

YouTube Mediating Current Events

Analyzing YouTube Commenting Sections in the Context of Conflict

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

We analyzed the comment sections of eight videos on YouTube relating to two current conflicts: the Russia-Ukraine War and the White Paper Protests in China. We conducted this research to investigate how comment sections mediate information, or how they lend themselves to certain commenter behaviors.

Taking the findings of the qualitative comment analysis into account, the modularity classes of the two comment based co-word networks reveal semantic meaning in their tokens. This leads to the following categories present in the networks, which expose certain narrative spheres. For the Ukraine Russia conflict are the categories: 1) Sentiment & Incident 2) Media Critique and 3) Political Stance & Conspiracy, which can be divided into anti-Russian, pro-Russian, anti-West and pro-West.

For the White paper protest: 1) Political Stance & Conspiracy 2) Sentiment & Incident 3) Power & Economy Critique and 4) Pandemic & Lockdown, which can be divided into anti-CCP, pro-CCP, anti-West, and pro-West.

For the Russia-Ukraine conflict the findings demonstrated that there was an abundance of comments leaning towards support and compassion towards the Ukrainian people suffering from the war. Nevertheless there was a large amount of comments leaning towards both anti-western and anti-Russian perspectives.

As for the White Paper Protests, the findings reflected elements of demands for freedom and democracy and showed levels of frustration against censorship and monitoring of the media in China. In addition there are many comments portraying hate speech or racist remarks. The findings additionally show that users tend to disclose their online identities to decrease the issues of reliability and credibility. The commenting sections of both conflicts similarly reflected anti-Western or anti-Russia/CCP (Chinese Communist Party) sentiments more than pro-Western or pro-Russia/CCP, showing a degree of political ideology through 'counter-expression' among YouTube users.

From this, we can characterize comment sections generally as sites of negotiation, contestation, and allegiance. Where video content puts truth and knowledge up for debate, these spaces afford a plurality of discourses to interface.

Data collection

We selected 8 videos in total, 4 per conflict. Video selection was based on the amount of views. Additionally we included a temporal dimension by choosing 2 videos at the beginning of an event and 2 more current videos. These video-pairs include a traditional news media outlet and a more informal, or amateur, channel.

From this, we used YouTube Data Tools to scrape the YouTube commenting sections for the selected videos.

Data curation

For the data curation, we took a combination of a qualitative approach and a quantitative approach to understand the possible narratives that arose from these comment sections and the behaviors that accompany them.

Firstly we carried out a content analysis, in order to understand the content of the selected YouTube videos that could reflect certain narratives in the comment section.

Secondly, we used a thematic analysis of comments. By reading through comment sections we developed an open coding method to understand the replies from the top 3 'most replied to' comments from each event in each conflict.

For the quantitative approach we imported our datasets into 4CAT for further analysis. We used the Tokenising tool to extract binary co-word networks.

Visualisation and Analysis

Matrix map

The matrix map is used to visualize and plot the different narratives according to their observed position and form of participation in the replies

Semantic co-word networks

To capture diverse controversial themes that emerged from the comment section, semantic co-word networks are used to navigate the large amount of data which reflect the comment section on YouTube. Within the whole network, 5 different themes were detected. These networks were created and analysed through the use of Gephi.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What spaces arise from the YouTube commenting sections in relation to cases of conflict?

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION

What discourses and narratives arise from the YouTube commenting section in relation to the White Paper Protest and the Russia-Ukraine conflict?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While investigating our narrative spheres of the different comment sections within the videos of our datasets, we relied on Stuart Hall's model of 'Encoding and Decoding' (see Figure 1). The communication processes expressed by the comments lead to certain spheres of codes (messages) which carry and expose certain narratives in our framework (Hall 1973).

FIGURE 1: STUART HALL ENCODING-DECODING MODEL (1973)

