



清华大学  
Tsinghua University

政治学系

# Political Culture

## A World and China View

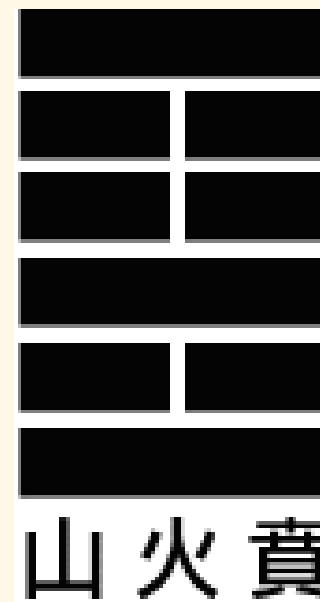
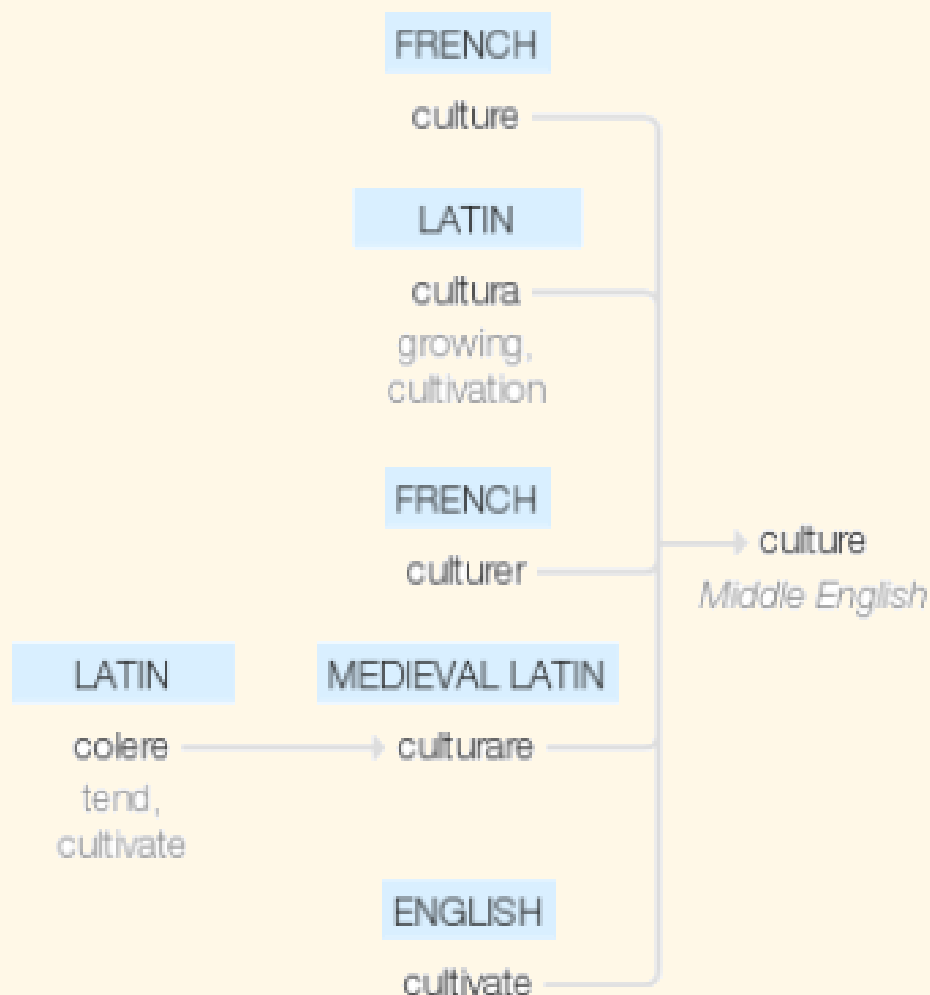
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## Overview

