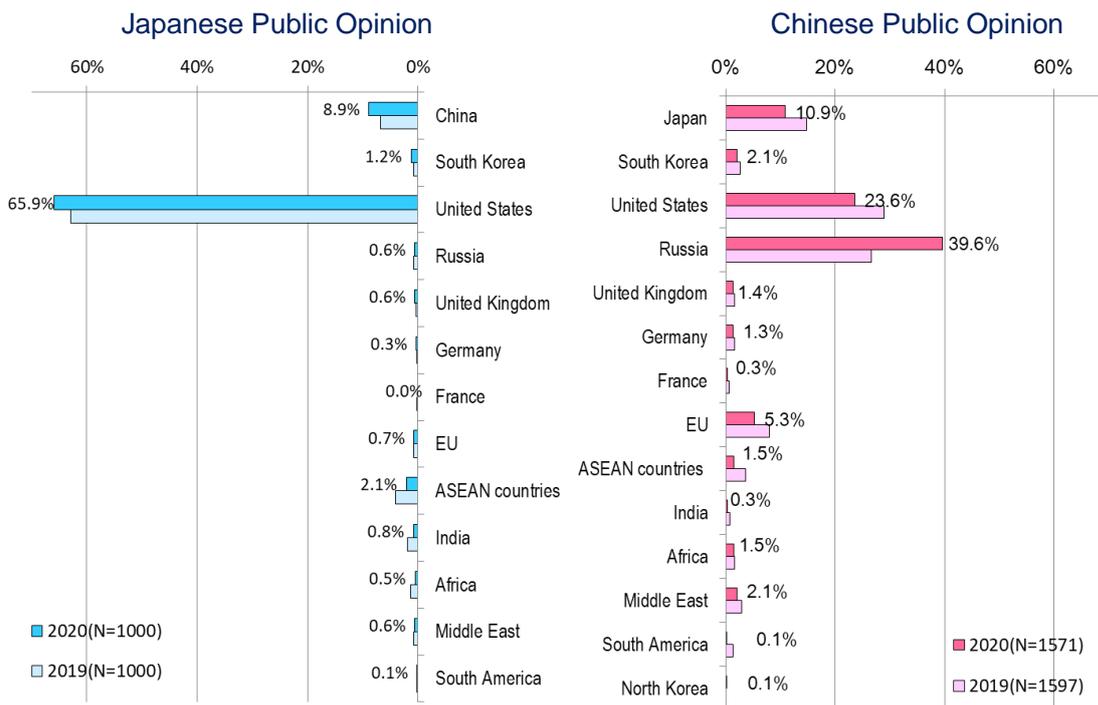
When asked about the influence the US-China conflict would have on the international order, Japanese people surveyed stated that 38.6% feel that even if the US-China conflict were to continue, it would do so under the mutually accepted rule framework. Although these are simply the expectations of the Japanese public, not evidence of any optimistic outlook. (See graph 3)

Chinese feel increased threat only from US, less from Japan – Taiwan Strait is most volatile region

Something else that became apparent during this survey is the powerful impact the US-China conflict has on the relationship between the two countries and on Chinese public opinion.

First, we discovered how much importance the Chinese place on their relationship with the US. In the last year, 28.9% of Chinese felt that the relationship with the US was the most important bilateral relationship, with that response being most popular. However, this result was overturned in the most recent survey, in which 39.4% of respondents answered that their most important relationship was with Russia. The US relationship is now considered most important by 23.6%, while Japan follows at 10.9%.

