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## THE RENAISSANCE OF POLITICAL CULTURE

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*The publics of different societies are characterized by durable cultural orientations that have major political and economic consequences. Throughout the period from 1973 to 1987, given nationalities consistently showed relative high or low levels of a "civic culture"—a coherent syndrome of personal life satisfaction, political satisfaction, interpersonal trust and support for the existing social order. Those societies that rank high on this syndrome are much likelier to be stable democracies than those that rank low. Economic development and cultural change are linked in a complex pattern of reciprocal influence. Originally, Protestantism may have facilitated the rise of capitalism, leading to economic development, which in turn favored the emergence of the civic culture. But in those countries that attained high levels of prosperity, there eventually emerged postmaterialist values that tended to neutralize the emphasis on economic accumulation that earlier characterized Protestant societies.*

**I**t is time to redress the balance in social analysis. Since the late 1960s, rational choice models based on economic variables have become the dominant mode of analysis; while cultural factors have been deemphasized to an unrealistic degree. This approach has made major contributions to our understanding of how politics works; nevertheless, it underestimates the significance of cultural factors, if only because while economic indicators are readily available for these models, cultural data generally are not.

The incompleteness of models that ignore cultural factors is becoming increasingly evident. In Catholic societies from Latin America to Poland, the church plays a major role despite the demise often predicted by economic determinists. In the Islamic world, Muslim fundamentalism has become a political factor that neither East nor West can ignore. The Confucian-influenced zone of East Asia manifests an economic dynamism that

outstrips any other region of the world. By economic criteria one of the *least*-favored regions on earth, it is virtually impossible to explain its performance without reference to cultural factors. Even in advanced industrial societies religion not only outweighs social class as an influence on electoral behavior (Lijphart 1979) but actually seems to be widening its lead: while social class voting has declined markedly in recent decades, religious cleavages remain astonishingly durable.

There is no question that economic factors are politically important, but they are only part of the story. I argue that different societies are characterized to very different degrees by a specific syndrome of political cultural attitudes; that these cultural differences are relatively enduring, but not immutable; and that they have major political consequences, being closely linked to the viability of democratic institutions.

After flourishing in the 1960s, the con-

cept of political culture came under attack. In 1963 the fountainhead of political culture research, Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture*, represented a tremendous advance. Previous works that attempted to deal with the impact of culture on politics relied on impressionistic evidence. Cultural influences on the distinctive political behavior of a given people were interpreted in terms of vague but presumably indelible characteristics such as "national character." By providing a well-developed theory of political culture based on cross-national empirical data, Almond and Verba moved from the realm of literary impressions to that of testable propositions.

In subsequent years, it was often charged that political culture was a static concept and that Almond and Verba had ethnocentrically asserted the (presumably permanent) superiority of Anglo-Saxon culture over that of other nations. For though their theoretical interests concerned possible changes in political culture, their analysis was based on data from a single time point and was therefore necessarily static. Empirically, the political culture of a given country could only be treated as a constant. The British and U.S. citizens were, as hypothesized, found to rank higher on interpersonal trust, pride in their political institutions, and feelings of political competence than the publics of Germany, Italy, or Mexico. But since these variables were in fact constants for each country, it was impossible to analyze their relationships with other macrophenomena or to trace changes over time.

The political culture literature argues that the evolution and persistence of mass-based democracy requires the emergence of certain supportive habits and attitudes among the general public. One of the most basic of these attitudes is a sense of interpersonal trust. Almond and Verba (1963) concluded that interpersonal trust is a prerequisite to the forma-

tion of secondary associations, which in turn is essential to effective political participation in any large democracy. A sense of trust is also required for the functioning of the democratic rules of the game: one must view the opposition as a *loyal* opposition, who will not imprison or execute you if you surrender political power but can be relied upon to govern within the laws and to surrender political power reciprocally if your side wins the next election. Almond and Verba found that their German and Italian respondents ranked relatively low on interpersonal trust. With data from only one time point it was impossible to determine whether these findings could be attributed to short-term factors—perhaps the harsh conditions of the post-war era—or whether they reflected more enduring differences. There was some reason to believe that the Italian findings, in particular, might reflect the heritage of long historical experiences (Banfield 1958).

The relationship between (1) a culture of distrust and (2) the presence or absence of modern social structures has the causal ambiguity of the chicken-versus-egg question: Does southern Europe have low levels of trust because it has not yet developed modern organizational structures? Or (in a variation on Weber's protestant ethic thesis) did southern Europe industrialize and develop modern organizational structures later than northern Europe because its traditional culture was relatively low on interpersonal trust? We cannot answer this question conclusively with the data now available. Banfield's interpretation implies that low levels of trust are a persisting feature of given cultures or regional subcultures, which may inhibit economic and political development in those areas. His critics emphasize the impact of economic development on cultural patterns. In our view a reciprocal causal relationship seems likely.

Important though it is, interpersonal

trust alone is not sufficient to support stable mass democracy. A long-term commitment to democratic institutions among the public is also required, in order to sustain democracy when conditions are dire. Even when democracy has no reply to the question, What have you done for me lately? it may be sustained by diffuse feelings that it is an inherently good thing. These feelings in turn may reflect economic and other successes that one experienced long ago or learned about second-hand as a part of one's early socialization. Evidence presented below indicates that the publics of certain societies have much more positive feeling toward the world they live in than do those of other societies. One of the best indicators of this orientation is satisfaction with one's life as a whole. This is a very diffuse attitude. It is not tied to the current performance of the economy or the authorities currently in office or to any specific aspect of society. Partly because it is so diffuse, intercultural differences in this orientation are remarkably enduring and may help shape attitudes toward more specific objects, such as the political system.

From their 1959 fieldwork, Almond and Verba found that (unlike the British or U.S. citizens) few Germans expressed pride in their political institutions. But one of the few aspects of their society in which they *did* express pride was the way their economic system was working. In the short run, this is an inadequate basis for democratic legitimacy. But in the long run, such feelings may contribute to the evolution of broadly favorable orientations toward the institutions under which one lives. Such feelings may play an important role in sustaining the viability of these institutions even when favorable economic or political outputs are not forthcoming. For cultural patterns, once established, possess considerable autonomy and can influence subsequent political and economic events. To demon-

strate this fact, let us now turn to the analysis of data from cross-national surveys carried out during the past 15 years.

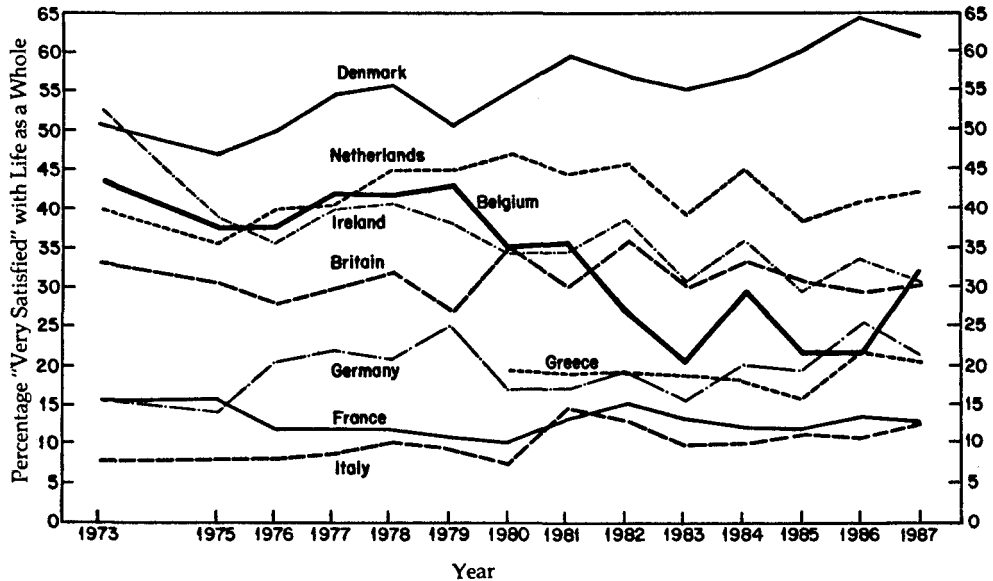
### **Cross-cultural Differences in Overall Life Satisfaction and Their Political Significance**

The study of political culture is based on the implicit assumption that autonomous and reasonably enduring cross-cultural differences exist and that they can have important political consequences. Intuitively, these assumptions seem plausible. But critics of cultural explanations have questioned them, and indeed very little empirical evidence has been presented to support them so far. Since they are crucial assumptions underlying a controversial topic, let us examine a substantial body of evidence in order to see how well these assumptions hold up in longitudinal perspective.

I will start with one of the most basic and central attitudes of all: whether or not one is satisfied with the way things are going in one's life. Figure 1 illustrates the cross-national differences in response to the question, "Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole? Would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?" This question has been asked repeatedly in the Euro-Barometer surveys carried out from 1973 to the present. Figure 1 sums up the results from the over 200 thousand interviews in more than two hundred representative national surveys of the publics of nine European community nations.

I find large and remarkably stable cross-cultural differences. And these differences do not reflect objective economic conditions in any direct or simple fashion. Year after year the Italian public shows the lowest level of satisfaction; from 1973

Figure 1. Cross-national Differences in Levels of Satisfaction with Life, 1973-87



Source: Euro-Barometer surveys.

through 1987 they rank last in every year but one (when they rank second-lowest); at no time during this fourteen-year period do more than 15% of the Italian public describe themselves as "very satisfied." The French manifest only slightly higher levels of life satisfaction than the Italians, ranking in second-to-last place in all but two years (rising one rank above this level in one year and falling one rank below it in the other year). At no time do more than 17% of the French public describe themselves as "very satisfied."

At the opposite extreme, the Danes manifest the highest level of overall life satisfaction in every year but one (when they rank second); at no time do less than 47% of the Danish public describe themselves as "very satisfied." On the average, the Danes are six times as likely as the Italians to describe themselves as "very satisfied." The Dutch also rank high consistently, throughout the period from

1973 to 1987; at no time do less than 36% describe themselves as "very satisfied" with their lives as a whole.

