

Politics in the Age of Emotion: Has It its Place in Diplomacy?

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In the realm of political science, the emotional aspect of human behavior has been neglected. This was accelerated after “the behavioral turn” of the discipline during the 1970s when methodological individualism and a rational choice was set as a major approach in the field. In the late 1980s, however, especially after that neo-institutionalism appeared, varieties of approaches were established, such as constructivism or critical theory (for details see Kaztnelson and Milner 2002). Even till, the elements of emotions have been left behind in the studies; at least the question of how emotions could be incorporated into those different approaches remains.

On the other side, research on human emotion has its roots in Human or Heideggerian tradition in Philosophy (Heidegger 1925, Hume 1751). In the recent years, schools of various disciplines, e.g., social science, economics, psychology, and sociology, have illuminated the importance of emotions and passions in human behavior and decisions (Elster 1999, Kahneman 2011, Haidt 2012; Azuma 2011; Yoshida 2014).

This paper aims to overview the place of emotions in the field of diplomacy, and to predict its implication on political decision making, especially focusing on geopolitical condition in North East Asia and how the public opinion perceives it.

1. Public Emotions in Foreign Affairs

In 1935, when people in the United Kingdom and France were alerted by Italian invasion to Ethiopia, the public opinion toward Italy at the time turned to be from pitiable into hostile. This shift completely influenced the mood in Europe, which provided the condition for the World War II. Some historians point out that leaders were immune and inactive to this public opinion “ambiance,” and then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin obtained serious political damage to the extent he could not recover (Renouvain and Duroselle 1991). Political leaders in democratic polity should be aware of the “awakening of people due to democratization” from this period.

Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, the democratization and the development of public media (newsmagazines and films) has completely transformed the conditions of public policy making, not only in domestic politics but also in foreign policies. A French intellectual of the time, Julian

Banda, even observed an “organization of hates” led by the various media industry, backed up by public intellectual figures (Banda 1927).

At the time, the pursuit of autonomy for rational decision making and reasonable negotiations among nations was the tenet of diplomacy. In his book, which became later known as a classic, the diplomat Harold Nicolson defined the substance of diplomacy by saying that “the qualities of my ideal diplomatist” are “truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty and loyalty” (Nicolson 1939); he implicitly criticized the hegemonic position of the United States with its democratic passion which led to an intervention to the old continent.

However, diplomatic autonomy of this kind which once guaranteed the European concert was on the way to collapse, due to the fact that public emotions, biased and fostered by new media are so pervasive. As Ryosuke Amiya critically analyzed the praise for diplomatic autonomy, given globalization and supranational institutions, the diplomatic corps are now constrained to accommodate with other bureaucratic structures, civil society actors, Medias, and public opinion (Amiya 2007).

This is by the fact that statecraft became more democratized over the decades, and that the *States* became the Nation-states finally. In his seminal works on the historical development of Nationalism, E.H Carr (who himself stayed critical to a rational view of politics; see Cox on this point) specified the transition from Monarchic Nationalism to Nation’s Nationalism, and finally to Mass Nationalism appeared during the time (Carr 1941).

It seems that these structural conditions, even if being strengthened, have not changed over time. By defining three basic emotions structuring contemporary world politics, i.e., fear, humiliation, and hope, Dominique Moisi pointed out that the first one as the driving force in the modern world. As he put it:

The primary reason that today’s globalizing world is the ideal fertile ground for the blossoming or even the explosion of emotions is that globalization causes insecurity and raises the question of identity (Moisi 2010:12)

As developed countries lose its hegemonic positions in world politics, the emotion of fear resurges, and the identity as a nation takes grounds. In sum, if democratic politics is sustained, decision-makers should take into account fear, humiliation and moreover , hope, in order to govern in the world claiming more and more for their just emotions.

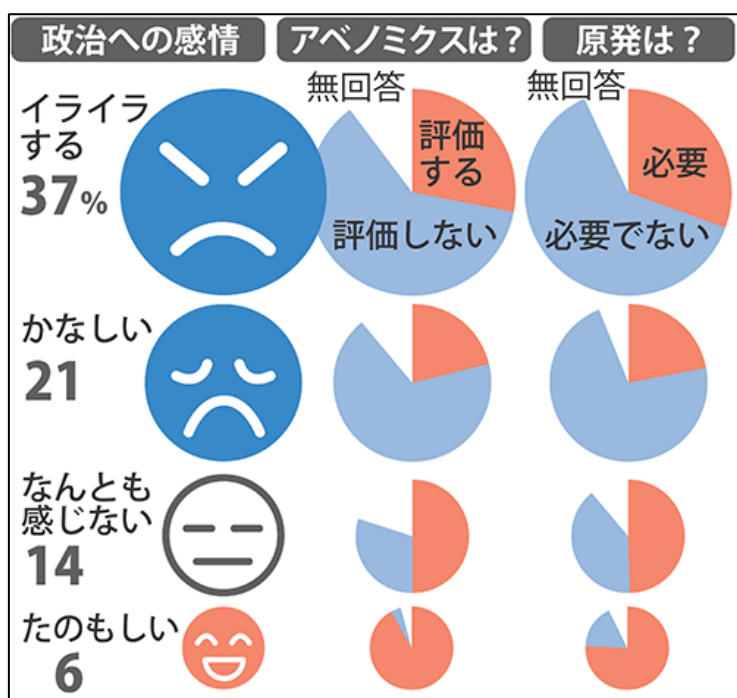
2. Taking Emotions Rationally

Recently, many opinion polls and surveys in Japan attempt to induce the emotional side of the electorates as possible. The electoral survey jointly conducted by Mainichi Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, and Hokkaido Shimbun during the last national elections in YEAR, in collaboration with academics, proposed several approaches considering the emotional aspects of the samples (for details, see Yoshida 2017). During the general election campaign in 2014, the Mainichi and Ritsumeikan University conducted a survey on people’s emotions by asking the feelings toward politics and policies, e.g., if they feel confidence, apathy, sadness, and irritation (see **Graphic 1** for the summary results).

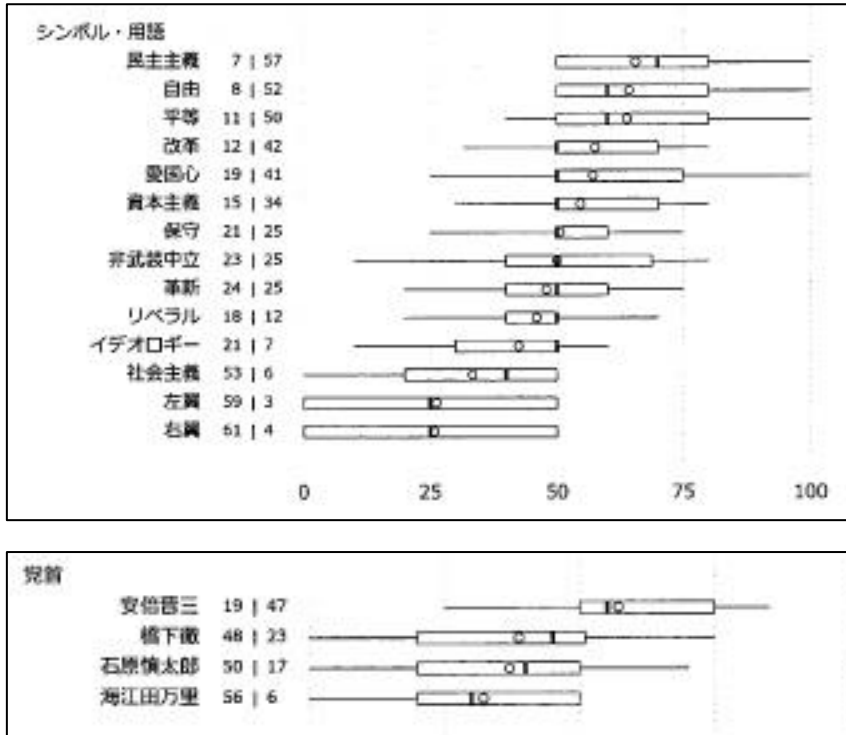
Since the 2012 general elections, Asahi Shimbun and the University of Tokyo have conducted surveys by applying the “feeling thermometer” method which asks the questions of whether respondents “like” or “dislike” certain political symbols (such as liberalism, conservatism, patriotism, capitalism, etc.) and political figures or institutions and political figures or institutions, by using the numerical scores from zero to hundred (see the result in **Graphic 2**).

Although the samples were limited to the local level, Hokkaido Shimbun and Hokkaido University also conducted an opinion survey by the method created by French sociologist Denis Muzet, originally named as “The Word of...(Les Mots de...),” which later became to be known as “Emotion map,” as it can visualize the respondents’ images of good or bad toward certain categories, such as political parties, public policies and reform ideas (see **Graphic 3**).