Graph 4: The most important country or region



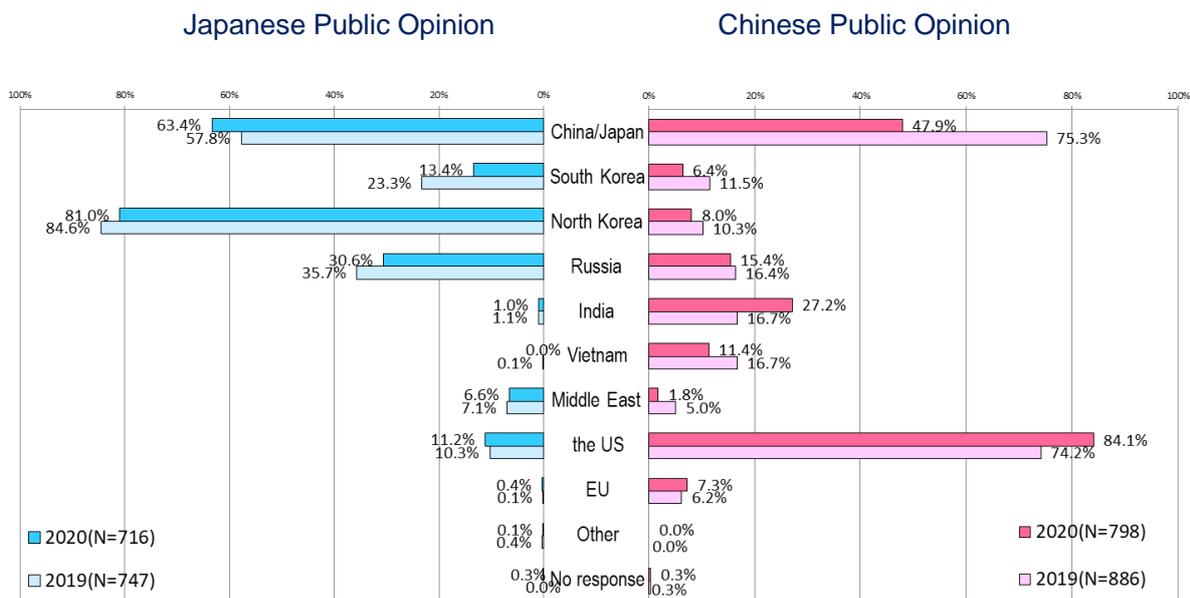
Moreover, the most recent survey showed an increase in the number of Chinese people who feel that the US is a military threat to their country, with 84.1% of respondents agreeing. Last year the number stood at 74.2%, so in only one year, there was a 12-point rise in the number of people who feel militarily threatened by the US. Worthy of note is that while last year’s survey showed that 75.3% of respondents considered Japan to be the greatest military threat to China, that has dropped

almost 30 points to 47.9% in this year’s survey.

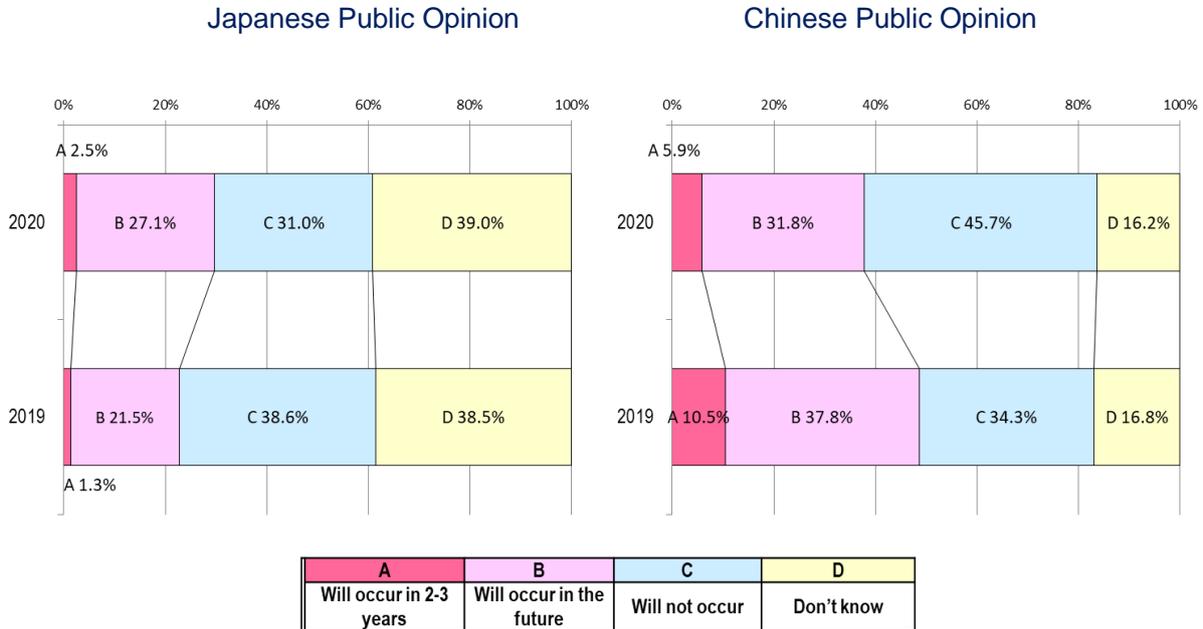
The Japan-US alliance is the foundation of security in Northeast Asia, and speaking realistically, it would be extremely difficult to separate its functions. In addition, the most common reason given by Chinese respondents who feel a military threat from Japan was that Japan is working with the US to hem China in. The fact that more Chinese respondents feel a threat from the US due to this alliance and less feel a threat from Japan means that the Chinese public is now judging the US and Japan independently from each other. This survey is the first time such a tendency has been seen.

