Magnetic Field Reversal around an Active Fast Radio Burst

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The environment of actively repeating fast radio bursts (FRBs) has been shown to be complex and varying\textsuperscript{1}. The recently localized FRB 20190520B\textsuperscript{2} is extremely active, has the largest confirmed host dispersion measure, and is only the second FRB source associated with a compact, persistent radio source (PRS). The main tracer of the magneto-ionic environments is the rotation measure (RM), a path-integral of the line-of-sight component of magnetic field strength (B) and electron density, which does not allow a direct probe of the B-field configuration. Here we report direct evidence for a B-field reversal based on the observed sign change and extreme variation of FRB 20190520B’s RM, which changed from $\sim 10000 \, \text{rad m}^{-2}$ to $\sim -16000 \, \text{rad m}^{-2}$ between June 2021 and January 2022. Such extreme RM reversal has
never been observed before in any FRB nor in any astronomical object. The implied short-
term change of the B-field configuration in or around the FRB could be due to the vicinity
of massive black holes, or a magnetized companion star in binary systems, or a young supernova remnant along the line of sight.

FRB 20190520B is an extremely active repeating FRB hosted by a dwarf galaxy of high
specific star formation rate at a redshift $z = 0.241^{+0.027}_{-0.018}$. Similar to FRB 20121102A$^5$, the estimated host galaxy dispersion measure ($\text{DM}_{\text{host}}$) is substantially higher than that from the intergalactic-medium (IGM), with FRB 20190520B being the more extreme case with a $\text{DM}_{\text{host}} \approx 902^{+88}_{-128}$ pc cm$^{-3}$, nearly an order of magnitude higher than the average of FRB host galaxies$^4$.

Among all known FRBs, only FRB 20121102A and FRB 20190520B have confirmed compact, persistent radio source (PRS)$^5$, suggesting a distinctive origin or an earlier evolutionary stage for this type of sources$^6$.

FRB 20190520B was discovered by the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST$^9$) in 1.2 GHz band, but its RM was first measured$^{10,11}$ with the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope (GBT). We attributed such apparent frequency evolution of polarization to multi-path scattering$^{10}$. We have been monitoring FRB 20190520B with the Parkes radio telescope (Murriyang) using its Ultra-Wideband Low (UWL) receiver since April 2020. Our observations covered frequencies from 704 MHz to 4032 MHz (see Methods for details), which enabled us to search for bursts and their linearly polarised emission over a wide frequency range. A total of eight bursts (Fig. 1) were detected with robust linear polarisation measurements ($\text{S/N} > 5$ in terms
of polarized intensity) during four observing sessions from June 2021 to January 2022. All eight bursts were detected above 2.8 GHz with an emission bandwidth ranging from ~ 500 to 1000 MHz. While some bursts show simple and narrow peaks (< 1 ms), others show multiple components with clear structures in frequency as observed in other repeating FRBs\cite{12,13}. The time of arrival (ToA), peak flux density, burst width, dispersion measure (DM), RM, the central frequency weighted by pulse shape in the frequency domain, and degree of de-biased linear and circular polarization of each pulse are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: **Polarization Properties of the eight bursts.** Column (1): burst index; Col.(2): Modified Julian dates referenced to infinite frequency at the Solar System barycentre; Col.(3): peak flux density; Col.(4): burst width; Col.(5): dispersion measure; Col.(6): frequency of the burst weighted by signal to noise ratio.; Col.(7): RM obtained by RM-synthesis; Col.(8): RM obtained by Stokes QU-fitting; Col.(9): degree of linear polarization; Col.(10): degree of circular polarization.