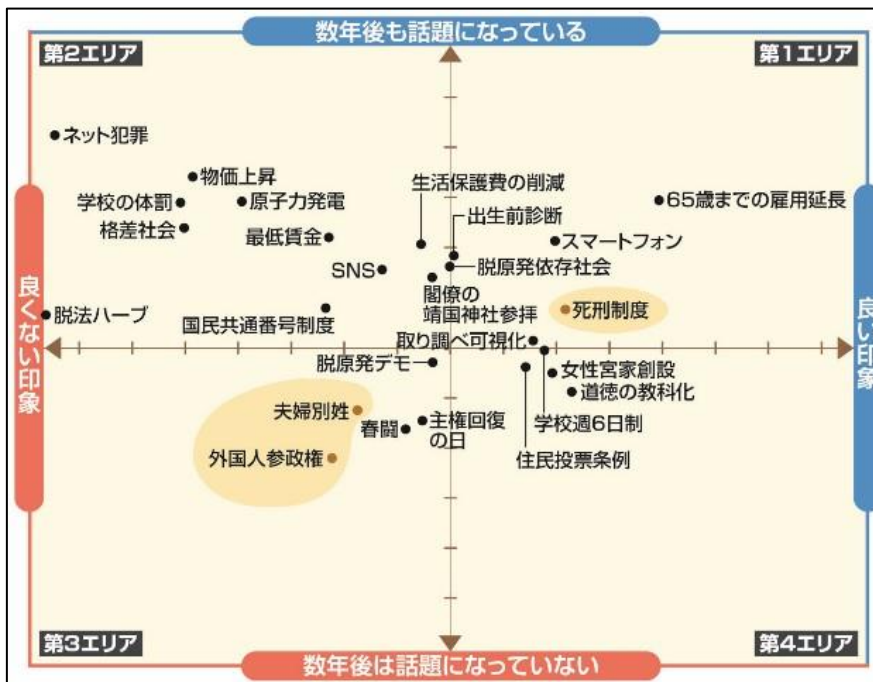
(Graphic 1) Mainichi Shimbun’s survey “Eravote” asking for feelings on politics (2014)



(Graphic 2) Asahi Shimbun “feeling thermometer” (2013)



(Graphic 3) Hokkaido Shimbun “Emotion Map” (2013)



As the technological and methodological innovations in the field of opinion survey have just started, further applications in other opinion polls in wider contexts are awaited; in Japan, however, where national newspapers has the monopoly for public opinion surveys to set up their preferred political agendas, opinion polls are likely to be studied in less systematic manners.

As Pierre Bourdieu famously stated in the article “There is no things such as public opinion” (Bourdieu 1973), public opinion is often manipulated by media elites, and is made in a constructivist way, if not artificially. On the one hand, opinion survey is used to politicize issues, and on the other hand, to create consensus in a mediatized society. The prerequisite for opinion surveys that the public knows about everything, that they know about their preference on everything, and to pretend that they would have a rational judgment, could be misleading. In this sense, taking rationally the emotional side of people is crucial than ever.

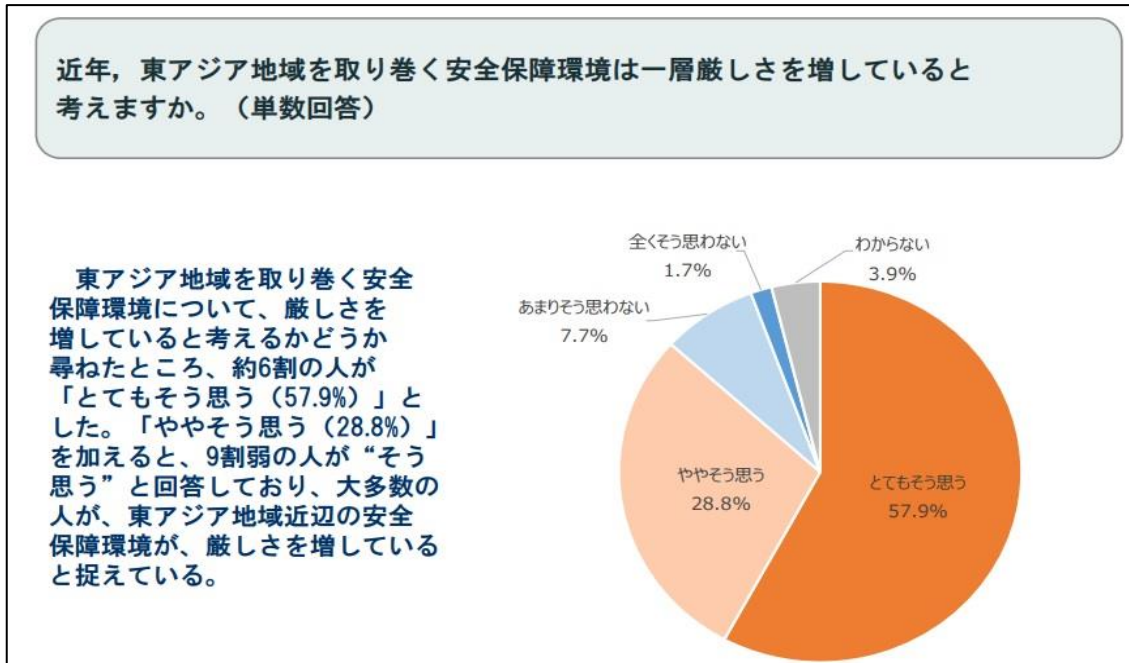
3. State of Public Opinion on Diplomacy and East Asian Environment

When measuring emotions and feelings thatthe Japanese have on the current situations in East Asia, we must depend on the existing public opinion survey results conducted by Government, private think-tanks, and traditional media. Despite the empirical limitations, we will focus on the survey results to consider the aspect of feelings in this section.

3.1 General appreciation

In general, the large majority of Japanese think that the security condition in East Asia is degrading (about 80%, **Graphic 4**).

(Graphic 4) People are alarmed on the security environment in East Asia

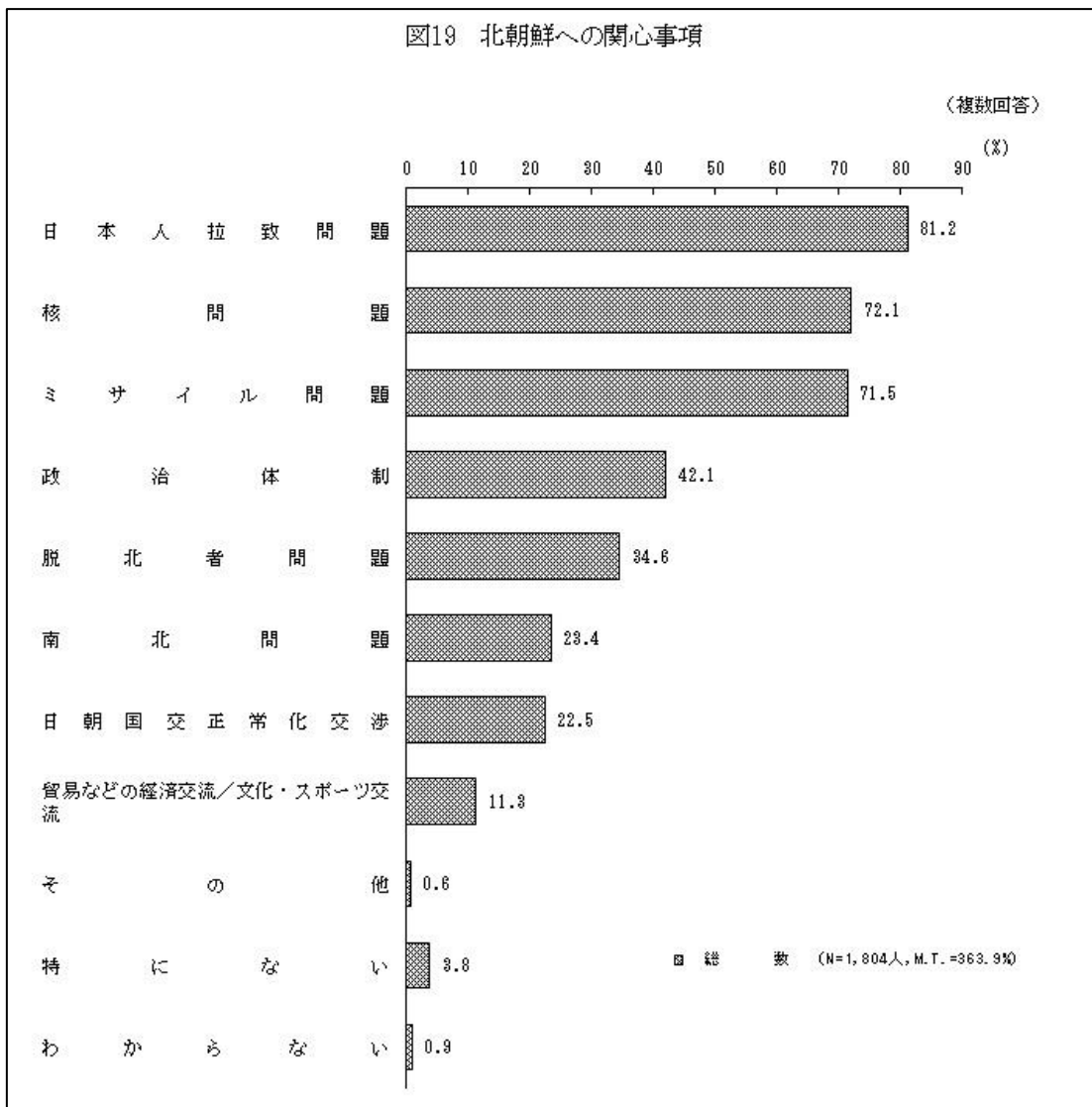


(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018)

Indeed, during and after the 1990s, Japanese opinion was strongly marked by security challenges in East Asia, including the North Korean Nuclear issue, missile crisis, and the emerging Chinese military presence.

