

## **How do the Chinese view the Taiwan Strait issue and the Russian invasion of Ukraine?**

### **-Insights from the 2022 Japan-China joint opinion survey-**

The Genron NPO released the findings of the 18<sup>th</sup> Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey on November 30, 2022.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has destabilized the global peace, and the conflict between the US and China is contributing to increased tensions in Northeast Asia. Japan and China are now celebrating 50 years since the signing of the Japan-China Joint Communiqué normalizing relations between the countries in the aftermath of the Second World War. Summit meetings between the countries have been re-launched after a three-year hiatus, but the coronavirus pandemic continues to hamper efforts to re-start private-level interpersonal exchanges. This year's survey was conducted in both countries this past summer, as both countries were dealing with increased tensions in Asia and greater instability around the world.

We were unable to reach an agreement on how to include questions regarding the Taiwan Strait issue in last year's survey, but this topic was able to be incorporated this year alongside questions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, making this survey the first time the Chinese public has ever been polled for its opinions on these two issues.

### **Roughly 60% of the Chinese public see potential for conflict over the Taiwan Strait**

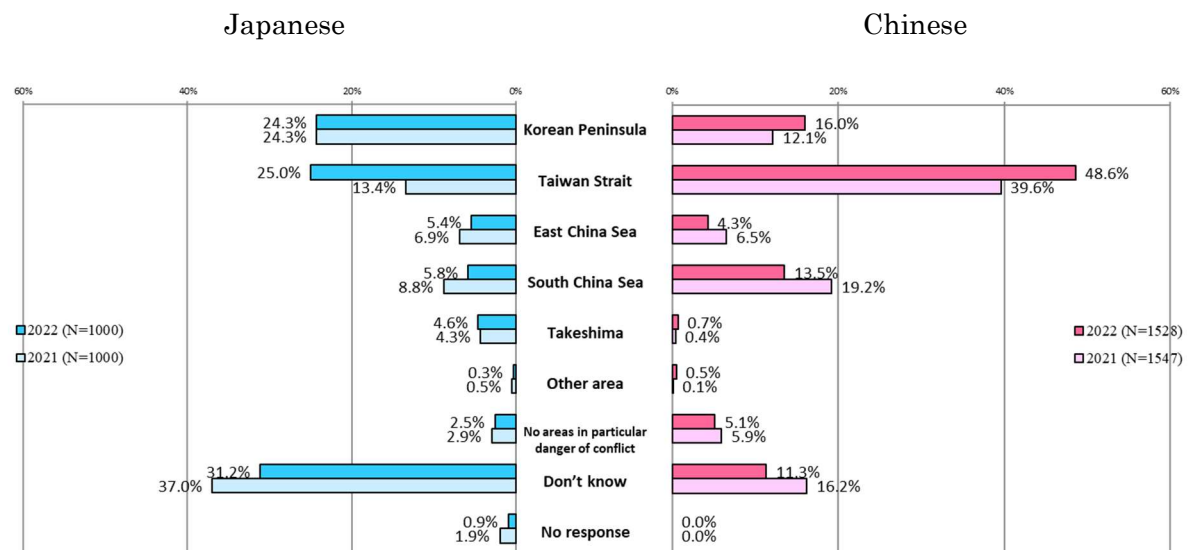
This year's survey clearly showed that the worsening US-China conflict is having a large impact on opinion in both Japan and China. The current direction of the conflict has made people in both countries more concerned about peace in Northeast Asia, and has affected people's views of the Japan-China relationship.

Respondents in both countries selected the Taiwan Strait as the issue about which they are most concerned, and it has seen a sharp increase since last year, with that issue selected by 25% of Japanese (up from 13.4% last year) and 48.6% of Chinese respondents (up from 39.6% last year.) Moreover, almost half of Japanese respondents (44.5%) answered that they believe a military conflict over the Taiwan Strait will occur within the next few years, while an even higher percentage of Chinese respondents feel the same (56.7%). When asked about the source of the tensions in the Taiwan Strait,

