The Rise of Trump

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tistically meaningful, any variation in support across the authoritarian scale for the other candidates is not.

The Role of Fear and Authoritarianism in Trump's Rise

As discussed earlier, while scholars differ on the specific origin of authoritarianism, threat and fear have long been theorized to play an important role in the activation of authoritarian behavior and the expression of authoritarian attitudes. Indeed, the linkage between threat and authoritarian behavior has remained a central focus of authoritarian studies from more than seven decades. Hetherington, Weiler, and Suhay have all advanced what I call the Pogo principle—that “[a]s people in the middle and lower tiers of authoritarianism come to perceive threat, they adopt policy orientations that are more like an authoritarian’s.”

With the terrorist attacks in Paris in mid-November of 2015 and the San Bernardino terrorist shootings occurring just two weeks later, I expected that fear of terrorism was rising—and that polling would find those who were more worried about terrorism would be more likely to support Trump. Theoretically, authoritarians and nonauthoritarians who are more worried about terrorism should be a receptive audience for the finger-pointing of a fear mongering candidate like Donald Trump.

The results from the national survey I conducted provided empirical support for this hypothesis, finding that personal fear of terrorism was a statistically significant predictor of support for Trump. Activated authoritarians, as well as fearful Americans, were (and remain) key components of Trump’s base. Trump’s calls for vigilance hit home with activated authoritarians as well as with an audience of nonauthoritarians primed by fear.

Graphed once again using predicted probabilities, the effect of fear of terrorism on support for Trump among less authoritarian voters is unmistakable. The more fearful nonauthoritarians are of the threat posed by terrorism, the more likely they are to support Donald Trump (Figure 3). Comparing those who are not at all afraid of terrorism to

those who fear terrorism a lot, the effect of fear on support for Trump is statistically significant at a confidence interval of 95 percent.

How Do We Know That Trump Supporters Are Authoritarians?

A common objection raised by skeptics of the four-question authoritarian scale is that the childrearing qualities it measures are not accurate estimators of an individual’s disposition to authoritarianism. One simple way to test this objection and answer skeptics is to assess whether Trump voters express authoritarian attitudes. In other words, if Trump voters really are authoritarians, more often than not they should behave like authoritarians. Not only should they walk like a duck (by testing dispositionally authoritarian); they also should talk like a duck (by expressing authoritarian attitudes on a wide range of issues). In short, they are authoritarian walkers and talkers.

Several questions in the national survey were designed to test for authoritarian behavior. These questions spring from a robust litera-