

Political Correctness in the Cultural Revolution

by

Jeremy Wallace

Abstract:

Players have an independent belief about the quality of an individual leader. However, they are willing to update and incorporate the beliefs of others when those beliefs are publicly displayed (Banerjee 1992). This updating is particularly acute because there are political correctness costs associated with not joining the herd (Morris 2001). However, unlike in Morris (2001), there is not a uni-directional bias that pushes the adviser towards the “politically correct” answer, since the political correct side is only determined after the denunciation or its failure to oust the leader. In this sense, the game is similar to the stock market described famously by Keynes, where one cares about only where the market is moving. However, there is a countervailing force to simply trying to match. Leaders are of different types or relations with the players in question. One does not want to eliminate a good leader for a (potentially) bad one, *ceterus paribus*. Additionally, the likelihood of future rounds of the denunciation game is positively related to the number of previously successful denunciations (i.e., there is a cumulative breakdown in the status quo norm against denunciation). Thus, one might not want to denounce a leader even if she thought he was of the bad type and would be successfully denounced as it increases the probability of future denunciations. The motivating cases are from denunciations in non-democratic regimes, but the ability to recall governors has a similar strategic structure.