Fabricating News In Chinese Social Media[1]

Gary King[2]

Institute for Quantitative Social Science
Harvard University

Congress of the Mexican Political Science Association,
University of Quintana Roo, Cancun, Mexico, 9/17/2017

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[1]Based on joint work with Jennifer Pan (Stanford) and Margaret Roberts (UCSD)
[2]GaryKing.org

Papers

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- Empirical Results:

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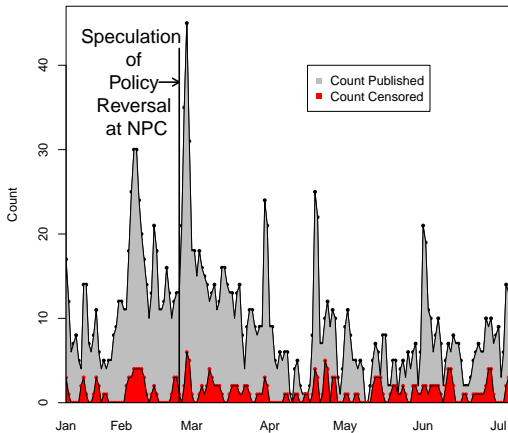
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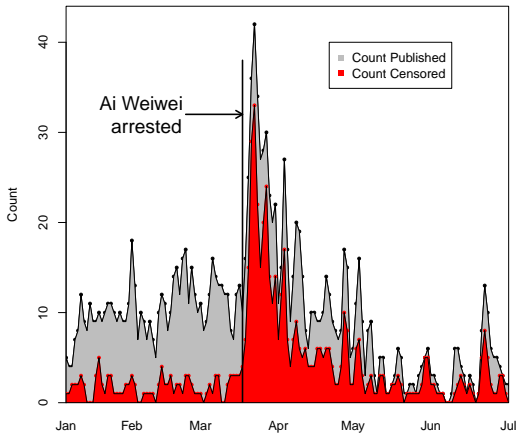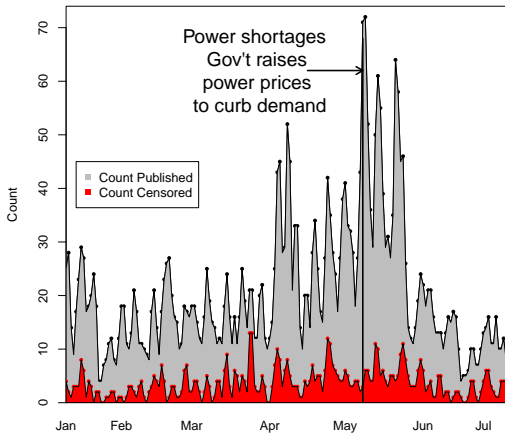
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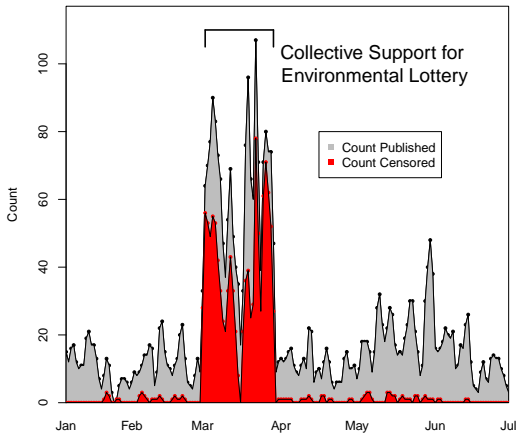
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Goal of China's 50c Party

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   It's antidisestablishmentarianism!

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

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- 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

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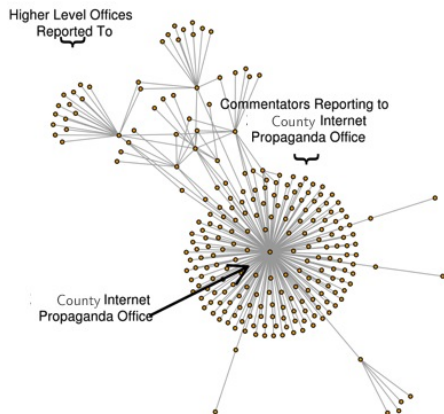
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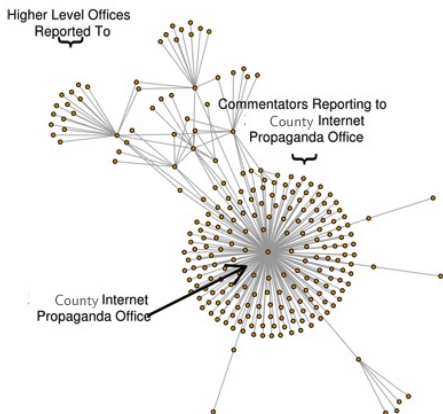- Decipher Leaked emails
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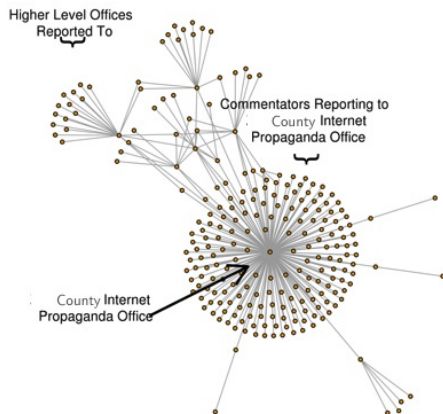
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Higher Level Offices Reported To