The other nationalities maintain their relative positions in remarkably stable fashion, with a sole exception: the Belgians, who consistently ranked among the three most satisfied nationalities throughout the 1970s, show a substantial and protracted decline in the 1980s, falling to sixth place by 1986. In the 1970s, 40-45% of the Belgians consistently described themselves as "very satisfied"; in 1986, the figure had fallen to 21%. This drop of 15-20 points is not immense when compared with the gap of 50 points that separate the Danes from the Italians, but it does represent a substantial decline in the subjective well-being of the Belgian public and stands in dramatic contrast to the overall stability of the cross-national differences manifested throughout this period. The cultural differences are

reasonably stable but not eternal. Short-term fluctuations are present and, as the Belgian case illustrates, significant changes can occur in the relative positions of given nations.

On the whole, the stability shown in Figure 1 is truly remarkable. For one must bear in mind that this was a period of sharp economic upheavals; the crises that occurred in the mid-1970s and the early 1980s constituted the two most severe recessions since the 1930s. Moreover, these crises had a much more severe impact on some societies than others. From 1973 to 1987, life satisfaction declined significantly in both Belgium and Ireland, two of the three countries most severely afflicted by unemployment and inflation during this period. Conversely, life satisfaction showed a modest but perceptible upward trend in Germany, the country with the *lowest* inflation rates from 1973 to 1987. Thus I find a fairly good fit between short-term fluctuations in life satisfaction and the economic experiences of the respective societies.

But a far more impressive aspect of Figure 1 is the cultural continuity that persisted *in spite of* these short-term fluctuations. Despite dramatic economic upheavals from year to year and despite large differences between the experiences of the different countries, I find remarkable stability in the relative positions of these publics. Through thick and thin, the Italians and French remain near the bottom and the Danes and Dutch near the top. And despite the fact that the German economy ranks high both in absolute terms and in relative performance, the life satisfaction levels of the German public consistently rank relatively low. Conversely, both the Irish and the Dutch have much lower per capita incomes than the Germans, and they experienced considerably higher levels of inflation and unemployment during this era than the Germans did, yet they continued to manifest higher levels of life satisfaction

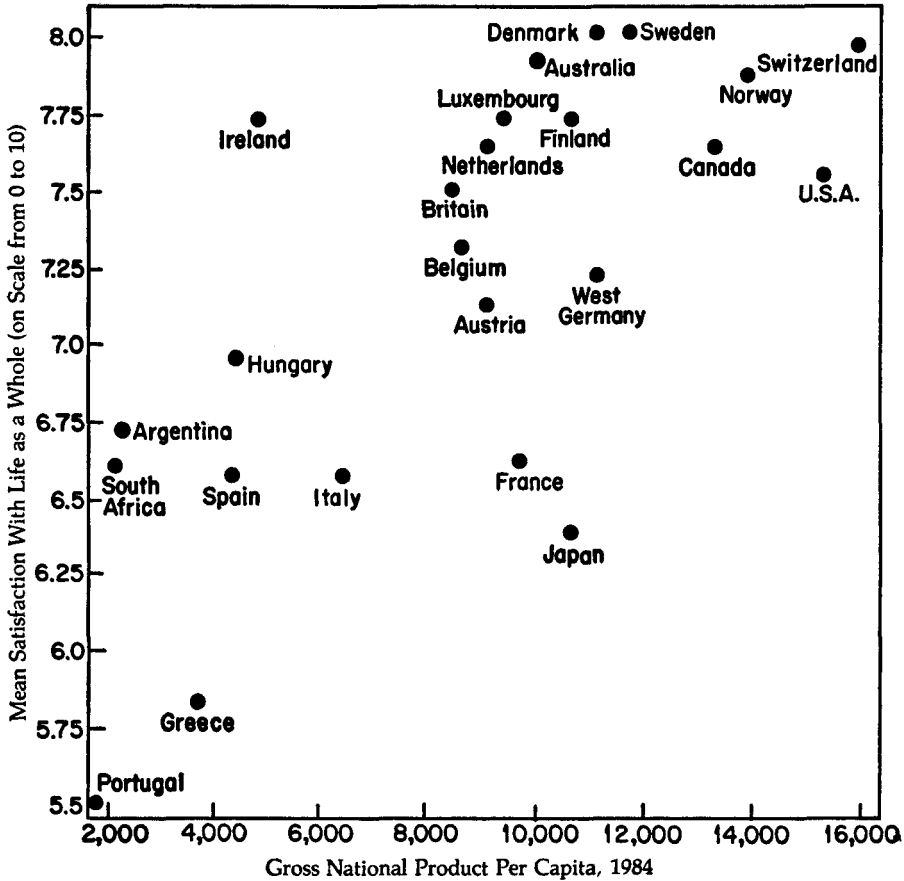
than the Germans. Though cross-cultural differences in life satisfaction respond to economic changes, they do so only with a great deal of inertia.

My conclusion is very simple but very important: there is a durable cultural component underlying these responses. Virtually any survey response is influenced to some extent by the context in which it is asked and this question is no exception: responses reflect both short-term fluctuations (resulting from immediate economic, social, and political events) and a long-term cultural component. Through statistical procedures it is possible to distinguish between the underlying cultural component and the short-term disturbances. In the present case, the long-term cultural differences are so pronounced that one can readily perceive them by mere visual inspection. Enduring cross-cultural differences exist and can be measured.<sup>1</sup>

I suggest that the cultural component of these cross-national differences reflects the distinctive historical experience of the respective nationalities. Long periods of disappointed expectations give rise to dissatisfied attitudes. These orientations may be transmitted from generation to generation through preadult socialization. In so far as early learning is relatively persistent, this contributes to the stability of distinctive cultural patterns. The fact that one can to some extent identify the historical causes of given cross-cultural differences does not of course make them disappear. They remain distinctive cultural characteristics with important behavioral consequences.

Is it true that economic security tends to enhance the prevailing sense of life satisfaction in a society, gradually giving rise to a relatively high cultural norm? Empirical evidence supports this supposition. First, as we have seen, there is a tendency for life satisfaction levels to rise or decline gradually in response to short-term economic fluctuations. But one

Figure 2. Mass Life Satisfaction, by Level of Economic Development



Note:  $r = .67$ .

might suspect that the observed cross-cultural differences reflect long-term historical experiences over generations or even centuries, not just the past dozen years or so. We would need survey data covering the past century or two in order to test this hypothesis directly. They are not available, but we can use the cross-sectional pattern to provide a surrogate test: if economic security is conducive to relatively high levels of life satisfaction, we would expect the publics of prosper-

ous nations to show higher levels of satisfaction than those of poorer ones. The data in Figure 2 tests this hypothesis.

The overall correlation between gross national product per capita and life satisfaction in Figure 2 is .67: prosperity is linked with relatively high levels of life satisfaction among the 24 nations for which we have data from the 1980s. This point has been a matter of controversy in previous studies. Cantril (1965) analyzed data gathered in the 1950s from 14 coun-

tries and found that the publics of richer nations *did* show relatively high levels of subjective well-being. Easterlin (1974) re-analyzed the Cantril data and concluded that the correlation was actually rather weak. Emphasizing the fact that some poor nations (such as Egypt) showed higher levels of life satisfaction than some relatively wealthy ones (such as West Germany), he argued that economic development had little impact on subjective well-being. In a more recent study based on a broader range of nations Gallup (1976) found a relatively strong correlation between economic development and life satisfaction. He concluded that the two *are* linked. The present data also show a relatively strong correlation between economic development and life satisfaction. How we interpret this depends on one's theoretical expectations. If one approaches the topic with the expectation that subjective well-being will be found almost entirely a matter of economic factors, as Easterlin apparently did, then the crucial finding is that this is not the case. With the data in Figure 2 a nation's economic level explains less than half of the variance in life satisfaction. In the data Easterlin analyzed economic factors explain an even smaller share of the variance. From Easterlin's perspective, economic determinism was clearly discredited.

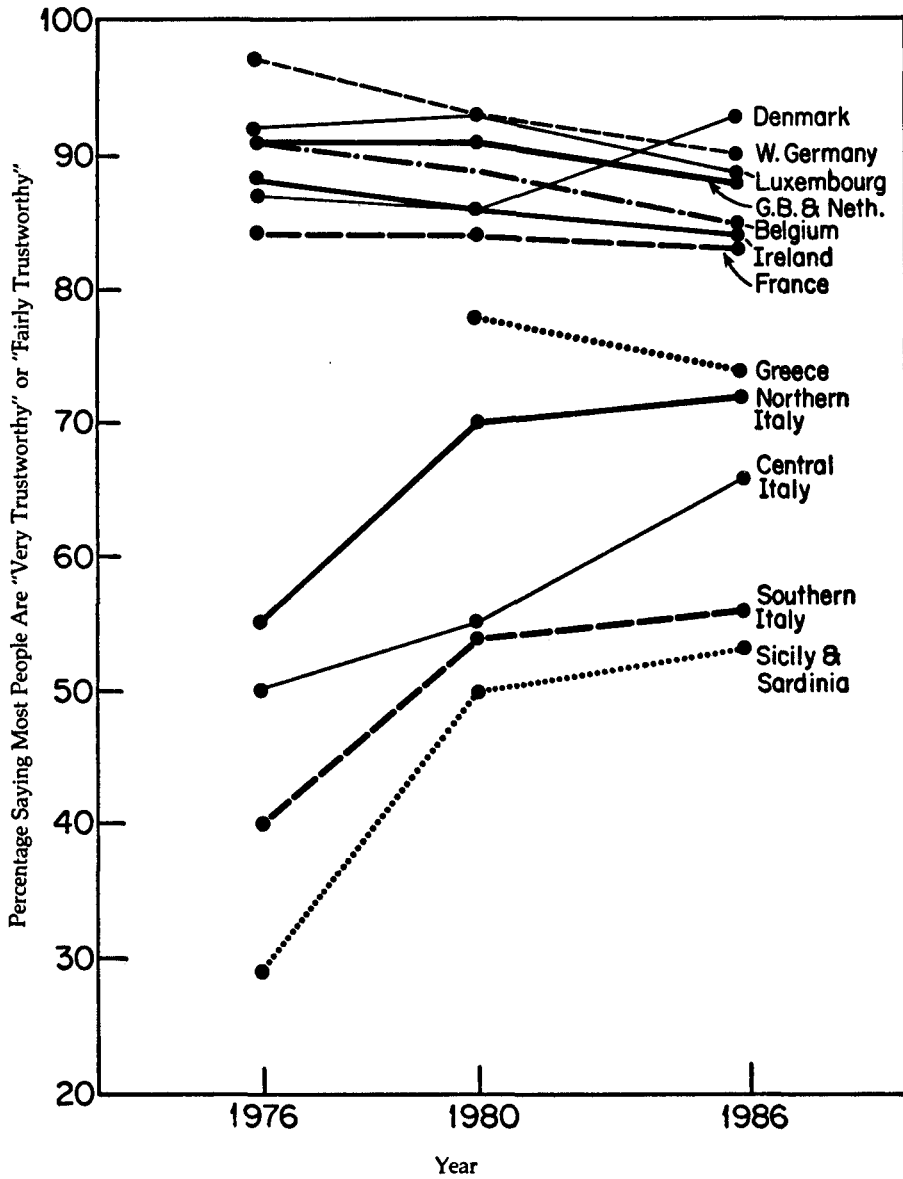
However, if one approaches the question with the expectation that a nation's level of economic development is only one of a number of historical factors that influence cross-cultural differences in life satisfaction, then the data clearly do support the hypothesis. Here, as in Easterlin's analysis, one can point to some striking deviant cases. Nevertheless, the overall pattern is clear: wealthier nations tend to show higher levels of life satisfaction than poorer ones.

