

Japan-China opinion poll 2023 mentions the possibility of nuclear war for the first time

The Genron NPO has announced the results of its 19th public opinion poll jointly conducted in Japan and China.

The purpose of the survey was to ask citizens of Japan and China their thoughts on the subject of peace, as this year marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China.

New questions were added to the survey to address the destabilizing global nuclear weapon regime, the future of the war in Ukraine and the challenges to achieving peace, restoring the Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and other issues. This is the first survey asking Chinese respondents their opinions on current issues related to nuclear weapons in Asia and around the world.

Concern about nuclear war among 52.6% of Chinese respondents, and Russia's actions in Ukraine will be the cause

Respondents were first asked about the possibility of nuclear war breaking out in the world. A majority of Chinese respondents answered that they believe a nuclear war is possible in the near or not-too-distant future at 52.6%, while 39.9% of Japanese respondents answered in a similar way.

Many more Chinese respondents answered that a nuclear war is possible in the near future, with 12.4% compared to 3.5% in Japan.

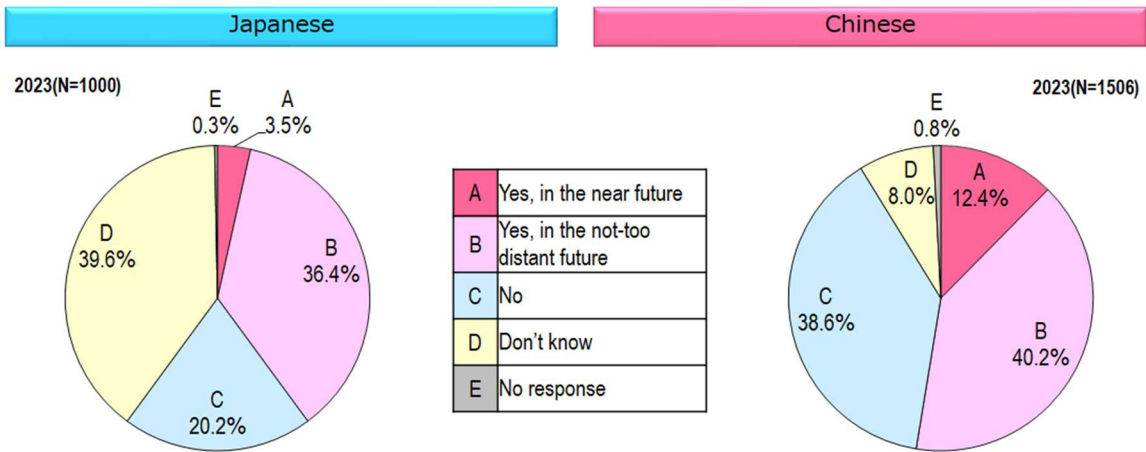
Among those who believe a nuclear war is imminent, 57.6% of Japanese and 34.7% of Chinese respondents selected as their reason that, "Russia has engaged in previously-unthinkable acts during the Ukraine War, e.g. threatening to use nuclear weapons and attacking a nuclear power plant." This was the most selected reason in both countries.

The second most common reason among Chinese respondents at 26.4% was "Nuclear powers are deploying low-power 'tactical nukes' as they are easier to use," showing that more people are viewing Russian actions as problematic.

Additionally, 11.8% of Japanese and 15.5% of Chinese respondents pointed to stalled disarmament among nuclear powers and increased productions of nuclear weapons,

and 17.8% of Japanese and 13.3% of Chinese respondents blamed the inability of the world to prevent nuclear weapon development by North Korea.

