

How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument¹

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Washington University, St. Louis, 2/13/2017

¹Based on joint work with Jennifer Pan (Stanford) and Margaret Roberts (UCSD)

²GaryKing.org

Papers

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- Empirical Results:

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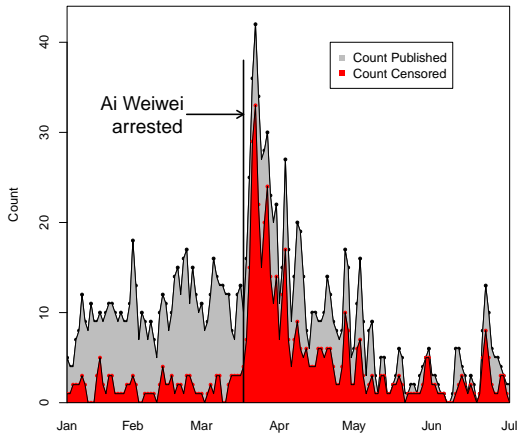
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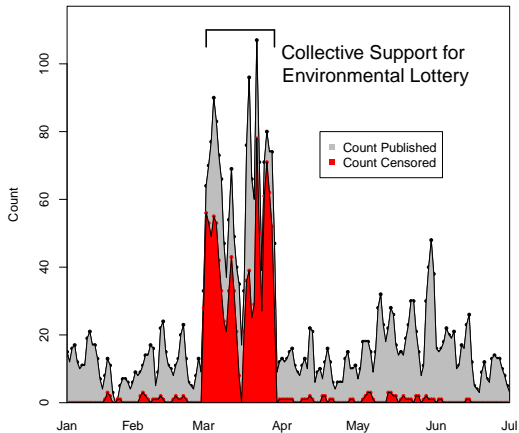
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 - Disagreements between central and local leaders

Censorship Reveals Government Goals

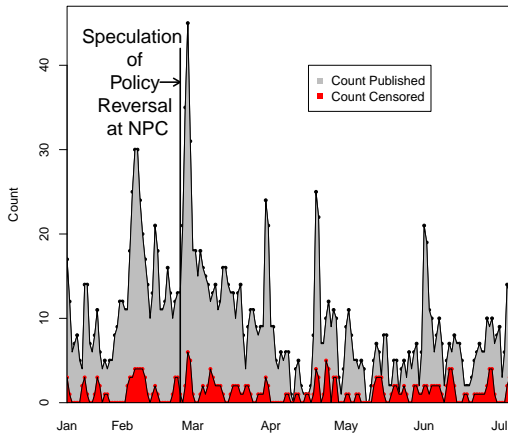
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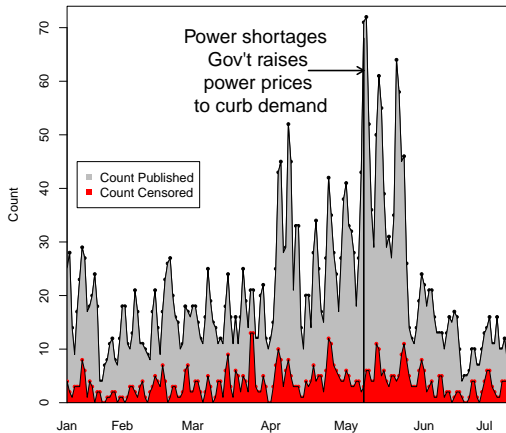
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Censorship Reveals Government Goals



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It's antisestablishmentarianism!

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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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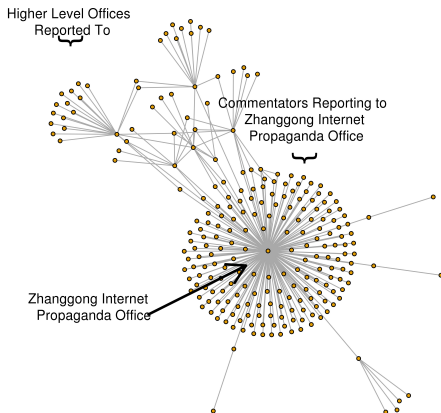
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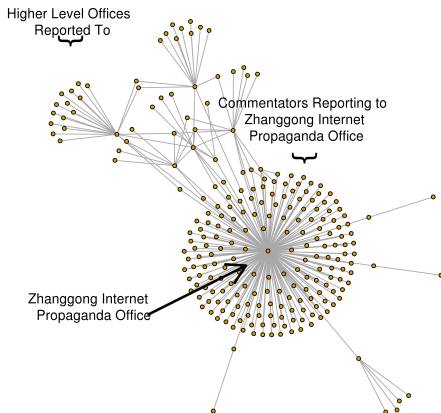
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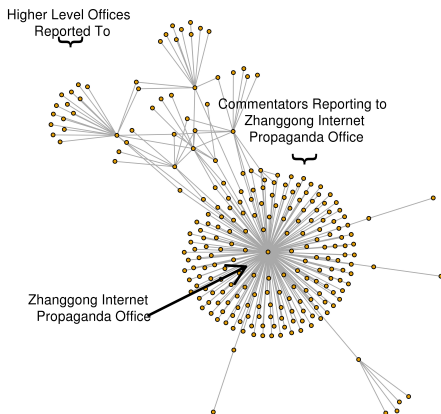


