

Source Cue Effects and Policy Considerations in Transnational Opinion Formation

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Background

- **Broad Research Q:** Impact of Donald Trump on global public opinion of the U.S.?
- **Motivation:** Soft power? Past research shows transnational opinion (State A public opinion about State B/State B's leader) can shape foreign relations

Literature

American Public Opinion

- Importance of source and credibility in message frames
- Elite cue reliance > Policy considerations
- Threat perception shaping framing effects

Transnational Public Opinion

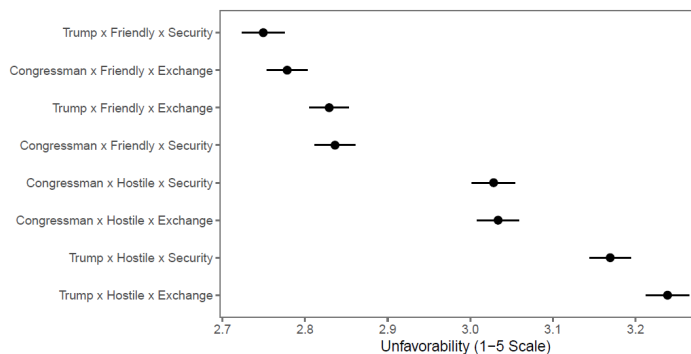
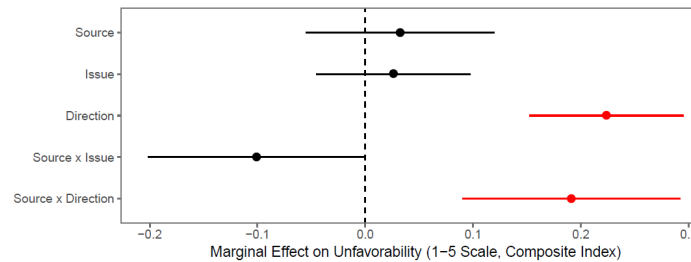
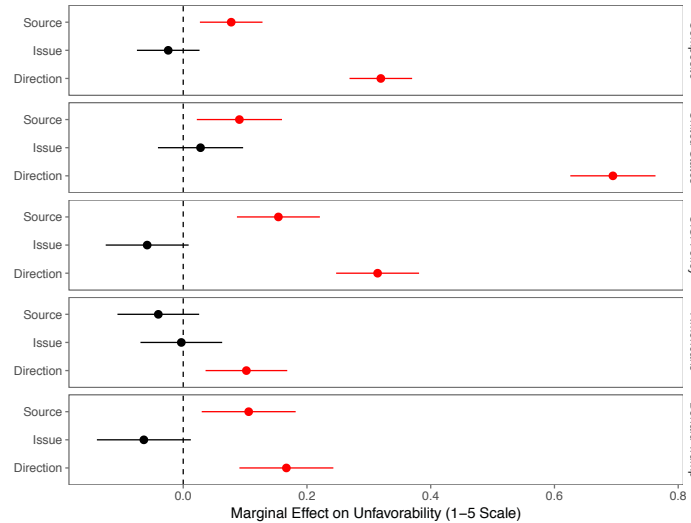
- American presidential source cue effects on transnational opinion formation

Expectations

- "Trump" as negative credibility outgroup source cue; unconditional effects
- Reactions depending on issue salience
- Hostile policy induces threat, consideration of policy implication

Study Design

- Online survey experiment (CrowdWorks)
- 3,221 Japanese citizens
- 2 x 2 x 2 treatments
 - ✓ **Source** Cue (Trump vs. Congressman)
 - ✓ **Issue** Salience (security vs. exchange program)
 - ✓ **Policy Direction** (hostile vs. friendly)
- 5 outcomes: Unfavorability of the U.S.
 - ✓ Composite Index
 - ✓ U.S.
 - ✓ U.S. Policy toward Japan
 - ✓ Americans
 - ✓ Donald Trump



Hypotheses

1. Positive effects of *Source*, *Issue*, and *Direction*
2. No effect of interactions of *Source* x *Issue* and *Source* x *Direction*
3. Most unfavorable attitudes with "Trump" + "Security" + "Hostile"

Results

Hypothesis 1

- Largest effect: *Direction*
- Large effect: *Source*
- No effect: *Issue*

Hypothesis 2

- The effect of "Trump" (*Source*) is significant only with "Hostile" *Direction*

Hypothesis 3

- Most unfavorable attitudes if "Trump" + "Exchange" + "Hostile"

Conclusions

- Greater policy-content considerations than heuristic (source cue) reliance
- U.S. president cue ("Trump") is negative, but threat level + policy approach are more important
- Conditionality of source effects → Trump has not made U.S. image fully irreparable

Future research: extend to other countries; further vary policy message and test manipulation with positive source cue



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