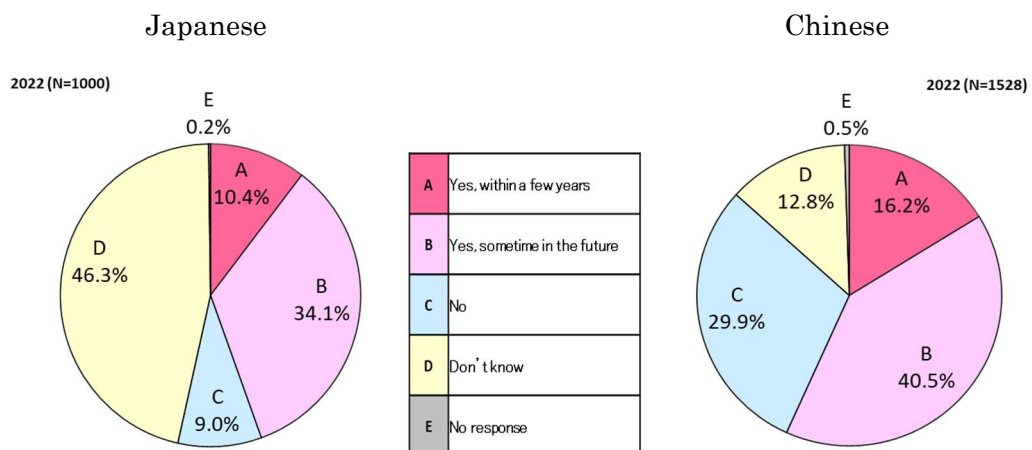
56.7% of Japanese respondents answered China, while in China, 52.5% selected the US, 25.8% selected “the US and Japan,” and 11.7% selected Taiwan.

It seems that the US-China conflict has effected a drastic change over the last year on Japanese and Chinese public opinion regarding peace in Northeast Asia, a trend that is particularly striking in China.

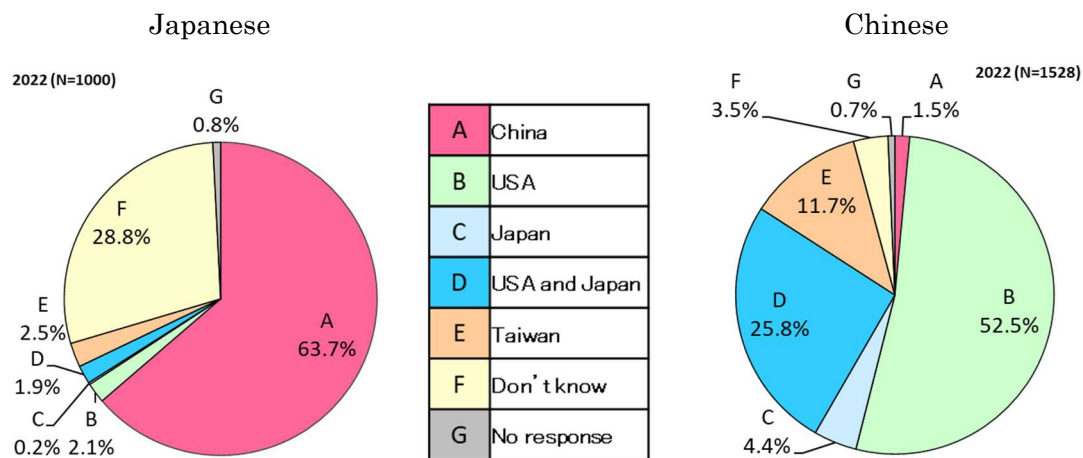
### Potential areas of military conflict in East Asia



