Although China is known to have enacted preferential policies toward the ethnic minorities, signs of ethnic discrimination frequently emerge from public domains. On the one hand, a variety of Chinese policies offer benefits to minority groups and the political mandate to maintain social stability incentivizes officials to buy-off members of potentially restive ethnic groups with preferential treatment. On the other hand, there is also evidence of bias against minority groups in contemporary China, as manifested through the discriminatory stereotypes and frequent crackdowns in certain ethnic regions. In addition, publicized incidents involving ethnic minority groups or individuals often heighten ethnic tensions and fuel discriminatory rhetoric and actions toward ethnic minorities. These conflicting accounts highlight uncertainty surrounding the political status of minority groups in China.

Is ethnic bias among political elites primarily taste-based, like the social intolerance prevalent across many ethnically diverse societies? To what extent do strategic considerations like the preferential ethnic policies described above explain bias? The existing literature suggests a large taste-based bias against ethnic out-groups and only a marginal role for strategic incentives, but these findings are limited as they mostly focus on cases in US and South Africa with
legacy of institutional racism and weak electoral incentives for strategic bias in favor of ethnic minorities.

To disentangle these confounding factors in the ethnic politics of China, Distelhorst and his coauthor implemented a field experiment to measure ethnic bias by political elites. By manipulating ethnic identity in communications with local majors’ offices, the authors estimate a causal effect of citizen ethnic identity on government responsiveness. The implementation of the experiment entails sending emails to the local government mayor’s mailbox in 336 prefectures to request information on the “minimum livelihood guarantee” (dibao) using fictitious Muslim names and Han names that are randomly assigned to each email as treatment and control. To better isolate the effect of ethnic status on government responsiveness, the authors use matching techniques to achieve pretreatment covariate balance.

By comparing the responsiveness of local government to an ethnically-unmarked name (control) and a names signaling membership in a Muslim minority group (treatment, they found that officials are 32 percent less likely to provide assistance to putatively Muslim minority individuals. The magnitude of ethnic bias among these officials is comparable to that found in racially diverse states that lack China’s pro-minority institutions, suggesting that that the “ethnic preference” policies that provide collective benefits play a negligible role in individuals’ experience with government. In addition, the analysis shows that strategic concerns about ethnic stability do not appear to influence official responsiveness
to Muslims outside of Xinjiang. The institutions of Leninist Minority Policy and Communist career management do not outweigh the tendency for political elites to exhibit lower responsiveness toward ethnic out-groups.

The authors also document variation in bias that mirrors the distribution of Muslim population in China, a finding that diverges from studies of South Africa and the United States. In Chinese regions where Muslims are most prevalent, the discriminatory effect moderates greatly. The result suggests that the public perception that ethnic minorities enjoy preferential treatment may actually have made the ethnic groups worse off.

During the Q&A session, the audience raised several engaging questions. Someone questioned the statistical supports for the results and pointed out that they could be potentially driven by the particular functional forms chosen by the authors. Another participant inquired about the identity of the officials answering the email requests and discussed with the presenter its potential influence on the results. There were also discussions of alternative mechanisms that may have produced the result. One participant suggested replicating the project by signaling other information to the government to fine-tune the result. Some questions probed into the fine details of the research and brought up issues such as local household registration (or Hukou) and its impact on the result. The concluding question triggered a discussion of alternative data sources on the subject.
Presentation No. 2:

Mobilizing without the Masses: Disguised Collective Action in China

Presentation by Diana Fu (Stanford University)

In authoritarian regimes, social movements either do not exist, or are suppressed by the regimes. In the absence of social movements, how do weak citizens organize for their rights? Diana Fu’s research tackles this puzzle by studying the underground civil society organizations and conceptualizes the notion of “atomized” collective actions under the authoritarian regime in China.

Since 1989, attempts to mobilize collective actions have been fiercely suppressed by the regime party in China. Under the oppressive pressures, civil contentions went underground and were disguised in novel forms. Seemingly individualistic advocacy behaviors are increasingly organized by underground groups. A notable phenomenon is the emergence of the “pedagogy of atomized action”, an alternative means of collective action by which group members share knowledge of lawfully resisting the government and demanding rights.