In line with this trend, there is also an increased number of Chinese people who think that there will be no conflict due to the Japan-China territorial dispute surrounding the Senkaku Islands. A total of 45.7% of Chinese people feel that there will be no conflict, a significant improvement over last year’s result of 34.3%.

Graph 5: Countries/regions posing a military threat to your country

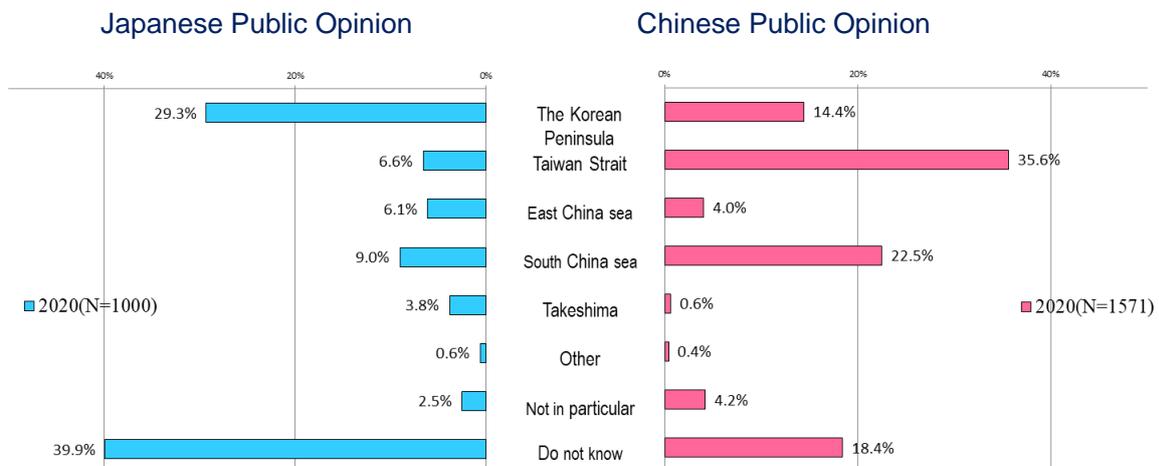


Graph6: Do you think a military conflict will occur in the future due to the Japan-China territorial dispute surrounding the Senkaku Islands?



Another question asked how the military threat induced by the US-China conflict could manifest itself. When asked what the most “dangerous area” of East Asia was, the Taiwan Strait stood out as the number one answer at 35.6%. Following this was the South China Sea at 22.5% and the Korean Peninsula at 14.4%. The results of the survey of Chinese experts showed essentially the same trend.

Graph 7: Which region do you think is in danger of occurring conflict?



