

# Reverse Engineering Chinese Government Information Controls<sup>1</sup>

Gary King<sup>2</sup>

Institute for Quantitative Social Science  
Harvard University

National Taiwan University, 5/30/2018

---

<sup>1</sup>Based on joint work with Jennifer Pan (Stanford) and Margaret Roberts (UCSD)

<sup>2</sup>GaryKing.org

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

- Empirical Results:

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

# Papers

- Empirical Results:
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

- Empirical Results:
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

# Papers

- Empirical Results:
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)
  - How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument (*Today's talk; in press, APSR*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

# Papers

- Empirical Results:
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)
  - How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument (*Today's talk; in press, APSR*)
- Automated Text Analysis Methods:

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

# Papers

- **Empirical Results:**
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)
  - How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument (*Today's talk; in press, APSR*)
- **Automated Text Analysis Methods:**
  - General Purpose Computer-Assisted Clustering and Conceptualization (*PNAS*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)



# Papers

- **Empirical Results:**
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)
  - How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument (*Today's talk; in press, APSR*)
- **Automated Text Analysis Methods:**
  - General Purpose Computer-Assisted Clustering and Conceptualization (*PNAS*)
  - A Method of Automated Nonparametric Content Analysis for Social Science (*AJPS*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

# Papers

- **Empirical Results:**
  - How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression (*APSR*)
  - Reverse Engineering Chinese Censorship (*Science*)
  - How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument (*Today's talk; in press, APSR*)
- **Automated Text Analysis Methods:**
  - General Purpose Computer-Assisted Clustering and Conceptualization (*PNAS*)
  - A Method of Automated Nonparametric Content Analysis for Social Science (*AJPS*)
  - Computer-Assisted Keyword and Document Set Discovery from Unstructured Text (*in press, AJPS*)

Copies at [GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*

## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?



## Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① Stop criticism of the state

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① Stop criticism of the state
  - ② Stop collective action

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② Stop collective action

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② Stop collective action *Right*

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- Implications: Social Media is Actionable!

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- Implications: Social Media is Actionable!
  - Chinese leaders:

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② Stop collective action *Right*
- Implications: Social Media is Actionable!
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② Stop collective action *Right*
- Implications: Social Media is Actionable!
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential



# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- What Could be the Goal?
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② Stop collective action *Right*
- Implications: Social Media is Actionable!
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- **What Could be the Goal?**
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- **Implications: Social Media is Actionable!**
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:
    - Officials in trouble, likely to be replaced

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- **What Could be the Goal?**
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- **Implications: Social Media is Actionable!**
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:
    - Officials in trouble, likely to be replaced
    - Policies that generate dissent (& interest of leaders)

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- **What Could be the Goal?**
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- **Implications: Social Media is Actionable!**
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:
    - Officials in trouble, likely to be replaced
    - Policies that generate dissent (& interest of leaders)
    - Government action outside the Internet

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

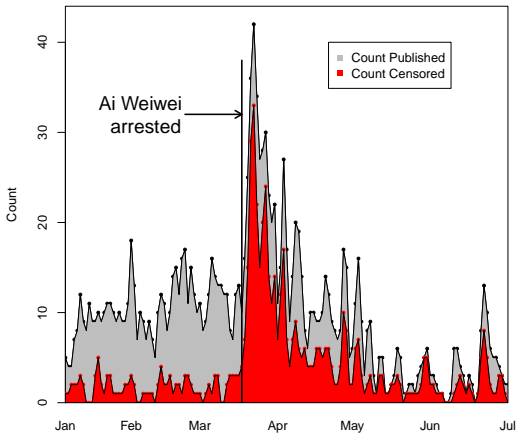
- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- ~~What Could be the Goal?~~
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- ~~Implications: Social Media is Actionable!~~
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:
    - Officials in trouble, likely to be replaced
    - Policies that generate dissent (& interest of leaders)
    - Government action outside the Internet
    - Dissidents to be arrested; peace treaties to sign; emerging scandals

