

How do emotions like trust and fear shape East- Asian Security Dynamics

Dianchen Shen *

Department of War Studies, King's College London King's College London, Strand, WC2R 2LS,
United Kingdom

* Corresponding author:shendianchenbeibei@gmail.com

Abstract. This article explores the subtle yet significant role of emotions in international relations, particularly focusing on East Asia's development and security dynamics. Emotions are not innate but shaped by external sociopolitical influences, and their understanding involves a combination of feelings and attitudes. The politics of emotion involves battles over entitlement and relevance of feelings, with individual, media, and state actors playing distinct roles. Emotional politics utilizes emotions as a political tool, strategically projecting emotional performances to achieve political goals. Populist politics exploit feelings of uncertainty, fear, and worry to advance their agendas. East Asia's political and social changes and ongoing conflicts involve highly emotional phenomena, such as fear and trust. This essay aims to demonstrate how emotions shape East Asian security as a fundamental political force through individual, state, and media dynamics.

Keywords: Emotions, international relations, sociopolitical factors, politics of emotion, East Asia security.

1. Introduction

Emotions have played a subtle but significant role in international relations for a long time. It is important to note, first, that emotions are not innate or 'natural' and are instead influenced by external, sociopolitical factors (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014). Gustafsson and Hall (2021) similarly regards that emotions are understood by society as a combination of feelings and attitudes, and can be seen as a result of a group or held in high regard for their political significance. In the politics of emotion, it mainly refers to the political battle over who is entitled to feel what and/or whose feelings are relevant. In particular, among the actors of emotions, including individual, media and state, emotions play distinct roles in East Asia's development. Emotional politics is another concept that involves the use of emotions and their expression as a political tool. Hall (2015) demonstrates how emotional performances can be strategically projected in order to achieve political goals. Similarly, according to Kinnvall (2018), populist politics exploit feelings of uncertainty, fear, and worry to achieve their aims. In fact, few realms are more infused with emotion. For instance, East Asia is undergoing tremendous political and social change, with numerous issues of concern, ongoing conflicts, and significant potential for future conflicts. Interestingly, all of these challenges involve highly emotional phenomena: Fear plays a crucial role in political realism, from Japan and South Korea's fears of a rising China to Taiwan's fears of a loss of political identity (Khoo and Nicholas, 2011). Trust has, likewise, been central to liberal visions of a more cooperative international order in East Asian security (Booth and Wheeler 2007). Therefore, it is important to see how emotions form East Asian security as a fundamental political force step-by-step. In these regards, this essay will demonstrate how emotions function through individual, state and media, and eventually lead to the dynamics of East Asian security.

2. Individual Emotion of ordinary people

To begin with, individually-experienced emotions are likely to be used as a tool of political power by politicians unexpectedly, especially when these emotions originate from so-called "past" memories. By doing so, it is easy for politicians to use these unifying emotions as a political force

when it comes to foreign policy, perhaps because collective emotions constitute the sum of the feelings of a majority of individuals. As Pace and Bilgic (2019) explains, when these emotions are felt and expressed collectively, they can create a sense of security and stability through the way they define "the self" in contrast to "the other." To illustrate, the emotion of trauma has been a very prominent concept in discussions related to emotions pertaining to foreign policy. It appears that political actors are generating and evoking the sad emotions of the past that are either long gone or didn't exist at all, including nationalism and patriotism (Pace and Bilgic, 2019). These emotions tend to lead to extremism - the conflict in East Asia has been fuelled by such emotional politics. For example, several scholars have argued that the memory of Japanese aggression has had a significant impact on China's perception of Japan as a threat (Sasaki, 2010). Even though according to Igarashi (2018), Japan has apologized many times for its occupation of China in the mid-20th century, Japan's former prime minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro, has visited the Yasukuni Shrine, and there has been a dispute over Japan's portrayal of its history in school textbooks, emotions of trauma were enough to evoke Chinese people's sad memories of Japan's history of aggression, possibly resulting in a worsening of China's perception of Japan as a threat (Sasaki, 2010). Meanwhile, Oren and Eitan (2020) also state that the Chinese government are trying to use patriotic education campaign to boost popular support, in a similar way to Japan's provocative China policies, which can also explain how politicians utilise the emotions of sadness and threat in shaping the relationship between China and Japan. Overall, it is clear to see that seemingly individual emotions either become or are, at least, public, social and political, and thus play a significant role in shaping the relationships of East Asian security.

3. Individual Emotion of political actors

When individual political actors take their own emotions into account rather than focusing on the emotions of others, their feelings may also play an important part of role during negotiations, and can, therefore, shape the relationships of East Asian security. According to Sasley (2011), when individuals who act on behalf of and strongly identify with a state appraise an event not for how it affects themselves but for how it affects the state, state emotion dominates. Unlike ordinary people, with their predominately personal emotions, for diplomats and leaders, they need to balance both individual and state emotions in order to create a unifying purpose and direction. To be precise, when the gap between a politician's personal feelings and national feelings grows, personal feelings can begin to play a disproportionate role in shaping how an individual defines and attempts to pursue the national interest. For instance, Henry Kissinger's first trip to China in 1971 was a huge step towards softening the relationship between China and the U.S. On an interpersonal level, Kissinger's personal feelings influenced his conception of Chinese policies, both directly and indirectly. When Zhou described one conversation as "heart-to-heart," Kissinger responded, "For friendship, we must be frank and understand how each other feels. I understand how the Prime Minister feels, and he can be certain that it will be taken very seriously" (Memcon, 1971). Kissinger also shared intelligence secrets with the Chinese in order to demonstrate his personal worth to Zhou, in contravention of the CIA's wishes. He informed China's UN ambassador that this was a violation of every security rule (Smith, 2011). While it is true that Kissinger was genuine in these expressions of friendship, and he was trying to use his personal emotion of trust to influence the relationship between himself and Chinese leaders, his actions broke conventions of diplomacy, even though Kissinger never consciously acknowledged that his own personal feelings affected his pursuit of the national interest (Keys, 2011). This could be argued to have gone against the US national interest, since Kissinger shared classified information and did not, therefore, utilise emotions in the most effective manner. Overall, however, Kissinger's individual and state emotions have led to a relatively successful outcome in strengthening relationships pertaining to East Asian security. It must be said, however, that although politicians like Kissinger often utilise emotions to create better conditions for successful negotiations and favourable outcomes, the media also plays a significant role and can exacerbate these intense feelings, something that will be the focus of the subsequent paragraph.

