

REALTIME SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT WITH MassSense



MassSense

POTENTIAL DISRUPTION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA | JULY 2017

A SenseMaker® & BBC MONITOR CASE STUDY

On July 4th, 2017, Pyongyang conducted its first test of an ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile). With this show of the North's dramatic missile progress, began the concerns over the potential disruption in the Korean Peninsula. In collaboration with the 7th International Risk and Horizon Scanning Symposium (IRAHSS2017) hosted by the Singapore Government, Cognitive Edge, together with Futures and Foresight researchers and BBC Monitoring conducted a **MassSense study** to understand expert perceptions on the topic. The study aimed to compare different professional and geographic perspectives on the issue - incorporating input and perspectives from Singapore civil servants; the global community of futurists/foresight experts; BBC Monitor's network of 150 journalists around the world; and military/security professionals.

What is MassSense?

MassSense is a real-time situational assessment tool that presents micro-scenarios to a diverse network who describe their perspective on the issue through indexing on geometric indices, called signifiers. The results, which take on the form of visualisation-driven patterns, are then presented back to decision makers to provide deeper insights collected from a panel of experts. In this process, suggestions for responses to situations are also captured. This enables decision-making that is informed by a 'live' human sensor network.

In this case study, BBC Monitor staff wrote the briefing on the Korean situation which participants were asked to reflect on. An invitation was sent out to gather responses.

An Invitation to Participate

"The two Koreas have existed in a precarious state of dynamic tension since the truce put civil war in abeyance. Uncertainties in global geopolitics have amplified uncertainties surrounding the future of the peninsula. You have been invited to contribute your impressions of the situation because you are a stakeholder in the region, an expert in security and conflict, an expert in foresight, or a professional in covering emerging news. MassSense will provide a short briefing on the situation on the Korean peninsula, and its geopolitical context, and then ask you a series of questions about that story."



Cognitive Edge collaboration with BBC Monitoring

BBC Monitoring (BBCM) filters, translates and reports on news from broadcast, press and social media sources. Journalists based in bureaus around the world monitor the world's media in multiple languages from over 150 countries worldwide. This capacity offers the most diverse and robust narrative collection available for an emerging story with potential global impacts.

BBCM combined expertise from across their international offices to draft the narrative which participants were then asked to consider and signify. Knowledge about North and South Korea and their relationships was assembled by journalists based in BBCM's Delhi office which covers the East Asian region. Detailed insights were added by BBCM's in-house Korea expert, and a BBCM researcher added in background data and quotes. The draft was passed to a BBCM editor for final review, and in-house illustrators added the map and photographs (sourced from Getty). As the BBC has covered the Korean peninsula for decades, some data was readily available.

The resulting overview narrative was reviewed by the Cognitive Edge research team, and signifiers chosen to suit the topic and research interests. The study also asked for a hashtag they would attach to the situation, as well as a summary of how they would describe it to group of international students in 2020. Cognitive Edge invited four panels of respondents: Singaporean civil servants who were participating in the IRAHSS2017 pre-conference workshop; BBC journalists (as contacted by BBCM); Futures researchers and Foresight experts (as contacted by Infinite Futures and Vision Foresight Strategy); and security / defense / military experts (as contacted by Cognitive Edge and Vision Foresight Strategy).

See the MassSense study here: <https://tinyurl.com/KoreaMassSense>



VISION FORESIGHT STRATEGY LLC

Black Swans, Black Elephants: IRAHSS2017

The International Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning Symposium (IRAHSS) is a gathering of participants from government agencies, think-tanks and businesses from around the world. IRAHSS represents the largest strategic foresight event for planning, policy, and security agencies in Asia, and is run in Singapore every 2 years.

Apt to the topic of the Korean peninsula, the theme for 2017 was "Black Swans and Black Elephants"- how do we identify black swans (rare, hard-to-predict events with large impact) and Black Elephants (rare but significant risks that everyone knows about, but no one wants to discuss).



Emergent patterns from the study, as well as initial insights were revealed at IRAHSS2017, with a sense-making session to develop more insight conducted with the experts in attendance.

Some of the findings which emerged from the patterns were:

- Patterns indicate that the majority view regional vulnerability to the threat as high and that the level of uncertainty is scary but somewhat manageable.
- Most of the respondents feel that global leaders' knowledge is culturally filtered and that the situation is evolving and turbulent.
- Majority felt that the initial global response should be to monitor and prepare for action, but there was no consensus on what the most influential actors would do.
- The vulnerability and severity of the situation's wider implications were assessed to be higher than the situation itself and its media spin/ focus.