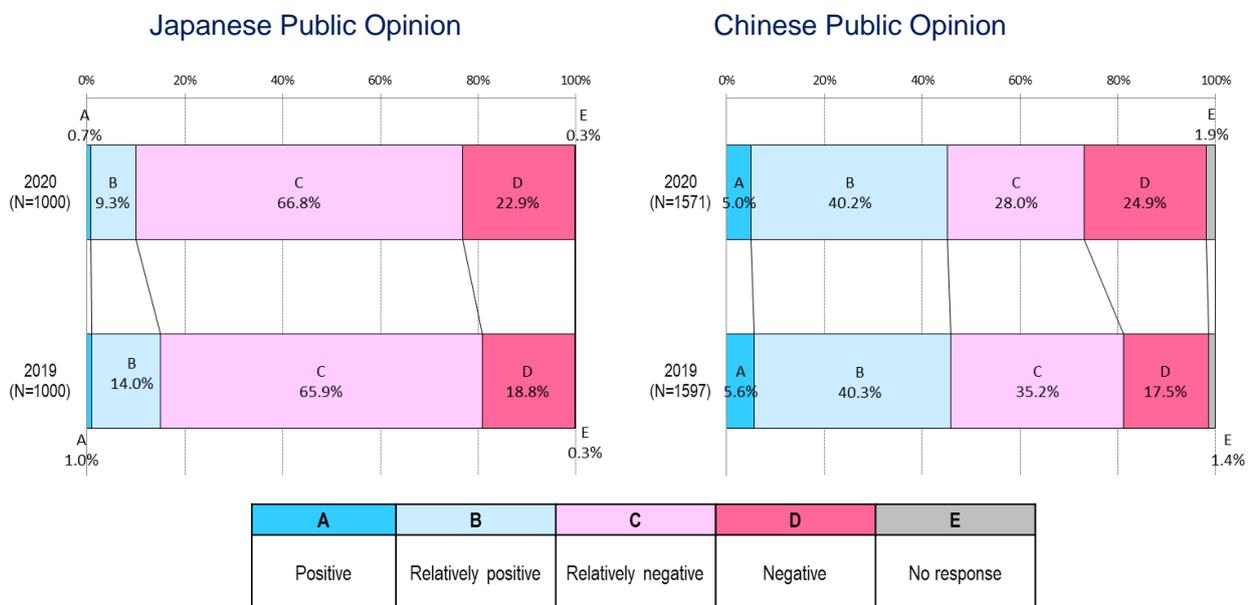
Under US-China conflict, increased expectations among Chinese for summit-level diplomacy and cooperation with Japan

Another interesting aspect of this survey was that as the US-China conflict worsens, there was an overall increase in Chinese expectations for improved Japan-China cooperation.

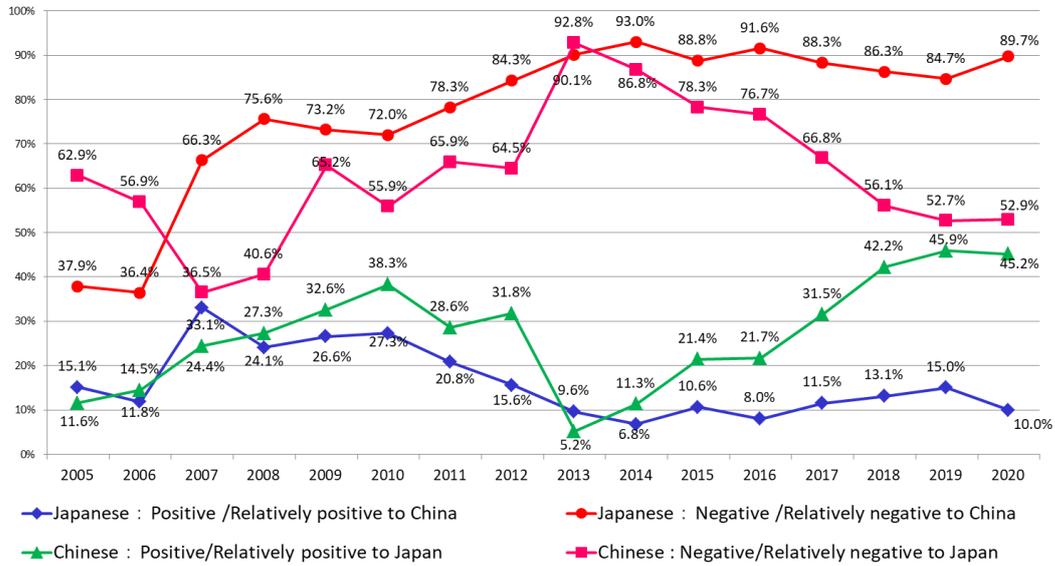
It was also learned that Japanese impressions of China and Japanese public opinion on the Japan-China relationship have deteriorated over the last year, influenced by China’s actions and the US-China conflict.