4. Influence of Media in shaping emotion

The role of media in exaggerating emotions is often underestimated, yet it plays a major part in influencing people's emotion and the dynamics of East Asia as well. Sinkkonen (2019) persuasively illustrates that the media environment may influence people's perceptions of threats, as individuals are more reactive and alert to negative news than to positive news. This might cause people to become more reactive and attentive to potential risks, as well as increase the likelihood of misconceptions or misinterpretations. For instance, almost all types of Chinese media portrays Japan and the United States as potential threats (Brady, 2008). Statistically, according to Lague and Lee (2013), there were 69 anti-Japanese TV shows and about 100 films approved for production by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television alone in 2012. Consequently, Chinese media is more likely to be used to articulate Chinese national identity and promote Chinese nationalism (Song, 2015), possibly leading to conflict in East Asia as mentioned above. Although Sinkkonen (2020) denies the fact that some individuals have the capacity to interpret, negotiate and even deny these collective emotions brought by media, Kennedy (2009) asserts that well-educated Chinese people are likely more difficult to persuade than other groups. Therefore, the rise of the middle class in China could lessen the impact of the media, and henceforth its ability to manipulate their emotions and foreign policy. Still, the share of the Chinese population educated to this calibre remains in the minority. For the less educated, emotions like threat and hatred are still likely to be inflamed by the sensationalism of the media, with these sentiments spreading between them like wildfire. These can easily aggregate to form group emotions, which probably results in a co-trending emotion and eventually influences the related national policy or regulation of East Asia. As a consequence, from the micro perspective, both individuals and the media can work together to bring about meaningful and lasting change in national relationship. While looking at the bigger picture, the state itself possesses its own personhood (Wendt, 2004), and this kind of state emotion is likely to influence the situation in East Asia, which shall be explained in the next paragraph.

It is interesting to see that the state feeling produced by nation itself is distinct from the state emotion comes from the individual actors themselves, which has been discussed earlier in the passage. Although states, some argue, are 'ontologically incapable of having feelings' (Digeser, 2009), we cannot deny the fact that the policies, actions and decisions of a state can create emotional reactions from the people living within its borders (Sasley, 2010). For example, if a state enacts a policy that has a detrimental effect on its citizens, they may feel angry or betrayed; if a state passes a law that benefits its citizens, they may feel grateful or relieved. In this way, a state can be said to have emotions to some extent. Under these circumstances, identity is one of the main triggers of state emotions. An example of this is that, China and Taiwan face a hostile relationship, perhaps because Taiwan feels a significant identity threat. While it is true that, after Ma Ying-jeou's election as Kuomintang leader in May 2008, Sino-Taiwanese relations have improved, and their economic and trade links are expanding, these phenomena do not change the fact that Taiwan wants to exist as a distinct entity from China, like other countries (Khoo and Nicholas, 2011). As a consequence, according to Taiwanese public opinion surveys on cross-strait relations (2008), the Taiwanese polity still feels a strong sense of hostility towards China. Furthermore, Ian (2011) observes that, from the perspective of the Chinese government, preventing Taiwan's independence is a defining feature of contemporary Chinese nationalism. Therefore, due to the fear of losing its identity, Taiwan's relations with China have been marked by periods of sharp friction. However, identity does not necessarily lead to emotions of fear or deteriorate the bonds between nations. Both David (2005) and Shambaugh (2010) argues that North-East Asian states are simply following in the footsteps of their ancestors, preferring the stability associated with a developing China. Surrounded by this past identity, most Asian nations do not fear China. Rather, China is perceived as "a friendly neighbour, a constructive partner, an attentive listener, and a non-threatening regional power" (Shambaugh, 2010). It is true that identity might close the relationship between China and the most of surrounding nations, but a US-led alliance still remains the predominant regional security architecture, and the regional inclination in Asia towards a shift away from the dollar is still relatively weak (Daniel, 2010). Due to this reality, China's

rise is evidently causing concern and fear about changes in the regional power balance, and long-standing US security partnerships and alliances seemingly favour maintaining the status quo.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, through various actors, emotions play a significant and complex role in East Asian security. Individually, most ordinary people's emotions can easily be manipulated by politicians, which may likely influence national policy through the power of group emotions; in the meantime, politicians themselves can actively use their personal emotions when negotiating foreign policy, thus changing the relationships among states. Furthermore, both domestically and internationally, emotions can be used as a tool of influence by media outlets to shape narratives and exaggerate emotions. On a state level, identity and the reality of their situation can trigger different state emotions, influencing direct foreign policies among nations. Ultimately, these individuals, state and media-driven emotions contribute to the dynamics of East Asian security. Given the variety of ways in which emotions have the potential to shape East Asian security dynamics through different actors, it is essential to take proactive steps to build the emotion of trust among all stakeholders. This can be achieved by expanding existing measures and frameworks, such as institutional agreements and dialogues, as well as deepening interactions and dependencies. Only through such measures can we hope to build a secure and mutually beneficial environment in East Asia.

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