The Euro-Barometer surveys also provide regular readings on political satisfaction, which shows much more short-term

fluctuation than life satisfaction, for it explicitly refers to the political system and accordingly behaves like an indicator of governmental popularity, fluctuating from one month to the next in response to current economic conditions and political events. When a conservative government is in office, those who identify with the Right show higher levels of political satisfaction; when a government of the Left gains power, those on the Left show higher levels. Political satisfaction fluctuates in response to current economic and political events. But it is clear that a significant cultural component *also* is present underneath these fluctuations: the publics of some countries are consistently more satisfied than others. Moreover, these differences reflect the now-familiar pattern found with life satisfaction and happiness: the publics of France and Italy almost always rank lower on political satisfaction than those of other nations: at the national level, the correlation between life satisfaction and political satisfaction is .41.

Both overall life satisfaction and political satisfaction are correlated with stable democracy. I will examine this relationship below. For the moment let me simply note that political satisfaction levels are only weakly linked with the number of years that democratic institutions have persisted in a given nation ( $r = .21$ ). But *despite* the direct and obvious political relevance of political satisfaction, life satisfaction is far more strongly linked with stable democracy ( $r = .85$ ). Democratic institutions seem to depend on enduring cultural traits such as life satisfaction and interpersonal trust, more than on relatively fluctuating variables such as political satisfaction. The latter may well be a better predictor of the popularity of a given government at a given moment. But precisely *because* it fluctuates with short-term conditions, it is less effective in maintaining the long-term stability of democratic institutions.

Figure 3. Interpersonal Trust among European Publics, 1976-86



Source: Data from Euro-Barometer surveys 6, 14, and 25.



### Interpersonal Trust, Economic Development, and Democracy

Following Banfield, Almond and Verba, Wylie, and others, I hypothesized that interpersonal trust is part of an enduring cultural syndrome that is conducive to the viability of democracy. The first question one must answer is, Do enduring intercultural differences exist in interpersonal trust? Unless they do, any argument concerning its long-term political impact is on shaky ground.

The evidence indicates that given societies are indeed characterized by distinctive levels of interpersonal trust. This even seems to be true of specific regions *within* given countries. Euro-Barometer surveys in 1976, 1980 and 1986 asked, "Now I would like to ask about how much you would trust people from various countries. For each country, please say whether, in your opinion, they are generally very trustworthy, fairly trustworthy, not particularly trustworthy, or not at all trustworthy."

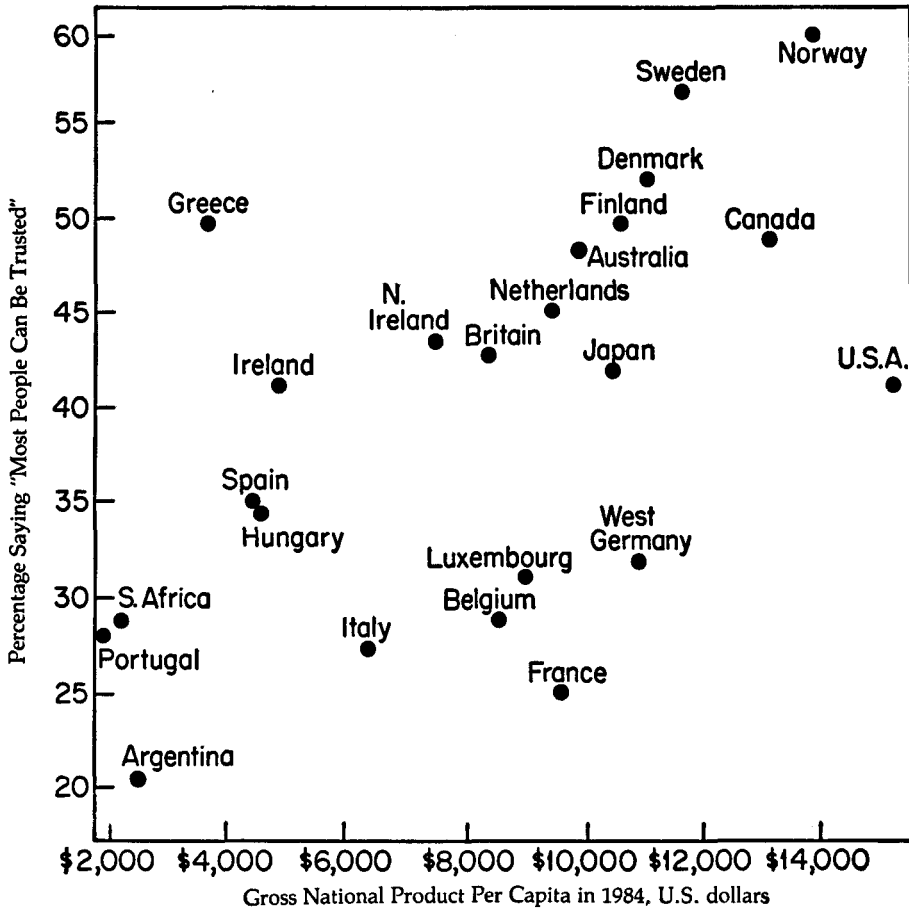
Figure 3 depicts the relative levels of interpersonal trust expressed during this 10-year period toward people of one's *own* nationality. As is immediately evident, trust levels in given countries are extremely stable. In a pattern that is becoming increasingly familiar, the Italian public ranks lowest at every point in time (with four major regions of Italy each retaining its relative position). The Greeks rank next, followed by the French. The other nationalities are clustered close together, with relative rankings consistently remaining within the band between 85% and 95%. One line in Figure 3, labeled "G.B. & Neth.," depicts the levels of *both* the British and the Dutch, which are identical at all three points. Remarkably pronounced and durable differences in trust exist among the various regions of Italy. Precisely as Banfield (1958) found many years ago, southern Italy seems to be characterized by lower levels of in-

terpersonal trust than northern or central Italy and than any other Western society for which we have data.

These findings of stable regional differences in Italian political culture are consistent with earlier findings by Putnam and his colleagues (1983) based on ecological data covering a much longer period of time. In an imaginative and elegant analysis, these authors utilize various indicators of social involvement and political mobilization (such as membership in mutual aid societies, union membership, and electoral turnout) to derive a measure of "civic culture." This variable manifests remarkable stability at the regional level: their index of civic culture as measured in the 1970s correlates at  $r = .91$  with the strength of mass parties in 1919-21 and at  $r = .84$  with the strength of mutual aid societies from 1873 to 1904. Civic culture in turn proves to be strongly correlated with the relative success of the new regional governments established throughout Italy in 1970. The authors conclude that political success or failure largely reflects the impact of autonomous cultural factors, independent of underlying economic variables:

Contrary to any simple-minded economic determinism, these regional continuities in political culture are strikingly greater than continuities in economic structure or social well-being. For example, the agricultural share of the regional work force in 1970 correlated  $r = -.02$  with the same figure in 1870; the equivalent statistic for infant mortality is  $r = .01$ . Those regions with a relatively agricultural economy in 1970 had not been the more agricultural regions a century earlier, and the regions with good public health in 1970 had not been the healthier ones in 1870. But the regions characterized by political activism and social solidarity in the 1970s were essentially the same regions that had been so a century earlier. In short, we can trace with remarkable fidelity over the last hundred years the historical antecedents of just those aspects of regional political culture—mass participation and civic solidarity—that in turn provide such a powerful explanation for contemporary institutional success." (Putnam et al. 1983, 69-70)

Figure 4. Economic Development and Interpersonal Trust



Sources: Data from World Values Survey, 1981 and for Greece, Portugal and Luxembourg Euro-Barometer Survey 25 (April 1986).

Note:  $r = .53$ .