In contrast, no corresponding deterioration was seen in Chinese impressions of Japan and in the Chinese public’s opinions on Japan-China relations. This period has seen the previous trend towards improvement come to a halt. However, it has become clear that Chinese public opinion is placing increasing importance on the Japan-China relationship and we are seeing increased expectations for Japan-China cooperation like never before.

Graph 8: Impression on the other country

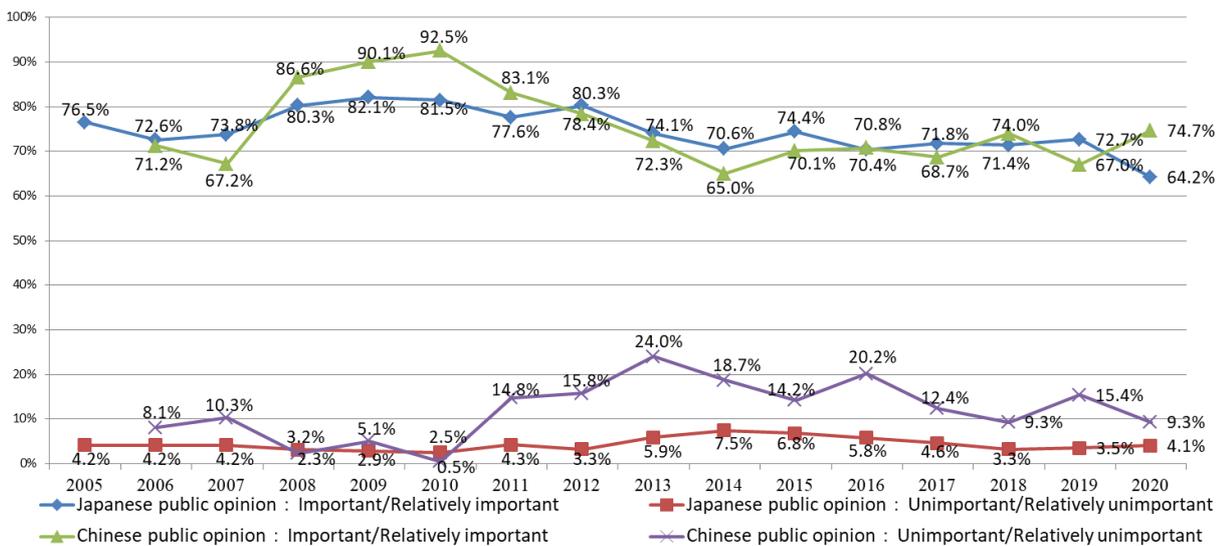


Graph 9: Impression on the other country from 2005 to 2020



Even the Chinese public’s basic understanding of Japan has seen dramatic improvement in this survey. In addition, the number of Chinese people who place importance on the Japan-China relationship rose from 67% last year to 74.7% this year, surpassing the number of Japanese respondents (64.2% this year) who feel the same way for the first time in three years. There is also growing interest among the Chinese public in improving cooperation between Japan and China. In order to ensure stable global economic development and bring about peace in Asia, 75.2% of Chinese respondents believe in the need to build a strong cooperative relationship between the two countries, a 13-point increase over last year’s 62.2%.