Signifier design for Emergent Patterns & Insights

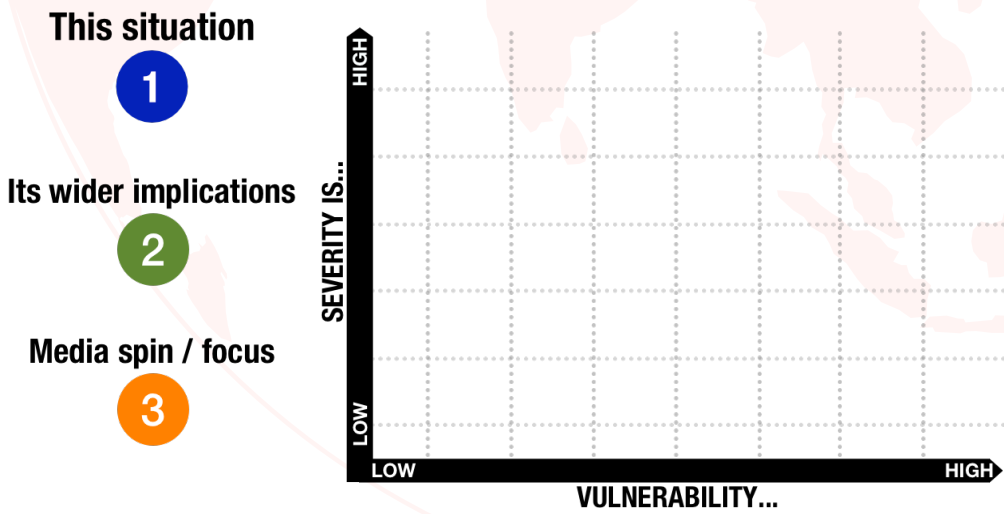
The signifiers built by the Cognitive Edge team are designed to provide a signification framework through which perspectives, interpretation and meaning can be overlaid onto the micro-scenario presented by BBCM. This study includes 3 different elements:

Multi-choice and Demographic Questions

These questions provide baseline information about where perspectives come from (which geography; whether they are journalists/security professionals etc.), as well as allow for deeper filtering of patterns across other signifiers to identify comparative differences.

Stones

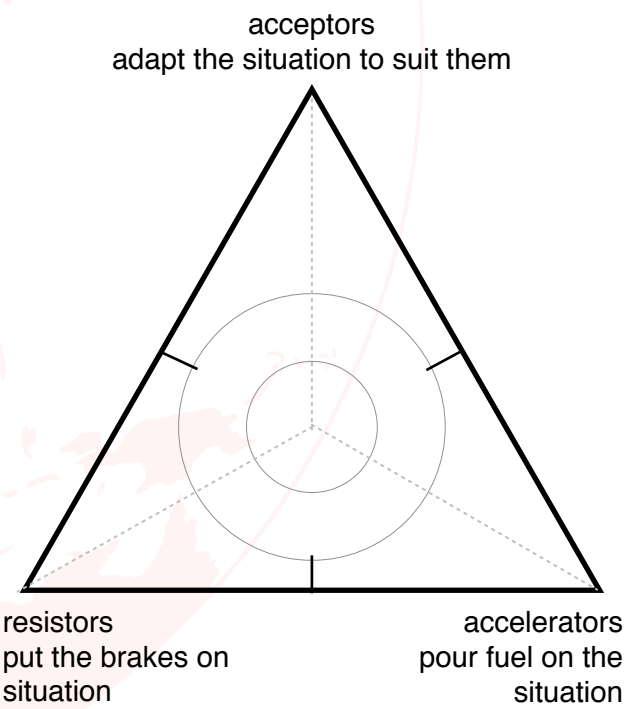
A grid-based signifier which has scales of Vulnerability and Severity (from low to high) built into the x- and y-axis accordingly. The respondent places a labelled 'stone' onto the grid or matrix where they feel it best fits in relation to the scenario. In this design, we were interested in how they viewed: (1) the situation, (2) its wider implications, and (3) the media spin/focus.



Triads

Triangle-shaped signifiers with apices that correspond with three elements that describe an overarching concept related to the topic (see example below). The respondent moves the pointer within the triangle, to a point which represents the balance of how strongly they feel each element is present within the micro-scenario.

