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"It's the economy, stupid" ?

A comparative analysis of confidence in political institutions among the "BRICS" countries

LÜ, Peng

Institute of Sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Division of Social Science, New York University Abu Dhabi

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze people's confidence in political institutions in the so-called "BRICS" countries, i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The author claims that the quality of macro-economic indicators cannot explain the variation of political confidence in these five most dynamic new emerging economies, and there is no substantial difference among youth, middle age, and senior age groups. By combing data from the Asia Barometer Survey and the World Value Survey, the author provides two complementary approaches, one "socio-culture" and the other "micro-political", to reveal the factors that influence people's confidence in four major political institutions. The explanatory effects of these two approaches are mixed. Political identity and values, at most cases, have significant impact on political confidence. On the other hand, high level of interpersonal social trust, individual happiness and satisfaction with living standard also show positive influence.

Keywords: confidence in political institutions; BRICS countries; political attitudes of youth; new emerging economies

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1. Introduction

The coming 2012 is a year of election, when many countries in the world will select their new governments or core leadership. Generally, it is believed that confidence in the political institutions will influence choice or restructuring of the political forces. Unfortunately, during the past twenty years or more, the political and social scientists kept claiming that the Western world is suffering crisis of political confidence. (Pharr and Putnam et al., 2000). Many scholars believe that the crisis has something to do with the declining economic prosperity of the Western world after 1970. (Lipset and Schneider, 1983; Klingemann, 1999; Newton, 1999).

Then, how do people respond to political institutions in countries with rapidly growing economy? This research selects BRICS as the target to answer the question. The acronym BRIC was coined by Jim O'Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, in a 2001 paper entitled "Building Better Global Economic BRICs" (O'Neill, 2001). On April 14 2011, the leaders of the BRIC countries decided to accept South Africa to join them, becoming the BRICS, during their third summit in Sanya, China—before that, the “Big Four” had met in Yekaterinburg in 2009 and in Brasília in 2010. The next BRICS summit is announced to be held in India in 2012 and is believed will become a regular round meeting. It is worthwhile to note that the BRIC did not have their first summit until 2009, eight years later than 2001 when the term BRIC had been coined and one year later than 2008 when a global financial crisis blow the advanced Western economies. Though some Western observers tended to treat BRICS as a “mirage” (Armijo, 2007), leaders in these five countries seem have determined to use this catchy label, along with others (like G20), to launch a campaign to convince people that multi-polar international politics is becoming unstoppable.

The confidence of this campaign comes from their growing economic might. In fact, the acronym BRICS has come into widespread use as a symbol of the shift in global economic power away from the developed G7 economies towards the developing world, though some commentators have been debating on which country is more “qualified” to have the “membership”.¹ Nevertheless, it is undeniable that these countries encompass over 25% of the world's land coverage and 40% of the world's population and hold a combined GDP of 11.539 trillion in 2010. Furthermore, these countries are among the fastest growing emerging markets in terms of GDP growth rate. Table 1 shows GDP growth rate and GDP in the BRICS from 2006 to 2010. Since data adopted in the following experience analysis come from survey 2006-2008, we start to present from the year 2006. Nevertheless, a large number of commentators view BRICS as a compelling set within a rigorous classical economic or a political science framework. (Armijo, 2007) Indeed, from Table 1 we can see that their 2006-2010 growth rates vary widely, ranging from South Africa's modest rate, to the around 6 percent logged by both Brazil and Russia, to China and India's steadily astonishing rate above 9.0 percent even under the shadow of world economic downturn. Other critics suggest that BRIC is nothing more than a neat acronym for the four largest emerging market economies. Two are manufacturing based economies and big importers (China and India), but two are huge exporters of natural resources (Brazil and Russia).

Table 1. GDP Growth Rate and GDP of BRICS countries (2006-2010)

<i>country of the</i>	GDP growth rate					GDP				
	(%)					(current US\$/billion)				
<i>BRICS</i>	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Brazil</i>	4	6.1	5.2	-0.6	7.5	1,089	1,366	1,653	1,594	2,088

¹ For example, cited from Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRIC), Jim O'Neill told the Reuters during the 2011 Investment Outlook Summit, held on 6–7 December 2010, that South Africa, at a population of under 50 million people, was just too small an economy to join the BRIC ranks. In addition, according to the same page on Wikipedia, Martyn Davies, a South African emerging markets expert, argued that the decision to invite South Africa made little commercial sense but was politically astute given China's attempts to establish a foothold in Africa. Further, South Africa's inclusion in BRICS may translate to greater South African support for China in global fora.

<i>Russia</i>	8.2	8.5	5.2	-7.8	4	990	1,300	1,661	1,222	1,480
<i>India</i>	9.3	9.8	4.9	9.1	9.7	951	1,242	1,214	1,381	1,729
<i>China</i>	12.7	14.2	9.6	9.2	10.3	2,713	3,494	4,522	4,991	5,879
<i>South Africa</i>	5.6	5.6	3.6	-1.7	2.8	261	286	275	283	364

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/>)

As far as political institutions are concerned, the BRICs are, yet one with a deep cleavage between two subgroups: one is large emerging power likely to remain authoritarian, and the other is elected society.² Although all are federal states, India, Brazil, and South Africa are the so-called “representative democracies”, either parliamentary or presidential. Russia is declared to be a “managed democracy” under Putin’s long-term ruling, while China is labeled as a “resilient authoritarianism”(Nathan, 2003) or “politicized capitalism”(Nee and Oppen, 2007).

The diversity within the BRICS, however, by no means indicates the weak justification of this category. Rather, it provides a conceptual homogenization of a heterogeneous domain for comparative study (Dogan, 2002). In other word, it is because their similarity and difference that we start the comparison. Obviously, economic growth in BRICS has kept growing since 2006, and their leaders show great confidence in playing a role as a power in the world. It is a natural question that what the confidence of common people in the politics is, whether there exists any difference between countries with better economic development trend (China and India, the "Chindia") and those with weak economy (Russia, Brazil and South Africa) and between democratic countries (India, Brazil and South Africa) and authoritarian countries (Russia and China) and more importantly whether there exists any similarity between all countries.

