

# The logics of Japanese cyber-nationalism

Rethinking Expressions of Nationalism in the Age of the Internet

Stevie Poppe

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Dimitri Vanoverbeke

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## THE LOGICS OF JAPANESE CYBER-NATIONALISM

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### **Abstract**

Terms such as *alt-right*, *fachosphère* and *Netto-Uyoku* have in their respective languages entered the mainstream discourse and refer to a phenomenon of online-based right-wing populist nationalism. This paper intends to conceptualize this phenomenon as cyber-nationalism, adopting a mixed method (quantitative and computer-assisted) content analysis to media-platforms associated with the Japanese cyber-nationalists known as Netto-Uyoku.

We find the Frankfurt School approach to ideological critique suitable to theoretically ground our research. A reading of right-wing populist rhetoric reveals a distinct flavor of Gramscian logic therein: established politics, left-wing institutions and mainstream media manufacture consent to the hegemonic ideology of the elite, which does not adequately represent the people's will and defers from self-perceived contradictions in society. The Internet as an imagined Habermasian public sphere is then ideal for disseminating counter-hegemonic ideologies.

Yet despite the existence of ultra-nationalist grassroots movements as the Zaitokukai, and the term Netto-Uyoku itself implying a prevalent electorate for Japanese right-wing populists as Sakurai Makoto, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has retained its grip on politics. For this, we hypothesize that while populist newcomers have on a global scale capitalized on the distrust of established institutions experienced by these cyber-nationalists, the LDP has effectively done this earlier in the wake of the 2011 earthquake. We then find two elements contributing to the LDP's success amongst Japanese cyber-nationalists: 1.) the ideological hegemony spread by the LDP through the state-sponsored soft-power of its culture industry has not left Japanese cyber-nationalists untouched; and 2.) the LDP appeals to Japanese cyber-nationalists by manufacturing public outrage and exploiting the same self-perceived contradictions in society that have led to counter-hegemonic movements elsewhere.

**Keywords—** Netto-Uyoku, neto-uyo, social media, Internet, alt-right, neo-nationalism, cyber-nationalism, Japan, subcultures, ideology

## DE LOGICA ACHTER HET CYBER-NATIONALISME

Uitingen van nationalisme in het tijdperk van sociale media

**Stevie Poppe**

**Samenvatting**

Sinds de uitslag van enkele politieke gebeurtenissen sinds 2016, is er een stijging aan academisch onderzoek rond de wereldwijde groei aan neo-nationalisme en het aandeel van het internet daarin. Een deel van dat onderzoek betreft een rechtse radicalisering onder internetgebruikers, met name in enkele kleinere online ‘gemeenschappen’ waar een substantieel aandeel van politieke propaganda, verspreid op onder meer Facebook en Twitter, ontstond. Propaganda die massaal verspreid werd over platformen zoals Facebook en Twitter, inclusief door voorname politici. Om dat aan te duiden, wordt er in hun respectievelijke talen gesproken over de Amerikaanse alt-right, Franse fachosphère en Japanse Netto-Uyoku (let. ‘Net-Rechts’), want ook in Japan is er sprake van een dergelijk fenomeen. Deze paper tracht dat globale fenomeen te conceptualiseren als cyber-nationalisme, een vorm neo-nationalisme die niet enkel op het internet bestaat, maar ook door de kenmerken van dat medium gevormd wordt. Om de logica achter dat cyber-nationalisme te onthullen, baseren we ons op de theoretische benadering van de notie ‘ideologie’ door de zogenaamde Frankfurt School. Zo zien we in de retoriek van cyber-nationalisten een Gramsciaanse flair: het establishment, linkse instituties en de massamedia representeren niet op voldoende wijze de wil van het volk, en leiden af van ‘contradicties’ in de maatschappij. Het internet representeert dan een adequate Habermasianse ‘openbare sfeer’ waarin contra-hegemonische ideologieën kunnen verspreid worden.

Deze paper betreft specifiek de Netto-Uyoku, en behandelt die als een gelokaliseerde Japanse expressie van dergelijk cyber-nationalisme. Dat doen we enerzijds met een literatuurstudie van voorname werken omtrent de Netto-Uyoku en anderzijds met een kritische inhoudsanalyse van platformen waarop zulke ‘contra-hegemonische ideologieën’ worden verspreid. Het cyber-nationalisme kunnen we koppelen aan steun voor rechts-populistische politieke nieuwkomers, en ook in Japan is er sprake van dergelijke nieuwkomers met politieke ambities (waaronder de oprichter van de Zaitokukai, een extreemrechtse burgerbeweging gericht op de in Japan aanwezige etnisch Koreaanse diaspora). Echter stellen we ons dan de volgende vraag: waarom worden Netto-Uyoku als steungroep voor de LDP en specifiek premier Abe Shinzō (iemand die in elke zin van het woord het politiek establishment beademt) aanschouwd? Daarvoor stellen we dat de LDP en Abe Shinzō in de nasleep van de aardbeving en kernramp in 2011 de huidige golf aan rechts-populisme voorliepen. Concreet stellen we dat: 1. de huidige instantie van de LDP succesvol inspeelde op die golf aan cyber-nationalisme, door het medium van het internet en dier dichotome relatie met massamedia te omhelzen, en 2. de ideologische hegemonie verspreidde via de door de staat gesponsorde cultuurstudio (in de vorm van de ‘Cool Japan’ soft-power) en aldus ook de Japanse cyber-nationalisten niet onberoerd liet.

# 日本における「サイバーナショナリズム」

「ネット右翼」は思想があるか？

ポッペ・スティーヴィー

## 要約

本稿の目的は、日本における「ネット右翼」の背景にある「ロジック」を明らかにすることである。2016年アメリカ大統領選挙およびイギリスの欧州連合離脱（いわゆる「ブレグジット」）に関する国民投票が予想外の結果を示した以来、新ナショナリズム（ネオ・ナショナリズム）<sup>1</sup>の世界的な成長、またはその中のインターネットの影響に関する学術研究が活発に行われてきた。この研究の一部は、インターネット利用者の右傾化に対し、特に多くの政治的プロパガンダが見られるいくつかの「オンライン・コミュニティ」に焦点を当てている。そのプロパガンダはまた、著名な政治家を含む、Facebook や Twitter などのユーザーにより大量に普及されていた（Zannettou et al. 2018）。日本でも、こういう傾向が見られる。その一例として、Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich (2017) は2014年総選挙の際、Twitter でつぶやかされた「ツイート」において、bot<sup>2</sup>により広まった多量の右翼的発言または自由民主党（以下より、自民党と称する）を支持する内容が存在する可能性を提示している。このような事柄を特徴付けるため、それぞれ国において「alt-right」（アメリカ）「fachosphère」（フランス）「ネット右翼」（日本）などの用語が新しく現れ、通用されている。

第一章（序章）では、そのインターネットにおける右傾化現象を「サイバーナショナリズム」と定義し、「オルタナ右翼」や「ネット右翼」などの用語は、このサイバーナショナリズムを称する各地域・国家の固有的表現として位置づけている。

「サイバーナショナリズム」は、ただインターネットにおける「新ナショナリズム」<sup>3</sup>だけではなく、「インターネット」のメディア自体に対するイデオロギー（いわゆる、マスマディアと対比する新しいメディアの理屈）によっても形成されている。世界中におけるサイバーナショナリズムは、右翼ポピュリストの新人政治家への支援に結びついている。その上に、日本では「在日特権を許さない市民の会」（以下、在特会と称する）<sup>4</sup>を含むいわゆる「行動する保守運動」のさまざまな新ナショナリストの市民運動が存在する。そうであれば、サイバー・ナショナリズムの表現とする「ネット右翼」も「日本第一党」<sup>5</sup>のような反体制の右翼ポピュリスト党に対する、適切な有権者の存在を意味しているはずだ。しかしながら、それにもかかわらず「ネット右翼」は政治的新人ではなく、既存の自由民主党を支持している傾向が多く見られる。

本稿の仮説は、特に2016年に入ってから、世界中において、右翼ポピュリストの政治新参者が、サイバー・ナショナリストが感じていた既存の政治制度、いわゆる「左翼機関」<sup>6</sup>または主流メディアに対する不信を利用し

<sup>1</sup> 言い換えば、右派ポピュリスト的で、排外主義的なナショナリズムである。

<sup>2</sup> bot とはこの文脈で自動アルゴリズムを示しているものである。

<sup>3</sup> 言い換えば、右派ポピュリスト的で、排外主義的なナショナリズムである。

<sup>4</sup> 桜井誠に設立され、主に在日韓国・朝鮮人を中心とする自称市民団体である。反差別機関に多く批判され、平成29年に最高裁判所でヘートスピーチとされる言葉に関する損害賠償が確定された。

<sup>5</sup> 「日本第一党」とは、在特会の桜井誠がトランプ大統領のレトリックをものまねにした政治団体である。2017年の東京都議会議員選挙に立候補し、落選した。

<sup>6</sup> この用法は、主に大学などの教育機関をしみしている。

ている一方で、自民党は2011年の地震をきっかけに2012年の選挙でその不信の利をより早く達成したことである。以上を踏まえ、本稿では、より具体的に2つの仮説を提案する。1. 現在の自民党はインターネットメディア(SNS)とそこから読み取られるマスメディアへの対立を利用し、日本中のサイバー・ナショナリストたちに支持を訴えかけている。2. さらに、自民党が文化産業(Culture Industry)を通じて広めた「ソフトパワー」(すなわち、ヘゲモニー的イデオロギー)は、日本のサイバーナショナリストたちの思想の形成にも影響を与えている。

第二章では、ネット右翼についての先行研究のレビューを行う。ネット右翼に関する研究は、大きく3つのテーマで分類される。1. Twitterや「2ちゃんねる」<sup>7</sup>などのソーシャルメディアにおけるネット右翼の思考過程に対する修辞的分析(辻, 2008; 辻, 2017; 高, 2015a; 高, 2015b)。2. ネット右翼と在特会を含む新ナショナリストの市民運動との関係(安田, 2012; 山口, 2013; Morris-Suzuki, 2013; 樋口, 2014; Gill, 2018)3. ネット右翼の出現に対する理論的アプローチ(東, 2001; 北田, 2005; Sakamoto, 2011; 村井, 2012)。

辻大介は大きく3つの特徴を持つとしてネット右翼を定義する(2008; 2017) :

1. 主に中国と韓国に対する排外主義
2. 憲法改正や靖国神社への公式参拝などへのナショナリズムに対する支持
3. ネット上に自分の政治的な意見を投稿すること

辻の2008年の調査によると、調査の参加者の約1%がその3つの要件を満たし、2014年行われた同調査では、それは2%である(2008; 2017)。辻はまた、潜在的なネット右翼行動(すなわち、投稿せず特徴1と2に賛成するだけの行動)の増加を主張し、匿名SNS選好度とニコニコ動画・2ちゃんねるの使用頻度の間の相関関係を明らかにしている。

本稿は、辻の3つの特徴に、このネット右翼のつながりを維持させるもう一つの特徴として、「マスメディアへの不信」を付け加える。北田暁大(2005)は2ちゃんねるなどの匿名電子掲示板を「皮肉の共同体」と名付け、その電子掲示板における右傾化が「つながりの社会性」(「つながり」を希求)の結果の1つであると主張している。要するに、コミュニケーション環境が対面からネットへ移行されることで、「内輪」で感じられる連帯感を保つため、コミュニケーション自体が目的になる。2ちゃんねるでは、インターネット空間と対置するマスメディアを敢えて批判することで、そのコミュニケーションより共同体意識が生まれてくるということである。

サカモト・ルミ(2011)と村井秀輔(2012)は2ちゃんねるとニコニコ動画におけるネット右翼の投稿の構造を分析した。彼らまた、Anderson(2006)、北田が指摘したように、2ちゃんねるのような匿名のSNSでは、インターネットスラングを含む書き込みの書き方により、「想像の共同体」が築かれていると述べている。高史明(2015a; 2015b)は、Twitterにおける中国人と「コリアン」についての日本語のツイートを収集し、計量的分析を行った。その結果では、多くのツイートはネガティブ傾向であり、少数のユーザーにより投稿され、2ちゃんねるや「2ちゃんねるまとめブログ」への引用が含まれる確率も小さくないことが明らかになった。

安田浩一(2012)、山口智美(2013)と樋口直人(2014)は、ネット右翼を主に在特会のような新ナショナリストの市民運動グループと関連付けている。これらのグループは、いわゆる「右翼団体」と特徴付けられる過激なナショナリズム団体と同一線上に立ち、しばしば外国人、グローバリズム、マスコミと左翼政治家をターゲットにする傾向が多い。これらの団体は抗議行動のビデオをインターネットに投稿し、また2ちゃんねるやニコニコ動画

<sup>7</sup> 2ちゃんねるとは平成11年西村博之により開設された匿名な電子掲示板である。平成29年してから「5ちゃんねる」に名付けられたにも関わらず、以前の文献とのつながりのため、本稿は「2ちゃんねる」の名を利用し続ける。

などの SNS を利用し自分たちのメッセージを広めている。それは、ただインターネットを利用し、自分のメッセージを広めるだけではない。たとえば、在特会の創始者である「桜井誠」の存在そのものはそのサイバー空間における右派の過激化の結果物とも言える。

在特会をはじめ、新ナショナリストの市民運動は 2014 年以降急激に減少している様子だが、その背後にある右翼の感情も減少したわけではない。すなわち、自民党による朝日新聞や NHK などのマスメディアへの攻撃から、早い段階で特に YouTube よりオタク系動画共有サイトの「ニコニコ動画」で生放送を行うことによって直接ネット利用者に訴える行為に至るまで、自民党とネット右翼の間になんらかの共通点が見られるという事実から見ると、在特会のような団体の必要性が少なくなったのではないか。

第三章は、ネット右翼の背後にあるサイバーナショナリズムのロジックを明らかにするために、「ネオ・マルクス主義」の主唱者の「イデオロギー」への理論的アプローチを採用する。右翼ポピュリストのレトリックを解釈することで、特にグラムシの論理的な風潮が明らかにされる。すなわち、ネット右翼を含むサイバーナショナリズムにより、既存の政治制度、左翼のイデオロギーまたはマスコミが果たしている役割とは「エリート」のヘゲモニー的イデオロギーにしたがって、道具的に「庶民」の同意を作り出すことである。さらに、そのヘゲモニー的イデオロギーは（自己認識の）社会における「矛盾」から逸脱され、「庶民」または「世論」を十分に代表していない。それに対して、ハーバーマスにより公共圏（public sphere）として解釈されているインターネットは、カウンター（反覇権的）イデオロギーの創造と普及に最適だと思われている。インターネットをめぐるそのような見解は、インターネット、特にワールドワイドウェブの起源にまで遡ることができる。マルコフ（2005）は、インターネットとワールドワイドウェブの開発を、1960 年時代の反独裁的、自由主義的なカウンターカルチャー思想から胎動され、実現につながったと考えている。このような背景から、地理的な境界から切り離された「サイバースペース」としてのインターネットの概念的空間が提起され、ワールドワイドウェブの背後にある「マスコミへの対抗」の思想をもたらした。それはまた、ばるばら・さやわか（2017）が言っているように 1980 年代、アメリカにおける「西海岸思想」または「カリフォルニア思想」として、技術関連雑誌を通じて広まった。

しかし、上記の対照的な思考は、右翼ポピュリズムの繁殖地であり、そして、ネット右翼が広がるカウンター・イデオロギーとは新ナショナリズムである。東浩紀（2001）とばるばら・さやわか（2017）は日本におけるインターネットまたはワールドワイドウェブの発展とアニメやビデオゲームといったサブカルチャー（いわゆるオタク分化）の関連は少なくないと述べている。さらに、東浩紀は、日本のナショナリズムは生き残る過程でオタク化されたと指摘している。<sup>8</sup> これはアドルノとホルクハイマーの文化産業の理論（すなわち、ヘゲモニー的イデオロギーの合意に達するための消費物化される文化の使用）と重なることとも言える。そして、そのサブカルチャーに集中する自民党の「クールジャパン」政策における国主導型のソフトパワー（または、麻生太郎の自称おたく発言や、安部晋三の、ネット右翼とよく関連付けられるオタク系のニコニコ動画の使用など）はさらにヘゲモニー的イデオロギーを広めることに一助している役割を果たしているのではないだろうか。

第四章は、ネット右翼の間に広まっている「カウンター・ヘゲモニー的イデオロギー」を、いくつかの主要インターネットプラットフォームを対象とし、コンテンツ分析を行う。そのため、本章ではメディア学者マクルーハ

<sup>8</sup> 「したがってそれはまた政治やイデオロギーの問題とも深く関係している。たとえば、冷戦崩壊後のこの一二年間、小林よしのりや福田和也から鳥肌實にいたるまで、日本の右翼的言説は一般にサブカルチャー化しフェイク化しオタク化することで生き残ってきたとも言える」（2011, 23）。

ンの「メディアはメッセージである」という主張に基づき、分析を進める。マクルーハンによると、メッセージ（情報）は、コンテンツだけではなく、メディア（情報媒体）そのものも含めているという。要するに、メッセージの内容は、そのメッセージを含むメディアにより、その解釈も変わることである。本章では、第三章で挙げた「インターネット発展の背後の存在するイデオロギー」とメディア（この場合、SNS やインターネットプラットフォーム）の構造の影響力を両方考慮しながら、分析を行う。

いわゆる「まとめサイト」とは、2ちゃんねるなどで人気のある特定のトピックに沿って、情報を収集、編集したウェブサイトのことを言う。まとめサイトはしばしば営利を目的として広告に頼っているため、

これを嫌った 2ちゃんねるのユーザーらがそれに対する対抗として、営利目的でコンテンツ収集ができない 2ちゃんねるの部分（「嫌儲」といういわゆる板）を設立し、自分のアイデンティティとそこで感じられるコミュニティの特性を規定したとも言える。さらに、特に保守的傾向がよく見られるまとめサイトでは、<sup>9</sup>「オーナーが慎重に選択したネット右翼的コンテンツを世論（「ネットの声」）として受け止めるケースも少なくない。また、まとめサイトの伝播力について過小評価してはいけない。なぜなら、数百万人に達するインターネットユーザーが日本語版ネット掲示板以外に（日本のソフトパワーを元にした）翻訳され、英語や他の言語の掲示板へアクセスし、影響を受けている可能性もあるからだ。<sup>10</sup>

さて、日本だけでなく、世界で最も使用されているサイト上位 10 の一つであるユーザーコンテンツに基づくウィキペディアでも、ネット右翼と 2ちゃんねるの影響が明確に見えてくる。本章は、日本語版のウィキペディアのデータベース最新版のコピーをもとに、格ページのリビジョン（改訂）の総数、リビジョンの中の取り消し（いわゆる revert）の総数、とそのページの「論争レベル」（本章では、リビジョン数を取り消し数で割ったもの）を計算した。リビジョン数、取り消し数、および「論争レベル」といった 3つのカテゴリーを設定した。その 3つのカテゴリーにおける上位 50 の記事は主にサブカルチャー（ポップカルチャーとも言える）のトピックと関連していることがわかった。<sup>11</sup>

これを計算すると、何がわかるの？

ウィキペディアの共同創始者であるジミー・ウェールズも、日本語版のウィキペディアにポップカルチャー関連のトピックと他のトピックとの間に明確な格差があると指摘した（Cohen 2009）。そして、ウィキペディアの匿名の変更数が世界平均をはるかに超えているという事実も、<sup>12</sup>2ちゃんねるとの重複を示唆していないのだろうか。その一方、取り消し数が高いカテゴリーと「論争レベル」が高いカテゴリー両方においては、サブカルチャーと関係ない記事も見られる。特に「論争レベル」が高いカテゴリーでは、「南京事件」（第 1 位）、「ネット右翼」（第 2 位）と、「日本」（第 3 位）<sup>13</sup>の記事が際立っている。<sup>14</sup>その中で小グループのウィキペディアユーザーがさまざまな成功を収めて記事のトーンを変更しようとする現象があり、明らかになったのは中立性を保護するユーザーもネット右翼の傾向があるユーザーも、2ちゃんねるとの関連が少くないことである。さらに、特にネット右翼の

<sup>9</sup> 例：「保守速報」、「もえるあじあ」、「キムチ速報」や「笑韓ブログ」

<sup>10</sup> 他人がそれらのユーザーの 2ちゃんねるでの書き込みを利用して金儲けすることが嫌うことをしみ示す。ネット右翼と繋がる「嫌韓」に言及。

<sup>11</sup> 具体的には、「ワンピース」というアニメとアイドル文化の「AKB48」に関連するトピックが多かった。詳細はテーブル4.5

<sup>12</sup> 詳細はテーブル A.2

<sup>13</sup> 他は例えば、「安倍晋三」（第 1 位）、「鳩山由紀夫」（第 13 位）、「中華民国」（第 16 位）、「金妍兒」（第 18 位）、「在特会を許さない市民の会」（第 19 位）、「在日韓国・朝鮮人」（第 21 位）や「朝日新聞」（第 26 位）である。

<sup>14</sup> 荒らし行為の恐れが高い記事が管理者以外保護できない場合もある。

傾向があるユーザーはサブカルチャーの記事でも活動し、日本語版だけではなく、英語版のウィキペディアでも変更しようとする傾向が見える。

このパラグラフ全体、もう整理して書き直す必要があるような気がする。読んで何がいいのかがわかりにくい。

しかし、同じ 2 ちゃんねるでは、上記に述べた「嫌儲」の「板」を含む、<sup>15</sup>ネット右翼を批判するコミュニティも明確に存在する。それらにおける政治的な理想にもかかわらず、明らかなのは、北田 (2005) が述べた通りそのコミュニティにおける「アイロニー」である。そのコミュニティは、「ネトウヨ BAN 祭り」を始め、要するに Twitter や Youtube などのさまざまなプラットフォームの通報方法 を利用し、数千のアカウント、数十万のメッセージやビデオを報告し、それらを「不適切な」発言として削除を求める。

前に、この論文を通じて、明らかになったことをまとめておいた方がいいと思う。

今後の課題は、ネット右翼と関連されるプラットフォームの技術的側面とそのプラットフォームで感じられる共同体意識の間の関係をより深く調査することである。また、この調査を、特に韓国と中国でのサイバーナショナリズムの表現へ拡張することも必要である。それらのサイバーナショナリスト（すなわち、中国と韓国の「ネット右翼」）はまた、日本のネット右翼の「嫌韓中」の形成に重要な役割を果たすことも言える。

4 章の分析とその結果を述べることが必要。

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<sup>15</sup> 他は、元々野球に関する「なん J」または、韓国に関する「ハン J」。

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*I sometimes suspect that we're seeing something in the Internet as significant as the birth of cities. It's something that profound and with that sort of infinite possibilities. It's really something new; it's a new kind of civilization.*

---

WILLIAM GIBSON, 1995

## CHAPTER 1

---

### THE ALT-RIGHT, NETTO-UYOKU, CYBER-NATIONALISM—A GLOBAL PHENOMENON?

On August 28, 2010 *The New York Times* published an article titled “New Dissent in Japan Is Loudly Anti-Foreign,” referring to a rise in politically motivated protest marches associated with a supposed Japanese ‘Net-Right’. In his article, Martin Fackler describes this ‘Net-Right’ (hereinafter referred to by its Japanese term *Netto-Uyoku* ネット右翼)<sup>1</sup> as “a new type of ultranationalist group” and “a virtual community.” He goes on to state that “while these groups remain a small if noisy fringe element here, they have won growing attention as an alarming side effect of Japan’s long economic and political decline” (Fackler 2010). Yet it is a small fringe element that is nevertheless noisy enough to reach print press in the United States. In its most commonly applied form the term Netto-Uyoku applies to a loosely connected, decentralized group of Internet users disseminating a form of extreme right-wing discourse online and who are active primarily on social media platforms such as Twitter, the anonymous messaging board 2channel (*2-channel* 2ちゃんねる),<sup>2</sup> and streaming services such as YouTube and Niconico (ニコニコ).<sup>3</sup>

Far from benign expressions of free speech limited to shadowy corners of the Internet, consequences

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This paper was written in a mixture of the Markdown mark-up syntax and LATEX. Its source code (as well as that of any used scripts) is available at [https://github.com/steviepoppe/graduate\\_thesis/](https://github.com/steviepoppe/graduate_thesis/). This paper is formatted according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> ed. (2017) and the updated *Monumenta Nipponica* stylesheet (2018). Japanese and Korean names are written in the autonomous usage, with family name preceding the given name. Macrons have been used to identify long vowels in Japanese, with the exception of well-known place names. Japanese terms appear in its English translation, followed by its transliteration and original form in brackets. Italics are used to indicate emphasis, keywords, titles of print media, and foreign terms including transliterations. Deviations are made as seen fit and elaborated upon using footnotes. Citations are done in-text according to the author-date system, leaving space for the extensive usage of content footnotes.

<sup>1</sup> This paper will retain the Japanese term in order to differentiate it as a localized expression of a larger phenomenon. This usage has since 2009 been overtaken by the more pejorative four-character abbreviation *neto-uyo* (ネトウヨ), and when deemed necessary in translations of texts using this the pejorative abbreviation, *neto-uyo* will be used instead.

<sup>2</sup> Albeit in October 2017 renamed to 5channel (*5-channel* 5ちゃんねる), this paper will for the sake of continuity with previous literature, refer to this message board as 2channel. Online, the distinction ‘5ch (旧 2ch)’ is more commonly seen.

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, social media refers to all online platforms used for computer-mediated communication in which a sense of community or interactivity can grow.

of such outings have however very much crossed digital boundaries and materialized in disquieting, at times even violent ways. As Fackler alluded to in his *New York Times* piece, the Netto-Uyoku are often name-called in the same breath as neo-nationalist movements like the *Zaitokukai* and *Shukenkai*<sup>4</sup>—or to use the jargon of those movements, *Action Conservative Movements* (ACM).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, according to a 2016 investigation by the Japanese department of Justice, a total of 1152 protest marches, xenophobic in nature and associated with the ACM, were found to be held across Japan between the period April 2012 and September 2015 (Nikaido 2016). Makoto Sakurai, founder of the Zaitokukai and one key figure associated with the ACM and Netto-Uyoku, has been arrested for violence associated with such protest marches, stepping down as its leader in 2014. He did however remain a prolific political commentator online, going on to form the populist right-wing Japan First Party in 2016, holding their first convention in a hotel of the equally controversial Toshio Motoya owned APA Group.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, nearly a decade after Fackler's publication in *The New York Times*, academic coverage of the Netto-Uyoku and related topics such as the ACM and Zaitokukai remains relatively scarce, with some exceptions including the seminal work *Netto to Aikoku* (ネットと愛国, “The Internet and Patriotism”) by journalist Yasuda Koichi (2012), and writings by Tsuji (2008), Sakamoto (2011), Murai (2012), Yamaguchi (2013), Higuchi (2014) and Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich (2017). Moreover, whenever the topic does reach mainstream outlets, there appears to be a tendency to frame the Netto-Uyoku as little more than a fringe ‘movement’ and side-effect of economic malaise with little real-life influence (Tsunebara Furuya 2016a).<sup>7</sup> This is in spite of the fact that, as shown above, actions associated with this phenomenon have had real-life consequences, not the least of which includes the 2016 adoption of an anti-discrimination law in order to curb hate speech.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, a 2017 paper on political bots in Japan suggests a hidden nationalist agenda of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō tied to that of the Netto-Uyoku, and views them as a potential “enormous online support army of Abe’s agenda” (Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich 2017, 1), something that the author of this paper too has

<sup>4</sup> Respectively “The Group Seeking Recovery of Sovereignty” (*Shukenkai Kaifuku o Mezasu Kai* 主権回復を目指す会) and “The Citizens’ Group Refusing to Tolerate Special Rights for Zainichi Koreans” (*Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai* 在日特權を許さない市民の会).

<sup>5</sup> Although Higuchi and Castelveteri (2016) describe the ACM as ultra-nationalist in nature, this paper agrees with Gill (2018) in that ‘ultra’ implies a *quantitative* increase in the degree of extremism, from ‘right’ to ‘far right’ to ‘ultra-right.’ It will instead utilize the term neo-nationalism to distinguish the ACM from ultra-nationalist Japanese militants collectively known as *uyoku dantai* (右翼団体, “right wing groups”). While often used in the context of Europe and North-America’s rise in populism, the term neo-nationalism refers to a type of nationalism marked by right-wing populism, cultural racism, anti-globalisation and nativism, and arguably more closely describes the ACM ideologically (Dougherty 2016; Hirsh 2016).

<sup>6</sup> According to the *New York Times*, controversy concerns the owners’ denial of war crimes and promotion of historical revisionist literature through distribution in their budget hotels (Soble 2017).

<sup>7</sup> A conservative Nippon Foundation platform *nippon.com* English language publication by author Furuya Tsunehiro (a cultural critic, online personality and until 2014 himself a frequent guest on Channel Sakurai). He claims that “disturbing as the voice of cyber-extremism may be, its influence on Japanese politics and society remains limited, and its heyday is nearing an end” (Tsunebara Furuya 2016a). The platform is part of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, founded by World Anti-Communist League (WACL) member Sasakawa Ryōichi (Kirkup 1995).

<sup>8</sup> The ‘*Honpō-gai shushin-sha ni taisuru futōna sabetsu-teki gendō no kaishō ni muketa torikumi no suishin ni kansuru hōritsu*’(「本邦外出身者に対する不当な差別的言動の解消に向けた取組の推進に関する法律」, “Law on Promotion of Efforts to Resolve Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Conduct to Foreign Residents in Japan”)

previously alluded to.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, a political booklet handed out to LDP lawmakers in the Diet before the July 2019 election was in a 2019 interview with Ishiba Shigeru (former Minister of Defense and political rival to Abe Shinzō) explicitly criticized as a ‘Netto-Uyoku book’ (Bungeishunjū editorial department 2019).<sup>10</sup> Although the publisher of this booklet, Internet media-website TerracePRESS, claims to have been widely viewed since its establishment one year prior, the *Huffington Post Japan* reports there was no data available on monthly visits (indicating that the number was too low to include) and that the meta-data of its website blocks it from being indexed by search-engines such as Google (Tanaka 2019).

It goes without saying that expressions of neo-nationalist sentiment taking place largely within the confines of cyberspace are by no means limited to Japanese territory. First of all, the outcome of the United States’ 2016 presidential elections, the 2016 British Brexit-referendum and the rise of neo-nationalist ideology amongst various European political campaigns reflect greater global political struggles. We can next argue that the role of the Internet, social media and software was of no small importance in those outcomes either, considering the extent it penetrated our daily lives. Facebook, for example, came under strong public scrutiny in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica data scandal (in which it came to light that illicitly obtained personal data of up to 87 million Facebook users were used for political advertising and data-analysis in favor of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and the British Leave.EU campaign).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, backing the cult of personality of presidents Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Xi Jinping, to name a few, as well as the 2016 elected president of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte, are supposed ‘online troll armies’. These ‘troll armies’ deliberately, and both on a voluntary or paid basis, spread disinformation on social media and attack self-perceived enemies of their respective presidents. They have on multiple instances been accredited with manipulation of political discourse online in order to influence elections, including in more recent memory the 2016 presidential elections in the United States (Benedictus 2016). A practice Marko Kovic defined in the case of state-sponsored Internet propaganda, as ‘digital *astroturfing*’, calling it “a form of manufactured, deceptive and strategic top-down activity on the Internet initiated by political actors that mimics bottom-up activity by autonomous individuals” (2018, 71).

Moreover, the *Alt-Right* (arguably the western counterparts to the Netto-Uyoku and associated

<sup>9</sup> This paper expands upon the author’s undergraduate thesis (Poppe 2017), written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Dimitri Vanoverbeke. In his undergraduate thesis, the author examined the Netto-Uyoku as potential electorate of populist politicians on both a national and regional scale.

<sup>10</sup> The booklet is titled “The Japan that is being eroded by fake news — the absurdity of the opposition and media” (“*Feiku jōhō ga mushibamu Nippon tondemo yatō to media no hijōshiki*”, 『フェイク情報が蝕むニッポン トンデモ野党とメディアの非常識』). According to the *Huffington Post*, the booklet contained harsh critique of *Asahi shinbun* and *Mainichi shinbun* as “outrageous newspapers” (*Tondemo shinbun* 「トンデモ新聞」) as well as cartoon caricatures of the opposition leaders of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, Social Democratic Party and Communist Party (Tanaka 2019).