1. Culture for political scientists
2. One perspective, two challenges
3. Political culture: Experiences from China

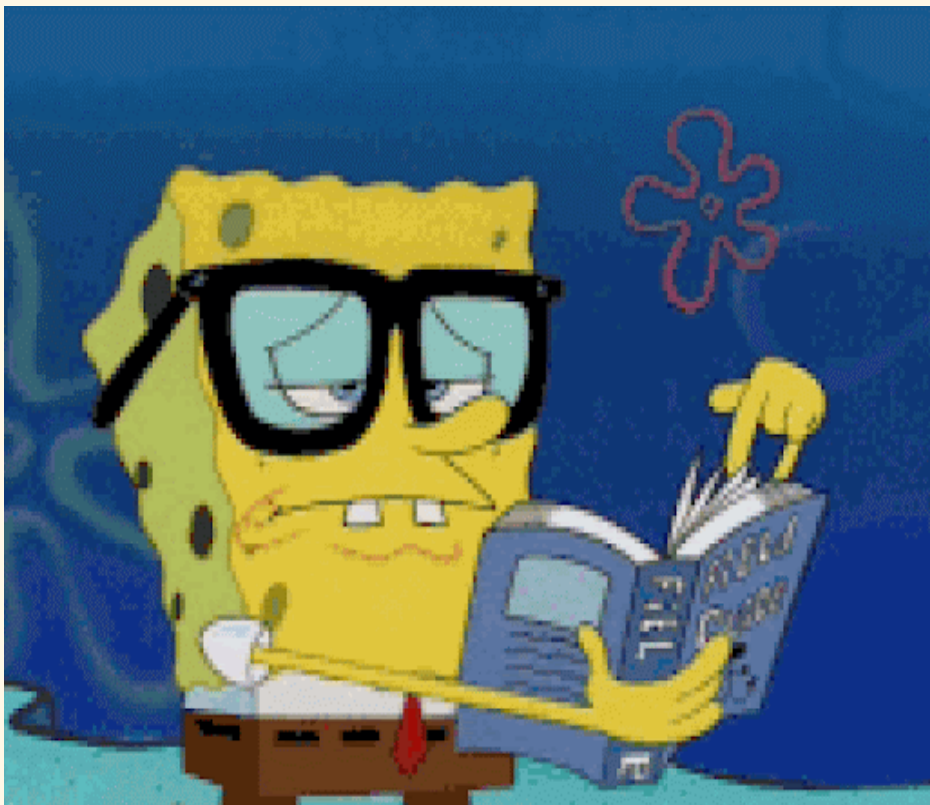
# Culture for Political Scientists

## What's Culture



《象》曰：柔来而文刚，故亨。分，刚上而文柔。故以小利有攸往。刚柔交错，天文也；文明以止，人文也。**观乎天文，以察时变，观乎人文，以化成天下。**

## Definition of Culture: Two Key Joins





Pick a definition and  
seek an example!

## Culture: In the View of Political Scientists

One of two still viable general approach to political theory and explanation.

---Harry Eckstein (1988)



## Culture: An Approach

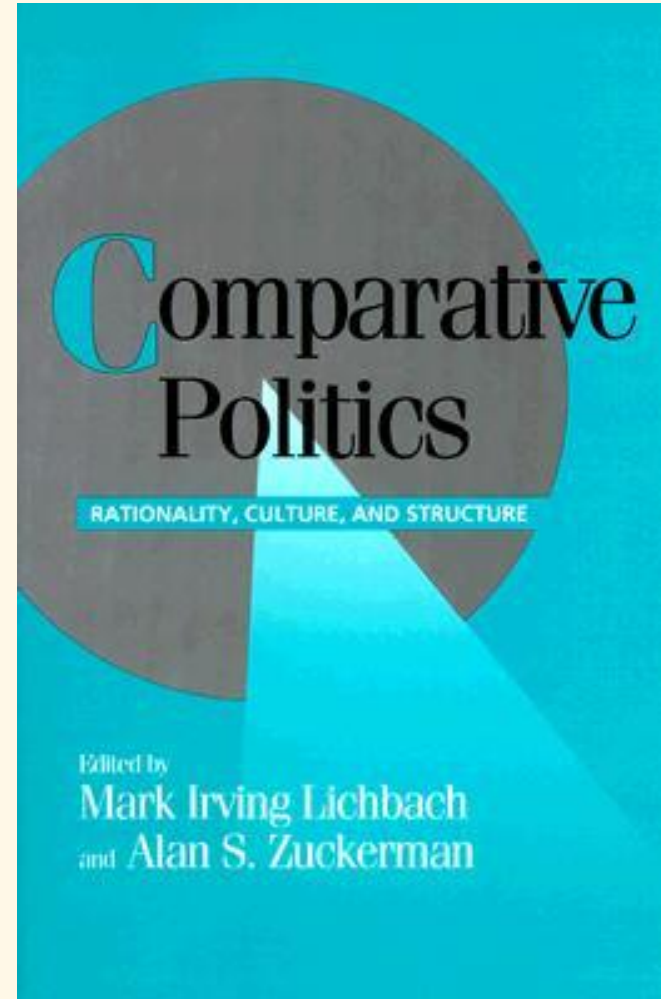
Structuralism



Culturalism



Rational choice



## Culture: An Approach

Structuralism

(How a system affect individuals)