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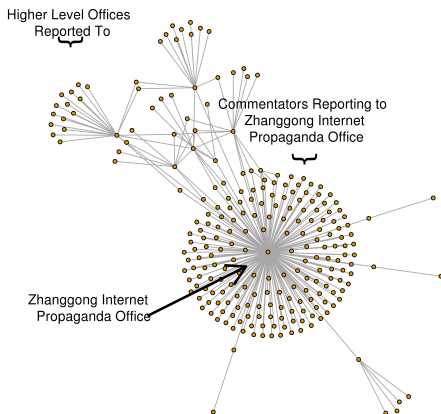
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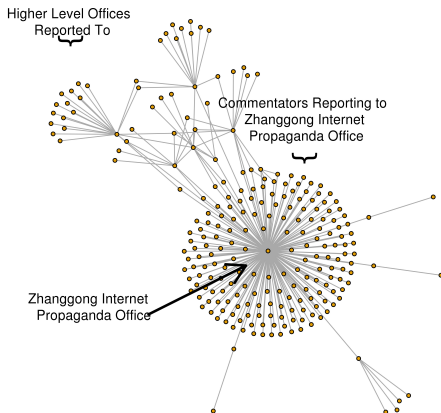
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 - **No evidence of 50c (or any piecemeal) payments;** probably part of their jobs