<sup>11</sup> The company has been involved with other international political campaigns, and was backed by the conservative computer scientist Robert Mercer, an important financial contributor to Breitbart News (Kang and Frenkel 2018; Rosenberg, Confessore, and Cadwalladr 2019).

primarily with the United States) have drawn much ire after a white nationalist terror attack (i.e. ideologically driven violence) in Charlottesville, Virginia during its Unite the Right rally,<sup>12</sup> and again after little public disavowal by the President of the United States.<sup>13</sup> In a similar fashion and overlapping ideologically with the Alt-Right, we then find associated foremost with (Western) Europe, Australia and New Zealand the so-called *Identitarian Movement*. It should be noted too that the perpetrator of the March 2019 terror attack in New Zealand sprinkled his manifesto with deeply ironic Internet-driven subculture rhetoric inherent to those movements. During the terror attack, he referenced an online trend concerning Swedish YouTube influencer Felix Khellberg (known for making video-game related videos through his online handler *PewDiePie* and as of writing subscribed to by over 95 million followers). Moreover, in his manifesto the perpetrator describes himself as “just an ordinary White (*sic*) man, 28 years old” and references a white supremacy conspiracy theory popularized by Alt-Right YouTube influencer and Canadian far-right Internet media-platform The Rebel Media contributor Lauren Southern.<sup>14</sup>

In Belgium, the mid-2019 elected politician Dries van Langenhove (aligned with populist far right party Vlaams Belang, lit. ‘Flemish Interest’) also acquired attention through his mimicry of rhetoric used by online-based far-right nationalist movements including the Alt-Right on platforms as Facebook and gaming chat application Discord (which was brought to light in a 2018 documentary on the Belgian Identitarian youth movement *Schild & Vrienden*).<sup>15</sup> The second largest party in Belgium after the 2019 elections, Vlaams Belang’s online campaign took inspiration from both the 2016 Brexit campaign and Trump campaign, investing dominantly on social media advertisements and targeting young voters aged 18 to 34 (Cerulus 2019). Furthermore, in another intersection with the Alt-Right, Vlaams Belang leader Tom Van Grieken hosted an event debating the UN migration pact with, amongst others, Steve Bannon (Gotev 2018), and a youth subdivision of Vlaams Belang invited Lauren Southern as guest-speaker during another congress supervised by Van Grieken (Rennenberg 2018). In France, the term *fachosphère* denotes similar trends on the French Internet and *Le Monde* published a series of articles on this topic connecting Marine Le Pen’s populist far-right Front National, online video-game community jeuxvideo.com and ‘Internet trolls’ (Laurent 2016; Audureau

<sup>12</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that although global “terrorist attacks dropped from about 17,000 in 2014 to about 11,000 in 2017 [...] the United States has seen a recent surge in terror-related violence, with 65 attacks [in 2017], up from six in 2006,” with two-third “tied to racist, anti-Muslim, homophobic, anti-Semitic, fascist, anti-government or xenophobic motivations” (Morlin 2018).

<sup>13</sup> After the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, The term Alt-Lite occasionally came into usage to differentiate its relatively moderate members from more extremist white-nationalist Alt-Right members such as Richard Spencer (Nagle 2017). When referring to the Alt-Right in this paper, this author uses the term as an overarching umbrella term indicating both.

<sup>14</sup> This theory, known as “The Great Replacement” (not coincidentally the title of the perpetrator’s manifesto), is featured on the Identitarian Movement’s homepage and has been adopted by populist right-wing figures such as Dutch politician Geert Wilders and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. It has arguably been endorsed by the President of the United States Donald Trump, who has shared tweets with the hashtag “#whitegenocide” (Weiss and Winter 2018; Manjoo 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Translates to ‘Shield & Friends’, a reference to a period of Flemish romantic nationalism (the Battle of the Golden Spurs) and in particular to the 14<sup>th</sup> century shibboleth for identifying Frenchmen based on their inability to pronounce this phrase.

2017).<sup>16</sup> In South Korea, the populist far-right Liberty Korea Party (LKP) has been condemned for its usage of ‘online Internet trolls’. Furthermore, its former chairman, previous presidential candidate and YouTuber Hong Joon-Pyo has seen comparisons to Donald Trump (He-rim 2018; Bo-gyung 2019). Finally, the online media-platform Ilbe Storage is described as hosting the South Korean equivalent of the Japanese Netto-Uyoku (Shim 2015).

Whether or not the actions of those online movements had any measurable effect on the outcome of the elections is wholly debatable, but in light of the above information, it is at the very least sensible to claim the Internet as a medium plays an undeniably important role, not just in the organization of neo-nationalist movements, but in shaping elements of its discourse as well; a narrative that is increasingly amplified by numerous mainstream news outlets. One Politico reporter states that “Just about everyone else, if they’re aware of these efforts at all, assumes they amounted to little more than entertainment for bored geeks and some unpleasant episodes for the targets of its often racist and sexist harassment campaigns. After all, the idea that a swarm of socially alienated trolls played a meaningful role in a multibillion-dollar presidential campaign by, among other gambits, relentlessly spreading images of a cartoon frog is at least as ridiculous as the idea that a billionaire TV entertainer could win that campaign” (Schreckinger 2017).<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, Japan’s international *soft power* (non-coercive political influence) has in no doubt left its mark on many of those communities abroad, seeping particularly into the Alt-Right and Identitarian Movement.<sup>18</sup> To name some examples, former Donald Trump strategist and Breitbart News Network owner Steve Bannon participated as a speaker at the 2017 *Japanese Conservative Political Action Conference* (J-CPAC) and praised Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as being “Trump before Trump.” Alt-Right and Identitarian Movement associates including white supremacists Richard Spencer (who coined the term Alt-Right) and Jared Taylor (who himself was born in Japan and speaks fluent Japanese) often sing praise of Japan as an exemplary *ethno-state*. Finally, other such Alt-Right associates include Vice Magazine<sup>19</sup> co-founder and Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes. Founder of a far-right male-only organization driven by the white genocide conspiracy theory and notorious for inciting violence, Gavin McInnes has since gone on to write for the Canadian far-right Internet media-platform The Rebel Media, and in 2018 participated in a reenactment of the 1960 assassination

<sup>16</sup> In the second article, Laurent (2016) describes the *fachosphère* as part of the Identitarian Movement and “une nébuleuse de sites, de comptes sur les réseaux sociaux, visant à diffuser de la « réinformation », en clair de la propagande allant dans le sens des militants qui les animent.” A nebula of websites and accounts on social networks, designed to disseminate ‘réinformation’, or in other words propaganda embracing the ideas of the activists, amongst the users of those platforms.

<sup>17</sup> For other mainstream news examples, see *The New York Times’ How The Trolls Stole Washington* (2017) and the *Washington Post’s We Actually Elected A Meme As President* (Ohlheiser 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Although affinity for Japan by the Far Right is by no means a new phenomenon. In 2010 for example, a European delegation including previous French Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen and Belgian Vlaams Belang associate and European Parliament member Phillip Claeys, visited the politically controversial Yasukuni Shrine reportedly on invitation by the far-right movement (*Uyoku Dantai*) *issuikai* (K.C. 2010; Phillips and McCurry 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Founded at the time with a focus on underground subcultures. McInnes left Vice Media in 2008, prior to its expansion into news-making.

of Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) chairman Inejiro Asanuma by ultra-nationalist Otoya Yamaguchi (Feuer and Winston 2018). Journalist Audrea Lim, in her *The New York Times* editorial, even goes so far to assert “yellow fever” (a sexual obsession with those of Asian descent) as a common trait amongst the Alt-Right, stating that many public figures in the movement have had documented relationships with Asian women (2018).<sup>20</sup>

This soft power influence is observable on a grass-roots level as well. Charity (2016), for example, reports on the increasingly common phenomenon of encountering online imagery containing politically-tinted Japanese animation characters (wearing political symbols ranging from neo-Nazi symbols to Trump-related iconography such as *Make American Great Again* hats). The fully English anonymous messaging board *4chan* in particular<sup>21</sup> (since September 2015 officially owned by 2channel founder Hiroyuki Nishimura) started in 2003 as a North-American copy of its Japanese equivalents text-board 2channel and image-board *Futaba Channel* with an intended focus on discussing Japanese pop-culture (Orsini 2015), but came under heavy scrutiny in 2014 for its association with the *Gamer-gate* controversy and the Alt-Right. The former, a co-ordinated harassment campaign against women targeting sexism in video game culture and the multi-billion video game industry, can be interpreted both as protest against diversification of a supposed gamer identity (a cultural identity that has traditionally been associated with men) and as part of a larger reactionary online *culture war* over conservative and progressive ideologies. The controversy has had widespread coverage, including condemnation by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and was extensively covered by Alt-Right key-figure Milo Yiannopoulos on the far-right website Breitbart News Network. The outcome of this campaign has been claimed to have had radicalizing effects amongst its supporters (Wofford 2014; Johnston 2014; Morgan 2016; Martens 2017). Moreover, preliminary research on such microcosmic English language Internet communities (such as the political discussion section of *4chan*, *4chan* spin-off *8chan* and the conservative political section of *Reddit*) observes strong neo-nationalist rhetoric exemplary of the Alt-Right.

*8chan* in particular has been described as a more radical spin-off of *4chan* and in the wake of

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that a short news-report on YouTube covering this topic, “A Lot Of White Supremacists Seem To Have An Asian Fetish (HBO)” by VICE News (2017), had as of writing a ratio of 6,1K dislikes to 5,6K likes. The comment section included comments such as “absolute state of (((modern journalism))) … the truth is people longing culture about sincerity, chivalry, family value, etc. the west is beyond saved from the sinner, hedonist, liar, and degenerate.” ‘ShadyxFiascoX 32’ wrote “Personally Hitler loved Japan and said they had a good culture. What the hell is (((Vice))) talking about.”, which was liked 166 times. In both cases the triple parentheses (originated from Alt-Right discourse) imply Jewish ownership of the video’s owner, Vice News. One comment, by “Ochiai’s Channel” misinterprets this video’s content by writing “I am Japanese, and can I consider his talk as a hate speech against us?!” His channel, with a follower count of 610 subscribers and viewed over 87K times as of writing, lists “You can paste my videos anywhere, or you can even download it and edit to use it. … However, if you’re anti-Japan or pro-migration, you’re not welcome to do any of those in any means” (Ochiai’s Channel 2019).

<sup>21</sup> *4chan* has been accredited with popularizing many aspects now common to Internet communities. Of note is the self-assessed demography of its users, consisting of a a mostly millennial, male user-base from the United States and Western Europe, listing interests as “Japanese culture, anime, manga, video games and comics” (Advertise - *4chan* 2019; Ellis 2018).

the New Zealand terror attack has been associated with several other white-nationalist attacks.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, on July 26, 2019 a *New York Times* article on this Reddit sub-community, *The\_Donald*, reports that after repeated incitement of violence aimed increasingly at police officers and public officials, the forum has now been ‘quarantined’. This means that its content is no longer algorithmically featured on the front-page of the platform, that users have to log-in and specifically agree to enter this sub-community, and that no revenue will be generated through advertisements (Chokshi and Vigdor 2019). Reportedly, both Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign manager and social media manager visit *The\_Donald* on a daily basis (Parscale 2016; Restuccia, Lippman, and Johnson 2019) and Donald Trump himself was reported to give a Q&A in the community as well (Robertson 2016). This research further argues those Internet communities to be hubs for influencing mainstream political discourse and setting “the narrative agenda for mainstream media outlets” (Hine et al. 2016; Pearson 2016; Zannettou et al. 2017; Zannettou et al. 2018). Alt-right appropriated *viral* imagery (in colloquial terms known as ‘memes’)<sup>23</sup> such as that of a green anthropomorphic frog (‘Pepe the Frog’) find their roots in those communities as well, and have been shared in some form by members of the current White House, including Donald Trump and Donald Trump Jr. (Lee 2016; Ohlheiser 2016; Phillips 2016).

Thus, to reiterate, an increase of mainstream news reports, as mentioned above, claim occidental online communities with an origin in discussing Japanese pop-culture are effectively 1. hotbeds for right-wing radicalization, and 2. important electoral spaces for both right-wing populist political parties attacking established institutions and for politically motivated citizen movements in the United States and Europe. Members of those movements have praised Japan as the ideal of an ‘ethno-state’, and have themselves gained political traction outside the realm of the digital. Moreover, this chapter discussed this to be part of a global trend of neo-nationalist discourse on the Internet and claimed that terms as *fachosphere*, Netto-Uyoku and Alt-Right are conceived of as expressions of such phenomena. Nevertheless the *fachosphere*, for example, refers uniquely to the French cyberspace in which such a discourse finds place (with the added connotation of fascist ideology), while the Alt-Right, now as a term unquestionably grown beyond its intended use, was originally conceived of as a particular ideological citizens movement in the United States.

As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, a common factor in literature on the Netto-Uyoku is the connection with ideologically driven ACM movements like the Zaitokukai (arguably the actual counterpoint to the original Alt-Right). The term Netto-Uyoku (‘net-right’) however, while

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<sup>22</sup> An anonymous post on this message-board linked to a live-stream of the New Zealand terror attack, suggesting that the perpetrator was active on 8chan (Brewster 2019). Prior to the 2019 Poway synagogue terror attack, a user on 8chan signed their post with the name of the alleged shooter, and in a similar fashion to the Christchurch perpetrator, posted a manifesto referencing the white genocide conspiracy theory and Internet subculture elements (Collins and Blankstein 2019; Stewart 2019). This reportedly happened again in August, 2019 prior to the El Paso, Texas shooting (Beckett and Levin 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Davison (2012) defines this as “a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission.”

vague in its usage of ‘right-wing’, leans in its literal meaning more closely to this phenomenon of Internet-driven right-wing populist nationalism (i.e. neo-nationalism), a phenomenon I would like to further conceptualize as the ideological movement of *cyber-nationalism* (i.e. a form of neo-nationalism centered around the peculiarities of the Internet as a medium). Although overlapping with recent conceptualizations of neo-nationalism, the *neo* aspect does not permit enough agency to the Internet as a medium and its underlying logic. After all, “the medium is the message” as McLuhan famously describes, and with roots in libertarian counter-culture movements, so too is the Internet and World Wide Web ideologically driven (Markoff 2005). Azuma (2011), Tamura and Kobayashi (2014) argue similar to McLuhan argued that the very nature of electronic media would shrink the world into a ‘global village’ or bring about a ‘General Will 2.0’ and cause social change through increased social and political involvement and awareness. In this Utopian view would the Internet as medium then, precisely because of the general lack of gate-keepers and the dual role of the Internet-user as both consumer and producer, serve as perfect representation of McLuhan’s ‘global village’.<sup>24</sup>

In this chapter, I have also argued that the space of the Internet is increasingly politicized and fertile soil for both grass-roots levels of Internet activism as large-scale political warfare. Within the context of Internet and politics, academics have to various degrees hypothesized on the contribution of the Internet to political polarization, on the Internet’s utilization by political actors applying populist strategies, and on the media effects of so-called ‘new media’ on its users regarding political awareness and opinion-forming. Sunstein (2017), for example, writes about the impact to democracy of so-called online echo chambers—reinforcement of one’s ideas through repeated confrontation with opinions and news aligning with one’s ideas). Although deliberate misinformation (‘fake news’) is by no means a new trend either,<sup>25</sup> this too has thrived due to the Internet’s widespread usage. The lack of moderation and the spontaneity of social network platforms facilitates the (conscious) spreading and sharing of false information (or information seen loose of its context), without reflection or without source control, and has potentially far-reaching political consequences.

My first hypothesis thus far is that those described as Netto-Uyoku are ideologically similar to the Alt-Right and other such loosely connected movements occurring on the Internet. But if we are to read the Netto-Uyoku as a localized embodiment of such a global phenomenon of counter-establishment neo-nationalism occurring on cyberspace, why then are the Netto-Uyoku perceived of as being supportive of the LDP and Abe Shinzō (a politician that is by all means of the word part of the political establishment)? For that, I hypothesize the following: whereas political newcomers

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<sup>24</sup> It is fitting too then that former Vice President of the United States, Al Gore, referred to the Internet in a 1994 speech for the International Telecommunication Union, as ‘information superhighways’ that would serve as a ‘metaphor of democracy’ and lead to a ‘global community.’ The text is available in full at <http://vlib.iue.it/history/internet/algorespeech.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Soll (2016) traces fake news in the west back to the invention of print media five centuries ago, to Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in 1439. In his essay, he recalls for example an account in 1475 of deliberate use of misinformation to persecute a Jewish community in Trent, Italy.

and anti-establishment have on a global scale capitalized on the distrust of established institutions experienced by these cyber-nationalists, the LDP has effectively done this earlier in the wake of the 2011 earthquake and waning popularity of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), by specifically appealing to the Netto-Uyoku ideology and deterring from the anti-establishment elements of populist ideology.

Based on this premise, several other questions come to mind:

- How then should we define Netto-Uyoku and cyber-nationalist ideology?
- Are there similar trends of *online culture wars* on Japanese social media?<sup>26</sup>
- What processes do Netto-Uyoku employ to disseminate ideology?
- Following McLuhan, how then do the media platforms the Netto-Uyoku utilize operate technically?
- How does the movement organize and mobilize, both online and in real life?
- Is there possible space for furthering a Netto-Uyoku political agenda through influencing its international counterparts?

This paper consists of four chapters, including this introductory first chapter wherein I tried to draw the Netto-Uyoku in a wider, global context and not regard it as a uniquely Japanese *Galápagos syndrome* phenomenon (although its idiosyncrasies are in no doubt shaped by Japanese occurrences, as seen in the framing of Azuma (2001) and Kitada (2008)). To substantiate the above hypotheses and answer those subquestions, the second chapter intents to build a narrative on the Netto-Uyoku through a literature review of both seminal and newer writings. As a relatively young and volatile term, ‘Netto-Uyoku’ has gone through several shifts in meaning, with earlier works viewing the Netto-Uyoku not as an actual group with group awareness, but loosely as people utilizing the Internet and engaging in aggressive, politically-driven rhetoric online (Sasaki 2005). Early scholarly work referring to the Netto-Uyoku does so in a greater context debating politicians with populist tendencies (in particular Tōru Hashimoto and Ishihara Shintarō), the historical revisionist organization Nippon Kaigi, or the actions of ACM-affiliated protest movements as Zaitokukai. The online messaging board 2channel is however a red line throughout these works, as well as occasional references to the online video-channel Channel Sakurai, video-services Niconico, YouTube and social media platform Twitter. Those works have far often viewed the Netto-Uyoku in a greater debate of (trans)national identity, discrimination and of questions to what qualifies as freedom of speech (Tsuiji 2008; Yasuda 2012; Yasuda et al. 2013; Murai 2012; Morris-Suzuki 2015). Two exceptions are Azuma (2007) and Kitada (2008), who have both connected the Netto-Uyoku with a cynical nihilism amongst 2channel-users in the wake of the economic crisis known as the Lost Decade.

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<sup>26</sup> Referring to the ongoing clash between reactionary and progressive ideologies, whereof the aforementioned Gamergate controversy is one such example.

With the widespread usage of the term *Netto-Uyoku* (and in particular its pejorative abbreviation *neto-uyo*), those at the receiving end of this critique have had ambiguous reactions. Some denounced the term (a common thread is the normative implication that they are merely ‘normal Japanese citizens’ voicing the concerns of the people), while others have mockingly appropriated it (as is the case, for example, with Zaitokukai-founder Makoto Sakurai). Through the social constructionist act of naming this phenomenon, so thus arises a group identity with discursive implications of both in-group normalization and out-group polarization. State of the art literature in contrast discusses and hypothesize on the socio-cultural background of the Netto-Uyoku, as well as on its ideology, demography and *modus operandi* (Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich 2017; Kitada 2018; Kurahashi 2018; Ota 2019; Yasuda and 倉橋耕平2019). This paper then too intents to read the Netto-Uyoku not as a noisy fringe element of Japanese society, but as an ideologically driven movement with political agency, and keeping in mind the context laid out in this chapter, the power to exert influence on public discourse. While refraining from taking too hard a technological determined position towards the Internet (the implication being that the existence of the Internet as a medium would by itself be a leading cause for societal change),<sup>27</sup> and instead treats the Netto-Uyoku in part as a symptom of deeper cultural malaise, this paper does suggest that by no means should the Internet be dismissed as merely a tool of communication either.

The third chapter lays down a Frankfurt School inspired lens of theory through which this paper reads the Netto-Uyoku, based on this author’s understanding of ideology, populism and neo-nationalism. This is done through the reasoning of thinkers associated with the Western Marxist tradition or Frankfurt School of critical theory: Antonio Gramsci, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Jürgen Habermas—juxtaposing this with concrete historical applications leading up to the present state in which the Netto-Uyoku arises. In contextualizing populism, this chapter follow Taggart (2000), Laclau (2005) and Mudde (2013) in their definitions of populism as a *thin-centered* ideology antagonizing a homogeneous elite in contrast to *the People’s Will*, a homogeneous group of *ordinary people*, utilizing an *us versus them* dichotomy. It then further analyzes compatibility with a so-called “Japanese model of populism” (*nihongata popyurizumu*, 「日本型ポピュリズム」) as described by Japanese scholars such as Otake (2003), Kimura (2006), Matsutani Mitsuru (2009; 2010), Yoshida (2011), and Kobori (2013). This chapter also draws on the work of Anderson (2006) for his notion of *imagined communities* and Azuma Hiroki for his concepts of *General Will 2.0* in relation to Internet-based forms of populism, and *animalization* within the context of Lukács’s *reification* (2001; 2011).

The fourth chapter attempt to further lay bare underlying ideological structures by conducting

<sup>27</sup> “Determinism is a philosophical system that posits every physical event, including human cognition and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of past occurrences and therefore makes it possible for us to know future effects with certainty. Technological determinism claims that technology is an autonomous,”self-controlling, self-determining, self-generating, self-propelling, self-propelling, selfperpetuating and self-expanding force ... out of human control, changing under its own momentum and ‘blindly’ shaping society” (Chandler 1995, 1).

a mixed method content analysis of what is to be understood as Netto-Uyoku rhetoric, building on Dijk and Fabra (2006) and Fairclough (2010). This chapter focuses particularly on two overlooked media-platforms in dispersing Netto-Uyoku thought: Wikipedia and 2channel aggregation sites. This chapter then pays particular attention to the *modus operandi* of each platform as well as the peculiarities of the Internet itself. Support for Japanese characters on Internet addresses (URLs) is, for example, relatively new, and thus are Japanese website URLs and many profile names on social media dominantly written in the Latin alphabet (in the process hinting at a technologically-determined hegemonic nature of the medium of the World Wide Web itself). Finally, this chapter expands on one particular event in recent Netto-Uyoku history: The ‘Netto-Uyoku Ban Matsuri’ (*neto-uyo ban matsuri* ネトウヨ BAN 祭り). Earlier I inquired on the existence of a Japanese equivalent of online culture wars. While setting up the outline of this paper, this question answered itself. The latter uses methods of mass-reporting on YouTube and Twitter for automatic removal of Netto-Uyoku related accounts.

On a closing note, it should be mentioned that any research involving the Internet and social networks online is bound to have some risks and limitations. In this case risks and limitations involve liquidity of data, copyright laws pertaining to acquiring data and lack of reliability due to anonymity masking intent of the user.<sup>28</sup> As referred to earlier, one issue that arose during the writing process was the effect of an on-going online *culture war* between Netto-Uyoku members and anti-hate speech movements. This author concurs that limiting public access to ideological extremist material reduces chances of radicalization,<sup>29</sup> but for the purposes of research it drastically impacted the ability to assess network influence and trickle-down effects of extremist rhetoric on mainstream platforms. Other issues are the extraction of online data from an ethical viewpoint and the concept of informed consent, more so in light of the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The dataset contains data created independent of the researcher on platforms that are explicitly open (2channel, *matome*-blogs and Wiki-style encyclopedias). In other words, data that is openly available to group-outsiders and explicitly intended to be so (including user-names) on online spaces that are not expected to be private spaces. It is therefore reasonable to argue that obtaining informed consent is not applicable in this case. Finally, all photographs, screen-shots graphs and translations are provided by the author unless explicitly stated otherwise (including direct quotes from secondary literature).

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<sup>28</sup> Particularly on 4chan and 2channel are ambiguity and cynicism inherent elements of discourse, increasing the difficulty of a critical reading. A blatantly offense message could be masked as irony either as defense for actual offensive intent, or as a deadpan form of inter-textual parody. This phenomenon is referred to as *Poe's Law*.

<sup>29</sup> Widespread social media platforms as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are already making efforts to remove contents that is deemed hateful or contains “bigoted ideologies.” Donald Trump has criticized this move as being biased against conservative users (Stack 2019; Roose and Conger 2019).

## CHAPTER 2

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### THE NETTO-UYOKU — A LITERATURE REVIEW

To demonstrate the extent of reach the term Netto-Uyoku in its various forms has had, the previous chapter touched upon a late 2010 print article in *The New York Times*. The first English language mention in mainstream press, however, dates back to March 14, 2006, when Journalist Eric Johnston published a *The Japan Times* piece on right-wing nationalism and the Internet in Japan, “Net boards venue for faceless rightists.” In his article, Johnston (2006) associates these ‘faceless rightists’ (who he further refers to as *Net Uyoku*) with hate-speech towards Koreans<sup>30</sup> and the anonymous messaging board 2channel. Moreover, Johnston ties them to the conservative online video channel Channel Sakura and the revisionist political organization *Nippon Kaigi* (the latter which has deeply rooted ties to the current iteration of the LDP),<sup>31</sup> arguing ideological overlap. In Japan then, the term first reached print press in a 2005 *Mainichi shinbun* article by Sasaki (2005), who described the Netto-Uyoku as a ‘new conservative public opinion’ (*shin hoshu-tekina yoron*, 新保守的な世論) that was able to sprout precisely due to Internet as a medium.

If we look at an estimate of relative online interest in the topic of Netto-Uyoku itself, using Google search queries from the past fifteen years (see **figure 2.1**),<sup>32</sup> we could assert that while there was a small rise in public interest around the time of Sasaki’s article, a global awareness of this phenomenon did not appear until the late 2000s, when the LDP suffers a landmark defeat and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) replaced then Prime Minister of Japan Asō Tarō with Hatoyama Yukio. It is around this period too that academic interest in the Netto-Uyoku started to increase. Peaks in this graph generally coincide with sudden bursts of (geo-)political tensions. This includes election

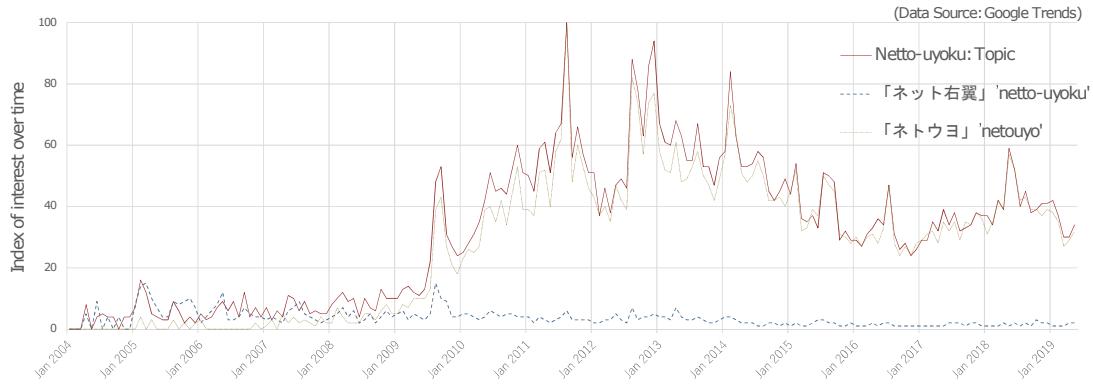
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<sup>30</sup> When this paper refers to ‘Koreans’, this broadly covers those with an ethnic background to the Korean peninsula. While the exact content of such messages differs depending on the recipient’s background, this includes South-Korea, North-Korea and diaspora in Japan with such ethnic backgrounds.

<sup>31</sup> Although the former too has been capitalized upon in timely fashion. See, for example, a June 11, 2009 Channel Sakura interview with Abe Shinzō “The problems facing Japan and Mass media from hereonforth” (*Korekara no Nihon to masumedia mondai* 「これから日本とマスメディア問題」) posted on its YouTube channel SakuraSoTV, criticizing biases in mainstream press such as the NHK and *Asahi Shinbun*. Ten years after its initial upload, this video still draws comments. The user 匿名希望 (*tokumei kibō*, ‘desire to stay anonymous’), for example, posts (translated by author) “the NHK, which sends criminals (NHK contractors) to the Japanese people to rob them of money, is an enemy of Japan and an enemy of the Japanese. Dismantle the NHK! Abe, I’m supporting you! (\*^ - ^)ノ♪” (SakuraSoTV 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Google search queries offer a glimpse on public awareness and interest in a topic. This graph contrasts the term ‘Netto-Uyoku’ as a ‘topic’ (which includes algorithmically collected related keywords) and its breakdown in the literal search terms ‘netto-uyoku’ 「ネット右」 and ‘neto-uyo’ 「ネトウヨ」. Interest is scaled to the highest peak of interest (100), which is calculated based on the highest amount of queries for a term or topic, relative to the total Google search queries at that time; it is not an indicator of quantity. For more information on the methodology behind Google Trends, as well as other related graphs, see **A.2.2**. A comparison of this graph to similar data such as comparative trends in populism (**figure 3.1**) and left/right-wing politics (**figure A.2**) might offer some big-data insights in political interest by Japanese Internet users.

lead-ups (such as the party election following former Prime Minister Naoto Kan's resignation and the December 2012 general election), but also for example large-scale Chinese protests in 2005 regarding talks of new Japanese history textbooks downplaying war crimes (Kahn 2005), and again in 2012 after territorial disputes were reignited. Finally, this graph further shows that the more pejorative ‘*neto-uyo*’ (「ネトウヨ」) overtakes the more neutral ‘*netto-uyoku*’ 「ネット右翼」 in usage from mid-2009 onwards.



**Figure 2.1.** The Google Trends of Netto-Uyoku & Japan (15 Years).

## 2.1 Who are the Netto-Uyoku?

In one of the earlier English language publications by those in academia, Morris-Suzuki<sup>33</sup> (2013) warns against the dangers of social media as a tool for populist mobilization, and paradoxical usage of the empty signifier ‘freedom of speech’. While not explicitly using the term Netto-Uyoku or *net-right*, she describes trends of “violently xenophobic or racist messages, recycling wartime language and imagery that had long disappeared from public discourse in Japan” on the anonymous Internet forum 2channel as a trend of “Internet nationalism”. Based on a 2012 social media white paper showcasing 2channel users to be predominantly young men, she frames this group as “lonely, frustrated *otaku* (an isolated person with obsessive interests), probably unemployed or in a dead-end job, seeking some sense of identity by sharing anger and bitterness with nameless others.” She further hints that as the social media-scape shifts, so too does this 2channel-inspired Netto-Uyoku discourse finds its way to other platforms. The image of lonely Netto-Uyoku as *otaku* seeking comfort in nationalism and group-bonding online is indeed a compelling narrative, if potentially stereotypical and, through such usage of polemic language, at risk of drawing backlash. So how then have other authors addressed this?

<sup>33</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki is professor of Japanese History and frequent contributor to *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. Her academic work focuses primarily on the topic of identity and politics in Japan.

Several years earlier Tsuji (2008) made a first attempt at drawing a quantitative view of the Netto-Uyoku demographic. By holding an online survey with 998 valid participants, Tsuji tried to map right-wing radicalization and polarization (working on Cass R. Sunstein's notion of *group polarization*) amongst Internet-users, and used the following traits to identify Netto-Uyoku:

1. Feelings of antagonism towards China and the Korea peninsula
2. Agreement with the Prime Minister's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine<sup>34</sup>
3. Agreement with the revision of Article 9 of the constitution<sup>35</sup>
4. Agreeing with the display of the national flag and singing the national anthem in elementary and middle schools
5. Having written on social or political issues on one's website, or commented and engaged in discussion on social media online

Out of his sample, thirteen people have had strong agreements to all of the above (1.3 percent) and, when eased to agreement of three items including the fifth point, this number increased to thirty-one (3.1 percent). Tsuji concluded that based on these early findings, this group indeed appears to be dominantly male, frequently participate on 2channel, and has a negative bias towards mass communication. Moreover, through a multiple regression analysis he concludes that a higher frequency in usage of 2channel correlates with stronger feelings of patriotism and exclusivism. Although some concerns could be raised on the amount of Netto-Uyoku willing to truthfully participate in a "survey on social awareness",<sup>36</sup> not to mention that the survey itself was targeting only users between the ages of 20 and 44, this does indeed suggest tendencies of right-wing polarization on 2channel. He further expanded upon this research with a 2017 paper, after having again revisited the survey in 2014. As seen in **table 2.1**, Tsuji broadened his target audience, this time with a reach of 2347 participants aged 20 to 59. For the sake of valid comparison, results limited to the age-groups 20 - 44 in 2014 have been added in brackets (Tsuji 2017).

While Tsuji's conclusions are not drastically different, finding no significant discrepancies in academic background or income, he confirms seven years after the initial study that this group of 'Netto-Uyoku' still prefer anonymous communication tools such as 2channel and video service Niconico over social media such as Facebook or the messaging service LINE. He further suggests that while there is not much of an increase in users actively attempting to disseminate their political opinions (an estimated two percent of Internet users), there is at least an increase in latent Netto-Uyoku behavior

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<sup>34</sup> A Shinto shrine generally commemorating those fallen in the service of the Japanese nation from the Meiji period onwards. This includes soldiers convicted of war crimes, including Class A war criminals during the Second World War, and public visits by politicians representing the state has drawn criticism for unapologetic, nationalist behavior.

<sup>35</sup> Article 9 respectively renounces war (clause 1) and deters any legal rights to maintain a national army (clause 2).

<sup>36</sup> Which is the title of the actual survey, *shakai ishiki ni kansuru chōsa* 「社会意識に関する調査」.

TABLE 2.1. *Ratio of Netto-Uyoku according to 2007 & 2014 surveys*

	2007 survey		2014 survey	
	Ratio (%)	Total	Ratio (%)	Total
a) Negative Sentiment Towards China and Korea	36.6	362	62.7 (60.6)	1471 (880)
b) Conservative political orientation	6.4	63	11.3 (10.7)	265 (155)
c) Posting or arguing on the Internet	15.4	152	12.2 (10.7)	286 (190)
a) Percentage Netto-Uyoku	1.3	13	1.8 (1.9)	43 (28)

(Source: Tsuji 2017)

when taking into consideration the increase in reactionary and xenophobic sentiment<sup>37</sup> between 2008 and 2014 (2017).<sup>38</sup> We find however one additional trait missing: distrust in mainstream media (in particular the *Asahi shinbun* and the NHK).

