How prevalent is state support for "patriotic hackers"? One account is that states outsource computer network attacks (CNA) to non-state confederates in order to retain plausible deniability for their involvement. While empirical difficulties have confounded researchers' ability to test this proposition directly at the open-source level, this paper uses a combination of legal analysis and decision-theoretic techniques to formally map the conditions under which delegation might be reputationally profitable. The model predicts that although CNA delegation can successfully exploit a variety of international legal lacunae, the set of conditions under which covert delegation is expected to yield political cover is narrow in comparison. Ex ante, suspicions should be directed primarily at the smaller universe of states that meet these permissive conditions, since only in these cases is complicity predicted.

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