



Asia Peace Conference 2022

April 2022

Avoiding Conflict in Northeast Asia and Handling the Taiwan Problem



言論
NPO

The Genron NPO

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About the Asia Peace Conference

On January 21, 2020, the Genron NPO launched a historic initiative aiming at building a sustainable peace in volatile Northeast Asia with experts and former officials from Japan, the United States, China and South Korea. Having conducted extensive dialogue with China towards sustainable peace and stability in the region through its Track 1.5 Japan-China dialogue, the Genron NPO will begin a new endeavor to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

With the Asia Peace Conference, we aim at building a Track II multinational platform for joint efforts to contribute to maintain the peace and the future development of frameworks for supporting sustainable peace and stability in the region. This is an attempt to open the discussions by starting at the non-governmental level to build an environment for future formal processes. By launching a new multinational platform for candid discussion involving the United States and China on regional crisis management, management of hotspots, and visions and norms for the future of a peaceful order in a structurally unstable Northeast Asia, we aim to contribute to an environment for future formal processes towards sustainable peace in the region.

Founding Consensus

Seventeen experts, intellectuals and former officials from Japan, the United States, China and the Republic of Korea gathered in Tokyo on January 21, 2020, to establish the Asia Peace Conference for the purpose of creating security and sustainable peace in Northeast Asia.

At the conference, participants shared their apprehension over the fact that structural confrontations and tensions prevail, that many hotspots exist in a region where bilateral relations remain unstable, and that neither a scheme for confidence-building nor a framework for multilateral consultations on security matters exist. In such circumstances, we agreed to make the Asia Peace Conference serve as a venue for consultations on confidence-building, and to launch joint efforts towards the improvement of crisis management mechanisms, and frameworks for conflict resolution and sustainable peace in the region, thereby affirming the following items.

1. As the risk of accidental conflict has been increasing, further communication between each country is needed more than ever. In order to prevent conflict and mitigate the risk of accidental clashes in Northeast Asia, the strengthening of binding bilateral frameworks is needed. In the Asia Peace Conference, we will hold a periodical review of incidents. Through these efforts on the platform, we will pursue the eventual establishment of a multilateral framework that can include the whole region.
2. Regarding the future for building sustainable peace in Northeast Asia, non-belligerency, anti-hegemonism and the rule of law should be pursued as starting principles for peace.
3. What was discussed at this conference shall be subject to further deliberations on a bilateral basis among participants from Japan, the United States, China and South Korea, and their results shall be reported to the next Asia Peace Conference, which will be held in Tokyo in January 2021.

What Asia Peace Conference 2022 has achieved

The world faced a worsening of the US-China conflict, alarming fragmentation of the global economy and other international systems, and increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait. US allies and other friendly countries in Northeast Asia began to see just how real the threat of a Taiwan emergency is, and began to strengthen ties with the US, resulting in even cooler relations with China. In the fall of that year, the number of incursions by Chinese military aircraft into Taiwan's air defense identification zone reached an all-time high, and regional tensions followed suit.

We conducted a survey of experts in the four partner countries to determine the top ten risks threatening peace in Northeast Asia, and invited the US and China to contribute to the dialogue at the Asia Peace Conference 2022. The results of our survey were announced during the meeting on April 22, 2022, the same day that Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his decision to invade Ukraine by signing a decree recognizing two "independent republics" in Eastern Ukraine, and authorizing the dispatch of military forces to that region.. Parallels were drawn between the situation in Ukraine with the current issues surrounding Taiwan, and discussions during the Asia Peace Conference became heated among the participants. The Asia Peace Conference 2022 thus became a forum not only for discussion of the Taiwan problem and other security issues, but also for the earliest private-sector dialogue on the Russian invasion of Ukraine between influential figures from both the US and China.

Asia Peace Conference moved forward with some major changes and increasing global tensions, but we were able to achieve the following three items.

First is our holding of the Asia Peace Conference, which brought together more than 30 diplomats and security experts, to engage in discussion on issues from the Taiwan problem to the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Participants agreed that the situation in Northeast Asia is more delicate now than at any other time since the Second World War, and a number of important ideas and issues were raised during the discussions.

One such issue was the agreement between participants from all four countries on the urgent necessity for dialogue that includes military commanders in the field, in order to avoid conflict over the Taiwan Strait. It was noted that it is essential to achieve a strategic dialogue between the US and China and build an accident-avoidance mechanism.

It was suggested that there are parallels between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Taiwan issue. However, Chinese participants were united in their evaluation of the Ukraine situation as

being international in nature, asserting that the Taiwan issue is purely a domestic one. Chinese participants also expressed their understanding for the Russian perspective that the continued eastward expansion of NATO was one of the underlying causes of Russia's invasion. All participants from all four countries re-stated their continued support for the One-China principle, but it was suggested that China's increased military strength has resulting in a power imbalance in the region. On this particular issue, it was noted that it is important for both the US and China to refrain from actions that could provoke conflict. All participants agreed that this private-sector international dialogue is one that should be made stronger. This effort is a major achievement for our first year of the collaboration.

Next, another major pillar of our efforts was our report, *The Ten Risks Threatening Peace in Northeast Asia* (2022). This report was a revolutionary effort achieved through the cooperation of approximately 200 experts in military, diplomatic, and diplomacy affairs from Japan, the US, China, and South Korea, and it explored the potential risks that threaten the security of Northeast Asia, both in terms of their potential impact, and the probability that they will spark off a conflict. The amalgamated four-country score for the first criteria (measuring impact) placed the deepening of the US-China conflict at 2.98 points, the potential for an emergency over Taiwan at 2.97 points, North Korea's status as a nuclear power at 2.95 points, and the occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait at 2.93 points. The fact that the 200 experts evaluated these risks at almost 3 points out of 4 that suggests that they have already reached the crisis management phase.

Also worthy of note was the opinion of the US experts, who deemed the possibility of an accident occurring in the Taiwan Strait as the most likely of all the threats. The results have been an important tool in gaining an understanding of the state of peace in Northeast Asia in 2022. They received much publicity in the media, and also provided fodder for discussion during Asia Peace Conference 2022 held shortly after the report's release.

In the year leading up to Asia Peace Conference 2022, we were able to: 1) promote bilateral dialogue between Japan and the countries of China, South Korea, and the US; 2) conduct public polls and expert surveys in the countries to determine national perceptions of the concept of Northeast Asia and the current regional security situation; and 3) hold regular discussions between government officials and private-sector experts from Japan, the US, and numerous other countries from Asia on security in Northeast Asia, and communicate the results of those discussions to the public.

The content of those discussions was released to the public to promote a better understanding of the issues at hand. These achievements form a part of the foundation upon which our efforts are built. We believe that the three achievements above illustrate our progress in the first year of the project towards reaching our originally-stated goals.

Photos in Asian Peace Conference 2022





Open Sessions

February 22, 2022

DAY 1 : February 22 at 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (Japan time zone)

9:00 ~ 10:00 **Opening and Keynote remarks**

10:00 ~ 12:00 **Special Session**

The top ten risks threatening peace in Northeast Asia in 2022

【Panelists】

◆ United States

- Daniel Russel / Former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
- Frank Jannuzi / President and CEO, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation

◆ China

- Jia Qingguo / Member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
- Yang Chao Ying / Vice Chairman, China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies
- Zhang Tuosheng / Chairman of Academic Committee, Grandview Institute

◆ Korea

- Choi Kang / Vice President at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies
- Ho-Young Ahn / Former Republic of Korea's Ambassador to the United States

◆ Japan

- Yuji Miyamoto / Former Ambassador to China
- Yoji Koda / Former Commander-in-Chief of Japan's Self-Defense Fleet
- Yasushi Kudo (President, the Genron NPO)
- Yoshihide Soeya / Professor Emeritus of Keio University

Closed Sessions

February 23, 2022

DAY2 : February 23 at 9:00 am - 1:00 pm (Japan time zone)

9:00 ~ 10:50 Session 1 How to avoid conflict over Taiwan

11:00 ~ 13:00 Session 2 How to manage security risks in Northeast Asia?

【Panelists】

◆ United States

- Gary Roughead / Former US Chief of Naval Operations
- Daniel Russel / Former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
- Mark Montgomery / Executive Director, the Cyberspace Solarium Commission
- Frank Jannuzi / President and CEO, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation
- Robert Girrier / President Emeritus, Pacific Forum and Senior Fellow, Center for Naval Analyses

◆ China

- Jia Qingguo / Member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
- Yang Chao Ying / Vice Chairman, China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies
- Zhang Tuosheng / Chairman of Academic Committee, Grandview Institute
- Teng Jianqun / Senior Research Fellow, Department for American Studies (CHIS)
- Zhou Bo / Senior Fellow of Center for International Security and Strategy Tsinghua University

◆ Korea

- Choi Kang, Vice President, the Asan Institute for Policy Studies
- Heo Tae-keun / Former Brigadier General, South Korea

◆ Japan

- Katsutoshi Kawano / Former Chief of Staff, the Japan Self-Defense Forces
- Yoji Koda / Former Commander-in-Chief of Japan's Self-Defense Fleet
- Shinsuke Sugiyama / Former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs; Former Ambassador to the USA
- Yoshihide Soeya / Professor Emeritus of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Law, Keio University
- Yasushi Kudo / President of The Genron NPO

Urgent need for US-China crisis management dialogue to prevent an accident in the Taiwan Strait



The plenary session of the Asia Peace Conference was split into two sessions held online on February 23. These sessions were attended by 18 high-level experts in national security and diplomacy from four countries-Japan, the US, China, and South Korea-who, in Session 1, discussed how conflict over the Taiwan issue can be avoided.