### Will there be military conflict in the Taiwan Strait?

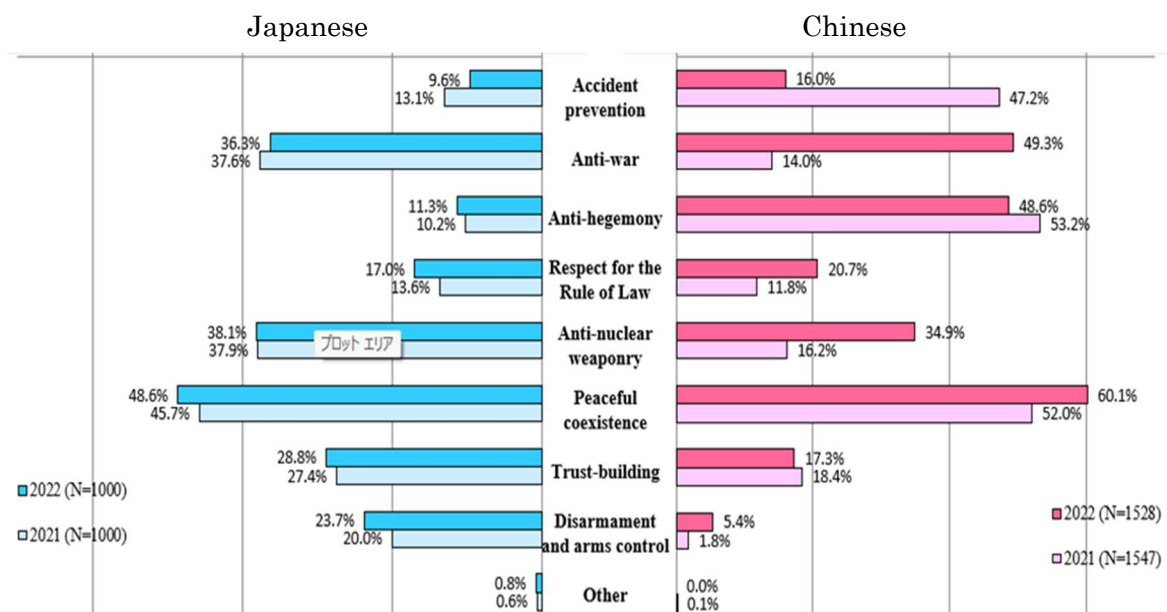


## Which countries are responsible for increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait?



There was a significant increase in respondents in both countries who believe that peace in Northeast Asia should be the ultimate goal for both Japan and China, with a majority in both countries (55.1% up from 53.8% in Japan, and 64.3% up from 54.6% in China) selecting that response. The most commonly selected response regarding the issue that requires agreement in Northeast Asia was “peaceful coexistence,” with that seeing an increase in both countries since last year. In addition, the percentage of Chinese respondents who chose “anti-war” as the issue requiring agreement increased drastically from 14% to 49.3% over this past year.

## Agreements and principles needed for sustainable peace in Northeast Asia



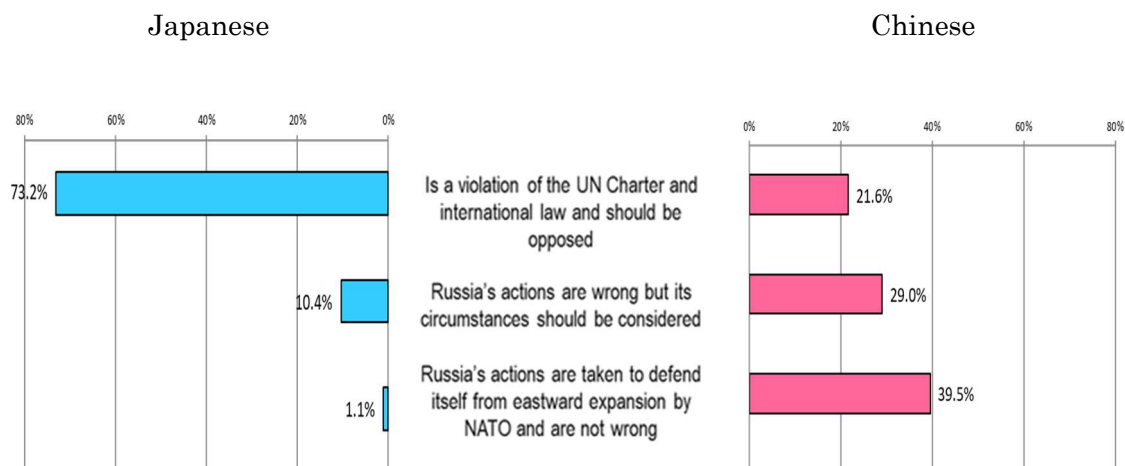
## More than half of Chinese oppose Russia or think its actions are “wrong”

This year’s survey was the first to ask questions about the legitimacy of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