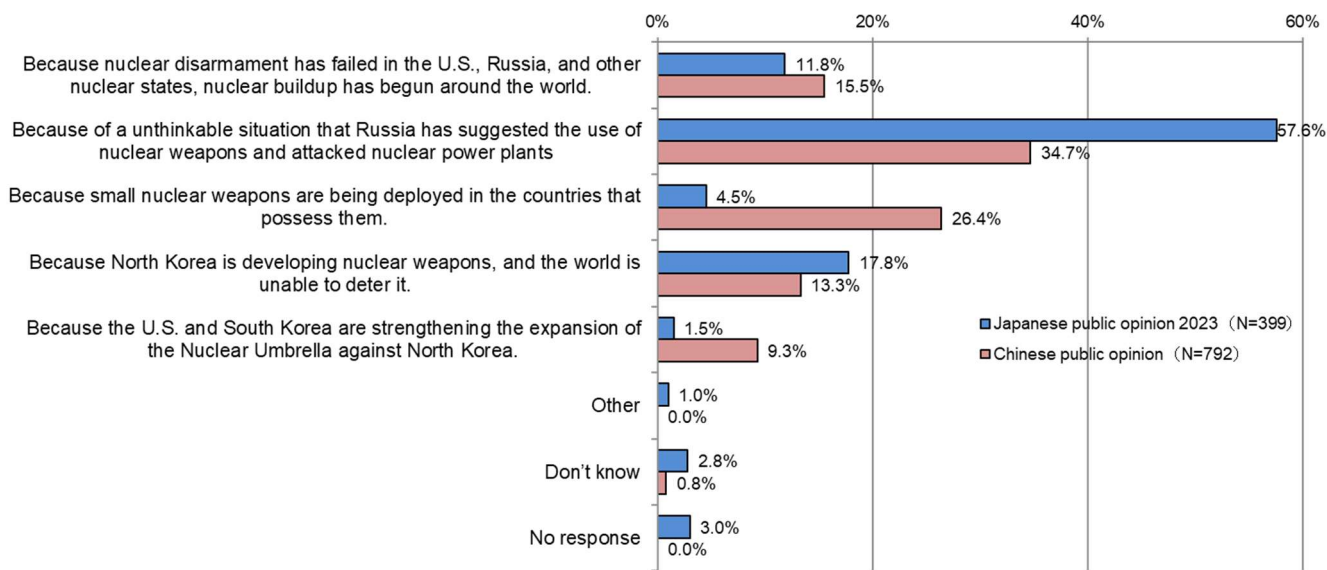
Do you think a nuclear war is possible in the future?



		A	B	C	D	E
		Yes, in the near future	Yes, in the not-too-distant future	No	Don't know	No response
Public	2023	3.5%	36.4%	20.2%	39.6%	0.3%
Experts	2023	19.0%	45.9%	18.3%	16.5%	0.2%

		A	B	C	D	E
		Yes, in the near future	Yes, in the not-too-distant future	No	Don't know	No response
Public	2023	12.4%	40.2%	38.6%	8.0%	0.8%
Experts	2023	14.7%	40.8%	36.3%	8.0%	0.2%

For those who selected “Yes, in the near future” or “Yes, in the not-too distant future” in the above question, please select the reason that is closest to yours. (Select one)



Only 5.8% of respondents point to treated water discharge from Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant as a potential obstacle to better Japan-China relations

The nuclear issue was touched upon in several other questions. Japanese respondents answered that North Korea was biggest cause for concern in terms of nuclear proliferation (62.9%), whereas Japan was selected as the most concerning among Chinese respondents (at 36.3%), followed by North Korea (11%), and India (10.4%).

However, 50.9% of Japanese and 48.9% of Chinese respondents supported the idea that the two countries should cooperate in handling North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development.

On August 24, treated water collected from the damaged nuclear power plant in Fukushima was released into the ocean, and 47.6% of Chinese respondents answered that they were either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about this release. A total of 33.2% of Japanese respondents expressed the same level of concern.

While the IAEA has verified that the treated water meets international safety standards, 47.2% of Japanese respondents believe that while the IAEA's scientific review is reliable, the Japanese government should make more of an effort to alleviate the international community's distrust. This was the most common response in Japan, and 33.9% of Chinese respondents felt the same way.

Among Chinese respondents, the most common answer selected (35.9%) was that the IAEA's scientific review is irrelevant; treated water should not be released.

However, the opposite phenomenon was seen regarding the question on whether the water release will pose an obstacle to Japan-China relations.

A total of 36.7% of Japanese respondents believe that the water release will be an obstacle, while only 5.8% of Chinese respondents answered in the same way.

