

Comparing Political Systems

Political culture

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Lecture 4

Plan

- 1 Conceptualizing political culture
- 2 Why it is useful concept
- 3 Evolution of political culture
- 4 Conclusion

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Definition

From textbook

- ▶ Political Culture (PC) is the sum of the fundamental values, sentiments and knowledge that give form and substance to political processes

Key elements

- ▶ Sum of attitudes, not behaviour (“values, sentiments, knowledge”)
- ▶ That shapes politics (“give form and substance to political processes”)

What you should not do

First mistake

- ▶ Considering PC as perfectly correlated with country boundaries

Second mistake

- ▶ Using PC as a lazy explanation of political phenomena

Third mistake

- ▶ Considering that PC is created magically
- ▶ And that it cannot change

Fourth mistake

- ▶ Considering that PC is homogenous, even within countries/regions

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PC as a necessary condition for democracy

To function, democracy needs political support

- ▶ Specific support (support to actor)
- ▶ Diffuse support (support to the institution)
- ▶ Easton, David (1975). A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support. *British Journal of Political Science* 5(4): 435-457.

A.k.a. civiv culture

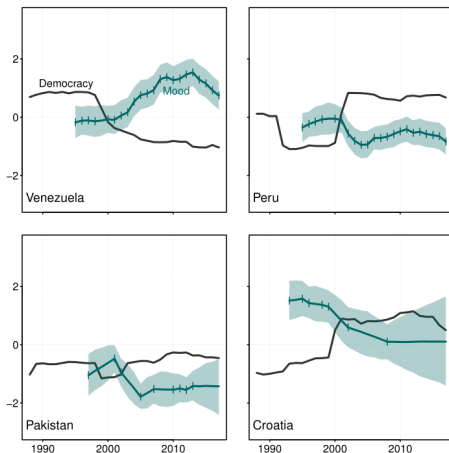
- ▶ Willingness to intervene if something bad happens
- ▶ Almond and Verba 1963, see Further Reading List

A.k.a. losers' content

- ▶ Acceptance of results even when one loses
- ▶ Anderson et al (2005), see Further Reading

See last week

Endogenous democracy: Thermostatic model



Claassen (2020), see Further Reading List

PC is not meaningless

People understand the meaning of democracy

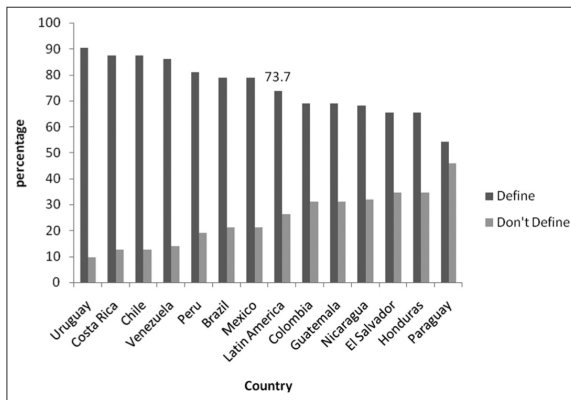


Figure 1. Distribution of definitional versus nondefinitional responses of meaning of democracy

Canache (2012), see Further Reading List

PC is a necessary condition for public policies

Some policies only work with citizens' compliance

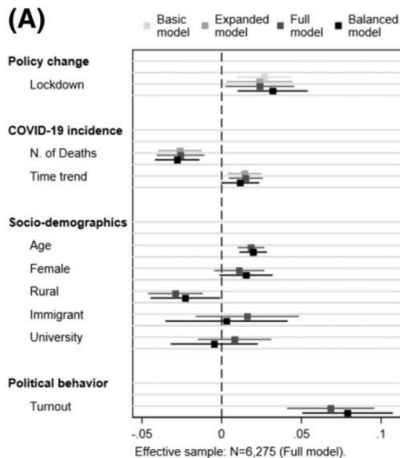
- ▶ Example: Taxes (in some countries)
- ▶ Levi, Margaret (1988). *Of Rule and Revenue*. California University Press.