Limited by data, this paper is not going to conduct long-term follow-up survey on political confidence of people in BRICS. After data of relevant surveys (e.g. World Value Survey) 2010-2011 were published, it is a more interesting topic to compare political confidence of people in BRICS both before and after financial crisis. This paper is also not going to compare BRICS and the developed countries, which will be conducted in later program. In next section of this paper, we will comb literature on political confidence, especially related to emerging market economies, by the two approaches, socio-cultural and micro-political. However, in the third section of this paper, we will deal with the concept and measurement of political confidence. On such basis, we adopt two sets of cross-sectional data, Asia Barometer 2008 and World Value Survey 2006-2007, to compare political confidence in political institutions of people in BRICS and explore factors that influence such confidence. Finally, we will go on to consider theoretical and realistic significance of the research.

2. Political Confidence in the New Emerging Economies: Two Complementary Approaches

The distinction of “socio-cultural approach” and “micro-political approach” is borrowed from Denters, Gabreil, and Torcal’s summary of existing literatures on confidence in political Institutes. (Denters and Gabriel et al., 2006) In their article, they argue that these two approaches are complementary. We will test this argument in our article as an empirical question. Certainly, it is not just Denters and others to suggest the difference. For example, in explaining decline of political support in many Western democracies, Newton (2006) suggested two explanation approaches, one is society-centered, which is built on the concepts of social capital, trust and civil society. The second is politics-centered and focuses on the performance of government and the economy. However, some variables under our analysis

² From perspective of the Western political science, India, Brazil and South Africa can naturally be listed as consolidated democracy. The point is that the term, “democracy”, has too strong a hint of value judgment. In this paper we do not argue the merits or quality of the political system, but conduct value-neutral description, so the expression, "elected society", is selected.

are not very similar to those of Denters, Newton and others. The reason is not only theoretical and experiential but practical.

2.1. Socio-culture explanations

Researchers in comparative research are increasingly relying on individual level data to test theories. To begin with, we take into account some of the many recent attempts to provide empirical explanations of political confidence or trust.

Many scholars believe that socio-cultural factors have significant impact on political confidence of the people. Among them, the most typical is Social Capital School as represented by Robert Putnam. (Pharr and Putnam et al., 2000; Pharr and Putnam, 2000) Actually, core opinion of Social Capital believes that political trust is a reflection of social trust. The opinion is very logical in terms of theory and in line with daily imagination of the people. Their relationship, however, has not shown a conclusive result in empirical researches yet. Some scholars insist that the more people tend to trust others in general, the less they distrust politics (Schyns and Koop, 2010); conversely, the socially distrusting citizen is also suspicious of political institutions. (Norris, 1999; Pharr and Putnam, 2000) On the other hand, there is a substantial body of research finding that generalized trust is not consistently or strongly associated with confidence in political institutions. For example, in a research on six Asia countries, Tan and Tambyah (2010) claims that generalized social trust only has positive but weak relationship with some political institutions while some not. As Kaase (1999: 3) wrote “the statistical relationship between interpersonal trust and political trust is small indeed”.

However, not limited to social trust, what the Social Capital School is considering includes factors that influence (political) socialization of the people, especially age, gender and education. A research towards the Norwegians shows that the female more tend to trust public institutions, and so do the senior people. (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2005) However, other scholars believe that the consequences of early socialization persist over the life-cycle and have a pervasive effect on adult political attitudes and behavior, including political confidence. In other word, political confidence of the people will not grow stronger with age. (Langton, 1984) We intend to accept the opinion of Newton (Newton, 1999) that distribution of people’s trust in groups with different education, age and gender is more or less at random, for individuals regardless of their particular personality or social type all receive influence from the political institutions; however, in countries of different situation, difference of age and gender may have different effect on political confidence. We will test whether the difference exists in political confidence of different age groups (the young, middle-aged and the senior) in BRICS.

In addition, research in the Western democratic countries show that the higher education people receive, the more they tend to believe their governments. (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2005). However, we doubt about its truth, for higher education may also cause more critical spirit or culture of critical discourse of the intelligentsia as put by Gouldner (Gouldner, 1979). To China and Russia with strong Socialist tradition, it is especially true. (Konrád and Szelényi, 1979) Therefore, we will test whether people with college education will more obviously demonstrate trust or distrust in the government.

All the variables discussed above have received much attention from the theories of “Socialization” or “Social Capital. However, in addition, some other social-cultural factors should be included in our analysis, e.g. people’s happiness and satisfaction of living standard, especially the economic conditions. Some scholars have found that life satisfaction of people has a positive effect on their political trust, but they consider such satisfaction as institutional factors (Wong and Hsiao et al., 2009). For us, despite influence of the institutional factors, the extent to which people feel happy or satisfied toward their life is still subjective cultural experience, so we still see them as in social-cultural interpretation category. However, for relationship between happiness and political confidence, results of the existing research are contradictory: for example, for Lipset and Schneider (1983), decline of political confidence is because people’s dissatisfaction with life, but other scholars have confirmed that in the United States and EU countries with greater confidence levels also enjoy greater happiness level (Baltatescu, 2005). However, Brehm and Rahn (1997) conclude that Americans transfer their unhappiness about their own lives onto confidence about federal institution. We believe that these two opinions both have something reasonable. On the one hand, it is a logical

imagination that there is significant correlation between trust in governmental institutions and happiness/life satisfaction, but on the other hand, the field research we conducted before in the rust belt in China shows that those who think their lives are unfortunate tend to pin their hopes on a strong State. Thus, relationship between happiness and life satisfaction and political trust need to be further tested.

Finally, we will examine the impact of people's vocation on political trust. As one of the most important indicator of class identification, vocation also reflects economic status of the people. Some studies show that people working with public institutions have more confidence in the government (Christensen and Lægheid, 2005), but subject to data, we are not able to verify. We will examine impact of vocations as the unemployed, employed, students, retired and the homemaker on political confidence of the people. To some people, development of the welfare state will offset the negative impact of unemployment on confidence in the government, and some people even claim that class-based politics has disappeared. (Gorz, 1997; Eley and Nield, 2000). However, by analyzing the Eurobarometer survey, Bay and Blekesaune (2002) point out that unemployed youth express less confidence in politics. They talk less about politics and more frequently support revolutionary political ideas, as compared with employed youth. It was most evident especially in the UK. Another study also shows that the British class-based politics is not dead, and on the contrary, people's political career is closely tied to their support to the politics (Hibbs and Vasilatos, 1982). Compared with the Western advanced industrial countries, all the BRICS countries have not establish sound social welfare system. Situation of the unemployed, retired and housemakers is more vulnerable. It is our main concern in this paper that whether people's confidence in political institutions will present a systematic correlation.