# Summary of Our Prior Work on Censorship

- ~~E.g., Everyone knows the goal of censorship:  
Stop criticism, protest, & collective action about the state,  
its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- ~~What Could be the Goal?~~
  - ① ~~Stop criticism of the state~~ *Wrong*
  - ② ~~Stop collective action~~ *Right*
- ~~Implications: Social Media is Actionable!~~
  - Chinese leaders:
    - measure criticism: to judge local officials
    - censor: to stop events with collective action potential
  - Thus, we can use criticism & censorship to predict:
    - Officials in trouble, likely to be replaced
    - Policies that generate dissent (& interest of leaders)
    - Government action outside the Internet
    - Dissidents to be arrested; peace treaties to sign; emerging scandals
    - Disagreements between central and local leaders

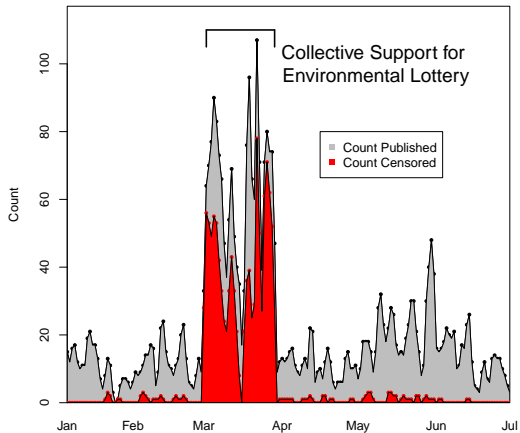
# Censorship Reveals Government Goals

# Censorship Reveals Government Goals

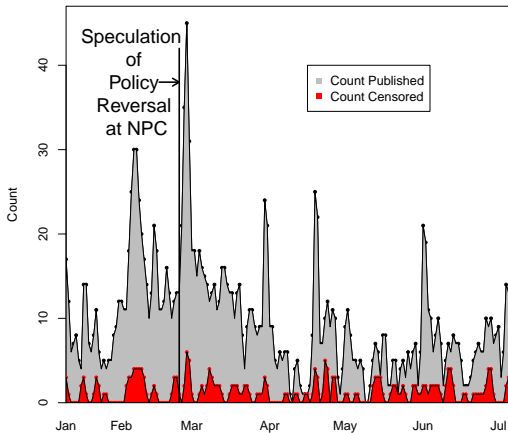




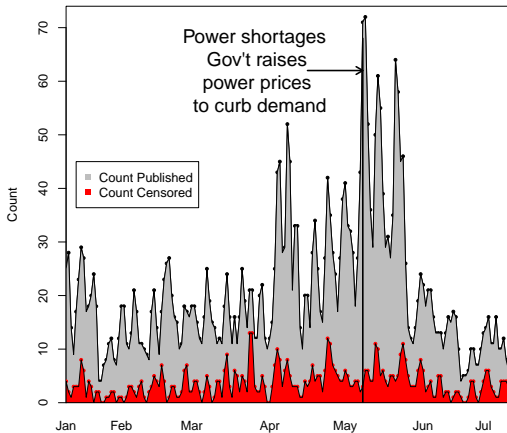
# Censorship Reveals Government Goals



# Censorship Reveals Government Goals



# Censorship Reveals Government Goals



# Goal of China's 50c Party

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants:

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

It's antidisestablishmentarianism!

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

Evidence?



## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

Evidence? A few anecdotes;

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

**Evidence?** A few anecdotes; “no ground truth”;

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

**Evidence?** A few anecdotes; “no ground truth”; “no successful attempts to quantify” 50c party activity;

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies

**Evidence?** A few anecdotes; “no ground truth”; “no successful attempts to quantify” 50c party activity; even several analyses with made up dependent variables!

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- ~~Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- ~~Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- Does not argue; does not engage on controversial issues

## Goal of China's 50c Party

- ~~Prevailing view of scholars, activists, journalists, social media participants: 50c party argues with & debates against those who criticize the government, its leaders, and their policies~~ *Wrong*
- Does not argue; does not engage on controversial issues
- **Distracts**; redirects public attention from criticism and central issues to **cheerleading** and positive discussions of valence issues

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party



# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails
  - to: Zhonggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails
  - to: Zhonggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails
  - to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails
  - to: Zhonggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
  - Large, unstructured, messy data

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
  - 1,245 contained 50c posts



# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
  - 1,245 contained 50c posts
  - 43,797 known 50c cent posts