| Burst | MJD       | $S_{\text{peak}}$ | Width | DM   | Frequency | RM$_{\text{FDF}}$ | RM$_{\text{QUfit}}$ | % Linear | % Circular |
|-------|-----------|-------------------|-------|------|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1     | 59373.6101602727 | 979.3          | 1.2   | 1202.4 ± 0.2 | 3402       | 12956$^{+143}_{-137}$ | 12298$^{+74}_{-93}$ | 30.0 ± 3.1 | −2.6 ± 3.0 |
| 2     | 59373.6119604420 | 2016.6         | 2.6   | 1209.6 ± 0.2 | 3264       | 12556$^{+58}_{-54}$ | 12523$^{+40}_{-42}$ | 19.4 ± 1.1 | −1.1 ± 1.0 |
| 3     | 59373.6527697290 | 752.7          | 1.9   | 1211.4 ± 0.5 | 2813       | 11756$^{+31}_{-42}$ | 11743$^{+34}_{-37}$ | 25.5 ± 3.2 | 3.5 ± 3.1 |
| 4     | 59384.6333777010 | 1051.6         | 4.2   | 1212.4 ± 0.2 | 3485       | 8054$^{+179}_{-166}$ | 8044$^{+19}_{-25}$ | 33.7 ± 4.4 | −9.2 ± 4.2 |
| 5     | 59400.4348331362 | 1853.2         | 1.5   | 1205.7 ± 0.2 | 3163       | 10135$^{+76}_{-102}$ | 9608$^{+91}_{-73}$ | 15.0 ± 1.8 | 3.1 ± 1.8 |
| 6     | 59400.4786563295 | 2020.5         | 2.3   | 1206.4 ± 0.2 | 3801       | 9715$^{+115}_{-88}$ | 9908$^{+96}_{-86}$ | 24.4 ± 2.2 | −0.5 ± 2.1 |
| 7     | 59588.834457013  | 656.5          | 0.9   | 1186.0 ± 0.2 | 3224       | −15518$^{+84}_{-164}$ | −16081$^{+18}_{-18}$ | 56.7 ± 12.5 | 1.7 ± 10.8 |
| 8     | 59588.9067463214 | 1276.4         | 0.9   | 1186.4 ± 0.3 | 3746       | −16358$^{+298}_{-108}$ | −16289$^{+17}_{-18}$ | 53.2 ± 14.0 | −12.8 ± 11.7 |
Figure 1: **Polarization profiles and dynamic spectra of the eight bursts from FRB 20190520B.**

A, Polarization position angles. B, Polarization pulse profiles; black, red and blue curves denote total intensity, linear polarization and circular polarization, respectively. C, Dynamic spectra.
During three GBT observations over roughly the same time span, significant RM variations on months time scale have been seen\textsuperscript{11}. The Parkes bursts exhibit more extreme variations and sign-reversal over the course of several months. As shown in Fig. 2, the measured RM increased rapidly from $\sim 3000 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ in March 2021\textsuperscript{10} to $\sim 10000 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ in June 2021, and then turned over and reversed to $\sim -16000 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ in the next six months. The reversal of RM with a peak-to-peak variation on the order of $10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ in such a short time-scale, which cannot be explained by density fluctuation alone, and thus requires reversal of the B-field direction, has never been observed in FRBs or any other astronomical phenomenon.

Extreme RM greater than $10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ has only been observed in FRB 20121102A\textsuperscript{1,14} and in the vicinity of supermassive black holes\textsuperscript{15,16}. FRB 20190520B also exhibits RM variations on day to day and week to week timescales, similar to FRB 20121102A\textsuperscript{14}. However, the RM of FRB 20121102A decreased almost monotonously, without any reversal, from $1.46 \times 10^5 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ to $9.7 \times 10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$ between January 2017 and August 2019, dropping by an average of 15% year$^{-1}$. No RM reversal has been observed in the vicinities of supermassive black holes either. The reversal and large variations of RM cannot be explained solely by the variation in electron density since the DM only varied by $< 20 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ during this period of time as shown in the panel A of Fig. 2 (see Methods for details of DM measurements).

Complex magneto-ionic environments have been inferred from observations for some repeaters in previous work\textsuperscript{1,8,13}. However, since the magnetic field strength and direction are degenerate, one cannot probe the geometric structure of the magnetic fields directly, even with both
Figure 2: **DMs, circular polarization, and RMs of FRB 20190520B as a function of time.**

**A**, DMs of all bursts as a function of time. Blue points denote bursts detected with GBT observations. Red points denote bursts detected with Parkes observations. **B**, Circular polarization of the eight bursts with linear polarisation (S/N > 5 for the linear polarization intensity) as a function of time. **C**, RMs of the eight bursts as a function of time. The solid green line represents linear fitting of RM from MJD 59300 to MJD 59373. The dashed green line represents linear fitting of RM from MJD 59373 to MJD 59588.
RMs and DMs measured, if the RM sign remains unchanged. The observed RM reversal of FRB 20190520B reveals that the RM evolution is mainly due to the change of the geometric configuration of the magnetic field along the line of sight. Meanwhile, extremely large RM values of \( \text{RM} \sim 10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2} \) reversing sign during half a year further implies that there must be a strong B field with complex geometric configuration at small scales.