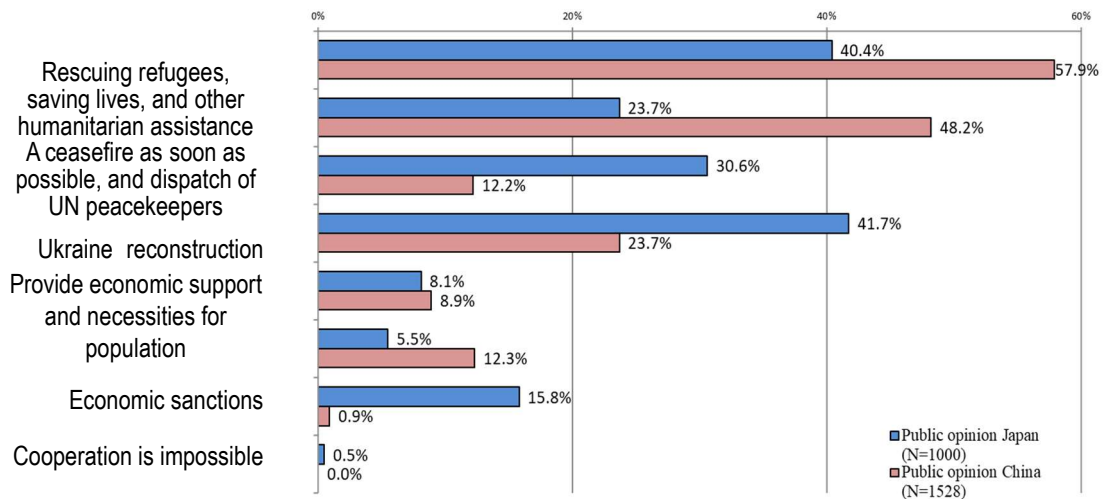
Japanese respondents overwhelmingly described Russia’s actions as “a violation of the UN Charter and international law and should be opposed” at 73.2%, while the response most selected by Chinese respondents was that Russia’s actions “are not wrong” at 39.5%. That being said, 21.5% of Chinese respondents oppose Russia’s invasion, and 29.5% selected “Russia’s actions are wrong but its circumstances should be considered.” The combination of these two responses shows that a majority of Chinese respondents at 50.6% either oppose the invasion or believe that Russia is making a mistake.

Chinese respondents took a more outlook when asked how Japan and China could cooperate to offer concrete responses to the conflict in Ukraine. In China, 57.6% believe that “rescuing refugees, saving lives, and other humanitarian assistance” is a possible area of cooperation, and 48.2% believe that the goal should be “a ceasefire as soon as possible, and dispatch of UN peacekeepers.” In Japan, 40.4% selected humanitarian assistance, and 23.7% selected the peacekeeper solution. The most popular answer among Japanese respondents was the provision of “economic support and necessities for (the) population” at 41.7%.

## Opinion of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine



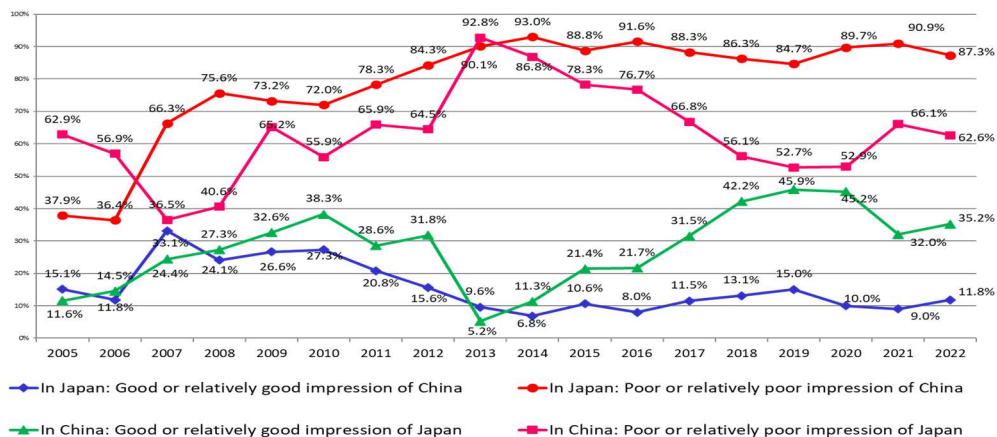
## Japan-China cooperation on the Ukraine issue



## US-China conflict coloring Chinese public impression and sentiment regarding Japan

The deepening conflict between the US and China is having an increasingly powerful impact on the public's impressions of each other and the relationship between the two countries. Impressions of the other country have improved slightly in both Japan and China since last year, but the percentage of Japanese respondents who have a poor or relatively poor impression of China still stands at 87.3%, while 62.6% of Chinese respondents have a similar impression of Japan.