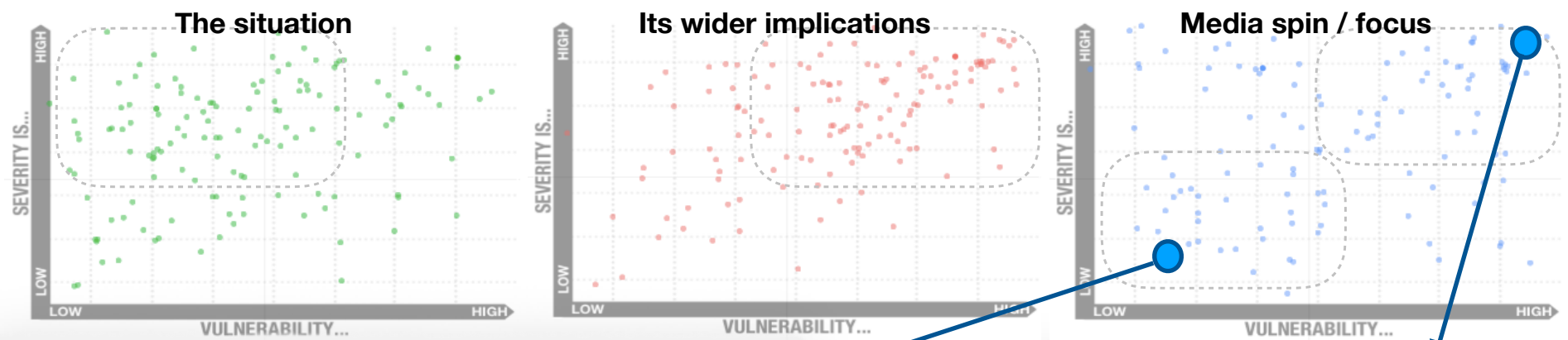
In this situation, the most influential actors will be...



Data sample & Findings

A total of 143 responses were collected, with Futures researchers and Singapore civil servants making up about 80% of the total sample. There were more than two times as many male respondents compared to female respondents. About half of the respondents lived most of their lives in Asia.

The vulnerability and severity of the situation's wider implications were assessed to be higher than the situation itself; although assessment of the Media spin/focus was split



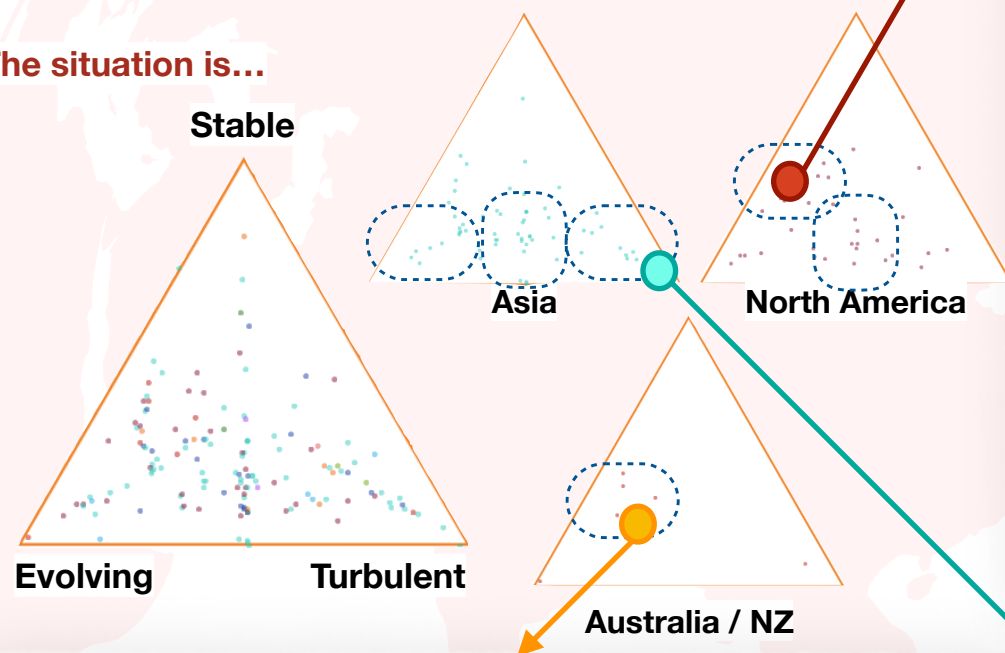
#KOREAKORNFLAKES - In 2017 the President of North Korea taking advantage of a Weakened USA global influence and wanting to weaken US-CHINA understanding decided to test the North Korea muscle by playing chicken with Trump. For most of us it was like watching a horror story featuring two two Mad Men and we were hoping that somehow CHINA could decide to be the SUPERMAN and do something before they led the world into a Nuclear War. The thing is most people were too busy responding to Trumps Tweets about Fake News.. to realize this was the REAL NEWS// It was a very fear inducing period of human history. - Futures Researcher, North America

Beyond Unification nor Collapse for the Korean Peninsula - From Collapse to sustained Social and Political ChangesFrom Nuclear threats to Cooperative Alternative Energy DevelopmentFrom Unification to Cooperation in small steps and projectsFrom Isolation to Becoming a Neighborhood in East Asia From 2020 to 2050 the experimentation for a more equitable progressive and evolvable development Continues - Peace Futurist, Asia



The situation is largely perceived as evolving, or a combination of evolving and turbulent; although there are different perspectives represented across different geographies. In Asia, where the threat is closer to home, there is a stronger tendency to view the matter across of spectrum of Evolving to Turbulent. However, in North America and Australia / NZ, patterns reflect perspectives which believe that there is some Stability to the situation.