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
  - 1,245 contained 50c posts
  - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
- Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- Decipher Leaked emails
  - to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
  - Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
    - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
    - 1,245 contained 50c posts
    - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
  - Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why
- Extrapolate to the rest of China

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

## ● Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
  - 1,245 contained 50c posts
  - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
- Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why

## ● Extrapolate to the rest of China

- Build model based on patterns we found

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

## ● Decipher Leaked emails

- to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
- On the web, but overlooked and ignored
- Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
- Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
  - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
  - 1,245 contained 50c posts
  - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
- Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why

## ● Extrapolate to the rest of China

- Build model based on patterns we found
- Identify 50c workers outside of Zhanggong

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- **Decipher Leaked emails**
  - to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
  - Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
    - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
    - 1,245 contained 50c posts
    - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
  - Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why
- **Extrapolate to the rest of China**
  - Build model based on patterns we found
  - Identify 50c workers outside of Zhanggong
- **Validate (and validate the validation)**

# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- **Decipher Leaked emails**
  - to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
  - Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
    - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
    - 1,245 contained 50c posts
    - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
  - Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why
- **Extrapolate to the rest of China**
  - Build model based on patterns we found
  - Identify 50c workers outside of Zhanggong
- **Validate (and validate the validation)**
  - Survey 1: 50c party members

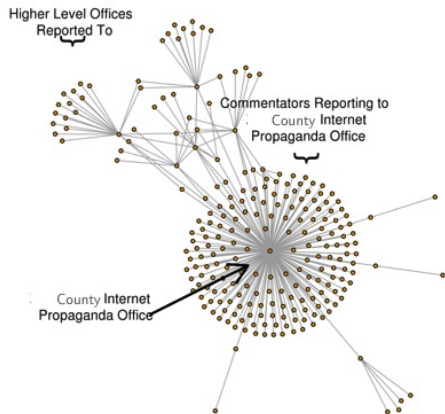
# First Systematic Evidence on China's 50c Party

- **Decipher Leaked emails**
  - to: Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Office (网宣办)
  - On the web, but overlooked and ignored
  - Workers claiming credit for their 50c posts
  - Large, unstructured, messy data ~> systematized (*hard to do!*)
    - 2,341 emails (covering 2013 & 2014)
    - 1,245 contained 50c posts
    - 43,797 known 50c cent posts
  - Map patterns of 50c workers: who, what, where, when, why
- **Extrapolate to the rest of China**
  - Build model based on patterns we found
  - Identify 50c workers outside of Zhanggong
- **Validate (and validate the validation)**
  - Survey 1: 50c party members
  - "Survey" 2: the Chinese regime

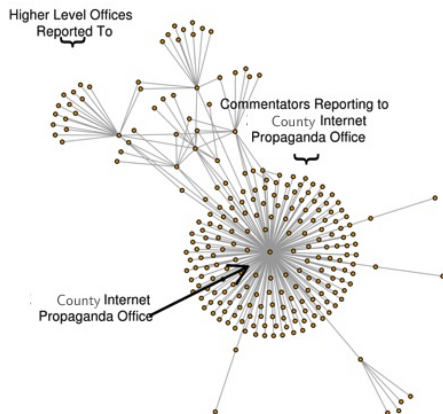


# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation

# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation

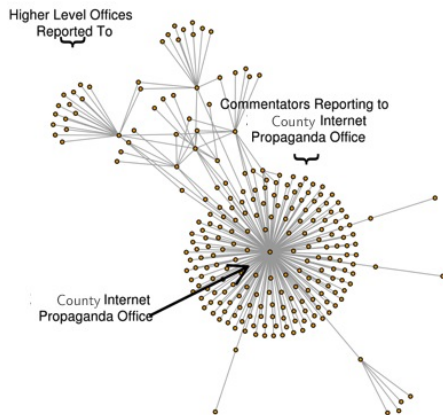


# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation



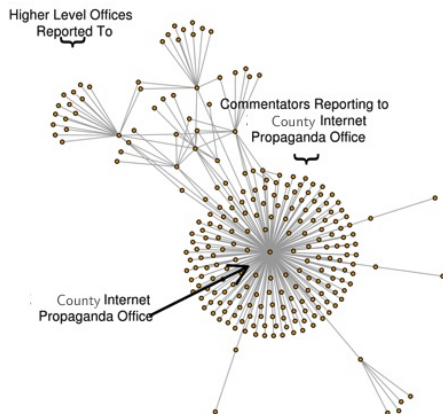
- Who is posting?

# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation



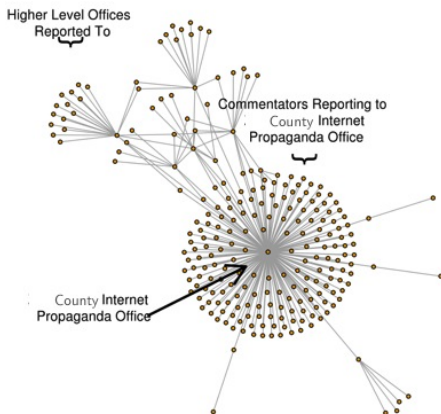
- Who is posting?
  - **Prevailing view:** ordinary citizens getting paid 50c to make each post

# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation



- Who is posting?
  - **Prevailing view:** ordinary citizens getting paid 50c to make each post
  - **In fact:** 99.3% of posts made by >200 government offices

# The Zhanggong Internet Propaganda Operation



- Who is posting?
  - **Prevailing view:** ordinary citizens getting paid 50c to make each post
  - **In fact:** 99.3% of posts made by >200 government offices
  - **No evidence of 50c (or any piecemeal) payments;** probably part of their jobs

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)



# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries
  - Argumentative praise or criticism

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting
  - Cheerleading

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting
  - Cheerleading

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:



# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - ① Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists)

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%)

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%) & *exclusive* (41%)

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%) & *exclusive* (41%)
    - ↳ Accounts that engage with Zhanggong weibo

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (“readme,” Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%) & *exclusive* (41%)
    - ↪ Accounts that engage with Zhanggong weibo
    - ↪  $\leq 10$  followers

# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (‘‘readme,’’ Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%) & *exclusive* (41%)
    - ↪ Accounts that engage with Zhanggong weibo
    - ↪  $\leq 10$  followers
  - 4 Unleaked posts from Zhanggong exclusive 50c weibo accounts