We consider that the relative velocity between the FRB source and the foreground magnetized plasma medium might range from \( v \sim (100 - 10^4) \text{ km s}^{-1} \). The lower end of 100 km s\(^{-1}\) corresponds to the kick velocity of a neutron star\(^{[17]}\) and the upper end of 10\(^4\) km s\(^{-1}\) the expanding velocity of a young supernova\(^{[18]}\). For the scenarios of the interstellar medium or stellar wind as the foreground, the velocities are also in the above range. Thus, the typical geometric lengthscale of the magnetic field can be estimated as \( l \sim v \Delta t \sim (10^{-4} - 10^{-2}) \text{ pc} \).

For the magneto-ionic cold plasma, the RM is

\[
\text{RM} = 0.81 \text{ rad m}^{-2} \int_0^d \frac{B_\parallel(l) n_e(l)}{(1 + z(l))^2} dl, \tag{1}
\]

where \( l \) is the line-of-sight position; \( B_\parallel \) is the line-of-sight magnetic field strength in microgauss; \( n_e \) is the electron density; \( z \) is the redshift of the source; and \( d \) is the distance to the source in parsecs. Due to \( \text{RM} \sim 10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2} \) and \( l \sim (10^{-4} - 10^{-2}) \text{ pc} \), one has \( \xi_{nB} \equiv n_e B_\parallel \sim (10^6 - 10^8) \text{ cm}^{-3} \mu\text{G} \) according to Eq.(1). In the interstellar medium, the magnetic field is about a few \( \mu\text{G} \) and the electron density is \( \lesssim 10^4 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) (this upper limit corresponds to the observed maximum density of HII regions)\(^{[18]}\). Thus, the resulting \( \xi_{nB} \sim (10^6 - 10^8) \text{ cm}^{-3} \mu\text{G} \) implies that the RM-generating magneto-ionic medium has to be extremely dense. Furthermore, we parametrize the
relation between the magnetic field pressure and gas pressure with \( n_e k_B T = \beta B^2 / 8\pi \), where \( k_B \) is the Boltzmann constant, and \( \beta \) is a scaling factor with \( \beta = 1 \) under the energy equipartition. Then one obtains the magnetic field strength as \( B \sim (8\pi k_B T \xi_{eb} \beta^{-1})^{1/3} \sim (0.3 - 1.5)\beta^{-1/3} \) mG for a photo-ionized temperature with \( T \sim 10^4 \) K and \( B \gtrsim (1.5 - 7)\beta^{-1/3} \) mG for a shock temperature with \( T \gtrsim 10^6 \) K depending on the shock evolution\(^{18}\).

We consider here two feasible astrophysical scenarios (see Methods for details): 1) an FRB source with a magnetic companion, e.g. a massive black hole or a stellar source with extreme magnetized environment. 2) an expanding supernova remnant (SNR) in front of the FRB source. The extremely large RMs with \( \text{RM} \gtrsim 10^4 \) rad m\(^{-2}\) have been observed in the vicinities of massive black holes\(^{15,16,19}\). If the FRB source is near a massive black hole, the RM variation is accounted for by the change of the parallel field due to the orbital motion around the black hole, and the persistent radio emission may be associated with the black hole itself\(^{20}\). On the other hand, the FRB source can also be in a binary system with period of a few years. A magnetized companion star can generate a field reversal along the line of sight. The radio observations of PSR B1259-63 showed that its RM reached an extreme value of a few times \( 10^3 \) rad m\(^{-2}\) and significantly reversed around periastron\(^{21}\). In this case, the observed DM and RM variation would be periodic, which could be tested in future observations. The latter scenario requires a young SNR, but not necessarily the progenitor of the FRB source. The localization of FRB 20190520B constrains the PRS and FRB source to be within \( \sim 1 \) kpc\(^2\), and the scattering time scale observed can be well interpreted by a more compact configuration at \( \lesssim 100 \) pc\(^2\). This is consistent with the FRB propagating in a plasma screen, like an SNR\(^{23}\). A young SNR would imply that its DM and the
maximum absolute value of the RM will decrease with evolution on longer time scales\textsuperscript{23,25}.