### Impression of the other country (2005-2022)



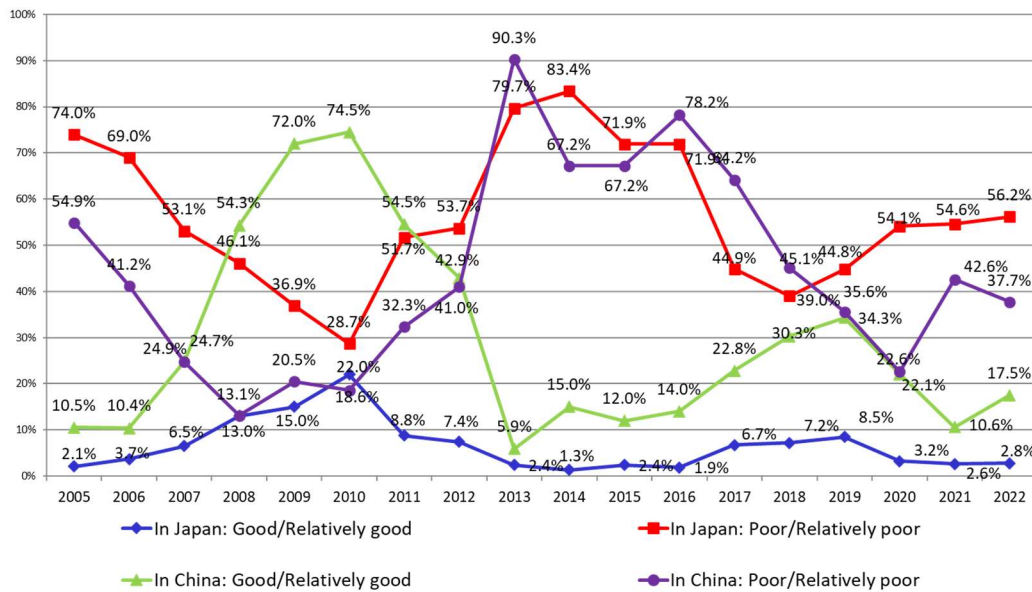
To understand this result, we should consider the special situation in which the countries find themselves. There are currently no genuine efforts on the part of either government to engage in diplomacy, and travel between the countries has decreased to 10% of its peak due to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, there is essentially no interaction within the private sector either. Under these circumstances, people are forced to learn about the other country through domestic media reports, which are the only option available.

When asked why they have a poor impression of the country, the most common response (58.9%) among Japanese surveyed was “Chinese violations of the territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands.” The second most common at 51.5% was people’s “discomfort with the Communist party’s one-party rule system of government.” An overwhelming majority (78.8%) of Chinese respondents with a poor impression of Japan selected “a lack of reflection about past aggression in China,” while 58.9% believe “Japan is causing conflict by nationalizing the Senkaku islands.”

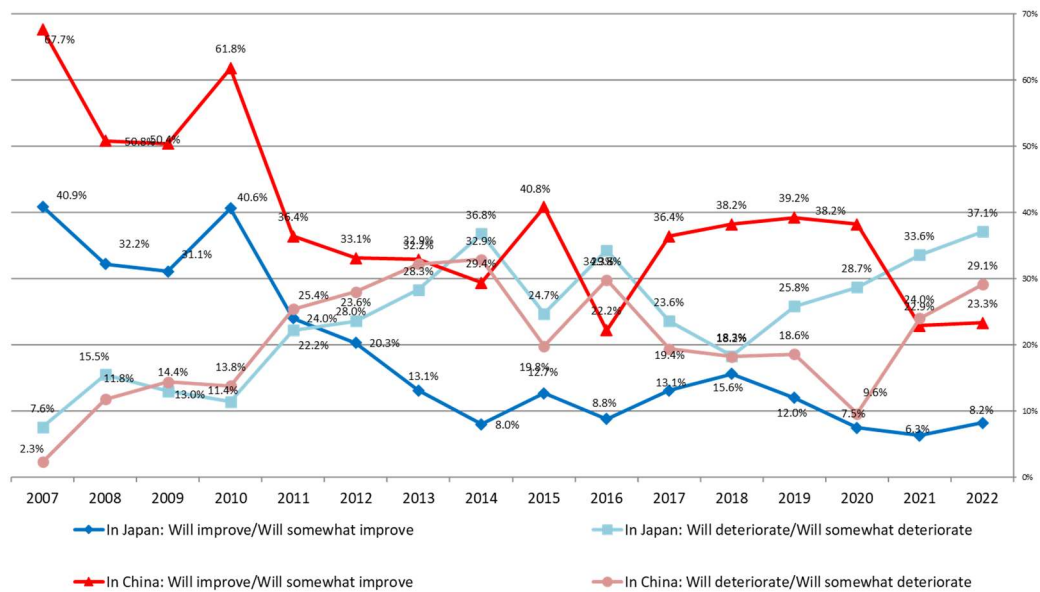
However, this year’s poll saw a sharp increase in Chinese respondents selecting answers connected to the Japan-US relationship. For example, 37.6% have a sense that Japan and the US are working to contain China, a rise from 23% last year, and 21.1% assert that they do not understand why Japan continues to follow the diplomatic cues of the US, a rise from 8.3% last year.