2.2. Micro-political explanation

Some scholars have argued that political variables rather than socio-culture variables are the most important for explaining political confidence (Anderson and LoTempio, 2002) It needs further test that whether it is applicable to BRICS. However, it is undeniable that origins of people's confidence in politics are unavoidable factors of influence.

There are two political origins, macro-political factors and micro-politics. Macro-political factors are often concerned about "objective" characteristics of the politics. By qualitative analysis, it is similar to contextualized comparison (Locke and Thelen, 1995), but by quantitative analysis, it often adopts the government's actual economic performance indicators (McAllister, 1999) or degree of political freedom (Norris, 1999) to explain the difference of people's confidence in the government. However, as put by Denters and others, the possible problems with the approach is that validity of the macro explanation will be subject to number of countries to be explained (small N) (Denters and Gabriel et al., 2006: 82). Thus, in this article, our analysis will focus on the micro-level.

Most scholars deem personal political orientation as the most important element of a micro political factor. In this paper, political orientation is measured by three variables, i.e. political spectrum, level of pride of nationality and subjective evaluation on importance of party status in their own life circle. Some scholars have pointed out that the left wing has kept their tradition of support to public institutions for a strong state, so the more the political spectrum of the people inclines to the left, the more they feel confident in the political institutions. Some empirical studies have proved that the left and right of ideology constitute a consistent and important variable that influences confidence of the people in political institutions. (Christensen and Lægheid, 2005; Rudolph and Evans, 2005)

In addition, we also assume that the more people feel proud towards their nationality, the more they are confident in their governments. The variable has been used in some researches (Newton, 2006), but not common. The remainder for us is "rich flight" in China. Though economically rich, some people are not satisfied with their nationality, but try their most to acquire nationality of other countries (mostly of the United States and Western Europe). We believe that this is actually a lack of confidence in political institutions of their countries, which we will test within BRICS.

In addition, subjective assessment on importance of the identity of political parties in one's own life circle was not a favored variable in previous research. Uslander and Brown (2005) claim that trust is not important for most forms of civic engagement across a wide variety of surveys. However, the party is not an ordinary civic engagement. In fact, the

so-called "democracy crisis" in Western world has been caused to a great extent by people's dissatisfaction with party politics. As some scholars have pointed out that a negative rejection of political parties as undesirable institutions may spill over to citizen evaluations of government more generally (Miller and Listhaug, 1990) In the democratic countries (such as India, Brazil and South Africa as well as the self-proclaimed Russia), it is subject to political awareness consideration rather than obligation or economic pragmatism. It is believed that those quite sympathetic with a political party may more actively take part in political activities, but it needs experience material to test whether they will have more confidence in political institutions. In addition, to a country like China, the identity of political party may also be linked to the socialist political system. Many observers believe that it is more a pragmatic consideration for more and more people to join the party rather than believe in the political system. We will also test the opinion in our research.

3. Research Design

3.1. Merging the Datasets

An ideal dataset for this paper should be a panel data or several cross-section datasets with comprehensive items in all the BRICS countries for consecutive years. This kind of data, however, does not exist. The authors build an alternative dataset of the BRICS countries by combing tow widely-used datasets together, the AsiaBarometer Survey (ABS) and the World Value Survey (WVS).

The ABS is currently the largest regional opinion survey conducted in East, Southeast, South, Central Asia and some Pacific Asian countries. To date, six consecutive annual surveys (from 2003 to 2008) have been completed in twenty-seven countries and two regions. The ABS primarily employs a multi-staged stratified random methodology for all of its surveys. Typically, face-to-face interviewing is used. The respondents in the ABS have been reported to be fairly representative of the respective national populations (More details can be found at <http://www.asiabarometer.org>).

The WVS is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs. It is carried out by a worldwide network of social scientists who, since 1981, have conducted representative national surveys in almost 100 countries. The WVS uses the sample survey as its mode of data collection, a systematic and standardized approach to collect information through interviewing representative national samples of individuals. More details can be found at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>.

Table 2. Composition of the BRICS countries in ABS and WVS (Frequency)

		Year			Total
		2006	2007	2008	
country of the BRICS	Brazil	1500(WVS)	0	0	1500
	Russia	2033(WVS)	0	1055 (ABS)	3088
	India	2001(WVS)	0	1052 (ABS)	3053
	China	2000 (ABS)	2015(WVS)	1000 (ABS)	5015
	South Africa	0	2988(WVS)	0	2988
Total		7534	5003	3107	15644

Source: Asia Barometer 2006-2008 and World Value Survey 2006-2008. It will be the same in the rest of the article.

Note:

- a. Courtiers are ordered by their first letter in this and all other tables in this article.

In the ABS, we adopt data of Russia, India and China in the 2008 survey³ and their

³ The reason why Russia-was included in ABS 2008 is that investigation targets that year are six so-called

sample sizes were 1055,1052 and 1000 respectively; in addition, we adopt data of China in the 2006 survey (with sample size of 2000). In the WVS, we adopt the 2005-2007 Wav data, including Brazil in 2006 (with sample size of 1500), Russia in 2006 (with sample size of 2033), India in 2006 (with sample size of 2001), 2007 in China (with sample size of 2015) and South Africa in 2007 (with sample size of 2988). Thus, sample size of the final database is 15644 (see Table 1). Advantage of this database is larger sample size (although sample size of Brazil is relatively small), and the disadvantage is that any possible difference of surveys conducted in different years is ignored.

On such basis, after deleting the respondents under 18 and over 80 in the year of the survey, we have 14,311 samples. See Table 3 for composition of the respondents at different age groups. Among the respondents with known ages, 4387 (30.7%) are young people (though defined as 18 to 30, in fact the youngest respondent was born in 1988, so all of them are "after-80's"). 8417 people (58.8%) were classified as middle-aged between 31 to 59, because 60 is the age of primary retirement in many countries⁴. People over 60 are defined as senior group, 1570 in total (10.5%).