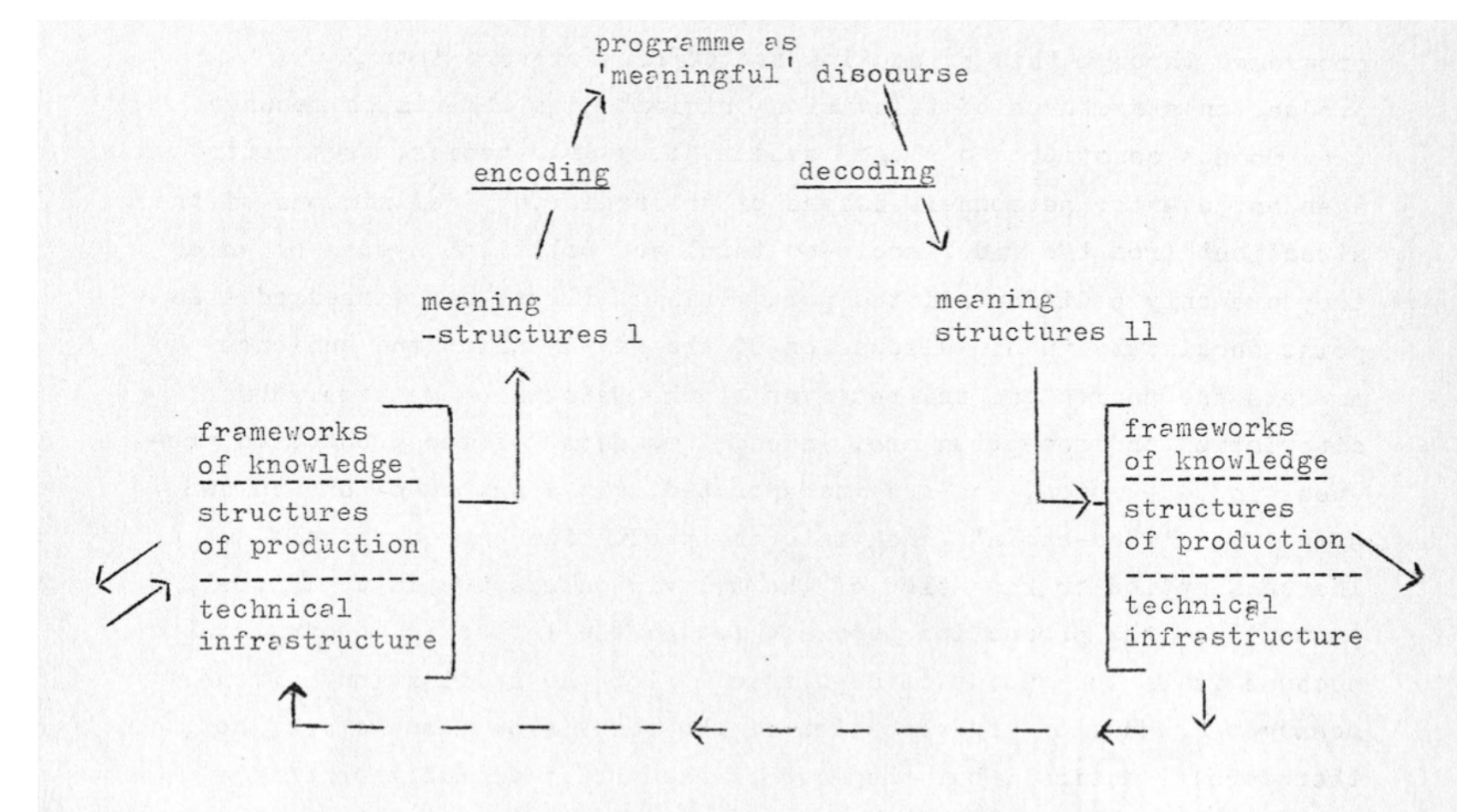
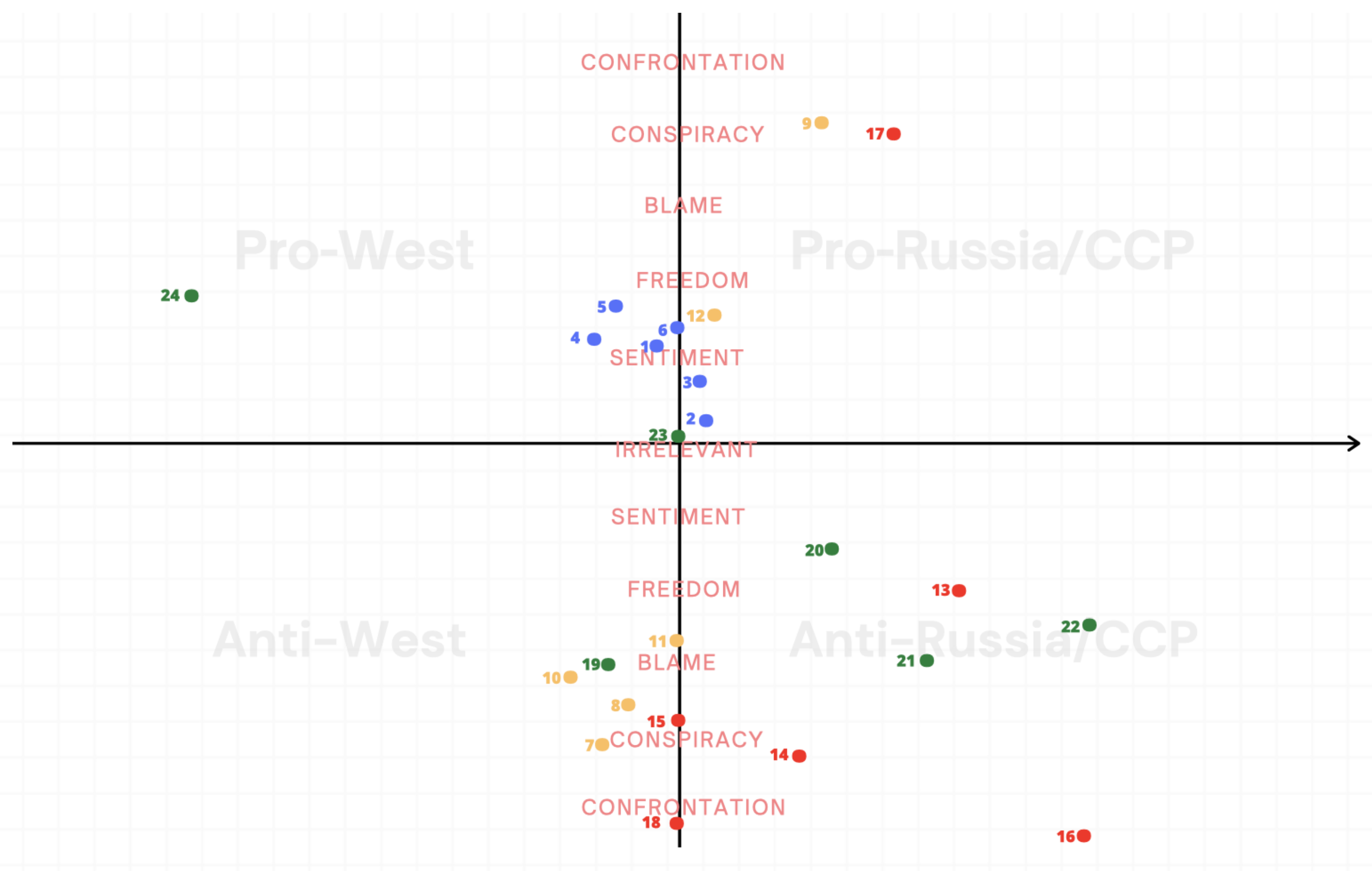