Fu investigates these hidden dynamics of disguised collective actions by tracking down and conducting fieldwork with these underground advocacy groups in China, focusing on the underprivileged group of migrant workers. These are weak citizens with substantial population but whose rights are poorly protected by local bureaucrats, whose interest are often in conflict with that of the migrant workers as they profit from economic growth based on cheap migrant labor.

Deprived of official means of resolving discontent, the migrant workers developed
alternative strategies through their repeated interactions with the government agencies, with the more sophisticated strategy involving the formation of underground labor advocacy groups. This strategy is facilitated by the regime’s adopting strategies aimed at containing rather than completely suppressing the advocacy by intentionally keeping the rules ambiguous. Under such uncertainty, the advocacy groups experiment with different means of contention. Pedagogy of atomized actions facilitates the promulgation of successful experiments, as the advocates organize workshops to teach members legal rules, provide platform for members to share stories of successful cases, and encourage members to follow suite and engage in similar atomized collective actions. Although these actions appear to be individually-based, the author argues that they are in essence collective actions in disguise.

Instead of collective confrontation, pedagogy of atomized action coordinates individual confrontation with the government. This strategy lowers the risks for the organization by pooling the risk among the members. Fu suggests that her research contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating that collective actions as conventionally conceived are not necessarily the only possible form of collective contention. The strategic adaptation of collective action mechanisms from group confrontation to individual confrontation under an oppressive authoritarian regime suggests alternative means and recalibration of collective actions based on pedagogy of atomized action.

In the Q&A session, someone questioned the nature of atomized actions in terms
of their outcomes – i.e., do atomized actions provide private goods or public goods? Fu suggested that atomized actions provide both private and public goods. Another challenged the alleged effectiveness of some strategies identified by the author and deemed them as “cheap talks” unlikely to be effective on the ground of rational interactions. Still another raised the issue of proper categorization of the underground advocacy groups. Fu suggested that these organizations straddled both civil society organization and interest group, and pointed out their distinction from the Western “coffee shop organizations” and their historically validated Chinese characteristics.

Presentation #3: Rory Truex, The Returns to Office in a “Rubber Stamp” Parliament

Does authoritarian “rubber stamp” parliament bring benefits to its member? Rory Truex, Ph.D. candidate in political science from Yale University, answers yes. Rory Truex presents a study on deputies of the National People’s Congress, the nominal top authority and legislature in China. In fact the 3000 deputies only meet once a year for about two weeks; none of them have real legislative powers as a parliamentary representative.

Truex collected data on all deputies of the 11th NPC (2008-2013). He matched biographical data of deputies from Baidu Baike (China’s version of Wikipedia), the NPC deputy database (NPCDD), and the COMPUSTAT financial database. About 500 of 3000 deputies turn out to be CEOs of a company, and around 50 of them
are from publicly listed companies. Truex constructed a counterfactual group of other 50 publicly listed companies with the technique of entropy balancing; they are almost the same to the NPC deputies’ companies in terms of paths and performance from 2005 to 2007. The only difference between two groups is that whether their CEOs are chosen as NPC deputies in 2008.

Truex interviewed analysts in China and found that NPC membership grants more favorable policies, positive perception, access to information, and preferential treatment. His finding is more in line with the second one. The new deputies of the 11th NPC were announced by provincial People’s Congresses in January and February of 2008; if the CEO is chosen as NPC deputy, there is an abrupt rise of around 3 Yuan in the company’s share price, and the margin lasts during the tenure. NPC membership is also worth a circa 2 percent increase in returns and a 7 percent boost in operating profit margins.

The research suggests that membership of an authoritarian parliament brings returns to office. Rent-distribution may matter more than policy spoils in a rubber-stamp legislature; they are necessary to the loyalty. Theorists of authoritarian legislature may need to present a better-rounded story than the “divide-the-pie” one.

Professor Edmund Malesky asks about incentives of joining NPC, and how can the research differentiate four mechanisms. According to Truex’s interviews, the deputies regard the NPC as a club of elites. Truex admits that he is still developing methods to distinguish four mechanisms.
Greg Distelhorst raises a related question; how to determine that the boosts are not because of favorable policies? Truex agrees that the deputies can make some influences on policies through proposals. But first, the proposals need at least a few months to become policies. The boost, however, took place almost simultaneously with the nomination. Second, deputies can only lobby for the industry (instead of their own firms); Truex has already controlled for sectors to eliminate influence of industry-level favorable policies.