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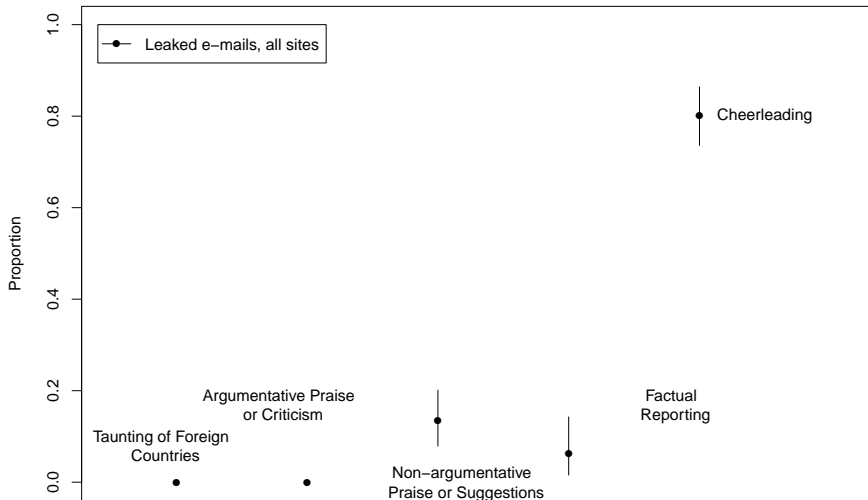
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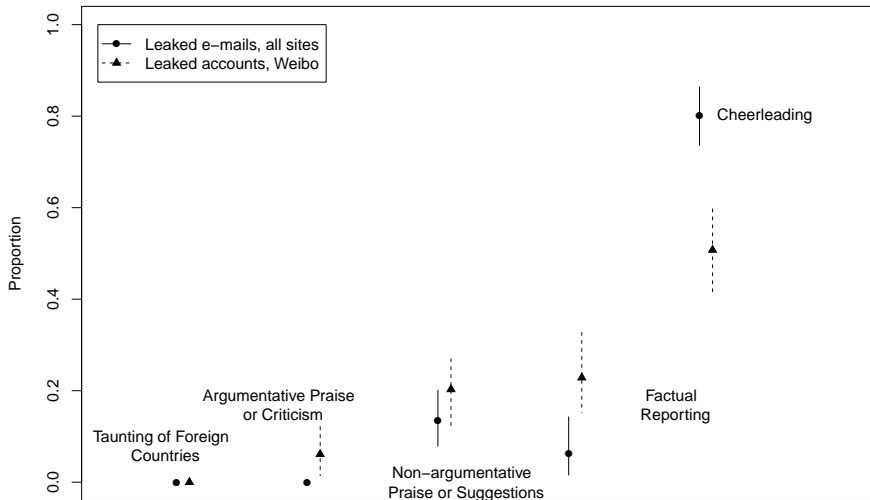
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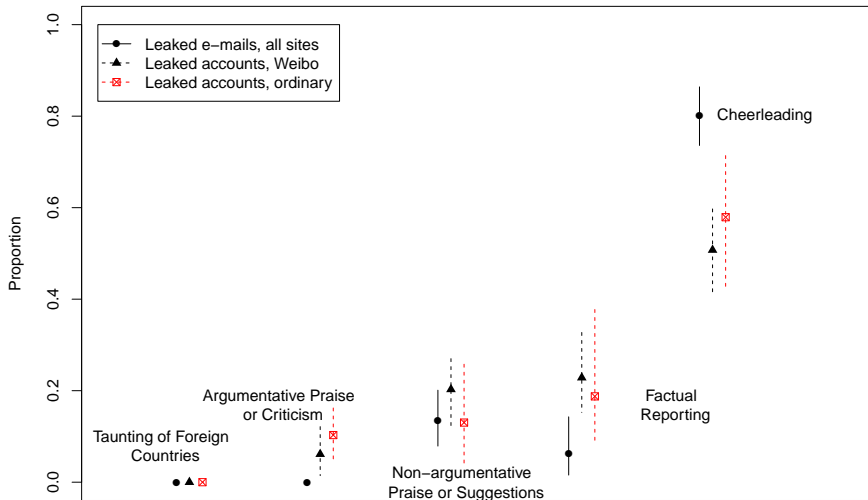
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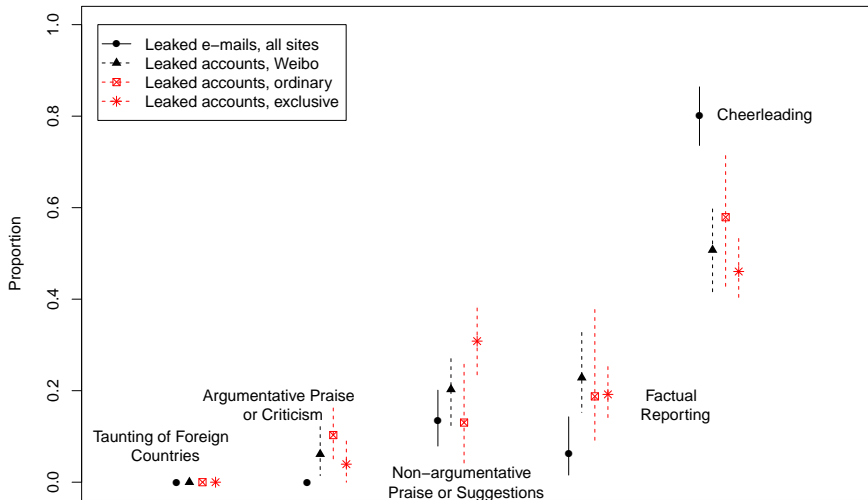
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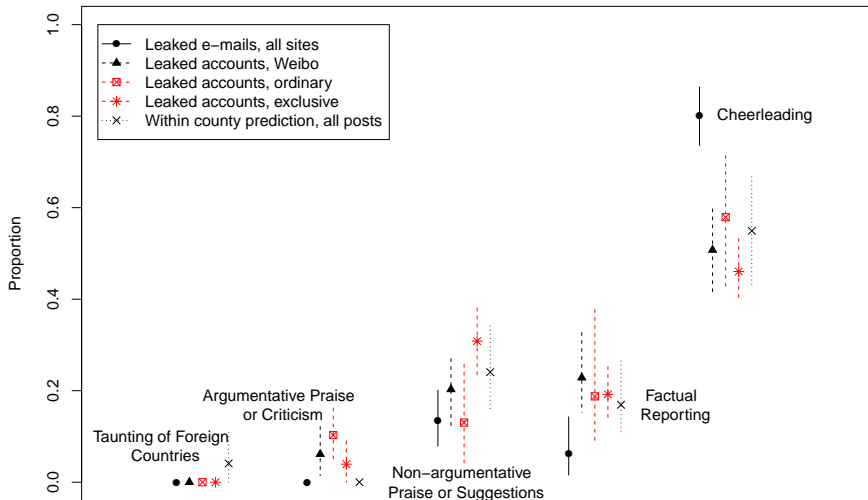
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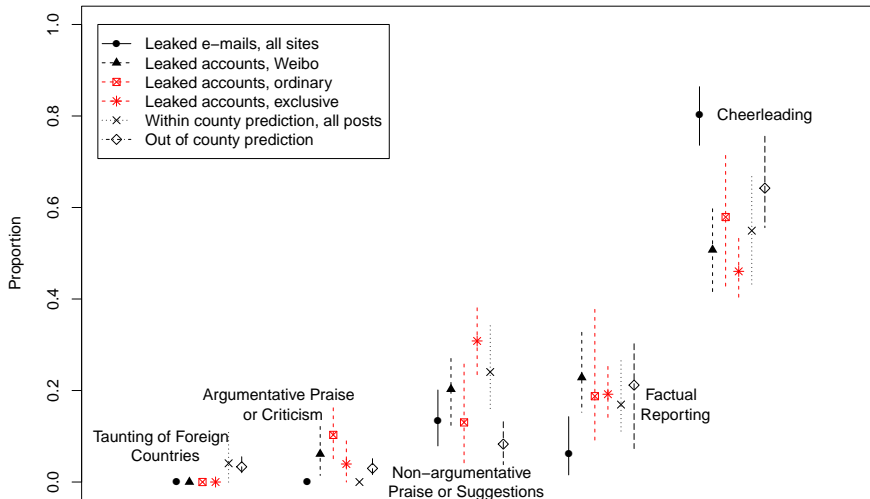
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Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts



Size of the 50c Party (in 2013)

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- Number of 50c Posts in China: 448 M

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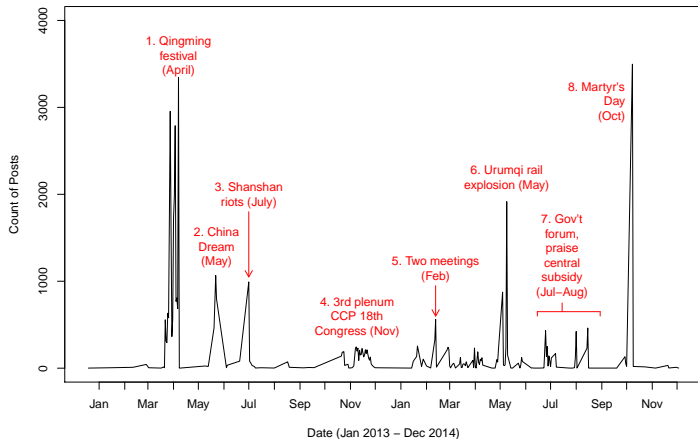
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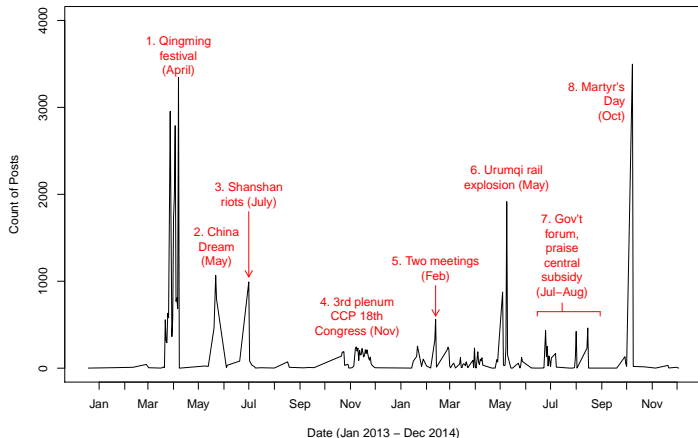
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- Number of 50c Posts in China: 448 M
 - 53% on government sites (a noticeable proportion of all)
 - 47% on commercial sites (1 of every 178 posts)

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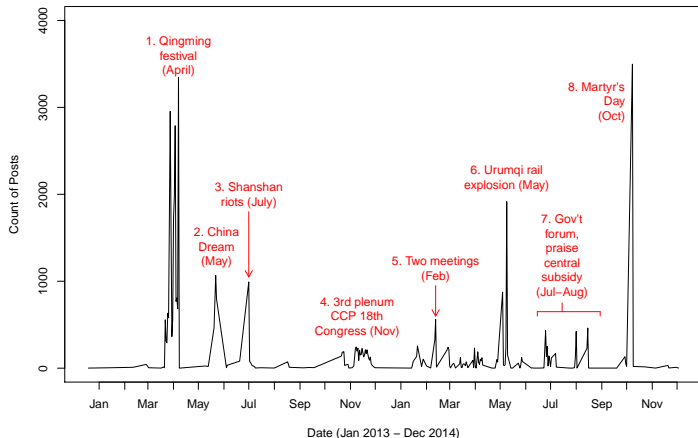


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- Coordinated bursts, many for events with collective action potential
- A clear measure of government intent.

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 - 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

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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%

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Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
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not significantly different



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- 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

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- WHEN STUDIED AT SCALE, CHINESE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CONTROLS LEAVE BIG FOOTPRINTS.

For more information



GaryKing.org



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