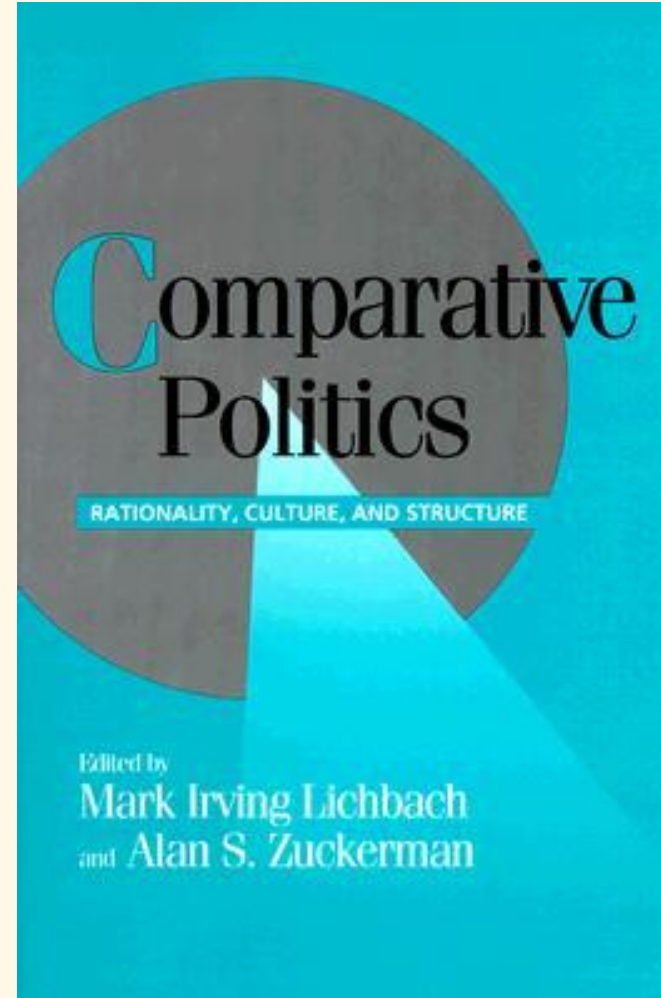


Culturalism



(What desides people's preferences)

Rational choice



# One Perspective, Two Challenges

## Understand Human Politics with a Cultural Approach

### *One Perspective*

Civic culture (status)  $\Rightarrow$  Renaissance of culture (continuity)

### *Two Challenges*

1. Conceptualization
2. Operation

## Type of Cultural Approaches

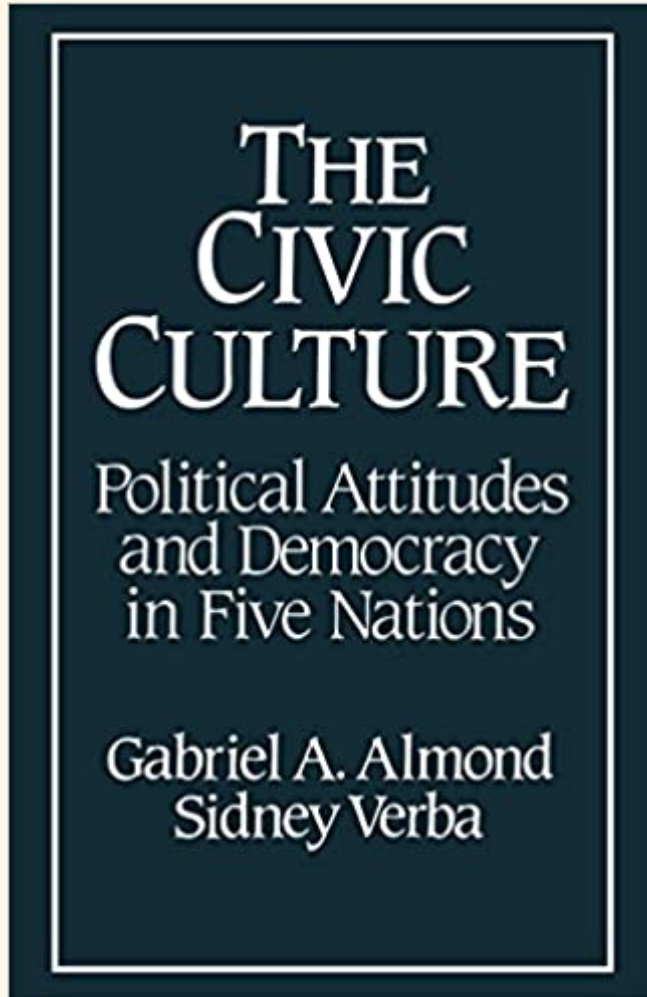
A sociological approach: Collective character

A anthropological approach: Symbol, discourse, and ritual

**A psychological approach:** Integration of individual attitudes and preferences

- Civic culture + survey-based investigation

## Benchmark: Civic Culture



### Contribution:

- **Concept** of "civic culture" (theoretical)
- **Typology** of culture-regime relationship (empirical)
- **Operation** of cross-national comparison (methodological)

**Attitudes** toward the political system and its various parts, and **attitudes** toward the role of the self in the system --- Almond and Verba (1963, 13)

