

**Seminar on
"The Influence of Political Cynicism
and Political Efficacy on Media Use:
Further findings from the IPS Survey"**

**14 September 2011
Conference Room, Level 1
Oei Tiong Ham Building**

Political cynicism and political communications in an authoritarian democracy

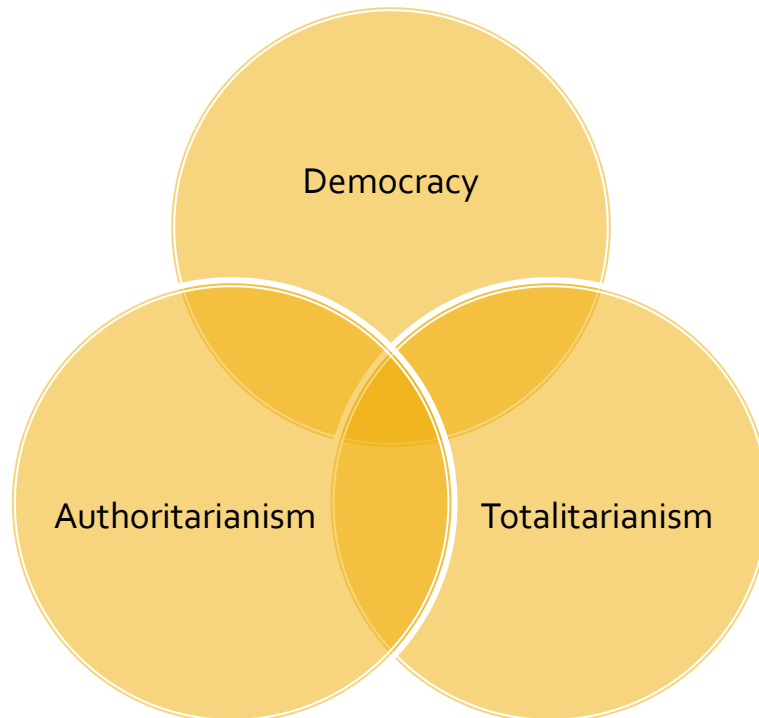
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Authoritarian Democracy



Political system in Singapore

- Elections
 - broad suffrage
 - absence of fraud
- Authoritarian governance (with a focus on mass media)
 - ISA
 - NPPA
 - Domestication of foreign media

Political Cynicism

- Cappella & Jamieson (1997)
- The absence of trust about political process vs. **political actors**
 - **Political cynicism** – manipulateness of political actors
 - **Cynical motivation** – the bias in perceiving the political actor's motives toward self-interest
- How is cynicism activated?
 - Information (aka mass media in the US)

Why political cynicism matters?

- Distrust leads to lack of support of political decisions and undermines the legitimacy of governance.
- Distrust in motives is particularly problematic:
 - The skepticism might not be true.
 - It is hard to verify.

Measures

- Manipulativeness
 - People are frequently manipulated by politicians
 - Politicians quickly forget their election promises after a political campaign is over
- Cynical motivation
 - For politicians, having power is more important than catering to the people's wishes
- Cronbach's alpha = .65

Findings

- About 30% of respondents agree or strongly agree with each of the three items
- Mean = 3.04 (3 = neither agree nor disagree)
- Compared to the US data - .47 to .73 in a scale of 0-1.
- Compared to the Dutch data – M = 3.61 (3 = neither agree nor disagree)

Who is more cynical?

- Males are more cynical than females (3.09 vs. 2.99**)
- Singaporeans of Others are more cynical than Indians
- No sig relations with education, income and age

Liberals as opposing participation rules

(I) q23_2a Q23_2. There are too many rules against participating in political activities in Singapore		(J) q23_2a Q23_2. There are too many rules against participating in political activities in Singapore					95% Confidence Interval	
		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
.00 disagree	1.00 neutral	-.20683*	.07513	.017	-.3832	-.0305		
	2.00 agree	-.49409*	.06554	.000	-.6479	-.3402		
1.00 neutral	.00 disagree	.20683*	.07513	.017	.0305	.3832		
	2.00 agree	-.28725*	.05632	.000	-.4195	-.1550		
2.00 agree	.00 disagree	.49409*	.06554	.000	.3402	.6479		
	1.00 neutral	.28725*	.05632	.000	.1550	.4195		