Meanwhile, there has been no sign of improvement in people’s views on the Japan-China relationship over the last year. The number of Japanese respondents calling the relationship “poor” or “relatively poor” rose from 54.6% last year to 56.2%. There was a slight improvement seen among Chinese respondents, which saw a drop from 42.6% to 37.7% of those surveyed seeing the relationship in a similarly poor way. However, it is difficult to describe this trend as an improvement overall. Regarding the future relationship between the countries, 37.1% of Japanese and 29.1% of Chinese respondents believe the relationship will deteriorate, both showing an increase over the previous year.

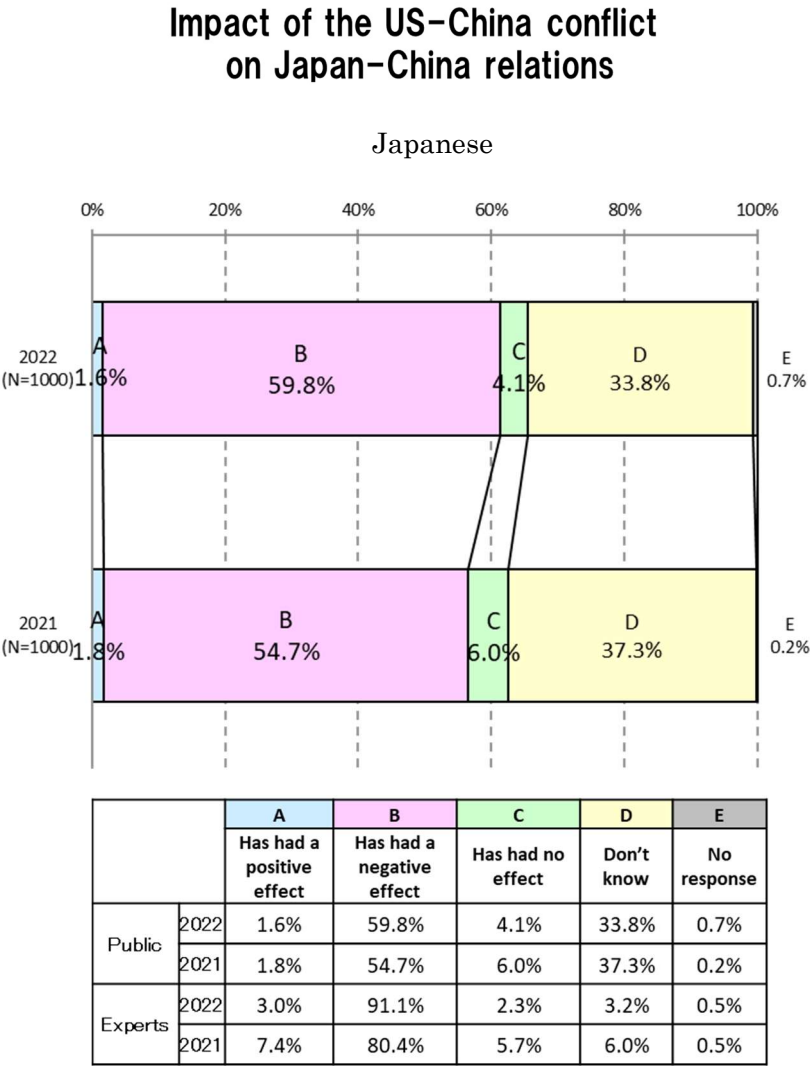
## Current state of Japan-China relations (Comparison of public opinion 2005-2022)