Concerning North Korea, the majority thinks that the abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean authority is the biggest concern, more important than the nuclear or missile development issue (Graphic 5).

(Graphic5) Abduction by North Korea is the most important issue



(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017)

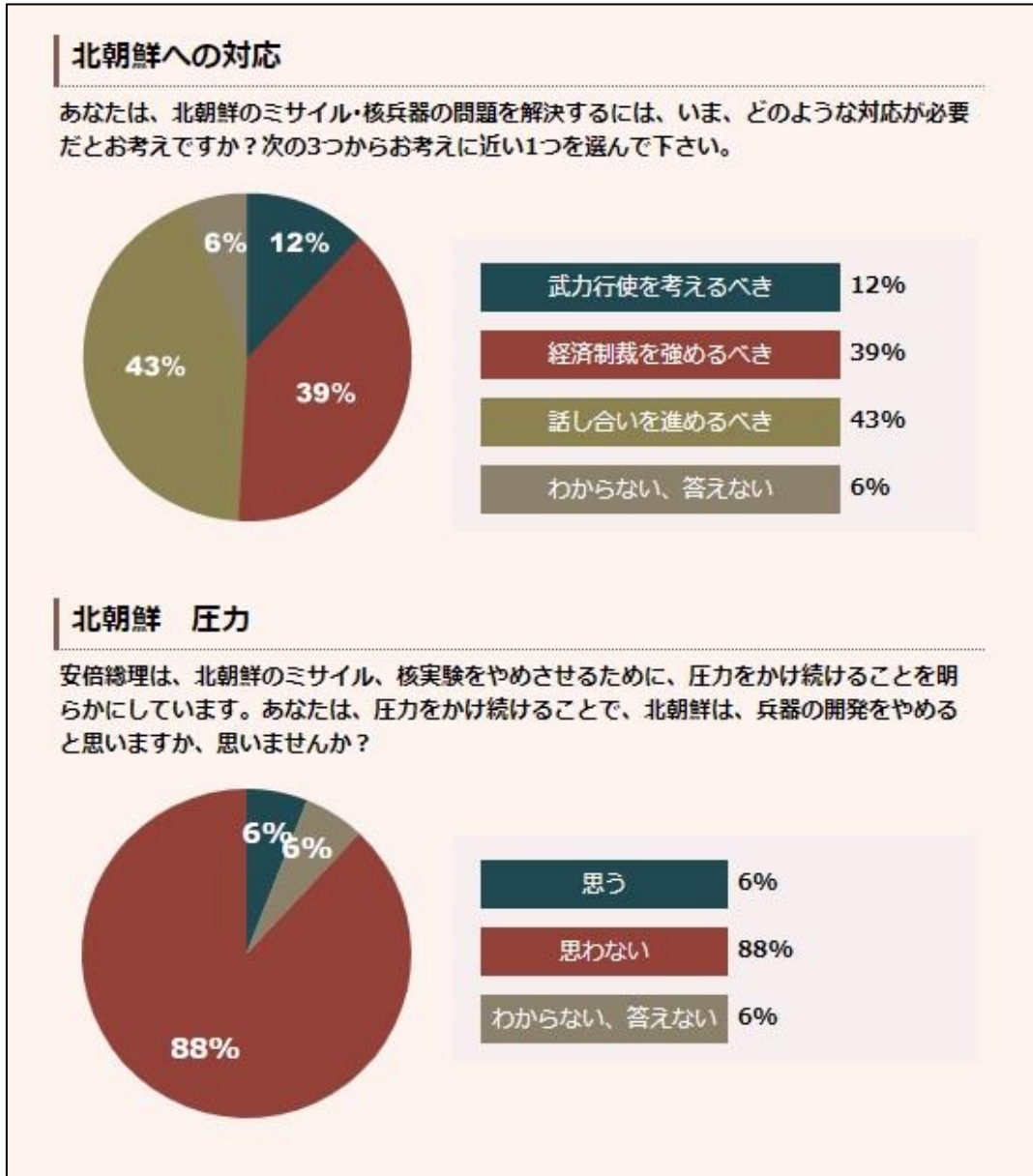
The abduction issue with North Korea was intensively reported by the media in the early 2000s. Then Prime Minister Koizumi used the issue politically by framing it in a theatrical style (Ohtake 2006), which strongly impressed the Japanese public opinion; the issue remains as an important variable in the Japanese diplomacy toward North Korea.

Still, most of the Japanese do not wish any military conflicts as a way of resolution with the northern part of the peninsula, by favoring diplomacy first, then economic sanctions (**Graphic 6**).

Nevertheless, the same survey also indicates that the Japanese stay pessimistic about the diplomatic capabilities of the Japanese government; about 90% of the respondents think that their

government will not be able to denuclearise the country (ibid.).

(Graphic 6) Only 12% favour for military intervention and pessimistic on resolving issues

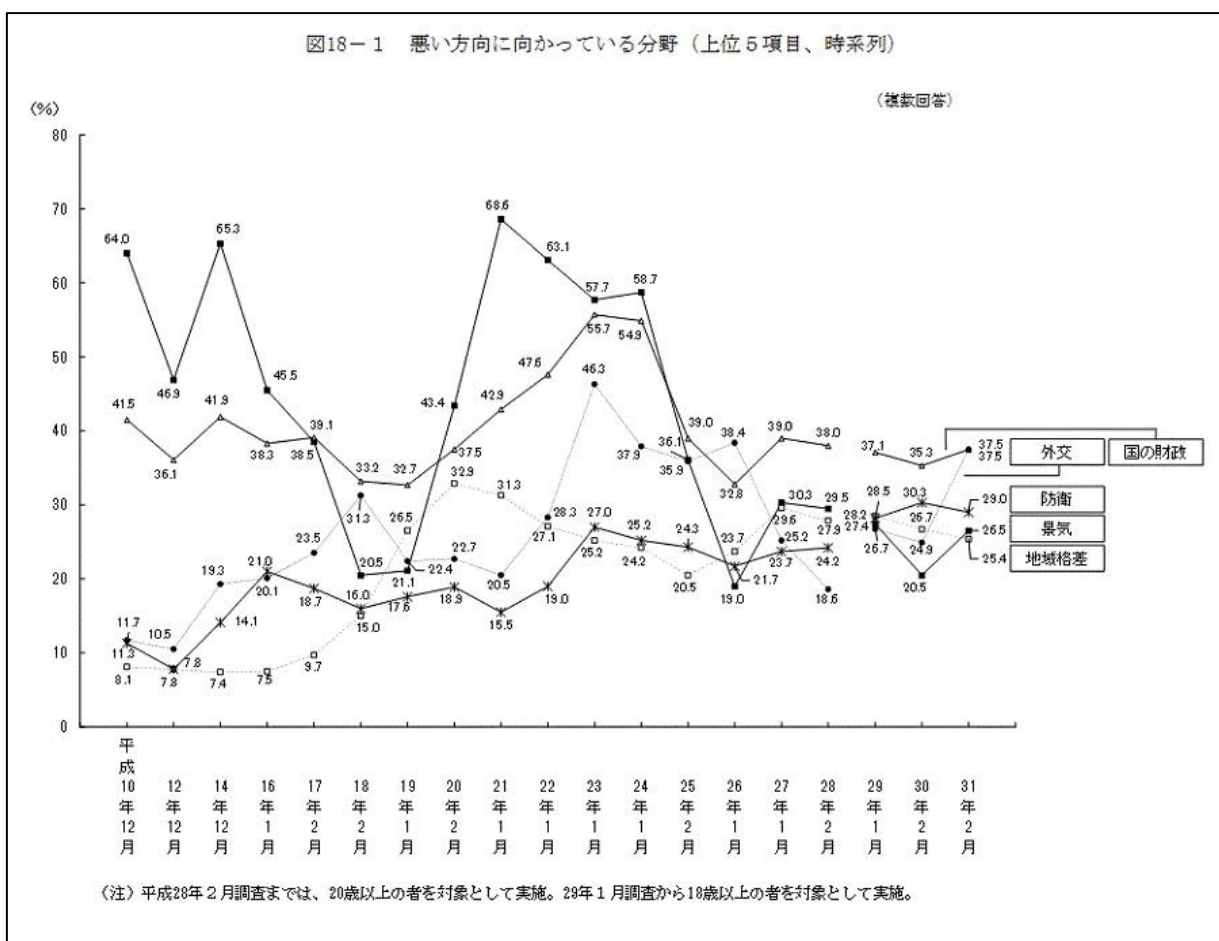


(Asahi Television 2017)

By the hostile conditions in Asia that Japan have faced after the end of the Cold War, from the military threats of North Korea to historical and territorial disputes with South Korea, passing by the economic and militaristic emergence of China, it seems that Japanese are losing confidence in their diplomacy.