The situation is...



#selfinterest - The world's media and US President backed the north Korean leadership into a corner where to not act made them feel like they would lose face. Other western countries such as Australia who should have known better sided with the US rhetoric out of habit and treaty making a bad situation worse. The Japanese and South Koreans readied their defensive activities to ensure they were able to respond if the North Koreans decided to do their worst. China and Russia acted to strengthen their relationships with their Asian neighbours however this was met with veiled skepticism but pragmatic self-interest prevailed. The Chinese and Russian leadership acted to side with the North Koreans furthering their own agendas at the same time allowing the North Koreans to feel that they were on the side of power against the US and the West more generally. This strengthened alliance of two of the biggest countries on the planet both of whom put human rights and democracy at the bottom of the list of valued outcomes meant resulted in further destabilisation of western democracies and cementing of the Asian bloc as a powerhouse of economic and military might in the early 21st century. The outcomes of this activity are yet to be played out fully but nuclear war has not eventuated rather we are seeing power and influence of the Sino-Russian alliance spreading through the Asian and Pacific regions. - [Futures Researcher, Australia](#)

#time to face reality - Although the current situation inside NK is stable and the regional dynamics are manageable there is a real potential for crisis in the near future. Below are two possible crisis scenarios. Crisis 1: The United States grows increasingly frustrated and worried by NK's growing nuclear capability. Following the election of a new hardline administration in Seoul the decision is made to dramatically increase pressure on Pyongyang. This includes limited military strikes against the nuclear test facility and missile launch pads. This leads to a retaliation by NK against military targets in the ROK. Although neither side wants war the dye is cast and neither side can disengage the escalatory ladder. Crisis 2: Klm Jong Un's health begins to fade. By 2020 he has not been seen in public for six months. The wider leadership is getting increasingly agitated. Despite efforts by elements of the Kim family the OGD and the Guard Command to maintain stability command and control at the top of the regime begins to crumble. Various power brokers inside the regime enter into a competition for resources. Eventually warlordism breaks out corps commanders taking control of pieces of territory. Resource grabs lead to open hostility and eventual civil war. The loss of control by Pyongyang initiates invasion plans by China on the one side and the ROK (backed by the US) on the other. No coordination between these invading forces ultimately leads to all out hostility on the peninsula - [Think Tank, North America](#)

#Northkoreacrisis - The problem of North Korea is directly linked to the US as it sees America as its eternal enemy due to the Korean War. Its nuclear programme is meant to show to the US that it is powerful and in a large way is primarily meant to seek attention. Nkorea sees US troops in South Korea and joint military drills as a threat and hence makes continuous efforts to improve its missile and nuclear weapons programme. One way to deal with Nkorea is to probably send a team of interlocutors who could try to influence the top leadership in Nkorea. The real chance of a war is relatively low but rhetoric is always high so the Koreas remain in a constant state of high tension. US President Trump needs to make more responsible statements. It is significant to note that Nkorea is unpredictable and no amount of UN resolutions have stopped it from pursuing its missile and nuclear programme. Sanctions are tightened every time a missile test takes place but trade survives. The country's people are repeatedly told that the US is their bigger threat hence they must focus on defence. - [Journalist, Asia](#)

Powered by SenseMaker®

MassSense is powered by SenseMaker®, a narrative-based research tool that enables the capture and analysis of a large quantity of stories in order to understand complex change. It provides a meta-analysis of qualitative data that bridges a gap between case studies and large-sample survey data. The approach offers a methodological breakthrough for recognising patterns and trends in perceptions, behaviours and relationships.

SenseMaker® draws upon anthropology, complexity theory and neuroscience. The methodology involves collecting large numbers of short stories that, together, create a nuanced picture of a given topic, in the same way that many pixels come together to produce a clear image. SenseMaker® can also assist with early recognition of weak signals of changing social dynamics, and with the identification of emerging or outlier factors that deviate from normal trends and patterns.

Run your own MassSense today!

MassSense has been applied across areas as diverse as international geopolitics, sensing of future trends, cyber-security threat, to employee/citizen engagement, and company policy.

It's all as simple as uploading an infographic around the topic you are interested in, and launching the standard study. You will then receive a URL and app-code that you can distribute to your personal network!

Find out more at: <http://cognitive-edge.com/masssense/>