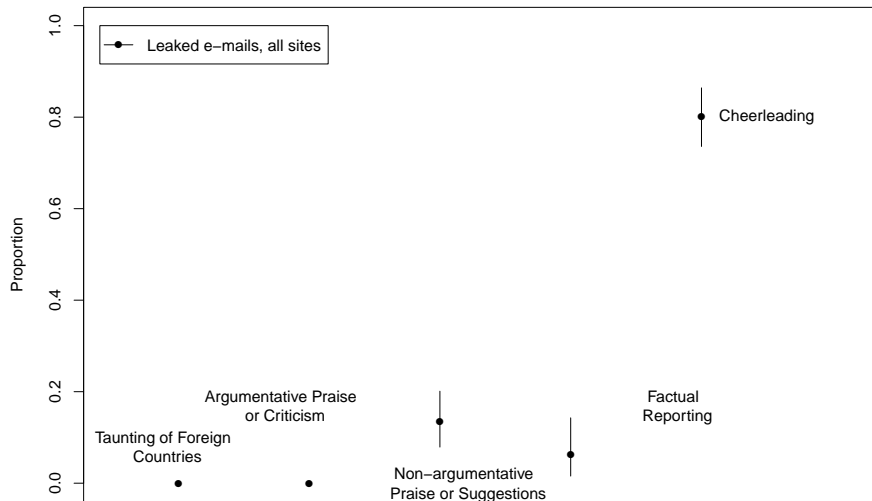


# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

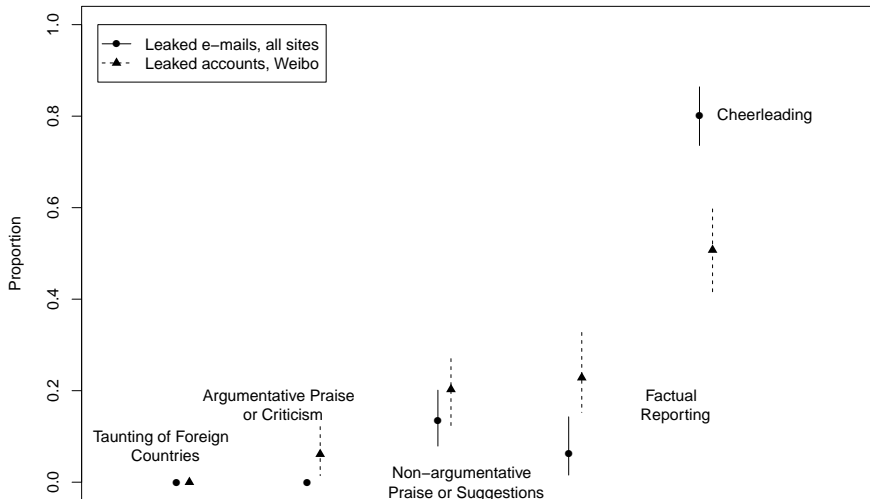
- Estimate distribution of posts across 5 categories (‘‘readme,’’ Hopkins & King 2010)
  - Taunting of foreign countries (prevailing view)
  - Argumentative praise or criticism
  - Non-argumentative praise or suggestions
  - Factual reporting (our evidence)
  - Cheerleading
- Separate analyses — from Zhanggong to China:
  - 1 Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
  - 2 Leaked Zhanggong 50c weibo accounts: 167,971 posts
  - 3 Partition accounts for extrapolation (using Bayesian falling rule lists) into *ordinary* (59%) & *exclusive* (41%)
    - ↪ Accounts that engage with Zhanggong weibo
    - ↪  $\leq 10$  followers
  - 4 Unleaked posts from Zhanggong exclusive 50c weibo accounts
  - 5 Unleaked posts from exclusive 50c weibo accounts across China

# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts

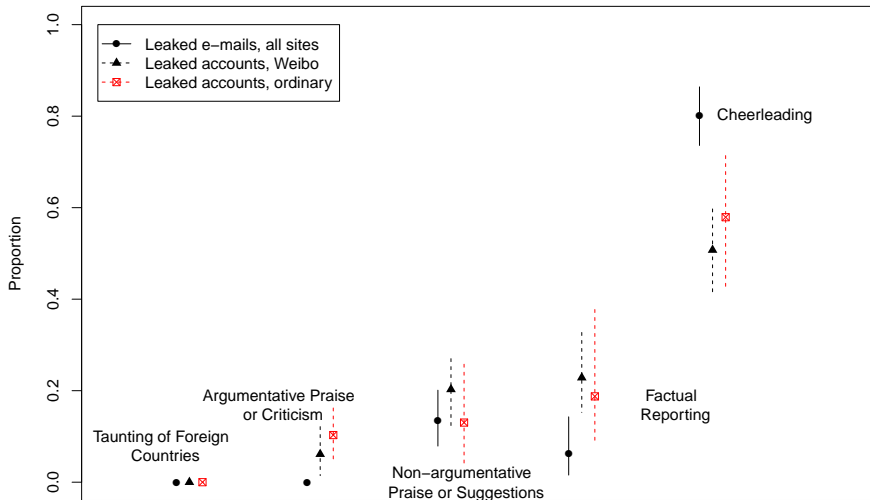
# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



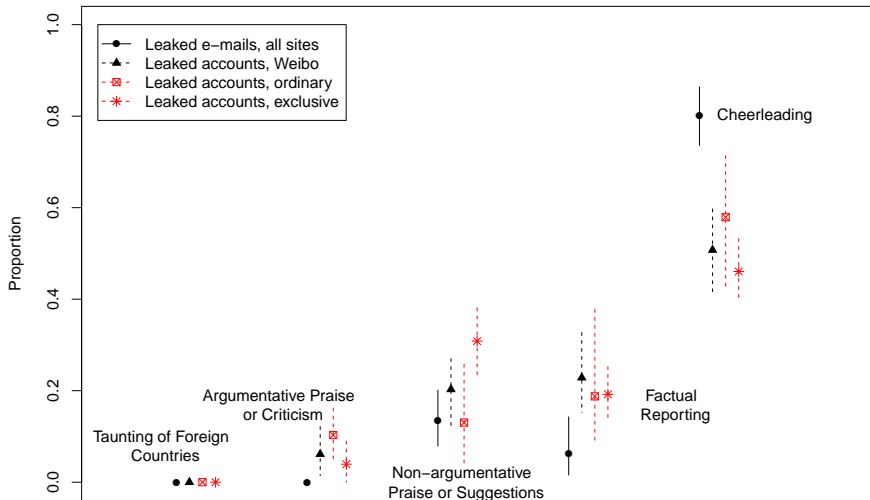
# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