These discussions took place as Russia engaged in a military campaign in Ukraine after unilaterally recognizing the independence of two Ukrainian regions. Moderator Yasushi Kudo, President of the Genron NPO, pointed out the similarities between the situation in Ukraine and the current environment in Northeast Asia. "In yesterday's (public) sessions, it was suggested that the security environment in Northeast Asia is almost at the breaking point and similar to that in Ukraine ? in its worst condition since the end of the Cold War," Kudo said before launching the discussion with the following question. What efforts are needed to avoid conflict in the Taiwan Strait as apprehensions continue to rise?"

In response, four presenters were asked to provide the foundation for the following discussion: from

the US, Gary Roughead, retired US Navy Admiral and former Commander of both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets; from China, Zhang Tuosheng, who has served for many years as Chairman of the Academic Committee at the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, a PLA-affiliated think tank; from Japan, Shinsuke Sugiyama, former Ambassador to the US; and from South Korea, Choi Kang, Vice President of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

Although these Asia Peace Conference sessions were closed to the public, it was decided that the statements made by the first four speakers would be released publicly, while the subsequent discussions would be held under the Chatham House Rule, which states that information can be used freely, but "neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

The participants from China, the US, Japan, and South Korea engaged in a spirited debate-each side looking to the other for the underlying reasons behind the increased risk of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, each side looking to the other to implement measures to avoid such a conflict. Subsequently, over the course of the conference, it became increasingly obvious that there are major differences in how the different countries concerned view the current situation. The Chinese delegation stated that their intentions for a peaceful reunification with Taiwan remain unchanged, and suggested that in order to avoid conflict, the US should refrain from supporting Taiwan's stance towards independence and that Taiwan should be persuaded likewise. However, the security experts from the US and Japan stated that conditions have changed in that China's stated desire for a peaceful unification with Taiwan is losing credibility in light of its actions in Hong Kong and the military exercises it has been conducting. They believe that China should clarify its stance regarding avoidance of armed action.

A participant from Japan added that the fundamental position of Japan regarding the One-China policy remains clear and unchanged; Japan does not support the independence of Taiwan. Some said that the deepening conflict between the US and China, combined with China's actions in the region, are contributing to tensions over Taiwan. However, the participants in the conference shared the opinion that what has been lost in the region is mutual trust, and that is an additional reason that strategic dialogue is needed between the US and China.

It has also become clear that the various previous agreements made regarding crisis management methods to prevent conflict between the US and China are not functioning as designed. Prompt dialogue over the priority issue of the Taiwan Strait is necessary, and all haste must be made to construct a mechanism for crisis management. There was general consensus about these points among the participants.

Before beginning the discussion for this session, four presenters were tasked with providing their insight on avoiding conflict over Taiwan.

Uncovering broader common interests through strategic dialogue

Retired US Navy Admiral Gary Roughead offered the opening remarks for the discussions.

"I've been involved in matters in the Pacific for quite some time, and still remain so. I thought it's important to put discussion of Taiwan in context of what I call the arc of the military-to-military relationships. It began with my first introduction to the PLA in the early 90s, and I would say that at that time the military-to-military relationship was a time of uncertainty. And I would submit that, again, we are in a time of uncertainty." Roughead explained how there then arrived a "period of optimism," during which there was more interaction between the militaries of the US and China, development of personal relationships which allowed for more effective communication, and engagement in various cooperative activities. Roughead described how the relationship then turned to one of disappointment, which he believes largely arose from a "lack of reciprocity." Now the relationship has again returned to one of uncertainty, he said, and explained that people are no longer asking, "where will the relationship go?" Roughead suggested that instead people are now asking the more pessimistic question, "How will it end?"

"The task before us," Roughead continued. "Was to discuss the possibility of conflict in the Straits of Taiwan and the efforts to prevent it. There is no question in my mind that conflict in the Straits is possible." Roughead emphasized that what they should be discussing is how probable such a conflict is and what the consequences of a conflict would be, adding that the measures currently in place are limited. "The increased activity (in the region), and the nature of that activity, renders those rudimentary protocols like CUES (Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea) inadequate for the type and the degree of risk that we face around Taiwan. Those rudimentary protocols lack the speed that is required, and the habitual and the practiced channels of communication that get better with time. In my view, we are at a time where accidents and incidents can escalate very, very quickly," Roughead explained.

In order to avoid such a situation, he believes that the priority must be for the two countries to "engage in a constructive strategic dialogue." On the strategic level, the dialogue should focus on the "broader common interests" through which the countries "might be able to make progress." To conclude, Roughead touched on the perceived global decline of US influence due to government decision-making, extensive public debate, and social issues currently facing the country before calling for a renewed effort for more cooperation.

"I always keep in mind the great American author who is (often quoted) as saying, 'The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated.' I think now is the time when we have to commit ourselves to some renewed strategic and operational dialogues, to reduce the possibility, the probability, and the consequences of conflict, particularly in the vicinity of Taiwan. And look for every opportunity to restart and to reengage and to return to that time of cooperation and optimism."

Three areas of risk for military conflict in the Taiwan Strait

Zhang Tuosheng of the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies was next to take the podium, and he began with a comment on the possibility of a conflict over Taiwan with some background from the Chinese perspective. "I think since Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP (Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party) came to power in 2016, she has refused to recognize the 1992 consensus...resulting in the suspension of institutional dialogue between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, severe degradation of cross-strait relations, and disrupting the peaceful development trend of the previous eight years. The US is exaggerating that China will attack Taiwan by force, and some American officials and experts are calling for the US government change its cross-strait strategy from 'strategic ambiguity' to 'strategic clarity' in order to fully defend Taiwan. The situation across the Taiwan Strait is becoming more tense," Zhang explained. He summarized his concerns by describing three main risks of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

"First, as both China and the US continue to strengthen their military presence in the Taiwan Strait and as Taiwan carries out various military activities, accidents or misjudgments may cause contingencies between military planes and warships. Second, the US continues to pressure China...in the Taiwan Strait, and even touches China's 'bottom line' from time to time. Once these extremely dangerous acts cross the bottom line set in the anti-secession law, China will negatively resort to non-peaceful means to counter pro-independence and secession attempts. Military conflict will be inevitable. Third, the United States has been exaggerating that China will attack Taiwan by force, calling for all-out efforts to strengthen Taiwan's defensive capability and the support capability of the US in order to prevent the so-called Chinese invasion. Once these propositions are put into practice, it will certainly lead to military conflicts, even serious ones," Zhang stated.

Zhang then reminded participants that the entire Taiwan question is a "leftover from the Chinese civil war" and stressed that it "is a Chinese internal affair" in which no other country should interfere. He stated that all efforts to avoid conflict should be based upon that understanding, before adding some suggestions on how to ensure peace.

"Adherence to the One-China principle should be the primary condition. Second, the relevant countries must never send the wrong signals to the Taiwanese independence forces," he said.

In addition, he stated that the Chinese government should "unswervingly pursue the policy of peaceful reunification," but emphasized that military force will continue to function as a deterrent to Taiwanese calls for independence.

"It is also important for the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to resume dialogue and improve relations in order to prevent military conflict between them. But this must be based on the 1992 consensus, which, at its core, means that both the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China," Zhang concluded.

Steadfast dialogue important for peaceful problem resolution

Former Japanese Ambassador to the US Shinsuke Sugiyama opened his remarks by addressing Zhang Tuosheng to assure him that Sugiyama believes all in attendance at the conference fundamentally agree that the Taiwan issue is a domestic issue for China. He added that this stance is shared by the Japanese government.

"The Japanese Diet has asserted that (Taiwan) is fundamentally a Chinese domestic issue," Sugiyama said. Moreover, he noted that the joint US-Japan statement issued by Prime Minister Suga and President Biden issued after their April 16 2021 meeting touched upon Taiwan for the first time in 50 years since the Sato-Nixon statement made in 1969.

"When I heard that news, I got a strong sense that something was wrong," he stated, pointing out that the wording in the two joint statements was different." The wording in the 1969 joint statement was, '...the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area was also a most important factor for the security of Japan.' The statement from last year contained the phrase, 'We underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,' with an additional clause stating, '...and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.' This phrasing is one that the Japanese government has been using for many years. Almost the same phrasing was used during the US-South Korea summit that took place a month later," Sugiyama explained.

He reiterated that all the actors involved do understand the Chinese position, and pointed to the Japanese government point to show that China will find no such statement asserting that 'there are two Chinas' or supporting the independence of Taiwan. That is further illustrated by the summit statement,

namely, 'We underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.'

Sugiyama explained that the official Japanese position includes no intention of increasing military tensions, but added that there is a key difference between the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan.

"The Taiwan Strait is not entirely within the territorial water borders of China, so it is not untoward to consider the importance of peace and stability in the Strait a matter of international interest. On top of that is the US-Japan statement clarifying their position of wanting to promote a peaceful resolution of cross-strait relations. What is different now compared to the situation in Northeast Asia in 1969 is that now I can't deny that the threat is real," he said.

As a diplomat, he emphasized that both diplomatic dialogue and strategic dialogue are essential in this situation, and that, "It is important to put our efforts into resolving problems in a peaceful way through steadfast dialogue."

A crisis prevention mechanism urgently needed in Northeast Asia

The last to offer an opinion on the issue was Choi Kang, Vice-President of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in South Korea. "The concern I have personally is in the change in the response of China in the past several years. Almost everyone expected that Tsai Ing-wen was going to lose the election, but after seeing what happened in Hong Kong, Tsai Ing-wen became very popular and won the election. Everybody agrees on the One-China policy. In addition to the One-China policy, both sides underscore the peaceful resolution of the peaceful reunification of Taiwan, one day. But Chinese behavior over the past couple of years has not impressed (upon most people) that China is seeking a peaceful resolution over the Taiwan Strait issue," he said.

Choi expressed his agreement with former Admiral Gary Roughead. "The frequency and magnitude of Chinese military activities around the Taiwan Strait have increased very sharply. That raises concerns? especially during the Xi Jinping era. I agree with (Admiral Roughead) arguing for strategic and operational dialogues, but those two dialogues are meaningful only when the two big powers agree to restore the status quo in the region."