Despite evidence of impressive stability in the propensity to trust others, trust is not a fixed genetic characteristic: it is cultural, shaped by the historical experiences of given peoples and subject to change. Fieldwork carried out for *The Civic Culture* found that the publics of the two long-established English-speaking democracies had markedly higher levels of interpersonal trust than those of Mexico, West Germany, or Italy. The Italian

public, in particular, manifested trust levels that were phenomenally low in 1959. But as our theoretical framework implies, the economic miracles that took place in both West Germany and Italy during the 1950s and 1960s eventually had an impact on the political culture of these countries. Though the Italian public still remained relatively low on trust in 1981 and 1986, absolute levels of trust had more than tripled by 1981 and almost

## Political Culture

**Table 1. Support for Radical Change, Gradual Reform, or Defense of Present Society, in 20 Societies, 1981 (%)**

Society	Radical Change <sup>a</sup>	Gradual Reform <sup>b</sup>	Defend Present Society <sup>c</sup>	Number of Cases
N. Ireland	1	74	25	287
Norway	2	50	49	1,146
W. Germany	3	59	38	1,149
Denmark	3	69	28	1,026
Japan	3	71	26	707
Netherlands	3	70	26	1,063
Sweden	4	80	16	797
Ireland	4	76	20	1,084
Luxembourg	5	69	25	760
Canada	5	74	21	1,135
Britain	5	73	23	1,136
U.S.A.	5	73	22	2,101
Belgium	7	73	21	897
Italy	8	73	19	1,270
Spain	8	82	10	2,091
Greece	9	57	26	2,000
France	9	73	19	1,123
Mexico	12	77	11	1,610
Portugal	14	74	12	813
S. Africa	25	54	21	1,182

*Sources:* World Values survey, 1981; except that data for Greece and Luxembourg are from Euro-Barometers 15 and 16 (carried out in April and October 1981), and Portuguese data are from Euro-Barometer 24 (carried out in November 1985). These are the earliest such data available from Portugal.

<sup>a</sup>"The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action."

<sup>b</sup>"Our society must be gradually improved by reforms."

<sup>c</sup>"Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces."

are reasonably strong grounds for thinking that while it may work both ways, the former of the two processes is mainly responsible for the relationship. First, knowing the relatively modest place that politics has on most people's intellectual horizons, it seems far more plausible that people vote Communist or neo-Fascist because they are dissatisfied and distrustful than that they are dissatisfied and distrustful because they vote Communist (or as a right-wing fantasy might have it, that communism spreads unhappiness and distrust among the public). Secondly, low levels of trust, satisfaction, and happiness are broad cultural characteristics of the French, Greek, and Italian publics, only marginally more prevalent among the electorates of the

Communists and extreme Right than elsewhere. If the Communists sow unhappiness, they sow it broadly, not just among their own supporters. Finally, there are indications that gradual cultural quadrupled by 1986—a phenomenon that parallels the rise in Italy shown in Figure 3. The growth of interpersonal trust among the West German public was proportionately smaller, because they started from a higher level. But by 1986 the Germans had actually surpassed the British in interpersonal trust. The other side of the coin is the fact that interpersonal trust had shown a long-term decline in the two English-speaking democracies.

Like life satisfaction and happiness, high interpersonal trust goes with relatively high levels of economic develop-

ment, as Figure 4 illustrates. The cross-sectional correlations is .53. The available data do not enable one to determine whether this is because interpersonal trust is conducive to economic development or because economic development leads to an enhanced sense of security that is conducive to trust or whether (as we suspect) the two processes are mutually supportive. It is interesting that in the two countries from which I have evidence of a dramatic rise in interpersonal trust (West Germany and Italy) this phenomenon took place after a period of dramatic economic recovery. But it is clear that economic factors alone are not decisive; for the publics of both Britain and the United States were wealthier in the 1980s than they were in 1959-60, but both experienced an erosion of interpersonal trust from 1960 to 1981.

As we will see shortly, high levels of interpersonal trust are also linked with stable democracy. But before analyzing this relationship, let us consider the implications of a recurrent finding in the data. With remarkable consistency, the publics of France and Italy rank lowest on the syndrome of attitudes that might loosely be called the civic culture. Among those societies for which time series data from 1973 to the present exist, the French and Italian publics nearly always rank lowest on life satisfaction, happiness, political satisfaction, and trust. And these are precisely the countries that have been characterized by the largest antisystem parties: in France since the end of World War I the Communists have normally polled a fifth or more of the total vote in national elections. More recently, a party of the extreme Right, the National Front, won about 10% of the vote in nationwide elections in 1984 and again in 1986, recalling the sudden mushrooming of support for another extreme Right party, the Poujadists, that took place in the 1950s. Similarly, in Italy the Communists have generally won about a third of the vote

since 1945, while the neo-Fascist Italian Social Movement has often won as much as 10% of the vote in national elections.

Data from Greece are available only since 1980, but they fit the pattern just described. To be sure, the Greek public has shown relatively high levels of satisfaction with the way democracy is functioning since democratic institutions were restored in the 1970s. But as I have already noted, this variable fluctuates with short-term events. On most of the long-term civic culture indicators such as life satisfaction, happiness, and support for the existing social order, the Greek public ranks relatively low. In keeping with this pattern, support for antisystem parties has been relatively high in Greece. The Communist vote has been higher than in any of the other societies for which time series data exist, apart from France and Italy; and there has also been significant support for parties of the extreme Right.

I believe that relatively low levels of diffuse satisfaction and trust make one more likely to reject the existing political system and support parties of the extreme Right or Left. Again, we have the chicken-versus-egg question: Does a culture of dissatisfaction and distrust give rise to an extremist vote or do extremist parties produce distrust and dissatisfaction? The available empirical data do not allow me to provide a conclusive answer; but there change *precedes* changes in the vote. Table 1 shows the cross-national pattern of responses to the following question:

On this card (*show card*) are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the kind of society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.

1. The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action.
2. Our society must be gradually improved by reforms.
3. Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces.

As Table 1 demonstrates, there is wide cross-national variation in response to this question. In the early 1980s, support for the revolutionary option ranged from a low of 1% or 2% in Northern Ireland and Norway to highs of 12%–25% in Mexico, Portugal, and South Africa. Conversely, support for defense of the status quo ranged from highs of 49% and 38% respectively in Norway and West Germany to lows of 10%–12% in Mexico, Spain, and Portugal. The revolutionary option was most likely to be endorsed in societies with a relatively *low* per capita GNP ( $r = -.68$ ), while the conservative option was most likely to be endorsed in societies with a relatively *high* per capita GNP ( $r = .58$ ). And, as one might expect, support for the revolutionary option is negatively correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -.52$ ); while support for the conservative option shows a positive correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = .31$ ).

Responses to this question among the nine European Community nations from which we have data from 1976 through 1986 are quite stable, apart from a gradual decline in support for the revolutionary option. In 1976 it was supported by 9% of the public in the European Community as a whole but in 1986 by only 5%. This decline was gradual, never falling by more than one percentage point per year and was pervasive, with most nations showing declining support for revolution. But the phenomenon was especially concentrated among the publics of France and Italy, where prorevolutionaries constituted 14% of the public in both countries in 1976 but only 7% and 8% respectively in 1986. In part, this reflects the deradicalization of the Communist electorates of France and Italy, which *preceded* the electoral decline experienced in the mid-1980s by the Communist parties of these two countries (and to some extent, throughout Western Europe). Moreover, it may be a harbinger of favorable prospects for the persistence

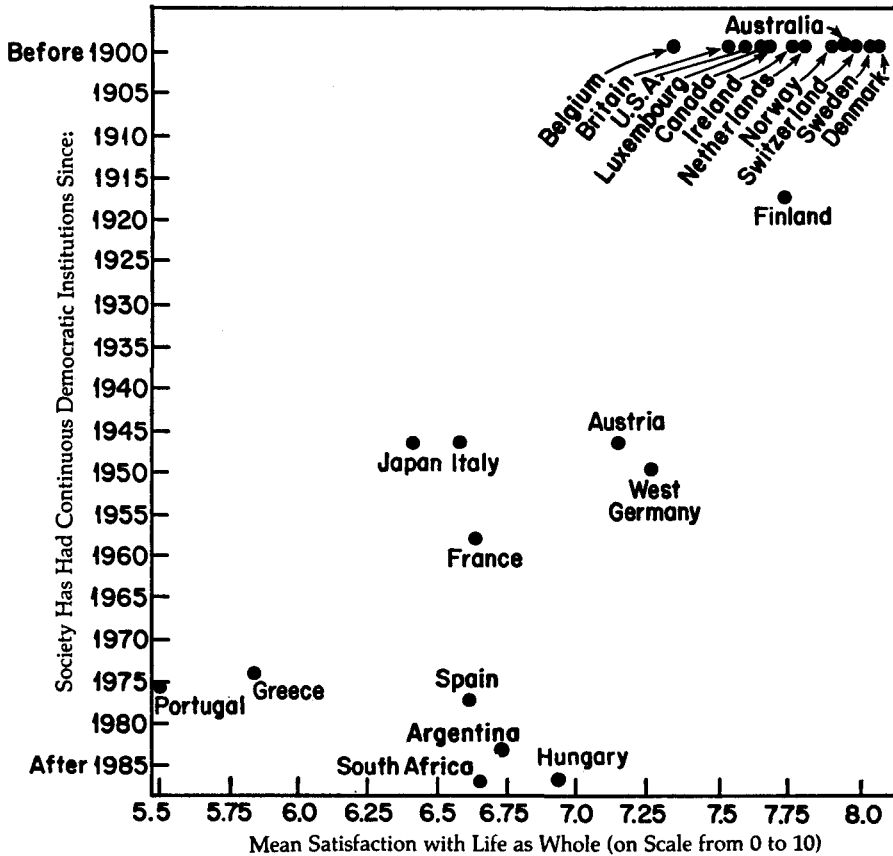
of democratic institutions in these countries, for my data show a correlation of  $-.73$  between support for the revolutionary option, and the number of continuous years that democratic institutions have functioned in a given nation.

### The Consequences of Political Culture: Some Speculations with Data

Let us sum up what we have learned so far. I find a broad syndrome of related attitudes that show substantial and consistent cross-cultural variation, with certain societies being characterized by satisfied and trusting attitudes to a much greater degree than others. The cross-national differences show impressive stability over time. Though they can vary (and the variations are of great substantive interest), they tend to be relatively enduring cultural characteristics. Finally, this syndrome is linked with the persistence of democratic institutions.