In summary, the extreme sign-change of the measured RM sheds critical lights into the geometric configuration of the magnetic field around and toward FRB 20190520B. Between the observer and the FRB source, there has to be a dense, highly magnetized (likely \(\sim\) mG as opposed to \(\sim\) \(\mu\)G for the general ISM) medium, which also has to be close to the FRB source. Conceivable scenarios include a FRB source in the vicinity of a blackhole or magnetized stellar companion, or an FRB propagating young SNR. Further monitoring can clearly distinguish between these scenarios, in terms of DM variations, periodicity or lack thereof in RM variations, etc.

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**Author Contributions**  S.D. and D.L. launched the observation campaign. S.D. searched the bursts and analysed the burst properties. Y.F. and Y.K.Z. conducted the polarization analysis and visualization. Y.F., D.L., S.D. and Y.P.Y led the discussion on the interpretation of the results and writing of the manuscript. Y.P.Y. and B.Z. contributed to theoretical investigations of the physical implications of the observational results. All authors contributed to the analysis or interpretation of the data and to the final version of the manuscript.

**Competing Interests**  The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests.
Methods

Observations  The repeating FRB 20190520B is currently being monitored fortnightly at Parkes using the Ultra-Wideband Low (UWL) receiver as part of project P1101 (PI: S. Dai) since April 2021. The UWL system provides a radio frequency coverage from 704 MHz to 4032 MHz. Data were recorded with 2-bit sampling every 32 $\mu$s in each of the 1 MHz wide frequency channels (3328 channels in total). The integration time of each observation is $\sim 7200$ s. Data were coherently de-dispersed at a DM of 1220.0 pc cm$^{-3}$ with full Stokes information being recorded.

A critical sampling filter bank has been used to produce 26 sub-bands and we removed 5 MHz of the bandpass at each edge of the 26 sub-bands to mitigate aliasing. To measure the differential gains between the signal paths of the two voltage probes, we observed a pulsed noise signal injected into the signal path prior to the first-stage low-noise amplifiers before each observation. The noise signal also provides a reference brightness for each observation. To correct for the absolute gain of the system, we use observations of the radio galaxy 3C 218 (Hydra A); using on- and off-source pointings to measure the apparent brightness of the noise diode as a function of radio frequency. Polarimetric responses of the UWL are derived from observations of PSR J0437$-$4715 covering a wide range of parallactic angles, taken during the commissioning of UWL in 2018 November. The Stokes parameters are in accordance with the astronomical conventions described by (van Straten 2010). The linear polarization and the position angle (PA) of linear polarization were calculated following Dai et al. (2015). All data reduction and calibration used the PSRCHIVE software package.

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**Search procedures** The full UWL band was split into multiple subbands for the search of repeating bursts. We used subband bandwidth of 256 MHz, 384 MHz and 512 MHz to optimise our sensitivity to signals with different characteristic bandwidth. The search of repeating bursts was performed using the pulsar searching software package PRESTO on CSIRO’s high performance computer facilities. Strong narrow-band and short duration broadband radio-frequency interference (RFI) were identified and marked using the PRESTO routine RFIFIND. We used a 2 s integration time for RFI masking and the default cutoff to reject time-domain and frequency-domain interference was used in our pipeline. We searched a DM range from 1130 to 1280 cm$^{-3}$ pc with a DM step of 0.2 cm$^{-3}$ pc. Data were de-dispersed at each of the trial DMs using the PREP-DATA routine with RFI removal based on the RFI mask file produced. Single pulse candidates with S/N larger than seven were identified using the SINGLE_PULSE_SEARCH.PY routine for each de-dispersed time series and for boxcar filtering parameters with filter widths ranging from 1 to 300 samples. Burst candidates were manually examined and narrowband and impulsive RFI were manually zapped. To measure the pulse width, we first smoothed the pulse profile with a Savitzky-Golay filter and then measured its width at 10% of the peak. Similarly, the emission bandwidth was measured with the frequency spectrum of each burst.