Commentators Reporting to County Internet Propaganda Office

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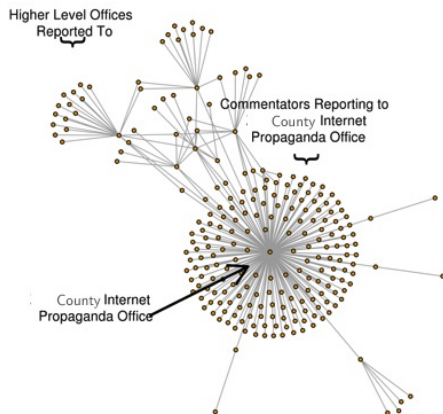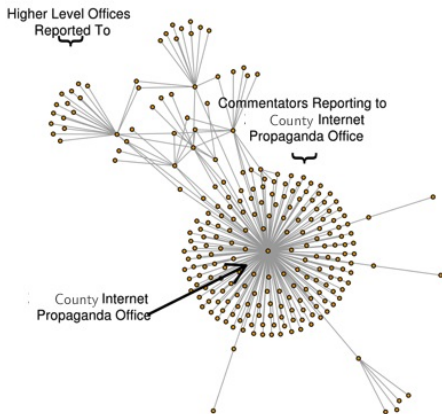
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  1. Leaked Zhanggong 50c posts: 43,797 posts
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Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