According to the other opinion survey by the Cabinet Office in 2019, among the five governmental policies of which the respondents think as being “in a bad direction,” diplomacy and public finance became the top concerns for the first time in the last two decades (**Graphic 7**).

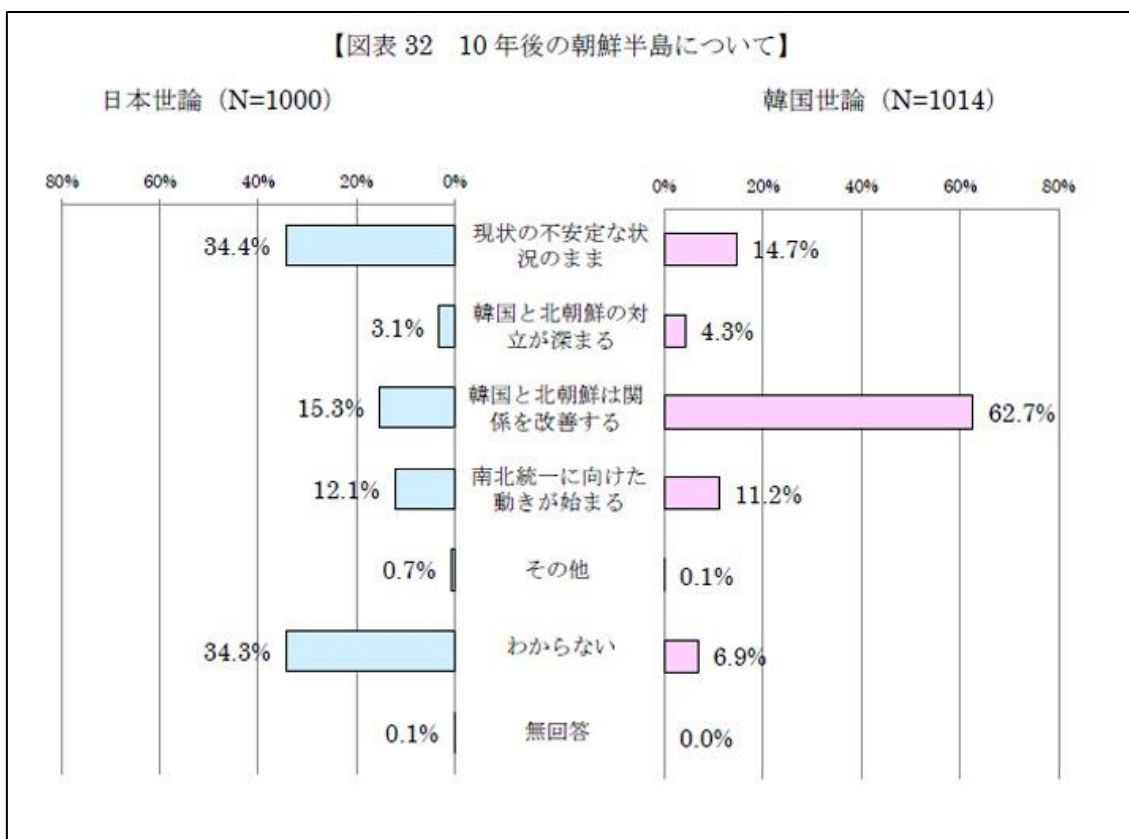
(Graphic 7) Diplomacy, Public finance, Defence, Conjunction, Regional inequality in disfavour



(Cabinet Office 2019)

Such an overall lack of confidence in their own government capabilities is reflected in the pessimistic vision on the future of the region. As to the predictions about the Korean peninsula in for ten years later, 34% of Japanese view it remain unstable, while 67% of the South Koreans opt for realizing a more friendly relationship with the North (**Graphic 8**).

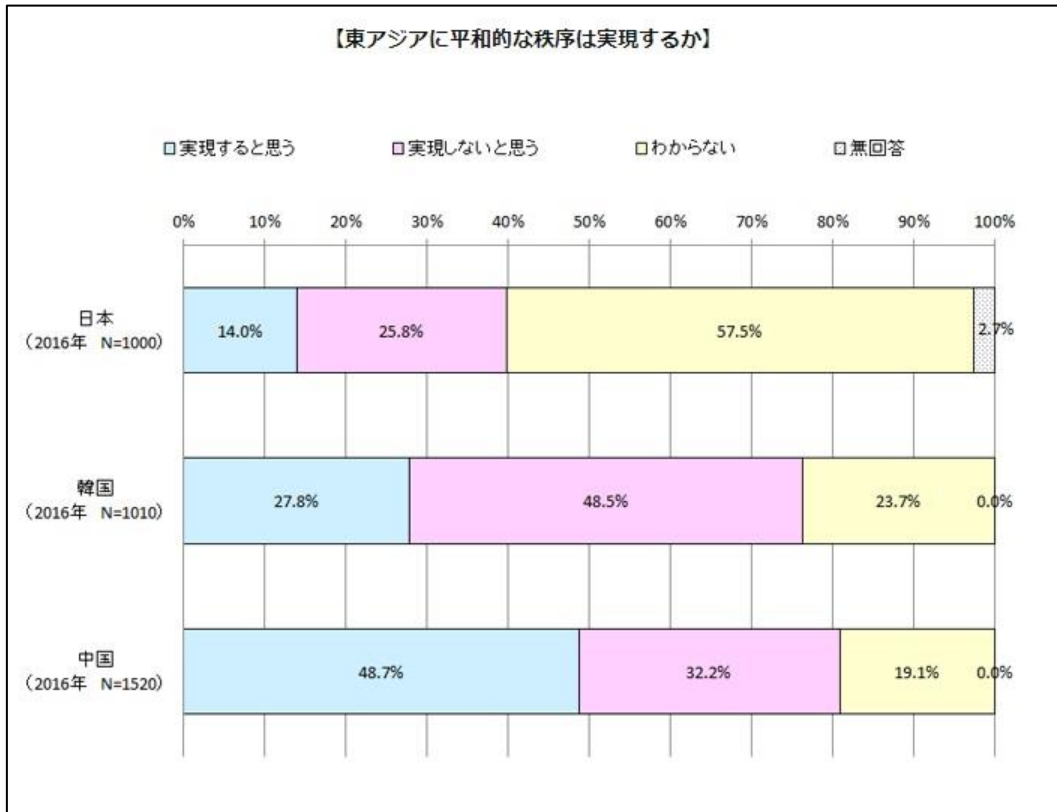
(Graphic 8) About the future of the Korean Peninsula, Japanese and Korean are in contrast



(Genron NPO 2018)

Such Japanese pessimistic prospects about the region can be seen in the other place like in the survey regarding a possible peace in East Asia (Survey source). To the question of the possibility for “realizing peaceful order in East Asia,” only 14% of the Japanese responded positive, while 57.5% were not sure and 25.8% of the responses were negative. This is, again, sharply contrasted to the results of the other two countries, South Korea and China, in the same survey: 27.8% of the Koreans and moreover, 48.7% of the Chinese respondents view positively (Graphic 9).

(Graphic 9) Japanese pessimistic about the East Asian order

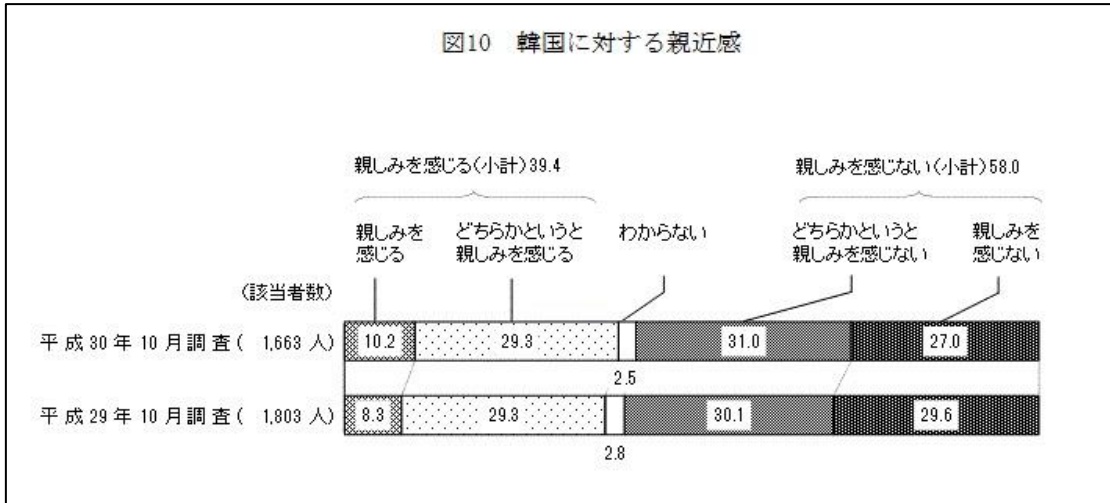


(Genron NPO 2016)

3.2 Japan-South Korean Relations

As to the Japan-South Korea relations, the Japanese feelings are divided into two opposite categories (**Graphic 10**): in the survey in 2017/2018, while roughly 40% of the Japanese respondents expressed “sympathy” with the neighboring country, 60% presented not to feel sympathy.

