

# Hongshen (Oliver) ZHU

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APPOINTMENTS	<b>University of Virginia</b> Global China Postdoctoral Fellow, East Asia Center	2023–2024
	<b>University of Pennsylvania</b> Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for the Study of Contemporary China	2022–2023
EDUCATION	<b>Duke University</b> Ph.D., Political Science	2022
	Dissertation: “Agents with Agency: How Subnational Officials Exercise their Autonomy Under Authoritarianism” Committee: Melanie Manion (Chair), Edmund Malesky, Daniel Stegmueller, Erik Wibbels Graduate training in methods: Econometrics, Machine Learning, Advanced Statistical Programming, Advanced Political Methodology, Causal Inference, Real Analysis, Advanced Regression.	
	M.A., Political Science	2020
	M.A., Economics	2017
	<b>University of Warwick, UK</b> B.Sc., Philosophy, Politics and Economics Major: Economics	2015
RESEARCH INTERESTS	Authoritarian political institutions Bureaucracy and governance Comparative political economy Chinese politics	
PUBLICATION	<i>Forthcoming.</i> “Contentious Origins of Autocratic Social Protection: China’s “Threat-driven” Strategy in Redistribution.” <i>Studies in Comparative International Development</i> .	
	What drives China’s redistribution efforts? This paper looks at the critical time when China first established its social security system in the 1990s and argues that the state adopts a “threat-driven strategy” where the redistribution effort varies with the expected collective action of economic losers. Analyzing an original granular county-level dataset of China’s laid-off workers and social security taxation by aggregating data of over a million industrial firms, the paper finds that a group of newly-emerged economic losers, precipitated by state policy, drives the local states’ efforts to redistribute. Instrumental variable estimation, with legacy state-owned enterprises established in historical contingencies as the instrument for laid-off workers, shows consistent results. Further analysis on mechanisms demonstrates that layoffs lead to an increase in SOE protests, which in turn foster greater redistribution.	
UNDER REVIEW	2022. “Dual Mandates in Chinese Congresses: Information and Cooptation.” With Melanie Manion and Viola Rothschild. <i>Issues and Studies</i> . Vol. 58, No. 1: 1-20.	
	Crisis and Correction: Do Government Rectification Efforts Restore Citizen Trust After Governance Failure? <i>With Melanie Manion and Viola Rothschild</i> – Revise and Resubmit at <i>Political Behavior</i> .	

Can government efforts to correct its mistakes restore public trust after crises? The paper analyzes a cycle of crises and contribute a theory of heterogeneous response to correction efforts. The paper leverages the occurrence of two exogenous shocks—a vaccine crisis and a subsequent government correction effort—with administration of a face-to-face, nationally representative survey in 2018. The paper theorizes that response to government correction efforts depends on prior exposure to similar governance failures. Using days from the crisis as an instrument, the paper finds that: (1) the more salient the crisis, the lower the trust in government; and (2) government correction increases trust for citizens experiencing the 2018 crisis as an isolated occurrence but not for those who experienced a similar crisis and correction in 2016.

Applying Insights from China: A Typology for Subnational Comparative Politics  
*with Viola Rothschild*

– Revise and Resubmit at *Chinese Political Science Review*.

When is China unique and when is it not? The paper draws on theories of subnational analysis and comparison to argue that even in a strong, authoritarian state such as China—often considered to be “unique”—theories and findings may be applicable to other contexts. We introduce a typology to show that careful consideration of the interests and information of national and subnational actors can allow us to identify generalizable policy areas. Depending on the particular configuration, researchers can then predict how the central state evaluates local actors, variations in local implementation, and the potential for generalizability to settings beyond China. The paper applies this typology to several policy areas—social stability, social security, environmental governance, and political selection—to derive expectations about the behavior of central and local states, and identify when researchers can (and cannot) treat subnational units as independent.

Community Policing and Political Participation in Contemporary China  
*With Viola Rothschild*

– Accepted by APSA Chinese Politics Mini-Conference 2024

How does physical presence of the coercive state impact citizen’s political attitudes and behaviors in China? The paper proposes that citizens living geographically closer to police stations will be both more exposed to, and reminded of, police violence, incompetence, or malfeasance—issues endemic to local policing in many autocratic states. Using data from a recent nationally-representative, probability sample survey and highly precise, geo-referenced information on the location of thousands of police stations around them, the paper finds evidence to support our theory: citizens who live closer to police stations (1) feel less safe, (2) express lower levels of trust in community political institutions, and (3) participate less in neighborhood political affairs. The paper also constructs an original township-level crime rate data to control potential identification threats. Our findings indicate that the growing investment in the physical police state may further exacerbate local information capture and the alienation of citizens from the system.