## 2.2 Imagined Cyber-villages

2channel, an anonymous message-board developed by Hiroyuki Nishimura (an exchange student in the United States at the time), was described in an earlier Wired article as the biggest bulletin board system in the world—with 2.5 million posts a day (Katayama 2007). The article paraphrases Daisuke Okabe as saying that 2channel for its users is a place “where people can combat the mass media on a grass-roots level,” bringing to mind imagery of warfare and suggesting a subconscious reasoning of the Internet as ideologically different from mass-media. Moreover, Katayama quotes 2channel founder Nishimura in reaction to “more than 50 civil lawsuits in Tokyo alone and more than \$4 million in settlements and court penalties for libel, defamation, copyright violations, privacy and personal injury,” as saying that he does not have “any intention of paying up to a country whose laws I don’t respect.” This again implies an atmosphere of rebelliousness and one that we could also associate with the messaging board itself as well.<sup>39</sup>

Kitada (2005) argues that this sense of rebelliousness and scorn towards mainstream media experienced on 2channel—in other words, a social space of ‘cynical anti-media culture’—lies at least in part at the roots of the nationalism experienced on 2channel. Writing in 2005 about trends of a ‘right-leaning tilt amongst youth’ (*Wakamono-tachi no ukei-ka*, 若者たちの右傾化) shortly before the public adoption of the term Netto-Uyoku, Kitada observes on 2channel a distinct cynical mode of

<sup>37</sup> In particular the idea that migrant foreigners will correlate to higher crime rates.

<sup>38</sup> He too argues the neo-nationalist ACM demonstrations as a real-life extension of the Netto-Uyoku and further refers to them as *Nihon-ban no orutana uyoku* 日本版のオルタナ右翼, the Japanese version of the Alt-Right (Tsuji 2017).

<sup>39</sup> In another intersection with its English language counterpart, it must be noted however that Hiroyuki Nishimura has since lost legal ownership of 2channel to the current owner of the extreme right-wing 4chan spin-off 8chan, Jim Watkins (Silverman and Lytvynenko 2017), and in turn himself became owner of 4chan. Furthermore, since Jim Watkins' take-over, 2channel now links to 8chan on its front-page. He has since gone on to create an intended 2channel rival 2ch.sc, which has attracted some of 2channel's former ‘population’.

communication that relies on harsh bluntness, but one through which its users develop a sense of intimacy. This mode of communication relies on a constant source for critique through which it can sustain social connections. As Kitada himself states in an English translation of his 2005 essay, “From a sociological point of view, [2channel] marks a departure from an instrumental rationality that supports the existing social order. Instead, it is a social space that produces an extreme form of connective rationality that supports ongoing communicative actions and reactions that maintain the community.” Furthermore, “what began as principled attacks on discrepancies between mass media’s ideology and reality have changed into an activity seeking to perpetuate ironic communication, leading to a paranoid attitude that aggressively seeks discrepancies between form and content” (Itō, Okabe, and Tsuji 2012, 70–80).<sup>40</sup>

This channels to a certain extent political scientist Anderson’s (2006) notion of *imagined communities*, which Sakamoto (2011), Murai (2012) and this author (2017) have relied upon in an attempt to explain the sense of kinship shared by those whose identity are clouded in the anonymity of the Internet. Anderson, in his work on nationalism, draws attention to the transforming role of what he called *print-capitalism*, the capitalist drive behind mass-printing in vernacular languages. His idea of nations as ‘imagined’ communities implies that the sense of kinship felt between its members is a social construct based on imagined mutual experiences. These imagined mutual experiences are facilitated by a standardization of language stemming from this print capitalism, and the subsequent rise in mass-media. Through such national media consumption, these communities then develop a sense of imagined sameness as well as a clearly defined paradigm of ‘otherness’. In that sense, the communities on 2channel (and indeed, on its English counterparts) gain their imagined sense of comradeship through Kitada’s suggested grammar of cynicism—mutual consumption and critique of national, mainstream media events, and the cynical, harsh language driving such conversations. Deviate from such rigid structures in those communities and one risks backlash or ostracism.<sup>41</sup>

This logic has also been covered by media scholar McLuhan and his work in the 1967 *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, expanding upon Harold Innis’s *The Bias Of Communication* (1951). Innis wrote that, “the effect of the discovery of printing was evident in the savage religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Application of power to communication industries hastened the consolidation of vernaculars, the rise of nationalism, revolution, and new outbreaks of savagery in the twentieth century” (2011, 245). McLuhan, extending Innis, argued that the invention of print-

<sup>40</sup> Kitada views this cynical anti-media culture as an extension of an ’80s consumerist society in which sensibilities of playful irony associated with media literacy and intertextuality became vulgarized through interaction with popular media. That is to say, a population growing up with the medium of TV developed a sense of ironic distance to this media, and an insider culture associated with the new mode of communication through which youth sought interactivity adopted a cynical stance towards “the discrepancies between mass media systems and journalism,” (Itō, Okabe, and Tsuji 2012, 76).

<sup>41</sup> A common tactic on these forums is to antagonize and mock the deviating party as someone belonging to the self-perceived enemies. On Japanese social media for example, the term ‘certified Zainichi’ (在日認定, zainichi nintei) is used to refer to baseless assumption of someone being ethnically Korean.

media transformed an oral, ‘time-biased’ tribe culture into a literate ‘space-biased’ culture, changing our mental processes and bringing about a heightened sense of individual consciousness yet laying the groundworks for nationalism.<sup>42</sup> With his idea of a ‘global village’, McLuhan hypothesized then that trends towards electronic media (referring at the time to radio and television) would again alter society—from a literate culture to a ‘post-literate’ visual culture, one with different forms of social interaction. That is to say, one of a collective, homogeneous identity, in which the lack of a physical body or physical cues creates a different relation to oneself and one’s surroundings (McLuhan et al. 2011, 21–35).

### 2.3 The Action-Conservative Movement (ACM)

In another early academic work on the Netto-Uyoku, Sakamoto (2011) connects the Netto-Uyoku to 2channel and Niconico, and adheres to Tsuji’s (2008) earlier classification in describing the Netto-Uyoku as follows (Sakamoto 2011, 2–4):

Mirroring the post-1990s historical revisionism, netto-uyo exhibit xenophobia towards immigrants, depict Korea and China negatively, and uphold revisionist history, justifying and glorifying Japan’s wartime actions. They also support political leaders’ official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, revision of Article 9 of the constitution, and patriotic education. [...] Netto-uyo’s ‘we the Japanese’ does not even include all ethnic Japanese, as those who do not share their values (liberals, left-wingers, feminists, supporters of non-Japanese residents’ rights, Korean TV drama fans etc.) are all considered potential enemies of the nation.”

Moreover, Sakamoto calls 2channel<sup>43</sup> “‘not for the faint of heart’, this unmoderated forum is known to be the main outlet for revisionism and xenophobic neonationalism of the internet generation” (2011, 2). Like Kitada, she concurs that the nationalism occurring on 2channel is not an extension of preexisting nationalism, saying that “discourses that develop on the Internet may exhibit different characteristics from those that form outside the Internet,” and further arguing that “[a]s one of the many strands of nationalism that constitute contemporary Japan’s neonationalist landscape [...] [2channel] online nationalism should not be dismissed as mere chatter,” (Sakamoto 2011, 13). Instead, so she continues, “[a]lthough netto-uyo nationalism currently remains largely within cyberspace, and although cynicism seems to prevail over modernist commitment to a fixed meaning, the potential for its politicisation and mobilisation exists” (2011, 13).

Although this paper deals primarily with the potential for *politization* (and Sakamoto too argues that Netto-Uyoku are too cynical to participate outside the realm of the digital), illustrations of *mobilization* are not unheard of. In the light of an increased Fuji Television programming of South

<sup>42</sup> “The inherent conflict [...] is at the centre of print technology itself, which isolates the individual yet also creates massive groupings by means of vernacular nationalism.” This inherent conflict refers to the conflict of the “need for self-definition” with the “process of renunciation of differences” (McLuhan et al. 2011, 244).

<sup>43</sup> She abbreviates 2channel as 2-chan. This should however not be confused with another messaging board, Futaba Channel, which is often referred to as 2chan due its URL 2chan.net.

Korean TV series, for example, several counter-protests were held in August 2011 drawing an estimate 2,000 to 10,000 participants depending on the source (Schilling 2011; Chosun.com 2011; Ilbo 2011; Itagaki 2015). Perhaps the most clear testament to their potential for *mobilization*, though, lies in the activities of what Yamaguchi (2013) translates as ACM, the Action Conservative Movement (*kōdō suru hoshu undō*, 行動する保守運動). As referred to in the first chapter, those neo-nationalist groups are linked to the Netto-Uyoku, and have held over a thousand documented marches in the timespan of three years (Nikaido 2016). Higuchi, author of the 2016 *Japan's Ultra-Right*, compares these ACM groups with the rise of neo-nationalism in Europe and argues that “[w]hile Japan’s old radical right is authoritarian, anti-communist, and nationalist, the new radical right is uniquely characterized by its xenophobia” (Higuchi and Castelveter 2016, 1).

We see this discrepancy between the neo-nationalism associated with the Netto-Uyoku and ACM and ‘traditional’ nationalism in the criticism by what might be considered the ‘historical’ (post-war) far-right movements in Japan (*uyoku dantai*, 右翼団体). According to Yasuda (2012), those groups claim that the ACM are ‘not rooted in conservative or right-wing ideology’ (2012, 320). The head of the *uyoku dantai* ‘Unification Front Volunteer Army’ (*tōitsu sensen giyūgun*, 統一戦線義勇軍), for example, criticized the ACM group Zaitokukai as not being able to distinguish between the Internet and reality, acting rashly without experience (2012, 324–25). Furthermore, amongst the representatives of an organization formed to counter the xenophobia of ACM groups, *Norikoe netto* (のりこえねっと, a contraction of ‘*Heitosupīchi to reishizumu o norikoeru kokusai nettowāku*’ 「ヘイトスピーチとレイシズムを乗り越える国際ネットワーク」, lit. “International network to overcome hate speech and racism”), we find not just former Prime Minister of Japan Murayama Tomiichi, and freelance journalist Yasuda, but also founder of the *uyoku dantai* ‘Issuikai’<sup>44</sup> Suzuki Kunio (Net 2015).<sup>45</sup>

The ACM’s topics of choice, so then writes Meiji Gakuin University Professor Tom Gill,<sup>46</sup> include “the lay Buddhist religious movement Soka Gakkai, the Japan Teacher’s Union (*Nikkyōso*), the Buraku Liberation League (*Buraku Kaihō Dōmei*), the media [...] and sometimes the national and local governments. However, its most striking feature is its hostility to foreigners in Japan generally, and Koreans in particular,” (2018, 176). To reiterate, the antagonizing of (ethnic) minority groups, foreigners and the media. While a complete overview of the ACM and a breakdown of their concrete stances lies beyond the scope of this paper, it is of some essence to cover the Zaitokukai and its founder Sakurai Makoto, the man who stirred Fackler (2010) to write his initial *The New York Times* article. Founded in 2006, the Zaitokukai gained notoriety for its frequent demonstrations throughout Japan and its

<sup>44</sup> The *uyoku dantai* that in 2010 reportedly invited several high-standing European ultra-nationalists for a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. See footnote <sup>18</sup> on page 5.

<sup>45</sup> This group’s name is a deliberate reference to the aggressive demonstrations held by the Zaitokukai in regards to a Filipino schoolgirl, Noriko Calderon, whose parents were deported as illegal immigrants.

<sup>46</sup> In his paper on the ACM, he describes 2channel in a rather negative light as “an internet site which is well known for no-holdsbarred discussion, virulent ad hominem attacks and rightist/racist rhetoric” (Gill 2018, 184).

aggressive rhetoric mirroring the language used on 2channel. As we might defer from the group's full name, "The Citizens' Group Refusing to Tolerate Special Rights for Zainichi Koreans" (*Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai* 在日特權を許さない市民の会), their activities are centered dominantly around the topic of ethnic Koreans residing in Japan<sup>47</sup>, with protests often held in neighborhoods with large concentrations of ethnic Koreans. Nevertheless, they often engage in attacks on media due to a supposedly biased programming towards South Korean pop-culture and 'concealment' of the truth (e.g. crimes supposedly committed by those groups), and have engaged in reactionary protests against left-wing counter-protests (on topics such as nuclear energy).<sup>48</sup>

Yasuda, author of "The Internet and Patriotism" ("Netto to Aikoku", 『ネットと愛国』) extensively covered the Zaitokukai; conducting interviews with its members and supporters<sup>49</sup> as well as those who've known the Zaitokukai's founder as a child. Yasuda found that, in spite of rhetoric inciting violence (at times including the actual usage of violence)<sup>50</sup> and racial pejoratives, its members are generally speaking 'normal' citizens.<sup>51</sup> Higuchi (2014) drives this point further, stating they are 'normal' in the sense that based on his surveys, they do not even stand out due to economic malaise or for being on the fringes of society. Furthermore, a common trait of these groups is, unlike the mostly male-dominated post-war nationalist groups collectively known as *uyoku dantai*, the inclusion of women; with various ACM groups solely built around the female identity.<sup>52</sup> Yamaguchi (2013) argued earlier that ACM groups such as the Zaitokukai pay strong attention to the normative aspect of being 'normal members of society'. This inclusive role is then purposely done, to quote Yamaguchi, "to enhance the 'ordinariness' of the ACM. Women are encouraged to deliver speeches, walk in front of the group, and wear the kimono not only as the epitome of Japanese women's tradition but for visual impact" (2013, 104).

Morris-Suzuki (2013), like Yasuda, Higuchi and Yamaguchi, noted the Zaitokukai's active use of social media for propagating ideology, hinting at a radicalizing effect by claiming that such media usage is how the Zaitokukai "recruit the young." Indeed, its core members are savvy Internet-users

<sup>47</sup> This paper for the sake of brevity refers to the different diaspora with ethnic roots in the Korean peninsula and immigration histories tracing back to Japan's rule of the peninsula as 'ethnic Koreans' (in Japanese, usually preceded with the term *zainichi* 在日, literally meaning 'residing in Japan'). We do not infer that the identity felt amongst these groups is homogeneous, and the complexity of the pre-war Korean kingdom known as Chosón, the post-war North and South Korea, the ambiguous legal state of these groups 'permanently residing' in Japan and the various difficulties of integration these impose goes beyond the scope of this paper. When this paper references xenophobia as an ideological element of Netto-Uyoku or ACM, this includes the logic of viewing those 'ethnic Koreans' as non-Japanese and not belonging.

<sup>48</sup> See for example the "Demonstration march for not extinguishing the fire of nuclear plants" (*genpatsu no hi o kesasenai demo kōshin* 「原発の火を消させないデモ行進」), a counter counter-protest in Shibuya on April 17, 2011, held in the belief that anti-Japanese left-wingers purposefully intend to weaken Japan from the inside by limiting its energy sources (Sakurai 2011).

<sup>49</sup> In 2017, the Zaitokukai's main page claimed a membership of 16399 people, of which 14079 (85,85%) were male (Poppe 2017, 24–25). As of writing, the Zaitokukai web-page referred to is no longer online.

<sup>50</sup> For which Sakurai and three other members of the Zaitokukai were arrested. This article too reached the print edition of *The New York Times* courtesy of Martin Fackler (Fackler 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Although going to some extents to include the social or economic exclusion felt by those supporters.

<sup>52</sup> Gill sums several of these up, such as the "*Nippon Josei no Kai Soyokaze* (Japan Women's Association Breeze), its offshoot *Aikoku Josei no Tsudoi Hanadokei* (Patriotic Women's Gathering Flower Clock), *Zenkoku Hoshu Josei Rengō* (National Conservative Women's Alliance) and *Nadeshiko Akushon* (Japanese Women for Justice and Peace)" (Gill 2018, 176).

using Twitter, Niconico and YouTube to spread videos of their protests,<sup>53</sup> and this author (2017) further pointed out the stylistic resemblance of the Zaitokukai's homepage to 2channel, as well as the usage of *otaku* subculture elements, such as cartoon characters to drive their arguments.<sup>54</sup> As Yamaguchi and Gill argue, they draw on a social anxiety that began in the early 2000s with the public acknowledgment of North Korean kidnappings of Japanese civilians, as well as protests with anti-Japanese sentiment held throughout East-Asia in 2005, and economic stagnation in the face of China and South Korea's rapid growth. It is nevertheless not just an outsider group's radicalizing usage of media, that is of note. Rather, it could be argued that it is within this right-leaning cynical Internet discourse itself that the Zaitokukai arose.<sup>55</sup> Its founder, going by the pen name Makoto Sakurai,<sup>56</sup> started his 'anti-Korean activities' (*kenkan katsudō*, 嫌韓活動) during the 2002 FIFA world championship jointly organized by South Korea and Japan, claiming in an interview with the conservative right-wing newspaper *Sankei shinbun* (2016)<sup>57</sup> that despite immense support from Japan, Sakurai noted an anti-Japanese presence on the Internet, with such slogans as "Lose, Japan!" (*nihon makero* 「日本負けろ」) making its way onto anonymous messaging boards.



(a) Volume 2, June 2011. "Exclusive interview: Abe Shinzo's counterattack"

(b) Volume 15, October 2013. "Major feature: That's enough, South Korea!"

**Figure 2.2.** Covers of Magazine 'Japanism'

<sup>53</sup> In an interview with Yamaguchi, one of its members points out that the protests serve as vehicle to broadcast online (Yamaguchi 2013, 108). Niconico has since, under influence of the 2016 anti-discrimination law, removed the Zaitokukai's account (Tsunehira Furuya 2016b). YouTube and Twitter have taken similar actions.

<sup>54</sup> Moreover in a mixed-methods content analysis of a corpus of approximately 3200 Twitter messages (including retweets) of the Zaitokukai's founder, this author (2017) found the topics to be dominantly centered around antagonizing South Korea and left-wing politics (using the pejorative term *payoku* パヨク, 'leftists').

<sup>55</sup> Writing "the Internet too was a catalyst for encouraging Sakurai's activities" (*Netto wa Sakurai jishin no hiyaku o mo unagasu kikkake tomo natta*, 「ネットは桜井自身の飛躍をも促すきっかけともなった」), Yasuda suggests that it was within the discourse of the Internet that Zaitokukai founder Sakurai Makoto was able to rise (Yasuda 2012, 45).

<sup>56</sup> In the wake of the arrest of several Zaitokukai-members, News (2013) published an article revealing his birth name to be Takada Makoto (高田誠). Due to the wide spread usage of his pen name, I will continue to refer to him as Sakurai Makoto.

<sup>57</sup> One of the few mainstream outlets covering his political ambitions during the 2016 Tokyo gubernatorial elections.

Before going on to start the Zaitokukai in 2006, run for Tokyo Governor in 2016 and start a political party in 2017 (the Japan First Party, *Nippon daiichi tō* 日本第一党), much of this early period as a self-proclaimed political activist (*seiji katsudōka* 政治活動家) happened online and in interaction with similar forms of neo-nationalism occurring on the South Korean Internet.<sup>58</sup> It is only through his continuous online activities<sup>59</sup> that Sakurai received an initial invitation to star as guest member on the Nippon TV (日本テレビ) variety-show ‘Generation Jungle’ (*jenejan*, 「ジェネジャン」), became frequent contributor to the bi-monthly conservative magazine Japanism (*japanizumu*, 「ジャパニズム」)<sup>60</sup> and eventually in 2006 started the Zaitokukai.<sup>61</sup> As we can further defer from **figure 2.4**, that latter magazine (which started its print in April 2011 shortly after the March 11 Earthquake) is a suitable example of Azuma’s suggestion of subcultured nationalism, wherein content that is highly ideological is juxtaposed with elements of *otaku* subculture.

## 2.4 From 2channel & Niconico

Moving away from views of neo-nationalism on the Internet decidedly as an expression of social anxiety, Sakamoto (2011) too shifts her point of focus on the discursive practices of building identity and nationalism online. For that, she conducts a content analysis of one thread on 2channel, involving the discussion of a YouTube clip on Tsushima Island,<sup>62</sup> which gained 7000 reactions over a time span of four days. According to her analysis, the majority of comments deferred from the original topic at hand and serve simply to reinforce a negative portrayal of Koreans as the cultural Other,<sup>63</sup> that is to say, an empty signifier symbolizing that what is “‘inferior’, ‘dirty’, ‘shameless’, ‘primitive’, ‘violent’, and ‘irrational’”, which then in the process implies the Japanese participants on these threads to be the opposite (Sakamoto 2011, 7).

<sup>58</sup> Collectively, the 7,000 postings produced and reinforced the negative image of Korea and Koreans far beyond the Tsushima issue. Forum participants brought up a multitude of Korea related issues which had nothing to do with Korean tourists on Tsushima: the ‘special tax and welfare privileges’ that zainichi Koreans allegedly enjoy, the

<sup>59</sup> Going in discussion with South Koreans on forums backed with automatic translation software (*hon'yaku keijiban* 翻訳掲示板), including that of Korean Internet portal NAVER. Murai references the VANK (Voluntary Agency Network of Korea), who took part in cyber-attacks on 2channel and in turn spread similar aggressive rhetoric on the Internet. As Murai states, “Ironically, such conflicts of radical nationalism have given credibility to Net Uyoku's radical ideology” (Murai 2012, 374).

<sup>60</sup> Including one website “The Strange Country, South Korea” (*fushigi no kuni no kankoku* 「不思議の国の韓国」), a pun on “Alice in Wonderland”, *fushigi no kuni no arisu* 『不思議の国のアリス』), a forum “live discussions on Korea” (*kankoku nama tōron* 「韓国生討論」) and a blog under his longtime user-name *Doronpa01*.

<sup>61</sup> Published by *Seirindō*, the publishing house behind the influential underground manga anthology *Garo* (ガロ) and more recently, several other of Sakurai's writings, including the 2014 “Great Korean Hate Era” (“*dai kenkan jidai*”, 『大嫌韓時代』) and the 2016 “Great Korean Hate Diary” (“*dai kenkan nikki*”, 『大嫌韓日記』). The magazine, as well as the publishing house *Seirindō*, have gone through different editors-in-chief, with a gradual shift towards radical political topics.

<sup>62</sup> In October 2014 Sakurai participated in a recorded debate with former mayor of Osaka, Hashimoto Tōru. This ended several minutes after both parties engaged in verbal insults (2021 summer 2014). Sakurai stepped down as Zaitokukai leader shortly after.

<sup>63</sup> An island located in between Japan and the Korean Peninsula. Due its location, it is one element in the territorial disputes (and the larger nationalist conflicts) between South Korea and Japan.

<sup>64</sup> The ‘Other’ in post-colonial theory signifies a classification based on perceived differences to exclude or marginalize, and differentiate between the in-group and out-group.

'illegal occupation' of Takeshima Island', kimchi with parasite eggs, or crimes by Koreans in Japan and overseas. Links were made to a TV news item about a Japanese boy who was attacked in Korea, snapshots of anti-Japanese artwork by Korean school children, a Youtube clip on a rape by a zainichi Korean, 2-chan threads on zainichi pension entitlement and welfare benefits, shocking images of anti-Japanese demonstrators slaughtering pheasants (Japan's national bird) in front of the Japanese Embassy, and many more. These and other unrelated events and images are linked together under the unifying but empty sign of the 'Koreans', (Sakamoto 2011, 5).

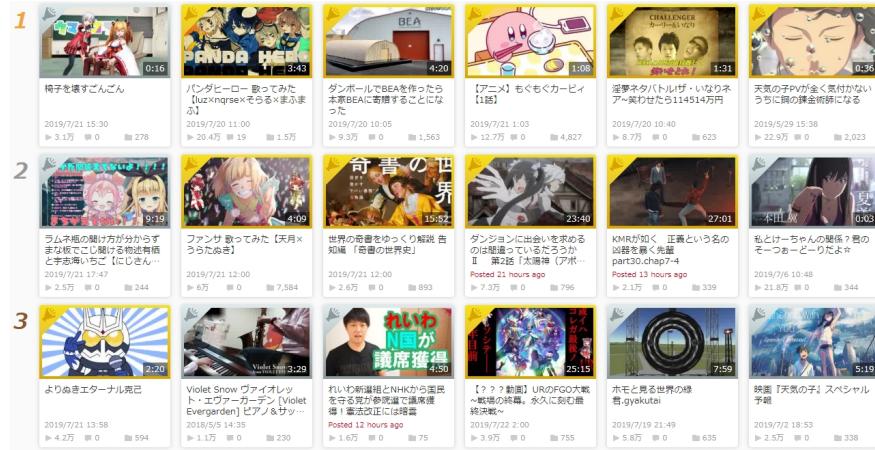
Sakamoto discusses the often decontextualized, historically revisionist (or rather, ahistoric) usage of events and imagery in this thread in the context of French sociologist Baudrillard's theorization of simulacra, simulation, the hyper-real and the construction of reality. Although this is but one interpretation of highly dense theory, simulation for Baudrillard has in consumerist society come to no longer *represent* or *copy* reality, but is through discursive processes the *realization* of that with no base in reality, "a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1994, 1). For Baudrillard, culture and media replace our understanding of an '*actual*' reality and meaning with simulations and simulacra; with the *idea* of reality. (Sakamoto 2011, 9) argues as follows:

Baudrillard's point was that simulation proliferated as a result of the new media like TV, but the Internet as a participatory medium carried this trend even further. 2-chan users are not just passive consumers of such signs provided by the mass media but are producing, performing, and exchanging referentless, decontextualised signs to generate a sense of belonging to a cyber community and a fantasy 'Japan'.

This notion of a *fantasy* Japan both consumed and produced by Netto-Uyoku is not unlike cultural critic Azuma Hiroki's (2001) critique of otaku, "*Dōbutsu-ka suru posutomodan — otaku kara mita Nihon Shakai*" (『動物化するポストモダン—オタクから見た日本社会』, *Animalized Postmodernity — Japanese Society from the Viewpoint of Otaku*). Azuma argues that although the imagery *otaku* consume and produce stems from an imitation of American pop-culture (in particular Disney animation), attempts are made to draw connections to pre-war traditions (in particular the Edo-period of 1603-1868) and portray this subculture and the media they consume as uniquely Japanese. Moreover, traditional Japanese motifs in wholly unrelated genres such as science fiction serve to reinforce an imagined *fantasy* or *pseudo-Japan* (*giji nihon*, 疑似日本). This pseudo-Japan, argues Azuma, stems from a psychological need for self reinforcement due to the loss of traditional identity after the Second World War, and again due to ongoing contradictions in society reaching its peak after the narrative of economic growth collapsed in the '90s (Azuma 2001, ch.1). Moreover, Azuma puts right-wing ideologies in Japan in direct correlation to this *otaku* subculture, arguing that "it can be said that Japan's right-wing discourse has generally survived through processes of becoming subcultured, falsified and *otaku*-ized." (Azuma 2001, 23).<sup>64</sup> That in itself then fits into Harumi Befu's argument of the rise of *Nihonjinron*

<sup>64</sup> "Nihon no uyoku-teki gensetsu wa ippan ni sabukaruchā-ka shi feiku-ka shi otaku-ka suru koto de ikinokotte kitatomo ieru.", 「日本の右翼的言説は一般にサブカルチャー化しフェイク化しオタク化することで生き残ってきたとも言える。」(Azuma 2007, 23).

日本人論 literature as<sup>65</sup> filling a ‘symbolic vacuum’ created in the search for cultural and national identity. That, as the result of “the use of major symbols of national identity and pride [being] rendered problematic by the Second World War” (2002, 26).



(Screenshot by author. Source: niconico.jp)

**Figure 2.3.** Screenshot of Niconico’s top ranking category (July 23, 2019)

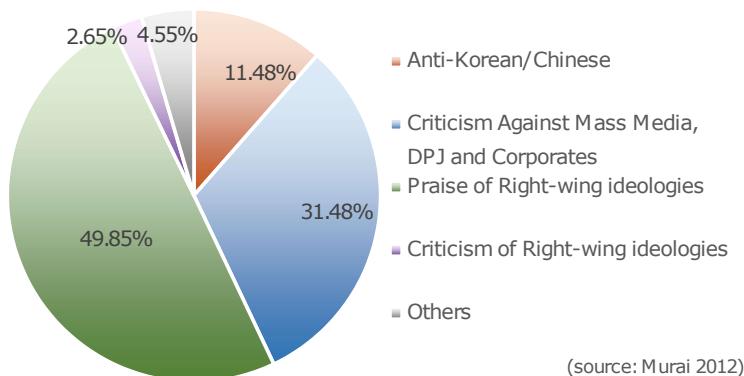
One could then further read Baudrillard’s notion of simulations and simulacra in Azuma’s argument, stating that those Japanese motifs in Japanese sub-cultural media associated with *otaku* are exactly such examples of a *real* without referent—a mediated hyper-reality that precedes actual reality. Moreover, if there is one online platform illustrating Azuma’s and Sakamoto’s interpretation of Baudrillard, we could point to Niconico (*nikoniko* ニコニコ). Founded in 2006 as a video sharing service similar to YouTube and as of July 2019 the 10<sup>th</sup> most visited website in Japan,<sup>66</sup> Niconico caters (as illustrated in **figure 2.3**) primarily to sub-cultural groups with a focus on Japanese animation or video-games (or what has arguably since transcended to pop-culture status). While functionally similar to what YouTube offers, Niconico distinguishes itself through the ability to place time-synced, horizontally scrolling comments on top of the video playing. Niconico is therefore not just reliant on user generated content, the content itself is actively transformed by those same users. While this brings about an imagined sense of community as envisioned by Kitada (2005), it could be argued that not unlike a laugh track on prime-time sitcoms indicating comical beats, such methods creates a standardized, homogeneous reaction to particular beats in the video. In a 2013 *Japan Times*, article journalist Mie Ayako (Mie 2013) paraphrases DPJ’s then-Secretary General Azumi Jun in criticizing

<sup>65</sup> Broadly speaking, literature that argues the (cultural) uniqueness of Japan. For Befu, this constitutes literature that “gives explicit explanation as to what national identity consists of and why one should be proud of one’s nation”, and furthers the wartime ethno-nationalist ideology of “the Japanese people being homogeneous and Japanese culture being pure and unique”, without being bound by tainted war-memories (2002, 42–44).

<sup>66</sup> Based on Alexa ranking. For a full list of the top fifty most popular pages, see **table A.1**. Alexa statistics further reveal that half of 2channel’s audience overlaps with that of Niconico (Alexa 2019).

Abe's proposal to campaign on Nico Nico exactly because "Net uyoku often alter such videos by directly overlaying their comments on them."<sup>67</sup>

Niconico further contains a category with topics related to society, politics and news, and is since used for broadcasting political discussions and information on elections.<sup>68</sup> Its founding coincides with the start of tech-savvy ACM groups as Zaitokukai, and its overlap with 2channel (Hiroyuki Nishimura himself served as CEO for the company behind Niconico, Dwango) did indeed give those groups a head-start in setting the political mood. Niconico has since expanded as a web-portal, with a dedicated online news service called Niconico News (ニコニコニュース),<sup>69</sup> as well as a comics service and an online dictionary. Moreover, Niconico holds in-depth monthly surveys polling political opinions<sup>70</sup> giving both valuable insight into trends of political affiliation among its users, and, perhaps, the intent of Niconico itself.<sup>71</sup>



**Figure 2.4.** Breakdown of videos in (Niconico) "Politics" category.

Murai (2012) uses Tsuji's aforementioned classification to identify videos containing Netto-Uyoku ideologies, finding 92.8 percent (3712/4000) of the top ranking videos in the 'Politics' category to be as such (see **figure 2.4** for a breakdown per topic). He describes these videos in his content analysis

<sup>67</sup> A 2013 *Tokyo shinbun* article claimed that Hirai Takuya, current minister in charge of information technology policy, minister of State for "Cool Japan" and accredited developer of the LDP-themed iPhone game Abepyon (あべぴょん), wrote jeering comments aimed at opposition leaders using this function while watching a live broadcast of a political debate on Niconico (Tokyo Shimbun 2013), which has since become a running joke.

<sup>68</sup> Take, for example, the July 4, 2019 political debate between Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and the opposition concerning the July 21, 2019 Upper House election, which was co-hosted by Dwango Co. and Yahoo Japan and broadcast through niconico live (The Asahi Shimbun 2019).

<sup>69</sup> Tsuji (2017) asserts that Netto-Uyoku are significantly more likely to read Niconico News, MSN Sankei News and jiji.com as their counterparts (2017, 217)

<sup>70</sup> While Niconico holds non-political surveys as well, these are limited and almost exclusively on the topic of Japanese animation. See <https://enquete.nicovideo.jp/result> for such examples.