Special cases: lockdown policies (first wave)

- ▶ In some countries, severe polarization (example: US)
- ▶ Leading to non-compliance

But in most countries

Lockdown increases political support



Bol et al (2020), see Further Reading List

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Two types of evolution

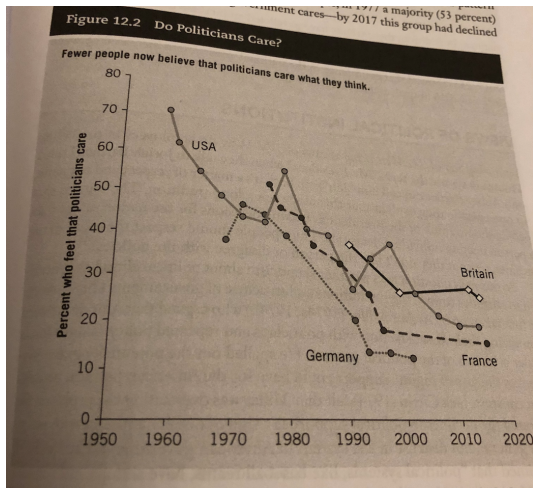
First type

- ▶ Individuals change attitudes
- ▶ (Rarely happens)

Second type

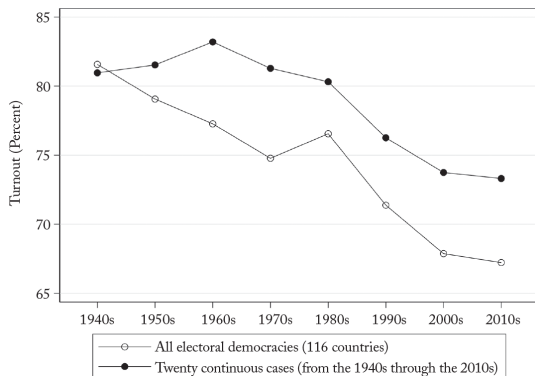
- ▶ Generational replacement
- ▶ (Much more common)

Specific support



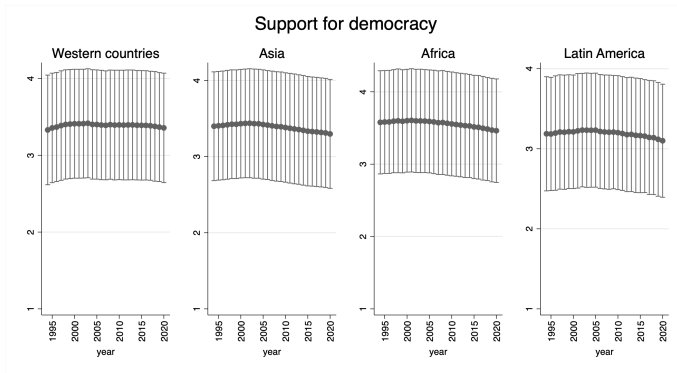
Dalton, Russel J. (2020). Citizens Politics. *Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* 7th Edition. Sage

Voter turnout



Dalton, Russel J. (2020). Citizens Politics. *Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* 7th Edition. Sage

Diffuse support



Anderson, Christopher J., Damien Bol, and Aurelia Ananda (2021). Estimating Humanity's Attitudes About Democracy and Political Leaders: Patterns and Trends. *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

How to explain these changes

Inglehart (1971), see Further Reading List

Post-materialist revolution

- ▶ Major shift of values in Western countries starting from the 70s
- ▶ Also in other parts of the world (but later, Inglehart and Welzel 2005, see Further Reading)

Argument

- ▶ People who grew up before WWII have materialist values (money, safety...)
- ▶ People who grew up after have post-materialists values (quality of life, the environment...)
- ▶ So they also more interested in politics

Remark: social capital

Defintion

- ▶ The sum of all social contacts and networks of an individual, and the willingness to use it to achieve goals
- ▶ Associated to political trust
- ▶ It contributes to democracy and public policies to work

Evolution

- ▶ Decline in social capital everywhere on the planet
- ▶ But more and more leisure ("Bowling alone", Putnam 2000, Further Reading List)
- ▶ Leads to affective polarization

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Summary

Political Culture

- ▶ Useful concept to explain the functioning politics
- ▶ But can be dangerous (beware the four mistakes)

Evolution

- ▶ Shift in values (post-materialism)
- ▶ Decline in specific support, but not in diffuse support for democracy
- ▶ Other key evolution: decline in social capital and generalized trust