Threatening Event, National Identity and Network Dynamics of Motivated Information Communication

Exploring Japanese Twitter during the Rise of Territorial Disputes, April through October 2012

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August 31, 2017 @ 113th APSA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA

Intergroup threat, group identity and motivated reasoning are expected to promote hostile intergroup attitudes (Stephan and Mealy, 2011; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Kunda, 1990).

- Most of the evidence is *individually-based*, from lab experiments and surveys.
- Majority of the evidence is *hypothetical*.

We are interested in the consequences of interdependent individuals and political communication, as they occur in real time in the real world.

We use Twitter to explore the implications in naturally-occurring large-scale communication networks.

Threatening Event: Japanese Territorial Disputes

We collect 4,086,539 Japanese tweets relevant to territorial disputes during Apr.15-Oct.14, 2012.

In 2012, a series of incidents occurred in disputed territories with South Korea (Takeshima/Dokdo) and China (Senkaku/Diaoyu).
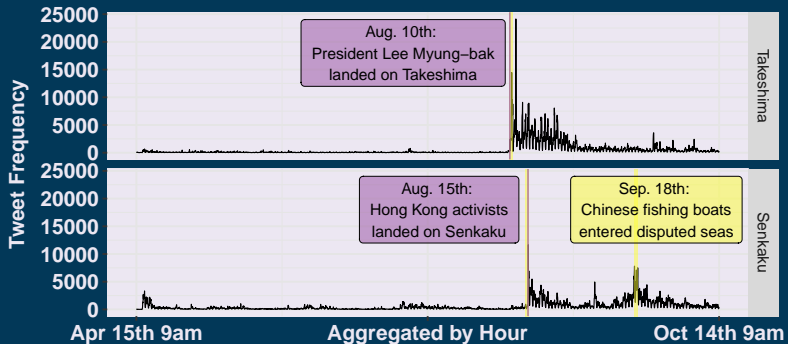
Retweets (reply to/quote others' posts) and web links capture information communication network.

603,167 users and 500 domains in the entire network.
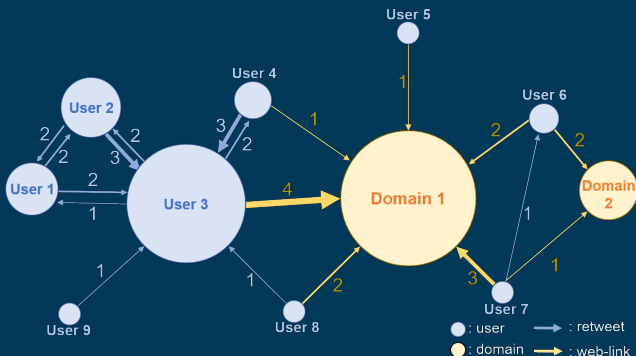
More frequently retweeted/linked ⇒ more influential.

Expressions of **national identity** (i.e., patriotism and nationalism) are coded based on each **user profile**.

Machine learning is applied to semi-automate the coding process.

- 15.56% (576,198 profiles) demonstrate strong **patriotism**, and 9.85% (364,643) demonstrate strong **right-wing nationalism**.
- Users with ≥ 1 strong identity profile are **identity holders**.

In this presentation, we focus on the result for **nationalistic identity holders**.

Factual or opinionated nature of expected information contents is coded for 500 most popular domains.

- With accuracy goal $\Rightarrow$ factual domain
- With directional goal $\Rightarrow$ opinionated domain

In this presentation, we focus on Hard News (as factual) and Personal Media (as opinionated) domains.

- Hard News (28% of URLs): Quality newspaper and TV news station websites
- Personal Media (35% of URLs): personal website, blog, social media…
- Other intermediate and irrelevant categories are ignored.

At the individual level:

Previous research suggests that **threat** strengthens the **motivation** to access **strong opinions** rather than neutral comments/facts.

If the above holds, at the network level:

After **the threat becomes salient** (i.e, incident occurred), **Identity holders** and **Opinionated domains** are more likely to **gain influence** in the communication network.

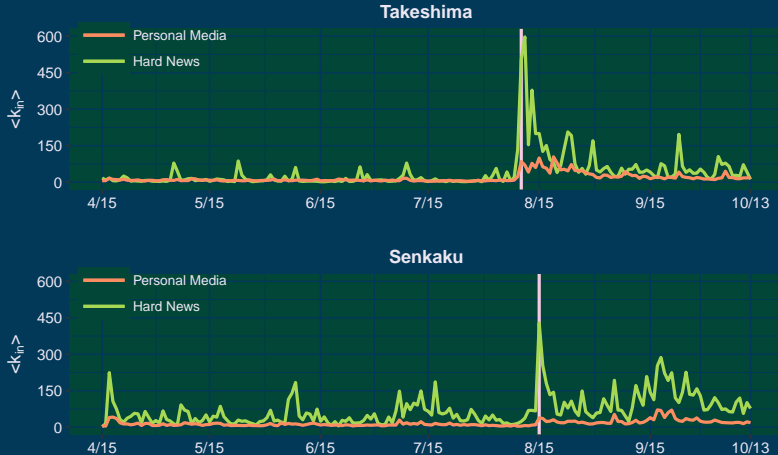# Analysis: Average Influence of ID/No ID Holders