<sup>71</sup> The one held on March 19, 2019 drew 27,301 registered participants. Included questions ranged from a general "Do you support the current Abe cabinet?" (50 percent voted yes, 28.4 percent voted unsure), to questions as "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, based on the length of total tenure as prime minister, overtook Shigeru Yoshida in February reaching 4<sup>th</sup> place, overtakes founding Prime Minister Hirobumi Itō in June, and overcoming the upcoming House of Councilors election will overtake Eisai Sato in July and Katsura Tarō in November, becoming No. 1. Do you think the Prime Minister Abe has achieved significant political accomplishments corresponding with the length of his tenure" (48.5 of men and 36.0 percent of women said yes, for a total of 43.0 percent; 25.5 percent said no). Throughout the poll men have higher support for the LDP (Nicovideo.jp 2019).

as deviant from the “recreational atmosphere of the other categories”, containing political messages negative towards East Asian nations, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the “anti-Japanese” mass media. He goes on to claim “these conservative videos are usually filled with sympathetic comments by anonymous viewers” and that “videos to condemn imagined enemies are filled with harsh language, while scenes of ‘patriotic’ activities are praised as heroic.” He fears that due to the mass quantity of such videos in the ‘Politics’ section, those political views will be perceived as the standard and have a radicalizing effect on a demography of mostly teens and those in their twenties (Murai 2012, 369–71).

## 2.5 Into the Twitter-sphere

Whereas 2channel and Niconico, despite undeniably popular, are still associated with subculture, Twitter has rooted itself firmly amongst Japanese Internet users; as of 2019 it is the sixth most visited website in Japan, proceeding the less anonymous Facebook. Furthermore, in 2013 Twitter’s most used language was Japanese, and according to a 2019 Bloomberg article, Japan became Twitter’s second-largest market. In 2016 a milestone was reached, with one-third of Japan’s population logging onto the site at least once every month (Wang 2019). Nevertheless, this latter article refers to “hateful tweets that have targeted minority groups” and indeed, literature on the Netto-Uyoku has noted seepage of 2channel and its rhetoric onto Twitter.

In 2015, Kanagawa University lecturer Taka Fumiaki held two quantitative text analyses of a corpus of data containing Twitter messages related to (ethnic) Koreans and one to China respectively (Taka 2015b; Taka 2015a). Taka claims that since the 2011 earthquake, ethnic Koreans and those without a Japanese passport residing in Japan have seen an increase in hate, libel and false rumors. Between the period of November 5, 2012 and February 16, 2013, Taka collected Korean-related tweets with a final corpus of 109,589 tweets,<sup>72</sup> whereof 48,934 were retweets. Through a frequency analysis of the contents of the tweets (which he further codified into topics such as politics, historical problems, racism, 2channel and the call for dispersion), Taka revealed that terms associated with socio-political tensions or hate-speech far outweigh references to South Korean pop-culture. Finally, through a sentiment analysis, he found the majority of those messages (70%) to be negative and dispersed by a small group of users intending these messages to be further shared. Moreover, he examined a distrust of mass media, reliance or links to 2channel and 2channel curated aggregation sites (*matome*-blogs), a belief in a “hidden truth” (“*‘Shinjitsu’ ga kakusarete iru to iu shin’nen*”, 「“眞実”が隠されているという信念」)<sup>73</sup> and critique of anything self-identified as anti-Japanese (Taka 2015b). His analysis of the

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<sup>72</sup> Which due the limitations of collecting data on Twitter cannot be claimed to be exhaustive.

<sup>73</sup> Something that—as some counter-movements on the Internet begin to consume Netto-Uyoku rhetoric as source of entertainment (*neta*, ネタ)—is since in ironic matter referred to as ‘Truth through the Internet’ (*Netto de shinjitsu*, ネット de 真実).

corpus pertaining to China (a final corpus of 67,884 Tweets collected between September 19, 2012 and November 5, 2012, whereof 25,139 were retweets) revealed the same trends, with beliefs in truths hidden by mass media and negative sentiment that outweighs the one seen in the Korean-related corpus; the latter most likely the effects of South Korea's soft-power (Taka 2015a).



**Figure 2.5.** Examples of Netto-Uyoku Twitter-accounts

Aichi Prefectural University lecturer Brett Hack follows up on Azuma's notion of a pseudo-Japan and the subcultured status of nationalism by referring to the *otaku* subcultural elements amongst the Netto-Uyoku. On the topic of Twitter, Hack refers to its presence in the form of the 'Japanese flag group' ('hi no maru kurasuta', 日の丸クラスタ): users with Netto-Uyoku tendencies who have the Japanese flag in their profile picture, preferably in combination with elements of Japanese animation, militaristic imagery or both. **figure 2.4** illustrates that. The rhetoric used in the description of both user pages further fits Tsuji's (2008) classification of Netto-Uyoku impeccably. The usage of *Japanese subject* (*Nihon shinmin* 日本臣民) in **figure 2.5a** brings to mind a pre-war Japan with Japanese citizens as the subject of the Japanese Emperor. This user further expresses support both for the LDP and the Japan First Party founded by Zaitokukai's founder Sakurai Makoto. The laws referred to,<sup>74</sup> as well as a call for nuclear power, visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, and the military aircraft Osprey<sup>75</sup> are highly controversial topics and seem to be intended as a reactionary, polemic statement. The account shown in **figure 2.5b** uses the normative 'Normal Japanese' construct, shows their support for

<sup>74</sup> The anti-terror laws refer to preemptive measures controversial for expanding police powers and threatening civil rights (Harding 2017). The right to collective self-defense refers to article 9 of the Japanese constitution.

<sup>75</sup> A military aircraft intended for deployment in Okinawa. Controversies are part of a greater debate on American military bases in Okinawa, and surround the safety of those aircrafts. This has led to several large-scale protests in Okinawa, especially after a fatal incident in Australia and a crash-landing of the coast of Okinawa in 2016.

a constitutional amendment, has patriotic feelings and considers negative feelings towards the left-wing (*payoku*, パヨク)<sup>76</sup> and three ‘Tokutei’ countries (*Tokua san-kakoku* 特亜三カ国)<sup>77</sup> to be normal, perhaps leaning a tad on the right (*choi migi*, チョイ右).

In their quantitative approach to Netto-Uyoku’s usage of bots to spread political propaganda during the 2014 General Election, Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich (2017) argue the importance of the Internet and social media usage by the Netto-Uyoku in the outcome of Japan’s General Election of 2014. ‘Bots’ in their study refers to “computer-generated programs that post, tweet, or message of their own accord” (Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich (2017), p.10) and indeed, linguistic analysis of their corpus of 542,584 tweets related to the election (collected in a timespan of weeks before until the day after the election) revealed, even when excluding retweets, 61.2 percent of (near-)identical tweets. Interestingly, out of five recognized patterns, four were associated with the usage of bots for ‘computational propaganda campaigns’ (either pro-Abe or generally right-wing). Nevertheless, one pattern that was regarded as such were actual human users sharing content through share buttons, in other words, a form of human interaction through the technical particularities of social media platforms to the point where it was detectable as the act of bots.

## 2.6 Netto-Uyoku & Politics

If Netto-Uyoku, as illustrated in this chapter, show traits of historic revisionism, xenophobia, nativism, antagonizing left-wing institutions and generally show support for the LDP and Abe Shinzō in particular (whose political career began in 1993 and whose family has deep roots in politics), how then does that reflect on the LDP and Abe Shinzō?

In the aforementioned article by Morris-Suzuki (2013), she recalls an incident in January 2001, when shortly before the planned public broadcast of an NHK documentary on wartime acts of violence against women by the Japan military, the national broadcast service NHK was forced to cut parts including testimony and preliminary findings. The reason for this, as turns out later, was an implied censorship and political interference by then Deputy Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō, who allegedly opposed the biased nature of the show. As the media-scape shifted, Abe Shinzō and a number of Japanese politicians including Hashimoto Tōru also adapted to the usage of social media. Next, Morris-Suzuki refers to a since deleted post in which Abe Shinzō’s secretary warns his followers for an upcoming NHK show that would likely be negative on Abe Shinzō and mobilizes his followers to send their thoughts to NHK’s fax and Twitter. A reply to this post by Abe Shinzō’s profile stated: “The level of NHK’s commentator is too low-level. [...] Last time I completely refuted it on Fuji TV.

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<sup>76</sup> A derogative term signifying left-wing ideologues, which this paper loosely translates as ‘leftists’.

<sup>77</sup> Tokutei Asia (Specific Asia) is a pejorative for South Korea, North Korea and China as countries considered to have anti-Japanese sentiment.

I would like to say, know some shame” (“NHK no komentētāreberu o somatsu sugi [...] Kono mae Fujiterebi de kanzen ronpa shimashitaga, hajiwoshire to ītaidesu ne.” 「NHK のコメンテーターレベルお粗末過ぎ。 [...] この前フジテレビで完全論破しましたが、恥を知れといいたいですね」).<sup>78</sup>

Different from the rhetoric Abe applies in the offline world, Shusuke Murai and Takeshi Suzuki (Murai and Suzuki (2014)) also point out his appeal to Netto-Uyoku sentiment in the online world. They then refer in particular to a Facebook post that is, as of writing, still accessible (Abe 2012):

Tomorrow, the elections deciding the future of Japan will finally begin. The emerging China that does not hide their territorial ambitions towards Japan. The illegal landing of the leaders of Korea and Russia on the northern territories and Takeshima. Moreover, North Korea’s missile launch. How should we respond to such a crisis? Will we sit on our hands with stopgap measures? Or will we build a new diplomatic history? If Japan can change even just a little through this Internet call, it will be the beginning of a new history. [...] And thus, on the last day the finale will be held by Mr. Tarō Asō as a street address in Akihabara (electricity street exit) from 19:00 at night. It may be cold, but if we can fill Akihabara Ekimae with determined people, Japan will without a doubt change. Why don’t we let those in the mass media saying, “On the *internet*... [italics added by the author to imply derogatory intent]” recognize grassroots power? Be sure to participate. Let us change Japan from Akihabara!” (English translation by the author)

While the mention of foreign traits is not unexpected, in a populist fashion he explicitly appeals to the notion of the Internet as a grassroots medium opposed to the established mainstream media, and places himself among its ‘people’. Of significant note are his deliberate references to Akihabara and former Prime Minister Tarō Asō, who as of December 2012 serves as Deputy Prime Minister of Japan. Akihabara, as Murai and Suzuki point out, is “the symbolic center of Otaku culture, and an essential destination for fans of Japanese anime and manga” (2014, 190). Tarō Asō, then, known not just for his revisionist views and political gaffes,<sup>79</sup> has positioned himself as an *otaku* and—deliberate or not—reinforced this image after being spotted at an airport reading *manga*. Amongst its mostly supportive reactions, Murai and Suzuki selected the following message as an one example of ideological overlap (2014, 190).

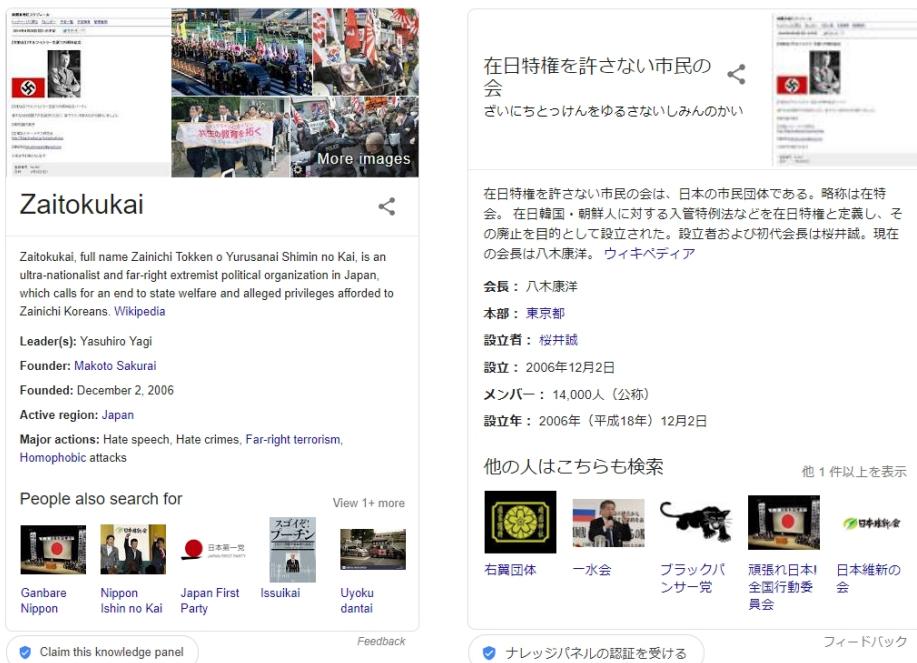
“Now, it will finally begin ... Japan has no other choices but you, Mr. Abe. We Japanese citizens can never repeat the same mistake of three years ago. The mass media will certainly intensify their negative campaign against you. But, “Japanese citizens” are on the side of Mr. Abe. We can never be defeated! Anti-Japanese activities of the China and Korea, traitor activities of mass media, and disastrous politics of DPJ have all sparked Japanese citizens to stand up. Let us show that Japanese people’s rage is something fearful! Then, Japan can overcome the post-war regime and finally return to its own shape. We citizens must protect Mr. Abe with utmost effort ... Let us get back the pride of Japan!”

<sup>78</sup> Although the original Facebook post and Abe’s reaction are as of date not accessible anymore, briefly after it was posted a dedicated 2channel thread received 3000 comments spread over four hours, almost solely mocking Abe’s usage of *kanzen ronpa* (完全論破, lit. ‘complete refutation’), a term most of its users associated with Internet slang particular to 2channel. Fitting to Kitada’s theory then, one user posted “Abe-chan offers us periodic joke material, huh” (“Abe-chan wa teikitekini neta o teikyō shite kureru na” 「安倍ちゃんは定期的にネタを提供してくれるな」) (2ch.net 2012).

<sup>79</sup> One 2019 *Washington Post* article reports a supposed ‘anti-gaffe’ guide in wake of, amongst others, Asō Tarō’s “infamous remark in 2017 that while Hitler was ‘no good, his motive was right’” and, in regards to a case of sexual harassment, that “the media should assign only men to the Finance Ministry if they objected” (Kashiwagi 2019).

## 2.7 Conclusion

The actions associated with the ACM, and in particular the Zaitokukai, appear to be in decline. Since 2014 the amount of ACM demonstrations has steadily decreased, Sakurai's debut in politics has seen little success (albeit finishing fifth out of 21 candidates during the Tokyo gubernatorial elections) and the Zaitokukai and its associated members' various online accounts have under pressure of anti-hate speech legislation since been removed (Gill 2018, 189–90). Furthermore, as this paper will expand upon in the fourth chapter, on a grassroots level Internet users have utilized the particularities of the World Wide Web and its interconnectedness to alter perception and public opinion, as seen, for example, in **figure 2.6**. Since Google (both in Japan and worldwide the most used search-engine and visited website) implemented its knowledge Panels, which draws its content from a variety of user-generated content including Wikipedia, a Google search for Zaitokukai now reveals decidedly negative content; both images contain a snapshot with imagery of Adolf Hitler, and the English version in particular refers to political extremism and terrorism.<sup>80</sup>



(a) Search term: Zaitokukai (Source: google.com, taken at July 27, 2019)      (b) Search term: zaitokukai (在特会) (Source: google.co.jp, taken at July 27, 2019)

**Figure 2.6.** Google Knowledge panels of 'Zaitokukai'

This decline of real life manifestations does not, however, imply a decline in Netto-Uyoku senti-

<sup>80</sup> This framing is not a deliberate choice by anyone related to Google and instead relies on user-generated content. This works however as a double-edged sword, as an unrelated Google search for Journalist Jake Adelstein revealed a knowledge panel containing an as of July 29, 2019 not-yet-removed Wikipedia edit stating “Jake Adelstein is an American journalist, crime writer, anti-Japanese bigot, and blogger who has spent most of his career in Japan.”

ment. Instead one could argue that the perceived necessity for such manifestations has also declined due to fading ideological boundaries between the current rendition of the LDP and the Netto-Uyoku. Since 2012 the LDP has undeniably taken a shift to the right, and in that sense, the ACM and the Netto-Uyoku might have actually achieved their goal of normalizing neo-nationalist ideology through wide-spread propaganda. Furthermore, we have argued in Sakurai’s case that he himself is a product of the discursive processes of right-wing radicalization online. While an ongoing anti-Japanese sentiment amongst some of Sakurai’s perceived enemies is beyond dispute (cyber-nationalism is not exclusive to Japan after all), the carefully curated anti-Japanese elements dispersed online—regarded of as purposefully hidden by the leftist mass media—make Baudrillard’s notion of hyper-reality feel all the more applicable. Demographically at least, Morris-Suzuki (2013) does not appear to stray too much from the mark either. Tsuji (2008; 2017) confirms a mostly male audience active on 2channel and Niconico, and the latter in particular contains dominantly *otaku* elements, as Azuma (2001) himself suggested earlier. The actions of LDP members like Asō Tarō and Abe Shinzō are then all the more logical.

Is McLuhan’s global village then an appropriate analogy for the Internet and the World Wide Web, or does it instead stimulate stratification and facilitate a globalized form of neo-nationalism of which the Netto-Uyoku are just one instance? Murai (2012) and Sakamoto (2011), both relying on Sunstein’s notions of online polarization and algorithmically sorted individualized news sources (‘Daily Me’), certainly seems to suggest the latter. Moreover, following Kitada (2005) and Anderson (2006), a sense of insider community on those online communities, arguably including those in the English cyberspace,<sup>81</sup> is formed through cynical language, which is critical of media. In the next chapter then, we will build a framework around the ideology of cyber-nationalism as a form of neo-nationalism to which that is inherent, and of which the Netto-Uyoku are a localized instance of.

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<sup>81</sup> This theory is particularly applicable to 4chan and Reddit as well, two platforms with a high technical overlap with the ones mentioned above.

## CHAPTER 3

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### CYBER-NATIONALISM AND JAPAN — CONNECTING THE DOTS

The previous chapter was a literature review of works describing the phenomenon of Netto-Uyoku in relation to social media on the Internet, the so-called ACM real-life protests, and the LDP. It further suggested that the Netto-Uyoku adhere ideologically to a form of right-wing populist nationalism (what this paper understands as neo-nationalism) that does not just take place on the Internet, but is further shaped by it as well. In the first chapter we have further suggested that the Netto-Uyoku is one localized instance of this global phenomenon. Although this paper has so far freely used concepts such as ideology, populism and nationalism, these terms are at an increasing risk of becoming reduced to trending political abstractions due to over usage. Based on the previous two chapters this chapter builds the theoretical groundings of key terms through which we can interpret the underlying logics of cyber-nationalism, as applied to the Netto-Uyoku.

#### 3.1 Conceptualizing Ideology

“1. A system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy. 2. The set of beliefs characteristic of a social group or individual,” thus defines the online *Oxford Dictionary* the concept of ideology (2019). In his *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991), Terry Eagleton agrees that such a pragmatic view on the notion of ideology is common in public discourse (with the additional critical implication of the ideologue having an oversimplified view of the world and thus, through indoctrination, a distorted understanding of reality). Despite this, he does warn, in light of the historical context briefly sketched below, against one ‘Grand Global Theory’ or one single comprehensive definition of ideology; especially one that would contrast ideology with ‘pragmatism.’<sup>82</sup> After all, following Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutic reasoning of interpreting reality, it would be impossible to identify and judge an occurrence without a set of preconceived values, and following Mannheim’s Paradox, analyzing a world-view as an ideology is achieved only from the vantage point of another ideology (1991: p.1, pp221-224).

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<sup>82</sup> “The term ideology, which had originally indicated a new science, became a condescending catch-word that served to demarcate political enemies. Ideology and ideologue began to connote the unwarranted interference of philosophical theory in political practices”(Mudde 2013, p:19). These shifts are still on-going in today’s political discourse and the term is often used in a dichotomous relationship to the truth or to a “moderate position” such as pragmatism. One recent piece by the USA political think tank Niskanen Center, for example, uses the terms ideologues and extremists interchangeably (Niskanen Center 2019), while a 2016 Business Insider article paraphrases Barack Obama as calling Donald Trump pragmatic rather than ideological, “someone who is stringently tied to a political philosophy” (Darcy 2016) and Donald Trump, at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, announced his rejection of the “ideology Of globalism” (Schwartz 2018).

Conceptualization of ideology has known many approaches. Historically, the concept finds its roots in the French Revolution as a positivist attempt to develop a new scientific framework of Enlightenment ideas ('the discourse of patterns'), which is a form of skeptical scientific materialism (Eagleton 1991: p.70). Following Napoleon's attack of the French "ideologues" as "unrealistic escapism and philosophical reverie," ideology has since gone through several shifts in meaning (2013, 22). From a classical Marxist view, as interpreted by Eagleton (1991), ideology also represented a false or misleading awareness of the human situation: a *false consciousness*. Ideology was, however, to be understood as an instrument of those in control of the means of production. That is to say, as an instrument to steer—whether intentional or not—the economically subservient class away from a scientific, objective reality (and from what is in the best interests of the dominated class) and of one's ability to self-identify as an economic class and express a political will. Hence maintaining the equilibrium of this mode of production.<sup>83</sup> In other words, classical Marxist materialist theory places ideology as a 'superstructure' in contrast to 'reality', within a dialectic basis-superstructure relationship: the dominant ideology is tied directly to the base (the mode of production) and visa-versa.

On the precondition of being universally applicable, one could then in the Empire of Japan (the Japanese nation-state between 1868 and 1947), for example, read the *kokutai* (国体, 'national body') notion of national identity or the state usage of folk traditions (state shintō, 国家神道 *kokka shintō*) to be the ideological means for morally justifying exploitation (perhaps viewing the *zaibatsu* conglomerate as some sort of Japanese *bourgeoisie*).<sup>84</sup> In contrast during the era of the 'Economic Miracle', the ideologies of economic growth and the *nihonjinron* breed of ethnocentric nationalism would serve to deprive or obscure an 'objective' reality from the subservient class an 'objective' reality; thus maintaining or legitimizing the *status quo* of society and its economic structures of exploitation. We further see this line of reasoning in the Alt-Right and Netto-Uyoku-appropriated conspiracy theories of 'red-pilling' and 'waking up' (*kakusei* 觉醒 or *mesameru* 目覚める).<sup>85</sup> This is a reference to the main character of 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix*. After consuming a red pill this character wakes up to a reality in which humanity is enslaved as a source of energy for a large machine. The idea of 'waking up' or being 'red-pilled' in this context refers to becoming aware of a (Marxist) left-wing elite utilizing their cultural hegemony over media to brainwash and exploit the ordinary people into

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<sup>83</sup> Summed up in the first chapter of Marx' *Das Kapital* as "Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es," or in English, "They do not know it, but they do it."

<sup>84</sup> In *The Japanese Economy*, Flath (2005) refers to the *Zaibatsu* as "at best a kind of *petite bourgeoisie* (2005, 75). Miwa and Ramseyer (2010) in polemic fashion dismisses the *Keiretsu* and *Zaibatsu* (industrial and financial business conglomerates) in its entirety as fictional scapegoats of "Marxist scholars in post-war Japan" and "populist journalists" (Miwa and Ramseyer 2010, 52). He further argues a historical growing demand for literature on Japanese economics and a lack of Japanese-literate Western economics who have resorted to accounts by academics from other disciplines, perpetuating conventional Japan-centric claims on *main bank systems* and *industrial policy* (Miwa and Ramseyer 2010, 54–57).

<sup>85</sup> A concept Furuya Tsunehiro has referred to as a matrix-historical viewpoint, *matorikku-shikan* 「マトリックス史観」 (2015).

believing a fabricated world-view.<sup>86</sup>

This line of thinking is nevertheless economically determinist, and failure of Marx's proposed collapse of capitalist society betrays its rigid scientism and ahistoricism. Neither can we (despite at least hints of a Taisho-era democracy) pinpoint an exact bourgeois revolution within the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Japan. In response, Karl Mannheim approached ideology as both the product of unconscious assumptions guiding our lives on a psychological level, and of our (social group's) position within social structures, on a social level. For him, this Marxist interpretation of history *itself* was an ideology; and so too changed the pejorative notion of ideology and started the idea of a 'positive' ideology to counter class oppression (Dijk and Fabra 2006; Mudde 2013: ch. 1-3). Since the early writings on ideology, and with sociological developments such as the linguistic turn, ideology as a concept has seen a wide range of meanings, deeply entangled with the study of discourse, culture and politics (Mudde 2013: ch.1), with contributions made by, amongst others, Marxist scholars Louis Althusser, Georg Lukács (*theory of reification*)<sup>87</sup> and Antonio Gramsci (*theory of hegemony*), as well as Michel Foucault and members of the Frankfurt School. Contributions that have helped develop the relation between the Marxist notion of ideology and the fields of culture and communication.

The debate on ideology has by no means stopped since then. Francis Fukuyama (1992), for example, claimed in his essay *The End of History?* that we have reached a post-ideological world in which western liberal democracy was the end-point of ideological evolution, an idea that could not be improved upon. On the other side, and furthering Lukács' ideas on alienation caused by the increased penetration of commodity fetishism in capitalist societies, Žižek views late-capitalist, post-modern cynicism (for Kitada intrinsic to online communities such as 2channel) as inherent to modern-day ideology, summarized best as "in contemporary societies, democratic or totalitarian, ... cynical distance, laughter, irony, are, so to speak, part of the game. The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally" (Žižek 2008, 28) and in a playful reference to Marx's take on ideology, "they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it" (Žižek 2012, 18). We are aware of the contradictions, of the false consciousness, but we renounce it only in cynical subversion, and as Eagleton (1991, 40) points out, "the ruling ideology has already accommodated the fact that we will be skeptical of it, and reorganized its discourses accordingly."

In his approach to ideology critique, Eagleton recapitulates top down from its most common to its most specific usage, in six points the different epistemological perspectives on ideology (Eagleton 1991, 28–30; Fuchs 2018, 158–59):

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<sup>86</sup> Not notwithstanding that this notion is, in itself, Marxist in nature.

<sup>87</sup> Building on Marx' concept of false consciousness, Lukács theorized class consciousness as a class-bound ideology obtained through class-level self-awareness, the result of *reification*. *Reification* meaning the alienation of the self and a fragmented understanding of the totality, in the wake of Marx's notion of commodity fetishism and commodification of labor (Eagleton 1991, 94–99).

1. Ideology as the “the general material processes of production of ideas, beliefs, and values in social life” and “the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society” (Eagleton 1991, 28). In other words, a neutral, descriptive definition of ideology as *culture*.
2. Ideology as the “ideas and beliefs” of a “specific, socially significant group or class” as “a kind of collective symbolic self-expression” (Eagleton 1991, 29). In other words, ideology as a neutral *world-view*.
3. Ideology as the “promotion and legitimization of particular interests [...] in the face of opposing interests” and as rhetorical discourse, a “discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole” (Eagleton 1991, 29). In this definition, ideology begins to be seen in relational, conflictive terms.
4. Like 3, the “promotion and legitimization of sectoral interests” but by “a dominant social power.” This perhaps in order to “unify a social formation in ways convenient for its rulers [...] securing the complicity of subordinated classes and groups” (Eagleton 1991, 29–30). This definition refines the third definition.
5. Like 4, “ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate interests of a ruling group or class” but specifically through “distortion and dissimulation” (Eagleton 1991, 30).
6. False or deceptive beliefs “arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole” (Eagleton 1991, 30), such as Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism. The economic base determines the superstructure of ideology.

### 3.2 Hegemonic & Counter-Ideologies

The epistemologically neutral definitions we have seen courtesy of the Oxford Dictionary fit in the first two descriptions given above, while the last three are akin the Marxist tradition; the last one in particular relating to so-called *vulgar* or economically reductionist Marxism. In these, power is a zero-sum game. The dominant possession of power invariably reduces the power of the subservient class. Gramsci expands upon this. After a failed communist uprising in Italy, and in order to explain the failure of Marx’ conception of the inevitable proletarian revolution, Gramsci recognized culture (or cultural *soft* power) as an important factor, not sufficiently taken in account for in traditional Marxist theory. Gramsci views the state as a superstructure of Marx’ base, consisting of a *political society* and a *civil society*— an *integral state* in which the latter is an essential component for maintaining consent and the former is a means to coerce and discipline those who don’t consent.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> These are concepts that Althusser has systematized as the *ideological state apparatus* and *repressive state apparatus*.

Furthermore, Gramsci coins the notion of *cultural hegemony*,<sup>89</sup> arguing that consent to the rule of the governing class is a manufactured outcome of socialization and promulgation of its ideology.<sup>90</sup> More specifically, promulgation through social institutions within civil society: education, organized religion, the media industry, and the entertainment industry. While the civil society is in modern capitalist democratic nations formally not under control of the political society (notwithstanding that Japan is ranked only 67<sup>th</sup> in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index),<sup>91</sup> they serve to impose the state's dominant set of values as 'common sense': the values of the dominant class become accepted as that of society in general. Predominance of the ruling class by coercion is in contrast restricted to the level of political society, which includes institutions as the government, police, judicial system and army. In a modern capitalist state however, civil society and *soft* power have grown to such an extent that this 'legitimized violence' has to certain degrees answer to public consent; which again can be achieved through the dominant ideology. Yet, if contradictions in the dominant ideology are too great, the manufacturing of consent becomes unsustainable. In other words, this leads to a *hegemonic crisis*.

For Althusser, ideology was an *unconscious*, discursive process; assimilated and reproduced through cultural practices in the ideological state apparatus; with little space for human agency. Gramsci does however see space for that in his concept of civil society. Gramsci coins the concept of *subaltern* (a term crucial in post-colonial studies)<sup>92</sup> to refer not just to those lacking in economic and political power (such as peasants and the proletariat), but those whose cultural or social identity is on the fringes of the dominant ideology; whose history is overshadowed by that of the ruling class and who are denied the right to make one's own culture and historical narratives. Yet in those fringes is an opening to develop a subaltern consciousness, a *sub-culture*. For change to occur, it is therefore necessary for those groups to dismantle the cultural hegemony by developing their own organic ideology (a

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<sup>89</sup> This paper's first chapter noted the Alt-Right's infatuation with Japan in particular. Asking why, one could without a doubt look at war-time relations between the far-right in the West and Japan. In Fukushima's mount Iimori, for example, this author examined both an archaeological column of Pompeii, donated by Italian fascist leader Mussolini, and a 1930s German donation in the form of a black granite plate with an Iron Cross. Those served as a form of praise for the *bushido*-related war-time propagandistic media-event of the White Tiger Company military unit (*Byakkotai*, 白虎隊), a story of nineteen teenagers committing ritual suicide after mistakenly believing their castle had fallen during the Boshin War. Perhaps in more recent memory, one other answer could be found in processes of cultural hegemony between Japan and the West. With the widespread 1980s narratives of Japan as economic powerhouse and the growing cultural *soft* power of 'Cool Japan', many a page were written on the *Japanese model* (see for example Chalmers' 1982 *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*), and thus a window opened to sell Japan's hegemonic ideology of *nihonjinron* (日本人論) style of (ethno-)nationalism to the West.

<sup>90</sup> Although not from a Marxist school of thought, these topics have also been explored by Walter Lippmann in his seminal work *Public Opinion* (1922) and Edward Samuel Herman and Noam Chomsky's work on propaganda (an ideological form of communication to gain consent) in mass media, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*.

<sup>91</sup> Far below Belgium (9), the United Kingdom (33) South Korea (41) and the United States (48). This ranking is based on among others restrictions of journalism in official press rooms (see concept of the 'reporters club,' the 記者クラブ *kisha kurabu*), strict policies against whistleblowers, and an increasingly hostile public climate towards public media (Japan : Tradition and Business Interests Reporters Without Borders 2019).

<sup>92</sup> In post-colonial theory, the concept of the subaltern refers to those in the margins of colonial society, lacking of agency and being forced to resort to speak the colonial oppressor's language. Crucial early works on the topic include Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's deconstruction *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1983), which criticizes the practice of interpreting the Other through western methodology (something the author of this very paper is guilty of as well).

dialectic process of an ‘ideological struggle’ with the hegemonic ideologies) unifying a ‘collective will’ as class-consciousness and producing a *counter-hegemony*. Only after ascertaining a counter-hegemonic dominance on civil society could the subservient classes succeed in coercive action over the political society (Gramsci and Hoare 1985, 210–38).<sup>93</sup> Gramsci calls this *passive revolution* (Gramsci and Hoare 1985, 106–20): in the case of a crisis of hegemony, the dominant class has no means but to either rely on coercion through the political society, or to consolidate oppositional movements in civil society (the passive revolution).

If orthodox Marxism were to view the contradictory nature of poverty, environmental problems and violent international conflicts in contrast to the ideological narratives of capitalism as a trigger for working class awareness and an inevitable revolution, then in Gramsci’s interpretation civil society would be the stage for counter-hegemonic processes in passive revolution. The 1993 Japanese general election and fall of the 1955 system<sup>94</sup> could be read through this lens,<sup>95</sup> and although not explicitly referring to Gramsci or Marxist traditions of ideology, the language of John W. Dower in his narrative assessment of the New Left and late ’60 political movements certainly seem to suggest such logic as well (Dower et al. 1993). As Dower states, the growth of Japan as a cultural and economic powerhouse brought to light contradictions in society—the *San Francisco System*, the ambiguous position of Okinawa and environmental issues (in particular the mercury poisoning in Minamata) to name a few; pitting “liberal and left-wing critics against the dominant conservative elites” and introducing “a more radical anti-imperialist critique to the discourse on peace and democracy.” In light of rapid economic growth, hegemonic ideologies of nationalism, capitalism, peace and democracy had retained however a strong grip on public consent, or as Dower et al. (1993) puts it, the “conservative hegemony—the bedrock of the 1955 System—continued to rule Japan” (Dower et al. 1993, 5–6,p.21). Nevertheless this counter-hegemonic shakes society in the late ’60s.

