

# How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument<sup>1</sup>

Gary King<sup>2</sup>

Institute for Quantitative Social Science  
Harvard University

US Government, 7/28/2016

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

<sup>2</sup>GaryKing.org

# Papers

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  - Common name: “50c Party” members



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    - Disagreements between central and local leaders

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*“posting information favorable to the regime and chastising its critics” (Deibert and Rohozinski, 2010)*



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*“undercover pro-government Internet commenters” (Foreign Policy)*

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*“neutralize undesirable public opinion by pushing pro-Party views” (Far Eastern Economic Review)*

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*"If you oppose the US and Japan [online], you are a member of the 50 cents army" (artist-dissident Ai Weiwei)*

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*“Combat hostile energy [which should be] resolutely resisted, proactively refuted, and eagerly reported to Internet authorities” (Haley, 2012)*

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65% *argue* with critics of the regime

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It's antisestablishmentarianism!

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- **Distracts**; redirects public attention from criticism and central issues to **cheerleading** and positive discussions of valence issues

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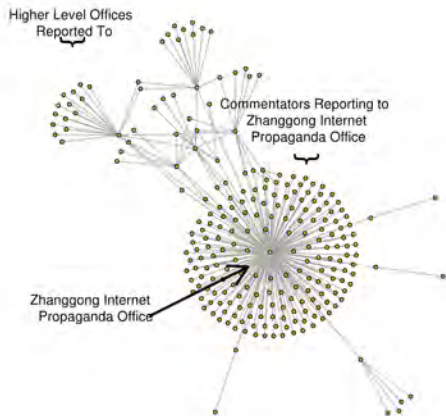
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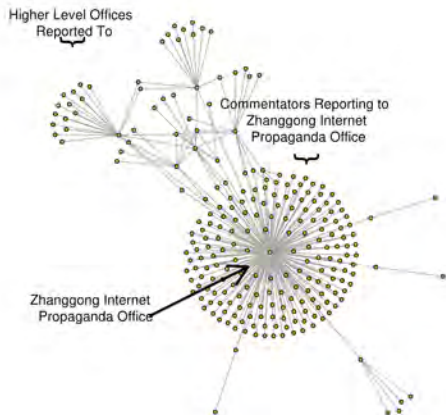
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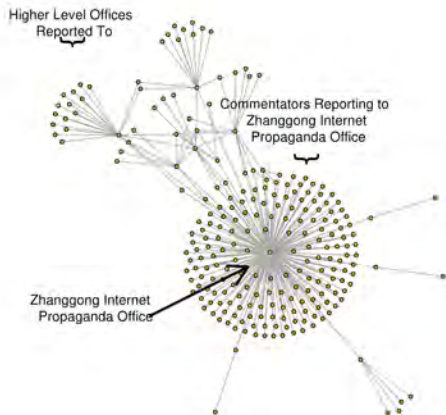


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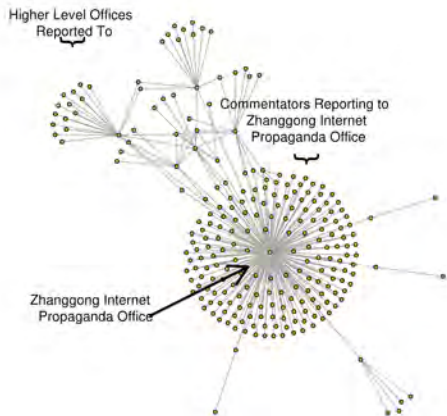
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  - **No evidence of 50c (or any piecemeal) payments;** probably part of their jobs