Takeshima

- Nationalists
- Not Nationalists

Senkaku

- Nationalists
- Not Nationalists
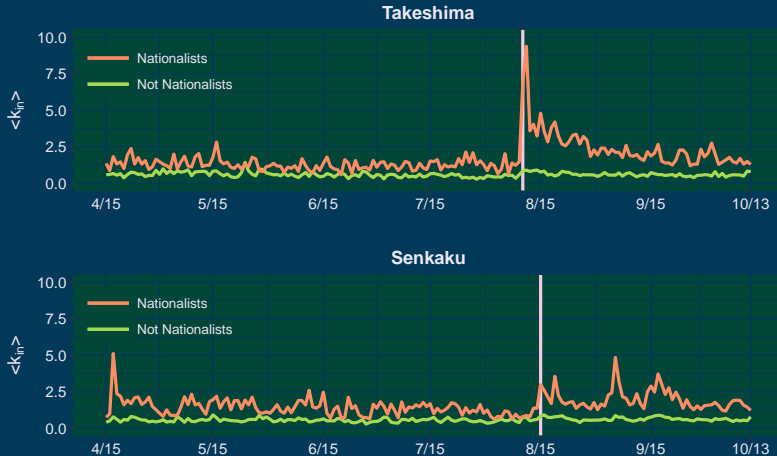
After the incident, ID holders gain significantly more influence than non-ID holders on average.

# Alternative Analysis: Total Influence of ID/No ID Holders
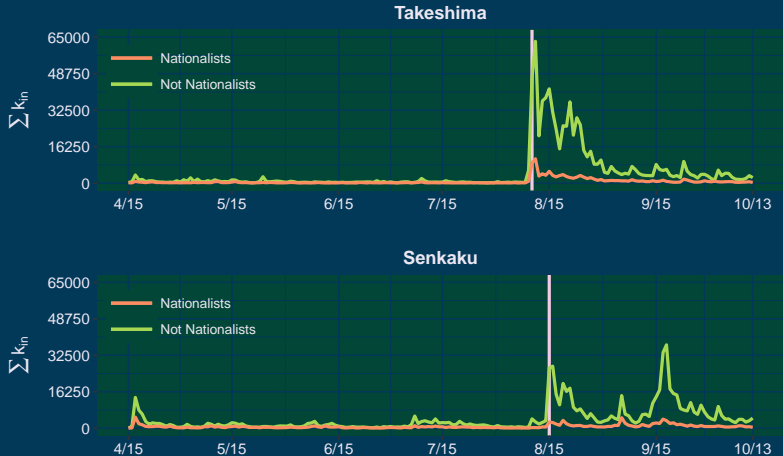
After the incident, ID holders gain less influence than non-ID holders in total.

Analysis: Average Influence of Opinionated/Factual Domains

Takeshima

Legend: Personal Media, Hard News

y-axis: $\langle k_{in} \rangle$ — 0, 150, 300, 450, 600

x-axis: 4/15, 5/15, 6/15, 7/15, 8/15, 9/15, 10/13

Senkaku

Legend: Personal Media, Hard News

y-axis: $\langle k_{in} \rangle$ — 0, 150, 300, 450, 600

x-axis: 4/15, 5/15, 6/15, 7/15, 8/15, 9/15, 10/13

After the incident, opinionated domains gain less influence than factual domains on average.
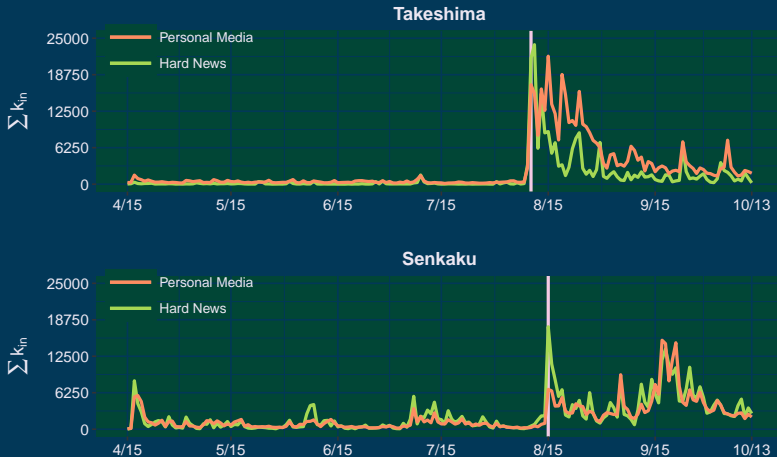
After the incident, **opinionated domains** gain influence **later** than factual domains **in total**.

Are our expectations supported?

- For identity holders: YES on average, NO in total.
- For opinionated domains: NO on average, Partially YES in total.

Average influence and total influence are different.

Dynamic observation of over-time influence matters.

Future step: Gaining influence among whom? Which individuals are most likely to be influenced?

References

Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin* 108(3):pp. 480–498.

Stephan, Walter G. and Marisa D. Mealy. 2011. Intergroup Threat Theory. In *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, ed. Daniel J. Christie. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Tajfel, Henri and John Turner. 1979. An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Brooks Cole Publishing.

Thank you for listening!