Choi then noted that he is unsure whether China is aiming to maintain the status quo or taking a more "revisionist approach" toward the international order.

"I think there must be a basic understanding between the two big powers about the future of the international order. That is the basic line where we can start the strategic dialogue and operational dialogue ? the military-to-military dialogue." He added that reports show that there seem to be three possible scenarios for the future.

"One is the continuation of the show of force by China over Taiwan. That could alarm almost everybody and actually heighten the tension. Second is the...public message that could enflame anti-Chinese feeling not only in Taiwan, but also other parts of the world. Third, maybe the lowest possibility, is occupying some territory in Taiwan, claiming it as a "recovery," maybe as Russia did in the former Soviet territory of the Donbas area. I think the probability of a physical conflict between Taiwan and China is very low, but there is a possibility of accidents or incidents over military maneuvers taken by either side, so we must be careful in managing such things."

Choi also called for the creation of a regional crisis prevention mechanism.

"We need to have region-wide principles. A code of conduct must be agreed upon by the countries in the region to safe-guard regional peace and stability against accidental war."

Loss of mutual trust is behind the US-China conflict over the Taiwan Strait

Following the four presentations, a closed discussion was held between 18 participants from the four countries. The discussion revealed major discrepancies in how the participants from the different countries view a potential contingency over Taiwan.

The Chinese position on the Taiwan issue is that it is a domestic one, rooted in Chinese sovereignty, and therefore a core issue of national interest. The reason China's behavior has changed is because they believe the situation has changed; since the DPP took power, the administration of Tsai Ing-wen has retreated from the agreement on the One-China principle, and from the Chinese perspective, the US is supporting Taiwan in that retreat.

For that reason, the agreement among the Chinese speakers was that in order to calm the tensions over a potential conflict, the US should work to convince the Taiwanese authorities to return to the spirit of the 1992 consensus (agreeing in principle to the One-China policy), and should refrain from offering Taiwan its support.

In response, participants from Japan, the US, and South Korea stated that regardless of the current situation in Taiwan, the position of Japan, the US and South Korea has not changed at all. Their policies are fundamental based in the principle of "One China."

However, China's recent behavior has raised concerns in those three countries that China is possibly looking to reunify the country through force rather than peaceful means; and that these issues seem to be arising from a lack of trust? a reluctance to compromise to the very last.

A participant from the US stated the belief that Tsai Ing-wen won the election in Taiwan due to the crackdown on citizens in Hong Kong. With the situation now having changed, people in the US no longer trust what China says, so China should promise not to use force.

China sees a clear difference between Ukraine and Taiwan

During discussion on the possibility of China achieving reunification through military action against Taiwan, parallels were drawn between the situation in the Taiwan Strait and Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. However, the Chinese position on this is that there are two clear differences in the circumstances surrounding the two countries. First, while the invasion of Ukraine is a consequence of Russia's attempts at expanding its sphere of influence, the issue over Taiwan is a domestic issue and the fact that Taiwan is a part of China has been recognized by the world.

Second, there seems to be a clear difference in the US response to the situation in either country; the US is not directly intervening in the situation in Ukraine, but it seems to be doing so with Taiwan. The underlying reason for the difference in the US responses, it was suggested, may lie in the fact that the US and Russia share a "strategic stability" that was established during the Cold War, but China and the US have no such mechanism in place.

US-China dialogue essential to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait

One comment made during the discussion suggested that the ambiguous behavior on the part of both the US and China is behind the heightened tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and that is amplifying regional instability in this region.

China suspects that the US military stance is aimed at supporting Taiwanese independence, and the US is making no effort to allay China's suspicions. In addition, while China's actions do serve as a deterrent to Taiwan's achieving independence in the short term, they offer no explanation for China's long-term military expansion throughout the region.

Moreover, it was pointed out numerous times during the discussion that no progress has been made in achieving mutual understanding between the countries involved in Northeast Asia, and that is what makes statements made by each country lose credibility in the view of those on the other side of the table. That is why it was dialogue was mentioned so many times as being vital is to crisis management in the region.

The participants from all four countries are well aware of the dangers of conflict in the area around Taiwan, and the discussion turned to what kinds of efforts are necessary to prevent a conflict in the Taiwan Strait and ensure peace and stability. All agreed that there is an urgent need for a strategic dialogue to prevent contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, and that there needs to be an agreement reached on reviving the non-functioning crisis management framework already in place between the US and China. It was also suggested that such a framework should be extended to span all of Northeast Asia.

Bringing the first closed session to an end, participants agreed on the necessity of honest dialogue aimed at filling the existing gaps in communication through increased efforts to foster mutual trust.

No room for unilateral changes to the status quo in Northeast Asia



For Session 2 of the Asia Peace Conference, Genron President Yasushi Kudo moderated a discussion on how to manage security risks in Northeast Asia. For the opening remarks, Kudo was joined by three other participants from the US, China, and South Korea, who he asked to provide their ideas on what sorts of efforts are needed to maintain peace and stability in the region. The session began with these opening remarks, after which a discussion of the issues presented was held.

In his role as moderator, Kudo opening the meeting by reiterating the agreements reached and issues raised at the previous two meetings of the Asia Peace Conference, before pointing out that the US-China conflict has revealed a number of risk areas in Northeast Asia, and that the security environment in the region is degrading.

Kudo asked the presenters if the previously reached agreements were still holding strong. "Do we still agree that we should be aiming for a peaceful order based on inclusive rules rather than dividing the region?" he asked.

In response, former US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Matters Daniel Russel offered a proposal on how to begin a dialogue on finding common interests and establishing a mechanism for crisis management in the region.

"My suggestion is that we start by taking a step back and looking at the current situation. We are in a period of disruption where the emerging power, China, is dissatisfied with the status quo, and the preeminent power, the United States, objects to the direction in which the emerging power is pushing. The peace and stability of Northeast Asia is being jeopardized by these trends, and the problem is being magnified, frankly, by unfavorable political developments in both Beijing and in Washington. The result is the surge in destabilizing friction that the conference has explored," he said. "We have to analyze; we have to unpack the key factors that are pushing us in the wrong direction."

He also suggested that what truly matters is the behavior of the emerging power, "...once it becomes strong enough to bend or ignore international norms and laws when they seem unfavorable to its own national interest."

He concluded by addressing China's recent behavior in that light. "Revisions to the status quo need to be agreed on by others and not imposed unilaterally. It's not that the status quo is sacred. It's not that the status quo can't be changed. The essential issue is how it is changed. Is it changed by consent or by consensus, or is it changed by disruption and coercion? I think it's useful to examine the questions that Kudo-san laid out, but I also believe that the starting point for examining them has to be a clear understanding of why we haven't been able to reach those goals to date."

Next, former Brigadier General Heo Taekeun of the Republic of Korea's Ministry of National Defense spoke about the importance of discussing a multilateral framework in Northeast Asia, but suggested that the focus should first be on improving bilateral relations that are currently facing difficulties, i.e., those between the US and China, between Japan and China, and between South Korea and Japan.

"Before the discussion of a multilateral dialogue mechanism and shared understanding of the impending security issues, we need to put effort into improving each bilateral relationship first. In order to improve those relationships and share a peaceful order, each country should have internal change, especially from politics."

Heo feels that the different countries are using "external policies for internal politics" to shape a favorable environment for their governments in an attempt to strengthen domestic nationalism.

"These trends will make it more difficult for us to make better bilateral and multilateral relationships for the future," he said. Regarding regional peace and stability, Heo argued that more effort needs to be put into the multilateral creation of a shared set of principles to protect the region, and into multilateral revision and establishment of rules preventing military contingencies.

Questions raised over China's stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine

The discussions in Session 2 focused on three issues. The first issue covered the building trust between the US and China. During the US-Soviet Cold War, both sides took measures to build trust through accident prevention agreements and other efforts. However, the current US-China crisis management mechanism is not functioning as designed, and participants discussed whether that mechanism can be fixed, whether new steps can be taken, and what sort of mechanism is needed.

The second issue delved into whether the fundamental values of achieving peaceful resolution to any conflict are truly shared throughout Northeast Asia, namely, those values that proscribe any use of military force, and stop changes to the status quo made by application of force. Russia's actions in Ukraine are an example of just such an attempt at changing the status quo, and throughout the day's discussions it was repeatedly mentioned that China's stance towards Russia's behavior is unclear.

As Russian forces were gathering near the Ukrainian border, Chinese leaders were expressing their support of Russian President Vladimir Putin on his visit to Beijing. US participants in the discussion questioned the timing of that public statement of support and Russia's subsequent military invasion of Ukraine. Many of those in attendance questioned why China, which is concerned with its own territorial sovereignty, has not clarified its stance over the breach of sovereignty arising from the Russian invasion.

Finally, the third theme touched upon how to build a framework to prevent military clashes in the Taiwan Strait. All attendees expressed strong concerns about the possibility of such an event, and there was much discussion on how to get a prompt dialogue started.

For Session 2, the 18 participants from four countries were joined by Daniel Russell, who provided opening remarks, and by retired Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, former Chief of Staff of the Japan Self-Defense Forces. The 20-member discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule, which states that information can be used freely, but "neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

Building an effective crisis management mechanism for the Taiwan Strait

Yang Chaoying is Vice Chairman of the China Foundation for International & Strategic Studies, a PLA-affiliated think tank, and he provided another interpretation of current events in the region. Yang began by speaking about what lies at the core of security tensions in Northeast Asia - a lack of trust among the various actors - and expressed his hopes for the building of a mechanism for achieving strategic stability as the US-China conflict continues.

"Building trust involves understanding and being understood," he said. "These have a lot to do with intentions, matching words with actions, honoring one's commitments or agreements made with others, power and subsequent responsibility, and also being sensitive to the concerns of others."