Table 3. Size of Sample and Composition of Age Group ^a

Age group		country of the BRICS					Total
		Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa	
young (30 below)	Count	461	709	1176	1176	865	4387
	Column %	36.0%	26.0%	40.4%	23.9%	35.0%	30.7%
middle age (31-59)	Count	699	1606	1483	3314	1315	8417
	Column %	54.5%	59.0%	50.9%	67.3%	53.3%	58.8%
senior (60 above)	Count	122	409	252	436	288	1507
	Column %	9.5%	15.0%	8.7%	8.9%	11.7%	10.5%
Total	Count	1282	2724	2911	4926	2468	14311
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note:

- a. The age group is coded based on respondent's then age in the year of survey.
- b. The oldest and youngest respondents were born in 1937 and 1988, respectively.

Of course, before combining the two databases, the author has made necessary and reasonable reform. Some of values of the items are recoded, and implicit nuances of questioning approaches are ignored. We will describe in detail the data combination of 3.3 in this paper.

3.2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is an additive index to measure respondent's confidence in four political institutions. As some scholars have argued, the word "trust" should be reserved for

Pacific Rim Asian (Pacific-Asian) countries, i.e. the three emerging economies including Russia, China and India as well as three developed economies including the United States, Australia and Japan. We are not sure that the samples of Russia as well as Australia and the United States are limited to Pacific Rim region or the whole territory. However, Professor Shigeto SONADA from the University of Tokyo professor, who is a key figure in conducting the Asia Barometer survey, held a seminar on application training of the data in July 2011 and told the reporters that the sample of Russia should be conducted in the whole territory.

⁴ According to Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World, retirement age for all countries is such: 65 for the male and 60 for the female in Brazil; 60 for the male and 55 for the female in Russia; 55 for the male and 55 for the female in India; 60 for the male and 55 for the female in China; 65 for the male and 60 for the female in South Africa.

attitudes towards individuals, whereas “confidence” should apply to institutions (Zmerli and Newton et al., 2006). Therefore we use “confidence in political institutions” or “political confidence” to conceptualize those corresponding items in both ABS and WVS, in which respondents were asked to indicate the level of confidence they have (from “1=Confident a lot” to “4= Not confident at all”) in various institutions to operate in the best interests of society.⁵ Only seven items are overlapping: central government, army, police, parliament, political parties, labor union, religious organization, and the United Nations (UN). We eliminate the UN straightforwardly, because it is the only international institution. Exploratory factor analysis shows that two items (labor union and religious organizations) by themselves create a component. However, considering that components should have more than 2 items or variables, labor union and religious organizations are not composed into an index. Then we run the factor analysis and reliability test for a tentative index combined by central government, army, police, parliament, and political parties. The item of army is removed on the ground that its value of communalities extraction is too low (0.297) and cronbach's Alpha will be considerably improved if Item deleted (from 0.742 to 0.801).

Furthermore, principle component analysis of responses to the 4 items reveals a single dimension in all the BRICS countries (see Table 2). It echoes with other studies (Christensen and Lægred, 2005; Zmerli and Newton et al., 2006) that political confidences in these institutions are all interconnected, that is to say, confidence in any one institution is likely to be repeated in all others. Table 5 also shows that the percentage of variance explained is systematically high and KMO measures reveal an excellent degree of fitness for the interrelationships among the different institutions.

Table 4. Component Matrix of confidence in political institutes^a

<i>Confidence in</i>	BRICS	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
<i>The central government</i>	0.809	0.793	0.838	0.685	0.720	0.820
<i>The police</i>	0.700	0.673	0.686	0.707	0.645	0.652
<i>Parliament, Congress</i>	0.852	0.811	0.881	0.825	0.771	0.839
<i>The political party</i>	0.801	0.825	0.821	0.760	0.725	0.733
<i>Pct. Variance explained</i>	62.7	60.48	65.59	55.66	51.36	58.50
<i>KMO</i>	0.831	0.747	0.784	0.740	0.714	0.748

Note:

- a. Entries are loadings on the first component.
- b. KMO is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olking measure, which indicates to what extent the variables included in the scale fit the underlying criteria. It is believed that the KMO statistic should be greater than 0.6.
- c. The Bartlett’s test is significant in all the countries.

We then build an additive index by combining central government, police, parliament, and political parties. Respondents who refuse to answer these questions are recoded as system missing. This index ranges from 4 (indicating the lowest level of confidence) to 16 (indicating the highest level of confidence). The reliability coefficient among these items is 0.801.

3.3. Independent Variables, General Hypotheses, and Methods

In order to explain the level of confidence in political institutions among the BRICS

⁵ In the WVS, the original question is: “I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?”. The expression in the ABS IS slightly different, as “please indicate to what extent you trust the following institutions to operate in the best interests of society”.

samples, we choose two sets of explanatory variables. The first set is socio-culture factors, and the second is micro-political ones. A classical multiple regression will be used as the method to test these hypotheses in the next section. Rather than providing a systematic theoretical account of sources of political confidence, our aim is to confirm whether the multivariate analysis can help us to reveal the effects of socio-culture and political factors. In general, we assume positive attitudes towards political institutions are significantly influenced by both their socio-culture and micro-political values/actions.

3.31 Socio-culture factors

Socio-culture factors are further divided into three categories: subjective evaluation, objective condition, and demographic factors. Subjective evaluation is made of three variables: general trust in people, general happiness, and evaluation of standard of living.

The relationship between social trust and confidence in political institutions is a perennial topic for a lot of political scientists and sociologists. The concept of “social trust”, however, is still quite imprecise and confusing (Zmerli and Newton et al., 2006). Many researchers use two or three variables to measure it by combining them into an additive index (Denters and Gabriel et al., 2006; Tan and Tambyah, 2010). Unfortunately, we have only one variable, but the most widely used one, to employ in our merged dataset. General trust in people is measured by the question “Q12 Generally, do you think people can be trusted or do you think that you can't be too careful in dealing with people (that it pays to be wary of people)?” in the ABS. Two options are provided: one is “Most people can be trusted” (recoded as 1) and the other is “Can't be too careful in dealing with people” (recoded as 0). The difference of tone in its counterpart question (V23) in the WVS can be consciously ignored.⁶

In the WVS, the question for the “general happiness is “Taking all things together, would you say you are 1. very happy, 2 rather happy, 3 not very happy, and 4 not at all happy”. Fortunately, in the ABS, the question is almost the same: respondents were asked “All things considered, would you say that you are happy these days?” Unfortunately, the answer is a 5 point scale, from “very happy”, “quite happy”, “neither happy nor unhappy”, “not too happy”, to “very unhappy”. In order to combine the two questions, we have to recode the answers of 3 and 4 in the WVS into 4 and 5, respectively, and recode “don't know” into 3. Thus in both datasets, we have a 5-point scale to measure general happiness. We then alter the direction of the values, making the larger value to represent higher level of happiness.