# Categories and Analyses of 50c Party Posts

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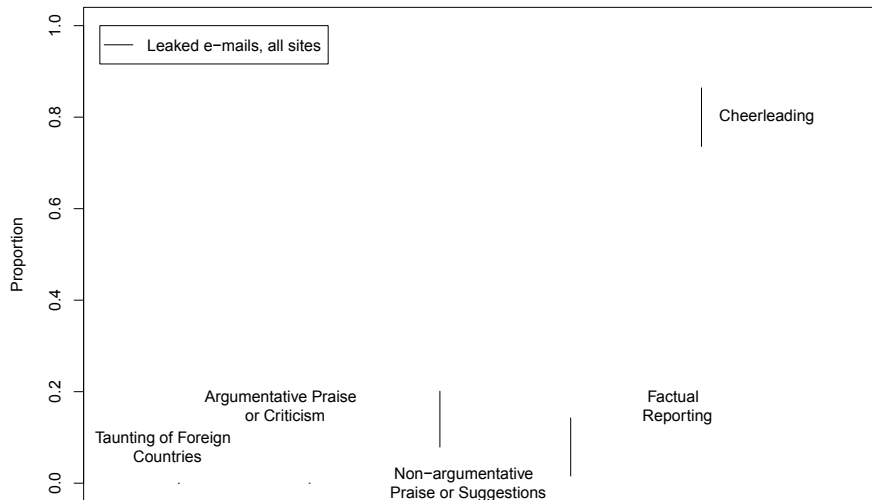
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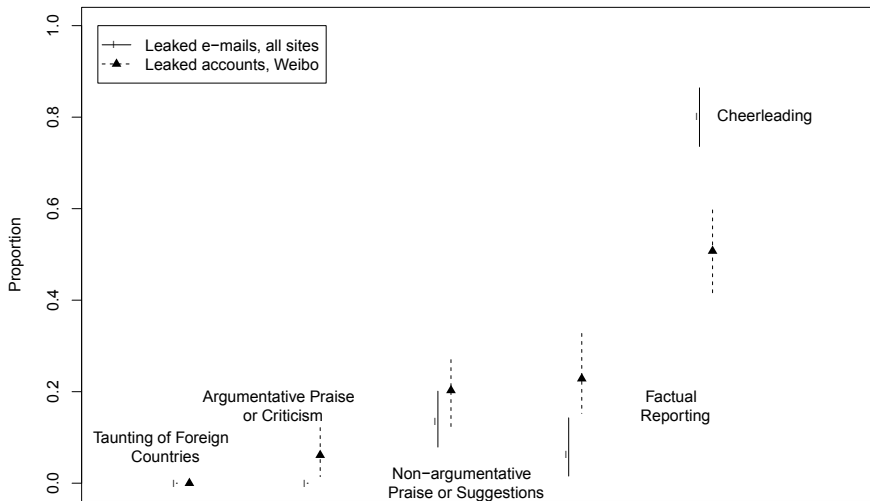
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# Content of Leaked and Predicted 50c Party Posts

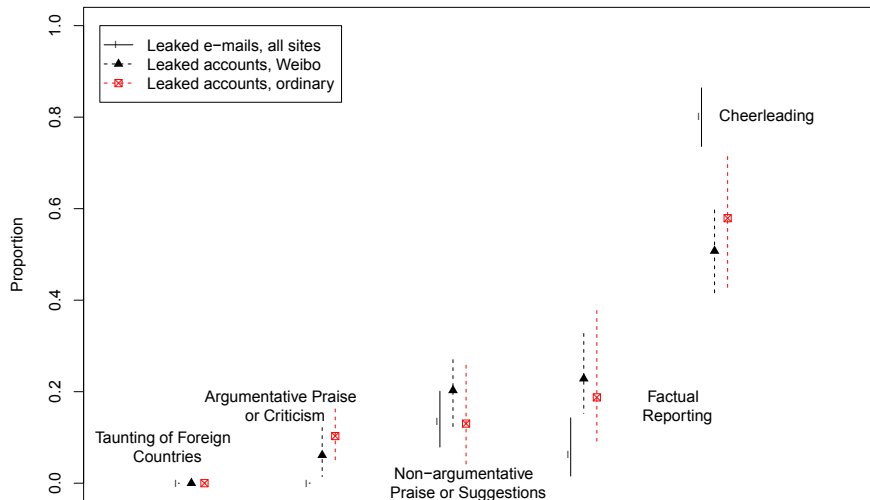
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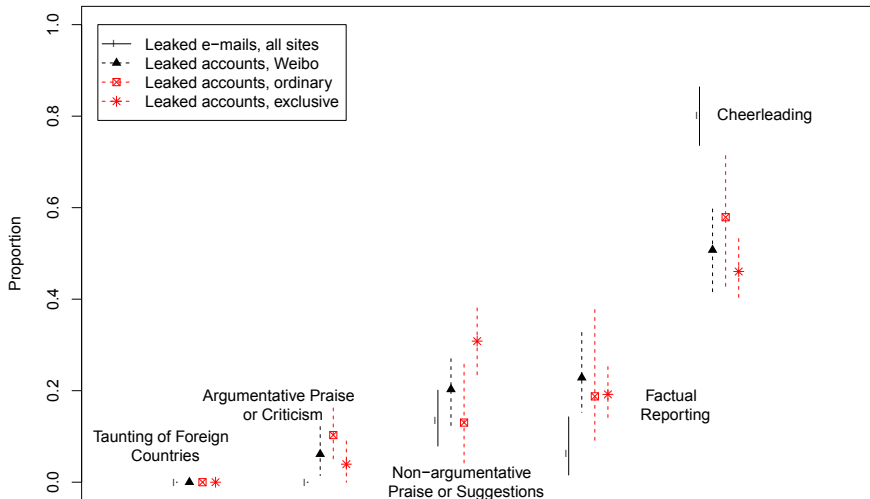
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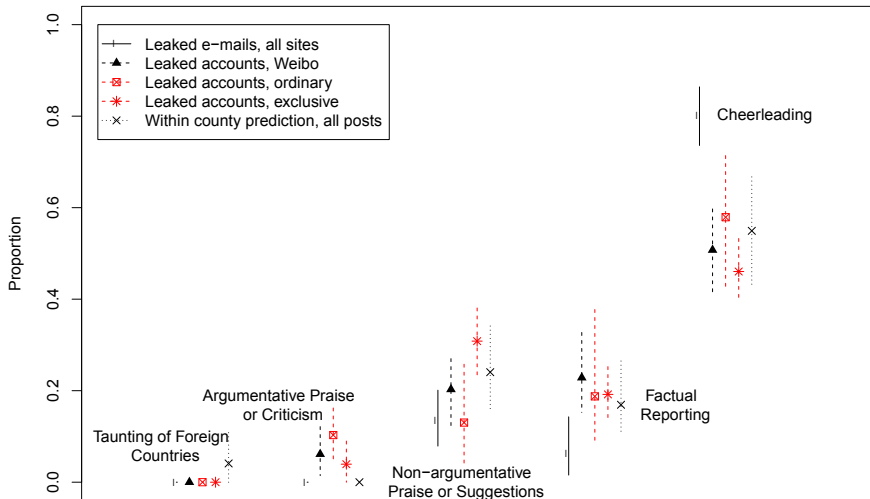


