

# **Understanding The Ideological Stances of Chinese Opinion Leaders:**

A Story told by **Social Media Data**

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# Research Question One

1. How to measure Chinese opinion leaders' ideological preferences?

- ~~Party Affiliation~~

- ~~Polls/Vote~~

- ~~Survey~~

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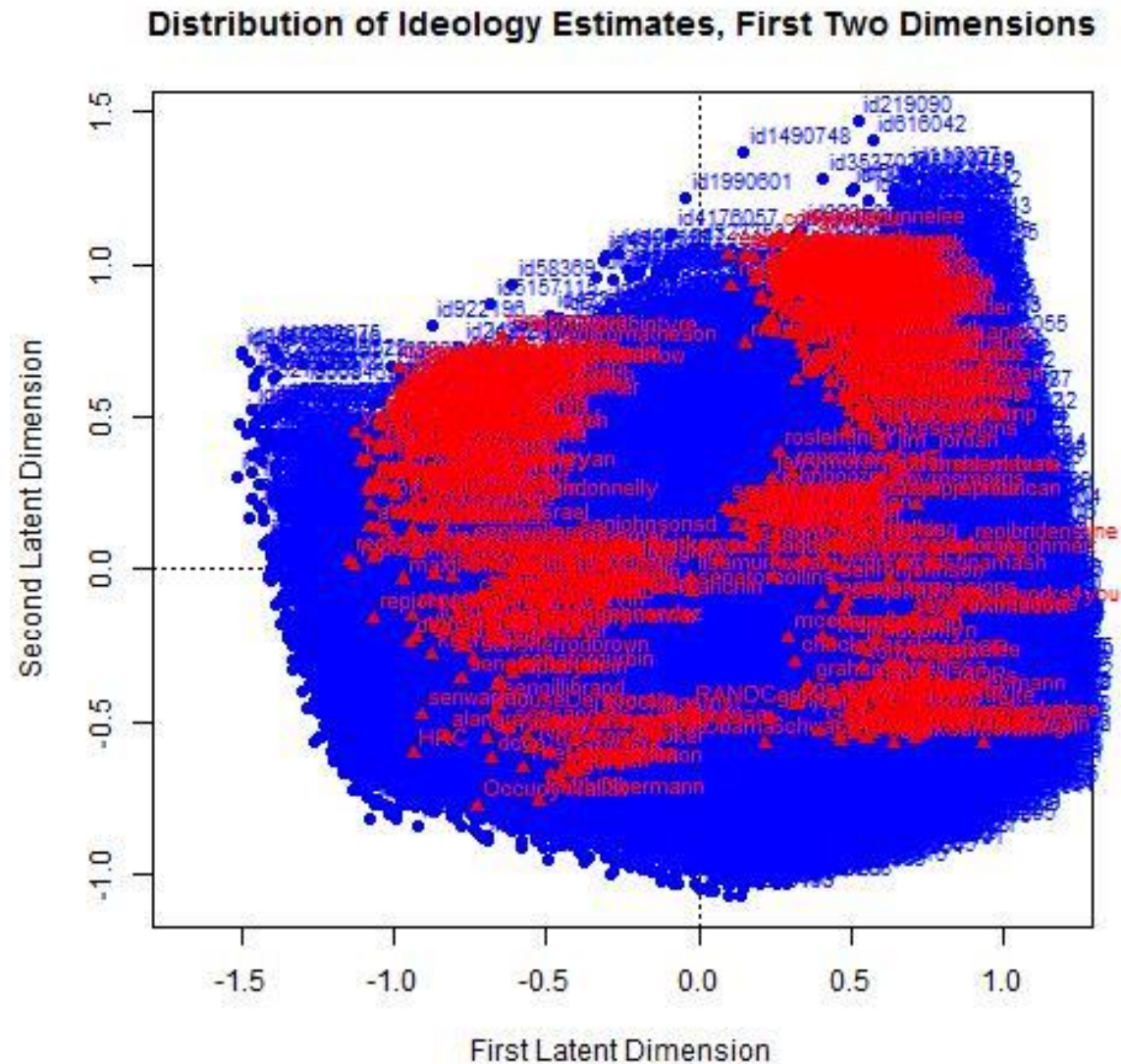
# Method

$$p(Y_{ij} = 1 \mid \alpha_i, \beta_j, d_{ij}) = \text{Logit}(\alpha_i + \beta_j - d_{ij}),$$

$\alpha_i$  : the “out degree” of an ordinary user  $i$ ;

$\beta_j$ : the “in degree” of an opinion leader  $j$ .

*d*: the distance between *i* and *j* in the ideological space



Barberá, P., Jost, J. T., Nagler, J., Tucker, J. A., & Bonneau, R. (2015). Tweeting From Left to Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than an Echo Chamber? *Psychological Science*, doi: 10.1177/0956797615594620.

# Research Question Two

2. How to make sense of the ideological clustering?

- It is also a **validation** of the original estimation.

\*\* Note that the connotations of the political “left” and “right” are very different in China from what they mean in western societies.

## Research Question Two

What opinion leaders talk about when they talk about “**democracy**”?



# Method

Social media posts mentioning “Democracy/民主”

< 140 characters **short texts**

- Topic detection: LDA? v.s. Hierarchical clustering
  - Word embedding: W2V model
    - Qualitative reading



# Data

- 2.7 billion **posts** produced by over 170 million active users in 2013 on **Weibo**, plus their user profiles (**following relationships**), obtained via APIs.
- 228 opinion leaders identified. [e.g. Ren Zhiqiang(任志强), Sun Liping(孙立平), Wuyue Sanren(五岳散人), Zuoyeben(作业本), Sima Nan(司马南), Hu Xijin(胡锡进), Dai Xu(戴旭), Cai Xiaoxin(蔡小心)...]



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	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Follower count	2272875	4904651	24799	3.45e+07
Following count	1385.25	895.45	0	3685
Friends count	1143.53	791.16	0	3623
2013 post count	443.21	434.70	30	3092

- IRB approved.

# Expected outcomes

- 1. Getting ideological positions (and clustering) of Chinese opinion leaders.
  - Easy to extend to ordinary people.
  - **One of the pioneering studies** to measure ideological preferences of Chinese people using observational data.
- 2. Interpreting the ideological stances of different opinion leader clusters.
  - Understanding the specific connotations of “democracy” in the Chinese context.
  - What are people’s opinions towards democracy? → joining in the scholarly efforts to **explain the (lack of) democratization** process in China.