In the ABS, respondents were asked “Please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with your standard of living”. The option is a typical Likert 5 point scale, from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”—we make the larger value to represent higher level of satisfaction. In the WVS, however, the questioning is different. A scale of incomes was shown to the respondent, on which 1 indicates the “lowest income decile” and 10 the “highest income decile”. They were required to specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. We confess that this is different with the one in the ABS, but both of them to a large extent were measuring respondents' subjective feeling about their economic standard. In this study, we convert this 10-point scale to a new 5-point scale straightforwardly, as Rajan Sambandam (2006) suggested, that is, ratings of 10 and 9 are converted to 5, ratings of 8 and 7 are converted to 4 and so on.

The objective position of respondents is measured by their working conditions. In both ABS and WVS, the questionnaires contain options on respondents' occupation. Four options can be considered the same, i.e., homemaker, student, unemployed, and retired.⁷ People who have a job, however, were asked in extremely different ways in the two surveys. We even are not able to identify a pattern. Therefore, these occupations are all recoded as “employed”. Then we have a categorical variable “occupation” with five levels, that is, retired, employed, homemaker, student, and unemployed.

In order to include this variable in a multiple regression prediction model, additional

⁶ The question is: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people? (*Code one answer*)”. The options are “1 Most people can be trusted. 2 Need to be very careful.”

⁷ ABS adopts the term, “housewife”, which apparently refers to women, while WVS uses a neutral “homemaker”. By combining the data, we adopt the latter.

steps, i.e., "dummy coding", are needed to insure that the results are interpretable. Since this variable contains five levels, four dummy coded contrasts are created: employed, homemaker, student, and unemployed. These dummy codes are entered into the regression model in a single block.

"Gender" and "age in the year of survey" in demographic variables are easy to understand, of which the former is a dichotomous variable and the latter a scale variable, and both of them can be directly introduced into the model. As also a dichotomous variable, the variable of the college degree (including junior college) is adopted to measure education level of the samples. It is noteworthy that an education level variable of multi-classification can be considered as ordinal variable and thus directly introduced into the model. However, due to large approach difference of education level measurement between ABS and WVS, they have to be merged into "college degree or not" as a dichotomous variable. Among them, the junior college level is matched "some university without degree/Higher education-lower-level in WVS and some years of college (Russia), "graduation/post graduation general/professional" (India) and "college school" (China) in ABS.

3.32 Micro-political factors

A large body of literature has found that misc-political variables may affect people's political attitudes. We therefore examine the potential impact of three variables. Two of them are scale-like variables: political spectrum and level of pride of nationality.

For the political spectrum, the questions and options in the ABS and the WVS can be considered as the same. Respondents were asked like "In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking", with a 10-point scale option to fill in. The larger the number is, the closer to right-wing the respondents self-placed.

For the proud of nationality, it is measured by a 5-point scale question on how proud the respondent is to a certain nation, ranging from "very proud" to "not consider as this nation's people"-like answer in both surveys. Again, we alter the direction of the values, making the larger value to represent higher level of proud feeling.

The remaining variable-- "importance of political party"—is dichotomous. In the ABS, there is a series of questions asking "Which of the following social circles or groups are the most important to you". Respondent who chose yes to political party is coded as 1 in the new variable "political party as important social circles or groups", while others are coded as 0. The question in the WVS is put in the way as "could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member" of several types of organizations, including political party. The last two options, "inactive" and "not a member", are then recoded by the authors as 0 and the "active member" is regarded taking political party as an important social circle or group in their life. It's a quite conservative coding because we do not label it as "the most important", though samples from the ABS do think so.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Characteristics of Sample

Table 5 reports descriptive statistics of the respondents in terms of these socio-demographic and political attributes. What the author badly wants to say is that general trust in people in various countries is relatively low, and the percentage of "being careful in dealing with people" is almost all above 80%, 79.9% for China as a country with the highest level of trust in people and 90.8% for Brazil as a country with the lowest level, which is in line with many previous research. For example, Lagos (2001: 142-143) argues that in Brazil, which had one of the highest crime rates in the world, trust has practically disappeared, plummeting from 11 percent in 1996 to 4 percent in 2001. This "common regional heritage of distrust" continues in 2005. Another research reports less than one out of ten Brazilian state that most people can be trusted (Delhey and Newton, 2005).

For education, in all the five countries, at least about 70% of the samples have not received higher education. Of them, samples in South Africa have a higher education

percentage as low as 7.2%, while those in Russia and India have the highest percentage, 30.7% and 26.3% respectively.

In addition, political status and behavioral characteristics of samples in the five countries are in line with the author's expectations: most of the respondents do not believe that parties are the most important organizations or circles in their lives. Furthermore, the five countries of the respondents at the nation level show a strong sense of pride, with the mean above 4.0.

For employment, the highest rate of employment among the respondents is found in China, reaching 75.1%; however, in other countries except for South Africa, the rate of employment is basically all above 50%. In contrast, among the respondents, South Africa has the highest rate of unemployment, reaching 25.4%, which is followed by Brazil, up to 16.5%. Another point worth noting is that percentage of students among respondents from India reached 25.8%, which might be higher than that of its population.