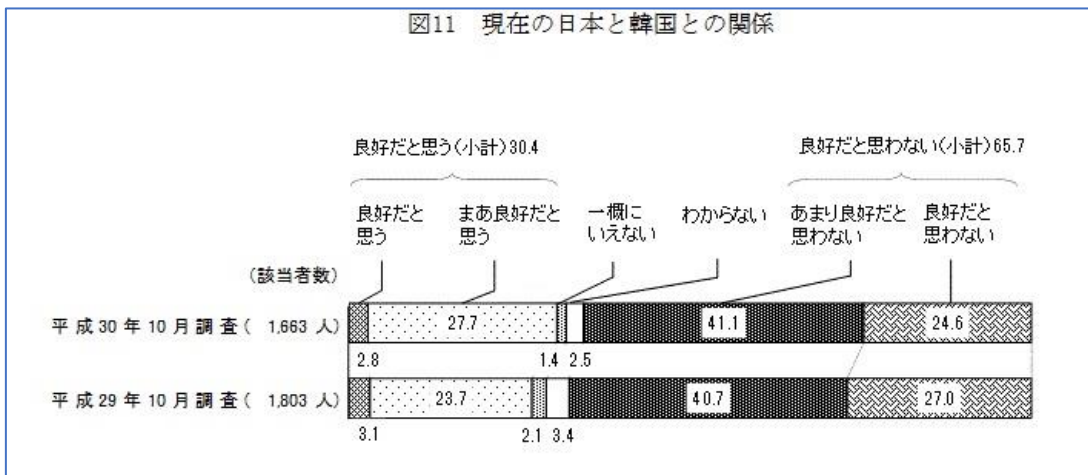
(Graphic 10) The share of Japanese feeling “Sympathy” towards Korea (2017/2018)



(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018)

Likewise, the poll results revealed a divide of opinions as to the state of the relationships: about 30% view as being in good relationship while about 65% do not agree with the opinion (Graphic 11).

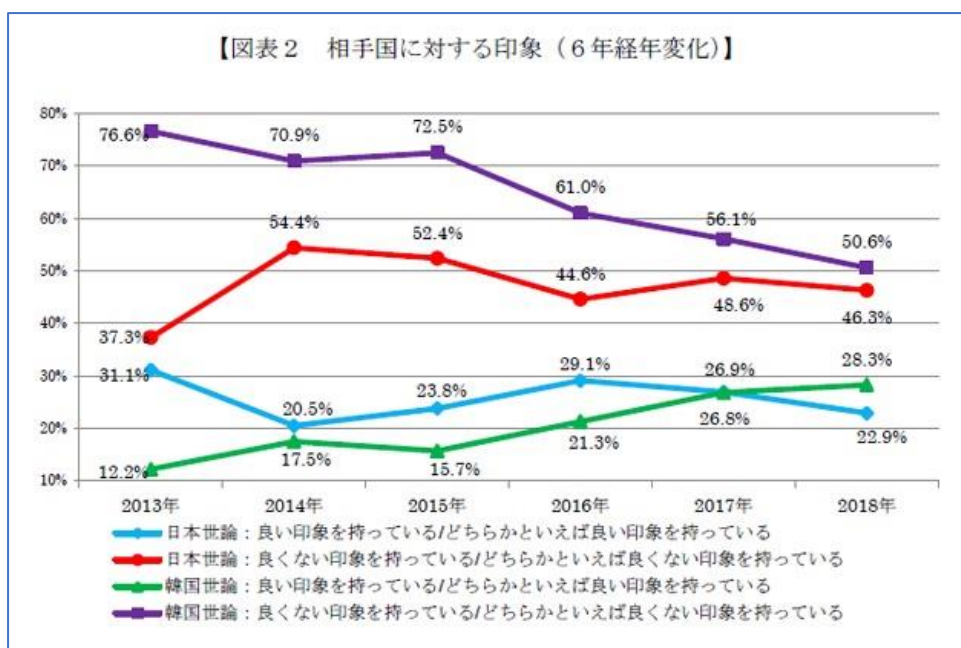
(Graphic 11) Relations with Korea (2017/2018)



(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018)

The good news is that both the Japanese negative impressions toward Korea and vice versa declined in the recent years (Graphic 12). During the last five years, in both countries, the number of people who have a negative impression toward the the other decreases is decreasing quickly in general trend even if the increase of people with a good impression remains small.

(Graphic 12) The impression of Japan and Korea toward each other

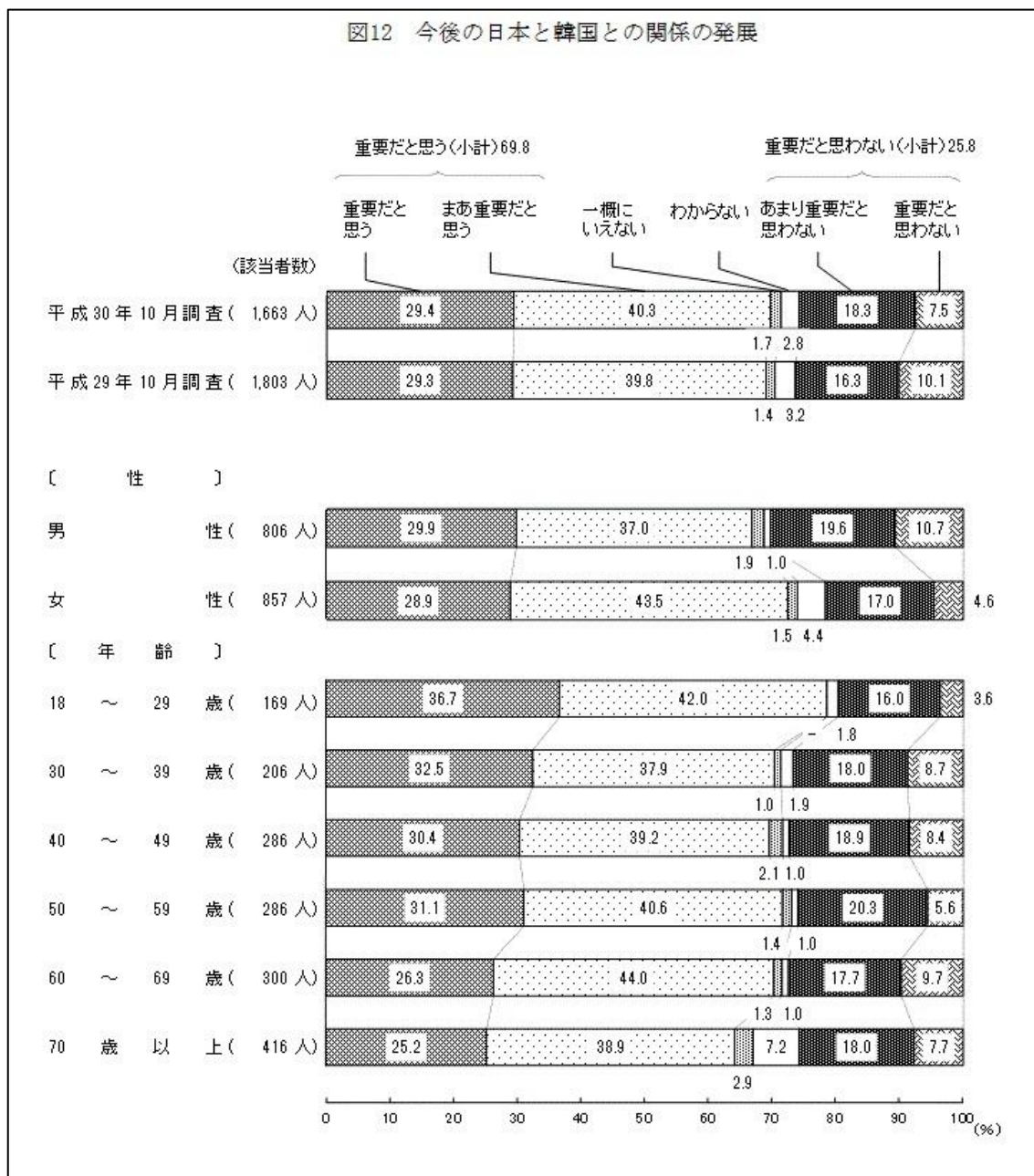


(Genron NPO 2018)

As has been seen, the mutual feeling is apathetic, at least not enthusiastic; we can find a large consensus that it is important to develop a more firm relationship, on both sides of the East Sea.

In the survey of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan conducted by 2018, the large majority (about 80%) think that “developing the relationships with South Korea” is important. This trend can be seen across the generations of this survey; remarkably, in the youngest cohort, from 18 to 29 years old, 37% of the respondents replied that “it is *very* important develop firm relationships.” (Graphic 13).