He proposed that the underlying focus of the discussion should shift.

"We should do our best to work on common interests. Despite the serious divisions that exist, there are important common interests, such as climate change, environmental protection, dealing with the pandemic, economic prosperity in the Pacific region, denuclearization in the Korea peninsula, avoidance of open war over the Taiwan Strait, etc. Policy makers should make decisions that best serve the interests of the people and the region, and not simply be hijacked by public opinion or party politics. (The countries should also explore) mechanisms that help to establish stability and prevent war," Yang explained.

Moreover, while he emphasized the need for a conflict prevention mechanism, he also explained that efforts like the US-China Military and Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) have not been very effective thus far.

"Maintaining stability and preventing war is a common aspiration. To achieve this end, we should seriously explore and work on mechanisms concerning various conflict areas. We experimented with different practices, including the Code of Conduct crisis mechanism to avoid incidents at sea or in the air. But even though these have not been very effective, they are helpful in avoiding accidents or misfires, and I propose that we should seriously work on those to make mechanisms already established more effective, and establish new, more effective, mechanisms.

Limited time to start a crisis management dialogue on the Taiwan Strait

During the discussions, US participants provided two perspectives on what can be done to build trust between the US and China.

The first was regarding the immediate situation between the US and China. One participant described that US-China bilateral relations have already become polarized, with each side merely asserting their own claims and opinions. It was suggested that it is difficult to provide a practical solution when both sides seem to lack the intention to foster trust.

However, many attendees pointed to the growing risk of accidental clashes in the Taiwan Strait, emphasizing the need for all parties to become more involved and engage in dialogue. What is particularly necessary, it was said, is for military commanders to be able to quickly communicate with each other, and for political leaders to continuously interact. It was also mentioned that time to establish such interactions is running out.

Both the US and China seemed to agree that it would be effective to start engaging in dialogue at the field commander level, and then gradually move that dialogue up the hierarchy to the level of the political leaders.

On maritime issues, a consensus was reached on the need for the prompt construction of an effective crisis management mechanism, but on the topic of freedom of navigation, an opinion from the Chinese side suggested that military activity should not be permitted near coastlines, even when those areas are technically international waters. So, while there was some consensus, the discussion revealed a difference in how the participants from different countries view specific aspects.

On the topic of the East China Sea, the Japanese side asked why the joint resource development agreement signed with China in June 2008 seems to have stalled after 14 years. The Chinese side responded by pointing out that the situation surrounding Japan's nationalization of the Senkaku Islands remains unchanged, and there are still issues regarding improvement of China-Japan relations, making it clear that there is little prospect of resuming negotiations any time soon.

China argues no similarity: Ukraine is international, Taiwan domestic

The next issue began with China expressing their view of Russia's military action against Ukraine. Numerous speakers mentioned the similarities between the situation in Ukraine and

the structure of the Taiwan issue.

The Chinese side stated their view that China's intentions for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue is clear. The greatest effort must be made to maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity, they said, and that desire lies in the fundamental thinking underlying the Charter of the United Nations.

They disputed the idea that the Taiwan issue is similar to the situation in Ukraine, describing them as completely different, with one individual saying, "The Ukraine issue is an international issue. The Taiwan issue is a domestic issue." In addition, while Russia is acting within the sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union, they argued that China stands in the position of the victim in East Asia, subjected to the pressures of the US and other countries.

The issue of Ukraine is a clear challenge to the global order and its foundation of international law, but during the discussions, there was no definitive protest made by the Chinese participants regarding Russia's unilateral military action in Ukraine.

Statements were made by the attendees from China pointing to their view of the Ukraine issue as a conflict between the US and Russia, and in the face of the deepening conflict between the US and China, it seemed that the Chinese government may be showing some understanding towards Russia's actions.

The South Korean attendees stated that the Ukraine issue is illustrating the importance of alliances, and that a stronger alliance with the US would guarantee both peace and stability. Even if the world changes in significant ways, until a new set of principles can be established, the South Korean side stated their belief in operating within the framework of existing alliances.

Statements from US side criticized the leadership of the Biden administration by asserting that in order to protect shared values against tyrannical behavior, what is needed is not only sanctions but also a stronger military response.

Can a new framework for US-China crisis management replace the MMCA?

Finally, the discussion turned to the possibility of military contingencies as activity increases in the Taiwan Strait, and participants agreed that practical dialogue including military commanders is urgently needed. Many speakers proposed a new framework for regional accident prevention considering that previous agreements like the MMCA are not functioning properly.

With the discussion winding down, three attendees were then asked to summarize the discussions to bring the Asia Peace Conference to a close.

From Japan, Former Ambassador to the People's Republic of China Yuji Miyamoto pointed to the strong consensus reached regarding the seriousness of the current security situation, the need for crisis management to navigate the treacherous path ahead, the essential requirement for dialogue and trust-building, and the need for finding common interests. He emphasized that at the next Asia Peace Conference participants should begin discussing specific issues to be resolved, and proposed that a better atmosphere of mutual understanding could be fostered through that type of concrete collaboration.

China agrees on the need for an effective crisis management mechanism

Jia Qingguo is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and is former Dean of the School of International Studies of Peking University. He offered his view of the Taiwan issue by criticizing the US and Taiwan for their actions that go against the 1992 consensus and thereby prevent peaceful reunification. He argued that if the West opposes the pro-Russian independence movements in Ukraine, it should also oppose the independence of Taiwan.

He added that China agrees regarding freedom of navigation in the Taiwan Strait, but opposes military activities and surveillance efforts in the region. Jia believes that dialogue is needed to bridge the gap in how the different sides view the situation, and agreed with the panelists from Japan, the US, and South Korea that an effective crisis management mechanism is required. He emphasized the importance of Track II dialogues like the Asia Peace Conference, and argued that governments should respect the move towards such dialogues.

Commitment to "One China" remains, but the situation has changed

Frank Jannuzi, President of The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation in the US, noted that consensus was reached on a number of discussions that took place during the Asia Peace conference. First is that the rules-based international order is under pressure. Second, there remain "fissures" in understanding on what a new global order should look like and there is a need to update the rules in line with a new vision for the order. Finally, such discussions should be inclusive, involving the participation of all countries, not just the great powers.

He also noted that the commitment to the principle of One China continues, but indicated that changes

in the US, China, and Taiwan have transformed the situation such that the important question now is on how to reinforce the rules through candid, open dialogue and ensure peace and stability. Until that update is complete, however, there should be an effort to follow the existing international order and maintain the status quo.

Moving forward step-by-step to find common ground through dialogue

Yasushi Kudo wrapped up the discussions by reminding the attendees that public opinion polls clearly show that the people of Northeast Asia have a powerful desire for peace and maintaining the rules-based order, and asserted that "Our will to build that in any way possible is unwavering." He looked back at the discussions held throughout the conference, and noted that the talks also showed that there is an obvious lack of mutual trust, which is affecting how each country interprets what the other countries are saying.

"We have no option but to continue to engage in dialogue, to search step-by-step for common ground, and to build trust with each other," Kudo said, and expressed that he is very much looking forward to the next Asia Peace Conference, and to future bilateral dialogues between Japan, and the US, China, and South Korea.



Top 10 Risks Threaten a Peace in Northeast Asia

February, 2022

200 foreign policy and security experts

from Japan, US, China, and the Republic of Korea graded

The greatest threat in Northeast Asia in 2022 is the deepening US-China tension

The Ten Risks Threatening Peace in Northeast Asia (2022) is a survey of experts from Japan, the United States of America, China, and South Korea to analyze and compare the views of experts from four countries on most pressing security agenda in Northeast Asia. It is annually conducted by The Genron NPO (Japan) in cooperation with the Asan Institute for Policy Studies (South Korea), East Asia Institute (South Korea), the China International Publishing Group (China), Grandview Institution (China), China Foundation for International & Strategic Studies (China) and the Pacific Forum (US).

Northeast Asia is currently facing a growing number of security issues, from the increased divide between the US and China, to the Taiwan Strait issue and North Korea's continued development of nuclear-armed missiles. We aim to explore the accumulated knowledge of experts from these four countries to determine their opinions on what the greatest risks to peace and stability in the region are this year.

These evaluations were conducted between January 7 and February 17, 2022. A total of 201 experts participated in the survey, with 50 each from Japan and the US, 70 from China, and 31 from South Korea. The evaluation was based on two criteria: first, the severity of impact from a potential conflict, and second, the possibility that a risk area could actually erupt in conflict in 2022. Each was scored out of four points for a combined total of eight points, with higher scores denoting higher perceived risk. In order to build the survey, we first asked 171 Japanese experts to narrow down the number of risks facing the region to 25 items, then these items were submitted to the experts for evaluation.