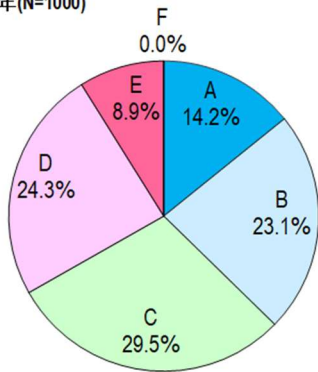
Are you concerned about the Japanese government's decision to begin releasing treated water from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in August 2023?

Japanese

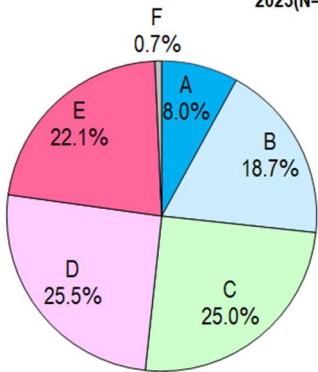
Chinese

2023年(N=1000)

2023(N=1506)



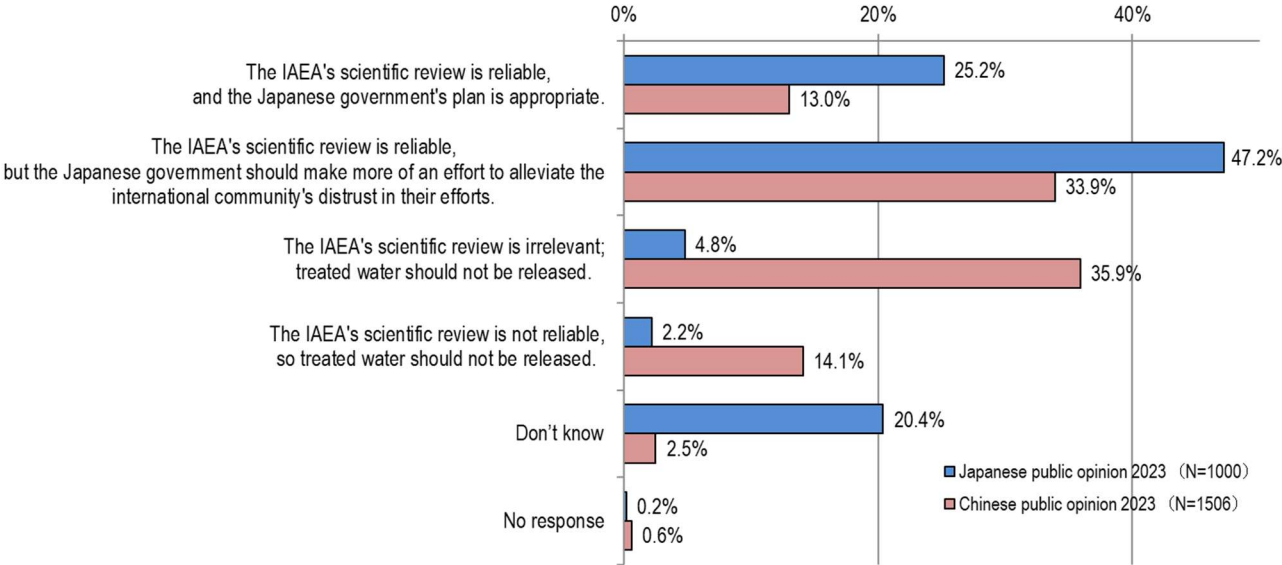
A	Not at all
B	Not really
C	Unable to judge
D	Somewhat concerned
E	Very concerned
F	No response



		A	B	C	D	E	F
		Not at all	Not really	Unable to judge	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned	No response
Public	2023	14.2%	23.1%	29.5%	24.3%	8.9%	0.0%
Experts	2023	1.1%	12.2%	46.6%	35.6%	4.4%	0.2%

		A	B	C	D	E	F
		Not at all	Not really	Unable to judge	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned	No response
Public	2023	8.0%	18.7%	25.0%	25.5%	22.1%	0.7%
Experts	2023	9.3%	21.5%	27.0%	23.5%	18.7%	0.0%

Neighboring countries and other countries around the world have expressed concerns about the release of treated water from TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. However, the IAEA has reviewed Japan's plan and found that it meets international safety standards. What do you think about this?