“It is estimated that between 1967 and 1970 alone, more than eighteen million Japanese took to the streets to protest the war in Vietnam and demand the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. Uncounted others were involved in the university struggles and citizens’ movements against the ravages of the growth-oriented state. As elsewhere,”people’s power” entered the Japanese lexicon at this time as a legitimate and essential alternative to bourgeois parliamentary politics; and, as elsewhere, the theory and practice of “people’s power” ranged from peaceful protest to wanton violence. By the mid-1970s the nationwide people’s movement was moribund,

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<sup>93</sup> These concepts have been translated as *War of Position* and *War of Maneuver* (Buttigieg 1995; Gramsci and Hoare 1985: p.46). It must be noted that this part of Gramsci’s reasoning has since gained renewed popularity and seen appropriation by both Identitarian movements and the Alt-Right. Social institutions education and the mass media are seen as platforms for manufacturing consent to a hegemonic left-wing or globalist ideology, and the notion of Gramsci’s counter-hegemony is re-framed as *metapolitics* (Stein 2018). Belgian populist right-wing party member Dries Van Langenhove claims his Identitarian youth movement Schild & Vrienden to function as a vehicle of metapolitics (NWS 2018), and previous Vlaams Belang leader Filip de Winter added that “The methodology Gramsci promoted is the right one” (“De methodiek die Gramsci aanpreeft, is de juiste”) (Ceulaer 2016).

<sup>94</sup> 55-nen taisei (55 年体制). An electoral system of Single Non-transferable Vote in which the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) held political dominance over the Japan Socialist Party (JSP).

<sup>95</sup> Although the democratic impact of the 1994 electoral system reforms in Japan is questionable considering the near constant dominance of the Liberal Democrat Party on national politics since then (Komatsu 2017).

but it left as legacies the memory and experience of grass-roots mobilization that could be evoked in more particularistic causes thereafter." (Dower et al. 1993, 22)

This was a period of hegemonic crisis, but one that in its aftermath left a considerably sour aftertaste in the mouths of many. Communist groups associated with New Left thought, such as the Japanese Red Army and the East Asia Anti-Japan Armed Front, immediately proceeded to direct action and vice-versa so did the political society too respond with violence. Furthermore, in light of economic growth and relative public wealth, the hegemonic ideologies of economic and ethnic nationalism<sup>96</sup> had thus far helped retain a strong, manufactured grip on consent, despite high profile political scandals as the Lockheed bribery.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, along with the collapse of the bubble economy, contradictions in the dominant, hegemonic ideology became unearthed once again,<sup>98</sup> renewing distrust in established politics and the political system behind it. In other words, the political reform of the 1955 System by temporarily allied political outsiders in 1994 was the logical outcome of an increased alienated Japanese civil society.

Although the same could be argued for the election of the DPJ after over another decade of national rule by the LDP and prolonged economic recessions, after the DPJ's election the strong peak of interest into the topic of 'Netto-Uyoku', displayed in the previous chapter (see **figure 2.1** or Fackler's 2010 *The New York Times* article) simultaneously indicates an increase of reactionary rhetoric among Japanese cyber-nationalists that has moved into the mainstream discourse. It is also around this time that the Zaitokukai and related ACM groups gain notoriety for their aggressive marches, that tensions surrounding territorial disputes are reignited, and, furthermore, that populist political actors, such as Ishihara Shintarō<sup>99</sup> and Hashimoto Tōru,<sup>100</sup> gained increased support. The DPJ's period of rule between 2009 and 2012 was plagued with several controversies, not the least the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear crisis; the latter incident drawing Japanese citizens to alternative, online (by 2010 Japan had an Internet penetration rate of 78.2 percent)<sup>101</sup> means of media ranging from Twitter to even 2channel<sup>102</sup> (H. Slater, Nishimura, and Kindstrand 2012).

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<sup>96</sup> What Dower coins a "late-Showa cult of exceptionalism" (1993, 6).

<sup>97</sup> This concerns the international bribing of political officials (which led to the incarceration of former Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei) by the U.S. aerospace company Lockheed Corporation, to adopt its line of aircrafts.

<sup>98</sup> It could be said that Morita Akio and Ishihara Shintarō's 1989 essay *The Japan That Can Say No* has not aged particularly well.

<sup>99</sup> Former governor of Tokyo (1999 - 2012), former leader of the Japan Restoration Party, and Member of the House of Representatives until 2014. In April 2012 Ishihara announced his intention to purchase the Pinnacle islands in response to the territorial dispute between Japan and China (where they are respectively known as the Senkaku Islands or Diaoyu Islands). His online-crowdfunding campaign collected a reported 1,485,201,967 yen donated by 113,602 participants (Murai and Suzuki 2014, 185, @horiuchi\_public\_2014, pp.36-38).

<sup>100</sup> Former mayor of Osaka (2011 - 2015).

<sup>101</sup> In 2016 a white paper by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications proclaims this to be 83.5 percent, with the age groups between 13 and 49 in particular all hovering between 97 and 99 percent (MIC 2017).

<sup>102</sup> Concerning the earthquake, H. Slater, Nishimura, and Kindstrand (2012) state that rumors concerning plundering by ethnic Chinese and Koreans were recirculated from 2channel.

This paper views this Gramscian understanding of ideology and hegemony as beneficial in understanding the processes of reasoning of neo-nationalists (and, ultimately, ‘cyber-nationalists’). We find in their rhetoric signs of the mass media representing the hegemonic ideology. In other words, in such rhetoric the mass media functions to ‘brainwash’ into a ‘false consciousness’ and ‘distract’ the people from contradictions occurring into society (the ‘truth’). That, then, concerns the perceived contradictions that arose during the period of the DPJ’s rule—both the territorial dispute with China and, in particular, the lack of mainstream reporting and inefficient handling by the ruling government of the 2011 Earthquake—aligned with the distrust in mass-media that has been lingering amongst Netto-Uyoku, arguably since the 2002 FIFA soccer match.<sup>103</sup> It could then be argued that both those populist right-wing political actors and the Netto-Uyoku found fertile ground on the contradictions that arose during that period to spread Netto-Uyoku ideologies in civil-society. We see this underlying logic, for example, in two blog-entries from the Wiki-style online blog “Kokumin ga shiranai han’ichi no jittai” (『国民が知らない反日の実態』, “The actual situation of Anti-Japanese sentiment, unbeknown to the nation’s people”), translated by Murai as follows (2014, 173–74):

“What is happening in Japan now is not a war of military power, but an information war to dominate the stream of information to secretly move politics and invade a nation in a legitimate process. Anti-Japanese power first dominates the mass media, brainwashes Japanese citizens, and the brainwashed public votes for traitor candidates to become their representatives. Then, the traitor politicians produce anti-Japanese constitutions to hand Japan to an anti-Japanese power. These activities are going through without the public even knowing them. Historically, Japan has been weak in the information war . . . Can Japanese repeat the same mistake?”

“Chinese Communist Party and Zainichi powers are trying to establish a DPJ regime, which is a horrible traitor party, by controlling the mass media to make Japan a subject state of China . . . Without knowing, Japanese people have been brainwashed into the wrong direction because of Zainichi’s domination of the mainstream media. If you have a stereotyped view that the Internet is evil or something dubious, that is evidence you are the victim of the mass media’s opinion control.”

In both those examples its writer views mainstream media as a tool for manufacturing consent from the masses to the hegemonic ideology (that of the DPJ) and expresses sentiments of Gramsci’s passive revolution. Moreover, we read an underlying implication of the Internet and social media, with their open and public nature, as ideal spaces for the under-represented to form a cultural identity and engage in ideological struggle with the hegemonic dominant ideology. If civil society is “the organized expression of the values and interests of society” (Castells 2008, 78), then we could read Habermas’ notion of the *public sphere* as where those values and interests are discussed and formed, and in turn influence the decisions of political society. The rise of online *influencers* using social media such as YouTube, Niconico, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to spread politically inspired messages, and

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<sup>103</sup> In which Netto-Uyoku perceived simultaneously a bias towards South Korea as well as anti-Japanese amongst certain South Korean supporters.

right-wing populists utilizing this medium to sell a counter-hegemonic narrative certainly seem to suggest such a perception.

### 3.3 Public Cyberspace

In his essay on global civil society and the public sphere, Castells argues that “there is a shift from a public sphere anchored around the national institutions of territorially bound societies to a public sphere [...] built around the media communication system and Internet networks, particularly in the social spaces of the Web 2.0, as exemplified by YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and the growing blogosphere that by mid-2007 counted 70 million blogs and was doubling in size every six months” (2008, 90). Castell views the Internet (as a new public sphere) in an optimistic sense: as “the most effective form of broadening political participation on a global scale, by inducing a fruitful, synergistic connection between the government-based international institutions and the global civil society” (2008, 90). This reasoning of the Internet as a public sphere for political engagement and beneficial to democracy, one that includes (political) minority groups that were traditionally left out of the public sphere (amongst others, women, as Habermas himself acknowledged) is not new. In an early stage of the Internet’s adoption in Japan, Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki (1999) wrote that “frequently, this electronic version of civil society is seen as a vehicle for the expression of opinions traditionally marginalised by the political establishment—the opinions of women, ethnic minorities, the young, etc” (1999, 1191). Moreover, they further discuss sociologists Masuda Yoneji and Kumon Shumpei’s utopian views, predicting that the Internet would serve democracy by transforming its users into “‘netizens’ in a virtual community”, and leading to a power-shift away from mass-media (1999, 1191).

We trace this ideological backdrop of the Internet as a new public space to the development of the Internet and World Wide Web itself. As Aoki (1994) writes, that development in Japan has a similar history to the United States and Europe, starting with universities developing technology to interlink academic papers: JUNET (Japan University/UnixNETwork), the “first nationwide noncommercial computer network”, linked Tokyo University, Keio University and the Tokyo Institute of Technology in 1984. According to Barubora and Sayawaka (2017), the loosening grip of government policy in 1985 led to the consequent adaptation of bulletin board systems (BBS) for computer-mediated communication between hobbyists in Japan, and through translations in technological magazines,<sup>104</sup> the ideology of American west coast voices crucial to the rise of Silicon Valley became known in Japan as *nishikaigan shisō* 西海岸思想 or *Karuforunia shisō* カリフォルニア思想 (West Coast Thought or California

<sup>104</sup> Such as Mitsuhiro Takemura’s メディア・エクスタシー (*media ekusutashi*, ‘Media Ecstasy’) and Kazuhiko Nishi’s 『ASCII』 (*asuki*, アスキー) and its spin-off 『ログイン』 (*roguin*, LOGiN), although the latter gradually evolved into a solely gaming-centered magazine (the now famous *Famitsu*). Its founder, Nishi Kazuhiko is mostly known for his work on the Japanese desktop-computer PC-8001, and the development of the MSX in a joint project with Bill Gates.

Thought). This refers to an ideology that envisions increased participation in democracy through the development of IT and computer science. In his narrative on the development of computers and the Internet, John Markoff echoes this connection of the libertarian hackers-ethos to '60s counterculture (2005).

Nevertheless, Barubora and Sayawaka (2017) argue that while, as Markoff too states, early rhetoric on the Internet in the united states is built on newsgroups discussing political activities and usages of the medium,<sup>105</sup> in contrast were Japanese mailing lists and BBS then primarily built around niche subculture topics (2017, ch.1). Aoki (1994) too argues that the early adaption of computer-mediated communication was associated with *otaku* (*otaku-zoku*, オタク族, a term that at that time roughly came to denote those with obsessive interests in subculture topics) and that it was less accessible to the public due to the difficulty of encoding Japanese characters on the Internet (early communication had to be written with the Latin script).<sup>106</sup> Azuma has argued the same, claiming that since the beginning of computer mediated communication in Japan in the '80s onwards, the discourse on Japanese Internet has been shaped by *otaku*; not just through websites and bulletin boards using references to Japanese animation or video-games, but dispersed on a technical level as well, such as in the naming of FTP-sites or sample sentences in manuals for word or spreadsheet software (2001, 4).

### 3.4 The Subculture Industry

In the previous chapter, we discussed Azuma's (2001) suggestion that right-wing discourse has become subcultured and 'otaku-ized', with tendencies of creating an imaginary 'pseudo-Japan' through juxtaposing traditional Japanese motifs in faux *otaku*-settings (which we could, in Marxist terms, express as the fetishism of an idealized Japan). Indeed the popularity of historical revisionist comics, such as Sharin Yamano's 2004 - 2009 "Manga Kenkanryū (『マンガ嫌韓流』, "Hating the Korean Wave")<sup>107</sup> and Kobayashi Yoshinori's 1995 – 2019 "Gōmanism Sengen" (『ゴーマニズム宣言』, "Gōmanism Mani-

<sup>105</sup> Such as John Gilmore's *Cypherpunks* mailing list. Gilmore later co-founded the Electronic Frontier Foundation with John Perry Barlow, author of the 1996 *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*.

<sup>106</sup> Which incidentally lies at the root of particular now 'mainstream' *net-slang*, such as the common usage of multiple letters 'w' as signifier of humor (the loose equivalent of the now rather outdated 'lol', laughing out loud). As abbreviation of '(笑)' (*wara*, 'to laugh'), this *slang* saw its first usage on platforms that required Japanese to be written with the Latin script.

<sup>107</sup> Which is discussed in Rosenbaum (2015) as explicitly an expression of Netto-Uyoku sentiment. "Manga Kenkanryū is not just an isolated phenomenon, but rather largely a spillover of this radicalised Internet discourse. Popularised with the help of the Internet, the manga's success offline again had its repercussions online" (2015, 218). Content-wise, the manga follows the same narrative of a 'truth' concerning Japan and South Korea relations that is "hidden by various powers, especially the (Japanese) mass media and the left". That 'truth' being South Korea as "a rapist and exploiting country that benefits from Japanese goodwill, plays the 'history card', and calls for special rights" (2015, 220–21).

festō”),<sup>108</sup> the latter which Asō Tarō referred to as “a masterpiece that directly questioned young people about the meaning of war....” (Penney 2009), or even the existence of the highly ideological, political ‘Japanism’ magazine referenced earlier, give weight to his argument.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, on a wider scale we noted that the platforms Netto-Uyoku prefer, such as the anonymous message-board 2channel and online video-service Niconico, appeal to such *otaku* subcultures as well. While the early rhetoric of the World Wide Web as a counter-cultural media has not escaped the online discourse in Japan, we pointed out the above argument of that same discourse being shaped by *otaku* subcultures. It is in that latter that we can then read Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry and the commodification of culture. Furthering Gramsci’s idea of mass culture imposing and drawing consent to the hegemonic ideology, Adorno and Horkheimer view ‘art as commodity’ as the “silencing of reflection” and as “removing the thought that there is any alternative to the status quo” (Adorno and Bernstein 2001, 10).

In Macwilliams (2008), the authors go to certain extents to discredit Adorno’s theorization as applied to the *manga* industry, rightfully arguing that, like any form of media, “manga and anime are anything but homogeneous in style, content, characterization, themes, or meanings, as they are aimed at different subcultures, age levels, and genders, and produced within ever-changing social-historical contexts. Moreover, the fantasies they evoke are not homogeneous either; they do not uniformly convey any master narrative or transcendent system of capitalistic values to their audiences” (2008, 9). Yet one can but wonder how interested some of their audiences, what Azuma describes as ‘*animalized otaku*’—*otaku* subculture fans consuming such works based on their underlying recurring tropes (Azuma 2001, ch.2)—really are in dissecting Tezuka Osamu’s distinct panel design in “*Hi no tori*” (『火の鳥』, “The Phoenix”) or even Anno Hideaki’s post-modernist deconstruction of child-abuse in his hit-series Neon Genesis Evangelion.

In fact, the success of the Japanese cultural exports in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and ‘mainstreaming’ of *otaku* subcultures is referred to in the aptly titled *The New York Times* article “The Year in Ideas; Pokémon Hegemon”. In that article Talbot (2002) points out that “though, so far, Japan’s media exports don’t convey an obvious or coherent set of values – akin to the capitalist individualism that American pop culture tends to package, for example – they might, if Japan’s culture-makers wake up to the consequences of their global reach.” Following Azuma’s suggestion, it could be argued then

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<sup>108</sup> Sakamoto (2008) describes this series as “instrumental in popularizing the ideas of new-generation rightists and historical revisionists over the last decade”; an anti-elitist, anti-globalist an nationalist manga that attacks a supposed masochist view on history imposed by ‘leftist’ war museums, intellectuals and “leftist media”, while appealing to latent patriotism and “[exploiting] the generalized sense of anxiety in contemporary Japanese society and nostalgically constructs war-time Japan as the good old days”. The latest *Gōmanizumu sengen SPECIAL daitōa-ron saishū Fumi Chōsenhantō doran su!* (『ゴーマニズム宣言 SPECIAL 大東亜論 最終章 朝鮮半島動乱す!』, “Gomanism Declaration SPECIAL Great East Asian Debate Final Chapter Korean Peninsula Disturbance!”) was published on June 2, 2019.

<sup>109</sup> Although it of course should not be forgotten that within the medium of Japanese visual art there are a wide range of works countering such views, including not the least the distinct anti-war and historic deconstructionist comics by Tezuka Osamu.

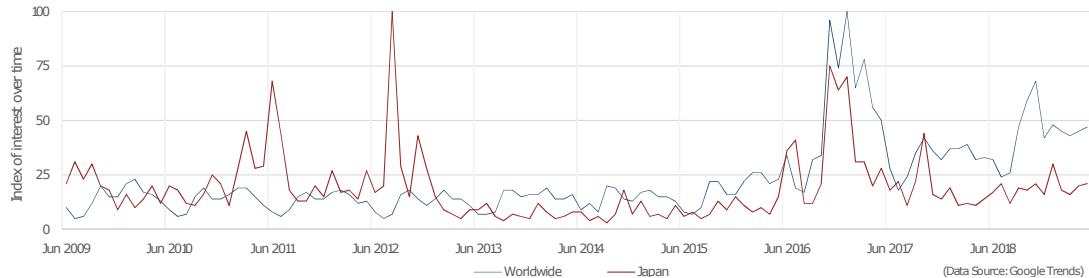
that these media exports instead convey the idea of a homogeneous Japanese uniqueness not unlike the *nihonjinron* form of ethno-nationalism we've brought up above. Furthermore should we point out the relationship between the state and the culture industry. The previous chapter established Niconico's usage by political actors (including, in an early stage of online political advertising, the LDP and Abe Shinzō), Asō Tarō's self-identification as *otaku*, and Abe Shinzō's appeal to Akihabara and online media. Moreover, in the wake of the success of the Japanese cultural exports in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Japanese government charged the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) with "examining ways to encourage the development and export of cultural industries" (Otmažgin 2011, 314), which has since developed into a fully-fledged state-sponsored adaption of 'Cool Japan' as representing its national soft power. While METI's and the state's actual contributions to the success of the now mainstream elements of *otaku* subculture are as arguable as the success of its predecessor's (the Ministry of International Trade and Industry) industrial policies and administrative guiding in Japan's previous booming markets of computer hardware and the automobile industry, the importance and reach of those *otaku* elements in Japan's far-reaching culture industry cannot be denied.

### 3.5 Cyber-Nationalism

The ideological backdrop we see then in cyber-nationalists is one of neo-nationalism or right-wing populism (which this paper has thus far used interchangeably), shaped by the narrative of the Internet as a counter-medium or a counter-public sphere. In his work on right-wing populism in Europe, political scientist Cas Mudde describes the underlying ideology of those movements as an ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2013, ch.27; Beauchamp 2016).

How then are we to understand populism? Disregarding the blatant dissimilarities in either political agenda or geographical situation, politicians such as Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, Viktor Orbán, Jeremy Corbyn, Jair Bolsonaro or Matteo Salvini have all been name-called as a populist. The term, not unlike 'ideologue', has a distinct pejorative connotation, and theorization of populism is, nearly as complicated as that of ideology itself. Horkheimer, for example, wrote on populism in Nazi Germany while Stuart Hall coined the term authoritarian populism in Thatcher-era Great Britain. Laclau and Mouffe, then, view populism in a more positive light and, basing themselves on Gramsci notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, covers populism in relation to left-wing politics (2005). Populism in the 2010s is however undeniably linked to right-wing politics (a Google Trends search for populism and for right-wing politics both worldwide and in Japan over the past ten years, as illustrated on **figure 3.1**, reveal a worldwide rise of public interest in populism correlating

to those political shifts),<sup>110</sup> and the term populist is increasingly used interchangeable or combined with demagoguery.<sup>111</sup>



**Figure 3.1.** The Google Trends of Populism Worldwide & Japan (10 Years).

The definition most commonly referred to in the wake of this recent rise in right-wing populism (Baker 2019), is that of Mudde and Kaltwasser's *thin-centered* ideology of populism. A *thin-centered* ideology because, according to Mudde, Kaltwasser (2013), Abts and Rummens (2007, 407–9) populism is by itself not a fully-fledged world-view. They view populism in its reduced form as the antagonistic struggle between a homogeneous 'People'<sup>112</sup> (the in-group) and a homogeneous 'Elite' (the out-group) based on their social positions of power, with the populist actor framing themselves as a defender of this people's 'Will', invoking Rousseau's notion of the general will (and thus appealing to direct forms of democracy rather than representative democracy). While the normative signifier of 'the People' refers to the ideal of one people or one nation, assuming a homogeneous whole without taking into account pluralist differences, in populist ideology the 'Other' usually denotes a moral antagonist in the form of a social or economic 'elite' ('the establishment', such as established politicians or media institutions), utilizing its socio-economic 'power' to oppress the 'People'.<sup>113</sup>

Under nativism, we understand a nationalism shaped predominantly by xenophobia. In other words, when we think of nationalism as an ideology, it is one of imaginary kinship based on the nation and a homogeneous, national identity. This national identity, the 'in-group', can be cultural (sharing the same cultural values) just as well as that it can be based on imagined ethnic or racial

<sup>110</sup> Although these worldwide trends reflect on Japan, they are preceded with a short but strong spike of interest in both July 2011 and August 2012, suggesting the concept of populism had penetrated Japanese public discourse a fair bit earlier as on a global scale. A period, barely a year after the devastating 2011 Tōhoku earthquake in which political outsiders Ishihara Shintarō and Hashimoto Tōru were making headlines, current prime minister Abe Shinzō was staging his political comeback, Tsuneo Watanabe, who was once called Japan's most powerful media baron (Onishi 2006), publishes a book warning against the dangers of populist nationalism (Watanabe (2012)), and literary critic Azuma Hiroki (2011) gains renewed success with his publication of *ippan-ishi 2.0* (General Will 2.0, 一般意志 2.0).

<sup>111</sup> One *The Huffington Post* article, for example, referred to Roman politician Publius Clodius Pulcher as "the Trump of Ancient Rome, a Populist Demagogue Who Helped Bring Down the Republic" (Freeman, professor, and author 2016).

<sup>112</sup> Which Taggart (2000) defines as the 'heartland', an idealized, romanticized representation of the group the populist actor represents (2000, 95–98).

<sup>113</sup> For research on a so-called "Japanese model of populism" (*nihongata popurizumu* 日本型ポピュリズム) see Otake (2003), Kimura (2006), Matsutani Mitsuru (2009) Matsutani (2009; 2010), Yoshida (2011), and Kobori (2013). Their respective research typically begin with Koizumi Jun'ichirō's television play and utilization of so-called 'wide-shows' and his utilization of television as a starting point, focusing on a neo-liberal economic populism.

similarities. Xenophobia, then, involves the creation of the ‘Other’ or the ‘out-group’. It underlines the perceived differences between those of the in-group and of the out-group, and in this paper’s understanding of ideology, distracts from contradictions in society by antagonizing that latter group. So too do Netto-Uyoku differentiate on what is Japanese and what is not, viewing not just foreign nations (China and South-Korea) as a threat, but also the ethnic Korean diaspora, most of whom have been citizens of Japan for several generations in a row. Those latter serve, in particular, as scapegoat for social problems (ranging from being blamed for particular crimes to having infiltrated the DPJ to push through ‘anti-Japanese’ policies). Finally, authoritarianism is the belief in strong, centralized political power and in a strictly ordered, law-and-order society (see, for example, the support portrayed in **figure 2.5** towards the LDP’s anti-terrorism laws, or even the support for a constitutional amendment).

### 3.6 Conclusion

This paper takes a critical approach to ideology, viewing it as a world-view rooted in conflict and—in capitalist nations that rely on consent over coercion—as a means to distract from what is in the best interest of exploited groups. Consent drawn by those in control of the political society (the ‘elite’ or establishment) through disseminating ideology by means of popular culture and mainstream media in civil society: the hegemonic ideology. The alienating effect of contradictions in society—a consequence of the capitalist nature of commodity fetishism—bring about class-awareness among the exploited and an opening for counter-hegemonic processes in civil society.

It is this very line of reasoning, however, that is of essence in right-wing populist antagonization of an ‘elite’ for the sake of a homogeneous ‘will’ of ‘the people’. Right-wing populists view the ‘elite’ in this case as primarily a left-wing entity utilizing the media to spread manufactured consent through a *fake consciousness*. In this narrative the populist actors are the counter-hegemonic forces, utilizing alternative means in civil-society to appeal to ‘the people’, exploited classes that are more often than not defined based on nationalist ideologies such as ethnic background or cultural values (i.e. Judeo-Christian values or Japanese *nihonjinron* essentialism). This *fake consciousness* borders on a nativist conspiracy theory wherein globalist values of the elite lead to clashes of culture and the disintegration of ‘the people’s’ best interest (i.e. the DPJ as a puppet-government utilizing mass media to work against the best interest of the ‘Japanese people’).

Based on the literature review of Netto-Uyoku in the previous chapter, this chapter attempted to conceptualize cyber-nationalism as a form of such neo-nationalist ideology shaped by the populist discourse concerning the World Wide Web as a public space for disseminating counter-hegemonic narratives. This paper, after all, argues a difference between those that adhere to neo-nationalist ide-

ologies and utilize the Internet purely for organizational means, and so-called *netizens* as a subculture adhering to an ideology of the World Wide Web as a ‘new frontier’ in contrast to ‘mass media’.

If self-perceived contradictions in society (such as immigration and terrorism) brought about a wave of right-wing populism with in particular 2016 as a pivotal year, then the period in which the DPJ governed could be considered the same for Japan. Blatantly populist politicians as Ishihara Shintarō and Hashimoto Tōru gain renewed fame, for one. Moreover, in the previous chapter we argued that Abe Shinzō skillfully employed populist tactics common to the right-wing populist actors that have dominated the global political scene since the latter 2010s and in particular drew support from the Netto-Uyoku by appealing to the Internet as grassroots media and continuously attacking mass-media. This chapter further notes the dominance of mass culture (the culture industry) in Japanese society and in particular on the Japanese Internet, which disperses the notion of a nationalist Japanese uniqueness both nationally and internationally.

In the next chapter we will then attempt to uncover how Internet users expressing Netto-Uyoku sentiment utilize the Internet to disperse their self-perceived counter-hegemonic ideologies.

## CHAPTER 4

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### THE ANATOMY OF JAPANESE CYBER-NATIONALISM — FROM 2CHANNEL TO WIKIPEDIA

This paper illustrated in the second chapter that Netto-Uyoku are often associated particularly with 2channel, Niconico and with its more recent rise of usage in Japan, with Twitter as well (Katayama 2007; Tsuji 2008; Sakamoto 2011; Murai 2012; Yasuda 2012; Morris-Suzuki 2013; Taka 2015b). Furthermore, all of these belong to the top visited websites in Japan, with the latter two dominantly fixed in the top ten.<sup>114</sup>

In 1964, McLuhan (1994) famously argued that the content of the message is itself intrinsically shaped by the vessel through which it is delivered (“The medium is the message”). Following this argument through in the age of online social media, Lev Manovich argues that software now takes a central position in our interaction with the world around us (2013). As someone creates a potentially viral image intended for political persuasion and posts it online, they might do so using their laptop computer to edit different layers of the image through image-editing software as Photoshop. Next they might use Chrome as a browser to interpret and visualize the semantic text of the World Wide Web (HTML), and upload the image on a platform as Twitter or 2channel. They have to adhere to the limits required on image-size and length of text, and preferably add symbols for interconnection or recognition to gain a wider reach (using hash-tags, the @ sign, or *trip-code* identifiers on pseudo-anonymous Bulletin Board Systems). Combined, these are a great amount of different interfaces for communication. Azuma (2001) expresses similar reasoning. Whereas the content of other media has one final represented form, data on the World Wide Web is determined by software. A web-page built using the HTML syntax will represent the contents in a different fashion depending on the software and hardware it is opened with, and reveals the underlying structural composition when opened with a text-editor instead of a browser. Furthermore, similar to the non-linear structure of games, non-linear paths are an intrinsic element of the world wide web’s hyper-connectedness (2001, ch.3).

Since the effective start in the mid 2000s of what Tim O'Reilly coined the *Web 2.0*—a participatory web based on interactive collaboration and user-generated content—as well as the onset of machine learning and artificial intelligence in generating semantically interlinked content, over a decade has passed for social media and its hyper-extended *hyper-connectedness* to mature within our lives. Based

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<sup>114</sup> For more information, see **table A.1**.

on the theoretical framework in the previous chapter, we approach this chapter through a mixed methods critical content analysis applied to social media, attempting to bring to light from a semiotic perspective how the Netto-Uyoku reinforce and disperse ideological narratives on the Internet. While it is hard to ignore major platforms as YouTube, Twitter and 2channel, this chapter will focus particularly on two forms of Internet-based media in Japan that are in academia less-documented: 2channel-based *matome* curated aggregation websites and Wikipedia. The former as a means to disperse to a greater audience a selected sample of certain sub-categories as supposedly representative of the Internet *vox populi*. The latter then, an open and collaborative encyclopedia built on hyperlinks, is both a prime example of Azumi's non-linear and endless structure inherent to the world wide web and, more concretely, gives us through its revision history insights in how and by whom persuasive narratives are formed.

#### **4.1 2channel & Matome-blogs**

Although we cannot dismiss previous literature in tracing the *Netto-Uyoku* and their rhetorical methods back to 2channel,<sup>115</sup> it would be unwise to dismiss those platforms in their whole as one homogeneous, even toxic community (with at their peak millions of messages per day).<sup>116</sup> The technical base behind 2channel was created in 1999 based on the structure of early Usenet-inspired Bulletin Board Systems *ayashī wārudo* あやしいわーるど (1996, lit. ‘Strange World’) and *amezō rinku* あめぞうリンク (1997), purposed as a text-only multi-threaded anonymous messaging board (2017, ch.2). These were subsequently the origin for the more graphically-oriented *Futaba Channel*, the software base on which *4chan* is based on. While correctly identified as strictly anonymous, users have the option to register a personal identifier (a trip-code). Moreover, messages (*posts*) have a numeral ID used when reacting to another post, and within one *thread* (a conversation on one particular topic) users often have a fixed ID to keep some consistency in communication. A thread has a limit of 1000 posts before it is ‘archived’ (meaning no new reactions can be placed) and users need to create a follow-up thread. Similar to the structure of news websites, those approximately 800 boards are thematically divided (including such topics as news, society, sports, idols and video-games). A 2channel ranking-site (based on the amount of threads and replies within a certain timespan)<sup>117</sup> consistently places boards belonging to the news section on top, as well as several boards dedicated to idol culture.

One trend that accompanied the growth of 2channel is the appearance of so-called *matome*-sites. Those are curated aggregation websites based around particularly popular (*viral*) threads on 2channel

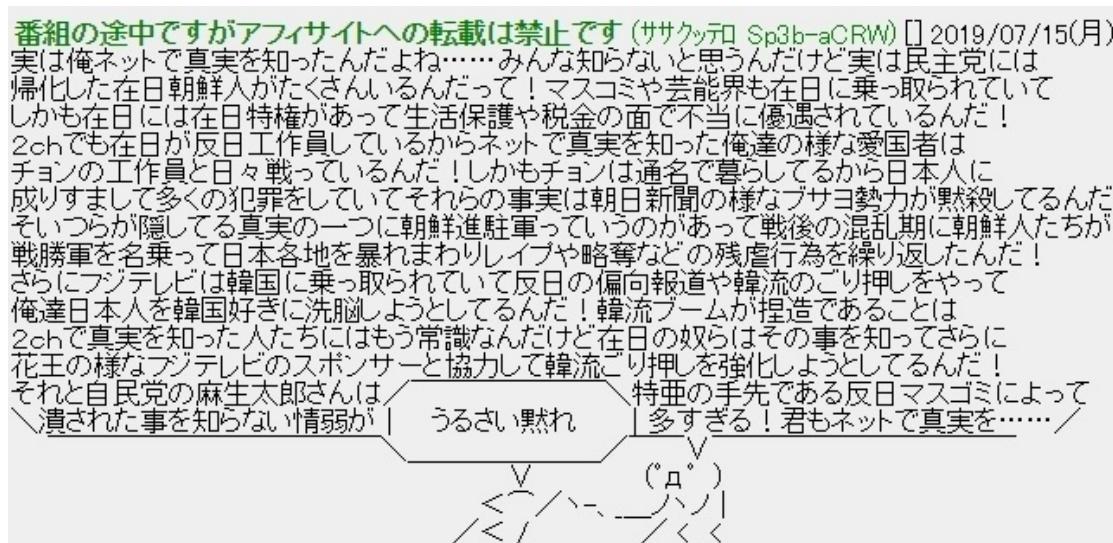
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<sup>115</sup> Take for example the suffix 「～ぢ」 *jida* as a pejorative expression in imitating someone with an ethnic Korean background.