Table 5. Profile of the respondents in the BRICS countries

		country of the BRICS				
		Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
gender	male	41.6%	46.4%	54.3%	48.7%	50.0%
	female	58.4%	53.6%	45.7%	51.3%	50.0%
college level (including junior college)	no college level	84.3%	69.3%	73.7%	80.8%	92.8%
	college level	15.7%	30.7%	26.3%	19.2%	7.2%
Employment status	retired	13.5%	19.1%	2.0%	7.7%	12.8%
	employed	53.2%	62.1%	49.0%	75.1%	42.9%
	homemaker	11.8%	4.5%	16.2%	8.5%	6.0%
	students	5.1%	8.6%	25.8%	2.7%	12.9%
	unemployed	16.5%	5.6%	7.0%	6.1%	25.4%
general trust in people	can't be too careful in dealing with people	90.8%	82.5%	85.3%	79.9%	82.5%
	Most people can be trusted	9.2%	17.5%	14.7%	20.1%	17.5%
political party as Important social circles or groups	unimportant	94.7%	98.7%	84.1%	91.7%	91.9%
	important	5.3%	1.3%	15.9%	8.3%	8.1%
political action-signing a petition	not done	25.4%	89.3%	75.9%	93.8%	87.2%
	have done	74.6%	10.7%	24.1%	6.2%	12.8%
age in the survey year		39.96 (15.68)	42.95 (15.94)	40.57 (14.00)	44.66 (12.85)	38.82 (16.58)
degree of pride of nationality		4.17 (0.84)	4.23 (0.81)	4.75 (0.52)	4.21 (0.79)	4.73 (0.53)
evaluation of standard of living		3.59 (1.05)	2.78 (1.03)	3.78 (1.01)	3.17 (0.88)	3.31 (1.17)
general happiness		4.14 (0.86)	3.44 (1.03)	3.94 (1.09)	3.72 (0.97)	4.04 (1.23)
political spectrum		5.44	5.54	4.79	5.08	6.35

Note

- a. For the last five items, figures in bold are Means. Figures in parentheses are standard deviations. The lower the means is, the higher level of pride, evaluation of standard living, or general happiness is
- a. Political spectrum values from 1 to 10, from left to right wing. The higher the value is, the more right-wing is

For assessment of living standards and general happiness, the mean of happiness in all the countries is higher than the assessment of living standard (all with 5-point scale), which confirms our previous opinion that happiness also includes assessment of factors beyond living standard. In horizontal comparison between the countries, both the two indicators are the most negative for the Russians (with means of 2.78 and 3.44 respectively as the lowest among BRICS), and the second most negative indicators are found with the Chinese (with means of 3.17 and 3.72 respectively). It is not something surprising for this paper has pointed out that although China's economy is taking off, the people's happiness has been declining. Therefore, it is proved that the relative deprivation theory and the concept of frustrated achievers (Brockmann and Delhey et al., 2009). Interestingly, generally, the Brazilians (mean 4.14) and South African (mean 4.04) have the strongest sense of happiness as in line with our general impression towards Latin Americans and Africans. However, Indians have the highest average living satisfaction (3.78).

4.2. Sample Political Profile

Table 2 shows the statistical distributions of these four items among the three age groups, ie, the youth, the middle age, and the senior age. The first important message that the table tells us is that there is almost no significant difference in confidence in political institutions with the respondents in the three age groups. For any options, means of the respondents in the three age groups are very close, which we will further prove in the following regression equation. In other words, age differences are not significant factors of the respondents' confidence in political institutions.

However, this does not mean that respondents of different age groups absolutely have no difference. For example, in terms of confidence in the central government, confidence mean of Chinese respondents clearly shows the characteristics that it gets stronger as the age group grows more senior, from 3.22 of the youth group, 3.30 of the mid-aged group to 3.40 of the senior group. The same trend is found with Chinese respondents' mean of trust in the "party", from 2.96 and 3.03 to 3.15. The Russians (with mean from 2.39 and 2.41 to 2.54) and Brazilians (with mean from 2.33 and 2.38 to 2.43) are similar to Chinese in confidence in the central government, with confidence growing with the seniority of the age group. It is interesting that in contrast, to the South Africans (with mean from 2.86 and 2.82 to 2.71), the lower the age group, the higher the trust.

Rows in Table 5 clearly show that by comparing the countries, China's confidence mean in all four political institutions are higher than those of the other four countries and also naturally higher than the general mean. As it were, China enjoys the highest confidence in political institutions. In addition, all confidence mean of the other three political institutions is obviously lower than that in the Chinese central government. This result has been expected by the author to some extent, for other research also proves Chinese people generally have higher index of confidence in both the central government and the party than people from other countries. (Tan and Tambyah, 2010).

However, Chinese people' trust is not highest in all the institutions. For example, respondents regardless of their ages have the lowest trust in religious organizations in the BRICS, far higher than Brazil, South Africa and India (confidence mean of the three countries in religious organizations are almost all above 3.0). This is perhaps because weak religious believe tradition of Chinese people and the poor reputation of the Chinese religious organizations. Since religious organizations are not included in our confidence scale of regression equation, so the authors did not present the results in this paper.

Let's come back to the four types of political organizations again. It is very interesting

that for the most options, the Indians' confidence index ranks moderate among BRICS (third), closest to the mean. In all the 12 horizontal comparisons, only four groups are exceptional, including confidence of youth group in the police (2.66), confidence of the young group in political parties (2.36), confidence of the middle-aged in political parties (2.34) and confidence of the senior group in the central government (2.76). In these four groups, the Indians' confidence is over that of the South Africans, while in the other eight groups, the South African people's confidence is over that of the Indians as well as the Russian and Brazilian people, ranking the second, only weaker than that of China - the second highest, only weaker than China. As it were, confidence of the Indians and the South Africans in political institutions ranks moderate among the BRICS.

The weakest confidence in political institutions is found with the Brazilians and Russians. Except the police, all the other three institutions have the lowest confidence among all the age groups, naturally far lower than the mean. The Russians have the lowest confidence in the police, surprisingly similar in all age groups. In addition, the confidence of the Brazilians in the central government and the police is higher than in the two representative mechanisms (parliament and political parties) confidence. Russians are similar to Brazilians in this aspect with the lowest confidence in political parties.

Findings from Russia and Brazil are in line with claims made by some scholars. For example, in an article written in 1997 based on New Democracies Barometer surveys, Mishler and Rose demonstrate that in post-Communist Europe, including Russia, skepticism, rather than distrust, predominates. (Mishler and Rose, 1997) This skepticism does not fade ten years later when Russia's economic and political performances are getting better, according to Shlapentokh's research (2006). He claims that in terms of their lack of confidence in social institutions, particularly political institutions, the Russians are behind not only the most advanced countries in the world, but even countries known for their unstable political systems, such as Colombia or Nigeria. Yet, Russia might not have the lowest political confidence. Lagos (2001: 142) insists that levels of institutional trust in Latin America are not really any higher than the low levels recorded in postcommunist Europe; rather, Latin Americans manifest some of the lowest levels of interpersonal trust observed anywhere in the world.