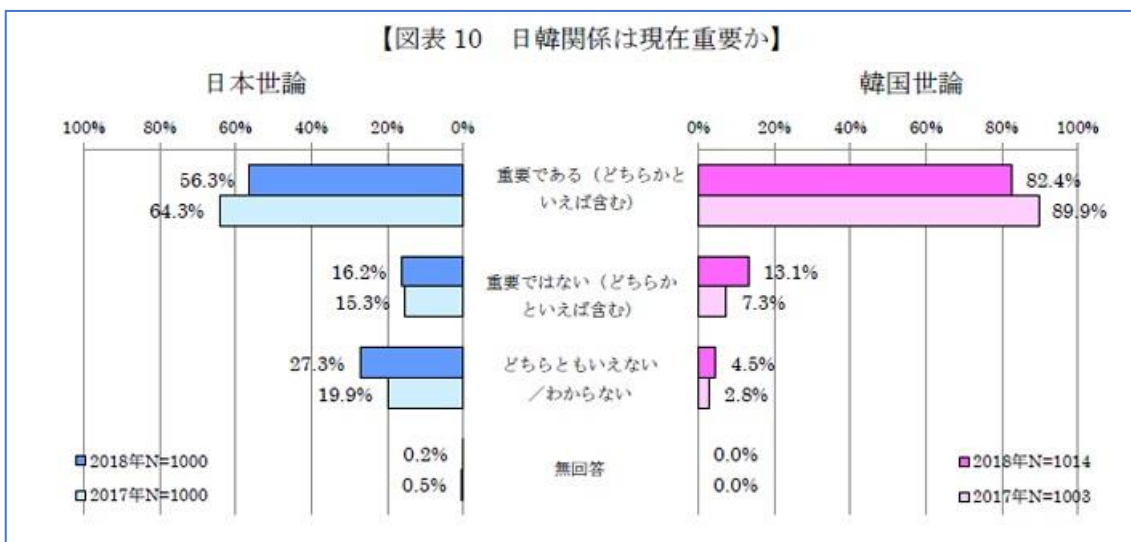
(Graphic 13) People thinking important to develop a firm relationship with Korea



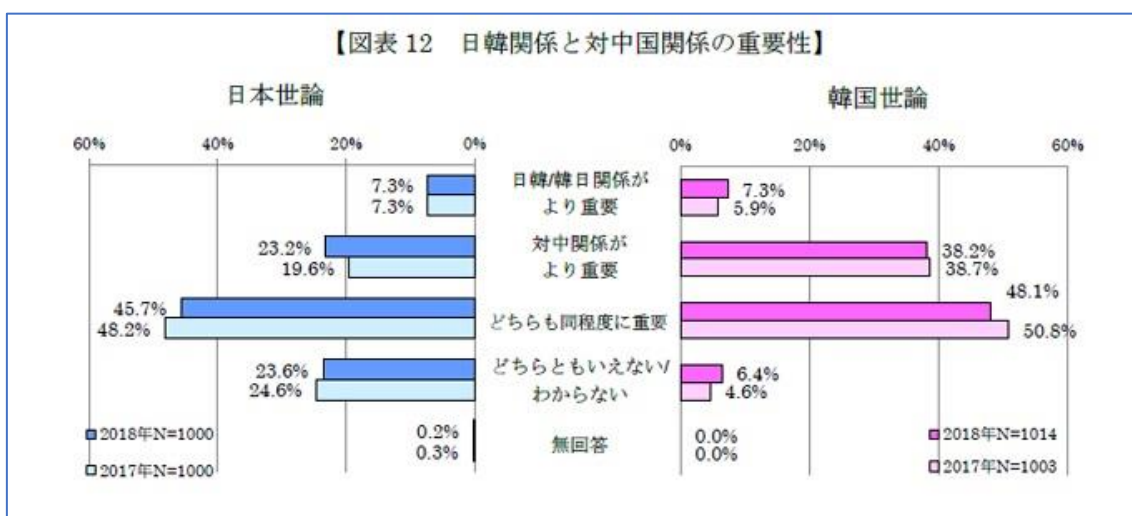
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018)

Another reason for being optimistic is that this feeling is mutual. Comparing the responses between Japan and Korea, the percentages of the positive responses toward the question differentiate each other: about 60% of the Japanese and 80% of the Koreans, respectively (Graphic 14). Moreover, the average level of this feelings do not change compared to China, since the majority think that both relationships are equally important (46% in Japan, 48% in South Korea)(Ibid.).

(Graphic 14) Japanese/Korean think that their relationship is important (2017/2018)



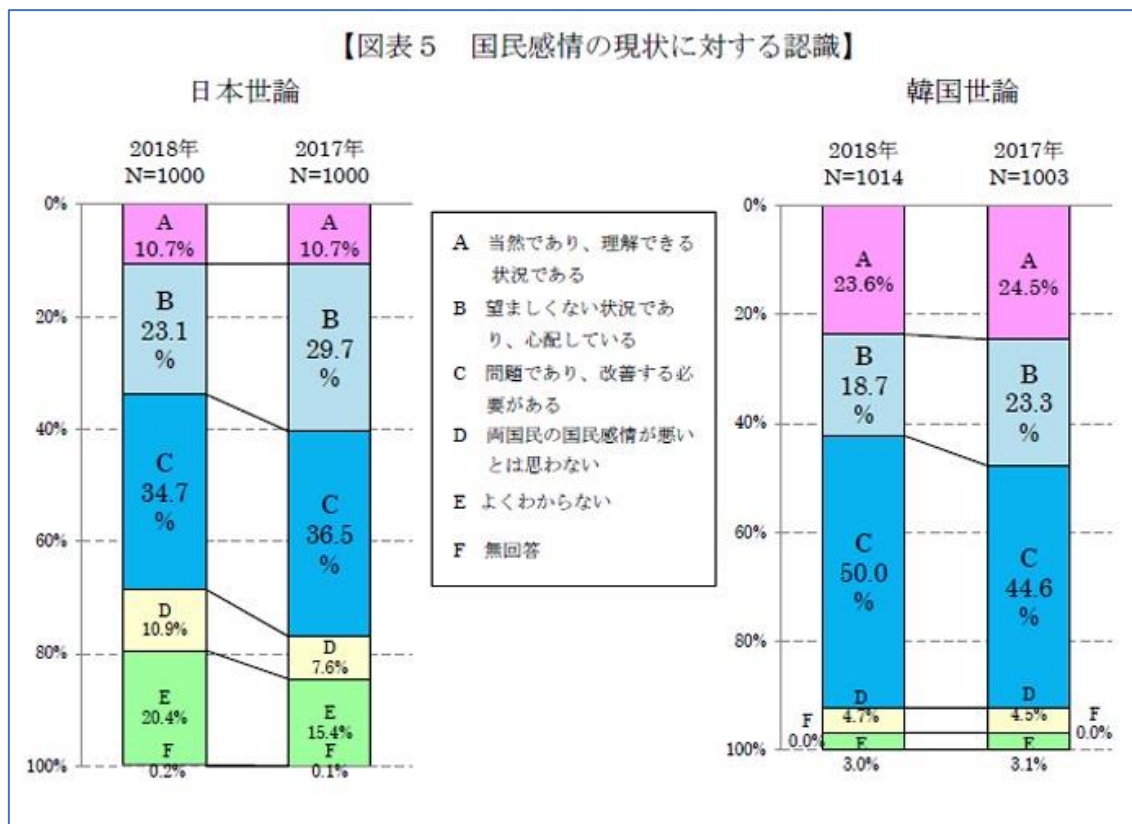
(Graphic 14) Japanese/Korean think that their relationship is important as well as with China



(Genron NPO 2018)

Moreover, most importantly, they are a sign of concerns about the state of their mutual relationships (Graphic 15). As to the question of the “state of the national feeling” toward each other, the majority in both countries equally concerns as not being desirable, as illustrated as the section B in the below, 23% in Japan and 19% in Korea, and considers to be improved, shown as the section C, 35% in Japan and 50% in Korea. Only a minority wish to hold the status quo (A: 11% in Japan, 24% in Korea).