The greatest threat in Northeast Asia in 2022 is the deepening US-China tension

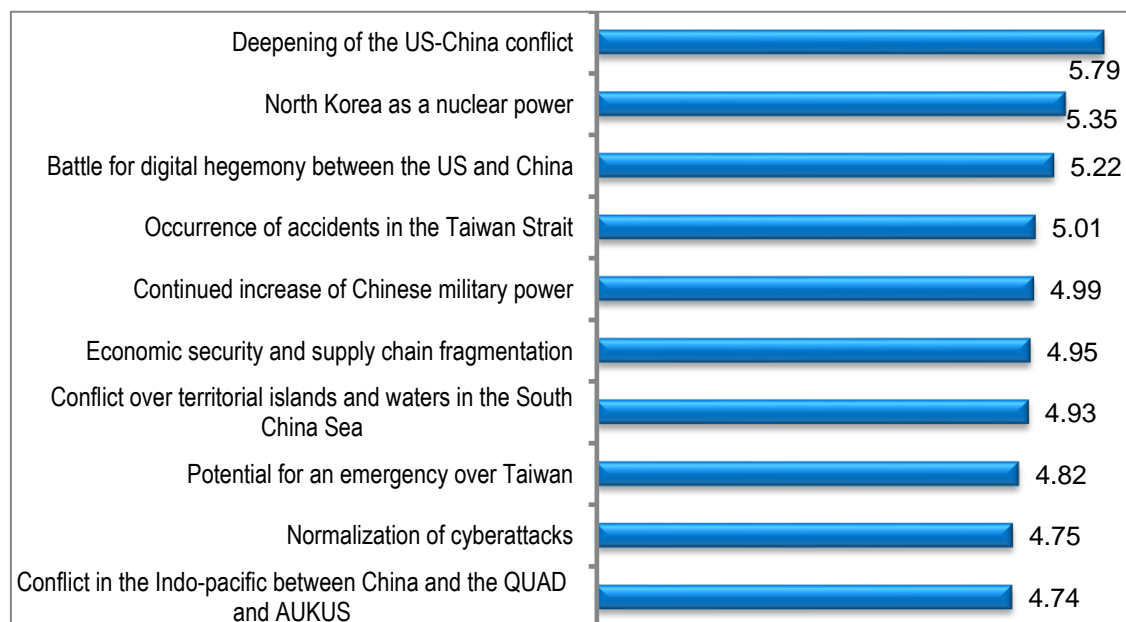
The survey results showed that according to the experts the greatest threat to peace in Northeast Asia in 2022 is the deepening conflict between the US and China. A number of risks connected to the development of that conflict and the subsequent worsening of relations fell in the top ten, including the battle for digital hegemony between the US and China in 3rd, economic security and supply chain fragmentation in 6th, and conflict in the Indo-Pacific between China and the QUAD (Japan/US/Australia/India) and AUKUS (Australia/UK/US)

One notable characteristic of the survey was that risks connected to tensions surrounding Taiwan have risen in the regional risk rank for 2022, with occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait in 4th place, and potential for an emergency over Taiwan in 8th place. Experts from Japan, the US, and China agreed that, of all 25 risks, the Taiwan issue would have the highest chance of destroying peace in the region, however, the chance of a conflict erupting over Taiwan in 2022 was considered low among the experts from all countries except the US, which is why those two risks ended up at 4th and 9th place. Comparing this year's top ten risks to last year's results, North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons fell from first to second place, and the two risks connected to COVID-19 both fell out of the top ten. In short, the experts from the four countries are most concerned about the worsening conflict between the US and China posing a greater threat to peace in Northeast Asia in 2022, and are very apprehensive about any subsequent economic conflict and about disputes over Taiwan.

【The Top Ten Risks Threatening Peace in Asia (amalgamated four-country score)】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



In order to take a closer look at how the experts from the four countries interpreted the risks threatening peace in Northeast Asia, we should first look at the risks through each of the two criteria. The table below describes the two criteria and explains how each was scored.

Criterion 1: What impact would conflict over an issue have, and how extensive would that impact be?

- 4 points: Could lead to conflict in the region (high impact/severity)
- 3 points: Will increase tension and require crisis management (moderate impact/severity)
- 2 points: Some concern about effect on peace in the region (low impact/severity)
- 1 point: Either unrelated to peace in the region, or if related, would have a minor impact
- 0 points: No impact

Criterion 2: What is the likelihood of a conflict erupting in 2022 over this issue?

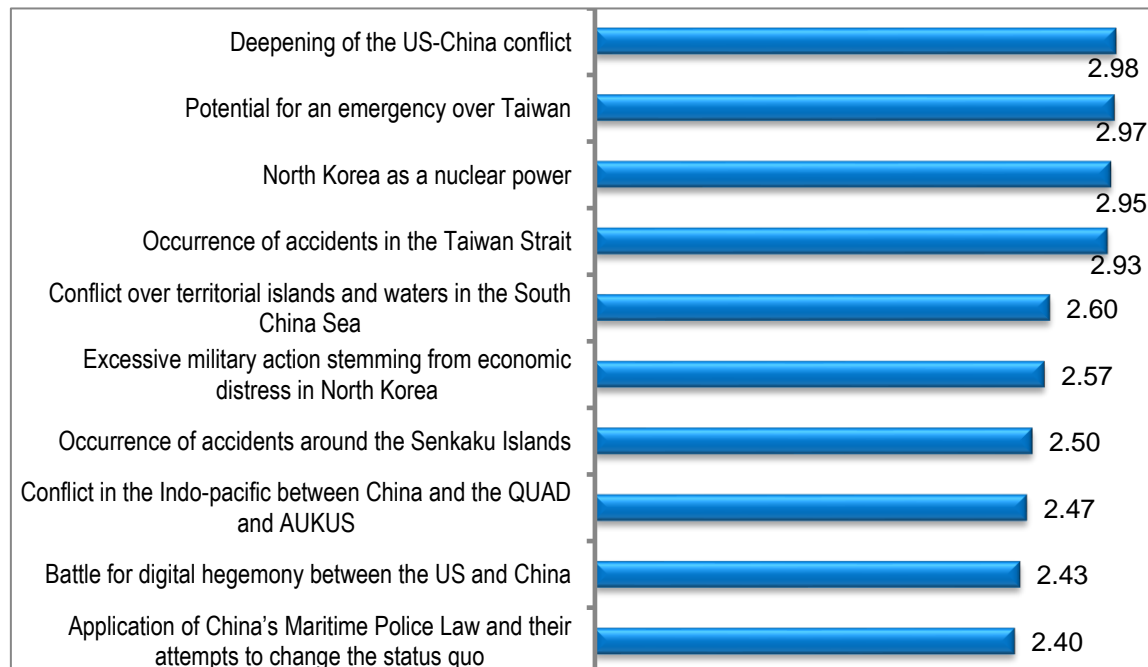
- 4 points: Conflict has already begun
- 3 points: High chance of conflict in 2022
- 2 points: Moderate chance of conflict in 2022
- 1 point: Low chance of conflict in 2022
- 0 points: No chance in 2022

In short, the first criterion was used to evaluate how severely a risk would impact peace in the region. This therefore revealed which risks to peace in Northeast Asia we should be focusing on. The second criterion was used to evaluate the likelihood a risk would result in actual conflict in 2022. So, to begin, let us look at which risks we should be thinking about.

【Top 10 risks in terms of its impact (amalgamated four-country score) 】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



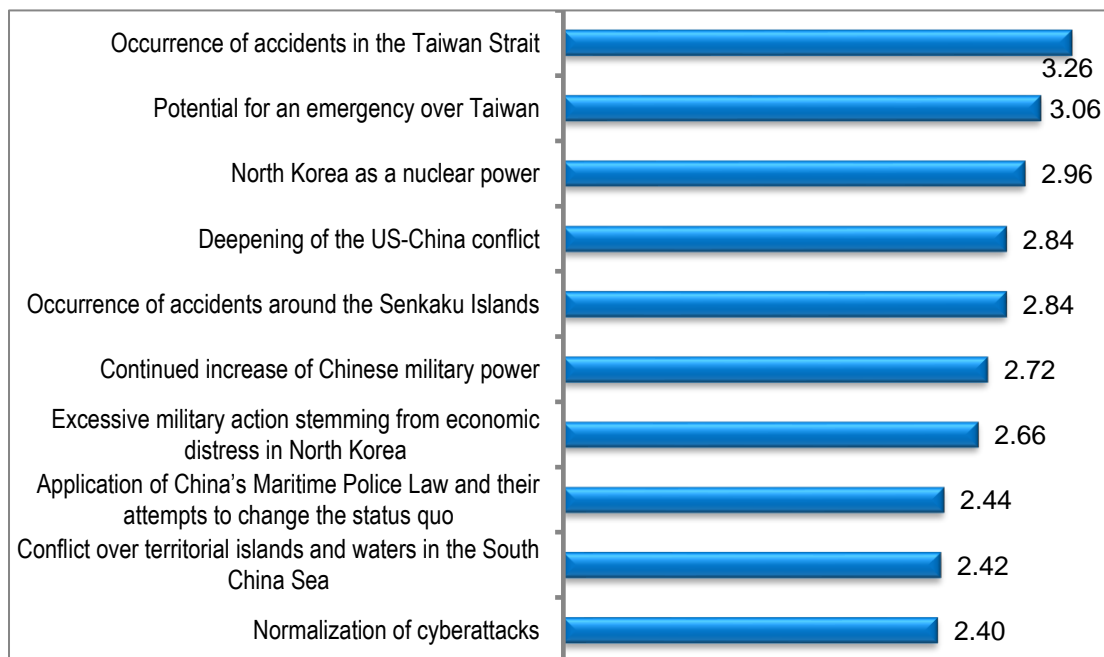
The combined data from all countries showed that the experts see the deepening conflict between the US and China, the possibility of a Taiwan emergency, the occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait, and North Korea's status as a nuclear power as all being in the crisis management phase.

These four risk areas all scored significantly more than the other areas with scores in the range of 2.9 or higher. The placement of North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons within the top four could be the result of the country's recent and continued missile launches. A score of 3 denotes increased tensions and that a threat has entered the crisis management phase, so these results show that the experts from the four countries see all four risks as being exceedingly close to that phase. Worthy of note is that two risk areas connected to Taiwan are in the 2.9 range, with the possibility of a Taiwan emergency at 2.97 points, and occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait at 2.93 points. This focus on Taiwan comes from the fact that the experts from both Japan and the US scored them the highest of the 25 risk items for criterion 1.