F = 34.002*** (agree = liberals)

Liberals as supporting critique of gov

(I) q23_3a Q23_3.Everyone should be given the freedom to criticise the government publicly		(J) q23_3a Q23_3.Everyone should be given the freedom to criticise the government publicly	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound				Upper Bound	
.00 disagree	1.00 neutral		-.17590*	.06547	.020	-.3296	-.0222
	2.00 agree		-.40526*	.05510	.000	-.5346	-.2759
1.00 neutral	.00 disagree		.17590*	.06547	.020	.0222	.3296
	2.00 agree		-.22936*	.05780	.000	-.3650	-.0937
2.00 agree	.00 disagree		.40526*	.05510	.000	.2759	.5346
	1.00 neutral		.22936*	.05780	.000	.0937	.3650

F = 28.397*** (agree = liberals)

Summary

- Liberals are consistently more cynical than neutrals and non-liberals.
- Neutrals are more cynical than non-liberals.
- The difference is not a socioeconomic one but a political one.
- Speculation: cynicism in Singapore is mainly a distrust of political actors who are ruling.

Political cynicism and news consumption

		cynicism1 3-item about politicians
Q19_1 Q19_1.reading print newspapers for this topic	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.011 .728 1024
Q19_2 Q19_2.watching television about this topic	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.054 .085 1026
Q19_3 Q19_3.reading about this topic on the online websites of Singapore mass media such as The Straits Times, Today, The New Paper, Zaobao or Channel News Asia	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.024 .454 1009
Q19_4 Q19_4.reading about this topic on foreign news websites such as the BBC, CNN or the New York Times	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.070 .027 1009
Q19_5 Q19_5.reading about this topic on Internet-only Singapore websites such as The Online Citizen, Yawning Bread, Temasek Review, Mr Brown or other blogs	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.069 .030 1004

Summary

- Mainstream media coverage rarely activates negative perceptions of politicians – very different from liberal democracies.
- People who are cynical may tactically turn to the Internet for alternative information and viewpoints, or it could be that political cynicism is increased by exposure to these online channels .

Political cynicism and political talk

politalk	Pearson Correlation	.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	1047
disagreement	Pearson Correlation	.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	874

- People who are cynical may tactically turn to interpersonal channels for alternative information and viewpoints, or it could be that political cynicism is increased by exposure to these interpersonal channels.

**To further test the correlation
between different communication
channels and cynicism**

Trustworthiness

Q22_1r Q22_1.TV	Pearson Correlation	-.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1016
Q22_2r Q22_2.Radio	Pearson Correlation	-.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	975
Q22_3r Q22_3.Newspaper	Pearson Correlation	-.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1009
Q22_4r Q22_4.Internet	Pearson Correlation	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062
	N	856
Q22_5r Q22_5.Talking with others	Pearson Correlation	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	953

Summary

- The more one trusts mainstream mass media, the less cynical one is.
- The more one trust interpersonal talk and the Internet, the more cynical one is.
- Weak significance of the Internet:
Mainstream mass media are online too.

Conclusions

- Cynics comprise a significant minority of Singaporeans, 30%.
- Cynics are more anti-establishment.
- Cynicism has no relationship with mainstream media political news consumption but significant positive correlations with alternative online and interpersonal channels.
- Cynics distrust mass media and trust Internet and interpersonal channels more.

Policy implications

- Cynics (30%) are ignoring the messages sent through mainstream media due to their low trust in such channels. - how to reach and convert them?
 - Online channel – diversify the online content and increase unintentional exposure
 - Interpersonal channel – expand “meet the people” sessions into regular consultation panels
 - Combine the two – online deliberation

Online deliberation

- A broadly practiced initiative all over the world by various political actors with diverse scopes



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Thank you!