Life satisfaction, political satisfaction, interpersonal trust, and support for the existing social order all tend to go together. They constitute a syndrome of positive attitudes toward the world one lives in. And this syndrome goes with enduring democratic institutions. Is the linkage a causal one? Such causal linkages are difficult to demonstrate conclusively. To do so would require political culture data from a large number of nations, some of which became democracies during the course of a long time series, while others did not. My interpretation implies that those societies characterized by high levels of life satisfaction (as well as interpersonal trust, tolerance, etc.) would be likelier to adopt and maintain democratic institutions than those whose publics lacked such attitudes. Conversely, democratic institutions would be more likely to flounder in societies with low levels of life satisfaction, trust, and so on.

Figure 5. Mass Life Satisfaction and Stable Democracy



Sources: Data from World Values survey and Euro-Barometer survey.

Note:  $r = .85$ .

Such data are not now available and will be difficult to obtain, both because it will require a long-term data-gathering process in many countries during many decades and because the governments of nondemocratic societies usually make it difficult to carry out survey research. In principle, however, it is possible to acquire such data, and this is a goal worth striving for. We may not attain the optimum, but we can certainly improve on what we have now. In the meantime, let

us examine the cross-national pattern: do democratic institutions seem to have emerged earlier and persisted longer in societies with high levels of overall life satisfaction, than in those characterized by relatively low levels?

As Figure 5 demonstrates, the answer is *yes*. There is a remarkably consistent tendency for high levels of life satisfaction to go together with the persistence of democratic institutions over relatively long periods of time. Among the 24

societies depicted in Figure 5, the overall correlation between life satisfaction and the number of continuous years a given society has functioned as a democracy is .85. Needless to say, the causal inference would be on firmer ground if I had survey data on life satisfaction levels from some much earlier point in time, such as 1900, but such data is not available. I use *ex post facto* data from 1981 as an indicator of the relative rankings earlier in history. The evidence indicates that these rankings are pretty stable, but this procedure undoubtedly introduces some error in measurement (which tends to work *against* my hypothesis). Since our focus is on the effects of domestic political culture, I code democracy as having failed to survive only when it collapsed through *internal* causes and not when it did so as a consequence of foreign conquest. By this definition, literally *all* of the 13 societies that have maintained democratic institutions continuously since 1920 or earlier, show relatively high life satisfaction levels (above 7.25 on a scale from 0 to 10). Among the 11 societies in which democratic institutions have emerged only since 1945 or which are not yet fully democratic all but one show mean life satisfaction levels below 7.25 and in some cases far below it. Some data are also available from Mexico, but because they are not based on a representative national sample, they have been omitted from these quantitative cross-national analyses. For what they are worth, these data show surprisingly high levels of life satisfaction, paralleling earlier findings by Almond and Verba that the Mexican public showed anomalously high levels of satisfaction with their political system despite relatively negative conditions.

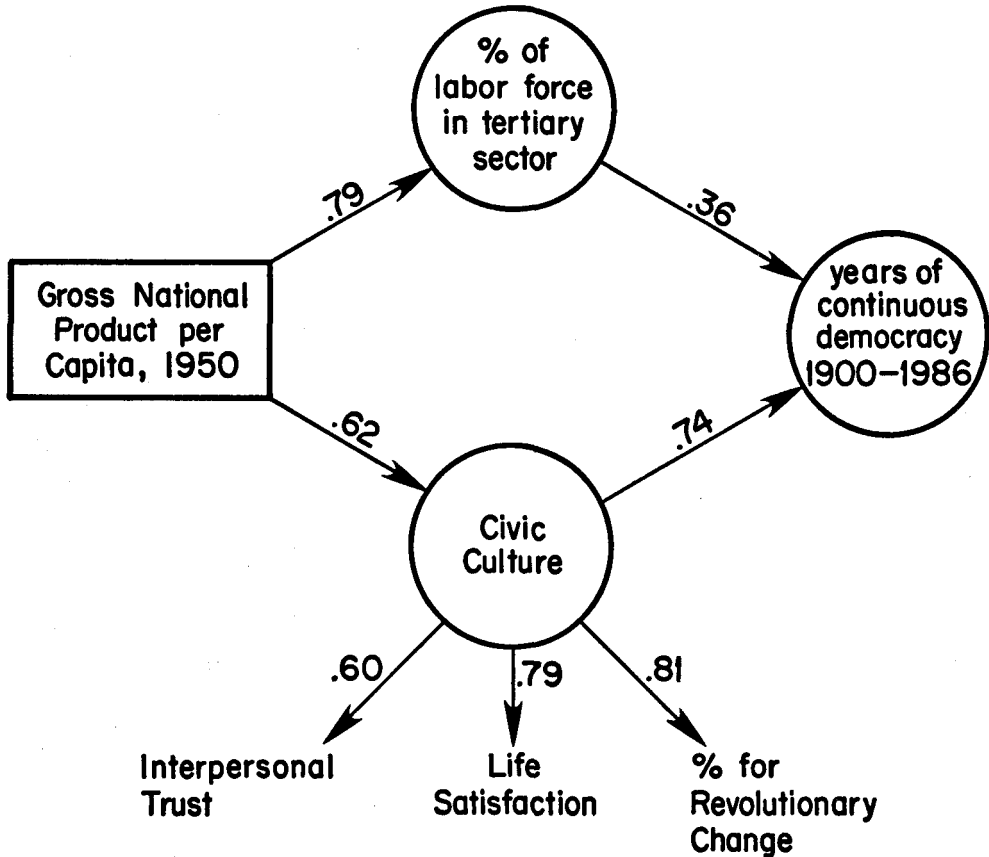
The coding of France might seem questionable. It is coded as having continuous democratic institutions only since 1958, since the military uprising that brought the Fourth Republic to an end and brought DeGaulle to power was not of

foreign origin but was carried out by the French Army. It is true that the last president of the Fourth Republic invited DeGaulle to form a government. But he did so only under pressure from the French Army. Free elections were held shortly afterward, so the suspension of democracy was very brief; but as the subsequent military uprising of 1960 and 1962 testify, democracy in France was for a time on shaky ground.

It is conceivable that we have the causal arrow reversed. Perhaps many decades of living under democratic institutions produces greater life satisfaction. We don't rule this factor out. Indeed, we think it *does* contribute to overall life satisfaction somewhat. But theoretical considerations suggest that the process mainly works the other way around. It seems more likely that a global sense of well-being would also shape one's attitudes toward politics than that what is experienced in one relatively narrow aspect of life would determine one's overall sense of satisfaction. In keeping with this reasoning, Andrews and Withey (1976) find that political satisfaction has only a relatively modest impact on most people's overall life satisfaction; satisfaction with one's job, home, family life, and leisure time all make larger contributions.

Overall life satisfaction is part of a broad syndrome of attitudes reflecting whether one has relatively positive or negative attitudes toward the world in which one lives. Life satisfaction, happiness, interpersonal trust, and whether one supports radical social change or defends one's existing society, all tend to go together in a cultural cluster that is closely related to whether or not democratic institutions have persisted for a long time in a given society. These attitudes seem to be a deep-seated aspect of given cultures, constituting a long-term component underlying absolute levels of satisfaction with governmental performance at any given time. Though political

Figure 6. Economic and Cultural Prerequisites of Stable Democracy



Source: LISREL analysis of data from the societies shown in Figure 5.

Note: Adjusted goodness of fit index = .88.

satisfaction shows sharp fluctuations from one month to the next, the publics of some societies consistently manifest higher levels of satisfaction than the publics of others.

This syndrome is also linked with a society's economic level. The more developed societies tend to rank relatively high on life satisfaction, trust, and the other components of the syndrome. Are both it and liberal democracy simply joint consequences of economic development

or does political culture make an autonomous contribution to the viability of democratic institutions, as Almond and Verba have argued? Let me emphasize that we do not yet possess a data base that would enable us to answer such questions conclusively. We have established the presence of an enduring and cross-nationally distinctive syndrome of basic cultural attitudes and demonstrated that this syndrome is much stronger in those societies that have been stable democra-



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cies since 1900 than in those that have been nondemocratic or intermittently democratic. But we do not yet have sufficient data to sort out the causal linkages between political culture, economic development, and democracy in any conclusive fashion. To do so would require regular measures of the relevant cultural variables throughout the past century. At present, they are simply not available. Nevertheless, the patterns shown in Figures 2, 4, and 5 are so striking and their implications are so important that they virtually cry out for further exploration. The remainder of this article will be devoted to some analyses that cannot be conclusive, but which suggest that cultural factors may play an extremely significant role in both political and economic development. I hope these analyses may stimulate further historical analysis and the development of the longitudinal data base necessary for any definitive analysis of the role of culture.

Figure 6 shows the results of a LISREL analysis in which the dependent variable is the number of consecutive years since 1900 that democracy has functioned in a given society. The results indicate that economic development per se does *not* necessarily lead to democracy. Only in so far as it brings appropriate changes in social structure and political culture does it enhance the viability of democratic institutions. To take an extreme illustration, such nations as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lybia are quite wealthy, but neither their social structures nor their political cultures seem favorable to democracy.

Clearly, I would prefer to have data gathered at earlier time points for some of my variables, especially the cultural indicators. I use gross national product per capita in 1950 as an indicator of a given nation's level of economic development, this being the earliest time for which I have reliable data from all 24 societies. Theoretically, an even earlier time point might better tap the impact of economic

development on the growth of the tertiary sector. However, the 1950 data were measured about 30 years before the political culture indicators (based on 1981 surveys), providing a time-lag of about one generation between economic and cultural indicators, which is appropriate for present purposes.

The results suggest that political culture is a crucial link between economic development and democracy. Although GNP per capita has a strong zero-order correlation with stable democracy, its effects are almost entirely due to its linkages with social structure and political culture, with the latter being the more important of the two. Earlier versions of the LISREL model allowed for a direct linkage between economic development and democracy, but its empirical importance was so insignificant ( $r = .08$ ) that the final model shown in Figure 6 omits it. A given nation's level of economic development is closely linked with a set of characteristics that we label the "civic culture" (though it is only roughly equivalent to Almond and Verba's construct). This political culture syndrome is tapped by three indicators: (1) interpersonal trust, (2) life satisfaction, and (3) support for revolutionary change, the latter being negatively correlated with the "civic culture." All three variables are good indicators of this underlying cultural dimension, with the second and third indicators showing almost identical correlations, despite the fact that in face content, overall life satisfaction has no obvious relationship to politics, while support for revolutionary change clearly does. Earlier versions of the model also included a fourth indicator of the civic culture, satisfaction with the way democracy is functioning in one's country. Though in face content this variable has the most obvious reference to democratic institutions, it manifests a relatively large amount of short-term fluctuation. This variable seems to be a better indicator of governmental popularity at a given time than of

long-term support for democracy. And though it has a significant correlation with the civic culture dimension ( $r = .54$ ), it taps it less accurately than the other three indicators. The same is true of a given public's rate of political discussion. With the small number of cases at my disposal, I obtain a better fitting model by omitting these variables.