Figure 2: Matrix Reflecting the Narratives



Legend (Figure 2):

1. Blue= Ukraine-Russia (Event 1)
2. Yellow= Ukraine-Russia (Event 2)
3. Red= White Paper Protests (Event 1)
4. Green= White Paper Protests (Event 2)

Figure 3: Semantic co-word analysis network Russia-Ukraine conflict

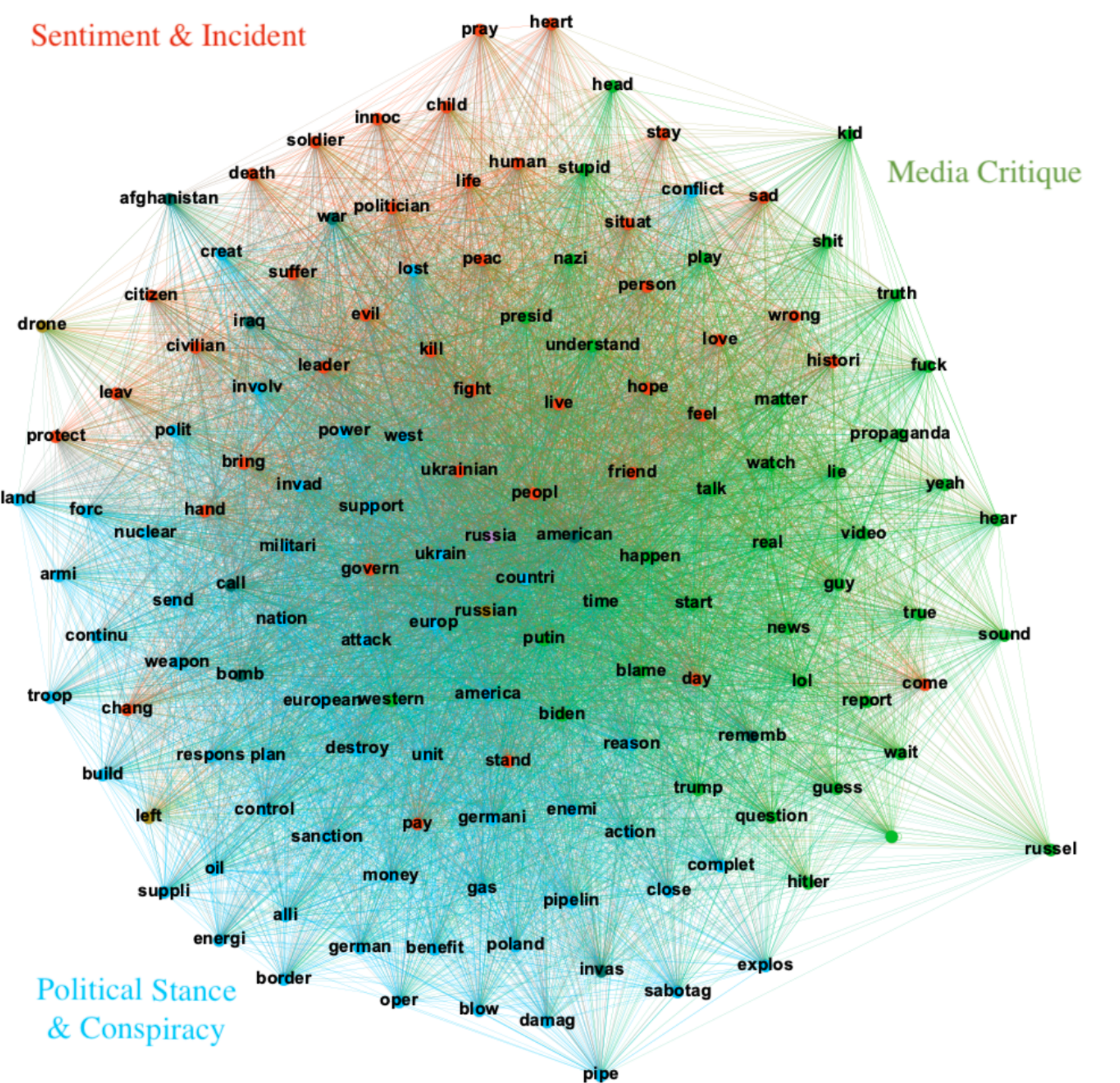
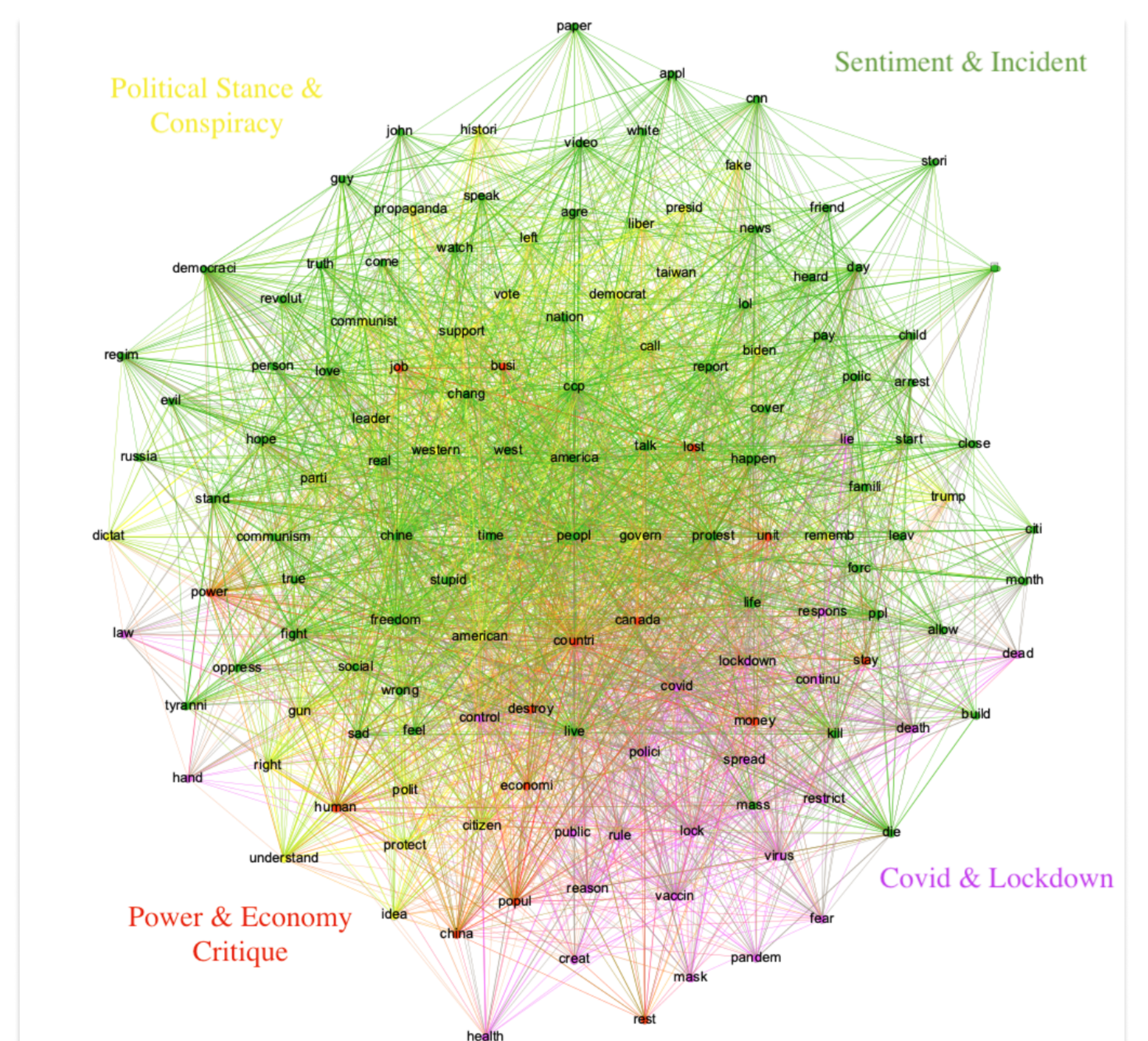