Roughly half of respondents believe Russia's actions are mistaken but that its situation should be considered

Last year's survey saw the introduction of questions about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and this year 46.9% of Chinese respondents believe that while Russia's actions are mistaken, their situation should be considered, a significant increase from 29% last year, when it was the most selected answer.

In contrast, Chinese respondents who believe that Russia's actions are correct dropped from 39.5% last year to 27.2% this year, and 16.3% believe that Russia should be opposed as it has violated the UN Charter and international law.

In comparison, 70.6% of Japanese respondents believe that Russia should be opposed. In addition, among Chinese respondents, the top two countries/bodies that should take the lead in ending the war/bringing about a ceasefire are China at 38.3% and the US at 30.7%. Japanese respondents selected the US (34%) and the UN (27.3%).

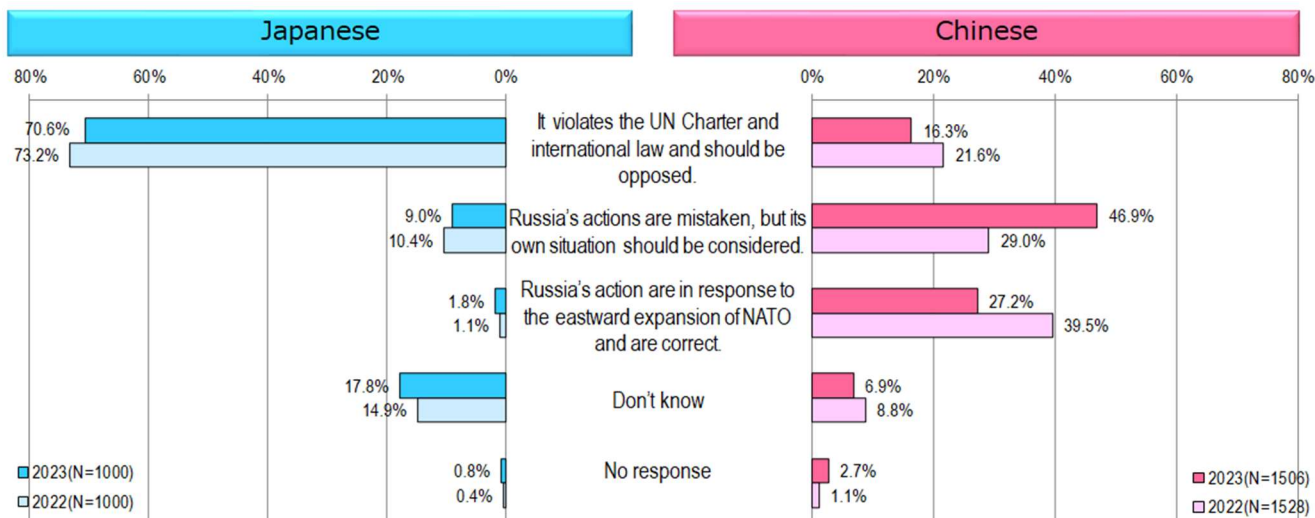
The percentage of Chinese respondents who have high expectations for Japan (11.2%) was similar to that who have high expectations of the UN (12.4%). Conversely, only 3.5% of Japanese respondents see a role for Japan.

Japanese respondents felt that Russia's complete military withdrawal (54.3%) is the most important issue to address in bringing the Ukraine War to an end, with 50.5% pointing to an immediate ceasefire.