TL;DR:

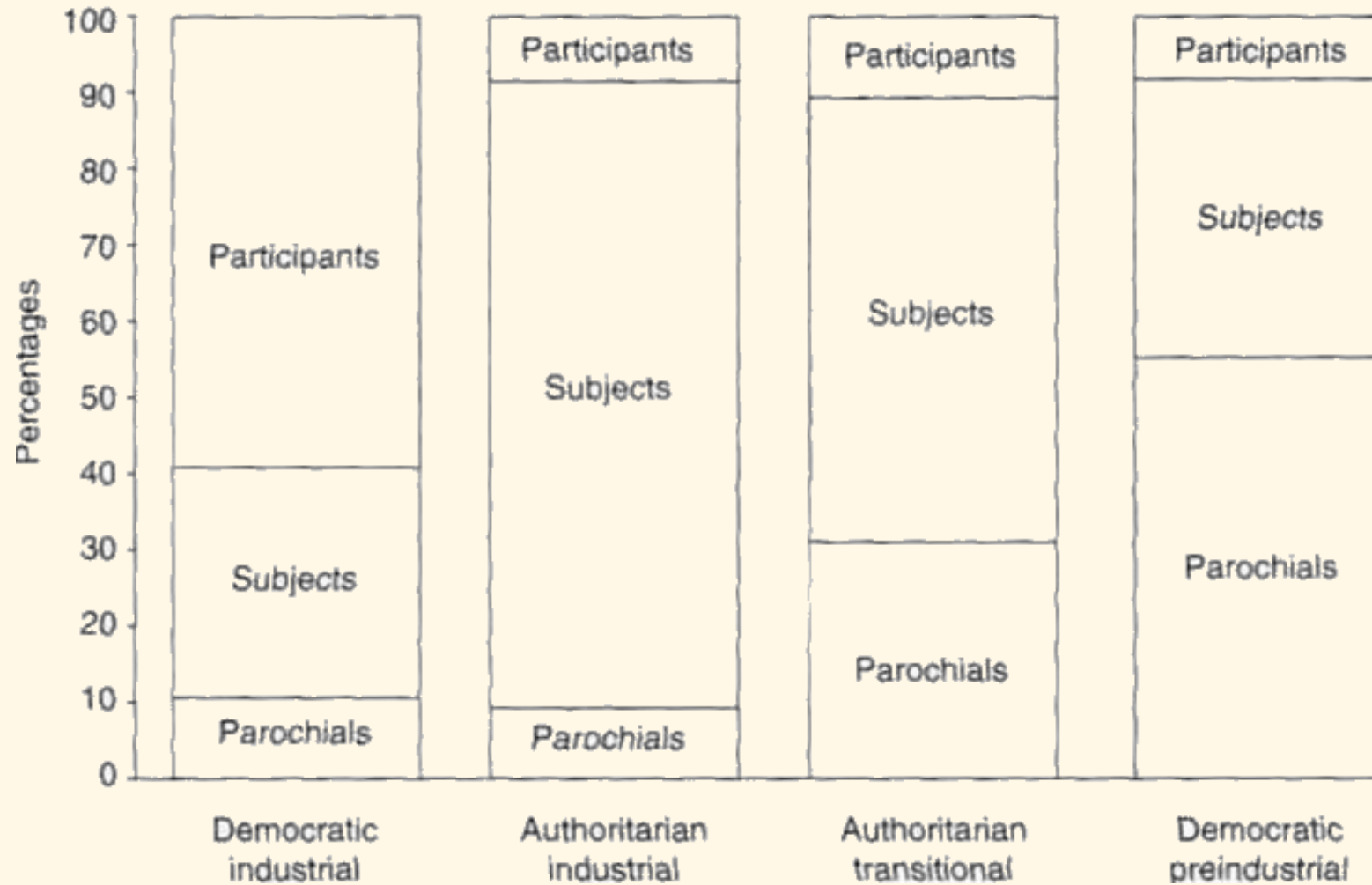
1. Regime is determined by people's attitudes;
2. Too much participation, allegiance, nor detachment helps democracy;
3. The U.S. is the "best."

# Typology of Political Culture





## Culture and Regime



## Empirical Studies

UK, US, Germany (FRG), Italy, and Mexico

Survey and interviews of a 1000 sample for each

- Conclusion
  - Italy: alienated political culture
  - Mexico: Alienated and aspirated political culture
  - FRG: Political detachment and subject competence
  - UK: Deferential civic culture
  - US: Participant civic culture, a.k.a.,



## Criticisms of Almond and Verba's Civic Culture

TL;DR:

1. Regime is determined by people's attitudes;
2. Too much participation, allegiance, nor detachment helps democracy;
3. The U.S. is the "best."

Hint:

- Accuracy?
- Good for democracy?
- Elite or mass?