Presentation No. 4:

Yellow on Red: Decelerating Authoritarian Rule-Making in China

Presented by Dimitar Gueorguiev (UC San Diego)

Authoritarian rule-making is often plagued by policy blunders and susceptible to policy volatility and uncertainty. Although the overly decisive and unconstrained decision-making structures typical of authoritarian systems ensure the regime’s monopoly of power, the resulting policy blunders and volatility weaken the administrative system and challenge the regime’s claim to enlightened leadership. Consequently, institutions that decelerate the decision making process may improve policy stability.

However, authoritarian regimes face the dilemma of constraining overly decisive policy making without challenging their own monopoly on power. Lacking institutionalized opposition politics or checks and balances characteristic of democracies by design, authoritarian regimes rely on alternative mechanisms to
mitigate the risk of policy blunders and reduce policy instability. In China, this is achieved partly by the creation of informal constraints in the policy making process by subjecting draft policies to public debate, an initiative of public participation in policy making known as open-policy making. Open-policy making decelerates the decision making process, allows for more informed policy vetting and increases the likelihood that contentious components and potential blunders are identified and resolved prior to adoption and implementation, leading to more durable and less volatile policy.

Using an original data on local legislation in China, Gueorguev empirically assesses the open policy-making reform by measuring the effect of public participation in policy formulation on policy stability. Although several platforms of open-policy making exist on different levels of policy-making, Gueorguev focuses on the more indiscriminate and salient platform of Online Notice and Comment concerning provincial and sub-provincial policy making.

Gueorguev finds that laws and regulations that engage the public during drafting stages take longer to formulate, and are less likely to be repealed or amended in the future, thus contributing to policy stability. Furthermore, public participation is more effective where intuitional constraints are the weakest. Through the informal institution of public participation, particularly the widely accessible Online Notice and Comment, the authoritarian regime in China is able to improve policy stability and avoid unnecessary policy blunders and reversals in an otherwise weakly constrained rule-making process without initiating risky formal
institutional reforms.

By interpreting public participation under authoritarianism as an administrative procedure associated with rule of law, not democracy, Gueorguiev challenges the prevailing perspectives that have largely dismissed public participation in policy making as quasi-democratic reform or a political concession merely aimed at shoring up legitimacy, and demonstrates how public participation can improve the policy making process by slowing it down, giving opportunity for alternatives to be vetted and potential points of contention resolved before policy adoption and implementation.

In the Q&A session, the audience raised several questions and provided feedbacks. Some raised the issue of the construction of the dataset, cautioning the potential problem of selection bias. Others suggested techniques that could be used to mitigate bias and improve the robustness of the results. Some pointed out alternative mechanisms through which increased public participation may increase policy stability. Others suspected if the open discussion through the Online Notice and Comment actually produced meaningful impact on the outcomes of important policies, or merely affected the more trivial policy space.

The author acknowledged the limitations of the current research and intended to make further improvement on both the data and methods based on the feedbacks.

Presentation No. 5:

Intermediate Users, Lobbying Competition and Outcomes in China's

Presented by Xiaojun Li (Stanford University)

As successive rounds of global trade liberalization have resulted in reductions in broad industry-level tariffs, antidumping duties have emerged as an alternative, WTO-sanctioned way of protecting domestic industries. Previous research on antidumping practices in democratic countries have shown that industry lobbying from both upstream and downstream users play a major role in determining case outcomes, that antidumping duties, just like tariffs, are also for sale. Xiaojun Li applies the same logic to China to examine how lobbying competition (or lack thereof) between the petitioning industries and the industries that use the products as intermediates affect the procedure and outcome of the antidumping investigations such as time to ruling and preliminary and final dumping margins.

China's current antidumping regime provides one of the most institutionalized mechanisms of producer-driven trade remedy measures available to domestic industries in need of protection from foreign competition. From 1997 to 2009, China initiated a total of 181 antidumping investigations in regard of 62 products from 26 countries and regions, most of which occurred after China joined the WTO in 2001. Over a relatively short period of time, China’s antidumping regime has evolved and matured, evidenced by the growing use by domestic producers and increased success rates of antidumping investigations. Compared to other forms of protectionism, the antidumping regime is a more institutionalized and transparent avenue for aggrieved domestic producers to protect themselves.
against foreign competition.