Figure 4: Semantic co-word analysis network White Paper Protests China



Ukraine-Russia

Dot 2. Event 1, invasion of Ukraine, bbc

Alexandra Tormont 10 months ago

I live in Ukraine = my family are fleeing out the country and I will now join the Ukraine army and defend this country and what I have built!

291 replies

Dot 5. Event 1, invasion Drone

Kortez 10 months ago (edited)

The drone operator may have just made military history with this video. I don't think I've seen a peer on peer live encounter captured like this from a bird's eye view with such clarity.

11K replies

450 replies

Dot 6. Event 2, pipeline german

CLW 3 months ago

Most people seem to want to blame Russia for this, but I don't understand what Russia would have to gain from sabotaging the pipeline. They already control the tap. Even if Europe agreed to all Russia's demands concerning the sale of gas, there is no way gas can flow now until the pipe is repaired.

798 replies

208 replies

Dot 11. Event 2, Russel

mudbucket 16 3 months ago

The near complete lack of media attention in the US speaks volumes.

7.7K replies

360 replies

White Paper Protests China

Dot 13. Event 1, Fire in Urumqi, CNN

Homer Bay 1 month ago

It's weird how 1.4 billion people can allow one man to dictate every single aspect of their life including thinking.

471 replies

140 replies

Dot 15. Event 1, Fire in Urumqi, CNN

Eric Bogar 1 month ago

I'm confused. Why are they still locked down? Covid isn't as serious as it was.

43 replies

81 replies

Dot 21. Event 2, Protests, Democracy Now

Fid Wang 1 month ago

Is actually 44 people dead in the Urumqi fire (as I heard from clubhouse who living in Urumqi). Government only reports 10 people dead. People can't escape from the fire because the units door has locked due to lockdown and the door has tied up with iron wires. Fire trucks couldn't get into the way because the fire exits also blocked. This is a...

229 replies

81 replies

Dot 24. Event 2, Protests, Warrior Poet Society

Yunhan Bai 1 month ago

Thank you for bringing this into attention. As a Chinese immigrant in the US I can't be more grateful for this country and the freedom in this country. This is exactly why we have the second amendment. Keep fighting and I hope your words bring more people to join this fight.

84 replies

20 replies

PARTICIPANTS

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