## Critiques of Culturalism as a Whole



🙅 Culture is deterministic;

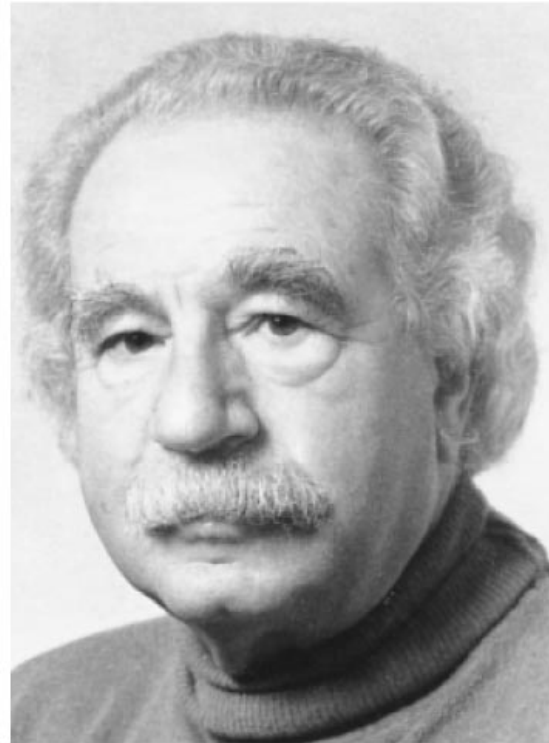
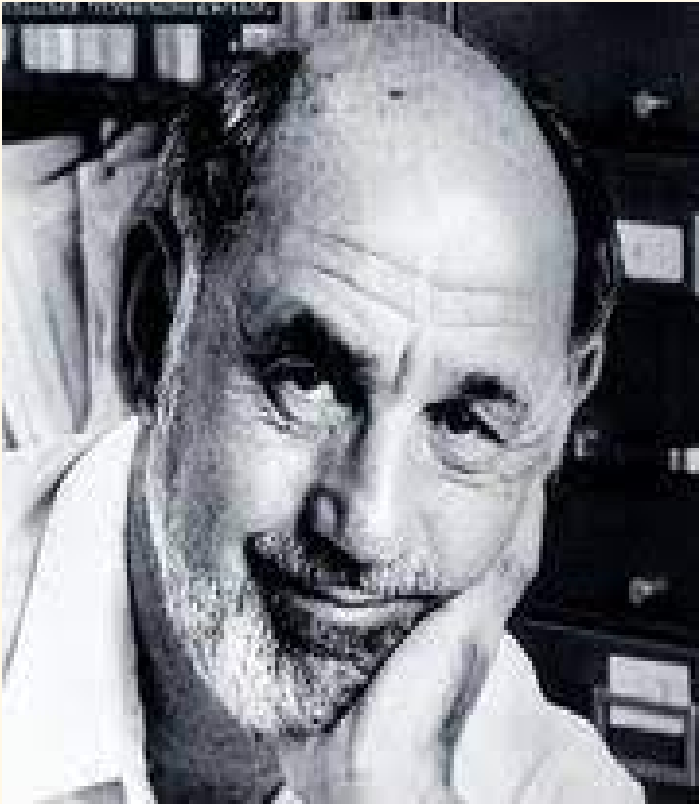
🙅 Class structure determines attitudes;

🙅 Adding behavior to the definition;

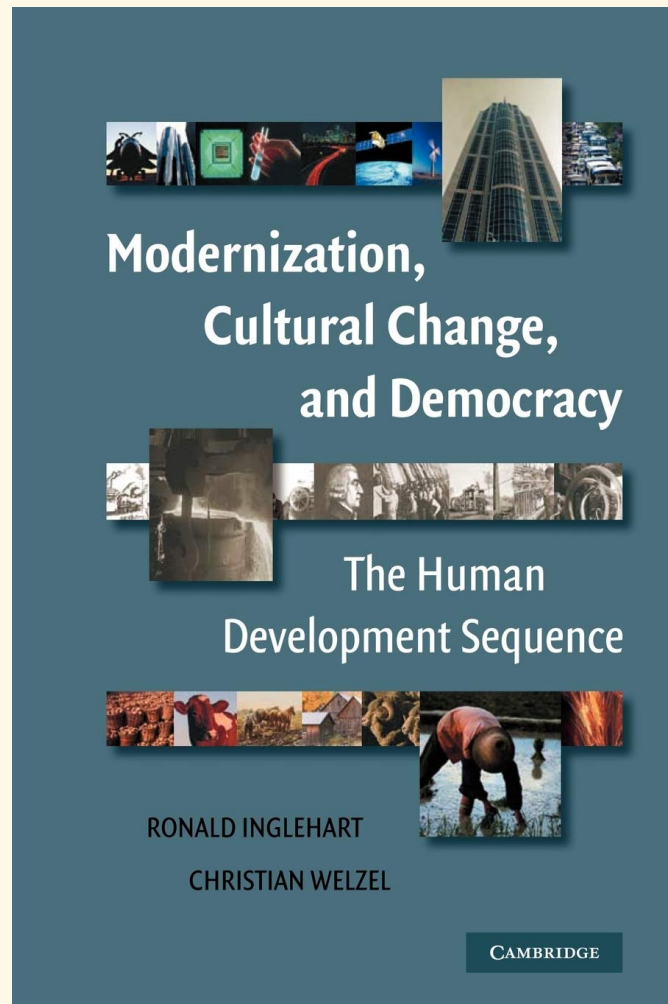
🙅 Rational behavior can explain cross-cultural differences.