**Dispersion measure** The DM of each burst was determined using the DM_PHASE software package which maximizes the coherent power in the pulse across the emission bandwidth. From MJD 59300 to 59600, a total of 113 bursts have been detected and we present their DM measurements in Extended Data Tab. and Fig. Detailed studies of this large sample of bursts will be published

*https://github.com/danielemichilli/DM_phase*
in future papers.

**Extended Data Tab. 1. DM measurements of 113 bursts.**

| MJD   | DM (cm⁻³ pc) | MJD   | DM (cm⁻³ pc) | MJD   | DM (cm⁻³ pc) |
|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| Barycentric |         | Barycentric |         | Barycentric |         |
| 59351.4750170033 | 1218.5±0.6 | 59373.6186719499 | 1211.0±0.3 | 59384.6294581983 | 1220.9±0.4 |
| 59351.5021431330 | 1216.7±0.3 | 59373.6191020361 | 1204.6±0.3 | 59384.6306480944 | 1204.4±0.5 |
| 59351.5110725938 | 1214.5±0.5 | 59373.6192861348 | 1217.2±0.2 | 59384.6333777010 | 1212.4±0.2 |
| 59351.5168879906 | 1214.2±0.3 | 59373.6197510004 | 1202.8±0.3 | 59384.6465330782 | 1218.3±0.4 |
| 59351.5315930086 | 1190.7±0.6 | 59373.6201633430 | 1209.7±0.3 | 59384.6500363071 | 1193.5±0.2 |
| 59351.5315930086 | 1190.7±0.6 | 59373.6214299823 | 1205.8±0.4 | 59384.6646176032 | 1203.0±0.6 |
| 59360.4955229562 | 1207.6±0.8 | 59373.6218976407 | 1212.7±0.2 | 59400.4225401029 | 1202.3±0.4 |
| 59373.5838717104 | 1195.0±0.4 | 59373.6229176433 | 1214.3±0.4 | 59400.4294084405 | 1206.6±0.3 |
| 59373.5850684017 | 1217.5±0.5 | 59373.6236883589 | 1190.4±0.4 | 59400.4337243184 | 1209.2±0.3 |
| 59373.5852747021 | 1210.2±0.4 | 59373.6265007697 | 1217.8±0.6 | 59400.4348331362 | 1205.7±0.2 |
| 59373.5872505665 | 1226.5±0.6 | 59373.6315025370 | 1215.2±0.3 | 59400.4408176222 | 1209.0±0.3 |
| 59373.5877579366 | 1201.3±0.4 | 59373.6345711752 | 1220.0±0.3 | 59400.4736373893 | 1211.0±0.2 |
| 59373.5895305270 | 1205.3±0.3 | 59373.6365923377 | 1228.2±0.4 | 59400.4736886456 | 1215.3±0.6 |
| 59373.5897958388 | 1209.6±0.2 | 59373.6382490036 | 1229.0±0.5 | 59400.4786563295 | 1206.4±0.2 |
| 59373.5916443999 | 1193.6±0.3 | 59373.6388043999 | 1201.6±0.6 | 59453.2009179602 | 1213.8±0.4 |
| 59373.5933619585 | 1219.0±0.4 | 59373.6423418338 | 1214.8±0.3 | 59481.2794162788 | 1193.4±0.6 |
| 59373.5934607981 | 1230.9±0.6 | 59373.6427697294 | 1200.4±0.4 | 59481.3165300471 | 1199.8±0.4 |