The underlying "civic culture" tapped by these three indicators shows a strong linkage with the number of years that democratic institutions have functioned in the given society: the regression coefficient is .74, controlling for the effects of social structure. This suggests that over half of the variance in the persistence of democratic institutions can be attributed to the effects of political culture alone.

The size of the tertiary sector also has a significant linkage with the persistence of democracy. A measure of the relative size of the middle class as opposed to those with blue collar or agricultural occupations, it is also an indirect indicator of the strength of commercial elites. The importance of this variable provides empirical support for the arguments of theorists from Marx to Lipset, who have emphasized the significance of the development of a commercial-industrial middle class. In part this variable reflects purely economic factors: a less polarized distribution of income and the presence of a middle majority tend to make political conflict less ruthless and less desperate. But historically, democratic institutions emerged long *before* the redistributive welfare state and the middle majority: democracy emerged when power passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie. Moore (1966) takes it as axiomatic that there is an inherent affinity between democracy and the bourgeoisie. But if one presses farther and inquires *why* this is so, one is likely to arrive at a cultural explanation as a crucial intervening variable. Preindustrial agrarian societies are typically dominated by landed aristocracies exercising a

military function or by priestly elites, both of which are accustomed to social relations based on a hierarchical chain of command structure. Commercial elites, by contrast, necessarily become accustomed to bargaining. In market relationships the buyer and seller may have diametrically opposed interests, the seller seeking the highest possible price and the buyer the lowest, but unless they can reach a compromise that is acceptable to both sides, neither can do business.

It seems clear that viable democracy does *not* depend on economic factors alone. Specific cultural conditions are crucial, and they in turn are related to economic and macropolitical developments. Long-term economic success can help provide legitimacy for any type of regime in industrial society. Thus it can help maintain the viability of democratic institutions once they are established. But unless economic development is accompanied by certain changes in social structure and political culture, liberal democracy is unlikely to result. Moreover, external constraints can prevent the emergence of democracy even when internal factors are favorable. Huntington (1984) argues that Czechoslovakia and (probably) Poland and Hungary have social and cultural conditions that would favor increasing democratization, in the absence of direct or indirect Soviet intervention. To what degree various East European societies now have political cultures that would support democratic institutions if the Soviet Union permitted them to emerge is a fascinating but unanswered question. It would be as gross an oversimplification to believe in sheer cultural determinism as to believe in economic determinism. Stable democracy reflects the interaction of economic, political, *and* cultural factors. While economic development does not automatically bring about democracy, it does seem to be linked with sociocultural changes that enhance its chances.

## Cultural Change and Economic Development

I have established that certain societies are characterized relatively strongly by a durable set of orientations that roughly corresponds to the "civic culture" discussed by Almond and Verba and that this cultural pattern shows a strong empirical linkage with stable democracy even when I control for related aspects of social structure and economic development. In other words, a body of evidence that not only is much larger than that available to Almond and Verba but also extends over a number of years tends to confirm the basic thesis of *The Civic Culture*.

But the civic culture itself is only one aspect of a still broader cultural syndrome that seems to reflect a long-term process of social and economic change. To understand this process, one must see it in the context of historical developments that have taken place over the past few centuries. Though we do not have survey data that would enable us to trace directly the long-term cultural changes linked with this process, some available indicators enable us at least to suggest the broad outlines of what has been happening.

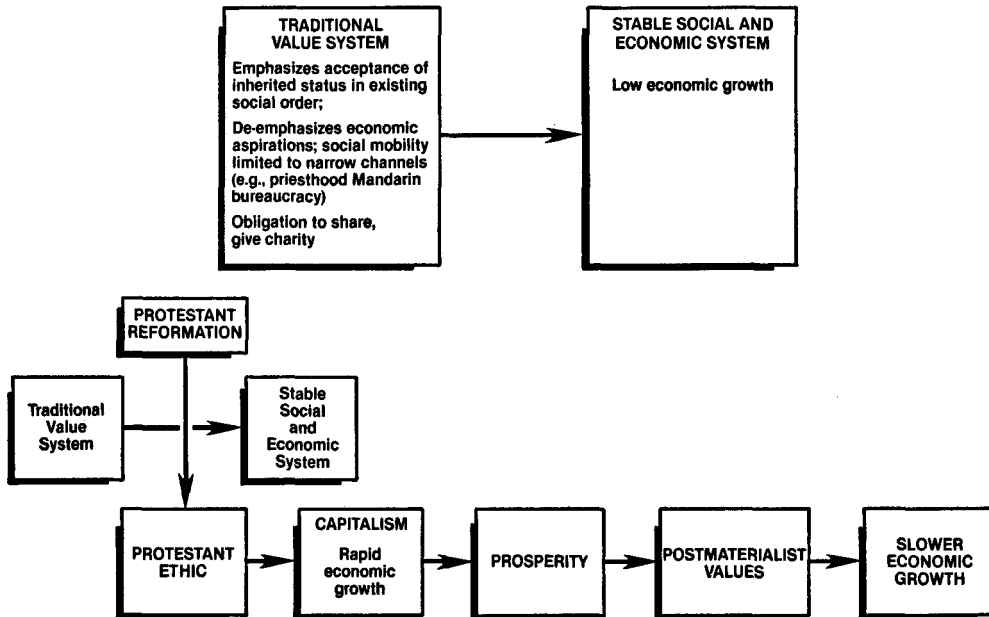
Max Weber (1958) argued at the turn of the century that the rise of capitalism and the subsequent rapid economic development of the West were made possible by a set of cultural changes related to the emergence of Calvinist Protestantism. His Protestant ethic thesis gave rise to a controversy that endured for decades. Some of the criticisms seem well founded; and the thesis that economic achievement was linked with Protestantism may seem unconvincing today, when predominantly Catholic countries have higher economic growth rates than Protestant ones. Nevertheless, though I would not defend Weber's thesis in its entirety, I believe that important aspects of it were correct, provided his work is viewed as an analysis of

a specific historical phenomenon (as was clearly Weber's intention) and not as asserting an immutable relationship between economic achievement and Protestantism. Particularly crucial is Weber's insight that culture is not simply an epiphenomenon determined by economics but an autonomous set of factors that sometimes shape economic events as well as being shaped by them.

I utilize the dominant religious tradition of a given society as an indicator of its preindustrial cultural heritage. This is, of course, an oversimplified indicator, though not as oversimplified as it may seem from today's perspective. Contemporary social scientists tend to underestimate the historical importance of religion, both because they are social scientists, habituated to viewing the world from a secular and scientific viewpoint, and because they are contemporary and live in societies in which the functions of religion have diminished drastically. In most agrarian societies, religion is an overwhelmingly important force, filling the functions that educational and scientific institutions, the mass media, art museums, and philanthropic foundations, as well as religious institutions, now fill in advanced industrial societies. In modern societies, religion is a far less adequate indicator of the culture as a whole, which becomes more differentiated and subject to more rapid change. But my interest here is on the impact of the *preindustrial* cultural heritage of given societies. Though religion is only a rough indicator of this heritage, I use it for want of more refined measures of the value systems prevailing at given times and places in the past.

Figure 7 diagrams a long-term process of economic and cultural change that led to the emergence of democracy in the West as one consequence. As this figure suggests, the relationship between economic and cultural change is one of complex reciprocal causality, with

Figure 7. Long-Term Economic Consequences of Rise of Protestant Ethic



Note: With varying time lags, the impact of the industrialized nations serves as a functional equivalent to the Protestant Reformation for the rest of the world, though the value system that emerges is shaped by the traditional value system that precedes it.

cultural factors not only being influenced by economic change, but also influencing it. Weber argues that Calvinist Protestantism gradually evolved into a value system that viewed the accumulation of wealth for its own sake (and not as a means to survive or acquire luxuries) as a sign of divine grace and encouraged an ascetic self-control conducive to the accumulation of wealth. This led to an entrepreneurial spirit and an accumulation of capital that facilitated the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which in turn had immense consequences for global economic development in the twentieth century.

I suggest that the Protestant Reformation was only one case of a more general phenomenon: the breakdown of traditional cultural barriers to economic

modernization. For as the top half of Figure 7 suggests, one feature common to traditional value systems is that they emerge in, and are adapted to, economies characterized by very little technological change and economic growth. In this situation, social mobility is a zero-sum game, heavily laden with conflict and threatening to the social system. In a society undergoing rapid industrialization and expansion, by contrast, social mobility may be widespread. But in traditional agrarian societies, social status is hereditary, except when an individual or group forcibly seizes the lands and social status of another. To preserve social peace, virtually all traditional cultures discourage upward social mobility and the accumulation of wealth. These cultures perform an integrating function by providing a ra-

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tionale that legitimates the established social order and inculcating norms of sharing, charity, and other obligations that help to mitigate the harshness of a subsistence economy.

By their very nature the traditional value systems of agrarian society are adapted to maintaining a stable balance in unchanging societies. Accordingly, they tend to discourage social change in general and the accumulative entrepreneurial spirit in particular. One of the important functions of the Protestant Reformation was to break the grip of the medieval Christian world view on a significant portion of Europe. It did not accomplish this alone. The emergence of scientific inquiry had already begun to undermine the anthropocentric cosmos of the medieval Christian tradition. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Weber's emphasis on the role of Protestantism captures an important part of reality. For prior to the Protestant Reformation, southern Europe was economically more advanced than northern Europe. During the three centuries after the Reformation, capitalism emerged, mainly among the Protestant regions of Europe and among the Protestant minorities of Catholic countries. Protestant Europe manifested a subsequent economic dynamism that was extraordinary, moving it far ahead of Catholic Europe. Shifting trade patterns, declining food production in southern Europe, and other variables played a role in this shift, but the evidence suggests that cultural factors were also important.