<sup>116</sup> Katayama (2007) reported in 2017 2.7 million messages per day spread over 800 different categories. Whereas 2channel was in 2017, a decade after that report, still the 18<sup>th</sup> most visited website in Japan (Poppe 2017, 15), in its current renamed state as 5channel it has since dropped to 43<sup>rd</sup> position.

<sup>117</sup> See <http://2ch-ranking.net/>.

(and since the early 2010s other social media platforms such as Twitter). The curator manually collects the material s/he deems most relevant to the viral topic in question—either as representation of public opinion, or for its comical value—and is usually accompanied with a particularly appealing title (what is in English colloquially known as ‘clickbait’) and a short personal comment. A common trait of those *matome*-sites is the usage of private advertising or services such as Google’s Adsense for the pursuit of financial profit,<sup>118</sup> and one of the larger subsections (boards) of 2channel, *Nyūsu sokuhō* (*kenmō*) ニュース速報 (嫌儲)<sup>119</sup> started in protest of such curated aggregation sites and may by terms of service not be aggregated.



**Above:** "In fact, I learned the truth on the Net... I don't think many know this but in fact there are a lot of naturalized Koreans in the LDP! The media and the entertainment world have also been taken over by Zainichi Koreans, and they enjoy privileged rights unfairly favored in terms of welfare and taxes! Patriots like us who learned the truth on the net are fighting daily with anti-Japanese *chon* agents because they have infiltrated even 2ch! Moreover, because *chon* use common names, they commit many crimes pretending to be Japanese, and these facts are being suppressed by the *filthy leftists* like the *Asahi shinbun*! One of the facts they hide is that that during the post-war chaos, Zainichi Koreans pretended to be part of the victorious army and ran around all over Japan committing atrocities such as rape and looting! Furthermore, Fuji TV is being taken over by South Korea, and try to brainwash Japanese people into liking Korea by biased anti-Japanese reporting and airing the Korean Wave! It is common sense for the people who learned the truth on 2ch that the Korean Wave is forged, but Zainichi Koreans know this as well and try to further cooperate with sponsor of Fuji TV like Kao Corporation to enforce and strengthen the Korean Wave! Moreover few people have adequate access to information of how the LDP's Tarō Asō was thwarted by the anti-Japanese garbage media, which is a puppet of Anti-Japanese Asian countries. You too should learn on the Net..." **Below:** "So noisy, shut up!"  
(Screenshot by author. Source: leia.5ch.net/poverty/)

**Figure 4.1.** ASCII Art (AA) parodying Netto-Uyoku

In a July 15, 2019 thread on this board, users discuss if and why there are less expressions of Netto-Uyoku discourse on *kenmō*. There is no consistent political ideology amongst its users (who refer to themselves as *kenmomen* ケンモメン or 嫌儲民), but in an interesting group dynamic there is a perception of the other *nyūsu sokuhō* boards as their cultural Other, with an overall resistance

<sup>118</sup> This is pejoratively known as *afikasu* アフィカス, a contraction of *afiriēto* アフィリエイト and *kasu* カス, loosely translated as ‘affiliate-tainted’.

<sup>119</sup> A subdivision of the *Breaking News* boards. 嫌儲 *kenmō* is a word play on 嫌韓 *kenkan* (lit. ‘Hate Korea’) and translates to ‘Hate Profit’. The URL itself <https://5ch.net/poverty/> itself contains an English language pun.

to profit-seeking aggregation sites and writers targeting the medium they identify with.<sup>120</sup> Through somewhat serious discussion on nationalism and ideology (along an occasional conspiracy theory),<sup>121</sup> several users echo the 2011 earthquake as a trigger for psychological cravings for positive nationalist self-reinforcement and view *matome* blogs as one such tool. Conclusively, these *kenmomen* dislike profit-seeking *matome* blogs and marketers, therefore they reason they have not become *Netto-Uyoku* themselves (which are often subject to parody, as illustrated on **figure 4.1**).<sup>122</sup> One anonymous user summarizes their answer to the thread's question as follows (5ch.net 2019):

「右翼とか左翼以前に世の中の天邪鬼なのがネットの主流だから  
ネトウヨがまだ頭が良いと思われていた頃はテレビや世間が左寄り  
今はテレビや世間がネトウヨやっているから俺たちが左寄りでバランスを取らないといけない  
って言う潜在意識があるんだよ」

*"Uyoku toka sayoku izen ni yononaka no amanojakuna no ga netto no shuryūdakara  
neto-uyo ga mada atamagaii to omowa rete ita koro wa terebi ya seken ga hidariyori  
ima wa terebi ya seken ga neto-uyo yatte irukara oretachi ga hidariyori de baransu o toranaito ikenai  
tte iu senzai ishiki ga arunda yo"*

"It's because since before all of this left-wing or right-wing talk, the voice of the Internet was this world's contrarian. When the Netto-Uyoku were still considered to be intelligent, television, public opinion and such were still left-leaning. Since they have become Netto-Uyoku themselves, we have to create a counter-balance to the left. At least there is such kind of subconscious reasoning."

Of note is the implicit ideological reasoning of the Internet as the 'new frontier' and public sphere.<sup>123</sup> When this user refers to public opinion being Netto-Uyoku, it refers to the idea that the Netto-Uyoku counter-ideology has successfully spread over civil society and become the hegemonic ideology. In their reasoning, these users present a counter-balance. Or as one user claims, "the ideology of the *kenmomen* will, maybe after around two years or so, have without a doubt become the Net-mainstream" (「多分 2 年後くらいは嫌儲思想がネットの主流に間違いなくなっている」 "tabun 2-nen-go kurai wa kenmō shisō ga netto no shuryū ni machigainaku natte iru").

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<sup>120</sup> Referred to as *biji-uyo* (ビジウヨ, an abbreviation of business-right, *bijinesu-uyoku* ビジネス右翼) and *sutema sōdō* (ステマ騒動, stealth-market unrest).

<sup>121</sup> Several reactions claim mind-control (i.e. Marx' notion of 'false consciousness') by the left-wing and ethnic outsiders. See for example: "...In spite of being controlled by the baby boomer leftists, and Zainichi Koreans and Chinese" (*zainichi chūgokujin, zainichi kankokujin, dankai sayoku ni kontorōru saretekita baka no kuse ni yo* 「在日中国人、在日韓国人、団塊サヨクにコントロールされてきたバカのくせによ」 ).

<sup>122</sup> An earlier trend on 2channel and similar message-boards was the usage of text-based artwork (AA, ASCII Artwork), the Japanese variant of the viral imagery referred to as *memes*. While somewhat out of fashion, they are now recycled in an ironic manner.

<sup>123</sup> In a February 21, 2016 thread that is now comically referred to as *poverlution* (a contraction of the board's URL-name 'poverty' and 'revolution') and *プリキュア革命* (*purikyuā kakumei*, a reference to an animation 'Pretty Cure'), a user asks "I'm thinking about bringing about a labor revolution in this rotten country Japan. Violence is out of the question. What can we do?" (*Kono kusatta kuni, nihon de rōdō-sha kakumei o okosō to omō bōryoku wa NG dōsureba ii?* 「この腐った国、日本で労働者革命を起こそうと思う 暴力は NG どうすればいい?」). In a similar trend to the 'Anonymous' movement associated with 4chan, a general distrust in mass media was noticeable and users discussed things as cyber-terrorism, strikes and the control of information. While this was the subject of much ridicule, The thread reached its limit of 1000 posts in less than two hours (5ch.net 2016).

I found one recent thread particularly suitable for demonstrating the reach of *matome* sites. On July 8, 2019 a South Korean YouTube *vlogger* posted a video complaining about the rising nationalist trade conflicts between South Korea. In the wake of public protests and various boycotts against Japanese products in South Korea, he tore up his airplane ticket for a planned trip to Japan and stated there are other places in the world to visit (daelyugnamTV 2019). On July 11, 2019 4:40 P.M. an aggregation website called Record China (*rekōdochaina*, レコードチャイナ), claiming to offer information of Chinese events towards a Japanese audience, published an article on this video (Kitada 2019).<sup>124</sup> In this unsourced article, the author claimed that this video went viral on the Chinese video-service Pear Video (梨視頻).<sup>125</sup>

この動画は 11 日午前現在、16 万回余り再生されている。コメント欄では、「かっこいい」「応援する」「愛国心に拍手」「日本旅行に行かないことが日本にとって一番のダメージになる」など、男性を支持するものが大半となっている。

“Kono dōga wa 11-nichi gozen genzai, 16 man-kai-amari saisei sareteiru. Komento-ran de wa, ‘kakkōi’ōen suru’ ‘aikokushin ni hakushu’ ‘Nihonryōkō ni ikanai koto ga nihon ni totte ichiban no damēji ni naru’ nado, dansei o shiji suru mono ga taihan to natte iru.”

As of the 11<sup>th</sup> in the morning this video has been played over 160,000 times. In the comments section most of them support him, writing comments such as “cool,” “I support you,” “applause to patriotism,” and “not traveling to Japan is the most damaging thing to Japan.”

One hour after, on July 11, 2019 5:41 P.M. a user created a thread on one of 2channel’s ‘breaking news’ sections to discuss this story (5ch.net 2019). Based on a script we wrote to scrape the contents of this thread, we found that, including the original post, within two hours 650 unique users reached 1000 messages (whereof 21 users were registered with a user-name). Out of those 1000 posts, 312 messages were then placed by 171 unique users as reaction to others (indicating the echo-chamber function for the majority of users).<sup>126</sup> From there, various *matome* aggregation websites picked up on this story, starting with on July 11, 2019 7:04 P.M. the conservative 2channel news-aggregation blog *hoshu sokuhō* 保守速報 (‘Conservative Newsflash’).

Another conservative 2channel aggregation site, Anonymous Post,<sup>127</sup> shared this with an addition in the post’s title: “the Internet reacts ‘nah, if you’ve paid then it’s already settled, right?w’ ‘paying and not coming... You’re the best’” (*Netto no han’nō ‘iya kane haratteru ijō kōnyū-zumidaro w’ ‘kane haratte konai... omae saiko’* ネットの反応「いや金払ってる以上購入済みだろ w」「金払って来ない... オマエ最高」) (Anonymous Post 2019). Although not indicating where this populist notion of the people’s ‘Internet reaction’ came from, a quick comparison traced every listed ‘Internet reaction’ back to the

<sup>124</sup> Accredited to an otherwise anonymous Kitada (北田), someone who is not listed among the staff of this site.

<sup>125</sup> The actual video referred to did reach publicity on Chinese social media through the hashtag # 韩国主播手撕赴日本机票 # (“Hánguó zhǔbō shǒu sī fù rìběn jǐpiào”, “Korean YouTuber tears ticket to Japan”), although the video itself served as a recap of the socio-political tensions between South Korea and Japan, and the segment of this Korean YouTuber took just 26 seconds out of 1 minute and 39 minutes. See <https://www.weibo.com/6004281123/HCP32zb6L>.

<sup>126</sup> Slurs such as *chon* ‘チョン’ were not uncommon (54 instances).

<sup>127</sup> In March 2019 Major of Osaka Matsui Ichirō gained backlash for retweeting an Anonymous Post message that contained false information on the 2019 Osaka gubernatorial election (Otsujiki 2019).

2channel thread in question. This story was subsequently shared on their Twitter-account with over 135,000 followers. At midnight, July 12, 2019 1:30 A.M. another aggregation site focusing primarily on video-games and animation (*Hachima Kiko* はちま起稿) picked up on this story. On 2019-07-15 pop-culture news-blog SoraNews24 posts an English version of this story sourcing Hachima Kiko, which was subsequently shared on online newspaper Japan Today, as well on its Japan Today's Facebook (which has as of writing over 1,3 million followers)<sup>128</sup> and finally reached 4chan's '/pol/' discussion board, associated with English-language cyber-nationalists (referred to in the first chapter).

SoraNews24 and Japan Today failed to include any of the socio-political context presented in the video. Moreover it contained false claims that the South Korean YouTube vlogger "had driven all the way down to the airport to purchase a flight ticket to Japan worth 1.35 million won (\$1,150)" and that "he could potentially walk up to a counter for a ticket refund," while in fact the vlogger had purchased this ticket prior to the political tensions. Although Hachima Kiko did not list the former information, it explicitly mentions the YouTube vlogger's claim that canceling the ticket and hotel is impossible (Hachima Kiko 2019; Japan Today 2019). The YouTube video has as of July 17, 2019 reached over 316,000 views, and its comment section, with over 10,000 comments, has seen an influx of English and Japanese reactions.<sup>129</sup> Disregarding the actual contents of this video, in just one week did a story magnified by echo-chambers of one particular sub-community on 2channel find its way to a common media-platform presenting English news on Japan—echoing the distorted bias the story had gained in this process.

Moreover, one of those *matome* sites listed above, *Hoshu Sokuhō*, was linked to on November 24, 2014 in a since removed message on Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's Facebook and Twitter account. Earlier, that *matome* site had been sued by the ethnic Korean freelance writer Lee Sinhae for libel (The Huffington Post JP 2014; J-CAST News 2014).<sup>130</sup> The repercussions of the lawsuit have led to *hoshu sokuhō* support by other popular *matome* blogs and the withdrawal of *hoshu sokuhō*'s sponsors and Google Adsense Support, as illustrated on **figure 4.2**.<sup>131</sup>

Disregarding the content of the aggregated items in **figure 4.2** (it should by now not be particularly surprising that most items are related to Korean topics or left-wing politics, often accompanied with the rhetorical device of 'w's for intended ridicule), two other things are of note. On **figure 4.2b**, *Moeruasia* uses the ethnic slur *chon* チヨン as well as *hibyō* / *hwabyeong* (火病, a term referring to a culture-bound mental illness). In the wake of this trial, such *matome* blogs have out precaution since

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<sup>128</sup> Japan Today shared this story on Facebook twice, once on July 15, 2019 7:10 P.M., receiving at over 160 comments, and again shortly afterwards on July 15, 2019 7:32 P.M., when it received over 500 reactions and 170 shares.

<sup>129</sup> One interesting observation was the frequent English claim that this YouTuber is in fact Chinese and not Korean.

<sup>130</sup> A judicial decision ordered a compensation of 2 million yen in favor of the journalist, which was confirmed in a final decision on 11-12-2018 in her favor after an appeal by *hoshu sokuhō* to the highest court was won (Okamoto 2018).

<sup>131</sup> Council member and blogger Kotsubo Shinya (whose blog is located at the subtly-titled *samurai20.jp*) defended *hoshu sokuhō* with the argument that freedom of speech should be absolute and suggested selling goods such as bookmarks as income replacement (Furuta and Harimaya 2018).



**Figure 4.2.** Screenshots of 2channel-based *matome* blogs

opted to exclude messages with explicit racial hatred from their aggregated posts.

「【チョン悲報】李信恵さん、保守速報の弁護士に正論で完全論破され火病、泣き落としにwwwwww」

[*Chon hihō*] Ri Shine-san, *hoshu sokuhō* no bengoshi ni seiron de kanzen ronpa sare kabyō, naki otoshi ni wwwwww

[Tragic *Chon* News] Lee Sinhae was completely refuted by the sound reasoning of Hoshu Sokuhō's lawyer; falls into mental illness and breaks down in tears *wwwwww*

The second point of note is on the screenshot of *hoshu sokuhō* (see **figure 4.2a**). As of July, 15 2019 *hoshu sokuhō* is still in search of adverts. Whereas this blog had previously been supported by ads of large companies as Epson (Hatachi 2018), only one advertisement is filled out (with a reference to a small-scale web-comic). To the left is an advertisement for an unofficial fan-blog of Toranomon News (*toranomon nyūsu*, 虎ノ門ニュース).<sup>132</sup> Although there is no substantial link between *hoshu sokuhō* and Toranomon News aside from a mutual target audience, we find that, as a conservative web-show drawing up to a combined half a million viewers within its first day on YouTube and Niconico, Toranomon News is worth briefly expanding upon for both its eclectic cast of ultra-right conservative regular speakers as well as for its plethora of guest speakers (see **figure 4.3**).

Sponsored by DHC Television,<sup>133</sup> the majority of Toranomon News' hosts, including Kent Gilbert and the Chinese born Seki Hei (Shi Ping), have previously capitalized and continue to do so on a print-medium market for historical revisionist and nationalist 'Japan as Number One' literature

<sup>132</sup> This name most likely refers to the December 27, 1923 Toranomon incident (*toranomon jiken*, 虎ノ門事件), an assassination attempt of the then Prince Regent Hirohito, committed under influence of left-wing ideologies.

<sup>133</sup> Another show of DHC Television, News Girl ("Nyūsu joshi", 『ニュース女子』), gained criticism for its libelous reporting of a protest march in Okinawa in January 2017, claiming that the demonstrators looked like terrorists, were being bribed, blocked ambulances and had (ethnic) Koreans amongst them (SANKEI DIGITAL INC 2017). Its panel and guest list overlaps with that of Toranomon News, and includes various celebrities and idols.

and literature highly critical of China and South Korea.<sup>134</sup> Since 2015 they have joined hands to influence public opinion and target the market for nationalist rhetoric online, with YouTuber and imperial descendant Takeda Tsuneyasu on the panel and YouTuber Kazuya as frequent guest (the latter seen amongst the top Niconico videos back in chapter two in **figure 2.3**). Other guests include Abe Shinzō himself,<sup>135</sup> as well as former Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Yoshitaka Shindō, various LDP lawmakers including Mio Sugita, *Nippon Kaigi* associate Sakurai Yoshiko and former idol Chiba Reiko.<sup>136</sup>



**Figure 4.3.** Screenshot of Toranomon News on YouTube

Hyakuta Naoki, regular commentator on Toranomon News and author of the best-selling 2006 war drama “The Eternal Zero” (which in its 2013 screen-adaption won the Japan Academy Prize for best film) went on to co-author 『日本よ、世界の真ん中で咲き誇れ』 (*nihon yo, sekai no man'naka de sakihokore*, “Japan! Be Proud of Yourself in the Center of the World!”) with Abe Shinzō in 2013 and was appointed by the latter as board of governor member of Japan’s national broadcast service NHK in 2013.<sup>137</sup> Although his November 2018 bestseller *Nihon Kokuki* (日本国紀, ‘Chronicle of Japan’) was criticized for historical revisionism and plagiarism from Wikipedia (Yamamoto 2018), he subsequently

<sup>134</sup> Although there is a market for counter-argumentative literature as well. On 2019-4-6 a book with the following eye-catching title was published in Martin Fackler’s name, the journalist with whom this paper opened: “Precisely because I’m an American journalist is Japan’s national disaster transparent” (*Beikoku hito jānarisutodakara minuketa Nihon no kokunan* 『米国人ジャーナリストだから見抜けた日本の国難』). Its subtitle: “The truth of this country that the media does not report” (*media ga hontō no koto o tsutaenai kono kuni no shinjitsu* 「メディアが本当のことを伝えないこの国の真実」).

<sup>135</sup> As Arimoto Kaori herself describes in an article on *Sankei shinbun* tabloid *Yūkanfuji* (夕刊フジ), On the 2019-07-13 edition of the annual cherry blossom viewing party (*sakura o mirukai* 「桜を見る会」), Abe Shinzō was again seen in the company of various Toranomon News regulars including Arimoto Kaori, Hyakuta Naoki, Kent Gilbert, Takeda Kunihiko, Jōnen Tsukasa, Suda Shin’ichirō, Takeda Tsuneyasu, Fujii Genki and Ōtaka miki (Arimoto 2019).

<sup>136</sup> Many of the above have contributed to the magazine Japanism as well. Volume 24 (September 16, 2015), for example, includes writings by Kent Gilbert, Sugita Mio, Sakurai Makoto, Kurayama Mitsuru, while Volume 49 (June 8, 2019) includes writings by Kazuya, Chiba Reiko and again Sugita Mio.

<sup>137</sup> Abe gained further criticism with his appointment of “comfort women” apologist Katsuto Momii as chairman of NHK, in what the *Japan Times* described as a “trend toward self-censorship” (Sieg 2015).

followed up with the March 2019 『今こそ、韓国に謝ろう～そして、「さらば」と言おう～』(Ima koso, Kankoku ni ayamarō ~ soshite, 'saraba' to iō ~, “Then let us now apologize to South Korea-and say, ‘Farewell’”).

Takeda Tsuneyasu is not without controversy either, posting, for example, the following Tweet on May 22, 2016, enforcing stereotypes of violent crimes linked to foreigners (Takeda 2016):

「小金井ライブハウス殺人未遂事件で逮捕された人物は「自称・岩崎友宏容疑者」と報道されている。自称ということは本名でないということ。なぜ本名で報道しない?ここが日本のメディアのおかしいところ。臆する必要はない。本名で報道すべき。これは私の憶測だが、容疑者は日本国籍ではないと思われる。」

“Koganei raibuhausu satsujin misui jiken de taiho sa reta jinbutsu wa ‘jishō iwa sai yū Hiroshi yōgi-sha’ to hōdō sa rete iru. Jishō to iu koto wa honmyōdenai to iu koto. Naze honmyō de hōdō shinai? Koko ga Nihon no media no okashī tokoro. Okusuru hitsuyō wanai. Honmyō de hōdō subeki. Kore wa watashi no okusokudaga, yōgi-sha wa Nihon kokusekide wa nai to omowareru.”

“The person arrested for the Koganei Live House murder attempt is reported as the ‘self-proclaimed’ Tomohiro Iwasaki. ‘Self-proclaimed’ means it is not a real name. Why not report their real name? This is strange of the Japanese media. There is no need to be hesitant. The media should report it under their real name. This is my speculation, but the suspect seems not to be of Japanese nationality.”

**Japan You Don't Know**

**May I Help You?**

Help! My name is Genki Fujii.  
I am a candidate of the Sunrise Party of Japan for the  
Japanese senate.  
I am a conservative.  
I am a traditionalist.  
I am an environmentalist.

I stand up to defend our own country against Chinese  
imperialism as  
well as Japanese leftists who are destroying national  
defense and  
nationing national defense and national interests.

I believe in democracy.  
Democratic nations of the world are all friends of Japan.

Please look at my website!

Welcome to my website. I am a Japanese columnist. I am also an author of 46 books on  
Japanese and global economy, politics, and international relations.

(Screenshot by author. Source: [gemki-fujii.com/english/](http://gemki-fujii.com/english/))

**Figure 4.4.** Screenshot of Fuji Genki's English homepage (14-07-2019)

Some have embraced the Netto-Uyoku phrasing, such as YouTuber Fuji Genki (see **Figure 4.4**), who with 14,900 subscribers on his main account has published videos both in English and Japanese on accounts as Yamatotube2, *Chan'neru kura-ra* チャンネルくらら and *hosu ronkaku chan'neru+* 保守論客チャンネル+ (lit. ‘Conservative Polemicist Channel+’). A conservative online voice, he has referred to himself tongue-in-cheek as *nekouyo* ネコウヨ (a wordplay literally meaning ‘cat-right’ as opposite

to ‘net-right’). Of note is the English language antagonizing both Chinese imperialists and Japanese leftists as anti-Japanese elements, and the literal translation “Japan You Don’t Know” (most likely from the common rhetorical device *anata no shiranai nihon* 「あなたの知らない日本」), implying a *real* Japan hidden by the mainstream press.

## 4.2 Wikipedia<sup>138</sup>

Whereas the software the Japanese 2channel and English 4chan are based on were influential in shaping online communities throughout the late ’90s and early ’00s, the software Wikipedia (a free online encyclopedia based on transparent and open collaboration) runs on, MediaWiki, has since its inception in 2002 gained much traction worldwide. Uses range from the political realm<sup>139</sup> to lighter topics,<sup>140</sup> and Wiki-style sub-communities are build around every possible aspect of popular culture.<sup>141</sup> Wikipedia itself is as of 2019 the 5<sup>th</sup> most visited website in the world and 6<sup>th</sup> most in Japan; with 7 percent of all articles being written in Japanese (the 2<sup>nd</sup> most represented language on Wikipedia). The specific mannerisms of utilizing Wikipedia have formed distinct subcultures and group dynamics, and vandalism or so-called *edit-wars* (disputes over content through reverting and adjusting user contributions) are not uncommon elements of those. The open nature of Wikipedia and its underlying MediaWiki software permits us a glimpse into topics that Wikipedia editors place high importance on. **Table 4.1**,<sup>142</sup> for example, displays the top fifty most ‘contentious’ articles on the Japanese Wikipedia as of 2019 (in other words, articles that have high rates of such *edit-warring*, based on the amount of reverts done in contrast to the total amount of edits).<sup>143</sup>

Based on these statistics, we find that regardless whether sorted by total revisions, total reverts or total ‘contention’, the lists of Wikipedia articles are dominated almost entirely with articles devoted to Japanese idol pop-artists (in particular AKB48) and animation (specifically One Piece). Sorted on either total reverts or total contention these lists include throughout the years topics such as Abe Shinzo, Japan, Sōka Gakkai, the Nanjing Massacre, Netto-Uyoku, both South and North Korea, and Zainichi Koreans. Throughout other years, this list has included topics such as the South Korean

<sup>138</sup> Throughout this section, I will refer to Wikipedia users using single quotation marks (with additional romanized readings when required). When I translate Wikipedia articles I use italics and single quotation marks, adding the romanized readings and original Japanese expression the first I time refer to that article.

<sup>139</sup> Governmental instances in the United States use the software as a content management system for internal information sharing (Diplopedia and Intellipedia), for example. WikiLeaks, famous for publishing various sensitive documents, was originally built on this software as well.

<sup>140</sup> Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales founded *Fandom*, a for-profit variant of MediaWiki, specifically for in-depth pages on popular culture topics.

<sup>141</sup> I have for example found numerous Japanese Wiki-style outlets solely on the topic of AKB48’s idol formations, with <https://48pedia.org> (as of 12-07-2019) alone already containing 2,062 pages.

<sup>142</sup> This is a translation. For an elaboration on the employed methodology, as well as the original, slightly more expanded list, see section A.3.2 and **table A.2** (page V).

<sup>143</sup> As of 2019, the article with the highest rate of reverts in contrast to its rate of revisions is the topic of Japanese war crimes in Nanjing during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This paper follows the English designations as used by Wikipedia. *Nankin jiken* 南京事件 is therefore not translated as Nanjing Incident but as Nanjing Massacre instead.

TABLE 4.1. 50 most contentious articles on the Japanese Wikipedia (2019)

1 Nanjing Massacre	14 Soka Gakkai	27 Keisuke Honda	40 HKT48
2 Netto Uyoku	15 Emperor	28 SKY PerfecTV! Channel List	41 South Korea
3 Japan	16 Taiwan	29 List of terms in ONE PIECE	42 Shuriken Sentai Ninninger
4 Maeda Atsuko (AKB48)	17 Mr. Osomatsu	30 List of monsters in Kamen Rider Series	43 Hatsune Miku
5 Shichibukai (One Piece)	18 Yuna Kim	31 K-on!	44 Witchy PreCure!
6 Devil's Fruit (One Piece)	19 Zaitokukai	32 Kantai Collection-Kancolle-	45 Fate / Grand Order
7 One Piece	20 Rino Sashihara (HKT48)	33 Navy (One Piece)	46 Magical Girl Madoka ★ Magica
8 Watanabe Mayu (AKB48)	21 Zainichi Koreans in Japan	34 Takahashi Minami (AKB48)	47 Kimura Takuuya (SMAP)
9 Nogizaka46	22 Sakurai Sho (Arashi)	35 Kamen Rider Ghost	48 Naruto Characters
10 AKB48	23 Akihito	36 Hitoshi Matsumoto	49 Minecraft
11 Abe Shinzo	24 YouTube	37 Doubutsu Sentai Zyuohger	50 Korea origin theory
12 Keyakizaka46	25 Monkey D. Luffy (One Piece)	38 DPR Korea	
13 Yukio Hatoyama	26 Asahi shinbun	39 Hiroiki Ariyoshi	

figure skater Yuna Kim,<sup>144</sup> the topic of male discrimination (*dansei sabetsu* 男性差別), an article on a supposed *Korean origin theory* (*kankoku kigen-setsu* 韓国起源説), global warming, Ishihara Shintarō, Hashimoto Tōru and the former Prime Ministers Asō Tarō, Hatoyama Yukio, Kan Naoto and Koizumi Jun'ichirō.

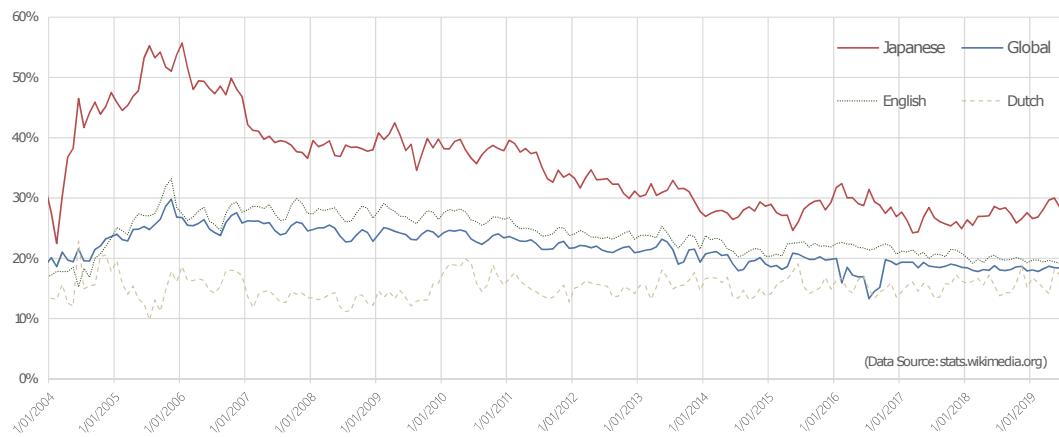
Of immediate note is 1. the position of Netto-Uyoku as 2<sup>nd</sup> most contentious article (already implying that Netto-Uyoku are highly active on Wikipedia), and 2. a seemingly distinct lack of articles that would otherwise be considered controversial topics, such as the territorial disputes of the Liancourt Rocks. These are however missing primarily due administrators' ability to 'protect' articles from anonymous edits (or even any edit in general) until new information comes up. That being said, on a platform that is dominated by articles on pop-culture when viewed over large time lapses, a closer look at top edits per month does reflect topical events. As that particular dispute gained renewed traction, so did the Japanese article on the Liancourt Rocks, for example, reach first spot as the most edited article of August 2012. Moreover, so did between May and June 2006 various other articles related to Netto-Uyoku sentiment reach first or otherwise high spots.<sup>145</sup>

During the early 2000s when articles on common topics were still being written from the ground up, reverts were uncommon to the point that they are not a reliable way to express quantifiable controversy in this time. Based on the total amount of revisions as an indicator of perceived importance by the Japanese Wikipedia community, top articles in the early days of the Japanese Wikipedia contain however few articles related to such pop culture phenomena. Instead in 2003 the most revised

<sup>144</sup> In the wake of Yuna Kim's victory over the Japanese skater Mao Asada during the 2010 Winter Olympics, rumors were spread on 2channel over a supposed improper win (CNN 2010).

<sup>145</sup> in order the following articles all reached top revisions for those months: 'Anti-Korean sentiment' (*kenkan*, 嫌韓), 'Zchannel' (2ちゃんねる), 'South Korea' (*daikanninkoku*, 大韓民国), 'The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery' (*josei kokusai senpan hôtei*, 女性国際戦犯法廷), 'Japan-Korea disputes' (*nikkannondai*, 日韓問題), 'minority discrimination' (*minzoku sabetsu*, 民族差別), 'Anti-Japanese Sentiment' (*han'nichi*, 反日), 'ishihara shintarō' (石原慎太郎), 'Right of foreigners to vote' (*gaikokuninjinseiken*, 外国人参政権), 'Special Privileges of the Zainichi' (*zainichi tokken*, 在日特權).

articles include the topics of the Japanese railway,<sup>146</sup> religion<sup>147</sup> as well as topics related to China<sup>148</sup> and Japanese history.<sup>149</sup> In 2004 2channel joins the top of this list as second most revised article, alongside articles related to media-channels<sup>150</sup> and the Korean peninsula. It is only from 2005 onwards that we perceive an increase of mass-edited articles on pop-media (animation as *crayon shin-chan* クレヨンしんちゃん, *doraemon* ドラえもん, One Piece and Naruto reach the top of this list). Although this rate has decreased over the years, the rate of anonymous edits on the Japanese Wikipedia is still remarkably high when contrasted to the global scale; an indication of 2channel's *modus operandi* seeping into Wikipedia (see **figure 4.5**). Although anonymity is to be taken with a grain of salt, considering IP addresses are publicly available, of note here is particularly the intent of the user not to be associated with a user-name.



**Figure 4.5.** Percentage of Anonymous Edits in Japanese and Worldwide (15 Years)

Using the statistic tool-set *XTools*,<sup>151</sup> one gets further insights into the revision history of each article, as well as into the Wikipedia users contributing to them. An overview of revision statistics on two contested topics (see **figures 4.6a and 4.6b**) shows a sharp increase of activity in the period of 2009-11, an increase that cannot be explained solely by a rise in usage of Wikipedia as a platform but falls in line with the aforementioned increase of interest in right-wing politics (**figure A.2**) and

<sup>146</sup> Such as 'List of railway stations in Japan' (*nihon no tetsudō-eki ichiran*, 日本の鉄道駅一覧), 'List of railway lines in Japan' (*nihon no tetsudō rosen ichiran*, 日本の鉄道路線一覧), 'Tokyo Express Railway' (*tōkyōkyūkōdentetsu*, 東京急行電鉄) and 'Japanese National Railway 113-series Trains' (*kokutetsu 113-kei densha*, 国鉄 113 系電車). High interest in railways and trains (*tetsudō otaku* 鉄道オタク or *densha otaku* 電車オタク) is not an uncommon phenomenon.

