REVIEW:

"THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CHINA"

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1   What is the question of the paper?

This paper examines how social media, the Sina Weibo in particular, affects the political economy in China. Three specific topics are of interest, namely, whether social media enables more collective actions (of political goals); posts more strict surveillance on government officials, and helps to analyze government propaganda.

2   Why should we care about it?

The first question arises because researchers and politicians are trying to understand whether collective actions induced by social media threatens authoritarian regimes, particularly when the Chinese government has put lots of effort in tracking and analyzing online activities. The second question, in view of the central government, answers whether social media has become a powerful tool in combatting corruption. The third question helps us to understand how the Chinese government launch propaganda through social media, which is essential for understanding the political economy of China.

3   What is your (or the author's) answer?

The authors found that social media facilitate collective actions (as to the contrary of the "slacktivism" hypothesis) In particular, collective actions can be predicted based on the post the day before the event, while newspaper coverage cannot. Corruption charges can also be predicted by posts one year before the

event. As for the government propaganda, the authors found the government-affiliated accounts post 4% of all posts regarding political and economic issues. Moreover, share of government-affiliated accounts decreases in the GDP in a region, increases with the proximity to Beijing, and is larger in CPC (Chinese Communist Party) stronghold.

4   How did you (or the author) get there?

The authors combine statistical description, econometric analysis, and machine learning techniques to analyze the microblog posts, and to make predictions. They identify government-affiliated accounts based on the word patterns used in the posts using machine learning techniques.