

Concealing Corruption: How Chinese Officials Distort Upward Reporting of Online Grievances

Supplemental Appendix

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Abstract

A prerequisite for the durability of authoritarian regimes as well as their effective governance is the regime's ability to gather reliable information about the actions of lower-tier officials. Allowing public participation in the form of online complaints is one approach authoritarian regimes have taken to improve monitoring of lower-tier officials. In this paper, we gain rare access to internal communications between a monitoring agency and upper-level officials in China. We show that citizen grievances posted publicly online that contain complaints of corruption are systematically concealed from upper-level authorities when they implicate lower-tier officials or associates connected to lower-tier officials through patronage ties. Information manipulation occurs primarily through omission of wrongdoing rather than censorship or falsification, suggesting that even in the digital age, in a highly determined and capable regime where reports of corruption are actively and publicly voiced, monitoring the behavior of regime agents remains a challenge.

Keywords: Authoritarian regimes, China, monitoring, citizen participation, automated text analysis

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1 J. Prefecture Characteristics

Comparison of J. prefecture to other Chinese prefectures, based on 2013 data from China Knowledge.

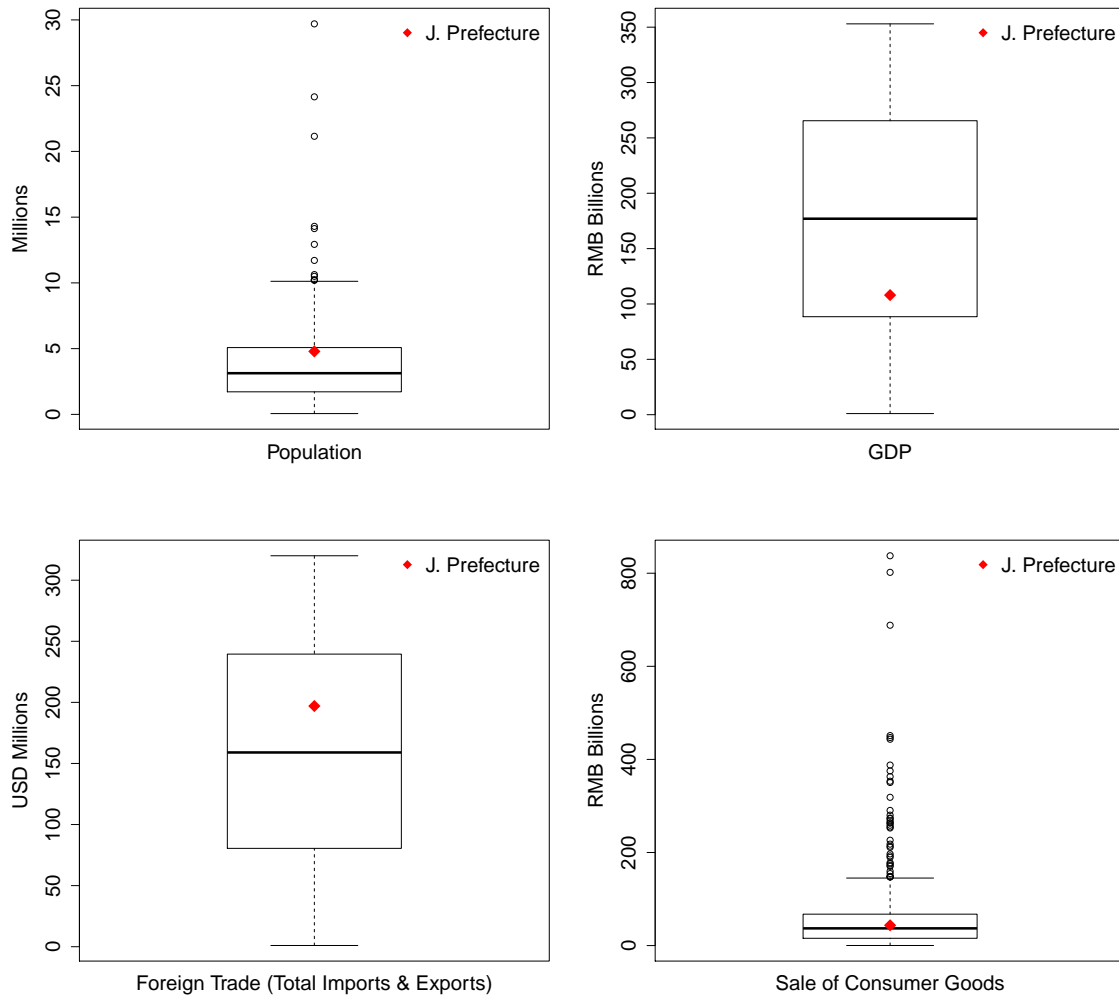


Figure 1: Distribution of population (top left), GDP (top right), total imports and exports (bottom left), and sales of consumer goods (bottom right) for all Chinese prefectures in 2013.

2 Summary Statistics of Variables

Table 1 includes descriptive statistics of all dependent and independent variables used in the regressions of the main paper.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N
Post Reported Upward	0.42	0.49	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Post Censored	0.24	0.43	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Prefecture Wrongdoing	0.06	0.23	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
County Wrongdoing	0.23	0.42	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Connections	0.41	0.49	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Prevalence	0.18	0.38	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Group Issue	0.95	0.22	1.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Sentiment	0.28	0.20	0.24	0.00	0.94	1412
Personal Experience	0.18	0.38	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Collective Action	0.04	0.20	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Petition	0.01	0.11	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Provincial Jurisdiction	0.01	0.12	0.00	0.00	1.00	1412
Prefecture Censorship Authority	0.16	0.37	0.00	0.00	1.00	1337

3 Regression Results at Issue Level

Table 2 shows coefficient estimates and standard errors of logistic regression with three specifications. The unit of analysis is the issue level. Out of 1,412 complaints, there are 1,038 unique issues that are raised. For issues with multiple complaints, if any complaint is reported upward, we code the issue as having been reported upward. In column (1),

Table 2: Predictors of Upward Reporting: Unique Issues

	Upward Reporting		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Prefecture Wrongdoing	-1.017*** (0.292)	-0.854*** (0.299)	-0.808*** (0.310)
County Wrongdoing		1.018*** (0.253)	1.075*** (0.260)
Connections		0.148 (0.151)	0.185 (0.158)
County Wrongdoing * Connections		-0.936*** (0.332)	-1.046*** (0.342)
Prevalence			-0.309* (0.173)
Group Issue			-1.827*** (0.391)
Sentiment			1.947*** (0.329)
Personal Experience			-0.023 (0.177)
Collective Action			0.283 (0.350)
Petitions			-0.639 (0.601)
Provincial Jurisdiction			-0.332 (0.511)
Intercept	0.244*** (0.064)	0.080 (0.092)	1.391*** (0.403)
Observations	1,038	1,038	1,038

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

we estimate the effect of *Prefecture Wrongdoing* alone on upward reporting. The result indicates that complaints related to J. prefecture wrongdoing are less likely to be reported

upward, and this result is statistically significant. In column (2), we examine the effect of *Prefecture Wrongdoing* as well as the interaction between *County Wrongdoing* and patronage connections on upward reporting. Complaints related to J. prefecture wrongdoing remain less likely to be reported upward. Complaints related to wrongdoing by counties where prefecture-level leaders have birthplace or workplace ties are less likely to be reported upward while complaints related to wrong-doing in the remaining, politically unconnected counties are more likely to be reported upward. Column (3) includes controls for alternative explanations. The main results remain robust.