<sup>147</sup> 'Christian glossary' (*kirisutokyō yōgo ichiran* キリスト教用語一覧), 'Catholicism' (*katorishizumu*, カトリシズム), 'Christianity' (*kirisutokyō*, キリスト教), 'List of Gods' (*kami no ichiran*, 神の一覧) and 'Religion' (*shūkyō*, 宗教)

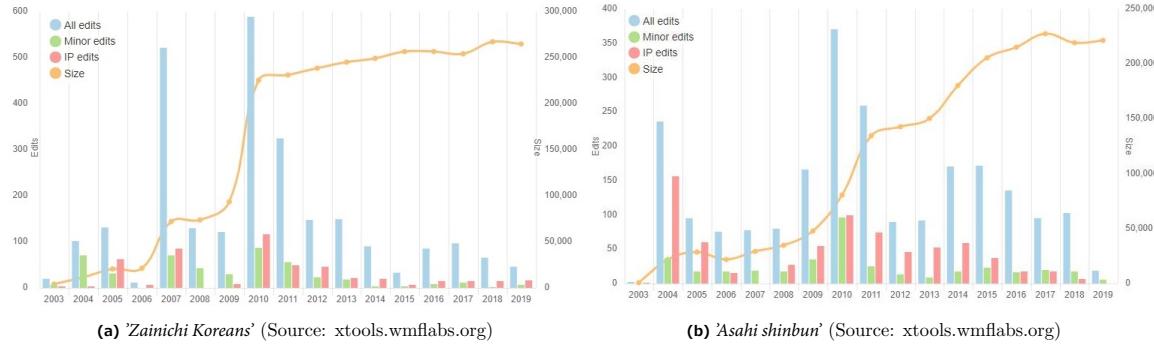
<sup>148</sup> 'China' (*chūgoku*, 中国), 'Taiwan' (台湾), 'List of Chinese Emperors' (*chūgoku teiō ichiran*, 中国帝王一覧)

<sup>149</sup> 'World War II' (*dainijisekaitaisen*, 第二次世界大戦), 'Pacific War' (*taihei'yōsensō*, 太平洋戦争), 'Japanese History' (*nihon'norekishi*, 日本の歴史)

<sup>150</sup> 'Fuji Television' (*Fuji terebijon*, フジテレビジョン), 'Nippon Television Broadcasting Network' (*nihon terebi hōsōmō*, 日本テレビ放送網), 'TV TOKYO' (*terebi tōkyō*, テレビ東京), Mainichi Broadcasting (*mainichi hōsō*, 每日放送), 'Tokyo Broadcasting Holdings' (*tōkyōhōsō hōrudingusu*, 東京放送ホールディングス), 'Japan Broadcasting Association' (*nihon hōsō kyōkai*, 日本放送協会), 'Chubu Nippon Broadcasting' (*chūbu nippōn hōsō*, 中部日本放送), 'Nippon Broadcasting' (*nippōn hōsō*, ニッポン放送), 'Asahi Broadcasting Group Holdings' (*asahihōsō gurūpu hōrudingusu* 朝日放送グループホールディングス)

<sup>151</sup> An open-source tool-set building on the Wiki-media API, available at <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/XTools>.

Netto-Uyoku (**figure 2.1**). This is confirmed by the relative word count to the amount of edits, which is aside, aside from the 2011 peak in edits of **figures 4.6a**, not in proportion and indicates again the contentious character of the topic on Wikipedia.



**Figure 4.6.** Revision Statistics for Japanese Wikipedia Article 'Zainichi Koreans' and 'Asahi shinbun'

The article on Netto-Uyoku then has seen 2,281 edits by 756 users since its creation on September 30, 2005 with an anonymous revision:

「ネット上で徘徊・跋扈する馬鹿な右翼のこと。2ちゃんねるなど無責任な管理者が運営する掲示板に生息する。また、まじめな議論をおこなおうとする、右翼に批判的な掲示板などを荒らすことも生業としている。2ちゃんねる風のプラカードをもって、杉並で「つくる会」教科書採択のために策動した連中もいる。」

“Netto-jō de haikai bakko suru bakana uyoku no koto. 2-Chan neru nado musekinin’na kanrishā ga un’ei suru keijiban ni seisoku suru. Mata, majimena giron o okonaou to suru, uyoku ni hihantekina keijiban nado o arasu koto mo nariwai to shite iru. 2-Chan neru kaze no purakādo o motte, Suginami de ‘tsukurukai’ kyōkasho saitaku no tame ni sakudō shita renchū mo iru.”

“Stupid right-wingers loitering on the Internet. They inhabit bulletin board systems (BBS) such as 2channel, operated by irresponsible administrators. Moreover, they call for trolling Bulletin Board Systems meant for attempting serious discussion and/or for making critical arguments against the right. There are also those that have participated in the Suginawa protests on the adoption of a new school textbook with 2channel-themed placards.”<sup>152</sup>

Since then the article has grown to contain 70,744 characters and is linked to from other pages 405 times, an indication of the term steadily seeping into public discourse. As shown in **table 4.1**, the topic remains controversial amongst certain users. The very last edits in our data-source (and thus the most recent at July 2, 2019) are the following addition and its subsequent revert.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> This refers to an event in 2005, *Suginami-ku rekishi kyōkasho saitaku sōdō* (杉並区歴史教科書採択騒動, “Suginami Ward history textbook adoption riot”) wherein groups both agreeing with and protesting the adoption of a new history schoolbook for public education (which would lessen the focus on topics deemed masochistic) took to the Suginawa Ward in Tokyo for public protest. 2channel users in particular protested supposed ties of protesters with the New Left (in particular the Revolutionary Communist League, National Committee or Chūkaku-ha).

<sup>153</sup> A user whose further edits include the addition 「日本人に経済保証と謝罪をした上で滅びるべき国家である。」 (*Nihonjin ni keizai hoshō to shazai o shita ue de horobirubeki kokkadearu*, lit. “A nation that after giving economic guarantees and apologies to the Japanese people, ought to be destroyed”), to the Japanese article of ‘South Korea’ and some vandalism to the article of South Korean idol formation TWICE. Edits to that article include amongst others changing Japanese member 名井南 (Myōi Mina) to *han-nichi, baikoku-yatsu* (‘反日、売国奴’, ‘anti-Japanese, traitorous bastard’) and later *uragirimono no nihonjin* (‘裏切り者の日本人’, ‘traitorous Japanese’).

「日本を取り戻し、世界でもっとも輝ける国にするために日々研鑽を惜しまない素晴らしい方達である。そのために、日本人による正当な民族差別を率先して行っている。」

“*Nihon o torimodoshi, sekai de mottomo kagayakeru kuni ni suru tame ni hibi kensan o oshimanai subarashii kata-tachi dearu. Sono tame ni, nihonjin ni yoru seitōna minzoku sabetsu o sossen shite itte iru.*”

“These are wonderful people who do not spare time in order to restore Japan and making it the brightest country in the world. To that end, they takes the initiative of legitimating ethnic discrimination by Japanese people.”

Here, the phrasing of ‘restoring Japan’ evokes images of an idealized ‘fantasy Japan’ and is eerily similar to prime minister Abe’s political catch-phrase ‘We will restore Japan’ (*nippon o torimodosu* 「日本を、取り戻す。」), used during his political campaign against the DPJ in the wake of the 2011 earthquake. As is what we translated as ‘brightest country’ similar to prime minister Abe’s 『美しい国へ』 (*Utsukushii kuni he* ‘Toward a Beautiful Nation’). The initially vague expressions of ‘restoring’ (from what?) and ‘bright’ or ‘beautiful’ country (defined how?) are implicitly answered by this user: normalization of ethnic discrimination is a means to restore Japan (from ethnic minorities) and make it a bright (ethnically homogeneous) country.

A constant in these contested pages are large contributions by a small group of people. The top contributor to the article of *Nanking Massacre* (27.7% of all edits, between the period of November 1, 2009 and April 16, 2019), for example, is a user by the handle of *yamato-yashiki* (大和屋敷). This is a user with as of July 2, 2019 16,682 edits over 3,229 pages including 139 edits to English Wikipedia articles (where he has since been blocked from contributing, having focused primarily on topics related to Korea, such as ‘Korean Nationalism’ and the ‘Japan-Korea Treaty of 1910’, as well as ‘softer’ topics as *otaku*, *Yakiniku* and ‘Secret photography’). Moreover, this user is amongst the top editors (based on frequency of personal edits compared to total edits) for other such contested topics as *Netto-Uyoku* (first place with 19.7%). The second largest contributor to this article (with 166 or 15.7% edits between October 21, 2015 and March 17, 2019) is ‘Japanese Sincerity’, which is a twin-account of the since blocked account ‘Japanese spirits’ (and most likely a reference to *yamato-damashii* 大和魂, a normative expression of *nihonjinron*-style Japanese ethno-nationalism). A look at the profile page of ‘Japanese Sincerity’ on Wikipedia reveals the following information:

「得意分野

日本史（特に昭和の時代）。イデオロギーでなく、事実の正確な記述や広い視点による解釈に固執します。記述に恣意的に反映するかどうかは別として、個人的には日本の皇室の大ファンであり、それも昭和天皇、上皇、今上天皇と戦後皇室の在り方に個人的には共感しています。」

“*Tokui bun'ya*

*nihonshi (tokuni Shōwa no jidai). Ideorogidenaku, jijitsu no seikakuna kijutsu ya hiroi shiten ni yoru kaishaku ni koshū shimasu. Kijutsu ni shii-teki ni hanēi suru ka dō ka wa betsuto shite, kojin-teki ni wa Nihon no kōshitsu no dai fandeari, sore mo shōwadenkō, jōkō, kinjōten'nō to sengo kōshitsu no arikata ni kojin-teki ni wa kyōkan shite imasu.*”

“Specialty

Japanese history (in particular the Showa era). I am not ideological, and instead stick to writing accurate,

factual descriptions and interpretations through broad perspectives. Regardless of whether it reflects in my articles, I am a big fan of the Imperial House of Japan, and feel sympathetic to the state of the Showa Emperor, Emperor Akihito, Emperor Naruhito and the postwar imperial family.” (source: [https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%88%A9%E7%94%A8%E8%80%85:Japanese\\_sincerity](https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%88%A9%E7%94%A8%E8%80%85:Japanese_sincerity))

Affiliated to the openly revisionist organization [[Nippon Kaigi]],  
+ [\[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/13/opinion/tea-party-politics-in-japan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/13/opinion/tea-party-politics-in-japan.html) Tea Party Politics in Japan]" (New York Times - 2014/09/13) Shinzo Abe consistently defends its agenda, as an honorable patriot.

(Screenshot by author. Source: ja.wikipedia.org)

**Figure 4.7.** English Wikipedia Edits by User 'Japanese spirits' on 'Shinzō Abe'

Contrary to that statement, the topics of choice and their particular edits do reveal an ideological point of view. Of note are this user's 455 contributions to the English language Wikipedia, as well as several to the Spanish (46) and French Wikipedia (28), dominantly on topics of Japanese war crimes. As shown in **4.7 and 4.8**, through the now banned twin-account of 'Japanese spirits' this user has formerly contributed to English articles on Inada Tomomi<sup>154</sup> and Abe Shinzō with apologetic, reactionary edits (the former which are as of July 9, 2019 still largely in-tact). Support for the revisionist agenda of Nippon Kaigi is in this user's logic an act of honor and patriotism. Criticism of the Yasukuni Shrine too is disrespectful towards "the souls of dead Japanese soldiers" and, furthermore, the 2017 critical documentary *Yasukuni* betrayed a Chinese tinted political agenda. Amongst this user's referenced sources we find "Japanese Magazine 'Will'", a website Tsuji (2008) links as primary news source for Netto-Uyoku. Through their main account 'Japanese Sincerity', this user has since opted for a softer tone. Their last contribution, on the article for 'Pantingan River massacre' (which too is still largely intact as of July 9, 2019), attempts to downplay events with the following line:

"Following Tsuji's abnormal order which was considered to be a war criminal and beyond his commission, Japanese 122 Regiment of Sixty-fifth Brigade executed the US and Philippine soldiers in the Pantingan River [2]. Colonel Takeo Imai, of another Japanese regiment, was doubt the authority of the order which came from the top but not clearly from who? and Imai ignored the cruel order and did not any execusion[3] (*sic.*)."

Another prolific Wikipedia user (and contributor to the *Nanking Massacre* article with 10.5% of its edits done between December 3, 2009 and April 30, 2019) is the user 'kachō fūgetsu setsugetsuka keibu' ('花蝶風月雪月花警部').<sup>155</sup> The actions of this user however involve policing primarily un-sourced or

<sup>154</sup> Japanese lawyer Inada Tomomi served under Abe Shinzō as Minister of Defense and Minister in charge of the Cool Japan Strategy. She has made controversial statements regarding stock elements of Japanese nationalism, such as partly denying the Nanking Massacre and the Comfort Women system and stating that there is no need to continuing expression of remorse towards other Asian countries.

<sup>155</sup> The origin of the name is unclear but possibly refers to a poem. 花蝶風月 *kachō fūgetsu* is the title of a popular *vocaloid* composition *dōjin* album released on Comiket in 2017, and translates as "Beauty of Flowers and Butterflies" or "Blossoms and butterflies, the cool breeze and a bright moon." 雪月花 *setsu gekka* refers to an ancient Chinese poem (attributed to Bai Juyi) and is a common theme amongst ukiyo-e artists. It translates as "Snow, Moon and Flowers." 警部 *keibu* translates as "police force" and possible refers to the user's role as an administrator or supervisor on Wikipedia.

Inada was a supporter of [[Uyoku dantai|right-wing]] filmmaker [[Satoru Mizushima]]'s 2007 revisionist film "[[The Truth about Nanjing]]", which denied that the [[Nanking Massacre]] ever occurred.The Japan Times [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ff20071206r1.html NANJING MASSACRE 70TH ANNIVERSARY December 6, 2007] Retrieved on 21 August 2012 After [[Takashi Kawamura]], Mayor of [[Nagoya]] City, made denialist statements about the [[Nanking Massacre]], on 6 March 2012 in Tokyo, at the Symposium「河村発言」支持・「南京虐殺」の虚構を撃つ緊急国民集会 主催 新しい歴史教科書をつくる会 日時 平成24年3月6日（火）場所 東京・文京シビックホール(The symposium on the support of Kawamura's statement and the denial of Nanking Massacre, held by [[Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform]], at Bunkyo Civic Hall in Tokyo, 6th March, 2012.) to support Kawamura's statement. She opposed to the history class in the Japanese school education, as the teachers, who could be members of [[Japanese Teachers Union]] and be sympathized with China, teach the pupils about the Nanking Massacre of the [[Second Sino-Japanese War]] at the school classes. At that time, She said, " When Japanese Prime Minister definitely denies the Nanking Massacre, such a non-sense school education could end."The statesment recorded at youtube, "河村発言支持・南京虐殺の虚構② 稲田朋美衆議院議員 百人切りのウソ".

[[Yasukuni Shrine]], a Japanese Shinto shrine to war dead who served the Emperor and Japan during wars from 1867–1951, has been on the issue, due to the enshrinement of [[International Military Tribunal for the Far East]] war criminals. But, Japanese nationalist has been paying respect at the shrine. In 2006, Inada said, "Any Japanese national, who criticizes Japanese Prime Minister's visit for paying respect at Yasukuni Shrine, could be the person who cares nothing for the souls of dead Japanese soldiers at the war and such a Japanese national could be deprived of the right to comment on anything about Moral/Upbringing." Japanese Magazine "Will" Sep. 2006

Inada questioned why the 2007 film "[[Yasukuni (2007 film)|Yasukuni]]"(produced by Chinese diretor and some scenes of the movie were politically expressed by chinese side) received government funds, and said that such funds should not be given to films with a "political agenda".The Japan Times [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fd20080413pb.html Confusion reigns after 'Yasukuni' doesn't tell us how to feel April 13, 2008] Retrieved on 21 August 2012

- (cur | prev) 15:24, 9 October 2015 [Japanese spirits](#) (talk | contribs) .. (14,567 bytes) (+401) .. (INADA SPIRITS IS GOOD!!!!!!!!!!!!) (undo)
- (cur | prev) 15:08, 8 October 2015 [Japanese spirits](#) (talk | contribs) .. (14,166 bytes) (-2) .. (→Right-wing positions 文芸春秋 2015年7月 Bungei-Shunju July, 2015: Inada said that Right-wing is not appropriate word for my political beliefs.) (undo)
- (cur | prev) 15:06, 8 October 2015 [Japanese spirits](#) (talk | contribs) .. (14,168 bytes) (+141) .. (→Right-wing positions: Tomomi Inada is a good woman and Great Politician!!) (undo)
- (cur | prev) 14:07, 8 October 2015 [Japanese spirits](#) (talk | contribs) .. (14,027 bytes) (+1,295) .. (undo)

(Screenshot by author. Source: ja.wikipedia.org)

**Figure 4.8.** English Wikipedia Edits by User 'Japanese spirits' on 'Tomomi Inada'

biased edits, and an online search of this account reveals several topics accusing that user of being an 'Anti-Japanese leftist traitor' (*han-nichi baikoku sayoku* 反日売国サヨク) and an ethnic Korean (*zainichi chōsenjin* 在日朝鮮人).<sup>156</sup> One other such active user, 'JapaneseA' (2,655 pages created and 46,343 pages edited) has received similar critique.<sup>157</sup> Their policing conflicts have led to bans of active editors such as 'Chichiii', who has added 11,999 edits to 3,926 articles and authored 572 articles including *Emperor Apologize request by Korea* (*Kankoku ni yoru ten'nō shazai yōkyū* 韓国による天皇謝罪要求), *Foreign Regional Suffrage* (*gaikokujin chihō sansei-ken* 外国人地方参政権) and *The issue of the Chinese Embassy and Primary land acquisition in Tokyo* (*chūgoku taishikan tonai ittōchi baishū mondai* 中国大使館都内一等地買収問題).<sup>158</sup>

If we take a look at some of the other contested articles, similar trends arise. Going through the revision history of articles as 'Japan' ('nihon', 日本), 'Hatoyama Yukio' (鳩山由紀夫), 'Foreign suffrage in

<sup>156</sup> See for example [https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question\\_detail/q10183667130](https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q10183667130) and [https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question\\_detail/q13171578898](https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q13171578898).

<sup>157</sup> See for example [https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question\\_detail/q10171294600](https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q10171294600).

<sup>158</sup> A MediaWiki-based 2channel aggregation (*matome*) page, 2ちゃんねる ウィキペディアスレまとめ wiki (2-channel wikipedia sure matome wikki, '2channel Wikipedia tread aggregation Wiki') contains entries on various of the aforementioned Wikipedia editors. The entry on 'Chichiii' in particular states "Joined with an account in 2008. A typical neto-uyo, this user happily writes revisions whenever Zainichi Koreans have cause some kind of incident" ("2008-Nen kara akaunto de sanka. Tenkei-tekina neto-uyodeari, zainichichōsenjin ga nani ka jiken o okosu to ōyōrokobi de kahitsu suru", 「2008年からアカウントで参加。典型的なネットウヨであり、在日朝鮮人が何か事件を起こすと大喜びで加筆する」). For more information, see <https://jawp2ch.miraheze.org/wiki/Chichiii>.

*Japan*' (*nihon ni okeru gaikokujin sanseiken*, 日本における外国人参政権), '*Zainichi Koreans*' (*zainichi kankoku • chōsenjin* 在日韓国・朝鮮人), '*Asahi shinbun*' (朝日新聞) and '*Zaitokukai*' reveals primarily edits by 'Chichiiii', '*kachō fūgetsu setsugetsuka keibu*' ('花蝶風月雪月花警部' and '*yamato yashiki*' ('大和屋敷')).<sup>159</sup> Another top contributor with a telling user name to that latter article is the user '*takeshima wa nihon*' ('竹島は日本', translated as 'Takeshima is Japanese'), who has also contributed to articles related to 2channel,<sup>160</sup> Baseball star Suzuki Ichirō (popularly referred to as *Ichirō*, イチロー) and the Wikipedia article on Makoto Sakurai.

One aspect of personalization on Wikipedia is the usage of badges on one's profile.<sup>161</sup> Take, for example, user 'S.S.Exp.Hashimoto'; a user primarily active on railway-related articles but just as well a top contributor to the articles '*Netto-Uyoku*', '*Taiwan*' and '*Foreign suffrage in Japan*' (with a total of 4,698 pages edited between February 28, 2004 and July 6, 2019, including several on the English Wikipedia). The user-page includes some information on the user's interest in railways (the handle itself is a reference to the Keio Line semi-express train towards Hashimoto, Kanagawa prefecture) and 2channel. More interesting is however this user's usage of badges, as illustrated on **figure 4.9a**. Badges that should be pointed out are not uncommon, as seen on the profile of a top contributor to the article on '*asahi shinbun*', user '*gokoku bōkyō-dan*' ('護国防共団', lit. 'anti-communist national defense corps') and article *Taiwan* top editor '*Kamakura*' (who between August 19, 2003 and June 30, 2019 had made 7,616 edits to over 3,933 articles, including 315 edits on the English wikipedia). This is illustrated on respectively **figure 4.9b** and **figure 4.9c**.

In all three cases do the users express support for the Self Defense Force (SDF). 'S.S.Exp.Hashimoto' and '*Kamakura*' both take pride in their identity as 2channel users,<sup>162</sup> both have Shintoist beliefs and both express their support for nuclear energy. 'S.S.Exp.Hashimoto' and '*gokoku bōkyō-dan*' ('護国防共団') then both describe themselves as conservative. *gokoku bōkyō-dan* (護国防共団) and '*Kamakura*' show their support for the Emperor System and the LDP. User *gokoku bōkyō-dan* (護国防共団) takes pride in being Japanese, shows support for the ultra-conservative Nippon Kaigi, political visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and the LDP. 'S.S.Exp.Hashimoto' expresses a dislike towards Mainland China and communism, while simultaneously expressing love for Taiwan (as documented earlier, a Wikipedia topic this user is affiliated with) and the United States. Finally, '*Kamakura*' has further syncretic tendencies expressing belief in both Taoism and Buddhism, and

<sup>159</sup> Going through the article on *Zaitokukai* in particular reveals a large portion of blocked accounts, including for example contributor *Asahara Shoko* 麻原彰晃, a reference to Aum Shinrikyo founder Asahara Shoko.

<sup>160</sup> In particular the topics '2channeler' (2-channerā, 2ちゃんねらー), 'List of 2channel boards' (2-channeru no ita no ichiran, 2ちゃんねるの板の一覧) and 'news bulletin (VIP) + board' (nyūsu sokuhō (VIP) + ita, ニュース速報 (VIP)+ 板).

<sup>161</sup> For a full list of such badges, see <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:%E3%83%A6%E3%83%BC%E3%82%B6%E3%83%BC%E3%83%9C%E3%83%83%E3%82%AF%E3%82%B9>.

<sup>162</sup> The catchphrase used on that particular badge (「この利用者は 2ちゃんねらーですが何か?」 *Kono riyōsha wa 2-chan nera desugananika?*) translates as a rhetorical question expressing indifference, "This user is a 2channel-user, so what?"

furthermore expresses support for the death penalty.<sup>163</sup>



Figure 4.9. Examples of Wikipedia Badges

The hyper-linked design of the MediaWiki software, reflecting on Azuma (2001) and Manovich (2013), offers previously unseen ways of global interconnection by linking articles between the different language variants of Wikipedia. This has political consequences as well. We have already shown the tendency of editing articles on non-Japanese Wikipedia variants (primarily the English variant) by several users depicting tropes common to the Netto-Uyoku. Whereas the English article<sup>164</sup> portrays Netto-Uyoku as “Japanese neo-nationalists who interact almost entirely within their own cyber community, shut off from the rest of Japanese society” and who “first appeared on the Internet during the Lost Decade, which was an economic crisis in Japan from the 1990s to 2010s” (perpetuating the

<sup>163</sup> The user also expresses their love for cats (*kono riyōsha wa neko ga suki desu* 「この利用者は猫が好きです。」). This badge is possibly an inside-reference to the deceased ‘Nekosuki600’, a 2channel user who was amongst the earliest contributors to Wikipedia and claimed by user ‘Kamakura’ to be their role-model. <https://jawp2ch.miraheze.org/wiki/Nekosuki600>.

<sup>164</sup> The page was created on 2016-06-01 with the most recent revision made on 2019-07-17.

idea of Netto-Uyoku as a disenfranchised by-product of the Lost Decade), on November 11, 2018 a user by the name of ‘Normal Japanese’ replaced the page contents with “anti-Japanese left wings will perish” (which was reverted one minute afterwards). The normative framing of oneself as “normal Japanese,” representing the general will of the Japanese people, is a common red line throughout Netto-Uyoku rhetoric, as is the usage of “anti-Japanese left wings” (a direct translation of *han'nichi sayoku*, 反日左翼) and ‘perish’ (*shine*, 死ね) as aggressive verbal attack.<sup>165</sup>

With heated tensions between Japanese and South Korean nationalists, it is not unexpected to find traces of struggles online and on Wikipedia either (as suggested by figures A.3 and A.4). Although the page on Zaitokukai has variants in different languages, the article on the umbrella term for such organizations as the Action Conservative Movement is available only on the Japanese and Korean Wikipedia. Another example of utilizing interlinking articles for nationalist purposes: a large-scale DDoS (cyber-)attack on 2channel’s servers occurring on March 1, 2010 has an article in Japanese (*Kangokujin ni yoru 2-chan neru e no saibātero jiken* ‘韓国人による 2ちゃんねるへのサイバーテロ事件’) and Korean (*2010nyeon han-il sam-iljeol saibeo gong-gyeog sageon*, ‘2010년한·일삼일절사이버공격사건’). An English variant (‘2010 Japan–South Korea cyber-warfare’) was created on December 24, 2014, 4 years after the initial event, by a Korean-speaking user.<sup>166</sup> Translated to English, the Japanese title of the page is more akin to “the cyber-terror incident on 2channel by South Koreans,” explicitly using a reference to terrorism as an ideologically motivated attack. The Korean title then translates to “The 2010 South Korea-Japan 3-1 cyber-attack,” with 3-1 (*sam-iljeol*, 삼일절) as an explicit reference to the Korean March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement in 1919.

Another common aspect of Wikipedia are lists or categories with personally identified correlations. Take for example the categories ‘Anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea’ (containing 61 pages), its Japanese equivalent *Kankoku no han'nichi kanjō* 韓国の反日感情 (56 articles) and its Korean equivalent *daehanmingug-ui ban-il gamjeong* ‘대한민국의반일감정’ (80 articles). The English page has an additional “See also: Category:Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan.” tag that is present neither on the Japanese nor Korean variants.<sup>167</sup> That latter category, Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan, then contains 33 articles (including a link to 2channel), with edits made to primarily by users who have expressed South Korean identity or interest into South Korea in their user-pages (such as the user ‘Caspian blue’<sup>168</sup>). Between April and July 2019, an anonymous user made additions to several pages such as Japanese

<sup>165</sup> Adachi Yasushi (a House of Representatives member and Deputy Secretary General of Japan Innovation Party) for example, tweeted on 11 Nov 2017 「朝日新聞、死ね。」 (*asahi shinbun, shine*, lit. “Asahi Shinbun, die.”), which has since gained traction on Twitter with the hashtag “# 朝日新聞死ね” (Adachi 2017).

<sup>166</sup> The English variant was created by user ‘Kanghuitari’ (who has between April 29, 2012 and July 11, 2019 contributed 27,984 edits on the English Wikipedia page and 28,411 edits on the Korean Wikipedia).

<sup>167</sup> There are however equivalents for that category on both the Korean Wikipedia (*ilbon-ui banhan gamjeong* 일본의반한감정, with 23 items) and the Japanese Wikipedia (*hankan kanjō* 反韓感情, lit. ‘anti-Korean sentiment’ and *hanchō kanjō* 反朝感情, lit ‘anti-South Korean sentiment’, containing respectively 4 and 18 items).

<sup>168</sup> This user appears to be Swedish but contributions are almost exclusively on Korean cultural or historical aspects.

idol Chiba Reiko<sup>169</sup> and film director and comedian Kitano Takeshi, including the Wiki-formatted reference ‘[[Category:Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan]]’. As of July 2019 Kitano Takeshi is still listed as belonging to this category, although neither the English nor Japanese variant contain mentions of anti-Korean sentiment either on the main document or in prior revisions).<sup>170</sup>

The revision pages of those pages too confirm what this chapter has thus far demonstrated. Users are trying to influence public perception on sensitive topics both regionally and internationally. Of note here is the user ‘ao-oniyoshi’ (‘青鬼よし’), with 7,662 edits on 2,192 articles between February 22, 2009 and July 9, 2019 and a top editor on the Japanese article for ‘Hatoyama Yukio’ and ‘March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement’. This user’s edits include 577 edits on the English Wikipedia, focusing primarily on the article for ‘Kofun period’ (87), ‘Japan–Korea disputes’ (30) and ‘Korea under Japanese rule’ (15) before this account on the English Wikipedia was locked.<sup>171</sup> Since then, a ‘Category:Suspected Wikipedia sockpuppets of Azukimonaka’ lists ‘ao-oniyoshi’ (‘青鬼よし’) as one of 25 double accounts of one suspected user contributing edits to controversial topics on Korean and Japanese history. Amongst the other users in this list are the user ‘KoreanShoriSenyou’ (which when written in Japanese characters could refer to the account as intended exclusively or possibly combatively for disposal or procession of anything Korean-related, コリアン処理専用 or コリアン処理戦用) and Azukimonaka (whose top edits include pages on ‘Eugenics in Japan’, ‘Foreign relations of South Korea’, ‘Japanese expansionism’ and ‘Manga’, as well as on the category of ‘Anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea’).

```
Caspian blue (talk | contribs) ... (243 bytes) (-41) ... (rv by Sennen goroshi (talk)) (undo)
Sennen goroshi (talk | contribs) ... (284 bytes) (+41) ... (undo)
Caspian blue (talk | contribs) ... (243 bytes) (-21) ... (rv by Sennen goroshi This guy has been ignoring previous comment. The cat. is embraced by the bigger cat.) (undo)
Sennen goroshi (talk | contribs) ... (264 bytes) (+21) ... (anti-Japanese - Japanese = race - anti-Japanese = racism) (undo)
Caspian blue (talk | contribs) ... (243 bytes) (-21) ... (rv by Sennen goroshi (talk) removed crappy intention) (undo)
Sennen goroshi (talk | contribs) ... (264 bytes) (+21) ... (if the cap fits) (undo)
Caspian blue (talk | contribs) ... (243 bytes) (-21) ... (rv by Sennen goroshi It is already embraced by the bigger category which has "racism" category. Your attempt is unbalance to Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan)
Sennen goroshi (talk | contribs) ... (264 bytes) (+21) ... (the Anti-Japanese sentiment certainly involves some racism) (undo)
asian blue (talk | contribs) ... (243 bytes) (-49) ... (rvv bv 125.14.248.230 (talk) Likeiv User:Azukimonaka's block evasion) (undo)
```

(Screenshot by author. Source: ja.wikipedia.org)

**Figure 4.10.** Edit Skirmish on English Wikipedia Page ‘Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan’.

Finally, another user, ‘Sennen goroshi’ (which is when written in Japanese, 千年殺し, a reference to a particular practical joke in the animation Naruto) has made 4,837 edits on 1,588 English Wikipedia

<sup>169</sup> Since 2016 frequent Toranomon News guest Chiba Reiko did publish various works on the topic, such as the 2016 “Sayonara payoku&chibarei ga mita sayoku no jittai” 『さよならパヨク—チバレイが見た左翼の実態—』(lit. “Farewell Payoku-The Actual Condition of the Left Wing As Seen by Chiba-Rei”) and the collaboration with Zaitokukai-founder Makoto Sakurai 『くたばれパヨク』(lit. “Drop dead payoku”), as well as the 2017 “mama ha aikoku” 『ママは愛国』(lit. “Mommy is a patriot”) with prolific right-wing author Kurayama Mitsu and “kanashi sayoku ni goyoshin!” 『悲しいサヨクにご用心!』(lit. “Beware of the sad left-wingers”) with Kurayama Mitsu and LDP lawmaker Mio Sugita.

<sup>170</sup> Rumors of Takeshi Kitano having either anti-Korean sentiment or being ethnically Korean himself have been renewed in 2018, after a South Korean idol reportedly came under fire for posting on social media a gift he received from the film-maker. The Korea Times erroneously reported ‘anti-Korean Japanese filmmaker Kitano Takeshi’ as having co-authored a book on the Senkaku Islands with Ishihara Shintarō in the early 2000s (Dong 2018). This was echoed by British outlet Metro (Hicap 2018).

<sup>171</sup> On the Japanese alternative MediaWiki website ja.yourpedia.org, this user is described in a dedicated page as *neto-uyo-pedian* (「ネトウヨペディアン」).

pages between July 28, 2007 and June 16, 2019, dominantly on topics related to Japanese and South Korean nationalism. Yet this user does not appear to be Japanese.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless does this user, on the English language Wikipedia page for ‘Anti-Korean sentiment in Japan’, engages in a brief edit-war with the aforementioned user ‘Caspian blue’, as seen on **figure 4.10**. Taking sides based arguably through the soft-power influence of both South Korea and Japan,<sup>173</sup> two seemingly unrelated users thus attempt to tip the balance in favor of a country they feel an imagined affiliation with.