Are antidumping duties for sale in China as they often are in liberal democracies through industry lobbying? Li argues that the institutional design of the antidumping regime in China makes the antidumping investigations particularly susceptible to lobbying pressures, both formal and informal. First, while China's antidumping procedures have been shown to be largely consistent with the WTO Antidumping Agreement, the system also left intentionally vague certain key elements in the investigation and determination of dumping. These value and arbitrary clauses in the antidumping regulations create opportunities for domestic influence. Second, the organizational structure and the overlapping authorities regarding antidumping provide domestic industries with multiple access points of lobbying. Consequently, the outcome of the antidumping investigation depends as much on the hard evidence of injury as on the impact of lobbying by domestic producers seeking antidumping protection on the one hand and importers, downstream users, and subsidiaries opposing antidumping on the other.

Constructing a sample space of antidumping investigation China initiated between 1997 and 2009, Li empirically assesses the effect of downstream lobbying on the outcome of antidumping investigations. His analysis shows that the outcomes of a total of 181 antidumping investigations in regard of 62 products from 26 countries provide significant evidence that the presence of downstream lobbying, measured as the percentage of the petitioning industry used as intermediates, lead to lower dumping margin and longer time to ruling, or in other words, that
downstream lobbying leads to less favorable outcomes for the petitioners in established antidumping cases, all else equal.

In the Q&A session, a question was raised about the research’s lack of attention to Chinese characteristics. This kindled a debate among the audience on the relationship between China studies and the broader discipline of political science. Those with more knowledgeable about China argued for the necessity to pay attention to the characteristics and even uniqueness of China compared to the West. Others without a background in China studies argued that too much emphasis on the uniqueness of China or Chinese characteristics may hinder generalization of the results and the relevance of China studies to the broader discipline. The audience finally reached consensus that what constituted as Chinese characteristics did not necessarily hinder the generalizability of the results, and that these characteristics could and should inspire new insights and contribute to the broader discipline.

Presentation #6: “Regulated and Informative Complaints in Authoritarian Regimes: Theory and Evidence”

Jidong Chen, Princeton University

Jidong Chen presents his current research (with Yiqing Xu) on authoritarian government’s decision to allow complaining based on case studies from China. He points out the trade-off between the gains from vertical communication and horizontal communication in authoritarian government’s decision on whether to open deliberative platforms. The vertical communication can give the government
the information of citizens’ preference, while the horizontal communication can either foster or avoid collective action of citizens, depending on the correlation between citizens’ policy preference. By briefly explaining their formal model, he shows that only if the citizens’ policy preferences are sufficiently correlated, the authoritarian government would allow complaining.

Discussants all praise this project and give their suggestions. Diana Fu expresses her interests in further communication, as their projects are closely related. She also questions the ‘rational player’ assumption in the model and the unitary setting of the government’s motivation. She points out the different interests among different government department. Professor William Keeth suggests Chen to compare authoritarian regimes with democracies.

Other discussants question how the government can know the correlation of citizens’ preference without allowing communication. Another factor, the size of population, which may influence the effects of horizontal communication, is pointed out in discussion. When the size of population is large, the citizens can always find a lot of people have the same policy preference. Other discussants also mention that the preference of citizens may change after communication. Chen then briefly talks some empirical evidences which can justify his assumptions in the model. He also gives one difference between autocracies and democracies. In democracy, citizens fight through institution, while citizens fight without institution in autocracies.

Presentation #7: “The Strategic Use of the National Media in China”

Andrea Jones-Rooy, Carnegie Mellon University

Andrea Jones-Rooy presents her research on China’s use of national media. She first shows the overuse of national media and points out the tension between legitimacy and credibility in the use of media. The tension comes from the imperfect control over the flow of information and the uncertainty of the events’ result. She then presents her model which describes how leaders balance the incentive to maintain stability or legitimacy and to main credibility in the decision
whether to share the international information with domestic audience. From the model, she claims three findings: 1) the probability an event is good (p) increases the probability that the government will prefer to report it directly or indirectly; 2) when p>0.5, the government prefers to report it directly; 3) when the size of the event increases, the government is more likely to report it, regardless of p. She then shows her empirical tests of the implications by using a new dataset of all articles published in the prominent national newspaper in China, the People’s Daily. Finally, she concludes her work and talks about the future expansion in this project.