| 59373.5939531716 | 1208.8±0.4 | 59373.6439084083 | 1201.8±0.5 | 59481.3307290648 | 1184.8±0.3 |
| 59373.5956878030 | 1222.5±0.7 | 59373.6440640982 | 1212.6±0.4 | 59562.9907597572 | 1195.9±0.3 |
| 59373.5979591211 | 1206.0±0.4 | 59373.6442020997 | 1204.9±0.2 | 59562.9912788861 | 1195.3±0.7 |
|                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 59373.5981310917 | 1201.7±0.4       | 59373.6442021552 | 1204.9±0.2       | 59562.9999439222 | 1195.6±0.2       |
| 59373.6020685605 | 1231.1±0.5       | 59373.6448700063 | 1218.6±0.5       | 59574.9781089355 | 1200.9±0.2       |
| 59373.6024451120 | 1229.6±0.4       | 59373.6456917126 | 1206.9±0.4       | 59574.9815491667 | 1186.5±0.3       |
| 59373.6028841527 | 1202.5±0.3       | 59373.6456921157 | 1204.1±0.4       | 59574.9831980626 | 1191.2±0.3       |
| 59373.6052884124 | 1204.0±0.3       | 59373.6521955553 | 1210.4±0.6       | 59574.9945700731 | 1186.8±0.2       |
| 59373.6072687276 | 1224.4±0.4       | 59373.6526363122 | 1208.2±0.3       | 59575.0300177670 | 1193.7±0.3       |
| 59373.6072690031 | 1224.4±0.4       | 59373.6527697290 | 1211.4±0.5       | 59575.0354346287 | 1191.4±0.5       |
| 59373.6076421224 | 1208.0±0.5       | 59373.657578495  | 1205.5±0.4       | 59588.8344457013 | 1186.0±0.2       |
| 59373.6092077267 | 1196.6±0.4       | 59373.6589247000 | 1221.3±0.4       | 59588.8524971994 | 1181.6±0.2       |
| 59373.6097061918 | 1203.9±0.4       | 59373.6609038940 | 1203.4±0.4       | 59588.8583910781 | 1190.6±0.3       |
| 59373.6099189906 | 1210.9±0.6       | 59373.6613604095 | 1200.6±0.4       | 59588.8665026800 | 1184.2±0.3       |
| 59373.6101602727 | 1202.4±0.2       | 59373.6621657088 | 1225.8±0.3       | 59588.8742191064 | 1185.0±0.4       |
| 59373.6119604420 | 1209.6±0.2       | 59373.6633856556 | 1205.9±0.4       | 59588.8947177502 | 1176.5±0.2       |
| 59373.6132582173 | 1205.6±0.3       | 59373.6653132433 | 1229.5±0.4       | 59588.9035810742 | 1201.9±0.3       |
| 59373.6134620465 | 1224.7±0.4       | 59373.6660004684 | 1209.8±0.3       | 59588.9040644909 | 1183.0±0.5       |
| 59373.6150713389 | 1196.8±0.2       | 59384.5914904468 | 1191.4±0.6       | 59588.9067463214 | 1186.4±0.2       |
| 59373.6158102326 | 1208.9±0.5       | 59384.6029173974 | 1203.0±0.4       | 59588.9117617914 | 1197.5±0.5       |
| 59373.6169866773 | 1215.5±0.7       | 59384.6169621390 | 1219.2±0.4       | 59588.9244279910 | 1188.5±0.5       |