Table 6. **Distribution of Additive Index and Average political confidence scores by countries (1980 cohort) ^a**

Items in Index		country of the BRICS																	
		Brazil			Russia			India			China			South Africa			Total		
		Mean	S.D.	Count	Mean	S.D.	Count	Mean	S.D.	Count	Mean	S.D.	Count	Mean	S.D.	Count	Mean	S.D.	Count
Young (30 and below)	central government	2.33	.91	461	2.39	.82	709	2.78	1.00	1176	3.22	.73	1176	2.86	.92	865	2.80	.93	4387
	police	2.28	.92	461	2.09	.83	709	2.66	1.04	1176	2.74	.74	1176	2.62	.96	865	2.54	.93	4387
	parliament	1.89	.82	461	2.11	.80	709	2.64	.98	1176	3.03	.74	1176	2.79	.93	865	2.61	.95	4387
	political party	1.76	.80	461	1.88	.76	709	2.36	1.02	1176	2.96	.75	1176	2.33	.90	865	2.37	.96	4387
Middle age (31 to 59)	central government	2.38	.93	699	2.41	.84	1606	2.71	1.00	1483	3.30	.69	3314	2.82	.90	1315	2.88	.91	8417
	police	2.24	.92	699	2.04	.85	1606	2.62	1.04	1483	2.86	.75	3314	2.62	.92	1315	2.57	.92	8417
	parliament	1.90	.86	699	2.02	.79	1606	2.61	.97	1483	3.11	.75	3314	2.71	.91	1315	2.65	.95	8417
	political party	1.79	.84	699	1.88	.75	1606	2.34	.98	1483	3.03	.73	3314	2.28	.87	1315	2.46	.95	8417
Senior age (60 and above)	central government	2.43	1.08	122	2.54	.86	409	2.76	.94	252	3.40	.67	436	2.71	.91	288	2.85	.93	1507
	police	2.45	.95	122	2.16	.93	409	2.80	1.00	252	2.90	.75	436	2.60	.92	288	2.59	.94	1507
	parliament	1.80	.92	122	2.08	.83	409	2.71	.97	252	3.16	.74	436	2.62	.92	288	2.58	.98	1507
	political party	1.78	.89	122	1.93	.80	409	2.46	1.02	252	3.15	.72	436	2.23	.88	288	2.41	.99	1507

Note

- Means of ratings on scale “1= Not confident at all” to “4= Confident a lot”. The higher the means is, the higher level of confidence in a particular institution it indicates.
- The four items are combined to form an additive index to capture a collective profile of respondent's confidence in political institutions.

4.3. Regression Result

Our goal in the remainder of this article is to explain that variation in the confidence in political institutions. Even though the level of political confidence varies from country to country, the effective variables are proved to be rather similar, with only sporadic variations in some factors.

As shown by the adjusted summary R² coefficient, the regression models in each case explain only a limited amount of variance in institutional confidence. But still, we can draw some conclusions from Table 7, bearing in mind the need to look elsewhere in future studies. Our first main conclusion is that socio-cultural approach and micro-political approach both show their strong effect of explanation, although the explanation effect of political factors is more consistent and significant. The four political variables are all significant in all the five countries ($p < 0.001$). On the other hand, subjective evaluation variable of the cultural-social approach, though also significant, is not as obvious as that of Brazil and South Africa.

More concretely speaking, the positive associations between proud of nationality and confidence in the political institutions is particularly strong in all BRICS nations ($p < .001$). Table 7 shows clearly that the prouder the respondents feel about their nations, the more likely do they report high political confidence.

Regarding to political party membership, participants who took the party as important social circle were more likely to express confidence in political institutions in all the BRICS countries ($p < .01$ in China and Russia, while $p < 0.001$ in Brazil, India, and South Africa). As we wrote in the last section, active membership in political organizations is always thought to be important for enhancing political confidence. It might be particularly true in the countries where citizens can choose to join a political party more voluntarily, like in Brazil, India and South Africa--though some researchers have demonstrated the strong role of the state in mobilizing people to engage into political organizations in today's Brazil (Côrtes and Silva et al., 2011)

Among the remaining attitudinal micro-political variables, the respondent's position on the left-right self-placement scale proved to be the strongest predictor of institutional confidence. However, it is interesting that the explanatory power of political spectrum goes into different directions in China vis-a-vis other BRICS countries. In Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa, those people reporting themselves to be furthest to the left reporting the least political confidence, which echoes to other researches in the democratic regimes (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2005; Rudolph and Evans, 2005). In China, however, the direction is completely opposite: the right-wing shows the least level of political confidence. This result is understandable given that the ruling party and official ideology in China is still communist; therefore the "leftists" might be more political confident. Yet, it should be bear in mind that Chinese have a quite different, sometimes opposite, concept of "left" and "right" than the Westerners. For many Chinese, "the right-wing" equals "liberal" which is usually labeled as the "left-wing" in the West, while "the left-wing" who are more sympathetic to Maoist is widely called as "conservatives". (Mierzejewski, 2009) In other words, a scale of "conservative" and "liberal" might be much less confusing than the one of "left" and "right" for Chinese respondents.

In the aspect of soc-culture factors, the results of multiple regression analyses show that the high level of general happiness positively associated with confidence in political institutions in all BRICS nations except for Brazil. Furthermore, people who were satisfied with their living

standard expressed a high level of confidence in Russia, China, and India ($p < .001$). Last but not least, the results presented in Table 7 also confirm a strongly positive and significant relationship between social trust and confidence in four out of the five nations being compared.