As capitalism led to industrialization and eventually to historically unprecedented levels of prosperity, emulation became more and more attractive, and increasing amounts of cross-cultural diffusion took place. But to a truly remarkable degree, throughout the early stages the Protestant cultural zone was markedly more receptive to industrialization and economic development than any other

part of the world. The Industrial Revolution began in England, spreading rapidly to predominantly Protestant Scotland and Wales but leaving Catholic Ireland largely untouched except for the Protestant region around Belfast. Industrialization spread from England to nearby France but lagged there in comparison with its rapid implantation in more distant but more receptive areas such as the United States and Germany, both of which soon became far more industrialized than France. At the start of the twentieth century, the correlation between Protestantism and economic development was still remarkably strong. In Europe, the economically most dynamic nations were Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, and Switzerland, all of which were predominantly Protestant at that time. The only non-Protestant countries that had attained even roughly comparable levels of economic development were Belgium and France, both of which were geographically near the original core area from which the Industrial Revolution spread and in both of which Protestant minorities played a disproportionately important role in the process of economic development. In the New World, the United States and Canada had also emerged as developed industrial societies, while virtually all of Latin America remained almost totally unaffected by the Industrial Revolution. Even within Canada, the predominantly Catholic region developed much less rapidly than the rest of the country. Economic development seemed wedded to Protestantism.

But culture is not a constant. It is a system through which a society adapts to its environment. Given a changing environment, in the long run culture is likely to change. One major change that took place was the secularization of Catholic (and other non-Protestant) cultures. In much of the world, the role of the merchant and the profit-making entrepreneur

became less stigmatized. In some settings the entrepreneur even became the cultural hero, as the captain of industry had been in the United States of the late nineteenth century.

A contrasting process of cultural change began to take place in the more advanced industrial societies during the second half of the twentieth century. The lower half of Figure 7 diagrams this process. Precisely in those regions that had earlier been most strongly influenced by the Protestant ethic, the long-term consequences of economic development began to be felt, as generations emerged that had been raised in unprecedented prosperity and economic security and were characterized, increasingly, by the presence of postmaterialist values. The theoretical reasons underlying this process of value change—and a large body of supporting evidence—have been presented in detail elsewhere (Dalton 1977; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Deth 1984; Flanagan 1982; Inglehart 1971, 1977, 1981, 1985; Ike 1973; Kaase and Klingemann 1979; Lafferty and Knutsen 1985; Marsh 1975; Thomassen et al. 1983).

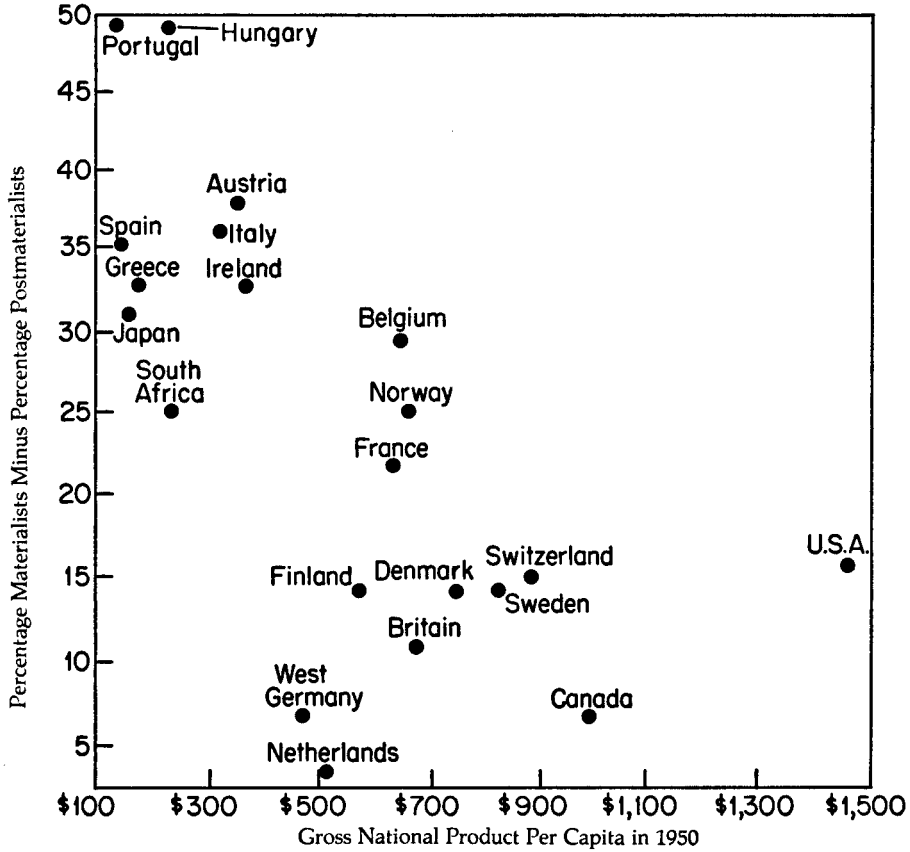
This thesis implies that as a result of the historically unprecedented prosperity and the absence of war that has prevailed in Western countries since 1945, younger birth cohorts place less emphasis on economic and physical security than do older groups, who have experienced a much greater degree of economic insecurity. Conversely, the younger birth cohorts tend to give a higher priority to non-material needs, such as a sense of community and the quality of life. Cohort analysis carried out from 1970 through 1987 in six Western countries confirms the presence of substantial differences in the basic societal priorities of younger and older generations (Inglehart n.d.). Moreover, it demonstrates that as intergenerational population replacement has occurred, there has been a gradual but pervasive shift in the values of these publics

from predominantly materialist priorities toward postmaterialist goals. One consequence of this shift has been a diminishing emphasis on economic growth in these societies together with increasing emphasis on environmental protection and preserving the quality of life—if necessary, even at the expense of economic growth. Postmaterialists place markedly less emphasis on economic growth than do those with materialist or mixed values. And they emphasize a high salary and job security less than working with people they like or doing interesting work (Inglehart 1977). Conversely, postmaterialists place more emphasis on protecting the environment and are far more likely to be active members of environmental organizations than are materialists. Finally, postmaterialists are economic under-achievers; that is, *controlling* for the fact that they come from more prosperous families and receive better education, postmaterialists earn significantly lower incomes than those with materialist values (Inglehart n.d.). All this suggests that as societies become increasingly influenced by the growing postmaterialist minority, they will tend to give economic growth a lower priority. Figures 8 and 9 test this prediction at the societal level.

Evidence from a cross-national perspective converges with evidence from the individual level, pointing to a long-term cultural process of negative feedback linked with economic growth. On one hand, as Figure 8 demonstrates, the publics of relatively rich societies are least likely to emphasize materialist values and most likely to emphasize postmaterialist ones. Since one's values tend to reflect the conditions prevailing during one's pre-adult years, I allow a lag of about 30 years between the independent variable (level of development in 1950) and the dependent variable (mass value priorities in 1981–86). Since the median age in my adult sample is about 45, my economic indicator taps conditions when the median

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Figure 8. Economic Development and the Decline of Materialist Values



Sources: Value priorities data from World Values survey, 1981; Euro-Barometer surveys 19-25 (1982-1986); and Political Action study, 1974. Gross national product per capita calculated from *UN Statistical Yearbook, 1958* (New York: UN, 1959).

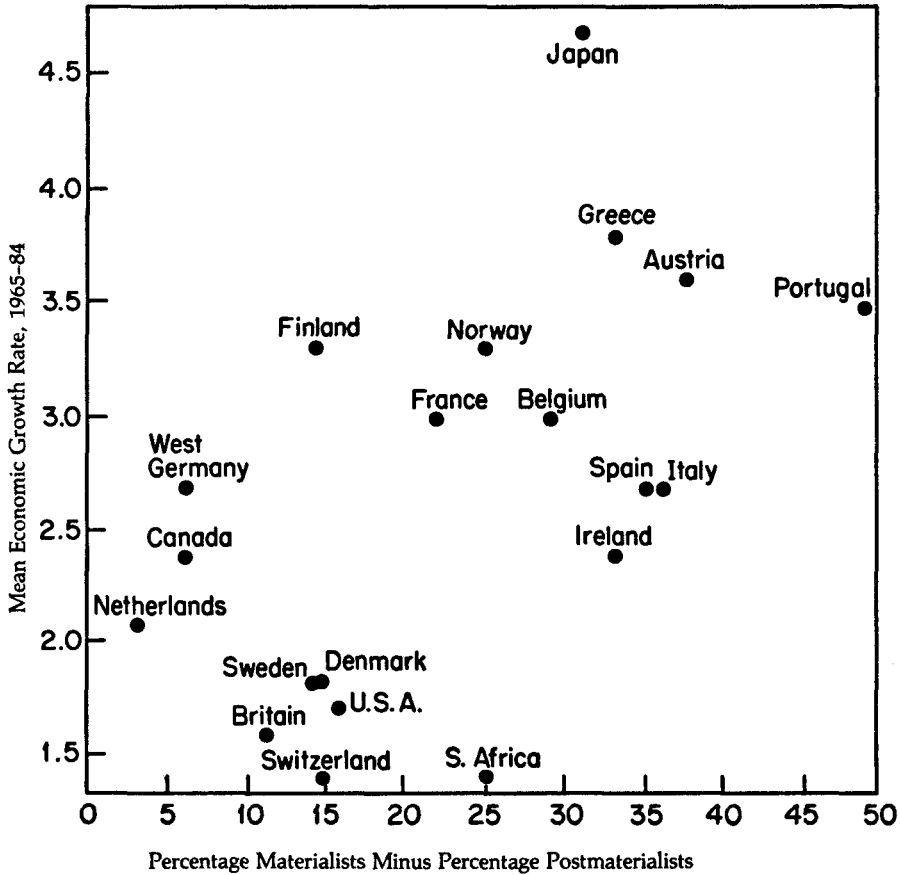
Note:  $r = -.63$ .

individual was about 15 years of age. I find a correlation of  $-.63$  between a society's per capita GNP in 1950 and the proportion of materialists among that society's public in the 1980s. Not only does this result have the predicted polarity and significant strength, but it is stronger than the correlation obtained when I use GNP per capita in 1980 as the independent variable. The time lag assumed to exist between economic cause

and cultural effect seems to reflect reality.