**Faraday rotation** We searched for an RM detection using the methods of RM-synthesis[33,34] and Stokes QU-fitting[35]. Examples of the results from RM-synthesis are shown in Extended Data Fig. 1 and for Stokes QU-fitting in Extended Data Fig. 2. We find consistent values with both methods (Table[1]).
Extended Data Fig. 1. RM search with RM-synthesis. Example result of RM-synthesis. The blues line represents linear polarization fraction of the burst as a function of rotation measure.

We derotated the linear polarization with the measured RM. We then calculated the degrees of linear polarization and circular polarization for each burst. We use the frequency-averaged, de-biased total linear polarization \[^{36}L_{\text{de-bias}}\]

\[
L_{\text{de-bias}} = \begin{cases} 
\sigma_I \sqrt{\left( \frac{L_i}{\sigma_I} \right)^2 - 1} & \text{if } \frac{L_i}{\sigma_I} > 1.57 \\
0 & \text{otherwise},
\end{cases}
\]

where \(\sigma_I\) is the Stokes I off-pulse standard deviation and \(L_i\) is the measured frequency-averaged linear polarization of time sample \(i\). We defined \(I = \Sigma_i I_i\), \(L = \Sigma_i L_{\text{de-bias},i}\) and \(V = \Sigma_i V_i\), where the summation is over the bursts and \(V_i\) is the measured frequency-averaged circular polarization of time sample \(i\). We then defined the degree of linear polarization as \(L/I\) and that of circular polarization as \(V/I\). Uncertainties on the linear polarization fraction and circular polarization fraction
Extended Data Fig. 2. RM search with Stokes QU-fitting. Example result of Stokes QU-fitting for the same bursts shown in Extended Data Fig. [1] A, Marginalized posterior of the PA. B, Two dimensional posterior probability distributions of the RM and PA. C, Marginalized posterior of the RM. The selection of contour levels is displayed in the colour bar.
are calculated as:

\[ \sigma_{\rho/I} = \frac{\sqrt{N + N^2 \rho^2}}{I} \sigma_I, \]  

(3)

where \( N \) is the number of time samples of the burst, and \( \rho = L, V \) for linear and circular polarization fraction, respectively. The degrees of linear polarization and circular polarization are listed in Table[1]..

Possible astrophysical scenarios In this section, we discuss two possible astrophysical scenarios producing the RM reversal: 1) the RM reversal is contributed by an expanding supernova remnant (SNR), as shown in panel (a) of Figure[3]. 2) the RM reversal is due to the change of relative position between an FRB source and its companion, as shown in panel (b) of Figure[3].

Extended Data Fig. 3. Two possible astrophysical scenarios. Panel (a) the FRB source is in the vicinity of its companion with large-scale magnetic field. Panel (b) an SNR as the foreground of the FRB source.
First, we consider that FRB 20190520B is close to a companion surrounded by magnetized medium, e.g., a massive black hole or a companion star, as shown in panel (a) of Figure 3. In this case, the RM evolution of FRB 20190520B would have a period of a few years, considering that the magnetic field of the companion is large-scale and the observed RM evolution (i.e., RM reversal) is significant during half a year. A long-term monitoring of FRB 20190520B with RM measurements is encouraged to test this scenario. The extreme large RMs with RM $\gtrsim 10^4$ rad m$^{-2}$ have been observed in the vicinities of massive black holes$^{15,16,19}$, and the RM variation is accounted for by the change of parallel magnetic field due to the orbital motion of the FRB source around the black hole$^{20}$. The orbital period of the FRB source moving around a massive black hole is $P_{\text{orb}} = 2.9 \text{ yr} (r/10^{-3} \text{ pc})^{3/2}(M_{\text{BH}}/10^6 M_{\odot})^{-1/2}$, where $r$ is the separation between the FRB source and the massive black hole, and $M_{\text{BH}}$ is the black hole mass. The timescale of RM reversal is less than the predicted period. On the other hand, the FRB source could be in a binary system with an orbital period of $P_{\text{orb}} = 5.4 \text{ yr} (a/10^{14} \text{ cm})^{3/2}(M_{\text{tot}}/10 M_{\odot})^{-1/2}$, where $a$ is the semi-major axis, and $M_{\text{tot}}$ is the total mass of the binary system. For example, radio observations of PSR B1259−63 showed that its RM reached an extreme value of a few times $10^3$ rad m$^{-2}$ and significantly reversed around periastron. In this case, the observed DM and RM would exhibit periodic evolution, which could be tested in future observations.

Next, we consider that the RM originates from an expanding SNR along the line of sight of the FRB source. It is noteworthy that some active repeating FRBs (including FRB 20190520B) exhibit conspicuous frequency-dependent linear polarization fraction that can be well described by RM scatter$^{10}$, and the relation between RM scatter and temporal scattering for various repeaters
suggests that both of them are due to multi-path propagation through a magnetized inhomogeneous plasma screen. Due to $\sigma_{\text{RM}} \ll |\text{RM}|$, the RM reversal must be mainly caused by the large-scale magnetic field, otherwise, the random small-scale magnetic field would cause $\sigma_{\text{RM}} \sim \text{RM}$, which is inconsistent with the observation of FRB 20190520B.