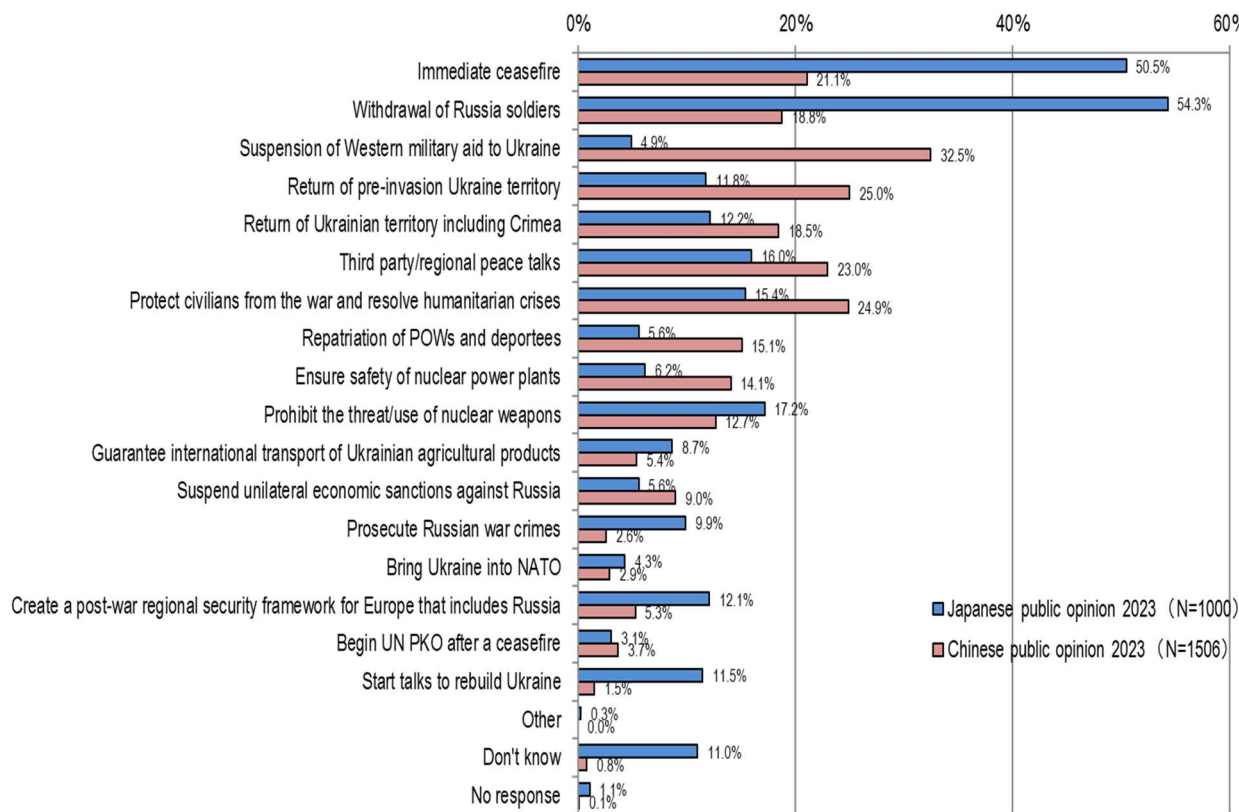
The most important issue seen by Chinese respondents was suspension of Western military aid (32.5%), followed by the return of pre-invasion Ukrainian territory (25%), and protection of civilians and resolution of humanitarian crises (24.9%).

However, even in China, 18.8% of respondents believe that a complete military withdrawal is necessary, and 18.5% believe it is necessary to return Crimea and other Ukrainian territory.

Which of the following option is the closest to your opinion regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine?



What must be done to end the war in Ukraine?



What can be expected from the US-China dialogues that began this year?