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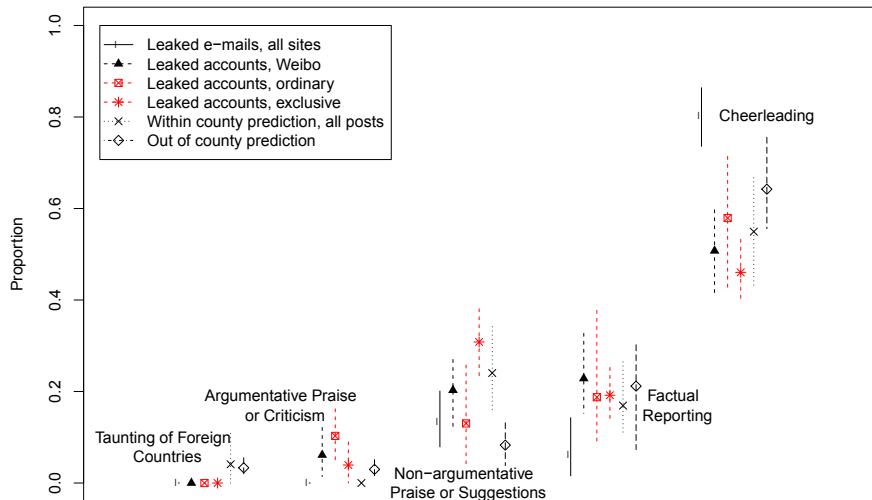




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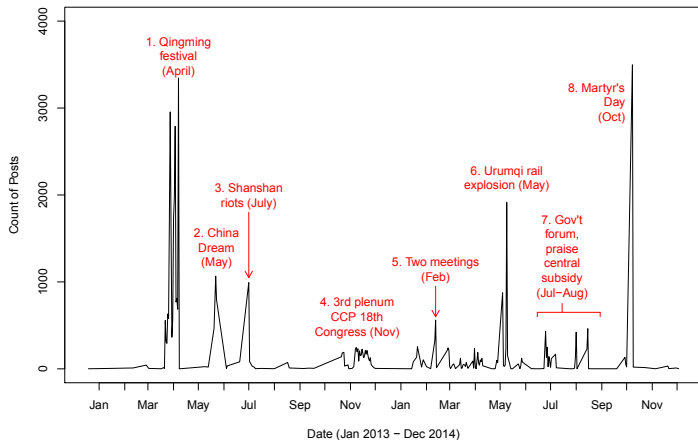
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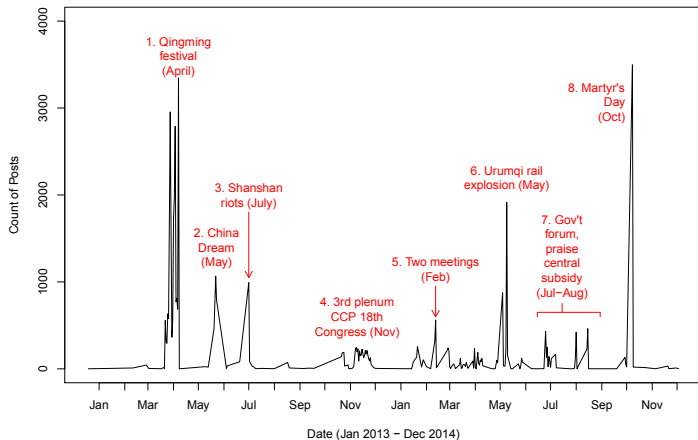
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Coordinated bursts, many for events with collective action potential



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# Survey Validation of 50c Party Membership Predictions

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50c Status

Origin

Percent Yes

---

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50c Status	Origin	Percent Yes
Predicted 50c	Across China	

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

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## For more information



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



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



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