## Future Japan-China relations (Comparison of public opinion 2007-2022)

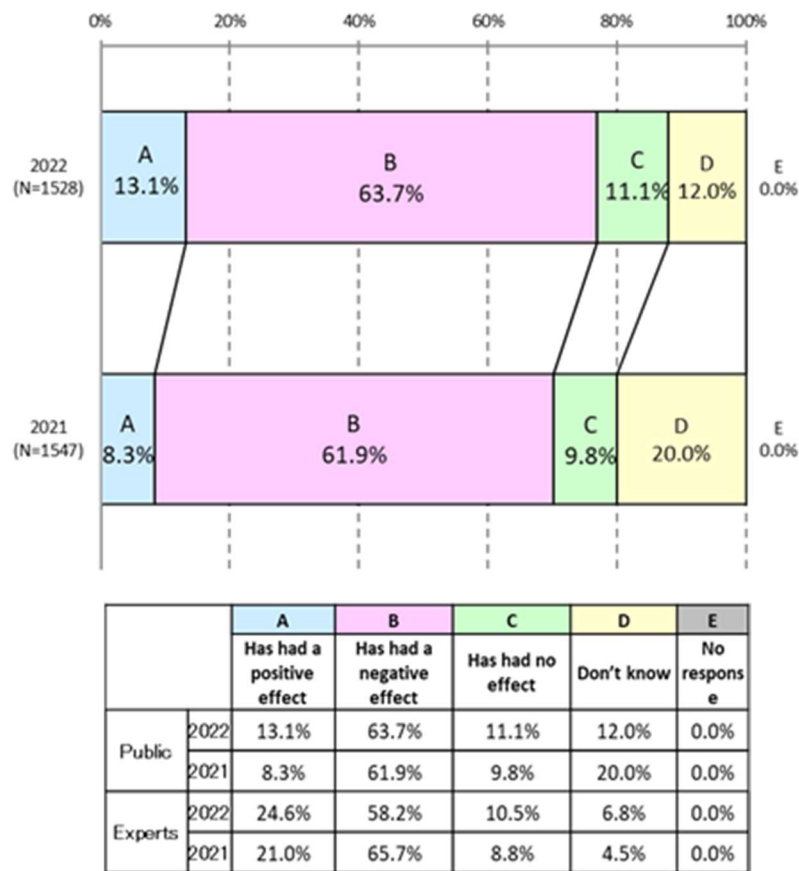


The direction of the US-China conflict is beginning to become an obstacle to improving Japan-China relations. A total of 63.7% of Chinese respondents described the conflict as having a negative effect on Japan-China relations, up from 61.9% last year, while 59.8% of Japanese respondents, up from 54.7%, had the same opinion. Respondents in both countries strongly believe that territorial disputes, lack of trust between the peoples, and lack of trust between the governments are obstacles to building a better relationship, and this year's survey showed a drastic increase in Chinese respondents pointing to the direction of the US conflict as being an obstacle, with a more than eightfold increase from 3.1% to 26.4% selecting that response. In addition, 22.6% selected the "US-Japan alliance and Japanese military build-up," up from 19.5% last year.





