



RETHINKING THE  
SOCIAL CREDIT  
SYSTEM:

A LONG ROAD TO  
ESTABLISHING TRUST  
IN CHINESE SOCIETY

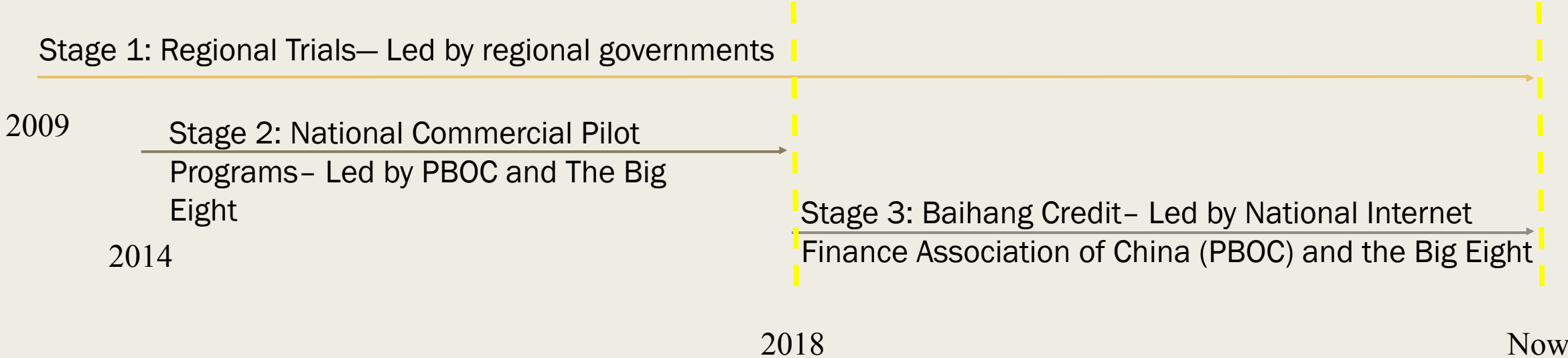
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# What is the social credit system (SCS)?

- The SCS is best characterized as an ecosystem of initiatives operated at the central and local level that is intended to encourage trust and discourage insincerity in Mainland China.
- The initiatives all aim “to incentivize individuals and businesses to improve their behavior by creating consequences for their behavior” (Rogier Creemers).
- The SCS is “promoted by the government and built together by society” (SCS Outline).
- The SCS aims to promote trust in government, financial, societal, and judicial sectors.

# The SCS Timeline



# Applying Contextual Integrity to Three Issues of the SCS

- Redefinition of “privacy.”
- Transmission of personal info of those who receive a travel ban.
- Current SCS philosophy, which advocates for uncontextualized punishments.

# Applications of Contextual Integrity– Redefining “Privacy”

- Privacy used to mean the separation of private and public information.
- The age of internet now demands a redefinition of privacy because private and public information are not so distinct anymore. E.g., people share private information on social media willingly, invasive data mining technologies are more prevalent.
- Contextual Integrity: interprets privacy based on the appropriate flow of information by considering the Data Subject, Sender, Recipient, Information type, and Transmission principle

# Applications of Contextual Integrity – Rethinking the Information Flow & Travel Ban



# Applications of Contextual Integrity– Rethinking Information Flow & Travel Ban

- Travel ban is one of many punishments issued to the discredited.
- In 2018, the SCS authorities have banned 20 million people from taking the high-speed trains and airplanes (Deutsche Welle)
- Two kinds of people would receive the travel ban: 1) defaulters 2) individuals who violate the *Regulations on Administrative Penalties For Public Security* on trains and airplanes.
- How is the personal info of those who receive the travel ban transmitted?

# Applications of Contextual Integrity– Rethinking Information Flow & Travel Ban

- Examining information flow through the lens of CI:
  - *Data Subject: A defaulter*
  - *Sender: A plaintiff, the defaulter*
  - *Recipient: The court*
  - *Information type: records of trust violations*
  - *Transmission principle:*
    - The recipient transmits the personal info of those subject to travel ban to the public.
      - *Public shaming rather than direct enforcement*
    - And transmits such info without differentiating the severity/nature of violation.
      - *Defaulters vs. students failed to pay loan on time*



# Public Shaming— Where Personal Info of Defaulters Ends Up



# Applications of Contextual Integrity– Rethinking the SCS Philosophy

- Public shaming practice finds root in the philosophy of the SCS project, “those keeping trust receive benefit in all respect, and those breaking trust meet with difficulty at every step.”
- The current philosophy of the SCS project is the main cause to the violation of the transmission principle of CI. It aims to improve legal enforcement by supporting punishments without context. E.g., the publication of defaulters’ personal info without differentiating the nature or severity of the violations.

# Conclusion

- The SCS project is an innovation but one with many privacy concerns.
- The current state of the SCS is far from the black mirror fantasy, but it could be heading in that direction if the authorities continue to disregard the privacy of the defaulters and the proper information flow.
- Punishments without context is dangerous.
- CI is a useful tool for the SCS authorities to discover the privacy violations in the information flow.
- Questions to audience: Can CI be useful for lawmakers when they legislate new SCS laws? Is CI more effective in helping the authorities detect the flaws in existing legislations?