Figure 9 is a mirror image of Figure 8. The wealthier societies are least likely to produce materialist publics, but materialist publics seem to produce high economic growth rates. Or, to reverse labels, though wealthier societies are most likely to produce postmaterialists, after an appropriate time lag the more postmaterialist societies have the lowest growth rates. The long-term result is that high growth rates even-

Figure 9. Materialist Values and Economic Growth, 1965-84



Sources: Growth rates 1965-84 from *World Development Report, 1986* (Washington: World Bank, 1986). Growth rates 1870-1913 from Angus Maddison, *Economic Growth in Japan and the USSR* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).

Note:  $r = .51$  (correlation between 1870-1913 growth rates and 1981-86 values =  $-.38$ , i.e., the countries that are most postmaterialist today had relatively high growth rates in 1870-1913).

tually lead to lower growth rates. Prosperity engenders a cultural shift toward postmaterialist values, which eventually leads to a less intense emphasis on economic growth.

Data from 21 societies reveal a consistent cultural-economic syndrome that was originally linked with the Protestant ethic: the wealthier nations and those

with highly developed tertiary sectors are most likely to be long-established democracies, and the publics of these societies tend to show a "civic" political culture, have less materialist value priorities, and tend to be Protestant in religion (cf. Huntington 1984). But the Protestant ethic seems to be unraveling: for the linkage between Protestantism and economic



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**Table 2. Economic Growth Rates in Protestant vs. Catholic Countries and Japan, 1870-1984**

Rank	1870-1913	1913-38	1949-65	1965-84
1	U.S.A. (P)	Japan (B)	Japan (B)	Japan (B)
2	Canada (P)	Norway (P)	W. Germany (P)	Norway (P)
3	Denmark (P)	Netherlands (P)	Italy (C)	France (C)
4	Sweden (P)	U.S.A. (P)	France (C)	Belgium (C)
5	Germany (P)	Switzerland (P)	Switzerland (P)	Italy (C)
6	Belgium (C)	Denmark (P)	Netherlands (P)	W. Germany (P)
7	Switzerland (P)	Sweden (P)	Canada (P)	Canada (P)
8	Japan (B)	Italy (C)	Denmark (P)	Netherlands (P)
9	Norway (P)	Canada (P)	Norway (P)	Denmark (P)
10	Gt. Britain (P)	Germany (P)	Sweden (P)	Sweden (P)
11	Netherlands (P)	Gt. Britain (P)	U.S.A. (P)	U.S.A. (P)
12	France (C)	France (C)	Belgium (C)	Gt. Britain (P)
13	Italy (C)	Belgium (C)	Gt. Britain (P)	Switzerland (P)
Mean economic growth rate in Protestant countries <sup>a</sup>	152	120	98	72

Sources: 1870-1965 standings calculated from data in Angus Maddison, *Economic Growth in Japan and the U.S.S.R.* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), pp. 148-49; 1965-84 standings from data in *World Development Report, 1986* (Washington: World Bank, 1986).

Note: (P) = countries in which a majority of the population was Protestant in 1900; (C) = countries having a Roman Catholic majority in 1900; (B) = Buddhist majority in 1900.

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of rates in Catholic countries.

achievement is a thing of the past. While the Protestant ethic syndrome was strongly correlated with high levels of economic growth in 1870-1913 (the earliest period for which we have data), this correlation weakens and then becomes strongly negative as we move into historically more recent periods.

Among those countries for which we have long-term historical data, those that had relatively high growth rates a century ago tend to have relatively low growth rates today. Table 2 illustrates this phenomenon. In 1870-1913, nearly all Protestant countries had growth rates that were higher than those of almost all Catholic countries. My table actually understates the extent to which this was true, because the few Catholic countries from which we have historical data are precisely the ones that were *most* developed in the nineteenth century. Protestant countries still had more dynamic

economies in the interwar years. But in the past few decades, this situation has reversed itself; during 1965-84, the Catholic countries in our sample had *higher* growth rates than most of the Protestant ones. Within the United States, as recently as 1958, Catholics and Protestants manifested different values concerning various aspects of economic and family life (Lenski 1963). But these differences have been dwindling (Alwin 1986).

In part, this reflects the fact that it is easier for a poor country to attain a high growth rate than for a rich one. By importing technology that has already been proven in more developed countries, one can catch up rapidly. But in global perspectives it is clear that this is only part of the story. For plenty of poor societies are *not* showing rapid economic growth, while others (like those of East Asia) have been growing at an extraordinary pace. Clearly, some societies are more receptive

to economic development than others. Conversely, some rich nations (like Japan) continue to develop relatively rapidly—even when they can no longer rely on imported technology but are increasingly developing their own—while others have become relatively stagnant.

High economic growth was once an almost uniquely Protestant phenomenon; today it has become global in scope and is less likely to be found in the Protestant societies than elsewhere. This does not mean that the civic culture that emerged in these societies will disappear. On the contrary, these countries are still becoming richer and on the whole, life satisfaction, political satisfaction, and trust have been gradually rising in recent years. The syndrome that linked Protestantism with wealth and democracy has become less distinctively Protestant because it is permeating other regions of the world.

It is doing so unevenly, however, with its spread being shaped by the cultural traditions of given societies. The Confucian system was virtually unique among traditional cultures in that it institutionalized a socially accepted and even honored channel for upward social mobility, based on nonviolent individual achievement rather than ascription. By passing a series of difficult academic examinations that were open to any promising young male, one could attain power, status, and wealth as a government official. Consequently, in the sixteenth century a social scientist from Mars might have ranked East Asia, with its Confucian tradition, as the region of the world that was culturally most conducive to economic development. Though narrowly circumscribed, social mobility through individual achievement was accepted to a degree virtually unknown elsewhere. Education, rather than armed force, was the principal means to rise in society. And a secular orientation was relatively conducive to technology and worldly achievement.

I suspect that the Confucian cultural

tradition, its traditional rigidity having been shattered by the impact of the West, is an important element underlying the current economic dynamism of certain portions of Asia. During the period from 1965 to 1984, 5 of the 10 fastest-growing nations in the world were countries shaped by the Confucian and Buddhist traditions: Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. China ranked thirteenth. Moreover, three more of the top 20 countries had significant Chinese minorities that in each case played disproportionately important economic roles: Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Finally, immigrants of East Asian origin have shown disproportionately high rates of economic achievement throughout Southeast Asia and in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Confucian cultural tradition is conducive to economic achievement today. It would be unrealistic to view these traits as indelible, however. My broader thesis suggests that the intense emphasis on economic achievement now found among peoples shaped by the Confucian tradition could emerge only when the static orientation of traditional society was broken and is likely to gradually erode when future generations have been raised in high levels of economic security. For the present, however, it may be a key factor in the world economy.

## Conclusion

Both social analysis and social policy would be much simpler if people from different societies were interchangeable robots. But a large body of evidence indicates that they are not. The peoples of given societies tend to be characterized by reasonably durable cultural attributes that sometimes have major political and economic consequences. If this is true, then effective social policy will be better

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served by learning about these differences and about how they vary cross-culturally and over time than by pretending that they don't exist.

Rational choice models constitute one of the most promising tools now available for political analysis. As currently applied, they are effective in analyzing short-term fluctuations within a given system, taking cultural and institutional factors as constant. But these factors are not constant, either cross-nationally or over time. And current models cannot deal with long-term changes in the basic goals and nature of a system. One of the central debates in the field of political economy seems to reflect this fact. When it was found that political support responded to fluctuations in the economy, it was taken for granted that this reflected the workings of economic self-interest among the electorate. Subsequent research has made this interpretation increasingly doubtful. The linkage between economics and politics seems largely shaped by sociotropic concerns. The classic model of economically determined behavior has a strong grip on the minds of social analysts, probably because, throughout most of the history of industrial society, it provided a fairly accurate description of human behavior. In recent decades, the rising role of postmaterialist concerns may have helped make sociotropic concerns increasingly important, particularly among the politically more aware segments of the electorate.

Political economy research has demonstrated convincingly that short-term economic changes have significant political consequences. But the long-term consequences of economic change have barely begun to be analyzed in comparable fashion, though they may be at least equally significant. Evidence presented here indicates that the emergence and viability of mass-based democracy is closely related to economic development *and* that the outcome is contingent on

specific cultural changes. Though mass democracy is almost impossible without a certain amount of economic development, economic development by itself does not produce democracy. Unless specific changes occur in culture and social structure, the result may not be democracy but a variety of alternatives ranging from the Libyan to the Soviet. A large body of cross-national survey evidence indicates that enduring cultural differences exist. Though these differences may be related to the economic level of a given nation, they are relatively independent of short-term economic changes. These cultural factors have an important bearing on the durability of democracy, which seems to result from a complex interplay of economic, cultural, and institutional factors. To neglect any of these components may compromise its survival.

Finally, it appears that economic development itself is influenced by cultural variables. In my brief analysis of this, I have utilized one indicator of materialist and postmaterialist values that is available from only the past two decades and another indicator—the dominant religious or philosophic tradition of a given society—that is a greatly oversimplified indicator of prevailing worldviews at a given time and place but goes back over centuries. Clearly, this analysis cannot be regarded as conclusive. But the available evidence tends to confirm Weber's insight that culture is not just a consequence of economics but can shape the basic nature of economic and political life.

### Note

1. These findings, incidentally, bear on a question that was recently considered grounds for denying Samuel Huntington membership in the National Academy of Sciences. His opponents charged that it was absurd to argue that relatively high or low levels of satisfaction can be attributed to given nations; but in a very significant sense, it appears that they *can*.

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