## Renaissance of Political Culture

Attacked by the rational choice theory

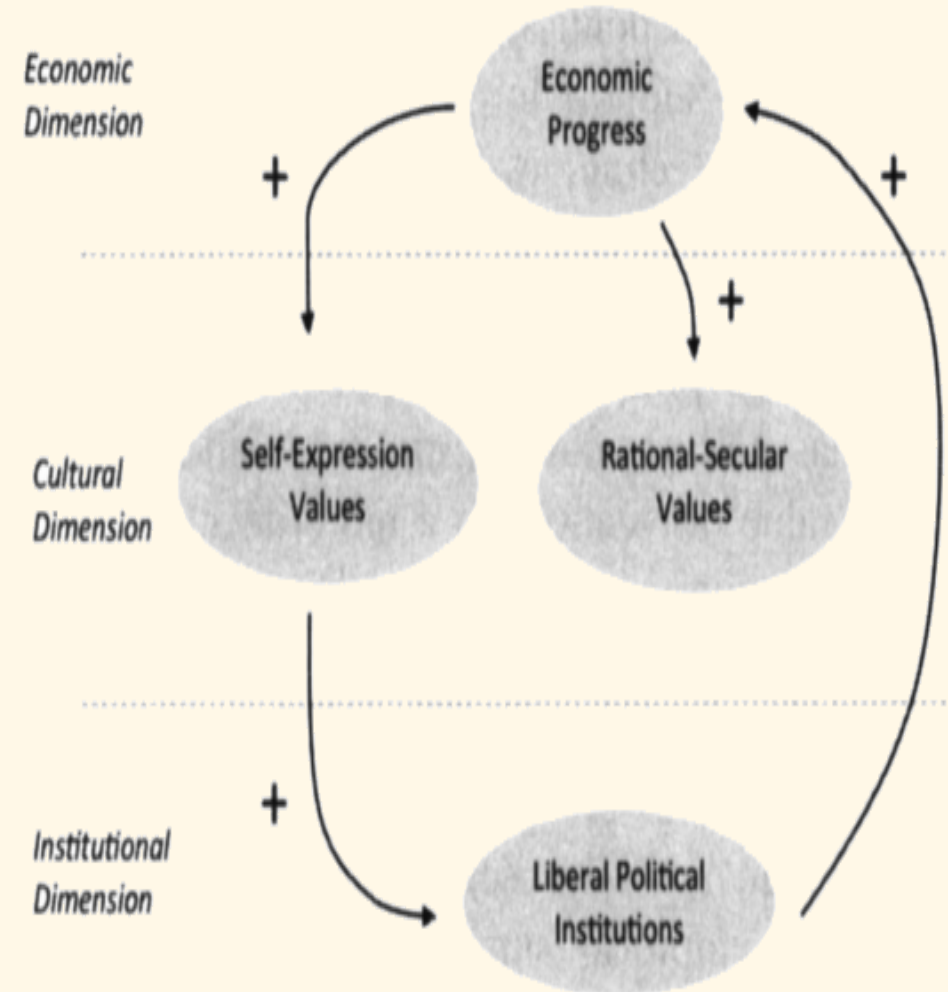
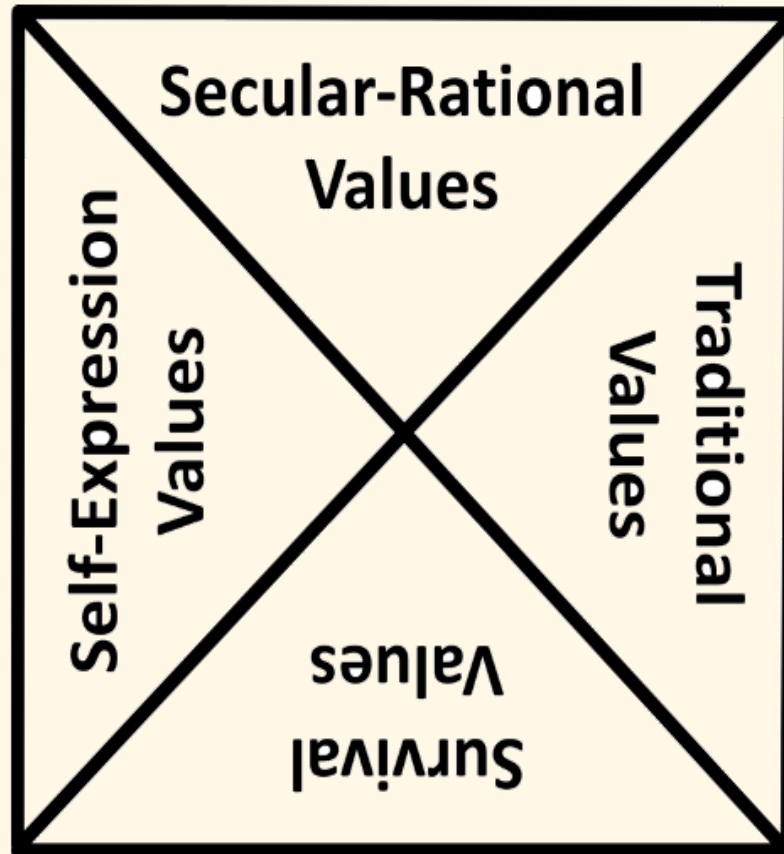