The discussants show their interests in the project offer their suggestions and share personal experiment related to this project. Weiyi Shi and Dimitar Gueorguiev both question choosing national media in this project. Shi points out that the headlines of People’s Daily are always repeated. Gueorguiev suggests her to put market media into consideration. Gueorguiev also asks how can her explain the unexpected behavior of Chinese government. Xiaojun Li shares his personal experiences of an internship in China’s media which is not the same as described in the model. Rory Truex questions the research design that how she deals with the change of certain type of events ‘sensitiveness overtime.

Presentation #8: “Loyalty versus Competence: Internal Conflicts and the Pattern of Bureaucratic Controlling in China, 1644-1911”

Tianyang Xi, NYU

Tianyang Xi presents his research on the pattern of bureaucratic controlling in Qing Dynasty China. He first identifies the trade-off between competence and loyalty faced by the ruler in Qing Dynasty when deciding whether to appoint a bureaucrat from Han ethnic group, the majority group, instead of from the same minority as him. The ethnicity-based patronage favoring Manchus helped to consolidate the power, but the bureaucrats from Han was important to bring better governance due to their better competence. By explaining his formal model, he shows how ruler uses sanction and appointment to stay in power. When
demand for competence increase, the probability of firing increase, which means the ruler will use sanction more often. When the demand for competence is sufficiently high, and when the distrust in the majority Han is moderate, the ruler should prefer delegating power to Hans to relying Manchu loyalists. He then presents his empirical test using a new dataset about conflicts and bureaucracy in provincial level. From the statistical results, he shows: 1) the probability of governors being sanctioned increased significantly when there were internal conflicts; 2) the probability of sanction for the majority Han officials was no greater than Manchus; 3) Han group had significant disadvantage in terms of promotion; 4) The appointments of Han governor increased significantly when there were internal crisis and threat to political survival. Finally, he talks about the implication of his findings. The pattern of sanction and appointment could be expanded to help explain the ‘red v.s. expert’ debate and the central-local relations in current China.

Discussants all praise his contribution and give their suggestions. Dimitar Gueorguiev asks for more evidence to prove the competence of Han group. Jason Guo raises another effect of hiring more Hans in crisis time that the appointment of Hans might signal the government’s weakness. Professor Michael Munger questions the empirical test using panel data that the coefficients may not be robust across the entire period due to the variance across time.

Presentation #9: “The Local Basis for Central Paradigm Change: Bureaucratic Manipulation in China’s Industrial Upgrading Campaign”

Ling Chen, Johns Hopkins

Ling Chen presents her research on the institutional change implemented and manipulated by local bureaucrats in China. She first brings the puzzle of empirical observation that the degree of success in implementing the reform pushed by central varies substantially across the country. She breaks the unitary actor assumption and identifies different interests between central and local and among different local bureaucrats. To understand the process of institution change, she
looks at China’s recent upgrading campaign which plans to switch the country’s central economic paradigm from FDI-dependence to indigenous innovation. Despite the central motivation, she identifies two major coalitions within local governments which competed over rules and policies, namely the vested interests coalition and pro-reform collation. After identifying the two groups, she shows the paired case comparisons in which she finds the foreign-invested enterprises played a vital role in determining the relative balance of power of the two groups. She then presents the result of statistical model based on her theory and empirical observation, and she finds the larger the general size of foreign firms of a city, the stronger the vested-interests coalition in a locality will be, and the more difficult it will be to implement the reform which is contrary to the conventional wisdom which regards the foreign investor as facilitators of institution change.

The discussants question the choosing of the size of foreign firms as dependent variable, and suggest to consider the political influence of foreign investment, instead of confined to economic influence. Xiaojun Li points out that there may be some difference between foreign hold firms and joint firms, and suggests separating the two types. Discussants also question whether the local bureaucrats have some ideological preference in manipulating reform.

Weiyi Shi, adopting the firm level data in China, probes the incentives for Chinese firms’ outward direct investment (OFDI). She argues that it is not the productivity of a company that drives the companies’ OFDI; instead, the firm ownership status, private or state-owned (SOEs), strongly predicts the decisions of outward foreign direct investment.