### 4.3 Online Grassroots counter-Activism: ‘Ban Matsuri’

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the world wide web and social media platforms are increasingly relevant tools for shifting public opinion. Moreover, this is done from the ideologically populist stance that these media—*bottom-up* media lacking so-called gatekeepers—represent the people’s will. In other words, a Habermasian online public sphere on which counter-hegemonic ideologies have space to develop and seep into civil society. This chapter further demonstrated several attempts to steer public opinion by those who reside in 2channel’s most active echo-chambers. This was done on an active level by using widespread tools as Wikipedia, but also passively through reinforcement of what is framed as the people’s voice on *matome* aggregation websites. Those aggregation websites should be noted for being profit-driven and acting on a demand of (such-framed) *Japan-bashing*.

The consumption of ‘anti-Japan’ news serves discursive processes of nationalist self-socialization through an antagonistic ‘Othering’, to rely on post-colonial theory. In other words, a construction of the self as being both morally superior to the irrationality of the dehumanized Other, but also as the *real* victim of a greater anti-Japanese conspiracy driven by the leftist elites, mainstream news and an imagined foreign enemy. This is further framed in a cynicism adherent to these cyber-communities. Alongside the blogs already mentioned, can the latter be deduced from the mere names of certain aggregation blogs and channels: ‘Kimchi Newsflash’ (*kimuchi sokuhō* 「キムチ速報」), ‘Traitor Newsflash’ (*baikoku sokuhō*, 「売国速報 (^ω^)」), ‘Funny Anti-Japan Channel’ (*omoshiro han’nichi chan’neru* 「おもしろ反日チャンネル」), ‘Zainichi Korean Crime Newsflash’ (*zainichi hanzai sokuhō*, 「在日犯罪速報<ゝゝゝゝ>」), and ‘Mizuki’s Girl Knowledge Korea Declaration’ (*Mizuki no joshi chi Kan sengen*, 「みづきの女子知韓宣言 (ゝゝゝゝ\*)」). Of note is the usage of *emoji* signifiers in the latter three cases here; another textual

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<sup>172</sup> In order edits to the articles of ‘Comfort women’, ‘Empress Myeongseong’, ‘List of Nürburgring Nordschleife lap times’ (the one exception in this list, a reference to a racking track in Germany), ‘Kimchi’, ‘Korean cuisine’, ‘Nanjing Massacre’, ‘Kim Koo’, ‘South Korea’ and ‘Anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea’.

<sup>173</sup> This is of course not limited to controversial elements within Japan-Korea relations. On the English article for ‘Senkaku Islands’, the American user ‘Washuotaku’ (according to his Wikipedia profile a reference to the animation series ‘Tenchi Muyo!’) has between September 2018 and January 2019 regularly reverted edits in favor of Japan’s asserted historical control.

tool for making more accessible and appealing what is in essence highly ideological rhetoric.<sup>174</sup>

Some of those media platforms have however reacted to those trends by implemented specific terms of services that prohibit inciting violence or hate. Users have the option to report content, and based on the amount of reports will those platforms then automatically *flag*, block or remove accounts and their associated content. The colloquial ‘Netto-Uyoku ban’ (ネトウヨ BAN 祭り *neto-uyo ban matsuri*, lit. ‘Netto-Uyoku Ban Festival’) is one such instance of grassroots activism based around those methods (in the context of 2channel, *matsuri* 祭り refers to a large-scale online meeting with a particular ideological purpose, such as ‘attacking’ a self-perceived other). The *Asahi shinbun* reported in 2018 a large scale deletion of YouTube channels, including that of Toranomon News regular Takeda Tsuneyasu (Shino 2018). A trend amongst deleted videos was the usage of automated voices and text scrolling over a black background or several images. Furthermore, a look at the list of removed accounts reveals a slight majority of accounts with unrelated Western usernames (such as the most recent deleted accounts ‘Sandy Kerrigan’, ‘Beauty Eansworth’, ‘Erica Bray’ and ‘Vickie Cooper’), with a high ratio of uploaded videos in comparison to the amount of subscribers (ハン J Wiki 2019), which strongly suggests the usage of double accounts (*sockpuppets*) and bots, in similar fashion to what Schäfer, Evert, and Heinrich (2017) have previously suggested.

This was followed by a *Sankei shinbun* tabloid reporting over 2000 YouTube channels and 2000 Twitter accounts suspended (including that of Zaitokukai’s Sakurai Makoto), with over 50 million tweets deleted and cited damage to channels such as *Bōkoku no īisu* (「某国のイージス」, lit. ‘A Certain Country’s Isis’),<sup>175</sup> that of Kazuya and Toranomon News (Ogawa 2019) and Tony Marano (known as *tekisasu oyaji* テキサス親父 or ‘Texas Daddy’).<sup>176</sup> In a final diversion, the latter is worth expanding upon as another source of ‘foreign’ reconfirmation. Various publications have been accredited to Tony Marano, including several columns in Japanism, a book co-authored by Toranomon News associate Kent Gilbert (『素晴らしい国・日本に告ぐ!』 *Subarashī kuni • Nihon ni tsugu!*, lit. “Wonderful Country, I’ll Inform japan!”) and an article co-authored by Hyakuta Naoki (「朝日の慰安婦報道を断罪する!」

<sup>174</sup> Blogger ‘Mizuki’, who has over 221,000 followers on the aptly titled Twitter account @mizukikenkan (a transliteration of the Japanese *kenkan* 嫌韓, ‘Hate Korea’) holds a *matome*-blog wherein she selectively translates Korean reactions to Naver news-articles. ‘Mizuki’s twitter account states “I love Japan. I hate anti-Japanese sentiment. I want to calmly keep an eye on the past and the future of this country while treating ’facts’ as important.” (*Nihon ga daisukidesu. Han’nichi ga daikirai. ’Jijitsu’ o daiji ni shite reisei ni kono kuni no kako to mirai o mitsumetai.*, 「日本が大好きです。反日が大嫌い。「事実」を大事にして冷静にこの国の過去と未来を見つめたい。」). The first article ‘Mizuki’ posted after an arson attack on an animation studio in Kyoto, Japan was on July 19, 2019 0:02 A.M., titled “[Korea’s Reaction] ‘Die’. Splashed with gasoline... The catastrophe of 33 deaths at Kyoto Animation Arson attack” ([*Kankoku no han’nō*] ‘shine’ gasorin bukkake... keiani hōka de 33-nin ga shibō no dai sanji], 「【韓国の反応】「死ね」ガソリンぶっかけ...京アニ放火で 33 人が死亡の大惨事」) (Mizuki 2019).

<sup>175</sup> This user runs a Twitter-account @defendjapan and is the owner of the above mentioned YouTube accounts ‘Funny Anti-Japan Channel’ (*omoshiro han’nichi chan’neru* 「おもしろ反日チャンネル」) and the English ‘Good morning Korea channel」. Both channels remain as of 16-07-2019 unaccessible. Moreover, this user has contributed writings to at least 16 different volumes of Japanism.

<sup>176</sup> As the content is not explicitly, verbally classifiable as inciting hate or violence, the accounts of Takeda Tsuneyasu, Kazuya and Toranomon News have since been restored.

*Asahi no ianfu hōdō o danzai suru!*, lit. “We condemn the Asahi Comfort Women Report!”).<sup>177</sup> On his main English account ‘PropagandaBuster’ Tony Marano writes “In an attempt to counter political correctness from the news media, I will examine propaganda masquerading as truth in the America news media. Also explore and expose the mental disorder of liberalism and political correctness infecting Hollywood, academia, and the re-education camps (public schools). Unchecked far left liberals in the United States are the single cause for the rapid decline of this nation, we must counter their leftist, anti-American ideology on every level.” A textbook example of neo-nationalism on the Internet, and if translated in a Japanese context, a textbook example of Netto-Uyoku.<sup>178</sup>

The users behind the ‘Netto-Uyoku ban’ are users that identify themselves with particular subcategories of 2channel, including the aforementioned *kenmō* board (「嫌儲」), the South Korean-centered board *hanguru* (「ハングル」) and a board designed for the discussion of baseball *Nandemo jikkyō (jupitā)* 「なんでも実況 (ジュピター)」. Moreover, while discussion on their activities happens on 2channel, they are they using MediaWiki software to organize themselves and inform on grassroots-level methods to counter what they deem to be Netto-Uyoku carriers of hate-speech. Those users have not just reported and documented YouTube and Twitter accounts they deemed belonging to Netto-Uyoku users, but by reporting blogs and other websites using means like Google’s Adsense, they effectively block the income of such accounts. Furthermore, on their Wiki-homepage they have explicitly called out for the revision of Netto-Uyoku leaning Wikipedia articles (「ネトウヨのウィキペディアの偏向記事を改善するんだ」 “*neto-uyo no wikipedia no henkō kiji o kaizen surunda*”, lit. “We’re improving the Wikipedia articles with Netto-Uyoku inclinations”) (hangul.shoutwiki.com 2019).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Like elsewhere in the world, Wikipedia as a platform and the software structure behind it are increasingly relevant to Japanese Internet users’ methods for informing oneself. Nevertheless, as demonstrated on the previous pages political topics are dominantly revised by a small group of Wikipedia users in order to express political ideology and influence the public opinion. We have in this chapter further shown ties between editors on the Japanese Wikipedia and 2channel, both in methods of organization (high tendencies for editing anonymously as well as using MediaWiki platforms for meta-discussions on Wikipedia) and in taking one’s usage of 2channel as a source of pride and identity. Neither are these users expressing their interests on Wikipedia exclusively around political

<sup>177</sup> The latter was published by the monthly magazine *WiLL*, whose regular contributors include Toranomon News hosts and regular guests Fujii Genki, Kent Gilbert, Seki Hei, Jōnen Tsukasa and Sakurai Yoshiko. It wouldn’t be far-fetched to claim a pattern here.

<sup>178</sup> On 2019-07-16, a YouTube Japan search (on an unrelated IP address and device, not logged in YouTube, to ensure our results were unaffected by personal Google search queries.) for 「韓国」(South Korea) and 「日本」(Japan) did respectively return his latest video 「字幕【テキサス親父】韓国に「恩を仇で返される」日本」 (*jimaku [Tekisasu oyaji] Kankoku ni 'on o kyū de kaesa reru' Nihon*, lit. “Subtitled 【Texas daddy】 This is how South Korea repays Japan?”) as the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> result.

topics either, with either having a history of editing topics on popular culture, or explicitly referencing those topics on their profile. The dominance of Japanese popular culture and the soft-power strategy of Cool Japan is further proven by the high percentage of articles and edits devoted to popular culture topics like Japanese animation and idol formations. Furthermore, in a *New York Times* interview, Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales himself asserted that about 80 percent of Japanese Wikipedia articles were devoted to pop culture (Cohen 2009). The time-line of increase in edits on contentious topics then too generally falls in line with our hypothesis of populist neo-nationalism becoming the hegemonic ideology during the crucial years of 2009 - 2011. Moreover, due to the ease of intersection with other language versions of Wikipedia, the most dedicated among those editors attempt the same thing on a global scale. Something that is not done solely as an expression of (Japanese) nationalism, either. The international reach of soft-power strategies for disseminating the hegemonic ideology lead to such phenomena of neither ethnically Korean or Japanese citizens trying to tip the balance of information-making in favor of either nation.

Channeling McLuhan, Azuma (2001) and Manovich (2013) this chapter has further drawn attention to the technical structure of the software behind some of these cyber-communities in which self-socialization and dispersion of ideology occurs. That is to say, imagined cyber-communities build around shared ideological values and utilizing normative rhetorical devices for influencing public opinion on the Internet as a public sphere. Capitalizing on the early growth of cyber-nationalism on the most active of 2channel's boards, so called curated *matome* blogs started aggregating content as being representative of the online voice, adding attractive titles to draw in clicks and increase profit through online advertisements. In protest, parts of those sub-communities relocated and started viewing the previous board as their imagined Other, resulting in a polarizing effect amongst its users and enhancing the echo-chamber effect of the communities *matome* blogs aggregate. As illustrated, this has the potential to spread like wildfire, enforcing political biases on a global scale.

As cyber-nationalists normalized their ideology spread throughout civil society, backed by politicians and capitalized on by populist right-wing influencers such as those of Toranomon News, so too then did a counter-ideological grassroots movement attempt to disrupt these trends. One such expression, the 'Ban Matsuri', while still rooted in the contrarian 'new frontier' ideology of the World Wide Web, was formed by users of the same 2channel community, including those that were deterred from being aggregated profit-seeking *matome* blogs. Using MediaWiki for the organization and administration of their counter-activism, their actions have led to the removal of income for influential news-aggregation websites and the deletion of thousands of public YouTube and Twitter accounts, affecting Toranomon News affiliates as well.

## CONCLUSION

The introductory first chapter brings the phenomenon of the Netto-Uyoku to a global level as a localized expression of what we call cyber-nationalists, and draws parallels with other such online instances in the United States and Belgium. We further made the argument that the Internet has seen increasing politicization; ranging from populist usage of big-data and paid propaganda campaigns operating as *faux* grassroots activism, to microcosmic counter-culture subcultures; primarily built (under the influence of Japan's soft power) around the discussion of Japanese pop-culture and disrupting the public discourse on political issues. In that chapter we next listed several questions intended to be answered during this paper:

- What is the *modus operandi* of the Netto-Uyoku to disseminate ideology?
- What are the structural processes of the media platforms that the Netto-Uyoku utilize?
- How do the Netto-uyoku compare to other online-based neo-nationalist movements? Can we speak of a distinct Japanese character compared to contemporary movements, or should we view the Netto-Uyoku primarily as part of a greater trend of Internet-fueled populist neo-nationalism? Secondly, is there a common reaction to, for example, the Alt-Right and Trump-era politics?
- How does the movement organize and mobilize, both online and in real life?
- Is there possible space for furthering a Netto-Uyoku political “agenda” through influencing its international counterparts?

The term Netto-Uyoku was coined fifteen years ago. The second chapter reviewed a select amount of literature both from the early period covering the Netto-Uyoku as a fringe element of greater topics, to more recent literature covering the Netto-Uyoku and the Internet.

The third chapter attempted to map the ideology behind the right-wing reactionary voices utilizing the Internet, drawing on Frankfurt School scholars' theorization of ideology and media. It is a pitfall to apply theory rooted in western cultural traditions without balancing the different socio-cultural contexts of the subject, and arguments could be made against the continuous western hegemony of academia. Yet, when we follow Anderson's and McLuhan's logic on media and literacy as crucial to nationalism, and see the world as a ‘global village’ connected by the digital, it wouldn't be a far stretch to consider the universal nature of the concepts presented in this chapter.

While we could never claim information warfare, populist demagoguery or nationalism to be new tactics in politics, this is now done to great success on the Internet; fueled by both the technological peculiarities of the Internet itself and the rhetoric formed on Internet subcultures. In the fourth chapter I covered the development of Japanese Internet subcultures and the close ties of Otaku culture with the adaption of the Internet.

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatethis/brazil-jair-bolsonaro-facebook-elections>

In the third chapter, I found many of the ideological goals of the Netto-Uyoku to fall in line with that of the current administration, who have in turn done well in dog-whistling to the Netto-Uyoku. This could be interpreted as one reason for a lack of political success for the Netto-Uyoku-associated Makoto Sakurai and his Japan First Party.

I conclude that the Netto-Uyoku, like its counterparts across the world, is on one hand a continuation of an ideological war

Whereas the rise in global right-wing populism shook the world in 2016, which falls in line with the wide-spread counter-hegemonic narrative disseminated in part by cyber-nationalists, I argued that this has appeared much earlier in Japan. More specifically in an outburst of public outrage after events occurring around 2011: scandals in politics, public media and the 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Disaster (as suggested on page ?? by **Figure A.2**). *Interest*<sup>179</sup> in politics has taken an increasingly large relative share of Google searches across the world. In Japan, interest has remained relatively stable with the exception of a massive peak in 2011; A massive peak noted on **figure 2.1** (page ??).

Following various contradictions in post-war Japan's society, The New Left and student protests influenced by Marxist scholars shook civil society. Now, anti-intellectual right-wing populists are (sub-)consciously applying the same Marxist school of thought. Contradictions in society, most notably the effects of alienation in the wake of the Lost Decades, have renewed public distrust. Within this sphere of alienation and crises of identity, digital natives built intrinsic cyber-communities with a distinct anti-establishment discourse—a cyber-discourse with vast ties to the libertarian mindset that shaped the ideology behind the Internet in the first place.

As we see happening across the world, I argued these communities to be ripe for political exploitation (in the form of a potential political electorate) by those same right-wing populists. Whether its Donald Trump's presidential campaigns, Duterte in the Philippines or the Flemish right-wing populist Vlaams Belang in 2019, right-wing populists have since the second half of the 2010 gained considerable support throughout the world by including digital natives in their campaign strategies. Distinct from national-scale politics in the United States however, I conclude that in Japan the current iteration of the LDP administration has successfully capitalized on this public distress. Although perceived societal contradictions up to the '90s shook the core of the LDP strong enough to bring

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<sup>179</sup> Another interesting expression considering this very word is rooted in capitalist commodity fetishism.

about a massive reform of the voting system, I next argued that from the '90s onwards societal contradictions between the 'hegemonic ideology' and the perceived reality (seen to its inevitable conclusion following the 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Disaster and the reveal of the North Korean kidnappings) brought about a new iteration of the LDP, or rather one that answered to the counter-hegemonic narrative of the Japanese cyber-nationalists. The actions of the Netto-Uyoku and the Zaitokukai have led to *public* disavowal by Abe Shinzo, yet on social media the prime minister uses *dog-whistling* methods to appeal to those groups by expanding (**op inspelen**) upon those groups' rising concerns and antagonizing enemies on common ground: established forms of media, conservation of the ethnic-Japanese identity, and hostile positions towards both the Korean peninsula and China. Perhaps in this sense Steve Bannon had a point after all?

Finally this paper demonstrated a higher awareness of group identity amongst those who reject the Netto-Uyoku. If the Netto-Uyoku exist and are to be named, then those who have become aware of this phenomenon and feel rejection from a group identity too, both in the off-line public sphere as on the Internet. Offline we have of course various counter protests such as SealDs, C.R.A.C. and influenced by its Western counterparts, the Antifa. Online we have seen communities form around exposing and removing Netto-Uyoku means of radicalization (the fourth chapter refers particular to the 2018 - 2019 neto-uyo Ban Festival). It is premature to claim, but perhaps this too can be seen as a trend of greater political shifts?

As hinted at throughout this paper, Netto-Uyoku are constantly fueled by a source of perceived anti-Japanese sentiment coming from in particular South-Korea and China; nations that are plagued by their own localized expressions of cyber-nationalism and 'troll-armies'. In similar fashion those latter localized expressions too feed on such perceived negative sentiment coming from Japan, and one that is very much rooted in the complicated historical three-way relationship between these nations. For future research, this paper suggests a comparative analysis between those, their *modus operandi* and their interaction.

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## APPENDIX A

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## APPENDIX

### A.1 50 Most Popular Websites in Japan (2019)

These statistics are calculated on a three-monthly basis, determined by a combined page views and unique visitors of all pages belonging to one particular domain (Alexa - Top Sites in Japan - Alexa 2019).

TABLE A.1. *50 Most Popular Websites in Japan (2019)*

1	Google.com	11	Fc2.com	21	Amazon.com	31	Blogspot.com	41	Msn.com
2	YouTube.com	12	T.co	22	Yahoo.com	32	Tmall.com	42	Nikkei.com
3	Yahoo.co.jp	13	Baidu.com	23	Qq.com	33	Apple.com	43	5ch.net
4	Amazon.co.jp	14	Instagram.com	24	Mercari.com	34	Microsoft.com	44	Naver.jp
5	Google.co.jp	15	Kakaku.com	25	Goo.ne.jp	35	Taobao.com	44	Dmm.com
6	Twitter.com	16	Livedoor.jp	26	Blog.jp	36	Netflix.com	46	Nhk.or.jp
7	Facebook.com	17	Livedoor.com	27	Weblio.jp	37	Pixiv.net	47	Line.me
8	Rakuten.co.jp	18	Ameblo.jp	28	Live.com	38	Japanpost.jp	48	Sohu.com
9	Wikipedia.org	19	Dmm.co.jp	29	Hatenablog.com	39	Github.com	49	Office.com
10	Nicovideo.jp	20	Pornhub.com	30	Xvideos.com	40	Impress.co.jp	50	Tabelog.com

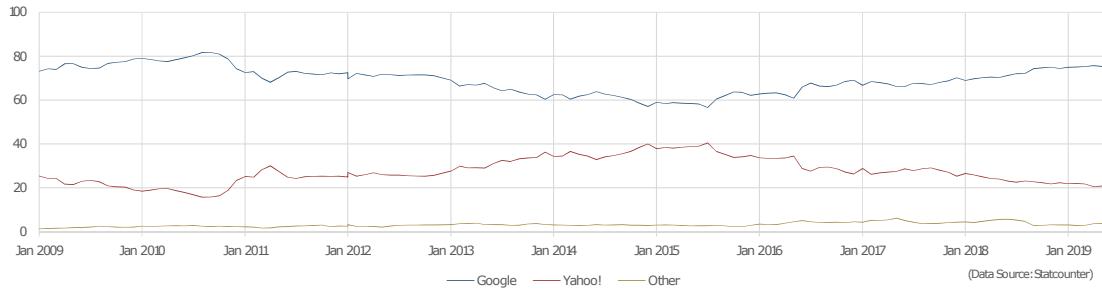
### A.2 Google

#### A.2.1 Search Engines in Japan

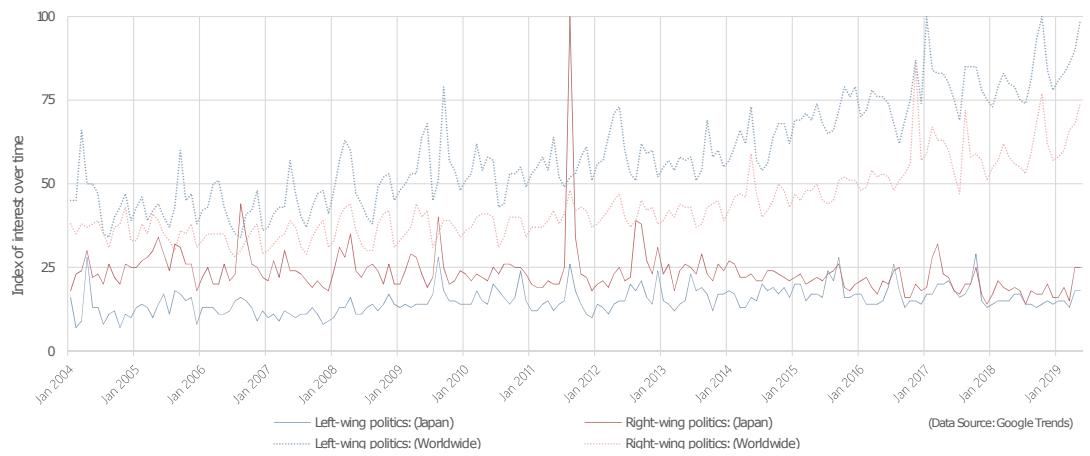
The web-portal Yahoo! Japan (a joint venture between the American Yahoo! and Son Masayoshi's SoftBank) retains a monopolistic grip on the Japanese Internet market as one of its most visited websites. Nevertheless, as seen on [Figure A.1](#), Google is by far the dominant search engine, more so when taking into account that Yahoo! Japan's search engine has since 2010 implemented Google's search engine algorithms (which may account for its increase in market share since). Results based on Google's statistics can therefore be argued to effectively reflect the overall interest of Internet users in Japan.

#### A.2.2 Google Trends

These graphs indicate peak interest over a duration of time and contrasts interest thus on a relative scale; it does not scale Japanese results to worldwide results quantitatively.



**Figure A.1.** Search Engine Market Share Japan (10 Years).



**Figure A.2.** The Google Trends of Right-Wing and Left-Wing Politics Worldwide & Japan (15 Years).

**Figure A.2** suggests a global increase in public awareness of politics (the frequency of searches in part of the total amount of searches has practically doubled) and nevertheless with a distinct majority of search interest in left-wing topics (crossed by right-wing topics one only in November 2016, in the wake of the presidential elections). In Japan however, interest in political topics as measured by Google Trends remains however fairly stable throughout the line, with one significant peak, again, during the period of the LDP elections in 2012.

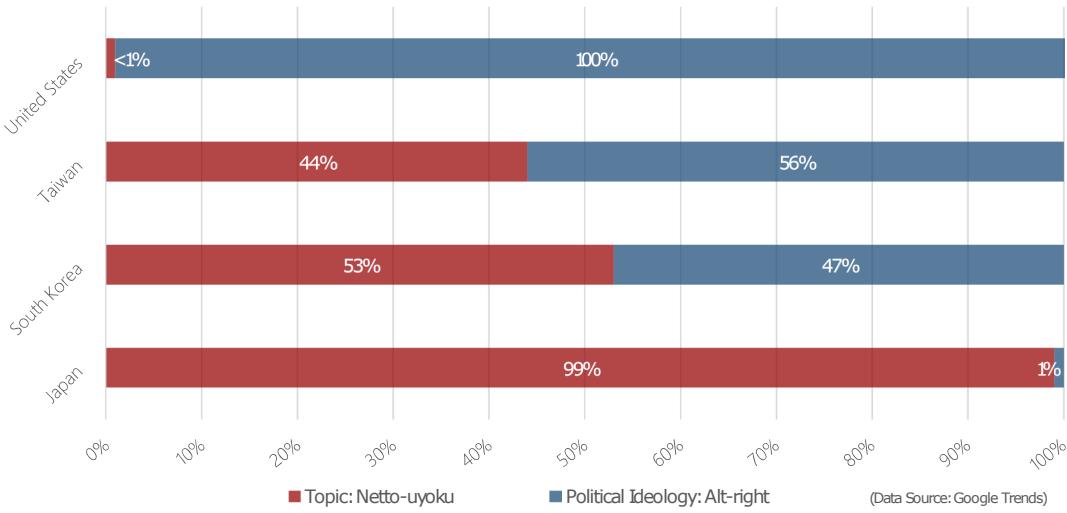
**Figure A.3**

**Figure A.4**

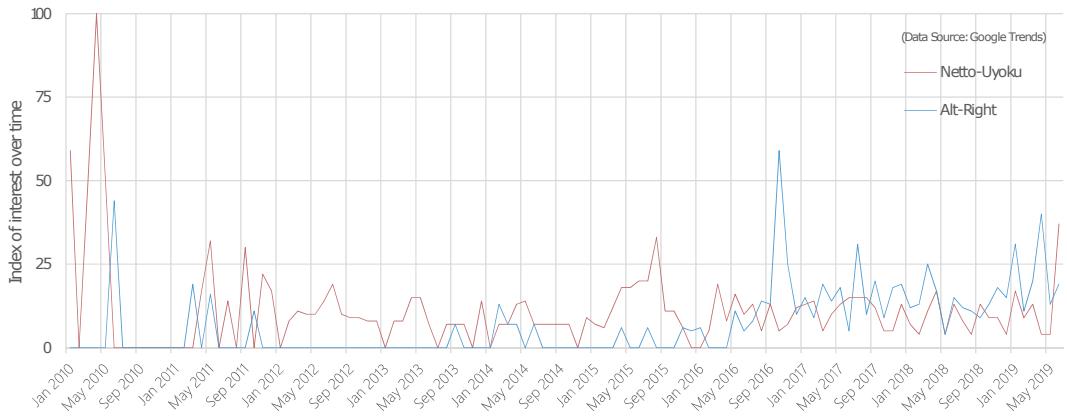
### A.3 Wikipedia

#### A.3.1 Wikipedia Reverts

In order to calculate contentious Japanese Wikipedia pages I use a rudimentary way of comparing the total amount of reverts to the total amount of revisions on a page (limited to articles, I exclude namespaces for pages such as *Userpages*). I wrote a script in the Java programming language to



**Figure A.3.** Google Trends Breakdown by Region of Netto-Uyoku & Alt-Right as Topics (15 Years).



**Figure A.4.** The Google Trends of Netto-Uyoku & South Korea Since 2010.

obtain the top 1000 revised articles (both in total and during a certain time span). Our dataset is a 5GB data-dump (*jawiki-20190620-stub-meta-history.xml.gz*) obtained from <https://dumps.wikimedia.org/jawiki/20190620/>. This compressed file contains an XML file with meta-data of every Japanese Wikipedia page (such as title, namespace, and revision information) up to 2019-06-20.<sup>180</sup> Reverts are then based on keywords (eg. ‘rv’, ‘取り消し’, ‘巻き戻し’) in the comments of revisions and are therefore not completely exhaustive (this would most likely include reverts of acts of vandalism, but will not include the actual act of vandalism in which one reverts parts of- or even the complete article). While this methodologically requires further attention, preliminary results undeniably show in quantifiable ways particular political topics to be in the top of so-called ‘*Wiki edit-wars*’. I ran the script for each

<sup>180</sup> For more information on the elements of this XML dump, see <https://glimmerphoenix.github.io/WikiDAT/pages/meta-history/>.

year between the range of 2003 (the beginning of the data-dump) and 2019. Per year I included levels of controversy based both on the total amount of revisions and reverts up to that year, as well as solely on the revisions and reverts committed in that particular frame of time.

#### **A.3.2 Japanese Wikipedia Top 50 (as of 2019)**

Based on respectively our measurement of controversy (reverts divided by revisions), the total amount of revisions and the total amount of reverts, we compiled a list of the 50 highest ranking articles.

TABLE A.2. 50 most contentious, revised and reverted articles on the Japanese Wikipedia (2019)

Top 50 contentious articles	Top 50 revised articles	Top 50 reverted articles
1 南京事件	ZIP!	AKB48
2 ネット右翼	海賊戦隊ゴーカイジャー	安倍晋三
3 日本	ONE PIECE の登場人物一覧	日本
4 前田敦子	天才てれびくんシリーズのドラマ	ONE PIECE
5 王下七武海	ゲゲゲの鬼太郎の登場キャラクター	前田敦子
6 悪魔の実	WWE に所属する人物一覧	乃木坂 46
7 ONE PIECE	オールスター感謝祭	創価学会
8 渡辺麻友	アニメ +	南京事件
9 乃木坂 46	めざましテレビ	悪魔の実
10 AKB48	名探偵コナンの登場人物	王下七武海
11 安倍晋三	ちちんぶいぶい (テレビ番組)	ネット右翼
12 欅坂 46	相棒の登場人物	けいおん!
13 鳩山由紀夫	ONE PIECE の登場人物一覧	ONE PIECE の登場人物一覧
14 創価学会	3年B組金八先生)	海賊 (ONE PIECE)
15 天皇	SASUKE	渡辺麻友
16 中華民国	青森放送	仮面ライダーシリーズ登場怪人一覧
17 おそ松さん	海賊 (ONE PIECE)	大韓民国
18 金妍兒	AKB48/log20110116	天皇
19 在日特権を許さない市民の会	イナズマイレブンの登場人物	嵐 (グループ)
20 指原莉乃	情報ライブミヤネ屋	海軍 (ONE PIECE)
21 在日韓国・朝鮮人	フジテレビジョン	モンキー・D・ルフィ
22 櫻井翔	福山潤	在日特権を許さない市民の会
23 上皇明仁	SMAP	鳩山由紀夫
24 YouTube	グルメチキンレース・ゴチになります!	在日韓国・朝鮮人
25 モンキー・D・ルフィ	新日本プロレス	ブリキュアシリーズ
26 朝日新聞	仮面ライダーフォーゼ	仮面ライダーゴースト
27 本田圭佑	ゲームセンター CX	SMAP
28 スカパー! チャンネル一覧	めちゃ×2イケてるッ!	SKE48
29 ONE PIECE の用語一覧	スーパー戦隊シリーズ	水樹奈々
30 仮面ライダーシリーズ登場怪人一覧	AKB48	AKB48
31 けいおん!	読売ジャイアンツ	指原莉乃
32 艦隊これくしょん -艦これ-	相棒	中華民国
33 海軍 (ONE PIECE)	ブリキュアシリーズ	福山潤
34 高橋みなみ	モーニング娘。	Hey! Say! JUMP
35 仮面ライダーゴースト	仮面ライダーディケイド	欅坂 46
36 松本人志	24時間テレビ「愛は地球を救う」	ドラえもん
37 動物戦隊ジュウオウジャー	成田国際空港	サザエさんの登場人物
38 朝鮮民主主義人民共和国	アニメ版ポケットモンスターの登場人物	ONE PIECE の用語一覧
39 有吉弘行	仮面ライダー電王	本田圭佑
40 HKT48	銀魂 (アニメ)	魔法少女まどか★マギカ
41 大韓民国	BLEACH の登場人物	相棒
42 手裏剣戦隊ニンニンジャー	関西国際空港	B'z
43 初音ミク	安倍晋三	イチロー
44 魔法つかいブリキュア!	仮面ライダー鎧武/ガイム	朝鮮民主主義人民共和国
45 Fate/Grand Order	阪神タイガース	上皇明仁
46 魔法少女まどか★マギカ	トリコ	織田信長
47 木村拓哉	龍が如くシリーズの登場人物	二宮和也
48 NARUTO -ナルト-の登場人物	ジャニーズ Jr.	ドラゴンボール
49 Minecraft	スーパー J チャンネル	櫻井翔
50 韓国起源説	SKE48	FAIRY TAIL の登場人物