(Graphic 15) The perception of the “national feeling” in their countries



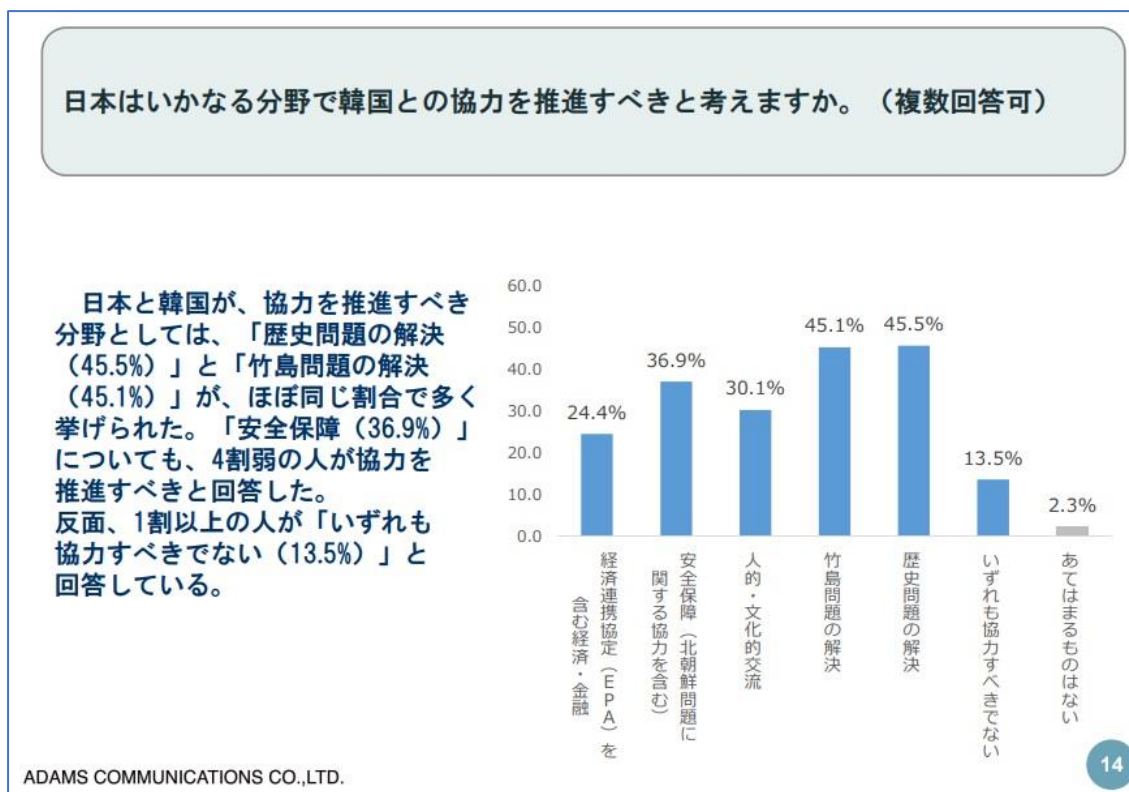
(Genron NPO 2018)

3.3 Waiting for a solution

As have been seen in the survey results about the people’s mind, the Japanese are still divided if they feel or not sympathy toward South Korea, yet, it can be appreciated the majority considers the relationship as crucial and anticipates a betterment.; such positive expectation can be seen in the Korean public opinion. Considering such two dimensions of the national feeling should be valuable for decision makers in both countries; moreover, to avoid to exploit negative feelings should be regarded as the norm of their conduct.

Then what are the key issues dividing public opinion across the two countries? As far as Japan concerns, most of the people wait that the historical problem (45%) and territorial dispute (45%) should be resolved, if not promoting security cooperation (37%) with South Korea (**Graphic 16**).

(Graphic 16) Areas to be fostered for more Japan-Korea cooperation

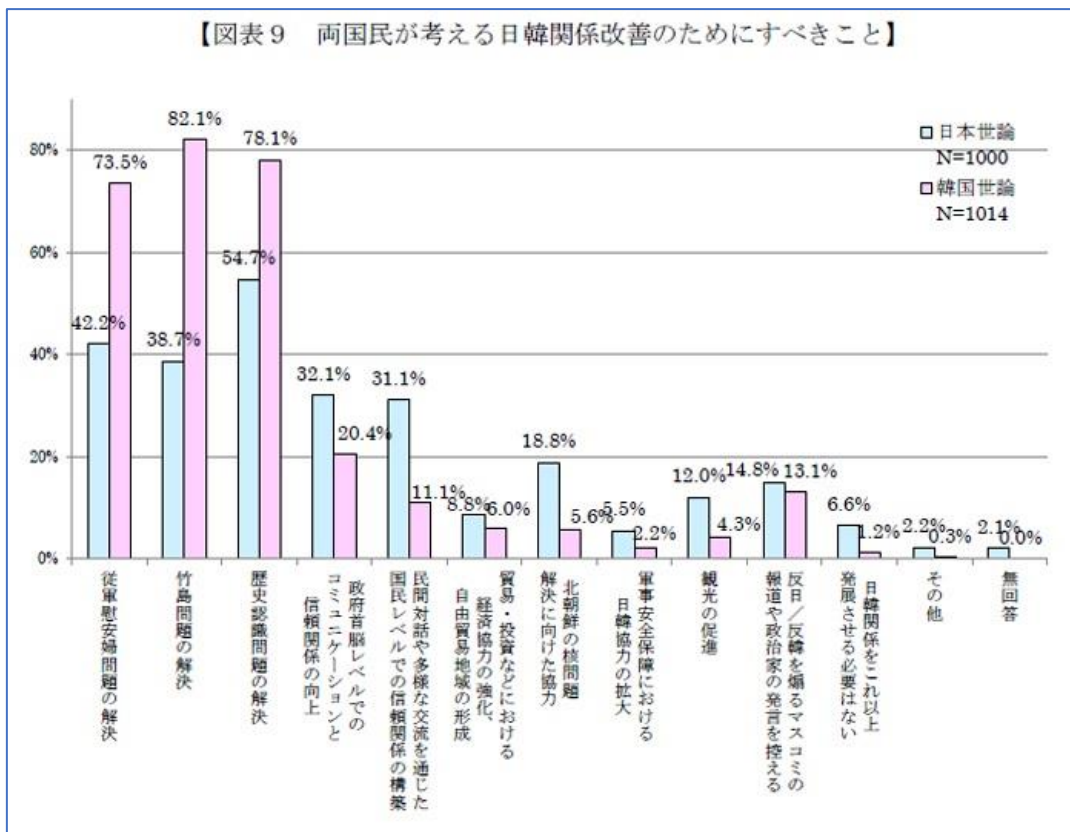


(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018)

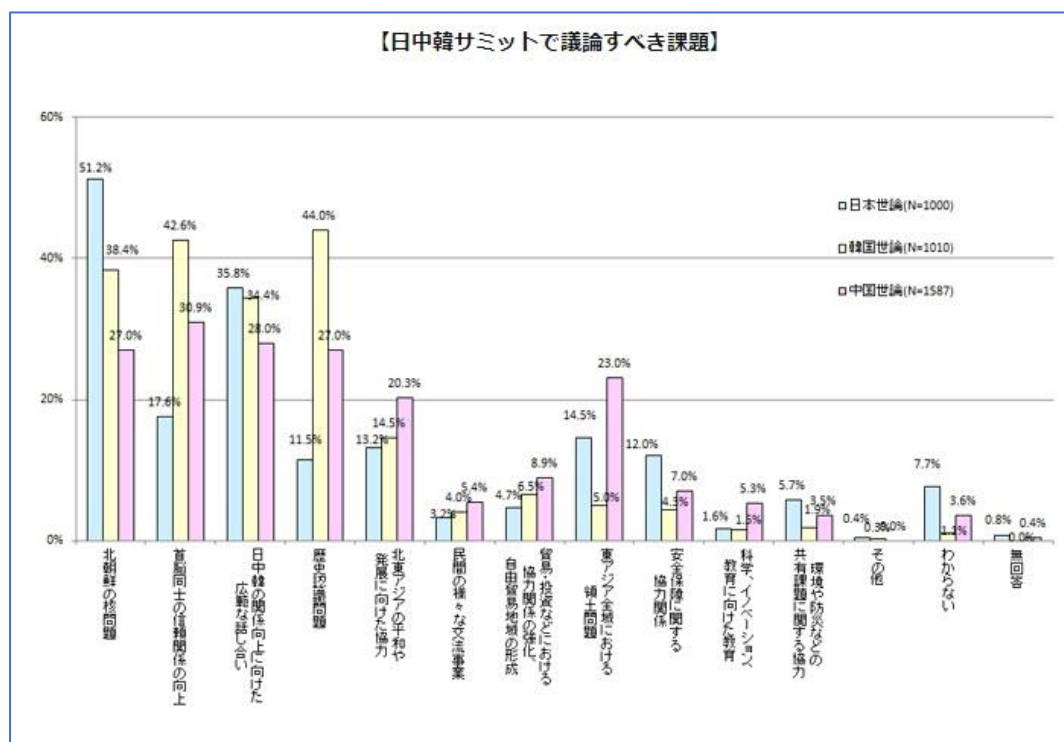
When talking on dividing issues, of course, we should consider its specificities. Again, comparing opinion on the both side, we confirm that the South Koreans are more attached to solve the historical problem and territorial issue, while Japanese are more relying on diplomatic cooperation. To the question of “what should be done to improve the relation”, 80% of Koreans see the settlements of the war-time comfort women/ sex slaves, Dokdo Island and historical problems as a prerequisite for a better relationship; on the other hand, Japanese recognizes these issues yet to a lesser extent. Japanese put more stress on a traditional and diplomatic way to establish a better relationship, namely “communicating and building trust among leaders” (32%, **Graphic 17**).

Such gaps of the priorities by country can also be seen across public opinion in the three countries: Japan, South Korea, and China. To the question of what should be discussed in Trilateral Summit, the Japanese respondents attached great importance to the North Korean problem, while the South Koreans emphasized the historical problem, and the Chinese ones were attached to the territorial issue, and also to more institutional cooperation (**Graphic 18**).