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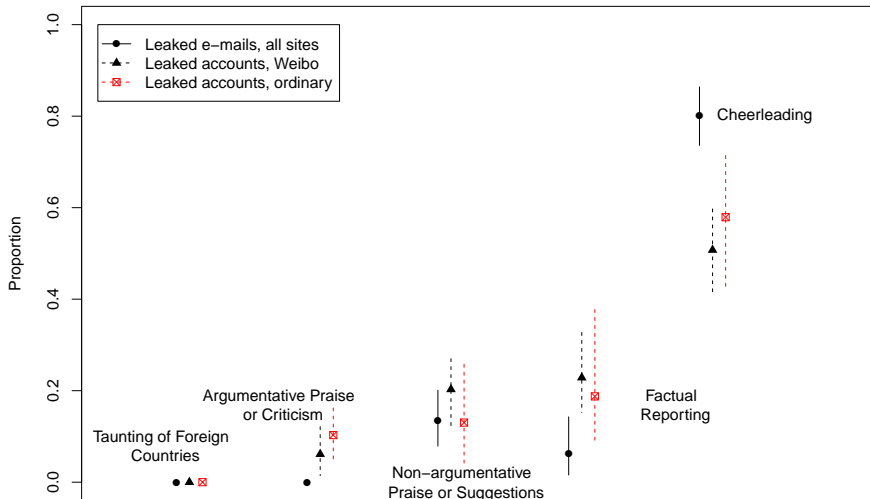
Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts
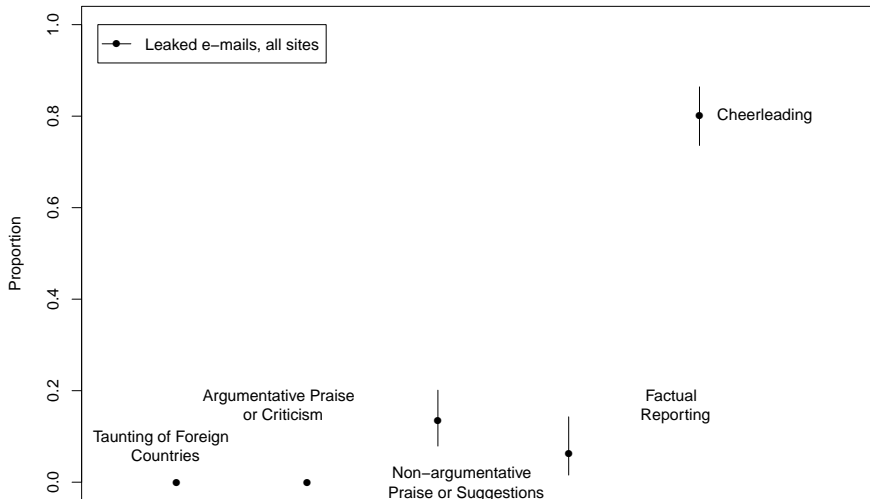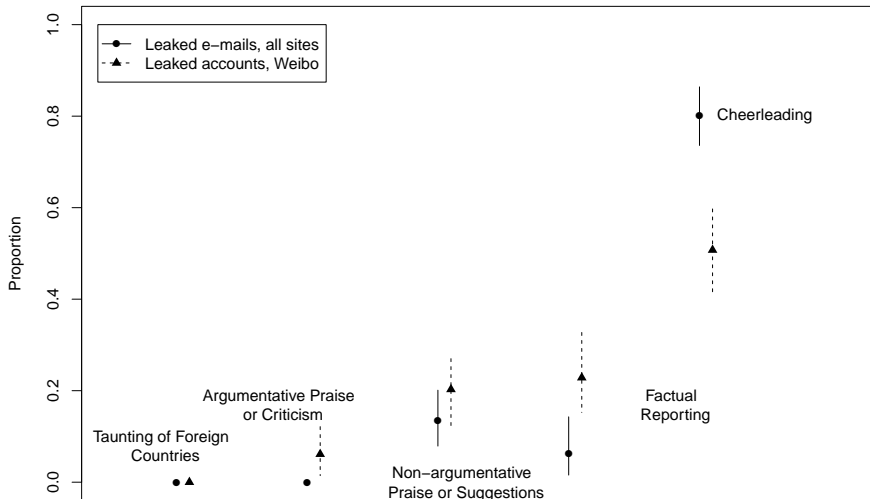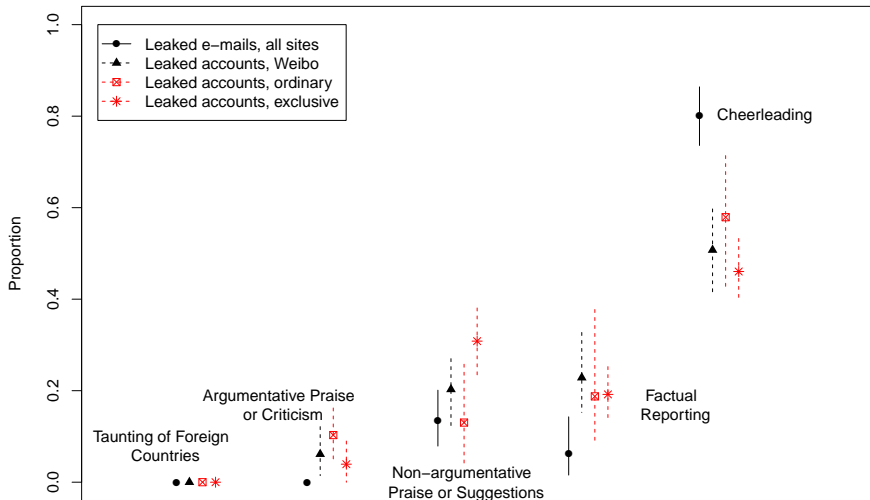
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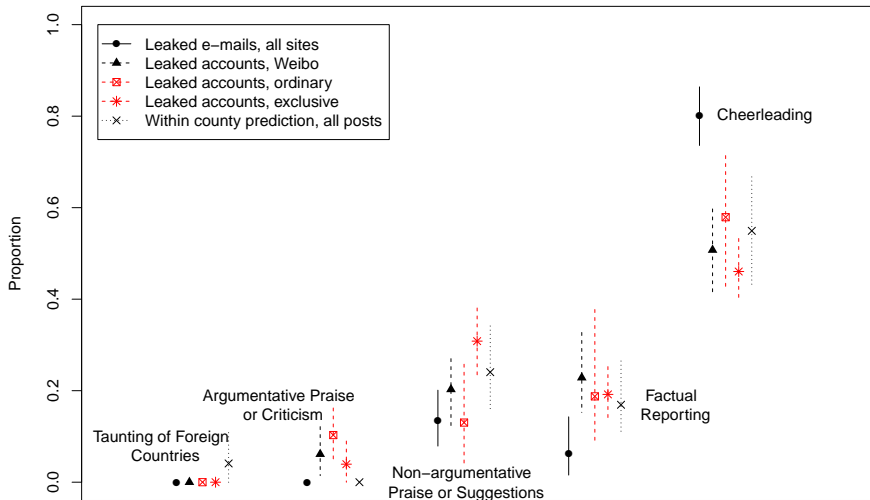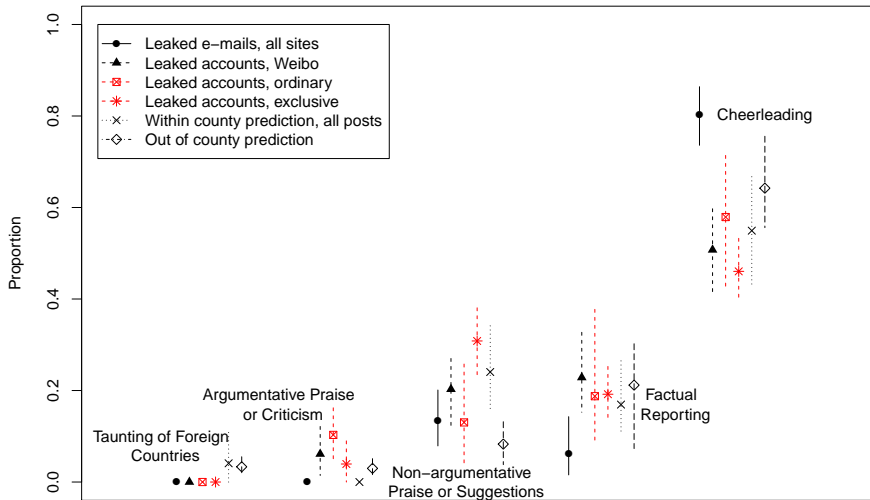
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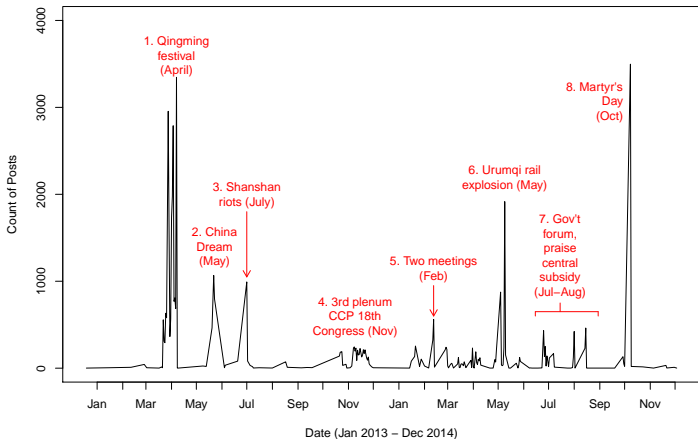
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43,797 Zhanggong 50c Posts: Highly Coordinated
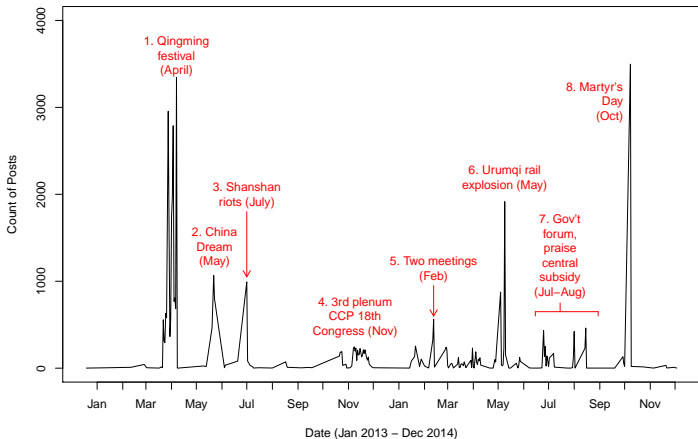
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Date (Jan 2013 – Dec 2014)
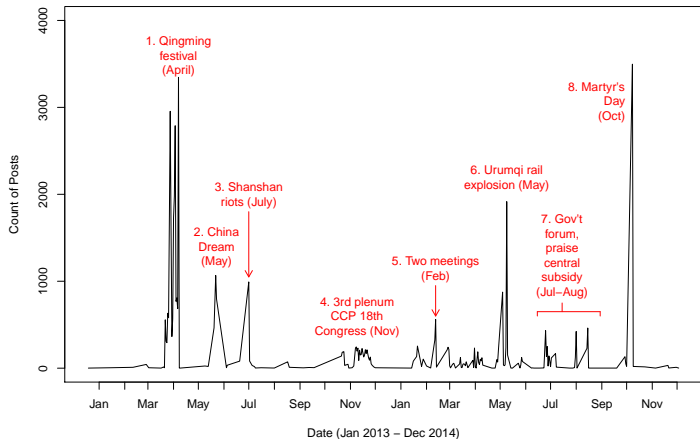
- Coordinated bursts, many for events with collective action potential
- A clear measure of government intent.

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Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes

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50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	

Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
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not significantly different

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- 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
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- For future research:
  - When studied at scale, chinese government information controls leave big footprints.

For more information

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