Table 7. Socio-culture and micro-political explanatory variables for confidence in political institutes of BRICS countries (OLS estimates)

Type of explanation and predictor	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Micro-political explanation					
pride of nationality	.339***	.546***	.925***	.259***	1.271***
political party as Important social circles or groups	1.591***	1.342**	.737***	.311**	1.122***
political spectrum	.179***	.133**	.184***	-.141***	.247***
Socio-cultural explanation					
<i>Subjective evaluation</i>					
general happiness	.011	.257***	.294***	.139***	.048
evaluation of standard of living	.104	.179**	.161*	.288***	.124*
general trust in people	.688**	.585***	1.029***	.849***	.112
<i>Demographic</i>					
gender	.079	.384**	-.128	.102	.202
junior college level and above	-.105	-.038	-.238	-.503***	-.308
age in the survey year	.001	-.001	.008	.007*	-.011*
<i>Objective condition</i>					
working -employed	-.032	-.262	.384	-.059	-.419
working -homemaker	.117	-.644	.012	-.156	-.743*
working -student	.612	.736	.613**	-.003	-.682
working -unemployed	-.148	-.664**	.097	-.135	.294
(Constant)	8.701***	10.604***	12.397***	14.417***	11.614***
Adjusted R ²	0.121	0.139	0.143	0.151	0.146
N	1199	1931	2093	3922	2209

Note

- * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
- The tolerance is above 0.1 for all the variables, mostly between 0.7 to 0.9. Variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 5 for all.

In addition, the overall pattern by gender, junior college level, age and occupation displays a sporadic significant relationship across each model. Gender shows significant influence only in Russia: woman in Russia are nearly 3.8 times more likely than man to have confidence in political institutions. Respondents with a junior college level or above in China are more skeptical about

political institutions. Political confidence tends to be marginally higher among the older people in China and marginally lower among the older in South Africa. Meanwhile, occupation fails to be a consistent predictor for political confidence in the BRICS nations. Homemakers in South Africa and unemployed in Russia show negative relationship with political confidence, while students in India are more likely to have positive attitudes toward political confidence. In sum, it appears that institutional confidence, at most cases, is to some extent evenly distributed within different social and economic groups in society, supporting the hypothesis that confidence in political institutions is the result of specifically political and socio-cultural factors rather than general demographic factors.

5. Conclusion

As we recognized at beginning of this paper, many observers doubt that whether BRICS can continue and do not think the BRICS nations have hope of acting together as neither an economic bloc nor a coherent political might in world affairs. However, to the author, fashionable duration of the neat acronym, BRICS, is nothing but a snapshot in the grand narrative of world history. Many years later, when the historians look back on the period, they may forget the buzzword of BRICKS. However, they will point it out that since the 21st century, especially after burst of the 2008 global financial crisis, it is an undeniable fact that a number of emerging economies have appeared in development of the world economy; it is also a truth that these emerging economies are starting to play their unprecedented political role on the international platform. It is not important whether these economies are BRICS, BRICK "(K for South Korea)," BRIMC "(M for Mexico)," BRICA "(GCC Arab countries-Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates), or any other "political club".

Importantly, any sustainable development in emerging economies can not be achieved from a stable political situation. And popular trust in political institutions is vital to the stability of a regime. The results of the present research confirm the importance of economic prosperity to political confidence. For example, as we can see, Chinese have the highest level of political confidence. Xueyi Chen and Tianjian Shi in an empirical research declare that state news media and party propaganda organs in China actually have negative effects on people's attitudes toward political institutions in general and make people distrust government. (Chen and Shi, 2001) Their research is based on 1993-1994 survey data. Today, China's media has been more open and critical than the old days, so it is farfetched to say that the Chinese people's trust in political institutions is a result of "brainwashing". In other word, it should not be taken as a coincidence that China alone accounts for more than 70% of the combined GDP growth generated by the BRIC countries from 1999 to 2010. (Firzli, 2011)

However, the economic indicators can not explain everything. With China as an example again, Chinese people are very confident in central government but not in the local governments (Li, 2004). Some researchers even claim that in the six Confucian Asia communities, such as Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc. Chinese have the least confidence in local governments (Tan and Tambyah, 2010). There may be many unobservable macro factors that play a role, such as traditional culture. This principle also applies to other BRICS countries. For example, It is probably closely related to the respective collective memory of Brazil and Russia that people from the two countries have less individual social trust and political trust, so skepticism about the

honesty and law-abidingness of fellow citizens have become pervaded.

Our research aims to find factors other than economic factors that influence people's political confidence. Of course, our perspective is set in factors of individual dimension. We have proved that for the BRIC countries, both socio-culture and political explanation have significant effect in explaining difference of people's political confidence, and political factors are more consistent and powerful. Of course, we must confess that limited by data, the three micro-political factors we choose are subjective indicators: pride of nationality, evaluation on importance of political party, and political spectrum. It may tell us some more interesting information to add some specific indicators that can measure political behavior of the people.

For culture - social factors, although age, gender and occupation appear significant in some countries, the most consistent significance comes from subjective variables, such as evaluation of standard of living, general happiness and general social trust. Our research shows that people's positive opinion on their own life and people around may have positive effect in their political confidence. It not only reaffirms that the level of economic development is not the only important factor, and it may urge policy makers to pay more attention to individuals' subjective experience of economic development results.

Of course, there are still many other variables that play an important role in people's political trust. For example, many researches have pointed out role of the media (Levi and Stoker, 2000). This is especially true today, when politics is increasingly personalized: whether in parliamentary or presidential system, people are more concerned about the leaders' individual performance, and growth of electronic media plays a crucial role on how to understand leadership (McAllister, 2007). There is still the network media that plays even a larger role in guiding people's political attitudes. (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006) For another example, It is proved that the evaluation citizens have on the government performance (such as on the issues of corruption, human rights, and crime as well as the economy) is closely related to political satisfaction of the people. (Kim and Voorhees, 2011)

However, limited by data, we can not test the role of these variables in this paper. In fact, any research can not exhaust all variables that may play a role on the political confidence. Nevertheless, one thing is certain that if we shift our attention from macro economic performance to individual level, it will be a key in raising people's political confidence to improve actual experience of the individuals in terms of economic development achievement. Nowadays, many politicians, probably including BRICS leaders, believe that as long as the economy keeps growing, they can maintain people's confidence in the government. Though the opinion is reasonable to some extent, we shall not forget that in 1992 election, the reason why Bill Clinton's "It's the economy, stupid" slogan was able to work, because it has captured the hope of voters to defeat George W. Bush. Considered as a hero in winding up the Cold War, he was invincible. Similarly, if a leader ignores the expectations of the citizens and believes that economic growth alone can achieve political confidence, then the invincible force sooner or later will suffer a serious crisis.

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