Graph 10: Importance of Japan-China Relations from 2005 to 2020



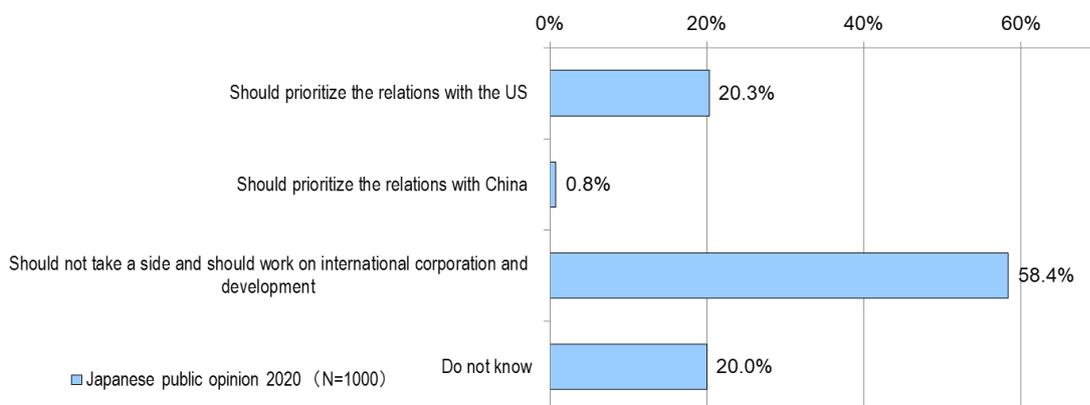
There was also a sharp increase in the percentage of Chinese respondents who think that summit-level talks should be actively used to improve the relationship between Japan and China, rising from 22.9% last year to 45.4% this year. Chinese President Xi Jinping's planned spring 2020 visit to Japan was cancelled due to the COVID-19 epidemic, but 30.7% of Chinese respondents agreed that summit-level visits must be held as soon as possible because of the difficult times the world is facing, much higher than the 18.8% seen among Japanese respondents.

Minimize the effect of the conflict and cooperate with China, say 40% of Japanese

Japanese opinion wasn't as directed as Chinese opinion was regarding the strengthening of the relationship between the two countries; in fact, there seems to be an increase in caution. Japanese respondents are uncomfortable with China's actions in the South China Sea and around the Senkaku Islands, and with their actions that run counter to international law and China's political system, resulting in an increase in the number of Japanese people holding a poor impression of China from 84.7% last year to 89.7% this year. (See graph 8 and 9)

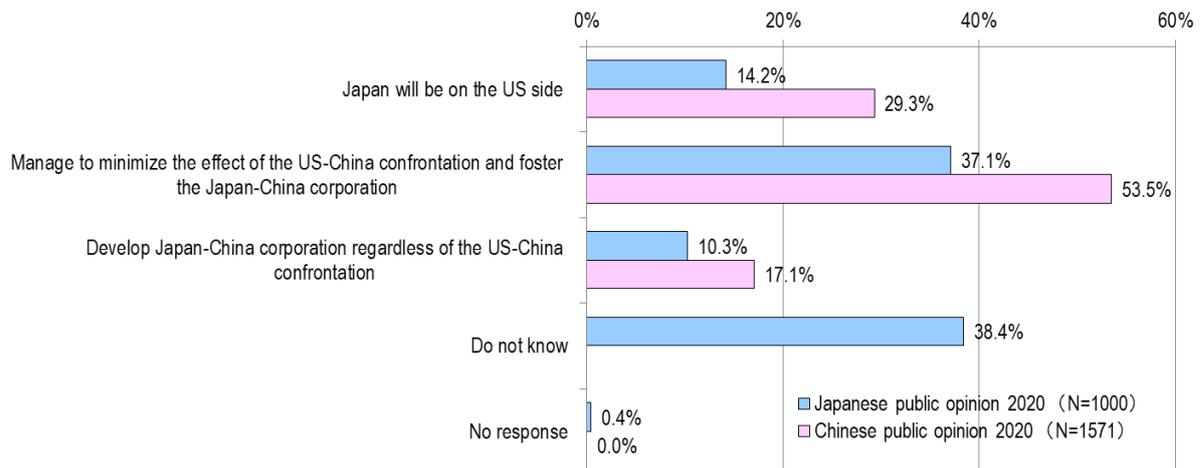
Despite this, the majority (58.4%) of respondents believe that Japan should avoid taking sides in the US-China conflict, but rather work towards global cooperative development. A total of 20.3% responded that they feel the relationship with the US should be prioritized. Japan and the US are part of an alliance, and there is some debate in Japan about the position Japan should take, but this survey was the first to gain such a clear view of Japanese public opinion on the issue.

**Graph 11: Japan's position in the US-China tension
(Survey only in Japan)**



When questioned about Japan-China cooperation as the US-China conflict continues, 37.1% of Japanese respondents agreed that the effect of that conflict should be minimized and cooperation between Japan and China should be promoted. The sentiment among Japanese experts showed 63.9% agreed with that statement.