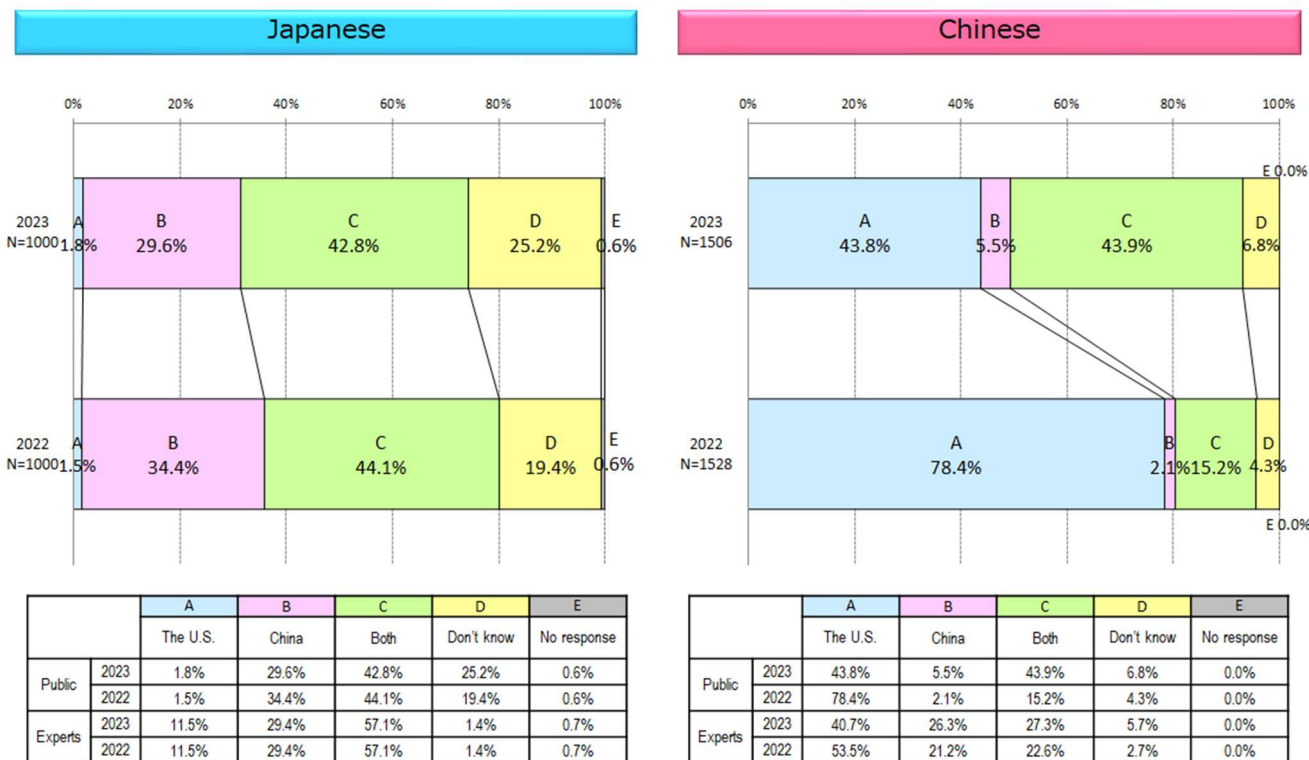
Some changes were seen in Chinese attitudes regarding the conflict between the US and China in this year’s survey.

The percentage of Chinese respondents who believe that the source of the US-China conflict is primarily the US stood at 43.8% this year, a significant decrease from 78.4% last year. While the difference is slight, that drop resulted in the most commonly selected answer among Chinese respondents being “both countries” at 43.9%.

One reason for change is that 16.3% of Chinese respondents have high expectations for the US-China dialogue that began this year, and believe that the relationship will improve. However, the most commonly held belief (39.7%) was that the relationship improved for a while but then stalled, followed by the belief that no improvements are being made (20.3%).

Most are pessimistic about the future of the US-China conflict, with 42.5% seeing no end of sight (the most selected response), and 24.4% believing that it will lead to further division in the world.

