

# “Bro Bro China Flies at Wills” : Political Idolization in China

## A Literature Review

WANG Chuyao, NG Ting Yin, LI Jingchen

HKUST

November 10, 2020

# Outline

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review and Hypotheses
3. Question and Answer

# Outline

## 1. Introduction

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

## 3. Question and Answer

## Political Idolization: Individual-level

- Media start to notice a recent phenomenon of idolizing Donald Trump. (The New York Times, 2017; The Rolling Stone, 2019; The Observer, 2020).
- This is particularly popular in China.
  - ▶ On Bilibili, netizens call him CHUAN Jianguo (川建國) as an imaginary Chinese spy mess the US up (The New York Times, 2020).



## Political Idolization: Country-level

- We theorize Political Idolization as a process idolizing any political entity in political discourse.
- Apart from the idolizing an individual, a country can even be idolized.
- Fandom Girls (飯圈女孩) **idolizes China** as “Bro Bro China” (阿中哥哥) and produces fanatic slogans **in the expedition to Facebook** in August 2019, in line with earlier actions by Diba (帝吧) against “HK independence” .

## Political Idolization: Country-level



苍逸\_cy

香港永远是中国的一部分 人气top大中国 ! 💎💎💎  
🌈 实力国家大中国 ! 💎💎💎 🌈 可爱宝贝大  
中国 ! 💎💎💎 世界天王大中国 ! 🌈 国泰民  
安大中国 ! 💎💎💎 🌈 你的爸爸大中国 ! 🌈  
独一无二大中国 ! 💎💎💎 无与伦比大中国 ! 地球  
仙子大中国 ! 💎💎💎



LieberSperling 🌟

我家哥哥出道几千年💖 现存最古老文明💖 超算排  
行包揽世界第一第二💖 专利申请世界第一💖 高铁  
长度世界第一💖 航道总长度世界第一💖 “中国天  
眼”FAST工程世界第一💖 “南水北调”世界最大水  
利工程💖 “港珠澳大桥”跨海大桥世界第一长💖 拒  
绝糊咖捆绑, 请关注70周年阅兵军演。💖 哥哥勇  
敢飞, 中唯永相随🇨🇳

Figure 2. Some playful expressions during the 2019 Fandom Girls' Expedition

# Outline

1. Introduction

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

3. Question and Answer



# The Fandom Girls: The Real Little Pink Idolizing China

- Diba: labeled as the *Little Pink*, the inventor of “burst the bar” (爆吧) (Chen & Lin, 2016; Liu, 2019), and the vanguard of protestive expedition to Facebook (The Economist, 2016; Yang & Chen, 2017; Yang et al., 2017).
- However, **Fandom Girls suits the label of the Little Pink more**, with their pick-color boys' love origin, intensive use of anime, comic, game, novel (ACGN) elements and playful expressions to idolize China.

# The Fandom Girls: The Real Little Pink Idolizing China

- Not yet a concrete research comparing the two vectors.
- Diba Expedition in 2016 is found to argue for the superiority of China with **absolute, paternalistic and hierarchical tone** (Ma & Huang, 2017; Guo & Yang, 2016; Wang, 2016; Wang, 2019).
- The Fandom Girls **personifies China as Bro Bro China**:
  - ▶ Bro Bro China flies at wills, Chinese children fly with you (阿中哥哥勇敢飛，中華兒女永相隨).
- Fandom Girls is more related to our aim to understand Political Idolization.

# The Fandom Girls: The Real Little Pink Idolizing China

- Necessary to make a descriptive inference about how Fandom Girls differs from Diba in **expressive characteristics and political idolization**.
- They both retweeted the same posts (Li, 2019), so we can **control the setting** when comparing them.

## Hypothesis One

The Fandom Girls tends add personified and fanatic elements in the responses to the statement of the state media than those by the Diba and is more likely to contribute to political idolization.

# Playfully Idolizing Expressions: The Impact in Political Discussion

- The research outcomes on the effect on adding playfulness in politics **vary**
- Ismangil (2018) observed the **intensified nationalistic sentiments** in online gaming environment. But Kyriakidou (2018) suggested that playful international singing contest can **mitigate nationalistic sediments**.
- Some warn the **danger** of backfire of **inappropriate jokes** (Kramer, 2011) or intrusion of **playfulness in serious discussion** (Edgerly et al., 2016).

# Playfully Idolizing Expressions: The Impact in Political Discussion

- For 2016 Diba Expedition, there are **unsubstantiated claims** that the heavy use of playful memes and parody can **reduce extreme sentiments** (Guo & Yang, 2016; Wang, Li & Wu 2016; Mao & Cai, 2017), or **mitigate confrontations** (China Daily, 2019; The Observer, 2019).
- However, the fanatic words and memes may be considered as **intrusive and offensive**. In the 2019 expedition during Anti-Elab Movement, Hong Kong netizens were antagonized by such and planned a revenge(Chen, 2019).

# Playfully Idolizing Expressions: The Impact in Political Discussion

- Without consensus, it is worth our empirical investigation in knowing whether the feminine and ACGN-toned idolizing approach of the Fandom Girls can mitigate radical sediments or will antagonize the audience.

## Hypothesis Two

The idolized expression by the Fandom Girls are more likely to reduce the radical sentiments in online political discourse than the more patriarchal ones (as may be concluded in Hypothesis One) by the Diba, but may further stimulate extreme sentiments as compared to political expression without such expressions.

## Methodological Review

- In previous studies on the Diba, qualitative and machine enhanced methods both are used when analyzing the expedition data.
- Randomized sampling (Fang & Repnikova, 2018; Yang et al., 2017), choosing the most commented post (Yang et al., 2017), extracting repetitive comments (Wang, 2019) and calculating the word frequency and co-occurrence (Wang, 2019; Wu et al., 2019), helps to **reduce the sample size** and facilitate closed-up analysis in characterizing Diba.

# Methodological Review

- **Dictionary method:** easy and intuitive, heavily depends on the predefined dictionary.
- **Supervised learning:** domain-specific and easy to validate, where a model is trained to predict the remaining data.
- **Unsupervised learning:** explosive, heuristic, discovers categories and contribute to coding scheme.



# Methodological Review

- We may start with the easiest **dictionary approach**, further use **unsupervised learning** to explore the data and **supervised learning** to further catch the nuances of different categories.

# Outline

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review and Hypotheses
3. Question and Answer

## Question and Answer

- Ask anything about our presentation.

Thanks for Listening :)