## Chinese

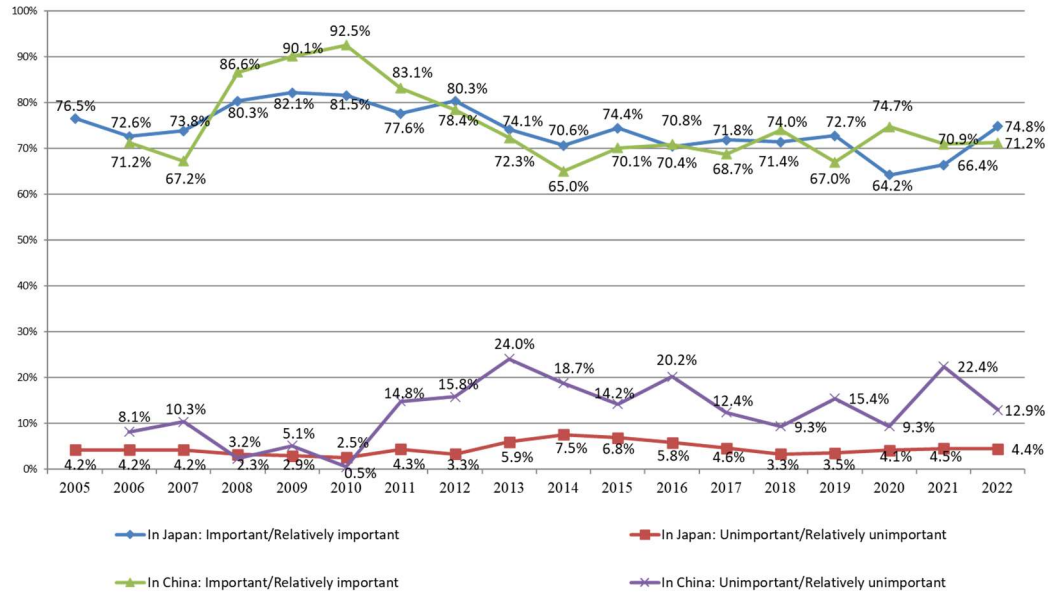


### A cooperative Japan-China relationship vital for Asian peace and stability

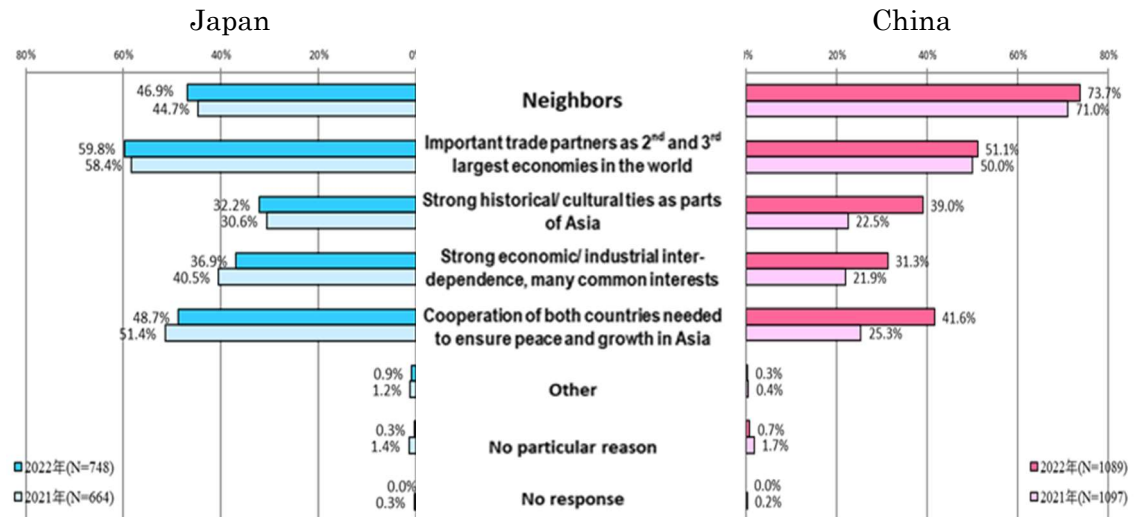
What is particularly noteworthy about the results of this year's survey is that even with the abovementioned negative impressions about each other, there was still an increase over last year of people in both countries who believe that the Japan-China relationship is important, with 74.8% of Japanese respondents and 71.2% of Chinese respondents selecting this answer. There was a particularly large increase in Japan of 8.4%.

However, we do see some change in the reason why the relationship is important. In Japan, the most common response at 59.8% was that "China is an important trade partner," followed by "Japan-China cooperation is necessary for Asian peace and stability" at 48.7%. In contrast, in China, 41.6% selected "Japan-China cooperation is necessary for Asian peace and stability," a major increase over 25.3% in last year's survey.

## Are Japan-China relations important? (Comparison of public opinion 2005-2022)



## Why are Japan-China relations important?



We also see a change in Chinese public opinion in the question asking what the most effective way of improving the Japan-China relationship might be. Common responses in both countries include “improve trust between governments” (Japan: 31.8%, China: 31.2%); “strengthen trust between the leaders of both countries” (Japan: 24.7%, China 26.8%); and “resolve the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands” (Japan: 25%, China 40.4%.)

A particularly rapid increase was seen in Chinese participants believing a resolution to the Senkaku Island dispute will be the most effective means of improving the relationship, rising from 29.2% last year to 40.4% this year. There was also an increase in respondents (from 4.8% last year to 16.2%) who selected “efforts to avoid conflict and realize sustainable peace in Northeast Asia.” This illustrates that the previous year has seen Chinese public opinion turn toward peace and conflict avoidance.

## **Survey Methodology**

The Genron NPO and China International Publishing Group conducted joint opinion polls targeting the citizens of Japan and China late August to mid-September in 2021. This survey has been administered annually since 2005, when Japan-China relations were at its worst. This year marks the 17th 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 August 21 and September 12, 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, 17.3% between the ages of 40 and 49, 14.8% between the ages of 50 and 59 and 38.7% over the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 5.2 % junior high school diploma and under, 48.4% high school diploma, 19.8% junior/technical college diploma, 23.6% bachelor's degree, and 1.8% master's degree or higher.

The opinion poll in China was administered through individual interviews between August 25 and September 25, 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 1,547 valid responses were obtained. Respondents were 49.8% male and 50.2% female. The age range consisted of 1.9 % under the age of 20, 22.3% between the ages of 20 and 29, 21.6% between the ages of 30 and 39, 26.8% between the ages of 40 and 49, 9.9% between the ages of 50 and 59, and 17.5% above the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 12.7% junior high school diploma and under, 25.3% high school/technical high school diploma, 28.2% technical college diploma, 31.9% bachelor's degree, 0.2% double degree, and 1.7% 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.