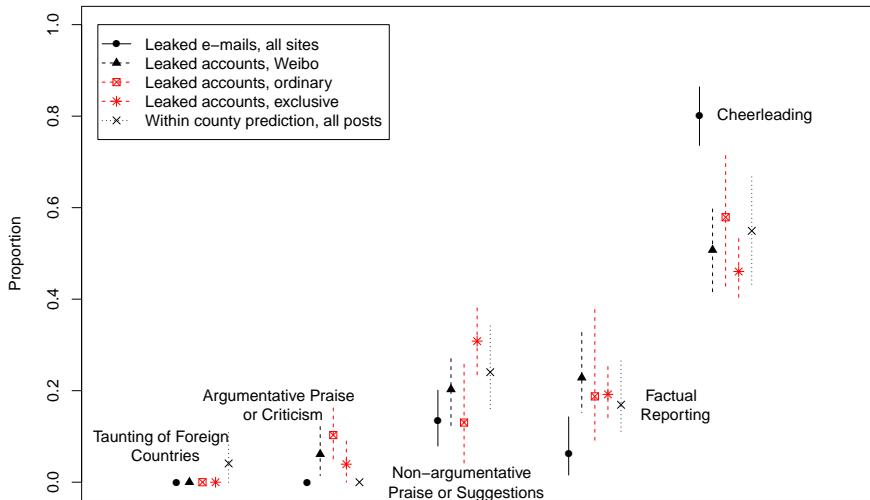
# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



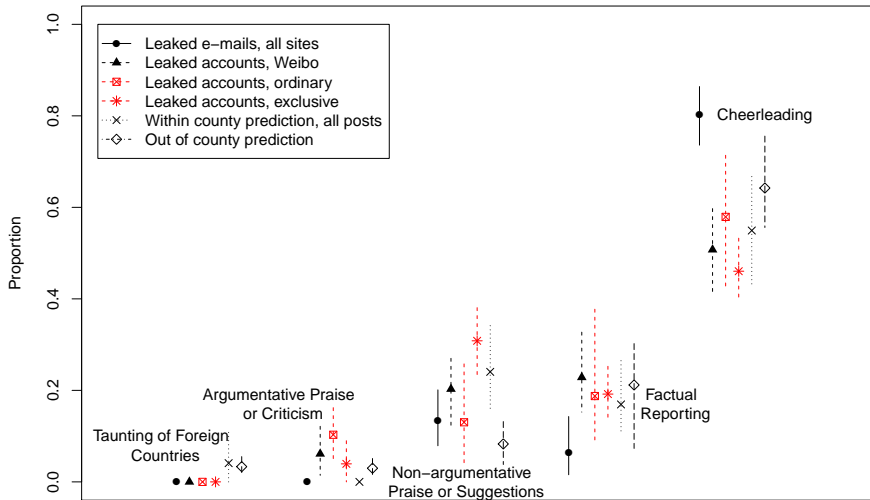
# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts





## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China:

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong:

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province:

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province: 10.65 M

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province: 10.65 M
- Number of 50c Posts in China:



## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province: 10.65 M
- Number of 50c Posts in China: 448 M

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

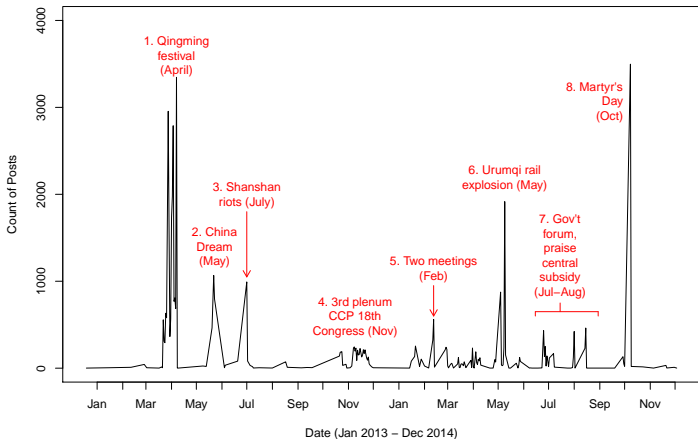
- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province: 10.65 M
- Number of 50c Posts in China: 448 M
  - 53% on government sites (a noticeable proportion of all)

## Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

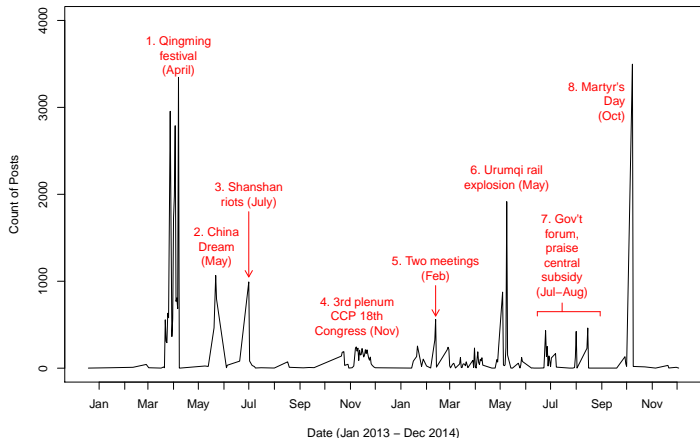
- Number of social media posts in China: >80.4 B
- Number of 50c Posts in Zhanggong: 154,216
- Number of 50c Posts in Jiangxi Province: 10.65 M
- Number of 50c Posts in China: 448 M
  - 53% on government sites (a noticeable proportion of all)
  - 47% on commercial sites (1 of every 178 posts)

## 43,797 Zhanggong 50c Posts: Highly Coordinated

# 43,797 Zhanggong 50c Posts: Highly Coordinated

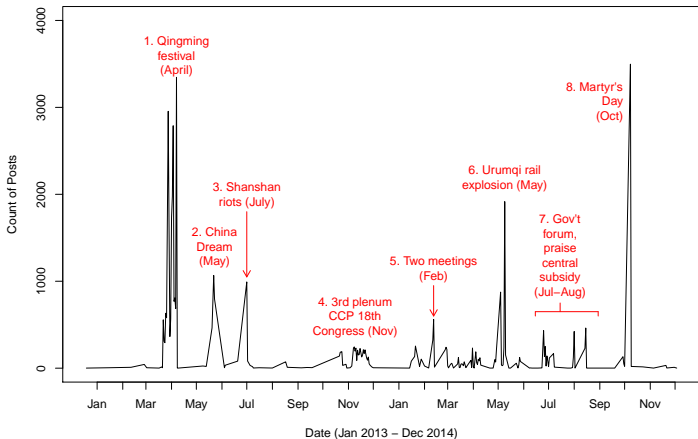


# 43,797 Zhanggong 50c Posts: Highly Coordinated



- Coordinated bursts, many for events with collective action potential

# 43,797 Zhanggong 50c Posts: Highly Coordinated



- Coordinated bursts, many for events with collective action potential
- A clear measure of government intent.

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?



# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions? Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job:

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*,

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions? Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more



# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- The Survey:

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- The Survey:
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- The Survey:
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- The Survey:
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- **Not your optimal survey respondents:**
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- **The Survey:**
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- Not your optimal survey respondents:
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- The Survey:
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging
  - Specially designed, pre-tested survey question:

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- **Not your optimal survey respondents:**
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- **The Survey:**
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging
  - Specially designed, pre-tested survey question: *"I saw your comment, it's really inspiring, I want to ask, do you have any public opinion guidance management, or online commenting experience?"*

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- **Not your optimal survey respondents:**
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- **The Survey:**
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging
  - Specially designed, pre-tested survey question: *"I saw your comment, it's really inspiring, I want to ask, do you have any public opinion guidance management, or online commenting experience?"*
- **Validating the Validation**



# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- **Not your optimal survey respondents:**
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- **The Survey:**
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging
  - Specially designed, pre-tested survey question: *"I saw your comment, it's really inspiring, I want to ask, do you have any public opinion guidance management, or online commenting experience?"*
- **Validating the Validation**
  - Ask same question of random sample of *known* 50c (from Zhanggong)

# How Can We Validate 50c Party Membership Predictions?

## Let's ask them(!)

- **Not your optimal survey respondents:**
  - Their job: to intentionally *mislead*, about the subject of the survey
  - Take orders from an *uncompromising government*
  - Their *employer*: The government
  - *Potentially at stake*: their job, or more
- **The Survey:**
  - *Random sample* of predicted 50c accounts
  - Follow extensive literature on asking sensitive questions
  - Carefully study local social media context
  - Administer *double blind* survey via direct messaging
  - Specially designed, pre-tested survey question: *"I saw your comment, it's really inspiring, I want to ask, do you have any public opinion guidance management, or online commenting experience?"*
- **Validating the Validation**
  - Ask same question of random sample of *known* 50c (from Zhanggong)
  - Ask same question of accounts *known not to be* 50c

# Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

# Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status

Origin

Percent Yes

---

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	57%



## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	57%
Known "Not" 50c	Random sample	

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	57%
Known "Not" 50c	Random sample	19%

## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	57%
Known "Not" 50c	Random sample	19%

not significantly different



## Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	59%
Known 50c	Leaked Zhanggong Archive	57%
Known "Not" 50c	Random sample	19%

significantly different



# Validation by the Chinese Government

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . .

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:



## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government,

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?”

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government,



## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said:

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ”

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website:

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%
  - Supportive posts on (more representative) Weibo:



## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%
  - Supportive posts on (more representative) Weibo: 30%

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%
  - Supportive posts on (more representative) Weibo: 30%
  - Results indicate:

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%
  - Supportive posts on (more representative) Weibo: 30%
  - Results indicate: figures are accurate,

## Validation by the Chinese Government

- Privately sharing draft paper among colleagues. . . does not last
- The Chinese government responds with an editorial in the nationalist, CCP-controlled *Global Times*:
  - Published only in Chinese, revealing a focus only on their own people
  - Admits to the existence of the 50c party
  - Confirms veracity of our leaked archive
  - Summarizes our results, takes no issue with any of our conclusions
  - Acknowledges the purpose of public opinion guidance is to stop the spread of “grassroots social issues” with collective action potential
- ≈ posing a survey question to the government, “Do you agree with our results?” And the government, effectively said: “yes”
- Why would they do this?
  - Editorial: “Chinese society is generally in agreement regarding the necessity of ‘public opinion guidance’ ” — a testable hypothesis!
  - Supportive comments on the nationalist website: 82%
  - Supportive posts on (more representative) Weibo: 30%
  - Results indicate: figures are accurate, the regime has a problem

# Theoretical Implications

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism



# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances



# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed)

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known
    - Collective action (not allowed)

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known
    - Collective action (not allowed) big problem, emergency action required

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known
    - Collective action (not allowed) big problem, emergency action required
  - Arguments never end arguments; but distraction does

# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known
    - Collective action (not allowed) big problem, emergency action required
  - Arguments never end arguments; but distraction does
- For future research:



# Theoretical Implications

- For China:
  - Do not engage on controversial issues:
    - No censoring of criticism
    - No 50c posts arguing against criticism
  - Stop collective action:
    - Respond to grievances to prevent collective action
    - Censor discussion of real-world collective action
    - Distract with cheerleading and positive valence
- For authoritarian regimes:
  - Scholars have thought autocrats want to
    - ↓ common knowledge of grievances  $\rightsquigarrow$  ↑ cost of coordination
  - We find: China has two versions of common knowledge
    - Grievances (allowed) no problem, already well known
    - Collective action (not allowed) big problem, emergency action required
  - Arguments never end arguments; but distraction does
- For future research:
  - WHEN STUDIED AT SCALE, CHINESE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CONTROLS LEAVE BIG FOOTPRINTS.

## For more information



[GaryKing.org](http://GaryKing.org)



[JenPan.com](http://JenPan.com)



[MargaretRoberts.net](http://MargaretRoberts.net)