

## When fear turns into love: A partial explanation of political trust in China

### ● 理论: Fear → Love.

The extraordinarily high level of political trust discovered by various surveys in China raises persistent doubt. Political culture scholars on China have made strenuous efforts to separate the “fear factor” from survey results. When successful in doing so, some argue fear is an important factor in inflating political trust in China, while others arguing that it has only marginal or even insignificant role. While different in conclusions, the opposing sides share one assumption: if the answer is out of fear, then it is “fake,” and if it detects sincerity, it cannot be out of fear. This assumption ignores the reality that people can sincerely love what they fear. In fact, fear can even sometimes be the very engine of such love. Why so? Because people often rationalize their conformity/participation with genuine belief when high pressure and high stakes induce such conformity/participation. As revealed by numerous memoirs, back in Mao years, most Chinese genuinely loved him, whom they also genuinely feared. The same could also be said about the Soviet people under Stalin. Or even to the North Korean people today to some extent.

The idea that induced conformity can lead to sincere belief is certainly not the discovery of this study. It comes out of a long tradition of social psychology: “cognitive dissonance” theory. Festinger first articulated it……待解释。。 and numerous studies confirmed afterwards……待解释。。. However, it is the first time that this theory is examined thorough the analysis of survey data from contemporary China, to be specific, through analyzing the persistently high political trust detected by various survey data.

It should be stressed that, in the literature of cognitive dissonance, adaptive behavior does not always lead to value change. it requires some conditions for behavioral conformity under pressure to generate value change…待展开

This study argues that such conditions exist in contemporary China…待展开

### ● 自变量: the fear factor

While political fear is notoriously hard to measure in opinion surveys, this study proposes to use the combination of two factors: 1) to what extent a respondent's livelihood/reputation/career is dependent on the state, which we call the “leverage” factor; and 2) to what extent the state demands exclusive political loyalty, which we call the “pressure” factor. We argue that both are essential in inducing fear, and the shortage of either will diminish political fear significantly. High leverage means the state is capable of “hijacking” a person's future. However, if the state is not strict in demanding absolute loyalty, a politically “critical” person need not fear such potential capacity will turn into reality. The public school teachers in, say, Japan, depend on the state for livelihood, but exclusive loyalty to the ruling party is not demanded from them, therefore political fear is unlikely to prevail among them. On the other hand, when the state has a high demand for political loyalty, but has little leverage over certain people, for example, private businessmen whose factories happen to be located in foreign land, these people won't easily fall into political fear as well. This explains why extreme political fear, and thereby in our opinion a frenzy level of personal cult, tends to happen in plan economy where most resources are state monopolized.

Accordingly, we construct a “fear factor” a variable combining the level of state dependence and the degree of state pressure, to measure political fear. To be specific, we measure the degree of state dependence with professions. “Regime insiders” (体制内人) are dependent on the state much more than the “regime outsiders.” By “regime insiders”, we mean government bureaucrats, party officials, state owned enterprises employees, state controlled “mass organizations” clerks, etc, in a word, those who depend on the state not only for financial security, but also for career promotion and social status. Therefore, they have more reasons to be politically fearful compared to “regime outsiders.” In fact, it can be said that the longer, the deeper and the higher they stay “inside the regime,” the more fearful they can be because they have much higher “sunken cost” if abandoned by the system.

The five waves of Asian Barometer Survey data from 2002 to 2019 offers us opportunity to operationalize the leverage factor. Besides a range of indicators of political trust, it contains information on respondents’ professions, making it possible to distinguish “regime insiders” from “regime outsiders.” It also contains the respondents’ age, which we use as a proxy of the level of state dependence among the regime insiders because the older a person is, the less likely he/she will leave the “system,” and the more likely he/she will be promoted and earn higher income from the system. (age 因素可以不考虑, 除非 it strengthens our results. 我对于 age 因素的效果没有明确的 hunch, 因为中国的确有可能中老年人比年轻人更“自由化”, 但是现代化又有 liberalizing 效应, 所以可能相互抵消)。

Meanwhile, we measure “the pressure factor” with the credibility of political threat. During the Jiang—Hu years, the regime insiders were pretty much left loose to maximize their interests without top—down pressure, but in Xi years, a large anti—corruption campaign was launched, the growing scale of which has made the possibility of discipline increasingly real for regime insiders. Therefore we code the Xi years with 1, and Hu years with 0. (甚至可以考虑 differentiate Wave 4 and 5, with 5 getting a higher value than 4, 因为 W4 的时候反腐程度有限, 而且很多人可能以为是一阵风, 但是到 2019 年的时候, 大家知道不是一阵风, 而且被卷入的人越来越多, but again, doing this or not depends on the coefficient change)

所以, “the fear barometer”的组成, 具体而言:

Leverage: 工作体制内与否 (Yes1, No0); (maybe 纳入年龄因素 to measure 深入体制程度, but it depends on it strengthens our results or not)

Pressure: 胡 or 习 (Xi1, Hu0); (maybe differentiate w4 and w5 to measure 压力强度, but again it depends on its effects on the results) .

$Fear = Leverage * Pressure,$

As seen from the formula of our construction, we combined cross—sectional components (insiders or not and age) with longitudinal components (changing political environment), taking their interactions as our measurement of political fear. We believe this is beneficial not only because of conceptual necessity we laid out earlier, but also it helps to capture more variations of fear.

## ● 因变量: political trust

As for political trust, following ... we use 信任中央政府。。。这个应该很简单, 待写。如果 political trust 效果不佳, 也可以考虑之前我们用的 satisfaction with democracy in China,。

Goal: To prove LEVERAGE factor by itself is weak, and PRESSURE factor by itself is weak,

but 二者交互 is strong. Therefore establishing fear has a causal effect on political trust.

● Potential counter-argument and response strategies:

- 1) 恰恰是因为“爱党爱国”才进入体制内。。。反驳：22-29 岁的“体制内人”（刚刚进入体制）并不比同龄人的非体制人更忠诚（描述性数据甚至显示更不忠诚），也就是说，在体制的“入口处”，他们并不更加忠诚，后面的差异不能用“起点处的信念不同”来解释
- 2) Performance（他们收入更高，生活状况更好。。。）：可以用家庭经济状况来衡量。事实上，一般是收入越高的人越“反动”
- 3) Faking，他们只是有更大的压力假装信任而已，反驳：除了我们之前用过的史天健方法（DK answer）和李连江方法（hierarchical trust），我觉得还可以有一个方法（我好像也看到有人用）：比较敏感和不敏感问题的变化轨迹——在不敏感问题上（但同样是测试政治信任），respondents 没有必要撒谎，如果仍然 political trust rise with fear，说明这个 rise 是 genuine 的。比如，测试对“地方政府的信任”——这个问题上没有必要撒谎。我大致看了一下，变化轨迹和对“中央政府的信任”是一致的。
- 4) 还有什么反驳？。。。。反正就说我们的意思不是 alternative 说法不对（毕竟我们刚写一篇论证 propaganda role，呵呵），而是 they are not strong enough to dismiss our argument.