【Scores in terms of its impact among Japanese experts】

Year: 2022

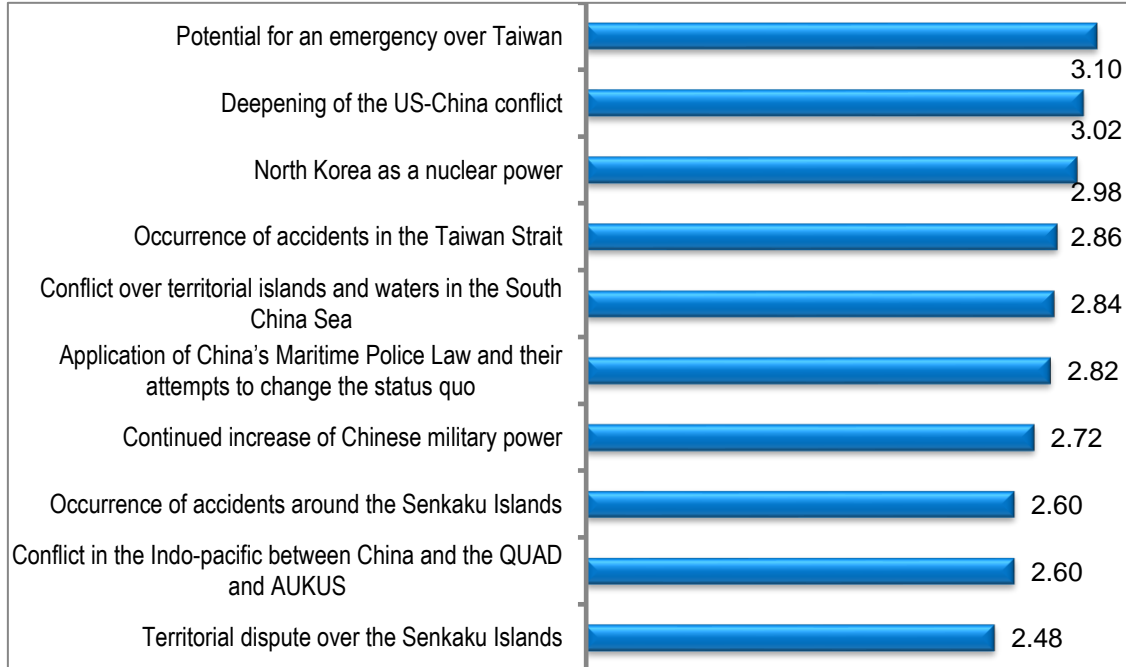
*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



【Scores in terms of its impact among US experts】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



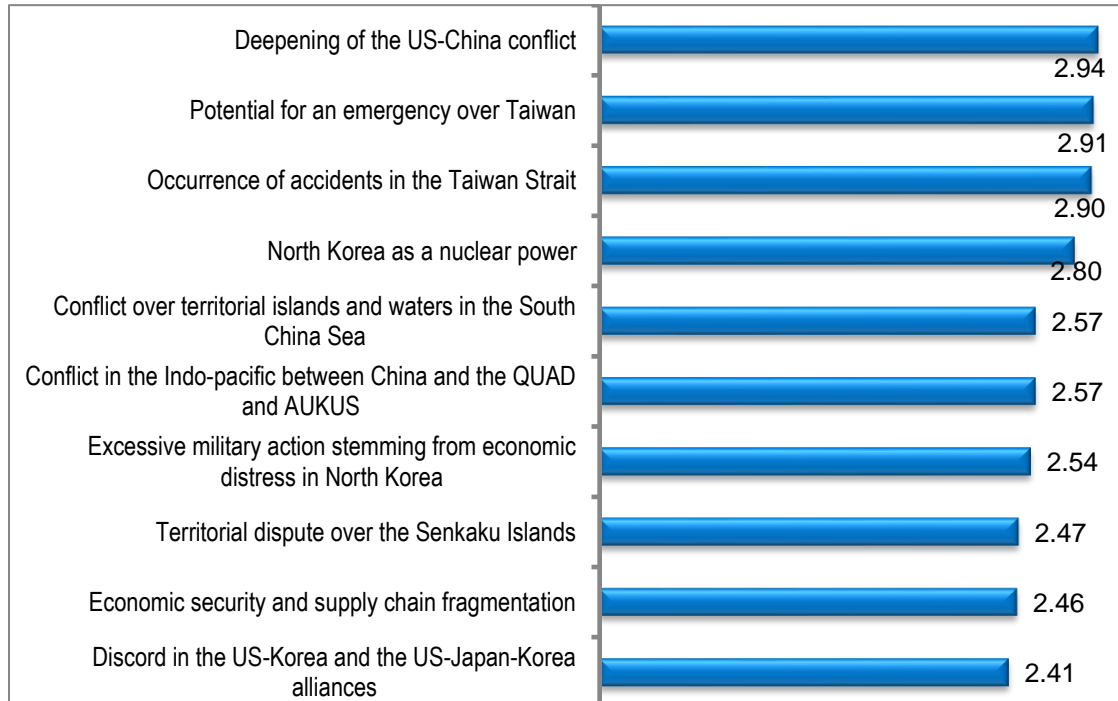
Looking at the Japanese expert survey results, the potential for an emergency in Taiwan comes at 2nd place with 3.06 points, whereas US experts placed it at 1st place out of 25 with 3.10 points. In addition, the occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait came in at 1st place among Japanese experts with 3.26 points, and 4th place among US experts with 2.86 points.

Because a score of 3 points marks the crisis management phase and 4 points marks the conflict phase, the survey shows that US and Japanese experts place the Taiwan issue beyond the stage of crisis management, and into the stage of potential conflict.

【Scores in terms of its impact among Chinese experts】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



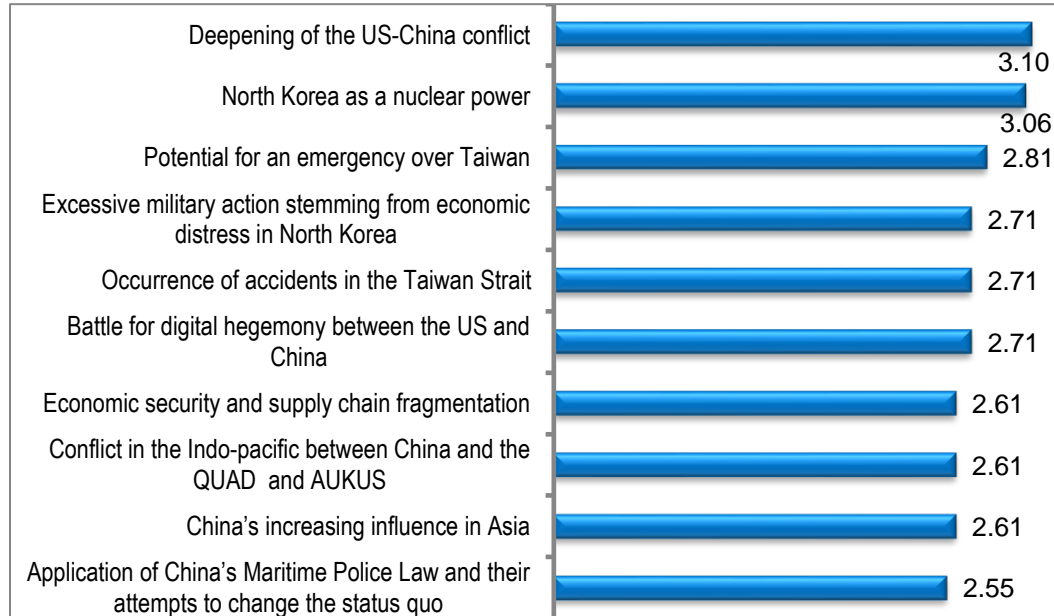
Let us now look at how the experts from China view the current state of Northeast Asia. We find that like their colleagues in Japan and the US, they are paying close attention to the situation surrounding Taiwan, but the bigger concern for them is the conflict between the US and China.

The Chinese experts judge that the greatest threat to peace in Northeast Asia in 2022 comes from the risks associated with the deepening conflict between the US and China (at 2.94 points). In 2nd place at 2.91 points is the possibility of an emergency over Taiwan, and at 3rd is the potential for accidents in the Taiwan Strait at 2.90 points. These results show that the experts from China see the Taiwan issue as almost being in the crisis management phase.

【Scores in terms of its impact among South Korean experts】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



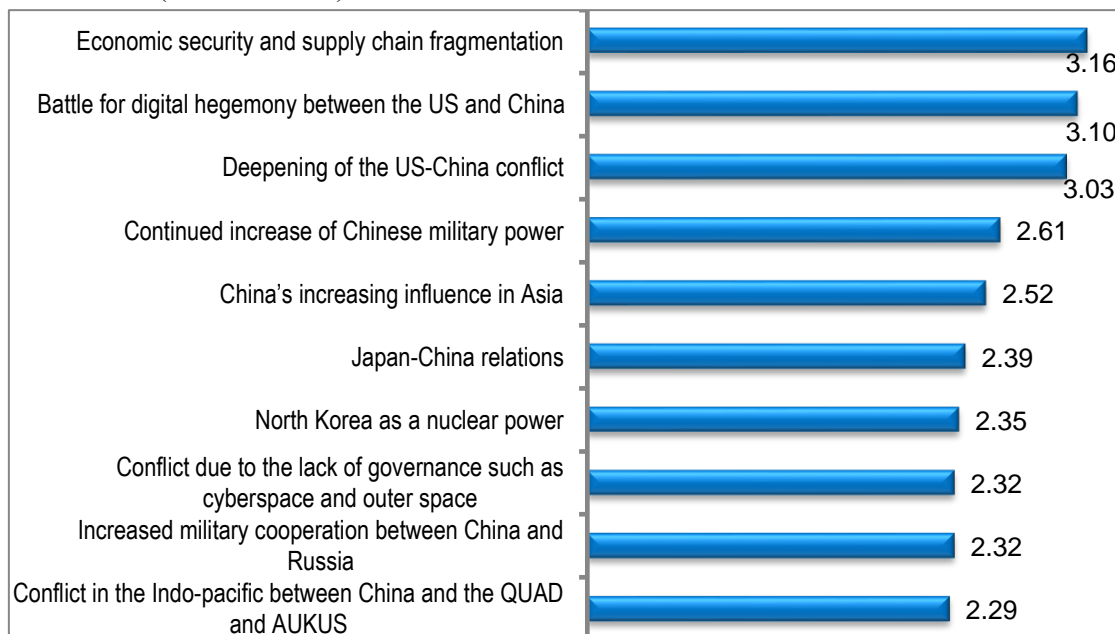
South Korean experts look at the risks somewhat differently, but they displayed a distinct nervousness about the development of the US-China conflict. The deepening conflict between the US and China falls at 3.10, higher than the 3.06 points scored by North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons, illustrating that they see the US-China conflict as the greatest risk to peace in Northeast Asia.