She first vividly illustrates the increasing number of companies in China conducting overseas direct investment, thus introducing her research question of what is the dynamics of this dramatic increase. Previous prevailing economic models give the prediction of the relation between higher productivity and OFDI based on the budget constraints. However there is no test of this on developing countries and no theory in economics or politics that explains how the budget constraints firms face at home might shape their decisions to invest internationally. So in Weiyi’s paper, she tests this theory on China and investigates the driving forces for OFDI.

She argues that the soft budget constraints facing SOEs, their political incentives and distortions in the domestic economy help explain why ownership enjoys more significant predicting power than productivity. The results shows that SOEs are more likely to invest in the resource sector, while in manufacture sector private companies are more likely to invest. By using a two by two chart with ownership type and investment type, she depicts the political theory foundation for this paper. In terms of the empirical part, she uses CSMAR database and builds a duration model to look at “how soon” and a negative binomial model to see “how many”. The theoretical hypotheses are tested and proved by the empirical evidence. To further the research, Shi will conduct Robustness checks using alternative definition of productivity as the next step.

Several interesting questions have been raised in response to this paper. One question is regarding the evidence of the political differences between SOEs and private firms. For example, how can she know that SOEs have more and
easier opportunities than private firms? Weiyi then introduces her ongoing survey in China and the answer to this question will be based on the survey results. Some discussants also suggest taking other measurements of productivity so as to check if it is this measurement that leads to the insignificance of this variable.

**State of the Field: Emerson Niou, State of the Field Lecture in Chinese Politics:**

The Politics of Secret Ballot

Historically, incumbent political elites do not like secret ballot; with secret ballot, they can no longer monitor whom the poor vote. Thus vote buying and manipulation of ballots become impossible. Why do the elites make the strategic choice to accept secret ballots? By reviewing and examining history of Western civilizations and modern China, Professor Emerson Niou's project studies origins of secret ballot and quasi-secret ballot (such as “bean election” in China).

Histories of ancient civilizations (Athens and Rome) and more recent polities (medieval Italian cities, 16 and 17th century England, and North American colonies) support the argument. The incumbent rulers always prefer open ballots; they can monitor voters’ ballots and manipulate elections. Secret ballot is part of concession from the nobility, or old political elites, to the emerging commoners, who demand more political power and succeed. When the ruling elites regained more power, they revoked secret ballots. The only exception might be North American colonies; open voting replaced secret ballot in the 18th century because of influences of the Great Britain.
Modern secret ballot originated from Australian ballot. Chartists failed in the Great Britain; but they succeeded in Australia, where the nobilities are absent. In Australian ballot system, ballot papers are preprinted by the government, and voters can only cast ballot in the secret booth. Australian ballot has been applied in most of democracies nowadays.

In 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) applied bean election, a quasi-secret ballot, in township and county-level elections in regions they controlled. Bean election is not completely secret; voters cast beans to the bowl of the candidate they want. Yet since most of Chinese people in rural areas were illiterate, bean voting approximates secret ballot. The main idea of promoting bean voting was to free peasants from control and threat of the gentry class; the landlords can no longer manipulate peasants' ballots. Niou argues that CCP used bean election to strengthen their United Front. Of course, first the CCP could have their candidates elected. More importantly, the CCP won support of the peasants, who could express their true preferences. The support was vital for the CCP, who was competing and later fighting against the Kuomintang (KMT).

Niou makes tentative conclusions; power that is becoming and power that is in being are entirely different. Those in power are not generous and proactive in sharing power; the politically disadvantaged must fight for their rights. He also presents several puzzles. One of them was echoed by Xun Cao's question that who are potential opponents of CCP. Why do workers in Coastal China or Foxconn factories today cannot be mobilized like their counterparts in England during the
Industrial Revolution? Another puzzle is that Rulers do not concede when they are in good shape; but it is often too late when they feel urgent to change. How do they tackle this problem?

Edmund Malesky comments that the power-sharing may be a top-down story; elite division may create opportunities for lower classes to gain more power. Niou agrees with the idea; rise of ordinary citizens and decline of patricians in Roman Republic completely fit into the story.