(Graphic 17) Issues to be resolved for improvement



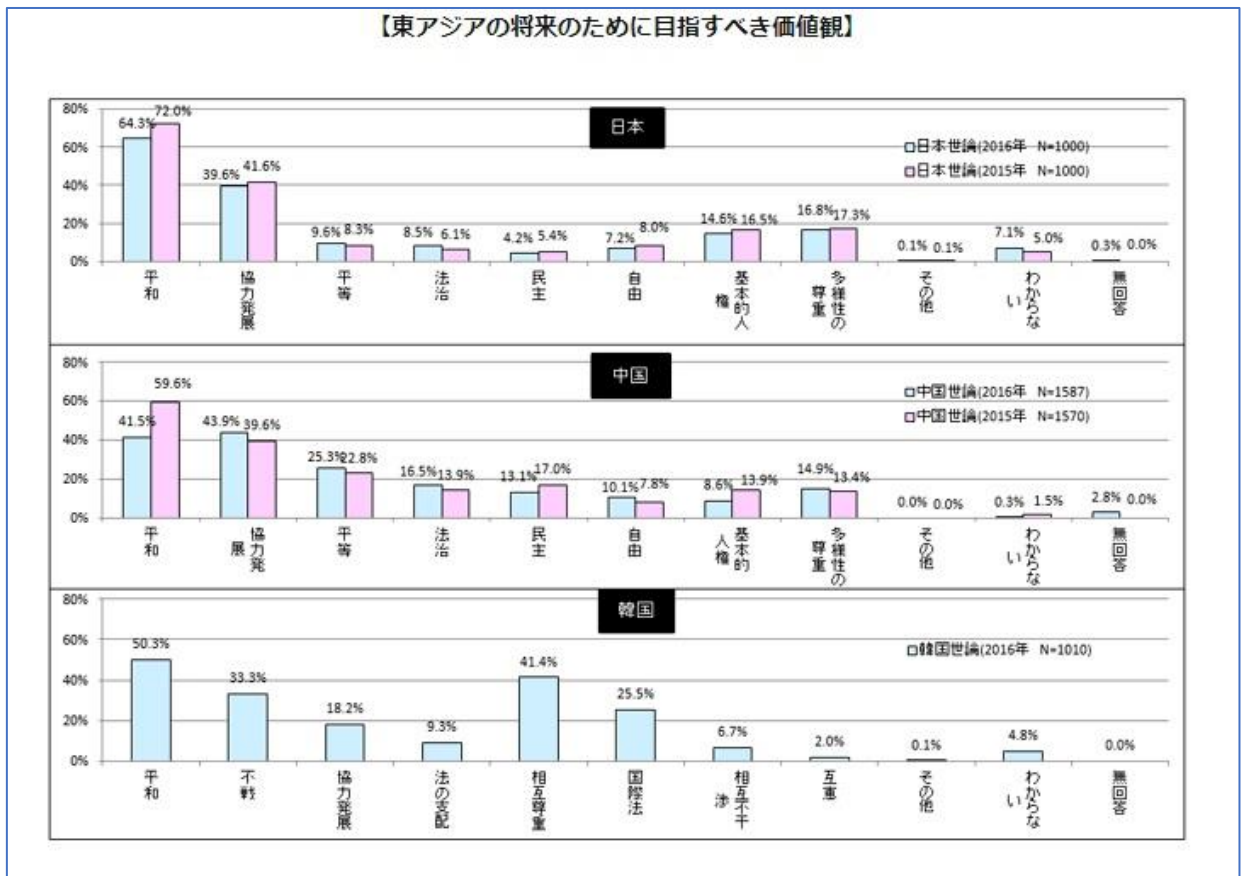
(Graphic 18) Issues to be discussed in the Trilateral Summit



(Genron NPO 2016)

As the priorities of the concerned issues and the preferred way of resolution vary, we should not undermine what in public opinion have in common. As to the question of “which is the *value* that should be pursued for the future of East Asia,” the respondents in all the three countries equally choose “Peace” as the top priority: 64% in Japan, 50% in South Korea and 41% in China (Graphic 19). Needless to say we should consider that the term, peace, might represent different meanings across the countries. Still however, we stress that the leaders and decision-makers should take such a positive connotation of the people’s feelings across the countries more seriously.

(Graphic 19) Important values for the future of East Asia (2015/2016)



(Genron NPO 2016)

Conclusion

Now that the scholastic arguments about the aspect and function of emotions and feelings arise in several social science fields, it would be counterproductive to blame, ignore, or omit this (very) human characteristic. One should even admit that with the democratization and evolution of media

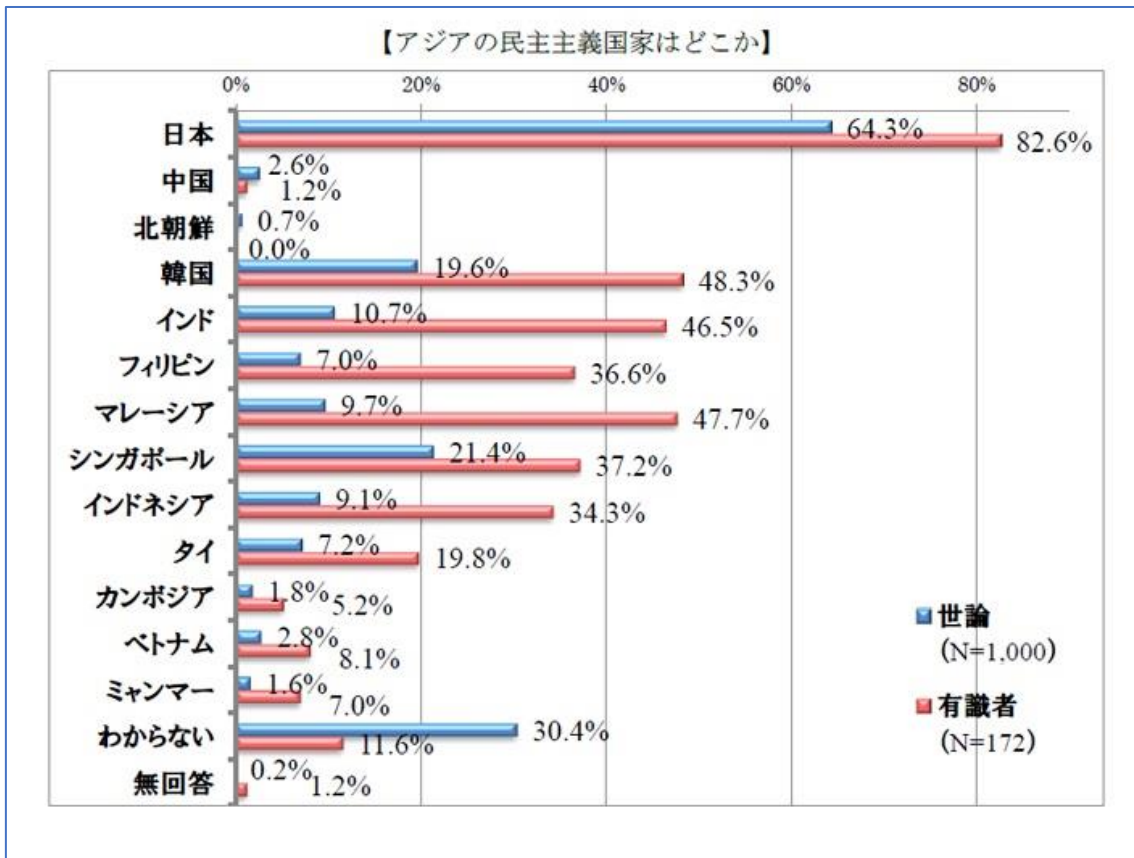
and communications, including the internet, decision-makers should be aware of that they cannot fulfill policy goals by enforcing rational way of thinking to the whole nation. Their constituencies are the ordinary citizens who are occupied by their daily concerns and with limited information and cognitive constraints (Sunstein 2014; 2017).

Moreover, this rule is not an exception for diplomacy in general, where its autonomy with professional diplomats has lost its grounds since long. Under this new structural conditions, leaders, and decision-makers should not abuse of the emotions, but to use and canal it more soundly, employing and zemphasisizing positive concept/values, in the age of negative emotions such as fears prevailing. After all, this is the function and the responsibility that only leaders in democratic polity could be awaited, not only naming, blaming and claiming? In this paper, we observed that the public opinion does not exist *a-priori*, but rather in *a-posteriori*, and as far as Japan and South Korea concerns, they are waiting for the amelioration of their mutual relationship.

Until recently, Japan has been long recognized as a “Civilian Power” (Maul 1990) or even as a “guardian of the liberal order” (Eickenberry 2017), where populist waves come up in different countries. We still do not know if Japan is ready to identify itself or have the ability to those expectations. However, at least, this is what the Asian are expecting from Japan. Asking the people of the ASEAN countries on which country they trust to “do the right thing in contributing to global peace, security, prosperity, and governance”, 66 % choose Japan, heading the European Union (41%), United States (27%), India (22%) and China (20%) . Moreover, only 2% sees that Japan has political and strategical influence in the regions (ISEAS 2019).

In Asia, there are only a few countries that share values and practice democracy. As we see in the graphic below, when the Japanese are asked to define democracies in their region, they name only three countries: South Korea, India, and Malaysia. In sum, we do not have much choice other than to cooperate.

(Graphic 20) Defining Democratic countries in Asia (Blue: Opinion polls, Red: Experts survey)



(Genron NPO 2018)

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