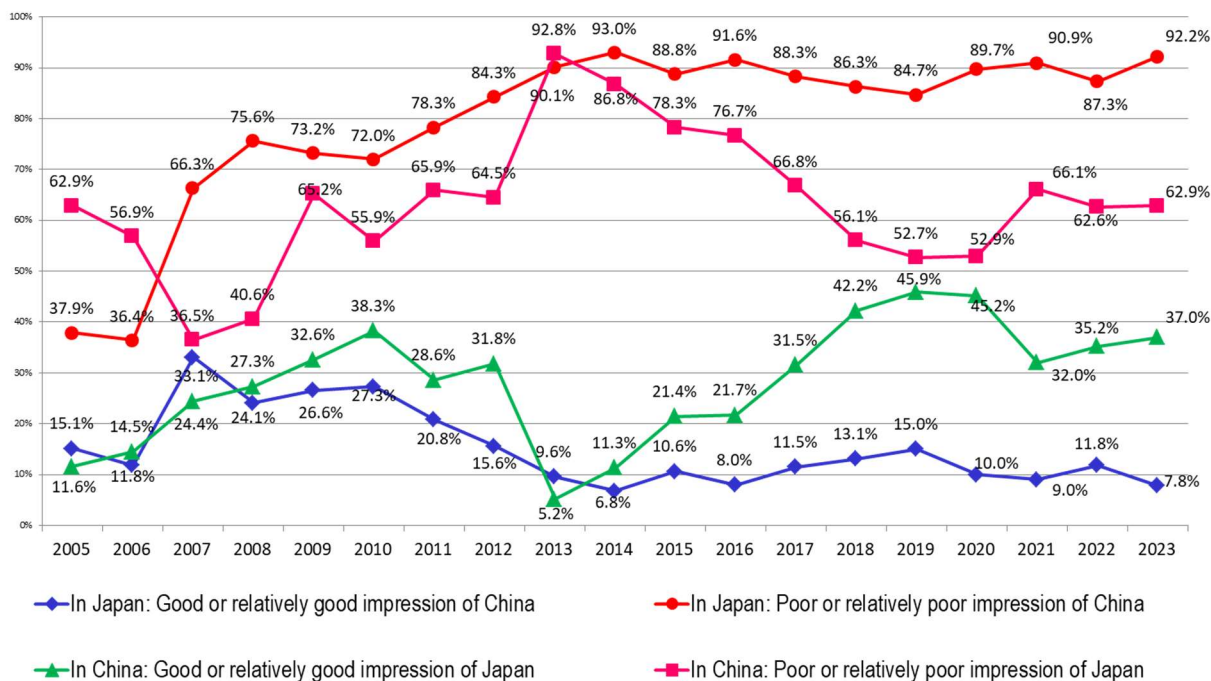
Which country is the cause of the US-China conflict?



Both countries have worse impressions of the other over last year, with the proportion higher than 90% in Japan

No improvement has been seen in how people in each country view the other, with 92.2% of Japanese respondents (a rise from 87.3% last year) and 62.9% of Chinese respondents (62.6% last year) showing poor impressions of the other country in this year’s survey. The most commonly selected reason among Japanese respondents – showing a major rise from 21.9% last year to 40.7% – was anti-Japanese reporting in Chinese media, while among Chinese respondents, 37.3% cited Japan’s reluctance to support the One China principle (up from 26.5%) and 27.6% citing their lack of understanding regarding Japan’s tendency to act in accordance with US diplomacy policy (up from 21.1%).

Japanese and Chinese Impression of the other country



Growing concerns about Japan and its stalled dialogues with China

There are continued tensions regarding the state of peace in Asia. The percentage of Chinese respondents who believe that Asia is currently in danger of coming conflict rose from 36.5% last year to 40.2%, while the percentage of Japanese respondents who

agree has changed little over the last year (27.4%).

There were some changes in the regions in which Chinese respondents felt conflict is likely.

The Taiwan Strait was selected by 32.9%. While like last year this was the most selected response, this was a major decrease over last year's 48.6%.