# Postmodernization Culture

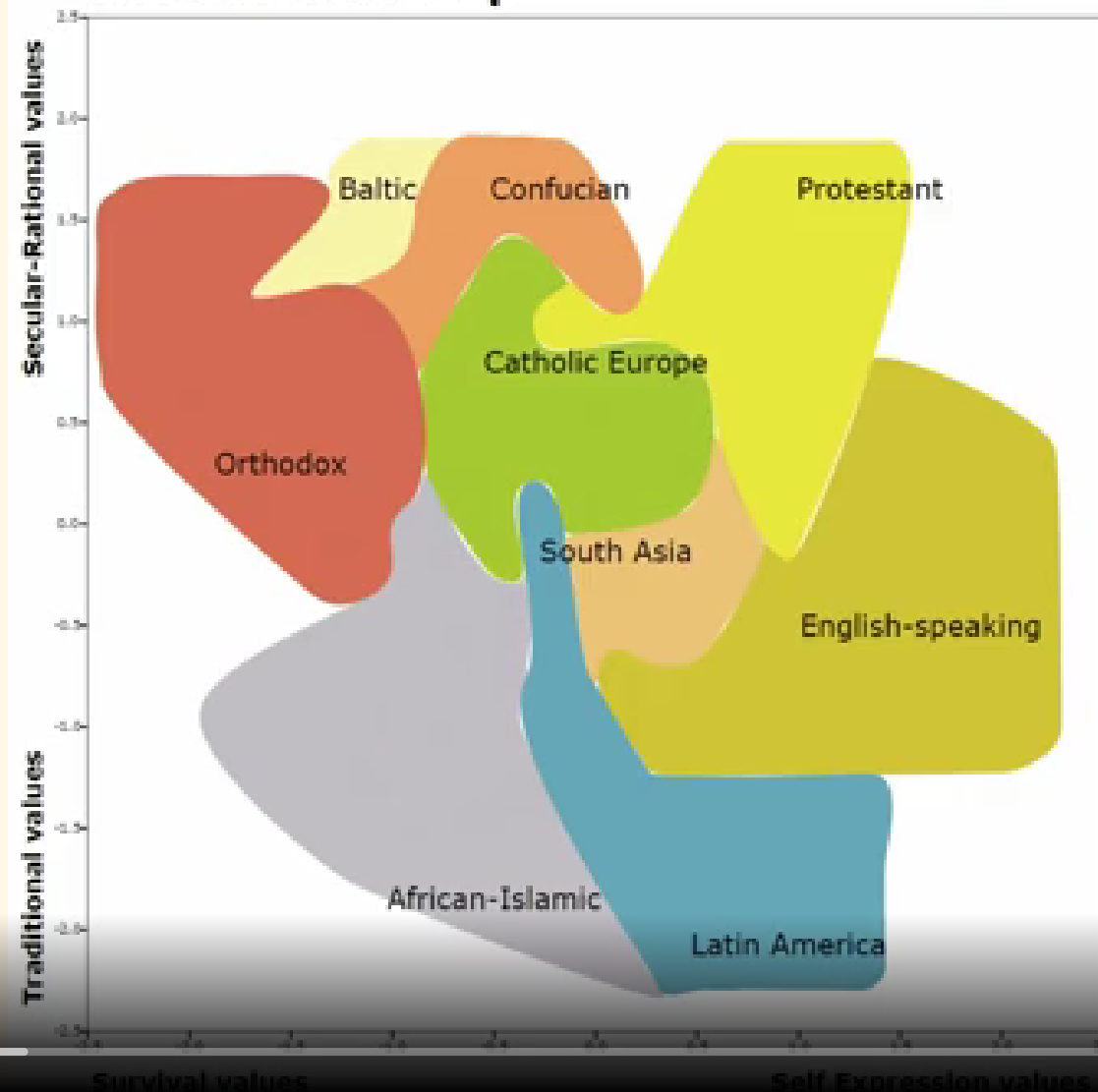


TL;DR:

1. Socioeconomic development (probablistically) brings secularism and self-expression.
2. No global cultural convergence in sight.
3. Cultural change is a non-linear process
4. Modernization not the same as Westernization.