Policy under Conflicting Mandates: Evidence from 1 Billion Cellphones during China’s COVID Lockdowns

– Presented at APSA Chinese Politics Mini-Conference 2022

What constrains China’s officials from taking extreme measures during Zero-COVID? By aggregating location data from 1.1 billion mobile devices in China, this study gauges the intensity of the lockdown policies in cities during China’s 2020 COVID-19 epidemic. The study employs event studies and a staggered difference-in-differences design to exploit the natural experiment of the end of a conflicting mandate against “Zero COVID”: the poverty elimination campaign. The paper finds that cities which needed to balance poverty elimination and pandemic control succeeded in both goals with significantly lower lockdown costs: a reduction of 40 percent in the severity of their COVID-19 lockdown measures, compared to a counterfactual scenario where only the Zero COVID mandate was present.

Doublespeak: Limits of China’s Hard and Soft Propaganda during Political Crises

*With Tony Zirui Yang*

How Effective are Different Authoritarian Propaganda Strategies During Political Crises and Policy Shifts? The paper leverages China's COVID policy reversal and political turmoil to conduct an original, pre-registered survey experiment in December 2022. Our findings reveal that pro-reopening hard propaganda of proclamation weakens its protest-deterrence effects by reinforcing belief in protest righteousness. Moreover, inconsistent soft propaganda of persuasion lowers public evaluations of China's COVID response, diminishing its persuasive effects. It highlights significant limitations of authoritarian propaganda, particularly during political crises when they are most needed.

## WORKING PAPERS

"How Adaptive Propaganda Works: Evidence from China." With Xinzhuo Huang and Haibing Yan.

– Presented at UCSD/Carter Center Young Scholars Conference.

"Bureaucrat Selection under Weak State Capacity: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo." With Dongil Lee, Eric Mvukiyehe, Christelle Tchoup, and Guo Xu.

## GRANTS & AWARDS

UVA East Asia Center Research Grant	2023
Ellen Bayard Weedon Travel Grant	2023
Penn CSCC Research Grant	2022
The Hayek Fund	2022
American Political Science Association Travel Grant	2022
Wilson Endowment Research Grant	2022
Graduate School Conference Travel Reward	2022
Political Science Department Research Grant, Duke University	2020,2021
Northwestern-Duke Causal Inference Workshop Fellowship	2019
Summer Research Fellowship, Duke University	2018–2021
Graduate Fellowship, Duke University	2017–2022
Merit Scholarship, Economics Department, Duke University	2015

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

<b>Instructor:</b>	
Chinese Politics, University of Virginia	Spring 2024
Political Economy of Global China, University of Virginia	Fall 2023
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	
Institutions and Self-governance, Duke University	Fall 2021
Political Risk Analysis, Duke University	Spring 2020
Democracy and Social Choice, Duke University	Fall 2019, Fall 2020

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for Professor Eric Mvukiyehe	Spring 2022–Summer 2022
Research Assistant for Professor Melanie Manion	Fall 2017–Fall 2021

## PRESENTATIONS

Midwest Political Science Association Conference	April 2024
East Asia Center (University of Virginia)	March 2024
Guest Lecture, Tsinghua-Schwarzman College	January 2024
Guest Lecture, Washington and Lee University	November 2023
East Asia Center (University of Virginia)	November 2023
American Political Science Association Conference	September 2023
UCSD/Carter Center Young Scholars Conference	August 2023
East China University of Political Science and Law Workshop	June 2023
Midwest Political Science Association Conference	April 2023
Carter Center China Focus Webinar	December 2022
Center for the Study of Contemporary China (Penn)	October 2022
Chinese Politics Mini-Conference (APSA)	September 2022
Midwest Political Science Association Conference	April 2022

American Political Science Association Conference	September 2021
New Faces in Chinese Politics Conference	August 2021
Midwest Political Science Association Conference	May 2021
Taiwan-American Conference on Contemporary China	December 2020
East China University of Political Science and Law Workshop	January 2020
State Capacity: Concepts, Causes, Consequences Workshop (Duke)	April 2019

## SERVICES

Reviewer: *American Political Science Review*, *Political Communication*, *Governance*, *China Quarterly*

Media interviews: *The Economist*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Associated Press*, *Bloomberg*, *Toronto Star*, *Mainichi* 每日新闻, *Initium Media* 端传媒

## REFERENCES

### Melanie Manion

Vor Broker Family Distinguished Professor of Political Science  
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### Edmund Malesky

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