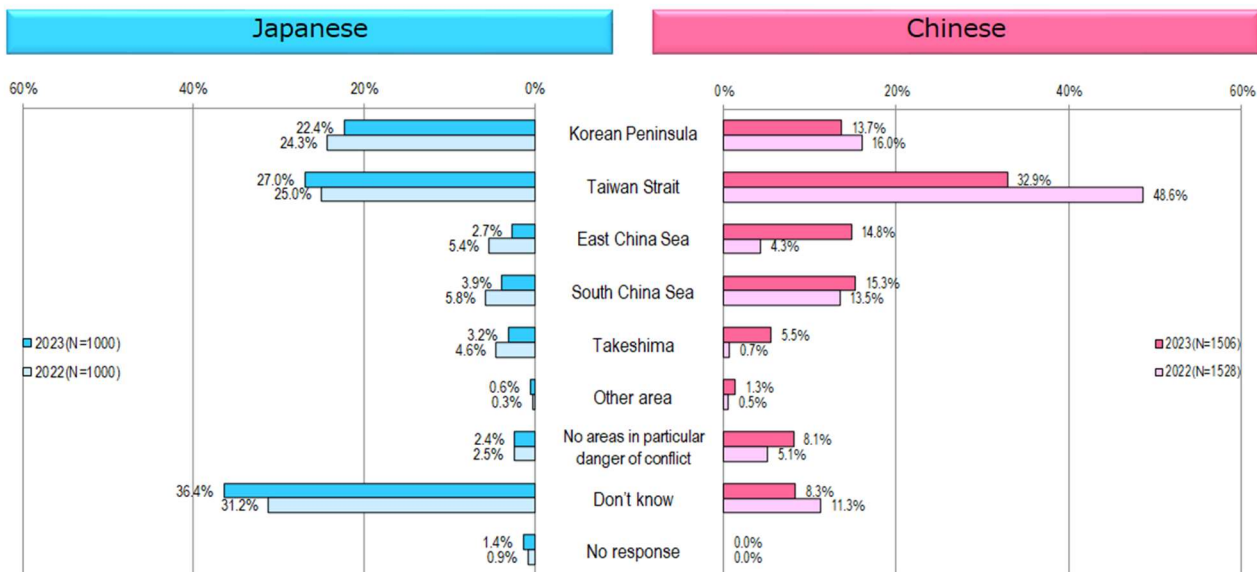
More Chinese respondents selected the East China Sea, the location of the territorial dispute between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands. This percentage rose from 4.3% last year to 14.8% this year. Subsequently, the percentage of Japanese respondents who believe that conflict with China is possible within the next few years or in the future dropped from 37.6% last year to 33.3%, but that proportion rose in China from 51% to 58%.

Additionally, regarding the cause of tensions in the Taiwan Strait, 59% of Japanese respondents responded "China," which has changed little over last year, but changes were seen in the responses in China.

Last year's survey showed 52.5% of Chinese respondents pointing to the US as the source of tensions in the strait, this being the most commonly selected response, but that number has dropped to 34.5% this year. However, the number of Chinese respondents who believe Japan to be the source of tensions has risen from 4.4% last year to 18.9%.

Japan has begun expanding its military power and working closer with the US through the Japan-US alliance, but in contrast to the US and the dialogue it has begun with China, Japan's diplomatic efforts have been lacking and Japan's actions have thus caused concern in China.

Potential areas of military conflict in East Asia



Survey Methodology

The Genron NPO and China International Communications Group conducted joint opinion polls targeting the citizens of Japan and China late August to mid-September in 2023. This survey has been administered annually since 2005, when Japan-China relations were at its worst. This year marks the 19th 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 2 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 48.2% male and 51.2% female. The age range consisted of 2.6% under the age of 20, 11.7% between the ages of 20 and 29, 13.3% between the ages of 30 and 39, 17.5% between the ages of 40 and 49, 15.9% between the ages of 50 and 59 and 39.0% over the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 5.1 % junior high school diploma and under, 46.2% high school diploma, 21.5% junior/technical college diploma, 23.9% bachelor's degree, and 1.5% master's degree or higher.

The opinion poll in China was administered through individual interviews between August 18 and September 1, 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 1,506 valid responses were obtained. Respondents were 48.8% male and 51.2% female. The age range consisted of 0.5 % under the age of 20, 18.5% between the ages of 20 and 29, 27.0% between the ages of 30 and 39, 22.4% between the ages of 40 and 49, 11.7% between the ages of 50 and 59, and 19.9% above the age of 60. The educational background of respondents were 14.6% junior high school diploma and under, 35.9% high school/technical high school and technical college diploma, 41.9% bachelor's degree, 2.0% double degree, and 5.5% 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.