Graph 12: Japan-China cooperation under the US-China confrontation



The Japanese government is addressing national security concerns by working with India, Australia, Indonesia and other countries to increase deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region, but it has yet to clarify the stance it will take in responding to China. It has yet to be determined how Japanese public opinions like those described above will influence the actions of the Japanese government.

Survey Overview

The Genron NPO and China International Publishing Group conducted joint opinion polls targeting the citizens of Japan and China in September 2020. This survey has been administered annually since 2005, when Japan-China relations were at its worst. This year marks the 16th year that this poll has been conducted. The objective of the survey is to continuously monitor the state of mutual understanding and perceptions of the Japanese and Chinese public towards one another as well as the changes that ensue over time.

The opinion poll in Japan was administered through the placement method (in which the survey was hand-delivered to homes and then collected) between September 12 and October 4, targeting men and women in the age of 18 or more. A total of 1,000 valid responses were obtained. Respondents were 48.6% male and 51.4% female. The age range consisted of 2.5% under the age of 20, 11.8% between the ages of 20 and 29, 14.9% between the ages of 30 and 39, 17.4% between the ages of 40 and 49, 14.6% between the ages of 50 and 59 and 38.8% over the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 6.6% junior high school diploma and under, 47.5% high school diploma, 21.3% junior/technical college diploma, 22.3% bachelor's degree, and 1.7% master's degree or higher.

The opinion poll in China was administered through individual interviews between September 15 and October 16, targeting men and women in the age of 18 or more in 10 cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shenyang, Wuhan, Nanjing, Xi'an, Qingdao and Zhengzhou. A total of 1,571 valid responses were obtained. Respondents were 49.6% male and 50.4% female. The age range consisted of 2.7% under the age of 20, 21.8% between the ages of 20 and 29, 28.0% between the ages of 30 and 39, 24.3% between the ages of 40 and 49, 12.3% between the ages of 50 and 59, and 10.8% above the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 11.0% junior high school diploma and under, 27.1% high school/technical high school diploma, 32.5% technical college diploma, 26.1% bachelor's degree, 0.5% double degree, and 2.2% master's degree or higher.

Apart from this opinion poll, The Genron NPO and China International Publishing Group also conducted the same survey targeting the intellectuals in both countries. This survey targeting intellectuals was administered together with the public opinion poll in order to complement the general understanding of the Japanese and Chinese peoples by comparing expert/intellectual perspectives with the results obtained from the public opinion poll. Most intellectuals in both Japan and China do not depend solely upon domestic media or the internet as their means of obtaining information on one another's countries. Rather, contrary to the general public, intellectuals obtain information by actually traveling abroad or through direct contact with

friends and acquaintances in the other country.

In Japan, the same survey used for the public opinion poll was emailed between September 12 and October 9 to 2,000 intellectuals consisting of domestic business managers, academics, press, and government employees who had previously participated in The Genron NPO's discussions and surveys. A total of 465 responses were obtained. Respondents were 85.2% male, 12.9% female and 1.9% no answer, and consisted of 1.3% under the age of 20, 4.3% between the ages of 20 and 29, 7.3% between the ages of 30 and 39, 11.2% between the ages of 40 and 49, 23.2% between the ages of 50 and 59, 52.0% over the age of 60, and 0.6% no answer. The educational background of respondents were 0.2% junior high school diploma and under, 4.3% high school diploma, 3.4% junior/technical college diploma, 59.6% bachelor's degree, and 31.6% master's degree or higher.

In China, phone interviews were administered between September 15 and October 16 to approximately 5,000 intellectuals from the Horizon Research Consultancy Group's database, consisting of 45,000 people including business leaders, government officials, journalists, experts and public organization officials. A total of 662 responses were obtained. Respondents were 55.4% male and 44.6% female, and consisted of 49.2% between the ages of 18 and 35, 48.8% between the ages of 36 and 50, and 2.0% over the age of 50. The educational background of respondents was 0.9% junior high school/high school/ technical high school diploma and under, 71.6% bachelor's degree/double degree, 27.5% master's degree or higher.

※ Percentages may not add up to 100% in some cases as the numbers here are rounded off to one decimal point and non-responses are not included.

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