We take the SNR expanding velocity as $V \sim 10^4 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ and the radius as $R \sim Vt$ with age $t$, as shown in the panel (b) of Figure. Since the dynamic evolution timescale of the SNR, $\tau_{\text{SNR}} \sim R/V \sim 10 \text{ yr}(R/0.1 \text{ pc})(V/10^4 \text{ km s}^{-1})^{-1}$, is much larger than the observed timescale of the RM reversal $\Delta t \sim 0.5 \text{ yr}$ (unless the SNR is very young with age $\lesssim 1 \text{ yr}$), the observed RM reversal is dominated by the relative position change of the FRB source and the SNR in the projected plane, as shown in panel (b) of Figure. Observations of radio polarization of Galactic SNRs shows that the coherent length of their large-scale magnetic fields is about $\eta \sim (1-10)\%$ of the SNR radius. Thus, the typical timescale of the evolution of the projected magnetic field is $\tau_B \sim \eta R/V \sim \eta \tau_{\text{SNR}}$. For the RM reversal with timescale of $\tau_B \sim \Delta t \sim 0.5 \text{ yr}$, the SNR has an age of $\tau_{\text{SNR}} \sim \tau_B/\eta \sim 50(\eta/0.01)^{-1} \text{ yr}$ and a radius of $R \sim V \tau_{\text{SNR}} \sim 0.5 \text{ pc}(\eta/0.01)^{-1}(V/10^4 \text{ km s}^{-1})$, which means that there is a young SNR in free-expansion phase along the line of sight of FRB 20190520B. Meanwhile, the extreme large RM and host DM of FRB 20190520B is also consistent with a young SNR along the line of sight. The reasons are as follows: for an SNR with ejecta mass $M$ and radius $R$ during the free-expansion phase, the electron density is $n_e \sim 3M/(4\pi m_p R^3) \sim 10^4 \text{ cm}^{-3}(M/M_\odot)(R/0.1 \text{ pc})^{-3}$, and the DM contributed by the SNR is $\text{DM} \sim n_e R \sim 1000 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}(M/M_\odot)(R/0.1 \text{ pc})^{-2}$. Since the coherent length of the magnetic field is $l_B \sim \eta R \sim 10^{-3} \text{ pc}(\eta/0.01)(R/0.1 \text{ pc})$ and the observed RM is $\text{RM} \sim 10^4 \text{ rad m}^{-2}$,
the magnetic field strength might be estimated by $B \sim 1.2 \text{ mG} (\eta/0.01)^{-1} (M/M_\odot)^{-1} (R/0.1 \text{ pc})^2$.

Furthermore, if the young SNR is indeed along the line of sight of the FRB source, there are two possibilities: 1) the SNR is physically associated with the FRB source; 2) the SNR is close to the FRB source, but they do not share the same progenitor. For the former case, the FRB source and the SNR have the same age. The projected distance between the FRB source to the SNR center is $r_{s,\perp} \sim v_{s,\perp} t$, where $v_{s,\perp}$ is the kick velocity of the FRB source perpendicular to the line of sight. Due to $r_{s,\perp}/R \sim v_{s,\perp}/V \sim$ constant, the relative projected position of the FRB source can not significantly change during the observation time. Thus, the RM reversal might not be significant unless the SNR shock is decelerated by the nearby inhomogeneous ambient medium. In the latter case, since the FRB source and the SNR are independent, a large relative motion in the projected plane between them is allowable, leading to the observed RM reversal. In this case, the FRB source could be the companion of the progenitor of the supernova, or they are in the same region of its host galaxy.

**Data availability** The bursts data are openly available in Science Data Bank at [https://doi.org/10.11922/sciencedb.o00069.00007](https://doi.org/10.11922/sciencedb.o00069.00007).

**Code availability** Computational programs for the polarization analysis reported here are available at [https://github.com/SukiYume/RMS](https://github.com/SukiYume/RMS). Other standard data reduction packages are available at their respective websites:

PRESTO - [https://github.com/scottransom/presto](https://github.com/scottransom/presto); DSPSR - [http://dspsr.sourceforge.net](http://dspsr.sourceforge.net);