## The Cultural Map



▶ 0:00 / 0:32





## Challenges of the Civic-Culture School: Conceptualization

### *Inconsistent definition*

- Almond & Verba: Attitudes
- Inglehart: Habits
- Eckstein: Orientations (cultural theme)

### *Whose culture*

- Elites vs. mass (Fred 2008; Fred, Hu, et.al., 2017)
- Institution vs. culture (Pye 1965, Almond and Power 1992)

## Solution

Rubric, sharedness, or societal-level

## Challenges of the Civic-Culture School: Operation

*Individual → society, how?*

- Mechanism
- complexity
- Individual fallacy

## Solution

"A theoretical rationale for why a particular way of summarizing a large number of individual responses is culture" --- William Reisinger (1995)

# Political Culture: A Chinese Experience

## Understanding Chinese Politics with a Cultural View

As an *explanatory variable*

- Ideological
- Institutional
- Bureaucratic
- Society
- Economy



## Cutting-In Point



*Distinction* from:

- Western Democracy
- Totalitarianism
- Civil Society

## Mass Line

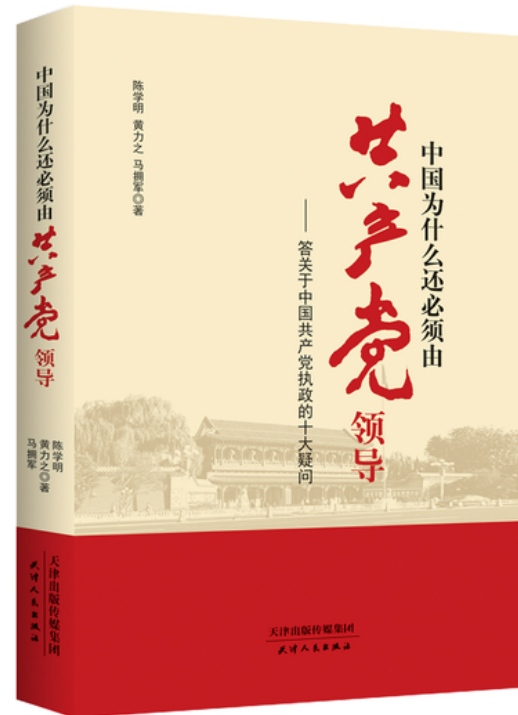
### Function

- Link
- Mobilization
- Contract

History

System

Generation



## Responding to General Theory

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Modernization

Social Crisis

Durability

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# Regime Sustainability

## *Two perspectives*

- Horizontal vs. Vertical

## *Two Attitudes*

- Happiness & Regime support
- Groups
  - Disadvantage groups
  - Educated
  - Private sectors



## Interpersonal Trust

A critical part of social capital

- Trust and Regime
  - Stabilize rather than promoting democracy
  - Discourage direct challenges
  - Promote stability and solidarity

## Interpersonal Trust in China: Type and Source



# Nationalism

## *Sources*

- Functionalism
- Culturalism
- Constructivism

## *Consequences*

- Instrument to strengthen regime stability
- Destabilizing factor
- Promote social trust

## More Mass-Line Culture Can Explain...

- Regime-inspired contentious politics
- Individual dispute resolution (court or non-court)
- Political desirability

(Omitted)



## Political Sustainability of China: A Cultural Explanation

Mass Line ideology

Rich social capital

High degrees of public political activism and contention

Weak political institutions

Highly responsive government

Strong regime support

## Take-Home Points

### 1. Culture for political scientists

- As a concept
  - Behavior or beyond
  - Individual or beyond
- As an approach
  - Meso-level theory
  - Sociological, anthropological, psychological

### 2. An approach, two challenges

- Civic culture → Postmodernization values
- Challenges from conceptualization and operation

### 3. Political culture: Experiences from China

Political culture → Regime operation + mass expectation ↓

↓ Contentious politics + individual disputes ← Interpersonal trust + nationalism  
→ Political trust + regime sustainability

**Good to see, more to work!**

# Thank you!

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🌐 <https://sammo3182.github.io/>

🐱 [sammo3182](#)