In 3rd place was the possibility of an emergency over Taiwan at 2.81 points, while the occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait was in 6th place with 2.71 points. Under the second assessment criterion, these risks were evaluated for the likelihood they would erupt in conflict in Northeast Asia in 2022.

【Scores in terms of possibility among South Korean experts】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



The experts from all four countries believe that the conflict between the US and China has reached the stage where caution is needed, as it is highly likely to lead to security and economic difficulties in Northeast Asia. This was particularly true among the Japanese and South Korean experts affected by that conflict, who believe that the danger of a crisis occurring in 2022 is not only likely, but that a number of risk factors are a step beyond that and could be judged as already in the conflict phase. Under the second assessment criterion, there were no risks scoring above 3 points among the US or Chinese experts.

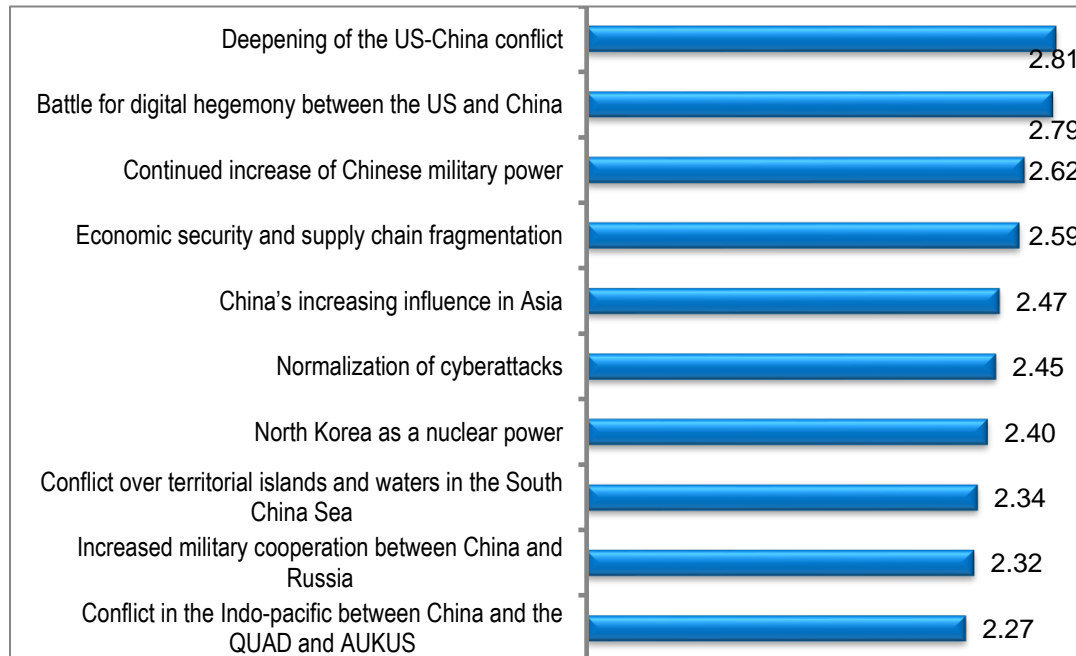
However, the Japanese experts scored six risk items at higher than 3 points, with South Korean experts scoring three risk items higher than 3 points. These results are connected to China's expanding military power and influence, and security and economic fragmentation arising from the US-China conflict. With a maximum of 4 points, a score higher than 3 points denotes a risk highly likely to erupt into conflict, while 4 points denotes that a conflict is already underway. Therefore, among the Japanese and South Korean experts, a total of nine risk items are seen as already in the conflict phase.

The second assessment criterion measures the likelihood of conflict, and with the Taiwan issue being considered the greatest risk to peace in the region in 2022, the survey highlighted that the experts from the four countries are wary about the possibility of the Taiwan issue erupting into conflict in 2022.

【Top 10 risks Scores in terms of possibility (amalgamated four-country score)】

Year: 2022

*4 out of 4 (4 is a full mark)



The amalgamated scores for the experts from all four countries show the occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan strait at 2.08 points and the potential for an emergency over Taiwan at 1.85 points. These scores both fall between the 2-point “50-50 chance of conflict” and the 1-point “unlikely to occur” stages. Taking a slightly closer look at the data, the Chinese experts scored the possibility of an emergency over Taiwan occurring in 2022 at 1.83 points, with the South Korean experts scoring it only 1.87. US and Japanese experts both answered that a Taiwan emergency is the greatest threat to peace in the region, but when asked about the chance it would actually occur, the US experts only scored it at 2.14, while the Japanese experts (in second place in terms of threat) only gave it 1.54 points. Meanwhile, while Japanese experts scored an accident in the Taiwan Strait at 2nd in terms of threat, they gave the possibility of it actually occurring in 2022 only 1.96 points, while China scored it at 1.64 and South Korea at 1.84.

The only standout result here comes from the US experts, who gave it a score of 2.86, judging it the most likely to occur in 2022 of all the threats considered. The experts were split into two groups on the root causes of these potential crises in Northeast Asia – with Japan, the US, and South Korea on one side and China on the other – and no agreement was found on whether the issues are being aggravated by China’s expanded military strength and influence, or by Japan’s military expenditures and the behavior of the US and its allies.

The experts from Japan, the US, and South Korea are greatly concerned about the shift in the balance of power in the region due to the increase in China's military influence under the US-China conflict, while the experts from China see these conflicts as being the result of the actions of the US, Japan, and other US allies.

Finally, in addition to these geopolitical conflicts, many experts in China, Japan, and South Korea are concerned that the impact of global warming on the increase in extreme weather conditions will result in difficulties in Northeast Asia in 2022. Chinese experts placed that issue at 6th with 2.34 points, Japanese experts had it in 10th place with 2.78 points, and South Korean experts had it in 11th place with 2.23 points.

Top 10 Risks

Threaten a Peace in Northeast Asia 2022

1. North Korea's existence as a nuclear power

Risk Rating: 4.17 points



A panel of experts at the United Nations Security Council investigated the effectiveness of sanctions against North Korea and released a report in September 2020 that indicated the country continues to conduct nuclear research and develop ballistic missiles, and that it has “it has probably developed miniaturized nuclear devices to fit into the warheads of its ballistic missiles.” In fact, 2020 saw

North Korea conduct repeated missile test launches in March, and it unveiled a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at the October 2020 military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Workers’ Party of Korea. In addition, at the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea held in January 2021, Kim Jong-un clarified the country’s confrontational stance toward the US, alongside his intention to further strengthen their nuclear deterrence.

The new strategic direction of the US is difficult to predict, as newly-elected US President Joe Biden is working with and sharing opinions with his allies, a process that takes longer than the unilateral approach of former US President Donald Trump.

To begin with, the Biden administration’s prioritization of nuclear issues seems to be focused on extending negotiations for the New START Treaty with Russia and on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, so it is difficult to predict how earnest its efforts towards North Korea will be. Furthermore, although cooperation between Japan, the United States, and South Korea is absolutely necessary, there are no signs of an improvement in relations between Japan and South Korea. It seems as if Northeast Asia will have no choice but to learn to live with the nuclear threat from North Korea as no one will be working towards the abolition of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula in 2021.

2. The US-China conflict and the struggle for control over the digital realm

Risk Rating: 3.88 points



The US-China relationship is still one of conflict in the realms of trade, technology, and security, a continuation of the situation from 2020. In addition, the US has increased its criticism of China and implemented economic sanctions in response to issues surrounding human rights conditions in Xinjiang, application of the National Security Law in Hong Kong, and more. The battlefield is

expanding with the addition of increased animosity regarding the response to the spread of COVID-19. In July 2020, four cabinet-level US government officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, gave speeches clarifying the US' confrontational attitude towards China and showing how its criticism of China was growing stronger.

Joe Biden's electoral victory in November led to the inauguration of his new administration, but the hardline stance towards China can no longer be described as partisan – the current administration is expected to continue this policy. Unless China actually changes its behavior, it will be difficult for the Biden administration to cooperate with them in dealing with issues it is prioritizing, such as infectious disease and climate change.

The sheer extent of economic and trade interdependence between the two countries will make it difficult to work towards the “containment” of China, but it is almost certain that the conflict between the US and China will continue to pose a threat to the world in 2021.

3. Conflict over territorial land and waters in the South China Sea

Risk Rating: 3.70 points



China and ASEAN continue to work on formulating a code of conduct (COC) to prevent the outbreak of conflict in the South China Sea. The first phase of the COC was completed in July 2019, earlier than planned, and the involved parties had expressed the intention to reach a conclusion by the end of 2021, but the COVID-19 outbreak has delayed further discussions.

However, ASEAN countries are strengthening their relationships with countries that have no territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. This trend can be seen in a November 2020 social media post by Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., who wrote that the COC does not exclude powers from outside the region, and in the joint exercise conducted in the South China Sea between the Vietnamese and Indian navies in December 2020.

In response, China is appealing for the exclusion of foreign powers, and pointing to the US, which is dispatching military ships to the South China Sea to strengthen its involvement in the region. China has stated that the US is interfering with the work of formulating the COC, and is calling on other countries in the region to remain vigilant and oppose the actions of the US.

Moreover, China's coast guard law took effect in February 2021, and operations conducted under that law could end up sparking off further conflict in the South China Sea.

4. China's expanding influence in Asia

Risk Rating: 3.53 points



China has continued to strengthen its military and economic involvement in ASEAN and other emerging countries around Asia through its maritime incursions in the South China Sea, its Belt and Road Initiative, and more. Laos and Cambodia have essentially fallen under the control of China under its “Southward Policy”, in which it is using aid as a tool for gaining influence. On 1 February 2021, a

coup was launched by the armed forces of Myanmar, a country in which China is working to expand its influence through the construction of a “China-Myanmar Economic Corridor” and other means.

Myanmar is geopolitically important because it lies between southern China and the Indian Ocean. If the US 7th Fleet blocks the Strait of Malacca in the event of an incident in Taiwan, China will lose access to energy resources and could face a life-or-death situation. It is a matter of national security for them to secure the necessary access to the Indian Ocean with a base outside of the US sphere of influence.

However, Myanmar also has an important role to play in the Indo-Pacific Initiative being promoted by Japan, the US, Australia, and India. This is particularly true for India as Myanmar is the only ASEAN country with which it shares a border, making it of high strategic importance. Deep-seated anti-Chinese sentiment in Myanmar means that it is not necessarily predestined to being brought under Beijing's umbrella. However, if the international community attempts to bring down the military government by enforcing economic sanctions, public sentiment may turn to China and China's influence may increase. If that occurs, Myanmar may become a seed of conflict with Japan, the US, Australia, and India – particularly the latter – even if the threat of it happening in 2021 is low.

5. Accidental clashes and other incidents in the Taiwan Strait

Risk Rating: 3.30 points



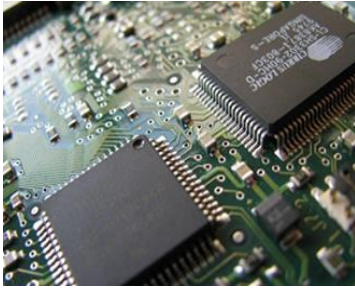
The administration of former President Trump strengthened US involvement with Taiwan by selling them a total of \$17.4 billion worth of weapons between January 2017, when Trump was inaugurated, and October 2020. In addition, US warships passed through the Taiwan Strait 13 times in 2020 alone.

This policy regarding Taiwan is expected to remain fundamentally

unchanged under the Biden administration, as seen in their sending of a destroyer through the strait on 4 February.

China vehemently opposes the US position on Taiwan. Chinese military aircraft have been more active in entering Taiwan's air defense identification zone since 2020, and there has been an increase in incursions into the waters around Dongsha Island – a valuable military position located near the southern end of the Taiwan Strait and the western edge of the Bashi Channel. China is clearly showing its opposition to the US and Taiwan as what were once simple return flights involving one or two aircraft have become large formations of aircraft of different types.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen repeated her declaration that Taiwan would not accept a “One China, two systems” offer. The peaceful unification of the two countries is becoming more and more difficult, and there is increased risk of the situation in the Taiwan Strait suddenly erupting in 2021. This will depend on the actions of Xi Jinping, who could be looking for tangible successes to lean on for the 20th National Party Congress in 2022, in which he could be selected to remain on for a third term as President.



6. Economic security and supply chain fragmentation

Risk Rating: 4.95 points



7. Conflict over territorial islands and waters in the South China Sea

Risk Rating: 4.93 points



8. Potential for an emergency over Taiwan

Risk Rating: 4.82 points



9. Normalization of cyberattacks

Risk Rating: 4.75 points



10. Conflict in the Indo-Pacific between China and the QUAD and AUKUS

Risk Rating: 4.74 points

Media Coverages

Media Coverage of Asian Peace Conference 2022

(Articles that could be verified as of the end of March 2022)

No.	Name	Date
1	The Asahi Shimbun (Japanese version)	February 23, 2022
2	Asahi Shimbun (English version)	February 24, 2022
3	Dream News	February 25, 2022
4	Niconico News	February 25, 2022

February 23, 2022 Asahi Shimbun (Japanese)

朝日新聞デジタル > 記事

北東アジアのリスク 今年の1位は… 日米中韓の専門家 201人調査



言論NPOが開いた「アジア平和会議」で発言
するダニエル・ラッセル元米国務次官補
=2022年2月22日、言論NPOの配信動画から



北東アジアの平和を脅かす 2022 年のリスクについて、NPO 法人「言論 NPO」（東京、工藤泰志代表）などが日米中韓 4 カ国の外交・安全保障問題の専門家 201 人に聞いたアンケートで、「米中対立の深刻化」が 1 位となった。2 位は「北朝鮮が核保有国として存在すること」だった。22 日公表された。

そのほか「デジタル分野における米国と中国の覇権争い」（3 位）、「経済の安全保障化とサプライチェーン分断の動き」（6 位）など、米中対立に関連する事象が多く選ばれた。

February 24, 2022 Asahi Shimbun (English)

U.S.-China feud cited as biggest threat to peace in Northeast Asia

By HIDESHI NISHIMOTO/ Staff Writer

February 24, 2022 at 18:03 JST

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Daniel Russel, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, speaks at the online Asia Peace Conference 2022, organized by Genron NPO, on Feb. 22. (Image released by Genron NPO)

Daniel Russel, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, speaks at the online Asia Peace Conference 2022, organized by Genron NPO, on Feb. 22. (Image released by Genron NPO)

A “deepening U.S.-China conflict” is the biggest threat to peace in Northeast Asia in 2022, according to a survey of 201 diplomacy and security experts in Japan, the United States, China and South Korea.

“North Korea as a nuclear power” was picked as the second largest risk to the region in the survey conducted by Genron NPO, a Tokyo-based nonprofit organization, and other groups in January and February this year.

The results were announced on Feb. 22 at the Asia Peace Conference 2022 symposium held online by Genron NPO.

Other U.S.-China issues made the risk list.

A “battle for digital hegemony between the U.S. and China” ranked third, and “securitization of economic issues and fragmented supply chains” came in sixth place.

The fourth most serious threat to peace in Northeast Asia was “occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait,” while “potential for an emergency over Taiwan” was eighth, the survey showed.

Among Japanese experts only, “continued increase of Chinese military power” was chosen as the biggest threat.

U.S. experts picked “occurrence of accidents in the Taiwan Strait” as the most significant risk.

China and South Korean respondents both chose “deepening U.S.-China conflict” as the No. 1 threat.

“You can’t say that a crisis similar to the one that is happening in Ukraine will definitely not occur in Northeast Asia,” Yasushi Kudo, head of Genron NPO, said at the Feb. 22 conference. “An escalation of tensions between the U.S. and China, including the Taiwan issue, is posing a risk to a wide range of areas.”

Daniel Russel, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, described “the security dilemma” currently facing the United States and China.

He said at the symposium that two states see their own actions as reactive and defensive while the other side’s actions are viewed as aggressive and threatening.

“Each side reacts to the other’s military behavior and military capability with alarm and believes it has to respond with a show of resolve and superior force as a deterrent,” Russel said. “This syndrome drives the bilateral relationship in a negative spiral as each state’s actions increase the anxiety of the other.”

“The actions that each side takes to increase its own security has the effect of pushing the situation closer to a crisis.”

About The Genron NPO

The Genron NPO is a non-profit, independent think tank based in Japan. Established in 2001 as the only venue in the country for responsible and future-oriented debate, The Genron NPO has sought to strengthen democracy in Japan, promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia, and develop solutions for pressing global issues. The institution was founded by Yasushi Kudo, the former editor-in-chief of a political journal titled “Ronso Toyo Keizai.” The advisory board of The Genron NPO consists of 13 prominent Japanese leaders from various fields. The institution is representative of the Japanese intellectual network, with over 7000 registered experts and more than 500 Japanese opinion leaders involved in its activities. The Genron NPO is a member institution of an international think tank network, the Council of Councils, since its establishment in 2012.

Our Missions:

Strengthen Democracy with the Power of Debate

The Genron NPO is the only institution that has taken such initiative to conduct research and the evaluations of party pledges made in every general election, and evaluate each administration’s performance in 12 policy areas annually to monitor their progress.

Conduct Civil Diplomacy to Promote Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia

Concerned about the absence of effective inter-governmental diplomacy in Northeast Asia, The Genron NPO established the “Tokyo-Beijing Forum” as a platform for civil diplomacy amid heightened Japan-China tensions in 2005. Each year, over 3000 people attend the forum, which has served as a unique bilateral platform for substantive intra-regional discussion for the past 13 years, and the forum has been widely covered by media outlets. President Xi Jinping has acknowledged our Track II diplomacy, calling it “non-governmental diplomacy”.

The Genron NPO also established the “Japan-Korea Future Dialogue” in 2013, and the “Japan-U.S.-China-ROK dialogue” on Northeast Asian security and public opinion in 2015. Recognizing the importance of public attitudes towards regional affairs for the implementation of pragmatic solutions, we also conduct annual multinational opinion polls in Japan, China, and South Korea. The Japan-China public opinion poll in particular is the only periodical dataset existing that analyzes public opinion in China over the past 13 years.

Organize Cross-Cutting Platforms to Discuss Pressing Global Agenda

The Genron NPO continuously strives to facilitate responsible domestic and international dialogue to tackle pertinent challenges facing the international community. In March 2017, we launched the “Tokyo Conference,” the first discussion platform in Japan that addresses global agenda with top international think tanks representing 10 major countries. With the intention to protect common international norms such as democracy and individual freedom as the basis of international cooperation, the results of the debates at the Tokyo Conference were synthesized into a proposal that was submitted to the Japanese government and the Italian government as the 2017 G7 host.

The Asia Peace Conference 2022

Supporters





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